

# PRACTICING CONSCIOUS EATING

## How to EAT Mindfully

**As much as possible in the next few weeks and months practice having a highly conscious experience with food.** Below are some suggestions to help guide your experience.

Do this exercise when you are hungry.

1. Consider the when, where and who you are with as you plan your eating time.  
**When**-Where are you on the hunger scale? Always guard against getting overly hungry, and work on eating when you are hungry within 10-15 minutes of noticing hunger (before getting too hungry).  
**Where**-choose a calm environment where you can focus on the eating experience with a minimum of distractions (avoid radio, TV, conversations or eating on the run)  
**Who**-you eat with can result in various feelings (Spouse, parents, grandparents, children, boss, friends, enemies?) Notice if eating with certain people pulls you away from being able to listen to your body's inner wisdom (hunger & fullness and [Other Hungers](#)).
2. Whenever possible involve yourself in the process of preparing, serving, unwrapping, or cutting up the food. Focus on the visual or sensual aspects of the food **before** you eat it, and while you eat it (visual, smell, feel, texture).
3. Tune into each bite of food while it's in your mouth. Try not to be focused on the next bite before you have swallowed the food currently in your mouth. **MORE DOESN'T MAKE IT BETTER, stay in the moment.**

### KEY PIECE:

**Keep reminding yourself you can have this food 100,000 times in your life time** or you will make sure you can get it again no matter the circumstances. You can get the recipe or a similar recipe and make it or have someone make it for you, or you can order it in the future even if it is from a special restaurant far from home etc. Also remind yourself that there are no forbidden foods, that all foods are legalized (see [Normalizing Foods](#))

4. Keep your thoughts on the food you are eating. Try not to think about distressing situations or other things unrelated to your eating experience at this moment. You can think on those things after your eating experience is over, remind yourself there is nothing you can do about "that" right now anyway. If necessary write down your worries or concerns and put them away, you can pick them up again after you finish eating.
5. Sit down (eating standing up is not a good way to be fully conscious, it is usually about hurrying), take a deep breath, relax your body, eat slowly (5-15 chews/bite, depending on the type of food and size of the bite), pausing periodically. Honor the food and your experience with **gratitude** calming yourself down and enjoying the moment (this is mindful eating).
6. Tune into your body cues (hunger, body cravings, fullness) and listen carefully to your self talk while eating, change any negative or accusing thoughts to nurturing empowering ones. **Make the distinction between mouth/mind hunger and belly hunger and fullness.**
7. Are you "sneak eating" in a hurry before someone sees you? Eat in the open, in full view of those you tend to hide from. You have the right to eat, regardless of what you eat, or your current body size. Listen to your self talk and replace negative thoughts with positive self-talk.

### Options for Conscious Eating in a Social Setting

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> You can choose to sit at the table and enjoy the social opportunity with/without food, IF YOU ARE NOT HUNGRY YOU DO NOT HAVE TO EAT!</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> If you not hungry, take some food for later, and wait for hunger to eat it consciously, when you are hungry.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> If someone tries to get you to eat more or eat when you are not hungry, tell them you would feel uncomfortable if you ate the food without hunger. Reassure them that you are sure the food is great, if they prepared the food, ask for the recipe.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Find out about all the foods that will be offered, decide what you are hungry for (sometimes you can have a taste if you are not sure).</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Take ample portions of the foods that match your belly hunger.....<br/>Surplus = Calming, when you are full remind yourself you do not have to eat it all or clear the plate. Say... <i>Oh darn I got full, I will save it for later or toss it out.</i></li></ul> |
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**Remind yourself:** If I continuing eating when I am no longer hungry **it is the same thing as throwing it away.** It is better to throw it in the trash rather than make your belly the depository!

### Consider Your Self Talk While Eating

(see additional self talk substitutes in the [Eating Flow Chart](#))

Try the following self talk to help you eat food consciously and calm your part down that wants to overeat (see [Causes Of Overeating](#))

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- ✓ I will be able to get this food again, I can eat it every day if my belly wants it.
- ✓ I can have as much of this food as my belly really wants, it is different than my mouth.
- ✓ I do not have to stop eating it until I am sure I have had enough for my belly, it is different than my mouth
- ✓ I will listen to my belly, it will tell me what I want and need, I will do my best to get it.
- ✓ My body will not crave the same food over and over again for very long if I am exposing myself to enough variety.

This type of positive scripting will be especially helpful with the foods you struggle with the most. It will help you stay calm and make you less likely to “inhale” the food, prevent eating beyond fullness and discontinue eating things you truly aren't hungry for. **It's all in the listening.**

***Remember.....the path to a healthy body is in the journey of listening..... for belly hunger, body cravings, fullness, or Other Hungers and finding healthy ways to honor whatever you notice.***

# Conscious Eating for the Lunch Environment

## STEP ONE

Stop, before getting your food, decide where you are on the hunger pendulum (see [Eating Flow Chart](#) or [Food Log](#) hunger scale):

1. If you are a -1 or less on the hunger scale, go ahead with your plan to eat. PROCEED TO STEP TWO.
2. If you are above a 1+ on the hunger scale, re-evaluate your plan to eat. YOU DO NOT NEED TO EAT RIGHT NOW IF YOU ARE NOT HUNGRY! You can box up some food to go if it makes you anxious to pass up "special" or free food. Remember, if you get hungry you can decide to eat at any time. Go to the table, sit down and enjoy the social opportunity and tell everybody *I like to eat when I have hunger and it just isn't there yet.*

## STEP TWO

Get out your food (or approach the food table) and survey all the food. Decide whether you are hungry for anything you see, touch your belly, close your eyes and imagine the food in your belly to see if it is a [perfect match](#). Remember you can ask to taste things on the buffet before deciding if it's what your belly wants.

1. If you see foods that match your hunger, take ample portions of those foods. (Remember to take plenty so you can feel calm about having enough.) PROCEED TO STEP THREE.
2. If you're not sure that the foods available match your hunger, you can wait until later, or eat just a little now to hold you until you can get what you really want.

Do not eat a full meal of foods that you do not want, just because its there! Go to the table, sit down and enjoy the social opportunity, make plans to get exactly what your belly wants as soon as possible.

## STEP THREE

Sit down and begin eating consciously. Focus on the sight, smell, feel, and taste of the food on your plate.

1. Take a few bites of the food and decide if it tastes like you want it to. If it doesn't, get something else or season it differently.
2. Eat slowly, pausing every few bites to experience the food and tune in to your belly for sensations of fullness.
3. Keep asking yourself "Am I still Hungry, where am I on the hunger fullness scale?" When the answer is no, see how it feels to stop eating.
4. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO EAT UNTIL EVERYTHING ON YOUR PLATE IS GONE!