



The Joy of Half a Cookie: Using Mindfulness to Lose Weight and End the Struggle with Food

By Jean Kristeller, Alisa Bowman

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Anyone who's tried to lose weight through sheer will power knows how difficult, if not impossible, it can be. In this practical and paradigm-shifting book, Dr. Jean Kristeller presents a new alternative--a program for weight loss based on her successful Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training Program. Instead of frustration, deprivation, backslicing, guilt, and a lack of results, *The Joy of Half a Cookie* provides simple, proven ways to lose weight and keep it off, using what we now know about the power of the mind.

The first book to bring mindfulness to the dieting space in a truly accessible and mainstream way, *The Joy of Half a Cookie* will show readers how to lose weight while:

- ditching willpower, guilt, and cravings
- loving every bite, including favorite and previously “forbidden” foods
- tapping into the body’s satiety signals

Written for anyone who wants to lose weight – not just the mediation and yoga crowd – this accessible book delivers a proven way to find peace of mind and a healthier relationship with food, for life.

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Editorial Review

Review

“If you take it to heart, which means if you incorporate its various practices into your daily life, you will find that this book is an ever-giving gold mine. As its valuable and freeing recommendations are internalized, eating in a happy and healthy way *for you* and mindfulness will become synonymous. This approach can transform your relationship to food, to your body, to your mind, and to life.”

--Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of MBSR (mindfulness-based stress reduction), and author of *Full Catastrophe Living* and *Mindfulness for Beginners*

“If you have suffered from food addiction, please give yourself the gift of reading this book. In her pioneering work, Dr. Jean Kristeller offers a pathway to healing that is based on a contemporary understanding of self-regulation and powerful mindfulness-based strategies that will change your relationship with eating, and more. These clear, accessible teachings and practices turn struggle on its head, call forth our deepest wisdom, and reveal the possibility for finding great joy in living.”

--Tara Brach, Ph.D., author of *Radical Acceptance* and *True Refuge*

“*The Joy of Half a Cookie* is really about reclaiming the joy of life. With a lifetime of successful counseling and research experience, Kristeller provides the tools that people can use to move their focus to living instead of obsessing about food. This program’s flexible, specific, and novel tools help lose weight in a painless way.”

--Brian Wansink, Ph.D., New York Times-bestselling author of *Mindless Eating*

About the Author

Jean Kristeller, Ph.D. is professor emeritus of psychology at Indiana State University and the creator of the NIH-funded Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training (MB-EAT). Self, Redbook, NPR’s “The Salt,” The Boston Globe, The Baltimore Sun, and many other outlets interview her regularly and cover her research.

Alisa Bowman is a professional writer and ghostwriter who has penned more than 30 titles, including seven NY Times bestsellers. Bowman has appeared on Today, The CBS Early Show, FOX, and Discovery Health.

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PART ONE

The Science of Mindful Eating

CHAPTER ONE

An Introduction to Mindful Eating

Imagine what it would be like to lose weight *without* the struggle and *without* giving up your favorite foods,

to be able to enjoy a glass of wine, a warm dinner roll, a slice of pizza, or a piece of chocolate *without* experiencing that familiar tug-of-war between your desire and your willpower. Think of how freeing it would be if you could truly savor a delicious treat without guilt and without worrying that, once you start, you won't be able to stop.

Is this possible? Could this become your reality? Yes, it can. Mindful eating will show you the way.

Before coming to my mindful eating workshops, the majority of women and men had lost anywhere from a few pounds to 50 pounds or more multiple times, depending on their body size and the type of diet they'd chosen. Depending on the plan, they had counted calories or points, feeling virtuous when they met their calorie goal—often 1,200 calories and sometimes as little as 500—and feeling awful when they missed, whether by only a little or by hundreds or even thousands of calories (though, by that time, they'd stopped counting). Some tolerated this good food–bad food approach for only a few days. But for others, it had worked well, at least for a while.

But then, inevitably, there came a point when they just couldn't stand to live like that anymore. Their old eating habits returned gradually, and so the pounds on the scale. Many couldn't even count the number of times this had happened to them. Often, they'd tell me that they just needed a little more self-control or willpower. One participant stands out clearly. On the first day, she told me, "I'm really good at 'no.' I say 'no' to so many things that, every once in a while, I want to consume all of it and never stop. And so that's what I do. Instead, I want to be good at 'yes.' I want to make friends with food."

