**Gaining Awareness with Food**

 **How often do we get so caught up in day to day stress and hectic schedules that food takes a back seat? Putting a meal together may feel like a chore, rather than a time to nourish our body. Whether entering a meal with starving hunger because we ignored the signs of normal or subtle hunger or eating in a rush without enjoying the food, we are not being mindful of our meals. If mindfulness is being aware of life, than mindful eating is being aware of food.**

**First Step:**

**Try a mindful eating exercise.**

1. **Choose a food you enjoy or feel you have little self control around. Clients have chosen anything from an apple to a peanut butter cup.**
2. **Find a place to sit where you will be free from distractions.**
3. **Recognize any thoughts that enter your mind that are unrelated to the food or judgments about the food itself, and push them aside. You may need to keep doing this throughout the exercise.**
4. **Now look at the food, what does it feel like in your hand, look like, smell like, and remind you of.**
5. **Take a bite. Let it sit in your mouth, chew it slowly or allow it to dissolve on your tongue depending on the food you chose. How does it taste? Sweet, sour, salty, etc. What is the texture like? Crisp, soft… Does the taste change from the first bite to when you swallow?**
6. **Swallow when ready and repeat a few times. Finish the food or stop when satisfied but taste it and enjoy it. Think about whether you are eating this food for satisfaction and/or nourishing your body.**

**What was that experience like for you? Maybe send me an email and let me know. Could you see how this type of awareness could change feeling satisfied with food or how much you eat?**

**Apply this Method Daily**

**It may be unrealistic to be 100% mindful with every bite you take, but think about what changes are realistic for you.**

1. **Take at least 15 minutes to eat your meal. Think about your schedule and when you can carve out the time to eat your meals. If you eat too fast, you will not be able to listen to your body’s signals of fullness and satiety.**
2. **Eat without distraction. If you are busy reading, on the computer, or in front of the television when you eat, consider removing those distractions until you start to better learn your hunger, fullness, and satisfaction cues. If you eat with friends or family, take a break from eating every few minutes and mentally check in with yourself to see where your fullness is and to remind yourself to taste and enjoy the meal.**
3. **Don’t forget planned hunger. Always have a portable snack on hand, like a fruit and granola bar in case plans change and a meal gets pushed later than expected. Also, if you know you are going into a meeting, class, etc. that will last a few hours but you are not hungry prior, have a small snack to combat starving hunger when it is over.**
4. **Try to mindful eating exercise 1-2 times a week when it fits in your schedule. It is especially helpful with foods we tend to overeat. Don’t go into the exercise too hungry or it will be hard to be mindful.**