LOSE WEIGHT FOR GOOD

The Weight Loss Mindset

The mindset you need for successful weight loss



By Amy Roskelley

MY STORY





At 43 years old, I'm in better shape than I was at 23! At 5'1, 10 pounds on my small frame is the difference between my size 12 jeans and size 6. So, for 20 years I've been trying to lose 10 lbs. Although there was a life crisis along the way when I gained 30 lbs, I've been able to keep my weight within 10 pounds of my goal through massive effort and attention to my food. But that was just the problem. So much attention to what I was eating was a full time job, and I was worn out. I tried diet after diet and saw minimal results. I found myself having to exercise more and more, just to maintain my weight.

Finally this year, everything changed. After trying a 30 day- no sugar challenge and gaining 5 lbs, and my face breaking out in acne, I decided the food I was eating was not my problem. I had been led to believe by the latest research that sugar was so addictive that you wouldn't be able to stop eating food if you ate sugar. What I found was, I can over eat on ANY food! It didn't have to have sugar for me to feel out of control.

That's when I realized I was eating mindlessly. I discovered mindful eating shortly after, and was able to lose 10 lbs more quickly than any diet I had tried in my entire life! Really paying attention to what I put in my mouth with mindfulness has helped me eat less, and gain so much joy in living! I hope you enjoy this book as much as I enjoyed writing it!

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MEET THE AUTHORS

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Mindful living gives us the opportunity to pause between a stimulus and a response. To quote the great Victor Frankl:

> *"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."*

So often in eating, there is no pause. We see a cookie on the counter and, before we know it, we've devoured it. Without noticing, it slips down our throats. Eating the cookie happens without us being aware or present, so we decide to eat another cookie, and another. We need more cookies to be satisfied because there is no memory of the moment we enjoyed the first cookie!

Simply consuming food mindlessly is a problem, but mealtime has it's own challenges. Our modern environment is extremely distracted and vulnerable to mindlessness. When you sit down to eat a meal, is it possible to only eat? Do you feel the urge to multitask? Have you ever tried to not have your phone, a book, or a computer screen at the breakfast table with you? As we are distracted from the activity of eating, our food never has the chance to satisfy us the way food is intended to satisfy.

When we eat with mindfulness and purpose, not only will we eat less, stick to our diet, and be more satisfied but we will also discover the junk food we thought we loved, really has no appeal at all!

The first few bites of our food is often the most pleasureable, and it's OK for our food to bring us pleasure! The diet industry will have you believe any food that increases endorphins is bad. Humans were meant to enjoy food! However, if you eat with mindfulness you will notice the pleasure is no longer there, and if it is there, it decreases with each bite. When we don't notice this, it's easy to eat four slices of pizza or an entire piece of cake. If you do notice the pleasure diminishing with each bite, you can take that pause and question whether you need to continue eating, or if you want to leave it for later. Eating on purpose and with awareness takes practice, and we want to help you get there!

We promise, as you follow the strategies and tips in this 40-day guide, you will notice a completely new relationship with food that you didn't think was possible. By staying focused and avoiding multitasking, you will eat less food. Less food will bring you more pleasure. You can be satisfied while leaving part of your meal behind! You will learn how to be curious enough to challenge your thoughts and behavior, before you eat something you don't really want. And you will enjoy the time you spend eating on a new, peaceful, and painless level, all while losing weight!

2 CHAPTER 2: THE BASICS OF A MINDFUL MEAL

You might be surprised to learn, that your weight has less to do with the food you eat and more to do with your behavior and attitude towards food.Those diets you tried before probably worked for the first few days, when circumstances were ideal. Then, as life happened and obstacles got in your way. Unless you can stick with that diet forever, you will never reach your goal.

Mindful eating creates the mental skills to help you stick with your dieting goals! It doesn't matter if you enjoy a Low Fat, Vegetarian, or Paleo style diet. This ebook will teach you how to stick with it, and how you can challenge the excuses that cause you to abandon your plan for healthy eating.

The most important practice during these 40 days, is to create meaningful rituals around mealtimes! At the very heart of mindful eating is to eat with purpose and to be present at your meals. This means no distractions and no multitasking while you eat a meal.

BEING PRESENT REQUIRES:

- Establishing three periods of time during the day for intentional, purposeful eating.
- Creating a space during meals free of common distractions. (no phone, books, computer, magazine, TV, etc).
- Chew slowly and experience each bite.
- Identify the tastes, flavors, and texture of each bite.
- Complete eating each bite before you fill your fork full again.
- Assess hunger mid meal to see if you are full, almost full, ready to stop.

1 - ESTABLISHING THREE PERIODS OF TIME DURING THE DAY FOR INTENTIONAL EATING

If there was one pivotal thing that has made my weight loss experience a success, it was that I stopped snacking for the first time in my life! For mindful, undistracted eating to be effortless, avoiding snacks is the easiest thing to do. Snacks generally are eaten on the go, in a hurry, out of a box, and with very little intention. By choosing three times during the day when you can sit with your food in a meaningful, fully attentive way, you can taste, enjoy, and be satisfied by your meals.

Your first step is to decide on three times during the day that you can eat, uninterrupted. Or at least have the least amount of distractions. The intuitive eating movement recommends not eating at all until your body tells you that you are hungry. This did not go well for me! When I attempted intuitive eating, waiting until I was hungry to eat a meal backfired. I would get hungry at inconvenient times when I wasn't able to sit down to eat. I would get hungry and have to hurry to a

meeting or run a carpool, and find myself rushing through the meal or grabbing something on the go. I would also lie to myself about being hungry! It's easy to convince myself I need food, when I had eaten an hour prior.

Decide at the beginning of the day when and where you can schedule meals, free of distraction. This will be a challenge for most people, because you are busy! However, this was a big turning point for me in finally being successful in sticking with my food plan. Taking time to eat is a gift to yourself, and your health should be a priority. When I saw this time as an opportunity to finally reach my weight loss goals, I made the time! You will be surprised at how much of your day you will get back as you refrain from grazing and taking repeated trips to the fridge or break room. If this means you will eat at 9am, 12pm and 4pm, keep that commitment to yourself! Mark them on your planner or calendar, and take a break from your busy life. If appointments come up, schedule them appropriately and don't let your commitment to yourself get put on the back burner. These times can change, as long as you are committed to sitting down three times per day.

There are so many reasons eating three times per day will not only contribute to mindful eating, but also help you to lose weight!

Grazing and snacking is the ULTIMATE habit of mindless eating! Moving to three meals per day--NO SNACKS--made eating less food and eating with purpose so easy. It seems like such a simple practice, yet so many of us aren't doing it. It might feel natural to have a distinct starting and ending point to a large family dinner, but breakfast and lunch can often get fuzzy. We eat one or two things, only to return to the fridge one hour later to eat more "lunch." This ongoing grazing causes most people, who struggle with their weight, to overeat. I'm sure you've told yourself, like I did, eating six mini meals per day is a good idea. The problem was, my mini-meals were not mini at all. It was just another way to eat more food than I needed.

Surprisingly, when you stop thinking about food between meals, you can participate more fully in life. Some days, my thoughts were centered around food. As soon as I cleared my plate at breakfast, I'd be planning what I'd eat next. Sound familiar? A woman following this plan recently proclaimed: *"I now **enjoy** the hours between meals, because I know I'll get food when It's time and I can be nourished properly!"*



Willpower is no longer necessary to resist the handfuls of food you shouldn't be eating when you have time boundaries around your meals. You will have space and energy to explore your interests and cultivate your relationships. You don't need to check the fridge every 20 minutes. You don't need to create a mess in the kitchen, just trying to get a snack. You don't need to worry about eating a snack and not being able to stop. Putting your food on a plate

for a legitimate meal means that there will be a distinct ending point to your feast. You can trust your body to send you the signals of satiety when you have sat down to the meal in a non-hurried, thoughtful, and purposeful way.

Eating three meals a day can also support your body while fueling it with fewer calories. Snacking or grazing allows for an almost unlimited amount of calories because you are never full or satisfied. Small meals make it harder to feel full. Personally, I like the idea of feeling full, and would rather eat 500-600 calories in one sitting instead of 100 calories at six separate times. Trying to limit myself to 100 calories in a meal or snack always resulted in overeating.

In the last few decades, someone decided that snacking was the key to health. We were told that without snacks, we will starve and slow our metabolism! It's almost unheard of today to eliminate snacks; but when you do, you'll feel more in control and present in your life!

It may seem contradictory, but eating food makes you more hungry. Have you ever noticed that when you start to snack on something, more often than not, you can't stop? This is especially true when you eat food you ***think*** you love. When there are no boundaries around snack time, and you aren't eating mindfully, you'll continue to munch on your favorite foods without awareness.

The beautiful thing about designating three times a day for satisfying meals, is that you have the freedom to eat your favorite, healthy foods. No guilt! The natural restrictions around keeping a meal to a designated time can naturally curb your appetite.

Snack foods are rarely the healthiest choice! Many snack foods are high in fat, salt, or sugar; at least the tastiest ones are! It's less likely that you're going to put a handful of Goldfish on your dinner plate instead of chicken and rice.



THE SCIENCE

EATING FREQUENT MEALS, AS OPPOSED TO THREE BIG MEALS, LEADS TO FATTY LIVER DISEASE

Study leader Dr Mireille Serlie, with the Academic Medical Centre Amsterdam in The Netherlands, said:

> *"Our study provides the first evidence that eating more often, rather than consuming large meals, contributes to fatty liver independent of body weight gain.*
>
> *Eating more frequent meals significantly increased fat in the liver, while larger sized meals did not. These findings suggest that by cutting down on snacking and encouraging three balanced meals each day over the long term may reduce the prevalence of NAFLD" (source).*

EATING MORE FREQUENT MEALS, AS OPPOSED TO THREE BIG MEALS, LEADS TO HIGHER BLOOD SUGAR AND INSULIN LEVELS.

Allowing our bodies to manage the influx of glucose and return to normal levels takes time! The constant elevation of blood sugar, caused by grazing throughout the day, never allows the body to "use up glucose in the blood" and then dip into fat stores. We *want* to dip into those fat stores!

EATING MORE FREQUENT MEALS, AS OPPOSED TO THREE BIG MEALS, LEADS TO HIGHER DAILY CALORIE INTAKE.

The snack industry has ballooned to more than $374 Billion in 2014. There is significant money spent trying to persuade you to eat snacks! It's simple: the more you snack, the more calories you will be eating.

EATING FEWER MEALS DOES NOT LOWER METABOLISM!

The number of times I've heard this argument is astonishing! Our hunter gatherer ancestors did not have the luxury of eating six times per day. For them, it was feast or famine. The idea that, as humans, we can't tolerate two or more hours between meals is crazy. Our bodies have evolved to be able to have periods of non-eating for many hours, with very little impact to our metabolism.

Following Excerpt from: https://lifespa.com/dangers-of-frequent-eating/

> *There are many studies disputing this notion. In 1997, the British Journal of Medicine did a thorough review of all such related studies, and found no evidence that eating 6 meals a day increases metabolism, thermogenesis, or weight loss. (1)*
>
> *When being fed every 2-3 hours, the body is not encouraged to burn any of its stored fat for energy. Why should it bother digging out the fat stores for energy when it is being spoon-fed all day long? When you eat 3 meals a day and have ample time between meals, the body is forced to burn that stored fat. Once the fat is restored as an active fuel supply, you will see better energy, more stable moods, greater mental clarity, better sleep, less cravings and natural and permanent weight management. We had the group eat 3 meals a day with no snacks and measured weight loss and a host of psychological factors. Within two weeks, their moods, cravings, sleep, exhaustion after work and fatigue were all significantly improved. They lost an average of 1.2 pounds per week during the 2 month study.*
> *If you have a healthy snack, like a carrot, in between breakfast and lunch you will burn the carrot, but you will not burn any stored fat between those two meals. If you don't snack between lunch and supper, your body will be forced to burn stored fat to get you to supper without a blood sugar crash. From supper to breakfast is a critical time to burn fat, lose weight, detox and reboot a stable nervous system to handle the stress of the next day.*
>
> *Eating only breakfast and lunch reduced body weight, fatty deposits in the liver, fasting glucose,*

> *and increased insulin sensitivity. These results suggest that, for blood sugar health concerns, eating larger breakfasts and lunches may be more beneficial than 6 smaller meals throughout the day. (4) (source)*

2 - CREATING A SPACE DURING MEALS FREE OF COMMON DISTRACTIONS. (NO PHONE, BOOKS, COMPUTER, MAGAZINE, TV, ETC)

The second most important component of a mindful meal is your ability to *just eat food!* You will have a difficult time with this in the beginning. In fact, it was surprisingly the most difficult thing I've done in this journey! I remember just a few short years ago we used to get the daily newspaper. I could NOT eat breakfast without reading the paper. I remember some mornings, as I would try to postpone going to work or starting my day, or even if there was a lot of interesting news to read, I would pour bowl after bowl of cereal and just keep eating. I wouldn't be surprised if I had 4-5 bowls of cereal in one sitting just to delay the start of the day. The sad truth is, those bowls of cereal were never satisfying. I would not be able to tell someone how much I had just eaten, because I didn't know. I was too wrapped up in what I was reading in the paper to notice.

After we stopped getting the newspaper, that habit was replaced by my phone and computer. Every time I'd sit down to eat breakfast, lunch, or even a spoonful of yogurt, I'd scroll through social media or read an article. I even had this ritual, where I would read a certain gossip site online with a container of peanut butter and a spoon! I could read for hours, which meant I was re-dipping that spoon into my peanut butter for hours! Do you know how many calories are in one spoonful of peanut butter? 300! And for a small person who shouldn't be eating more than 1500 calories per day, it was a recipe for disaster.

The amazing thing about deciding to ***just eat*** during meal time, is the incredible pleasure, satisfaction, and satiety that food can have, without overeating. Not only can the following steps help you be present during your meal, but also get the most from it!

- Begin the meal by breathing, with meditation, or with prayer to become fully present
- Do not eat in the same room as your television.
- Put your phone in a drawer or purse until the meal is complete.
- Bring all the food you intend to eat for the meal to the table.
- Do not bring work to the table, even when on a lunch break at work.
- Do not eat while standing up
- Do not eat while driving

If you find it difficult to only eat, respect the pause long enough to ask yourself, "Why am I multitasking?" Are you short on time? Do you find the behavior comforting? Are you procrastinating doing something difficult, or starting your day? The first few minutes of eating without multitasking will be hard. You will get fidgety, and bored. But the more you practice, the more you will be able to relax, settle in, and find peace!



THE SCIENCE

MULTITASKING CAUSES A PERSON TO EAT MORE CALORIES (SOURCE)

In a series of a variety of distractions, those assigned to watch TV while eating consumed more than those in other conditions. In one study, people watching TV ate 25% more calories! (source)

DISTRACTIONS DURING MEALTIME LEAD TO EATING MORE SUGARY FOODS (SOURCE)

> *"Being distracted during meals puts kids at added risk for obesity and increased consumption of unhealthy foods. In this study, we found that noisy and distracting environments affected parents' actions, and we know that parents set the tone for the quality of family mealtimes," said Barbara H. Fiese, director of the U of I's Family Resiliency Center (FRC).*
>
> *The effects of the distraction were more marked for parents than for children. Parents ate more cookies and chose more diet beverages over sugary drinks than the quiet group, but they also ate more carrots. Parents and children ate the expected amount of pizza, Fiese said (science daily)*

3 - CHEW SLOWLY AND EXPERIENCE EACH BITE

Chewing your food slowly is the best way to identify the tastes, flavors, and textures of your food. Also, chewing your food completely aids in digestion! It seems like such a simple thing to do, but as registered dietitian and author Dawn Jackson Blather said, "The most dangerous habits are the ones that feel like they're no big deal".

