

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

Overcoming Fear by Knowing Fear

By Donald Altman M.A., LPC

As a former senior mental health therapist at an intensive outpatient eating clinic, I dined often with patients—making sure they ate all their food. I saw individuals filled with anxiety and frozen in fear with the idea of taking another bite or trying to consume a “challenge” food, such as a slice of pizza, a serving of pudding, or a small scoop of ice cream. Do you fear food? If so, you are not alone. There are many chronic dieters and health addicts who have irrational food fears that are restricting their lives and food choices—often to the point of physical and emotional illness.

What exactly is fear? Fear is related to the need to escape or avoid a danger that is real or perceived. Fear can even be the *memory* of a threat. Giving in to an unrealistic food fear is much like

watching a scary movie over and over where the ending is always the same. That’s why fear gives us the sense of being stuck and hopeless. So is there a way out of



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the fear cycle?

Fortunately, mindfulness moves you past fear, and it does this by letting you closely examine and observe fear and anxiety, as if from a safe distance. Imagine this to be

like turning on the lights in the movie theatre so you can tell yourself, “It is only a movie that I’m getting frightened by.”

You can, for example, ask yourself these questions: What really triggers my fear? When did it first begin? Where do I notice the sensation of fear in the body? Is my fear connected with an image? If so, try to notice the image in as much detail as possible.

Fear of food is not innate. Show a baby a fat-free salad or a chocolate pie and it will not flinch from either. Fear of food is not innate, but learned. Fortunately, what can be learned can also be unlearned. Remember, scary movies don’t really make a whole lot of sense when you turn on the lights of curiosity, clear knowing and seeing.

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