

# INTRODUCTION TO CONSCIOUS EATING: MAKING INFORMED CHOICES FOR GREATER HEALTH AND WELLBEING

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The relationship we  
have with *food* is a  
reflection of the  
relationship we  
have with *ourselves*.



*EVEN IF ...*

...you eat organic, healthy food – if you eat when distracted, under stress and without total presence, you are not fully honoring your body, mind and heart.

A National Highway Traffic Safety Administration study has shown that 80% of all car accidents and 65% of near misses are caused by distracted drivers more focused on eating or drinking than driving.

***EVEN IF ...***

...you don't have a weight management problem, if you are filling your body with processed and junk foods or lots of salt and sugar (even if it's organic), you are likely setting the stage for health concerns, including diabetes and heart disease.



***EVEN IF ...***

...you eat totally organic, are a vegan or vegetarian, on a Paleo or gluten-free diet:

if you are riddled with negative thought processes, are highly reactive or over-extended and don't take time to engage in self-care practices

... all that money spent on high-quality food is *not enough* to keep you healthy



***EVEN IF ...***

...you have successfully lost weight, if you live with constant fear and anxiety about gaining it back, you will forever be in a battle with yourself.

And if you have struggled endlessly to lose the extra pounds and keep them off, running from one diet to the next with the same results, you are never going to regain balance and peace within your body, mind and heart.



Conscious eating and  
healthy self-care go hand  
in hand.

How you nourish your  
body is *equally* as  
important as how you  
nourish your mind and your  
emotional well-being.





# INCREASE IN STRESS = DECREASE IN SELF CARE

- Men often haven't been taught how vital it is to care for themselves.
- Women often feel guilty when they do, being programmed to take care of *everybody else* first.

# PRACTICING SELF-TLC

Healthy self-care is **not** self-indulgent, and self-compassion is one of the **most important** aspects of self-care.

You **cannot** bring your best if you are constantly running on fumes and not eating properly.



”SELF-COMPASSION  
IS SIMPLY GIVING  
THE SAME KINDNESS  
TO OURSELVES  
THAT WE WOULD GIVE  
TO OTHERS.”



We all have a lot to take care of ... and we all have an impact upon the people in our lives.



Bringing our best self to **everything** and **everyone** that depends on us and leading by healthy example **requires** regular self-care and honoring the needs of your body, your emotions and your mind.