She eventually learned to do just that, and now, in the pages of *The Joy of Half a Cookie*, it's my intention to show you how to do the same.

Say "Yes!" to Joy

Do you believe that forbidden foods—especially desserts, fried foods, snack chips, and cookies—contain an addictive combination of sweetness, fattiness, and/or saltiness, making them impossible to consume in small amounts? Assuming you're not too hungry, could you savor only half a cookie, a handful of corn chips, or a few spoonfuls of ice cream and put away the rest for another time? Could you put half a chocolate bar in your desk drawer—and then ignore it? Or would you be continually tempted to have just a little more?

As you read these words, you might be telling yourself, "That's impossible. No one can stop at just a few chips or a few bites of dessert." By the end of this book, after you've spent some time with the practices described in the second part of *The Joy of Half a Cookie*, it's my experience that you'll know it's possible because you'll have experienced this kind of freedom for yourself.

It doesn't matter how much out of control you might feel around certain foods at the moment. You can gain freedom. You really can.

That's because this is not like any other plan you've ever tried. In fact, when you embark on this plan, you are *not* going on a diet. Rather you are creating—and staying with—a new way of relating to food, to eating, to yourself, and to your body.

Based on the successful Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training (MB-EAT) program I developed with funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and have adapted into shorter workshops that I teach around the world, *The Joy of Half a Cookie* is about using mindfulness practice to give yourself permission to enjoy the foods you love, to choose the foods you enjoy, and to leave food on your plate if you don't want it or no longer feel like eating.¹ It's about self-care, self-nourishment, self-acceptance, kindness, exploration, and curiosity. It's about cultivating your inner gourmet rather than martialing your inner police

force.

It has grown out of more than 30 years of experience and research in trying to help people learn to come into balance with their eating by linking their awareness with their desires. The underpinnings of this approach began decades ago with the understanding of how we can link our minds and bodies together, despite external pressures to do otherwise. It also draws on many years of research done both by myself and by a number of remarkable mentors and colleagues who've shared their wisdom and whose contributions I've attempted to honor in this book. Meditation practice, when made available to everyone, really can help us connect with the *inner wisdom* that leads us to handle complex choices, rather than trying to make them too simple, as many diets do.

Mindful eating is therefore about an entirely different way of looking at our relationship to our eating and food, one that pulls together a wide range of science-based perspectives on how our bodies and minds regulate themselves. It isn't about willpower or rigid self-control. Instead it's about creating balance through *self-care* and *self-regulation*. What's the difference? With willpower or self-control, you still want to keep on eating, but you force yourself to stop. With *self-regulation*, you check in mindfully, realize you're not hungry any more or aren't enjoying the food so much, so you simply decide to let it go. There's no struggle. You can always have more later, and you'll actually enjoy it more.

The core building blocks for the foundation of MB-EAT came together over a number of years, during my graduate studies and continuing beyond. The program now includes four core elements:

- Meditation and mindfulness
- The power of tuning in to your body and mind
- Embracing, rather than fighting, the positive value of food
- The power of science to show how these make a difference

Each of these elements melded together with my own personal experiences and struggle over many years. This chapter shares the story of how these building blocks came together slowly, gradually, to emerge into MB-EAT, and now, *The Joy of Half a Cookie*.

A Personal Struggle and a Scientific Journey

Throughout my teen and undergraduate years, I found myself in an endless round of self-deprivation during the day followed by overeating almost every night, with strong feelings of guilt and shame fueling the cycle to start over again. Despite my attempts, I never lost the weight I'd hoped to—and in fact, I gained more. A familiar story.

After learning Transcendental Meditation and then studying abroad in Japan, I became interested in the newly emerging area of mind–body science. I then joined a cutting-edge research team at the University of Wisconsin that was exploring the effects of biofeedback on people's ability to slow down their heart rate to help manage stress. I suggested meditation as another approach, and we found, to our surprise, that it was as effective or more so than biofeedback in helping people slow their heart rates.² I became even more interested in how meditation might help link the mind and body, much as biofeedback does.

