

10 steps to

Mindful Eating

How to listen to your body and create
a healthy relationship
with food





Table of Contents

Starting out

Step 01. Listen to Your Physical Hunger Cues	4
Step 02. Eat Without Distraction	8
Step 03. Engage Your Senses in the Eating Process	12
Step 04. Slow Down	15
Step 05. Respect Your Fullness	19
Step 06. Recognize Emotional Eating	24
Step 07. Improve Your Relationship With Food	28
Step 08. Eat to Feel Good	32
Step 09. Appreciate Food	36
Step 10. Cultivate Self-Compassion	39
10 steps to Eating Mindfully	42



Starting Out

Fast-paced life has created a lifestyle that is not healthy for us. We eat while we work, text while we drive, and forget to take in the moment before taking a picture of it.

Slowing down has become a luxury, but it shouldn't feel like it. Living in the present, enjoying your surroundings, and following your body's cues is necessary for your mental and physical health.

Luckily, no matter how fast life feels right now, it is possible to stop, regroup, and get back to the lifestyle that was all about small but **essential moments**.

This guidebook is here to help you get back on track, starting with your daily meals. Eating mindfully is one of the core strategies for taking back control of your day and making space for calmness and joy.

We have collected 10 simple steps you can take today to start eating more mindfully and begin **changing your behavior** regarding food. After a while, you will notice how the same principles can be applied to any daily activity.

It's often overlooked as mundane or routine, but actually, this is where the true **mindfulness** hides.


Even the smallest moment can become life-changing if only we stopped and appreciated it.

Let's explore how you can **transform** your relationship with food, starting today.

Resolutty Team

01 Step

Listen to Your Physical Hunger Cues



Eating drives survival, and it is no surprise that hunger developed during evolution. Many physiological mechanisms serve as the basis for hunger.

When our stomach is empty, it contracts, causing both **hunger pangs and the secretion of chemical messages** that initiate the need to eat. Then, the pancreas and liver generate many chemical signals that induce hunger.

Ghrelin, also known as the “hunger hormone,” plays a key role here because it signals our brain to eat. Ghrelin is produced in the stomach. It stimulates appetite and increases food intake. It is well known that yo-yo dieting causes large fluctuations in weight and negatively affects your hormones, including the rising of ghrelin.

How to avoid hormonal imbalance and keep our ghrelin levels stable? There are 4 important factors:

- 7–8 hours of quality sleep every night
- A sustainable, balanced, and enjoyable meal plan with enough protein, fats, and fiber to cover your nutritional needs
- Staying hydrated
- Managing stress

Although hunger is our body's natural cue, many of us tend to forget about it. Some eat without feeling hungry and consume more food than needed. Others ignore their biological hunger and go too long without eating, increasing drowsiness and distraction, and always overeating later.

Recognize physical hunger cues



Increasing our recognition of physical hunger cues is an essential element of mindful eating.

If we don't respect our hunger and skip meals, we are more likely to make impulsive food decisions and eat long past the point of fullness at the end of the day. When we come to the table with an appetite but not when ravenously hungry, it is much easier to consume just the right amounts of food. Also, it helps keep our energy levels and mood stable.

How to listen to your physical hunger cues?

Each time you eat, ask yourself:

- Am I hungry?
- What's my hunger level?
- How does my stomach feel?
- How does my mouth feel?



The “Hunger scale”

The scale below will help you evaluate your levels of hunger. Use it as a starting point as you explore your hunger cues.

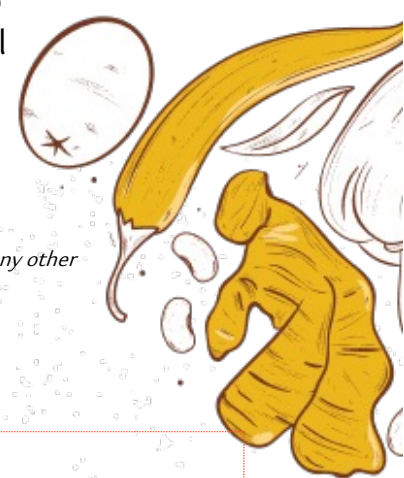
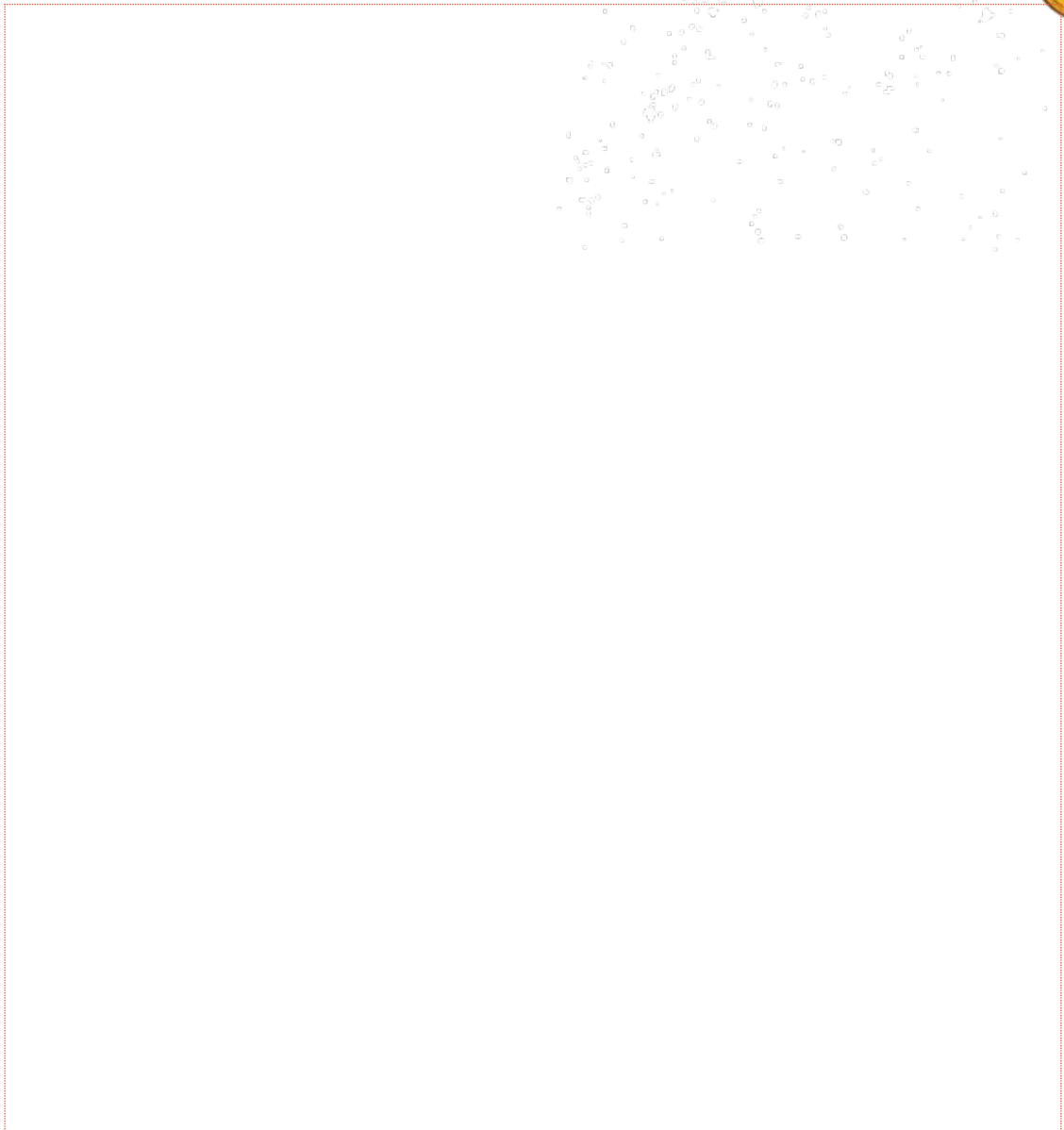
1.	I can't think straight. Incapable of making a decision on what to eat and how to take care of myself.
2.	Lack of energy, drowsy. Grumpy and anxious, snapping at people. Can't concentrate. Shaky and weak. Having a headache. The stomach is growling and feels empty.
3.	Preoccupied with thinking about food. Light-headed. Mild concentration lapses. A slight empty feeling in the stomach. Mouth-watering sensation.
4.	Starting to think about food. Mouth-watering sensation. The body feels light. Energy levels are normal.
5.	Satisfied, neither hungry nor full. Energized.
6.	Pleasantly full. Energized.
7.	A little uncomfortable. A little sleepy.
8.	Feeling stuffed and heavy. Low energy.
9.	Bloated. Tired. Want to sleep.
10.	So full, it hurts. Feeling sick. Need to lie down.

