

Mindful Eating

for Children



Healthy Eating Tip of the Month
May 2020

What is mindful eating?

Mindful eating is an approach to eating in which you bring awareness to your body's hunger and fullness cues and you utilize all five senses (touch, smell, taste, sight, sound) to greater appreciate food.

Why should I practice mindful eating with my child?

Mindful eating can help your child develop a healthier relationship with food. Learning to listen to body hunger and fullness cues can prevent undereating and overeating.

What if my child is a picky eater?

Mindful eating can help with picky eating! Trying a new food using a mindful eating approach can make it a fun eating experience in which the child can fully experience the taste, aromas, and textures of a food.



Phrases that Hinder vs. Phrases that Help

<i>Rather than...</i>	<i>Try...</i>	<i>Why?</i>
<p><i>“Eat that kiwi for me.”</i></p> <p><i>“If you don’t finish your vegetables, I will be disappointed.”</i></p>	<p><i>“This fruit is a kiwi. It is sweet like an orange.”</i></p> <p><i>“Wow! These vegetables are crunchy!”</i></p>	<p>Some phrases may encourage children to eat for your approval and attention. This can lead to the child developing unhealthy beliefs about food and their relationship with food. Encourage your child to try new foods by using phrases that point out the sensory qualities of food.</p>
<p><i>“Stop fighting with your sister and I’ll give you a cookie.”</i></p> <p><i>“Finish your fruit so you can have some dessert.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Let’s talk about what’s wrong so we can continue eating together as a family.”</i></p> <p><i>“We can try this fruit again another time. Next time, would you like to try the apple raw instead of cooked.”</i></p>	<p>When offering a reward for eating certain foods over other foods, it can make it seem like some foods are better than others. Offering food as a reward may also lead to food being used as a coping mechanism. Instead, comfort your child with love, time, and words.</p>
<p><i>“Finish your dinner so you can join the Clean Plate Club!”</i></p> <p><i>“Look at your brother; he finished all of his fruit.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Is your stomach telling you that you’re full?”</i></p> <p><i>“Is your stomach still making its hungry growling noise?”</i></p>	<p>It is important to allow your child to recognize the sensation of hunger vs. fullness so they can decide whether to continue eating or to stop eating. This can help prevent undereating and overeating.</p>
<p><i>“Eating that broccoli wasn’t so bad, was it?”</i></p>	<p><i>“Did you like the broccoli?”</i></p> <p><i>“Everybody likes different foods. That’s okay if broccoli isn’t your favorite right now.”</i></p>	<p>Some questions can make the child feel like they are wrong for not wanting to eat a certain food. Instead, try to empower the child to make their own decision about how they feel about the taste of the food.</p>

The Hunger and Fullness Scale

A hunger and fullness scale can be used to monitor your eating habits and to become more aware of your body's natural hunger and fullness cues. This scale can help you differentiate between true, physical hunger and psychological hunger which is a desire to eat caused by emotions. Learning to recognize your hunger and fullness signals can help strengthen your relationship with food and body as well as be beneficial for your health.

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- 1—Starving, weak, dizzy
 - 2—Very hungry, cranky, low energy, lots of stomach growling
 - 3—Pretty hungry, stomach is growling a little
 - 4—Starting to feel a little hungry
 - 5—Satisfied, neither hungry nor full
 - 6—A little full, pleasantly full
 - 7—A little uncomfortable
 - 8—Feeling stuffed
 - 9—Very uncomfortable, stomach hurts
 - 10—So full you feel sick

Food Exploration Activity

The following activity is a way for your child to practice focusing on each of their five senses. You can start out by using one food as the object for mindful eating. Try involving the whole family with this activity, taking turns in sharing what each person notices about the food.

Touch:

Is the food warm or cold? Is it smooth, rough or sticky?

Smell:

What does the food smell like? Is the scent sweet, spicy, or fresh? Does it have a smell?

Sight:

What do you notice? What color is the food? Is the food dull or shiny?

Sound:

If applicable, do you notice any sounds? If you're unwrapping a food, what does it sound like?
Does the first bite make a sound?

Taste:

Does it taste sweet, spicy, tart, salty, or savory?



Tips for Picky Eaters

- **Offer one new food at a time.** You can also serve it alongside a food you know your child likes.
- **Start with small portions of new foods.** Encourage your child to try at least one bite. If the child does not like it, you can always offer it again later. If you would like your child to take more than one bite, make sure to tell your child at the beginning of the meal to reduce the child's anxiety around how much they are expected to eat.
- **Offer new foods multiple times.** It may take more than 10 times before your child may like the food. Give them multiple chances to explore this new food.
- **Make food fun!** Try preparing the food into attractive shapes or fun patterns.
- **Involve your child in meal prep.** This gives the child the opportunity to further explore the ingredients and build their curiosity of new foods.

Food Ideas for your Picky Eater

- Macaroni with Cheese and Broccoli
- Fruit and cheese kabobs
- Pita bread and veggies with hummus
- Vegetable pizza
- Breakfast burrito
- Walking tacos
- Mini bagels with jam, cheese, or nut butter
- Trail mix
- Celery with peanut butter and raisins
- Fried rice with eggs and veggies
- Vegetable soup
- Fruit salad



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