

# Eat Mindfully

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Mindful eating is a great way to start a mindfulness practice. For most of us, eating is something we are going to do anyway, so it doesn't require adding one more thing to the calendar.

Eating is often something that a lot of us do on autopilot. Many of us eat on the go, while doing homework or watching tv. Even when we're aware that we are consuming food, we may be distracted by our phones and mental to-do lists – sometimes the pull to simply check eating off that list is strong.

Mindful eating offers us a path towards actually experiencing our food. While autopilot is useful when we need to recall a particular passcode, it can lessen our ability to notice – to enjoy the mind/body connection that is at the heart of eating.

Mindfulness assists us in focusing on the present moment. And this includes acknowledging, and even embracing, how you feel, your thoughts, and the sensations your body experiences when you eat.

The concept of mindful eating may be new to you. Cultivating a practice of slowing down and paying attention to flavors, textures, aromas and more, is akin to a type of meditation.

The invitation is to give it a try. You may find that through the practice (there are no experts, it is a practice) you begin to enjoy the experience of eating a bit more. You may find certain benefits that affect your mood, energy, and other aspects of your life as a student.

Whether you are about to enjoy a meal or snack, consider slowing it down and taking a bit of time to practice mindful eating.

Begin by bringing attention to your food.

Notice.

The invitation is to approach the food as though you had never seen anything like it before.

Look at it closely and carefully.

Approach the food with curiosity – What do you see?

Perhaps you take in the light and shadow, color and shape of the food.

Slowly shift your attention to how the food feels.

Notice the texture— Is what you're feeling smooth, sharp, maybe it's rough, sticky or dry.

Draw your attention to smelling the food. Place it just below your nostrils, noticing any scent as you inhale. What scent remains as you exhale.

Just notice.

Is the fragrance intense, mild; perhaps there is no scent at all.

Slow it down even more.

Place a small portion of the food into your mouth.

With your teeth and tongue, explore the texture of the food.

When you're ready, bite into the food.

Notice the sensations of taste – however strong, slight or neutral.

Take time to pay attention to flavors, the urge to swallow, the very feeling of chewing.

If your mind wanders it's okay.

Moving from thing-to-thing is what minds do.

Your mind may cause you to visit places in the past or encourage constructions of the future.

Notice when your attention pulls away from the food.

When that happens, breathe in and out deeply.

With gentleness and compassion, walk your attention back to the sensations of mindful eating.