PAUSING PRACTICE: YOUR NATURAL BREAKING SYSTEM

Adapted from the Centers for Mindful Eating

Have you ever had difficulty pausing when faced with temptation related to food? We've all had the experience of taking an extra helping or eating food to soothe ourselves. What pausing helps us do is to take a moment to step back and reflect on all the various possibilities before us.

The ability to pause is like having a braking system in your car. Driving—or eating—without brakes can be a very scary activity! Putting on the brakes gives you time to consider better options when you might otherwise simply react or act out of habit.

This 4-Step pausing practice that grounds you in the present moment and helps you step back from unwanted reaction. You can use this before ordering food, before stepping into the mini-mart store for a quick junk food fix, or even after you've started to react to food because of habit or stress.

STEP ONE: Stop whatever you're doing and just stand or sit in place. Notice your entire body, from the tips of your toes, legs, and torso all the way up to the hands, arms, and all the way up to the head.

STEP TWO: Take three nice, calming breaths. Imagine each breath coming in through the nostril or top of the head and then spilling down the entire body, calming and comforting it. You might notice how the body relaxes and responds as you do this. Allow your hands, shoulders, and entire body to release tension.

STEP THREE: Notice what emotion you are feeling in this moment. Are you physically hungry? Or, are you trying to use food to avoid an uncomfortable feeling—such as loneliness, anger, or frustration—that is not really caused by physical hunger?

STEP FOUR: Congratulate yourself for putting on the brakes. Each time you do this practice, you will be strengthening the brakes and making pausing your skillful response to old habits and daily stress.

What is mindful eating?

- Learning to be aware of physical hunger and satiety cues to guide your decision to begin eating and to stop eating.
- Choosing to eat food that is both pleasing to you and nourishing to your body by using all your senses to explore, savor and taste.