

Mindful Eating Challenge

Challenge: to change habits of the way we eat, that may not be contributing to our overall health. There are 5 days of challenges (please try and continue this longer if possible) that we can focus on that will help make sure we are actually 'fueling' our bodies and not eating 'mindlessly'. Our digestive systems and waistlines will thank us for paying attention to what we are eating. (originally developed by Sara Best @SaraBestNutrition.com)

Day One Task: breaking the habit of 'multi-tasking'

- Choose at least one meal or snack today and eat it sitting at table (a desk is not a table) doing nothing but eating.
- And by nothing I mean put your phone, ipad, book, coupons and mail away.
- Do nothing but eat.
- Observe your body while you're eating. Use all five of your senses. Notice how it feels physically when you're chewing, swallowing and afterwards.
- Notice how the food smells, the way it looks, the way it tastes and feels in your mouth, notice how it feels in your stomach. Notice how your energy and moods change after you eat. Put your attention down into your body today and just be aware of what's going on.
- No judgment – just awareness.

Day Two Task: Slow Down

When you're eating today, really focus on s-l-o-w-i-n-g down. Take your time. Maybe take smaller bites. Breathe. Put your fork down a few times. It will feel weird and probably a little uncomfortable because you're used to your old rhythm. That just means you're doing it right so keep at it!

DAY THREE TASK: As you're eating today, as often as you can, try to get quiet and tune in to what your body is feeling physically.

- Notice how your body feels in relation to the kind of food you're eating. Do you feel light or heavy? Energized or sleepy? Wired or calm?
- Notice how your body feels in relation to the amount of food you're eating. Almost after every bite, ask are you still hungry? Satisfied? Stuffed?
- Even notice how your body feels in other ways. Are your shoulders tight? Is your back sore? Are your feet cold? Are your hands warm?
- Just start to notice your body. Spend some time in there. Explore. Scan every inch from your toes to your crown. Poke around and see what you find. There's no right or wrong answer here. You don't need to fill out or submit any form. I just want you to start getting used to tuning inward and listening to what's going on in there.

So many people struggle to know how much to eat, what to eat, and when to eat. But the wonderful thing

is that your body is telling you exactly what it needs to feel good and be at it's healthiest weight all the time...we've just forgotten how to speak it's language.

Day Four Task: Every time you want to eat today, ask yourself "How am I hoping this food will make me FEEL?"

- Each time before you eat or drink today, pause for a few seconds, tune inward and ask yourself that question.
- Are you physically hungry (a good way to determine that is to imagine that someone offered you an apple or a carrot - if you don't want it, you're not truly hungry) and you're hoping the food will make you feel not hungry anymore?
- Are you feeling empty and hoping the food will make you feel satisfied?
- Are you feeling sad or lonely and hoping the food will make you feel happy and connected?
- Are you feeling stressed and hoping the food will make you feel relaxed?
- Are you feeling exhausted and depleted and hoping the food will make you feel recharged?
- Are you feeling bored and hoping the food will make you feel entertained?
- Are you just used to eating this particular food at this particular time and hoping the food will make you feel safe and like life is familiar and predictable?
- **If you still eat the food, that's totally fine!** Today's task isn't about not eating, it's simply about starting to become aware of WHY we're eating (especially when we're not really hungry).

DAY FIVE TASK: Today, whenever you feel yourself wanting to eat when you *know* you're not hungry, I want you to do this:

- Take **THREE** slow, deep belly breaths. Breathe in for a slow count of 5 and then out for a slow count of 5 each time.
- Then, after your three breathes, repeat these **THREE** mantras slowly to yourself three times really *feeling* the meaning of each one:
 1. I am safe
 2. I am supported
 3. I am divine
- This exercise is actually working to **calm the amygdala in your brain.**

The amygdala is part of your brain's limbic system and it plays a huge role in your natural survival instincts, which means that it's always on the lookout for danger. In our crazy stressful world these days, we typically have very over-active amygdalas and, when your brain has been wired to turn to food when you feel stressed or anxious, an over-active amygdala means over-eating!!

You can't rationalize with your amygdala but it will respond to this 3 X 3 X 3 exercise. Take the three breathes and then repeat the three mantras three times.

*****Remember, we are training our brains to love (and crave) the healthier options...*****