

INSTRUCTIONS for THE MINDFUL EATING COACH APP (available at Apple Store)

(These instructions provide more detail than what is currently in the app under the “Coaching” tab)

Who will benefit from using this app?

The **Mindful Eating Coach** is designed to help people who: eat too much or too little, eat when they're not hungry, feel badly about their eating or their weight, worry a lot about food and eating, often think, “I wish I hadn't eaten that,” but keep repeating the same patterns, or struggle in other ways with their eating and/or weight. The goal is to help you feel better about your eating choices and to help you maintain a healthy weight.

This app is NOT designed to treat eating disorders. If you are struggling with serious eating and weight problems (like an unhealthy low weight or purging), please see a doctor or mental health professional.

What is mindful eating?

Mindful eating is paying attention to your HUNGER and FULLNESS cues and trying to primarily use those cues to make decisions to start and stop eating. It's doing your best to: not get too hungry or too full, avoid eating when you're not hungry, and enjoy what you do choose to eat.

Mindful eating is distinguishing between hunger and WANTING to eat for other reasons (e.g., being upset, avoiding work, socializing, taste). If you want to eat for other reasons, it's INTENTIONALLY deciding whether it's more effective to eat (e.g., because you'll feel deprived if you don't) or to do something else to meet your needs (e.g., distraction, coping in other ways).

Mindful eating is intentionally choosing foods and amounts that you predict will be “worth it,” meaning you will enjoy in the moment and will still feel good about eating it later on.

Mindful eating is being kind to yourself when you make mistakes. It's focusing on taking away lessons so that you make more mindful choices in the future, rather than criticizing yourself or feeling guilty.

Mindful eating is NOT a “diet,” a set of “rules,” eating “perfectly” all the time, only eating “healthy” foods, or never having a treat.

How to BE MINDFUL

Whenever you want to eat or it's a planned meal or snack, follow these steps to BE MINDFUL when eating . . .

- B:** Breathe in and out – pause to tune in to what's going on internally and around you
- E:** Explore reasons for wanting to eat besides hunger (i.e., food available, emotions)

- M:** Monitor how hungry you are
- I:** Intentionally decide to eat – or not eat
- N:** Now, recall past lessons – think about what will be “worth it” to eat now and later
- D:** Dine slowly and savor your food
- F:** Focus on staying tuned in to how your stomach feels while eating
- U:** Use moderate fullness as your signal to STOP eating (no matter what you eat)
- L:** Learn from the experience, but don't judge! Focus on lessons for improving next time

**Also, “check in” with your appetite and how you feel periodically throughout the day, and especially after eating (e.g., are you hungry and need to eat? how do you feel after that snack? was that meal really “worth it,” or would you have enjoyed something else more?)*

Why do you need a coach?

Changing mindless eating habits and making mindful eating your new habit initially takes a lot of effort. ***That's why you need a coach!*** The “Mindful Eating Coach” provides **five coaching tools** that help you coach yourself throughout the day to follow the steps to **BE MINDFUL**.

When you first use the app, use it as long as you need to make mindful eating a habit (this may take from a few weeks to several months). When you feel like you're getting the hang of mindful eating, you can shift to “mental coaching” (or using the coaching tools in your mind, without the app). When old habits show up again (e.g., when you're on vacation or you're stressed), use the app again for a few days or weeks until you get back on track. Then you can return to mental coaching.

Tool #1: COACHING ALERTS

Coaching alerts remind you to coach yourself to BE MINDFUL throughout your day.

We are in the process of adding the alerts into the app. For now, you will set alerts using the “Calendar” app on your iPhone. We’d like for you to set four alerts each day. Please set the first alert early in the morning to start off your day. Choose the other three alerts from the list below. Set those alerts at times when you have more trouble with your eating.

List of coaching alerts

Set your INTENTION: Be your own mindful eating coach ALL DAY

Alerts to remind you to stay tuned in to appetite cues:

- BREATHE . . . Tune in to how hungry or full your stomach feels
- STAY IN THE GREEN as much as possible
- STAY TUNED IN to your stomach during and after eating
- Use your stomach as your STOP SIGN
- Don’t GET STUFFED no matter why you started eating

Alerts to help you decide what and how to eat:

- PLAN AHEAD - getting too hungry makes it hard to stop
- Choose foods that feel good BOTH IN THE MOMENT and LATER ON
- REMEMBER how different foods and amounts felt in your body
- FULLY ENJOY what you eat and eat slowly

Alerts to manage urges to eat when not really hungry:

- Notice when you want to eat just because you SEE FOOD
- Notice urges to eat when you’re BORED or PROCRASTINATING
- Consider SITTING WITH uncomfortable emotions instead of eating
- TRY DISTRACTION when you have non-hunger urges to eat
- Remember, food DOESN’T FIX uncomfortable emotions