Try to measure your hunger a few times a day. The best time to eat is when your hunger is at **3 or 4**. If you can, don't wait until your hunger gets down to 1 or 2.

During the process, you might recognize your own individual patterns of hunger and might want to modify the given scale. Feel free to do that! Remember, we all feel hunger (and fullness) a little bit differently, so you will have to learn to listen to your own body – this is what mindful eating is all about.

Notes

(feel free to write down the results of evaluated hunger or any other thoughts that you have):



02 Step

Eat Without Distraction

Ask yourself, “How often do I eat and pay attention to my food? How often do I turn off the TV and put my phone away when having a meal?”

If the answer is “not very often,” don’t feel bad – it’s an outcome of our fast-paced lifestyle. Just a hundred years ago, it was common to have each meal at the table, in silence, or in deep conversation. Technology and media made it much easier for us not to be present.



There’s an old ZEN proverb: “When walking, walk. When eating, eat.”

We drive while listening to podcasts; we wait in cues while checking emails; we eat while watching videos. It’s not surprising that many of us find it challenging to give our full attention to one thing at a time.



Distraction-free meals

Modern science reveals why we should bring this wise saying into practice. Studies show that if **we're not paying attention to food, the digestion process doesn't work as well.**

We don't metabolize our food nearly as effectively, and our bodies don't get all the nutrients they need, nor do our brains get chemical messages to trigger stop-eating cues (we still get the calories, however).

For example, in one study, researchers monitored the digestive processes of healthy college students. When they ate while watching a movie, their digestive tract activity was reduced, and their digestion was less effective than eating without distraction.



As the research indicates, the digestive system is closely related to our brain. If the brain doesn't take part in eating, the digestive tract doesn't do a proper job, too.

In another study, participants first consumed a mineral drink under relaxing conditions. The absorption of the two minerals in water, sodium and chloride, was 100%. Then the same individuals were exposed to distracting and stressful conditions while having the drink. The absorption dropped from 100% to 0%!

Also, studies show that distracted participants eat faster, can't remember what they ate, eat more snacks, and report feeling significantly less full.

That's why attentiveness is so important in the process of eating. It helps nourish our bodies and minds better.



How to eat without distraction?

Eating without distraction is not always possible: sometimes we don't have the time, sometimes we are stuck in a distracting environment, and sometimes we simply want to watch a movie and have snacks at the same time. That's perfectly normal!

Implementing attentive eating to your daily life should be slow and gentle.

To start, consider how often you can eat undistracted, and try to be realistic here. It can be twice a day, once a day, or three times a week – just set an accurate number that seems comfortable and achievable to you.

If you feel you need to be reminded, add each attentive eating session to your calendar or create a reminder on your phone. Aim to be fully present for your meals. Set a nice table and sit down to enjoy the food.

Here are a few tips that might help you eat without distraction:

- Keep your eating space clean and tidy.
- If you live with a partner and/or children, try to engage them in mindful eating practice.
- Try eating in silence; make sure the TV and radio are turned off.
- Put your laptop, tablet, and phone out of your sight.
- Turn your phone notifications off (or enable Airplane mode).
- Acknowledge when your mind wanders, and bring it right back to eating.



