

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

Thoughts That Flavor the Meal

By Megrette Fletcher, M.Ed., R.D., CDE

It is amazing to notice how much thoughts can influence whether a situation is viewed as “good” or “bad.” It is common for those scheduled for bariatric surgery (and even after surgery) to have worries about the unknown, hopes and expectations for the future, and questions related to the surgery itself. If these types of thoughts are present when eating, consider trying this suggestion.

Before you take a bite, pause and fill your lungs with air. Then slowly let the breath out. Now, observe the food before you. Look at it, noticing any labels of “good” or “bad,” “allowed” or “forbidden.” If this is hard to do, take another breath and slowly exhale – relax. Allow yourself to be a witness to the experience of eating a meal: Its shape, color and texture. Now, take a bite.



Let it rest in your mouth for a moment before chewing.

With your next bite, notice how the food feels in your mouth. Is the bite size comfortable? Does it feel too big to chew easily or too small to really taste the flavor? If the size of the bite was not pleasant, adjust the amount you select so you can actually taste the bite, chewing it a little bit longer each time before you swallow. Experiment with sizes and how long you chew each bite.

Now that you have had a few bites, ask yourself: Did slowing down and chewing my food feel new, different, or maybe a bit uncomfortable?

Eating in a mindful way allows you to “wake up” and notice new things.

These things may include taste, texture, or even how much food is selected for each bite. Frequently the information received does not stop there. When a person eats mindfully, she may notice how some thoughts can trigger anxiety, anger and desperation, making these emotions part of the meal.

If uncomfortable feelings are present while eating, take a deep breath. Fill your lungs with air, and then slowly let this air out. Remind yourself that you are not “bad,” “stupid,” “a failure” or “wrong.” These are just the thoughts and feelings that are with you. They are not facts.

For many individuals, the thoughts that are present when eating contribute a large part to how the meal tastes. An important question to ask is: Are these thoughts helping me enjoy the food in my mouth?

Practicing eating in a mindful way is more than seeing what and how much you eat. It is learning to welcome the thoughts that are present when you eat. This process of opening up can profoundly change the taste of the bite. At times you may realize it is your thoughts that are actually flavoring the meal. Noticing each bite can help you season the meal with thoughts you enjoy.

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