

## Eating Mindfully

5/4/23

Lisa here. I hope you read last week's blog and have been looking for ways to practice some mindfulness in your daily life. Today we're going to focus on a specific mindfulness practice- mindful eating. You've probably heard of this before, but you may not have tried it. Mindful eating is an easy way to introduce yourself to the practice of mindfulness. Mindful eating also allows you to experience food in a new way, which is a nice bonus. You can do this alone or get your family involved.



So, how do you mindfully eat?

First, select the food you want to eat. You can mindfully eat any food, but when you're starting out, use foods that provide strong sensations- appearance, taste, texture, or smell. It's okay if you and/or your family do not really like the food, everyone just has to be willing to try it.

A couple tips for selecting foods: Don't start with mindfully eating a whole meal. Start with something bite-sized, like dried fruit or nuts, or mindfully eat the first few bites of your meal.



Next, notice any thoughts, feelings or physical sensations that show up *before* you take that first bite. Remember, you're just noticing these things, you're not making any judgments. If a negative thought or feeling shows up, that's okay. Just observe what comes up naturally.

Before taking a bite, notice & describe what the food looks like. You can do this in your head or out loud, whatever works for you. If you're doing this with your kids, get them to tell you what they notice about the food.

Take a whiff & describe what the food smells like. Notice any thoughts, feelings, or physical sensations you have when you smell the food. Now, if you're doing this with your kids, they may have a negative reaction to the smell of the food if it's something they don't really like. Remind them that whatever reactions they have are fine, but you're all still going to try the food as part of the exercise.



If it's a handheld food, notice & describe how the food feels in your hand/between your fingers. Again, notice any thoughts, feelings, or physical sensations you have as you hold the food.

Now you're ready to actually eat! *Slowly* put the food in your mouth. Take your time with your first bite. Really focus on the texture, the temperature, the taste and the experience of the food. See why it's easiest to do this with foods that provides strong sensations?

Notice everything that you can about that first bite. For instance, what is the sound that comes with eating the food? Is it audibly crunchy or squishy? Do you just hear the sound of chewing?

As you eat, notice any thoughts, feelings or physical sensations that show up while you're eating. Notice the experience of swallowing the food. Remember, no judgment, just notice what comes up while you eat.



Try another bite or two following the same steps. Notice what this experience of mindful eating is like for you. What came up? What stood out to you? Hopefully, this experience helped you slow down and get into that mindful state where you were really present in the moment, and you really attended to your experience as it was happening.

Well, I don't know about you, but all this talk about mindful eating has made me hungry. I'm going to mindfully eat my lunch. I hope you and your family try this for yourselves. Let us know in the comments how it goes!