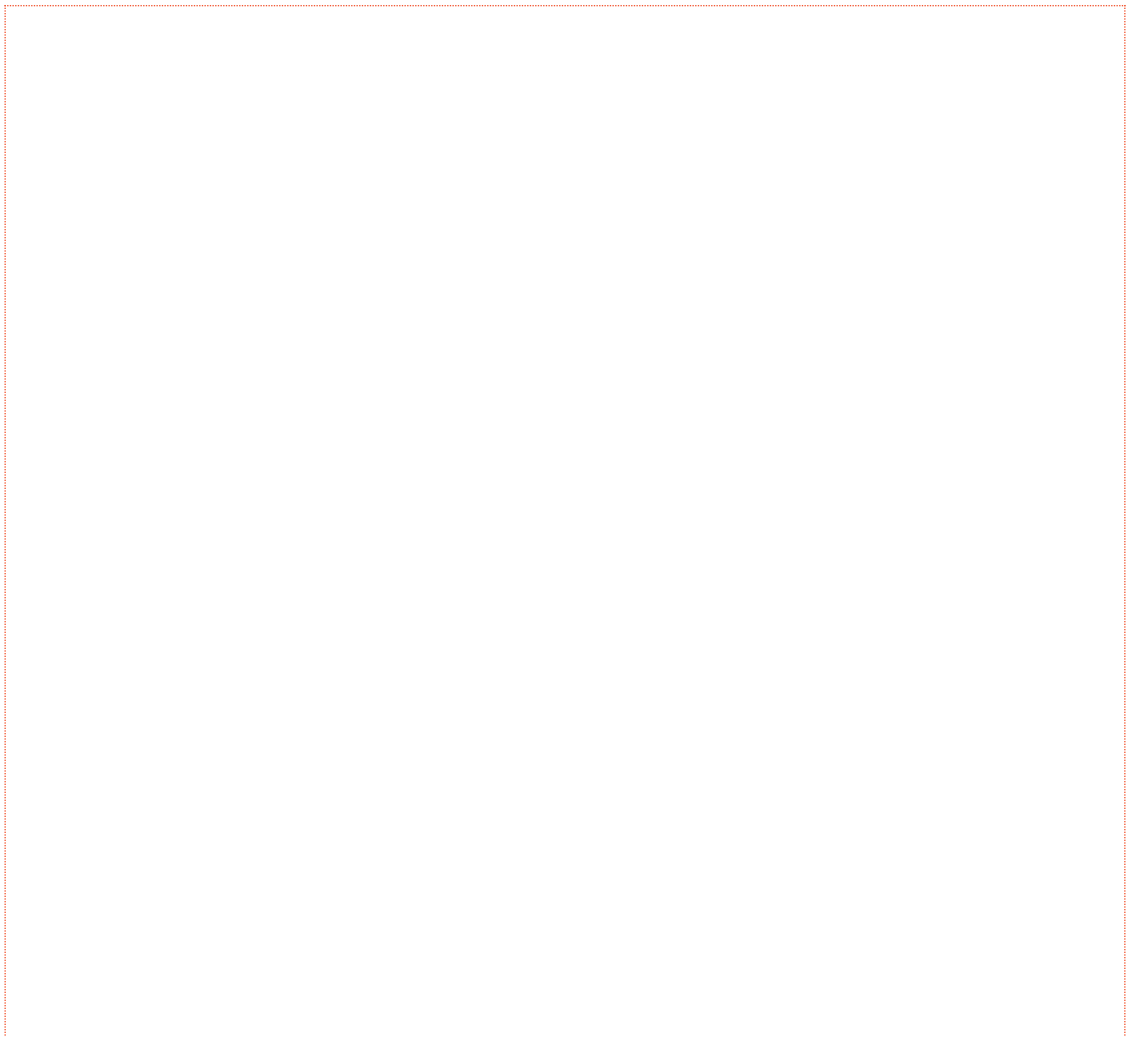
After each mindful eating session, spend a bit of time reflecting.

Answer the following:

- How did it feel to eat without external stimuli?
- Was it easy or difficult? Why?
- What thoughts came to my mind?
- Did I recognize something new about eating?

Notes

(feel free to write down the thoughts and feelings you have):



03 Step

Engage Your Senses in the Eating Process

When we are distracted, it's so easy to miss the fact that we don't like what we're eating. At the same time, it prevents us from discovering new foods. Let's explore how to be more conscious while having a meal.

The topic we're going to unfold next is the **sensational eating experience**. As you know, mindfulness helps us become more aware of sensations within our bodies. Eating mindfully provides an opportunity to appreciate food's sensual pleasure and provides richness to your meal that is joyful and satisfying.

When we engage all our senses in the eating process, **the brain releases feel-good chemicals, such as dopamine**, which elevate our mood and evoke feelings of trust, enjoyment, and relaxation. As a result, we enjoy our food in a new and exciting way.



Despite the obvious psychological benefits, engaging the senses in eating also has a positive physiological impact on our bodies.

Research consistently finds that 30–40% of our total physical response to a meal occurs during the time we spend seeing, smelling, and tasting our food. This process initiates many digestive activities, including releasing saliva and digestive enzymes, sending blood to the digestive organs, and contracting the stomach and intestinal muscles. Digestion begins way before we put food in our mouth!

Engage every sense while eating



In mindfulness practice, there's an important concept called the beginner's mind. Approach the eating experience just as a baby does. It allows us to experience food in a new way and to be open to our sensations in the here and now. It is important to set aside our past experiences and judgments of certain foods to discover our current "likes" and "dislikes."

Pamper your senses while selecting, preparing, and eating your food.

- **Hearing.** Pay attention to the sound of sizzling in the pan, pouring a drink into a glass, or crunching in your mouth.
- **Sight.** Appreciate the natural color variety and richness in fruits and vegetables. Take a picture of your meal, if you like.
- **Smell.** While cooking, smell the various aromas in your kitchen and notice how they increase your appetite. While eating, indulge in the aroma of each bite.
- **Touch.** Notice the texture of your food while preparing it and how it changes as it's cooked. Pick up an ingredient, and pause to feel its weight. Immerse yourself in the tactile sensations you experience in the kitchen, from peeling an onion to juicing a lemon.
- **Taste.** Roll the food on your tongue to see if it's sweet, salty, sour, or bitter. Give yourself a chance to explore by slowing down, chewing your food inquisitively, and noticing how the taste changes in each moment. You can even close your eyes for a more intense experience!

Use your creativity to name all of these sensory perceptions with interest and gratitude.

Answer the next set of questions on how the last meal you ate was:

Sounded

Looked

Smelled

Felt

Tasted

Notes

Now, think about what you noticed when eating this food that you hadn't noticed before.

04 Step

Slow Down

We often rush through the day with no time for anything, especially our needs and pleasures. We have breakfast in the car and snack while working. Spending more than 5 minutes for lunch seems like a luxury for most of us, but it shouldn't!

Prioritizing work and other daily tasks over our basic needs leads to a stressful and unbalanced lifestyle. **Let's explore eating slowly and become rebels against fast life.**



Eating slowly

First of all, it's important to know that our satiety is time-dependent. We need to let our bodies catch up to our brains.



It takes approximately 20 minutes from the time we start eating to start feeling full. Slow eating allows enough time to trigger the signal from our brain that we are full, and feeling full translates into eating less.

For example, one research showed that both men and women took in fewer calories when they slowed their normal eating pace. Another study involving 1,700 young women concluded that eating more slowly resulted in feeling satiated sooner and eating **fewer calories** at mealtime.

If we slow down, we give ourselves more time to feel satisfied. This gives us a better chance of stopping before we “get stuffed.”

Secondly, when **we eat slower**, we chew our food better, which leads to better digestion. Fast eaters eat more food in a given amount of time, and that food also isn't as well-processed. As we discussed before, digestion starts in the mouth, so the more work we do up there, the less we'll have to do in our stomach. Chewing more thoroughly can help improve nutrient absorption, prevent indigestion and other digestive problems.

Finally, eating slowly and **paying attention** to our food can be a great form of mindfulness. A longer lunch break can be an opportunity to pause and reset your brain. Taking mindful breaks during work is related to increased **work satisfaction**, productivity, and stress relief.



How to slow down while eating?

It's true that slowing down eating pace can be difficult, especially when you are busy and famished. Take time not only to eat, but to **relax, recharge, and refuel.**

Try a few quick tricks to help you slow down:

- Set a timer for your meal (at least 20 minutes for main meals).
- Do short breaks by setting your utensils down between bites.
- Try eating with your non-dominant hand or chopsticks.
- Eat high-fiber foods such as grain, fresh fruits, and vegetables, and chew them carefully.
- Set a minimum amount of chews per bite (at least 30 for hard-to-chew foods). This might feel strange at first, but give it a try and see what you discover.
- Enjoy not only your food but also fun and witty conversation!

