

Walk **NEBRASKA**

Mindless Eating

Do you ever eat the last piece of a dried brownie? Or clean up your child's plate? Or finish off the bag of stale potato chips?

Why do we choose to eat food that doesn't even taste good?

We eat because there are cues and signals around us that tell us to do so. It's simply not our nature to pause after every bite and contemplate how full we are. Often, we are eating while doing something else and don't have a clue as to how much we have eaten. Other times we eat because of stress and tension. It becomes our crutch to help us through the difficult times or our loneliness. It is an emotional hunger, not physical hunger.

People in happy moods tend to prefer healthier foods, while people in sad moods tend to reach for ice cream, cookies, or a bag of potato chips. Don't deprive yourself, but keep this in mind the next time you find yourself feeling down.

How about that jar of candy sitting on your desk or on the kitchen counter? It's so easy to reach over and get a handful whenever you want. Our consumption decreases when we have to walk to the other side of the room to get that same handful.

Some of us were brought up with the Clean Plate Club, and failing to eat everything on our plate was being wasteful. When we go to the all-you-can eat buffet, we want to get our money's worth.

These are all different aspects to the concept of mindless eating, eating when we really aren't hungry. We need to eat when we are physically hungry and stop when we are full even if our plate isn't clean!

Source:

Wansink, Brian. *Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More Than We Think*. New York City: Bantam Books, 2007.

Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

University Nebraska-Lincoln Extension educational programs abide with the non-discrimination policies of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.