Once you sit down to a meal, set a timer, or notice the clock to and set a goal to eat the meal for 10 minutes or longer, if alone. If you are eating with family or friends, aim for 20-30 minutes. 10 minutes might seem like no big deal, but if you are a former food inhaler, 10 minutes can feel like an eternity.

One of our mindful eaters recently shared about mindful eating while out with friends: She took so long to chew and eat her french fries that they got cold, the dinner ended, and she never finished her fries. She said it was the first time in her entire life she didn't finish the french fries she ordered!



THE SCIENCE

DIGESTION STARTS IN THE MOUTH

While our bodies are terrific at breaking down food, even if we skip the step of chewing, we can assist digestion by using our teeth!

> *Chewing your food properly will make less work for your stomach, and you may find yourself suffering from less indigestion. Take small bites and chew your food thoroughly. Your saliva is rich in amylase and protease, which are essential for breakdown of carbohydrates and proteins. Chewing is necessary to expose as much surface area as possible on the food particles so that enzymes can begin digestion. (source)*

CHEWING SLOWLY COULD BURN EXTRA CALORIES. (SOURCE)

While our body does a fabulous job of utilizing the nutrients out of the food we consume, many think it's possible to extricate maximum nutrients simply by masticating it to liquefaction. Research may not back this up yet, but small studies have shown that we might burn a few extra calories with an increase of chewing.

> *Some preliminary research has found that chewing until "no lumps remain" increases the number of calories the body burns during digestion: about 10 extra calories for a 300-calorie meal. (Eating fast, on the other hand, barely burns any calories.) Chewing food more thoroughly also increases blood flow to the stomach and gut. By taking a little extra time for chewing, someone could theoretically burn about 2,000 extra calories each month, the study authors write. (Time.com)*

CHEWING SLOWLY HELPS YOU EAT FEWER CALORIES (SOURCE)

> *People with obesity tend to chew their food less than lean people do, even when they eat the same thing and take bites of the same size, according to a study in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. When the research team asked everyone to chew each bite 40 times, the lean and obese people in the study both ate less. When they chewed their food a little more than usual, their levels of gut hormones related to hunger and satiety also improved. "Improving chewing activity could become a useful tool for combating obesity," the study authors concluded.*

4- IDENTIFY THE TASTES, FLAVORS, AND TEXTURE OF EACH BITE.

There is a practice in the mindful eating world called the chocolate challenge (or raisin challenge). Take three raisins, or a small piece of chocolate, and put one in your mouth. What are you experiencing? What flavors do you notice? What does it feel like across your tongue and teeth. Can you truly taste the food? Do you like it? Is it sweet, bitter, smooth, rough? Can you experience the food from mouth through digestion?

Enjoy this challenge with a piece of rich, creamy, delicious chocolate. Take these steps to truly understand the mindfulness required during mealtimes.

1. Sit down in a comfortable position. Notice your surroundings, and take some long, slow, and very deep breaths.
2. Unwrap the chocolate slowly. Notice the shape, the weight, the color, the spots, the inconsistency, the creaminess, and more. Wonder to yourself where the chocolate could have come from. How was it made? Imagine the cane fields where the sugar came from, or the cows the cream came from.
3. Smell the chocolate as if it's the first time you've ever smelled chocolate. Can you describe the smell? Does it smell differently than you remember it smelling in the past? The same?
4. Take a small piece and break it off. Place the small piece of chocolate in your mouth and simply let it sit on your tongue. Allow it to melt there as you notice the flavors unfolding in your mouth. There is no need to chew the chocolate, as it will dissolve on it's own.
5. Does the chocolate flavor or texture change as it melts on your tongue? Can you identify different flavors or feelings with the next piece?
6. Reflect on the experience. Did you enjoy that piece of chocolate more than you imagined you would? Less than you imagined you would?

WAS YOUR SMALL PIECE OF CHOCOLATE MORE SATISFYING THAN INDULGENCES IN THE PAST WHERE YOU SWALLOWED A WHOLE CANDY BAR WITHOUT TASTING IT?

Your challenge is to recreate these sensations on a smaller and quicker scale during meal time. As you begin to truly taste your food, it will be more satisfying and you will need less of it to fill you up! You will be allowing yourself to experience pleasure from food, rather than believing food should not bring you pleasure. So many people fear that food related pleasure will cause you to eat more. What most people don't understand is: this isn't pleasure at all! True food pleasure comes from slow and deliberate enjoyment of the food. With mindful eating, you will finally experience the difference! Use attentive eating to feel grateful for the food you're blessed to eat.





5- COMPLETE EATING EACH BITE BEFORE YOU FILL YOUR FORK FULL AGAIN

How often do you eat a meal by putting a fork full of food into your mouth, and dig into your bowl or plate for the next bite while your mouth is still full? Are you breathing between bites? How heavy is the fork full of food? Is it light? Is the food piled high? Can you look at it before it enters your mouth?

Creating a simple rule for yourself that you won't scoop another fork full of food while you are still chewing, is such a simple way to slow down the meal. It gives you the chance to talk to your table mates, assess hunger, and really savor each bite!

The rule of putting your fork down can also assist you in your resolve to eat at the table! It's downright impossible to put a fork down if you are standing in the fridge, eating out of the leftovers box!

If you find yourself growing anxious to get through the meal, bored, or tempted to shove the food, consider the following:

- Use your non-dominant hand to pick up your fork.
- Try chopsticks instead of a fork.
- Experiment with using a fork to eat meals that normally don't require a fork (like french fries or grilled cheese sandwiches!)
- Push your plate far enough in front of you that your fork won't naturally scoop something off the plate mindlessly.
- Take tiny sips of water between bites.
- If socializing, put the fork down to speak and pick it up again when someone else is speaking.

6- ASSESS HUNGER MID-MEAL TO SEE IF YOU ARE FULL, ALMOST FULL, READY TO STOP.

During through the meal, when your food is half gone, take a pause! Stop eating. Put the fork down. Dig deep inside your stomach and determine how hungry you really are. Although you might not be very hungry when you start eating, you can find your "fulness" during the meal. If you regularly gobble down your food, you become disconnected from your body's own way of recognizing satiety. You may lose the ability to really tell when you are hungry and full. This may lead to overeating or eating at time when you are not actually hungry. If you slow your eating and practice listening to your body's physical signals before and after meals, you can reconnect with your natural "hungry" and "full" signals. (source)

Knowing when to stop eating might be the most difficult part of your mindful meal; it will take practice. Most people, whether they learned the behavior as a child or they feel as unable to decide how much food to dish onto their plates, feel like the meal isn't finished until their plate is empty. It will take time to shift to this new mindset. I find it interesting in my own practice that, while I'm a "clean plate eater" at home, I seldom finish a meal at a restaurant. Why are the rules different? Are there circumstances where you don't feel the urge to clean your plate, even if you are full? If so, ask yourself why. A new mindset to stop eating when mostly full can be created and maintained.

Here are some simple steps to get you started!

- Take a deep breath midway through the meal.
- Determine if sufficient time has passed to send the hunger and satiety signals to your brain.
- Put your fork down, and take a large drink of water.
- Check in with your belly. What are you feeling? Are your pants getting tighter? Is the belly distended uncomfortably?
- Evaluate whether or not your meal becomes less satisfying as you continue to eat. It's common for the first few bites, when we are the hungriest, to be the most pleasurable of the meal. As we get full, the pleasure diminishes. When the meal is no longer delivering the same pleasure, it's a signal to our body that we may be close to finished.
- Identify distractions. Are you still paying attention to your meal, or has your mind wandered to other things? Are you allowing yourself to absorb other distractions in your environment that you may not have control over? Only when you are paying attention can you fully analyze if you are still hungry enough to finish your meal.

3 CHAPTER 3: THE DAILY PRACTICE

Daily mindful habits can help us make smart, purposeful choices throughout the day. When we aren't mindful or aware, we tend to get pulled away from our focus. Our intentions and goals get carried away and lost in thousands of moments as options cross our paths. A huge downfall can occur between meals when one isn't paying attention.

> *"In any given moment we are either practicing mindfulness, or de facto, practicing mindlessness." Jon Kabot-Zinn*

WHY DO THEY CALL THIS A "PRACTICE?"

Wikipedia defines the word practice as "a customary action, habit, or behaviour; a manner or routine." The habit--or practice--of mindful eating is continual. One day we may do really well with our new eating habits, and the next might not go so well. We don't tally a mindfulness checkmark and consider ourselves permanently mindful. It is a practice: one day at a time, one meal at a time, one moment at a time. Fortunately, the word practice is ever ongoing and it's also graciously forgiving when you fall short. In fact, we can't practice wrong. We can practice a new habit, slip up, and practice again and again.

In this chapter, we will give you some simple, daily mindful exercises for the course of this purposeful diet. Practice these daily habits, but don't become so rigid that you feel are either winning or failing at them. Mindfulness is a practice that evolves into habits and then into routines, but being perfect at mindful eating is not the goal. The purpose is practicing awareness wherever you go, no matter what you are doing!

> *"That which we persist in doing becomes easier to do, not that the nature of the thing has changed but that our power to do has increased." Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Remember, it's all just practice. No expectations. No worries. It's ok if you don't master it immediately, or ever. Don't judge or label, just practice these exercises.

So HOW do we practice mindfulness each day, especially when it comes to our eating patterns, instead our default of mindlessly consuming food?

> *"Knowledge is a treasure, but practice is the key to it." Lao Tzu.*
> *"Every moment is an opportunity to Practice." Jon Kabot-Zinn*

NEUROPLASTICITY SCIENCE

So *WHAT* are we *practicing* in this book? We're striving to be more purposeful in widening the space between reactionary eating habits and our actual eating choices. This chapter will help you practice five ways to master your personal mindfulness without expectations, worries, labeling, or judgment. These will become your personal habits over the next 40 days. To help you remember them, we'll call them the **5 M's**. That's right, you can look at your hand and memorize these 5 daily practices. At first, to remember them, you might write M's on your five fingers as a reminder. You will practice these habits over the coming days and they will become part of your daily rituals:

- **M**ake a plan
- **M**ove your body
- **M**editation
- **M**indful journal
- **M**ind focused on intention

1- MAKE A PLAN

The first practice is taking a few minutes everyday (or even better, do this the night before) to look at your schedule and decide when you will be able to sit undistracted for two or three meals. Planning ahead is key in mindful eating, especially when you are new to the practice.

> *"The best way to predict your future is to create it." Abraham Lincoln*

1. **WHEN?** Schedule your meal times. At first, you might begin with two or three typical meal time slots that are shorter in length. Start small (5 minutes), and build up to longer mealtimes. As you practice mindful eating, you will start to notice more and more that your body has hunger cues. And perhaps you will begin to be more intuitional about your body's scheduled meal times. But for now, just carve out time to sit and eat! No need to be rigid on the time of day, just schedule it in. Be flexible, but downright purposeful, on your intention to be mindful while you eat.
2. **WHAT?** Plan what your meals will consist of. (See meal ideas in back of book)
3. **HOW?** Prepare your meals mindfully. For example as you peel carrots or toast bread, ponder about where did these foods come from and what did it take to get them to your hands? Another example might be to notice how your breathing while you prepare your food, and perhaps how your mouth waters when you are anticipating eating foods you love, imagine what it will be like to sit and eat and enjoy these foods later on as you prepare them.
4. **WHO?** If you can eat alone for this 40-day program, that would be excellent practice. We realize no one reading this is on an island alone! Take into consideration who will be around during our meals and how we can either sneak away to a quiet spot for a few minutes. Alternatively, invite others to participate in this practice or simply take on mindful eating

while being around others. You'll find more suggestions in Chapter 5: Obstacles in the Journey. For now, simply decide how you might be deal with people in your schedule to be sure you are giving your mindful practice a structure for success.

5. **WHERE?** It doesn't really matter where you eat, but we'd like you to plan eating your food seated on a chair, bench, or ground whether you eat at a table or not. Will you be at home, the office, in a hallway, or at a park? Plan to have your meal set out in front of you and, if possible, away from any and all distractions.

2- MOVE YOUR BODY

> *"The body benefits from movement, and the mind benefits from stillness."*
> *Sakyong Mipham.*

The second practice is to simply experience movement. Every human body needs to move for optimal health. For the purpose of this book, and helping you in recreating your habits, we believe movement is another important key to eating with purpose. Our objective of mindfulness is the practice of making *everything* we do an opportunity to connect with our breath and present senses.

1. **Choose your format.** We aren't so worried about the details of your chosen movement, however, we do suggest it be something you are doing alone, so you can focus exclusively on yourself. Your daily practice of mindful movement might look completely different from another's, and there are many different forms of exercise to choose from. We don't care *when, what form,* or *how long you do it*. We simply want you to get used to noticing how your body feels moving and how it's connected anatomically, physiologically, and even energetically. This practice will enhance the way you consume food and help you become more aware of your entire body; including your senses, digestive system, emotions, etc.
2. **Mindfully Move your Body.** During your chosen form of movement--whether you are riding a bike, practicing yoga, Tai chi, jogging, or walking--take 1-5 minutes to notice how your body feels in its movement and shifting weight.
3. **No distractions.** Instead of listening to music, watching a screen, or chatting with a partner, practice noticing the sensations you are feeling and connecting to your body. Experience the movement instead of numbing your consciousness.
4. **Breathe to Get Clear.** Practice scanning for and experiencing sensations. When other thoughts come to your mind, let them float in and out--like clouds rolling by. Practice observing distracting thoughts, but not engaging with or attaching to them. Often, it takes a few moments to get out of our "distracted head" and into our "mindful head." Sometimes thoughts come in like a conveyor belt - constantly running. You'll notice chattering voices, opinions, to-do lists, worries about past memories or what future holds run through your mind. This is referred to as the "monkey mind". A monkey swings from limb to limb--or thought to thought--in any given hour, we might give that monkey a banana--or a mantra--to focus on.

5. **You can bring mindfulness back by simply focusing on your breath.** Return to each new inhale and exhale and then your five senses when you get carried away by distracting thoughts.
   "You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf." Jon Kabot-Zinn
6. **Observe thoughts and patterns without judgement.** Notice your thoughts, but don't judge or buy into them. Notice what you notice. See what you see. Feel what you feel without attaching labels or conclusions. This is merely a chance for you to be an observer to your thoughts, notice how you speak to yourself, and bring awareness to the ongoing critical voice.

3- MEDITATION

Research with brain scans shows about 100 minutes of meditation a week (that's about 15 minutes a each day) can drastically improve your sense of well-being and peace of mind. Meditation is, simply put, "a formal way to practice mindfulness."

The third habit we aim to help you develop in this book is *meditation*. Many people wonder how 'meditation' and 'mindfulness' differ. Aren't they the same thing? We are suggesting that these five practices are all mindful in nature. Within each habit you 'go mindful' for 1-5 minutes, but with this practice, we'd like you to *formally practice your mindfulness* by dialing it up a notch to meditation.



