

FOOD *for* THOUGHT

SPRING 2014

What is Mindful Eating?

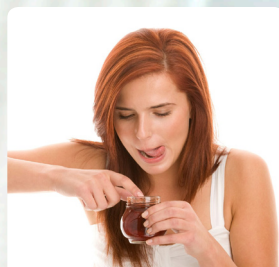
“Being here, not there,
with whatever is arising,
and doing so with kindness.”

~ Shirley Kessel, RYT, TCME Member

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About The Center for Mindful Eating:

Our Mission:

The mission of The Center for Mindful Eating, also known as TCME, is to help people achieve a balanced, respectful, healthy and joyful relationship with food and eating. By providing an easily accessible source of information and opportunities to interact via the web and in other ways, we seek to train and encourage professionals who can then foster this capacity in others.

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Board Members Corner

The Center for Mindful Eating Five-Year Goals

We'd like to take this opportunity to update you, our community, on TCME's five-year goals:

- **Introductory Mindful Eating Resources** - On [The Center for Mindful Eating website](#), you will find a wonderful set of resources called [What Is Mindful Eating?](#) Bundled in these resources are answers to common questions, practical tools, and guidance for starting a mindful eating practice.
- **Utilize Social Media** - Our growing presence on these social media websites has been very rewarding. On the [TCME Resources](#) page, you will find beautiful [mindful eating quotes](#) to print and share to spread the word about mindful eating.
- **The NEW Food for Thought** - Our [free newsletter](#) has evolved into a beautiful eight-page resource that can be downloaded, printed or read in English and Spanish online through Issuu.
- **Membership and Find A Professional now include individuals outside the United States** - Mindful eating education, networking and resources now include countries outside the United States and Canada.
- **Expanded Professional Development** - TCME.org members who offer a program or lecture that provides CPE/CEU or CME are encouraged to share their programs on the TCME.org site. To learn more, log in to the [Professional Trainings Members](#) page to learn how.

Meet the TCME Board Members



Cheryl Wasserman

is a psychotherapist who owns Alliance Therapy Associates and is a partner in

Westport Wellness Group. She teaches mindfulness for the treatment of depression, anxiety and stress. She also trains other psychotherapists who wish to incorporate mindful eating into their life and professional practice.

Cheryl began meditating 30 years ago. She maintains a daily mindfulness practice in an effort to bring genuine mindfulness to her work with others, especially as applied to eating. Cheryl was put on her first diet when she was five years old. She describes beginning her "dieting career" of one form of suffering after another until she began her meditation practice.

"I began to meditate in order to deal with the stress of going back to college to get my master's degree in counseling with two young children. For the first time in almost 30 years, food and eating began to recede into the back of my mind. Without effort, weight began to fall away. As I've looked back on my situation, I believe that my meditation practice allowed me to see my maladaptive patterns without judgment (on my "good" days) and to get in touch with my Wiser Self to make choices informed by what my body was telling me."

In her private practice of 25 years, Cheryl has primarily specialized in weight management. She uses a non-diet approach, believing that mindful eating helped her clients settle down to observe their relationship to food without self-recrimination.



Satisfaction comes hand in hand with slowing down



Char Wilkins

MSW, LCSW

It's Friday, 6 p.m. It was one of those weeks when I woke up Tuesday hoping it was Friday.

I'm tired, and it feels good to be sitting in my favorite Mexican restaurant, where familiar smells and sounds drift out of the kitchen to whet my appetite. I decided what I wanted to eat on the drive over, and having given the attentive waitress my order, I sit back and close my eyes for a moment. Immediately I remember that I have to write this article. My eyes pop open, and I'm digging for pen and paper.

The waitress sets down a red plastic wicker basket lined with waxed paper and full of thin, crisp tortilla chips. She balances a brimming saucer of bright red salsa lowering it from her tray to the table and slides another black saucer heaped with chunky guacamole next to it. I swear I can feel my pupils dilating. Eye hunger equals yum-gulp-yum-gulp.

I completely forget about writing the article and

about the pen clenched in my right hand. Without a moment's hesitation, my left hand plucks a chip, dives it into the guac, skims the salsa and in a less than graceful swoop it all arrives dripless at the Endless Cavern of Desire: my mouth. Crunchy . . . smooth . . . kicky. My mouth is in seventh heaven and more, more, more is the choral refrain in my brain. I sigh and lean back in the yellow, brown and orange striped vinyl booth. The week slides off my shoulders and the distance between my ears and shoulders lengthens by at least four inches. The pen slides from my fingers onto the table. The "mmm-m-m" that rises in the back of my throat is as much the sound of "tired" as it is "good." It's a relief from something I haven't even taken time to acknowledge.

