

# mindful eating

Eating is a healthy, natural and pleasurable activity. However, with so many distractions and the overabundance of food available to us, eating can sometimes become mindless, a response to an emotion, or can even bring up feelings of guilt. It is important to be mindful of **what** we're eating and **why**.

## what is mindfulness?

**Mindfulness** is about being conscious and attending to your moment-by-moment experiences, thoughts and emotions with an open, non judgmental approach. Research has shown that mindfulness can help with weight management and improving eating behaviours.

## the mindful eating cycle

The mindful eating cycle can help you get a better idea of why you're choosing to eat at any given time. Although it seems simple, asking yourself, "Am I hungry?" is the first step to understanding why, when, what, how, how much and where you eat at any given time. Before you eat your next meal, try asking yourself these questions:

### Why am I hungry?

What is driving me to feel hungry at this point in time?

### When am I hungry?

When do I feel like eating? When do I think about eating and when do I decide to eat?

### What do I want to eat?

What food do I choose from all the available options?

### How will I eat?

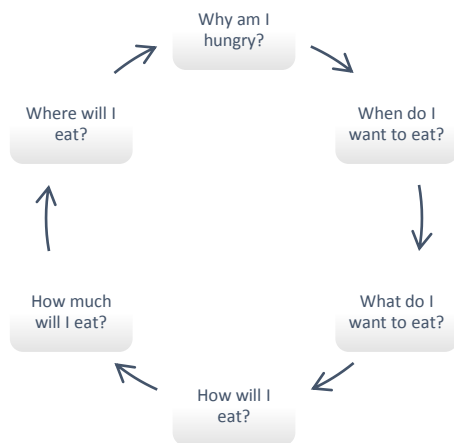
When I eat, do I eat alone? With friends? In front of the TV?

### How Much will I eat?

How much fuel do I need consume before I feel full?

### Where will I eat?

Where will I eat my food? Will I take the time to sit down and enjoy my food or do I have to eat on the go?



## tips for mindful eating

- ✓ **Pay attention to hunger cues:** Before you begin eating, take a minute to reflect upon what you're feeling. Are you rushed? Bored? Anxious? Are you actually hungry? After you take a moment to reflect, decide if you really want to eat.
- ✓ **Sit down:** If possible, try not to eat on the go. Take the time to sit down and enjoy your food. You're less likely to enjoy your food if you're distracted or multi-tasking, and it's harder to keep track of how much you're eating if you snack on the go.
- ✓ **Turn off your screens:** It's much harder to be mindful of your food if you're "plugged in" to the internet or watching TV. These distractions often make us less aware of what and how much we're eating.
- ✓ **Make yourself a plate:** Try not to eat straight out of a bag or box. It's much harder to gauge how much you've had to eat. Take the time to put your food on a plate; this will make it easier to practice portion control.
- ✓ **Put down your utensil:** Often we prepare our next morsel of food when we are still on the previous bite. Try putting down your utensil when you're chewing and pick it up again once you have enjoyed and swallowed each bite.
- ✓ **Be a food critic:** Act like you're a food critic. Whether you're eating out at a fine restaurant or eating leftovers, eat slowly and carefully and pay attention to every flavor, texture and sensation you feel from each bite of food.
- ✓ **Pay attention to fullness cues:** Stop eating once you feel slightly full, and not when you feel stuffed. It can be difficult to catch this moment so pay attention the way your stomach feels while you eat.

## hunger & fullness scale



1 - starving

2 - ravenous

3 - slightly hungry

4 - hungry

5 - satisfied

6 - slightly full

7 - full

8 - slightly overfull

9 - overfull

10 - stuffed