I was still struggling with my own eating and weight, avoiding carbohydrates, trying to apply the newly developing cognitive behavioral therapy approaches both for myself and my clients, but not really succeeding, when I made another trip to Asia. There I became more aware of truly savoring my food (which was high in carbs), eating smaller portions, and to my surprise, effortlessly losing weight. I returned to the United States to continue graduate work at Yale University, where I promptly returned to my old eating

habits and the weight came back on. At Yale I again began researching mind–body connections, also using biofeedback and meditation, but going beyond a simple relaxation model of meditation. Instead, the team was using an approach referred to as self-regulation, which cultivates the body’s ability to heal itself rather than just focusing on taking away symptoms.³ We asked the question, How could we help people reconnect the natural balance of the body and mind?

Just as exciting was the opportunity to work with researchers who were studying how people create their relationship to eating and food and how even “normal” eaters can lose touch with their experiences of physical hunger and fullness in the face of social pressures or other triggers to eat.⁴ These researchers were also investigating the basic processes of taste experience and how this is affected by physical and psychological factors, such as hunger and being distracted.⁵

My thought was, Could I combine these two areas of science—self-regulation theory and perception of eating experience—to help individuals who were seriously struggling with their eating (and weight)? We couldn’t apply electrodes to do biofeedback for hunger and satiety. But instead of telling my clients who were dealing with eating disorders to use a different diet, track everything they were eating, or just look for triggers to eating out of control, I began suggesting that they pay more attention to their physical hunger, relax their minds and bodies in the face of stress, choose to eat what they really liked, and stop eating when they’d had enough. I also began recommending that clients read Susie Orbach’s ground-breaking book *Fat Is a Feminist Issue*, especially the chapter titled “The Experience of Hunger for the Compulsive Eater.”⁶

I then began to wonder about trying this myself. If I gave myself permission to eat the foods that I loved earlier in the day, when I wasn’t as hungry, would my taste buds perhaps tire and allow me to feel satisfied with just a reasonable amount? And what if I really paid attention to these experiences, if I slowed down and savored what I was eating, would the food also be more satisfying?

For one week, I gave myself permission to eat any sugary, fatty, high-calorie, sweet food I wanted for lunch. On the first day, I went straight to a nearby vending machine. I pressed the most tempting buttons. Down came the chips, and the chocolate cookies. They tasted pretty good, and I got through the rest of the day without thinking about food or hunger. I had my usual reasonable dinner and, much to my surprise, didn’t want to eat anything more that evening.

On day two, I went back to the vending machine, made some different choices, and I still didn’t want to raid the pantry after dinner. On day three, the vending machine didn’t look appealing. I wanted something more indulgent. I walked to a bakery and got myself a large croissant and a piece of dark fudge chocolate cake. *Fantastic!* But I noticed something really important: The last few bites of the cake didn’t taste quite as good as the first few, just as the research on taste was predicting.

On day four I was too busy to go to the bakery and nothing looked good in the vending machine. So I went around the corner to a pizza place, ordered two slices of my favorite, sat down, savored every bite, and again felt satisfied throughout the afternoon, but also a bit nervous. I hadn’t had sweets at lunch. Would I feel an urge to empty the cookie shelf later that evening? To my surprise, I didn’t.

By the end of the week, the message was clear. When I gave myself permission to eat my favorite, previously forbidden foods without guilt, I ate far less than I usually did at night, without any struggling. I found, to my amazement, I also enjoyed them more, but craved them less, and that I did not want to keep eating them endlessly. Soon these foods—the ones that I’d thought I’d never find the willpower or self-control to resist—lost much of their allure. It was a huge eye opener. I kept using this technique with patients, but it would be several years before I put the pieces of the puzzle together to create a mindfulness-based program.

