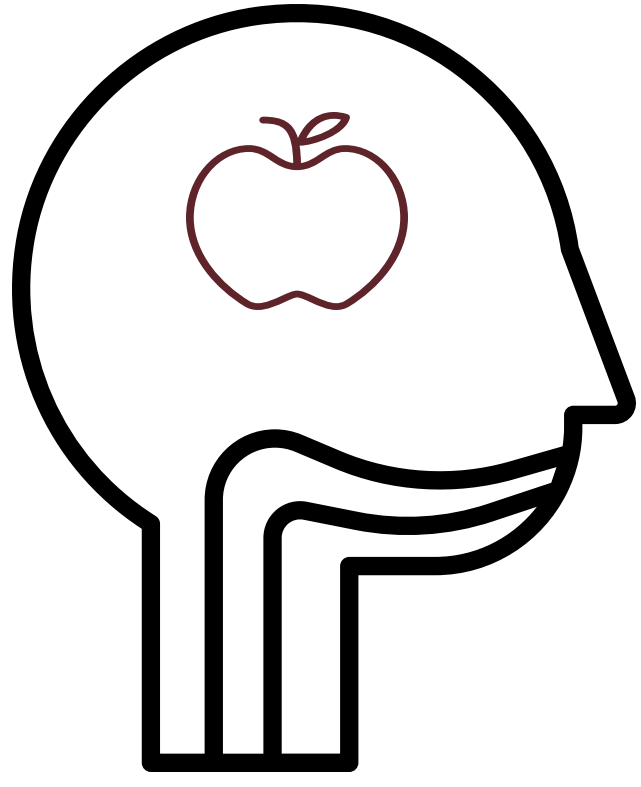


Stimulus Control and Mindful Eating



What is Mindful Eating?

Mindfulness involves focusing on the present moment, and being in-tune with thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Mindful eating refers to tuning into the food that is being consumed and the sensory experiences that come along with eating. Mindful eating requires slowing down, limiting distractions, and listening to the body's signals regarding hunger and fullness.

Mindful Eating Involves:

- ✓ Limiting distractions during meal and snack time so that full attention can be paid to food and eating
- ✓ Taking time to check in with hunger and fullness cues before, during, and after eating
- ✓ Enhancing the sensory experience of eating by engaging all 5 senses
- ✓ Noting the effect that different foods have on feelings-- both emotional and physical

Benefits of Mindful Eating:

Eating mindlessly while distracted by electronics, school work, or other activities is associated with eating past fullness. When the eating process is slowed down and closer attention is paid to one's body, feelings of fullness and satisfaction are able to be detected sooner, thus preventing overeating. Along with helping to prevent unwanted weight gain related to overconsumption, mindful eating can help enhance enjoyment of food at meal times, promote better digestion, and help us to become more attuned to our body's signaling.

Check in with your body using The Hunger Scale

Take a moment to check in with yourself.
Where are you currently on **The Hunger Scale**?

6 I'm so full that I feel sick to my stomach.



5 I feel too full. I feel sluggish and uncomfortable.

4 I feel full. I can feel food in my stomach and I don't want to eat any more food.

3 I am satisfied! I don't feel hungry and I don't feel too full.



2 I feel a little bit hungry but I can wait to eat.

1 I feel hungry. My body is telling me that it's time to eat!

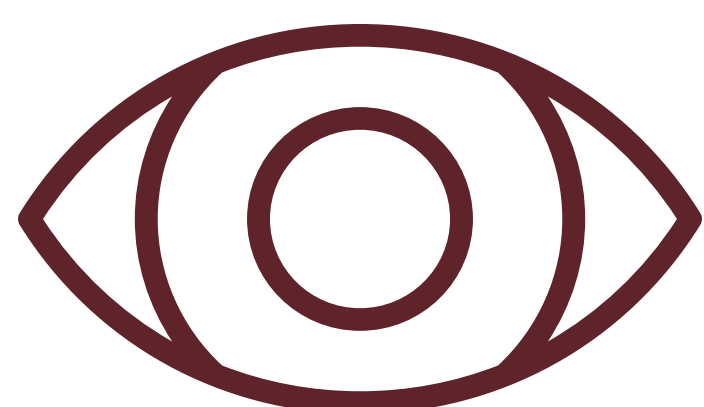
0 I am so hungry that I feel uncomfortable. I feel grumpy and weak.



Once you reach 3 to 4 on The Hunger Scale, it is time to stop eating. Remember, you do not have to finish all of the food that is on your plate if you are feeling full. Save the leftover food to eat the next time you are feeling hungry!

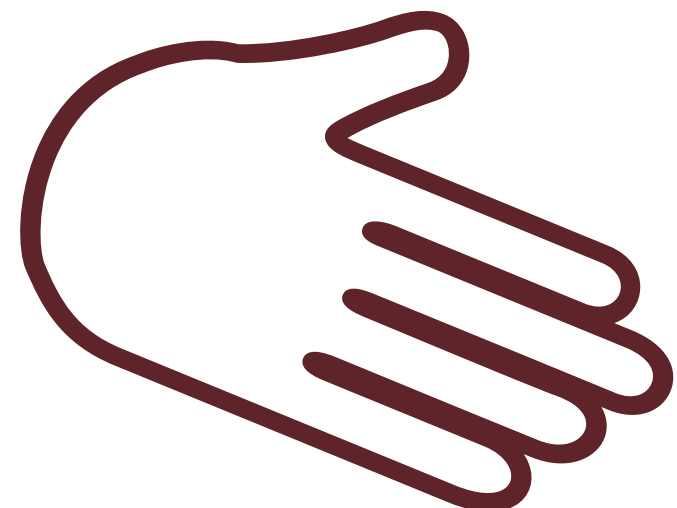
Take **5** & Eat Mindfully

Taking time to incorporate and acknowledge all **5 senses** when eating is a great way to practice mindful eating.



