TOP 7 STRATEGIES TO BECOMING A MINDFUL EATER

1 **Gain awareness of how you eat, why, and how much.**

Becoming a mindful eater starts with understanding your current eating cycle. Are you an intuitive eater, restrictive eater, overeater or an eat-repent-repeat eater? The type of eater you are determines why, when, how, and how much you currently eat. Gaining an understanding of your current cycle will help you gain clarity on how to become a mindful eater.

2 **Honor your body's hunger and fullness signals.**

If you're hungry, eat! The key to being mindful about your body isn't depriving yourself – it's eating the *right thing* when you are hungry. There is no one "right thing" to eat: it's the food that fuels you for your day and leaves you satisfied. Eat slowly, giving your body time to digest – and when you feel satisfied or full, stop eating. You may find you need less food than you anticipated.

3 **Employ all of your senses as you eat.**

The appearance, flavor, and scent of food makes an instant impression on your senses. Your personal biases, environment, and emotions affect your perception of food. Take note of how your senses influence your experience with food by answering the following questions: Does the food make your mouth water at first sight? Does the size, shape, or color produce a reaction? Do you like the smell? What sound does the food make when it is being prepared and consumed? Does your food have a specific texture, or touch? And finally, what does it taste like? Enjoy every bite!

4 **Deal with emotional triggers that tell you to eat or not eat when you are hungry.**

Many emotional triggers lead people to eat. If you find yourself heading to the pantry when you're stressed, sad, bored or happy, stop and do a Mind-Body-Heart scan. Determine your true emotional wants and desires, which may be relaxing, self-care, being creative, journaling, taking a walk, or calling a friend. Confront your emotions head on rather than expecting food to change your state.

5 **Let go of guilt and judgement around food and your body.**

Food rules are ineffective because they leave you feeling guilty about what you eat and how you look. When you hear the voice in your head saying, "You can't eat that because...," stop and ask yourself if this rule is rational. Food is fuel for your body. Give yourself permission to eat the foods you love. If you tell yourself you can't have cookies or chips anymore, what do you immediately want to eat? When those foods are no longer on the "bad" list, they become less desirable. Also, let go of judging your body and comparing it to other bodies. All bodies are beautiful and worthy.

6 **Be aware of how the foods you choose affect the way your body feels after you eat.**

Being mindful includes an awareness of how you feel after you eat. The foods you eat affect your serotonin and dopamine levels, which impact your mood. Take notice of your energy level and mood before and after a meal. If you feel lethargic after eating pizza, pasta or red meat, switch to fish, chicken, sweet potato, brown rice, fruits and veggies and see if you notice a difference.

7 **Know YOU are in charge of your food choices, and understand emotional eating and dieting are the opposite of mindful eating.**

Emotional eating and dieting are the opposite of mindful eating. Next time you reach for a snack, take a moment to ask yourself, "Are you craving a specific, unhealthy food or will any meal do the trick?;" "Is it your stomach or your head that's telling you you're hungry?" These questions will help you identify if you're emotional eating and give you the power to make the best choice for your body.

Healthy eating isn't about rules or guilt; it's about learning what's right for your body. By listening to and understanding the way different foods affect your energy and mindset, you can find exactly the right balance for better health – and a better life!

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