Mindful Eating and Nourishment: Part I

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About Alexa

- Licensed dietitian-nutritionist (LDN), Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS) yoga and fitness instructor (E-RYT 200)

- Masters of Science in Nutrition and Integrative Health at Maryland University of Integrative Health (MUIH) in 2019

- Health at Every Size (HAES) informed approach to care
What is Mindful Eating?

- Allowing yourself to become aware of the positive and nurturing opportunities that are available through food selection and preparation by respecting your own inner wisdom

- Using all your senses in choosing to eat food that is both satisfying to you and nourishing to your body

- Acknowledging responses to food (likes, dislikes or neutral) without judgment

- Becoming aware of physical hunger and satiety cues to guide your decisions to begin and end eating

- *Shifts focus of control from external authorities to your body's inner wisdom*

Source: The Center for Mindful Eating, Introduction to Mindful Eating retrieved from https://thecenterformindfuleating.org/page-1863947
WE ARE BORN WITH AN INNATE INTUITION SURROUNDING SATISFYING OUR HUNGER AND HONORING FULLNESS. SO WHAT HAPPENED?

"When hungry, just eat."

ZEN PROVERB
Physiological Hunger

- The most basic type of hunger is physiological hunger
- It occurs when our energy reserves have decreased and our body needs more energy for our cells to function
- Physiological hunger is controlled by several mechanisms:
  - The hypothalamus: region of the brain that regulates sleep cycles, body temperature, pituitary gland activity, and other autonomic nervous system functions.
  - Blood glucose levels
  - How empty the stomach and intestines are
  - Certain hormone levels in your body
Physiological Hunger

- Some signs of Physiological Hunger include:
  - Throat/esophagus: dull, aching, gnawing
  - A variety of sensations in the stomach
  - Cloudy thinking, lightheadedness, headache, difficulty focusing
  - Experiencing more thoughts about food and eating
  - Irritability or crankiness
  - Sleepiness, apathy

- These signals tend to intensify the longer we go without eating producing a sensation that becomes increasingly uncomfortable
Many people are under the impression that they need to eat the exact same number of calories per day.

There are many different things that can influence the amount of food we need to eat, including:
- Physical activity
- Menstruation
- Extreme temperatures
- Illness
- Gaining muscle mass

This is why relying on external "experts" to dictate when and how much we should eat is inaccurate and can lead to undernourishment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0. Painfully hungry. Primal hunger that feels intense and urgent</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Ravenous and irritable</td>
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<td>2. Very hungry. Looking forward to a hearty meal or snack</td>
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<td>3. Hungry and ready to eat, but without urgency. &quot;Polite&quot; hunger</td>
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<td>4. Subtly hungry, slightly empty</td>
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<td>5. Neutral. Neither hungry nor full</td>
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<td>6. Beginning to feel emerging fullness</td>
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<td>7. Comfortable fullness. You feel satisfied and content</td>
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<td>8. A little too full. This doesn't feel pleasant but it has not quite emerged in to an unpleasant experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Too full. You feel uncomfortable as if you need to unbutton your pants or remove your belt</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Painfully full. Stuffed. You may feel nauseous</td>
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What Happened?

- As children, our caretakers (sometimes with good intentions) often influence our eating behaviors
  - Pressure
  - Restriction
  - Monitoring

- These behaviors pave the way for a lack of self trust and self regulation as adult eaters

- As adults, our minds take over from our bodies
  - Eating choices become motivated by a desire to look a certain way
  - "Fit in" with others
  - Our minds attempt to override our physiological hunger cues with "shoulds" and "shouldn'ts"
Childhood feeding practices can lead to maladaptive feeding behavior in adults

- Galloway, Farrow, and Martz (2012) conducted a retrospective study on 98 college students. They had students and their parents complete a series of questionnaires:
  - Students completed a Retrospective Child Feeding Questionnaire, Dutch Eating Behavior Questionnaire (DEBQ), and the Intuitive Eating Scale (IES).
  - Student BMI was calculated using weight and height measurements.
  - Parents completed a Retrospective Child Feeding Questionnaire

