Over the summer I had a friend up to visit. She arrived right around dinner time and we had decided to go out to eat. I asked her what she was in the mood for. Her response to me was, “Something girly.” I did not really know what she meant by this so I asked her to clarify. “You know something that is healthy and won’t make you feel bad after you eat it.” As a nutrition major I hate hearing people talk like this, I believe that food should not be associated with guilt.

I think that the media is most at fault for putting the idea that unhealthy food should make you feel bad into the public. Magazines and television especially highlight fad diets and foods that create and maximize “ideal” bodies. I feel this just encourages people to sort foods into “good” vs. “bad.” There is clearly a large health difference between choosing to eat a super strict healthful diet of only fresh foods, lean protein, and whole grain versus completely following a diet of prepackaged goods, high fats, and fast food. I understand this difference but I feel that society places too much emphasis on both extremes and not enough on the realistic middle ground that is relatively easy to maintain.

Eating a balanced diet is not only beneficial to the body; it is helpful for the mind. If a person constantly restricts certain foods because they feel bad after eating them then an unhealthy relationship with food is formed. It is much better to follow a wholesome diet but also to allow oneself some leeway and occasionally eat foods that are “unhealthy” or “bad.” Maintaining a positive relationship with all foods by not associating food and guilt is something I strongly believe in. I don’t like pushing my views on people, especially close companions, so I took my best friend to the most “girly” place I could think of. I do hope that one day she, and many other people like her, can come to view food as both a pleasure and a way to uphold fine health.

By Anna O’Brien