

FOOD *for* THOUGHT

WINTER 2017

Starting Your Mindful Eating Journey



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About The Center for Mindful Eating:

Our Mission:

The mission of The Center for Mindful Eating, also known as TCME, is to help people achieve a balanced, respectful, healthy and joyful relationship with food and eating. By providing an easily accessible source of information and opportunities to interact – via the web and in other ways – we seek to train and encourage professionals, who can then foster this capacity in others.

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About this issue:

As the fullness of winter arrives here in the northern hemisphere, we naturally begin to turn inward to reflect on our own journeys – physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. In considering our program and publications for 2017, we chose to offer a path of practice, which begins with basic principles and moves through various tools and approaches to help a person develop – or deepen – an existing mindful eating practice. Beginning with this issue of *Food for Thought*, entitled Starting Your Mindful Eating Journey, we offer our readers guidance in starting their own mindful eating path.

Cultivating a mindful eating practice and moving away from the diet mentality can be quite challenging, according to Sharon Theroux, Ph.D. In “Establishing a Mindful Eating Practice,” Theroux describes how accepting the sensation “craving” as it is, and not immediately trying to deny it or give in to it, you can begin to investigate, “What am I really, really hungry for?”

Caroline Baerten, RD, offers significant insights on the importance of a formal mindfulness practice as the foundation of mindful eating. She writes: “A mindfulness practice is not only beneficial for the health professional. Clients benefit and learn from seeing

mindfulness embodied in the teacher.” Baerten has been an essential force behind the development and creation of TCME’s Good Practice Guidelines (available at www.thecenterformindfuleating.org/principles.) Becoming a mindful eating professional consists of multiple stages of preparation, study, training, practice and direct teaching experience. As providers, “when we are aware of our own feelings of anxiety or inadequacy, we can choose to remain present with the needs of the client, instead of being caught up in our own stories or emotions.”

Our educational handout is on the BASICS of Mindful Eating, a concept developed and shared by Lynn Rossy, Ph.D. “BASICS is an acronym for a complete set of guidelines that walks you through the eating process from beginning to end. These are not rules and you don’t need to be perfect at them.” She warns us that mindful eating could change the way you eat forever!

We bring this issue to a close with a new feature for our *Food for Thought* magazine, a led practice for us to use to bring mindful eating alive and into the present moment.

As always, thank you to our writers and to our members for supporting this and other *Food for Thought* issues.



Establishing a Mindful Eating Practice



Sharon Theroux
Ph.D.

Mindful eating is a practice which can be used every day to learn more about our actions, thoughts, feelings and motivations in order to cultivate health and contentment. This practice is not just about what we do when we put food into our mouths (although that is a useful examination and often a wonderful experience); it is also about learning how to access our internal wisdom and to use the qualities or characteristics of mindfulness in how we approach food, our bodies, and our entire lives.

Establishing a mindful eating practice and moving away from the diet mentality is life affirming. However, cultivating such a practice in our fast-paced society can be quite challenging. It requires an intentional shift from using external guidance about what, when, and how much to eat (e.g. diets, provided portion sizes, dress size, the bathroom scale, the size of your plate) to internal guidance (e.g. using your taste buds, your

hunger/satiety cues).

In order to achieve an awareness of your internal guidance, a daily formal mindfulness practice is essential. There are many types of formal meditation practices. As described by Caroline Baerten in this issue, one of the first steps in teaching mindful eating is to help the client establish a daily formal meditation practice. In addition, each time a client eats can be an opportunity for tuning into thoughts, feelings, and body sensations. Lynn Rossy describes the BASICS of mindful eating in this issue, which can be a guide during this process.

In addition to these formal practices, the attitude with which you undertake the practice of paying attention is crucial. When teaching clients mindful eating, it can be helpful to explicitly discuss the attitudes of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2013) to help them transition from an external to a more internal guidance system. They are:

1) Non-Judgment

Most of us are highly critical of ourselves, as well as others. Although some judgmental thoughts are adaptive,

our minds often get into the habit of judging all the time—judging how we (or others) should look, what we (or others) should wear, how much we (or others) should weigh, what we (or others) should eat. These judgmental thoughts are painful, often false, and counterproductive to mindful eating. Noticing our judgmental thoughts is the first step toward freedom from them.

2) Patience

Our clients have well-ingrained habits and highly automated ways of thinking to overcome. Patience is required to learn the new skill of mindful eating and to realize that you will continue to learn over your lifetime. Mindful eating is not a quick fix.