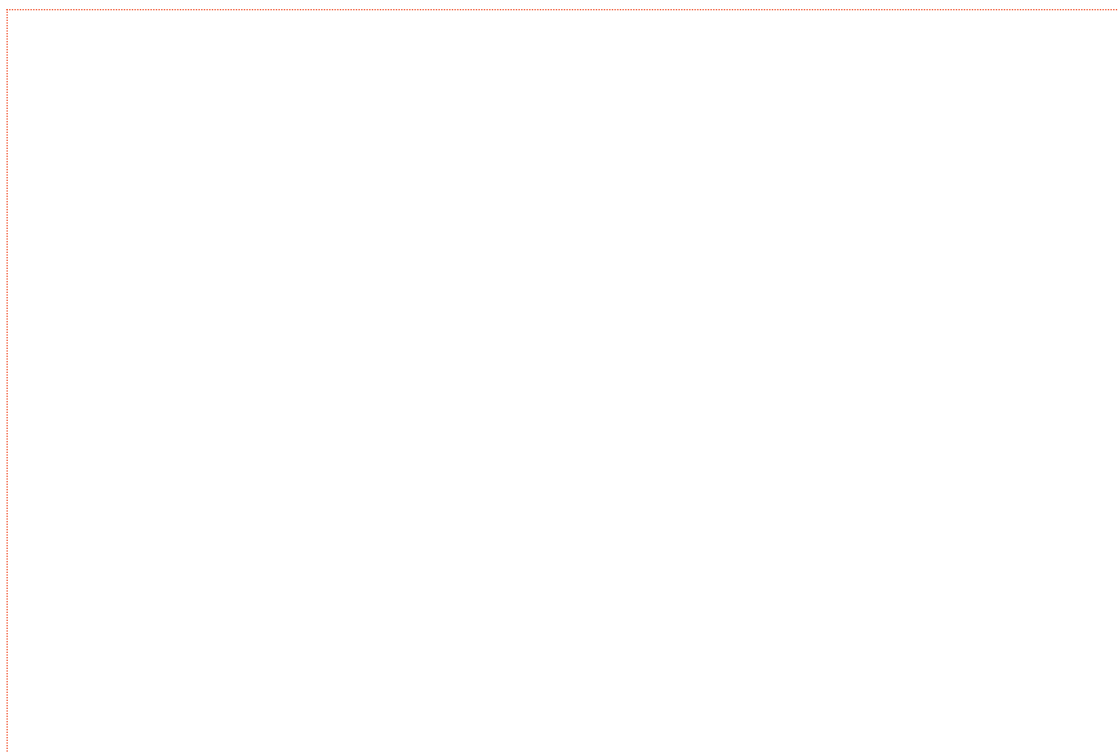


After each mindful eating session, reflect on yourself. Answer the following:

- How did it feel to slow down my eating pace?
- Was it easy or difficult? Why?
- What thoughts came to my mind?
- Did I recognize something new about eating?

Notes

(feel free to write down the thoughts and feelings you have):



If you find yourself rushing, that's ok. Slow eating may seem not habitual for you at first; it takes some time and patience. Don't force yourself and practice it as much as it seems acceptable to you. Remember, your inner compass is the most reliable resource in the mindfulness journey.

05 Step

Respect Your Fullness

What does being full mean to you? Feeling satisfied, energized, or maybe stuffed?

Although satiety is an innate mechanism that evolution has given us, nowadays, many of us are detached from our physiological fullness signals and might eat more food than necessary.

Listen to your body

Young children are often able to intuitively regulate their eating habits. Once we get older, external factors take over, which may cause us to disconnect from our internal signals.

Here is what can influence us to eat after we are full:

- Learning to finish everything on your plate by our parents
- Dieting
- Respecting the value of food
- Stopping to eat when the food is gone, regardless of the portion size
- Food insecurity and traumatic experience



Your body signals when you are full not when a food or drink is consumed but as it enters the gut and is digested and absorbed.

Eating due to external factors may lead to the unpleasant sensation of overeating, drowsiness, and, in the long run, numerous health risks. **Luckily, we can rebuild the relationship with our body** and become in touch with our natural satiety signals again.

These fullness signals, which travel to specific areas of the brain, are produced in response to:

- Beliefs about how filling the food or drinks are likely to be
- The sensory eating experience, including food appearance, smell, taste, and texture.
- The expansion of the stomach
- Hormones released during the digestion

Taste plays an important role here! When we are hungry, our senses become sharper. **That's why the first bites of a chocolate bar taste much better than the last ones.** Our taste buds toning down on repeated exposure is nature's way of prompting us to stop eating when our calorie needs are met. In other words, if we commit to eating foods when they are maximally pleasurable, we feel satiated with less.

How to respect your fullness?

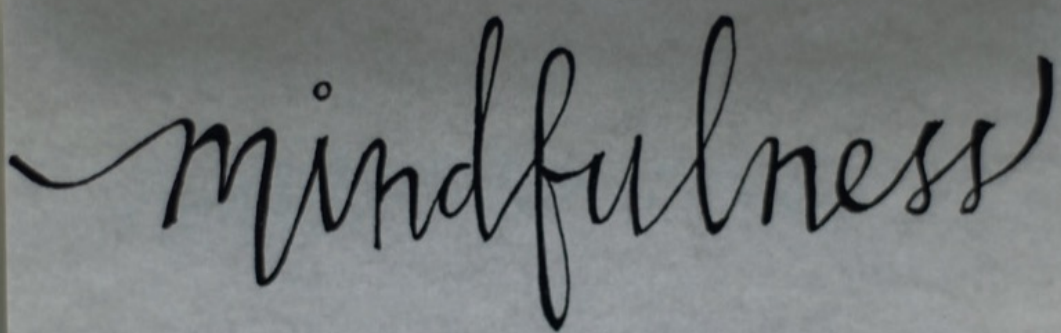


The only way to become aware of your internal fullness signals is to eat mindfully. If you don't pay attention to the eating process and your body, you will probably follow the "**clean-plate principle,**" whether the portion is too large or too small for you.

As you've already learned, mindful eating includes identifying your hunger cues, minimizing distractions, engaging your senses, and slowing down the pace.

The tips below might also help you recognize your fullness earlier:

1. Portion your food out by splitting it in half. Think about your fullness level after you complete one section and move to the next one.
2. Check in regularly to see how the food tastes.
3. Check in regularly to see how your stomach feels.
4. Assess your energy level; food should make you more energetic rather than tired.



mindfulness

Use the scale to evaluate your levels of fullness. Use it as a starting point as you explore your satiety cues.

