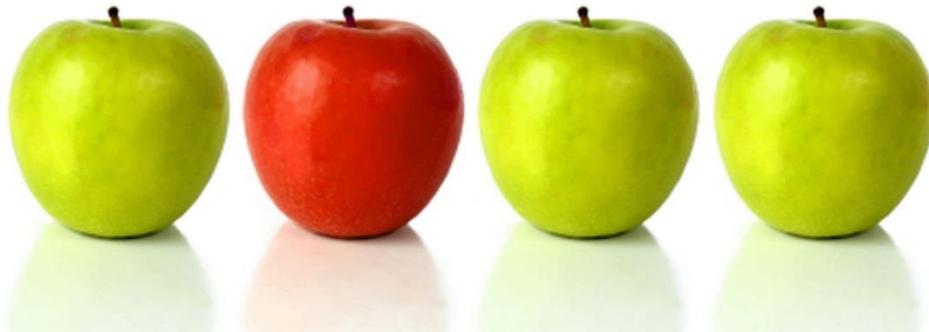


25 EASY WAYS TO
EAT
MINDFULLY
& AVOID
EMOTIONAL
EATING

Susan Albers Psy.D.



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Eat, Drink & Be Mindful...

- 1) Eat with Your Non-Dominate Hand.** If you are right handed, eat with your left. This breaks up your automatic hand-to-mouth flow. Studies have shown that this simple tip can reduce how much you eat by 30%. Also, try piercing food with your fork instead of scooping with it—this will slow you down and make you more mindful of each bite.
- 2) Be Radically Present.** Check your “to do” list at the door. Remember: You can eat an entire plate of food and not taste one bite. Don’t multitask while you eat! Put down your phone. Push aside your gift-wrapping. When you eat, just eat.
- 3) Say Ho, Ho, Ho.** Laughing yoga has been clinically shown to decrease cortisol levels (the hormone that makes you crave sugary, fatty food). Your body doesn't know the difference between laughter prompted by a joke and when it is artificially created. This is easy. Just create a ho, ho, ho kind of Santa laughter. Do it three times in a row. This may feel silly but will likely prompt real laughter that will lower your stress level and consequently reduce stress eating.

4) Grab a Peppermint Stick. Peppermint is not only calming but it helps to curb your appetite according to several studies. If you are having a craving or are seeking comfort food, suck on a candy cane. It will take a long time to eat and keep your hands occupied. Stock up on the sugar-free version!

5) Soothing Tea Time. A cup of black tea can reduce your cortisol levels (the stress hormone that makes you crave sugary, fatty foods) by 47% according to a study in the journal *Psychopharmacology*. (If you love chocolate, try chocolate tea by Republic of Tea).

6) Shift Out of Autopilot. Do you sit in the same seat at the kitchen table? Do you eat the same foods each day? Consciously and purposefully do something different to shake up old habits. Eat a new fruit. Sit in a different location. Choose a new option.

7) Hydrate Mindful. People often confuse thirst for hunger. Being fully hydrated helps you to make better decision and can curb your appetite. Drink 8 oz of water before a holiday party. Substitute your typical sweet fix with chocolate coconut water which is a great boost of potassium and can hydrate you quickly. Dehydration=stress on the body=emotional eating.

8) Distract and Delay. Struggling with eating too many second helpings at a party? Place sugar-free peppermint candies in your pocket. Pop one in after your first plate of food. Make a deal with yourself to get a second helping only after the mint has completely dissolved. This will help to pass the time and prevent you from acting immediately on the “I want” urge.

9) Be Mindful of Picking. It’s hard not to pick, pick, pick at good food. When you notice yourself taking a bite or “picking” at food, imagine a heavy weight being placed on your wrist. Notice how this powerful image can make your hand gravitate down to the table. Need more? Slip a heavy watch or bracelet onto your wrist to weigh it down.

10) When Food Is Calling Your Name. Go somewhere where food can’t follow you. Go into the bathroom. Take a bath. Sit outside.

11) Be a Food Snob. Before you take a bite, do the love vs. like test. Do you really love it? Be picky. If you like sugar cookies, make a deal with yourself to only eat homemade chocolate chip cookies and ignore the store bought version. Skip filler foods. These are foods that you eat all year long like rolls and familiar appetizers. Passing up these foods alone could save you 300+ calories. This swap gives you extra room to indulge in a treat that you love. Also, eat the food you love most last. A recent study in the journal of Appetite suggests that you remember the last bit of food you eat the best. This prevents you from eating more later because the experience is still fresh in your mind.

12) **Cool Down Cravings.** According to the elaborate intrusion theory, your thoughts can either pump up your desire for good food or cool off your cravings. When you notice yourself daydreaming about candy cane fudge, tea cake cookies or candied sweet potato casserole, steer your thoughts toward a neutral item like a picture on the wall or an object on your desk. For two minutes, take note of the color and shape. This activity blocks the available sensory input that your brain can process – it can only imagine one thing at a time.

13) **Use Your Body.** Lean out. Do you ever say to yourself, “I didn’t want the piece of pie but it was like my hand had a mind of its own!” Before you know it, you’ve eaten every morsel. One way to help you avoid overeating is to use your body effectively. When you think “no,” match this thought with the right body language. Shake your head no, clench your fists, and lean back.

14) **Plate Everything.** No matter what it is, put it on a plate first. When you eat directly out of a bag or a box, it is easy to lose track of how much you eat. It is TRUE. Smaller plates do help. Use dessert plates for dinner plates.

