

Beth Hemmila

LOVE
MINDFULNESS
& FOOD

Your Emotions & Conscious Eating

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*For Mom,
Thank you for nourishing
and sustaining my body, mind,
and soul through food.*

Contents

Conscious Eating	1
Why am I Eating?	3
Mindful Eating Habits	5
Eating Prayer	7
Practice Conscious Eating	9
Conscious Eating Worksheet	10
Examples	14
List of Feelings	18
List of Needs	22
Recipes	24

Conscious Eating

During the first few bites, and before we get dazed by overeating, everything we want is possible. Everything we've lost is here now. And so we settle for the concrete version of our lost selves in the form of food. And once food has become synonymous with goodness or love or fulfillment, you cannot help but choose it, no matter how high the stakes are.

- Geneen Roth, *Women, Food and God*

What and how you eat reflects your relationship to life. Building an awareness of your connection to food and your body's reactions to eating is an amazing journey, leading to a more conscious way of living.

One of the most important strategies for connecting with food is slowing down while you eat so as to observe your experience. The *Conscious Eating Worksheet* is a method for writing about personal food experiences or eating habits that are troublesome and part of a larger self-destructive storyline that produces feelings of guilt or shame. Consistently using the *Conscious Eating Worksheet* changes your eating habits over time and results in a more balanced relationship with food and a more loving connection with your soul.

The *Conscious Eating Worksheet* is NOT about going on a diet, losing weight, or never again eating foods that you perceive as "bad" for you. Conscious eating is about building awareness and connection to your body, feelings, and needs so that you eat from a place of wholeness, develop a more authentic relationship with food, and expand your choices when feeling emotionally reactive.

The *Conscious Eating Worksheet* assumes that for some people food is a coping strategy for dealing with trigger events (emotionally charged situations in your life). This habit of emotional eating is covering up or numbing needs that are going unfulfilled and continue to be unsatisfied as food fails to meet basic desires for love, nurturing, affection, companionship, safety, and reassurance. By repeatedly using the *Conscious Eating Worksheet* you begin to see patterns in your feelings and needs, and understand why you employ certain eating habits. From this discovery process you learn to construct a group of new behaviors in response to trigger events and begin to question using food as a favorite strategy. Lastly, you create new food connections between feelings and needs so your brain is given the opportunity to explore other forms of nourishment that may have a positive impact on your life.

Why Am I Eating?

Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you who you are.

- Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin

When you are emotionally reactive and eating in a way that is disconnected from your body and basic needs, here are some questions to consider, which may bring you back to whole consciousness:

- Am I eating for pleasure or survival?
- Am I eating for approval – to please or make others happy? (e.g., I don't want to hurt my mom's feelings because she baked cookies especially for me.)
- Am I eating to stay connected or to bond with a person or group of people? (e.g., All my friends are drinking beer and eating brats at the tailgate party. I don't want to feel left out.)
- Am I exhibiting emotional eating and want to be nurtured because I am feeling scared, tired, lonely, frustrated, or anxious? (e.g., It's Friday night, and I don't have a date, so eating ice cream might help me deal with my feelings of loneliness and need for companionship.)
- Am I eating out of hospitality or not wanting to be rude? (e.g., I don't usually eat pumpkin pie, but my friend made this dessert for our Thanksgiving dinner, and I want to make her feel welcome in our home.)
- Am I eating to celebrate and have fun? (e.g., Everyone is eating cake at the company picnic, and I want to be a part of the festivities.)
- Am I eating because of boredom or stress? (e.g., My flight is delayed again, and I have nothing to do, so I'm sitting in the bar eating appetizers to kill time.)

- Am I eating because of a situational habit? (e.g., I'm watching a movie, and normally I eat popcorn during this kind of activity.)

While using the *Conscious Eating Worksheet* be kind to yourself. Try not to get caught up in the judgments you have about your eating, but rather act as a neutral observer who is simply noticing your thoughts and behaviors. Explore your eating habits from a place of genuine curiosity and take time to have a good chuckle.

There is nothing you need to fix to be more loved than you already are by a power greater than yourself. Your exploration of food is simply an opportunity to create a deeper connection with your soul and the world around you and find new ways to fulfill basic needs, which help you thrive.

Mindful Eating Habits

When walking, walk. When eating, eat.

