



MIDLIFE MAVEN'S DIETITIANS MINDFUL EATING GUIDE



5-STEP MINDFUL EATING READINESS KIT

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5-STEP MINDFUL EATING READINESS KIT

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01

Hunger & Fullness Check-In



How to Feel Hunger & Fullness

- Feeling hunger & fullness is an important part of determining if you want to reach out for food or if you are emotionally hungry and want to reach out for another way to comfort yourself instead.
- Your Readiness Tool: Check out my 1-5 Point Hunger/Satiety Scale. Most other scales provide 10 points to consider, and I don't know about you, but I would much rather think only five things instead of ten.
- Mindful Eating Practice: The Two-Question Pause: Before you eat, ask, "Am I physically hungry?" If yes, "How hungry am I?" "Am I full?" If you said yes, "I can stop eating."

Check out the hunger scale as a tool to help with this.



The Hunger Scale and Your Appetite

- Use your 5 fingers & assign them a hunger or fullness name.
- Your middle finger will be “comfortable”. You are neither hungry nor full, you are just right.
- Your ring finger is hungry but not starving. When we get a little bit of something to satisfy our hunger, we are more likely to eat a reasonable portion.
- Your pinky is what I like to refer to as the point of no return; you will eat anything and anyone that gets in your way. You will need extra calories to satisfy your hunger. The reason for this in primitive times, our ancestors used to fill up in times of feast to survive the famine. There are actually biological responses to make us feel like filling up!
- Going from the other end of comfortable, starting with the pointer, we have comfortably full.
- The thumb is Thanksgiving full, which is uncomfortable and ready to pop.
- Many of us go from the point of no return to Thanksgiving full over and over without much being in the middle of satisfaction. That is because many of us go on a “diet,” get hungry at the level of no return, and then have to fill up to Thanksgiving full, feel remorseful about overeating, and then do it over again. It’s a vicious cycle.

02

Engage All 5 Senses



Engage All 5 Senses

Your Readiness Tool: Use all 5-Senses Mindful Eating Exercise: When eating, use all of your senses: sight, smell, sound, touch, and taste. The mindful eating exercise tool in your readiness kit will help you develop more of an awareness and appreciation of your food and you!

Actionable Practice: Make your first bite a Mindful Bite using this Mindful Eating Exercise: Practice the 5-senses check just on the first three bites of any meal. Put your utensil down between each bite. Slow down and savor!

On the next page, I have a copy of a mindful eating exercise for you to try.



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Mindful Eating Exercise

Food to be eaten: _____

Amount to be eaten: _____

Your location: _____

1. Use your senses

- Sight: What does your food look like?
- Smell: How does your food smell?
- Taste: How does your food activate your taste buds?
- Sound: Listen to your stomach growling, chewing noises, food crunching, or other food sounds. How does it sound?
- Feel: Take note of the texture of your food and your body's physical response to food. Feel the food as it is chewed in your mouth, and how the food passes through your throat and rests in your stomach.

2. Note your reactions: • What are you thinking? Listen and observe the thoughts you experience. List some of your thoughts:

- What emotions are you feeling? Take a minute to describe those feelings:
- Pay attention to what you are doing. Describe your behavior:
- What are your physical responses? Develop an awareness of your entire body. Notice your breath, heart, stomach, legs, hands, and facial expression. Check yourself out from head to toe. Take a minute to write down your physical responses:

Were you totally present during this exercise or did your mind begin to move onto something else? Adapted from: Nhat Hahn's book *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* (Bantam, 1992).

03

Remove Distractions



Remove Distractions

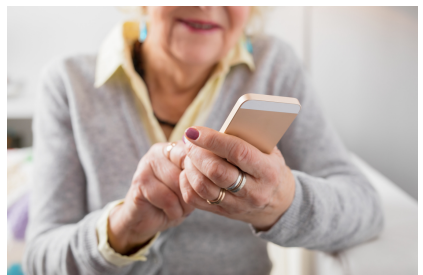
Your Readiness Tool: Creating your intentional eating environment for listening to your hunger/fullness and **savoring your food**.

Actionable Practice: Designated Eating Zone: Commit to eating your meals and snacks while sitting at a table with zero screens (phone, TV, computer).

If this feels difficult at first, set a goal to complete one meal or snack at a time. Once you succeed in doing that, move on to the next meal or snack. Sitting at the table and avoiding distracted eating is one of the first steps to developing awareness in mindful eating.

Create a Digital Detox

Pay attention to your food more and increase your enjoyment of it. Here are additional [ideas from Lisa Young PhD, RD on distracted eating](#).





