A Practice that can blow your mind—and transform your body.

Share

Diet challenges are usually all about what you *can't* eat. But what if you could see huge results from a self-experiment that doesn't make any foods off-limits? Instead of focusing on *what* you eat, our 30-day eating challenge emphasizes *how* you eat. And the results? They could be transformational.

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"You want the next level stuff?" I asked.

"Do this first, and let's see if you can handle it."

The nutrition advice I'd just given Cameron Lichtwer wasn't what he expected, so I made it a challenge.

As an instructor at the British Columbia Personal Training Institute, a strength and conditioning coach, and a former competitive athlete, Cameron was no stranger to exercise and nutrition. In fact, he thought he'd tried it all.

But my advice? It was so… basic. Wasn't he far beyond that?

Well, no. Because what I told him can help almost anyone, from the most advanced dieters to those who've struggled with healthy eating for a lifetime.

"Eat slowly and mindfully."

I know: It sounds too ridiculously simple to work.

But guess what? It was exactly what Cameron needed. In two months, his body fat dropped from 13.9 percent to 9.5 percent, the lowest level he's ever achieved. This was without weighing and measuring food, or following a restrictive meal plan.

Soon after he started, he sent me this text:

"I can't believe it. I'm losing fat and destroying my workouts. I'm sleeping better. I feel awesome."

Cameron was surprised by the results he got from such a simple process.

So why not try the slow-eating challenge yourself?

Practice it for just 30 days, and you may be shocked at what you achieve—*even if you don't change anything else*.

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5 ways this Practice will change your body and mind.

When it comes to eating better, most folks worry about the little details:

- "Are potatoes fattening?"
- "If I don't drink a protein shake after my workout, is it even worth exercising?"
- "Is keto really the best way to lose weight? Or should I be doing Paleo? Or what about the alkaline diet?!"

Yet they eat over the kitchen sink. Or in their car. Or in a daze while in front of the TV.

And who can blame them? We've been taught to think about what we eat, not how we eat.

That's too bad since…

Eating slowly and mindfully can actually be more important than:

- what you eat
- when you eat
- getting anything else "perfect"

Now, this may seem a bit controversial. After all, if you only eat Oreos, the speed at which you consume them isn't your biggest problem.

But setting aside the extremes, **slow eating may be the single most powerful habit for driving major transformation**.

Instead of having to figure out which foods to eat, in what frequency, and in what portions—all important factors, of course—eating slowly is the simplest way anyone can start losing weight and feeling better, *immediately*.

That fuels confidence and motivation, and from there, you can always tighten up the details.

Because why go to the complicated stuff right away, when you can get incredible results without it?

Slow eating isn't just for nutrition newbies. Nutrition nerds can also see big benefits. If you're like Cameron, for example, it could be the key to unlocking never-before-seen progress. In fact, we've seen it work for physique competitors, fitness models, and even Olympic athletes.

Slow eating is like the secret weight-loss weapon everyone has access to, but nobody knows about.

That's because it can help you…

1. Eat less without feeling deprived.

Sure, many popular diets claim this as a benefit. But with slow eating, this phenomenon can occur even if you don't change *what* you're eating.

For example, in one study, University of Rhode Island researchers served the same pasta lunch to 30 normal-weight women on two different days. At both meals, participants were told to eat until comfortably full.

But they were also told:

- Lunch 1: Eat this meal as fast as you can.
- Lunch 2: Eat slowly and put your utensils down between every bite.

The results:

- When eating quickly, the women consumed 646 calories in 9 minutes.
- When eating slowly, they consumed 579 calories in 29 minutes.

So in 20 more minutes, the slow-eaters ate 67 fewer calories. What's more, it also took them longer to feel hungry afterward compared to when they were speeding through their lunch.

These effects, spread across every meal and snack, could add up to hundreds of calories saved over the course of a day.

Granted, this is just a single study, but it demonstrates what we've seen with our clients over and over.

Why does this happen?

Reason 1: Physiology. It takes about 20 minutes for your body's satiety signals to kick in. Slow eating gives the system time to work, allowing you to better sense when you've had enough.

Reason 2: Psychology. When you slow down, and really try to savor your meal, you tend to *feel* satisfied with less, and feel less "deprived."

Rachel Levy: Facing fear and anxiety.

Rachel Levy's initial reaction to this challenge: "I can't possibly eat slowly. I will die!"

As you can guess, she didn't perish after giving it a try.

How'd she make it happen?

"**I decided to just try.** Just put one foot in front of the other, and only do what was being asked of me—eat just a little bit slower.

"I faced the fear of doing something different."

During her first two weeks of eating slowly, Rachel had one of those "aha moments."

"I suddenly realized that the reason I ate quickly was actually a feedback loop: I ate quickly to calm my anxiety, but eating quickly was making me anxious."

The upshot: Discovering this connection immediately made it *easy* for Rachel to eat slowly.

2. Look and feel better.

Have regular bloating, cramping, or stomach pains? Many of our clients say slow eating helped solve their digestive issues.

Why does speed matter?

Because when you wolf down your food, you take larger bites and chew less.

Your stomach has a harder time mashing those big chunks of food into chyme—the sludgy mix of partially digested food, hydrochloric acid, digestive enzymes, and water that passes from your stomach into your small intestine.

When food isn't properly broken down into chyme, it can cause indigestion and other GI problems. We may absorb fewer nutrients, depleting ourselves of valuable vitamins and minerals.

Besides making you uncomfortable (maybe even miserable), shoddy digestion can also affect your mindset.

For instance, if your meal leaves you bloated, burpy, and sluggish, you may interpret this as "feeling out of shape," and become discouraged about your efforts. On the other hand, slowing down and digesting your food properly may help you "feel leaner."