Just as my eyes start to close around the tastes and textures, my dear waitress arrives. She eases my favorite combo dish onto the table and, with the usual warning to be careful, it's hot, she slides it to a stop in front of me. The bright orange platter is adorned with a burrito in its tightly wrapped pale jacket, the familiar brown beans splattered with cheese and colorful rice nestled against the red-sauced enchilada. A rounded scoop of sweet corn pone perches on the plate's edge. My mind is jumping up

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happy food

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and down and clapping with this array of stimulating colors, shapes, textures, smells, flavors.

And now, Eye and Heart hunger are neck and neck in a 10-inch dash for the fiesta food. My eyes bounce like Mexican jumping beans from item to item making it difficult to decide what to eat first. I'm on the verge of swallowing my tiredness, disappointment and the week's irritation in my favorite distraction: food. My left hand reaches for another chip and begins its descent to the saucers while my right hand pulls the plate closer as it simultaneously lifts the fork.

Or should that be forklift... as in shovel.

I love Happy Food. That's what I call this Mexican dinner. I feel better just thinking about eating this spicy, warm, crunchy, soft food. And I most want it when my heart is achy and over-tired. My fork hovers over the plate coasting from a bite of soft burrito to the cool mouth-feel of rice to the sweetness of corn pone. I mix and match the crunch of a chip laden with creamy guacamole with bites of spicy enchilada and sips of cooling iced tea. This meal is easily on the Nonstop-I-Should've-Stopped-Long-Ago list of foods I can eat too much of, too fast. I put my fork down and lean back.

Just as my plate is a picture of contrasts – spicy and cool and soft and crunchy – so is the way in which I eat the food: moments of mindlessness and moments of awareness. I'm well aware that I won't be mindful of every mouthful and I'm OK with that. I

can be mindful of eating mindlessly – consciously making the choice not to attend to my food for the next few bites – and those moments help remind me that I don't want to miss this entire meal and opportunities to experience satisfaction.

This is a practice I cultivate one breath at a time, one step at a time, one bite at a time... imperfectly. I

“I'm well aware that I won't be mindful of every mouthful and I'm OK with that.”



Happy Food, Spring 2014 Food for Thought Issue
Char Wilkins, MSW, LCSW

practice relaxing into being less than perfect – maybe even average – and find that there's freedom in not constantly striving. In fact, I find I'm much more willing to slow down, pause or take a breath so that I can enjoy the food when I'm OK with not being perfect about eating every bite mindfully. Who can do that anyway?

My co-teacher, Jan Chozen Bays, told me about a way to eat more mindfully called Alternating Practice. Let's say I'm one of those people who love to read while they eat. OK, I am one of those people. So if I just can't put the book down for 20 minutes (This sounds ridiculous as I write it. Am I afraid the book is going to get up and return itself to the library if I close the cover?) I can alternate reading and eating. If I'm

reading, I just read. If I'm eating, I just eat. Close the book to eat. Put the fork down to read.

Just as I toggle between reading and eating some days, I've learned to toggle with my favorite Mexican platter, even when I'm tired at the end of a long week. I bring attention to the textures, tastes and smells... and then I forget and don't. I set my fork down,

leaned back and created space, geographically and emotionally. I take a breath. I put my pen down and pick up my fork. I put my fork down and drink the iced tea. I acknowledge without criticism that I am tired and upset and that I am using food to soothe. Small steps count, and a sense of humor helps.

Of course, the Critic stomps right up her well-worn neural pathway, knife in hand, only to be met by A Little Kindness for the long week and my habituated way of taking

care of myself. No sense arguing with a bully, is there? Being conscious of my hungry heart rather than denying it reminds me I'm not perfect. That means I can join the human race, most of whom are average folks, doing the best they can. And it's such a relief to be off the prongs of Perfect.

Char Wilkins, MSW, LCSW, is a mindfulness-based psychotherapist who works with women recovering from childhood abuse, disordered eating and body image. She is a certified MBSR instructor, trains professionals internationally in MBSR, MBCT and MECL (Mindful Eating/Conscious Living), and offers consultation for professionals. She serves on the TCME Board. www.amindfulpath.com

What is Mindful Eating?



Cheryl Wasserman
MA, LPC, NCC

Mindful eating is a way of eating that can create a whole new relationship with food. It provides us with an opportunity to pay close attention to the wisdom of our bodies as opposed to the judgmental, harsh and simultaneously demanding, insatiable voice in our head. It grants us space to calm ourselves as we prepare a meal and again before we begin to eat so we can be totally present for the experience. When we are aware of the process of eating, we might notice that we are satisfied with much less food.

Mindfulness is paying attention on purpose to what is happening in the present moment without judgment, or, in other words, being aware of what we're doing, and letting go of any judgments we might have about it.