Fast-forward a few years. Using meditation as part of therapy was becoming more acceptable and more popular. I had the opportunity to try out the pieces of the program I was developing in several more places, each of which added new insights. Using meditation with workers in a weight loss group at a factory in New Haven, Connecticut, gave me confidence that people with a wide range of backgrounds would be comfortable with a meditation-based program. Adapting the program for use at the Brown University Counseling and Psychological Services confirmed my own earlier experience with the power of mindful eating for letting go of weight concerns and struggles. And using it in the Department of Psychiatry at Cambridge Hospital, part of Harvard Medical School, made me less concerned that meditation might trigger psychiatric problems. The final pieces of the foundation dropped into place when I joined the faculty at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in Worcester, which in the 1980s was at the forefront in the development of medical services incorporating mind–body components. In addition to other responsibilities, I began working with Jon Kabat-Zinn’s ground-breaking Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program and helping with some of their research.⁷ I was moving much closer to what has become MB-EAT today, offering a mindfulness-based program to individuals struggling with their eating and weight, finding that adding some of the MBSR components made it even more powerful.

But to do research with the program, I wanted to move back into a university psychology department. Shortly after beginning teaching at Indiana State University, one of our doctoral students, Brendan Hallett, asked to join the team, and we systematically began to assess the effects of the program for 18 women, ranging from 25 to 62 years, who were struggling with binge eating disorder and weight. None had ever meditated before. The results of this small study were very exciting and confirmed my clinical experience to that point: Frequency and size of binges dropped by more than half in a few weeks, and participants markedly decreased their overall struggle with eating; feelings of depression and anxiety also decreased. Further, the more these women used mindfulness practices with eating, the stronger the improvements they experienced.⁸

Encouraged by these positive results, my colleagues and I embarked on NIH-funded studies. The first one was a large study of men and women with binge eating disorder that included the capable involvement of Dr. Ruth Wolever at Duke University.⁹ We were able to replicate the results from the first, smaller study. But we found it hard to predict who would be able to lose weight; while some people lost as much as 25 pounds in only a few months, others actually gained some weight, perhaps feeling that they were being given permission, for the first time, to eat whatever they wanted to. Again, the one clear predictor of success was how much they were actually using mindfulness practice.

So in our next NIH study, we decided to add on what has become a core part of the MB-EAT program: mindfully learning to tune in to calories, nutrition needs, and healthier food choices, which we refer to as cultivating *outer wisdom*. We also decided to design the program for individuals both with and without binge eating problems. The results were striking. By the end of the 10-week program, which this book is based on, study participants were dropping an average of 1 pound a week and maintaining that well after the program’s end. Over time participants found it easier and easier to draw on “healthy restraint” in regard to food choices and with far less struggle.¹⁰ In the last few years, we’ve found similar results in NIH-funded studies that have adapted the MB-EAT program to people with diabetes and those with less severe levels of weight issues.¹¹

Participants vary in their weight loss. Some lose 20 or 25 pounds in the first few months. Others lose nothing at first, but then go on to drop more than 100 pounds after the formal program has ended. Some don’t lose very much, but their sense of struggle greatly diminishes. They no longer battle food or their urges to eat. By the end of the MB-EAT program, participants are able to balance their eating, eat mindfully, and experience true culinary joy and satisfaction. They are even able to do so when sitting inside a buffet-style restaurant with huge portions of highly tempting foods.

Here's more: Once participants learn how to become more mindful, some of the foods they once craved—the very foods they thought were too delicious to resist, that even seemed addicting—don't taste as nearly good or have lost their appeal entirely. So often a participant remarks, "I used to love these cookies/chips/donuts, but you know what? They're really not that good." It no longer takes willpower or self-control to stop eating these treats. They just don't want them anymore. They wait to indulge themselves with foods that are really worth eating!

On a personal note, this method has continued to help me completely let go of my own struggle. Using the techniques you're about to discover, I enjoy food more, eat less of it, and have ended the cycle of overeating, guilt, and deprivation. I hope you'll find success with it too.

It's Not About Willpower

When you attempt to lose weight by using willpower, you use external rules to guide your eating—only 1,200 calories a day, never take second helpings, and no desserts (except for fruit)—and then you try to force yourself to follow those rules. Think of a fresh baked cookie right from the oven, the one made from scratch using your grandmother's special recipe. Of course you want to eat it. Who wouldn't? I'll use the image of our hands to show the difference between willpower/self-control, and self-balance/self-regulation. As your hand reaches for that cookie, willpower is the other hand that wraps itself around your wrist and forcefully pulls it back. To strengthen your willpower, you might police yourself with food logs, diet buddies, weekly or daily weigh-ins, and negative self-talk, such as "No! I shouldn't."

