

Mindful Eating *Framework*

EMPOWER YOUR FOOD
MINDSET WITH THESE 4
SIMPLE TIPS



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MINDFUL EATING 101

What is it?

In today's fast-paced world, mindless eating has become the norm. The problem is, when you eat distracted or on-the-go, it's *much* easier to overeat or make poor food choices. That's where mindful eating comes in...

What is Mindful Eating?

Mindful eating stems from mindfulness, an ancient Buddhist practice. In a nutshell, mindfulness is basically the ability to stay fully present in the moment.

Mindful eating, as you may have guessed, is simply being present while you eat. **When you eat mindfully, the focus is on your food and how it makes you feel.** Not on work, your to-do list, social media, or anything else.

Mindful eating may seem too simple to have much impact. But research shows it can have some pretty amazing effects when practiced consistently.

Benefits of Mindful Eating

- Helps you recognize when you're full
- Reduces disordered eating behaviors like binge eating
- Increases enjoyment of meals
- Improves mental well-being
- Helps you distinguish between hunger vs. emotional eating
- Promotes weight loss

However, just like any habit, learning to eat mindfully *doesn't* happen overnight.

But don't worry! This guide will walk you through 4 simple tips to integrate mindful eating into your routine... so you can improve your eating habits AND your relationship with food.

TIP 1: FOOD JOURNALING

Build awareness

Awareness is the first step to changing anything. After all, if you're not aware of your eating habits, how can you ever hope to change them?

So, the first step to making mindful eating a habit is to **bring awareness to WHEN and WHY you're eating**. And food journaling is an excellent way to do this.

Food Journaling Tips

- **Get clarity first:** To set the stage for mindful eating, spend one full week food journaling BEFORE you try to incorporate the other 3 tips.
- **Record your meals & emotions:** Write down every meal, snack, and drink you have, as well as any emotions you felt before reaching for that food (EX. boredom, anxiety, nervous, stressed, sad, etc).
- **What to use:** You can use a simple notebook to do this, your notes app on your phone, or the template on next page.

Once you've spent a solid week food journaling, you'll likely have some major a-ha's.

Whatever patterns you notice, try to view with a non-judgmental attitude.

This awareness will help you as you add in the other three mindful eating tools in the coming weeks.





FOOD JOURNAL

WEEK OF

MONDAY	
BREAKFAST	_____ _____ _____
LUNCH	_____ _____ _____
DINNER	_____ _____ _____
SNACKS	_____ _____ _____

TUESDAY	
BREAKFAST	_____ _____ _____
LUNCH	_____ _____ _____
DINNER	_____ _____ _____
SNACKS	_____ _____ _____

WEDNESDAY	
BREAKFAST	_____ _____ _____
LUNCH	_____ _____ _____
DINNER	_____ _____ _____
SNACKS	_____ _____ _____

THURSDAY	
BREAKFAST	_____ _____ _____
LUNCH	_____ _____ _____
DINNER	_____ _____ _____
SNACKS	_____ _____ _____

FRIDAY	
BREAKFAST	_____ _____ _____
LUNCH	_____ _____ _____
DINNER	_____ _____ _____
SNACKS	_____ _____ _____

SATURDAY	
BREAKFAST	_____ _____ _____
LUNCH	_____ _____ _____
DINNER	_____ _____ _____
SNACKS	_____ _____ _____

SUNDAY			
BREAKFAST	_____ _____ _____	DINNER	_____ _____ _____
LUNCH	_____ _____ _____	SNACKS	_____ _____ _____

TIP 2: HUNGER SCALE

Get clear

How did last week go? Did you notice some patterns of reaching for certain foods when emotions pop up?

Now that your awareness muscles are growing stronger, you're ready for tips 2, 3, and 4. If you feel up for it, you can practice them all this week!

Or if you prefer, you can try out one new tip each week. Whatever feels right for you!

Either way, the focus for tip two is to **distinguish between physical hunger and emotional hunger (aka emotional eating)**. Here's how to do it:

Rate Your Hunger

- **Tune into your body:** Before eating, bring attention to whether you're actually hungry. (If you're not sure, the chart at the bottom should help)
- **Rate your hunger:** On a scale of 0-10, rate your hunger. Zero being not hungry at all, and 10 being ravenous. Say your number out loud or write it down before eating.
- **Notice patterns:** Also state when you last ate. This can help you see if you need to adjust your meal/snack schedule if your hunger keeps hitting 9 or 10.

Physical Hunger

- Signal from your brain that you're low on energy
- Comes on gradually
- Usually happens 2-3 hours after eating something satisfying
- Stomach may feel empty, or may notice growling sounds
- Food desires are less specific
- Stops when you're full

Emotional Hunger

- Stems from the onset of an emotion like stress, anxiety, sadness, etc.
- Comes on suddenly and is usually intense
- Occurs regardless of the last time you ate
- Food desires are for specific comfort foods
- Isn't satisfied with a full stomach

TIP 3: REMOVE DISTRACTIONS

Stay present

So many things fight for our attention these days. Between your phone, social media, email, TV, and work, the distractions are endless. Because of this, many people eat most of their meals on the go, multitasking, or in front of screens.

But as mentioned, eating while distracted makes it easy to overeat *and* make poor food choices.

That's because **it takes your brain a full 20 minutes to register you're full.** If you mindlessly scarf down your food, there's a good chance you'll miss the signal.

Tip 3 is to remove those distractions, slow down, and put ALL your attention on your food. That's right, take a break from your computer, phone and TV and let enjoying your meal be your top focus.

Mindful Eating Tips

- **Eat slowly:** Take smaller bites and consider putting your fork down between bites.
- **Savor the tastes:** Whatever you're eating, savor the flavors. Does it taste sweet? Savory? Or bitter?
- **Engage your senses:** Use your 5 senses and notice the colors, texture, and smell of your food.
- **Put on some music:** If eating distraction free is hard at first, putting on some soft ambient music may help.



TIP 4: APPRECIATE YOUR FOOD

Give thanks

Yogi Bhağan said, "An attitude of gratitude brings great things." And according to the science, he's right on.

Research shows gratitude can **ease stress and anxiety, reduce depression, enhance sleep quality, and even improve relationships.**

And since most of us eat at least 3 times a day, meals are the perfect time to practice an attitude of gratitude. So step 4 is to fully appreciate your food.



Mindful Eating + Gratitude Tips

- **Think about where your food came from:** Most of us take for granted all the people and steps it took for our food to land on our plate. So take a moment to reflect on each part of your meal, and where it came from. Think about the fisherman that caught that salmon, or the farmer who grew that broccoli, and express gratitude for them all.
- **Appreciate your food:** Think about each part of your meal and how it's nourishing your body. Appreciate those eggs and how they're helping you build muscle. Or how those blueberries are flooding your body with nutrients.
- **Give thanks for friends & family:** Mealtimes are an amazing time to appreciate your loved ones. If you're dining with friends or family, feel free to share your gratitude for them out loud.

Turning each meal into a gratitude fest will not only enhance your eating experience, it'll benefit your mental health. **Each meal is an opportunity to train your brain to look for the good.**