

NOURISH TO FLOURISH

ORANGE PAPER



ENHANCING OLDER ADULTS' WELL-BEING THROUGH MINDFUL EATING



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INTRODUCTION

Mindfulness is the ability to be fully present and aware without judgment. A growing body of research suggests that mindfulness can significantly reduce stress and promote positive psychological outcomes (Huong, 2023). In older adults, mindfulness improves cognition and attention, strengthens the immune system, leads to better sleep, and enhances resilience, optimism, and compassion, which all contribute to an overall sense of well-being. In addition, mindfulness can have a positive effect on diet and nutrition (Huong, 2023). More specifically, mindful eating has been shown to reduce emotional eating and binge eating, and support weight loss in adolescents and midlife adults, yet limited research exists on how mindful eating affects older adults.

To address this gap, Mather Institute developed and evaluated a program to promote mindful eating among older adults. The following report describes the program and includes findings from an evaluation conducted with older program participants.

What follows are tips and background for those interested in creating a mindful eating program:

PART 1: LEAD A MINDFUL EATING PROGRAM

This Orange Paper begins with a step-by-step description of an interactive program called Nourish to Flourish and provides guidance on how to implement and replicate this program with older adults.

PART 2: LEARN ABOUT THE MINDFUL EATING STUDY

The second part of this Orange Paper describes a pilot study of the Nourish to Flourish program, which aimed to improve eating behaviors in older adults. Researchers from Mather Institute conducted an evaluation of the program and include their results and recommendations.

If you are looking to create your own Nourish to Flourish program, a guide for facilitators and a workbook for participants is after part 2 of this report.

PART 1

LEAD A MINDFUL EATING PROGRAM

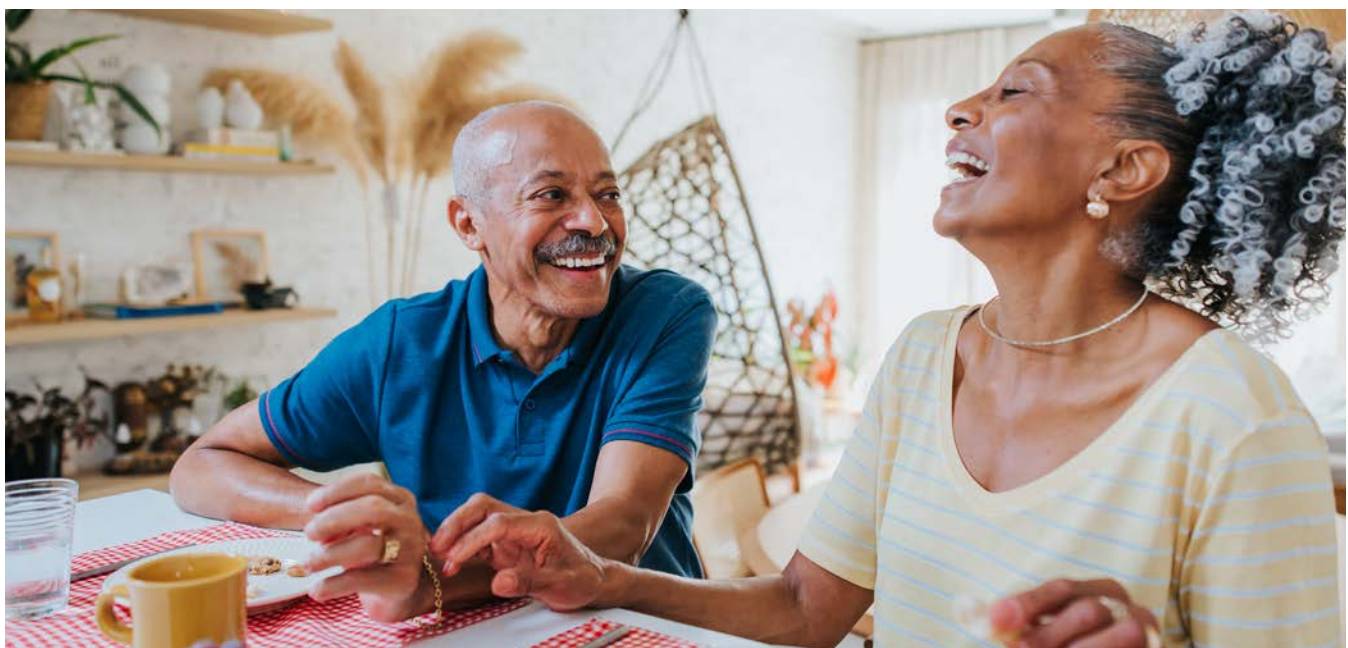
FORMAT: This program takes place over four weeks, and each weekly session lasts approximately one to one and one-half hours. During this time, participants will engage in group discussions, self-reflection, and taste testing.

There is a participant workbook, which participants should receive prior to the program, as well as a facilitator guide. The Appendix contains both documents.

FACILITATOR: We recommend having one instructor. Facilitators do not need formal mindfulness training, but it may be useful.

GENERAL FORMAT OF EACH SESSION: The facilitator should begin each session with an overview of the session, describing the subject matter and related research (found in the guide). Next, the facilitator will encourage participants to self-reflect—perhaps even encouraging them to write down their thoughts—and then administer a sensory exercise related to a mindful eating exercise. Each session concludes with a group discussion and an optional take-home exercise for the participants.

Teresa Fung, PhD, from the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health designed the program and workbooks. Tiffany Mitchenor was the program facilitator.



OVERVIEW OF SESSIONS

An overview of each session is provided below. More detailed instructions can be found in the Facilitator Guide.

SESSION 1: MINDFUL BEGINNINGS— SETTING THE STAGE

The first session introduces participants to the core concepts of mindfulness and mindful eating. The session opens with a grounding meditation and a discussion about the roots of mindfulness, including its use in stress reduction and emotional regulation.

Participants learn how mindful eating can enhance their enjoyment of food, improve digestion, and support a healthier relationship with eating. They engage in a sensory exercise with small snacks, using all five senses to fully experience the act of eating. Participants reflect on their current eating habits and set personal goals, which they record in their workbooks.

A take-home exercise encourages participants to practice mindful eating with one meal or snack each day and to journal their observations.

