

Mindful Eating Exercise

Have you ever been eating out of a packet, put your hand in and realised you had finished it all without even realising? And were you watching the television or looking at your computer at the time? Or have you ever been in a rush and eaten your lunch/dinner so quickly that you haven't even tasted it? What about popping a piece of cheese into your mouth whilst making sandwiches?

You are not alone!

We all have done these things time and time again. When we are distracted we tend to go into 'autopilot', where we do familiar tasks robotically without having to think about them. This frees our mind up to concentrate on other problems. We do the same with tasks such as driving, brushing our teeth and getting dressed in the morning. The problem is when we are

eating automatically we are not aware of the amount we are having, are not fully enjoying the food and are not listening to our body's hunger and fullness signals.

To work out whether you are prone to 'mindless' eating, ask yourself the questions on the next page.

Tips and advice

If you think that you could benefit from mindful eating, why not try some of our top tips:

- Do not eat in front of the television, computer or in the car.
- Check your hunger and fullness levels before eating. Try to eat when you are hungry and know when you are full. If you have the desire to eat when not hungry, identify what the trigger is e.g. emotional, habitual.
- Make sure you keep checking your hunger and fullness levels throughout the meal. Try to stop when you are full.
- Enjoy food with all senses spend some time noticing the colour and smell
- Taste the food first without chewing. Then chew slowly savouring each bite; put your fork down in-between bites and stop eating to take a drink of water allowing your body enough time to signal the brain that it is satisfied.
- If you are in a rush, eat at least the first bite with complete awareness.
- Acknowledge there is no right or wrong way to eat, no food is 'good' or 'bad' and try not to be judgemental about the way you eat.
- Finally, practice, it takes time to develop healthy eating practices but it becomes more natural as time goes on

1. I tend to stop eating when I am full

All of the time Most of the time Occasionally Sometimes Almost never

2. I eat when I am hungry rather than emotional

All of the time Most of the time Occasionally Sometimes Almost never

3. I try not to 'pick' at food

All of the time Most of the time Occasionally Sometimes Almost never

4. I taste each bite before reaching the next

All of the time Most of the time Occasionally Sometimes Almost never

5. When I eat, I think about how nourishing the food is for my body

All of the time Most of the time Occasionally Sometimes Almost never

6. I am non-judgmental of myself and my body when I accidentally overeat

All of the time Most of the time Occasionally Sometimes Almost never

7. I don't multi-task while I eat. When I eat, I just eat

All of the time Most of the time Occasionally Sometimes Almost never

8. I don't have to eat everything on my plate, I can leave what I don't want

All of the time Most of the time Occasionally Sometimes Almost never

9. I tend to eat slowly, chewing each bite

All of the time Most of the time Occasionally Sometimes Almost never

10. I recognise when I slip into mindless eating (e.g. zoned out, popping food into my mouth)

All of the time Most of the time Occasionally Sometimes Almost never