- Eating customs / Mental health

EAT YOUR WAY Calm

BY STEFANI SASSOS

YOU CAN ELEVATE BOTH YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AND YOUR MEALTIMES by eating mindfully. Mindfulness has been shown to be a wonderful antidote to stress and anxiety, which can make a big difference in how physically and mentally vibrant you feel. When you slow down and focus on enjoying your food (noticing taste, texture, and smell) instead of shoveling it in or chowing down as you scroll social media, you give yourself a chance to reset each time you eat, whether it's a meal or a protein bar. **Follow these steps:**



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1 BEFORE YOU SIT...

Assess how you feel. Being slightly hungry is OK, but anything more extreme can make it hard to pump the brakes and be mindful. Make a mental commitment to enjoying balanced meals throughout the day so that at mealtimes you will have an appetite but won't be ravenous.

2 ONCE SEATED...

Start with gratitude. Take a minute or two to pause and appreciate the food in front of you. Focus on being grateful for your body as well as this meal and everything and everyone involved in preparing it. Are you sharing this eating experience with friends or family members? Spend a moment reflecting on and expressing appreciation for them too.

3 AT FIRST BITE...

Utilize your senses right off the bat. Pay attention to different flavors and aromas. How does the food sound when you chew it? Does it feel crunchy or smooth? Do the flavors or textures change throughout the meal? These are examples of questions you can ask yourself during a mindful-eating experience.

4 AS YOU NOSH...

Take time to chew your food, notice its flavor, and savor each bite. This should help you slow your eating pace, but if you find that you're still going fast, try to set your fork down after every few bites. It takes about 20 minutes for your stomach to signal to your brain that it's full.

TIPS TO MAKE MINDFUL EATING EASIER

- **Place** phones and other electronics in a basket at the beginning of mealtime to minimize distractions. Turn off the TV and anything else that may shift your focus away from the activity at hand: eating.
- **Create** a nice decorative tablescape or use dishware that brings you joy to set the mood.
- **Choose** foods you like that are easy to prepare, and enjoy your meal with a glass of plain or sparkling water with lemon or lime slices instead of a sugary drink or an alcoholic one.
- **Take** a relaxing post-meal walk, journal about your thoughts, or create an uplifting dish-washing playlist to further boost your satisfaction.

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