

Mindful Eating Cards

- For Dietitians & Health Professionals -

Mindful Eating is a fantastic skill that you can support your clients in order to help them discover & enjoy a better relationship with food, eating and their body. As you would be aware, mindfulness is bringing awareness to the present moment, without judgement. And mindful eating is really about bringing mindfulness and intentional awareness specifically to activities that involve food and eating. It doesn't have to just be about eating as such, but can your discussion can incorporate any component of your client's interactions with food, from growing food in the backyard and preparing meals, to the environment around mealtimes, to the times before, during or after the meal. Remind your clients (regularly!) that there's no right or wrong, but that there's an enormous amount they can learn from simply being open **observing**, and being more present alongside your experiences of food and eating which in turn offers opportunities to shift away from unhelpful reactions or behaviours, and towards those are more nurturing, healthful and respectful.

Mindful Meal Meditations:

These cards are specifically designed to be used to set an intention for the meal ahead. A recommendation for how you can describe using them is:

3 minute Mindful Meal Meditation

Sit down in a comfortable chair away - this may be at the bench or table, or away from the kitchen or meal area altogether.

Hold the card in your hand (or remember the one you have chosen), close your eyes & take 3 deep breaths.

Repeat the phrase (silently) to yourself in a calm tone (a minimum of 3 times), aiming to sustain awareness and connection to the words and your breath - it's completely understandable that the mind tends to want to wander off....that's OK, just gently bring it back on task

When you're ready, take another 3 deep breaths and aim to move calmly to your meal or meal preparation, cultivating awareness of the various sensory aspects of foods (such as sight, smell, texture) and a sense of gratitude (to yourself too!)

What if I'm eating with others?

Of course this is often the case, and it's always possible to bring mindfulness to a meal.

Talk to your clients about aiming to remain connected with company & food throughout the meal.

Before you meal, take a few big deep breaths and repeat your chosen phrase to yourself. Take time to regularly check in with your body, mind & others at the table. If the mealtime is noisy, or you're finding it difficult to focus perhaps select another meal time to practice at first....it's fine, that's life.

Other cards

There are a variety of other cards which aim to be gentle reminders about being present with eating, or to help support intentions to shift the way you feel about food towards a more positive, relaxed, healthful and sustainable way of living.

Suggestions for use with individual clients:

Choose 1 card for the meal, or day that you'd like as a "theme" for the day/week. Some people enjoy keeping it in a visible place, others prefer to just remember it

Use them as a theme for a diary entry - they could choose 1-5 for the week. Write about what the words mean to your client, encouraging them to reflect on how they could use this message as a positive or helpful reminder of what they're wanting to focus on. Follow up in your next session.

Suggestions for use with groups:

These cards can be very powerful in a group setting as prompts for discussion and sharing. Although the cards could work well with any health/wellbeing group, you may like to choose the specific ones that are most relevant to the needs or goals of your particular group. And add your own if you like!

A suggestion is that **the way you set up this activity** is really important. This activity would work best in an established group, where people are familiar with each other and feels like a "safe" place to share. Perhaps remind the group of any guidelines you've discussed eg. respecting everyone's experience, listening, no "diet" talk etc.

Group Reflection Activity - approx. 1 - 1.5 hrs

Lay the cards out, with the messages side up in a central place (eg. table or floor in the centre). Encourage the group members to look at the cards, and choose one that represents something to them, such as:

- Something they feel like they've overcome
- Something they'd like to work on
- Something that feels difficult to do/believe

Encourage the group members to write down (5 mins) then share their thoughts, reflections and ideas. As a facilitator, your aim would be to encourage discussion, aiming not to jump in too often, or provide too many "answers," but rather pose some questions to the group (such as "is there another way that you might be able to try that, which might make things more successful?") Aim to ensure everyone has a turn to speak.

At the end of the activity, provide a bit of a summary and encourage the group members to provide some feedback about anything they've learned, like to try etc.

I really hope you enjoy your cards!

Your feedback is very valued. With gratitude,

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