

## *Mindful Eating During the Holidays*

The holiday season is a time to come together to celebrate traditions, spend time with loved ones, express gratitude and of course enjoy holiday foods. It can be a great occasion to practice mindful eating. Mindful behaviors originated from Zen Buddhism. Mindful principles focus on being present and aware. It emphasizes a relaxed, nonjudgemental, and deliberate approach to food consumption. Mindful eating is an approach to food that focuses on an individuals' senses of being aware of food. It has little to do with calories, carbohydrates, fat or protein. Paying attention to what, when and how you eat allows you to better tune into your body's hunger cues and make choices that keeps your energy and spirits up during the holidays.

So how exactly do you practice Mindful Eating? Here are a few tips from the experts to help you through the holiday season.

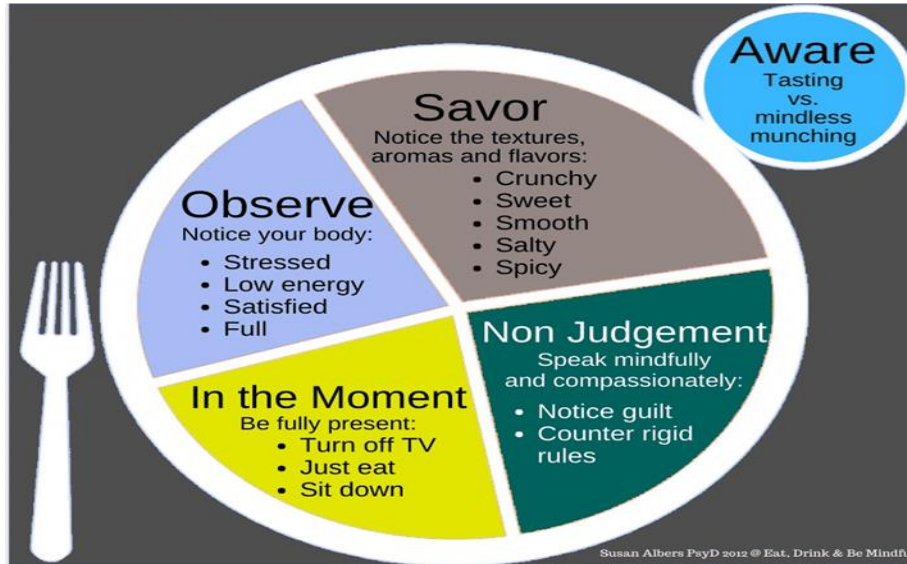
### ***Mindful Eating Strategies to Improve Your relationship with Food During the Holidays***

- **Recognize Signs of Hunger:** Do you feel tired, sluggish, nauseous or faint? Is your stomach growling, difficult to focus? Recognize you own signs of hunger especially if it has been a few hours since you last ate.
- **Sit to Eat:** It's easy to lose track of how much you're eating when grazing the holiday buffet while chatting. When you sit down to eat, however, it can help you connect and better gauge how much food is on your plate, see distractions, aware of what and why you're eating. Improve your overall awareness.
- **Breathe Deeply:** Take a deep breath before eating can help you achieve some degree of mindfulness- allows us to become more in tune of our surroundings, emotions to ensure you recognize hunger signals and respond appropriately.
- **Focus on Sensory Cues:** Your senses easily get overloaded by the sheer indulgence of the season with fancy cocktails, dazzling desserts and nostalgic flavors. Take time to focus on the scent, taste, texture and temperature of food is one way to practice mindful eating. Be intentional about what you choose to eat. Eat the foods you enjoy with confidence allowing more control of your eating.
- **Stick to a Schedule:** Treat holidays and days with holiday functions like any other day following your usual eating schedule. Don't skip meals to "save up" for the holiday meal. Avoid going more than 4 hours without eating as too long will may trigger mindless eating resulting in overeating.
- **Practice Coping Mechanisms:** Spending time with family members you don't typically see can stir up emotions- good and bad. Emotional eating is a normal human response, especially when we don't have the skills or tools to manage our emotions. Your toolbox can be deep breathing, meditation, walk away for a moment to regroup are only a few ideas. Learn to deal with the situation so it does not result in mindlessly overeating.

- Slow Down: It can take about 20 minutes for the stomach to send a message to your brain that you are full. Eating more slowly puts you in control and helps you enjoy each bite, so you feel more satisfied and provides the opportunity to stop before overeating.

These are just a few mindful eating strategies. Mindful eating during the holidays reminds you to appreciate foods and welcome the festivities.

Follow the plate below with reminders to follow mindful eating during the holidays!



### **Crockpot Pumpkin Spiced Oatmeal from Taste of Home**

1 can (15 ounces) pumpkin

1 cup steel-cut oats

3 tablespoons brown sugar

1-1/2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

3/4 teaspoon salt

3 cups water

1-1/2 cups 2% milk

Optional toppings: Toasted chopped pecans, ground cinnamon, and additional brown sugar and milk

In a large bowl, combine the first 6 ingredients; stir in water and milk. Transfer to a greased 3-qt. slow cooker. Cook, covered, on low 5-6 hours or until oats are tender, stirring once.

Serve with toppings as desired.

Nutrition Facts: 1 cup: 183 calories, 3g fat (1g saturated fat), 329mg sodium, 34g carbohydrate (13g sugars, 5g fiber), 6g protein. Diabetic Exchanges: 2 starch, 1/2 fat.

References: [everydayhealth.com/diet-nutrition/tips-for-mindful-eating-during-the-holiday/](http://everydayhealth.com/diet-nutrition/tips-for-mindful-eating-during-the-holiday/), [foodinsight.org/a-mindful-approach-to-eating-during-the-holidays](http://foodinsight.org/a-mindful-approach-to-eating-during-the-holidays)

Written by Laurie Zirilli, registered dietitian, contract RD for Oneida County Office for the Aging. Oneida County OFA provides nutrition counseling and education for the aging. Questions about services and programs for older adults and caregivers, including the Senior Nutrition Program, should call Oneida County Office for the Aging at (315) 798-5456.