



BOTANICA

**TAKE THE
MINDFUL
NUTRITION
CHALLENGE**

#MINDFULNUTRITION

WHY MINDFUL NUTRITION?

It's a busy world, and in all the "doing" of life, the basic fundamentals of health are so easily pushed aside. Sleep, community, activity, joy, and nutrition have been largely overtaken by electronics, online interactions, sedentary jobs, stress, and fast-food.

It was only one or two generations ago that food was grown in ways that our ancestors developed and was eaten in the company of our community. As a society we've moved away from that heritage with more and more people mindlessly consuming convenience foods in isolation. Yes, eating with your phone or computer as company counts as isolation!

At Botanica, we know an important part of your health journey is to bring greater mindfulness to all of the choices you make. Food and nutrition are such an important part of your health and well-being so we wanted to provide some inspiration to help you get back in touch with your roots. Through shifting back to our base biological needs, we can excel in life as healthy individuals in a strong and rooted community.

We would like to support you in increasing your mindfulness around food. We're not just looking at what we eat, but also how, why, and where we eat. There is always room to improve so this one-month challenge is here to guide you with honest self-reflection. With a different area for reflection every week, the goal is for expanded understanding of your dietary choices.

#MINDFULNUTRITION

MINDFUL NUTRITION CHALLENGE WORKSHEET

WEEK 1

WHAT. MINDFUL FOOD CHOICES

WHAT MAKES A FOOD “GOOD”? THE GOAL OF THIS IS NOT DIETARY PERFECTION BUT AN INCREASED AWARENESS OF WHAT YOU EAT IN ORDER TO GUIDE YOU TO MAKING BETTER CHOICES FOR YOU.

KEEP A RAINBOW FOOD JOURNAL

A food journal for a week is a good way to get an objective overview of what passes your lips on a daily basis. If writing isn't your thing, then take a picture to get a visual overview. Action: Aim for a colourful rainbow of whole foods throughout eat day! Red beets, orange mango, yellow pepper, green leaves, blueberries, purple carrots, black kale.

CONSIDER YOUR FOOD SHOPPING PRIORITIES

Historically, we didn't have many choices to make. Food came into season or was caught/harvested and preserved for later consumption and we ate what we could when it was available to us. Action: Shop as you normally do and as you unpack your bags at home, consider each item and what drew you to it. Deliciousness? Calories? Convenience? A particular recipe you plan to make? Habit? Cost? The goal here is to bring awareness to why you make the choices you do.

RECONNECT WITH YOUR ROOTS

Food and culture are strongly linked. While we have access to a wide range of culinary inspiration, sometimes those food of our youth provides a level of comfort that we've forgotten. Action: Connect with an “elder” in your family for recipe inspiration (or use the power of the internet to help you find something that your ancestors would have eaten.) Does this food feel different in your body? Does the source of this meal's inspiration make you feel differently about what you're eating?

EXPERIMENT WITH WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

Perhaps you choose not to eat particular foods due to values. Perhaps you have health restraints such as Celiac disease, lactose-intolerance, or food allergies that must be avoided in your diet. Perhaps you feel better on a paleo, gluten-free, soy-free, or ketogenic diet. Action: Continue to be true to yourself and your physiology! If you haven't explored alternative diets then consider trying one for a week or a month to explore dietary options. When one door closes another one opens – if you avoid one food group for a period of time you open your eyes to the myriad of alternatives that are available. You may discover a new favourite food!

END-OF-WEEK REFLECTION

What did you learn this week about the food choices that you make? What considerations around mindful food selection will you carry forward after this week?

WEEK 2

HOW. MINDFUL APPROACHES TO EATING

THINK OF YOUR TYPICAL BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER AND ANY SNACKS, AND CONSIDER YOUR OVERALL DIGESTION, ENERGY, MENTAL FOCUS, AND MOOD AS YOU PONDER THESE QUESTIONS DURING THIS WEEK.

— CHEW, CHEW, CHEW

For some people eating is a chore to get done quickly and efficiently in order to get on with the rest of life. For others it is a time to slow down and smell the seasonings. Sometimes it's the quality of the food that determines the speed at which we eat – wolfing down what we don't enjoy and lingering over every molecule of a favourite food. Sometimes it's the pace of life that interferes with this early step in digestion. Action: Be conscious about chewing your food until it is completely smooth. Consider the Ayurvedic advice to “drink your food and chew your drink”, meaning that solids should be liquids before they are swallowed and liquids should be sipped and mixed with saliva before being swallowed. What do you notice when you chew completely? Do new flavours arise from your food? Do you notice the shift in textures? Do you enjoy your food more or less when you chew it well? Does that enjoyment vary with the quality of the food being eaten?