When you attempt to lose weight with self-control, you manage your environment or change your thoughts so you don't have to exert so much willpower. To avoid feeling tempted by cookies or chips, you never buy them or, at the very least, never leave them out where you can see them. To prevent yourself from wanting larger servings, you opt for smaller bowls and plates or fool your body into feeling full by downing water before meals, eating lots of soup, or continually nibbling on so-called free foods you may not particularly enjoy. Maybe you avoid certain environments—buffets, restaurants that serve large portions, and potlucks. Think of that fresh baked cookie again. With self-control, your hands are clasped together at your lap. As long as they stay folded together like that, neither hand can reach for a cookie. This can be helpful and may even lead to new patterns—but may not help much when those cookies get left out on the counter, you're faced with a buffet, or everyone else is ordering dessert.

When you lose weight by cultivating balance and self-regulation, you can welcome that delicious cookie into your life. Self-regulation means you listen to the natural feedback systems within the body that send out the messages that your cells either need food or have had enough. You listen to the thoughts in your mind urging you on—and respond, rather than react, to them. You could choose to enjoy the cookie if you want it, when you're hungry or if it's a rare treat. Even if it's a huge cookie—the kind that might contain as many calories as an entire meal—there's no fear. You know that you'll be able to savor a few bites or perhaps half of it, wrapping up the other half for later when you'll be able to enjoy it all over again. There's a decision but no struggle. When you connect with your body and mind and engage your natural powers of self-regulation, your hands are open, welcome, and inviting, much as they are in the classic meditation posture. You can choose to take the cookie or you can leave it. You're using the wisdom of your body and your mind to make choices that are balanced, are easy, and surprisingly, require little effort.

It might be hard to imagine that you could ever manage your weight or your eating in this way, but you really can, and mindfulness will show you how.

How Mindfulness Helps You Lose Weight

Mindfulness meditation is *not* just about relaxing, although that can happen. It is about tuning in, letting go

of judgment, and embracing what you experience in the moment. Practicing meditation helps cultivate our capacity to stay mindful, regardless of how compelling or overwhelming a situation feels, and will help you to lose weight and keep it off in two key ways.

Tuning in to your inner wisdom. By becoming more mindful, you'll tap into an *inner wisdom* that helps you sense how physically hungry you are, how full you feel, and when a food's flavor is disappearing and is no longer enjoyable enough to keep on eating. Inner wisdom includes learning to recognize and honor how to use food for comfort, relaxation, and celebration, without going overboard. Rather than forcing yourself not to take second helpings, you'll let your wisdom be your guide. You ask yourself questions like "Do I really want this? Would I really enjoy it? Am I really hungry? Am I still enjoying this?" Your answers help you decide whether you want that next bite or an additional helping. As a result you'll find that three or four bites might be just as satisfying—and will leave you much less uncomfortable—as one or two servings.

Tuning in to your outer wisdom. Rather than adopting someone else's rules about calories or nutrition, you'll use *outer wisdom* to inform your own choices. There's so much information about nutrition and exercise out there that it can feel overwhelming. One day you learn that fatty foods are fattening. The next you hear certain types of fat are actually slimming, but other fats are not. One day you read that you should be a vegetarian or vegan for optimal health. The next you're told that carbs should be avoided.

With *The Joy of Half a Cookie*, you'll be encouraged to explore this nutritional information, consulting your physician or a dietician if you have particular health needs. Then you'll use this input to inform your own wisdom about the types of foods and the amounts of foods your body really needs, for weight loss, weight management, and overall health. On this plan, you don't split foods into two categories: foods I'm allowed to eat and foods I'm not allowed to eat. Rather, there are simply foods you enjoy more and foods you enjoy less, and foods that are healthier for you and foods that are less nutritious, especially in larger quantities. Food as "medicine," perhaps; food as "poison," no.

But calories (which I refer to as *food energy*) do count, and learning what is a good balance for you is a path to freedom. You'll discover how to become attentive and relaxed, rather than obsessive and anxious, about how you're balancing your eating and your body's need for fuel (food energy). And you'll gradually shift away from your current eating patterns—the ones that you've had for years and that keep coming back after every diet—to new patterns that can work for you long term.

By employing both types of wisdom—inner and outer—you'll bring your eating and your life into balance.

