



Mindful Eating by Linda Ciotola

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Eating is a sensory experience meant to nourish us nutritionally and sensorily (and often socially as well). We miss the experience if we are eating on "auto-pilot" - rather like trying to enjoy the smell of a fragrant flower if it is quickly passed under the nose instead of our being able to hold it under the nose and breathe the fragrance in.

Here are a few steps to begin to practice Mindful Eating:

1) Settle into the chair and feel the support of the seat under you; the support of the chair back behind you; and all four corners of the feet firmly grounded to the earth (from which the food grows) .

2) Take in the surrounding sights - notice and label them. For example, the color on the wall , the fabric of the tablecloth, pictures , light coming thru the window

3) Notice sounds - perhaps a tea kettle whistling or glassware clinking

4) Notice smells - can you identify a food by its smell? Does it smell sweet? Pungent? Other?

5) Tune into the body and discover the level of hunger. Think of a car's gas gauge:

0=empty "Feed me NOW!"

10=Full (gas tank overflowing !)

Experiment with feeding the body when the gauge is at 3 and 1/2 and stopping around 7 (know you can always eat again when you get the hunger cue). Cues may be the stomach gnawing or growling or a slight headache (unless you have that from caffeine withdrawal or some medical reason), or sagging energy.

6) If you are serving yourself , notice the colors and textures and smells as you place food on the plate . If you are being served, notice those when the plate comes to your table - take it all in with sight and smell before tasting.

If you serve yourself, take half of what you think you are hungry for knowing you can always get more .

7) As you begin eating take small bites and chew each mouthful 10x before swallowing . This allows for the taste buds to have time to notice the various flavors like salty, sweet, bitter, spicy, pungent; various textures : chewy , crunchy, smooth , creamy. This also helps with the process of accurately tuning into hunger/fullness cues because it takes 20 min for the brain to get the signal

from the stomach that the stomach is full - this gives the signal a chance to register before we have eaten beyond the comfort level.

8) Put the fork down and take little breaks to slow the process down. Get curious about what you notice about the food - is the taste what you expected? Different ? How about the temperature? Texture? Does anything surprise you? For example, is it saltier than you expected? Did you taste a spice you weren't expecting?

9) Check in to fullness level about 2/3 thru the meal . Assess. Are you still feeling more "empty" than full? Or the reverse? Are your taste buds missing something they wanted ? For example , did they want hot and spicy and maybe tasted citrusy instead? Choose what is needed here - stopping? getting more food? adding more flavor? more water to drink ? ??

10) Once the meal is over, identify any surprises, likes, dislikes.

Mindfulness After the Meal : Becoming Your Own Detective :

Beginning about an hour after the meal and continuing periodically until the hunger cue begins to say "feed me" again: Tune into body and brain signals related to energy. for example , Are you sleepy , drowsy, eyelids heavy , yawning, want a nap ? If so, take note of what you ate and what the hunger and fullness cues were at the previous meal. Sometimes we have an energy drop when we eat certain foods or food combinations. On the other hand, do you feel alert, energetic? Another aspect of being a detective is noticing what feelings may arise in this process and how are the feelings connected to the choices (?) Being a good detective thru tuning in mindfully to the brain and body will provide information so you can make food choices that literally help you feel well

Mindful Eating Brings Pleasure to the Experience and Nourishing Energy to the Body and Brain. Breathe. Notice. Chew. Actively Pause. Notice. Taste... Enjoy! Bon Appetit!

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