EATING MINDFULLY

What is Eating Mindfully?

There are many interpretations of what mindful eating is but in simple terms mindful eating is about paying more attention to the way that you eat. Instead of mindlessly eating food, putting food into your mouth almost unconsciously, not really tasting the food you’re eating; mindful eating is about paying more attention to your thoughts, feelings, and sensations around food with the goal of being more in tune with your body’s needs and having a healthy relationship with food.

How does it work?

Changing any habit takes time and it’s important to practice some simple strategies such as those outlined below. Be patient! It may take some time and frequent practice to make some of these steps become habits.

Ten Ways to Practice Mindfulness of the Mind

1. Observe.
2. Take Mindful bites
   Touch, taste, smell, listen, focus on each mouthful. Where is your mind during this bite? Zoned out not tasting a thing? Tuned into each bite? Or somewhere in the middle?
3. Quiz Yourself
   Ask yourself before eating “Am I physiologically or emotionally hungry right now?”, am I eating because the clock says it’s time to, because I’m looking for a distraction, or because I’m truly hungry?
4. Be in the moment
   Eat in a different way. Use chopsticks or your fingers instead of a fork. Sit in a different seat. Use the opposite hand. Choose new foods.
5. Remove distractions
   Eat at least one mindful meal a day – eat it without distraction. Turn off the TV. Put your book or laptop aside.
6. Categorize less.
   Rather than categorizing foods as “bad” or “shouldn’t” make your decisions based on your overall nutrition intake and the bigger picture rather than an individual meal or snack
7. Identify where your hunger is coming from
   Get to the root of why you are eating. Are you avoiding something? Feeling stressed? Are you really hungry?
8. Speak compassionately to yourself
   Be kind, don’t criticize – this will help you to be more honest
9. Start a food diary
   Raise your awareness of what you are actually eating by recording what you eat – you can use paper and pen, apps or take pictures.
10. Let go of old strategies
    Don’t restrict, deny or reprimand yourself – but continue to ask yourself “Am I eating mindfully?”
Practical tips to practice mindful eating:

- Cook for yourself! Pick a new recipe that you have wanted to try and make a delicious meal!
- Sit at the dinner table when eating and avoid eating on the run when you can.
- Turn off the TV/laptop when eating and focus on your food.
- Choose appropriate plates, bowls etc. for your goal. If you use a large plate or bowl you are more likely to fill it and eat to “clear your plate”, not until you feel satisfied.
- Avoid bringing pots/dishes to the table as you’ll be more tempted to go for seconds even if you are not hungry. Leave them in the kitchen and just eat the serving you have given yourself.
- Put your fork down between bites.
- Sip water between bites.
- Make sure you are getting enough sleep as we are inclined to eat more when we are tired.
- Always have chopped fruit or veggies ready to snack on in the fridge.
- Plan your meals for the following day.
- Try new healthy foods regularly.
- Don’t leave long gaps between meals as you are more likely to over eat.
- Don’t go to the grocery store when you are hungry.