

## MINDFUL EATING

## אכילה מודעת

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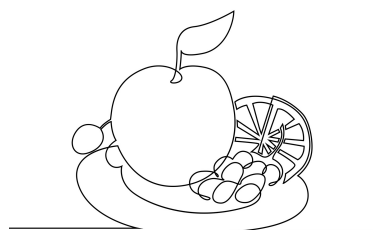
**Healthy food** is only one component of healthy eating. Shabbat reminds us that it's essential to set aside time to focus on ourselves. Shabbat creates the foundation for a mindfulness practice—a practice in which we take for rest, gratitude and to focus on being present.

**Wholeness & Peacefulness,** or Shleimut (שלימות), is one of the many Jewish Middot (values). Shleimut is the act of being mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually in tune with oneself to bring all of these aspects of the self in harmony with the others.

**Mindful eating** can strengthen our mental wellness and bring us into a healthier relationship with both our bodies and the food we eat. Mindful eating is not a diet, but rather a form of meditation. Mindful eating is about bringing our awareness and attention to our in-the-moment experiences and being present.

### In this Resource:

- Mental Tenants of Mindful Eating
- Concrete Ways to Begin Eating Mindfully
- Questions to ask yourself to create a personalized Mindful Eating practice
- Mindful Eating Scripted Meditation



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### Mental Tenants of Mindful Eating

- Accept that all eating experiences are unique. What is right for you is right for you individually.
- Try to view food as an experience. There is no right or wrong way to eat, just awareness and the increasing ability to make choices that support health and well-being. Let go of judgment.
- Try to move away from the idea of good food and bad food— guilt is not part of mindful eating as it takes us out of the present moment and is not non-judgmental.
- Try to become aware of the positive and nurturing aspects of food. Think less about calories and more about nourishment.
- Notice and acknowledge how you respond to food (positively, negatively or neutrally) without judgment.
- Try to become aware of physical hunger cues. Bring your attention to what it feels like to be each state of full and hungry, and let this guide your decisions to begin and end eating.
- Before you eat, think about why you're hungry. Are you hungry or experiencing something else like boredom or stress? Try to eat for hunger and use self-care instead if you find yourself eating for an emotional reason. Like the modern-day nutritionists, King Solomon also advises against the unnecessary consumption of food, saying, "The righteous eat to satisfy their souls" (Proverbs 13:25).
- Notice how different foods impact your feelings and physical state. We all react differently, and some foods make us feel energized, some make us feel sleepy. In the same way, some foods may make us feel happier or sadder. Part of Mindful Eating is checking in with your physical sensation and your emotions before, during and after eating.

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### Concrete Ways to Begin Eating Mindfully

- Start with a check-in by taking a few seconds to do a quick body scan. How are you feeling physically at this moment? How are you feeling emotionally? What are you thinking about?
- Before you eat, look at your food. What colors are on your plate? What textures? Take a moment to smell your dish. Does it look and smell good?
- As you eat, engage your senses-- notice the smells, sounds, textures, and flavors of what you're eating. Some people find it helpful to count how many times they are chewing, as it brings their attention to the physical sensation of eating.
- Eat slowly and without distraction; try to focus on the food. Redirect your attention without judgment when you get distracted (it happens to all of us!).
- Listen to your body and eat only until you're full. You may find it helpful to eat until satisfied (but not totally full), and then give yourself time to sit with how you feel (it can take the brain up to 20 minutes to catch up to the stomach). Then reassess to see if you'd like to have a second helping. If you do, try not to pass judgment on this desire. Instead, acknowledge that you are not yet full and need more to eat.
- Practice gratitude related to the eating experience. Here are a few prompts to get you started:
  - What work went into the creation of this meal and who did that work.
  - How you feel while eating it: if your physical body is comfortable, if the texture, taste or scent is pleasant, or if you feel satiated.
  - How you feel about the room you're eating in, are there things in this room you are grateful for, or that bring you joy.
  - How you feel about the people you are eating with and how they may be part of making this experience positive.

