Mindful Eating and Nourishment: Part II

Alexa Bedingfield, MS, CNS, LDN
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
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. This week we will dive into eating for self care and the different types of hunger.

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?
Eating for Self Care

- Last week we talked about distinguishing between thoughts and body cues

- Sometimes listening to our thoughts can improve the process of mindful eating!

- If you do not experience hunger (due to stress, illness, medication, etc.) you need to rely on your rational thoughts to help keep yourself fed throughout the day

- If you frequently experience a loss of appetite due to the reasons listed above, it's a good idea to have easy to eat food on hand that is both nourishing and palatable to you
Eating for Self Care – Examples

- Eating something small/gentle despite feelings of nausea/food aversions caused by pregnancy or illness
- Eating something for breakfast even though you don't have a strong appetite to avoid energy crashes later in the morning
- Eating a pre/post workout snack
- Blocking off time from your workday to eat lunch
What if I'm not hungry but want to eat?

• In the next couple of slides, we'll discuss the different "types" of hunger and how they show up in our bodies.

• It is important to recognize that all forms of hunger are valid, however eating food may or may not satisfy all the different forms of hunger.
The Nine Kinds of Hunger (Mindful Eating)

1. Eye Hunger
2. Touch Hunger
3. Ear Hunger
4. Nose Hunger
5. Mouth Hunger
6. Stomach Hunger
7. Cellular
8. Mind Hunger
9. Heart Hunger

So far, we've discussed stomach, cellular, and mind hunger.

In the next couple slides we'll discuss the other forms of hunger and how to satisfy them!
Eye Hunger

- Eye hunger is the experience of seeing food and then having the desire to eat it, whether or not physical hunger cues are present.

- **Satisfying Eye Hunger**
  - *Ask yourself,* will I ever be able to eat this food again (ex: when traveling)? If the answer is no, perhaps satisfy your eye hunger by taking a few bites or sharing with someone else.
  - Make your food look visually appealing (garnish with herbs, color, plate food in an appealing way).
  - Use smaller plates/bowls. Give yourself a smaller first helping than you might normally. See how you feel after eating that.
  - Enjoy looking at something beautiful (not food).
Touch Hunger

- Touch = feeding yourself through your skin [2]

- Touch hunger is likely a hunger that you have experienced but not been aware of. It is a hunger for physical touch/ connection. Touch hunger can cause us to search for comfort in other things, like food.

- **Satisfying Touch Hunger**
  - Try eating with your hands. Take note of the physical sensation of touching your food and experiencing textures with your mouth/ lips/ teeth
  - Comfort yourself with soft blankets, clothing, warm baths, pillows, etc.
  - Human touch (from others or self) - hugs, massage, skincare
Ear Hunger

- When sounds evoke a desire to eat whether or not physical hunger cues are present

- **Satisfying Ear Hunger**
  - Mindfully listen to the sounds of eating / preparing food
  - Try to avoid distractions while eating - lower music or TV volumes so you can hear the "sounds" of your food, eating, and chewing
  - Be aware (in restaurants, bars especially) that loud music/ noise tends to cause us to eat and drink more than we otherwise would. If you find yourself in this situation, take a few trips to a quieter area/ bathroom to reconnect with your body and hunger/ fullness cues
Nose Hunger

- Our sense of smell plays a huge role in our enjoyment of food/taste

- When smells evoke a desire to eat whether or not physical hunger cues are present

- **Satisfying Nose Hunger**
  - Taking time to mindfully observe the smells of your food and beverages while you are cooking and eating
  - Use aromatic herbs in your cooking, like rosemary, thyme, oregano, basil, etc.
  - Take time to smell things - the smell of rain, flowers, incense, essential oils, etc.
Mouth Hunger

- Mouth hunger is the mouth's desire for pleasurable sensations - Think about when you take a bite of something delicious, and then instantly have the desire to continue to eat more and more
- Mouth hunger is a common cause of overeating - we eat so fast/ without chewing that our mouth hunger will never be satisfied no matter how much we eat
- **Satisfying Mouth Hunger**
  - When you eat, chew slowly and thoroughly. Notice all of the flavors and textures in the food you are eating.
  - Foods that are chewed are generally more satisfying for mouth hunger than foods without texture (pureéd foods, smoothies, etc.)
Heart Hunger

- Heart hunger is the act of craving the feeling or experience associated with a food just as strongly as the food itself.
- While eating certain foods can bring us a temporary sense of comfort and enjoyment, food alone cannot truly satisfy heart hunger.