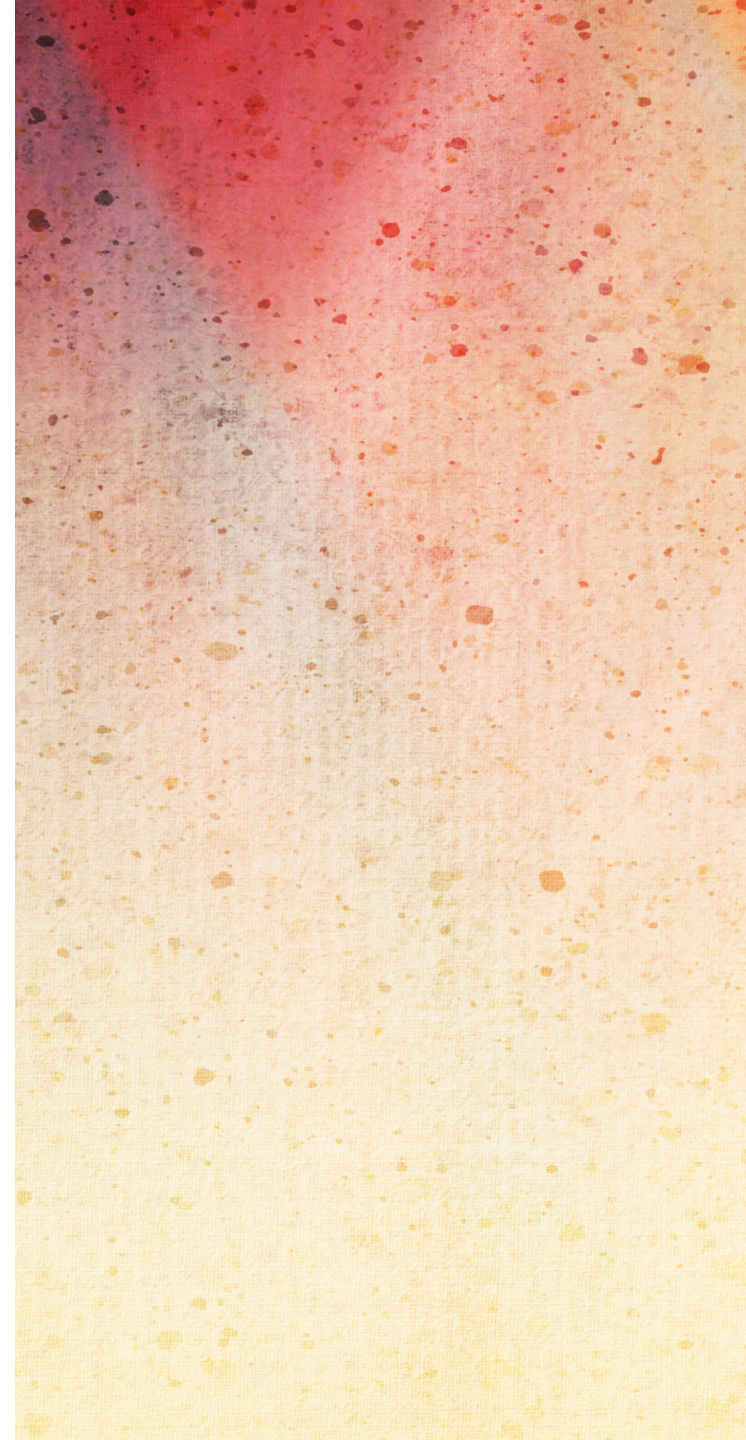
## MANY PEOPLE ARE STARVING FOR CARE

Often food is used for comfort and soothing.

Deeper, true needs are not addressed.

This can result in increased depressed mood and substance abuse.

... and food is one of the most abused substances we turn to when seeking to fill the void.



# THE FANTASTIC NEWS

**Each and every one of us** holds the key to transforming our relationship *with food* and *with ourselves* so that none of these old habitual issues and patterns need to be just “the way it is” any longer.



Bringing conscious and deliberate attention to what, where, why, and how you eat can open the doorway to a new way of living and being where you can have greater choice, freedom and empowerment.





# WHAT IS MINDFUL AWARENESS?



*Mindful awareness is deliberate, attentive focus to what's happening in the present moment, both on the **inside** and **outside** of us, **without** reactive judgment and **with** calm responsiveness.*



*Mindful awareness then extends into acknowledging the impact our thoughts, actions and behaviors have upon **others and ourselves**, and consciously choosing to treat everyone (including ourselves) in the manner we wish to be treated.*



*Mindful awareness is a Life Skill that can positively enhance any situation we apply it to; but just like any skill, **requires consistent practice to make it work** for us.*



# MINDFUL AWARENESS LIFE SKILLS

- are not a religious practice
- are not owned or a “brand”
- include formal and informal practices
- are being taught in corporations, schools, military, prisons

# MINDFUL AWARENESS SKILLS CAN HELP

Improve Focus,  
Attention and  
Performance

Improve Quality  
of Sleep

Substance  
Abuse Relapse  
Prevention

Increase Calm in  
Schoolchildren

Decrease  
Experience of  
Chronic Pain

Increase  
Emotional  
Self-Regulation

Decrease  
Stress-Related  
Health Symptoms

Decrease Anxiety  
& Depression

Improve Brain  
Function &  
Structure

Improve Social  
Relationships





# MINDFUL AWARENESS SKILLS PRACTICES

Support  
“Whole Person”  
Wellbeing:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Mental
- Spiritual



Our mind and brain work in tandem

How does mindful awareness apply to eating and **weight loss for some** and **health gain for anyone?**

# CONSCIOUS EATING = MINDFUL EATING

- It's NOT a diet.
- It takes into account multiple factors in addition to nutrition and exercise.







IT ALSO CONSIDERS

*What*  
*When*  
*Where*  
*Why*  
*and*  
*How*

we eat

## BRINGING MINDFUL AWARENESS TO EATING

Research out of Cornell University indicates people make, on average, more than 250 food decisions on any given day.

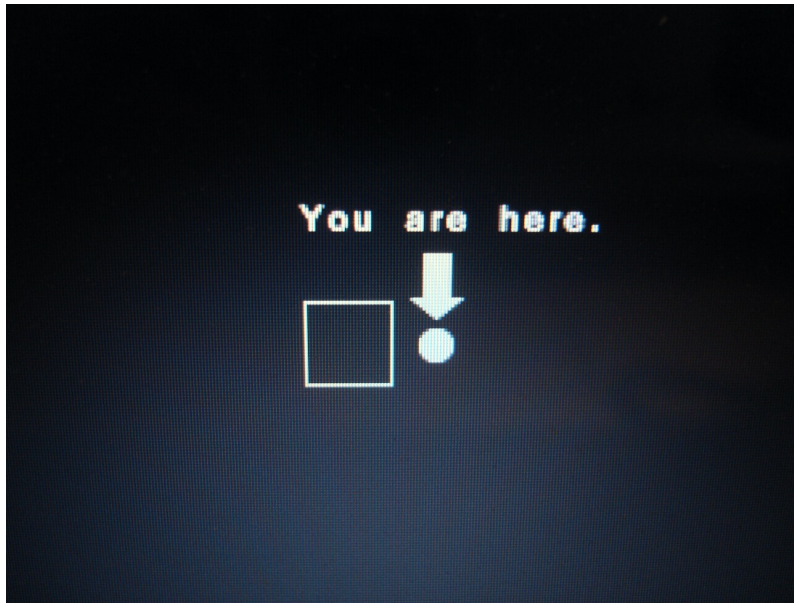
Many of these decisions are made **mind-less-ly**.