SESSION 2: HUNGER WISDOM—TUNING IN TO YOUR BODY'S NATURAL CUES

This session focuses on helping participants understand the difference between physical and emotional hunger and learn how to recognize their bodies' natural satiety cues. Through meditation and group discussion, participants explore how emotional states can trigger eating and how physical hunger develops more gradually and is satisfied by a range of foods. The Hunger-Satiety Scale is introduced as a tool for gauging fullness and encouraging moderation.

A sensory exercise involving mindful tasting is paired with the Japanese practice of *Hara Hachi Bu*—eating until about 80% full. Participants reflect on how their hunger levels shift during eating and journal their experiences.

The take-home exercise asks individuals to apply these concepts during meals and track awareness of hunger and fullness throughout the week.

SESSION 3: GRATITUDE AND AWARENESS— EMBRACING THE JOURNEY OF FOOD

In week 3, the emphasis shifts to cultivating gratitude and understanding the interconnected journey of food. After the opening meditation, participants reflect on the Five Contemplations from Buddhist philosophy, which encourage awareness of the people, systems, and resources involved in bringing food to the table.

During a sensory exercise, they compare processed and natural foods, using their senses to observe differences in texture, taste, and experience. Use this to lead a discussion about food choices, appreciation, and how gratitude can transform the act of eating.

A take-home exercise encourages participants to write a brief note of gratitude before meals and continue journaling about their reflections on food, nourishment, and connection.

SESSION 4: EVERYDAY MINDFULNESS— MAKING MINDFUL EATING A LIFESTYLE

The final session helps participants integrate mindful eating into their daily lives and sustain the practice beyond the program. Begin with a check-in on the goals that participants set in Session 1, allowing time to celebrate progress and reflect on challenges. Participants can adjust their goals to better align with their lifestyles. A shared mindful eating experience with healthy snacks reinforces the importance of community and collective reflection. Through this, participants discover how practicing mindfulness together can deepen the experience.

For the take-home exercise, individuals develop a personal mindful eating plan, share it with someone for accountability, and continue journaling. The program closes with final meditation and words of encouragement to carry the practice forward.

TIPS FOR PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

1

BEGIN AND END WITH MEDITATION

Each session includes a short, guided mindfulness practice to help center participants and set the tone.

2

USE ALL FIVE SENSES

Encourage participants to slow down and truly experience food—its colors, textures, smells, and sounds, not just taste.

3

ENCOURAGE REFLECTION AND JOURNALING

Guided reflection questions and personal journaling deepen awareness and reinforce learning.

4

MODEL NONJUDGMENTAL CURIOSITY

Invite participants to notice patterns and habits without guilt or shame. This program is about growth, not perfection.

5

BUILD A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

Use group discussions to normalize challenges and celebrate wins together. Encourage openness and respect.

6

PROVIDE CONTINUITY BETWEEN SESSIONS

Reference the previous week's insights during each session to help connect themes and progress.

7

PERSONALIZE THE EXPERIENCE

Let participants adapt mindfulness exercises to suit their personal dietary preferences, cultural foods, or spiritual beliefs.

8

CELEBRATE THE JOURNEY

Acknowledge the work and progress of every participant at the program's close—mindful eating is a lifelong path.

PART 2

CASE STUDY: EVALUATING A MINDFUL EATING PROGRAM FOR OLDER ADULTS

The purpose of the mindful eating program for older adults was to improve healthy eating habits and behaviors among older adults. An evaluation was conducted to assess the relationship between mindful eating and participants' healthy eating behaviors. Specifically, the evaluation sought to answer the following questions:

- What is the impact of participating in a mindful eating program on healthy eating behaviors among older adults?
- Are there significant increases in healthy eating behaviors for participants?



HOW THE EVALUATION WAS CONDUCTED

PARTICIPANTS

A total of 98 participants were recruited from seven senior living communities across the Chicagoland area to take part in a four-week program on mindful eating. Participants were eligible to participate if they were 55 or better and fluent in English. Participants attended weekly one-hour sessions held at the same time and day each week at their respective sites. Of the 98 individuals who enrolled in the program, 78 (79.6%) completed all four weeks. Nearly 90% (89.6%) of participants were female; 41.6% were White, and 48.1% were Black/African American; and 83.8% were retired. More information can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics for Analytic Sample (N = 78)

| DEMOGRAPHIC | COUNT (%) | DEMOGRAPHIC | COUNT (%) |
|--------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|------------|
| Gender | | Highest Education | |
| Female | 69 (89.6%) | Some high school diploma | 1 (1.3%) |
| Male | 8 (10.4%) | High school graduate or GED | 22 (28.6%) |
| Gender identity not listed | 0 (0%) | Associate's degree | 13 (16.9%) |
| Marital Status | | Bachelor's degree | 17 (22.1%) |
| Never married | 19 (25%) | Master's degree | 18 (23.4%) |
| Partnered/Married | 16 (21.1%) | Doctorate/professional degree | 6 (7.8%) |
| Separated/Divorced | 23 (30.3%) | Employment Status* | |
| Widowed | 18 (23.7%) | Employed part time | 4 (5.4%) |
| Race/Ethnicity* | | Unemployed and looking for work | 7 (9.5%) |
| White/Caucasian | 32 (41.6%) | Unemployed and not looking for work | 1 (1.4%) |
| Black/African American | 37 (48.1%) | Retired | 62 (83.8%) |
| Asian | 1 (1%) | Age | |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 1 (1.3%) | Average | 70.12 |
| Asian | 3 (3.9%) | Median | 70 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 2 (2.6%) | Range | 55–82 |
| Other | 2 (2.6%) | | |

Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, and thus total percentages may not always add up to 100%.

SURVEYS

Both the pre- and post-surveys included questions about health, mindful eating inventory, a Healthy Behaviors Checklist, and healthy eating. The pre-survey also collected demographic information, while the post-survey measured program satisfaction, level of participation, perceived impact, and program feedback.

