

## Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More Than We Think!

Extension Homemaker Package Lesson

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**Description:** The mind makes food related decisions and many of them without pause for actual thought. Explore together the idea that we don't have to change what we eat as much as how and that by making more mindful food-related decisions we can start to eat and live better.

**Lesson Objectives:** Participants will be able to:

- Understand how mood affects eating habits.
- Understand that the main cook in the family determines the foods that are eaten.
- Recognize that the smell of food can affect how much you eat.
- Learn that people who enjoy sweet snacks will enjoy fruit so substituting a fruit for a sweet could be a positive diet change.
- Learn that "low fat" does not mean "low-calorie" and to use this knowledge to eat well every day.
- Learn how the look of food can trick you into paying for more for it and thinking it tastes better.
- Recognize that the size of plates and drinking glasses can trick you into eating more.
- Learn that you will eat more food if given a variety of options rather than if given only one option.

**Handout:**

The Art of Altering Recipes

### Food for Your Mood Your mood affects your eating habits.

1. When you feel sad, what kinds of foods do you like to eat?
2. What kinds of foods do you eat when you feel happy?
3. Is there a difference? Why is that?

Do you think people eat more unhealthy food when they are sad or happy? Why?

Discussion Questions:

1. How can you avoid over-eating when you are feeling bad?

What things can you do to improve your mood when you are feeling bad?

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Take-Away Facts:

1. While people tend to overeat unhealthy foods when they are sad, people who are happy often over-eat healthy foods.
2. If you are feeling sad, don't use food to try to improve your mood. Instead, try going for a walk, watching a movie, or talking to a friend.
3. When feeling bad, many people overeat without realizing it. Put snacks into smaller bags to avoid eating too much.

Activity- When do you eat these foods?

Food	Sad Mood	Happy Mood
Ice Cream		
Candy Bar		
Potato Chips		
Apple		
Raisins		
Other		

### Who's Your Food Gatekeeper?

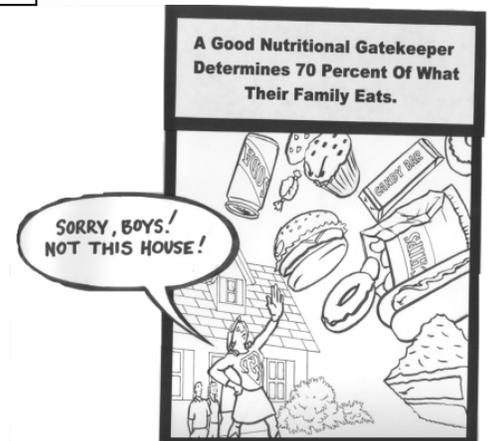
Over seventy percent of what you eat is determined by the main cook in your family .

Take-Away Facts:

1. The main cook in your house is responsible for the majority of what you eat.
2. The main cook makes decisions (like using olive oil in place of butter) that affect the entire family.

Discussion Questions

1. Does the main cook in your family try to prepare dishes that the whole family will like? How could this be good? How could it be bad?
2. What things could you do to help your family eat more nutritiously?
3. What things would make you want to eat healthy foods?





## The Nose Knows Best

The smell of a food affects how much of it you eat .

1. How do you think apple pie would taste if you smelled onions while eating it? Why?
2. How would you feel about eating lunch while sitting next to a smelly garbage can?

### Discussion Questions:

1. How does the odor of a food affect how enjoyable it is to eat?
2. How could you stop someone from wanting to eat a second helping of chocolate cake?
3. If you ran a bakery what would you want your customers to smell when they came in?

### Take-Away Facts:

1. If a food smells delicious, you will eat more.
2. If a food smells strange, you will eat less.
3. If you want to get people to eat more fruits, put out ripe, pleasant-smelling varieties.

## A Sweet Deal

If you like sweet snacks, you will love fruit

1. Think of some sweet snack foods you enjoy. What types of fruits could you eat instead?
2. Why do you think many people don't eat the recommended amount of fruit each day? What advice would you give them?



### Take-Away Facts:

1. Fruit is a great alternative to sweet snacks.
2. If you like to eat sweet foods, you will like to eat fruit.
3. Eating fresh fruit after dinner instead of a sugary dessert is a healthy change you can easily make.

## The Low-fat Lowdown

“Low-fat” claims on foods can trick you into eating more.

1. What comes to mind when you hear that a food is “low-fat”?
2. Would you rather eat “low-fat” cookies or “regular” cookies? Why?

