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Mindful Eating Group

Introduction

Our target audience is freshman college students between the ages of 17 to 19. Many freshmen rely on dorm cafeteria foods or campus food stations to get their meals/snacks. Most of these students are unemployed, work part time on minimum wage or dependent on their parents for financial support. These students often incorporate multitasking while eating such as eating while studying or watching TV. Other contributors to eating mindlessly are eating out of boredom, stress, between each class breaks, eating during class time and during late hours of the night. Research suggests that practicing mindfulness, in general, can help college students cope with stress and improve their mood. Also, mindfulness is currently being used as an essential part of treatment in helping people gain control over their eating habits as well as traditional psychological treatments ¹.

A recent study in Public Health Nutrition found that Americans do almost 50% of our eating while concentrating on something else. Eating has shifted from a primary activity to a second activity in the past 30 years ². Therefore, we feel there is a need for this intervention because students who master the art of mindful eating can improve their relationship with food and can also use these skills to cope with college life as whole.

Analyze needs and behaviors

The major behavioral concerns we found based on our needs assessment are: studying while eating, eating out of boredom, eating during breaks (between classes), eating while watching television, eating late at night, and eating as an emotional response to stress. Based on our needs assessment we found that college freshman needed information on how to separate eating from other activities. We also felt like they needed information describing what mindful eating is (steps involved) and environmental barriers that interfere with the ability to eat mindfully.

Identify Relevant Mediators

We collected data by creating a short questionnaire/survey. Our survey included a variety of question styles, with mostly brief close-ended questions. Sample questions from our survey are:

- Eat While Studying? Yes No
- Eat Out of Boredom? Yes No
- Eat While Watching TV? Yes No
- Any Other Triggers? (Stress was a common answer)

Twelve surveys were obtained from six male freshmen and six female freshmen, with majority of them living on-campus dormitories. In general, we found that many freshmen tended to watch T.V., study or do other activities while eating. Others found that emotional cues triggered them to eat as a response to boredom or stress. Although, we did receive some feedback on mindful eating we feel like more of our questions could have focus more on sensory characteristics of food. For example, we could have asked questions pertaining to what their focus was while they are eating such as “Do you take the time to recognize the texture, flavor, appearance and smell of

your food?” We could have also asked if they take time to enjoy the act of eating and actually “being one with their food”, not just to “relieve hunger”. Overall, we could have more concise in our questions to extract more thorough answers from our participants. Lastly, it would have been helpful to ask more questions concerning what they want to learn about being a mindful eater.

Based on the results of the survey we found that there was a lack of knowledge about what mindful eating involves. This discovery leads us to believe that there is a need for additional knowledge of the actual definition of “mindful eating”. Moreover, we feel that demonstrating or explaining how to eat mindfully will improve their self-efficacy towards practicing this behavior.

Theory, Philosophy, and Components

The theory we selected for our study is the Social Cognitive Theory. This theory focuses on how an individual’s behavior is direct result of personal and environment factors. This theory is based on the idea that many people attain the behaviors have through watching others in their environment. The Social Cognitive Theory consists of seven constructs that help facilitate a specific behavior change. The seven constructs are:

- Self-Efficacy: how confident the person is to execute a specific behavior.
- Behavioral Skills: attaining the knowledge and skill to execute a specific behavior.
Usually obtained from skill training.
- Modeling/Observational Learning: modification of behavior attained through watching others perform the given behavior, while focusing on actions and outcomes of that behavior.
- Reinforcement: responses to a particular behavior that can increase or decrease the probability of reoccurrence.

- Reciprocal Determinism: the complex interaction of a person, a specific behavior and the environment around them.
- Expectations/Barriers: what the person believes will happen due to changing the behavior. This includes perceived barriers and perceived benefits.
- Outcome Expectancies: the value that a person places on a given outcome due to a behavior change.

We chose Social Cognitive Theory because we felt the constructs closely resembled the steps that need to be taken in order to aide behavior changes towards mindful eating. The concept of mindful eating is not necessarily a behavior that many people know how to perform. As a result, we felt that before participants could implement behavior changes, they need to understand and observe how to be a mindful eater. This theory focuses on observational learning we concluded that developing a nutrition education program that involves a demonstration would be helpful in teaching participants various skills needed to become a mindful eater.

