

More Mindfulness Techniques

Mindful Eating:

Mindful Eating may sound funny to some people. But have you ever sat down in front of a plate of food and finished it and feel like you hadn't really tasted what you were eating? This is certainly counterintuitive to being present in the moment. Mindful Eating involves focusing on your senses and really enjoying each bite of food. There are studies that say that Mindful Eating may even contribute to weight loss. Many of us, I'm sorry to say myself included, reach for things to eat when we're stressed and don't even realize why we're eating them. For me it can be ice cream, chocolate, a bag of chips. Sometimes I even say to myself, "why am I even eating this?". Has this ever happened to you? I'm certainly not really-experiencing the flavor of what I'm eating when I'm doing it. It's really goes a way to assuage other aspects of what I'm feeling. I would call what I'm doing Mindless Eating.



MS/SLP, CDP, CADDCT
CDCM, CMDCP

The book *The Mindful Diet: How to Transform Your Relationship With Food for Lasting Loss and Vibrant Health* by Ruth Wolover is actually an extension of her personal experience. Where she found was consuming large amounts of a particular food item without any Awareness that she was doing it. What she found was that it's possible to train yourself to Become a more conscious eater, to be able to savor each bite of food and this she labeled Mindful Eating. She found by doing so you can reduce stress related overeating which could potentially contribute to weight loss. This involves changing our relationship with food,

Changing how we think about food. Instead of thinking of eating until we finish what's in front of us, it's about eating until you're satisfied. There was a study done with two groups. Group one engaged in practices of meditation and yoga and breathing exercises before they consumed chocolate snacks.

Group Two did nothing before consuming snacks. What they found was that people who participated in the exercises consumed fewer calories.

In addition, they adjusted the amount of food they were eating in future meals: eating less.

Savoring

Finding Your
Inner Smile

Mindful
Eating

Progressive
Relaxation

Acts of
Kindness

Mindful Eating:

What this bears out is that being mindful can go a long-ways toward counteracting the temptation to reach for something to eat mindlessly rather than eating mindfully. One of the ways you can consider trying to eat more mindfully is to consider the number of times you chew each bite of food. There are schools of thought that say you should chew each bite of food up to 32 times. Most of us probably don't chew each bite of food more than 5 or 7 times.

There are actually physiologic reasons for this. When you chew your food into smaller particles it mixes with the saliva in your mouth. Saliva is where the digestion process actually starts.

Then the food continues into the stomach where it mixes with acid. The food components that have been broken down are then moved into your stomach with the nutrients and water being absorbed along the way. Then the undigested portions of the food, as well as the digested portions of the food, pass out of the body. So, in actuality, the chewing of the food and chewing of it well allows for a complete and thorough digestion process.

Furthermore, when you eat too quickly the brain doesn't have sufficient time to register what you've eaten and this is sometimes why we get in the habit of overeating. When you eat more slowly, the brain has time to recognize what you're eating, how much you've eaten, and will signal you that you've had enough and that's when you'll stop. This is why eating more slowly can contribute to weight loss.

Exercise:

Start to adapt to chewing your food for longer periods of time; it doesn't have to be 32 times for each bite, but even if it's 15, or 20 or 25 and really focus on enjoying the taste of the food, and the sensation of how the food feels in your mouth.

Softer foods or foods with a high-water content may be closer to 10-15 times. this will go a long way to helping you understand the processes of Savoring and Mindful Eating.