



University of Cyprus
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Psychological Approaches To Mindful Eating Behavior

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DISCLOSURE ✓ I do not have any potential conflict of interest

Introduction (1)

Psychology is the scientific study of (Eating) Behavior
Contemporary psychological definitions of BEHAVIOR include the study of

1. OVERT actions – habits around food choices, preparation, consumption etc
2. Cognitions and Mental representations –Thoughts e.g. I need to eat healthier, or I want a burger, or I am such a loser
3. Affect – e.g. Emotional reactions of disappointment, stress, contentment
4. PsychoPhysiological reactivity of the body – in relation to the above



Psychological approaches to eating behaviour

- Psychology begins when we start relating to food
- Through language, humans relate to food in a significantly more complex way than non-human species.
- Humans have the unique capacity to relate to food
 - **with rules** e.g. I should eat at the table, e.g. I eat lunch at 2 everyday
 - **mentally** i.e. in absentia of internal hunger stimuli or external food stimuli.
 - mental representations of food as well as thoughts and feelings way before food is even in front of us and long after we are done eating.
 - As a result eating behaviour in humans is tremendously more complicated than other animal species that relate to food in a more instinctive/automated way.

Adam Brumberg of Cornell's Food and Brand Lab



- 82,000 meals in one's lifetime
- 200 food decisions every days
- **Most are subconscious** i.e. mindless
- Most people undermine the impact of unconscious influences and decisions on eating *Wansink, Brian & Sobal, Jeffery. (2007).*
- Endless variables that affect when we eat and how much we eat
 - Packaging, marketing, who is with us, our mental state, where we are, time of the day etc



From MindLESS to MindFUL eating



- Mindful eating decreases unconscious mindless eating
- An emphasis on nutritional aspects alone (variety, quantity, balance, calories, ingredients, frequency, food combinations) may not be adequate for a sustainable impact on healthy eating behaviour, weight loss (or gain) or disordered eating.
- Deliberate attending to our eating habits, to food and to the eating process
- **Bringing conscious awareness to our choices and behaviors around food and eating**

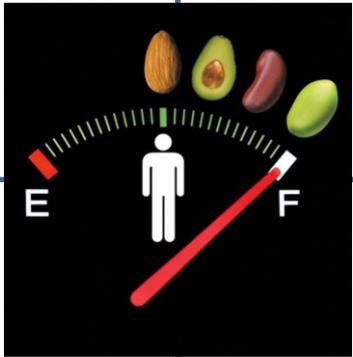
MINDFUL EATING



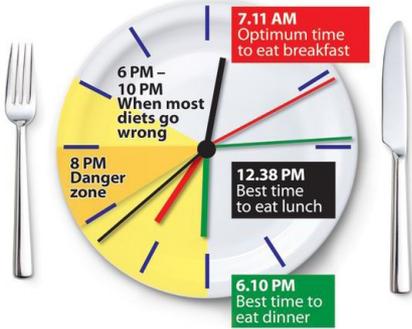
1. What? Τι τρώμε?



4. Why
Γιατί τρώμε?



2. When
Πότε τρώμε ?



3. How
Πως τρώμε ?

Mindfulness in contemporary psychological science

- Multiple pathways to mindfulness
- Mindfulness is a process that involves deliberate attention to the present moment, conscious noticing of the phenomenon, and flexible recognizing what is without judgement. (Wilson, Bordieri, & Whiteman, 2012).
- It can be packaged as a skill/strategy applied to many behaviors
 - E.g. In contemporary behaviour psychotherapy of many maladaptive behaviors we teach mindfulness with ones' emotions and thoughts



Psychological Model of EATING MINDFULLY

4 Components *Linda Craighead, PhD, Professor of Clinical Psychology, Emory University, USA*

1. Πρώτα πρέπει να συνδεθούμε με τον εαυτό και το σώμα μας.
Connect with our hunger and body (**Appetite and Body Awareness**)
2. Να συνδεθούμε με το φαγητό. Connect with food (**Food Awareness**)
3. Να συνδεθούμε με την εμπειρία ετοιμασίας φαγητού.
Connect with the experience of preparing our meals
(**Preparing Meals Awareness**)
4. Να συνδεθούμε με την εμπειρία κατανάλωσης του φαγητού.
Connect with the experience of consuming food (**Eating awareness**)

Marx, L. S., & Craighead, L. W. (2016).