When we bring mindfulness to eating we use all of our senses to be totally present in the moment to taste and savor what is before us.

As we become more mindful, we might begin to notice our habitual thoughts, attitudes and moods that stimulate us to turn to food when we're not really hungry. We might notice that we feel we can never get enough food. With more mindfulness we might begin to explore the issue of whether there is something missing in our lives. What is it that we are truly hungering for?

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“What is it that we are truly hungering for?”



What is Mindful Eating?
Spring 2014 Food for Thought Issue
Cheryl Wasserman, MA, LPC, NCC



The void we feel that we're trying to fill with food might be a need for connection with others, or to find a more meaningful job, or for spirituality, or a need for more fun in our lives. No matter how much food we try to stuff into that void, it will remain empty

because food is not the solution to the problem.

We might think, “The problem is that I love food too much.”

If we love food so much, why do we eat while driving, reading a book, or while watching TV? The problem is not only that there is no awareness of the food,

but also that there is no awareness of the body so that we can follow the cues it gives us about hunger and fullness. We just eat and eat until the food is gone. We relinquish control of our food intake and allow whatever amount is piled on

our plate to determine how much we consume.

Through the use of mindful eating, we can slow down, bringing ourselves into the present moment as we begin to eat. We automatically calm ourselves and begin to notice what was there all along but has been out of our awareness. We are able to savor our food so that we can eat like a food connoisseur as opposed to a food glutton, stopping when our bodies are satisfied.

Bringing mindfulness to eating in this way opens the door for us to slow down our hectic pace several times each day as we mindfully are aware of our careful process of preparing food for ourselves and, perhaps, others. We then can sit down to enjoy our meal, experiencing the nurturance that comes from paying attention to what we are doing on purpose.

Cheryl Wasserman is a TCME Board member and psychotherapist with a private practice in St. Louis, MO. Cheryl can be reached at cheryl.wasserman@sbcglobal.net.

New Members page for Professional Trainings Listings

We are very pleased to announce that we are expanding our online services to include professional training listings by our members.

If you are a professional in any discipline who offers CPE/CEU/CME accredited programs that include a focus on mindful eating, we invite you to share those trainings so that we may include them on our Professional Development resource page. This service is offered to members only, and will be free through July 31, 2014. See our Professional Trainings Listing page to submit your application to list your accredited workshops or training programs.

And as a reminder, all members can list any trainings, workshops or retreats that they are offering in their personal TCME profile.

When people use our Find a Professional Network, they will see you, and your offerings, further strengthening the web of connections we are forging in the mindful eating community.

“And it’s such a relief to be off the prongs of *perfect*.”



Char Wilkins, MSW, LCSW
Happy Food, Food for Thought, Spring 2014.

Explore Our Online Resources

If you haven’t taken some time to explore the resources available on The Center for Mindful Eating website in the last few months, you might be missing out on some wonderful opportunities.

If you are interested in learning about the growing body of research in mindful eating, you can satisfy this craving by reviewing the Mindful Eating Bibliography. Quench your thirst for

learning by looking at our reorganized Teleconference Recordings Archive or enjoy a small snack by sampling one of our Professional Handouts.

A newly compiled collection of Food for Thought Professional Handouts spans thirty topics and a dozen authors.

To help professionals deepen their understanding of mindful eating, TCME.org recently offered a short training course and CPEs titled *Explore the Food for Thought Professional Handouts*.

Mindful Eating Words to Live By

The Center for Mindful Eating recognizes that people learn about mindful eating in a variety of ways. This year we began selecting quotes from our collection of writings, as well as through our member and community surveys, and placing them with an image to communicate and inspire our community to deepen its understanding and practice of mindful eating.

Finding images that communicate the messages of our mindful eating professionals is a wonderful way to reflect more deeply on the concepts themselves. We hope that you find these offerings of benefit to you in your practices, both personally and professionally.

You’ll find these mindful eating “graphical quotes” in our TCME Resources section. Please feel free to download these to include in your professional presentations, to display in your office, or simply share with your clients, friends, family, professional circles and more. By doing so you are helping us in our educational mission of spreading the word about mindful eating.

More great news and updates from the [TCME blog](#)

Starting a Mindful Eating Practice



Megrette Fletcher

*MEd, RD, CDE,
Co-founder TCME*

Looking for a straightforward way of starting a mindful eating practice? Give this a try.

Give your full attention to the food that is in front of you by taking three deep breaths.

For the first breath, inhale the smells. Exhale any tension or stress.

For the second breath, inhale, knowing that the feeling of hunger will pass. Exhale your worries.

Now smile. It is good to remember hunger is only temporary.

For the third breath, inhale the present moment. Exhale thoughts of tasks, projects and deadlines.

Tell yourself, “I can choose to relax and enjoy eating.”

