

A TASTE OF MINDFULNESS

Research shows that we make more than 200 food decisions each day and are unaware of ~90% of them. Many factors can interfere with your ability to accurately listen to your body's hunger cues. Mindful eating is one way you can step away from your routine eating habits, pay attention to WHY and HOW you are eating and begin to make informed eating decisions. Consider the steps below to increase your eating awareness and execution skills.

1

Shift out of autopilot. Before you eat ask yourself why you are eating:

- Hungry? See hunger scale.
- Bored, restless or eating for entertainment?
- Others are eating or to be social?
- Proximity - food just happens to be there?
- Feeling management (anxiety, stress, grief, loss, loneliness, excitement)?
- Conditioned eating? Used to eating a lot and often to support high volume training or learned to clean plate as a child ... etc.
- Food cravings?



Tune into your hunger and fullness cues:

- When you pay attention to your hunger and fullness cues and eat until satisfied your body will, over time, give clear signals. Meal planning and regular meals will help you find a rhythm allowing you to manage your hunger. If you find yourself waiting too long to eat you may become too hungry and overeat or, if you are constantly grazing you may under-eat or be less satisfied and eat more than needed over a day. Both situations can lead to a cyclical pattern of under or over eating.
- Check out the hunger scale below and aim to eat in the green zone.
- If you find that you are unable to eat only when in the green zones be patient with yourself as it has taken years for you to develop your current patterns of eating.



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HUNGER and FULLNESS SCALE		
5	Starving	Rip the fridge door off hungry – may feel nauseated, fatigued, shaky, lightheaded
4	Very hungry	Thinking about food nonstop – everything looks tasty. Feel lightheaded, irritable, hangry
2-3	Hungry	Thinking about food. Stomach is growling or you have hunger pangs - time to eat a meal.
1	A little hungry	Just starting to think about food – time to eat a snack
0	Fully satisfied	Have eaten the right amount. Neither hungry nor full. No longer thinking about food. If looking for food, ask self why.
-1	Full	Don't need/want anything else to eat. No longer thinking about food.
-2	Very full	Ate a few bites too many.
-3	Extremely full	Did not need the second helping.
-4	Stuffed	Uncomfortable, bloated.
-5	Painfully full	Feel sick



Food should be a pleasure. The moment we consciously deny ourselves something, the more we're likely to end up craving it. Consider getting rid of your eating rules.

3

Eat with awareness and savor your food:

- Strengthen your relationship with food by preparing meals or trying a new recipe.
- We eat with all of our senses so try to make your food look as good as possible, add color and textural variety.
- Celebrate food - use nice dishes rather than eating out of packages.
- Sit down while eating.
- Slow down and savor the flavor of each bite. Pause by putting cutlery down between bites and chew your food thoroughly.
- When you are eating, eat. Try not to multitask. Turn off technology unless it is to share a virtual meal with a friend.
- Resign from the clean plate club. Check in with your hunger and fullness cues and move away from the table when you are aware you are satisfied even if there is still food on your plate. Using a smaller plate may help. You can always have more if you are still hungry.



Pay attention to the "messy moments":

- It's easy to think about your eating when you are on-track or "eating clean" however, the times when you find yourself eating mindlessly or when not hungry are the most informative. Be curious. Journal what you were thinking and feeling before, during and after messy-moment eating.
- Pay attention to what happens and to your feelings around eating transitions (end of a meal/empty plate). Is there a sense of anxiety, tension, loss or grief? Do you rush into dessert or distract yourself completely with social media?
- Notice when should's, rigid rules or guilt pop into your mind. If self-critical thoughts creep into your mind, remember, a thought is not a fact.



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Paying attention and gaining awareness is how you can begin to understand the WHY'S of non-hunger eating and start to set small goals for more mindful eating and a healthy relationship with food.

Strategies and support to manage reasons underlying non-hunger eating:

- SET UP AN ACTION PLAN
 - Write a list of things to do instead of eating. Try 3 things on the list to get you out of the kitchen before you decide if you are really hungry. If you are hungry or still want to eat, sit down to a pre-planned snack and try to eat with awareness.
 - Journal 3 gratitudes and one "to work-on" per day.
- To help with in-the-moment anxiety:
<https://www.inc.com/melanie-curtin/neuroscience-says-listening-to-this-one-song-reduces-anxiety-by-up-to-65-percent.html>
- Visit the Centre for Clinical Intervention online at:
<https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself> for many resources including anxiety, depression, self esteem etc.
- Connect with trusted friends and family.
- Seek help from trained professionals. Talk to your Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute/Centre network provider or local professionals you have engaged with at your university or home program. If you do not have a professional you can contact, reach out to your coach who can help direct you to the appropriate support personnel.

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The information in this handout is intended for information purposes only and is NOT a substitute for diagnosis, treatment or the provision of advice by an appropriate health professional.