Mindfulness can be practiced informally during ordinary, daily activities like eating and exercising, but this would be considered mindfulness--not meditation. Use the following steps to help you in your meditation practice:

1. Sit comfortably, with your back upright.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Focus your full attention on the feeling of your breath coming IN and going OUT.
4. Clear your head. When practicing mindfulness, it is usually suggested to experience the senses and notice how the body feels. When first beginning meditation, focus exclusively on the breath. When your thoughts start to wander, come back to your breath. Every time your thoughts get lost, start over.
5. Practice this for by starting small and building up to longer periods of time. At first, one minute will feel like an hour. With diligent and consistent practice, you may find that 15 minutes is not long enough.

4- MINDFUL JOURNALING

YOUR BODY KEEPS AN ACCURATE JOURNAL, REGARDLESS OF WHAT YOU WRITE DOWN.

Journaling is another important key to mastering mindfulness. In terms of eating, we know the body takes certain steps to process and digest food, then it makes use of the good and eliminates the bad. Journaling can help us digest our thoughts. Our minds are masters at thinking, being a critical voice and a constant inner chatterbox. When journaling, we think and then write what we think. Journaling is a way to digest and process our thoughts, feelings, and experiences. It's a contemplative process to get thoughts out and release emotions from our mind and body. This is extremely important because your body can retain everything your mind says. Holding onto thoughts and emotions wastes our energy and diverts our attention from our greater purpose.

In conjunction with mindful eating, we want to practice eliminating waste in our mind that doesn't serve our purpose. We can do this by reflecting and identifying what our limiting beliefs are and how they might be sabotaging our healthy eating habits.Writing is a powerful tool that aids in self-reflection and can help us to liberate our minds. We live in a technology-driven world, giving us every excuse not to put pen-to-paper. We email and text as a form of communication, but we rarely participate in physically writing.

Writing on paper engages another part of the brain. When you reflect through journaling, you are able to remove thoughts and emotions and release any negative energy they may carry. In doing so, you free up mental energy for more positive endeavors. The act of writing allows you to understand yourself beyond your thinking brain - kind of like doing yoga - once doing it, it is now not just in your head. In the case of journaling, it's now embodied on paper.

When working toward self-improvement or participating in self-exploration, it helps to remember where you started and what aided your efforts. By keeping a journal, you are able to reflect and understand your progress and reflect on what you've learned along the way. The following are some helpful tips to maximize your mindfulness journal practice:

1. Write a letter to yourself describing **why** you are beginning this purposeful practice. Read it after you've completed the 40-day program.
2. Take 1-5 minutes to write each day. Use the daily journal prompts given in Chapter 6 or create your own that help you reflect on your beliefs and attitude about eating.
3. For one or two days, write down all foods and liquids you consume. Notice how your body digests these foods. Is it pleasant? Reflect.

5- MIND FOCUSED ON INTENTION

> *"Your intentions set the stage for what is possible. They remind you moment to moment of why you are practicing." Jon Kabot-Zinn*

The final practice is developing a daily intention. An intention can be a positive affirmation, mantra, prayer, or anything to remind you why you are practicing mindfulness.

Affirmations can create a powerful, positive inner dialogue. Dan Harris talks about a "critical voice" in his book *10% Happier*. Recognizing this critical voice helps us recognize negative our inner dialogue that can derail healthy intentions. When we practice positive affirmations, we can reverse destructive thought patterns. The neurological patterns of the brain that are fixed on negative self-talk can change! By utilizing positive affirmations, we can begin to alter our thinking and critical voice--like creating a new muscle. We can practice creating new ways of believing and transform ourselves, our habits, and our well-being.

An intention--or affirmation--can help us see clearly in present moment. Like the monkey mind, focusing on why you are doing what you are doing, can help you realign while practicing mindfulness. The most important thing is to remember the most important thing. Here are five tips to help you focus on your own personal "why" as you participate in these mindfulness practices:

1. What is the most important thing for you to remember while on this journey?
2. Choose an affirmation each day. It may be different every day, or it may be one you use for a week, or even one you use for the entire 40 days (see suggested list in Chapter 6).
3. Write your affirmation on your mirror or a post-it note. Stick it in your pocket, on your screensaver, or somewhere you will see it often and be reminded of your intention.
4. Repeat this affirmation in your mind throughout the day.
5. Soak in this affirmation and let it guide you back to your intention and goal.

CALORIES COUNT

The most shocking thing for me to learn, after years of following diet plans and listening to diet advice from the experts, was that it is **never about the food!** The very last diet I tried before finding mindfulness was to eliminate sugar. I listened to books about sugar being addictive, I subscribed to podcasts, I read articles, and I was convinced that if I simply eliminated sugar, I would never overeat again! To me in that moment, sugar was the villain and, by simply taking it away, all my overeating and indulging would vanish. Imagine my surprise when I not only gained five pounds during those 30, sugar-free days, but my face broke out in acne! All those experts who claimed cravings would dissipate and skin would clear up, were suddenly proven wrong in my personal experience. I gained five pounds because I simply replaced sugar with other foods that I loved to mindlessly eat: trail mix, crackers, and spoon fulls of peanut butter! Do you know how easy it is to eat 1,000 calories of trail mix while standing in the pantry? VERY EASY!

Mindful eating is intended to work in harmony with eating the best food for your body! While our body is learning what foods are best, it's smart to set some boundaries if your goal is weight loss. If it's been years since your body felt true hunger, it may not be able to tell you when to eat and when to stop. Compare eating to budgeting: You can still buy the things you really want, you just need to look at the price tags more closely! With proper food, 400-600 calories at a meal is enough to satiate your appetite and give you the proper energy till the next meal. For the Purposeful Diet, we're going to start there, while your body re-learns how to listen to hunger cues and learns the difference between emotional (brain hunger) and physical (body hunger).

Emotional hunger is that child inside of you that wants to eat a cookie. Physical hunger is the grown up in you that knows a fresh piece of fruit will leave you feeling better than a cookie.



When you begin to really taste your food, you might find there are some foods that you thought you loved, that you actually don't like at all! By paying attention to the food you are eating, certain foods may leave you feeling sick, bloated, or unwell.

Before you begin your journey, make a list of the healthy foods you love, to include in your regime. For example, I love fruit and oatmeal. I love it so much, that I would eat it daily and I would NEVER tire of it! When I try to incorporate different breakfasts into my day, based on the latest fad diet or recommendations from fitness guru's, I am not satisfied with breakfast! If I love oatmeal, but feel like I have to eat an

egg white and broccoli scramble, breakfast leaves me unsatisfied, and wanting to eat more food. Head to the back of this book and write a list of the foods that you love!

Keeping a food journal is a great way to establish patterns for how you respond both physically and mentally to the food you put in your body. You can assess after a meal with the following, or come up with your own criteria:

- What food did you eat and in what quantities?
- What was my mood during the meal, immediately following the meal, and 1 hour post meal?
- Was the meal satiating? Was I full when I finished the meal?
- Did I feel tired or sick after the meal?
- Did I move through the meal with intention, paying attention to the food, and not succumbing to distraction.
- Did I include foods I love and that make me happy?
- Did I include foods I know are healthy, but I don't enjoy?

After keeping a food journal for a few days, assess which foods you are going to keep in your personalized, custom program. You want to enjoy food and find pleasure in it, so I certainly wouldn't want any calories wasted on foods that don't provide that joy for you! However, remember that these are HEALTHY foods! We aren't talking about incorporating Oreo's into your plan. There are plenty of healthy foods that you will be able to come up with that you love and will also properly fuel your body.

5 CHAPTER 5: OBSTACLES IN THE JOURNEY

The truth is, growth comes through obstacles. Without the opportunity to fall and get up again, we can't acquire skills for success. We won't get the benefits of the practice. I can say with 100% certainty that my 40-day journey into mindful eating had many obstacles and many days I felt like I failed, yet I was still able to reach my goals in the end!

> *"Nothing in the world is **worth** having or **worth** doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty" Theodore Roosevelt*

Instead of seeing obstacles as boulders in your path to success, they can be stepping stones to your goals. With each obstacle comes practice, reflection, and--ultimately--the reward of triumph. On the path to weight loss, you will encounter a variety of obstacles! We've listed a few common obstacles that get in the way of mindful eating, and propose some strategies to help you purposefully move through them with awareness and practice!

1- WEIGHING YOURSELF

For some people, stepping on the scale can prevent you from making progress. We've all had "good days" where we've eaten everything on our diet plan and exercised like a fitness competitor, only to see the scale up the next day. This can result in abandoning the diet because we tell ourselves it didn't work. The opposite happens as well. If a day of indulging is followed by weighing less the next day, we tell ourselves that healthy eating means nothing, life is too short, and we can eat whatever we want.

In my experience with weight loss this year, the scale moved much slower than I could have imagined. No wonder I gave up so quickly in the past! There were several weeks I felt that I wasn't making progress at all. Luckily, when I looked back after 30 days, I could see it! Progress is SLOW. If you are going to assign any judgement to the scale, you shouldn't be weighing yourself more than once a week. Daily weigh-ins when you have this mentality will be an obstacle for you. It will dictate adherence to the plan or give you license to quit the plan.

Having a goal weight in mind can also be an obstacle if the goal is unachievable or unrealistic. For me, a good strategy was not to have a goal weight at all, and to assign no time limits. If the joy is in the journey, and you are enjoying being healthy and eating mindfully each day, your natural weight will manifest itself over time: it's generally not on your timeline.

2- GOING OUT TO EAT WITH FAMILY

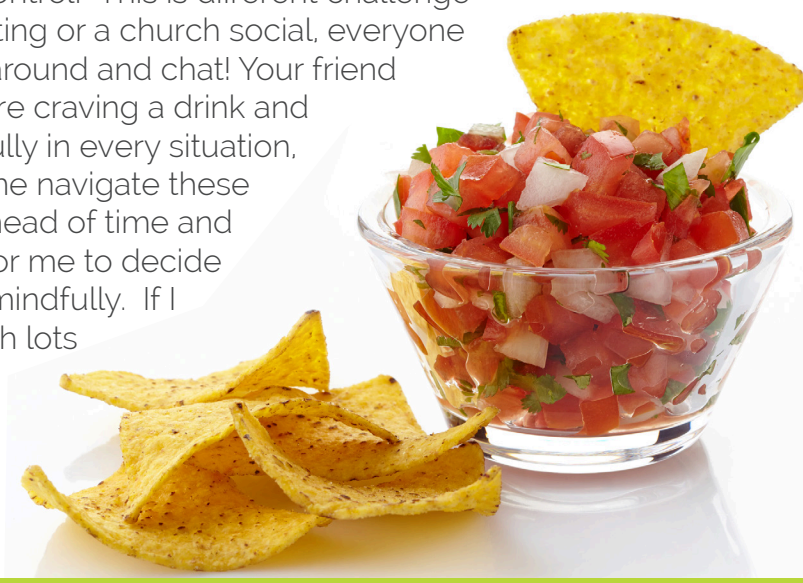
One thing that derails my healthy eating plan quickly is getting out of a routine. Eating mindfully works when I'm home, but eating out is challenging. Here are a few things that have worked for me:

- Eat mindfully ahead of time and order an appetizer or share a small dessert with another person.
- Follow the mindful eating suggestions as best as you can even when you are at a restaurant. You can wait for hunger cues, take small bites, taste and chew the food in your mouth, put your fork down between each bite, stop when the food no longer tastes good, etc.
- Get involved in the conversation and really listen and engage with others instead of focusing on the food.
- Be an observer and notice if others seem to be enjoying their food or mindlessly eating.
- Tell your family you are on a mindful eating quest and get them involved. For at least a few minutes of the meal tell them all about this journey, walk them through a mindful eating meditation. Be their teacher!
- Order you food and ask for a to-go box right away. Put ½ of the meal in the to-go box, and enjoy the other portion as you engage with your family in meaningful conversation.

There is no need to say no to an invitation to eat out with family and friends. The meal might even be more satisfying and enjoyable as you use the event to practice eating mindfully. Even if you do one thing, such as chewing your food slowly, you will notice you will eat far less food than you have in the past.

3- SOCIAL GATHERINGS/PARTIES

When in a social situation, eating due to peer pressure, fear of missing out, and by mimicking what your friends are eating can make you feel out of control! This is different challenge than eating out at a restaurant. During a work meeting or a church social, everyone is eating and enjoying their food while they stand around and chat! Your friend is holding a drink and cookie, and, suddenly, you are craving a drink and a cookie. It's not going to be possible to eat mindfully in every situation, especially one like this. Two things have helped me navigate these types of situations. First, is to imagine the event ahead of time and decide how to respond to each hurdle. It's easier for me to decide to eat the healthy options, instead of trying to eat mindfully. If I know there is going to be a long work meeting, with lots of snacks, I can choose the baby carrots instead of the Swedish Fish. Sometimes, it's about joining in and eating more than which foods you are choosing.



If the event has food that I know I'm going to want to taste or try because it is special, I simply delay the first bite. When I start eating at the beginning of the event, it's difficult to stop. So, simply waiting as long as possible to start can cut the quantity of food I am mindlessly eating in half!

I also remind myself that--even in a situation like these--you can chew your food slowly, pay attention to how the food tastes and feels, even while listening in on a conversation!

4- YOU ARE BUSY

Any way you look at it, being busy is an obstacle to mindfulness! Decide immediately your boundaries and set personal rules. Things changed when I decided that, no matter how busy I am, I wouldn't eat standing up or in the car. I haven't even been tempted to grab something quick on my way because I know I'll have a much better meal when I can sit down. Some days, the times I have to sit down for a meal aren't traditional! Some days, I won't have my first meal till after 12:00. Prioritizing the time for a meal over the need to satisfy quick hunger has allowed me to continue to eat mindfully.

Go back to the simple awareness and ask yourself why you think you need to eat while you are performing other tasks. Eating mindfully allows you to take a five minute breather out of your day. Even though it may save you time to eat while you are carpooling, avoiding the meal on-the-go altogether and waiting will make you feel empowered and lead to better habits overall.

5- YOU HAVE CHILDREN

This journey to mindful eating is a shared journey! Your mindfulness practice is teaching your children to honor and respect their bodies and food. Brene Brown talks about her family gratitude practice. She's trained her kids and they still make a habit of it as they are growing up. Family mealtime shouldn't be avoided. It isn't just for eating but also for teaching social skills, manners, and most importantly, mindfulness. Instead of being stressed out that your kids will derail your efforts to be mindful during a meal, consider that everyone in the family would benefit from learning mindful eating and do it together. Here are some guidelines to help you get your whole family on board:

- Sit down at the table every time you eat a meal. No eating in front of the television or in the car!
- While talking, put your fork down and engage in the conversation. Multi-tasking should never happen at the table.
- Chew your food slowly while you listen to your kids talk. Think about what they are saying, and the food that is in your mouth. Nothing more. Don't think about your day or your to-do list in your head.
- Ask the kids questions about the taste and textures of the food they are eating. Encouraging them to pay attention can in turn help you to pay attention.

6- FALLING OFF THE WAGON

It's very important to remember that part of mindfulness means having self-compassion. Brene Brown said: "We are hardwired for struggle." We are guaranteed to fall off the wagon. So, just know that you will have "one of those days." Acknowledge a break-down and then, let that crap go (mentally and literally :))))! Above all, remember that every day is an opportunity to practice. Technically, there is no wagon to fall off of!

7- YOU ARE BORED

It might be restlessness. You may notice procrastination or being compulsively involved with some activity, It may be stress-related physical symptoms such as stomach aches, headaches, or other body pain.