3) Beginner's Mind

According to Kabat-Zinn (2013), a “beginner’s mind” is “a mind that is willing to see everything as if for the first time”. All too often, we let our thoughts about what we “know” prevent us from seeing things as they actually are. How

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establishing practice

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many times will we automatically dismiss certain food choices as “bad” for us, and then end up craving (and sometimes bingeing on) those very same foods! We often see food with “dieter lenses,” instead of listening to our own bodies. A beginner’s mind will help us make more intuitive food choices.

4) Trust

Many of our clients have lost trust in themselves. After years of dieting, the effects of the restrict-binge cycle creates a sense that they cannot control their eating behaviors. But trust in oneself is a necessary attitude to cultivate when establishing a mindful eating practice. This entails learning to rely on the intelligence of the body about what it wants to eat, and relying on the signals of hunger and satiety when it is time to stop eating. Trusting in oneself develops gradually over time.

5) Non-Striving

How many of our clients come to us with the goal of weight loss? Yet, the latest research suggests that going on a diet can actually predict weight gain. From a mindfulness perspective, the best way to achieve a goal is to back off from striving and instead focus on carefully seeing and accepting things as they are, moment by moment. With patience and regular practice, movement towards your goal can take place by itself.

6) Acceptance

Your clients have likely tried all sorts of ways to deny their food cravings. By accepting the sensation “craving” as it is, and not immediately trying to deny it or give in to it, you can begin to investigate, “What am I really, really hungry for?” Over time, they may find that what they really crave is not food. Accepting a situation is not passive surrendering. It is seeing the reality as it is without turning your head



By accepting the sensation “craving” as it is, and not immediately trying to deny it or give in to it, you can begin to investigate, “What am I really, really hungry for?”

away from unpleasant experiences.

7) Letting Go

Mindful eating encourages the letting go of external cues, our cultural conditioning about what and how much we need to eat and what and how much we need to weigh. By letting go of our reliance on external cues, and cultivating a reliance on our own internal signals, we have the potential to find internal wisdom and peace.

Establishing a mindful eating practice by developing a consistent sitting meditation practice, a mindful eating practice, and the cultivation of these attitudes, is truly the doorway to more peace in our relationship with food and our bodies. This improved relationship will then begin to impact other areas of our lives. We encourage you to take these practices on for yourself so that you

understand them deeply in your own lives and then you will be better equipped to teach them to others.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness. Bantam Books.

Rossy, L (2016). The Mindfulness-Based Eating Solution: Proven strategies to end overeating, satisfy your hunger and savor your life. New Harbinger Publications.

Kristeller, J. L., & Wolever, R. Q. (2011). Mindfulness-based eating awareness treatment (MB-EAT). Conceptual basis. Eating Disorders. The Journal of Treatment & Prevention, 19, 49–61.

Sharon Theroux, PhD, is a TCME board member, licensed psychologist and certified Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) instructor. She can be reached at www.mindfulnessouthflorida.com and www.internationalseminarsgroup.com.

A formal mindfulness practice as the foundation of mindful eating



Caroline Baerten

MA, RD

While working as a psychotherapist and dietitian, mindfulness came into my life from two different angles. First, it came to me thanks to the teachings of Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh and his influential book “The Miracle of Mindfulness.” A more secular introduction to mindfulness happened through an eight week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course.

For many years, I’ve followed several mindfulness and mindful-eating teacher trainings (MBSR, ME-CL, MB-EAT, MSC) to learn the essence of mindfulness. Professional trainings such as ‘Mindful Eating, Conscious Living’ (ME-CL) and ‘Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training’ (MB-EAT) have all included hours and sometimes days of silence, with guided meditations to deepen the practice of mindfulness.

What might be the rationale behind a formal mindfulness practice as the foundation of mindful eating?

The meaning of mindfulness

First, it might be useful to clarify the meaning of mindfulness. A well-accepted definition provided by Scott Bishop, says: “Mindfulness has been described as a kind of non-elaborative, non-judgmental, present-centered awareness, in which each thought, feeling, or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as it is.” The non-judgmental nature of mindfulness provides a way



to disengage from habitual reactivity — for example, seeing a trigger food and automatically reaching for it — and this allows for a more reflective response to the experience of craving.

The embodiment of mindfulness

Having a clear attitude (open, kind), intention (on purpose) and attention to be with what is present, provides an anchor when sessions are challenging for the professional. Every health professional is also a wounded healer. When we are aware of our own feelings of anxiety or inadequacy, we can choose to remain present with the needs of the client, instead of being caught up in our own stories or emotions.

A mindfulness practice is not only beneficial for the health professional. Clients benefit and learn from seeing mindfulness embodied in the teacher.