As you do so, you'll be able to do the following:

Let go of the struggle. People tell me that, before learning to eat mindfully, it seemed to them as if they spent most of their waking moments worrying about food and their weight: what to eat, what not to eat, when to eat, how much to eat, and what effect it would have on the scale. With mindfulness, you'll learn to let go of this seemingly constant struggle and give this energy and attention to areas of your life that are richer and more important than whether you're going to eat that brownie.

The patterns you have and the way you relate to food have been there a long time. It might take some time to re-create them, but you can begin to experience success immediately, which then continues over time, as it did for Mary. I ran into her about a year after she'd attended one of my workshops. She began to tell me how excited she was about being able to have ice cream back in the house. She used to binge on whole quarts of it, and for a few months after the workshop, she wouldn't have any in the house, just treating herself occasionally to some at restaurants or to an ice cream cone—really savoring it and enjoying it. Then she'd found she could have one of her less favorite flavors in the house (vanilla or strawberry). But recently, she had discovered she could have her favorite (mint chocolate chip) and eat it only a few spoonfuls at a time.

Turn mindless eating into mindful eating. Our decisions around eating can happen in milliseconds: I want more. I want less. I'm terrible for doing this so I'm going to keep doing it. If I have this I'll feel better about myself. Even as we're obsessing, we're often not even aware we are making decisions. By becoming aware, we can interrupt the cycle and gain freedom over the next moment. We can change our automatic reactions into mindful response. Through meditation practice and mindful observation, you'll learn how to notice what's arising in a nonjudgmental way. You'll get in touch with what it means to be hungry, full, satisfied, and filled with pleasure, rather than with discomfort. You'll learn how to make decisions around your eating that are enriching rather than painful. We are bombarded with a wealth of choices. You'll learn how to stop and tune in to that wealth of choices without being overwhelmed and without drawing unnecessary boundaries.

Notice the thoughts that trip you up. We bring a history to every meal we eat. For example, workshop participants tell me that they struggle to leave food on their plates because their mothers always told them not to waste food. When I ask, "Is your mother in the room?" some even joke, "Oh, she's here all right." I then ask, "I wonder if there are other things your mother told you to do, that you don't do anymore?" And suddenly the room is quiet for a moment. Then I hear a chorus of, "Oh yes."

With this book, you'll learn how to feel comfortable leaving food on your plate no matter what your real or imagined mother tells you. And you'll notice and respond to other unhelpful thoughts that powerfully affect your eating. How many times have you lost the battle between your willpower and your desire and told yourself, "I'll just have a little bit"? Then maybe you had a little bit more. Then you thought, "I've blown it," and you kept eating until you felt physically uncomfortable or even sick? The "I've Blown It" cycle often reflects a sense of defeat: I can't control myself anyway, so why bother? The secret to overcoming the cycle has nothing to do with shoring up your willpower. Reactions get locked in and you might feel as if you didn't have a choice, but with the power of mindfulness, you do. When you give yourself permission to be present with strong negative emotions, cravings, guilt, and other triggers as well as to enjoy the foods you love, you can gradually break this cycle, tap into your inner wisdom, and feel a sense of freedom when you eat.

Get away from the food police. The idea of policing yourself—whether with a journal, a buddy, or the scale—often triggers a sense of rebellion and an inner voice that whispers, "Who says I can't have this?" With mindfulness, you'll shift away from policing yourself and toward understanding and nurturing yourself. Can it be helpful to keep track of your food sometimes? Yes, and I'll show you in Chapter 6 how to do it in a totally different way, with a sense of curiosity and exploration, rather than as if someone were looking over your shoulder.

Let go of calorie anxiety. I've worked with some people who fear calories so much that they don't even like saying the word and never check to see how much they're eating. Others obsess over minor amounts like 10 or 20 calories, counting up what they've eaten every day. With *The Joy of Half a Cookie*, you'll learn to manage your eating more flexibly, in much the same way as you manage your money if you're on a budget—not an absolute set amount every day, but keeping an eye on the bottom line.

