

Mindful Eating can Help you Eat Healthier

Cookies, leftover candy from the holidays. Family gatherings, snacks at work and at church. It might start to feel like there are foods to eat and snack on can be everywhere and sometimes it is hard to resist. One way to avoid eating too many foods that are high in sugar or fats is to practice more mindfulness while eating.

Food is an important part of our lives. It brings people together and we do enjoy it. Don't miss out on the joy food brings by strictly restricting certain foods. Eating mindfully is a much simpler way to eat healthy and avoid unwanted weight gain.

Mindfulness is the practice to bring full attention and awareness to one's experience in the moment without judgement. Mindfulness can be applied to eating and becoming aware of our thoughts, feelings and physical sensations related to food consumption, reconnecting us with our natural insights about hunger and satiety. Mindful eating brings mindfulness to food choice and the experience of eating. When you eat mindfully, you learn to pay attention to things such as why you feel like eating and what emotions prompted you to eat. For example, noticing the colors, smells, flavors and textures of your food. brings the focus back to the food. Have you ever been surprised by how quickly you ate a bag of popcorn while watching a movie? This can happen when you are not paying attention to what you are eating.

Here are some tips to help you eat mindfully throughout the year.

Ponder: Before eating, ponder the question. "Am I really hungry?" Sometimes we eat out of boredom or because there is something right in front of us. If there is something that looks tasty, but you are not hungry, save it for later. For example, if a co-worker brings a treat to the office, don't take one until you are hungry. Often, you will forget and not eat the treat at all.

Assess: When you have food in front of you, take a moment to think about it. Think about how it looks, smells, and if it is something you want to eat. Ask yourself, how the food will make you feel. Will it make you feel good, happy, bad or sick?

Slow: Slow it down! Take time to really taste your food. Setting down your fork or spoon after every 1-2 bites make sit easier to tell when you are full.

Savor: Enjoy each bite! Think about the flavors and texture.

Stop: When you are full, stop eating. It might seem obvious, but we often feel a need to eat everything on our plate. Instead start with smaller portions and get more food as needed. You can always put leftovers in the refrigerator if you don't clear your plate.

Mindfulness applies to physical activity too! Choose exercises that make your body feel good and bring you joy! Make a goal to be physically active 30 minutes each day most days of the week.