

# Mindful eating.

Do you ever eat until you are too full and end up feeling guilty? Do you eat when you are bored, stressed, or anxious rather than hungry? Do you graze on food without really tasting it? Do you mindlessly munch on snacks while zoned out in front of the TV? Do you eat a meal at the same time each day whether you are hungry or not? Or, do you skip meals, not paying attention to your hunger signals? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may have some *mindless* eating habits. Keep reading and you will discover some helpful tips that can truly transform your life.

Eating is an extremely significant part of our daily lives because it can impact how we feel and perform physically and mentally throughout each day. However, it is easy to become disconnected from eating, hardly tasting or consciously enjoying each bite. One minute, our plates are full, and the next, completely empty. We can change this mechanical way of eating and establish a better relationship with meal and snack times by establishing a daily mindful eating practice.

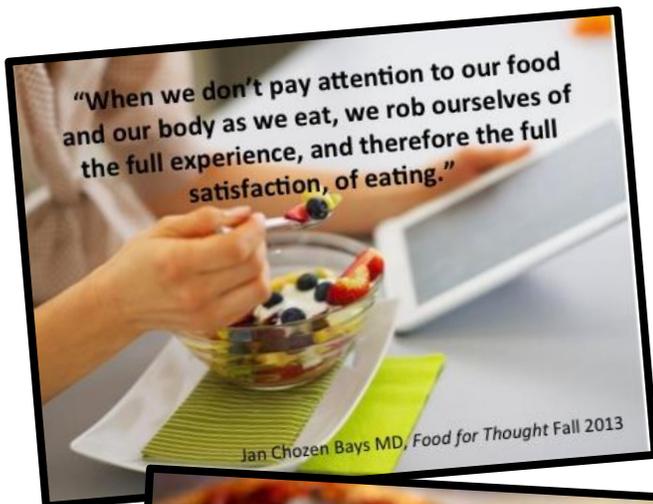


Mindful eating is not a diet. It is becoming more aware of your eating habits, the sensations you experience when you eat, and the thoughts and emotions that you have about food. It is more about how you eat than what you eat. Mindful eating is a scientifically researched approach that can heal a wide range of eating issues. When you eat mindfully you:

- allow yourself to become aware of the positive and nurturing opportunities that are available through food preparation and consumption
- choose to eat food that is both pleasing to you and nourishing to your body by using all your senses to explore, savor, and taste
- learn to use physical hunger and fullness cues to guide your decision to begin eating and to stop eating
- acknowledging responses to food (likes, neutral or dislikes) without judgment

There are many benefits that you gain when you begin to eat mindfully. When eating mindfully you:

- learn to make good choices naturally, which results in a healthy relationship to all foods and brings more happiness to all aspects of life
- build confidence in your eating habits because noticing and accepting what is happening in each moment makes it possible for new eating habits to emerge
- decrease stress and reduce emotional eating
- manage your weight naturally without starving or restricting certain food items





Now that you know what mindful eating is and the benefits of starting this as a daily practice, it is time to discover how to put this into practice:

1. Before you take a bite, notice the smell, shape, color, and feeling of the food in your hands or with a utensil.
2. As you begin to chew, notice the first burst of flavor. As the flavor begins to fade, continue to focus on what you are actually experiencing rather than going for that next hint of flavor.
3. Before reaching for the next piece of food or taking the next bite, take a moment to think about the sensations as it reaches your tummy and recognize the food value and nutrition of what you just ate.
4. Continue steps 1-3 for each bite. As you continue eating, be sure to offer your full attention.



For more information on mindful eating, check out:

- [www.tcme.org](http://www.tcme.org)
- [www.mindfuleating.org](http://www.mindfuleating.org)
- [www.mindfulpractice.com](http://www.mindfulpractice.com)
- [www.slowfoodusa.org](http://www.slowfoodusa.org)
- [www.eatingmindfully.com](http://www.eatingmindfully.com)
- [www.bodypositive.com](http://www.bodypositive.com)

Use these helpful tips as you begin a mindful eating practice:

- Start small by committing to eat one meal or snack mindfully each day or even one part of a snack or meal.
- Don't multitask and focus on what you are eating. Avoid eating while standing up, walking, standing in front of the fridge, watching TV, or being on the computer.
- Move mindfully. Yoga has been clinically proven to help people become more mindful eaters.
- Eat fiber. This helps regulate your blood sugar levels so you're not tempted to binge eat.
- Put your fork down between bites.
- Eat with your non-dominant hand, which can reduce how much you eat by 30 percent.
- Sip water between bites.
- Use a scale of 1 to 10 to rate your hunger before you eat. Are you eating because you are hungry, or another reason?
- Take a deep breath before eating.
- Instead of self-criticism, find compassionate words for yourself before you eat.
- Stay hydrated because thirst often masks itself as hunger, which can cause you to eat when you are actually just thirsty.
- Acknowledge cravings. Were you thinking about chocolate? Or is it your afternoon habit? Then, find a healthy way to indulge your craving.
- Cook mindfully. Try to enjoy the process of cooking instead of rushing through it. Be mentally present when you are chopping and mixing food. Breathe in the aroma of what you are cooking.
- Get out of mindless eating ruts by trying new foods.
- Focus on eating more nourishing foods. By choosing good-for-you foods first, you will leave less room in your mind (and stomach) for empty calories.
- Write reminders to eat mindfully in your calendar or in places you will see them every day.