



mindful  
eating  
made  
easy

For mindfulness junkies who  
love food as much as we do.

## Benefits of Mindful Eating

Mindfulness is a term that has become embedded in our everyday language, but its meaning is more profound than how we use it in our driven, multitasking, social structure. This term has become popular because it urges conscious awareness of whatever the focus might be. It has become a method of encouraging someone to take good care of him- or herself. Likewise, “mindful eating” encourages us to gain awareness of our eating experiences.

The term “mindfulness” was defined by Jon Kabat-Zinn as “paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally”. Kabat-Zinn was the original developer and leader of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. He wrote the book *Full Catastrophe Living* in 1990 to offer guidance on living mindfully based on his experiences with this program since 1979.

Mindful eating (i.e., paying attention to our food, on purpose, moment by moment, without judgment) is an approach to food that focuses on individuals’ sensual awareness of the food and their experience of the food. It has little to do with calories, carbohydrates, fat, or protein. The purpose of mindful eating is not to lose weight, although it is highly likely that those who adopt this style of eating will lose weight. The intention is to help individuals savor the moment and the food and encourage their full presence for the eating experience.

## Tips to Use Mindful Eating to Improve Your Well-Being

- 1. Begin with your shopping list.** Consider the health value of every item you add to your list and stick to it to avoid impulse buying when you're shopping. Fill most of your cart in the produce section and avoid the center aisles—which are heavy with processed foods—and the chips and candy at the check-out counter.
- 2. Come to the table with an appetite— but not when ravenously hungry.** If you skip meals, you may be so eager to get anything in your stomach that your first priority is filling the void instead of enjoying your food.
- 3. Start with a small portion.** It may be helpful to limit the size of your plate to nine inches or less.
- 4. Appreciate your food.** Pause for a minute or two before you begin eating to contemplate everything and everyone it took to bring the meal to your table. Silently express your gratitude for the opportunity to enjoy delicious food and the companions you're enjoying it with.
- 5. Bring all your senses to the meal.** When you're cooking, serving, and eating your food, be attentive to color, texture, aroma, and even the sounds different foods make as you prepare them. As you chew your food, try identifying all the ingredients, especially seasonings.

**6. Take small bites.** It's easier to taste food completely when your mouth isn't full. Put down your utensil between bites.

**7. Chew thoroughly.** Chew well until you can taste the essence of the food. (You may have to chew each mouthful 20 to 40 times, depending on the food.) You may be surprised at all the flavors that are released.

**8. Eat slowly.** If you follow the advice above, you won't bolt your food down. Devote at least five minutes to mindful eating before you chat with your tablemates.

Mindful Eating is not the same as Intuitive Eating. Eating mindfully is about awareness and intention. *The core of this healthy eating strategy is to slow down and be fully in tune with all tastes and textures of the food at hand .*

Here are some [quick tips to eat more mindfully](#) :

### **1. Turn Off or Silence Your Devices**

Even when eating from home, this can help minimize distractions. Take the time to relax and enjoy your food without all the interruptions.

### **2. Take a Moment to Clear Your Head**

Appreciate the food that's in front of you. It takes a lot to prepare and produce the food you're about to eat.

### **3. Use Your Senses**

Mindful eating involves all 5 senses, so take note of the appearance, aroma, textures, flavors, and sounds of your food.

### **4. Name the Flavors**

As you eat your meal or snack, consider the 5 basic tastes and which you are experiencing. The 5 basic tastes are umami, bitter, sweet, salty, and sour. Sometimes foods contain more than one – can you tell the difference?

### **5. Notice the Texture**

Is the bite crunchy or creamy? Is it dry or moist? Paying attention to the texture of each bite you take may help make your eating experience more intentional.

### **6. Set Down the Fork**

In between bites, place your utensils down on your plate to help slow your pace. Mindful eating is an experience, not a race!