**Mind-less** eating is the habitual and automatic eating that we all do.





Mindful awareness teaches us how to become curious, interested and keen observers of our moment-to-moment experiences and habitual patterns *without* reacting to them.



## BRINGING MINDFUL AWARENESS TO EATING

Waking yourself out of automatic mind-less eating gives you the *power to choose* to steer yourself in *different* direction.





# LEVELS OF THE MIND COMPARED TO AN ICEBERG

Above the surface:  
Our conscious and constantly  
chattering mind

Below the surface:  
Our unconscious and subconscious  
mind: emotions, thoughts,  
sensations, behavioral urges,  
ingrained habits

Just like an iceberg, there's  
*a lot* more going on below  
the surface of our mind.

# WISE MIND

- Deeper intelligence
- Honors intuition/gut feelings
- Pays attention to “red flags”
- Connects body, mind and heart
- Honors our *true* needs
- Can be strengthened by practice





# MINDFUL AWARENESS PRACTICES TEACH US TO

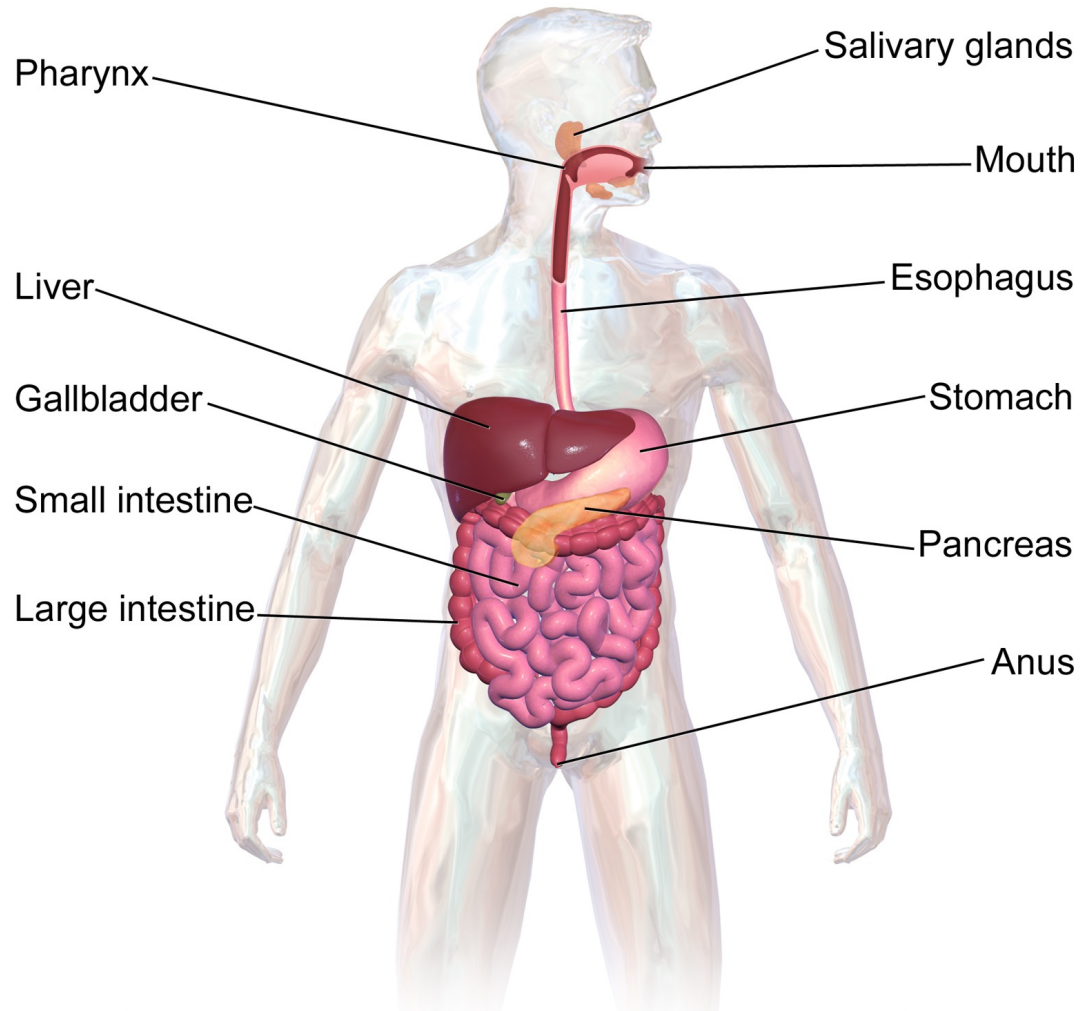
- Accept our imperfections with kindness and compassion *and* as opportunities for growth
- Let go of the past and begin again
- Learn to approach the present with a sense of adventure and learning
- Become more aware of reactive and mind-less automatic pilot patterns *without* being self-critical
- Make conscious choices that fit with our highest values and goals



The background of the slide is a textured orange color. A horizontal brushstroke in a lighter, yellowish-orange hue runs across the middle of the image, creating a visual separation between the top and bottom sections.

**HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW  
YOUR DIGESTIVE SYSTEM?**





**The Components of the Digestive System**

# EPIDEMIC OF DIGESTIVE PROBLEMS?

Over 50 million Americans experience heartburn and acid reflux - and PPIs are the third highest selling drug in the U.S. at a cost of \$14 billion annually.





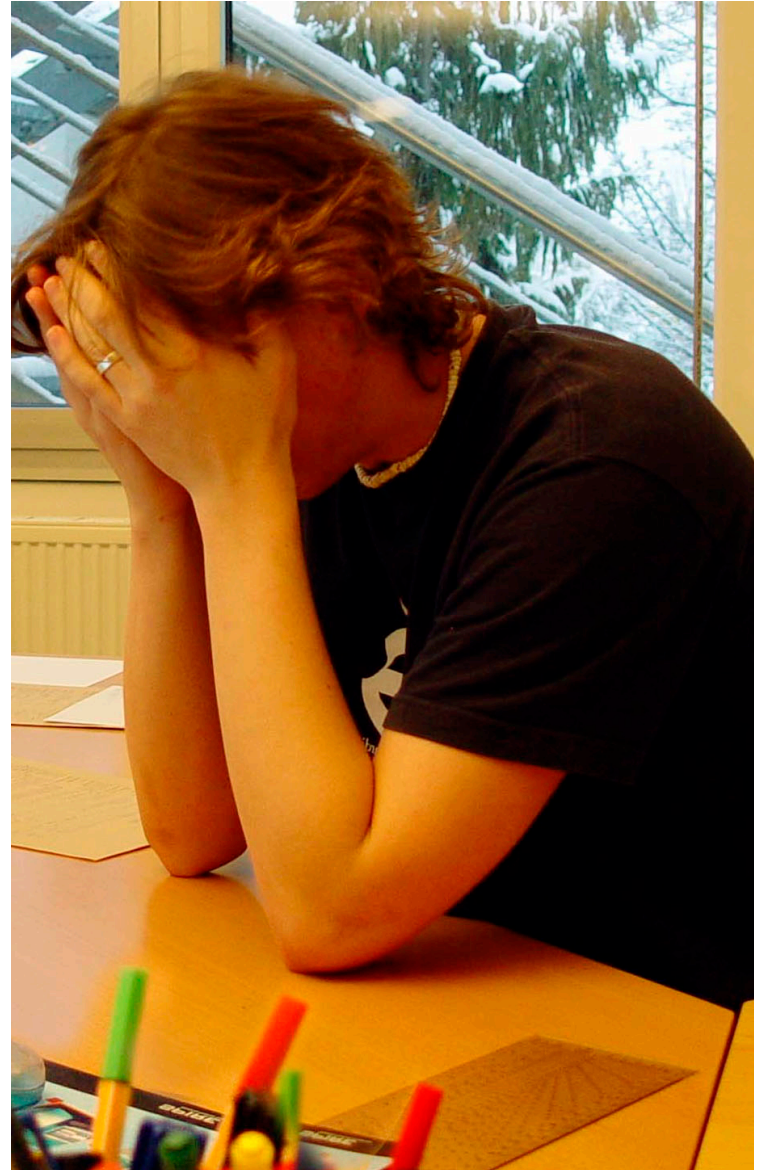


## CONSCIOUS, MINDFULLY AWARE EATING

- Naturally eat smaller portions and to savor each bite.
- Slow down and *feel* your body's hunger and fullness cues.
- Notice impulses to rush through meals and consciously intervene.
- Reduce distraction and multi-tasking during meals.
- Identify stressful emotions that drive reactive eating; meet emotional needs more intentionally.

# STRESS AND EATING

In what ways does stress  
impact what, where,  
why, and how you eat?





# THE STRESS AND EATING CYCLE

Chronic stress is an obstacle to *making* and *maintaining* healthy lifestyle changes.

- Challenging to engage in healthy behaviors
- More likely to fall back into old habits



# STRESS-REACTIVE EATING

What types of food and drink do people **typically** consume when they are stress-reactive eating/drinking?