My Wish for You

There's a cartoon I like to share during my workshops. It's of Cathy, the guilt-ridden comic strip character, created by Cathy Guisewite, who struggles with food, love, family, and work. She's tied herself to a chair to help resist the power of a box of cookies on the floor nearby, but she's still reaching out for those cookies with one foot. Whenever I show this cartoon, everyone laughs. That's because this is almost a universal struggle. You are not alone in this struggle, and you can free yourself from it.

After researching the psychology of eating, studying mindfulness meditation, and teaching these skills to

hundreds of clients and workshop participants over more than two decades, there's something I now know with deep conviction: Everyone can improve his or her relationship to eating and food, enjoy delicious foods more, and find the way to a smaller body size, with less and less struggle over time.

You really can enjoy just half a cookie for dessert or a few chips for a snack. You can navigate big holiday dinners without anxiety, and you can put the word *comfort* back in "comfort food." You can also go to a party where dozens of foods are being presented, and you can feel a sense of freedom that comes from knowing that you're not going to overdo it. You can eat smaller portions and paradoxically create more satisfaction.

You may not be able to do all of this today and you may not be able to do it by next week or next month, but you can learn and practice important skills that will eventually make the kinds of experiences that I just described your norm rather than the exception. You can drop pounds, and keep them off, without feeling deprived and without missing out on everything you love about eating.

Rather than having a relationship with pain and anxiety, you can cultivate a relationship with flavor, nourishment, and satisfaction. You'll reconnect to savoring and enjoying, to letting go of the struggle, and to welcoming the taste and the pleasure of eating. It's possible. *The Joy of Half a Cookie* will show you how.

Let's get started.

CHAPTER TWO

Cultivating the Habit of Mindful Eating

The Joy of Half a Cookie is based on several decades of research—completed by myself and others—that has explored the psychological influences on overeating. It includes a blend of many different approaches, yet mindfulness serves as the foundation for the entire plan.

Mindfulness may be a new catch phrase, but it points toward a universal truth: Much of our struggle and suffering in life comes from over-attachment to things we think we want, linked with fear of things that might cause problems. Mindfulness allows us to release some of that struggle by simply observing this reactive self and considering other possibilities.

And mindfulness is for everyone. Though it draws from ancient Buddhist practices, it's something we can *all* do—regardless of our spiritual beliefs—if we just stop, pay attention, and cultivate awareness and appreciation of the moment rather than just reacting. The mindfulness seed is within you. It is a basic human capacity. All you need is the intention to cultivate it. Mindfulness isn't something that requires many years of study. You don't need to believe in reincarnation or karma. Nor must you have a yoga mat or sit cross-legged on the floor to do it. I've taught mindfulness to people of all backgrounds and religions. No matter your current issues with food or weight and no matter your religious beliefs, mindfulness practice can help you transform your relationship with food and your body.

Try This Now

You may worry that you don't have what it takes to be mindful. Let me reassure you. You've been mindful before, many times throughout your life. Now think back over your day, your week, or your month. Have you stopped and appreciated a sunset or beautiful rainbow? Or looked into the face of a baby? Or stopped to smell a flower? If not, then find one this week. You don't have to put words to the experience or judge it or

worry about how you are going to respond. You are just there. When this happens, that's mindfulness.

What Is Mindfulness?

When you practice mindfulness, you don't try to become mindful of every single experience, but you do focus on the ones that matter the most. You deliberately pay attention, without judgment, both to your *inner world*—your bodily sensations (such as hunger and taste, among many others), your emotions, your thoughts—and to your *outer world* (for instance, the nutrition value of that favorite snack food in front of you).

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lindsey Putman:

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Suzanne Jensen:

This The Joy of Half a Cookie: Using Mindfulness to Lose Weight and End the Struggle with Food is brand-new way for you who has fascination to look for some information as it relief your hunger details. Getting deeper you upon it getting knowledge more you know or perhaps you who still having tiny amount of digest in reading this The Joy of Half a Cookie: Using Mindfulness to Lose Weight and End the Struggle with Food can be the light food for you personally because the information inside this kind of book is easy to get simply by anyone. These books produce itself in the form which is reachable by anyone, yeah I mean in the e-book application form. People who think that in publication form make them feel tired even dizzy this guide is the answer. So there isn't any in reading a publication especially this one. You can find actually looking for. It should be here for an individual. So , don't miss this! Just read this e-book sort for your better life as well as knowledge.

Brandon Huff:

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