- Zen Proverb

Here are some eating habits that you may choose to incorporate into your lifestyle to further your exploration of food:

- When you prepare food, notice each element and step in your process and give thanks for the ingredients. Envelop your cooking with a sense of gratitude, and thank the earth, animals, and all the people that helped bring this food to your table.
- Practice eating slowly and chew each bite of food at least 10 to 25 times. This amount of chewing sounds like drudgery, but in the beginning, see if you can make it a personal challenge. Chewing is an incredible habit for improving your digestion and absorption of food.
- Take a moment to savor the visual display and aroma of your meal before you start eating.
- While chewing, silently describe in your mind the color, texture, scent, and flavor.
- Eat silently and avoid distractions such as television, phone, music, and conversation with others. Think only about the food in front of you and try dropping other thoughts that enter your head like planning what is next in your day or mulling over problems that need solutions. Observe how eating silently and focused only on food changes your experience.
- Make your mealtimes more sacred by lighting a candle, saying a blessing, or putting aside an offering of food.

- Notice when you are truly hungry and eating for nourishment as opposed to just filling up.
- Learn to eat small amounts (e.g., portions the size of your fist) when you feel hungry and not necessarily during the traditionally scheduled mealtimes. Then wait 20 minutes to see if this amount of food has satisfied your hunger.
- Notice if you are a person who neglects eating even when your body is craving nourishment and consider creating a mealtime routine that forces you to take care of this basic survival need.
- If you are a person that craves certain snack foods, try drinking a glass of water before reaching for that treat to see if you are misinterpreting your body's message of thirst for one of hunger.
- Most often restaurants have portions that are too large. Before going out to eat, make a promise to yourself to eat only half the meal and take the rest home for later.

Eating Prayer

Food is a sacred emissary from the universe. While eating, breathe in and out while contemplating the following:

1. May I see this food as a gift from the earth and sky and made possible by the hard work of many living beings.
2. May I eat with mindfulness and gratitude so as to be worthy to receive this food.
3. May I learn to eat with intent and moderation.
4. May I accept this food as a way to nourish and strengthen my connection to family and community.

Upon finishing your meal, take a few moments to notice that you are done, see that your plate is now empty and your hunger is satisfied. Fill up with gratitude as you realize how fortunate you are to eat nourishing food, supporting you on a path of love and kindness.

Adapted from Deer Park Monastery

Practice Conscious Eating

One should eat to live, not live to eat.

- Benjamin Franklin

When you experience a strong emotional or physical response to something you ate such as feeling angry, guilty, ashamed, disgusted, sick, or lethargic, answer the questions on the *Conscious Eating Worksheet* to connect with feelings and needs and make new choices so as to create a more loving relationship between your soul and food. In this way, you will begin to diminish emotional eating, see the positive feelings and needs you want to cultivate in your life, and design new habits for fulfilling these desires. See the examples on pages 14 – 17 for more information.

Make copies of the questions on pages 10 – 13 or go to my Web site and download the *Conscious Eating Worksheet* here:
bethhemmila.com/freedownloads/

You can print this worksheet out and make multiple copies. Use the lists of feelings and needs in the back of this book or on the downloaded worksheet to complete the questions.

4-Steps to Conscious Eating

1. Make a Concrete Observation
2. Connect Feelings & Needs to Your Memories
3. Imagine a Need Always Met
4. Make Personal Requests

Conscious Eating Worksheet

1. Make a Concrete Observation

What food did you eat? Where? When?

How or in what manner did you eat this food?

How much of this food did you eat?

2. Connect Feelings & Needs to Food Memories

Use the Lists of Feelings & Needs on pages 18 - 23

What past memories does this food evoke?

What **needs** were fulfilled during these memories?

What do you **feel** when you remember these events from your past?

Look at your answers from the previous two questions and fill in the statement below choosing the strongest “feeling” and “need” word from your list of possibilities.

When I eat (fill in troublesome food) _____

I want to **feel** _____ because I **need** _____ .

3. Imagine a Need Always Met

In the sentence below, fill in the same “need” word from the previous statement and then answer the questions.

What would my life be like if my **need** _____
was always met?

What do I look like? How do I act? Where am I? What do I
do differently than I do now? How do I relate to others?
What do I feel?

4. Make Personal Requests

Complete the sentence below by filling in your strongest “feeling” and “need” word written down in section 2 and then answer the question.

Write down concrete actions you can take that do not involve eating food but are things that may result in the same positive feeling.