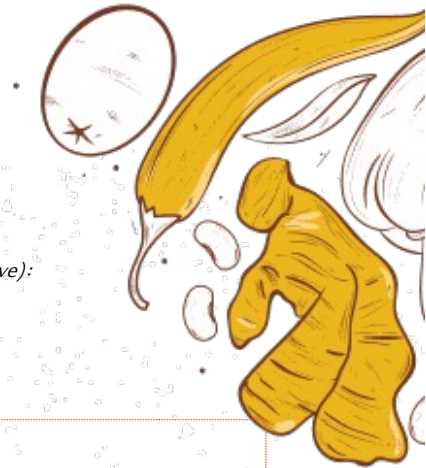
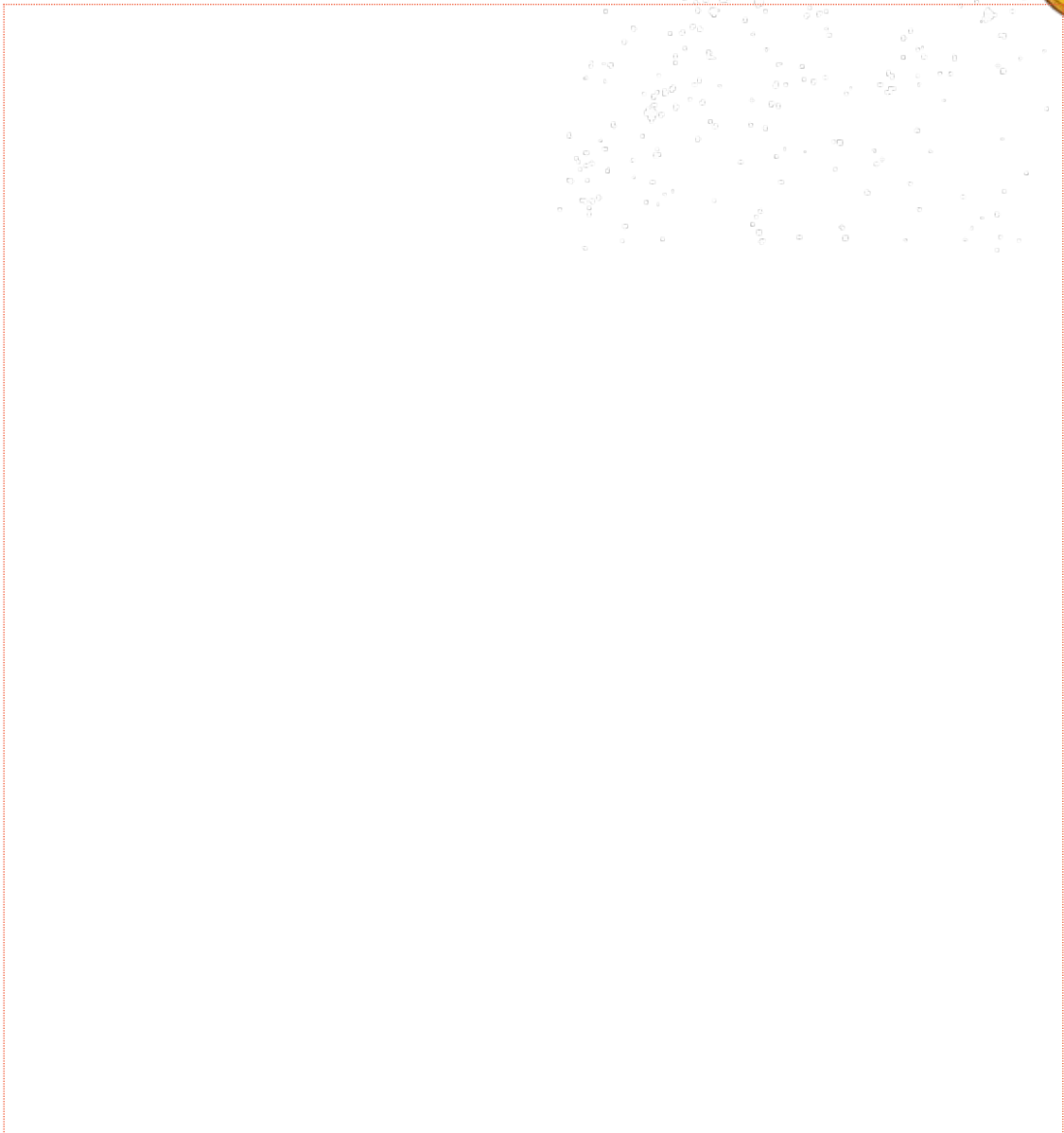
1.	I can't think straight. Incapable of making a decision on what to eat and how to take care of myself.
2.	Lack of energy, drowsy. Grumpy and anxious, snapping at people. Can't concentrate. Shaky and weak. Having a headache. The stomach is growling and feels empty.
3.	Preoccupied with thinking about food. Light-headed. Mild concentration lapses. A slight empty feeling in the stomach. Mouth-watering sensation.
4.	Starting to think about food. Mouth-watering sensation. The body feels light. Energy levels are normal.
5.	Satisfied, neither hungry nor full. Energized.
6.	Pleasantly full. Energized.
7.	A little uncomfortable. A little sleepy.
8.	Feeling stuffed and heavy. Low energy.
9.	Bloated. Tired. Want to sleep.
10.	So full, it hurts. Feeling sick. Need to lie down.

Try to measure your fullness during each meal. **You'll probably feel best when you stop eating at points 5 or 6.**

During the process, you might recognize your own individual patterns of hunger and might want to modify the given scale. Feel free to do that! Remember, we all feel fullness (and hunger) a little bit differently. **Trust your body!**

Notes

(feel free to write down the thoughts and feelings you have):



06 Step

Recognize Emotional Eating

Eating can be one of the most emotionally charged experiences in our lives. The emotional meaning of eating is set from the first day that a newborn is offered a breast or a bottle to calm them down.

It's then reinforced each time a piece of candy is offered to soothe a scraped arm or a pizza is eaten to celebrate a new job. Nearly every culture gives food an important symbolic meaning to specific foods, from a wedding cake to the Thanksgiving turkey.



Each time you celebrate a significant life experience with food, you strengthen the emotional bond.

Some people are unaware that they use food as a coping mechanism because it has many subtle forms. They think they overeat because of good taste and ignore the importance of emotions. If you find yourself eating when you're not biologically hungry, there's a good chance it's emotional eating.



Then you can ask yourself, “What need am I trying to fulfill with food?”