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- Judaism has a long tradition of practicing gratitude around food. For some, prayers and rituals around food enhance their Jewish experience. Typically this is done with a shorter prayer before the meal over specific foods and a more extended prayer after the meal. Examples of prayers for meals.:
  - For before you eat: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/blessings-for-food-drink/>
  - For after you eat:
    - Reform: <https://reformjudaism.org/practice/prayers-blessings/daily-blessings-birkat-hamazon-grace-after-meals-short-version>
    - Orthodox: [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/136676/jewish/EnglishHebrew-PDF-of-Birkat-Hamazon.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/136676/jewish/EnglishHebrew-PDF-of-Birkat-Hamazon.htm)



## MINDFUL EATING

## אכילה מודעת

### Questions to ask yourself to create a personalized Mindful Eating practice:

- What are some ways I can slow down in eating and listen to what's going on in my body?
- What signals does my body send to tell me I'm full?
- What do I do to feel physically comfortable and relaxed during eating, while cooking and after eating?
- Do I ever eat because of my emotional state (stress, sadness, boredom, etc.)?
- What foods am I bringing into my life, and how can I make my kitchen a place that encourages mindfulness?
  - For example: Are healthy foods handy? What kinds of foods are in sight?
- Am I eating randomly or multitasking while eating?
  - When we snack during another activity or wander while eating, it's easy to be mindless. Try to set aside time that's focused solely on eating.
- Am I eating alone?
  - When possible, eating with others gives us a healthy connection and helps us slow down because there is a ritual to it. If your life situation means you are always eating alone, consider adding a ritual to when you eat to create consistency or setup virtual meals with family and friends.
- What are my body's physical hunger signals, and what might be emotional hunger triggers? Before you eat, ask yourself "How Hungry am I?"

### The Hunger Scale



Source for Hunger Scale Image: Abby Langer Nutrition ([abbylangernutrition.com](http://abbylangernutrition.com))

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### Mindful Eating Scripted Meditation

Mindful Eating Script was written by Christine Milovani, LCSW, based on information from KabatZinn's book Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness.

Begin by connecting to your breath and body, feel your feet on the ground and notice your experience in this moment. With your awareness in this moment, notice any thoughts, sensations or emotions you are experiencing. (Pause)

Tune into the awareness or sensation that you have in your body of feeling hungry, thirsty or maybe even feeling full. If you were going to eat or drink something right now, what is your body hungry for? What is it thirsty for? Just pay attention and notice with awareness the sensations that give you this information. (Pause)

Now, bring your attention to the item in your hand and imagine that you are seeing it for the first time. Observe with curiosity as you pay attention and notice the color, shape, texture, and size. Is there anything else that you notice, sense or feel? (Pause)

Imagine what it took for this item to get to your hands: sunshine, water, time, processing, and shipping. You may choose to be aware of gratitude for everyone involved in the cultivation and preparation of this item of food. You may choose to bring in your own gratitude or spiritual blessing. (Pause)

Now place the item between your fingers and feel the texture, temperature and ridges. You may notice smoothness or stickiness. Again, notice if you have any thoughts, sensations or emotions at this time. Continue to breathe and be fully present in this moment. (Pause)

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Take the piece of food and bring it toward your nose and smell with your full awareness. Notice if you have any memories, sensations or reactions in your body. Even before you eat it, you may notice that you begin to have a digestive response in your body just by noticing and smelling. (Pause)

With full awareness of your hand moving toward your mouth, place the object (fruit or chocolate) into your mouth without chewing or swallowing it. Just allow it to be in your mouth, roll it around to different parts of your mouth and tongue. Notice the flavor and texture. Notice the physical sensations within your body, especially your mouth and your gut. Continue to breathe as you explore the sensation of having this item in your mouth. (Pause)

Next take just one bite and notice the flavor, notice the change of texture. Then very slowly begin to chew this piece of food, and notice the parts of your mouth that are involved in chewing. Notice the sound and movement of chewing, as you continue to notice the sensations and flavor. (Pause)

When you are ready, swallow this item and notice the path that it follows from your mouth and throat into your stomach. Notice the sensation and taste that may linger in your mouth. Connect again to your body and your breath and notice your experience in this moment. (Pause)

Next, I invite you to pick up another food item, and choose to eat it however you wish. Noticing your choice and your experience. Notice how it is similar or different. (Pause for 30-60 seconds, and then return to large group discussion about the experience).