Creating a Space for Wellness

Savoring the Moment:
The Key to More Mindful Eating

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Why do we eat?
Eating is about nourishment.

- Nourish the body.
- Nourish our social relationships.
- Nourish our spirits.
- Nourish our aching hearts.

_Eating helps us feel better in many ways._
When do we eat?

We eat because we are hungry....
When do we eat?

We eat because we are hungry….

…but hungry for what?
Eating to cope with emotional distress is at the core of most problem eating behaviors.
We cannot examine the reasons why we eat the way we do if we are not aware of the fact that we are eating in the first place.
Eating on automatic pilot.

- Watching TV
- Chatting
- Reading
- Listening to music
- Driving
Eating on automatic pilot.

- Enter the “Masters of Distraction” – our electronic devices.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dN040O67_do
What was your family dinner routine growing up?
What is your current dinner routine?
Eating on automatic pilot.

Meta-analysis of 24 studies to explore the influence of cognitive processes on food intake:

On average, eating while distracted increased the amount eaten by about 10%.

But, perhaps more importantly, distracted eating also increased the amount a person ate at a later meal by more than 25%!

Episodic food memories.

- **Recalling and valuing the experience of eating helps decrease the amount eaten at future meals.**
Attentive eating, where do we begin?

- Admit that there is a problem.
- Decrease distractions.
- Increase attention.
  - Mindfulness
  - Savoring
  - Just you and the food.
Principles of mindful eating:

• Grounded in Buddhist teachings.
• Reconnect us with the experience of eating and enjoying food.
• No right or wrong way to eat, but only varying degrees of consciousness about what we are eating and why.
Attentive eating is also known as *mindful* or *intuitive* eating.

Goal of mindful eating:

- Base meals on physical cues (hunger signals), and not emotional cues (need for comfort).
Toward more mindful eating.

What is mindfulness?
• Ellen Langer: Mindfulness is “the process of *actively noticing* new things.”

• Langer also noted: “…when you are mindful - rules, routines, and goals *guide you; they don’t govern you*.”

• Notice how you feel *without judging or criticising* how you feel.
Mindfulness is associated with better health outcomes and has been especially applied to depression, anxiety, addiction, smoking, enhancing exercise persistence, chronic pain and weight control and binge eating (mindful eating).
Strong data for mindfulness interventions in eating.

- Meta analysis of 15 studies of mindfulness-based interventions in 560 individuals showed weight loss of ~4.2 kg (> 9 lbs). Large effects for improving eating behaviors and medium effects for improving depression, anxiety and eating attitudes.\(^1\)

- Meta analysis of 19 studies showed that most demonstrated large or medium-large effects for mindfulness-based interventions on improving binge eating.\(^2\)

Toward more mindful eating.

- When mindfulness is applied to eating it includes elements of savoring such as noticing colors, smells, flavors and textures of your food.
Toward more mindful eating.

Noticing and appreciating the colors, textures, smell, and beauty of your food often involves *savoring*.
A Yummy Experiment.
Toward more mindful eating.

Savoring refers to our *awareness of pleasure* and our deliberate *attempt to make it last*. 
Toward more mindful eating..

- People who savor are happier, more satisfied with life in general, more optimistic and less depressed.*

- Savoring is a mindful act.
  - 1. the quality or state of being conscious or aware of something.
  - 2. a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique.

Savoring interventions are helpful for people with depressive symptoms and depression.

Savoring has also been evaluated in and found to be helpful for people with diabetes, a desire to stop smoking, stress, weight control and chronic pain.

Exercise: Savoring a Beautiful Day:

1. Set aside a block of time for your own pleasures. Set aside a minimum of one hour or a maximum of a full eight-hour day. A half-day is just about perfect for the first time you do this exercise.

2. Block that time out on your calendar now, and do not let anything interfere, if possible. Next plan one activity or, even better, a sequence of activities that brings you real pleasure, and carry them out as you planned them.

3. Here is the further twist. Savor each of the activities using all of your senses and with feelings of gratitude and optimism.

Mindful eating tips.

**Remember:** When engaging in mindful eating we are not comparing ourselves to anyone else.

- No judgement
- No self-criticism

- Observe the sensations and thoughts that come up as we eat. We put ourselves in a loving and curious space.
Mindful eating tips.

No more eating on Autopilot.

• Banish the distractors:
  – Turn off the TV
  – No books, magazines, newspapers or even cereal boxes
  – Ban electronic devices from the dinner table!!
Mindful eating tips.

Begin meals in silent appreciation.

- Try to spend at least the first five minutes of the meal in silent appreciation of the food.
- When dining with others, agree to this rule then chat about observations about the food after the first five minutes of quiet.
- Then, after chatting about the food, you may move onto other topics.
Mindful eating tips.

No more racing through meals.

• Set a timer for 20 minutes and slowly eat your food.
  – Take small bites
  – Chew leisurely
  – Savor the flavors and textures
  – Breathe
  – Think about the origins of the food
  – Be grateful that you have this food to eat.
Mindful eating tips.

No more racing through meals.

• Try tricks to slow down.
  – Eat with chopsticks
  – Eat with your non-dominant hand
  – Count to five between each bite of food.
Mindful eating tips.

Meals alone can be full attention or spent by alternating eating with activity.

- Read a paragraph of your book
- Take a bite of your meal
- Paragraph, bite, paragraph, bite – no overlap!

- It takes a lot of discipline to fall back into old habits.
Mindful eating tips.

Become more aware of your food.

• Rekindle your loving relationship with food.
  – Select your vegetables and fruit from a Farmer’s market
  – Grow your own herbs and vegetables
  – Get your bread from a bakery (savor the smell!)
  – Prepare meals that are beautiful and pleasing
  – Think about how to decrease your carbon footprint
Pay attention to the body.

Where do we feel hunger?

Where in our bodies do we feel satisfaction?

What does half-full feel like, or three quarters full?
Pay attention to the mind.

Avoid judgement or criticism, but be aware of when the mind wanders and you become distracted.

Be aware of the impulses to grab a book, turn on the TV, text somebody or do a web search.

Jan Chozen Bays, MD Mindful Eating: How to really enjoy your meal.
Mindful eating tips.

Notice how eating affects your mood. Become more aware of how emotions like anxiety influence our eating.

Seek a sense of comfort and ease with eating like perhaps you had when you were a child.
Mindful eating tips.

Old habits, like distracted eating, are very tough to break!

Do not try to make major changes too fast.

Lasting change takes time, and is built on many small changes.
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