Food Calories	Regular Version	Reduced Fat Version
Fig Cookie	56	51
Small Chocolate Chip Cookie	53	50
Peanut Butter (2 TBS)	191	187
Vanilla frozen yogurt (1 cup)	104	100

**Take-Away Facts:**

1. "Low-fat" foods do not necessarily have fewer calories than "regular" foods.
2. Many people over-eat "low-fat" foods without realizing it.
3. Even if they eat the same amount of calories, people feel less guilty about over-eating "healthy" foods (like granola) than "unhealthy" foods (like chocolate).
4. Eating all foods in moderation is one of the keys to a healthy lifestyle.

**Hey Good Lookin'!**  
**When food looks beautiful, we think it will taste better and we are willing to pay more for it**

Questions:

1. When sitting down to a meal, what helps you decide whether the food you're about to eat is going to taste good?
2. If you wanted to impress guests at a meal, what kinds of things could you do to make your food seem tastier?
3. Other than the look of a food, what other things affect your opinion of a food?
4. If you wanted to help someone eat more healthy foods, how could you make the foods look tastier?

**Take-Away Facts:**

1. The more beautiful a food looks; the more delicious you think it is.
2. Descriptive labels on foods increase sales by 27% and improve attitudes towards food (example – Black Forest Double Chocolate Cake vs. chocolate cake).
3. People consider appearance more than taste when deciding how much a food is worth.

**Bottomless Bowls**

The amount of food you have left on your plate may trick you into eating more even after you are full.

Questions:

1. Think about dinner last night, when did you stop eating?



2. Do you usually try to finish everything on your plate? Why or Why not?

Discussion Questions:

1. What types of situations could cause you to eat more than you would like to? How could you prevent from falling into these food traps?
2. Why might eating until you finish everything on your plate not be the best idea?
3. When you go to a fast food restaurant, how likely are you to get a drink refill? Why do you get the refill?

**Take-Away Facts:**

1. Fifty-four percent of American adults aim to finish everything on their plates. This behavior can lead to weight gain.
2. Watch Out! Many people eat more food than they think. You can avoid doing this by putting a single serving of food on a plate (don't eat directly from large bags/containers).
3. People eat more food from large plates than they do off of small ones, but feel equally full. Therefore, use smaller plates!

## The Dark Side of Variety

### How variety causes you to overeat

Questions:

1. Explain why you think you would eat [more/less/the same amount] pudding if given both chocolate and vanilla to eat versus just one flavor.



**WHICH STORE HAS MORE VARIETY?**

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think variety causes people to eat more?
2. What are some situations where having a greater variety would be beneficial? When would it be bad?

**Take-Away Facts:**

1. If a bag of trail mix is put in 20 bowls, people will think there is a greater variety than if the same amount was put into just a few bowls.
2. When variety increases, people eat more. For example, when people were offered three different types of yogurt, they ate as much as 300% more than when offered only one type.
3. Having a variety of foods available makes people think that they will enjoy the foods more.

## Other Important Information

Did you know?

1. For every 100 calories consumed you need to walk a mile.
2. Mindless margin- if you remove or add (if you need to gain weight) 100-300 calories a day you would lose/gain 10-30 pounds in a year.
3. If you buy in bulk, repackage the food into serving size containers- you will be less likely to overeat.
4. Hide the extras- if it is out of sight, you will be less likely to eat it.
5. Use tape to seal the packages- making it harder to open. This will give you time to think if you really want/need to eat it.
6. Dine with a friend; you will eat about 35% more. With a group of 7 or more you will consume 96% more food. If you are trying to lose weight, eat alone or with the smallest group possible, and pace yourself with the lightest eater.
7. The longer that you sit a table the more you will consume.
8. Preplate your food and you will eat about 14% less.
9. Only put two items on your plate at a time at buffets.
10. Always eat in the same room of your home but not in front of the television or computer. You won't snack as much.
11. Restaurant rules- enjoy 2 of these, but not all 3: an appetizer, a drink or a dessert. Share a dessert with a friend or ask for a take home box for the other half. Ask the waiter not to bring the bread or chips basket to your table.

\* Wansink, Brian, James E. Painter, and Jill North (2005). "Bottomless Bowls: Why Visual Cues of Portion Size May Influence Intake." Obesity Research 13:1 (January), 93-100.

Wansink, Brian, Ph. D., *Mindless Eating- Why We Eat More Than We Think* (New York, Bantam Dell 2006).