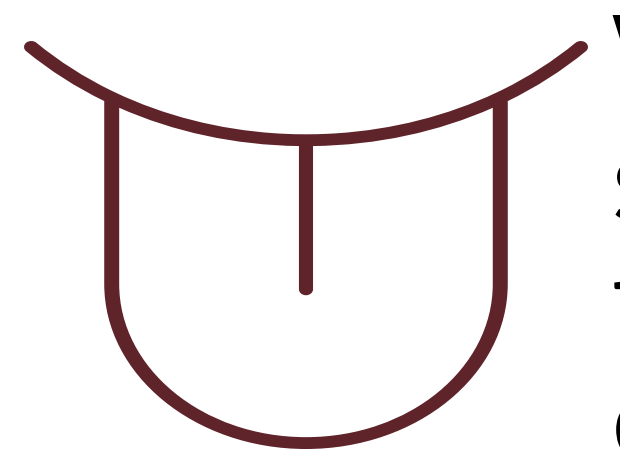
What does your food **look** like? What is its shape? What colors do you see? Does your food remind you of something else?

What does your food **sound** like? What noises does your food make when you pick it up with a fork or when you take a bite?



What does your food **feel** like in your hands or in your mouth? Is it cold or warm? Is it hard or soft? Is it wet or dry? Does it have more than one texture?

What does your food **smell** like? Can you smell different ingredients? Do you notice your mouth watering when you smell your food? Does the smell remind you of anything?



What does your food **taste** like? Is your food sweet, salty, or savory? Can you taste all of the different ingredients? Do you like the taste? Try to hold your food in your mouth longer by chewing extra well. This will help you to savor every bite!



Limit Distractions

Eating while watching TV, playing on a tablet, or using other electronics can lead to overeating. When distracted by other tasks or stimuli, fullness cues are less likely to be detected.



When able, try to turn off all electronics during meals and snacks to prevent mindless eating

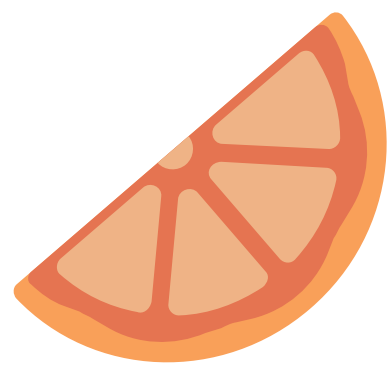
Instead, try:

- Engaging in light, pleasant conversation
- Modeling mindful eating behaviors like taking your time while eating, chewing thoroughly, and checking in with your own hunger signals
- Audibly describing what food looks like, smells like, and tastes like
- Discussing the benefits of food that is being eaten (For example: "These carrots are high in vitamin A which helps us to see in the dark!")
- Acknowledging and praising desired behaviors in children like trying a new food or using appropriate table manners
- Avoiding comments about calories, weight, or diets while eating



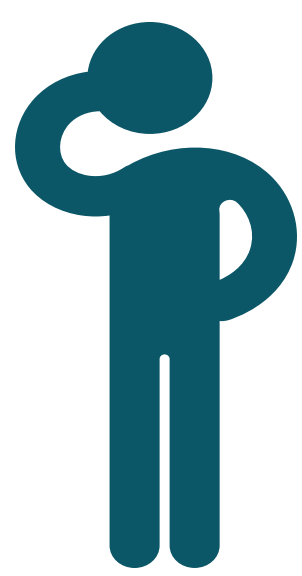
Try This!

Let's practice mindful eating!

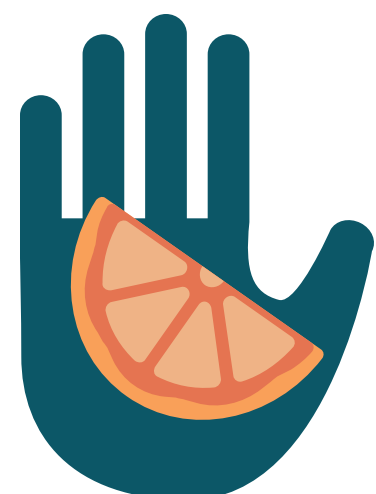


orange slice

Start by taking a small piece of food. A piece of fruit like a slice of orange or apple works well.



Take a minute to think about the past times that you have eaten this food. What does it normally taste like? How would you normally eat this food? Would you normally be eating this food with something else? Does this food remind you of something?



Next, pick up the piece of food in your hand. What does it look like up close? Are there details that you have not noticed before? How does the food feel in your hand?



Hold the food up to your nose and take a sniff. How would you describe the smell?



Take a bite of the food. Before you start to chew, take a moment to hold the food in your mouth. What does the food taste like before chewing? How does the food feel in your mouth? Start to chew the food slowly. Does the flavor change as you chew? Try to chew until the food is smooth like applesauce before swallowing.

How was this experience different from how you would normally eat this food? Did you notice anything new about the look, smell, or taste of this food compared to the past times that you have eaten it?

Try to take a mindful bite at your next meal or snack!