
Mindful Eating

Think back to the last meal you had, consider the flavors, textures, smells, and the taste. What do you recall? If you do not remember, you are not alone. Most people find it hard to purposefully pay attention to what they are eating when they are eating. When we are not paying attention, it can lead to overeating or add to stress and anxiety.

Principles of Mindfulness

- Pay attention, without judgment.
- Be aware of your thoughts, feelings and physical senses in the present moment.
- Promote balance, choice, wisdom, and acceptance.

Mindful Eating is:

- Being aware of the positive effects of food.
- Using all your senses when choosing to eat food that is both filling and healthful to your body.
- Noticing your response to food (likes, dislikes, or neutral) without judgment.
- Becoming aware of hunger and fullness cues to when to begin and end eating.

Someone Who Eats Mindfully:

- Knows there is no right or wrong way to eat.
- Accepts that their eating experiences are unique.
- Chooses to direct their attention to each moment when eating.

Benefits of Mindful Eating

- Enjoy what you are eating, regardless of if it is “healthy”.
- Increased satisfaction, meaning that you will most likely eat less.
- Feel fuller; allows time for the stomach to tell the brain it is full.
- Gives you the power to make better choices on your own.

Bottom Line:

Pay attention to what you eat. When you pay attention while eating, you will be able to fully enjoy what you eat.

Simple Ways to Eat More Mindfully

Mindful eating may seem like a huge task that requires great focus. If you are not ready for that, you can slow down the speed of your meals by being mindful by:

- Eat with chopsticks.
- Eat with your non-dominant hand.
- Eat sitting down.
- Eat without looking at your smartphone, TV, newspaper, or computer.
- Go around the table and each say something you are grateful for. This is a great activity for both adults and kids!
- Before you eat, sit quietly for at least 30 seconds. Smell your food and think about where it came from. Think about the steps it took to end up on your plate: growth, harvesting, processing, transportation, purchase, and preparation.
- Give thanks before eating.
- Focus on your arm movements as you bring your food to your mouth.
- Chew your food 15 to 20 times per bite. Focus on taste and texture and how it changes as you chew your food. Swallow when the food is uniformly smooth.
- Set down your fork or spoon between bites. Rest for a few seconds before taking the next bite.
- Take a sip of water, tea, or black coffee between bites.
- Put reasonable portions of food on your plate and try to make the meal last at least 20 minutes.

Mindful Eating Worksheet

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Time of my first bite: _____

Am I hungry? How hungry? And what body sensations tell me I am hungry? Notice how you feel after each bite.

Where am I eating?

What am I eating? (List the foods and amounts.)

What are the colors?

What are the smells?

What does the food feel like in my mouth?

How does the food taste? Salty? Bitter? Rich? Starchy?

Which bite is most enjoyable? Think about this as you eat.

Am I chewing each bite 20 times? Yes No

Am I putting my fork/spoon down between each bite? Yes No

Is my mind focused on anything else? Yes No

What else is going on around me?

When you are halfway through with your meal, note the time:

How much of your meal have you eaten after 15 minutes?

How can you tell when you are full and satisfied? Before each bite, ask yourself, “Do I really want this next bite, or am I mindlessly eating it because it is in front of me?”

Time when you stop eating: _____

Describe what you have noticed about how you eat, your body while you eat, distractions, or any other observations.
