

# Food for Thought

## What is mindful eating?

- Allowing yourself to become aware of the positive and nurturing opportunities that are available through food preparation and consumption by respecting your own inner wisdom.
- Choosing to eat food that is both pleasing to you and nourishing to your body by using all your senses to explore, savor and taste.
- Learning to be aware of physical hunger and satiety cues to guide your decision to begin eating and to stop eating.
- Acknowledging responses to food (likes, neutral or dislikes) without judgment.



## Free Handout for Individuals from *The Center for Mindful Eating*

### **Food: The Solution, Not the Problem**

By Donald Altman, M.A.

When a person chooses to see that food is the solution, not the problem, they are often filled with a sense of relief. Why? I think it may be because it gives them hope, as well as permission to let go of their symptoms—even if for a moment. And, it may give them some space from the pervasive idea that a struggle with food is too difficult to be overcome. Besides, we all know how easily food can be abused. Writer Rita Mae Brown states this very nicely when she says, "Lead me not into temptation; I can find the way myself."

Fortunately, once food becomes a solution, hope is just around the corner. Turning that corner, however, takes a lot of time, effort, and discipline. A mindfulness approach to food is not a shortcut. In fact, it may be the long road to making peace with food, hunger and self-care. However, this is one case where a long road with several detours may make for a richer and more meaningful journey. Mindfulness can be taught in numerous ways and with endless variations. The one constant, perhaps, is that a mindful approach changes the eater's relationship with food. And that makes all the difference.

Food ceases to be viewed simply in terms of "good" or "bad." Rather, food becomes connected to one's feelings, body, and the world at large. It means awakening to the

deeper purpose of food, as well as to the underlying desires and cravings for it.



There are three advantages to observing and describing one's relationship with food. First, is a fundamental awareness of patterns and behaviors. Begin to think of yourself as detectives (and not as hanging judges!). By paying attention you may begin to notice your food habits. For example: Do you use food as a reward? Do you use food as a way to signal others for attention?

A second advantage of knowing one's food relationship is that it generates compassion—towards oneself. Compassion means, from the Latin, "to be with suffering." Compassion and forgiveness allow a person to become more present with food and eating.

Thirdly, awareness of a food habits can shed light on other life patterns, as well as the relationship one has with her/him self. For example, one who continually skips meals or eats fast food, might ask: What other things in my life am I

skipping over or indulging in like a fast food meal?

Best of all, when mindful eating transforms food into a solution, the relationship to food has new and forgiving space in which to grow and change—and where all things are possible. Or, as Groucho Marx once said, "Man does not live by bread alone. Every now and then he needs a cookie."

### Internet Resources

#### Mindful Eating

- [www.tcme.org](http://www.tcme.org)
- [www.mindfuleating.org](http://www.mindfuleating.org)
- [www.mindfulpractices.com](http://www.mindfulpractices.com)
- [www.eatingmindfully.com](http://www.eatingmindfully.com)
- [www.balancedweightmanagement.com](http://www.balancedweightmanagement.com)
- [www.med.umich.edu/umim/clinical/pyramid/index.htm](http://www.med.umich.edu/umim/clinical/pyramid/index.htm)

#### Body Image

- [www.beyondhunger.org](http://www.beyondhunger.org)
- [www.bodypositive.com](http://www.bodypositive.com)
- [www.hugs.com](http://www.hugs.com)
- [www.healthybodyimage.com](http://www.healthybodyimage.com)

#### Inspiration

- [www.getinspired.org](http://www.getinspired.org)
- [www.gratefulness.org](http://www.gratefulness.org)

#### Meditation

- [www.tcme.org](http://www.tcme.org)
- [www.learningmeditation.com](http://www.learningmeditation.com)
- [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)