

What Has Dr. Shook Been Reading?

Eating Mindfully

By Susan Albers Psy. D.

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Susan Albers is a counselor and therapist specializing in eating and addictive disorders. In her practice, Albers has seen how dieting and a negative body image can be detrimental to emotional, mental and physical health. According to Albers, low self-esteem, body image problems, a sluggish metabolism, the absence of control and balance, social and cultural values of thinness and overeating caused by emotional problems all contribute to mindless eating and mindless dieting. A persons' emotional distress, an over critical self-image and negative thoughts can distract from the body's reaction to food and the process of eating. Albers explains how both uncontrolled eating/eating without hunger and obsessive dieting/ not eating regardless of hunger are both examples of the mind, disregarding the body's need for food, in other words, mindless eating.

Eating Mindfully draws upon the teachings of Buddha and the Buddhist practice of living mindfully as a tool for better understanding your relationship with food and eating. Mindful eating allows your body and mind to send and acknowledge essential information about what you need and want to eat. Mindful eating requires a balance of the four foundations of mindfulness; mindfulness of mind, body, thoughts and feelings.

Eating Mindfully presents simple "skill builder" techniques to help anyone who struggling with chronic dieting, weight control and psychological stress associated with to eating and food. Exercises and meditations guide the reader towards a conscious awareness of their thoughts and feelings all the while encouraging compassion and a non-judgmental mindset towards oneself and others. This awareness is mindfulness, mindfulness of mind, body, thoughts and feelings.

For example: An overeater, who disregards the sensations of a full stomach and continues to eat past the point of satiety, is encouraged to eat a meal using chopsticks instead of a fork. This changes the whole eating experience forcing smaller bites, slower eating and a close look at the food being eaten.

As for myself, *Eating Mindfully* has challenged me to eat less in front of the TV and computer. A task I've found to be remarkably challenging. Why? Because I keep forgetting, I'M NOT THINKING ... Eeeek ... I'm a mindless eater. Fortunately I also learned to accept myself with compassion, not dwell on my mindless eating lapses and strive to live in the present with a little meditation and some deep breaths thrown in along the way.

Now, where are my chopsticks?

Dr. Laura L. Shook is a chiropractor with an office located near downtown Wichita KS; She can be reached by phone at 316-267-6522 or by E-mail to gooddlaura@cox.net