It's easy to become bored with being mindful because it really seems like you are doing nothing! As I noticed myself unable to sit without distraction (scrolling through my phone in the bathroom or even at church), I realized it was a problem that I wasn't comfortable with boredom. I truly turned it around this year through practice. I'm able to sit through a church service, take a bubble bath, and just sit without feeling the tug of technology.

It can be liberating to realize that mindful practices have helped you become comfortable being bored. Reframe being "bored" with a positive spin, and getting there will feel like an accomplishment.

8- YOU DON'T WANT TO FEEL THE FEELINGS (NUMBING THEM IS PREFERRED!)

Food does feel good! However, food doesn't solve your problems, give you freedom, or numb the feelings indefinitely. In these situations, the best strategy is to journal or talk to someone. Write it out, talk it out! Feel the feelings. Once you re-direct your coping mechanism away from food, you'll finally be able to work through your emotional baggage.
As you begin to explore your feelings about your weight struggles through a journal, reasons you are eating more than you need or reasons you haven't been able to lose weight can begin to surface. Acknowledging your feelings takes away some of it's power.

6 CHAPTER 6: DAILY AFFIRMATIONS AND JORNAL PROMPTS

The purpose of affirmation practice is aimed to alter the conscience and subconscious mind. Affirmations can motivate, refocus, change thinking patterns, modify behavior, and transform our inner and outer world.

AFFIRMATION IDEAS

You can use one affirmation from this list for the entire 40 days, or you can read and focus on a new one each day! The affirmations are there to rewrite the stories and paradigms in your mind to support new ideas and positive self talk!

1. I am active and full of energy.
2. Today I choose healing and nourishing my body.
3. I am aligned with my higher self.
4. I recognize what has not been working for me in the past, and I have courage to change.
5. I don't compare myself to others. I'm on my own journey.
6. I am strong enough to withstand the bumps and bruises of life.
7. I am fit, healthy, and bursting with energy.
8. I allow my journey to be unique to me.
9. Maintaining my ideal weight is easy.
10. I eat well, listen well, and live well.
11. I acknowledge that my thoughts are just thoughts. They are not real.
12. I can be present. I only do one thing at a time.
13. I turn everyday tasks into mindful moments
14. I challenge existing beliefs.
15. I make peace with the past.
16. I get outdoors and embrace the beauty of nature.
17. I enjoy every bite when I eat.
18. My health, vitality, and energy increase with every breath I take.
19. I think before I eat.
20. Every cell in my body gets nourished by what I choose to put in my mouth.
21. There is new hope in every day
22. My will to live is stronger than my craving.
23. I think before I eat without judgement.
24. I realize thoughts are just thoughts and they can be changed.
25. I have an inner determination beyond food, weight, and the scale.
26. Today, I choose healing and nourishing my body, mind, and spirit.
27. I am creating a life of abundance.
28. My purpose-filled life allows me to enjoy every moment.
29. I am moving forward each day.

30. I properly chew all the food that I eat so it gets digested properly and this helps me reach my ideal weight.
31. My metabolism is running optimally, helping me achieve my desired weight.
32. I am letting go of the guilt I have around food.
33. Unhealthy foods don't appeal to me. My body craves healthy, whole, real food!
34. I breathe in relaxation and breathe out stress.
35. My journey is unique and I do not compare myself to other people who are also losing weight.
36. I drink an abundance of water as it stokes my metabolism and mood.
37. My food choices are consistent with my desire to be my optimal weight.
38. I am willing to learn new things each day.
39. I crave mindfulness each day.
40. I am on a lifelong path of wellness. Each day I recommit to being my best self.

JOURNAL PROMPTS

Use the journal prompts below to start the journey of taking a magnifying glass to the reasons you are eating! As I've said many times in this book, it's not about the food! Generally, we eat for other reasons. The remember the purpose of journaling outlined in Chapter 3: "Your body keeps an accurate journal, regardless of what you write down." The journal prompts are designed to be therapeutic and help you to discover what is stopping you from reaching your goals.

Day 1: What am I thinking about right now about embarking on a fresh start?
Day 2: What emotions do I feel when I think about food?
Day 3: How do I respond to the feedback of the scale?
Day 4: What reasons cause me to eat besides hunger?
Day 5: If I had a perfectly healthy day, what would that look like?
Day 6: What does the beginning of a new diet look like?
Day 7: How have my thoughts about food changed in the last 6 days?
Day 8: What food rules have I created or followed in the past that make it difficult to eat mindfully?
Day 9: What excuses do I tell myself that cause me not eat mindfully?
Day 10: What circumstances do I find myself in that encourages mindless eating?
Day 11: What lies do I tell myself to allow that binge or bite I shouldn't take?
Day 12: What brings me pleasure in mindful eating?
Day 13: What circumstances shorten the window between a trigger (seeing food) and a response (eating it)?
Day 14: What are some dieting beliefs worth challenging?
Day 15: What is my earliest memory of being concerned about my weight?
Day 16: What type of movement brings me the most joy?
Day 17: What food do I love that loves me back?
Day 18: What activities not related to food bring me pleasure and joy?
Day 19: In what areas of my life do I feel unfulfilled?
Day 20: How do I show my physical body respect?
Day 21: What would it look like to commit to the daily process and not the results?
Day 22: How do I want to feel when I reach my physical goals?

Day 23: What is my immediate response when I eat something unhealthy?
Day 24: How will I notice when I'm in the middle of generating an excuse?
Day 25: How will my life change when I reach my goal weight?
Day 26: What do I desire more in life than losing weight?
Day 27: How am I contributing to my family or the world in a meaningful way?
Day 28: What are some non-hunger reasons I eat?
Day 29: What will I be deprived of if I deprive myself of a binge?
Day 30: What roadblocks consistently get in the way of reaching my goals?
Day 31: Dear body, I love you because….
Day 32: What is one thing I haven't done because of my weight?
Day 33: Describe my comfort food. Why does it bring me comfort?
Day 34: What are 10 activities that make me feel the most relaxed?
Day 35: Identify someone who needs encouragement. How I give it to them?
Day 36: What fears do I have for sticking to an eating plan for life?
Day 37: What is one habit, if mastered would make healthy living easier?
Day 38: How can you turn a workout into mindful movement?
Day 39: What am I most grateful for about my body?
Day 40: How will I continue mindful eating for the next 40 days?

Being curious about your behavior is easy when you are mindful. Asking questions about why you do what you do, even when you don't have reasons or solutions, can literally stop you in your tracks; helping to free you from the behavior you don't want to engage in. I decided to give mindful eating a full 40 day effort! I knew 40 days was just long enough to see results, but short enough that if I hated it and didn't see results, the end wasn't too far away. These entries are my true questions, thoughts and feelings along the journey. I'm far from perfect. I decided I "messed up" in 90% of these entries. Yet, at the end of 40 days, I had lost the weight- despite feeling like I was failing along the way. The following is my thoughts through my journal during the 40 days.

DAY 1

STATS: 128 lbs Waist: 31" Hips:39" Thigh 22"
AFFIRMATION: I am active and full of energy.
PROMPT: What am I thinking about right now embarking on a fresh start?

This morning, I had a new theory about why I start so many diets and never finish them. I think I'm addicted to day 1 of dieting! Not really the actual hard work and dieting part of a new eating plan, because I can think of a thousand reasons why I don't enjoy being on a "diet", but the truth is, day 1 of any new diet gives me an endorphin rush! Day 1 of a diet to me is filled with hope, possibilities, fantasizing about reaching my goals, and a sense of willpower that can not be matched any other day. And to make it even better, I generally can lose a pound or two just after the first day because it's usually followed by "my final binge". So, there are three different events that give me that endorphin rush. The first being the rush of eating everything in sight because I decide to "eat junk food to get it out of my system". I indulge in forbidden food because it's the last time I'll ever eat that food, ever again, in my entire life! At least, that's what I'm telling myself. The second rush is waking up with an intense amount of hope and strength to "make it the last time I diet!" The third is the day after the first day, when I receive confirmation that I was super good the day before and therefore lost a pound. So, that leads me to wonder, if it's really the endorphins I'm chasing, certainly I could provide a better path! One thing that may be contributing to my dieting failure is my tendency to choose a reward after so many days of "being good." Literally! Yesterday, I created a 40 day chart, and circled day 20 because i was going to let myself get a massage if I could last for 20 days. But, with my new theory, maybe actually getting that massage--without it being tied to sticking to my diet--will actually help me stick to the program! If I am breaking down after 3 days of dieting because I'm looking for that endorphin fix, what else will give me an endorphin high? I think it's worth exploring, at least, to find ways to feel great, regardless of my ability to stick to a new diet.

Either way, today I AM filled with hope! I feel like mindful eating is exactly what has been missing in all my prior attempts to control food and my weight. I'm very hopeful that this can be the mindset shift I need to not only enjoy food, but lose weight while I do it!

DAY 2

AFFIRMATION: Today I choose healing and nourishing my body
PROMPT: What emotions do I feel when I think about food?

I feel like I eat with the false idea that somehow, indulging in food will make me happier. Food will make me calmer in a tense situation. Food will give me the good feelings. I believe if I eat a handful of pretzels, it will give me the chance to relax, or calm some anger. But instead, I still have that stressful thing to do, or that person is still making me mad. So, the food instead leaves me empty, regretful and disappointed. Why does bad food have that lure of good feelings, but not actually deliver in changing my mental state?

During this mindful eating journey, I will focus on the reasons I am eating. I am going to focus on the pause between the desire to eat and the true reasons I think I need food. If I find myself reaching for pretzels, if I'm honest with myself, I can say- "Hey! Are you eating those pretzels because you are mad at someone? Because you are trying to avoid a tough project? Or are you eating those pretzels with the purpose of nourishing your body and bringing yourself physical pleasure?" If I eat on purpose, I can take those pretzels to the table and mindfully eat each one. It does not need to be associated with emotions that do not belong to food, like stress or anger!

I've been thinking about the times that I start a diet and then decide to cheat and give myself excuses to eat whatever I want. My self talk looks something like this, "My body is actually fine where it is! I'm not really overweight. I don't need to deprive myself these wonderful foods, because my body is OK! (and it's true! I am not heavy… so it's easy to talk myself into failing or abandoning another plan). But, I've also never known what it's like to meet my weight goal. I want that once in my life. I want to achieve this goal to prove I can do it. To finally take control of something I've wanted to control for 25 years. It would be amazing to know what it's like to be lean and buy trendy clothes! I also want to desire healthy, nourishing, life giving foods!!! I want to DESIRE fruits and veggies above all else!

Certain sacrifices must be made to reach these goals, which I know! But I want the DESIRE to make those sacrifices in order to reach this goal. If the desire were strong enough, I would follow through with a plan! Any plan!

Since it doesn't do enough for me to just explore why I do what I do, I also want some strategies to fix it. If it's easy for me to abandon a diet because the pain of being overweight isn't there, I obviously need a different reason to be on the diet. Like HEALTH, peace, mindfulness over food, etc.. not weight loss!

DAY 3

AFFIRMATION: I am aligned with my higher self.
PROMPT: How do I respond to the feedback of the scale?

124 lbs this morning, which isn't surprising. Those first few pounds are always easy to shed. I've struggled with the idea of getting rid of the scale for so long because I've always told myself,

without that feedback from the scale, I'd be 200lbs! But, I have no history to prove that would happen. I have never NOT weighed myself. On top of that, weighing myself isn't proving to be an effective strategy to reach my goals, considering I haven't reached them in 25 years of weighing myself! Usually, I will assess how well I followed a food plan, and if the scale doesn't reflect a positive change, I will give myself permission to abandon the plan altogether. It's a VICIOUS cycle that I must break out of! Besides, true weight loss takes time, patience, and isn't always reflected in the scale. Intellectually, I know this! Emotionally, I can't accept it.

I was listening to the audio book "Building a badass business", and like many others in the same niche, a lot of it was about mindset and how your limiting beliefs about money can get in the way of your goals. I don't believe I have any limiting beliefs about money,
with weight though, I've literally programmed my own brain to believe I can't reach my weight loss goals. What is that about? Why do I get close to 120 lbs and then sabotage my diet in any way I can think of? Why am I afraid of being lean? I don't know if I can dive into the real reason.. (perhaps afraid of the attention?) but I can begin to reframe and choose healthy eating and weight loss.

DAY 4
AFFIRMATION: I recognize what has not been working for me in the past, and I have courage to change.
PROMPT: What reasons cause me to eat besides hunger?

I love this affirmation! I was listening to a podcast (of the anti-sugar, anti-carb variety) and she was going on about how carbs make you crave more food and stimulate appetite rather than suppress it. I know this isn't true! My recent attempt at cutting out sugar proved to me that it's not that simple. Sure, sugary foods are more delicious and it's easier to eat more of it. But the problem is, other delicious foods, ALSO make me want to eat more of them, even the ones that don't include sugar, like roasted mixed nuts and trail mix!! Listening to that podcast and my recent attempt at cutting out sugar, confirmed to me that I will over eat, despite being hungry or not!! So, does it really matter if I cut carbs to control your appetite, if hunger isn't the reason I eat to begin with? I NEVER eat because I'm hungry! I eat for so many other reasons! I eat because
Food is available (like easy to grab, in the cupboard, staring at me to eat it!)
Food tastes good (who doesn't eat something because it tastes good? I don't have to be hungry to eat a rice krispy treat!)

I'm bored (probably my biggest downfall. I have plenty to do- working, being a mom, etc. but when there is downtime, it seems I think that should be filled with stuffing my face.
I'm procrastinating. I'm REALLY good at this one. That was the hardest thing about working from home. When I have a project for work, or just have a bathroom to clean, I will often tell myself- I should eat first, then I'll do that thing.

I'm mad. I'm not sure why I do this. But if someone does something to make me mad, I retreat into the pantry for spoonful of peanut butter! How does that even solve anything?
I'm busy. Isn't that interesting that I'm busy and I'm bored can both be reasons to eat! Wow, that's something I've never really noticed!

… so many reasons other than, "I'm hungry." Bottom line is, it doesn't matter if it's carbs, fat, or protein, I WILL EAT IT in excessive amounts when I feel like it, if I am not paying attention to the pause between wanting to eat and eating.

So, what can I do to implement purposeful, mindful eating in the face of these excuses? I truly believe being aware is the biggest obstacle to overcome. Just KNOWING I'm only grabbing a spoonful of peanut butter because I'm mad, somehow takes away it's allure. I may eat one, but then I'm Conscious enough to walk away after that. AWARENESS IS EVERYTHING! The pause between stimulus and response is everything. Mindlessness is the killer of weight control.

DAY 5

AFFIRMATION: I don't compare myself to others. I'm on my own journey.
PROMPT: If I had a perfectly healthy day what would that look like?

I love this thought I heard from Joel Osteen yesterday. "Hold tight to what God put in your heart, but hold LOOSELY to how it's going to happen!" I can have the desire to nourish and achieve an amazing body, but letting God help me figure out how to get there is how I can put my faith in Him! It might not be the "strategy" or the method that I think will get me there, but only God knows how to TRULY help me reach my goals! I mean, He did make this body after all! He should know how it functions better than the latest diet guru.