Directions to set a coaching alert

- ✓ Go into the “Calendar” app
- ✓ Click “+” in the top right-hand corner
- ✓ Type the text of the desired alert (where it says “Title”)
- ✓ Click on “Starts,” and scroll to the time you’d like to receive the alert each day (keep the day as “Today”)
- ✓ Click on “Repeat” and select “Every Day”
- ✓ Click on “Alert” and select “At time of event”
- ✓ Click “Add” (in top right corner) to set the alert

Tool #2: APPETITE RATINGS

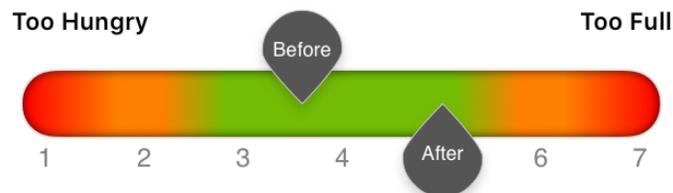
Under **Ratings**, add a new entry for every meal and snack. Check meal or snack, and then rate your hunger and fullness levels BEFORE and AFTER eating. You also have the option to check if you had a caloric beverage and to add a picture. Try to do your ratings as close to when you eat as possible. If you forget, complete your rating as soon as you remember!



Your goal is to STAY IN THE GREEN (as shown above), meaning . . .

- Eat before you get Too Hungry (to the orange) – because when you’re too hungry you’re likely to eat too fast and too much
- Eat enough so you don’t get Too Hungry (to the orange) before you eat again
- Stop before you get Too Full (to the orange)
 - For weight maintenance, stop just before the orange
 - For weight loss, stop slightly earlier
 - For weight gain, eat a little into the orange
- At the end of the day, look at your whole day of ratings and praise yourself for times when you STAYED IN THE GREEN.

NOTE: Sometimes mindful eating means deciding to eat even though you’re not hungry. You might do this: to prevent getting too hungry later (like if you won’t have a chance to eat for awhile), to cope with uncomfortable emotions, or to prevent feeling deprived (like if you skip eating cake at a party). This is totally allowed *if it’s intentional*. Just make sure to stop before you get to the Too Full orange zone. See an example below:



Tool #3: HOW MINDFUL? RATINGS

After rating your appetite, rate how mindfully you ate. You'll select . . .

- **SUNNY** if you were MOSTLY mindful
- **PARTLY CLOUDY** if you were PARTLY mindful
- **CLOUDY** if you were NOT SO mindful

Tool #4: LESSONS

After the How Mindful? Rating, you'll be asked what lessons you want to take away from that meal or snack. This is an important part of being your own mindful eating coach! An effective coach analyzes the last "game," praises the team for what they did well, and provides feedback for how they can do better next time. So, be your own cheerleader and avoid criticism! Criticism makes you feel bad and makes it difficult to focus on what lessons you need to remember for the future.

If you selected . . .

- **MOSTLY SUNNY**, check off things you did well to eat mindfully.
- **PARTLY CLOUDY**, select what went well and then any lessons you want to remember for the future.
- **MOSTLY CLOUDY**, check off any lessons you want to remember for the future.
- Select "**My Lessons**" at the bottom to type any personal lessons. These lessons will be saved under the "History" tab (the lessons you check will not). So, type any information here that you want to review or remember later. These might be things like: "One doughnut felt good, but the second wasn't worth it," or "Make sure to eat enough at breakfast so I'm not starving by lunch."

Tool #5: HISTORY

Use the **History** tool to track your improvement, identify new goals, and review your Lessons. Praise yourself for any **green**! This means you were mindful of hunger or fullness. Notice the other colors and use this information to pick GOALS to continue working on. For instance, if you see a lot of **red**, you may want to work on planning ahead to not get so hungry or stopping eating earlier.

Under **My Lessons**, you can review the personal lessons you typed in. Part of mindful eating is pausing to consider both your GOALS and past LESSONS. This helps you stop repeating eating decisions that aren't "worth it," so you less often end up thinking, "I wish I hadn't eaten that!" or "Why did I do that again?"

Resources

For more information about the strategies used in this app, refer to Dr. Linda Craighead's (2006) book: *The Appetite Awareness Workbook: How to Listen to Your Body and Overcome Bingeing, Overeating, and Obsession with Food* from New Harbinger Publications (<https://www.newharbinger.com/appetite-awareness-workbook>).

Additional handouts to help you as you use the *Mindful Eating Coach* can be found here: <http://craigheadlab.weebly.com/mindful-eating-coach-app.html>.