



# **BE A MINDFUL EATER AND NOT AN EMOTIONAL EATER**

**EMOTIONAL EATING: COULD IT BE WHAT'S EATING YOU AND NOT WHAT YOU ARE EATING?**

**Presented by Military & Family Life Counselors**

# OBJECTIVES

- Define mindful eating
- Learn 4 steps to practice mindful eating
- Identify hunger
- Learn easy tips to incorporate mindful eating into your daily schedule



# WHAT IS MINDFUL EATING

- Paying attention to what we are eating, eating with **AWARENESS** and not out of emotion
- Being aware of each sensation of the experience of eating
- Acknowledge chewing, tasting and swallowing food moment by moment



# WHY PRACTICE MINDFUL EATING?

- Over the past 25 years mindfulness practices have been shown to have a positive impact on psychological and physical health, including stress, depression, anxiety, chronic pain, and heart disease.



# WHY PRACTICE MINDFUL EATING?

- There is evidence that mindful eating helps with treatment of obesity as well as binge eating disorders.
- The benefits of mindful eating are not restricted to physical and emotional health improvements; they can also impact one's entire life, through a better sense of balance and well-being.



# WHY PRACTICE MINDFUL EATING?

- Adults in the United States devote an average of 1 hour and 12 minutes per day to eating, yet spend between 2½ and 3 hours per day watching television
- School lunch periods provide an average of 7 to 11 minutes for students to eat their lunch



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# WHY PRACTICE MINDFUL EATING?

- Scientists are beginning to better understand the role of the mind-body connection in eating behavior.
- When our mind is tuned out during mealtime, the digestive process may be up to 30% to 40% less effective.
  - This can contribute to digestive distress, such as gas, bloating and bowel irregularities.



# WHY PRACTICE MINDFUL EATING?

- The mind-body connection plays a pivotal role in our ability to accurately assess hunger and fullness.
- We eat meal after meal, snack after snack, barely aware of what we're eating and how much we're consuming.
- Mindful eating is powerful – it keeps you in the present and can help you facilitate change





# A CULTURE OF MULTI-TASKING

- We often pair eating with other activities, such as driving or working at our desks.
- Where and how did you eat your breakfast today?



# THE BASIC MINDFUL BITE

- This is the core of Mindful Eating
- Use this technique with any solid food



# TYPES OF MINDFUL EATING

- With the Basic Mindful Bite as your fundamental technique, you can approach mindful eating in four ways:
  - **Arriving** at food
  - **Awakening** to the food
  - **Tuning in** to the body
  - **Service** with food



# STEP 1 : ARRIVING

- Arriving at food means that we become aware before a meal or snack that food has come into our personal space.
- This sounds simple, but actually it's more difficult than you might think. Food is so abundant in our society that we're scarcely aware of it and we can be eating and not even know that we've made a choice to eat.



# STEP 1 : ARRIVING

Before you begin eating any meal or snack, become silent for 30 seconds. During this 30 seconds:

- Take a close look at the food. Notice colors, shapes and arrangements.
- Name to yourself all the foods you see.
- Name to yourself all the plants and animals that are represented in the food.
- Think about the human effort it took to get the food to you.



# STEP 1 - ARRIVING

If you do this activity seriously, you will have truly arrived at your meal. This sets the stage for you to continue your mindfulness during your eating.



# STEP 2 - AWAKENING

- Awakening to food means that we pay attention to all the aspects of food
- When we awaken, we notice the sensations of the food, such as taste, change of flavors, texture and aromas. We can also look deeper to see the effort, resources and sacrifices within each food as well.
- A mindful eater spends at least one moment during each bite waking up to some aspect of the food.



# STEP 3 – TUNE IN TO YOUR BODY

- Mindful eaters pay close attention to themselves as they eat.
- Become aware of how many chews it takes for you to chew your food completely.
- Have a “baseline” number of chews for eat bite





# STEP 3 – TUNE IN TO YOUR BODY

- Notice your emotions when you eat
- Notice how your body feels as you eat
- Notice the taste, smell, feel of the food



# STEP 4 - SERVICE

- Mindful eating includes being aware of all the activities that surround food and eating.
- Setting the table, clearing the table, loading the dishwasher, putting away leftovers
- When we adopt a careful, deliberate way of behaving with any action involving food, we help ourselves stay in the moment



# HUNGER



**How do you  
know when  
it's time to  
eat?**



# TRUE HUNGER VS. EMOTIONAL HUNGER

## How to tell if you are hungry

- Physical signs
- The desire to eat doesn't go away
- The desire for food intensifies over time
- A non-favorite food even sounds good



