

# 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

## Choosing Your Way to Mindfulness

By Molly Kellogg, RD, LCSW

How often do you say “I have to control my eating” or “I can’t eat...”? We humans do have a drive to control. When we have a degree of control over our environment, we are safer and we are more apt to get our needs met. So, in some ways, striving to control ensures our survival. Exerting *control* over our food choices usually means following rules, such as limiting calories or avoiding certain foods. This external control takes us further away from mindful eating and eventually backfires. The antidote to control is *choice*.

Look at the process of feeding yourself as a series of choices. *How* do you best make choices, based on what? Mindful eating means choosing food that both pleases you and nourishes your body. This means tuning in to all

your senses and making choices throughout the meal. Our choices are sometimes limited by simple habit. Habits are patterns of behavior that we learn to do with little attention. It is a wonder and gift that our brains are capable of developing habits. However, when we rely on them too much, habits rob us of choice.



When *attending* to the full process of mindful eating, you have many places to make choices. When to begin eating, which foods you eat or drink, where you eat, the utensils you use, the amount you eat, the size of each bite or sip, how and for how long you chew, the time between bites, what else you do or listen to during the meal.... The choices are endless. We all have habits that cause us to eat certain ways unless we deliberately choose otherwise. To

broaden your habits, pick one type of choice and focus on it for a while. For example, for a few meals attend to the question “What bite size is just right for this food?”

Support yourself with your language. Instead of control phrases such as “I should...” or “I have to...,” use choice words as you approach your meal. “I choose to eat in this chair today.” Or “I want to eat this soup warm, but not hot, so I will wait a few minutes.” I want to enjoy pie for dessert, so I will leave some of this pasta for tomorrow’s lunch.”

Molly Kellogg, RD, LCSW, is the author of *Counseling Tips for Nutrition Therapists: Practice Workbook, 2006* and a free e-mail series of *Tips*. She is a Board Member of TCME and welcomes comments. [www.mollykellogg.com](http://www.mollykellogg.com).

## Internet Resources

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 www.mindfulpractices.com  
 www.slowfoodusa.org  
 www.mindlesseating.org  
 www.bodypositive.com