Acknowledge
Without
Judgement

04

All Food Can Fit in a Nourishing Eating Plan

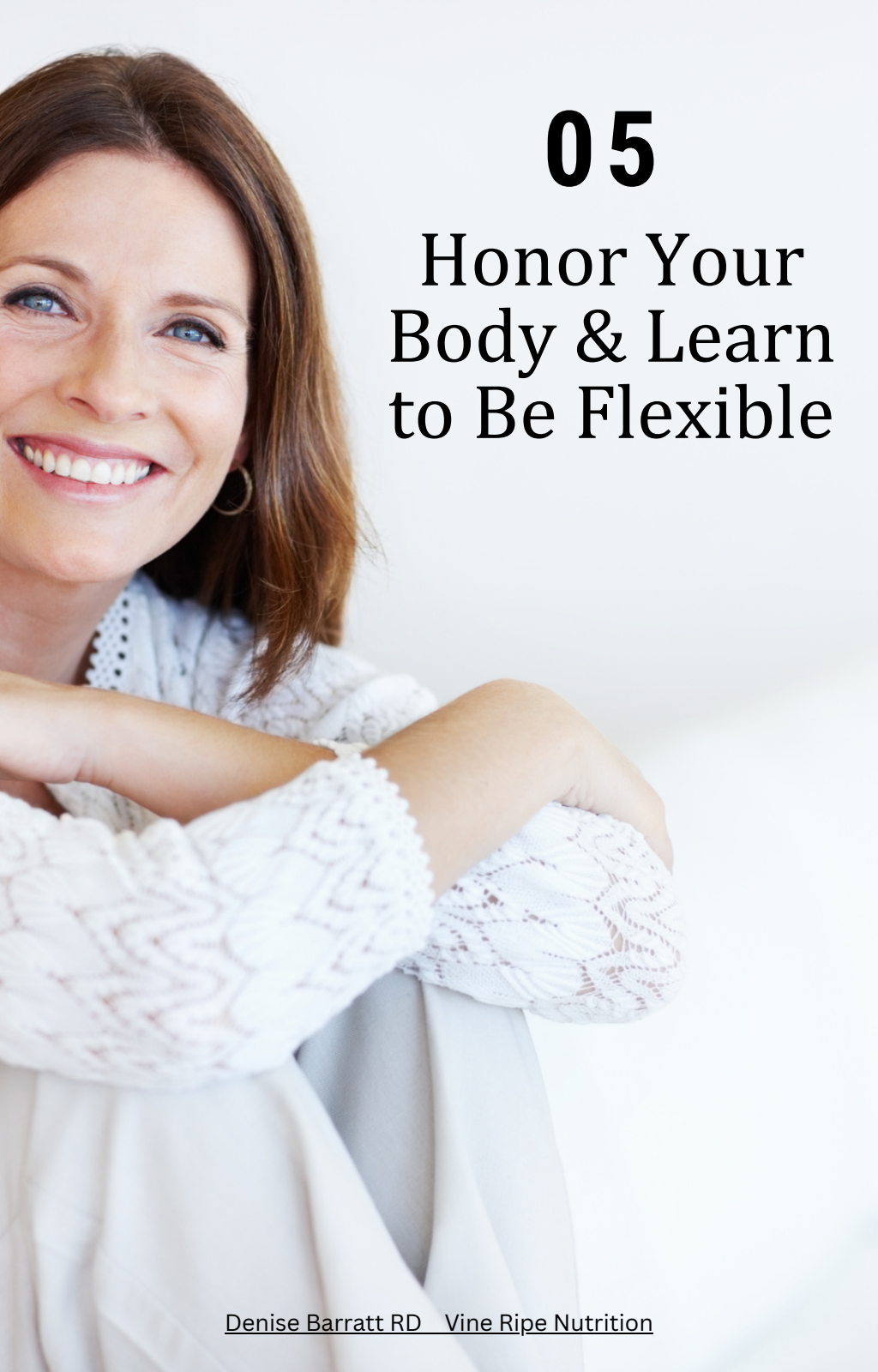
The Tool: Self-Compassion is a part of mindful eating is non-judgmental. The practice of eating is neutral; it should not be powerfully charged a good or bad food. Being good or being bad.

We are, and therefore we eat, and some days are "healthier" than others. Some days, things get in the way of what we set out to do. But lessening the emotions behind food as a comfort, listening to hunger and fullness, paying attention to the five senses, and removing distractions help us eat more mindfully. And this can increase our self-compassion.

Actionable Practice: Try this exercise that I like to call the "That Happened Now What": Here's how to do it, if you eat past fullness, just acknowledge that it happened and move on. The next eating opportunity is a chance to reset—no guilt, no restriction.



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05

Honor Your Body & Learn to Be Flexible

Take Good Care of Your Body & It Will Take Good Care of You

The Tool: Choosing foods that both satisfy and nourish, and moving your body in a caring way.

Actionable Practice: Prioritize eating foods that provide protein and fiber first to ensure lasting satisfaction, and then fully enjoy the "fun foods" you truly desire.



I hope that these tools help you on your way to eating more mindfully!

In addition, if you are ready to create a healthier relationship with food and your body in 2026, stay tuned for my course created for midlife women and is called Hunger Harmony: Nourish Your Body and Love You!

More details coming soon!



A little more about me.

I'm Denise with Vine Ripe Nutrition & the Midlife Nutrition Maven on Substack, and I have been a registered dietitian nutritionist specializing in Women's Health in Middle Age for almost 30 years. I offer digital/online courses for women in midlife on a variety of health topics, as well as a women's online supportive community.

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