

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

Slowing Down When Eating With Others

By Donald Altman, M.A., LPC

It's easy to get mindless when eating in social situations. Eating at a party, with family members, or at holiday gatherings can trigger strong emotional feelings. Eating with "food pushers" who constantly try to make you eat more food can be unpleasant, to say the least. Fortunately, there are four mindfulness skills that can help you manage these and other challenging situations: pausing, pacing, slowing down, and being flexible.

1) Slow down. Get grounded before socializing. Spend a few moments to center yourself before entering a party or sitting down at the dinner table. Take some long, satisfying diaphragmatic breaths to reduce your stress or anxiety level.

Combine this with a little stretching, such as rolling your head in a circle or rolling your shoulders to lessen tension.

"Remember that you don't have to be perfect when eating with others."



2) Pace your eating. This means checking in with your hunger. It helps to rate your hunger on a 1-10 scale (1 the least, 10 the most). If your hunger is in the 7-10 range, eat some food in advance. This

way it will be easier for you to eat moderately and pace yourself.

3) Pause while eating. Find ways to take a moment of rest. Put down your fork or spoon. Take a few breaths. Use this time to be attentive to others and to check in with your hunger level. To guard against "food pushers," learn to place smaller portions on your plate at any time. Give yourself permission to say "No, thank you" to more food.

4) Be flexible. Remember that you don't have to be perfect when eating with others. No one is a "perfect" eater. There are no "perfect" foods. With pacing, pausing and slowing down, you can mindfully navigate social eating challenges while also enjoying the food and the company.

Donald Altman, M.A., LPC, is a psychotherapist, former Buddhist monk, and author of *The Mindfulness Code and Meal by Meal*. Contact: info@mindfulpractices.com and www.mindfulpractices.com and www.mindfulnesscode.com

