

Session overview

Aim of this session is to introduce mindfulness and explore how to incorporate mindfulness into mealtimes to make them an enjoyable experience.

There are four main topics in this session. It introduces the concept of mindful eating to eat in tune with hunger and satiety cues. The recommendations in this session align with Ellyn Satter's Division of Responsibility in Feeding (2015). This theory is the foundation of establishing healthy mealtime behaviours. It is typically used to describe the feeding relationship between parents and children, however can be extrapolated to encourage healthy mealtime habits for all age groups.

1 Mindful eating

Teaching objective: To explore how to eat mindfully by paying attention to our 5 senses, and our environment.

By the end of this topic, participants will understand:

- What mindful eating is.
- How to engage our five senses when eating.
- Ways to eat more mindfully.

Summary of key learnings

- Participants are introduced to mindfulness and how to be mindful when eating – including when buying food, cooking food, preparing food and eating food.
- Participants are introduced to practical mindful eating strategies they can apply when eating meals and snacks including turning screens off at mealtimes, sitting at the table with others and putting the fork down between bites.
- Participants are provided with a step-by-step framework to experiment with mindful eating using a sample of food.

2 Listening to your hunger cues

Teaching objective: To explore how to listen to hunger signals.

By the end of this topic, participants will understand:

- The difference between feeling hungry and having a craving.
- How to use the hunger scale to reflect on hunger levels.
- Ways to manage cravings.

Summary of key learnings

- Participants learn the difference between feeling truly hungry and having a craving through scenario-based activities. For parents or caregivers, the focus is on how they can encourage children or others in their care to listen to their hunger and fullness signals.

- Participants are provided with suggested strategies for managing cravings.
- The hunger scale is introduced as a visual tool to help participants assess their hunger levels before and after eating.

3 Regular eating

Teaching objective: To explore the importance of regular eating.

By the end of this topic, participants will understand:

- Why regular eating helps to eat better and feel good.
- How many meals and snacks to aim for each day.
- Why breakfast is important.

Summary of key learnings

- Participants learn regular eating is important for many reasons, including to provide the body with regular fuel, to help listen to hunger cues and eat in tune with their appetite. Also it can help to stabilise blood sugar levels, enhance metabolism, aid digestion, and support weight management.
- Participants are encouraged to consume three meals and two to three snacks each day at regular intervals, or alternatively up to six smaller meals. They also learn that regular eating is about creating a consistent meal environment, by eating with others around the table.
- Breakfast is highlighted as an important for setting up a day of regular eating. Suggestions are provided for easy, healthy breakfast ideas.

4 Enjoyable mealtimes

Teaching objective: To explore ways to make mealtimes more enjoyable.

By the end of this topic, participants will understand:

- How to make mealtimes more enjoyable for everyone.
- The different roles of providers and deciders at mealtimes.
- Helpful phrases to reduce mealtime pressure.

Summary of key learnings

- Participants are introduced to Ellyn Satter's Division of Responsibility in Feeding by explaining at mealtimes there is usually one person who provides the meal (the provider) and one or more people who eat the meal (the decider). It's the provider's role to decide what to offer, as well as when and where it's offered. Whereas the decider's role is to decide how much to eat or whether they eat at all. Parents or carers usually take on the role of the provider, and young children take on the role of the decider. Young people and adults providing foods for themselves take on both of these roles at mealtimes.
- Participants are introduced to the concept of pressure at mealtimes and are provided with

- some helpful communication strategies to foster a pressure free, mealtime environment. This conversation is directed to those who primarily play the role of the provider, however can be helpful for everyone to know.
- Similarly, there is a discussion around responding to pressure at mealtimes. This is primarily directed to those when playing the role of the decider, however can be helpful for everyone. Participants are provided with strategies to manage scenarios where others are applying pressure at mealtimes.

5 Put this into practice

Below is a list of suggested SMART goals that participants may choose to work on after completing this session.

Coaches should introduce these SMART goals to participants in the coaching session, or once all education activities and discussions are complete. Participants are encouraged to choose 2 – 3 goals to work on at a time. Coaches should guide participants to select a balance of activity and nutrition goals. Goals can be adapted to be easier or harder, so they are suitable for each participant.

SMART Goal suggestions

- Eat meals as a family or with friends three times this week.
- Serve everyone at the table the same meal at mealtimes every day this week.
- Eat three meals and two to three snacks at regular mealtimes every day this week.
- Drink water, rather than other food and drinks, between regular meal and snack times every day this week.
- Cook or prepare a meal with others at least once this week.
- Remove distractions, like screens, at mealtimes every day this week.
- Use helpful mealtime phrases when eating with others at least three times this week.
- Eat breakfast every day this week.
- Serve meals on a plate every day this week.
- Sit at the table at mealtimes every day this week.
- Use the hunger scale before and after eating at least three times this week.
- Set your fork down between bites when eating meals at least three times this week.
- Try a new food at least three times this week.
- Cook a new recipe / meal and share it with others once this week.

Key references:

Ellyn Satter Institute (2015). *Ellyn Satters Division of Responsibility in Feeding*. <https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/ELLYN-SATTER’S-DIVISION-OF-RESPONSIBILITY-IN-FEEDING.pdf>