My perfect, healthy day would look like this: I wake up and take a nice long, slow run. I love running… slowly. Many people can actually walk faster than I run. I'd come home, take a shower, get dressed and then eat oatmeal with fruit, made with coconut water. I don't even need sugar on my oatmeal, just berries, cooked into the creaminess of it.. Ideally, this would fill me up for hours. Then, I'd eat a chicken wrap with avocado for lunch. Wraps "feel" healthier to me than bread, although nutritionally, it's no different. I will say, sometimes I think I have a problem with yeast. I used to believe I was gluten intolerant, but I can tolerate pretzels and tortillas like a champ! Now, I think it might have more to do with the yeast, than the wheat. Then, I wouldn't be hungry again till dinner, where I'd eat a BIG salad with sweet poppyseed dressing and rotisserie chicken. That feels like a perfect day. It's food I love, and it's healthy too!

Even though the affirmation is just that (an affirmation), I want to express my feelings about it real quick. Comparing myself to others can be a problem! It's easy to think that someone I consider to be lean can eat anything they want and maintain their figure. I get into this spiral of beliefs where I think, "It's not fair! Why do I have to be so careful to maintain my weight, and she gets to eat cookies every day? It's not fair!" When I really think about that attitude, I should be thinking, "get over yourself! You are being so childish right now. Your journey is yours alone, and it doesn't matter what anyone else gets to eat or doesn't get to eat." I remember first noticing this when I was just 12 years old. I had a very skinny friend who would eat tortillas with melted cheese, all rolled up. She would eat them almost every day. My mom mentioned to me that this friend could do this, but unfortunately, I couldn't be so careless with how much food I ate. This comment didn't "scar" me for life, and I absolutely don't blame her for my weight struggle. However, it did make me mad that I couldn't eat whatever I wanted, while my best friend could! That friend is still very thin to this day,

and it's definitely genetic. However, my eyes have recently been open. The more "skinny" people I meet, the more I realize the population of people who can stay lean effortlessly is very small! Most people my age can't maintain their weight and eat anything they want. So, basically, I'm in the majority! But it shouldn't matter- my journey is my journey and I won't let anyones ability or inability to eat excessive calories impact my choices.





DAY 6
AFFIRMATION: I am strong enough to withstand the bumps and bruises of life.
PROMPT: What does the beginning of a new diet look like?

I'm really digging this "mindful eating" strategy!! And in true fashion, I'm bingeing on information to find out what it means to eat mindfully! Haha. I love a good information binge! BUT- yesterday was a success!! I don't know how much I ate yesterday, how many calories I consumed, but I REFUSED to eat standing up, on the go, or mindlessly. Every single morsel I put in my mouth was intentional. I'm not sure why it took me a full 5 days to have an entire day of purposeful eating, but it is what it is. I sat at the kitchen table and did nothing but eat! I didn't look at my phone, read, work, or watch TV. I JUST ATE. WOW it was hard. I did find myself somewhat rushing the meal a bit, because I was so restless. It's a problem I've been noticing getting worse in my life. With technology, a few minutes of being mindful or doing nothing feels boring! I can't even go to the bathroom without bringing my phone!

In prayer yesterday I decided that part of mindful eating would be to start my meal with prayer. Something I rarely do unless It's a formal family dinner, and most of our dinners are casual and sporadic. I'd never pray over a handful of nuts, because that would be weird. But if I'm going to eat mindfully, a handful of un-blessed nuts have no place in my life. Instead, I want to commit to starting each official, purposeful meal in deep meditative prayer. I will thank God for the food, and ask for his guidance to eat the foods that are going to be nourishing and beneficial- and ask him to

help me not enjoy the foods that are bad for me. Today will be rough, because I already know I'm eating sugar. Tonight, my mom is taking us to Ice cream. Dang!

DAY 7

AFFIRMATION: I am fit and healthy and bursting with energy.
PROMPT: How have my thoughts about food changed in the last 6 days?

I'm really trying to pay attention to the food. Not just pay attention,

- but chew 20 times, or as many times as possible
- Praying with real intent before the meal
- Placing all my food on a plate.
- Sitting at the dining table
- Not reading or scrolling social media
- Trying to identify the flavors in the food, textures etc.
- Imaging in where the food came from
- Paying attention to how it makes me feel- good food for energy, crappy food for irritability.
- Starting the meal when I'm hungry
- Paying attention to my hunger during the meal
- Stopping when I'm "pleasantly full"
- And never snacking while standing, walking, or to be social.
- Identify whether I'm experiencing Brain hunger (cravings for crap) or body-biological hunger- cravings for life and vitality.

I'm finding that I don't have as big of an appetite as I once thought I did! I always believed I had a HUGE appetite. I would even brag about how much food I could eat without feeling full. But, I was listening to a book on audible about mindful eating, and one of the stories included a girl who used to say the same thing. She told people, she was a petite girl with a large appetite. She then realized after mindful eating that she in fact was a petite girl with a PETITE appetite.

I noticed the same thing! Yesterday, I was totally satisfied with only TWO MEALS!! My teenage daughter made cookies, and I ate ONE!! ONE- then I was satisfied!! I ate the cookie very slowly, paying attention to whether I REALLY liked it or not (i did.. haha), and acknowledging that a second one wouldn't be MORE pleasurable than the first one, and I stopped! I STOPPED!! For the first time in my ever loving life I stopped after one cookie, even though there are 4 dozen more in my pantry! I also was dreading the Ice Cream sandwich date with my mom last night, but I only ate a few bites before I was physically sick! It's amazing how eating intentionally and with mindfulness can show you your true appetite, that's appropriate for your best size. Mindless eating allows you to eat a LOT more food than your body needs.

I've been praying for God to physically change my preferences about food, and He is definitely answering my prayers. I prayed to not crave sugar and flour, and I definitely am NOT craving those things!! HOORAY TO MINDFUL EATING.

I must be careful now that I am digging into an information black hole about mindful eating! A lot of information online messes with my head and almost gives me permission to eat crappy food. It's a slippery slope to allow forbidden foods on a mindful eating plan and journey! When I heard about mindful eating years ago (or more accurately, intuitive eating) I only "heard" what I wanted to hear. I grabbed onto the part to "eat whatever you want without judgement, and you won't crave it anymore"... which TOTALLY did not work for me when I tried it years ago. After 1 week of eating cookie dough and never getting sick of it, and gaining weight, I decided my brain doesn't know what it should be eating, and only wants what it wants. I thought I'd never go back to intuitive eating again, but the truth was, I just wasn't listening to the right part of my cravings. I was only listening to my head hunger (which says: give me cookie dough), and not my body's hunger (which says: give me fresh fruits and veggies because that's what makes me feel good!)

Yesterday was almost perfect! I ate my breakfast undisturbed. I really breathed, and thought about my food. Lunch/dinner was a little different. There were people around, But I did my best to slow down pay attention to how fast I was eating, how much I was chewing, and how much food was going in my mouth. I must say, I was VERY satisfied with three small meals. I did not crave more food, and I didn't need any snacks either!

DAY 8
AFFIRMATION: I allow my journey to be unique to me.
PROMPT: What food rules have I created or followed in the past that make it difficult to eat mindfully?

I FEEL amazing! I feel light. I feel energetic. I feel like I can stick with this forever! This weekend could have been hard. We had so many things conspiring against me. It was our monthly family party. My daughter made 6 dozen cookies. I made cookies for a neighbor. It was Conference. I made cinnamon rolls. We watched a lot of TV and people were home the entire time.. Normally, I'd just snack through it all, but I DIDN'T. I ate ONE cookie. I TASTED a cinnamon roll. But knowing eating the whole thing would make me feel crappy, I didn't eat the entire roll!

It's amazing to me how very little food I need to be satisfied! SO AMAZING.

Some food rules that are super ingrained in me that I believe has made it difficult for me to eat mindfully include:

- Focusing on daily calories- minimums PLUS maximums. This belief has made it impossible to eat mindfully, as I try to strive to reach 1500 calories for the day, even if I'm not hungry, or try to LIMIT myself to 1500 calories, even if I am hungry. With this new approach, simply having 500 calories on my plate for each meal is one thing, but after that, I don't have to eat it all! I can leave some if I listen to my body and not worry about meeting my calorie limits for the day.
- Protein vs. carb content of food- I hate that I think about carbs vs protein. I just love carbs! Why is that so bad? But I would tell myself on other diets that I MUST eat protein with every meal or I'll only put on weight. Rubbish! That creates rules around food that don't allow

mindful pleasure of food! Pleasure for me comes in the form of a delicious, warm slice of bread, not from bacon!

- Fat content of food. I'm a casualty of the 80's. Fat phobic to the core! It's only recently I added avocados to my life. I still shy away from fat, mostly because the calories in that food will always be higher. I'm not sure what to do with this food rule, other than decide fat isn't the enemy.
- Scale Feedback. The scale has always determined my food choices, and when I let an external device to decide what and how much I'll eat, that can't be mindful!
- Force feeding food I don't love. Buying someone's meal plan and trying to stick with it, because I want their body, is anti- mindful at it's finest. I remember buying a meal plan from a fitness pro- and it had fish and brussels sprouts on it. That brought me NO pleasure at all!

OH NO!! It's the same day as that prior entry, but now it's noon. I just had an amazing and filling breakfast. I'm trying to get back to work, but my head keeps drawing me back to the kitchen to find something else to eat! I KNOW it's because I don't want to finish my work today! Some things I do in my job are either hard or boring, and the way I have dealt with it for a long time is to forage for food! I must remember my goals! I'm NOT hungry! If I succumb to this desire, I will not be eating for the right purposes.

DAY 9
AFFIRMATION: Maintaining my ideal weight is easy.
PROMPT: What excuses do I tell myself to not eat with mindfulness

Well, yesterday was a fail- and I was INTENTIONAL about eating crap. I literally CHOSE to eat mindlessly. I obviously get pleasure from eating while working on the computer or watching low budget TV shows from my computer, while I pretend to work. Obviously, this is going to take practice! I guess that's why it's called a mindful practice.

I need to figure out why I enjoy eating without having to be present for it. There is something about "only eating" that is difficult, and there is something about eating while doing other things that I enjoy- so WHY?? Why do I enjoy that?

Checking in…. (later on, same day)

I believe intuitive eating would be very difficult to lead to weight loss for me. I don't trust myself. I can justify eating anything. But If I could truly understand intentional/mindful eating, I feel like I can have some break throughs. But there is so much I need to understand about myself. Just deciding to eat mindfully hasn't worked completely yet, and I'm 9 days in. I INTENTIONALLY ate mindlessly yesterday- Like, I was sitting at my desk, and consciously decided I was going to walk to the pantry and eat whatever I wanted, standing up, scooping pretzels into peanut butter, without noticing or being aware with the number of pretzels I was consuming. Why am I doing that?

Maybe a bigger question- WHY do I put so much conscious energy around food. Why do I put so much thought into what I'm eating, my next meal, and how will it help me lose or make me gain

weight. Why can't I eat without judgement, and between meals, actually pursue hobbies and enjoy life to the fullest? Do I need more hobbies?

Yesterday I was so bad! WHY? I CHOSE to start the day eating something I didn't feel like I could eat in moderation. That food choice was Pumpkin bread. It was so yummy, but I didn't need it, and I ate half the loaf before 8am! And, in awareness, I ate it mindlessly. Meaning, I KNEW I was mindlessly eating and I didn't care. I was thinking, maybe there is a part of me that wants to rebel? The inner child throwing a fit about *doing things MY way* came roaring in.

I am also concerned that mindful eating, eating without judgements, and eating without boundaries will make me gain weight. And, that is actually confirmed by some stories I've read. But, a GREAT book: The Joy of Half a Cookie, does address this! She is the first one that combines mindful eating with PROPER eating, and calorie awareness. Her example which totally resonated with me, is that when you are on a budget, you at least LOOK at the price tag on something! It's not off limits, but you can make a better choice of whether it will fit in your budget, by KNOWING how much it costs! I LOVE THIS! I'll definitely use this method going forward, and use this journal to write WHY I choose to eat mindlessly when I decide to, and what is going through my mind when I decide to eat.

INSIGHT!!
Back an hour later to say I had a breakthrough on my walk just now. I was wondering to myself why only two days after I decided every meal I eat would be eaten at the table, with intention, only when I'm hungry,... you know- MINDFULLY. And how after just two days in, I CHOSE to eat, standing in the pantry, while doing something else- and kept it going by eating more and more while I watched a junky, low budget TV show.

Well... I always thought I was a complier. A respecter of rules. Yet somehow, food rules cause an inner rebellion in me. A childlike effort to exert my free will. To be independent. To NOT follow rules. I follow the rules of religion and society, my parents, etc. I've always seen myself as the goody two-shoes... not rocking the boat, being agreeable in every way. But when It comes to food rules, I exert this drive to rebel and not let anyone tell me what to eat. So, as soon as mindful eating became a rule, I promptly rebelled, as I do.

My challenge to myself is to not see mindful eating as a rule. In fact, it should be the opposite of a rule. It should be WHAT I DO because I LOVE food so much and I want to SQUEEZE every morsel of pleasure out of it! It should represent freedom from rules. I want to enjoy food so thoroughly, that I don't need rules or judgement! No food off limits. PURE BLISS.

Oh- and one more thing- I'm going slow at this pleasure thing. So, I am not going to FULLY assess my hunger before I sit down to a meal- Instead, I will plan my meals according to the time of day that I can spend a full 20 minutes in uninterrupted time. Even though I might not start each meal fully hungry, the practice will be to STOP when satiated, EVEN IF IT MEANS LEAVING FOOD ON THE PLATE





DAY 10

AFFIRMATION: I eat well, listen well, and live well.
PROMPT: What circumstances do I find myself in that creates mindless eating?

I was cleaning the kitchen just before dinner, when I noticed my husband grab a tangerine and eat it. Almost instinctively, I took one and peeled it. But I stopped myself!. I knew I was about to have a satisfying, satiating dinner experience, so I set it aside and pulled It out to eat with my meal when I was good and ready. Yay for not mindlessly eating the tangerine!

I Watched a short YouTube video today about mindful eating and what really stood out to me is she said,

> *"those times when you feel like abandoning your health goals or get the "screw it" mindset, to embrace it. Look forward to it. Because only in those moments can you figure out why you behave the way you do."*

So, it's happening right now!! There are two homemade cinnamon rolls in my kitchen. But we had pizza for dinner that I thoroughly enjoyed and it filled me up. Yet those cinnamon rolls are calling to me to eat them! Why? I do feel a twinge of guilt from eating the pizza, so I should just "start over tomorrow", but considering pizza isn't off limits, that logic is a lie!

So, the circumstances that I find myself in that create mindless eating are as follows:

- Spending an excessive amount of time in the kitchen, doing nothing but looking at food.
- Working on my laptop in the kitchen. I have a small office in my bedroom, and can avoid food most of the day if I stay there. As soon as I start working at the kitchen table instead, mindless munching!!
- Scrolling through pictures online of delicious food. It's much easier to unconsciously eat with all that stimuli.

- Habits! When I'm in a hurry, it's hard not to grab a granola bar on my way out the door. For so many years I've been brainwashed to believe I can't leave the house without some emergency food- otherwise, I'll either starve to death or slow my metabolism down! (which is B.S of course!) The other bad habit I have is going straight to food when I get home from something. Church or work especially!

To make it easier to eat mindfully, I should avoid some of these situations, or find better circumstances. I don't need to work in my kitchen and I don't need to look at pictures on pinterest of food! I just don't! If it contributes to mindlessness, it doesn't need to be part of my day. I also can decide on a different activity to replace the pantry raid when I get home from work!