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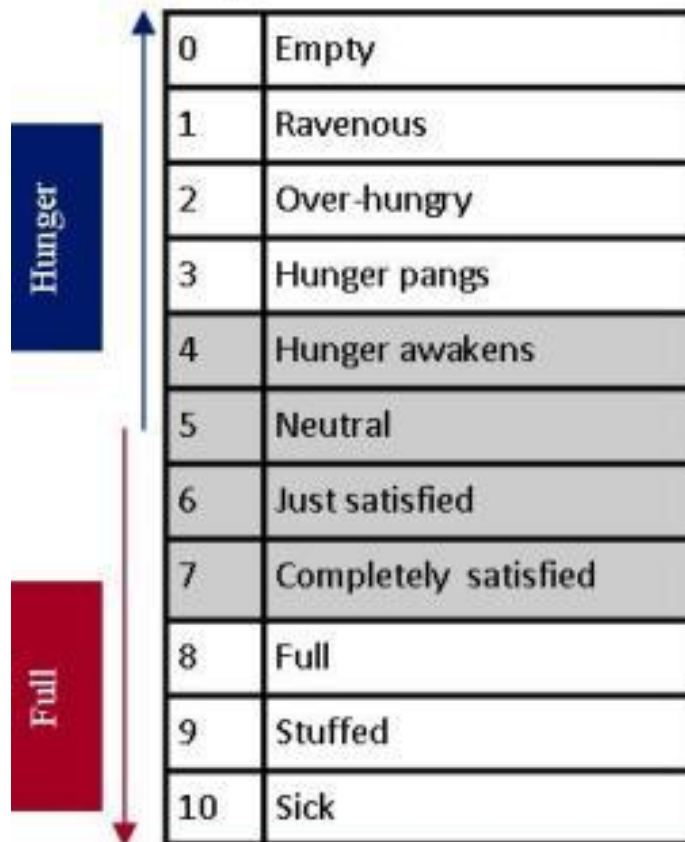


# TRUE HUNGER

- Do not ignore true hunger
- Most people need to eat every 3-4 hours while awake
  - Metabolic rate
  - Blood sugars
  - Mood



## The Hunger-Fullness Scale



0	Empty
1	Ravenous
2	Over-hungry
3	Hunger pangs
4	Hunger awakens
5	Neutral
6	Just satisfied
7	Completely satisfied
8	Full
9	Stuffed
10	Sick

*Working towards eating more in the grey area (from 4-7) will help with portion control as well as blood sugar balance and energy level.*



# HUNGER VS. CRAVINGS

## What is a craving?

- No physical hunger “pains”
- The thought of eating goes away if distracted
- You feel “emotional” about eating that food
- You want something specific: crunchy, sweet, salty



# HUNGER VS. CRAVINGS

- It's normal to feel cravings
- But we want to relate to them mindfully and not get blinded by them
- We can learn to become aware of our cravings and their messages





# MINDFUL PORTIONS

## Cheeseburgers



**Twenty years ago**  
*333 calories*



**Today's Burger**  
*590 calories*



# MINDFUL PORTIONS

Normally, we think of portions as how much food is on the plate.

## **But in mindful eating, portions include:**

- How often we eat
- How much food is on the spoon or fork
- How long we take to chew our food
- How often we stop during a meal to find out if we really need more food
- How much time we pause between bites





# HOW TO INCORPORATE MINDFUL EATING

**Breaking an eating habit and forming a new one is difficult!**



# SUGGESTIONS TO TRY

- Eat sitting down
- Eat without TV, newspaper, computer or work
- Chew your food 30 to 50 times per bite
- Watch the clock; try to make the meal last at least 20 minutes.



# SUGGESTIONS TO TRY

- Eat with chopsticks
- Eat with your non-dominant hand
- Don't eat from a bag or box
- Box up half of the meal at a restaurant
- Keep extra food away from table



# SUGGESTIONS TO TRY

- Use a smaller plate at meals
- Do not skip meals
- Plan meals and snacks ahead of time
- Keep a mindful eating journal
- Try a Two-Plate Approach
  - Use a second plate to eat from, taking only half of the food



# TAKE HOME MESSAGE

- Mindful eating involves paying full attention to the experience of eating and drinking, both inside and outside the body.
- Mindful eating helps us learn to hear what our body is telling us about hunger and satisfaction.
- Eating mindfully can improve our overall health.
- Try it at lunch and at home today!





# QUESTIONS?



# REFERENCES

- The Center for Mindful Eating
  - [www.tcme.org](http://www.tcme.org)
- The CAMP system
  - [www.mindfuleating.org](http://www.mindfuleating.org)
- United State Dept of Agriculture
  - [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)





**THANK YOU**

