

SMART about Mindful Eating

S- Self Discovery and Self-Empowerment

Before you can learn anything about nutrition, you need to know why it is that you are going to make a change in your food selections and/or eating behaviors. As you recognize the value in the impact of nutrition on your health, you may want to make sure that the foods you include will help you to improve your quality of life.

Identify at least two reasons why you should make different food choices.

For example:

- Lower my LDL cholesterol
- Lose weight
- Have more energy
- Improve my quality of life

M- Be Mindful of your reasons for including a food

Before eating, it is helpful to take a breath, and have a pause. Armed with nutrition knowledge and a heightened sense of awareness, ask yourself if the food in front of you is helping you to reach your goals? Occasionally, you will see a food is not consistent with your goals. You may take the breath and the pause and think about how you will feel after you eat it, and yet still decide that you would like to have this food. It is important for you to appreciate that this is a lifestyle and not a diet. Go ahead and have this food. Make sure to enjoy it. As long as you are not doing this on a regular basis, you will be fine. Perfection is not necessary. The goal is to be consistent with healthy choices.

A-Awareness of why you are eating

Ask yourself the hardest question of all: "Are you really hungry?" Are you bored? Are you frustrated? Would you rather not have to do something, so you would prefer to eat instead? Are you tired? Are you stressed? If you have not answered the question by saying yes, I am hungry, then begin to be aware of the connection between eating and emotions.

Be aware of the foods that you are including when you are not hungry. How do you feel after you include these foods?

What were you doing prior to eating foods that are not consistent with your goals? What steps can you do differently that may lead to different behaviors? For example, if you find that you are eating too much during the evening hours, and you note that you are spending this time sitting in your kitchen watching television, perhaps, you may

consider going into another room to watch television or including another activity such as reading a book.

- Construct a list of alternative activities to eating, that you can do when you are not hungry
- Bring awareness to the level of hunger you and fullness you feel
- Bring awareness to how the pace at which you eat
- Bring awareness to the what other activities are you doing while eating
- Bring awareness to the people around you when eating
- Bring awareness to the room in which you are eating
- Bring awareness to your thoughts, as you are mindful to be present enjoying and appreciating the food that you are eating

R-Realistic Goals

Set goals that are realistic, specific, timely, measurable, and attainable. For example, if you set a goal to include more whole grains. How will you know that you achieved your goal? If you set a measurement, a time reference, and make sure it is realistic, you will gain confidence as you appreciate that you can make a change. In this example, you may decide to include 3 whole grain servings every day for the next 3 weeks. Keep a record of your progress. You can do this either electronically, or on paper. When you reach your goal, have a non-food item with which you can reward yourself. It may be a place you have wanted to visit, a book you've wanted to read, or whatever would be a treat for you. This is about treating yourself well and putting yourself at the top of your priority list. Once you achieve your goal, set a new one. This will help you to stay on track

Track- Track your intake

Take the time to track your intake as you keep a record of what you are eating and the amounts of the foods that you are including. You may do this using an app such as Lose It, or My Fitness Pal, or you may do so by keeping a notebook or notepad. You can also track your goals and the progress you are making.

When constructing a food diary using paper and pen, include a few columns that allow you to identify how hungry you were at the time, how you are feeling, the room that you are in, who you are eating with, the activity(ies) that you are doing while eating, and your position (sitting, standing). Here is an example of a food diary that you may construct. I have included two days of recording. Please feel free to make this your own by customizing it to whatever format will work for you.

Date:

Time:	Food Preparation/Amount	Degree of Hunger 0=not hungry 10=ravenous	Emotions Happy, sad, bored, stressed, angry, frustrated, nervous, etc.	Where-place/room	People I am with when eating	Activity Sitting, standing, driving, reading

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