



# Mindful

Layer  
Real Change





## Mindful - a Lean Life Skill

*“Mindful eating means simply eating or drinking while being aware of each bite or sip.” ~ \*Thích Nhất Hạnh*

What is mindful eating?

Mindful eating is based on mindfulness, a Buddhist concept. Mindfulness is a form of waking meditation that helps you recognise and cope with your emotions and physical sensations. It is about using mindfulness to reach a state of full attention to your experiences, cravings, and physical cues when eating.

Fundamentally, mindful eating involves:

- eating slowly and without distraction
- listening to physical hunger cues and eating only until you're full
- distinguishing between true hunger and non-hunger triggers for eating
- engaging your senses by noticing colours, smells, sounds, textures, and flavours
- learning to cope with guilt and anxiety about food
- eating to maintain overall health and well-being
- noticing the effects food has on your feelings and figure
- appreciating your food

These things allow you to replace automatic thoughts and reactions with more conscious, healthier responses.

### Summary:

Mindful eating relies on mindfulness, a form of meditation. Mindful eating is about developing awareness of your experiences, physical cues, and feelings about food. It is about staying present, in the moment, and honouring yourself and your relationship with food.

\*Thích Nhất Hạnh is a Vietnamese Thiền Buddhist monk, peace activist, and founder of the Plum Village Tradition, historically recognized as the main inspiration for engaged Buddhism.

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## Why mindful eating is important

Today's fast-paced society tempts people with an abundance of food choices. On top of that, distractions have shifted attention away from the actual act of eating toward televisions, computers, and smartphones.

Eating has become a mindless act, often done quickly. When we eat without attention to our food we lose connection with our inner intelligence and miss the chance to be truly nourished by our food. Additionally, you miss vital cues that you're eaten enough, and it's time to put down your fork. This is very common in binge eating.

By eating mindfully, you restore your attention and slow down, making eating an intentional act instead of an automatic one. What's more, by increasing your recognition of physical hunger and fullness cues, you are able to distinguish between emotional and true, physical hunger.

You also increase your awareness of triggers that make you want to eat, even though you're not necessarily hungry. By knowing your triggers, you can create a space between them and your response, giving you the time and freedom to choose how to react.

### Summary:

Mindful eating helps you distinguish between emotional and physical hunger. It also increases your awareness of food-related triggers and gives you the freedom to choose your response to them.



Mindful Exercise:

Working with the eight components of mindful eating, complete the self-awareness questionnaire.

- 1. How many distractions are there when you eat, and how long does it take you to finish most meals?

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- 2. Describe your hunger and fullness levels. What signals does your body give you that it is hungry, or that you've eaten enough?

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3. When do you know it is time to eat? Would you say you eat when you are truly hungry, or are there other triggers that cause you to eat (e.g. boredom, routine etc)? What are those triggers and describe how they count down (i.e. what happens from your first thought about food, to when you finally put something in your mouth?).

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4. Think of the last meal you ate. Using your senses, describe in detail the food, the table, what was happening around you. Be descriptive, engage your sight, smell and taste to really describe it as though it was appearing in a movie.

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5. How do you feel when you eat food? Do you feel any anxiety or guilt when you buy, prepare or eat food? If so, describe those feelings and the thoughts that go through your mind.

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6. Do you eat to nourish your body or just to get the job done? Do you eat for pleasure? Is it a shared experience? Describe your relationship with eating.

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7. Are there foods that you eat or drink that you know decrease your energy levels? If so, what are they, when do you eat them and how often do you do so?

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8. Think of the last meal that you really appreciated. Fully describe the meal and situation, and what made it so pleasurable for you.

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Antidote to a lack of mindful eating.

Now, using your answers to the previous eight questions, write realistic ways you can bring more mindfulness to each of those situations.

1. Eating slowly and without distraction

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2. Listening to physical hunger cues and eating only until you're full

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3. Distinguishing between true hunger and non-hunger triggers for eating

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4. Engaging your senses by noticing colors, smells, sounds, textures, and flavors

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5. Learning to cope with guilt and anxiety about food

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6. Eating to maintain overall health and well-being

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7. Noticing the effects food has on your feelings and figure

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8. Appreciating your food

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"Mindful eating is a way to become reacquainted with the guidance of our internal nutritionist."

*Jan Chozen Bays*