

-- Speaker 1 00:00:27 Welcome to another episode of Dr. MCs self-care cabaret podcast. I'm Theresa Melito-Conners, a PhD level self-care expert in the greater Boston area with a passion for helping others recognize the importance of caring for themselves for the next couple of episode releases, we are going to mix things up a bit. Instead of the usual format, we are going to share what we are calling bite size pods, which will be me, Dr. MC chatting with you about a particular topic. Episodes will continue to drop biweekly on Wednesdays. These will likely be on the shorter side, but with a new school year upon us, shorter, maybe just what the doctor ordered. So for bite size pod, number one, we discuss the importance of listening to your body and how mindfulness can help us do that. Today. We're going to look at the act of feeding our body and how mindfulness can play a factor here as well.

Speaker 1 00:01:23 And I know folks likely struggle with this area as I do. And if you've been following me for a long time, you know, that I'm in recovery for multiple eating disorders and intuitive eating and mindful eating is really how I was finally able to begin to make peace with food and honor my body and my hunger and fullness cues. So intuitive eating is actually a very large framework that extends beyond the act of eating. It actually consists of nine principles, but mindful eating plays a really significant role in intuitive eating. So we're gonna focus there for today. And first, just to be clear, mindful, eating and intuitive eating are not diet diets do not work. And matter of fact, 95% of diets fail. Even the sneaky ones like weight Watchers and Noom. They're still diets. They're modeled on restriction and starvation and making you feel badly about yourself.

Speaker 1 00:02:18 And just put it into perspective though. Weight loss services industry in 2022 is worth about 3.8 billion. This is not an industry that is concerned with your success and your wellness. You know, let's think about this. If you've ever been on a diet, what happens when you regain the weight after being on a diet? Does the diet take the blame? No, they have it so twisted up and backwards that they make you feel like you didn't try hard enough and that you failed. So what do you do? You try again, you try to muster up more willpower this time you'll restrict even more. You'll be better. You promise, Ugh, it's such a vicious cycle. And quite frankly, this is a roller coaster. I am happy to never ride again. It keeps us very disconnected from our body when you diet, cuz you're not listening to your body.

Speaker 1 00:03:12 Remember that was the topic of bite size pod one. So if you missed it or didn't listen, might be worth going back and listening to that episode. And if you wanna know more about intuitive eating too, I'm gonna make sure there's lots of info in the episode notes for you, but let's dive in and explore some ways we can invite more mindful eating into our lives and you may or may not know, but there's actually a hunger fullness scale. So there's a scale that we can look at and consider when we are trying to figure out, you know, how hungry we are or how full we are. And if you're prone to chronic dieting or you've just prone to not listening to your body, this may be a little challenging at first. So I'm gonna explain the hunger fullness scale to you and, you know, let that, let that sit and see how that feels and start to maybe pay attention to your own hunger and fullness cues.

Speaker 1 00:04:05 And I wanna remind you that it actually takes your stomach 20 minutes to tell your brain that you're full. So this is why cultivating a practice of mindful eating can really help us to just slow down and really get in touch with your hunger and fullness. So the scale starts at one, it's a scale of one to 10. And when we're down in the one to two, three area, this is, this is the hunger area. So this is where, you know, a one we don't, we don't wanna ever wanna be there. That's when we start to feel dizzy or nauseous or physically ill from our hunger and then a two we're still extremely hungry. Three, maybe your stomach's still growling. You're still hungry when you're, when you're at a three, but you haven't gone down to that like kind of danger zone where we don't want to be.

Speaker 1 00:04:54 When we got up to area four, I could eat. That's kind of the, the vibe of four, five is kind of ne --

-- utral six. This is where we start to feel. You know, our stomach might be a little full, but we're not quite satisfied. That's more, when we get to a seven on the scale, we start to feel that satisfaction. And then the other extreme, we go beyond that satisfaction and now it at eight and perhaps we're starting to feel a little uncomfortable full for nine. Now we might be very uncomfortable, maybe even feeling stuffed. And then at the far end of the spectrum for a 10, you maybe actually begin to feel physically ill or even nauseous or sick because you're so over full. So the comfy area is that seven, that satisfaction that's kind of where we wanna strive to be feeling satisfied after a meal.