15) **Chew, Chew, Chew!** Chewing gum for 15 minutes before you eat can significantly reduce your appetite and curb cravings (according to a study in the journal of Appetite). Brain scans show that

chewing gum moves your brain into a "relaxed but alert" state. It's the perfect antidote to boredom eat.

16) **Set the Table.** Sometimes a fork can feel like a luxury in our fast food culture. A meal or dinner can give you an opportunity to take great care to set the table with nice dishes (and leave eating drive-thru in the car behind). Fine china and linen placemats aren't necessary. Just do whatever makes this meal feel special and honors the sheer act of eating.

17) **Take a Seat.** The tradition of the "family meal" often falls by the wayside when it has to compete with working overtime, running your kids to soccer practice and other responsibilities. Start with being grateful for the basics, a moment to sit down. Look around. Feel your back against the chair. Notice your feet touching the floor.

18) **Mindfully Move.** Reframe "exercise" to be "mindful movement." Be mindful when you move—notice your feet hitting the floor, your temperature, how fast you are breathing. A recent study in the journal, *Appetite*, found that going for a 20 minute walk significantly helped curb chocolate cravings. Or, be in "training." Sign up for a 1 mile fun walk or 5K.

19) **Be Thankful.** Say a simple prayer or meaningful quote before your meal to get into a thankful mindset. Or, just take a split second to look at your fork and acknowledge your gratitude for this bite. The benefits of simply saying a genuine thank you is a well-hidden secret.

Gratitude has been linked to an improvement in mood, self-esteem, depression, life satisfaction, sleep better, body image, ability to cope with adversity, promotes positive feelings AND helps you eat less.

20) Stretch. Feeling the urge to comfort eat? Choose your favorite yoga pose or stretch. Set your timer for 5 minutes. When you don't immediately respond to the urge to eat, it often passes. Try the Warrior Pose. Imagine fighting off comfort eating. If you aren't familiar with yoga, just cross your legs, child-style, close your eyes and enjoy a few moments of quiet. Imagine emptying your mind like a trash can—dumping out all your thoughts.

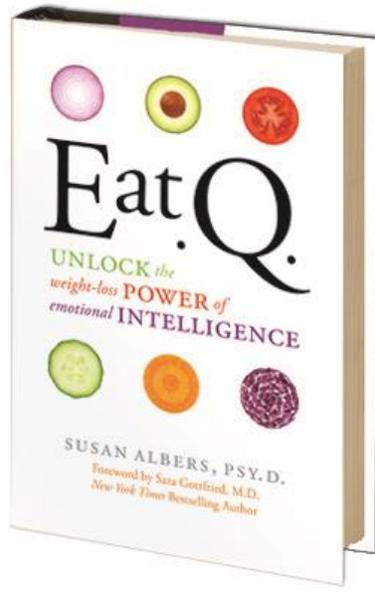
21) Switcheroo. Don't get rid of your favorite favorites! Just revamp them with a healthy makeover. Use the principle of “just noticeable difference.” Change just enough so that you can't perceive the difference. For example, take out one third of the brown sugar and butter in a sweet potato casserole. If you skip them, you are sure to notice and miss them. This adjustment is barely noticeable and can help you avoid overeating.

22) Snap it! Keep better track of how much you eat day-to-day. Research indicates that people underestimate how much they eat by 40%. Your best tool is right in your bag or pocket. Snap a picture with your phone. This will help you to remember exactly how much you are nibbling on. A picture is worth a thousand calories.

23) Create a Self-Soothing Tool Kit. Fill a box with soothing items such as bubble bath, gum, tea bags, journal, bubble wrap to squeeze when angry etc. These items reduce your cortisol level, the stress hormone that makes you crave sugary, fatty foods. Keep this box handy and in hot spots for comfort eating such as on your desk or in your pantry.

24) Self-Massage. People naturally do self-massage when stressed like rubbing their temples or feet. Intentionally and purposefully massaging tight spots can release feel-good chemicals. Place a tennis ball under your foot and rub. Or, place the ball behind your shoulder blades against the wall. It's an instant, cheap massage!

25) Tapping. In clinical studies, participants who were taught tapping skills, an acupuncture-like technique, showed significant improvements in weight, food cravings, and coping. Choose an affirmative statement like: "I can cope with these cravings." Start with the "karate chop" part of your hand (the outer side along the edge) and tap the edge. Tap lightly but firmly with your index and middle finger, about five times. Focus on seven points of the body: eyebrow (by your nose), side of the eye, under the eye, under the nose, the chin, collarbone, and under the arm. State the problem and repeat the affirmation you picked aloud as you tap.



About Dr. Albers...



Susan Albers PsyD is a clinical psychologist at the Cleveland Clinic. She graduated from the University of Denver and did her pre-doctoral internship at the University of Notre Dame. Dr. Albers completed her post-doctoral work at Stanford University. She has been on the Dr. Oz Show and is frequently quoted in Shape, Fitness, Prevention, New York Times, US News and World Report etc.

She has written six books on the topic of mindful eating including *Eat.Q.*, *Eating Mindfully*, *Eat, Drink & Be Mindful*, *Mindful Eating 101*, *50 Ways to Soothe Yourself Without Food*, and *But I Deserve This Chocolate*. Dr. Albers was awarded the University of Denver, Master Scholar Award. She conducts mindful eating workshops and lectures on *5 Easy Ways to Boost Your Eat.Q.* internationally. www.eatq.com