



Mindful Eating & How It Relates to Good Nutrition

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What is Mindfulness?

- Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non judgementally to things as they are.
- This means paying attention to things as they really are in any given moment not what we want them to be.

Nutrition & Good Health

- To be in good health involves not only what we eat, but how we digest our food
- Most of us eat very quickly, on the run, in our cars, and/or watching television
- Eating on the run can also involve unhealthy food
- If you've ever wolfed down food only to realise that you were barely conscious while eating, then mindful eating exercises may be helpful

What is Mindful Eating?

Mindful Eating is:

- Paying attention to an eating experience with all of our senses (seeing, tasting, hearing, smelling, feeling)
- Witnessing the emotional and physical responses that take place before, during and after the eating experience



Basics of Mindful Eating

- ▶ Mindful eating exercises are basically about being conscious of eating.
- ▶ Some ways to do this are:
 - ▶ Focusing on body triggers associated with food
 - ▶ Chewing slowly
 - ▶ Being aware of the sensory experience of eating

Basics of Mindful Eating

- ▶ Being grateful for food
- ▶ Noticing how the body feels after eating
- ▶ If we look at mindful eating vs mindless eating, the differences are mostly about speed and awareness.
- ▶ Mindless eating is when we eat too fast, barely aware of chewing or flavours.
- ▶ Mindful eating is the opposite, it is chewing slowly and being mindful of both food and the body's reaction to it.



Basics of Mindful Eating

- Mindful eating means paying exclusive attention to appetite cues and our mind/body relationship to food.
- When we eat mindfully, we are totally focused on doing so: eating slowly, chewing, letting food sit on our tongues so our taste buds can do their jobs, and noting how food feels in the body.
- While eating mindfully we aren't thinking about anything but how food tastes and how our body is responding. It helps to think about each of these aspects of eating separately and move attention from one to the other.

When Are We Mindlessly Eating?

We may be eating mindlessly if we:

- Consistently eat until we are overly full
- Find ourselves grazing on food without really tasting it
- Do not pay attention to the foods we are eating and frequently eat surrounded by distractions
- Rush through meals
- Have trouble remembering the taste, smell and look of the meal we have just eaten



Why Does It Matter?

- *The answer is simple. It can improve your health.*
- *Eating mindfully is what your body was designed to do. That's why you feel signals of hunger and fullness. You were made to translate those messages into action organically, eating when you're hungry and stopping when you're full.*
- *Research suggests that people who don't focus on their meal tend to eat 69% more than mindful eaters.*

Weight Loss

- One of the most significant benefits of mindful eating is weight loss according to Harvard Medical School
- Yes, you can use mindful eating to lose weight, and it has been proven to be highly effective.
- It helps with weight loss because it makes us more conscious of our relationship with food and gives us more mental control over our dietary habits. This can be huge for binge eating.
- Mindfulness helps to control our emotions and, in turn, helps us eat more healthily and stop comfort eating. It also improves our willpower and can improve our dietary habits.



Improves Nutrition

- *It's too easy to slip into a habit of wolfing down food.*
- *We're in a rush. We don't have time to prepare proper food. But we're hungry.*
- *So, we just eat whatever fills us up.*
- *The problem is we are mindless. When we become more aware of food, through mindful eating exercises, we naturally choose foods consciously, which will lead to more varied and nutritious meals.*




Aids Digestion

- Research from Harvard Medical School shows a positive link between mindful eating and digestion.
- Digestion involves complex hormonal signals between the nervous system and the digestive system.
- It takes approximately twenty minutes for us to get that feeling of being full.
- If we eat too quickly, we often overeat before we get the message telling us to stop. This can cause digestion problems.