Speaker 1 00:05:48 And when we think about hungry again, that's kind of down at a three. So the sweet spot of hunger is really that three to seven range. And I want you to think for just a moment about your body and when you're hungry, does your body give you signs to tell you you're hungry? Can you think about them? What happens? Think about your energy level. Do you start to feel tired and sluggish and low energy? What happens in your head? Do you begin to maybe have trouble concentrating or even a headache or even lightheadedness, unable to focus and then maybe your mood, maybe that's another physical indicator of hunger. Anybody else get hangry? <laugh> I know I do. You may get irritable or on edge or just cranky, or even just uninterested in whatever it is you have to do. And of course our stomach, our stomach may growl or rumble.

Speaker 1 00:06:49 You may even feel a slight pain or just an empty feeling or a gnawing feeling in your stomach. So your body really does give you all these cues again, if you are willing to listen. So there's some ways we can begin to just think about mindful eating and inviting more of this back into our lives or into your lives. Maybe for the first time, if this is not something you've done before. So I'm gonna share with you several kind of tips. And these are adapted from the mindful dietician, Fiona Sutherland and her work, which I really like. So first you need to tune into and observe without judgment. The amazing shifts that happen from the beginning to the end of a meal. Just get curious, like what happens in your body when you start to eat? What happens in your body towards the end of a meal? Does that first bite of something taste different than the, I don't know, 25th bite of something. When you are eating, try to just eat and limit distractions. I'm gonna tell you a personal story. This one is, um, an area that I struggle with the limiting distractions. And if you listen to the episode, um, moving back into your body with my eating disorder, dietician, Anna Sweeney, she actually talked about this because she still uses my example when she's working with her clients, which is, um, pretty cool. I think, anyway, I'm gonna call it the Seinfeld phenomenon.

Speaker 1 00:08:27 So back when I was early on in my healing, Anna would tell me to limit my distractions during meal times. Well, that's kind of hard for me, just in my relationship, my husband and I, we like to, and kind of always have sat in front of the TV and watched an episode of something like during dinner, we'll pause it and talk and chat, of course. And, but we tend to have something else going on in the background. And it's just really not something that we can let, let go of. It just is part of, kind of who we are and what we do. So I remember telling Anna about this back several years ago, again at the early stages of my healing. And so I developed, uh, you know, a little system and what I would do, like let's say it was pizza or something.

Speaker 1 00:09:10 And we were rewatching Seinfeld at the time, which is one of my favorites. But anyway, I would, you know, get maybe two slices of pizza. Sit. The episode would be on I'd watch the episode. But before I got back up to maybe get seconds of or whatever was another slice of pizza, I would wait until the episode had finished and a Seinfeld episode they're not super long. So it kind of gave me at least enough time to let my stomach tell my brain what was going on and give myself that moment of mindfulness. Even though there was a distraction, I was still mindful enough to know, okay, enough time has passed. I don't really want that second helping, or I don't need that other piece of pizza or whatever it was or maybe I did, but I gave myself --

-- that time. So when you think about that, if you're not able to limit distractions, for whatever reason, you know, how else can you play around with that so that you still are honoring your own hunger and fullness and eating mindfully and continuing on with our tips.

Speaker 1 00:10:12 You know, remember it's like not possible to eat mindfully 100% of the time. I mean, we still have to live our lives, but you have to practice forgiveness and self-compassion for yourself 100% of the time. So, you know, it's okay if every day isn't perfect. You might grab a meal on the go, you might skip a meal, you might choke down something. When you really don't have time, you might just not be real mindful, whatever it is, it's fine. Strive to offer forgiveness. And self-compassion next, when you're eating notice just how certain foods make you feel. Do you feel a certain way after you eat something that is, you know, really heavy and dense, how do you feel when you eat something salty or crunchy or whatever it is just, how do certain foods make you feel? Do you feel the same after you eat a steak as you do when you eat a donut without judgment, again, all of this is without judgment, but just how do you feel get back in touch with that?