FIND A TABLE

Where do you eat? Standing up, sitting down, in the car, on the bus, while walking... With whom do you eat? Family, colleagues, roommates, pets, strangers in a food court, alone... Is meal-time something to which you look forward, or something to just “get done”? What do you do while eating? Action: Aim to eat every meal at a table - ideally one that is aesthetically set and in a calm environment. Pull out the tablecloth and candles at home and set the table beautifully, bring a nice plate mat to work and choose a communal area with conversation, go out to a restaurant with an old friend or a new acquaintance, play pleasant music BUT avoid all screens, pages, stress and work demands.

BREATHE BEFORE YOU EAT

To help the shift from busy fight-or-flight mode in which digestion is a low priority, to a more supportive rest-and-digest state. Action: take three deep breaths before your meal, relax your shoulders, and smile before picking up your knife and fork.

END-OF-WEEK REFLECTION

Does your productivity after meals change when eating more mindfully and focusing on eating socially, consciously, and with increased chewing and sensory involvement? Does your digestion feel different? Did your energy pattern stay the same or shift?

WEEK 3

WHY. MINDFUL CONNECTIONS TO FOOD, APPETITE, AND EMOTIONS

THERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY PEOPLE EAT: HUNGER, BOREDOM, STRESS, SELF-SABOTAGE, PLEASURE, TIME, SOCIAL CUES, REWARD, AND OTHERS. THIS WEEK, THE FOCUS IS ON CHECKING IN WITH YOURSELF TO DETERMINE WHY YOU ARE STANDING IN FRONT OF THE FRIDGE OR HEADING TO THE LUNCH ROOM.

CONSIDER YOUR HUNGER

Do you wait until you are hungry or eat according to a routine? Sometimes the answer is one and the same because your body knows that lunchtime is at the same time every day and starts growling in anticipation. Other times, you may eat when not truly hungry but because the clock says you should. Others still don't eat until they are close to passing out and their bodies demand attention. Action: Take note of your cues around snacks and meals. Similar to the food journal of week one, record the time and rate your hunger on a scale of 1-5 before eating.

CONSIDER YOUR OFF SWITCH

After a meal do you feel comfortably full, over-stuffed or longing for more? Do you finish everything that's on your plate or stop when you feel as though you have had enough? Action: Tune in to notice when and or if you are comfortably full...and what you do when you have that sensation. For example, are you more inclined to overeat at restaurants when portions are not your decision?

DIGEST WITH EASE

Consider how the food you eat feels as it moves through your digestive tract. Are you bloated after meals, energized or lethargic? Do you feel nourished and fueled by the food you eat or uncomfortable either physically or emotionally? Action: Add physical symptoms to your food journal noting energy levels, mood, bowel movements, heartburn, abdominal discomfort, bloating, and any else that you may experience regularly such as headaches or brain fog.

EATING YOUR EMOTIONS

Some people eat because they are sad, lonely, stressed, or bored, while others forget about food entirely when they are feeling strong emotions. Which emotional states trigger you the most, and is your innate reaction to stuff them down with food or to starve them out? Action: Before letting anything pass your lips be it food or drink, do a quick self-assessment. Are you "hangry" or do you simply have "appetite"? Or are you not hungry at all but experiencing a strong emotional state, positive or negative?

END-OF-WEEK REFLECTION

Why do you eat the way you do? Is your life sufficiently balanced to allow time for self-nourishment? Are there areas of your life outside of meals that could be shifted to allow for more mindfulness and presence with food consumption?

WEEK 4

WHERE. MINDFUL CHOICES ABOUT WHERE YOUR FOOD COMES FROM

OUR EVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT WAS DICTATED LARGELY BY WHAT FOODS WERE AVAILABLE IN OUR IMMEDIATE REGION. COASTAL COMMUNITIES ATE DIFFERENTLY THAN THOSE IN THE MOUNTAINS. TODAY, FOOD IS SHIPPED AROUND THE WORLD INCREASING OUR DIETARY REPERTOIRE TO SOME DEGREE, BUT ALSO DISTANCING US FROM OUR LOCAL GEOGRAPHY.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

How far did your food travel? Was it grown within your region, province, country or shipped in from overseas? Action: Notice, and even write down or mark on a world atlas, countries and continents that contribute to your meals for a week. How many countries contribute to your weekly food consumption?

TRY A NEW SHOP

Grocery store, health food store, online shopping, delivery service, community sponsored agriculture, farmers market, home grown? Action: Explore one alternative option for food acquisition just to shake up your habits and invoke curiosity. Does the alternative appeal to you? Why or why not?

MEAL PREP MADNESS

Homemade vs. take away vs. restaurants vs. meal service vs. produce delivery? Action: Try a meal exchange with friend or co-worker or set up a dinner party group and take turns hosting each other. This can increase our intake of home-cooked meals while fostering community and exploring new recipes or methods of cooking.

END-OF-WEEK REFLECTION

Where is your money going each week when you buy food? Which country, farmer, corporation, grocer? Could your dollars be allocated differently in order to improve the health of yourself, your family, your finances, your community?

**SHARE YOUR MINDFUL NUTRITION TIPS WITH BOTANICA
FOR A CHANCE TO WIN DURING THE MONTH OF MAY**



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