Mindful Eating: From Research to Practice
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Our goals today:
- Mindful eating definition
- Mindful eating research
- Mindful eating practice!
- How to incorporate mindful eating

Roots
- Many mindful eating practices have roots in vipassana or insight “seeing clearly” meditation practices
- Many meditation practices now are taught without any religious component.
Mindful eating

Eating with non-judgmental INTENTION and ATTENTION

Mindful Eating (TCME definition)

• 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.
• Acknowledging responses to food (likes, neutral or dislikes) without judgment.
• Learning to be aware of physical hunger and satiety cues to guide your decision to begin eating and to stop eating.

www.thecenterformindfuleating.org/

Not just at the moment before eating...

Megrette Fletcher, MEd, RD
From TCME
Pausing...

COME ON INNER PEACE
I DON'T HAVE ALL DAY

Hunger Scale
Hunger scale

- What do you notice in your body
  - At 0
  - At 10

- When you don’t eat until you’re at a 0 or 1, what is the next meal like?
  - Size
  - Speed
  - Content
  - Satisfaction

How would you rate your hunger right now?

0 5 10
- What physical cues prompt you to start eating?
- What cues prompt you to stop eating?

**Types of hunger**
- Physical hunger
- Sense hunger
- Heart hunger
- Mind hunger
- Celebration hunger
Recognizing hunger

- Several studies done, training in recognizing “initial hunger” and comparing untrained with controls


Mindful Eating Studies

- MB–EAT–focused on BED
- MB–EAT w/ weight loss component
- MB–EAT to affect cortisol levels
- MB–EAT–D adaptation for diabetes
- MEAL (adapted from MSBR)
- MSBR adapted to use with food for patients with pancreatic cancer
- ACT (Acceptance and Commitment therapy, mindfulness based)—several small studies
- Mindful eating without a mindfulness component
Adaptation of MBSR by Jean Kristeller, PhD

Several studies on binge eating disorder with significant decreases in binging, decreases in depression scores

The study that focused on weight additionally saw a significant weight decrease in participants

Recurrent and persistent episodes of binge eating

Binge eating episodes are associated with three (or more) of the following:
- Eating much more rapidly than normal
- Eating until feeling uncomfortably full
- Eating large amounts of food when not feeling physically hungry
- Eating alone because of being embarrassed by how much one is eating
- Feeling disgusted with oneself, depressed, or very guilty after overeating

Marked distress regarding binge eating

Absence of regular compensatory behaviors (such as purging)

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MB–EAT (Mindfulness Based Eating Awareness Training)

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Binge Eating

- Recurrent and persistent episodes of binge eating
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Looked at 19 studies
Most were adaptations of MBSR/MBCT, fewer were DBT or ACT
“Overall, mindfulness-based interventions were associated with effects on binge eating of large or medium–large magnitude and can be considered effective.”

Reviewed 21 studies, 18 (86%) showing improvement in eating–related behaviors.
- Binge eating
- Emotional eating
- Cravings

Mindfulness/Mindful Eating and Obesity

**SHINE study**

- Nutrition/diet intervention, VS Nutrition/diet/mindful eating intervention
- Mindful eating group had statistically significant greater improvements in fasting blood sugars and lipids @ 18 months
- Those in the mindful eating intervention lost more weight (avg 3.7 lbs more, but it was not statistically significant)


**What nutrition–related conditions may respond to decreases in stress, depression or anxiety?**

**Stress/Obesity Link**

- Significant link with stressful events, chronic stress and level of body fat, weight and BMI

Mindfulness Based DM Studies

- MBSR pilot w/ Type 2
  - Decrease depression, anxiety, general distress
  - -48% decrease in HgbA1C
- RCT w/57 in MBSR groups, 53 controls
  - Significantly lower depression, significantly improved health status at 1 year
  - Significantly lower stress in people who attended the group
- MBCT study: reports of significantly less stress, depression, anxiety, and higher quality of life.
  - Non-significant trend toward higher A1C in the control but not the MBCT group
Citations for DM studies


Digestive disorders
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)
- Gastroparesis
- Reflux

MBSR for IBD
- Controlled study of a mindfulness intervention tailored to IBD
- "Compared with the control group, the MI–IBD group reported significantly greater improvements in anxiety, quality of life, and mindfulness at after intervention, with reduction in depression and improvements in quality of life and mindfulness maintained at 6 months after intervention."

MBSR for IBS

- Comparison of MBSR vs treatment as usual.
  - Significant decreases in IBS symptom severity
  - Symptom severity went from constant \(\rightarrow\) occasional
- Benefits maintained 6 months post intervention


Eating with Gratitude

- Did you ever stop to taste a carrot? Not just eat it, but taste it? You can’t taste the beauty and energy of the earth in a Twinkie.
  ~ Astrid Alauda.

Gratitude

Many ways to practice!

- Saying grace
- Family traditions
- Cultural or spiritual customs
- Appreciating everything and everyone that got your food to your table
Some ideas…

- Saying grace or a religious blessing
- Give thanks to Mother Earth, Father sky and to the four directions
  ~Native American prayer
- I offer my gratitude for the nourishing blessings of this earth that I’ve been given to partake in.
  ~Traditional mindfulness saying
- In this food I see clearly the presence of the entire universe supporting my existence. ~Thích Nhất Hạnh

- *Itadakimasu*: Japanese saying before meals, means "I am receiving."
- When you eat fruit, think of the person who planted the tree—Vietnamese saying
Gratitude
- Saying grace/blessing
- Give thanks to mother earth and father sky, to the four directions—Native American prayer
- When you eat fruit, think of the person who planted the tree—Vietnamese saying
- I offer my gratitude for the nourishing blessings of this earth that I’ve been given to partake in—Traditional Buddhist saying
- In this food I see clearly the presence of the entire universe supporting my existence.
  ~Thích Nhất Hạnh

