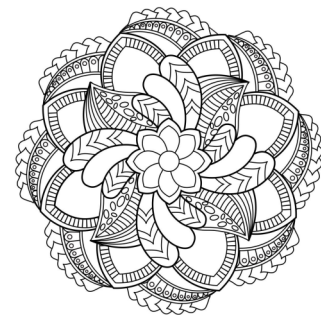
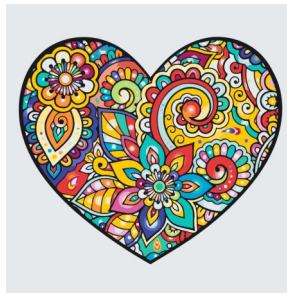
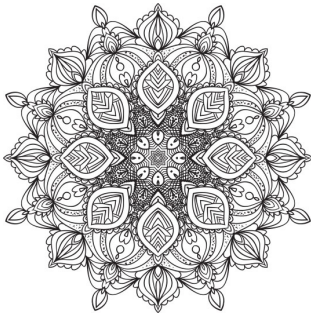


Mindfulness and Mindful Eating

Mindfulness has come into the conversation more in the last few years, particularly as a way to help reduce stress and be more present in the moment. However, there are many benefits to practicing mindfulness, despite the new age-y associations. Not only is practicing mindfulness a terrific strategy for improving mental health, but it can help with physical health as well. Mindful eating, a separate but similar concept, can be a useful tool when it comes to better nutrition and certain health markers, like cholesterol and blood pressure. Read on to explore both techniques and see how they can help improve your health.



What is mindfulness?

- ⇒ A practice that has evolved from Buddhism and meditation
- ⇒ A psychological state of awareness
- ⇒ Something that can help bring peace and contentment to life
- ⇒ Similar to meditation, without the religious context

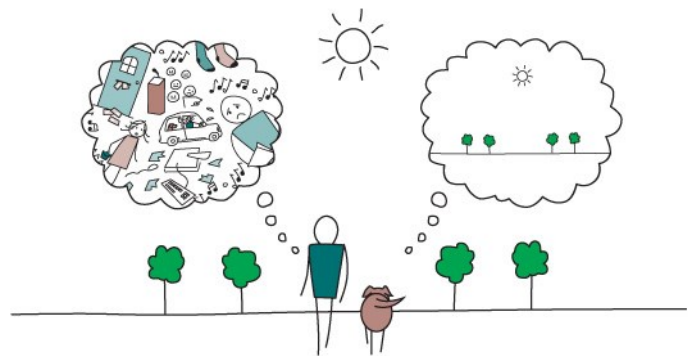
What is mindful eating?

- ⇒ A technique that encourages focusing on the act of eating while minimizing distractions
- ⇒ Uses the five senses to fully experience the meal
- ⇒ Encourages thinking about and expressing gratitude for the food, where it came from and those who produced it
- ⇒ A way to slow down and be present in the act of eating

Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness

- ⇒ Lower stress levels
- ⇒ Better sleep
- ⇒ More attunement to your body, so you can notice when things are “off”
- ⇒ Improved cognition and concentration
- ⇒ Improved mental health (fewer depressive thoughts and less anxiety)



Mind Full, or Mindful?

Mindfulness Activities

Meditation



Deep breathing

Body scan:

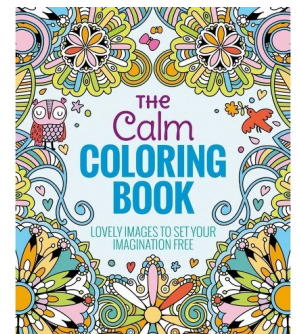
a mental check-in with each area of the body, starting at the top of the head and moving down to the tips of the toes

Focusing on a single task

5-4-3-2-1:

- ⇒ See: look for five things around you
- ⇒ Touch: notice four things you can feel
- ⇒ Hear: listen for three sounds
- ⇒ Smell: detect two scents
- ⇒ Taste: identify one taste

Coloring



Rainbow:

look around and see if you can identify something in every color of the rainbow

Benefits of Mindful Eating

Better digestion

In the US, we eat incredibly fast, which can affect digestion. Eating in a mindful way can help to slow down, in turn improving digestion



Improved relationship with food

Many people have a love/hate relationship with food. We have been socialized to feel guilt or shame when eating “junk food” and morally superior when eating things like salads. Eating mindfully takes away that judgment.

May help treat eating disorders

Studies have shown that incorporating mindful eating into eating disorder treatment can improve outcomes, especially with binge eating disorder.



Can help distinguish between physical hunger and emotional hunger

Physical hunger and emotional hunger are separate sensations (and one is not better or worse than the other). Identifying your triggers for emotional eating can lead to making decisions based on nourishing your body or soothing it.

Ways to Practice Mindful Eating

- ⇒ Check in with yourself before eating: notice how hungry you are, and how you are feeling physically, mentally and emotionally
- ⇒ Minimize distractions during meals: turn off the TV, put down your phone or tablet, and focus only on the act of eating
- ⇒ Utilize your senses: engage each of the five senses while eating to enhance pleasure during the meal. See the color of the food, smell the aroma, taste the different flavors, feel the textures and listen to your body for cues that you are feeling satisfied.
- ⇒ Start the meal with gratitude: before the first bite, pause and take a moment to appreciate what is in front of you. Think of the people who grew and transported the food, the people you are with, and how this food will nourish your body



Resources: <https://www.jmu.edu/counselingctr/files/Mindful%20eating.pdf>

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/07-08/ce-corner>

<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2021/06/mindfulness-your-health>

<https://www.calm.com/blog/mindfulness-exercises>

<https://www.calm.com/blog/mindful-eating>

Consumer-centered access for long-term care information, referrals and assessments.
For information, call 518-382-8481, #9, ext. 304



Do you have questions or concerns about what to eat?

If you are participating in services offered by Schenectady County's Senior and Long Term Care services, you are eligible for a free consultation with Debbie Griswold, Registered Dietitian.

Call Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County at 518-372-1622, ext. 269 to contact or leave a message.

Check out our website for nutrition resources: <http://ccschenectady.org/nutrition-for-seniors>

Schenectady County Department of Senior and Long Term Care Services denies no person services or access to service based upon race, color, sex, religion, national origin, marital status and/or handicapping conditions. Schenectady County Department of Senior and Long Term Care Services is primarily funded with County tax dollars. Supplemental funding is through the New York State Office for the Aging under Title III-B/D, III-C-1, III-C-2, III-F of the Federal Older Americans Act, and New York State Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly (EISEP), Community Services for the Elderly Act (CSE), Congregate Services Initiative (CSI), and the Wellness In Nutrition (WIN).

OFA