KEY FINDINGS

PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT

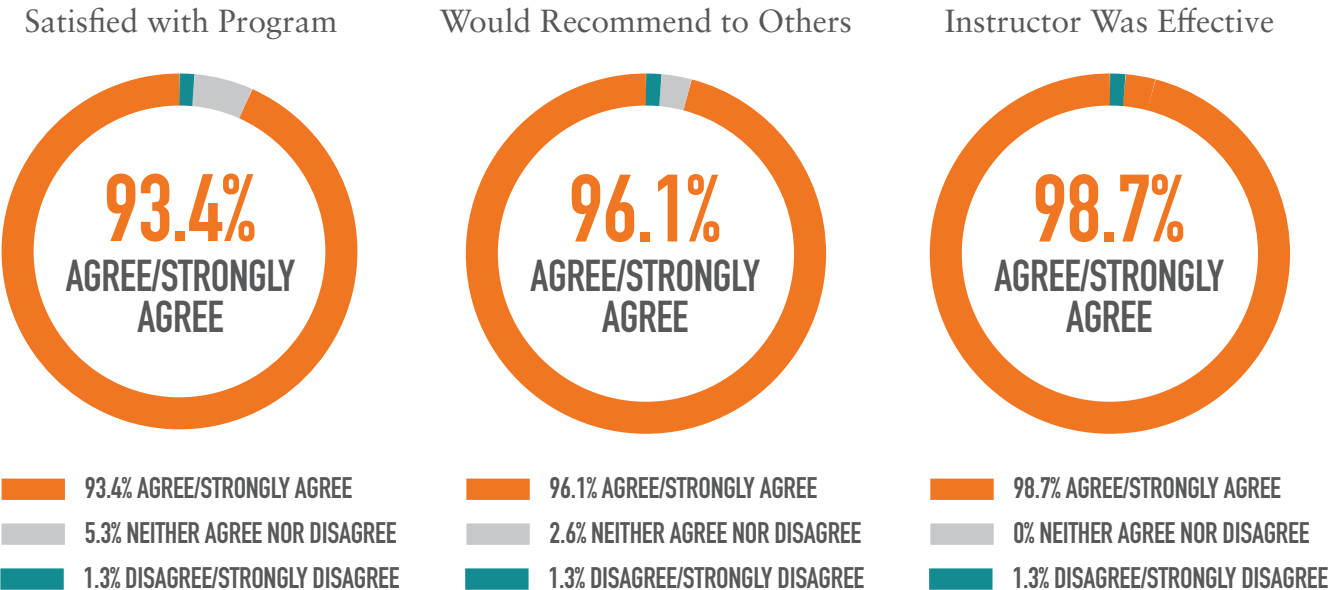
The program was conducted across seven sites, with varying attrition rates and total completes recorded from Week 1 to Week 4. Attrition rates ranged from 17.39 to 40%. Across all sites, the overall attrition rate was 20.41%, with a total of 78 completed pre- and post-surveys.

PROGRAM SATISFACTION

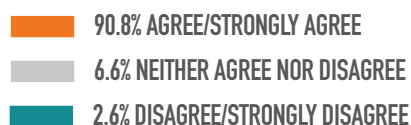
Participant feedback on the program was highly positive, with 93.4% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the program was satisfying. Program recommendation scored even higher, with 96.1% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they would recommend the program. Instructor effectiveness received the highest rating, with 98.7% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that their facilitator was effective. The appropriateness of the session lengths had 93.4% in agreement or strong agreement. Positive changes in eating habits were confirmed, with 90.8% agreeing or strongly agreeing. The sense of being connected to food was increased, with 90.8% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing.

Notably, 100% of participants expressed their intent to continue mindful eating practices.

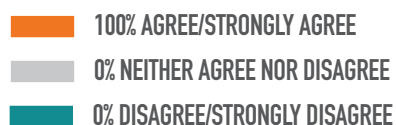
Figure 1. Satisfaction with the Program



Positive Change in Eating Habits



Plan to Continue Mindful Eating



PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Researchers compared pre- and post-surveys to assess differences in variables, including mindful eating inventory, autonomy, affiliation, purpose, achievement, mindful attention awareness, health, Healthy Behavior Checklist, life satisfaction, spirituality, and healthy eating identity. Findings revealed statistically significant improvements in the following measures: mindful eating inventory, healthy eating identity, and spirituality. Statistically significant improvements were also observed for self-reported health and a Healthy Behavior Checklist.

TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The program was held across seven different locations, with varying levels of participant retention. Some locations experienced a higher attrition rate than others, but overall, about four out of five participants who began the program completed it. The program received extremely positive feedback from those who completed it, with most participants saying they found the program satisfying and nearly all of them saying they would recommend it to others.

The instructor was especially well-regarded, and the length of the sessions was considered just right. Many participants reported positive changes in their eating habits and felt more connected to their food. **Impressively, every participant expressed a desire to continue practicing mindful eating!**

The results showed significant improvements in several areas. Participants became more mindful about their eating habits and felt a stronger sense of identity related to healthy eating. They also reported feeling more spiritual and healthier overall. Their behaviors aligned more closely with healthy practices by the end of the program.

To improve the program, it's important to examine why some participants did not complete the program and find ways to keep them engaged. Following up with those who leave early might encourage them to continue. Maintaining a high level of satisfaction is crucial, especially through the use of skilled instructors.



REFERENCES

Huong, X. V. P. (2023). Examining the scientific foundation of mindfulness and alternative approaches for improving mental well-being. *The American Journal of Social Science and Education Innovations*, 5(11), 65–71.

DOWNLOADS

You can download free PDFs of the two guides that follow for use in your own mindful eating program.

DOWNLOAD PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK

DOWNLOAD FACILITATOR GUIDE

These program guides are available license-free.

NOURISH TO FLOURISH PROGRAM

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We express our heartfelt gratitude to Teresa Fung, PhD, from the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, for her invaluable guidance and support in developing this program and designing the “Nourish to Flourish: Mindful Eating Workbook.”

Our sincere thanks also go out to Tiffany Mitchenor, the program facilitator, and experts in the field of mindful eating for their contributions and feedback.

It is your dedication and expertise that have brought this program to life and that are helping us promote a healthier relationship with food. We extend our deepest appreciation to all program participants for their time, enthusiasm, and commitment.

Thank you for being an integral part of this journey toward mindful eating and well-being.

“

When this body was just born, it was very light. As we grow, we tend to get weighed down by worries and lose our freshness and beauty. Mindful eating helps us regain this freshness, nourishing our spirits as well as our bodies. Eating with appreciation of our own bodies, we eat with more relaxation and joy.

- Thich Nhat Hanh

”

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

Welcome to the **Nourish to Flourish Mindful Eating Program**! This guide is designed to help you cultivate a mindful approach to eating, enhancing your overall well-being.

Each week, you will participate in a session led by a trained instructor, engage in sensory activities, and reflect on your experiences. The workbook is structured to support you through:

WEEKLY SESSIONS

Each session includes an introduction, activities, and discussions to deepen your understanding of mindful eating.

