

# 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 Families from The Center for Mindful Eating



### At The Meal

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Eating together has long been known to create a sense of belonging and community. Yet, not all family meal times are relaxing. They may feel rushed or magnify the tone of the day. One way to make meal times more enjoyable is to think about how you and your family “arrive” at the meal. Begin to notice how your family starts a meal together. Are they beginning the meal in a way that will enable them to enjoy everyone’s company as well as the food that is prepared?

This small step can bring about a life-long change in you and your children’s eating habits. There isn’t one way to begin a meal. The key is finding a way that feels right for you and your family. Over the next three days (and beyond), make an effort to intentionally begin a meal. This is often referred to as “arriving”. When a family arrives, each person recognizes that they are part of a larger group – they are part of a family. Some days this can

be challenging-- so, check in with your family. Begin the process of learning what it is about the meal that they enjoy as well.

Consider if any of the following might help your family become more mindful.

**Centering words** -- Ask your family to say a few words to express gratitude for the meal before them. It could be as simple as saying ‘thank you’ or following a more traditional blessing or grace. If neither of these feels comfortable try creating a pause before eating to set the stage for an enjoyable meal.

*The most important thing about food is:  
when you eat,  
how you eat,  
why you eat.  
— Tibetan Sage*

**Noticing something about the meal** -- Children learn best by modeling. Help your family become aware of the different smells, tastes or colors that are part of the meal. This simple step creates interest in our meal, which is a great way to explore other things about food: where it was grown, the nutrition it contains, different ways to prepare it.

**Encouraging your family to slow down when eating** -- Helping your family eat in a more intentional and paced way offers

many health benefits. The most noticeable is that when people eat in a more paced way, they are better able to recognize the experience of fullness and stop eating. Experiment with simply placing the fork down after each bite or every other bite. Families with young children can often make these types of suggestions into a light hearted focus that the whole family can participate in. The key thing is to explore, experiment and have fun!

### Internet Resources

#### Mindful Eating

[www.tcme.org](http://www.tcme.org)

[www.ellynsatter.com/](http://www.ellynsatter.com/)

[www.eatingmindfully.com](http://www.eatingmindfully.com)

[www.balancedweightmanagement.com](http://www.balancedweightmanagement.com)

[www.med.umich.edu/umim/clinical/pyramid/index.htm](http://www.med.umich.edu/umim/clinical/pyramid/index.htm)

#### Body Image

[www.beyondhunger.org](http://www.beyondhunger.org)

[www.bodypositive.com](http://www.bodypositive.com)

[www.hugs.com](http://www.hugs.com)

[www.healthybodyimage.com](http://www.healthybodyimage.com)

#### Inspiration

[www.getinspired.org](http://www.getinspired.org)

[www.gratefulness.org](http://www.gratefulness.org)