

Mindfulness for Managing Weight

Slowing down and being present may benefit your health and your weight.

What it is: Mindfulness is bringing your attention to the present moment and experiencing it with non-judgemental awareness. This awareness can bring appreciation, understanding and meaning to everything you do. Two key concepts in mindfulness are...:

- slowing down your mind and actions so you are present to the moment and what you are doing and experiencing while letting go of other thoughts and worries.
- observing and describing people, events, emotions, your body, food, etc. without making judgements (good/bad, right/wrong, should/shouldn't).

Benefits:

- Enables you to pay closer attention to what you are eating and what you enjoy
- Helps you to appreciate the value of nutritious food for your body
- Can make you more aware of the emotional reasons for eating
- Can help you learn to identify when you have had enough/feel full
- Can improve digestion and absorption of food and nutrients

Taking the time to experience food can help you become more in tune with your body's signals of satisfaction and make you less likely to overeat. It takes 20 minutes for your brain and stomach to communicate the messages: "I'm full" or "I'm no longer hungry"

With practice, mindful eating will become a habit, even with limited time to spend eating you will have greater awareness and ...Your body will thank you for this 😊

"Mindful eating replaces self-criticism with self-nurturing. It replaces shame with respect for your own inner wisdom" by Jan Chozen Bays.

Full Mindful Eating Practice Experience

Use this practice when you have time as it can take at least 10 minutes.

With this practice you may discover that foods you have an attachment to do not taste as good as you once thought. This may help you let go of foods that no longer serve you and your health goals.

As you begin:

- Make sure you are feeling comfortable, feet on the floor, back supported, etc
- Take a few deep breaths in thru your nose and out thru your mouth

As you relax and breathe, **notice without judgement:**

- Where are you feeling tension in your body?
- What thoughts are running through your head?
- What emotions are you feeling?

Next turn to your environment, **notice without judgement:**

- What do you see nearby?
- Describe your room – dark/dim/bright? Organized, messy, etc
- What sounds do you notice? Loud/soft hum/clicking/birds/traffic, etc
- What smells do you notice?

Next turn to your food and observe:

- **Look:** Notice the color, size, shape of the food
- **Feel:** Notice the food's texture
- **Smell:** Notice the aromas. Does the food have a smell?
- **Think:** What memories are related to this food? Do you like this food?
- **Taste:** Take your first bite, let it linger in your mouth as it breaks down. How does it taste at first? What is the texture? How does your mouth respond to the flavor? Does the taste change as you eat? How would you describe the taste? Savor the taste.
- **Swallow:** Become aware of when you have the urge to swallow, so that even swallowing is experienced consciously.
- **Listen:** Become aware of the sound of utensils on plates, cutting, chewing, etc.
- **Focus:** Slow movement, conscious movement, letting go of judgements and other thoughts surrounding eating.

Follow up Thoughts

- Food is to be enjoyed. Every bite is valuable and not to be shoveled. Savor and enjoy. Eating is a pleasurable experience and brings us joy!
- Think about how the food you have eaten nourishes your body with nutrients it needs to provide energy and maintain internal functions that support your health.
- Reflect on the subtle nuances of taste, temperature, smell and textures of foods. What did you notice while you experienced your food? What did you enjoy?

SHORTER Mindfulness Eating Practice:

NOTE: The most important part is to slow down, breathe, minimize distractions and multitasking and bring your awareness to your meal and the eating process.

As you begin to prepare to eat, slow down and become present to your environment, your food. etc. even while prepping, cooking and or plating.

As you sit down to begin your meal, pause:

- Take a few deep breaths in thru your nose and out thru your mouth
- Observe where you are feeling tension in your body. Let go and relax. (fight or flight diverts blood away from digestion and absorption).
- Check in with any highly excited response to your food and drive to eat quickly and “a lot” – what is driving that? Smell, anticipation of taste?

BEFORE you begin eating, briefly glance at and observe your food, colors, textures, arrangement on the plate, quantity, thoughts about your food and take notice of the food you are choosing to eat. Essentially take a “snap-shot”.

SLOWLY begin with your first bite, being mindful of how much you put in your mouth, chew slowly, observe your chewing and how the food breaks down in your mouth. Let the flavors linger on your tongue and notice the taste, texture, etc

Swallow and pause and take a few breaths. Briefly reflect on your experience, especially with the first bite.

Repeat for the next one or two bites before you increase your pace of eating

Remember: slowing down, your body has time to sense “no longer hungry” and “full”.

Short on time or in a hurry?

- Continue to eat at a slower pace than normal focusing on staying present, relaxed and breath as you chew. Only consume what you can eat in the designated time. (put left over food away for later or throw away).
- Check-in with fullness. NOTE: You may be hungry later for a snack, however, rather than eating quickly and overconsuming calories and/or being overfull, you can eat later (leftovers from this meal, may provide a nutrient rich snack versus something else you might normally choose).