Component 1. Mindful Awareness of hunger and fullness cues

- Cues for hunger are very strong in animals –
 - Triggers looking for food and guarantees survival of the species
 - Cues for fullness are less strong
 - Not necessary for survival
 - animals may overeat in preparation for periods of starvation
- In western cultures food is widely available at any time –
- food related triggers become disconnected from cues for hunger and fullness – they easily become connected to cues of emotions, thoughts, interpersonal factors etc.

Mindfulness Training

- To consult with our stomach and our body before consuming food
- to reconnect with internal bodily cues of hunger and fullness
- To distinguish hunger from thirst



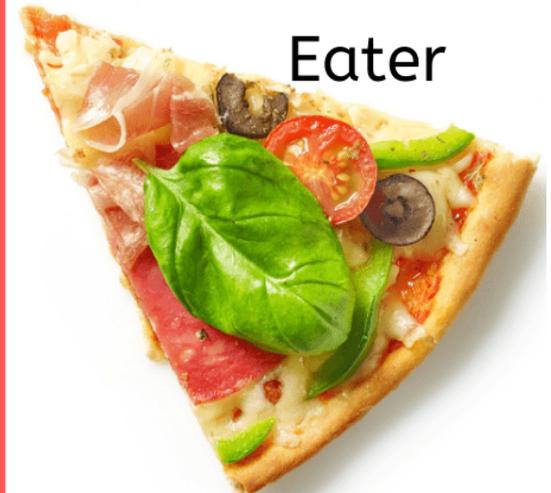
INTUITIVE EATING - Counter to the culture of dieting and the over emphasis on counting calories

- **Connect with our hunger**
- **Connect with our fullness**
- **Connect with body cues**
- **Connect with desires**
- **Teach our brain to connect with our stomach before making decisions around food and eating.**



Dieter

Doesn't eat pizza at office party, but wants to. Goes home and overeats at dinner to try and satisfy the craving.



Intuitive Eater

Wants a slice of pizza at the office party and eats it. Goes home to have a light dinner because they are less hungry.

The Hunger/Fullness Scale

developed by Linda Craighead, PhD

- To help people gauge their hunger to determine whether they need to eat
- A subjective Likert type 7-point scale
- A psychological intervention that allows one to practice a mindful refocus that helps one become more sensitive to one's body's signals of hunger and fullness.

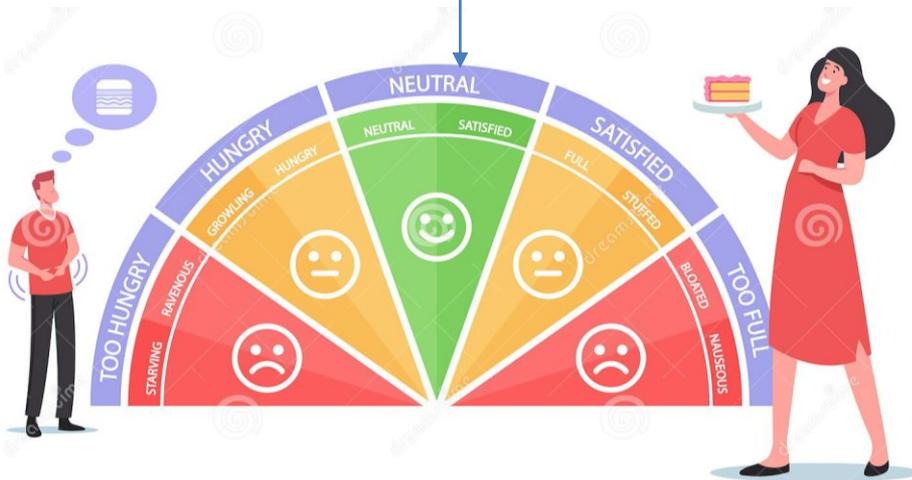
Very Hungry	Moderately Hungry	Mildly Hungry	No Feeling; Neutral	Mildly Full	Very Full	Much Too Full
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.5		<-- Desirable Zone -->			5.5	

Here's a little more about what the numbers mean:

- 1: Very hungry; starving; desperate. Your stomach is "screaming."
- 2: Moderately hungry; ready to eat. Your stomach is "talking."
- 3: Mildly hungry; beginning hunger. Your stomach is "whispering."
- 4: Neutral. You feel no sensations of hunger or fullness.
- 5: Mildly full. You feel satisfied.
- 6: Very full. Your stomach is beginning to feel a bit distended.
- 7: Much too full. Your stomach feels stuffed.