The following table lists constructs that embodied Social Cognitive Theory. We also included a list of activities that will be included in the nutrition education program to address each construct.

Constructs	Activity/Content
Self-Efficacy	Guide student through an interactive activity where they practice mindful eating.
Behavioral Skills	After participating in the mindful eating activity, participants will be asked to describe components involved in the mindful eating process.
Modeling/Observational Learning	Participants will view a video clip of a person explaining and demonstrating the process of mindful eating.
Reinforcement	Participants will describe their personal

	internal response to gaining enlightenment of eating mindfully.
Reciprocal Determinism	Have each participant name one way they can change their environment to facilitate mindful eating.
Expectations/Barriers	Ask participants to brainstorm possible barriers they may face in trying to be a mindful eater, also ask participants what benefits they believe they will experience from mindful eating.
Outcome Expectancies	Become one with self and food, increased energy levels (due to recognizing feelings of satiety), become more in tuned, and find more enjoyment in eating.

Educational Objectives:

Goal: Participants will increase their knowledge of what mindful eating involves.

Objective: Increase knowledge of environmental barriers that disrupt mindful eating.

Specific Objective: Participants will be able to identify three environmental barriers in relation to mindful eating.

Objective: To educate participants on potential benefits of mindful eating practices.

Specific Objective: Ask participants to list three potential benefits of mindful eating.

Objective: To make participants feel confident that they can implement mindful eating into their daily lives.

Specific Objective: We will walk participants through an interactive learning activity, allowing them to practice the steps of mindful eating. After the activity, we will ask student's to list one component of the exercise that will help them become a more mindful eater.

Theory Based Educational Strategies

The first component to our presentation describes the principles of mindful eating and addresses ways in which mindful eating can be implemented. The purpose of this component is to ensure our audience has a clear idea of what mindful eating is before we proceed any further. To help them fully understand mindful eating, we selected a clip that shows an individual practicing the various steps that are involved with mindful eating. Throughout our presentation we have several slides labeled “reflection”, that asks the participants questions about their thoughts concerning the topic. For example, one of the slides asks the participants about the environmental barriers they think can be disruptive towards mindful eating. The purpose of each “reflection” slide is to stimulate each student’s participation and is also an attempt for them to process some of the information being presented. The main educational component to our presentation is a “mindful eating exercise”. In this exercise, we will provide the participants with food and ask them to use all five of their senses (sight, touch, smell, taste, sound) while completing the exercise. We feel that this exercise will increase their confidence, desire and ability to eat mindfully. Ultimately, our goal is to increase their understanding of mindful eating and the factors that might hinder their ability to practice it. Once they can identify their environmental barriers and mediators we feel their chances of being able to apply mindful eating to their daily life will increase.

References

¹ Albers, S. “Mindful Eating 101: A Guide To Healthy Eating In College And Beyond.”

Routledge – Taylor & Franic Group. New York, NY. 2006. Page 10.

² Cahana, A. L. “Americans spend more time eating, mostly while distracted.” Ayala’s Herbal

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[spend-more-time-eating-mostly-while-distracted.html](http://herbalwater.typepad.com/ayalas_herbal_water/2010/07/americans-spend-more-time-eating-mostly-while-distracted.html) Accessed on October 17th, 2010.

Evaluation Material

1. Which of these is NOT part of mindful eating?
 - a) Paying attention to how you feel.
 - b) Being non-judgmental.
 - c) Turning off all distractions.
 - d) Eating while driving.

2. Which of the following is an example of environmental barrier?
 - a) Watching television.
 - b) Wearing a hat.
 - c) Drinking water with your meal.
 - d) Sitting in silence.

3. 50% of Americans eat while doing something else. True or False

4. Which definition defines “unconscious eating style”?
 - a) Eating free food.
 - b) Focusing on the taste of your food.
 - c) Eating while doing something else at the same time.
 - d) Eating because you’re hungry.

5. What is NOT a different term for mindful eating?
 - a) Attuned eating
 - b) Good eating
 - c) Intuitive eating