

# Mindful Eating Activity

The purpose of this activity is to help you increase your awareness of internal and external cues that influence eating behaviour. Being able to accurately identify how you feel at any given moment will give you the ability to choose how you want to respond (i.e., mindful eating) as opposed to acting automatically without awareness (i.e., mindless eating).

## Before eating, ask yourself:

- What am I feeling right now?
- Am I: hungry, anxious, bored, sad, frustrated, tired, etc.

## If hungry, ask yourself the following questions:

- How hungry am I on a scale of 0-10? If your hunger score is less than 6/10, consider how you are feeling again and whether another feeling besides hunger is motivating your desire to eat.
- When did I last eat?
- When is my next meal planned?
- Can I wait until my next meal? If your hunger level is not very high, your last meal was less than four hours ago, and your next meal is within 30 minutes, then it might be reasonable to wait a little longer before you eat.
- Is the purpose of this meal: a snack between main meals or a main meal to fill me up and keep me going?
- On a scale of 0-10, how well is this food going to satisfy my current eating goal (e.g., a snack to tie me over until my next main meal or a main meal to fill me and keep me going?)
- If your score for the above is less than 6, then consider how can you improve this meal to better meet your goal.

Note: The scores above are arbitrary and the purpose of this activity is to encourage reflection on your eating behaviour. For example, when considering your hunger levels and whether you wait until your next meal, the intention is not to follow strict rules but to use flexible guidelines you set for yourself. You are encouraged to use a combination of information about your internal cues, environmental context, and overall health goals to make informed decisions. It is important to balance between food rules and restriction on one side, and mindless or impulsive eating on the other.

If you notice an unpleasant internal state, ask yourself the following questions:

- **What can I do to help relieve this feeling?**
  - If tired – get up and move. Go for a short walk. Talk to someone. Have a 20-minute nap.
  - If bored – have a break from work. Find an enjoyable activity to do.
  - If sad – practice mindfulness. Go for a walk. Listen to some music. Speak to a friend.
  - If anxious or frustrated – practice mindfulness. Do some deep breathing. Go for a walk. Listen to some music. Speak to a friend.
- **Am I craving a particular food? If yes:**
  - Try one of the activities above.
  - If your next planned meal isn't far away, consider waiting until after this meal until you have some of the craved food.
  - If your next planned meal is more than 30 minutes away, consider having the main meal sooner (if possible). Then having some of the craved food.
  - Allow yourself to have some of the craved food, but first wait 10 minutes before you eat it.
  - If after trying all of the above steps and you still desire the craved food, then consider the steps below.

We often eat for social reasons and enjoyment, and this is a wonderful part of life that should be cherished.

When eating with others or indulging, use the same question above regarding the purpose of the food/meal:

- **What is the purpose of this food/meal?**
  - A main meal to fill me up – if so, consider questions about hunger above.
  - To make me feel better – if so, consider questions about unpleasant internal states above.
  - I am feeling good and not overly hungry, the purpose is for enjoyment – if so, consider the questions below:
- **If the purpose of eating is social or enjoyment, ask yourself:**
  - On a scale of 0-10 how much do I enjoy this food?
  - What do I enjoy about this food?
  - On a scale of 0-10 how much enjoyment does the food add to this particular social activity/setting/event?
  - How do I feel after eating the food/meal? (e.g., content, happy, sick, overfull, etc.)
- **While eating the enjoyable food. Continue to ask yourself after every few bites how much you are enjoying this food. If the rating is less than 5/10 (again, this is arbitrary), consider why you are still eating.**