

## Mindful Eating - Activity

**Goal:** To explore mindful eating and its importance to our whole-body health

### Objectives

- Define mindfulness
- Discuss the benefits of practicing mindful eating
- Identify how to make mindful eating a regular habit

### Related Handouts

- Mindful eating activity

### Lesson Plan

#### 1. Define Mindfulness

Questions you can ask:

*What does it mean to practice mindfulness?*

*What is mindfulness?*

- A simple way to define mindfulness is being present.
- Mindfulness is the opposite of multitasking or hurrying through something. It is slowing down and paying attention to “now”. There is so much that may be going on around us and in our heads. It can be difficult to focus on what is happening right now and how we are feeling, in our minds and bodies, at this very moment.
- Practicing mindfulness can help us to manage our emotions, focus, and achieve in school or other activities we enjoy.
- We can practice mindfulness throughout our daily lives- while doing regular activities like brushing our teeth, walking, and eating.

#### 2. Practicing mindful eating

Questions you can ask:

*What does it mean to eat mindfully?*

*Have you ever eaten a meal and can't remember the flavors or tastes?*

*Have you ever eaten so quickly that you felt sick?*

Mindful eating can:

- Allow us to tune into our feelings connected with the foods we are eating.
- Help us connect to the journey, history, and cultural meaning of those foods.
- Allow us to slow down our eating, which is important for improving our digestion and maximizing the nutrition we get from our meals.
- Help us with hunger cues. That means mindful eating can help us recognize when we are hungry and full.

## How do I practice mindful eating?

Does this sound familiar? You sit down to watch your favorite show with a big bag of chips. After what feels like only a couple of bites, you look down and the bag is empty! You are too stuffed for a nutritious meal and you can barely remember the flavors of the chips.

When you eat mindfully, you sit down with your plate, preferably at a table. You stare at it for a moment. You inhale the aromas from the food. You consider where it came from and all the people you were involved in the food from where it came from until it arrived on your plate. You chew slowly because you don't know when you will have this exact meal again. You are able to taste the different flavors and it is an enjoyable moment you can remember.

Mindful eating is a practice we should have most of the time when eating. Before mindful eating becomes natural for us, we need to actively think about how to arrange our environment and prepare ourselves for mindfully eating each meal.

Questions you can ask:

*What are some things to consider about our environments to support mindful eating?*

*What are some things in our environment that prevent eating mindfully?*

*How do your emotions or feelings impact how you eat or feel about your food?*

*How does how you eat impact how you feel in your body? About your food?*

- Environment
  - *Where is the most comfortable place for you to have your meal?*
  - *Who are you sharing this meal time with?*
  - *What emotions do you have when you share this time?*
- Physical
  - How we eat our food is important
  - Try to chew your food as much as possible. Chewing food allows you to enjoy it more and is the first step to digestion.
  - You will be able to get more nutrients from your meals if it is chewed enough before it gets to your stomach.
- Emotional
  - *What feelings do you have about how your food will affect your body?*
  - *Do you think it will give you energy?*
  - *Do you think it will make you sluggish or tired?*
  - *Does this meal make you happy?*

## **Mindful Eating Activity**

- Each student will wash their hands and receive one small food (suggestions: raisin, piece of dark chocolate, apple slice, carrot)

### *Directions*

- Check-in with your emotions and physical space. Think to yourself: How do you feel today? How do you feel about this food?
- Look at the food. Turn the food around in your hand. Notice what you see.
- Smell the food. Notice what you smell or don't smell.
- Consider where this food came from and all the people involved in its arrival on your plate.
- Put the food in your mouth, but do not chew. Notice the texture and any tastes.
- Now chew. Pay attention to how many times you are chewing as the food becomes smaller.
- Notice any changes in texture or flavor as you continue to chew. Notice any sounds.

Questions after you complete the activity:

*What did you notice about the smell/taste/texture/sounds?*

*What did you notice that you usually don't when eating?*

*How many chews did you need before swallowing?*

*What can you incorporate into your daily meals from what you learned today?*

## **Sources**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1jRaHrpokA>

<https://www.mindful.org/6-ways-practice-mindful-eating/>

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/8-steps-to-mindful-eating>

Mindfulschools.org Mindful educator training

<https://www.webmd.com/diet/obesity/features/crunch-chew-your-way-to-healthier-eating#1>