

Mindful Eating Handout

Principles of mindfulness

- Mindfulness is being in the present, with a purpose and observing in a non-judgemental way.
- Mindfulness encompasses both internal processes and external environment. It is being aware of your thoughts, emotions and physical sensations in the present moment.
- Mindfulness promotes balance, choice, inner wisdom and acceptance of what is.

What is mindful eating?

A concept of focusing your attention and awareness on the present moment to help disconnect from habitual eating behaviour. In other words, it is the opposite of mindless eating.

Mindful eating helps up make more intentional choices with how we nourish our bodies and care for our wellbeing that's unique to our lifestyle.

The simplest way to explain the philosophy on mindful eating is these three pillars. Our food and eating experience not only consists of what we're eating, but also why and how we're eating.



What does a mindful eating mentality involve?

- Being aware of the positive and nurturing opportunities of food preparation and eating.
- Choosing to eat food that is both satisfying and nourishing to the body.
- Being aware of physical hunger and fullness cues to guide decisions to start and stop eating.
- Acknowledging responses to food without judgement.
- Identifying triggers for mindless eating, whether they may be emotions, social pressure or certain foods.

Hunger level scale

The hunger level scale is a useful tool to help you think about how hungry you really are and decide whether your desire to eat comes from physical hunger or other reasons.

Rating		Physical sensation
Too hungry	1	Starvation, physical pain
	2	Definite physical symptoms, headache, lack of energy
Hungry	3	Beginning of physical signs of hunger
	4	Could eat if it were suggested
Neutral	5	Neutral
	6	Satisfied
Satisfied	7	Feel food in stomach, sense of wellbeing
	8	Stomach stretched and comfortably full
Too full	9	Bloated, definite mood alteration
	10	Uncomfortably full, nausea, physical pain, numbness

Mindful eating tips and strategies

Mindful eating practice can help you reduce the likelihood of binge eating/overeating and help you restore your body true hunger and fullness signals. Mindful eating can also help people with disordered eating issues to cultivate a healthier, positive relationship with food.

- Ask yourself, “Am I really hungry?”. Rate your hunger before you eat from 1 to 10, with 10 being too full.
- If not hungry, what other reasons do you want to eat? Potential triggers can be:
 - Emotions such as stress, boredom, happiness, sadness
 - Situations or places
 - People surrounding you
- Choose the best amount. Start with small to moderate portion, then reassess halfway.
- Take a deep breath before beginning eating.
- Minimise distractions and find a quiet place to eat.
- Appreciate the food using all of your senses. Acknowledge the effort from farmers to grocers to the hands that prepare the meal.
- Slow down and chew thoroughly.
- Put utensils down between mouthfuls.
- “Hara Hachi Bu” approach: Aim for 80% full. Enjoy your meal. If you don’t enjoy eating you will never feel satisfied.

Other mindfulness-based practice you might like to try include journaling, keeping a food and mood diary, and mindful eating meditation.