Common things we turn to:

Sugar

Fats

Salt

Caffeine

Alcohol





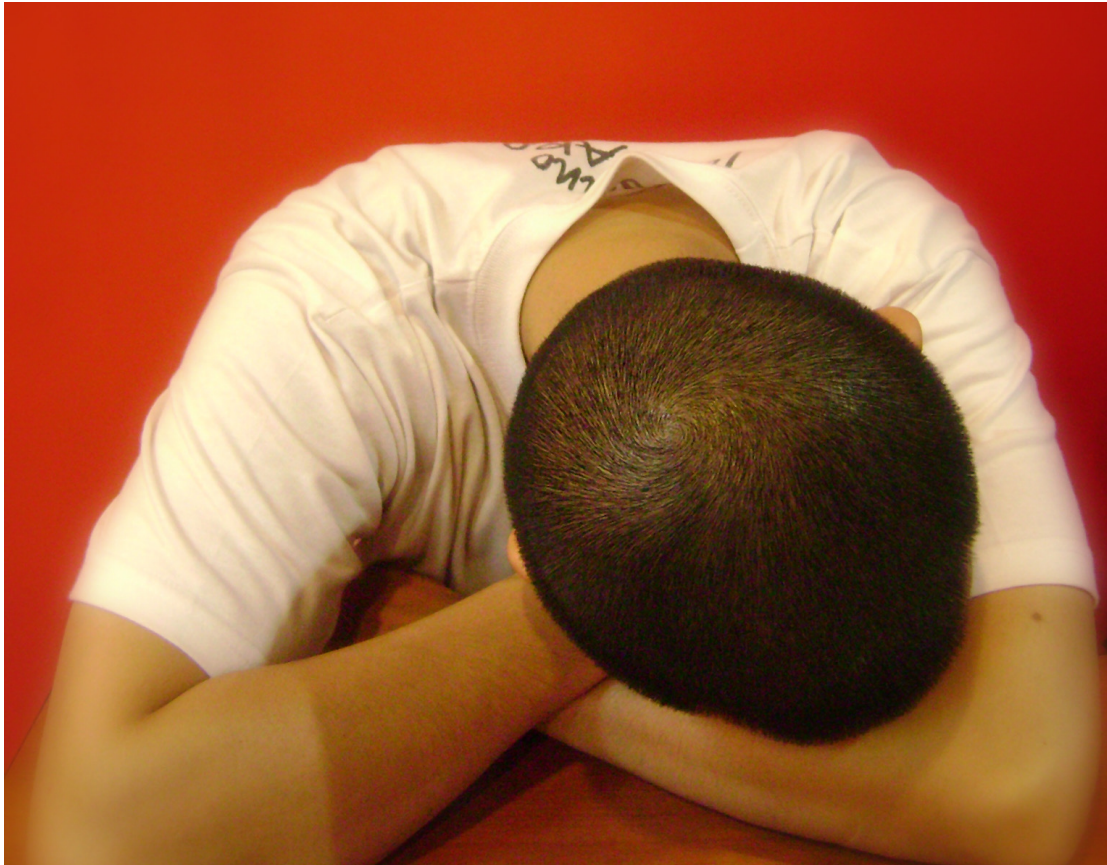
## HOW IS YOUR EATING INFLUENCED BY STRESS?

- Mindless Snacking
- Bingeing
- Skipping meals and overcompensating later
- Eating large portions
- Eating for entertainment
- Making unhealthy food choices
- Using food for reward
- Procrastinating

