

From Ronda's Front Porch to Yours

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Mindful Eating and A Healthy Food Relationship

In the hustle and bustle of our busy lives we can get caught up in the desire to lose weight, gain muscle and look better that we often forget about the importance of a healthy food relationship. You may have heard of mindful eating and intuitive eating but what do they really mean?

Many diets on the market today are restrictive and we might feel like we have to sacrifice taste or our favorite foods to achieve weight loss. They can make it easy for us to fall into a pattern of shame and guilt when we break the food rules. Adding our busy schedules in to the mix with competing priorities, we may forget to evaluate why, when and how much we eat.

Being aware of mindful and intuitive eating can have a role of a healthy diet relationship with food. Let's take a look at the differences.

According to the International Food Information Council Foundation, mindful eating is when we drift away from fad diets and calorie restrictions. It gives the opportunity to find a way to enjoy your food without gaining unwanted weight and mindlessly overeating. Mindful eating can be looked at as a way to enforce awareness.

The core to this healthy eating strategy is to slow down and be fully in tune with all tastes and textures of the food at hand. Have you ever considered how fast you may eat a meal? It is recommended to slow down and breathe deeply between bites and so you can notice the different tastes and textures of the dish. This might even require you to turn off the technology, TV, phone and enjoy your meal.

A 2013 issue of Today's Dietitian stated that "mindful eating is being used as a tool to improve eating behaviors, encourage weight control, prevent chronic disease, and foster a healthy relationship with food."

When you sit down to enjoy your next meal, notice the texture of each item. Is it crunchy, moist, grainy, dry, tough, creamy or tender? How about the flavor? Is it sweet, salty, sour, bitter or savory?

Intuitive eating differs from mindful eating because it is about the when, why and how much of food you eat. The concept of intuitive eating urges individuals to listen to natural hunger cues that the body gives. These natural hunger cues should lead you to eat only when you feel hungry, stopping when you are satisfied and not relying on outside indicators to tell you when you should eat.

So many times we eat out of habit instead of hunger. Intuitive eating does not give in to habitual and mindless eating practices. Instead, it focuses on the core reasons why we eat: hunger and nourishment.

Mindful eating and intuitive eating can be used together as the perfect pair. They complement each other well and when both strategies are used, you can find peace in all aspects of eating. Choosing when, where, and how much to eat can become less stressful as you transition away from habitual ways of thinking about eating. Both mindful and intuitive eating are great practices to improve your relationship with food and build healthier eating habits.

For questions or more information about intuitive and mindful eating, contact the Scurry County Extension Office at 325-573-5423.

Sources: International Food Information Council Foundation

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