

Mindful Eating

Hey - don't roll your eyes!

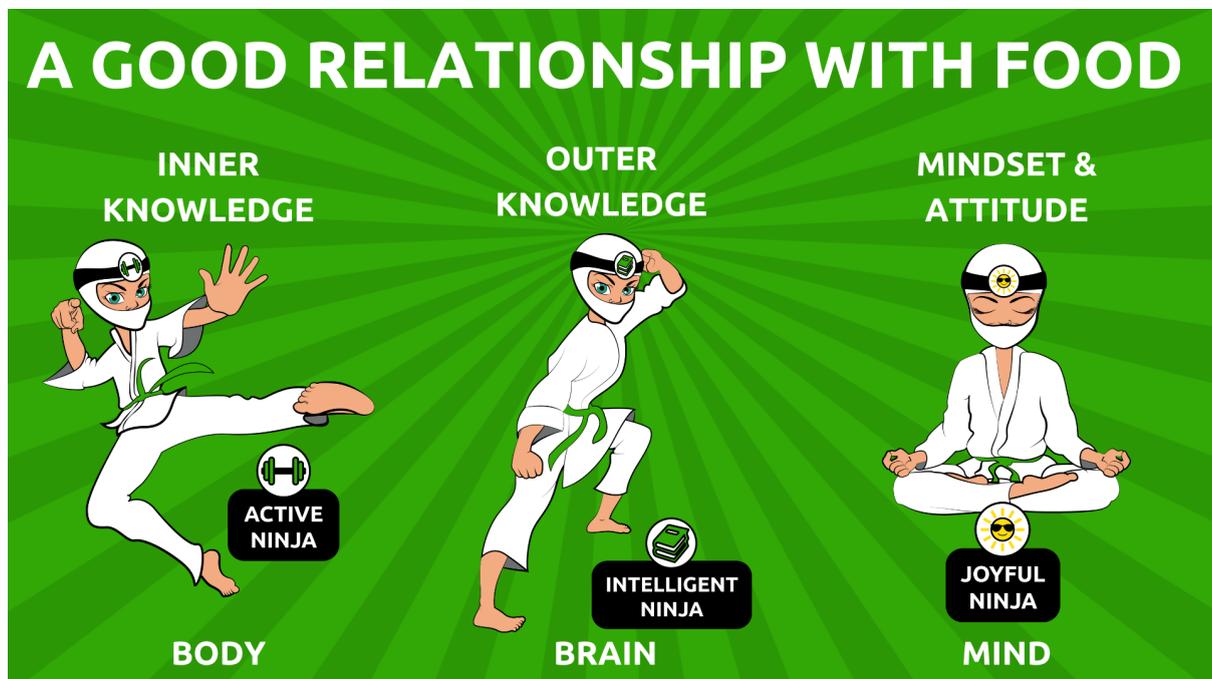
We're not gonna be sat round in a circle, contemplating a raisin or anything like that.

And mindfulness is not some hippy shit without any science to back it up



A Good Relationship With Food

To put all this into context, when we're looking at improving our relationship with food, the Ninja way is to look at these three elements:



This three pronged approach allows us to attack your goal from all angles to really give us the best chance of success.

Inner knowledge is about being aware of INTERNAL factors, such as hunger and taste, or your thoughts, feelings and emotions around food and your body.

One of the tools we use to increase our awareness is mindful eating.

INNER
KNOWLEDGE

A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD



- Increased awareness of bodily sensations, emotions & thoughts, without judgement
- Learning to listen to your bodies very clear 'safety nets' and acting appropriately
- Body acceptance - celebrating function, movement over aesthetics

So, how do we do it?

Throwing out the Rule Book

First of all, I need you to STOP following all the food rules you might have - yep, I know this is gonna be uncomfortable, but let's just make a start.

That means:

- NOT having a list of foods you don't allow yourself to eat
- NOT eating 'diet' or 'low fat' versions of foods because you think you should
- NOT judging yourself for what you eat

Are you now thinking - "WTF Hayley, I can't be trusted around food, I NEED some rules".

You don't need rules, you need PRINCIPLES.....here they are:

1. YOU ARE THE BOSS OF YOU

No one can tell you when to eat, how much you should eat, how hungry you are, and when you are fully satisfied.

Only YOU know this, by listening to what your body tells you.

I promise you, once you develop your INNER knowledge - using your satisfaction, hunger and enjoyment, you'll make the right choices.

2. FEELINGS ARE FRIENDS, NOT THE ENEMY

Instead of punishing yourself for your thoughts and feelings, and berating yourself for what you SHOULD be doing, or SHOULDN'T be feeling, how about making friends with your feelings?

You feel them for a reason, they're telling you what you need - sit with them & figure it out.

Stop being a Judgey McJudgeyPants - this will help you make better decisions & show yourself a bit of compassion.

3. FOODS ARE NOT BAD, AND YOU ARE NOT A BAD PERSON FOR WHAT YOU EAT

OK, unless you're the child catcher, who eats children or something.

