

# MINDFUL EATING

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# WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

mind·ful·ness

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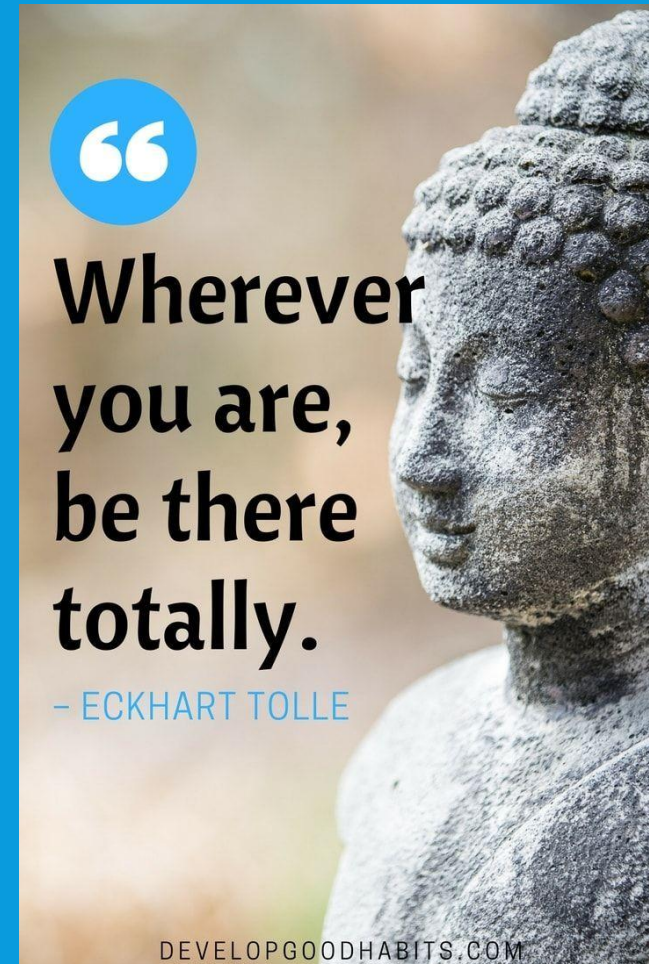
*noun*

1. the quality or state of being conscious or aware of something.
2. a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting



# MINDFULNESS

- Based on Buddhist meditation practice
  - The premise was to be present moment to moment throughout the day.
  - Accepting of your thoughts, emotions, etc. with no judgement.
- In modern day, its health benefits have been greatly established and is now used as a way to treat ailments such as:
  - Stress
  - Anxiety
  - Depression
  - Eating disorders
  - Mental health disorders



# WHY MINDFULNESS?

- The premise of mindfulness is to be fully present in the here and now
  - Engaged in whatever is currently going on
  - Mindless functioning – ex how many times have you driven somewhere and you don't remember how you got there
  - Mindfulness is a remedy to this
- Mindfulness is not something you practice once a day - it's something that you learn to incorporate in your every day
  - This does not eliminate stress or difficult times, but it helps us become more aware and equipped to handle emotions and hard times
- In the past 10 years, there have been over 200 studies on the benefits of incorporating mindfulness
  - Results have found improvement in stress, depression, anxiety, improved body image, etc.

# MINDFUL EATING

- What is mindful eating?
  - Shifting the focus on the food you're eating, whenever and wherever you are. You are aware of what you are eating, but more in the sense of focusing on the relationship to food and focusing on how the food tastes, feels, and makes you feel.
  - You become more focused on what the food is and less on whether it's "good" or "bad" food and focus more on the experience of eating the food, your personal cravings, your physical cues before, during and after eating.



# MINDFUL EATING

- When we are born, we have an innate ability to determine when we are hungry and when we are full
  - We also have no labels on food, all foods are nourishing and eliminate the feeling of hunger
- Over time and exposure to different messages, we begin to lose the ability to listen to these internal cues
  - We begin to label different foods as “good” and “bad”
  - With these labels we also begin to dissociate from the cues and signals our body sends
  - We no longer know how to eat when we are hungry and stop when we are full

# MINDFUL EATING

- What does mindful eating look like?
  - Activity: the next time you sit down for a meal
  - Sit down, with your phone in another room
  - Take one bite of your meal, then set your fork down.
  - Focus on chewing the food, all the flavors, the textures, even your emotions while eating the food.
  - Don't talk while you're eating your food, limit any distractions and focus solely on the process of eating and the emotions around it.
  - Continue doing this with every bite, pausing for at least 2-3 minutes between bites, stopping when you feel satisfied.
  - Reflection on how foods made you feel
- This is mindful eating

