



Mindful Eating

It is impossible to pay attention to every single thing that I do. My brain can only focus on one thing at a time, even when I think I am “multi-tasking.” Many of my decisions are made on autopilot. Some of my unhealthy habits may not be from lacking willpower, but lacking awareness instead.

Here are some tips to increase awareness:

- **Listen to my body.** How do I feel? Am I hungry or satisfied? If I am hungry after recently eating, what is triggering the feeling of hunger?
- **Only eat when hungry.** During weeks 2 and 3 the class talked about eating 3 balanced meals, but I should not force myself to eat when I am not hungry.
- **Don't slip into thinking: “I am not hungry anymore, but if I don't fill up I will get hungry before the next meal.”** If I get hungry later I can have a snack.
- **Enjoy food.** Spend time enjoying each bite instead of preparing for the next one. While I am eating do I notice all of the flavors, smells, colors, and textures of the food?
- **Put the fork down.** Take a 2-3 minute break a couple times through a meal; this gives the body a little rest to decide if it is still hungry.
- **Eat slower.** Set a timer and see if I can stretch my meal out longer than 20 minutes.
- **Use manners.** Eating with friends or family should be a time to socialize. Only talk when all food is swallowed between bites. This gives the stomach time to tell the brain it's getting full.
- **Limit distractions.** Do not do any other activities while eating like working, watching TV, reading, using my phone, or driving.
- **Enjoy small indulgences.** Don't label food as “good” vs. “bad” choices. If I want ice cream, have half a cup. Enjoy each bite without feeling guilty about my choice. Fit all foods into my plate, so I don't overeat when I have a craving.

- **Live in the moment.** Thinking about how things were in the past can make me feel depressed. Worrying about how things will be in the future can make me feel anxious. Focusing on the moment can help me feel more peaceful.
- **Leave some food.** Finishing every crumb of food might tell the brain that the body did not get enough to eat. By leaving a few bites behind I might be more satisfied after eating.

Which of the awareness tips will I try this week?

What can I do to remove distractions while eating?