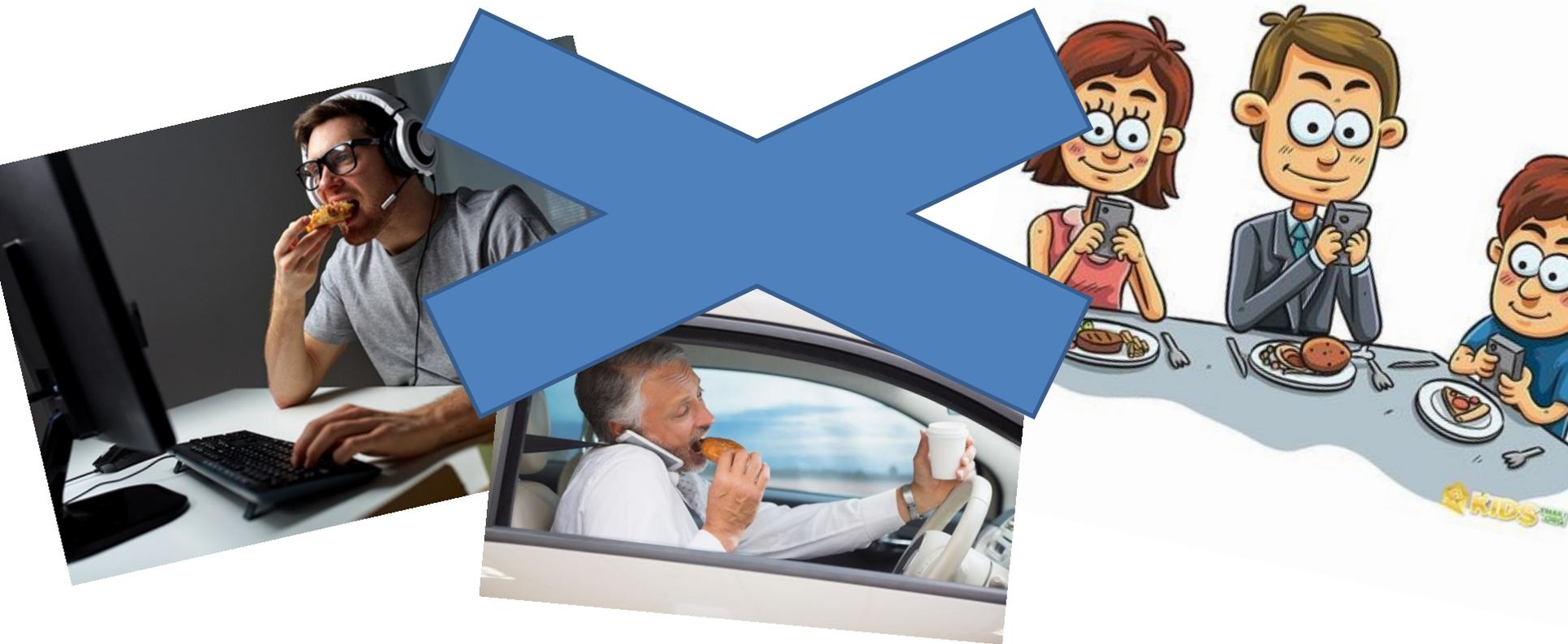
Connecting with bodily cues of hunger and fullness by Linda Craighead, PhD

Νιώθω πλήρης- ούτε πεινάω ούτε νιώθω γεμάτος . Έφαγα ακριβώς όσο χρειάζομαι



Component 4.

Mindful Connecting with the experience of eating



Eating mindfully improves the experience of the meal



- A meal is not just food!
- It is the impression that food leaves on our senses
- Eating with all of our senses fully activated
- Give a meal the full attention it deserves

Additional Psychological Components of Mindful Eating : **Gratitude**



THANK YOU FOR THIS MEAL
For the farmer that
produced it
The truck Driver that
delivered the
Products
The industry chain that
brought
it to our plate
The person that cooked it
for us

Self-Compassion for our mis-behaviors around eating

Relates to psychological flourishing and reduced psychopathology (*Germer and Neff, 2013*)