Pause. Let your eyes feast on the food before you. Even if it is just a cracker or a few pieces of food, celebrate what you will be eating.

Allow yourself to become aware of your feelings. Feelings can often be described as a one-word emotion. For example, feelings like worry, fear, stress, frustration, resentment and anxiety, and feeling rushed or busy offer a powerful flavor that distracts you from the bite in your mouth. Feelings can overwhelm the actual taste of the food.

If this is happening, pause by taking another deep breath. Sprinkle delight, curiosity, contentment, joy and anticipation onto your meal by seeing what is enjoyable about it. When you



encourage these emotions, you may enjoy the flavor of these thoughts, making eating more enjoyable.

Now, taste the bite directly. Notice everything and anything you can about the food in your mouth. Pause and let yourself fully take in the experience. Is eating this bite pleasant, neutral or unpleasant? Ask yourself, “What can I do to make eating more enjoyable?”

When you eat more mindfully, you

are bringing your full attention to food and eating. Mindfulness opens the mind

to see opportunity and choice. For many, this is the best flavor of all.

See what is good about the bite before you. This mental shift sprinkles delight, curiosity, contentment, joy and anticipation onto your meal.

Megrette Fletcher, MEd, RD, CDE, is a Registered Dietitian, Certified Diabetes Educator, and co-author of Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat with Diabetes and Discover Mindful Eating. She can be reached at Megrette@megrette.com

Food for Thought handouts may be reproduced and distributed for educational purposes.

COMMUNITY SHARING:

Our Food for Thought newsletter will now share thoughts from our community members on each quarter's theme. This issue explores the benefits of mindful eating. We asked our community:

- **What does it mean to be mindful?**
- **How can you best achieve mindful eating?**
- **Why is mindful eating a benefit to you?**

We'll be tweeting your quotes, making graphical images and sharing them here in our newsletter. Later in the year we will have a focus on taste and dealing with anxiety. We will be creating surveys each quarter to ask for your input on these themes. What has worked for you? What insights do you have to share? We'd like to know!

What does it mean to be mindful?

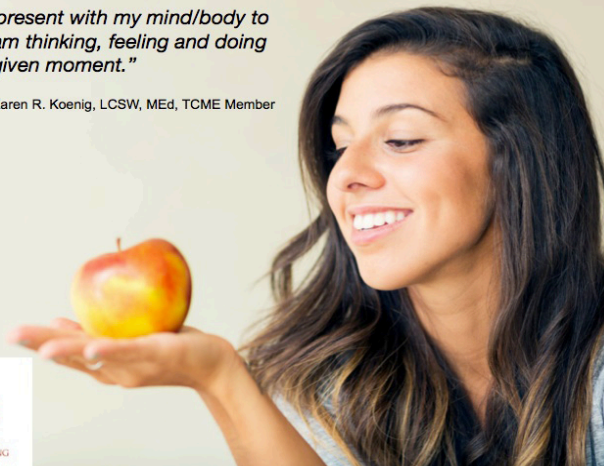
"To be in the present moment, feeling all emotions and physical sensations of that exact time." ~ *H.R.W.*

"To be present in the moment. Being aware of what you are doing moment to moment." ~ *Rose Rogala*

What does it mean to be mindful?

"To be present with my mind/body to what I am thinking, feeling and doing at any given moment."

Karen R. Koenig, LCSW, MEd, TCME Member



to change them ahead of time. Stay mindful. Enjoy the food experience."

~ *Cissy M., Australia*

"Allowing my breath to be present. Putting down my fork or spoon between bites; chewing my food; savoring its taste, texture and how it makes me feel." ~ *Kati Konersman, RD, CDE*

"Mindfulness accepts self and life just as it is, with compassion." ~ *Ellen K., Mindfulness student and teacher, bodyworker*

How can you best achieve mindful eating?

"Learn to be aware of all eating signals in and outside yourself so that you can make a wise eating decision in every moment. Stop worrying about choices after they are made." ~ *Rita Zeelenberg, Netherlands*

"Slow down, take a few breaths before going near food. Identify the mindless pathways and create a strategy

Why is mindful eating a benefit to you?

"I pay attention to my hunger and fullness, enjoying fully the foods I choose to prepare and eat, acknowledging when my hunger is emotional rather than physical." ~ *Jan Hampstead, RN, Board Certified Health Coach*

"It enables me to taste food and connect to appetite signals so that I eat with pleasure and according to my food needs. It also makes me feel confident and proud that I take good care of my body." ~ *Karen Koenig, LCSW, MEd.*



Be the first to know about our teleconferences, mindful eating trainings, and other events!

Visit our website at:

thecenterformindfuleating.org/upcoming

Learn more about becoming a member of The Center for Mindful Eating at:

thecenterformindfuleating.org/join-us