



YW5

YOUR WELL-BEING

# Mind Over Matter: Developing Mindful Eating Habits

*Time: 70 Minutes*

If you want to put healthier eating habits on the menu, mindfulness techniques may help you! They are not about dieting or restrictions. They are about eating when you are truly hungry, slowing down and savoring the flavor. Expand your mind, not your waistline.

## OBJECTIVES:

Describe four techniques for mindful eating.

List three benefits of mindful eating.

Practice mindful eating habits with an eating exercise.

## SETUP

- Review the resource list and print it out. Purchase all necessary supplies after reviewing the [HFL Cost Calculator](#).
- If using the optional demo supplies, set up the demo table.
- Set up the stations for the eating exercise. Place two apple slices on a plate for each participant.
- Provide computer, internet access, and projector, if available.

## INTRO (10 Minutes)

- Welcome participants and introduce yourself.
- Take care of any housekeeping items (closest bathroom, water fountain, etc.).
- Give a brief description of the educational experience.
- Engage in a goal setting activity from the bank of options provided in the [Welcome Toolkit](#).

## DEMO (10 Minutes)

- Demonstrate content (see demo script). Play video as indicated.

## ACTIVITY (20 Minutes)

- Participants will practice mindful eating.

## RECAP (10 Minutes)

- Pass out the handout(s) and go through them together.

## GOAL SETTING/CLOSING (20 Minutes)

- Engage in a goal setting activity from the bank of options provided in the [Welcome Toolkit](#). Pass out the Setting SMART Goals handout to participants.
- Thank participants and encourage them to join the next activity. (Provide date/time/location if known.)



**NOTES:** Read legal liability disclaimer before activity: [Food Liability Disclaimer](#). Refer to Resource List for all necessary supplies and handouts. This Healthy for Life® Educational Experience was created by Aramark and the American Heart Association as part of our Healthy for Life® Initiative. We are proud to be working together to help improve the health of all Americans.

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# Mind Over Matter Resource List

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## HANDOUTS/VIDEOS

Find these resources on AHA's YouTube channel or [heart.org/healthyforgood](https://heart.org/healthyforgood)

- Video – [Veggie Mac and Cheese](#)
- Article – [Mindful Eating: Savor the Flavor](#)
- Article – [Food and Mood](#)
- Infographic – [Make Every Bite a Meditation](#)

Find these resources in this lesson

- Recipe – [Veggie Mac and Cheese](#)
- Handout – [Make Every Bite a Meditation – Infographic](#)
- Handout – [Setting SMART Goals](#)

## SPACE SETUP

- Chairs and tables for participants
- Plates
- Computer, internet access, and projector, if available

## ACTIVITY SUPPLIES\*

- Two types of apples, sliced (Red Delicious and Granny Smith, for example)


\*Purchase appropriate number of supplies for your participants.




**SAY:**




Have you heard of mindful eating?  
What do you think it means?

**(Wait for the participants to respond and react to their descriptions.)**

 Mindful eating is just what it sounds like. It's a thoughtful approach to consuming your food. Mindful eating means that you concentrate on nourishing your body and savoring what you eat. With the fast pace of our lives today, we often treat eating as a duty or a task to be checked off a to-do list. We eat distractedly — at our desks while scanning emails, while watching TV, while checking our cell phones, while doing household chores and even while driving! Most of us have probably had a “multitasking meal.” Mindful eating teaches us to slow down and focus on our eating experience.

 Remember these three terms to understand mindful eating practices: **REFLECT**, **CONNECT** and **PROTECT**.

 To encourage you to **REFLECT** before you eat, here are some questions to consider:

-  • **Where** are you eating?  
Find an area where you can sit down and have an undisturbed meal.
-  • **How** and **how much** are you eating?  
Give your meal the attention it deserves. Enjoy the moment and savor the flavors. Take small portions so you're not tempted to overeat.
-  • **Why** are you eating?  
Try to eat in response to real hunger. We often use food for comfort — to ease emotional pain or combat stress. Emotional eating can become a habit and turn into compulsive overeating.