But seriously, yes, some foods have more nutrients than others, but all foods that you enjoy have a place in your balanced diet.

Using your OUTER knowledge, you can eat whatever the fuck you like, in the correct quantities for your goals and values.

4. DATA MATTERS

Yep, I want you to get all touchy feely, and cultivate that inner wisdom. Many people stop there when trying to repair their relationship with food.

The REAL gravy is combining that with OUTER knowledge - knowing the energy value of foods, how certain foods affect your health, and which foods are more in line with your goals and values.



OUTER KNOWLEDGE

A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

- Tracking your food, with ZERO judgement
- Observing the data and understanding how different foods affect you, upskilling yourself
- Encourages you to make food choices based on enjoyment AND health
- Empowers you to make the right food choices for YOU and your emotions

INTELLIGENT NINJA

5. YOU WON'T ALWAYS MAKE THE OPTIMAL CHOICE

Sometimes your resilience will be super low. Shit happens, and when all your mental and emotional energy is being expended dealing with shitty situations, your brain will take the easy option.

You aren't in the right mindset to make the best decisions every day.

And that's OK. This is where the third element, mindset and attitude come into play.



MINDSET & ATTITUDE

A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

- no morality attached to foods
- You are not a good or bad person depending on your diet
- No restriction or stupid rules around food
- Your perception of a restriction dictates it's impact

JOYFUL NINJA

THE MINUTE YOU START TO JUDGE A BEHAVIOUR, YOU LOSE YOUR ABILITY TO LEARN FROM IT!

The infographic features a green background with a sunburst pattern. On the left, a cartoon character of a 'Joyful Ninja' is shown in a meditative pose, wearing a white gi and a white headband with a yellow sun icon. Below the character is a black box with the text 'JOYFUL NINJA' and a yellow sun icon. To the right of the character, the title 'A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD' is written in large white letters. Below the title, four bullet points are listed in white text. At the bottom right, a quote is written in white text: 'THE MINUTE YOU START TO JUDGE A BEHAVIOUR, YOU LOSE YOUR ABILITY TO LEARN FROM IT!'. In the top left corner, the words 'MINDSET & ATTITUDE' are written in white.

Be kind to yourself when your gas tank is empty, do some activities to top it up (reading, relaxing, journaling).

Wipe the slate clean and start again at the next decision.

Mistakes are there to learn from - compassion and a growth mindset will serve you way better than trying to rely on willpower and discipline.

Mindful Eating in Practice

So, let's get down to the business of eating mindfully! Now, I know, you're a busy person and you haven't got time to make every meal as elaborate as a Japanese Tea Ceremony.

However, AT LEAST one meal a day should be eaten mindfully, and all your meals could include one or two of the following elements.

1. Set the table

WHERE and HOW you eat are just as important as WHAT you eat. Where possible, you should eat with minimal distractions.

Yep, I'm afraid that means:

- no eating in front of the TV
- no eating at your desk
- no eating in bed
- no scrolling on your phone while eating
- no working/emailing while eating

Eating should be a joyful experience.

Eat at the table, put a place mat & cloth on if you're fancy, put your food on a nice plate, get a drink you enjoy.

2. Check in with your body

So you're sat at the table, your food in front of you. Don't just dive in and inhale - breathe!

Take three deep breaths before you start your meal. Close your eyes, focus on your breathing, clear your mind ready to enjoy your meal.

How hungry do you feel? How do you know? What symptoms of hunger do you have?

What emotions are you feeling right now? Are you preoccupied?

3. Time to tuck in!

Take your first mouthful of food. Put your cutlery down. Close your eyes. Really savour the food.

What's the overriding taste and smell? What's the texture like? How much are you enjoying the food? Are you happy with your choice?

Now take the next bite and repeat the process for three to four mouthfuls

4. Check-in

Put your cutlery down. How hungry are you now? Do you feel like you need more food? Why?

Are you physically hungry, or are you enjoying the taste and feel like you'd really enjoy another bite?

Are you judging yourself for what or how much you're eating?

Do you need another bite? What's influencing your decision?

5. Permission to stop

Have you had enough to satisfy yourself both physically and emotionally? Is there food left on your plate?

Give yourself permission to stop eating if you need it. Yes, I know, you can hear your Mum talking about wasting food, and starving children in Africa.

How is that making you feel? Do you have resistance to it?

Wait 5 minutes, and if you truly don't want anymore food, you can box it up & put it in the fridge - leftovers make a great lunch.

If you want to throw the food away, that's also OK. You're not a waste disposal - eating it because 'I'll just throw it away otherwise' is not reason to eat it if you don't want it.

6. Reviewing the exercise

Did you enjoy your meal more or less than if you'd eaten it 'mindlessly'? Do you think you ate more or less than you'd normally eat?

Did you feel resistance to doing it?

So that's it! You ate mindfully.

And yeah, I get it - it feels weird. But even two or three meals a week eaten this way can be enough to start repairing your relationship with food.

If you have any questions, or would like to share how you got on & get some feedback, just [drop them here in the Questions forum in the Dojo](#).