The way a mindful-eating teacher holds difficult feelings with kindness, compassion and curiosity, might model a new way of relating to similar stressful

experiences. A clear understanding of the mindfulness qualities (e.g., acceptance, non-striving, patience), a clear understanding of how the mind works, and direct insights are difficult to learn through reading books or passive listening to webinars. An in-depth understanding of mindfulness can best be experienced on an intimate personal level within the context of a safe setting (meditation group or training) and under guidance of long term meditation teachers. There is no short-cut to learning mindfulness skills.

S. Bishop et al, Mindfulness: A Proposed Operational Definition, Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice; Autumn 2004; 11, 3;

Mindfulness and the Therapeutic Relationship, Ed. S. Hick, T. Bien, 2008

Caroline Baerten is an integrative psychotherapist, qualified chef and mindfulness-based nutritionist/RD. She can be reached at info@me-nu.org or www.me-nu.org

Foundations of Mindful Eating

A New Webinar Series from TCME

Discover a path you can walk in 2017 which will help you to learn about teaching mindful eating.

The Center for Mindful Eating is pleased to present a 7-part Foundations of Mindful Eating webinar series. The series will cover seven basic areas of mindful eating practice, beginning with our Good Practice Guidelines, and continuing with exploring habitual eating patterns, basic principles of mindful eating, the role of meditation, eating well, body image, weight concerns and self-compassion. This foundational series is not a certification program, but rather a guide to help you on your path to becoming a mindful eating practitioner.

We are equally delighted to announce that this program, and our regular free programs for members, are now eligible for CE/CPE for therapists and dietitians. Our new CE/CPE provider, ISG, is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. ISG is also a Continuing Professional Education (CPE) Accredited Provider with the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR). Participants will be able to earn their continuing education credits either by attending the programs live, or by watching the recorded video and completing the post-test survey and evaluation.

We purposely decided to begin this webinar series with TCME's Good Practice Guidelines. These were developed in 2015 by members of the TCME board and advisory council. We are frequently asked by our members where they can be trained as mindful eating professionals. The Good Practice

Discover a path you can walk in 2017 to help you to learn to teach mindful eating.

Foundations of Mindful Eating Webinar Series offered by *The Center for Mindful Eating*

thecenterformindfuleating.org/foundations-series



Guidelines offer a suggested path where people can learn how to become a mindful eating professional who teaches mindful eating to others.

In order to convey the wisdom of the principles of mindful eating, a depth of experience with the practice of mindfulness in one's own life is essential. In our Good Practice Guidelines, we describe how becoming a Mindful Eating Teacher consists of multiple stages of preparation, study, training, practice and direct teaching experience.

Our Good Practice Guidelines are aspirational in nature. Not every professional who teaches aspects of mindful eating to their patients or clients will choose to be engaged in this level of training. Our hope is that the guidelines will be motivational for those who wish to be a part of this inspiring mindful eating work.

Learn more about our Good Practice Guidelines: <http://thecenterformindfuleating.org/Good-Practice-Guidelines>

Learn more about our Foundations of Mindful Eating Series: <http://thecenterformindfuleating.org/foundations-series>

Please consider joining us for our first comprehensive webinar series entitled **Foundations of Mindful Eating**. These programs will be available for purchase and will include eligibility for the CE/CPE self-study credits for therapists and dietitians.

Jan 18: *Understanding the Good Practice Guidelines* - Lynn Rossy, Ph.D. & Caroline Baerten, RD

Feb 21 & 28: *Get Stressed, Eat, Repeat. Why Eating Becomes Habit* - Judson Brewer, MD, Ph.D.

Apr 13 & 20: *The BASICS of Mindful Eating* - Lynn Rossy, Ph.D.

Jun 13 & 20: *Cultivating a Formal Mindfulness Meditation Practice* - Cinzia Pezzolesi, Ph.D. and Sharon Theroux, Ph.D.

Aug 15 & 22: *Eating Well - The Role of Mindful Eating in Nutrition Education* - Megrette Fletcher, MEd, RD, CDE

Sep 29 & Oct 6: *Heartfulness: Where Compassionate and Joyful Living Meet* - Caroline Baerten, RD

Dec 5 & 12: *Mindful Eating for Well-Being: What's Weight Got to Do with It?* - Marsha Hudnall, MS, RD, CD

BASICS of Mindful Eating



Lynn Rossy

Ph.D.

BASICS is an acronym for a complete set of guidelines that walks you through the eating process from beginning to end. These are not rules and you don't need to be perfect at them. However, practicing the BASICS could change the way you eat forever.

B – Breathe and belly check for hunger and satiety before you eat.

