

Mindful Eating: Mind-Body Awareness One Bite At A Time

BY KAREN BERGER
MIRROR REPORTER

Anyone who has munched through a tub of popcorn during a movie or inhaled a burger while running errands can relate to “mindless eating.”

But mindful eating – the process of giving food and eating full attention – not only makes food more enjoyable, but often leads to weight loss and healthy eating, asserts Dr. Michelle May, founder of the Am I Hungry? program and author of *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat*.

Dr. Ellen Cullman, a Perrysburg-based mindful eating coach, utilizes May’s techniques, and those of other mindful eating programs, to help clients gain a healthier approach to food.

“The practice of mindful eating is more than eating slowly. It teaches you to sense your unique mind-body connection before, during and after a meal, and whenever you think about food. You relearn your natural ability to eat just the right amount of food and meet other needs in more productive ways. In a nutshell, mindful eating is mind-body awareness, one bite at a time,” Cullman said.

Thirty years ago, Cullman used the techniques and lost 40 pounds that she’s kept off

– even through two successful pregnancies.

When dining with yelling kids or heading to a cocktail party with tempting treats, Cullman brings mindful eating with her.

“Before dinner I would go to the bathroom and turn on the fan because no one bothers you there,” she laughed. “I would meditate and picture myself eating and then stay conscious during the meal. I wasn’t gulping and eating. It’s not mindless eating.”

While in her early 20s, Elovie Peddle had an eating disorder that was left untreated – so she became a dietitian, believing it would change her behavior. Instead, she began looking at how she perceives food and restrictive eating.

“I knew that dieting was dangerous and destructive for me. I changed the way that I looked at food first, and then the mindful eating just made sense to me,” she said.

As a result, she lost the 10 extra pounds she’d carried for 30 years. But she and Cullman stress that mindful eating is not a diet.

The concept of a diet, which involves rules and restrictions, is ingrained in our culture, Cullman said, while the concept of mindful eating seems counterintuitive



Dr. Ellen Cullman

to what would be effective.

“Mindful eating isn’t just for dieters. It is for everyone. If a person needs to lose weight and begins to eat mindfully, chances are, they will lose some weight or a lot of weight. But they gain so much more. They gain an appreciation for food, for themselves, for life,” Peddle said.

Mindful eating is different from a diet in that it allows freedom to enjoy all foods, said Claudine Reilly, a registered nurse and mindful eating coach from

Massachusetts.

“I don’t need a points calculator, website, a book, special recipes and mostly, I don’t need rules except those I make for myself,” said Reilly, who has practiced mindful eating for over 25 years. She’s kept off most of the 17 pounds she lost – although the last five pounds are sometimes tough.

Society has made eating difficult and guilt-ridden. Add the fast-paced nature, and it’s easy to make poor choices or not take time to enjoy food, said Cullman, who coaches individuals and groups in the process.

“I help them find ways to eat mindfully when the schedule is really tight and it seems impossible to do. And we find alternatives to eating if they’re not really hungry,” she said.

Cullman is a licensed facilitator for what she describes as May’s user-friendly and very applicable mindful eating model, which can be viewed at www.amihungry.com. She also has training with Dr. Jean

Kristeller’s Mindfulness Based Eating Awareness Training (MB-EAT).

The National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine has a sample of *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat* at www.nicabm.com/eatwhatyoulove/Eat_What_You_Love.pdf.

Cullman’s first eight-week class for mindful eating starts Thursday, January 20 from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at the Fort

Meigs Psychological Services office of Dr. Pat Van Kley in Perrysburg.

She welcomes those who have medical diagnoses related to problematic eating behaviors such as obesity, morbid obesity, metabolic syndrome, type II diabetes, pre-and post-surgical bariatric patients, and patients who do not meet the criteria for bariatric surgery.

Sign-up is due by January 6. For more information, e-mail mindfuleatingcoach@gmail.com

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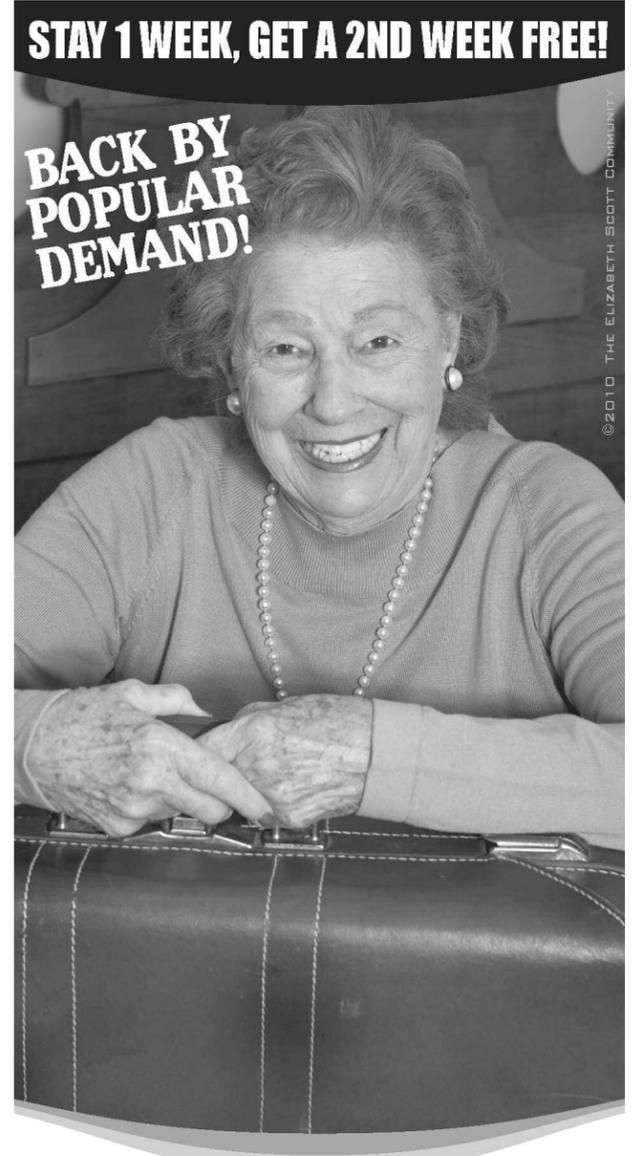
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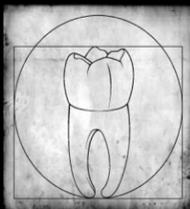
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