Instead of eating (fill in troublesome food) _____ ,

What other things can I choose to do that will make me **feel**

_____ and fulfill my **need** _____ ?

PIZZA EXAMPLE

1. Make a Concrete Observation

What food did you eat? Where? When?

I am eating a store bought, frozen pepperoni pizza alone in my apartment late at night.

How or in what manner did you eat this food?

I am eating it while watching a movie on T.V.

How much of this food did you eat?

I am eating the whole thing by myself.

2. Connect Feelings & Needs to Your Food Memories

What past memories does this food evoke?

When I was younger, my family went out for pizza for special occasions like birthdays or made it together at home. I also remember my mother buying small, individual frozen pizzas that we were able to cook in the oven by ourselves when my brothers and I were kids. During high school sleepovers with my best friend, we ordered pizza to eat while watching a movie. When I got older I treated myself to pizza delivered to my college dorm room after studying for a test. Buying a slice of pizza for meals was one way I travelled so cheaply in Italy during college. One of my first boyfriends and I went out for pizza to our special restaurant on Saturday nights.

What **needs** were fulfilled during these memories?

Connection*, independence, freedom, companionship, special treats (to matter), self-care, nurturing, making up for having completed something difficult (to be rewarded)

What do you **feel** when you remember these events from your past?

*When I think about these memories, I feel **happy***, content, confident, grateful, comfort, and at peace.*

When I eat pizza I want to feel happy because I need connection .

3. Imagine a Need Always Met

What would my life be like if my need for connection was always met?

*I feel on top of the world and like anything is possible. I smile and laugh a lot.
I reach out to help people more often.*

4. Make Personal Requests

Instead of eating pizza, what other things can I choose to do that will make me feel happy and fulfill my need for connection ?

Strike up a conversation with people at yoga, join a local hiking group, and take a painting class

BURGER & FRENCH FRIES EXAMPLE

1. Make a Concrete Observation

What food did you eat? Where? When?

I am eating In-N-Out Burger and French fries while sitting in my car in a deserted parking lot after being evacuated from the wildfire near my home.

How or in what manner did you eat this food?

I'm eating it quickly and while listening to the radio.

How much of this food did you eat?

I am eating one burger and an order of fries, but I bought an extra burger that I decided to save for later.

2. Connect Feelings & Needs to Your Food Memories

What past memories does this food evoke?

My first memory of burgers was during childhood and having family cookouts in the backyard during the summertime. Later while in high school, I spent a lot of lunches going to McDonald's with my friends. My ex-husband and I use to stop by In-N-Out Burger in Sacramento for a special treat on our trips to San Francisco. When we lived in Portland, my ex-husband and I would try to reconnect after a tiring workweek by having date night at Burgerville. Lastly, I remember after buying our first house, the fun of being able to grill hamburgers in our own backyard.

What **needs** were fulfilled during these memories?

*Shared memories, celebration, independence, togetherness, fun, predictability, ritual, and **dependability****

What do you **feel** when you remember these events from your past?

*When I remember these experiences, I feel **centered***, whole, friendly, playful, easygoing, and optimistic.*

When I eat *In-N-Out Burger* I want to feel *centered* because I need *dependability* .

3. Imagine a Need Always Met

What would my life be like if my need for dependability was always met?

I trust in the good intentions of other people. I contribute more to charitable events. I see less problems and more opportunities.

4. Make Personal Requests

Instead of eating In-N-Out Burger, what other things can I choose to do that will make me feel centered and fulfill my need for dependability?

Writing in my journal, meditation, yoga, and walking

List of Feeling Words: What do I feel when my needs ARE NOT met?

Scared

Frightened
Mistrustful
Bewildered
Disturbed
Startled
Shocked
Afraid
Dread
Unsafe
Alarmed
Freaked Out
Worried
Terrified
Concerned
Panicky

Sad

Disappointed
Discouraged
Disheartened
Depressed
Hopeless
Despair
Sullen
Gloomy
Unhappy
Dejected
Morose
Bummed Out
Glum
Rotten

Irritated

Cranky
Crabby
Grouchy
Impatient
Dissatisfied
Frustrated
Aggravated
Annoyed
Agitated
Thwarted
Impotent
Grumpy

Pain

Grief
Hurt
Lonely
Miserable
Devastated
Desperate
Heartbroken
Bereaved
Troubled
Achy

Angry

Disgruntled
Resentful
Furious
Enraged
Upset
Hateful
Mean
Mad
Irate

Hostile

Dislike
Disgusted
Repulsed
Grossed Out
Contempt
Horrificed
Defiant
Antagonistic
Hateful

This word list is based on the work of Marshall B. Rosenberg and the
Center for Nonviolent Communication, www.cnvc.org.