MINDFUL MEDITATIONS

Sessions begin and end with a five-minute meditation to center and focus your mind.

SENSORY ACTIVITIES

Hands-on activities to practice mindful eating.

TAKE-HOME ACTIVITIES

Exercises to reinforce what you've learned and integrate mindful eating into your daily life.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Brief discussions to share experiences and insights with fellow participants.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Questions to help you reflect on your experiences and deepen your understanding.



WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION

“

Mindfulness is about love and loving life. When you cultivate this love, it gives you clarity and compassion for life, and your actions happen in accordance with that.

- Jon Kabat-Zinn

”

WEEK 1

MINDFUL BEGINNINGS: SETTING THE STAGE

OBJECTIVE

Understand the principles of mindful eating and set personal goals.

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness is the practice of paying full attention to the present moment without judgment. It involves being aware of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment. When we are mindful, we are fully engaged in what we are doing, whether it's eating, walking, or simply breathing.

Mindfulness has its roots in ancient Buddhist meditation practices, particularly from the Vipassana tradition, which dates back over 2,500 years. It was introduced to the Western world primarily through the work of Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, who developed the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program in the late 1970s. Kabat-Zinn's work helped bring mindfulness into mainstream medicine and psychology, demonstrating its effectiveness in reducing stress, anxiety, and chronic pain.

WHAT IS MINDFUL EATING?

Mindful eating involves paying full attention to the experience of eating and drinking, both inside and outside the body. It allows us to become aware of our physical hunger and satiety cues and to enjoy the sensory experience of food.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MINDFUL EATING?

- Enhances the enjoyment of food and improves digestion
- Helps with weight management by preventing overeating
- Reduces emotional eating
- Promotes a healthier relationship with food

GOAL SETTING

Reflect on your current eating habits. Identify specific, achievable goals for practicing mindful eating. Note them in the box below.

GOAL 1: _____

GOAL 2: _____

GOAL 3: _____

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Practice mindful eating with one meal or snack each day. Record your observations and feelings in your journal.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

- How did you feel during the sensory exercise?
- What differences did you notice compared to your usual eating habits?
- What challenges do you foresee in practicing mindful eating regularly?

Use the space below for your notes:

WEEK 2: PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL EATING

“

Moderation in all things, especially food, brings a healthy and long life.

- Chinese Proverb

”

WEEK 2

HUNGER WISDOM: TUNING IN TO YOUR BODY'S NATURAL CUES

OBJECTIVE

Recognize the difference between physical and emotional hunger, and learn to identify satiety cues.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL HUNGER?

PHYSICAL HUNGER

- Physical hunger develops gradually.
- You may experience stomach growling, weakness, or a slight headache.
- Almost any food will satisfy physical hunger. You're more open to a variety of foods.
- Once you eat, physical hunger is satisfied, and the feeling subsides.
- Physical hunger is driven by the body's need for nutrients and energy.

EMOTIONAL HUNGER

- Emotional hunger can come on suddenly and feel urgent.
- Emotional hunger often involves cravings for specific comfort foods, like sweets or junk food.
- Even after eating, emotional hunger may not feel satisfied.
- Emotional hunger is often linked to feelings such as stress, boredom, loneliness, or sadness.
- Eating due to emotional hunger can lead to mindless eating, where you're not fully aware of how much or what you're eating.



THE HUNGER-SATIETY SCALE (UC BERKELEY)

Use this Hunger-Satiety Scale to get in touch with your hunger and satiety cues. Aim to stay within the blue zone, 4–7, as much as possible.

| |
|---|
| 10 - EXTREMELY STUFFED, NAUSEOUS |
| 9 - STUFFED, VERY UNCOMFORTABLE |
| 8 - OVERFULL, SOMEWHAT UNCOMFORTABLE |
| 7 - FULL, BUT NOT UNCOMFORTABLE |
| 6 - SATISFIED, BUT COULD EAT A LITTLE MORE |
| 5 - STARTING TO FEEL HUNGRY |
| 4 - HUNGRY, STOMACH GROWLING |
| 3 - UNCOMFORTABLY HUNGRY, DISTRACTED, IRRITABLE |
| 2 - VERY HUNGRY, LOW ENERGY, WEAK AND DIZZY |
| 1 - STARVING, NO ENERGY, VERY WEAK |

WHEN YOU REACH 3 OR 4

Aim to start eating when you reach a 3 or 4. By not waiting too long, it may make it easier to thoughtfully choose what you'd like to eat and eat until you are satisfied rather than overly stuffed. Keeping nutritious snacks available, especially while running errands, can help tide you over until your next meal if necessary. Some tasty snack ideas include whole fruit, nuts, hard-boiled eggs, veggies and hummus, or plain yogurt with fruit.

WHEN YOU REACH 6 OR 7

Once you reach a 6, you would be just about satisfied. Within 15 to 20 minutes, you will likely be at a 7, full but not uncomfortable. To make this a bit easier, check in with your hunger cues before and/or during meals and snacks, keep serving dishes on the counter rather than on the dinner table, and take your time while eating by engaging all of your senses.

HARA HACHI BU — EAT UNTIL YOU ARE 80% FULL

Distinguishing between physical and emotional hunger is crucial for mindful eating. *Hara Hachi Bu*, a Japanese concept, encourages eating until you are 80% full, promoting awareness of satiety cues.

RECOGNIZING SATIETY CUES USING HARA HACHI BU

- Learn to pause during meals to assess hunger and fullness.
- Practice eating slowly to recognize when you are comfortably full.
- Use a hunger scale (1–10) to evaluate your hunger before, during, and after meals.