DAY 11

AFFIRMATION: I acknowledge my thoughts are just thoughts. They are not real.
PROMPT: What lies do I tell myself to allow that bite or binge I shouldn't take?

HOORAY!! Yesterday was a smashing success!! I never felt deprived. I ate the food I wanted, and I am two pounds less today! (ok- my "don't pin success by the scale" attitude didn't last long.. I'm too weak!) Yesterday, I even got bored and antsy between meals, yet I kept myself busy until my designated mealtime was ready. It was amazing how many times I reached AUTOMATICALLY for a taste or a bite of something, only to put it back down and tell myself, I can eat this when I sit down to my meal!! It worked! I even had a handful of pretzels I was about to eat. When I stopped myself. I put the handful of pretzels on a plate to be eaten with my next meal and never felt deprived!! I am convinced that getting the ultimate pleasure out of your meal really does leave you satisfied enough to not KEEP eating. Being fully aware and present during the meal allows you to eat the perfect amount of food for your body!

I WANTED to grab food and eat on the run. I wanted to CHOOSE to eat mindlessly. I even caught myself saying,

> *"I can have ONE day a week where I don't have any food rules or rituals. In fact, it's better I take a break from mindful eating just one day a week, to keep me on track the rest of the week".*

WOW!! I can't believe the things I tell myself! I quickly realized the terrible advice I gave myself. I said again: Do you EVER need a break from savoring, loving, and ENJOYING your food??? HEAVENS NO! Do you need a break from eating for fulfillment and pleasure? NO!

I've noticed a few EXCUSES and obstacles that I've given myself for not eating mindfully.

1. **FATIGUE!** This was my problem on Sunday . I'm not one to take naps, but middle of the day, it was a warm afternoon, I sat to watch a movie with the family, and noticed myself craving food to keep me awake. I went for pretzels. Ate them mindlessly
2. **BOREDOM!** Although I consider myself an extremely busy person, any down time feels like it HAS to be filled with something to "do". So, I eat.
3. **ANGER!** I get angry that I can't eat like "normal people". I had one day where I ate more

than I should have. It wasn't even bad food. It wasn't like I was eating CAKE or anything truly desirable, yet the scale was up the next day. That makes me angry, because I tell myself, it isn't fair, it takes TOO much effort to be smart about food, and I just rather relax my standards, since it's impossible to maintain.

4. **MIMICKING-** My husband has a bowl of some cereal that I think looks so delicious, so I go get some myself, and eat it all before I realize what I've done.
5. **THE HONEYMOON**- I LOVE the honeymoon period of any new thing I want to try. It's almost like I intentionally screw up, so I can "start over clean" and fresh! The first day is always the best day, and I crave that experience. The problem is, it's usually a lie! I use it as an excuse to not eat well, and the next day, isn't the first day, it's more cheating.
6. I can't eat "this way" for the **REST OF MY LIFE**.. Or I need a break from healthy eating. This is a lie! There are healthy foods I'd be happy eating for the rest of my life, and there is no reason to take a break from healthy eating. Our body doesn't need a BREAK from healthy food!
7. **I DESERVE THIS** - Wow that sounds so entitled!
8. **PROCRASTINATION**- Something that makes me overeat is having a task (usually a work task) that I'm avoiding. I usually record a video once a week, and it's a lot of work, prep, and editing that has to go into it. The task really is overwhelming. In an effort to delay or postpone it, I generally start eating. Handful after handful of pretzels or granola bars until I can't avoid it any longer. Yesterday, I did OK. My strategy is to try to bust out the thing I don't want to do, before I start eating. That isn't too tricky for me because I wake up so early that it doesn't make sense to eat.
9. **PROOF I'M NORMAL**- I can be weird sometimes. I noticed that because I'm known as a "healthy eater" that I go out of my way to NOT appear neurotic about healthy eating. I eat cookies and candy in front of people even if I don't want to, as a way to prove I'm not one of those fanatics about health. Why do I do that?

The takeaway here is once again, awareness! If I know that these are lies, I can challenge those thoughts!

DAY 12

AFFIRMATION: I can be present. I only do one thing at a time.
PROMPT: What brings me pleasure in mindful eating?

Two great stories from my friend Eliece, who I've been chatting about mindful eating with. She said after she decided to start the practice, for the first time, IN HER LIFE she had a container of french fries from a restaurant that she did NOT finish! She said she was taking so long to eat, so slowly, and so mindfully, that the rest of her party was finished eating and her fries were cold. The "Old" eliece would have been picking at every last spec of crumbs in her fry bag! The second story she noticed herself eating a super yummy salad on for a big family dinner party. She loved it so much, that while she was MID- SALAD she started thinking about going for seconds! Then, she realized- Why am I thinking about seconds before I'm even finished! Why can't I fully enjoy the FIRST! She decided to stop thinking about it,, and by the time she was done eating, everyone else was too, and it didn't make sense to get a second helping when everyone else had finished! SUCCESS!!

I truly feel like eating is supposed to be pleasurable. As we eat mindlessly, the pleasure is not there, and we are compelled to keep eating more than what is necessary to meet that innate need. As we enjoy food, and really REMEMBER eating, there is no reason to go back for more. Getting complete pleasure out of the first serving will be enough.

And there is a difference in my mind between mindful eating and intuitive eating. Intuitive eating might be considered the HOLY GRAIL of mindfulness. But, until I really get to a place where my intuition isn't suggesting cookies for dinner, I am starting with mindfulness and intention! Starting my day with intention will be critical.

DAY 13
AFFIRMATION : I turn everyday tasks into mindful moments
PROMPT: What circumstances shorten the window between a trigger (seeing food) and a response (eating the food)?

WHY? OK- yesterday it was **PEER PRESSURE!** Seriously, I walked around to food booths, set up to promote different brands, and I ate something at every single booth! I was with friends also eating from all the tables, and it just happened. Booo

Why can't I pause between a trigger- the desire to eat something- and it literally slipping down my throat? I can't even weigh in today. I'm too mad about the amount of food I ate! The real question is, how can I take this knowledge (that I'm easily and heavily influenced to eat what people around me are eating) and change the behavior.

I'm going to have to give this more thought, because I honestly don't know what the right answer is. I start to think to myself, I should just choose to make it a fasting day, and nothing to eat is sometimes easier than small amounts to eat. I could say, I'd carry a drink around with me, and when I'm tempted, take a sip.. But both of those put me into that space where I don't want to be the "weird one" or the one who is neurotic about food. I just want to be normal! I think the only answer here is that every circumstance is going to be very different- being at a food conference, vs at a family party. So, I just need to be pro-active! I just need to consider before I get in the situation what I'll face and how I'll deal with it that day. It doesn't have to be annoying or crazy, and I don't have to take extreme measures. Just simply breathe, be calm, and decide before I go!

DAY 14
AFFIRMATION: I challenge existing beliefs.
PROMPT: What are some dieting beliefs worth challenging?

I love this question! Because I've been so interested in diet culture from a very young age, there are certain beliefs that have shaped my behavior for sure. Some things I believe so strongly, that I wasn't even willing to challenge them. These included:

- That you should eat every 2 hours - I mean, heaven forbid you go too long between meals, cause your metabolism will come to a screeching halt and you'll never lose weight, even

if you are only eating 1500 calories! The diet world has been teaching this forever, and I bought in 100%. I know it's the reason I ate so much food! Each "meal" was never a small meal for me. I'd eat 6 big meals a day!

- That you need to carry food everywhere you go, so you don't get too hungry- you don't want to get caught without a snack! Your willpower will be exhausted and you will be so hungry that you'll eat everything in site. I've been able to go many hours without food, and it hasn't been a problem in the least!
- That carbs make you fat- Even though I actually don't believe this one, it does cause me regret and feelings of "I've failed" if I think I've eaten too many carbs. Carbs are not the problem.. Overeating is the problem!
- That you have to eat breakfast every day- wow! This one lingered forever. I used to eat at 5am, even before I'd exercise. I always thought it would "jump start my metabolism", so I had to get it going. Now, I'm over this completely. In fact, when I don't eat my first meal till 10am or later, I'm actually more productive in the morning, eat less throughout the day, and I'm pretty sure my metabolism hasn't been ruined.
- That sugar is addictive- I'm actually glad I used to think this. Because I learned so much from finding this out for myself. All food is addictive if you try to take the pleasure of eating away and eat for the wrong reasons… because you are struggling to get that "fix".
- That you have to give yourself a cheat day or cheat meal, to be able to stick with something long term. Umm.. I'm still trying to let this one go. Whenever I eat more than I should, or eat food I know will make me feel crappy, I convince myself that I deserve a cheat day. That a cheat day will keep me on track better. But it never does. It always leads to more cheat days.. And more and more and more!
- That muscles weighs more than fat… OK, while technically this is true, the actual weight isn't so much more that it's impossible to move the scale. The scale CAN be moved, even when you are lifting weights.
- That I need a protein shake and chicken breasts to see progress. Bleh. If I never drink a protein shake again, I'll be happy. They never fill me up or satisfy me. Why drink your calories when you can get more satiated and more pleasure from actually eating food!

Being so fascinated by the diet industry has really led me to believe some things about eating that completely take away the mindfulness and purposeful experience of eating. Eating is wonderful, and having someone else dictate how to eat is not giving your mind the credit it deserves.

DAY 15

AFFIRMATION: I make peace with the past.
PROMPT: What is my earliest memory of being concerned about my weight?

Unbelievable! No wonder I've never made it past 10 days on a program before!! I weighed myself this morning, not only to find I was a few pounds up from the last time I stepped on the scale, but after two weeks, I'm basically the same weight! However, I've been trying to rely more heavily on the tape measure than the scale, and the tape measure showed my hips are down ½ of an inch!! HOLY COW!! No wonder I gave up so easily when the scale was my only measure of success. At my current body weight, the scale moves VERY SLOW!! But, when I don't see the scale move in a short amount of time, I give up the plan I'm on, never giving it a chance to do it's thing! My

behavior will not be affected by the scale today, because I know there is progress unseen! I'm so happy I started measuring instead. However, now the challenge will be, can I maintain mindful eating, EVEN WHEN the tape measure stops showing me results? There have been a few points in my life when I've realized I should be grateful for the weight challenges I have. If I didn't have to actively work at maintaining my weight, I would eat terribly! I would probably survive on cinnamon rolls and coke. So, I should be glad I need to watch what I eat, for health's sake!

The first time I remember thinking I was heavy was in the 6th grade. The first episode was when I was at a swim party for church. The boys referred to me as "Thunder Thighs" when they saw me in a swimsuit! Rude, right? The second episode was in High school. I was walking in front of a group of girls, who were whispering (loudly because they really wanted me to hear) to each other and said "Can you believe what a big butt she has!" painful, right? I won't say those events scarred me for life. In fact, I rarely think about them. But they were moments in my life where I was aware that other people were judging me.





DAY 16

AFFIRMATION: I get outdoors and embrace the beauty of nature.
PROMPT: What type of movement brings you the most joy?

This question is easy for me. I really love to exercise. I have been exercising since my youngest memories of going to Jazzercise with my mom at 10 years old. I can still remember the leotards, the music, the instructor, and even the dance moves!

The funny thing about exercise and movement though, is I'm not a fan of team sports, or HARD workouts. I love walking, hiking, and even light jogging. But I could walk for HOURS. I get lost in thought and just keep going. Recently I started waking more without music or podcasts in my ear and it's been so therapeutic and meditative for me. I often tease about the idea that I can think about myself for hours! Haha

So, lately, my workouts have basically consisted of walking and light jogging only! I don't like strength training, although I feel like I have to start if I want to see muscle. But maybe I don't care about muscle. Recently I read the book, "run till 100", and I LOVED it because it gave me the validation I need to not try to run faster than I do! Slow is better if you want to run for the next 60 years of your life!

Turning everyday tasks into mindful moments makes sense on so many levels to me. Being outside is one of the very best ways to feel mindful. I love to be out on walks with no podcast, no music and just my thoughts. It's such a great way to spend time outside!

DAY 17

AFFIRMATION: I enjoy every bite when I eat.
PROMPT: What food do I love that loves me back?

From a very young age I've been extremely drawn to fruit and bread. I for sure lean towards a vegetarian lifestyle, although I would never consider it 100%. But, I could never understand why people would be so excited about the Atkins diet or the Paleo diet. I would think, "Who would want to make meat the center of their life? It literally sounds like my personal food hell!". Give me a crusty loaf of bread or a watermelon, and I'm a happy girl. I love fruit so much that I even decided to go on the 80/20 diet at one point, and eat 80% of my food fruit. I LOVED IT. If it hadn't been so expensive, I probably would have kept it up. I truly did eat an entire watermelon in one day during that diet, and the energy I felt from it was off the charts!

I've tried low carb several times, and the food has left me unsatisfied in a huge way. This is why I love the mindful eating approach! Food was meant to make a person happy and fruit and grains really do make me happy! I'm so glad I can create a plan with my favorite foods and still lose weight!

DAY 18

AFFIRMATION: My health, vitality and energy increase with every breath I take.
PROMPT: What activities bring me pleasure and joy, not related to food?

Yesterday was tough! I'm not going to lie. I had an assignment I was dreading and I always distract myself with food when that happens. When I'm busy with fun stuff, I usually forget about food, but when I'm busy and procrastinating, I ONLY think about food! And yes, I indulged by mindless eating granola bars on the go- AGAIN! They will be gone soon, but I keep buying them. Maybe I shouldn't buy them at all.

I love the question of what brings me pleasure besides food. I try to come up with a list every few years to remind myself that I don't have to be eating non-stop to find joy in life. Instead of eating between meals, the activities that bring me pleasure include:

- Taking a bath
- Walking
- Reading self-help books
- Watching movies or television

- Hiking with my family
- Taking classes (like college classes!)
- Reading magazines
- Drinking Diet Coke
- Baking
- Making money
- Getting a massage
- Cleaning my house (sometimes! lol)
- Listening to podcasts

There are lots of things I could do in my downtime, between meals, that don't have to involve eating.

DAY 19
AFFIRMATION: I think before I eat
PROMPT: Where in my life do I feel unfulfilled?

That's a tough question, because I do feel quite fulfilled in my life. I may take this journaling time though to reflect on all the things I've tried in the past to get control over my weight. I do find it fascinating that I've been a seeker for so long!
Even though all these approaches have never truly brought me lasting weight loss, they have all played a role in my habits and my perspective about achieving my goals.

- Weight loss online courses & videos
- Intermittent fasting
- Macro counting
- Counting calories
- Goals journals
- Affirmations
- Vision board
- Tracking through my fitness pal
- Body for life
- Health coach (I've hired two)
- Personal trainer at the gym
- Youtube channel celebrities
- Overeaters anonymous podcast
- Reading scriptures & prayer
- Hypnosis- guided meditation
- Drinking 1 gallon of water
- Listening to music for cardio (so I run faster)
- Working upstairs instead of in my kitchen
- Staying busy
- Reading health magazines.
- Vegan living
- Paleo diet
- 80/20 Raw food diet

I don't regret any of these attempts or approaches. As I've already said before, In the beginning, I actually like exploring new strategies to control eating. However, not only has none of them ever helped me get to my goal, but the weight loss I saw wasn't sustainable.

One reason I like the current approach of purposeful, mindful eating is the sustainability and satisfaction of it! Limiting calories was hard, but with mindful eating, it feels EFFORTLESS!

