

Practical Steps To Mindful Eating

- Bringing awareness to your patterns and relationship to self and food

1. Move Away From The Screen

- o The screen includes all electronics - computer, phone, tablet, tv, etc
- o Without a screen in front of you, you become aware of eating and be mindful during your meal.
- o When you are present with your meal, your taste buds are awakened. You are aware of how much you are eating and what it is you are eating. The plate doesn't suddenly become empty and you don't recall how the food vanished.
- o Minimizes distractions stopping the unconscious eating which can lead to overeating.
- o Being away from a screen increases a sense of peace and calm during the meal so you can relax and enjoy it more.

2. Sit Down At A Table To Eat Your Meal

- o Try to use a plate, a knife and fork and sit down at a table so you can relax while you eat your meal.
- o Breathe deeply into the belly, 'fill the breath into the kidneys', exhale. Repeat 3 times or more until a sense of calmness is felt.
- o Observe what is on your plate so you can look forward to consuming it!
- o Standing creates stress and a sense of urgency so you unconsciously eat your meal without much enjoyment.
- o When eating in a state of calmness, digestion is improved rather than impaired. The digestive tract functions at its best without the stress of standing.

3. Observe How You Eat

- o Pay attention to the speed of how you eat. Are you like a vacuum sucking it all in? Or do you remember eating? If yes, refer to points 1 and 2 before reading on.
- o Are you chewing your food into a puree before you swallow?
This is not about chewing 30 or 50 times, but taking smaller forkfuls or bites and pureeing it with your teeth is recommended for optimal digestion.
- o When you chew more completely, you taste the nuance flavors more completely so you enjoy the meal more.
- o Saliva starts the digestion process, so the longer you chew, the better coated your food is with saliva and the better it will be broken down in the digestive tract.
- o Pureed food enables digestion to be more complete. The body is not designed to break down chunks of food. It can also lessen digestive imbalances, flatulence and GI distress.

4. Remove the Liquids From Your Meals

- o Liquids can dilute the digestive enzymes. Try to drink 2--30 mins before or after, not during your meals. Drinking room temperature water beforehand can create a sense of fullness.

- Do you chew 3 times, and use whatever liquids to swallow your meal? Refer to point 2 about chewing your food. Using liquids to help swallow your food defeats digestion. Refer to the point 3 regarding chewing food into a puree.
- If the food is too dry, keep chewing, or add green vegetables which have high water content (and additional nutrients).
- If you are using liquids with your meals, this may be an indication you may be rushing through your meals. This can cause stress and a decrease in digestive function. Using liquids sparingly will help you be more present to what it is you are eating.

5. Be Aware of Whether You Are Comfortable or Full?

- When do you stop eating - when you are comfortable? Or when totally stuffed?
- Do you feel compelled to eat everything on your plate? The stomach does not digest well when it is over-stuffed. Just like an over-stuffed washing machine, the clothes get wet, but they do not really get clean.
- How satisfied are you? What emotions are present? Are you eating to placate those emotions? If yes, go to point 6.
- Do you feel deprived with your choices? This may mean you can add something to make the meal more complete like a healthy fat or a healthy root vegetable. It may indicate you need to add a little sweetness into the meal with raisins, currants or some fruit.
- When you recognize comfort level and satiety, you will eat as much as you need and avoid feeling uncomfortable for hours later. You can also use those leftovers for your next meal or snack.

6. Reflect After Your Meal?

- Do you feel guilty about what you ate? Where your choices good vs bad or bad vs good? Reflect on why it is bad? Who taught you this labeling? Is there an emotion related to the choice that you made? Can you make peace with that emotion knowing that it is a human condition and the emotion needs a hug vs criticism.
- Do you feel rushed? Refer to points 1 and 3. Try to be present with your meal and focus on enjoyment of that meal.
- Do you feel self hatred around choosing the wrong thing? How can you modify that choice for next time? Can you change the mindset to 'I am fueling my body with foods that nourish my body, mind and soul', and ask your body what it wants in a short meditation.
- Do you feel triggered into an emotional tailspin? First, accept that the emotion has surfaced. Then try to understand that trigger. For example, if you eat crunchy chips, are you feeling overwhelmed? If yes, then try to look at all those things that you have to do and list the tasks associated with them. Make that list and choose 1 item to work on at a time. You will find that you may still eat the chips, but it will be a normal portion rather than the whole bag. You may feel a sense of calm, then accomplishment once you break down the reasons for feeling the overwhelm, or whatever emotion surfaces for you.
- Schedule an emotional release techniques (Path) session with Joanna to fully understand and release the trigger. Or a Be Whole session to add the nutrition therapy suggestions.