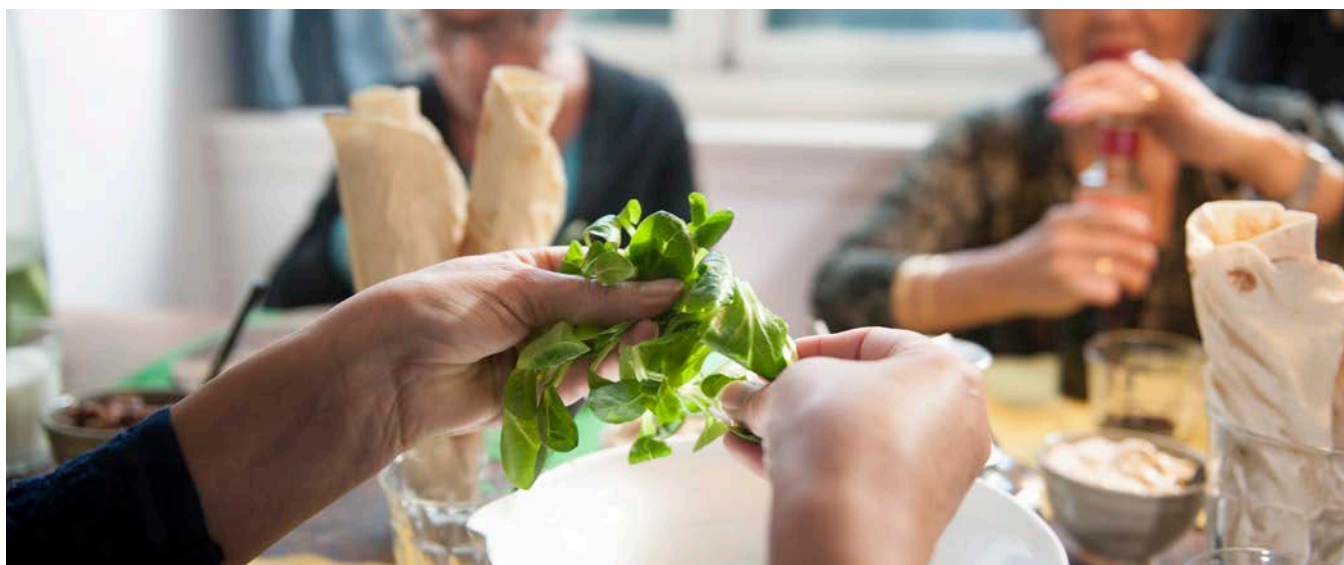
SENSORY EXERCISE: EXPLORING HARA HACHI BU WITH MINDFUL TASTING

Choose a small snack:

- Begin by observing the snack closely. Notice the colors, textures, and shapes. Describe what you see.

- Bring the snack close to your nose and take a deep breath, noticing the aromas. Share what you smell and how it makes you feel.
- Take a small bite of the snack and chew slowly. Pay attention to the flavors, textures, and any changes in taste as you chew. Focus on the experience, and do not rush.
- After the first bite, pause and reflect on your hunger level. Use a hunger scale (1–10) to gauge how hungry or full you feel.
- Continue eating the snack slowly and mindfully, pausing periodically to reassess your hunger and fullness levels. Aim to stop at about 7 or 8 on the scale, corresponding to being 80% full.

This practice can also be done using a beverage, such as tea.



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Share your experiences with the sensory exercise.

- Discuss how you differentiate between physical and emotional hunger.
- Talk about the concept of Hara Hachi Bu and how it can be applied to your eating habits.

Use the space below for your notes:

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Practice Hara Hachi Bu during meals. Keep a journal of your experiences, noting when you stop eating and how you feel.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

- How do you typically distinguish between physical and emotional hunger?
- What did you notice about your satiety cues when practicing Hara Hachi Bu?
- What strategies can you use to stop eating when you're 80% full?

Use the space below for your notes:

WEEK 3: AWARENESS AND SHARED HUMANITY

“

In this food, I see clearly the
presence of the entire universe
supporting my existence.

- Thich Nhat Hanh

”

WEEK 3

GRATITUDE AND AWARENESS: EMBRACING THE JOURNEY OF FOOD

OBJECTIVE

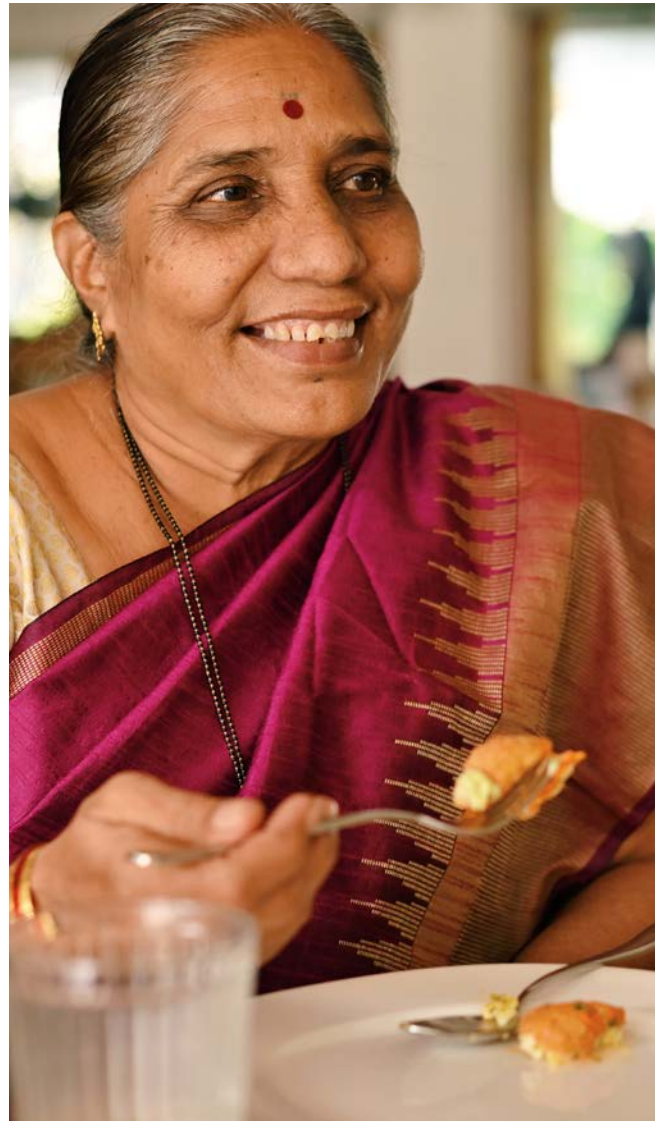
Develop a sense of gratitude and awareness of the interconnectedness of all beings through mindful eating.

FIVE CONTEMPLATIONS OF BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

- Reflect on the effort and resources involved in bringing food to your plate.
- Acknowledge your own worthiness to receive this nourishment.
- Consider how your food choices affect the planet and other beings.
- Reflect on the quality of your thoughts and actions while eating.
- Contemplate the intention to sustain your practice of mindful eating.

INCORPORATING GRATITUDE

Practice gratitude before meals, acknowledging the food and its journey. Write a gratitude note or keep a gratitude journal related to your meals.



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Choose a processed food item and a natural food item.