DAY 20
STATS: 124.5 lbs
AFFIRMATION: Every cell in my body gets nourished by what I choose to put in my mouth.
PROMPT: How do I show respect for my physical body?

I'm officially half way and I'm pretty upset this morning!! Yesterday, I mindlessly ate cookies AND cookie dough. ALSO, crusty bakery bread that was super buttery and flaky and I wasn't even craving it. It was purely a response in visual temptation. I KNOW better. In fact, I was just reading in the book "French women don't get fat" about how they love chocolate and bread. The difference is, the French women only indulge when the quality of the chocolate or bread is supreme! They don't waste their time or calories on average, mediocre food. And they certainly don't waste their calories in mindless shoveling of the food while driving, where they can't take adequate pleasure in the food. I'm trying to really zero in on what goes through my mind when I let myself "fail" like that. The interesting thing is, I CAN eat cookies and still not fail on this program. If I took a cookie to the table, and REALLY tasted it, not only would I have enjoyed it more, but I wouldn't need to eat 4 or 5 of them! Also, cookie dough- why do I love you so??? But straight out of the bowl and then returning to the bowl to scrape every last morsel is just unnecessary!

The lesson here is, I'm still OK! There really is no deadline, and the majority of the 20 days, I have been eating mindfully. Little slip ups don't deserve self deprecation. I don't have to go back to day 1! Not only do I not have to go back to day 1, I don't need to. It's like falling down during a race. You stand up and keep running. Who in their right mind would head back to the starting line to restart the race? No one! So, I'm standing up mid-race,brushing off the dirt, and committing to get to the finish line in 20 more days.

DAY 21
STATS: 124.5 lbs
AFFIRMATION: There is new hope in every day
PROMPT: What would it look like to commit to the daily process and not the results?
Waist: 30 inches
Hips:37.5
Waist: 29.5
Thigh: 21

It's typical for me, after 3 weeks of a new program, I just start to get lazy. It's a slippery slope. Progress feels slow, and I'm quick to get bored and want to resume what's easy as if it "doesn't matter anyway, so why make life hard"? But I did wonder this morning if I could behave as if this is

the FIRST day of my program today. 20 days is exactly half way, and although I've only lost 4 lbs (despite feeling thinner), I typically would give up right now, go back to the starting line, gain those 4 back and never see progress. Instead, if today is the FIRST day of the program, my excitement could then be renewed, and I may be able to shed another 4 lbs! THAT would put me in new territory. That would finally put me at a weight that I haven't seen in 20 years. So, TODAY IS THE FIRST DAY! I'm going to take my measurements and everything. I'm recommitted and excited for the next 20 days. I even have a massage scheduled for this week to not only celebrate 20 days, but also do an activity that will be sure to bring mindfulness and pleasure!

For me the daily process should have nothing to do with the scale. I am committed to daily mindful eating, regardless of the results! Success would be achieved as I look back on the day, identify and remember what I've eaten, without writing it down. This would mean I truly ate that food, MINDFULLY! Success would also be to see the day behind me and remember the joyful exercise or movement I was able to experience.

DAY 22

AFFIRMATION: My will to live is stronger than my craving.
PROMPT: How do I want to feel when I reach my physical goals?

Yesterday was great! In fact, I was able to feel like it was the first day of a new diet. With hope and excitement that I would somehow make good choices. And I did. My sister came over to roast S'mores and I wasn't even interested in having one. I hardly ever am, but helping my nephew with his, and breaking off a piece of chocolate for him to use, generally has a way of me mindlessly breaking off a second piece of chocolate for myself. Then, It's in my mouth, being chewed before I even have the chance to decide if I even wanted it or not! So, the fact that I was able to hold that chocolate and decide I didn't want a bite was a huge win. I didn't eat it at all.

To the prompt above, I'm not sure I've really given this question much thought! I've been so desperate to reach my goal that I haven't considered what it would feel like to already be there. I can imagine I would feel super confident. That I would go to the pool, or go on a hike and not be self-conscious of wearing tight clothes. That I wouldn't avoid getting out of my workout clothes in the morning, because my jeans would fit perfectly! That I could run faster because I was lighter! I feel like it would feel like freedom. Freedom to wear what I want, when I want, and without self-judgement.

DAY 23

AFFIRMATION: I think before I eat without judgement.
PROMPT: What is my immediate response when I eat something I consider unhealthy?

GUILT! I am the worst with food guilt or regret. Or maybe that's a good thing? Could it be possible my guilt in overindulging or eating the wrong foods has actually been a benefit all these years? I mean, if we didn't feel guilty for a crime, we might commit one. If we didn't feel guilty for being rude to someone, we might be rude more often. I guess the difference with food is that food isn't a crime. A better thought could be, how would I feel when I eat something healthy? It's obvious the physical feelings of healthy eating are that you feel amazing, light, and full of energy. The way I feel

physically when I eat something unhealthy is bloated, lazy, and sometimes even sick to my stomach. So mentally, I can change my immediate response to be one of no judgement, just awareness. I can be aware of what I just did to my physical body, but also let those thoughts pass by like clouds in the sky. Being aware of it, but not dwelling on it and letting the thought move on. There is no sense in studying the cloud, figuring out why it's in the sky, trying to catch it, trying to reshape it. Just being aware of it, and letting it move on. At the point when I eat something I shouldn't have, just be aware of the misstep and move on immediately! Otherwise, dwelling on it often leads to the " you messed up anyway. You lack willpower. You might as well make a day of it! You might as well have another since the day is a failure!" That's the LAST thing I want to dwell on. The longer I let myself think that, the more likely I am to really binge that day.



DAY 24

AFFIRMATION: I realize thoughts are just thoughts and can change.
PROMPT: How will I notice when in the middle of an excuse?

OK- let me really dive into this!! I've thought about what to tell myself before I eat something I shouldn't, and what excuses I use to allow myself to eat crappy food- but how do I CHANGE that dialogue?? GREAT QUESTION! The best example is always the most recent one. Literally today… like even just 1 hour ago. I kept thinking I wanted some popcorn. What I really was trying to do was write an article I have a deadline for. But instead, I decided popcorn was essential. It was obvious, and I even said it to my husband, "I'm not hungry. I don't need any popcorn. I clearly just want to use eating in order to procrastinate." It's such a great feeling to pause for just a moment and identify the excuse. It gives the excuse less power. It causes you to realize how silly it really is. Popcorn will not make the project disappear. It just delays it for a few moments!

DAY 25

AFFIRMATION: I have an inner determination, beyond food, weight, and the scale.
PROMPT: How do I believe my life change when I reach my goal weight?

It's literally amazing how many journal entries I've just read through from the last 10 years that had my weight at the top of the entry, and they were ALL between 123-128lbs. In almost every entry, I would write, "If I could just get to 115 lbs I'd be so happy! How sad I've been chasing that goal for so long. I think it's sad because It feels like I am white knuckling my way through life. Every day, gripping a steering wheel, trying not to "mess up". When I don't eat the foods I decide are appropriate for my plan, I feel hopeless. I'm not always mad at myself, but perhaps just have that hopeless feeling that I'll never get where I want to be.

If I'm honest with myself, I'm guessing my life isn't going to change dramatically when I lose the weight. I like to imagine, suddenly I'll be rich and well liked by everyone! Haha. It's just trim, popular and wealthy seem to be the 'holy grail' of temporal, selfish goals.

DAY 26

AFFIRMATION: Today I choose healing and nourishing my body, mind, and spirit.
PROMPT: What do I desire in life MORE than losing weight?

I love this quote I found in a church manual "Self-denial … is not the negative, forbidding thing that often we shake our heads about. In one sense there is no such thing as self-denial, for what we call such is the necessary price we pay for things on which our hearts are set."

So that's what has brought me here today. My heart is not set on being skinnier or really even losing weight. If that's all I wanted, I would have made that happen. My desire is self mastery, and control for the sake of being healthy.

Self-denial is not restrictive. It is liberating. It is the pathway to freedom. It is strength. It is an essential element of purity. If I choose self-denial, I am choosing freedom from my addictions.

DAY 27

AFFIRMATION: I am creating a life of abundance.
PROMPT: How am I contributing to my family or the world in a meaningful way?

Not proud of my choices yesterday, but it could have been worse. I was at a conference where they provided food. Normally, at a social event, I would eat an excessive amount of the crappy food. Not yesterday!! Although I did eat the 600 calorie croissant club sandwich, and the chips, I only ate PART of the cookie! The whole thing would have EASILY been 500 calories. They also had a table FULL of trail mix and Kind bars. Both healthy choices, right!? BUT, I knew by taking it, I would eat it. I knew by eating eat, I'd be WAY over my calories for the day. I thought about taking it and saving it for later, but I KNEW that I was lying to myself. I knew I wouldn't save it for later. Once I have trail mix in my possession, I WILL eat it.

When will I learn, there is no do-overs. There just is moments when I make poor choices and moments when I make good ones.

DAY 28

AFFIRMATION: My purpose filled life allows me to enjoy every moment.
PROMPT: What are some non- hunger reasons I eat?
The thing I'm worried about this week is an event on Saturday with a brand. They are feeding us there, and I certainly will want to overeat. I have a huge problem with **"FEAR OF MISSING OUT".** No doubt they'll have amazing food that I don't normally go for, and will think in my mind- I will NEVER have the opportunity to eat this again in my life!". What I really need t have a fear of missing out on is MY LIFE! Why isn't that more important than a cookie?

This specific question has come up in these journal prompts many different forms, but I do believe it's one of the most important questions worth exploring. When I finally pin down the reasons I'm eating, it will have less power over me.

DAY 29

AFFIRMATION: I am moving forward each day
PROMPT: What will I be deprived of if I deprive myself of a binge?

I'm in a total funk today! The weekend was a disaster. I feel like every weekend is a disaster, and then some Monday's it's INCREDIBLY difficult to get back on track. This weekend there wasn't time for mindfulness. It seemed like every meal was in the company of others, and I made decisions I wouldn't have if I were on my own. For example, the chocolate chip cookies and ice cream! I probably ate 3 bowls! I'm so disappointed.

Then, I woke up higher on the scale, super sluggish, and incredibly TIRED! Tired of working so hard. Tired of pushing. Tired of running. Tired of using willpower to not eat unless at mealtime. Basically, I'm being a big baby. When I really think about it, I SHOULD Be tired of indulging. Tired of my clothes not fitting. Tired of eating mindlessly. That should make me tired. The truth is, the past week, I felt AMAZING. (before the weekend). I put on a pair of pants I hadn't worn in a long time and they were loose. That felt amazing! I had incredible confidence. I felt like I could master anything! I can not let a two day reprieve set me back. I'm on a continuous trajectory.. Moving forward each day.

When I deprive myself of a binge, I deprive myself of guilt. I deprive myself of feelings of failure. I deprive myself of feeling crappy! It physically feels amazing to be deprived.

DAY 30

AFFIRMATION: I properly chew all the food that I eat so that it gets digested properly and that helps me in reaching my ideal weight.
PROMPT: What roadblocks consistently get in the way of reaching my goals?

> *It's supposed to be hard. If it weren't hard, everyone would be doing it. The hard is what makes it great.*

I heard this quote on A League of Their Own Last Night, and it's exactly what I need to kick me in the butt once again! How many times do I need a kick in the butt? Well, the way things are going, like every Monday morning! The slippery slope looked like this. Thursday, I had some snacks after a cooking demo we did. Just stood around the table eating without thinking. Then, Friday, went to lunch with friends. Somehow, that gave me license to indulge the rest of the day. Saturday and Sunday were completely shot, as I rationalized the idea of having a cheat day. I heard myself say to myself, "even fitness competitors give themselves a cheat day. It's actually HELPFUL to have a cheat day in order to stay on track". Well, this is a lie I've told myself for 20 years since Body for Life made cheat days OK. It is not helpful for keeping ME on track. In fact, it's extremely detrimental. I had loaves of zucchini bread on Saturday. Then, I continued the binge on Sunday with a half a loaf of white bread with butter (something I never buy because it's too difficult for me to resist). Followed by yesterday, granola bars in the morning, cheese and pretzels in the afternoon, then more and more slices of bread, and literally topped it off with a BOWL full of peanut butter mixed with powdered sugar- that combo is the ULTIMATE in me flipping the bird to all my efforts. The peanut butter/powdered sugar mix is the treat that signifies that I no longer care about healthy living. That I no longer care about mindful eating. And that I no longer care if I'm sick and full of regret after I eat it. And I was sick and full of regret! I was VERY sick to be honest. My stomach so uncomfortable and bloated that I just wanted to go to bed.

But, with literally every single low point that I pass through, comes a brilliant and bright new day! I love new days. I love new starts. And today, is a new start. I no longer need to beat myself up for the weekend. I can learn from it. Practice recovering from it. And I will emerge stronger from it like a Phoenix from the ashes. Burn to emerge. As in the words of Teddy Roosevelt, "The credit belongs to the one who is actually in the arena. Whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood and who at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails daring greatly." I'm in the arena! I'm not LEAVING the arena, ever again. I can get beat up in the arena. I can get dust and blood on my face in the arena, I can fall down. But I will not leave. I will stay in the arena even after the game is over. Even after the crowd has left. I will not leave the arena.

DAY 31

AFFIRMATION: My metabolism is running optimally, helping me achieve my desired weight.
PROMPT: Dear body, I love you because….

I find it so fascinating how I can have MORE energy with less food. It's almost like food weighs me down. The more structured my meals are, the less I eat and the more energy I have. When I allow myself to graze all day, I'm truly tired and sluggish! It's a crazy phenomenon.

I truly do love my body. Even when I'm feeling heavy, I appreciate all it can do for me. Even when I'm suffering from an ulcerative colitis flair, or hypothyroid fatigue, I still love my body! It can walk, run, hike, and I'm an EXCELLENT sleeper! For real, I know how blessed I am that I've never been an insomniac!

DAY 32

AFFIRMATION: I am letting go of the guilt I have around food.
PROMPT: What is one thing I haven't done because of my weight?

I feel like I really screwed up yesterday, and I'm trying not to let it get to me! I did great until about 6pm when my stomach felt a little nauseated. We had just got home from driving in the canyon and I was a bit car sick. So, I started taking handfuls of pretzels. And then more and more and more. Until I lost count and decided, since I had eaten more than 1500 calories, I should just decide it was a "free day", like my body for life days. So I ate a THIRD granola bar. Then, since I did that, I ate a peach, and then a bunch of cheese.. Oh yeah, and then some pasta with cheese!!!

So, the question is, why did I let myself do that? Why couldn't I be ok with just some extra pretzels. Why do I maintain this all or nothing idea?

I could decide that it's good practice! If I mess up, it takes practice to not let it turn into a 3 day bender!

I don't feel like I've ever put my life on hold or not done something directly because I felt like I didn't weigh the right amount.

DAY 33

AFFIRMATION: Junk food doesn't appeal to me. My body craves healthy, whole, real food.
PROMPT: Describe my comfort food. Why does it bring me comfort?

Peanut butter! I have no idea why. It's something I haven't given up during this entire journey. And maybe that's OK. Finding joy through food can include the foods I find that bring me comfort. The key is, and surely the reason I've still been able to lose weight despite enjoying my peanut butter, is I can thoroughly enjoy a small amount. When I do this without guilt and paying attention to the pleasure of it, I don't go back for more. Old me would fall into the classic "screw it" mentality. I messed up, might as well eat the whole jar! New me says.. "That was delicious, and I'm satisfied. Another bite would NOT be more satisfying."

