

Eating a Mindful Meal

Objective

To boost your enjoyment of food by learning to eat mindfully.

You Should Know

When is the last time you noticed, really noticed, what you're eating and what you're doing while you're eating? So much stress, so many responsibilities—it's easy to end up mindlessly inhaling your food while you sneak one more peek at your phone or simply rush toward the day's finish line.

Eating good, healthful food is one of life's greatest pleasures. Bringing mindful awareness to your food can enrich your day and bring you into the present moment. And, of course, it's better for your digestion and your health than wolfing down a slice of pizza on the run.

What to Do

This week, make a date with yourself to eat a meal mindfully, using all your senses to notice what's on the list below. You don't have to be alone. If appropriate, ask your family to join in, too. (This won't work with infants and young children, of course!)

First, unplug. No phones, no TV, no music, no devices. Take a deep breath or two. Notice the silence. Notice what's happening in your body and your mind.

Before you even put anything in your mouth, notice the whole meal on the plate; notice the table, the room, the present moment in your home. Then take yourself through the following steps.

- What does the food look like (appealing, not appealing, color, size)?
- How does it taste (hot, cold, salty, sweet, sour, spicy, bitter)?
- What is its texture (crunchy, smooth, creamy, hard)?
- How does it smell (pungent, mild, pleasant, unpleasant)?
- What sounds do you notice (fork clanking, apple crunching)?

If eating an entire meal feels like a stretch, start slowly. Just take a few mindful bites of your food. The purpose is to experience your food mindfully. Record your experience below.

What did you eat?

What did it look like?

What did it taste like?

What was its texture?

What did it smell like?

What sounds did you notice?

What did you discover about your relationship to food or to your mealtime habits?
How did you feel doing this exercise? What was positive about it? What was challenging?

What goal(s) would you like to set in the coming weeks to experience more mindful eating? Be specific; for example, "Twice a week, I will eat my lunch mindfully," or "I will eat the first three bites of any meal with mindful awareness."

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?
