

# Food for Thought

## What is mindful eating?

- Allowing yourself to become aware of the positive and nurturing opportunities that are available through food preparation and consumption by respecting your own inner wisdom.
- Choosing to eat food that is both pleasing to you and nourishing to your body by using all your senses to explore, savor, and taste.
- Learning to be aware of physical hunger and satiety cues to guide your decision to begin eating and to stop eating.
- Acknowledging responses to food (likes, neutral or dislikes) without judgment.



### Free Handout for Individuals from The Center for Mindful Eating

#### Handling Triggers

By Molly Kellogg, RD, LCSW

“Trigger” is defined as anything that serves as a stimulus and initiates a reaction or series of reactions. This implies that every time the trigger is activated, the subsequent reaction is automatic and inevitable.

How often have you heard or said, “That food triggers me to overeat.” Or “When I see donuts, I have to eat them.” Or “That bad news triggered me to eat.” All of these imply the inevitability of mindless eating. Indeed, the “triggers” for mindless eating are often emotional states or the sight or thought of specific (often forbidden) foods.

Shifting the words you use allows more choice. All these “triggers” can be viewed instead as useful information. The impulse to eat when emotionally activated is useful

information that something is bothering you. It is not uncommon for the first awareness to be of the desire for food. This desire does not mean food is needed. It does mean (quite reliably) that something is happening. You can choose to use this information to pause and possibly explore your emotional state. (For more useful ideas on response to emotional triggers/cravings, see Food for Thought, Spring 2007.)

When a particular food seems to be a trigger for you, this is useful information that your thoughts about this food are giving the food more power than it deserves. (For more on the thoughts that propel us to mindless eating, see Food for Thought, Spring 2006.)

Pausing is powerful.

Research shows that placing a pause or break between the initial impulse to eat and the actual eating decreases the likelihood that you will eat if you are not physically hungry. Search for opportunities to practice pausing and

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attending to your thoughts and emotional states.

Practicing mindfulness daily helps cultivate attending to “triggers” as useful information, rather than as things automatically compelling you to act. You can practice in any number of ways, from formal sitting meditation to yoga to simply taking a few mindful breaths during the day.

*Molly Kellogg, RD, LCSW, is the author of Counseling Tips for Nutrition Therapists: Practice Workbook, Vol. 1 (2006) and a free e-mail series of Counseling Tips for health professionals. She is a Board Member of TCME and welcomes comments at [mkellogg@TCME.org](mailto:mkellogg@TCME.org); [www.mollykellogg.com](http://www.mollykellogg.com).*

#### Internet Resources

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 www.mindfulpractices.com  
 www.slowfoodusa.org  
 www.eatingmindfully.com  
 www.bodypositive.com

