
Mindful Eating

Developing a healthy relationship with food

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Eating is something we have to do many times every day. Like anything else we do repeatedly for a long time, it is easy to eat on autopilot, without really paying attention to our food. While we might find advantages to this, like being able to complete other tasks or engage in other activities while we eat, eating mindlessly deprives us from the pleasure of truly savouring food and it often leads to overeating and weight gain.

Mindful eating is the opposite of eating on autopilot or while distracted. It involves being in the moment and focusing on what we eat while we are eating it. Mindful eating has been shown to be an effective weight management strategy.

Moreover, eating is more than a physical act; it can be a “soul satisfying” act when we really take the time to pay attention to the different smells, colours, textures and tastes of our food. Just like when we take the time to really pay attention to the birds, trees, grass, the different smells, etc. while taking a walk versus just looking at our feet!

Here are some ways to increase your presence in the act of eating and getting more out of every bite.

- ❖ Before eating, ask yourself “Am I hungry right now?”
- ❖ Pay attention to which part of your body is most hungry: your eyes, your mouth or your stomach?
- ❖ Use your senses: look at your food, smell it, really notice the texture, taste, temperature, etc.
- ❖ Pay attention to how you eat your food: slowly, fast, taking big bites or smaller ones
- ❖ Eat without other distractions, focusing only on the act of eating
- ❖ Slow down and enjoy each bite of food: make it travel in your mouth to engage all your taste buds, chew slowly then swallow.
- ❖ Notice the thoughts that go through your mind and the emotions you are feeling as you are eating
- ❖ Pay attention to your physical sensations, such as how hungry you are when you begin eating and how your stomach feels with each bite you take

Mindful eating might be a new or unfamiliar concept to you and it may seem like too big of a challenge to shift from mindless to mindful eating. Keep in mind that you can start very gradually, experimenting with only one bite at first. Why not try with a food that you really enjoy?

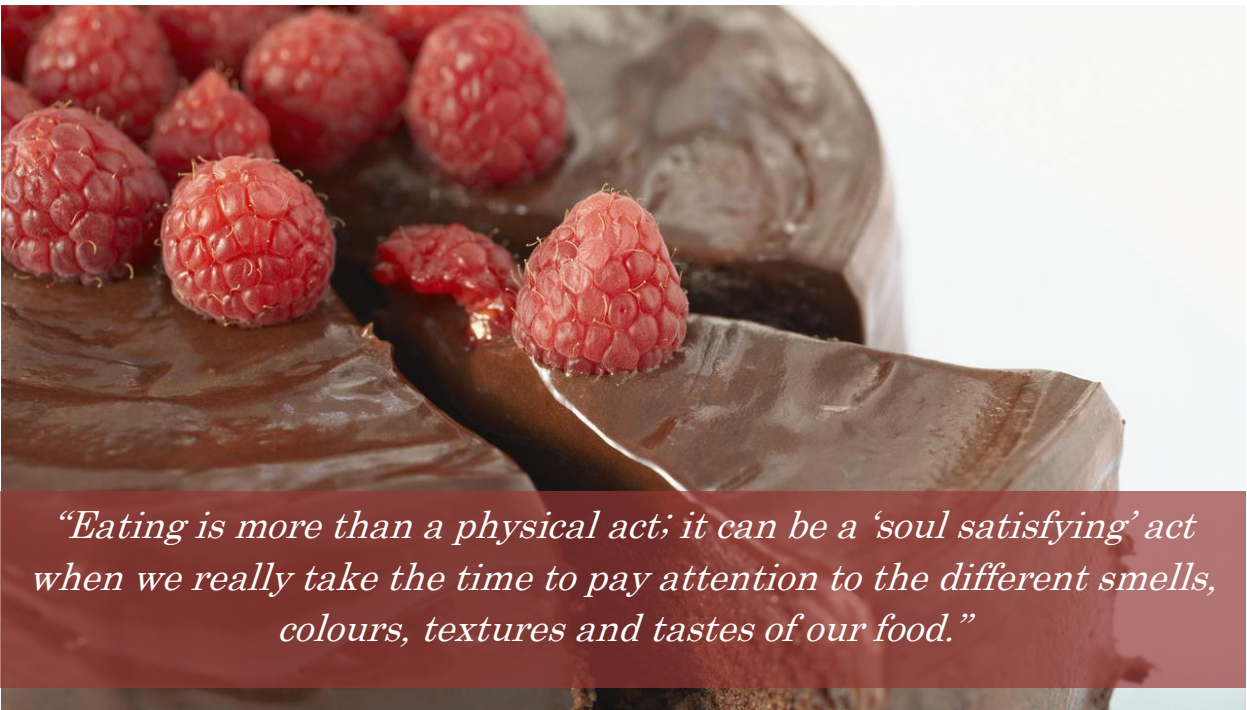
As you begin practicing mindful eating, you might notice that you need less food to be satisfied. You might also become more familiar with your hunger and satiety cues, which are often ignored when eating mindlessly.

If you want to learn more about mindful eating, or if you require assistance in addressing your relationship with food, don't hesitate to reach out to your dietitian or psychologist.

Bon appétit!

An example of mindful eating

“Imagine you’ve just packed away your groceries from your shopping trip and you’ve been thinking about the leftover birthday cake in the fridge for the whole drive home. You take the lid off of the container and hold the cake up to your nose. You breathe in the smell of the chocolate, and see the bright colours of the berries topping the cake. Now you cut into the cake, and see the moist, dark filling. You notice that you have started to salivate. You take a small piece and place it on your tongue, feeling the soft, light texture. Now you take the first bite of the piece of cake and feel the smooth, rich cake move around your mouth. You feel the juice escape from the berries and the chocolate melt across your tongue. You enjoy the feeling and flavours of the cake as you allow it to travel across your taste buds. After you swallow, you notice the warm, sweet aftertaste in your mouth. You feel content and relaxed.”



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