Emotional eating is triggered by feelings, not by physiological hunger. Those feelings vary from bad to good, from mild to intense. The most common feelings that lead to emotional eating are:

- Boredom and procrastination (e.g., snacking when there's a lot of tedious paperwork)
- Reward (e.g., having a treat after cleaning the kitchen)
- Excitement (e.g., indulging in a "forbidden" food after a strict diet)
- Soothing (e.g., eating a favourite childhood meal on a rainy day)
- Love (e.g., having a romantic home-made dinner for two)
- Frustration and anger (e.g., biting and crunching hard food after a fight)
- Anxiety (e.g., finding certainty in food during the pandemic)
- Stress (e.g., nibbling cookies before an important meeting)
- Mild depression (e.g., having a carton of ice cream to repress sadness)

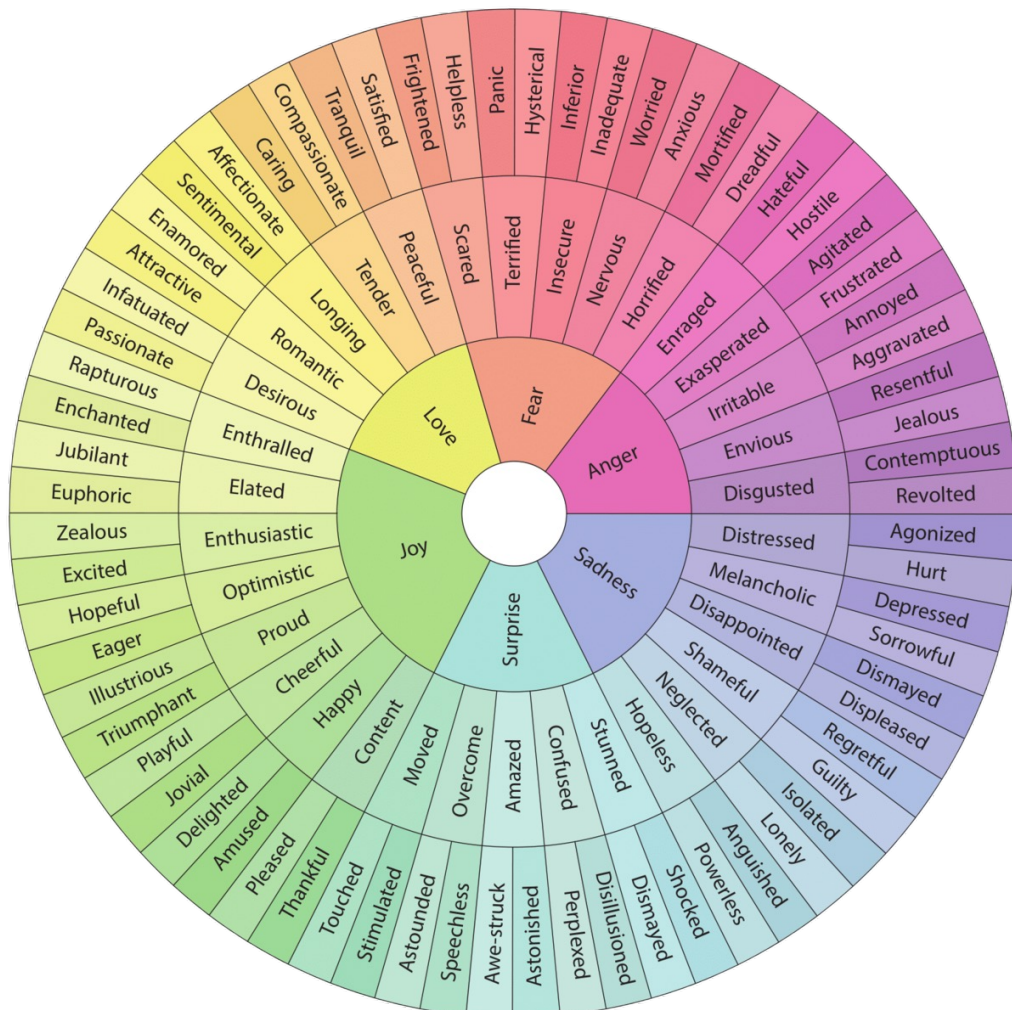


Engage every sense while eating

It doesn't matter if your emotional eating is mild or out-of-control bingeing; the steps below can help reduce the importance of food in your life. When you recognize that your trigger to eat is not physiological, ask yourself:

1. What am I feeling?

If you find it difficult to identify your emotions, try using the wheel of emotions.



1. What could satisfy my needs?

Or you can choose the most soothing option from the following:

1. Muscle relaxation (gentle exercise, yoga, hot bath)
2. Meditation or other mindfulness practice
3. Distraction (a good movie, interesting book)
4. Laughter (a comedy, stand-up, funny YouTube videos)
5. Social support (a talk with a friend, family member, or therapist)
6. Nature views (a walk outside, documentary)
7. Rest (a break, nap, or good night's sleep)

Remember, there's nothing wrong with using food to cope with problems from time to time. The most important thing is to recognize emotional eating, identify your feelings, and find more effective ways to satisfy your needs.



07 Step

Improve Your Relationship With Food

Have you ever felt guilty about eating sweets? Punished yourself for overeating? Thought that you are misbehaving by having a high-carb meal? Probably, the answer is “yes.” We all have!

We aren't born with these thoughts and feelings – **it's learned behavior.** Diet culture and pursuing the thin body ideal have led us to the point where foods are often described in such terms as “guilty,” “sinful,” “clean.” It's not surprising that we feel bad after breaking the nutritious eating rules and feel anxious and stressed around food.

A negative relationship with food can impact many aspects of our life. When we eat poorly and don't provide our body with the nutrients it needs, we increase the risk for cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and other health problems. Research shows that extreme dieting and food deprivation is linked to food obsession, negative body image, and disordered eating.

A study conducted in 4 countries found that Americans had the greatest worry over their health and eating and greater dissatisfaction with what they ate. They also scored the highest on dwelling on the fattening effects of food.

In contrast, French people were found to enjoy food the most and to be the least health-oriented. It was also discovered that food-related anxiety and stress had a more profound negative effect on health than the actual food.



Identify your relationship with food

Check if any of the following apply to you:

- You feel guilty or ashamed about eating.
- You avoid or restrict foods that are “bad” or “unhealthy.”
- You ignore your physiological hunger and fullness cues.
- The only thing you rely on is calorie counters and scales.
- You have developed various rules surrounding the foods you can and cannot eat.
- You have a history of yo-yo dieting or weight cycling.
- You find yourself binge eating food.
- You feel stress and anxiety when eating in social settings due to fear of what others may think of your food choices.
- “Black and white” is your way of thinking (e.g., you think you aren’t allowed to have any chocolate, and if you eat a piece, you feel that you must finish the whole bar).

If none of the items apply to you, great! You’ve already developed a positive relationship with food. If you answered “yes” to 1–4 items, your relationship with food might be complicated and could be improved by practicing self-compassion. If you answered “yes” to 4 and more items, consider visiting a psychologist to evaluate the risk of an eating disorder.

How to improve your relationship with food?