Anxious

Tense
Nervous
Overwhelmed
Stressed
Jittery
Stiff
Moody
Edgy
Touchy
Out of Sorts
Uptight

Confused

Uncertain
Ambivalent
Lost
Hesitant
Torn
Puzzled
Unsure
Spacey
Indecisive
Shy

Jealous

Envious
Bitter
Longing
Yearning
Nostalgic

Exhausted

Tired
Sleepy
Fuzzy
Depleted
Sick
Worn Out
Listless
Burnt Out
Beat
Weary
Slow

Sensitive

Fragile
Shaky
Defensive
Insecure
Humiliated
Helpless
Leery
Guarded

Uncomfortable

Restless
Uneasy
Unnerved
Surprised

Detached

Bored
Disconnected
Distracted
Withdrawn
Reserved
Lifeless
Aloof
Numb
Dull

Guilty

Self-Conscious
Embarrassed
Ashamed
Awkward
Regret
Dirty
Unworthy

List of Feeling Words: What do I feel when my needs ARE met?

Happy

Optimistic
Good Humored
Hopeful
Joyful
Delighted
Cheerful
Glad
Elated
Pleased
Giddy
Jubilant
Easygoing
Lighthearted
Sunny

Confident

Hopeful
Empowered
Responsible
Intelligent
Approachable
Adequate
Fulfilled
Satisfied
Complete
Content
Honest
Open
Proud
Solid

Healthy

Open minded
Genuine
Alive
Radiant
Beautiful
Lively
Vibrant
Upbeat
Glowing
Youthful
Active
Bright
Strong
Mature
Natural

Relaxed

Calm
Rested
Mellow
Rejuvenated
Refreshed
Comfortable
Tolerant

Safe

Relieved
Connected
Secure
Assured
Trusting
Reliable
Certain

Focused

Alert
Awake
Productive
Conscientious
Adaptable
Clearheaded

This word list is based on the work of Marshall B. Rosenberg and the
Center for Nonviolent Communication, www.cnvc.org.

Loving

Affectionate
Understanding
Friendly
Welcoming
Empathetic
Warm
Openhearted
Compassionate
Supportive
Sympathetic
Fervent
Helpful
Caring
Kind

Grateful

Thankful
Appreciative
Admiring
Gracious
Moved
Tender
Touched
Expansive
Humble
Giving
Sharing
Sincere

Excited

Thrilled
Exhilarated
Engaged
Energetic
Stimulated
Aroused
Exuberant
Ecstatic
Overjoyed
Animated
Dazzled
Eager

Adventurous

Amused
Courageous
Resourceful
Spontaneous
Creative
Brave
Playful
Passionate
Enthusiastic
Motivated
Invigorated
Outgoing
Carefree
Daring
Free
Bold

Peaceful

Harmonious
Balanced
Graceful
Serene
Gentle
Flowing
Centered
Blissful
Whole
At Ease
Tranquil
Quiet
Still
Light

Fascinated

Curious
Wonder
Intrigued
Amazed
Enchanted
Interested
Absorbed

List of Needs: What do I need to be my best self?

Connection

To be Understood
To Be Known
Appreciation
Shared Values
Consideration
Acceptance
Conversation
Social Interaction
Mutuality
Feedback
To Listen
To Be Heard
To See

Purpose

Meaning
Intention
Self-Worth
Competence
Contribution
Recognition
To Be Effective
To Accomplish
To Be Valued
To Matter
To Share
To Serve

Nurture

Affection
Warmth
Caring
Self-Care
Bonding
Comfort
Self-Empathy
Empathy
Food/Water
Exercise
Sleep
Rest

Peace

Wholeness
Relaxation
Balance
Optimism
Stillness
Beauty
Clarity
Quiet
Calmness
Order
Ease

Growth

To Learn
To Practice
Healthy Risks
Change
To Discover
Information
To Understand
Challenge
Goals
Focus
Birth

Play

Curiosity
Laughter
Humor
Movement
Happiness
Spontaneity
Adventure
Pleasure
Energy
Fun
Joy

This word list is based on the work of Marshall B. Rosenberg and the *Center for Nonviolent Communication*, www.cnvc.org.

