

Mindfulness & Mindful Eating

Specialist Weight Management & Bariatric Surgery

What Is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness refers to paying attention to the present moment, without judgement. It is an attention practice that helps us to focus on what is happening right now in this moment and allows us to be open and curious to whatever we may be experiencing. With practice, mindfulness helps us to let go of the struggle with difficult and painful thoughts, feelings and sensations so that they have less impact on us.

Being mindful can include becoming aware of what is happening inside your body, in your mind and being mindful of your environment.

Mindfulness has been shown to help with a number of physical and psychological difficulties including: type 2 diabetes, chronic pain, binge and emotional eating, depression, anxiety and stress.

Mindful Pause

Practicing building in a mindful pause can help you to slow down and decide how to respond to any given situation.

You can follow the steps below to try this:

- Take a couple of deep breaths
- Allow your normal breathing to return and pay attention to each inhale and each exhale. Notice how the breath moves in your body.
- Allow any thoughts, feelings or sensations to come and go, in their own time. As if they were clouds passing by in the sky.
- Ask yourself: where do I want to direct my energy and attention right now?

What is Mindful Eating?

Mindful eating involves paying attention to the full experience of eating and drinking. Before eating, you might pause to check in with your body and ask:

- How hungry am I right now?
- How much do I desire this food?

When eating mindfully you can pay attention to one or all of the following aspects of eating and drinking, such as colours, smells, textures, temperature, flavours and sounds.

It is normal for the mind to wander or get distracted when practicing mindful eating. So often we eat when distracted or doing another activity. Can you remember the last time you simply sat and ate something without doing another activity? Part of the mindful eating practice is to notice what catches our attention, maybe there is an impulse to turn on the TV, read a book, pick up your phone etc. We notice the impulse and return back to just eating.

A Mindful Bite

A simple practice you can try when having a meal is a mindful bite.

1. Turn off any distractions (e.g. T.V.) and sit down somewhere comfortable.
2. Notice the movement of your hand and arm as you slowly bring the food to your mouth.
3. Put down any cutlery or remaining food.
4. Slowly chew this bite, paying complete attention to the taste of the food. Almost as if you are a curious scientist observing every bit of the bite.
5. Continue to chew until you are ready to swallow. As you swallow notice how the food feels as it travels down your throat.
6. Repeat as you desire.

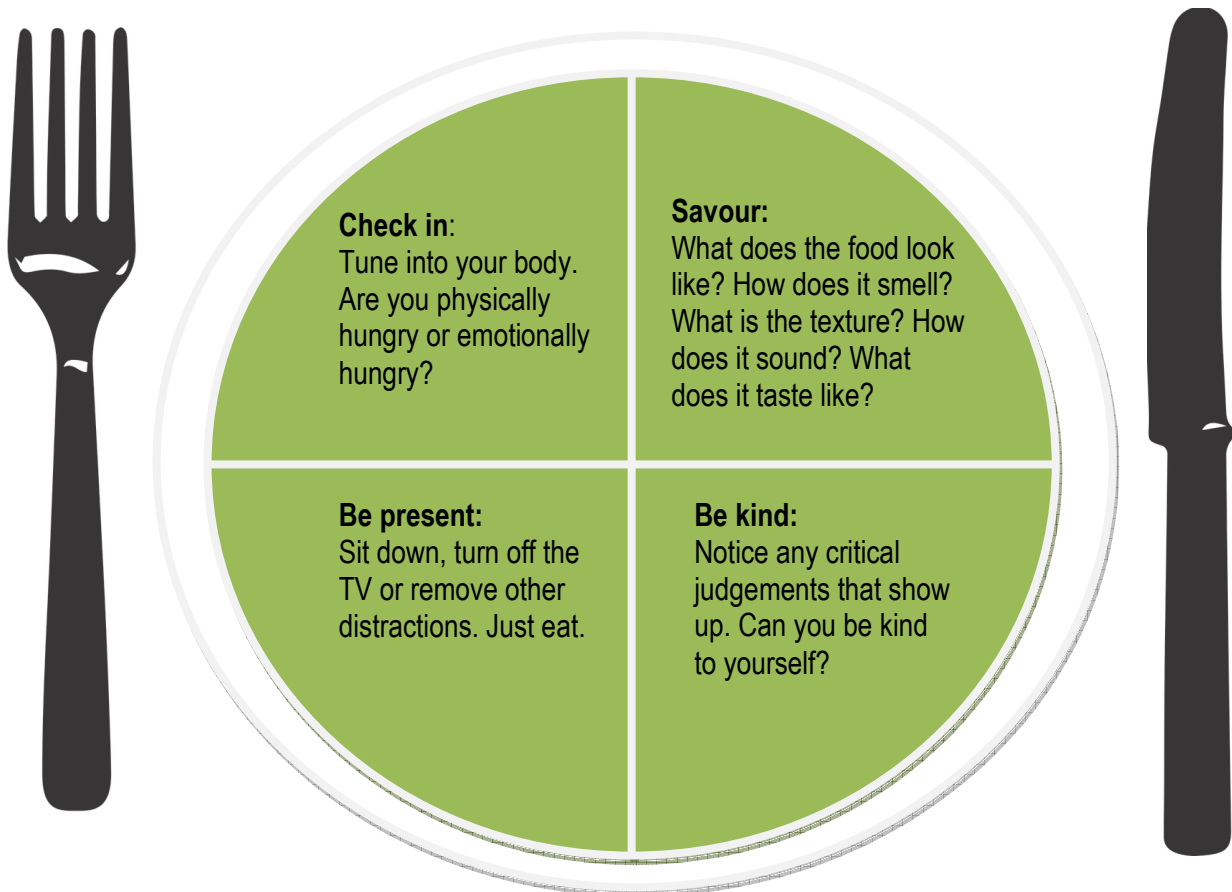
Mindful Eating Practice

If you notice the mind wandering and distracted you can try the practice below to help bring your attention back to eating:

1. Turn off any distractions and sit down somewhere comfortable
2. Choose a point of focus for the exercise, for example, how the food tastes or feels in your mouth.
3. Each time you notice the mind wandering try:
 - silently labelling it as 'thinking' or
 - silently repeating to yourself 'thank you mind'
4. Return your attention back to your point of focus.
5. Repeat each time your mind wanders.

Mindful Plate

You can use the mindful plate to help you practice mindful eating at mealtimes or with snacks.



Making a Lasting Change

Remember, lasting change takes time, and is built on many small changes. Eating mindfully is often a completely new approach to eating which takes a lot of practice! Take a moment to consider how long you have been eating without awareness? We invite you start simply.

Is there one small step that would help you to practice mindful eating?

When would you like to try it?

If you have any questions about the information presented here, please speak with a member of the bariatric team for more information.

Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty. If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Experience Team on 01932 723553 or email asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net. If you remain concerned, the team can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

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We can provide interpreters for a variety of languages, information in larger print or other formats (e.g. audio) - please call us on 01932 723553.



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