A healthy relationship with food means getting rid of fear, anxiety, and guilt around food. It means keeping in mind that foods are not



intrinsically “good” or “bad,” and eating them doesn’t make us better or worse as people. It’s making conscious efforts to put healthy and nutritious foods into our body and start noticing all the things we can eat instead of the things we shouldn’t.

Most importantly, it’s giving ourselves unconditional permission to eat the foods that make us feel good physically and mentally. Remember, you won’t suddenly become unhealthy from one snack, one meal, or one day of eating.

Moreover, studies show that eating “forbidden foods” decreases binge eating. Why? Because “legalized” food loses its power and becomes less appealing to us.

Here are some strategies that might help you improve your relationship with food:

- Forget labeling food as “good” and “bad.” Instead, use the words “nourishing,” “satisfying,” “exactly what my body/mind needs right now.”
- Minimize nutrition and health content consumption on the media, especially when it’s coming from non-qualified individuals. Follow specialists with a holistic approach to human health.
- Stop comparing your plate to other people’s. Your own body is the one to trust!
- Let go of pursuing the “perfect diet” – there’s no such thing! Instead, listen to your physical hunger/fullness cues and take care of your emotional needs.
- Let go of the all-or-nothing dieting rules. You’ll find that when the restriction is gone, so is the out-of-control behavior.
- Satisfy your food cravings with regard to your physical comfort.
- Practice positive self-talk (e.g., “I had ice cream more than I wished, but I had lots of nutritious foods, too” or “These cookies are delicious! I will stop eating now because I feel pleasantly full. I know I can have more later if I want.”).

Be curious about your eating patterns rather than judgmental.

Having a healthy relationship with food isn't something you can achieve overnight. Instead, it's something that you'll have to work on your entire life, just as you'd work on a relationship with your friend, partner, or any other important person in your life.

Notes

(feel free to write down the thoughts and emotions you have):



08 Step

Eat to Feel Good

The previous mindful eating steps were closely related to psychology: our food-related cognitions, emotions, and sensations. The eighth step is about the nutritional properties of food and how they are related to our well-being.

First of all, it is important to realize that nutrition science is not set in stone. Research is a slow process, which often contradicts widely held theories. Nutritional guidelines and recommendations are constantly changing, and it can increase confusion and even anxiety when choosing food. The media isn't helping here, too – we are bombarded with controversial health-related messages every day.

The good news is that you don't have to worry about foods and their nutritional values each time you shop or eat. We're going to unfold the main principles of a balanced diet that will help you feel more confident and relaxed around food and also nourish your body better.



Why is it important to maintain a balanced diet?

When the body isn't getting the nutrients it needs, it is more prone to disease, infection, fatigue, and low performance. In contrast, when we nourish ourselves properly, we may improve our:

- Immunity
- Energy levels
- Memory
- Gut health
- Mood
- Teeth and bone health
- Heart health
- Sleep quality
- Physical performance

Also, you may have your own personal motivation to maintain a balanced diet. Write down what motivates you to develop healthy eating habits:

The main principles of a balanced diet

Eat fruits and veggies. These foods are rich in microelements, antioxidants, and fiber, which offer numerous health benefits. In almost every study looking at plant-based food and human health, fruit and veggie consumption is associated with lower cancer risk.



There is also a growing body of research that concludes that phytochemicals, the nutrients found exceptionally in plants, have even more health benefits. Scientists are not able to synthesize phytochemicals yet, so we simply can't get them in any other form but food.

If you associate fruit and veggie consumption with having plain celery sticks all the time, no wonder you fail to consume enough of them. Include veggies into lasagnas, sauces, pancakes, stir-fries, quesadillas, etc. Add fruits to pies, smoothies, and porridges! Remember, the more various fruits and veggies you consume, the more different beneficial chemicals you'll get.

Eat whole grains. Whole grains are a wonderful source of complex carbohydrates, fiber, and B vitamins. Fiber is proven to feed our good gut bacteria, keep our blood sugar levels stable, and help keep the digestive tract flowing.

Eat protein-rich foods. They include poultry, lean meats, seafood, eggs, legumes, and nuts. Protein helps build and maintain muscles and hormones and also increases a feeling of fullness.

Eat high-quality fats. We need fat in our diet for our nervous system health, feeling of satiety, and fat-soluble nutrient absorption, such as vitamins A, D, and E. Studies show that our brain functions best with omega-3 fats, which are found in oily fish, seafood, seaweed, flax seeds, chia seeds, and walnuts.

Notice how you feel. You've already learned to be attentive to your bodily signals. Use your new skills to notice how particular foods make you feel. Be aware of the quantities too.



Remember: all foods fit into a healthy diet.

You might think you could continually eat chocolate cake. But if you really were to eat cake all day long, you might feel nausea, drowsiness, heaviness, etc. If you listen to your body, you will not feel good eating

this way. Furthermore, be curious and discover how whole foods make you feel!

Focus on what you can eat, not what you can't. Think about all of the creative ways to include nutritious ingredients into your diet. It's much more fun adding than removing foods. And you know what? When you're well-nourished and satiated, you're less likely to crave highly processed foods and sweets. But it doesn't mean you can't have them when you want them!

No single food can make you gain or lose weight or become healthy or unhealthy.

Balance doesn't have to be achieved at each and every meal. You won't suddenly get nutrient deficiency if you didn't consume enough food in one day. You won't become unhealthy from one meal or one day either. It's what you eat consistently over time that matters. Just listen to your body and respect its needs!



09 Step

Appreciate Food

We live in a world where not comparing ourselves to others is almost impossible. The media, especially social media, lets us know how other people look, dress, and succeed. Constant social comparison can make it difficult to appreciate what we do have. But giving thanks every day is extremely important, even when we're having a meal!

Being grateful helps us notice the good things in our lives. As a result, gratitude helps us connect to something larger than ourselves, whether to other people, nature, or a higher power.

There are plenty of benefits that come from practicing gratitude.

In positive psychology research, people who regularly take time to notice and reflect upon the things they're thankful for experience more positive emotions, are more resilient, sleep better, express more compassion and kindness, and even have stronger immune systems.

We can feel and express gratitude in multiple ways. We apply it to the past (reliving positive memories), the present (not taking good fortune for granted), and the future (maintaining an optimistic attitude). Regardless of the current level of someone's gratitude, it's a quality that individuals can successfully cultivate further.

Why is it important to appreciate food?

As discussed before, diet culture encourages us to use negative talk about food. Most of the messages we hear from friends, family, or coworkers, or in the media are about calories and the "fattening



effects” of food. It can be challenging to be thankful for food if we perceive it as a threat!

Remember, **calories have a wonderful purpose in our bodies.** They don't enter our body, aiming to change our weight and store as fat. Having enough energy in our body keeps every cell and organ in our body functioning – it keeps our heart pumping, lungs breathing, digestion working, hormones in balance, temperature regulated, hair, skin, and nails growing, and much more.