- Findings from the study indicated that:
  - 69% of participants remembered being pressured to eat a disliked food in the past and that 76% of these occasions involved someone who was an authority figure (e.g., a parent or teacher).
  - Higher recollections of parental restriction and monitoring were positively correlated with higher student BMI and higher levels of emotional eating
  - Parental recollection of more monitoring was negatively correlated with eating for physical reasons on the IES.
  - There were positive correlations between parental child feeding practices, BMI, and emotional eating for female students. These relationships did not exist for male students.
An observational study titled "Just Three More Bites" (Orrell-Valente et al, 2007) looked at parents' influence on children's eating behaviors at mealtimes. The study included a socioeconomically-diverse sample of 142 families of kindergarteners. Researchers visited families' homes to observe them at meal times twice. The study found that regardless of socioeconomic status, the overwhelming goal of parents at mealtime was to get their kids to eat more food. 78% of families served their children food without the child's input of how much food they wanted. Parents used a variety of prompts including neutral prompts, pressure/demand, reasoning, food rewards, threats. Praise was the most commonly used prompt for females. Pressure was the most commonly used prompt for males. Girls sought approval for eating significantly more often than boys. Boys exhibited significantly more instances of eating refusal than girls.
Mind Cue, or Body Cue?

Our decision to eat can be regulated by both our physiological experience of hunger, and the thoughts surrounding what we "should" and "shouldn't" eat. Below are several prompts - identify which are physiological cues vs. which are thoughts.

- I can't be hungry- I just ate one hour ago.
- I deserve to eat this food because I worked out at the gym today.
- My stomach feels empty and I'm having difficulty concentrating
- I am afraid that if I eat this snack to honor my hunger, it will add unnecessary calories
- I'm anxious about my presentation, my mouth is dry and I feel queasy, therefore I'm going to skip breakfast
- I don't feel very hungry for dinner. I will eat something light but satisfying
SOMETIMES, IT'S NOT AS SIMPLE AS HONORING OUR PHYSIOLOGICAL DESIRE TO EAT OR NOT TO EAT, AND RATIONAL THOUGHT CAN ASSIST OUR EXPERIENCE OF MINDFUL EATING. WE WILL DIVE INTO EATING FOR SELF CARE AND THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF HUNGER NEXT WEEK!

What if I want to eat when I already feel full/ I'm not hungry?

What if I don't feel hungry, but I think I "should" eat?

What if I don't feel hungry, but I think I "should" eat?
"I work at the restaurant part time and I am addicted to eating chips even when I am not hungry. How do I break the bad habit?"

HAVE A MINDFUL EATING QUESTION YOU'D LIKE ANSWERED? EMAIL MPERALTA@UMARYLAND.EDU THIS WEEK TO HAVE YOUR QUESTION FEATURED IN NEXT WEEK'S PRESENTATION!
OPTIONAL EXERCISES

**Practice:** checking in with your hunger/fullness by completing the Hunger/Fullness Scale Worksheet (I would recommend printing this and posting it on your fridge so you remember to complete it).

**Journal:** Reflect on your memories of eating in your childhood. Did you experience pressure, monitoring, or restrictive eating practices from an authority figure? In what ways do you think those practices may be showing up in your current eating habits?

**Prepare:** bring a one bite snack to next week’s session. Examples could be: a raisin, date, piece of chocolate, piece of fruit.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following books will offer you additional content to dig into if you have the time and the desire to learn more about Mindful and/or Intuitive Eating principles.

Mindul Eating by Jan Chozen-Bays

The Intuitive Eating Workbook by Elyse Resch and Evelyn Tribole

Eat, Drink, and be Mindful by Susan Albers

Nourishing Wisdom by Marc David

How to Eat by Thich Nhat Hanh
REFERENCES