# THE STRESS AND EATING VICIOUS CYCLE:

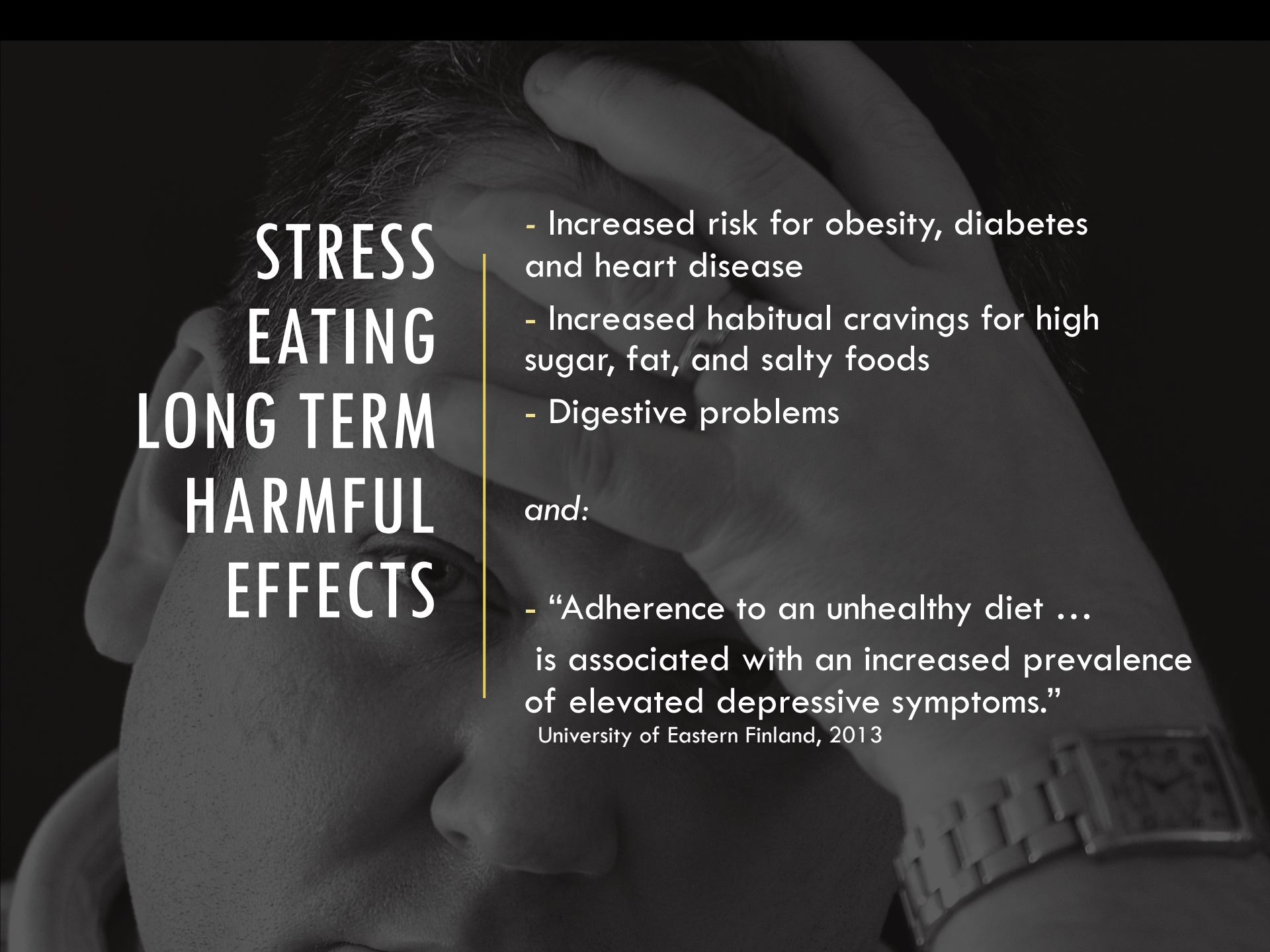






## STRESS EATING SHORT TERM HARMFUL EFFECTS

- Decreased energy level
- Mood swings
- Loss of attention
- Increased distractedness



# STRESS EATING LONG TERM HARMFUL EFFECTS

- Increased risk for obesity, diabetes and heart disease
- Increased habitual cravings for high sugar, fat, and salty foods
- Digestive problems