Mindful eating: Take home messages
- Awareness of all aspects of eating
- Not about charts, tables, grams of xyz
- In the spirit of curiosity
- Guidelines…not rules
- Not about food restriction, and weight loss not necessarily a goal

Take home messages
- Studies on MB–EAT & adaptations show effectiveness for nutrition conditions (BED, weight loss)
- Mindfulness may help with stress–related conditions, such as diabetes, IBS and IBD
- More research needed!
Cautions

- Active anorexia or bulimia
- PTSD
- Severe anxiety
- Work in conjunction with a team


Great places to start

- Start with YOU!!!
- Are there pieces in the process of eating that are challenging?
  - Pausing
  - Using the hunger scale
  - Eating with awareness
  - Practicing gratitude
  - Food journaling with emotions (before or after eating)

Selected tools and resources

- Discover Mindful Eating from Megrette Fletcher, MEd, RD
- Eat, Savor Satisfy from Donald Altman, MA, LPC
- MB-EAT www.mindfuleatingtraining.com
- Michelle May, MD: trainings and books for clients and professionals
- The Center for Mindful Eating free newsletter, classes and workshops (some free, some with membership), handouts, etc.
**Selected books**

- *Eating Mindfully: How to End Mindless Eating and Enjoy a Balanced Relationship With Food* by Susan Albers, PsyD, and Lilian Cheung, DSc, RD
- *Every Bite Is Divine* by Annie Kay, MS, RD, RYT
- *Mindful Eating: A Guide to Rediscovering a Healthy and Joyful Relationship With Food* by Jan Chozen Bays, MD
- *Savor: Mindful Eating, Mindful Life* by Thich Nhat Hanh and Lilian Cheung DSc, RD
- *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat* by Michelle May, MD (versions for diabetes, bariatric & BED)

**Selected mindful eating apps**

- Am I hungry?
- Eat right now
- Eating mindfully
- Recovery record
- Mindful eating tracker

**Where and how to begin to incorporate mindful eating?**

- For yourself?
- With clients?
Mindful food contemplation fail

Questions?
- If you have questions afterwards, feel free to email me!
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MB–EAT D (Diabetes)
- Participants had a BMI over 27 and HgbA1C of 7% or more
- 2 groups—In-depth diet info classes or mindful eating with basic diet info
- Both groups ate fewer calories and had significant improvement for intake of trans fats, fiber, and improved glycemic load
- Improvements maintained at 3 months post intervention

Non-Meditation Based Mindful Eating Program

- 6-week program with education, discussion on behavior change strategies and mindful eating exercises
- Significantly lower weight, calorie intake, fat intake and more food confidence


Mindfulness or Mindful Eating?

- General MSBR alone did not lead to less emotional or uncontrolled eating in a small group of veterans
- Another study—general mindfulness increased mindful eating, but more specific mindful eating skills around emotional eating made more of an impact.


MindLESS Eating

- Changing the environmental cues around eating, vs internal awareness
- Examples:
  - smaller plates
  - repackaging or purchasing single-serving sizes
  - placing unhealthful foods out of sight
  - ordering smaller portions at restaurants
- Often strategies complement mindful eating
Different kinds of hunger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Onset</th>
<th>Physical hunger</th>
<th>Mind hunger</th>
<th>Heart hunger</th>
<th>Soul hunger (eye, nose, touch, sound, taste!)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gradual</td>
<td>gradual, a few hours after eating</td>
<td>sudden, or at a prescribed interval</td>
<td>sudden</td>
<td>sudden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trigger</td>
<td>none, or sight of food</td>
<td>Thoughts</td>
<td>Sensations</td>
<td>right, smell, touch, sound, taste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What satisfied?</td>
<td>need</td>
<td>fulfilling one's desire</td>
<td>something other than food</td>
<td>food—maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling after eating</td>
<td>satisfied outcomes, one order or even more</td>
<td>under-ful to satisfied</td>
<td>generally over-full</td>
<td>generally over-full</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Mindful Eating by Jan Chozen Bays, MD

Heart hunger/Emotional eating=eating for comfort

Good? Bad? Indifferent?
- Is it the only means of coping with emotions?
- Frequency
- Quantity eaten
- Discomfort with the eating when not hungry or over-fullness
- Health parameters
Chronic stress

Intuitive eating

- By Evelyn Tribole, MS, RD and Elisa Reish, MS, RD
- Contains a component of ‘conscious eating’ (similar to mindful eating) listening and awareness of hunger and fullness
- Many other aspects to IE. Significant difference: IE states that all foods can fit and a fundamental premise is rejecting any aspect of dieting


Intuitive eating by Evelyn Tribole

10 Intuitive Eating Principles

1. Reject Diet Mentality
2. Honor Your Hunger
3. Make Peace w/Food
4. Challenge Food Police
5. Feel Your Fullness
6. Discover Satiety
7. Cope without Food
8. Respect Your Body
9. Exercise-Enjoyable Activity
10. Health: Gentle Nutrition

www.intuitiveeating.com
Mindfulness/Intuitive Eating study

10 week mindfulness/intuitive eating workshop
- Belly check
- Assess your food
- Slow down
- Investigate your hunger and satiety
- Chew thoroughly
- Savor your food


Mindfulness/Intuitive Eating study

10 week mindfulness/intuitive eating workshop
- Improved body appreciation
- Less likely to have indicators of disordered eating
- Higher scores for mindfulness
- Better awareness of body cues around food

As compared to the waitlist control


2017 Yoga study

- Overall, people who practiced yoga more often were less likely to be overweight.
- Among overweight young adults, there was a non-significant trend toward lower BMI