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5 Habits Of Mindful Eating

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What Is Mindful Eating?

Mindful eating is a simple method of becoming hyper-focused on the present moment and being aware of your senses while eating food. It can help manage eating habits and make people feel better about their bodies.

The purpose is not counting calories or tracking macros (carbohydrates, fat, or protein), and mindful eating has little to do with weight loss. Yet, it is proven to help with losing weight. The intention is to help individuals understand and enjoy the food they eat and remove stresses associated with overeating unhealthy foods. Mindful eating can be a fun way to make mealtimes social or a time to reflect and savor the moment as a solo experience.



Benefits of Mindful Eating

Mindful eating redefines our approach to food and yields remarkable benefits. According to a study by the Journal of Obesity, embracing mindful eating reduces binge-eating episodes by 53%. This approach cultivates a profound awareness of the sensory aspects of eating, curbing overindulgence and fostering a healthier relationship with food.

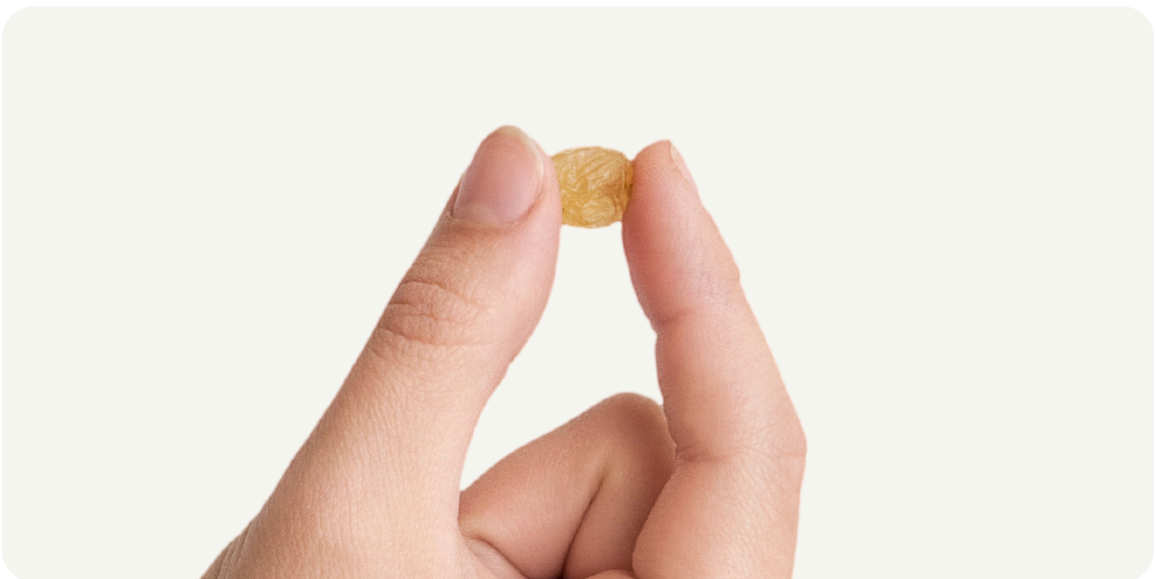
By savoring each bite and paying attention to hunger cues, individuals can experience reduced stress-eating, improved digestion, and better weight management. Mindful eating empowers us to break free from fad diets, facilitating sustainable, long-term wellness through a conscious connection with the nourishment we consume.





Habit 1: Try The Raisin Exercise

The Raisin mindful eating technique is a brief mindfulness exercise designed to heighten awareness during meals. You deliberately engage your senses by closely observing a single raisin (or a small food item). First, notice its appearance, then feel its texture and temperature. Inhale its scent before slowly moving it toward your mouth. As you place it on your tongue, focus on its taste without chewing right away. Chew slowly, feeling its changing texture and taste. Finally, swallow deliberately. This practice cultivates present-moment attention, fostering a deeper connection with eating, enhancing appreciation for food, and promoting mindful consumption habits.