- Observe the differences in color, texture, and aroma.
- Taste each item mindfully, noting the differences in flavor and sensation.
- Reflect on how the processing of food affects its taste and your overall eating experience.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

- Discuss the Five Contemplations and how they influence your view of food.
- Talk about the practice of gratitude and its impact on your eating habits.

Use the space below for your notes:

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Reflect on your food choices and their impact. Write a gratitude note before each meal. Keep a journal of your reflections on the interconnectedness of food.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

- How did the Five Contemplations change your perspective on eating?
- What differences did you notice between the processed and natural food items?
- How does practicing gratitude before meals affect your eating experience?
- In what ways can you incorporate the practice of gratitude into your daily life?

Use the space below for your notes:

WEEK 4: CONCLUSION

“

The journey of a thousand
miles begins with one step.

- Lao Tzu

”

WEEK 4

EVERYDAY MINDFULNESS: MAKING MINDFUL EATING A HABIT

OBJECTIVE

Integrate mindful eating into your daily routine, and sustain the practice.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

As we reach the final week of the Nourish to Flourish Mindful Eating Program, our focus shifts to embedding the principles of mindful eating into your daily life. Mindful eating is not just a temporary exercise but a lifelong practice that can transform your relationship with food and enhance your overall well-being.

THE JOURNEY OF MINDFUL EATING

Over the past weeks, you have learned to slow down, pay attention to your body's signals, and appreciate the sensory experiences of eating. These practices have helped you become more aware of your hunger and satiety cues, differentiate between physical and emotional hunger, and cultivate gratitude for the food you consume. Now, the next step is to maintain these habits and make them a natural part of your everyday life.

EVALUATING YOUR GOALS

REVIEW YOUR INITIAL GOALS

Take a moment to revisit the goals you set in Week 1. Reflect on your progress and any changes you have noticed in your eating habits.

ASSESS ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Identify what you have achieved and any challenges you encountered. This assessment can help you understand what strategies worked best for you.

ADJUST GOALS

Based on your experiences, adjust your goals to better fit your lifestyle. Remember, mindful eating is a personal journey, and your goals should be flexible and adaptable.

INCORPORATING MINDFUL EATING INTO DAILY LIFE

MINDFUL MEALS

Aim to eat at least one meal mindfully each day. Choose a meal when you have enough time to fully engage in the experience without rushing.

MINDFUL SNACKING

Apply the principles of mindful eating to snacks. Pay attention to what you are eating, why you are eating, and how it makes you feel.

GRATITUDE PRACTICE

Continue practicing gratitude before meals. This can be a simple moment of reflection or a more formal practice, such as keeping a gratitude journal.

MINDFUL FOOD CHOICES

Make conscious food choices that align with your values and well-being. Consider where your food comes from and how it affects your health and the environment.

SENSORY EXERCISE: MINDFULLY EATING A SNACK AS A GROUP

Choose a healthy snack.

- Sit together as a group.
- Observe the snack's appearance, texture, and smell.
- Eat slowly, discussing your experiences and sensations.
- Reflect on the shared experience and how it enhances your mindful eating habit.



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- Share your experiences with the sensory exercise.
- Discuss strategies for integrating mindful eating into daily life.
- Explore the benefits and challenges of maintaining a mindful eating habit.
- Reflect on the progress made toward your goals and any adjustments needed.

Use the space below for your notes:

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Create a plan to incorporate mindful eating into your daily routine. Share your plan with a friend or family member for accountability. Continue practicing mindful eating and journaling your experiences. Set new goals or adjust existing ones based on your reflections.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

- How have your eating habits changed since you began practicing mindful eating?
- What progress have you made toward your initial goals?
- What challenges have you encountered, and how did you address them?
- How can you remind yourself to eat mindfully daily?
- What new goals can you set to continue your mindful eating journey?

Use the space below for your notes:

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations on completing the Nourish to Flourish Mindful Eating Workbook! Over the past four weeks, you have embarked on a journey to develop a more mindful and intentional relationship with food. This workbook has provided you with tools, activities, and reflections to help you integrate mindful eating into your daily life.

RESOURCES

BOOKS

- *Mindful Eating: A Guide to Rediscovering a Healthy and Joyful Relationship with Food* by Jan Chozen Bays
- *Savor: Mindful Eating, Mindful Life* by Thich Nhat Hanh and Lilian Cheung

WEBSITES AND APPS

Mindful eating programs and resources available online:

- For meditation and mindfulness apps, check out Headspace, Calm, and Insight Timer.
- For the Hunger-Satiety Scale, visit <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/wellness-hungersatietscale.pdf>.
- For the Five Contemplations, visit <https://sevengoodthings.com/five-contemplations-by-thich-nhat-hanh>.

IN THE COMMUNITY

- Join mindful eating or meditation groups in your community or online to connect with others who share your interests and goals.
- Visit local farmers' markets for healthy, locally sourced produce.

THANK YOU

Thank you for participating in the **Nourish to Flourish Mindful Eating Program**. Your dedication to this journey is commendable, and we hope you continue to find joy and balance in your mindful eating practice. Remember, each mindful bite is a step toward a healthier, more fulfilling life!



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NOURISH TO FLOURISH PROGRAM

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eating for their contributions and feedback. It is your dedication and expertise that have brought this program to life and that are helping us promote a healthier relationship with food. We extend our deepest appreciation to all program participants for their time, enthusiasm, and commitment. Thank you for being an integral part of this journey toward mindful eating and well-being.

“

When this body was just born, it was very light. As we grow, we tend to get weighed down by worries and lose our freshness and beauty. Mindful eating helps us regain this freshness, nourishing our spirits as well as our bodies. Eating with appreciation of our own bodies, we eat with more relaxation and joy.

- Thich Nhat Hanh

”

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Welcome to the **Nourish to Flourish Mindful Eating Program!** This guide will help you facilitate each weekly session of the program.

Each session is designed to introduce participants to different aspects of mindful eating and includes activities, discussions, and reflections to deepen their understanding and practice. Each session includes the following.

MINDFUL MEDITATIONS

Sessions begin and end with a five-minute meditation to center and focus participants' minds.

SENSORY ACTIVITIES

Hands-on activities for participants to practice mindful eating.

TAKE-HOME ACTIVITIES

Exercises to reinforce what participants have learned and to integrate mindful eating into their daily lives.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Brief discussions for participants to share experiences and insights with each other.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Questions to encourage participants to reflect on their program experiences.



WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION

“

Mindfulness is about love and loving life. When you cultivate this love, it gives you clarity and compassion for life, and your actions happen in accordance with that.

- Jon Kabat-Zinn

”

WEEK 1

MINDFUL BEGINNINGS: SETTING THE STAGE

OBJECTIVE

Understand the principles of mindful eating, and set personal goals.

OVERVIEW

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Mindful Eating Workbook (one copy per participant)
- Pens and markers
- Small snacks for the sensory exercise

SESSION OUTLINE

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)

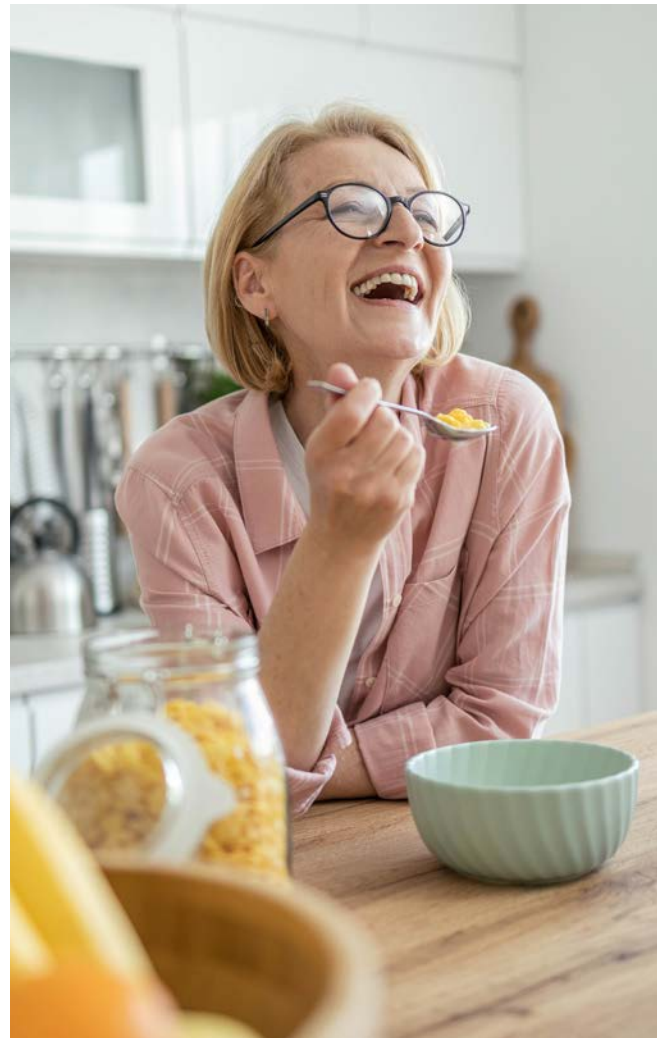
Greet participants and introduce yourself. Provide an overview of the program and its goals. Explain the structure of the sessions: introduction, activities, discussions, and take-home exercises. Workbooks must be distributed at beginning—see goal setting.

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS? (10 MINUTES)

- Conduct the opening meditation.
- Discuss the concept of mindfulness and its roots in Buddhist meditation practices.
- Highlight the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn and the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program.

WHAT IS MINDFUL EATING? (10 MINUTES)

Explain mindful eating and its benefits: enhancing food enjoyment, improving digestion, managing weight, reducing emotional eating, and promoting a healthier relationship with food.



GOAL SETTING (5 MINUTES)

Encourage participants to reflect on their current eating habits. Have them identify specific, achievable goals for practicing mindful eating and note them in their workbooks.

SENSORY EXERCISE: MINDFUL EATING EXERCISE (10 MINUTES)

- Provide a variety of small snacks.
- Guide participants to observe the snacks closely, noting colors, textures, and shapes.
- Instruct them to take a small bite, chew slowly, and pay attention to the flavors and textures.
- Encourage them to record their observations and feelings in their workbooks.

GROUP DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)

- Facilitate a discussion about participants' experiences during the sensory exercise.
- Ask them to share any differences they noticed compared to their usual eating habits.

TAKE-HOME EXERCISE (5 MINUTES)

- Explain the take-home exercise: Participants should practice mindful eating with one meal or snack each day and record their observations.
- Remind participants to bring their workbooks to each session.

CLOSING MEDITATION (5 MINUTES)

End the session with a brief meditation to center and focus the mind.



WEEK 2: PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL EATING

“

Moderation in all things, especially food, brings a healthy and long life.

- Chinese Proverb

”

WEEK 2 HUNGER WISDOM: TUNING INTO YOUR BODY'S NATURAL CUES

OBJECTIVE

Recognize the difference between physical and emotional hunger, and learn to identify satiety cues.

OVERVIEW

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Mindful Eating Workbook
- Pens and markers
- Small snacks for the sensory exercise

SESSION OUTLINE

WELCOME BACK (5 MINUTES)

Welcome participants back, and briefly review the key points from Week 1. Ask participants to share their experiences with the take-home exercise.

OPENING MEDITATION (5 MINUTES)

UNDERSTANDING HUNGER (10 MINUTES)

Explain the difference between physical hunger and emotional hunger.

- **Physical Hunger:** Develops gradually, satisfied with any food, driven by the body's need for nutrients.
- **Emotional Hunger:** Comes suddenly, craves specific comfort foods, often linked to emotions.

THE HUNGER-SATIETY SCALE (10 MINUTES)

Introduce the Hunger-Satiety Scale, and explain how to use it. Encourage participants to aim to stay within the purple zone (4–7) as much as possible.

10 - EXTREMELY STUFFED, NAUSEOUS

9 - STUFFED, VERY UNCOMFORTABLE

8 - OVERFULL, SOMEWHAT UNCOMFORTABLE

7 - FULL, BUT NOT UNCOMFORTABLE

6 - SATISFIED, BUT COULD EAT A LITTLE MORE

5 - STARTING TO FEEL HUNGRY

4 - HUNGRY, STOMACH GROWLING

3 - UNCOMFORTABLY HUNGRY, DISTRACTED, IRRITABLE

2 - VERY HUNGRY, LOW ENERGY, WEAK AND DIZZY

1 - STARVING, NO ENERGY, VERY WEAK

SENSORY EXERCISE: EXPLORING HARA HACHI BU (10 MINUTES)

- Provide small snacks, and guide participants through the mindful tasting exercise.
- Encourage them to observe the snacks, note the aromas, and taste slowly.
- Have them use the hunger scale to gauge their hunger before, during, and after eating.

