
MINDFUL EATING GUIDELINES

Many of us do not pay attention when we are eating, we are too busy doing other things – emailing, watching TV, driving or reading. Doing too many activities at the same time as eating often leads to weight gain because we don't realize how much we are consuming, so why not make meal time special instead of something we do in a hurry? Eating in a mindful way will lend itself to healthier eating, a healthy weight, and feeling really, really good. The following mindful eating guidelines are suggestions meant to support you as you begin to establish awareness of hunger and mindful eating habits. Hang these guidelines on your refrigerator for inspiration!

- Reject the dieting mentality – no matter what it takes: step off the merry-go-round of deprivation and restriction and begin to listen to your body's hunger.
- Honor your hunger – eat what your body truly wants: learn to respect your body and listen to what it is asking for.
- Make peace with food – refuse to see it as 'the enemy': food is innocent – it is simply food. It is our thoughts that create a negative image around food and eating.
- Eat when you are truly hungry – allow hunger to happen: Bring a focused and non-judgmental awareness to your body and learn your hunger signals, eating when your body tells you it needs nourishment.
- Slow down, savor, enjoy – put your fork or spoon down after every bite you take, chew slowly, giving yourself time to taste what you are eating and for your body to give you the proper signals when it is full.
- Stop eating when your body is full – regardless: learn to recognize fullness and satiety and stop eating when you feel sufficiently full and satisfied.
- Eat without distraction: learn to pay attention to your food and the experience of eating by choosing not to read, watch TV or drive while eating.
- Eat sitting down – choose a quiet place to eat (if possible) and mindfully notice your food, enjoying each bite before going on to the next.
- Eat as if everyone is watching – encourage yourself to adopt respectable eating habits...ones you would not hesitate to show others.
- Cope with emotions without eating – learn to allow a feeling to be present, welcome it and wait it out, breathing deeply and noticing how nothing stays the same for long.
- Honor your body, the nourishment and the experience – pay attention to how you feel and what you sense in your body, the nourishment you have chosen and how you experience eating...and finishing eating.
- Plant a garden and cook – anything that reconnects you with the process of creating food will magnify your mindfulness.
- Use flowers, candles and pretty dishes – place them on the table right before dinner; rituals that create a serene environment help foster gratitude.
- Use smaller plates – you've probably heard this advice, but have you tried it? The results may surprise you.
- Eat dinner with your family or significant other at least a couple of nights a week – eat slowly and talk.
- Go for a walk before dessert – this will give you time to truly enjoy what you already ate, and help you decide if you really want any more food.
- Serve snacks in bowls or on plates – reaching into a bag or box will only lead to you being totally unaware of the amount you are consuming; find some fun or pretty bowls to use.
- Try to leave your desk for lunch – if you absolutely cannot, turn the computer off, clear the area in front of you, and don't answer the phone; enjoy your meal.
- Enjoy the food, the taste and be grateful – let yourself truly take pleasure in the food you are eating and give thanks in whatever way feels right for you. Gratitude helps digestion!
- Take a day to write down what you eat without judgment– at the end of the day, look at your list, what do you think?

