

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

Joy of Generosity

By Donald Altman, M.A., LPC

Do you put the needs of others before your own? Would you rather please others than express your own emotions and wants? Do you believe that putting yourself first is an act of selfishness? If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, then food generosity practice could be valuable for learning how to be generous to yourself. Generosity is an important aspect of creating a healthy relationship with food, as well as being an essential part of mindfulness. Practicing generosity is especially useful for sensitive people with food issues who find it difficult to express emotions – and who give too much to others while neglecting their own needs.

Usually, we think of giving as an act that we do for another person. But the fact is that generosity begins with oneself. If you have ever been on an airplane, then you are familiar with the safety drill that the flight attendants give before the plane takes off. When demonstrating how to use the oxygen masks, the attendants tell passengers to put their own masks on first, and only then to help children

with their masks. The point here is clear: There are times when you need to take care of your own well-being and health in order to help and give to others.

In terms of meals and food, there are several ways to offer yourself this form of self-giving and generosity. For example, instead of rushing your

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meal or eating convenience food on the run, you can take the time to prepare a healthful meal. By choosing nourishing foods and allowing your body to receive it with thankfulness and acceptance, you are generously giving to all of your body: the heart, the bones, the lungs, the muscles, the brain, and more. You could say that eating is the ultimate form of giving because it enables you to have the energy to help others. You can also practice generosity by allowing yourself to truly appreciate, enjoy and savor food by slowly and mindfully tasting and chewing it.

Another positive way to offer self-generosity is by asking for assistance from others, whether for developing a meal plan, working with a professional, or getting help managing food portions and exercise. When you ask for help, you are allowing another to share and give in return. As Saint Francis of Assisi says in his wise Simple Prayer, “For it is in giving that we receive.” By asking for help, you are actually giving.

One last way of being generous with food involves sharing food as a resource with others. This could be expressed in such ways as inviting someone to dinner who would enjoy companionship, sharing or making food for someone who is sick or in need, or volunteering for a food bank or other food organization. This does not mean that you have to “give until it hurts,” but that everyone has worthwhile gifts to share. Each day offers a new way to invite generosity into your practice of eating mindfully. Which ones will you discover today for yourself – and for others?

Donald Altman, LPC, is a psychotherapist, former Buddhist monk, and award-winning writer.

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