



MINDFUL EATING VS. MINDLESS EATING

Mindful eating = **more satisfaction, more pleasure and ultimately more control**

Mindless eating = **unconsciousness, lack of control, eating just to satiate hunger**

Mindful eating leads to weight management and stress reduction.

Mindless eating leads to more of what you already are experiencing.

Mindful eating is an outgrowth of a practice called mindfulness, itself an outgrowth of Zen Buddhism (but one that can easily be embraced without adopting Zen or any other philosophy). Mindfulness involves slowing down to savor all of life's details, to notice small things and appreciate every sensation. As applied to eating, mindfulness offers a means of making the most of every calorie you choose to ingest and can help you make those choices.

#1 Principle: Slow down

Slow eating cuts your calories by 30% without any effort. The slower you eat, the faster you metabolize. It takes 20 min for your brain to receive the message that you've had enough food. Try to make each meal last at least 20 minutes. Just slowing down your eating will do a lot to reduce stress.

Mindful Eating Exercise

- 1) Before digging in, sit for a moment, even as those around you start eating, and take in all the sights, scents and sounds of the table and your environment
- 2) Lift your fork and before placing the food in your mouth notice how it smells, how it looks
- 3) Take the bite and use your tongue to feel the texture, the temperature
- 4) Chew 3 times, savor the bite and ask yourself "What does it really taste like?", "Is this something I really want?" "Does it satisfy my taste buds?"
- 5) Put your fork down
- 6) Continue chewing slowly, letting your saliva begin to liquefy the food
- 7) Swallow
- 8) Take a sip of water or liquid and allow 15 seconds to pass from the time you swallow to the time you take the next bite (if you're eating with others, pay attention to what someone is saying or contribute to the conversation)

By the end of the meal -- which you are the last to finish -- you are not just full but truly satisfied. You will have probably not eaten as much but gained all the nutrition available from each bite because the body will be able to digest more thoroughly when the food is not swallowed practically whole. Saliva is the first step of the digestive process. When we swallow quickly, we do not allow saliva to begin the process.



What the Experts Say

Psychologist **Susan Albers** has written extensively about mindful eating, particularly in her book "Eating Mindfully: How to End Mindless Eating and Enjoy a Balanced Relationship With Food" (New Harbinger, 2003). She defines the practice as "a calm, focused, nonjudgmental awareness of what you eat. It focuses more on the way you eat rather than what you eat." Mindful eating, Albers adds, "is not a diet. There are no menus or recipes."

Mindful eating takes three steps, she says.

- First, train yourself to really taste food, using all of your senses.
- Next, become aware of the habits and routines which govern your eating.
- Finally, tune in to your hunger and fullness, learning to distinguish between psychological and emotional hunger and true physical hunger.

Brian Wansink wrote the groundbreaking book "Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More Than We Think" (Bantam, 2007), which showed how our eating habits are governed by myriad environmental cues, such as the size of our plates and the company we keep. He has a slogan: "The best diet is the one you don't know you're on."

That means scouring your surroundings for all the little things that encourage you to overeat. Swap your mammoth dinner plates for modestly sized ones to make healthful food portions seem substantial. Use tall, thin glasses instead of short, squat ones so you pour less liquid. Plate your food in the kitchen rather than at the table so you're forced to get up for second helpings. You might not.

The idea is to remove all of the subtle obstacles to healthful eating so that you don't have to think about whether you're eating smart: Doing so becomes the only option.

More Tips for Weight Loss

Weight control ideas that have worked are to **drink water before and after meals**, **eat an apple before your meal** and to make sure you eat something -- a snack or piece of fruit -- in between meals.

Muscle burns 8 times the calories that body fat burns. Save your muscle. Dieters who combine strength training and aerobic activity gain muscle and therefore increase metabolism.

Eat at a table (not at your desk or standing)

When you're eating only eat - don't watch TV, work, etc.

Choose foods you eat with utensils (sandwiches go down fast)

Cut the food into smaller pieces

If you're served a heaping amount of food divide each item into half and eat that first - you may decide you don't need to eat the whole plateful

Be in touch with your hunger - do you eat unconsciously just because you're used to eating under certain circumstances (while watching TV, at certain scheduled times)

Before you eat, **stop and check in with your body**. Am I really hungry? Why do I feel like eating now?