



Top Tips for Mindful Eating

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Many of us eat mindlessly without knowing why we want to eat or tasting what we are eating.



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This is especially the case when we are feeling anxious and stressed. But eating **automatically and mindlessly** can lead to overeating and excessive calorie intake.

Through **mindful eating** we can learn how to eat based on our bodily needs, and to be present when we eat to enjoy food and avoid over eating.

If you find yourself reaching for food automatically, feeling hungry or craving food all the time, or have a problem stopping eating once you start, here are some basic **mindful eating skills** you can try to regulate your eating behaviour.

Listen to your stomach

Satisfy your taste buds

Soothe your heart



Listen to your stomach



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The stomach is a container

Eating when the stomach feels hungry and stopping when the stomach feels full, generally will not lead to overeating.

Evaluate your hunger before you eat

Before you eat, try to take a moment and explore your feelings in your stomach to decide if you are really hungry or not.

0 starving ←————→ **10 stuffed**

The **best time** to eat is at hunger level **3 to 4**, when you have signs of hunger but not too much.



Slow down and observe the signs of satiety

It takes time for the satiety hormones to be released. When you eat, try to **slow down** a little bit so you won't miss the signals. **Pay attention** to your bodily sensations and note where you land on the hunger / satiety scale. The best time to stop eating is at **6 to 7 on the scale**, when you start feeling a sensation of fullness but not yet too full.

Satisfy your taste buds



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It is very common for many of us that although our stomach says '**enough**', our mouth is shouting '**more!**'. This is just the mouth desiring pleasant sensations, which has very little to do with the amount of food you eat. To fulfil this **mouth hunger**, you'll probably need to eat the '**right**' food in a '**right**' way.

Instead of rushing to eat whatever you see, take time to consciously choose the food or flavour you want at the moment that would help you feel more satisfied when you've had it. No amount of spicy food can satisfy your desire for sweets, so why not have what you want to begin with?



The key to satisfying your taste buds with a small amount of food is to fully taste it. Try to **slow down**, take one small bite at a time, and chew thoroughly. Rest your attention on the experience of eating and the pleasure it can bring. If you find your mind wanders away, take a breath and let the taste of your food bring you back to the present.

Soothe your heart



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Many people are aware that they eat in an attempt to fill a hole, not in the stomach but in the heart. We often eat when we feel lonely, bored, disappointed, anxious or stressed.

Food cravings are also always linked to our **mood states**, rather than to biological hunger.

It is normal that many of us turn to **food for comfort**, as it is a strategy we've learned – consciously or unconsciously – from our past experiences.

But it is important to understand that food put into the stomach will never ease the ache in a heart.

Soothe your heart



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Be aware of what you are hungry for

Take a moment first to look at what you're hungry for – entertainment and freedom from boredom, comfort and escape from stress, or love and intimacy? It is perfectly natural to have negative emotions, and an urge to eat in response to them.

Find ways to soothe your heart that do not involve eating

Maybe simply put on some music, take a hot bath, talk with your friends or pet your dog. You can also try to make a list of things you can do to relieve stress and distress without being regretful afterwards.



Soothe your heart



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Indulge yourself with the “right amount” of food you crave

If you find you still want the food you have in mind, don't worry about that. Maybe give yourself permission to have it – it doesn't have to be a lot.

There is evidence showing that a small portion of food can satisfy your cravings as much as much as larger portions.

If you're worried that you'll overeat, try to decide ahead of time specifically how much you'll eat in one sitting.

Then take the planned amount of food, relax, slow down, and **pay attention** to the taste of the food and the sensations of your body, and fully enjoy it without rushing or feeling guilty.





Be patient

Don't be discouraged if you find these skills harder than they sound.

We've become accustomed to ignoring the signals from our stomach, eating quickly, or turning to food for comfort.

It takes time and effort to develop new approaches to eating and to break old habits.

Be patient and keep trying. You might be surprised at how much you enjoy your food when you eat mindfully.