The Raisin Exercise Checklist

- ☐ **Preparation:** Start by selecting a raisin or a small piece of food. Sit in a quiet, comfortable space where you won't be disturbed.
- ☐ **Observation:** Take a moment to really look at the raisin. Notice its texture, color, and any ridges or imperfections.
- ☐ **Touch:** Hold the raisin between your fingers and feel its texture. Pay attention to its temperature, weight, and any sensations in your fingers.
- ☐ **Smell:** Bring the raisin close to your nose and take in its aroma. Notice any scents or subtle fragrances.
- ☐ **Slow Movement:** As you bring the raisin to your mouth, do so very slowly. Pay attention to the movement of your hand, arm, and fingers.
- ☐ **Taste:** Place the raisin in your mouth but don't chew it. Rest it on your tongue. Notice any taste, sensations, or changes in your mouth.
- ☐ **Chewing:** Slowly start chewing the raisin. Pay attention to the texture, taste, and how the sensation changes as you chew.
- ☐ **Swallowing:** When you're ready, swallow the raisin. Be aware of the swallowing process and how it feels.
- ☐ **Reflection:** Take a moment to reflect on the experience. How did the raisin's appearance, texture, smell, taste, and chewing process engage your senses? How does this exercise differ from your typical way of eating?



Habit 2: Just Ask “Why?”

The body signals when action is needed, like the 'rumbly stomach' indicating hunger for energy. Ignoring it may lead to low blood sugar and discomfort. Addressing this physical hunger is straightforward by eating.

However, complications arise when emotional factors intervene—psychological hunger. It drives snacking and overeating based on feelings, not actual energy needs. Cravings, boredom, and emotional eating fall under this category.

Research highlights boredom as a prime trigger for psychological hunger, seen in cinema snack sales combating movie dullness.

Here's how to break free from boredom-triggering situations. A walk, changing playlists, or questioning your craving works. Try this: When craving a snack, grab a glass of water.

Drinking water to fulfill the craving enhances mindfulness about snacking prompts. This simple practice aids in recognizing and addressing emotional eating triggers effectively.



Habit 3: Slow Down

Eating initiates a 20-minute interval for your body to recognize fullness. Eating slowly allows ample time for your gut and brain to synchronize, curbing overeating and improving digestion.

Top strategies for a more gratifying meal:

Set a Timer: Set a 20-minute timer on your phone before dinner. Begin with a few centering breaths and aim to stretch your meal over this period. Relax and immerse yourself in the food.

Pause Method: Place your fork down between bites if extending a meal feels challenging. Using chopsticks or taking breaks for sips of water can also decelerate your pace. For added pause, step out briefly for three deep breaths before returning to your meal.

Chew Deliberately: Chewing thoroughly breaks down food, aiding digestion and triggering quicker satiety. In the initial 5 minutes, take smaller bites and chew around 20 times per bite before swallowing.



Habit 4: Remove Distractions

Whether it's wolfing down subway in the car or crunching on chips while watching YouTube in your lunch break, distracted eating is not uncommon. A review of 24 studies by The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that distracted eating encouraged people to consume more food throughout the day, and led to a poor relationship with eating.

Applying the mindful eating principle, we can avoid the distraction trap. Try one of these simple habits:

- **When I finish plating up dinner, I will turn the TV off.**
- **When I sit down to eat dinner, I will turn my phone onto airplane mode.**





Habit 5: Predict The Future

Visualizing how we might feel after a meal before it happens can help us connect better with the food we eat and avoid any negative feelings. Before you start eating, ask yourself:

- Will eating this food evoke any emotions?
- Why do you think these emotions are surfacing?
- Are you eating to satisfy hunger or cope with a specific emotion or issue in your day?
- Will this meal feel nourishing? If not, why?

The goal of this activity is to become more aware of your emotional responses to food and better understand how feelings can affect how we eat, not just what we eat.



Sources And Further Reading

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