GROUP DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)

- Facilitate a discussion about their experiences with the sensory exercise.
- Ask participants how they differentiate between physical and emotional hunger, and discuss the concept of *Hara Hachi Bu*.

TAKE-HOME EXERCISE (5 MINUTES)

Explain the take-home exercise: Participants should practice Hara Hachi Bu during meals and keep a journal of their experiences.

CLOSING MEDITATION (5 MINUTES)



WEEK 3: AWARENESS AND SHARED HUMANITY

“

In this food, I see clearly the
presence of the entire universe
supporting my existence.

- Thich Nhat Hanh

”

WEEK 3

GRATITUDE AND AWARENESS: EMBRACING THE JOURNEY OF FOOD

OBJECTIVE

Develop a sense of gratitude and awareness of the interconnectedness of all beings through mindful eating.

OVERVIEW

MATERIALS NEEDED

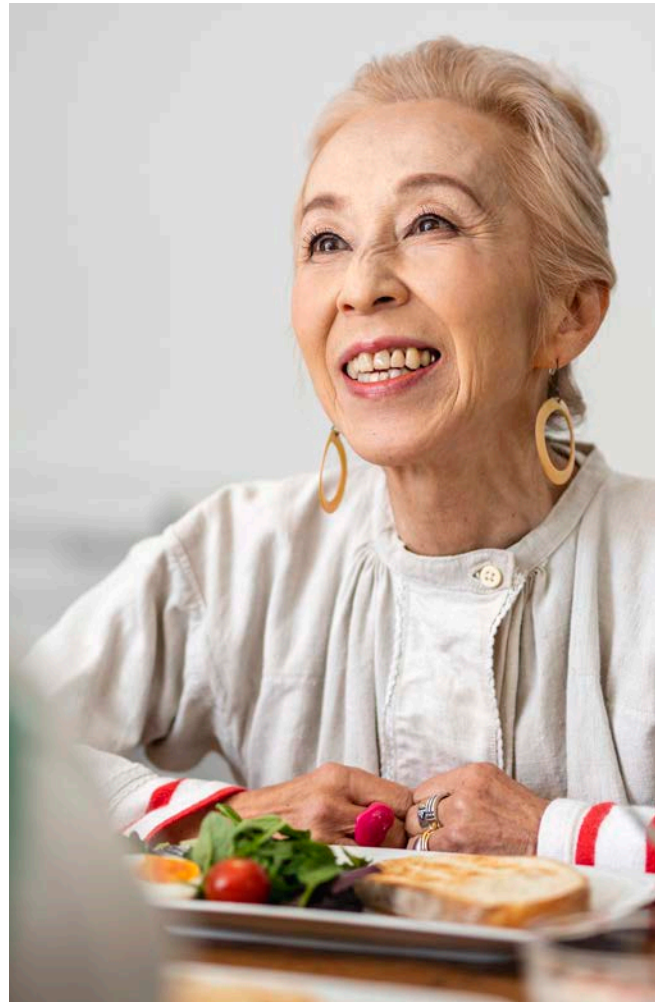
- Mindful Eating Workbook
- Pens and markers
- Processed and natural food items for the sensory exercise

SESSION OUTLINE

WELCOME BACK (5 MINUTES)

Welcome participants back, and briefly review the key points from Week 2. Ask participants to share their experiences with the take-home exercise.

OPENING MEDITATION (5 MINUTES)



GRATITUDE AND AWARENESS (15 MINUTES)

- Discuss the importance of gratitude and awareness in mindful eating.
- Introduce the Five Contemplations of Buddhist philosophy related to food.

FIVE CONTEMPLATIONS OF BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

- Reflect on the effort and resources involved in bringing food to your plate.
- Acknowledge your own worthiness to receive this nourishment.
- Consider how your food choices affect the planet and other beings.
- Reflect on the quality of your thoughts and actions while eating.
- Contemplate the intention to sustain your practice of mindful eating.

SENSORY EXERCISE: PROCESSED VS. NATURAL FOOD (15 MINUTES)

- Provide both processed and natural food items.
- Guide participants to observe, smell, and taste each item mindfully.
- Ask them to note the differences in flavor and sensation and reflect on how food processing affects their eating experience.

GROUP DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)

- Facilitate a discussion about participants' experiences with the sensory exercise.
- Discuss the Five Contemplations and how they influence participants' view of food.
- Talk about the practice of gratitude and its impact on their eating habits.

TAKE-HOME EXERCISE (5 MINUTES)

Explain the take-home exercise: Participants should reflect on their food choices, write a gratitude note before each meal, and keep a journal of their reflections on the interconnectedness of food.

CLOSING MEDITATION (5 MINUTES)



WEEK 4: CONCLUSION

“

The journey of a thousand
miles begins with one step.

- Lao Tzu

”

WEEK 4

EVERYDAY MINDFULNESS:

MAKING MINDFUL EATING A HABIT

OBJECTIVE

Integrate mindful eating into your daily routine, and sustain the practice.

OVERVIEW

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Mindful Eating Workbook
- Pens and markers
- Healthy snacks for the sensory activity

SESSION OUTLINE

WELCOME BACK (5 MINUTES)

Welcome participants back, and briefly review the key points from Week 3. Ask participants to share their experiences with the take-home exercise.

OPENING MEDITATION (5 MINUTES)

EVALUATING YOUR GOALS (10 MINUTES)

- Review the initial goals set in Week 1.
- Reflect on the progress made, achievements, and challenges encountered.
- Encourage participants to adjust their goals to better fit their lifestyles.

SENSORY EXERCISE: MINDFULLY EATING A SNACK AS A GROUP (15 MINUTES)

- Provide healthy snacks, and guide participants through a group mindful eating exercise.
- Encourage them to observe the snacks, note the aromas and textures, and taste slowly.
- Reflect on the shared experience and how it enhances their mindful eating habits.

TAKE-HOME EXERCISE (5 MINUTES)

Explain the take-home exercise: Participants should create a plan to incorporate mindful eating into their daily routines, share their plans with a friend or family member for accountability, continue practicing mindful eating, and journal their experiences.

CLOSING MEDITATION AND FAREWELL (10 MINUTES)

- End the session with a final meditation to center and focus the mind. Congratulate participants on completing the program, and encourage them to continue their mindful eating journeys.
- Distribute any additional resources or materials to support their ongoing practice.



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