- **What** are you eating?

Choose foods that are part of a healthy eating plan. It's tempting to fall into the habit of grabbing the easiest thing to satisfy a craving or simply because it's that time of day or evening. Planning is key to making healthy meal choices.



**Mindful eating encourages you to **CONNECT** with your body, with your food and with others.**



**Recognize hunger signals coming from your body. Real hunger:**

- Starts to build up slowly.
- Happens several hours after a meal.
- Usually involves your stomach growling.
- Causes you to feel a bit weaker.
- Goes away after you have eaten and are satisfied.



**Appreciate your food using each of your senses.**

- Look at the food, observing the colors, textures and presentation.
- Smell the food and linger over the aroma.
- Touch it (if appropriate).
- Chew it slowly to fully taste the complex flavors and enjoy the textures.
- Listen as you chew.



**Unite your body and mind.**

- Eat slowly to allow the brain the 20 minutes it needs to register fullness. The stomach actually sends a message to the brain via the nervous system to tell the brain that it's time to stop eating.
- You can even set a timer for 20 minutes until you become accustomed to taking a little longer.

## Mind Over Matter Demo Script (continued)



### SAY:

Mindful eating encourages you to **PROTECT** your eating time and space. It also encourages you to **PROTECT** your health by paying attention to the cues your body provides.



**Focus on the task at hand – eating – rather than multitasking.**

- Be grateful for your meal. Think about where it came from and how much work it took to get the food to you.
- After you take each bite, put down your utensils for 10 to 15 seconds.
- Be present in the moment while you eat.



**Reserve some mealtimes to share with family and friends.**

- Sitting down to a family dinner benefits all the members, allowing them to connect at the end of the day.
- Eating with family and friends discourages mindless eating because you are present in the moment when you share a meal. Try the [Veggie Mac and Cheese recipe](#) to bring your family together around the dinner table.



**Think of your health and stop eating when you are satisfied.**

- Overeating forces the stomach to swell so it can hold all the extra food. You may feel discomfort from heartburn or gas. You may feel sluggish and sleepy.
- Over time, frequent overeating could be harmful to your health.

(Pass Out the [Make Every Bite a Meditation Infographic](#).)



### SAY:

We'll go over this page together to help you remember techniques for mindful eating. We'll do a short exercise in a moment to give you a chance to try these techniques.

1. **Ponder** – Check in with yourself about your hunger before you eat. You may actually be thirsty, tired, bored or stressed.
2. **Appraise** – Take a moment to take it in. How does the food smell? Do you really want it? Is it more than you need for your level of hunger?
3. **Slow** – Slow down so your brain can keep up with your stomach.
4. **Savor** – Enjoy your food. Take a moment to savor the satisfaction of each bite—the taste, the texture, everything!
5. **Stop** – Stop when you're comfortably full. There is no need to clean your plate if that means overeating.



**What are the Benefits of Mindful Eating?**



There are many benefits when you practice mindful eating. Here are just a few:

- Reduced calorie intake and accompanying weight loss or maintenance (and all the associated health benefits)
- Reduction of stress
- Reduction in binge eating and the negative emotions associated with it
- Reduction in digestive problems
- An increase in self-awareness
- An increase in meal planning and the selecting of healthier options
- Increased enjoyment of the food you eat

Invite participants to have a seat at the tables in front of a plate (with two types of apple slices on it — one slice of the Red Delicious apple and one slice of the Granny Smith apple).



**SAY:**

Today, we're going to practice some mindful eating techniques. Let's all take a deep breath.



1. Begin by taking another deep breath. Connect to your breathing and your bodily sensations. Are you comfortable in your chair? Place your feet flat on the floor.