Speaker 1 00:11:19 Maybe another trick for you to do is just before you start eating, take a few deep breaths. My favorite way to do deep breathing place. One hand on your chest in one on your belly, take a big deep breath in through your nose, slight pause, and then a long exhale and make that exhale longer than the inhale, exhale longer than inhale. And do that just a couple, two, three deep breaths before you start eating just to ground yourself and center yourself. So you, that can be there in the present moment in your body. Additionally, you know, see if you can play around with that hunger scale and tune into like where you're at. Like it's dinner time, whoa, I'm at a one I'm like, Naly sick. I waited way too long, no judgment. Just see where you are at and check in with yourself.

Speaker 1 00:12:19 Additionally, bring awareness to your thoughts, emotions, perceptions, and sensations that arise as you start to feel hunger, what starts to happen in your body? Just pay attention there. And when you start to feel full, what happens in your body and how can you tune back into that? And this can be actually really challenging to do, especially if you have a history of dieting and restricting and not listening to your body, even giving yourself the permission to start listening to your body can feel like whoa. So again, be gentle with yourself, mindful eating isn't about being perfect all the time, but it's about making wise choices based on what your body wants and needs. And what's available to you at any given time. You may not have a great option or what is perceived as a great option and what, for whatever reason. So what is available to you, but also what your body wants and what your body needs and ask yourself like, what am I craving right now? Is it salty?

Speaker 1 00:13:34 Is it smooth or spicy or cold or hot cetera, and really try to remember, and this is a shift for people. There are no bad foods. I said it, no bad foods. There is no morality in food. However, you may decide that certain foods make you feel a certain way. So you may choose not to eat them or choose to eat them. But that's a conscious choice. You're not just restricting food because something else tells you that it's quote unquote bad. When you do that, you actually give food power. And then it immediately like flips something in your brain where all you can do is crave it. So then what tends to happen is it's like let's use, um, we'll use donuts again as an example. So like, Nope, donuts are bad food. Okay. So we want a donut, but we don't allow ourselves to have that donut.

Speaker 1 00:14:32 So then we crave it. We crave it. We want it. We still don't allow it. So what happens is your chances are you're going to binge on something else that doesn't bring you that satisfaction. If you had just had the donut or a bite of donut, or you're eventually gonna break down, then you're gonna eat a half a dozen donuts. That was at least my lived experience in my healing journey. And that may resonate with you as well. So there are no bad foods. There's no morality in food. All foods count, all foods are good. And just let go of the idea of perfection. It doesn't have to be perfect a --

-- nd it won't be perfect, but that's okay. And this is one of my favorite things to do is bring something pleasurable to your meal time, those fancy dishes that are collecting dust in the China cabinet time to bring them out, even though it's not a special occasion or maybe some candles or a centerpiece or some nice, um, music playing in the background, whatever it is, that's just pleasurable to you, bring it to your mealtime, make it an event.

Speaker 1 00:15:38 And remember, it's fine to eat when you're not hungry. It really is. But try to get in touch with the reasons why you might be doing that. So why are you eating if you're not hungry? What else is going on? Get curious with your body, bring awareness to it. And again, without judgment. So those are just some things to think about when we think about mindful eating and I know, you know, depend upon your job or your schedule or what you get going on. This can be kind of hard to do. So don't, don't stress about it. Don't try and do everything all at once. Maybe just adopt one of these tips and kind of see how it feels start small. I'm always big proponent of starting small and then building from there. But I hope that you found that information useful. I'm gonna put lots of info and links in the episode notes and as always, thank you so much for listening. We hope you're enjoying these bite size episodes and we'll be back with full size interviews all too soon. And remember to subscribe and rate this podcast on your preferred player and be sure to follow me on social media at Dr. MC's self care episodes drop biweekly on Wednesdays. So we'll see you next time. Stay well and do good.

Speaker 1 00:17:11 Are you looking for exciting, engaging and useful professional development and workshops for your school business or organization will look no further. Dr. MC offers a variety of options and topics related to self-care and renewal trauma, recovery, building resilience, developing a growth mindset, stress management, and more completely customizable to fit every need. And coming soon is a new program to help high school students manage the challenges they are facing today and the increasing concerns around mental health visit Dr. MC self-care dot com to learn more and request a session.

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