

Hand Therapy Relaxation Techniques - Mindful Eating

This leaflet explains more about mindful eating and how it can help reduce stress and anxiety levels. If you have any further questions, please speak to your hand therapist.

What is mindful eating?

Mindful eating is a technique which focuses on eating with attention and intention, to create an awareness of the entire process of eating. This can help reduce stress and anxiety levels and improve your mood.

What do I do?

This is an exercise to help practise mindful eating with a small piece of chocolate. If you can't eat chocolate, you can do the exercise with a piece of fruit. Start by going to a quiet space, sitting down and trying to focus all your attention on the chocolate. Then follow these steps:

1. Pick up your wrapped chocolate. Don't unwrap it yet.
2. Place it in the palm of your hand and notice the colours and shapes on the packaging. Feel the weight of it in your hand.
3. Touch the packaging with your fingers and feel the texture.
4. Pay attention to looking at the chocolate. Pretend that you have never seen a chocolate before and that you must examine it closely.
5. If your mind starts to wander and think about other things, that's ok, just notice those thoughts and bring your attention back to the chocolate.
6. Look at each of the different sides of the package.
7. Now begin to open the wrapper, perhaps noticing the movement of your arm muscles as you open the chocolate and listen for the sounds of the wrapper tearing.
8. Raise the chocolate to your nose. Breathe in and focus on the smell of the chocolate.
9. If you have thoughts like "hurry up! Let me eat the chocolate." or "what's the point of this?" just notice those thoughts and bring your attention back to the smell of the chocolate.
10. You may notice your mouth beginning to generate saliva and perhaps you have an urge to eat the chocolate. Be mindful and aware of these feelings and experiences.
11. Now slowly take a small bite of the chocolate and notice the feeling and taste of the chocolate in your mouth. Do not swallow the chocolate yet.
12. Try to explore the sensations of the chocolate on your tongue.
13. Notice the taste and sensations on your tongue and around the inside of your mouth. Pay attention to how the chocolate starts to change consistency.
14. Try to notice the moment when you feel like you want to swallow. Then swallow the chocolate.
15. Focus on the feeling in your throat as the chocolate goes down.

Now slowly eat another sort of food, and notice how it feels, tastes, smells and sounds.

What happens during mindful eating?

Mindful eating is a way of helping you focus on sensations that we often ignore or do not notice.

When you are 'mindful' you are not using energy on worries from the past or on things that may happen in the future. Your focus is on the now, which may help reduce any stress and anxiety.

It can be very difficult to focus on the present moment when you are not used to it.

It takes practice and time for mindfulness to work.

Other ways to practise mindfulness

Many activities can be undertaken mindfully, such as washing dishes, having a shower or bath, going for a walk or playing sport. Pick a different activity and try to follow the same steps above.

You can discuss different ideas with your therapist.

Useful information

www.thecenterformindfuleating.org

Contact us

If you have any questions regarding mindful eating and hand therapy, please feel free to discuss them with your therapist at your next appointment.

For more urgent queries please contact treatment enquiries on 020 8725 1038 (answer phone only, please leave a message and someone will get back to you as soon as possible). For appointment enquiries, please contact 020 8725 3000.

Your therapist's name is: _____

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

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