Security

Trust
Stability
Reassurance
Emotional Safety
Physical Safety
Consistency
Dependability
Accountability
Responsibility
Leadership
Protection

Expression

To Share Stories
To Be Creative
To Be Seen
To Teach
To Invent
To Reinvent
To Envision
To Build
To Inspire
To Talk

Independence

Individuality
Empowerment
To Be Separate
Time to Think
Self-Reliance
Freedom
Options
Choice
Space

Authenticity

Honesty
Integrity
Thoughtfulness
Awareness
Self-Respect
Respect
Patience
Tolerance
Fairness
Truth

Spirituality

Compassion
Communion
Groundedness
Reconciliation
To Rejoice
Forgiveness
Harmony
Healing
Hope
Faith

Celebration

Honor
To Praise
To Offer Thanks
To Give
Shared History
Shared Culture
Reunion
Mourning
Aliveness

Intimacy

Love
Closeness
Relationship
Sensuality
Sexuality
Support
Touch
To Embrace

Belonging

Companionship
Collaboration
Community
Cooperation
Participation
Partnership
Friendship
Inclusion

RECIPES

SPICY LIME & MELON SALAD

Serves 2

2 cups cubed cantaloupe rind removed
2 cups cubed seedless watermelon rind removed
2 kiwis peeled and sliced
1 small handful of cilantro, washed and chopped

Dressing:

1/4 cup olive oil
2 to 2 1/2 teaspoons lime juice
1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon salt
1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper

1. In a medium bowl toss together the prepared cantaloupe, watermelon, kiwi, and cilantro.
2. For the dressing, in a separate bowl whisk together the olive oil, lime juice, salt, and crushed red pepper. Adjust the seasonings to make it more tangy, salty, or spicy for your taste buds.
3. Drizzle the dressing over the top of the fruit salad. Gently mix the fruit and the dressing together.

LIME, GINGER, COCONUT CASHEW RAW COOKIES

Makes 4 Cookies

- 1/2 cup of raw cashews
- 3 tablespoons of raw dried coconut flakes
- 1 pinch of salt
- 1 teaspoon of fresh minced ginger
- 1 tablespoon of lime juice
- 1 teaspoon of honey

1. Place the cashews, coconut flakes, salt, and ginger in a food processor and mix into a fine texture.
2. Add the lime juice and honey. Mix just until the dough starts to stick together.
3. Roll the cookie dough into small balls and pop in your mouth.

Other Serving Suggestions:

- Make a fresh fruit puree to dip your cookies in.
- Put a spoonful of cookie dough into a bowl and top it with a puree of fresh berries and chopped fruit just like ice cream.
- Flatten the dough like a pizza pie crust and refrigerate for an hour. Make a puree of fresh berries to spread across the crust like jam and slice some fresh bananas to sprinkle on top. Serve like a pie.

RAW FOOD PEACH COBBLER

Serves 2

1/2 cup raw walnuts

1/2 cup raw almonds

Cinnamon

1 tablespoon honey

Fresh peaches (or frozen and thawed)

1. Add the walnuts and almonds to the food processor and chop into fine bits.
2. Add a dash or two of cinnamon to taste and blend some more.
3. Add the honey to the nut mixture. Blend for about a minute until the mixture starts to clump.
4. Scoop out some of the nut mixture and place it in a bowl.
5. Chop up the peaches into bite-size chunks.
6. Top the nut mixture with the chopped peaches.

Variations:

- You can substitute any other fresh fruit or a combination to make a different kind of cobbler such as blackberry or blueberry. You could use fresh apples and it would taste like apple pie.
- You can add raisins and ground flax seeds to make the mixture into a power bar for breakfast.
- You can add some carob powder or raw cacao to the nut mixture and make a chocolate base for your dessert.

BLUEBERRY WATERMELON COOLER

Serves 1

3/4 cup frozen blueberries

1 cup seedless watermelon

1/2 cup water

Slice off a piece watermelon and remove the rind. Chop the watermelon into one-inch chunks. Add frozen blueberries, watermelon, and water to your blender and mix until smooth.

PEACHY BLACKBERRY SLUSHY

Serves 2

1 cup sliced frozen peaches

1/3 cup frozen blackberries

1/2 cup ice

2 1/2 cup water

Raw honey or dates (optional sweetener)

Place all ingredients in a blender and mix until you have a smooth, slush-like consistency.