**Day 28**

**Title: Mindful Eating**

Yesterday we talked about mindless eating. It’s what’s going on when we eat without noticing what we’ve eaten, or how much, or even why we ate. Since it can lead to extra calories and extra pounds, it’s something we should try to avoid. But how?

The opposite of mindless eating is mindful eating. Mindful eating is also one way of practicing mindfulness. But what exactly is mindfulness? Even though entire books have been written on this subject, there are simple ways of describing it. Jon Kabut-Zinn, a scientist and author who has studied mindfulness as a way to reduce stress, describes it as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.” Thich Nhat Hahn, a Buddhist monk who has written and taught about mindfulness for decades, describes it as “moment-to-moment awareness of what is occurring in and around us.”

Mindfulness can be simplified to paying attention to what’s going on in this very moment. So how does that apply to eating? And why does eating mindfully matter?

**What is mindful eating?**

Mindful eating leads us to pay attention to what we’re putting in our bodies. It doesn’t require any special equipment or separate kinds of tracking. It’s not a way of quantifying what we’re eating. Instead, it’s more of a change in attitude toward food. It reminds us that food is meant to nourish us, rather than harm us. Mindful eating has benefits that are worth checking out.

**The benefits of mindful eating**

The scientific study of mindful eating is still a young and developing field, but there have been some promising findings. Studies have found that participants who apply mindfulness techniques to their eating lose more weight than those who make no changes to their eating behavior. Other studies have found that people who are more mindful in general have lower BMIs than people who are less mindful. Researchers have even found that participants who eat mindfully wind up liking a food more than they thought they would initially. Think of this as a way to overcome reluctance to eating those vegetables!

**How do I eat mindfully?**

Eating mindfully isn’t difficult, but it may take some practice if you’re used to rushing through meals or eating whatever’s close by. Here are some suggestions on how to make mindful eating a regular practice.

1. Before you start eating, ask yourself why you’re eating. Is it because you’re hungry or is it because you’re sad, stressed, or happy? Are you eating because there is food nearby? Are you eating because a commercial or advertisement made you think of food? Try to eat as a response to hunger, rather than emotion.
2. Put away distractions. Let your food be the object of your attention, not your smart phone, the tv, or a newspaper.
3. Once you sit down to eat, notice how your food looks on your plate. What colors are on your plate? How much of your plate is covered? Notice the aromas of your food. Take note of the temperature. Is your food hot, cold, or room temperature? Take pleasure in how your food looks and smells.
4. When you take a bite, notice how the food tastes. How does it feel in your mouth? Is it crunchy, smooth, soft, tough, chewy, or crumbly? Does this change as you are chewing?
5. Eat slowly. Savor each bite. Put down your fork between bites. Enjoy what you’re eating.
6. After you have eaten, notice how you feel. Are you full or no longer hungry? Are you satisfied?
7. A little while after you have eaten, notice how you feel. Are you energized or are you sluggish? Did you eat too much, not enough, or just the right amount? Do you feel nourished?

**A final word**

Mindful eating takes practice. In fact, mindfulness is a practice, rather than a skill to be mastered. Even if you’re not trying to lose weight, mindfulness can help you to enjoy your food more and appreciate it for its ability to nourish you. Given how busy modern life can be, you may not be able to eat every meal or snack mindfully, but do yourself a favor and try applying some of these techniques today.

**Sources:**

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