

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

The Power of Permission

By Char Wilkins, LCSW

When we deny ourselves foods we enjoy, we are usually trying to push away

“bad” things or unpleasant thoughts or hang on to “good” times and thoughts. Both take a lot of energy and attention. We become obsessed about not eating a particular food by endlessly thinking about how not to eat it. Or we imagine how “good” we are because we aren’t eating the forbidden foods, which keeps us thinking about how not to eat them. We end up spending huge amounts of time thinking about food – exactly what we don’t want to do!

Surprisingly, giving ourselves permission can take the “fight” out

of it and change our relationship to that forbidden food. Simply becoming aware that we are engaging in a battle of imaginary wills is an important first step.

When we deprive ourselves, we initially feel strong. But when we “cave in,” we feel weak, as though the food itself has power over us.

Becoming mindful of this cycle, we can begin to see how this keeps us yo-yoing from one extreme to another: strong, then weak; powerful, then powerless.

Giving yourself permission to have chocolate isn’t the same as “giving in” or “giving up.” Permission is a mindful agreement with yourself to allow yourself a

favorite food. This requires slowing down, acknowledging feelings, sensations and thoughts, exploring choices, and making a decision. This process is very different from mindless behavior on autopilot.

What would it look like to give yourself permission? It might be reminding yourself that you can have some of that favorite later. Or maybe that you can have a small amount now that really satisfies your craving, comforts or soothes you. It could mean sitting down and allowing yourself to enjoy each bite of the desired food, savoring it with all your senses. Taking the fear, anger and anxiety out of eating by offering yourself mindful, kindly permission can help you feel less powerless and more in control.

Char Wilkins, MSW, LCSW, serves on the TCME board and is a mindfulness-based psychotherapist. She is the owner/director of the Center for Mindful Living in Connecticut. She can be contacted at www.amindfulpath.com.