Where to Start

- *Now that you understand the importance of mindful eating, you're ready to get started.*
- *It's difficult to shift your mealtime habits overnight, so don't expect to.*
- *Instead, gradually begin to incorporate mindful-eating techniques.*
- *This way, you'll slowly tweak the way you eat and create lasting change.*



Listen to Your Body

- *Our bodies already has the appropriate mechanisms in place to regulate when we eat.*
- *The problem is that we're too consumed by life stress, the latest news or politics to pay any attention to them.*
- *Practice thoughtfully assessing your hunger before you begin to eat.*

Listen to Your Body

- ▶ Let your natural hunger cues guide when you eat meals and, more importantly, how much you eat.
- ▶ It often takes about 15 minutes after a meal for your body to recognize that it's satisfied and doesn't require any more fuel.
- ▶ So instead of compulsively snacking after lunch, eat a proper portion and then give yourself some time. Go for a walk, make a phone call or return a few emails and then check back in with your body.
- ▶ Are you still hungry? Then perhaps your meal wasn't large enough to begin with and you should pack an extra side tomorrow.

Unplug From the World

- ▶ If you're in the habit of checking your smartphone while you eat lunch or watching TV as you devour dinner, perhaps it's time to create a new routine.
- ▶ Put away your phone — or, even better, turn it off entirely — and head to the kitchen table for dinner instead of the coffee table.
- ▶ When you remove these distractions, you'll have more mental space to devote to the dinnertime.



SAVOUR YOUR MEAL

- *With the distractions out of the way and your mind fully focused on your meal, slow down and enjoy it.*
- *Really take the time to experience the flavors of the food and savour each bite.*
- *This will probably require that you eat more slowly, especially if you typically gulp down a meal before your next meeting.*



SAVOUR YOUR MEAL

- ▶ Take note of the texture of the food, its aroma and how your body feels after eating it.
- ▶ You'll likely eat less. The added bonus is that eating slower may prevent awkward digestive issues (i.e., gas)!



Source Food Locally

- *When you know exactly who is responsible for the food on your plate, you may have a higher level of respect for a meal.*
- *With that level of respect comes a duty to treat your food well — by eating it mindfully, not gobbling it down without a thought. To help with this, you should think about buying local food.*
- *When you grab food at a farmers market or a local store, you often get the chance to meet the people who worked hard to bring it to your table.*
- *This association can be a powerful one when it comes time to sit down at that table. So take full advantage of any opportunities to buy food from local sellers.*



Ongoing Mindful Eating

- ▶ *The transition to mindful eating is a process, so don't be discouraged if you have trouble prying yourself away from the TV immediately.*
- ▶ *Start slowly and add in elements of mindfulness one by one.*
- ▶ *Maybe one week you'll be able to restrain yourself from answering emails during lunch, and by the next, you'll take your entire lunch break to finish a meal.*
- ▶ *When it comes to mindful eating, slow and steady is the best approach.*

Practicing Mindful Eating

- Eat only 80 percent of your appetite and if that satisfies hunger leave the table
- If you has a frequent snacking habit, then take fresh-cut fruits or vegetables instead of processed food items.
- Activities like watching television or internet surfing can also increase eating by 10 percent and by 25 percent if done while eating a meal.
- It has been found from research studies that food memories of the previous meal are able to reduce 10 percent of food intake of the next meal.

6 Ways to Practice Mindful Eating

Mindless Eating

- 1** Eating past full and ignoring your body's signals
- 2** Eating when emotions tell us to eat (i.e., sad, bored, lonely)
- 3** Eating alone, at random times and places
- 4** Eating foods that are emotionally comforting
- 5** Eating and multitasking
- 6** Considering a meal an end product

Mindful Eating

- Listening to your body and stopping when full
- Eating when our bodies tell us to eat (i.e., stomach growling, energy low)
- Eating with others, at set times and places
- Eating foods that are nutritionally healthy
- When eating, just eating
- Considering where food comes from



In Summary

- *Mindful eating is good for your health*
- *It is important to listen to the cues our bodies are giving us*
- *Mindful eating helps you distinguish between emotional and physical hunger*
- *It also increases your awareness of food-related triggers and gives you the freedom to choose your response to them*
- *The best way to success is to start slowly and make changes one step at a time*



Mindful Eating Meditation