

## **It's not WHAT you eat its WHY !**

### **MINDFUL EATING LEADS TO PERMANENT WEIGHTLOSS**

For emotional eaters, food becomes a best friend. It can alleviate boredom, boost spirits and calm stress. Unfortunately it can also lead to a life long struggle with weight. New studies show that the key to permanent weight loss is **Mindful Eating**. It is about balancing your life, gaining awareness of your mindless eating habits and tailoring your approach to your body's needs.

The Mayo Clinic runs successful medical weight loss and lifestyle change programs at four of their American Medical Centers. The philosophy of their programs has been that “the key to successful weight loss is a commitment to making permanent changes in your diet and exercise.” Doctors have been preaching this mantra for years but simply telling someone to eat less and exercise more does not lead to the life long changes needed for permanent weight loss. The difference between those who experienced temporary weight loss and those who were able to make life long changes, was the introduction of the principal of Mindful Eating. In studies of different weight loss programs, those that included Mindful Eating had the highest success rates. Studies showed that after 5 years, the Mindful Eating programs participants were 5 times more likely to have kept the weight off and maintained their goal weight.

Mindful Eating retrains the brain and the body to have an intuitive sense of hunger and satisfaction and to develop a balanced and joyful relationship with food. Learning to eat mindfully is a lifelong process that varies under different conditions, such as changes in stress levels, health states, and age

The first step to Mindful Eating is about being conscious of **why** you are eating before you deal with **what** are eating. Mindful eaters have two tasks to master. First they need to learn how to avoid using food to regulate their feelings. This involves taking a closer look at current behavior and developing a personalized plan that addresses a change in both thoughts and habits. Second, they must safely get adequate food and nutrients without overdoing or under-doing it.

Psychologists have detected over 25 different mindless eating habits that lead to being overweight. These include the “clean plate eater” who eats everything on their plate regardless of hunger, and the “habitual rerun eater” who eats the same bad foods at the same time, over and over again. By tracking their eating habits and behaviors through a series of reflective exercises, participants in Mindful Eating Programs become aware of their own patterns. Using a holistic approach, they examine all dimensions of eating; mind, body, thoughts and feelings.

The Mayo Clinic also identified that emotional eating not only leads to eating too much but also it often leads to making unhealthy choices, especially high fat, salty and sweet foods. A mindful-eating approach goes hand in hand with balanced nutrition. When someone pays attention to their body and how it processes food, they discover which foods make them feel the most energetic, healthy, and strong.

Many bariatric surgery clinics in the US are now only performing weight loss surgeries on those patients who enter a weight loss program that includes the Mindful Eating concepts. Simply sending patients' home with a calorie restricted diet or liquid meal replacements created a warped relationship with food and did nothing to solve how the patient became overweight in the first place. Long term success rates increased significantly, especially in those patients identified as binge eaters, when a Mindful Eating program was introduced 3 months prior to bariatric surgery and for 12 months following. According to the Bariatric Times, one of the most interesting findings was a significant decrease in rates of depression in patients who practiced Mindful Eating.

For many people, mindfulness leads to greater health, pleasure, and satisfaction while decreasing the tendency to overeat. The Mindful Eating approach helps compulsive or emotional eaters become more in tune with their bodies' needs and regain control over their eating behavior. The goal of mindful eating is to be able to prepare a meal that includes exactly what you want to eat, eat it until you are satisfied and completely savor the experience without guilt.

***City Centre Health and Fitness offers programs that include Mindful Eating. For information on Medical Weight Loss or Lifestyle Change programs call Kirby at 250-487-1481***