

The Importance of Mindful Eating



What is Mindful Eating?

- Is about using all of your senses and being present in the moment
- Eating without distractions – this means eating outside instead of at your desk and turning the TV off when eating at home
- Eating without judgement and acknowledging responses to food (e.g. likes and dislikes)
- Becoming aware of satiety cues to guide decisions of when to stop eating
- Allowing understanding of food cravings by becoming aware of why you are craving certain foods

Why Mindful Eating?

- Promotes balance and choice
- Heightens enjoyment of foods
- Creates awareness of the effects of mindless eating
- Allows you to connect with the positive emotions associated with food e.g. pleasure
- Contributes to awareness of appropriate portions needed to feel satisfied
- Allows you to indulge in your favourite foods by savouring the taste with smaller portions

Have a go at Mindful Eating

For this activity, choose a food that you find pleasurable. It is important to slow down, rid yourself of distractions and focus your attention on what is in front of you.

1. Start by just observing the food as though you have not seen it before. Is there variation in colour and texture? Appreciate the effort that has gone into the preparation of this food.
2. Next, pick it up and smell it. Does it smell simple or like a mix of different flavours?
3. Now is the time you have been waiting for – take a bite. Notice the initial taste and texture for a few moments and then begin to chew slowly. Is it hot, cold, hard or soft? Does the taste change as you chew it? Does it leave an aftertaste? How does it feel as you swallow it? Note the pleasure you get from eating it.
4. Now continue doing this with each mouthful. Importantly, make a note at which mouthful the pleasurable aspects of eating it begin to decline. Notice how much (if any) of the food is left at this point.
5. Repeat this for 2-3 pleasurable foods for the week as a start. This approach is so powerful because it allows all foods in the diet but in moderation and smaller amounts, allowing you to take control.

Aim to eat mindfully as often as you can.

Acknowledgement to the Centre for mindful eating for their information and Fiona Willer's 'The Non-Diet Approach Guidebook for Dietitians', 2013 page 46-7