Core components

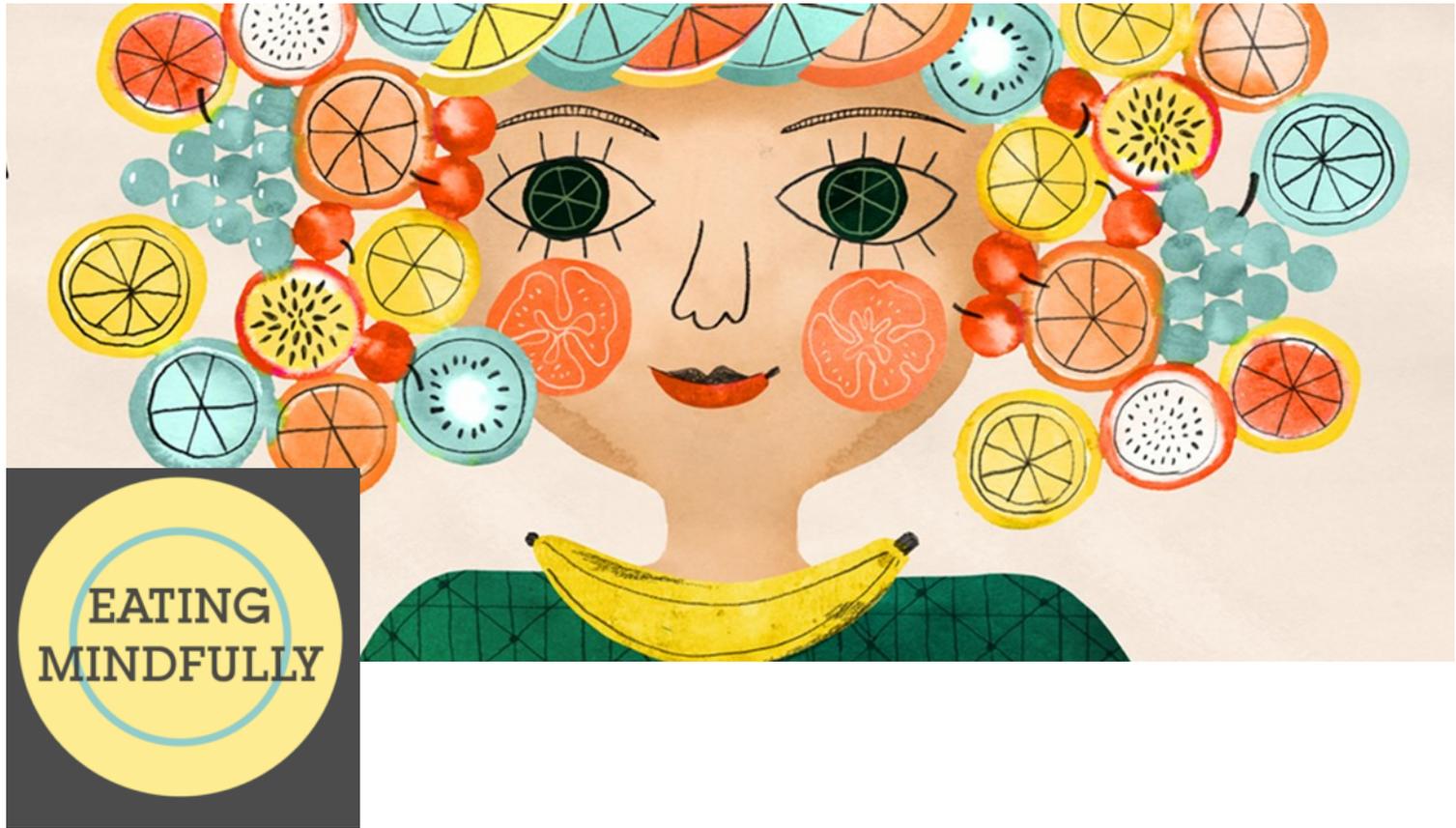
- self-kindness versus self-judgment
- Mindfulness versus overidentification with painful thoughts and emotions



Main references

1. Germer, C.K. and Neff, K.D. (2013), Self-Compassion in Clinical Practice. *J. Clin. Psychol.*, 69: 856-867. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.22021>
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4. Wansink, Brian & Sobal, Jeffery. (2007). Mindless Eating: The 200 Daily Food Decisions We Overlook. *ENVIRONMENT AND BEHAVIOR*. 39. 106-123. 10.1177/0013916506295573.





THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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