

# 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

#### Spice Your Food with Gratitude

By Donald Altman, M.A., LPC

Do you ever find yourself at war with food and eating? Are you tired of living in a battle zone? Are you exhausted from trying to control food? If so, you may want to shift your focus from control to gratitude. The word *gratitude* has a long history. The ancient Latin word *gratitudo*, which means being thankful and pleasing, is closely connected to the word *grace*, that short blessing or prayer before or after the meal. In this sense, gratitude is a spiritual practice.

Gratitude centers on the little things, often things we tend to overlook. The Japanese tradition of *The Way of Tea*, for example, appreciates all the objects used in making and drinking the tea – the delicate bamboo whisk, the iron teakettle, and the beautifully designed teacups – with a sense of thankfulness and gratitude.

You can practice gratitude right now by simply looking around the room or space that you inhabit. Is there a color or an object that you find pleasant or that you can appreciate? Look until you find something, and then see if you can feel a sense of gratitude for this object being present. Someone created it or brought it into the

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room so you could enjoy it. Congratulations on brewing up some *instant gratitude!*

You can bring this same approach to the food that is before you when you eat. Noticing anything pleasing about your meal – such as the colors or smell of the food – is a good way to invite gratitude. Or, you might take a moment to have gratitude for all the energy that went into this food: the water, the sunlight, the nutrients from the

soil, and the vast network of people who planted, cultivated, and made the food available for you.

Now, you may think that gratitude could hardly make much of a difference in your day. Research shows that gratitude packs a powerful punch. It is strong enough to reduce depression and produce happiness. Remember, you don't need to have a formal ritual or grace with your meal to change your perspective. Simply spice up your meal with gratitude. Doing so will help you become more aware of the blessings you have in your life, instead of focusing on deprivation. Gratitude is contagious. The more grateful you are for the food you eat, the more mindful you become each time you eat. Gratitude alone can make your experience and connection with food more meaningful and spiritual.

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