

Mindful Eating Techniques

By Chef Jen, RDN/LDN, RYT-200

This week we are focusing on mindfulness. First of all, let me describe “mindfulness”: it’s a psychological process of paying attention to the experiences that are occurring in your present moment, purposefully and non-judgmentally. When it comes to mindful eating, this means a few things: appreciating, enjoying, and being aware of your food.

Appreciation:

When it comes to appreciating, you can think of this in many different aspects, such as the farmer who produced it (fun fact- today, Oct 12 is Farmer’s Day!); the farm hands who help tend to and harvest the crops; or the person(s) who prepared the meal.

You can say a blessing of thanks in your heart for the food.

You can also think of it as a *visual* appreciation. Enjoy the look, the presentation and the colors in your food.

When you eat your food, chew slowly and thoroughly so that your taste buds can pick up on all the marvelous flavors which the food is creating for you.

Enjoyment:

Prior to eating, enjoy the preparation of the food. You can take this time to have music playing in the background or you can make it quite time and meditate as you are preparing and cooking.

Enjoy the cooking or baking process.

Enjoy the company or the environment within which you are eating.

Savor the flavors and the aromas!

Awareness:

First and foremost: Put the technology away! Turn off the TV. Appreciate yourself, whomever else may be dining with you (if there is) and the meal.

Noticing the colors, the aroma, the “mouth-feel” of your food.

Enjoy the environment you are eating in such as, in your home, outside or the pets/animals who may be near. If you are in your home, since so many of us have been home-based for 6+months, take this time to look differently at your kitchen, dining room, or wherever you are eating. Reflect on the good memories that you’ve had in the room or at that table. Try to find the good in what is surrounding you. Don’t sit there thinking: “I really need to repaint.” Or “I can’t stand this table, it’s so old” or other negative things.

Limit other distractions. If the children are younger and fighting or not eating their meals, acknowledge them, but continue to focus on yours. Kind of like the oxygen masks on the

airplane, take care of you first so that you can care for others. Children will learn by your actions, maybe not right away, but they will pick up on it and eventually adapt it for themselves (hopefully...) Try to have something nearby for them, that's not technology based, to focus on besides whatever may be triggering them for the fight, tantrum or breakdown.

If you are dining alone, reflect on the fact that you can appreciate the fact that you can afford to put food on your table; have the capacity to prepare and cook it; and have shelter.

I know that most of this is easier said than done! But, you don't have to do *every single one of these steps* to eat mindfully. You can start slowly by enacting a few of these steps. Work to master them. Then build off of that by adding more into your practice. (YES- it's a practice!!)

Mindful eating is a great way to make yourself SLOW DOWN and take the time with your food. Best of all, when you enact mindful eating, it helps you to foster a healthy relationship with food. That's something that we all need.

Be well, eat well, walk your dog and Bon Appetit!!!

~~ Chef Jen