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# THE ART OF ALTERING RECIPES

With the technique of altering some items in our recipes, we may just be able to “have our cake and eat it too”. Take a look at some of these ideas and incorporate them in your food choices and recipes that you prepare for both your family, pitch-ins and make them part of your daily lifestyle in terms of food preparation.

- Select fewer foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt. Save foods like pastries, snack chips, cakes, cookies and candies for only special occasions and only have small portions when you eat these choices.
- Choose whole grain breads and cereals for at least half of your grain choices. Use highly processed or refined cereals and breads only occasionally.
- Take smaller portions. (Using a smaller plate makes portions appear larger - much of food perception is mental).
- Modify recipes to decrease the amounts of fats, sugar and salt - increase the amount of fiber by replacing some or all of the white flour with whole grain flour.
- Use more fresh fruits and vegetables.

Here are some suggestions for making traditional recipes a healthier version:

Remember that recipes are chemical formulas - they specify ingredients, proportions and methods necessary to produce a satisfactory product. Be aware that changes made to a recipe will produce a slightly different product than the original recipe. Experiment until you find a version that meets your satisfaction. Some recipes, such as soups and casseroles, are more flexible than others. Cake recipes are less adaptable than cookies but most recipes for baked goods can be altered - just remember that the taste and texture will vary from the original product.

Know which ingredients can be altered: food scientists have found that most people don't notice much difference or accept the difference that results when the following kinds of changes are made.

- Reduce sugar by one-third - example: if a recipe calls for 1 cup, use 2/3 cup. This works best in canned and frozen fruits and in making puddings and custards. In cookies and cakes try using ½ cup sugar per cup of flour. For quick breads and muffins, use 1 tablespoon sugar per cup of flour. To enhance flavor when sugar is reduced, add vanilla, cinnamon or nutmeg.
- Reduce fat by one-third- example: if the recipe calls for ½ cup use 1/3 cup. This works best in gravies, sauces, puddings and some cookies. For cakes and quick breads, use 2 tablespoons fat per cup of flour. Yogurt or cottage cheese may be substituted for sour cream in some sauce and dip recipes. Low fat cheeses can also be used in place of higher fat options. Skim milk may be substituted for whole milk. Evaporated milk or whipped nonfat dry milk may be substituted in place of cream in some recipes calling for whipped cream.
- Omit salt or reduce by one-half - example: if the recipes says ½ teaspoon, use ¼ teaspoon. This may be more acceptable if you gradually reduce the amount each time you make the recipe. Herbs, spices or salt-free seasoning mixes also can be used as flavor enhancers. Do not eliminate salt from yeast bread or rolls; it is essential for the flavor and helps texture.
- Use whole grain and bran flours: *whole wheat flour* can replace from one-fourth to one-half of the all-purpose flour. Example: if a recipe has 3 cups all-purpose

flour, use 1½ cups whole wheat and 1½ cups all-purpose flour. *Oat bran or oatmeal* (that has been ground into flour or flour consistency) can replace up to one-fourth of the all-purpose flour. Example: if a recipe has 3 cups all purpose flour, use ¾ cup oat bran or ground oatmeal and 2¼ cups all-purpose flour. *Bran cereal flour* is made by grinding a ready-to-eat cereal such as Bran Buds or Fiber One or 100% Bran in a blender or food processor for 60 - 90 seconds. It can replace up to ¼ of the all-purpose flour. Example: if a recipe calls for 2 cups all-purpose flour, use ½ cup bran flour and 1½ cups all-purpose flour.

Some other ideas:

Instead of	Try	Best choice
Butter	60/40 margarine - butter blend	Margarine or reduced calorie margarine
Sour cream	Lite sour cream	Mock sour cream
2 whole eggs	1 whole egg plus 2 egg whites	4 egg whites, commercial egg substitutes, or homemade egg substitute
Whole milk	2 % milk	Skim milk
Cream	Evaporated milk	Evaporated skim milk
Cottage cheese	Lowfat cottage cheese	Nonfat ricotta or cottage cheese
Baking chocolate		3 tablespoons powdered cocoa plus 1 tablespoon cooking oil
Mayonnaise	Lite mayonnaise	Half cholesterol-free mayonnaise or nonfat yogurt
Regular ground beef	Lean ground beef	Use extra lean ground beef or lean ground turkey (also try rinsing ground meat after cooking by using a sieve and hot water)
Oil (1 cup)		½ cup baby fruit or veg. plus ½ cup oil or 1% buttermilk
Nuts		Use ½ the amount but toast to enhance the flavor