**(Be sure to speak slowly and clearly. Pause briefly after each directive.)**



2. Now, look at the apple slices. Observe that each has a different shape, texture and color.



3. Pick up each of the apple slices, one at a time, so you can feel the texture.



4. Do they have an aroma?



5. Choose one apple slice and take a bite. Keep the piece of apple in your mouth without chewing it for 30 seconds. Does it taste tangy or sweet or maybe it tastes both tangy **and** sweet?



6. Now, chew the piece of apple very slowly. Listen to your chewing. Chew it for as long as you want. Pause before you swallow it.



- What did you think of this way of eating? Did it seem different to you? Did you enjoy eating this way?

**(Give each participant a chance to speak. Let them share their reactions with each other.)**

Makes 4 servings; 1½ cups per serving  
Per serving: 267 Calories; 2.5 g Saturated Fat; 393 mg Sodium



Spend time with the family while you cook and enjoy this healthier version of a simple favorite.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup dried whole-wheat elbow macaroni
- Cooking spray
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 medium red bell pepper, chopped
- 8 ounces broccoli florets, chopped
- 2 small yellow summer squash or zucchini (about 8 ounces total), thinly sliced crosswise
- ¼ cup water
- 1 cup fat-free half-and-half
- ½ cup fat-free, low-sodium vegetable broth
- 2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons all-purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ⅔ cup shredded low-fat Cheddar cheese
- 2 tablespoons shredded low-fat Monterey Jack cheese
- 2 tablespoons plain dry bread crumbs (lowest sodium available)

### DIRECTIONS

1. Prepare the pasta using the package directions, omitting the salt. Drain well in a colander. Lightly spray a 13 x 9 x 2-inch baking dish with cooking spray. Pour the pasta into the baking dish.
2. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 350°F.
3. In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium heat, swirling to coat the bottom. Cook the bell pepper for 2 to 3 minutes, or until tender-crisp, stirring occasionally. Stir in the broccoli and squash. Cook for 1 minute. Stir in the water. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, or until tender, stirring occasionally.
4. Meanwhile, in a small bowl, whisk together the half-and-half, broth, flour, salt and pepper. Pour into the cooked bell pepper mixture. Increase the heat to medium high and bring to a simmer, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat. Stir in the Cheddar and Monterey Jack until melted. Stir into the pasta. Sprinkle with the bread crumbs.
5. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the casserole is heated through and the top is golden brown.

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Healthy For Good™

# ○ | MAKE EVERY BITE A | + + | MEDITATION | ○

If you want to put healthier eating habits on the menu, mindfulness may be a simple and effective place to start! It's not about dieting or restrictions – it's about taking a moment to take it in.

**Try these easy ways to incorporate mindful eating into your day, so you can Eat Smart at every meal:**



**PONDER:** Check in with yourself about your hunger before you eat – you may actually be thirsty, bored or stressed.



**APPRAISE:** Take a moment to take it in. How does it smell? Do you really want it? Is it more than you need?



**SLOW:** Slow down so your brain can keep up with your stomach. Put your fork down between bites and focus on the flavor.



**SAVOR:** Enjoy your food. Take a moment to savor the satisfaction of each bite – the taste, texture, everything!



**STOP:** Stop when you're full – there's no need to join the clean plate club if it means overeating.



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Try one or more of these tactics to help you eat more mindfully. And for more ways to be Healthy For Good, visit [HEART.ORG/BEWELL](https://www.heart.org/bewell)

EAT SMART ADD COLOR MOVE MORE BE WELL

## **SPECIFIC**

- What exactly do you want to accomplish?

## **MEASURABLE**

- How will you track your progress towards your goal?

## **ACHIEVABLE**

- Is reaching your goal possible with your full effort?

## **REALISTIC**

- Do you have the resources and ability to achieve your goal?  
If not, how can you get them?

## **TIME-BOUND**

- When will your goal be achieved?

## **EXAMPLE OF A SMART GOAL:**

I will increase the number of fruit servings I eat daily by 2 cups within the next 3 months.

Personal SMART goal:

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