Take a few deep breaths and relax the body. As you're doing this, check in with your belly. Are there sensations of physical hunger? How hungry are you? What are you hungry for? You might want food. You might be thirsty. You might be hungry for something entirely different than food. Listen to what your body is telling you. General rule: Eat when you're hungry; don't eat when you're not hungry.

A - Assess your food

What does it look like? Does it look appealing? What does it smell like? Where does it come from? Is it a food you can recognize, or is it so highly processed you don't know what it is? Is this the food you really want? As you take your first bite and continue to eat, reassess your food to see if your first impressions were correct and you really want to keep eating.

S - Slow down

Slowing down while you are eating helps you be aware of when the body's



physical hunger is satisfied. Slowing down can also help you enjoy your food more fully. Simple methods to help you slow down include putting down your fork or spoon between bites, pausing and taking a breath between bites, and chewing your food completely.

I - Investigate your hunger throughout the meal, particularly half-way through

To be a mindful eater, it is important to be aware of your distractions and to keep bringing your attention back to eating, tasting, and assessing your hunger and satiety throughout the meal. In particular, half-way through the meal, you may discover you are no longer hungry, or you no longer find the food appealing, even though there is still food on your

plate. Give yourself permission to stop or to continue based on how hungry you are, not old rules like "you need to clean your plate."

C - Chew your food thoroughly

Notice the variety of tastes registered inside your mouth and if you're enjoying what you're eating. Notice what happens to the food as you chew. How long does it take to thoroughly chew your food before you swallow it? As you continue to chew and swallow, can you sense hunger beginning to dissipate? Chew each bite thoroughly before you move onto the next.

S - Savor your food

Savoring your food means taking time to choose food that honors your taste buds and your body. Savoring your food happens when you are fully present for the experience of eating and the pleasure that it can bring. If you really like it, experience the joy of savoring.

Lynn Rossy is a health psychologist and author of "The Mindfulness-Based Eating Solution." She developed and teaches the empirically-validated 10-week mindful eating program called "Eat for Life." She is a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction teacher and serves on the TCME board. She welcomes comments on this article. She can be reached at www.LynnRossy.com and MindfulRossy@gmail.com.

A Mindful Meal or Snack Meditation

Choose a time when you would normally eat a meal or a snack. Practice bringing kindness to yourself, mindful openness and curiosity to the practice of mindful eating.

Before eating, bring awareness to your body and your breathing. Let your belly be soft and full. Take three full deep breaths. Let the breath relax you and help you settle into the present moment. Start by checking in to see how hungry you are. Explore what hunger feels like in the belly, noticing its pleasant and unpleasant qualities. Notice the sensations in the mouth and in the belly that occur with the mere thought of eating.

If you haven't chosen food to eat yet, check in to see what would taste good right now. Can you get a sense of what the body would like to eat, or what tastes would be pleasing to you? Once you have your food in front of you, take some time to assess it. What does it look like? What is the color and shape? Where did it come from? How nourishing do you think it is? What does it smell like? Acknowledge the importance of food for your body's health.

When you eat, can you take your time? You can slow down by chewing your food thoroughly and by putting down your fork or spoon between bites. Watch any distractions or thoughts, let them come and go. Keep coming back to the sensations involved in eating and tasting.

As you eat, notice whether you are



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enjoying the food or not. Focus on the sensations of taste—sweet, sour, salty, pungent. Keep coming back to the taste of your food. If you notice you aren't enjoying it, can you stop eating? If you enjoy it, how present are you for the pleasure of the experience. Savor your food.

Throughout the meal, notice how your hunger level moves toward feeling satisfied. Particularly half-way through, stop and assess where your hunger level is again. If you're hungry, continue to eat. But if you notice a sense of satisfaction, stop. Notice if it is difficult to stop at this point and inquire as to why. Give yourself permission to stop, even if there is some food left on the plate. Remind yourself that you can always have more later.

What thoughts and emotions are

present as you eat and as you decide to stop? What beliefs and stories do you tell yourself about food and eating?

Be present for the last bite as fully as you were for the first bite. And if you eat more than enough, or feel too full, know that you have not blown it, but that you are simply now aware of this fullness. It takes time to learn new ways of eating. Every time you eat is a time to practice again.

Lynn Rossy is a health psychologist and author of "The Mindfulness-Based Eating Solution." She developed and teaches the empirically-validated 10-week mindful eating program called "Eat for Life." She is a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction teacher and serves on the TCME board. She welcomes comments on this article. She can be reached at www.LynnRossy.com and MindfulRossy@gmail.com.



Be the first to know about our teleconferences, mindful eating trainings, and other events!

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