*and:*

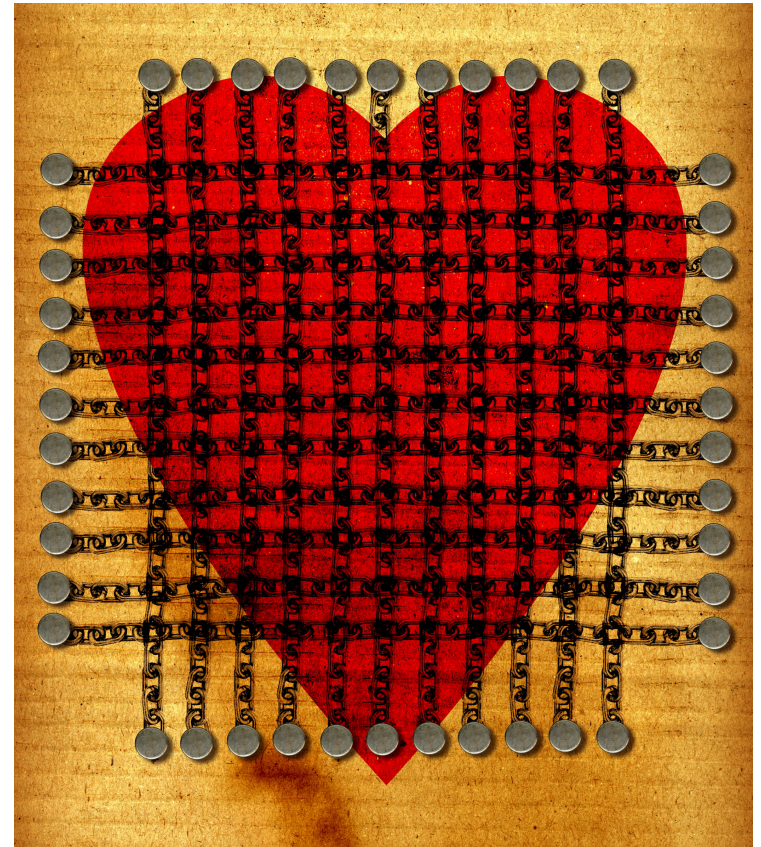
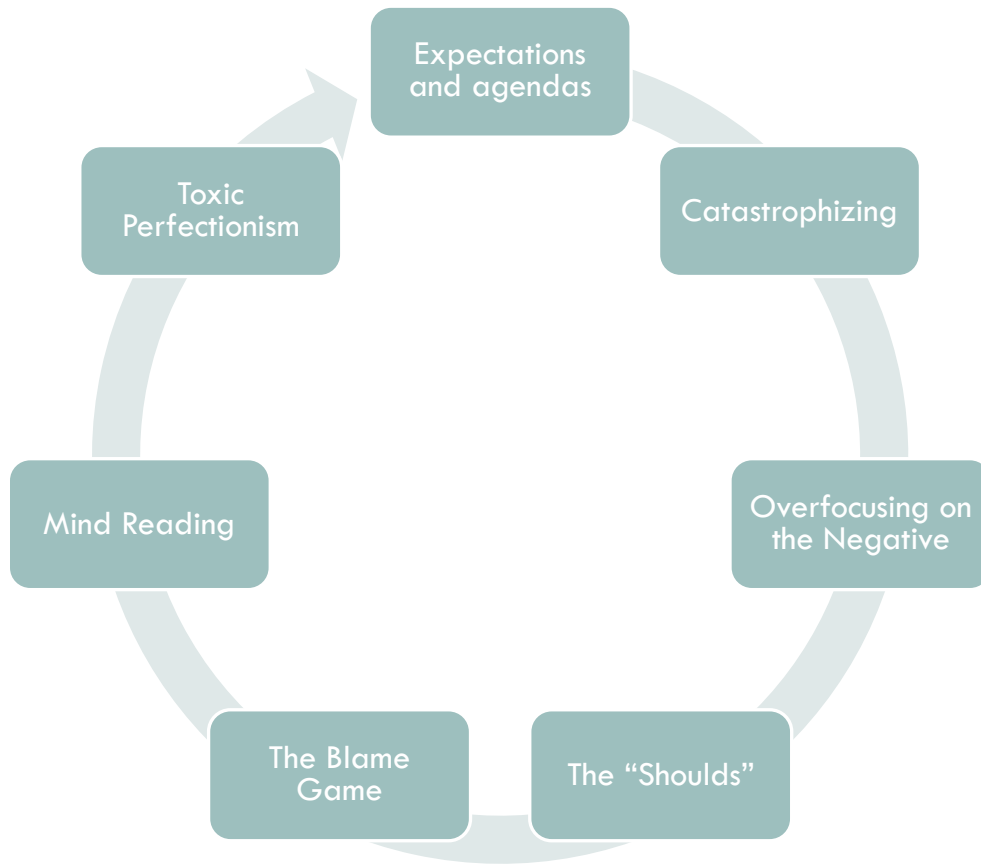
- “Adherence to an unhealthy diet ... is associated with an increased prevalence of elevated depressive symptoms.”

University of Eastern Finland, 2013



# STRESSFUL THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS

Types of thoughts that keep us stuck in habitual stress patterns





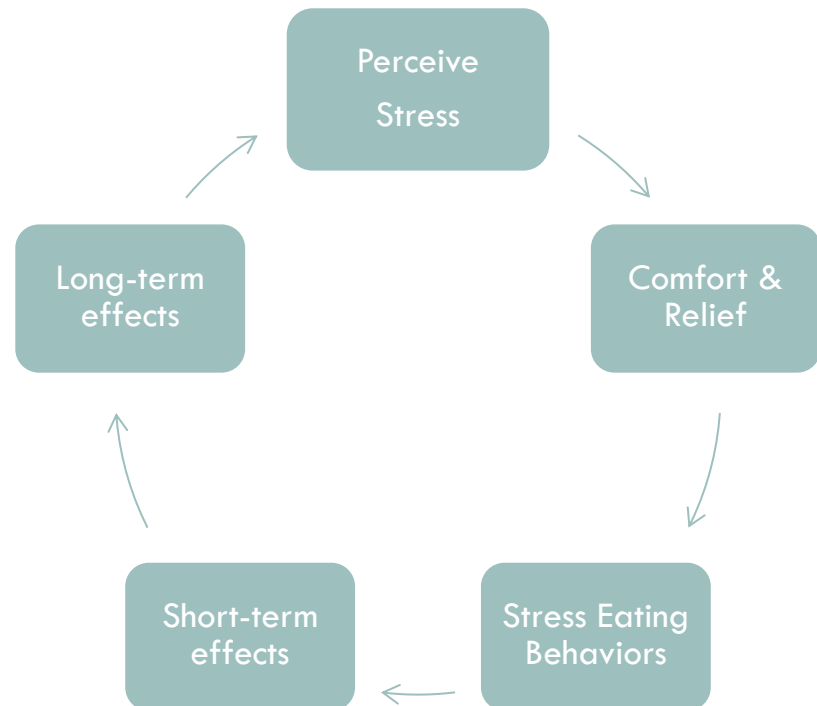
# NEGATIVE SELF- IMAGE THOUGHTS

- I don't pay much attention to my body.
- I avoid uncomfortable experiences by distracting myself or avoiding them.
- When I'm uncomfortable I turn to food.
- I am critical of my body.
- Negative self talk/  
beat myself up.



