

# Strive for mindful instead of mindless eating habits

October 4 2016, by Ann Blackford

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Have you ever raised and butchered a chicken or a pig or do you get all your meats in nicely sanitized vacuum packed containers? In the process of nurturing our bodies and nurturing our souls, many of us have lost self-balance, hence our obesity epidemic.

We have become detached and unaware of our present moment, of our presence in our environment, of our inter-presence. The underlying philosophy of mindful/contemplative eating is to rekindle these senses which we have neglected. To make us aware once again of the sights, smells, sounds, feelings and presence of things in our environment which sustain and nourish our being.

To study [mindless eating](#) and subconscious eating stimuli, Brian Wansink has conducted extensive studies on these behaviors. For example did you know that you will likely eat twice the amount of jelly beans if there is more than one color in the bowl? The bigger the serving the more you are likely to consume. You may pour 70 percent more liquid and drink 25-30 percent more out of a short, wide glass than a tall glass.

How many times have you watched a movie alone and wondered where the popcorn in the bucket disappeared? When served the same wine under different labels, we will generally like the more expensive bottle or the wine with the more prestigious looking label. Food marketing is a science built on our subconscious buying and eating stimuli. The more [food](#) variety in a food isle the more you are likely to buy.

How can we develop mindfulness so that we become more aware of our environment and our relationship to food? We can build in cues to raise our awareness. For example, move tempting foods to less convenient locations so it takes extra effort to reach them, don't put serving dishes on the table. Instead, get up to get a second helping, remove distractions including turning off the iPhone, iPad and TV—things that take you away from the [present moment](#). Also, use a smaller plate (the portion will look larger), as reminders give blessings for the sources of your food (where did it come from, how was it grown, who might have processed it for you, how did it get to your plate), pay close attention to the smell, texture, color, taste of your food and eat slowly experiencing the "wholeness" of your meal.

When possible utilize smaller package size so that you are made aware when the amount is gone. When every 10th Pringle in a package was marked with a food dye compared to no markings people ate fewer chips – every 10th chip is an awakening cue. As an exercise in mindful eating try eating one small square of chocolate slowly over a five minute span and experience the "fullness" of chocolate.

**More information:** A useful website to gain more information can be found at the Center for Mindful Eating: [thecenterformindfuleating.org/about-us](http://thecenterformindfuleating.org/about-us).

Provided by University of Kentucky

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