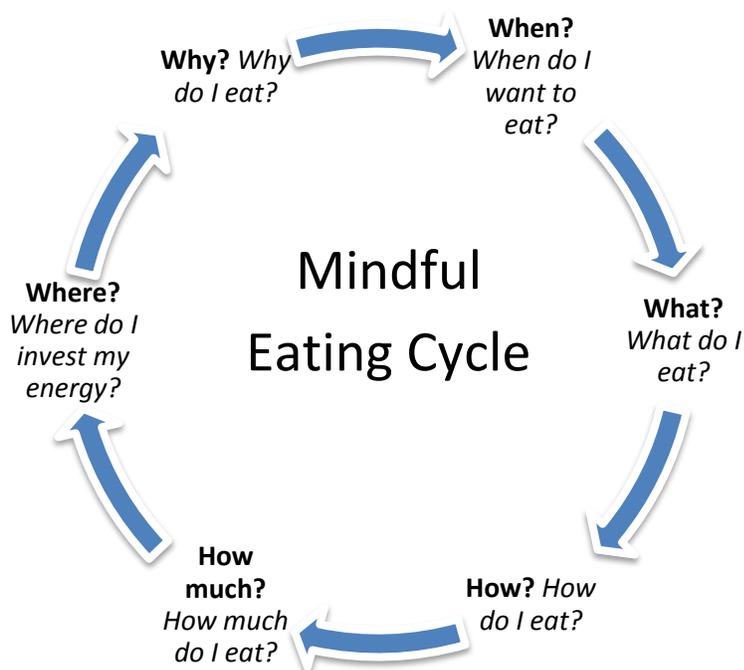


Becoming a Mindful Eater

The Mindful Eating Cycle is a good tool to help you become aware of your eating habits and to help you with decision-making.



What is an instinctive eater? How to become one:

- **Why?** You eat to fuel your body.
- **When?** You decide when to eat based on how hungry you are.
- **What?** You choose what to eat because you like it, it is available to you, and you know what the food does to your health. You aim to eat a balanced diet, with a variety of foods and in moderation. You do not have strict rules about what to eat and not to eat, and therefore, there is no judging yourself after eating. Eating is enjoyable!
- **How?** You eat for a reason: to satisfy hunger and feed your body, so you pay attention to your body to tell you those needs are filled.
- **How much?** You eat until you are no longer hungry, but not stuffed because being too full is uncomfortable.
- **Where?** Your energy goes toward living your life: working, playing, exercising, setting goals, performing daily tasks, and building and maintaining relationships.

When Do I Want To Eat?

The Hunger and Fullness Scale:

- 
1. Ravenous- you will eat anything because you are so hungry
 2. Starving- you must eat now
 3. Hungry- eating would be nice, but you can wait
 4. Pangs- you are a little hungry, and you start to think about food
 5. Satisfied- you feel normal- not hungry nor full
 6. Full- you can feel the food in your stomach
 7. Very full- your stomach feels stretched and you feel tired and lazy
 8. Discomfort- your stomach is too full and you wish you did not eat so much
 9. Stuffed- your clothes feel tight and you do not feel well
 10. Sick- you feel sick, in pain, or both

When is the best time to eat?



Level 5 or higher: if you are at a level 5 or higher, something other than hunger is making you want to eat.

Level 4: you are a little hungry, so it is the right time to make sure you will have food available and ready to eat.

Level 3 or 2: the perfect time to start eating! You are hungry, so food will taste good.

Level 1: if you do not eat until this level you are probably not going to make good decisions about eating.

What Do I Eat?

- Don't label foods as "good" or "bad"
- Eat what you really want and notice how your body feels
- Eat without having to make excuses or having to "pay it back" (as in "*I'll eat this today, but I'll be good the rest of the week*" or "*I'll eat this now, but I'll have to spend more time exercising tonight*")

Let go of your fears and tell yourself:

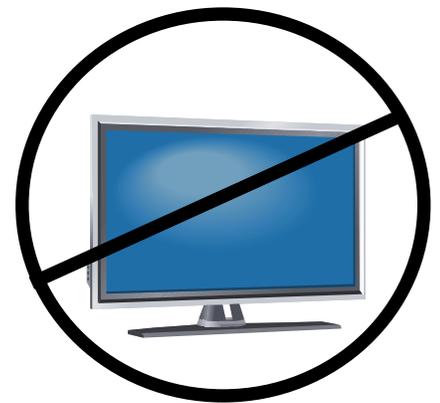
- I enjoy a variety of healthy, satisfying foods
- I eat what I love, and I love what I eat
- I choose balance, variety, and moderation in my eating
- I make all my decisions, including when I eat

How Do I Eat?

Eat with INTENTION	Eat with ATTENTION
Eat when you are truly hungry	Cut out distractions
Eat to fuel your body	Focus on the flavour, smells, temperature, and texture of the food
Eat to feel better when you are done	Listen to your body- it will tell you when you are hungry or full

Helpful tips:

- Be aware of how hungry or full you are- check in with yourself several times a day to see where you are on the Hunger and Fullness Scale
- Decide how full you want to be after eating
- Choose food for both your body and mind
- Buy, cook, or serve only the amount of food you think you will need
- Eat in a nice environment
- Be calm. If you are upset, anxious, or excited, take time to calm down before you begin eating
- Sit down
- Put your fork down
- Take small bites
- Pause in the middle of eating
- Notice when your taste buds are less sensitive to the taste of the food
- Push your plate forward or get up from the table as soon as you feel satisfied



How much do I eat?

Learn from the experience:

- “I’ve been feeling deprived”- if you are restricting foods, you are more likely to overeat when you give into cravings.
- “I always overeat in that situation”- be aware of these certain times so that you can plan and think them through before going and make new goals to help you.
- “It was a special occasion”- if you only treat yourself on special occasions, you will probably overeat more on special occasions.
- “I felt obligated”- remember, you eat to meet your body’s needs, so come up with some polite but firm responses ahead of time.
 - “I might be overeating to stuff other feelings”- if you do not notice or cope with your emotions and eat to hide the feelings, you cannot meet your true needs.
 - “It tasted good, so I just kept eating”- when you eat good food, do not forget to notice how you really feel. Check in and remind yourself that if you keep eating, the pain will soon be stronger than the enjoyment.
 - “I wanted to taste everything”- be a picky eater; decide that you will only eat what you love and won’t bother with anything that’s just so-so.
- “I was afraid that I wouldn’t get that food again”- it is rare that you will never have a food again. Ask for the recipe, take some home, or plan to return to the same restaurant.
- “I ate food I didn’t enjoy”- if you realize you are eating a food you do not really enjoy, stop and choose something else.
- “I hate to let food go to waste”- take smaller portions, share meals, and save leftovers for later.



Source: *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat: How to Break Your Eat-Repent-Repeat Cycle* by Michelle May, M.D.

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