# SHIFTING OUT OF THE CYCLE

Good news: Mindful awareness can give us the **conscious focus** and **attention skills** that allow us to **choose** to step out of the stress and eating reactivity cycle...



# FIND TRUE COMFORT AND RELIEF

- Identify your *true* need and hunger
- How can that *deeper* hunger be nourished?
- Learn how to comfort and soothe *without* food







## CHOOSE STRENGTHENING BEHAVIORS

- Deal with the stressful event and not avoid or escape it; we can *choose* how we respond
- Adopt healthy comforts:

call a friend  
go to the gym  
take a short walk  
take a bath  
funny movie or TV  
...what else?

You *still* may eat – but it becomes *less likely* when you learn to make *different* choices

# MINDFUL AWARENESS IS A LIFE SKILL

Just like learning *any* skill it takes:

- Ownership of the need to change
- Commitment and accountability
- Consistent, daily practice
- Supportive environment
- Patience, practice, self-compassion and non-judgment
- Tenacity and perseverance



# CULTIVATE PRODUCTIVE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

- Make self-care a priority
- We are **all** imperfect human beings. Allow imperfections to be friends that have something to teach you
- Drop the negative stories you tell yourself - just notice them and how they make you feel – choose to let them go
- Engage in a healthy sense of humor





# VIKTOR FRANKL

Holocaust survivor  
and author of  
*Man's Search for  
Meaning*

“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.”



# BREAKING FREE OF THE KNEE JERK REACTIVITY CYCLE

A simple, on the spot mindful awareness practice you can do when a stressful situation arises:

- S**top what you are doing
- T**ake some calm, even breaths
- O**bserve what is happening
- P**roceed with a positive choice



# HOW CAN YOU FIND TIME TO INVITE MOMENTS OF MINDFUL AWARENESS?



- Before commute or driving
- Starting your workday
- At the beginning of meals
- First cup of coffee, tea, water
- Showering, brushing teeth
- Waiting in line, or on hold
- Finding a quiet place to do the **STOP** practice before a conversation or meeting

...where else can you think of?





# CONSCIOUS HOLIDAY & RESTAURANT EATING

Do you habitually

- Focus more on food than the experience?
- Eat more (or less) if you feel nervous?
- Obsess about the food itself?
- Promise to pay penance for overindulging?



## CONSCIOUS HOLIDAY & RESTAURANT EATING

### Empowered Alternative:

Take charge of your experience in the moment. When you are fully present you have greater awareness of your emotions, when you are starting to feel full, and can have greater self-control.

There's no need to turn food into your enemy or reward. Don't beat yourself up. **It's just food.**

Forgive yourself and move forward. If you have an eating disorder, it's **an act of power** to get help.





# CONSCIOUS HOLIDAY & RESTAURANT EATING

- Mindful Awareness Practice Check in: how hungry are you *really*?
- Express gratitude
- Bring in all your senses and be aware of the variety of textures and flavors
- Connect with your *entire digestive system* and inwardly choose to honor it





# CONSCIOUS HOLIDAY & RESTAURANT EATING

- Choose whatever you want, but don't eat **all** of it.
- Allow yourself to say "no thank you" without guilt (and don't make others feel guilty!).
- Put down utensils between bites and sips and consciously consider your next choice.
- Check in several times to consider fullness.
- You don't need to clean your **plate**!

A faint background illustration of a person holding three heart-shaped balloons. One balloon is light pink, another is white with a red stripe, and the third is a solid red heart. The person is shown from the waist up, holding the strings of the balloons.

# GRATITUDE IS THE ATTITUDE

- higher levels of positive emotions
- stronger sense of connection
- stronger immune system
- lower blood pressure
- less feelings of loneliness

*When you are feeling grateful, it's difficult to have an opposite emotion.*

# BEING CONSCIOUS OF WHERE OUR FOOD COMES FROM AND HOW IT REACHES US CULTIVATES INCREASED AWARENESS AND GRATITUDE

The journey from farm to plate consists of five different stages: **production, processing, distribution, retailer, and consumer.**

Think about that before you eat, and express gratitude for all it took to reach you.





# RE-MINDER: WEIGH THE BENEFITS OF CONSCIOUS EATING AND SELF-CARE



Bring attention to present moment experiences



Identify and honor *true* needs



Discover auto-pilot tendencies



Make Wise Mind choices aligned with values and goals

- Hunger and fullness awareness can support weight loss **without** struggle and **with** dignity
  - Let go of chasing perfectionism

# CREATE *SUSTAINABLE* SUCCESS ...



Increase Your Knowledge Daily



Make a Commitment to Yourself



Engage in Consistent Practice



Ask for Help and Support



Join a Healthy Eating  
Community

Thank You Thank You Thank You  
Thank You Thank You Thank You  
Thank You Thank You Thank You