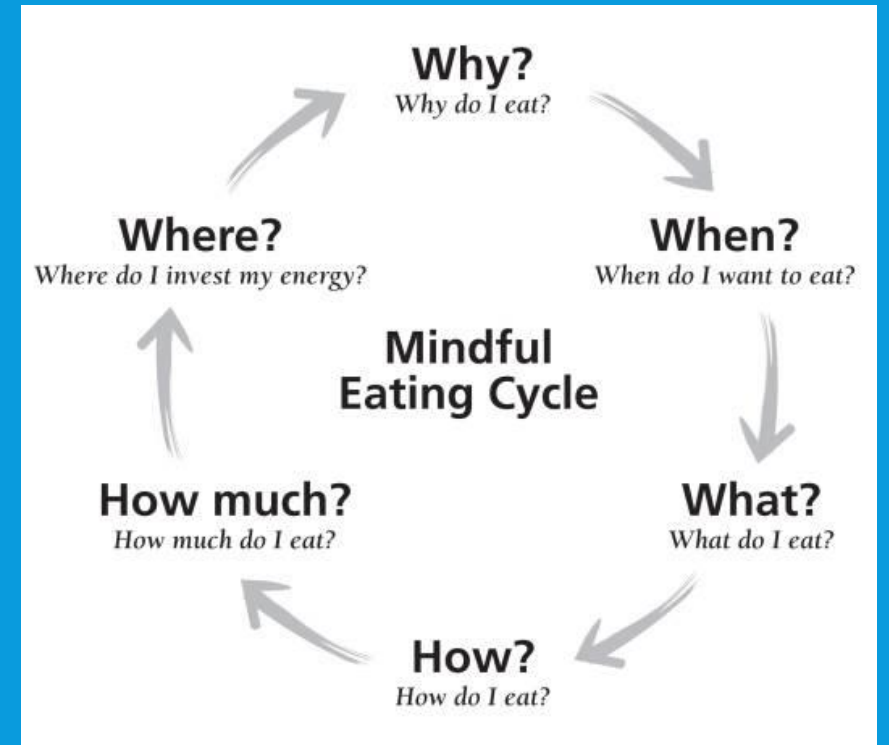
# MINDFUL EATING

- Mindful eating is not...
  - A diet
  - Focused on eliminating any foods
- Mindful eating is...
  - Eating slowly and limiting distractions
  - Listening to your body – ie hunger cues
  - Learning when you are truly hungry versus a different type of hunger
  - Engaging all senses when you eat, noticing smells, textures, flavors, sounds, sight
  - Learning and eliminating any kind of food guilt or anxiety around foods
  - Eating food to maintain your health and well-being
  - Choosing to eat food that is both pleasing to you and nourishing to your body by using all your sense to explore, savor and taste
  - Noticing how foods make you feel and impact how you function throughout the day
  - Appreciating your food, instead of loathing what you eat



# MINDFUL EATING

- We have become disconnected from our bodies while eating due to external cues
  - When we eat now, we hardly listen to what our bodies crave/want, how hungry we are, or how much we're eating.
- Questions to ask yourself before eating:
  - Am I hungry?
  - How hungry am I?
  - Does my body need this?
  - Why am I eating this?
  - How do I want to feel after this meal?



# MINDFUL EATING

- Mindful eating is an approach that removes any labels on food
  - “good”
  - “bad”
  - “healthy”
  - “clean”
  - “unhealthy”
- By removing all labels on food, you eliminate any guilt for eating certain foods, which allows you to listen to what your body needs and wants
- This enables you to truly enjoy the food and will likely reduce binge eating or mindless eating

# MINDFUL EATING

- Mindful eating research
  - In a systematic review, it was identified as an effective treatment for binge eating, emotional eating, and eating due to external cues<sup>1</sup>
    - There was not enough evidence to justify using this approach for weight management
  - In a randomized controlled study evaluating obese women, mindful eating was found to help improve fasting blood glucose levels and decreased sweet consumption<sup>2</sup>
  - In another randomized controlled study in post menopausal women, it was found that mindful eating lowered weight, BMI, waist-hip ratio, binge eating, interleukin-6, and C-reactive protein<sup>3</sup>

1. Warren, J. M., Smith, N., & Ashwell, M. (2017). A structured literature review on the role of mindfulness, mindful eating and intuitive eating in changing eating behaviours: effectiveness and associated potential mechanisms. *Nutrition Research Reviews*, 30(2), 272–283. doi: 10.1017/S0954422417000154