**Satisfying Heart Hunger**

- When you eat open your heart to all of the people and beings that brought your food to your table and feel gratitude for them.
- When you feel hungry, and can't quite put your finger on what type of hunger you're feeling, do something to nourish your heart (call someone you love, play with your child or a pet, work in the garden, create something).
WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO EXPERIENCE THE FOOD WE EAT WITH ALL OF OUR SENSES. ANYTIME WE REMOVE OR NEGLECT ONE OF THE SENSES, THE PROCESS OF EATING BECOMES LESS SATISFYING.

"Nothing would be more tiresome than eating and drinking if God had not made them a pleasure as well as a necessity."

VOLTAIRE
**Practice - Basic Mindful Eating Exercise**

- For this exercise you will need a single piece of food - a raisin, strawberry, cracker, chip, etc.
- Place your food on a plate or a napkin in front of you. Sit comfortably in your chair and take a couple of deep breaths, until you feel relaxed and calm. It is important to take your time with this exercise.
- **Sight:** Without touching your food, notice how it looks on your plate or napkin. Gaze upon it with curiosity, as if you have never seen this type of food before. Notice the color, the shape, and any nooks, crannies, and shadows. How would you describe what you observe to someone who has never seen this food before?
- **Smell:** Place your nose near the food and gently inhale. What does the food smell like? Is there a scent? Is the scent subtle or strong?
- **Touch:** Pick up the food and place it in your hand. Notice how it feels in your hand. What is the physical texture - smooth, rough, sharp, crumbly, sticky, brittle, crusty, heavy, or light?
- **Sound:** Listen to your food. How does it sound? Take a bite. How does it sound as you take a bite?
- **Mouthfeel:** before taking another bite, roll the food around in your mouth and notice how it feels. Resist the urge to chew your food right now.
- **Taste:** How does the food taste? What happens to the taste as it sits on your tongue?
- **Chew:** chew your bite of food completely and thoroughly, when you feel ready to swallow it, notice how the food feels as it travels down your throat.

Discover the Satisfaction Factor

• When you eat what you want in an environment that is comfortable, inviting, and conducive to mindful eating, you will find it takes less food for you to feel truly satisfied.

• When you feed yourself, try treating yourself the way you would a guest in your house by cultivating a pleasant eating environment:
  ○ Declutter your eating space
  ○ Eat sitting down
  ○ Consider putting flowers, a plant, or a candle on your table for yourself
  ○ "Set the table" for yourself before meals with silverware, napkin, and whatever utensils you need
  ○ Minimize distractions and noise. If you prefer to not eat in complete silence, play quiet music that is relaxing
  ○ Plate your food in a visually appealing way - including meals and snacks!
OPTIONAL EXERCISES

Create: cultivate a positive environment for eating in your home. Use the suggestions on Slide 18 of this deck to create a space that is conducive for Mindful Eating.

Touch: eat one meal this week with no utensils and only your hands. When you are preparing your food, notice the textures of the foods in your hands. While you are eating, pay special attention to how your food feels to your hands, lips, teeth, and mouth.

Eyes: prepare one meal for yourself this week that is visually appealing. Take time to arrange your food nicely on your plate. Add garnishes that you normally may not. Take a few minutes to enjoy the appearance of your food before eating it.
OPTIONAL EXERCISES

Ears: eat one meal this week with no TV/ music and minimal background noise. Pay special attention to the sounds of the food you are eating.

Heart: eat one food or meal this week that is extremely nostalgic for you. Eat slowly and mindfully connect on an emotional level with the positive experiences that you associate with this particular food.
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.

Mindful 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