Appreciating food is one of the key components of the mindful eating process. Eating offers us an opportunity to connect to the natural world and to each other.

When thinking of all of the people involved in the meal that has arrived on our plate, from those who prepared it to people who planted and harvested the raw ingredients, it is hard not to feel grateful.

Being thankful for the opportunity to eat and enjoy food leads to more conscious food decisions, more satisfying eating experiences, and more positive relationships with food.



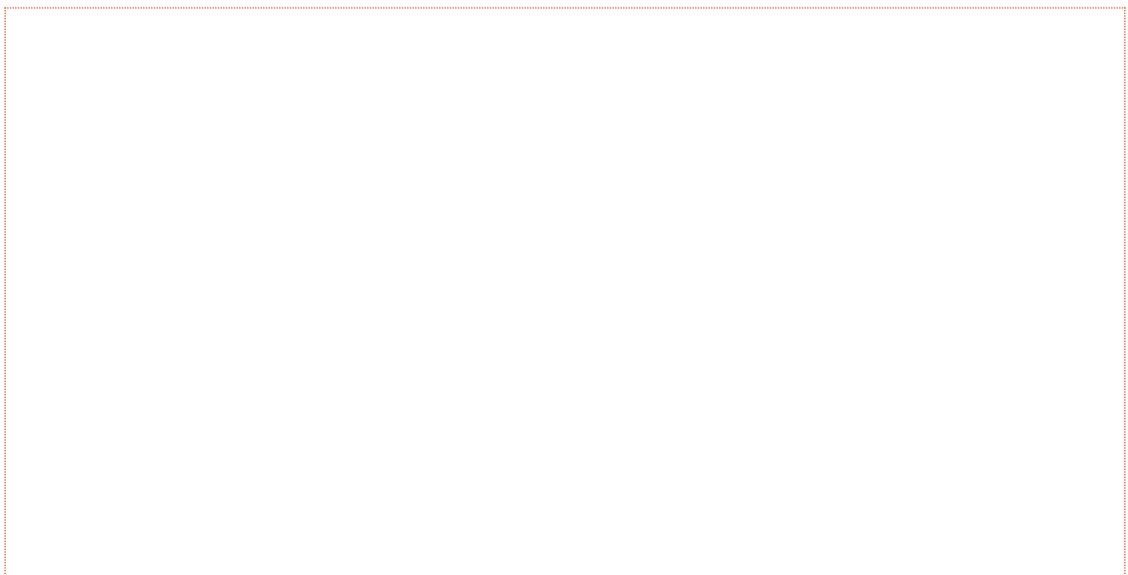
How to appreciate your food?

The steps below will help you practice gratitude while eating:

- Each time you eat, say thanks for your food (verbally or mentally).
- Take notes on how different foods (especially fresh, seasonal, minimally processed whole foods) impact your mood and overall vitality.
- Feel grateful and reflect on the source of the food, the plants or animals involved, and all the people it took to transport the food and bring it onto your plate.
- Think about how different foods can provide you with unique nutrition that is important to your health.
- Prepare your own meals when possible and notice if cooking makes you feel more connected to your food.
- Express your excitement when the food is sensually pleasing (e.g., “Wow, this soup is outstanding!” or “I love the aroma of this pie!”). Smile with satisfaction!
- Appreciate the opportunity to try out different cuisines and learn more about other cultures through food.

Notes

(feel free to write down other ways to appreciate food or any other thoughts you have):



10 Step

Cultivate Self-Compassion

A mindful eating journey is impossible without self-compassion. This concept comes from Buddhist philosophy and entails treating oneself with kindness and care. It refers to acting in kind and understanding ways towards ourselves.

For example, instead of being critical (e.g., “I can’t stop binging!”), our inner voice is supportive and warm (e.g., “It’s no big deal I overate, I had a really rough week. I’ll try to be more aware of my physical comfort in future.”).

Also, it’s essential to recognize that **everyone makes mistakes and no one is without their weaknesses**. Accepting that no one is perfect comforts us with feelings of inclusivity rather than alienation.

Finally, acceptance offers a meta-perspective on our ups and downs, helping us not to exaggerate our distress, and learn from past experiences.



Numerous studies show the positive consequences of self-compassion on various aspects of our well-being, including greater emotional intelligence, life satisfaction, interconnectedness with others, curiosity, wisdom, happiness, and optimism.

Self-compassion also correlates with less anxiety, self-criticism, depression, fear of failure, and perfectionism. Most importantly, self-compassion can lead to greater emotional resilience, since unlike self-esteem, our increased self-worth will not be dependent on our successes.

Practice self-compassionate eating

Let go. Mindful eating encourages letting go of past expectations and emotions about ourselves. It allows us to explore new food without judgment based on past experiences.

Don't judge yourself. Use non-judgmental self-talk, just like if you talked with a dear friend. Don't use words that can evoke feelings of guilt and shame. Even when you feel like a failure, stay understanding and kind to yourself.

Accept. Developing a willingness to notice and accept what happens is essential in the mindfulness process. This means accepting positive things like successfully implemented mindful eating skills and more challenging things like bingeing episodes. It is the acceptance of whatever comes up. Remember, mindful eating is a process; the ups and downs mean you're learning.

Trust yourself. With full awareness of your own experience, you'll develop more self-trust. This is your experience; you don't have to have the same experience as anyone else. By noticing and appreciating what you feel and think about different foods, you'll become more accepting of yourself and, therefore, more trusting your body.



Be patient. You must be patient to eat mindfully. For most of us, it's unrealistic to think we can be mindful of every bite or even for every meal we eat. It takes time to become more attentive and conscious at the table. Let the experience unfold rather than race through it.

Mindful eating supports our sense of who we are by assuring us that we are OK in a non-judgmental and self-accepting way.

It encourages us to appreciate food rather than restrict it by having a beginner's mindset and patiently appreciating each moment with full awareness. It makes us trust our own bodies and decisions rather than being restricted by rules about what and when to eat.

Mindfulness encourages us to live fully in each moment and appreciate life as it is.



10 Steps to Mindful Eating

*Congratulations on successfully learning the
10 steps to eating mindfully!*



Here is a short reminder of every step we talked about in this guidebook:

Step 01. Listen to your physical hunger cues

Step 02. Eat without distraction

Step 03. Engage your senses in the eating process **Step 04.** Slow down

Step 05. Respect your fullness

Step 06. Recognize emotional eating

Step 07. Improve your relationship with food

Step 08. Eat to feel good

Step 09. Appreciate food

Step 10. Cultivate self-compassion

This program was designed to give you a strong foundation that will help you understand your body better, improve the relationship with food, and become more mindful in daily life.

Make sure these lessons become a part of your daily routine. Whenever possible, try to sit down, use all your senses, and slowly take in every beautiful moment of your day.