2. Mason, A.E., Epel, E.S., Kristeller, J. *et al.* Effects of a mindfulness-based intervention on mindful eating, sweets consumption, and fasting glucose levels in obese adults: data from the SHINE randomized controlled trial. *J Behav Med* 39, 201–213 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10865-015-9692-8>

3. Smith, B.W., Shelley, B.M., Sloan, A.L. *et al.* A Preliminary Randomized Controlled Trial of a Mindful Eating Intervention for Post-menopausal Obese Women. *Mindfulness* 9, 836–849 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-017-0824-9>

# MINDFUL EATING BENEFITS

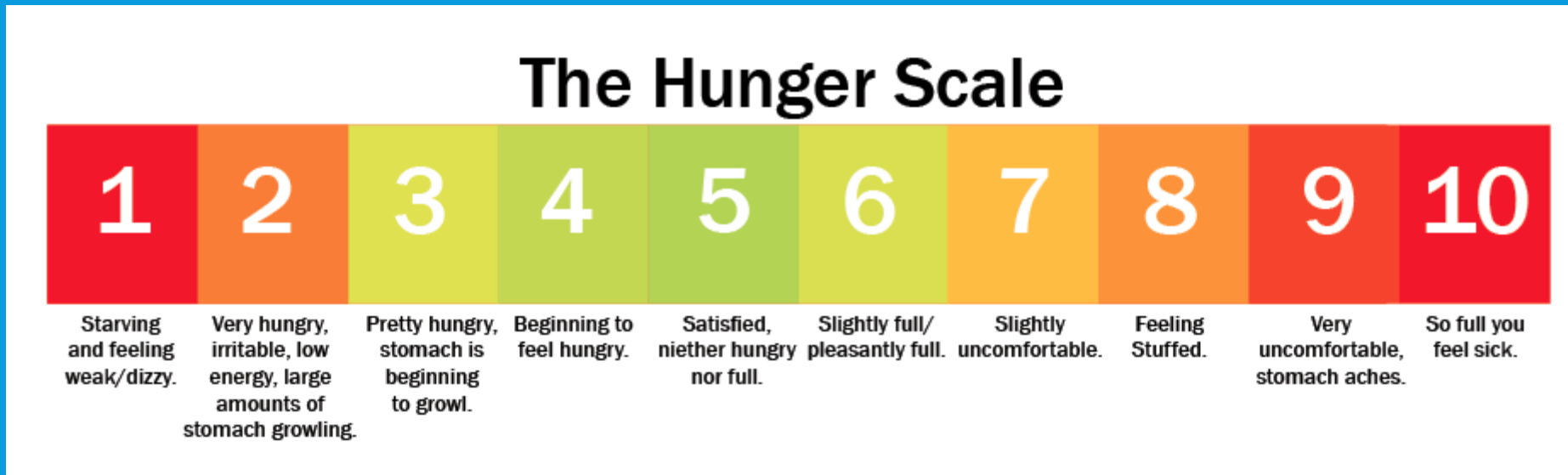
- Reconnects you to innate hunger and satiety cues
- Provides you with food freedom
- Helps you nourish your body, mind and heart
- Empowers you to make healthful choices based on your body's needs and preferences
  - Individualization is key!
- Shifts food choice and control from external sources to your body's innate needs

# MINDFUL EATING

- Things to try while getting started:
  - Set a timer for 20 minutes, and take that amount of time to eat a regular-sized meal.
  - Eat with your non-dominant hand or use chopsticks if you aren't used to using them
  - Eat silently for 5 minutes, concentrating on the steps to produce that meal from growing in the field to preparation
  - Take small bites and chew the food well
  - Before grabbing a snack, ask yourself "am I really hungry?" If you answered "no," then find something else to do
    - The Hunger/fullness scale

# MINDFUL EATING

## The Hunger Scale



# MINDFUL EATING

- Intuitive Eating
  - Intuitive Eating is a self-care eating framework, which integrates instinct, emotion, and rational thought
  - This is NOT a diet
  - All food rules or food guidelines are out the window
  - You learn to listen to your internal hunger cues, cravings, and preferences, and that's what you eat
    - Stomach growling, head ache, nausea, irritability, cravings
  - Yes, you will eat things like cheeseburgers, pizza, desserts
    - That's ok. The key is to tune into how your body feels after eating these foods

# MINDFUL EATING RESOURCES

- The Center for Mindful Eating
- Intuitive Eating by Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch
- Headspace
- Intuitiveeating.org
- Health at Every Size
- Ellen Satter Division of Responsibility



QUESTIONS?