

# mindful MEAL CHALLENGE

## Day 1: Mindful Meal Basics

Hey guys, welcome to the Mindful Meal Challenge.

I'm Darya Rose, and I'm so happy you decided to join me and commit to practicing mindful eating for the next 5 days.

Mindful eating is one of the most underrated healthstyle habits, and it can be life-changing if you are able to integrate it into your daily life.

Over the next five days I'm going to be sending you daily videos to help you through the process of learning to eat mindfully.

Today we're just going to start with the basics.

One of the reasons mindful eating can be such a difficult habit to develop is that the phrase is pretty vague.

What does mindfulness mean exactly?

For the purposes of this program we will consider mindful eating to be focusing your attention on the experience of eating your food and NOT doing anything else.

Sounds simple enough, but it is easier said than done.

Our minds wander by nature. They drift to thoughts, feelings, memories and other sensory stimulations. We tend to judge things and wish they were different. We make plans for the future and ignore the present moment.

If your mind is doing any of these other things, by definition you are not focused on your experience of eating.

The goal of mindful eating is to notice when your mind wanders away from your present experience and bring it back to your meal, without judgment. That's it.

In this program you are going to eat one meal mindfully per day for five days.

I want you to focus one specific meal where your only goal is to eat mindfully so you don't fall into the trap of "trying" to eat mindfully at every meal, while also trying to do other things.

Getting specific about your goals makes them much easier to achieve.

Mindfulness is more difficult when there are more distractions around you. For this reason you should choose one meal a day that you are able to eat alone (or in silence with others also eating mindfully).

For most people this is breakfast or lunch, since dinners tend to be more social. But you can choose whatever meal you like.

If for some reason it is impossible for you to have a single meal you can eat mindfully every day, you can choose a snack to eat mindfully. A more prolonged dining experience is ideal though.

Take a moment to think about the best time for you to eat a mindful meal. Maybe it's in the morning during breakfast. Maybe you can sneak off to a conference room at work during your lunch break.

The more quiet the space the better. There should be a chair and a table for you to sit at. Ideally there will be no music, screens, or other beeping/buzzing technology nearby.

Don't feel like you need to choose the same meal every day. If your schedule changes throughout the week, feel free to move your mindful meal each day to a time that suits you best.

After this lesson is complete, add your mindful meals to your calendar.

Your first mindful meal should happen today. Take your food to your quiet place and sit down.

If you're curious how long your mindful meal will last, feel free to set a timer before you start. This can be helpful in proving to yourself that you do in fact have time for one mindful meal each day.

You can also take a picture of your food before you start if you like and share it with the hashtag #mindfulmealchallenge after you are finished.

Once you do these things, be sure to put your phone and/or computer in sleep or Do Not Disturb mode and put them away.

Start your mindful meal by just looking at your food. Notice the colors, shape, moisture and other physical properties. If you find yourself naming or judging an element of your meal in your mind, simply notice that your mind tends to do this and bring your attention back to the properties of the food itself.

After looking at your food for a few moments, bring your nose closer and smell it. Notice the aroma. If you identify a familiar scent in your food note that as well.

When you are ready, close your eyes and take your first bite of food. Notice the taste, texture and mouthfeel of what you are eating.

Try to pinpoint where you experience the flavor in your mouth. This can be trickier than it sounds, since our brains compile the sense of taste from both our tongues and our noses. Personally I experience most of the sensation of flavor at the back of my mouth, but not always.

Slowly chew your food, and notice how the taste and texture of the food changes as you continue to chew. Chew until all the food in your mouth is soft and thoroughly chewed, then swallow it.

You can open your eyes after your first bite, but continue to eat slowly and notice the flavors and textures of eating. Continue to chew your food as thoroughly as possible.

After a few bites you may notice that your mind starts to wander to other things. Maybe you have an urge to check your phone, or an impulse to eat faster. Or maybe you've started to plan the rest of your day. This is normal.

Just notice that your mind tends to do this and remember that you have committed this short 10-15 minute period today to practice bringing your attention back to your experience of eating.

If you start to feel bored or anxious, notice these judgments as well and remember your commitment to practice.

The more your attention wanders and you bring it back to your eating experience, the more practice you are getting. This is a good thing, so do not be frustrated with yourself.

Toward the end of your meal you may start to notice that you are getting full or no longer wish to eat. This is OK, and you can stop your meal whenever you like. However, judging how full your stomach is is not the goal of this practice.

One of the most common misunderstandings about mindful eating is that the purpose is to learn to stop eating when you are full. While slowing down and focusing on the sensations of eating can make you feel more satisfied with your meal and naturally eat less, this is not the goal *while* you are eating.

It really does take 20 minutes or so for your brain to fully recognize satiety, so it is more valuable to slow down and truly experience your meal than it is to try to predict your future feelings in your stomach.

Eating slower will naturally help you eat less. Paying attention to the experience of eating will naturally make your meal more satisfying. Eating less and enjoying food more is a byproduct of mindful eating, not the primary goal of practice.

This week you are practicing keeping your attention on your eating experience. Stop when your food is gone or when you no longer wish to continue eating.

To recap:

- Choose one meal per day to eat mindfully for 5 days and add the times to your calendar
- Take a picture of your food and set a timer (optional)
- Turn off your phone and computer
- Focus on the experience of eating your food

- Notice when your mind drifts to something else and bring it back

After your mindful meal today head over to the [Mindful Meal Challenge group on FB](#) and share your thoughts and insights. It's also the best place to ask questions if you have them.

I'll see you tomorrow with more tips for your Mindful Meal Challenge.