

# Food for Thought

## What is mindful eating?

- Allowing yourself to become aware of the positive and nurturing opportunities that are available through food preparation and consumption by respecting your own inner wisdom.
- Choosing to eat food that is both pleasing to you and nourishing to your body by using all your senses to explore, savor, and taste.
- Learning to be aware of physical hunger and satiety cues to guide your decision to begin eating and to stop eating.
- Acknowledging responses to food (likes, neutral or dislikes) without judgment.

Free Handout for Individuals from The Center for Mindful Eating

### Finding Fullness

By Megrette Fletcher, M.Ed., RD., CDE

What would happen if you always knew when to stop eating? You could sense when you had eaten enough food and simply put your fork down. Take a moment and think: Would this ability improve your health?

If you believe that stopping eating when you are comfortably full will help your health, then consider using the following hunger / fullness scale. This tool can be helpful to discover a comfortable level of fullness when eating.

The rating scale below is divided into three sections. Numbers 10-7 is when either hunger or fullness is painful and unpleasant, 6-4 is when hunger or fullness is comfortable, and 3-1 is when hunger or fullness is slightly noticeable.

Between hunger and fullness is the number zero, and this is the most important number to notice when finding fullness. Zero is the point when you are neither hungry nor full. It is also the moment in eating where you can shift your intent from satisfying hunger to finding fullness.



When you come to this point, put your fork down and silently tell yourself, "When I am

comfortably full, I will stop eating." As you prepare to exit the meal, slow down after each bite and check in continuously with your belly. The ability to recognize the absence of hunger is enhanced by slowing down at

mealtime, reducing eating distractions, and intentionally noticing and rating current physical sensations like fullness.

You may notice that once you have satisfied your acute hunger, the taste of food changes. It may still taste good; however, the amount of enjoyment you receive from each bite is less and less until finally eating is no longer pleasurable. In fact, eating past a comfortable level of fullness becomes painful, both physically and emotionally.

The ability to find a comfortable level of fullness is a skill that you were born with. It can be reclaimed as you become more aware of the physical body cues of fullness and hunger. In doing so, a new sense of health and well-being is created by not overeating and is enjoyed after the meal.

*Megrette Fletcher, M.Ed., RD., CDE, is a co-founder of TCME, author, dietitian and diabetes educator and contributes to a number of mindful eating blogs, including [www.resourcesformindfuleating.com](http://www.resourcesformindfuleating.com)*

(Hunger) **10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10** (Fullness)