3. Learn what "hungry" and "full" feel like.

Ever have a meal because it's a certain time of day, even if you're not particularly hungry?

Or clean your plate, though you're pretty sure you'll regret it?

These are just a couple of ways people tune out their internal hunger and satiety cues. There are plenty more, but the point is:

Many of us eat when we're *not* hungry, and keep eating when we're full.

Slow eating can help get you right again. With regular practice, it improves your appetite awareness. You learn to recognize —and more importantly, *trust*—your body's own internal signals.

Over time, this retrains you to eat when you're hungry and stop when you're full. Not because some rigid meal plan demands it, but *because your body (a.k.a. your new best friend) tells you so*.

This is the difference between being "on a diet" and learning how to "listen to your body"… a valuable skill that allows you to make healthier choices *for the rest of your life*.

4. Disrupt patterns that derail your progress.

If you struggle with binge eating, learning to go slow can help.

That might sound odd, since a binge is driven by an overwhelming urge to consume as much food as possible, as fast as possible. (This quality is what differentiates binge eating from run-of-the-mill overeating.)

But the skills you develop from slow eating can help you mitigate the damage, and build resilience over time.

Here's how: When you're in the grip of a binge, **slow down as soon as you realize what's happening.**

Pause. Breathe. The food will wait for you. Even just one breath between bites will help.

How much you eat isn't as important as getting back into a more thoughtful state of mind.

The more you practice it, the more effective it will be.

If you keep slowing down, even during your most difficult moments:

- You'll become more aware of why, where, and how you're binging (so it won't seem random, and eventually you can break the chain).
- You'll likely eat less and stop sooner.
- You'll feel less panicked and powerless.
- You'll be able to soothe yourself more effectively, and get back into "wise mind" faster.

In time, this'll help normalize your eating, boost your physical and psychological health, and improve body composition (or help you maintain a healthy body composition more easily, without restriction-compensation cycles).

5. Gain a tool you can use anytime, anywhere.

We don't always have control over what foods are available to us. But we always have control over how quickly we chew and swallow.

Think of slow eating as the low-hanging fruit of nutrition: super accessible in any situation.

It doesn't require specialized meal plans or a food scale. **No matter what's going on in your life, or what's on your plate, you can practice eating slowly.**

How to eat slowly.

Eating slowly and mindfully is *simple* and *effective*—but not necessarily *easy*.

Try one of these tips. You can experiment with them for just one meal, or take on a full 30-day slow-eating challenge, if you feel up to it.

Take just one breath.

Before you eat, pause. Take one breath.

Take one bite. Then take another breath.

Take another bite. Then take another breath.

Go one bite, and one breath at a time.

That's it.

Add just one minute.

At first, most people panic at the idea of "wasting time" on eating or having to be alone with their thoughts and the sounds of crunching for too long. Plus, life is busy and rushed. Having long leisurely meals may feel impossible.

So, start small. Add just one minute per meal. Or two, or three,

The game: Stretch out that meal as long as you can. Then try to make your next meal last one minute longer.

Over time, you can gradually build up how long you spend at meals.

Don't be hard on yourself: If you forget to slow down during one meal, no biggie. Just slow down next time, and notice what happens.

And remember, even one minute better—or one breath-between-bites better—can help.

Put down the remote.

For the next level of challenge, don't eat while you drive, watch TV, or play with your phone. Sit at a table, not on your living room couch, and for heaven's sake, don't eat standing over the sink. Try to relax and experience your meal.

The whole point is to pay attention to your food and body. **So, over the next 30 days, do your best to eat in a calm environment with minimal distractions.**

Eat foods that need to *really* be chewed.

Try this experiment: Eat a whole food, like an apple slice, and count how many chews it takes to swallow a mouthful. Then grab a highly processed snack, like a cracker or cookie, and count your chews.

What differences do you notice?

Which food do you think will be easier to eat slowly?

Now act accordingly.

Minimally processed lean proteins, fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans and legumes require more effort—and time—to eat.

The more you have to chew, the longer it'll take you to eat, giving your fullness signals a chance to catch up.

Do something between bites.

Between bites, try:

- setting down your utensils
- taking a breath (or three)
- taking a sip of water
- asking someone at the table a question

Savor your food.

When you eat… eat. Enjoy it. Really taste it.

Is it salty? Sweet? Does it coat the roof of your mouth? What's the texture like?

Notice these little details with each bite.

To really tap into this experience, **try "wine tasting" your food**. Practice chewing slowly, sniffing, and savoring your food, as if it were a fine wine.

Notice what affects your eating speed.

As you experiment, **try to identify what affects your eating speed or focus**.

Consider factors such as:

- who you eat with
- when you eat
- what you eat
- where you eat

Once you've made some observations, ask yourself:

- What could you do to improve on what is already working well?
- What could you change, given what isn't working well?

Refine your practice.

Pay attention to the eating speed of those around you. Observe the slowest-eating person in the group and match their speed.

If you find yourself rushing, that's okay. Put your utensils down and take a minute to re-focus. If slow eating isn't habitual for you, this will take some time to master.

Embrace an experimental mindset and notice what you learn.

Remember: every meal is a chance to practice.

I ate slowly, now what?

At the end of your 30-day slow-eating challenge, tune into what's different.

You're probably going to observe some changes in your body—such as how your stomach feels after a meal or how your pants fit. You may also notice mental changes, like what you think about while you're eating, or how you react to feeling hungry or full.

Look at how much has changed in just 30 days, and imagine:

What would happen if you continued working on this habit… forever?

There's a good reason to do just that: No matter what other habits you adopt or "next level stuff" you try, eating slowly will always enhance your efforts. And how often can you say that about anything?

But don't just keep it to yourself: Share the 30-day slow-eating challenge with your friends, family, and co-workers. It could be exactly what they need, but never even knew to try.