Why it brings me comfort is a good question. The creaminess, the flavor, the enjoyment of eating it from a spoon? Not really sure!

DAY 34

AFFIRMATION: I breathe in relaxation, I breathe out stress.
PROMPT: What are 10 activities that make me feel the most relaxed.

So, I feel like it's uncool to admit it, but I love television! Almost every night from 8-9pm I watch a show. It's my favorite way to unwind and escape from the day. For one hour I don't think about my to-do list. I don't think about any of my responsibilities. It's an hour that I can truly forget about my own life. The funny thing though about using television to relax, is in excess, it is depressing and exhausting. So, 1 hour is perfect for peak enjoyment!

Other activities that leave me feeling relaxed:

- Sunbathing
- Reading magazines
- Walking
- Stretching/ Foam rolling
- Sleeping! (Only at night though, I hate naps!)
- Going to the temple
- Hiking in the mountains (slowly)
- Taking pictures
- Baking bread (kneading it)
- Vacuuming

I think it's wonderful to identify things that help me feel relaxed! I can go to this list when I tell myself that eating would be relaxing. I can remember, there are all these other things that are also relaxing! I love this list!





DAY 35

AFFIRMATION: My journey is unique and I do not compare myself to other people who are losing weight.
PROMPT: Identify someone that needs encouragement. How can I give it to them?

I'm not going to lie. I'm basically a super selfish person. Ask my husband or sister and they'll be the first to tell you that when they come to me with their problems, I respond by talking about myself! Who does that? I've really got to step up my game when it comes to thinking about and serving other people.

So, my first objective will be to offer encouragement to my sister! She is always trying to eat better and lose weight, so instead of me telling her about my latest diet or strategy, I can do better about

asking her how her efforts are going. I know she'll LOVE to hear about mindful eating. In fact, I've been so satisfied and excited about this approach that I can't wait to tell people that this works! It not only has worked for me over the last few weeks, but I know it can work for everyone who gives it true effort. I love that it allows flexibility and enjoyment, rather than deprivation and stress. Plus, it's basically free!

DAY 36

AFFIRMATION: I drink an abundance of water. It stokes my metabolism and my mood
PROMPT: What fears do I have for sticking to an eating plan for life?

I realized something about myself yesterday as I was listening to a podcast. It appears that I'm a jumper or a quitter whatever you want to call it I love starting new projects. But I quickly get bored the end of the project feels like it's nowhere in sight. And so I jump to the next new and shiny idea. I am committed to finishing something, including this 40 day challenge.

I do fear that my behavior isn't sustainable for life. I do fear that all the exercise I've been doing this summer will not be sustainable through the winter. I fear that I'll backslide and go right back to an easy and effortless place to be. But the difference this time is that, although that might happen, it doesn't mean I can't give it my 100% today. I no longer want to live in a world where I feel like I shouldn't even start something if I don't think I can finish it. I'll live for today and today is all that matters.

DAY 37

AFFIRMATION: My food choices are consistent with my desire to be my best weight.
PROMPT: What is one habit, if mastered would make healthy living easier?

I just returned from the first vacation in my entire life where I didn't gain weight. In fact, I lost weight while on vacation. Generally, my vacations include lots of food and hanging out with family. And this one was no exception. We had the yummiest spread of snacks you could imagine. But we also had delicious meals, that we took turns being in charge of. For example, I was in charge of breakfast, and made a waffle bar, complete with Nutella, strawberries,and whipped cream.

The reason this vacation was different, was I committed to not snack on the snack food! I didn't need to snack, to enjoy my vacation. And the snacks were ALWAYS eaten mindlessly during card games or chatting. Instead, I allowed myself to thoroughly enjoy the meals only, and not snack on the Goldfish and licorice! This made meal time even more wonderful, and I didn't miss snacking AT ALL!

So, if there is one habit I want to learn from this entire experiment, is that snacking isn't as great as I once thought, and that if I stick to three meals per day, those meals will taste amazing, be more satisfying, AND contribute to either weight loss or maintenance!

> *"That which we persist in doing becomes easier for us to do; not that the nature of the thing itself is changed, but that our power to do is increased."*

DAY 38

AFFIRMATION: I am learning new things each day.
PROMPT: What am I most grateful for about my body

So many things! But mostly, that I can move every part of it!

As I have been re-reading my journals from the last 25 years, It's been crazy to me how I hopped from one banned food to another. Always seeking for the magical food that if I removed it, the weight would melt away. I was so blind! I have entries that start: I will never buy animal crackers again! Sugar and flour is gone from my life forever. But our bodies are so amazing, that it can take any food, including animal crackers, and break it down into the tiniest components and use it for exactly what your body needs it for! It's adaptable and smart. Whether a person is eating low carb, low fat, high fiber, or low sugar, the human body makes it work, uses what it needs, and keeps on growing.

DAY 39

AFFIRMATION: I crave mindfulness each day.
PROMPT: How can you turn a workout into mindful movement?

I desire for EVERY movement to be mindful! I love to listen to music or podcasts, but I noticed several years ago, when I would go on long walks without the distractions of my earphones, I was able to be more self aware, be more creative, think deeper thoughts, and set exciting goals for my life. Now, at least once a week I make sure to have a walk without my phone, but also, the last mile of a walk/run, I will take out my headphones and just enjoy the silence.

From the time my kids were little, I've always used a morning run or a walk as my personal time. I loved that my husband supported me in that, and he knew that if he let me have that time, I was a happier, more calm mother. I set that expectation from the beginning of marriage, I was VERY consistent with it, and as a result, I was always supported in it. I am probably the most consistent person I know, as I almost never take a day off. I will walk 7 days a week, because, why not!? It' not like I'm sweating and getting my heart rate up all 7 days. Trust me, there isn't a threat of burnout. It's literally pure joy!

DAY 40

AFFIRMATION: I am on a lifelong path of wellness. Each day I recommit to being my best self.
PROMPT: How will I continue to eat mindfully for the next 40 days?
Weight 118 lbs
Hips 37"
Waist 29"
Thighs 20.5"

Without being too dramatic, I want to say that it's actually EASY! I look forward to my meals! I enjoy avoiding snacking and grazing all day, because I'm so much more productive. I enjoy avoiding snacks because the food isn't as enjoyable as a meal, or when I'm just standing in the pantry.

So, to wrap it up.. Being curious about my behavior will stop me from doing a lot of things I shouldn't,, and eating food I don't want or need. Yesterday, I found myself drawn to the pantry for a spoonful of peanut butter. I kept asking myself, "why do I want this? What is it about today, or that food that is pulling me there. One reason I decided was because it was just after church. I typically like to eat food right when church ends, out of habit. The rest of my family was in the kitchen preparing food, so I wanted to eat something too! Habit and peer pressure! I didn't need or want a meal, so I sure of heck didn't need or want a spoonful of peanut butter.

This 40 day experiment has truly changed me. I have no reason or desire to go back to snacking and mindlessly eating. I can be intentional each day. Everything I eat can be on purpose and with enjoyment! I love this way of living!!





8 CHAPTER 8: MEAL IDEAS FOR WEIGHT LOSS

True intuitive eating may be difficult until you train your body back to wellness. In the beginning, setting boundaries around your meals is necessary while your body re-learns to listen to hunger cues. With processed foods, it's easy to eat 1000 calories in one sitting, and not feel full. Depending on your size however, you should be able to be filled and satisfied by consuming 400-600 calories per meal. With the right foods and mindful eating, this CAN Be enough to keep your appetite, as well as your mind, satisfied!

Here are a few examples of what 500 calories looks like. If you are going for 600 calories per meal, add one more food to your plate, such as a piece of fruit or an extra tablespoon of peanut butter, or a handful of nuts.

This is the exact food I ate for the 40 days I was on this challenge. When you first start, as I did, you will feel like this isn't enough food to satisfy you. It's insane how very little food you need to maintain our human body!

BREAKFAST



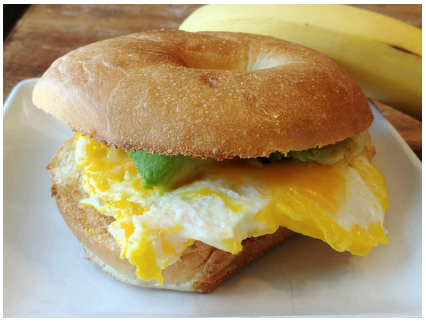
EGGS & PANCAKES

2 Eggs
1 ounce cheese
25 grams avocado
2 Kodiak pancakes
¼ cup strawberries
Total: 523 calories, carbs 35 grams, fat 23 grams, protein 34 grams



GRANOLA, BERRIES, AND YOGURT

½ cup Granola (nature valley protein)
1 cup Berries
1 cup Greek Yogurt, vanilla
TOTAL: 483 calories, 72 grams carbs 14 grams fat, 22 grams protein



EGG SANDWICH

Einstein plain bagel
2 eggs
1 slice cheese
2 slices avocado
1 banana
TOTAL: 562 calories, 79 grams carbs, 17 grams fat, 26 grams protein



OATMEAL, BERRIES, AND GREEK YOGURT

½ cup oats
1 cup Greek yogurt, strawberry
1 cup sliced strawberries
¼ cup walnuts
TOTAL: 503 calories, 63 grams carbs, 19 grams fat, and 24 grams protein

LUNCH



QUINOA SALAD

½ cup Quinoa
¼ Avocado
½ cup chopped Peppers
½ cup chopped Cucumbers
½ cup Black Beans
1 ounce Feta Cheese
2 tablespoons talian Dressing
½ cup Cantaloupe
Total: Calories, Calories 491, 60 grams of carbs, 22 grams fat, 18 grams protein



CHICKEN WRAP

1 white Tortilla
3 ounces Rotisserie Chicken
1 tablespoon Cream Cheese
½ ounce Monterey Jack Cheese
¼ Avocado
2 leaves Lettuce
½ peach
TOTAL: 511 Calories,38 grams carbs, 30 grams fat, 27 grams protein



PEANUT BUTTER AND BANANA SANDWICH

1 tablespoon Peanut butter
1 medium Banana
2 slices Bread
1 cup Carrot strips
1 tablespoon Ranch Dressing
TOTAL: 492 Calories, 74 grams carbs,17 grams fat, 14 grams protein
:

DINNER



CHICKEN AND RICE

3.5 ounces Chicken thighs
1 tablespoon BBQ Sauce
½ cup Rice with 1 teaspoon butter
Salad with ranch
1 cup Blueberries
TOTAL: 495 Calories, 53 grams of carbs, 20 grams fat, 28 grams of protein



POPPYSEED SALAD WITH CHICKEN

1 1/2 cups Green Salad mix
3.5 ounces rotisserie Chicken
2 tablespoon Briannas Poppyseed Dressing
2 tablespoons Sunflower Seeds
1 tablespoon Craisins
TOTAL: 492 Calories, 26 grams of carbs, 34 grams fat, 20 grams protein



STIR FRY CHICKEN AND RICE

1 cup Chicken thigh
½ cup cooked Rice
1 cup chopped bell Peppers
1 cup sliced Zucchini
1 tablespoon olive oil
TOTAL: 506 Calories, 36 grams of carbs, 24 grams fat, 44 grams protein



CHILI WITH CHIPS AND CHEESE

3/4 cup Chili recipe
1 ounce Cheese
Corn Chips
TOTAL: 460 Calories, 18 grams of carbs, 24 grams of fat, 22 grams of protein

MISC.

I wanted to throw this photo in because it was shocking to me how many calories it had. Before I became aware and purposeful, I would eat this for my "mini meals", several times per day! No wonder I could never lose weight despite the idea that I was "being good" on my diet! I actually still eat this, because I love it so much, but now I only eat it once a day and it is included as one of my 3 meals, not 6!



WEIRD COMBO THAT DOESN'T BELONG ANYWHERE ELSE :)

Granola bar
2 Tablespoons peanut butter
2 ounces turkey breast
2 tablespoons hummus
1 ounce string cheese
Total: 510 calories, 30 grams of carbs, 32 grams of fat, 28 grams of protein

9 CHAPTER 9: WORKSHEETS

DAILY CHECKLIST

- [ ] MAKE A PLAN
- [ ] MOVE YOUR BODY
- [ ] MEDITATION
- [ ] MINDFUL JOURNAL
- [ ] MIND FOCUSED ON INTENTION

AFFIRMATIONS

1. I am active and full of energy.
2. Today I choose healing and nourishing my body.
3. I am aligned with my higher self.
4. I recognize what has not been working for me in the past, and I have courage to change.
5. I don't compare myself to others. I'm on my own journey.
6. I am strong enough to withstand the bumps and bruises of life.
7. I am fit, healthy, and bursting with energy.
8. I allow my journey to be unique to me.
9. Maintaining my ideal weight is easy.
10. I eat well, listen well, and live well.
11. I acknowledge that my thoughts are just thoughts. They are not real.
12. I can be present. I only do one thing at a time.
13. I turn everyday tasks into mindful moments
14. I challenge existing beliefs.
15. I make peace with the past.
16. I get outdoors and embrace the beauty of nature.
17. I enjoy every bite when I eat.
18. My health, vitality, and energy increase with every breath I take.
19. I think before I eat.
20. Every cell in my body gets nourished by what I choose to put in my mouth.
21. There is new hope in every day
22. My will to live is stronger than my craving.
23. I think before I eat without judgement.
24. I realize thoughts are just thoughts and they can be changed.
25. I have an inner determination beyond food, weight, and the scale.
26. Today, I choose healing and nourishing my body, mind, and spirit.
27. I am creating a life of abundance.
28. My purpose-filled life allows me to enjoy every moment.
29. I am moving forward each day.
30. I properly chew all the food that I eat so it gets digested properly and this helps me reach my ideal weight.
31. My metabolism is running optimally, helping me achieve my desired weight.
32. I am letting go of the guilt I have around food.
33. Unhealthy foods don't appeal to me. My body craves healthy, whole, real food!
34. I breathe in relaxation and breathe out stress.
35. My journey is unique and I do not compare myself to other people who are also losing weight.
36. I drink an abundance of water as it stokes my metabolism and mood.
37. My food choices are consistent with my desire to be my optimal weight.
38. I am willing to learn new things each day.
39. I crave mindfulness each day.
40. I am on a lifelong path of wellness. Each day I recommit to being my best self.

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
DAY 6	DAY 7	DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10
DAY 11	DAY 12	DAY 13	DAY 14	DAY 15
DAY 16	DAY 17	DAY 18	DAY 19	DAY 20
DAY 21	DAY 22	DAY 23	DAY 24	DAY 25
DAY 26	DAY 27	DAY 28	DAY 29	DAY 30
DAY 31	DAY 32	DAY 33	DAY 34	DAY 35
DAY 36	DAY 37	DAY 38	DAY 39	**DAY 40**

JOURNAL

DAY 1 DATE: / /

JOURNAL PROMPT:

AFFIRMATION:

WEIGHT: HIPS: THIGHS: WAIST:

JOURNAL

DAY 2 DATE: / /

JOURNAL PROMPT:

AFFIRMATION:

JOURNAL

DAY 3 DATE: / /

JOURNAL PROMPT:

AFFIRMATION:

JOURNAL

DAY 4 DATE: / /

JOURNAL PROMPT:

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DAY 5 DATE: / /

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DAY 6 DATE: / /

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DAY 7 DATE: / /

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