



Savor: Mindful Eating, Mindful Life

Thich Nhat Hanh

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Common sense tells us that to lose weight, we must eat less and exercise more. But somehow we get stalled. We start on a weight-loss program with good intentions but cannot stay on track. Neither the countless fad diets, nor the annual spending of \$50 billion on weight loss helps us feel better or lose weight.

Too many of us are in a cycle of shame and guilt. We spend countless hours worrying about what we ate or if we exercised enough, blaming ourselves for actions that we can't undo. We are stuck in the past and unable to live in the present that moment in which we do have the power to make changes in our lives.

With *Savor*, world-renowned Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh and Harvard nutritionist Dr. Lilian Cheung show us how to end our struggles with weight once and for all.

Offering practical tools, including personalized goal setting, a detailed nutrition guide, and a mindful living plan, the authors help us to uncover the roots of our habits and then guide us as we transform our actions. *Savor* teaches us how to easily adopt the practice of mindfulness and integrate it into eating, exercise, and all facets of our daily life, so that being conscious and present becomes a core part of our being.

It is the awareness of the present moment, the realization of why we do what we do, that enables us to stop feeling bad and start changing our behavior. *Savor* not only helps us achieve the healthy weight and well-being we seek, but it also brings to the surface the rich abundance of life available to us in every moment.

Savor: Mindful Eating, Mindful Life Details

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From Reader Review Savor: Mindful Eating, Mindful Life for online ebook

Bam says

I bought the hardcover edition of this book when it first came out in 2010. I can tell just how far I'd gotten into it when I put it aside by the highlighting I'd done up to that point--about 50 pages. I don't know why; maybe it just wasn't the right time. Because this time around it has reawakened the desire to practice mindfulness, not just with food, but in all aspects of my life.

Amy says

I'm about 60 pages into this book and have to call it right here: I'm not going to finish reading it.

I bought this book maybe 4 or 5 years ago (yes, I'm one of those book hoarders whose shelves are filled with books that are 30-40% unread. Okay, maybe 50%. On a good day.) At heart, this book is a guide on leveraging mindfulness to help you lose weight and become more active. If I had read when I bought it—back when I was 60 pounds heavier and not exercising at all—I might have gotten more out of it. As it happens, I'm currently at a comfortable weight and exercising regularly. So hearing advice such as “[d]rinking sugar-sweetened beverages can contribute to weight gain” and “[t]here's strong evidence that getting enough physical activity can help prevent weight gain” is not particularly ground-breaking.

I am more interested in the mindfulness angle, which is why I even started reading the book at this point anyway. Even though I'm doing better at eating healthy and exercising, I do still struggle with my relationship with food (and, admittedly, exercise.) I am guilty of unconsciously inhaling my lunch at my desk while reading emails, rather than taking the time to be fully present as I eat. I still think of foods as being either “bad” or “good”. Food sometimes feels like a frenemy.

I guess I was looking for practical tips on how to remain in the *now* and fully experience not only my lunches but my entire life. It occurred to me the other day that I am usually utterly focused on the upcoming weekend, desperately wishing my work week away, wanting Monday through Friday to be over with as quickly as possible. Basically, I am wishing 5 out of 7 days away each week. That's over 70% of my life! I'm too old to wish away 70% of my remaining days on earth. I'm tired of living in the future (and/or the past.) I want to learn how to better be here now. Even if it *is* a Monday.

I'm sure there are books out there that will give me guidance around mindful living. This book is not one of them. This book might be helpful to someone who is at the beginning of their weight-loss journey, although Thich Nhat Hanh's take is pretty vague and high-level (he talks a lot about compassion and the interconnectedness of all beings.) I didn't get to the chapters written by Dr. Lilian Cheung (a Harvard nutritionist), so maybe those offer more practical tips. I feel as if this book suffers (which is First Noble Truth of Buddhism, yes?) from not knowing if it is about Buddhism, or mindfulness, or losing weight. In trying to be about all of them, it ends up not really being about any of them...at least not in a detailed, deeply satisfying way.

It stresses me out to abandon a book without finishing it, but I'm going to mindfully acknowledge that I would rather be reading something else, have compassion for myself, and move on. I have plenty of other

unread books on my shelves to choose from.

Kevin says

As a 25+ year vegetarian, I came to this book looking for mindfulness advice not weight loss. I agree with the book that a vegetarian diet will lead to weight loss if as I did eating more than the recommended amount of meat is what caused me to put on weight. I became a vegetarian because when I saw how small a portion of meat was recommended, I knew that I'd never be satisfied.

The advice on mindfulness is well presented. If you are not a Buddhist and do not want to read Buddhist suggestions on how to live a happier healthier life I'd suggest picking a different book.

Angela says

Did not finish book- not that great

Kate Irwin-smiler says

Surprisingly preachy. My prior experiences with mindfulness have been very gentle & accepting but this preached against various food, alcohol, casual sex, and on and on.

The mindfulness explanations were no better than I've gotten elsewhere, and there was a lot of pretty standard weight loss advice. (just move more! Cut out soda! Keep a journal!) I found that very surprising since it seems most people with weight issues come to mindful eating after trying all the standard (western) approaches.

That provides a really weird mix with some pretty hard core Buddhist teachings. I don't recommend this - I think pretty much everyone will be offended by something here, whether it's the judgement (!) or the overly simplistic approach to weight loss.

Raquel says

A decent enough book on mindful eating--it approaches the subject from a Buddhist perspective without being too over-the-top on the Buddhism, although some of the concepts start to get a bit abstract, especially for someone dealing with the emotional complexities behind emotion-driven eating. I disliked its emphasis on vegetarianism as the right eating path for everyone without taking into account possible chronic health conditions (particularly autoimmune ones, which are often exacerbated by foods the authors purport as healthy like grains, legumes, and soy-based meat substitutes), and I disagree with the commonly accepted and rarely questioned research provided in the book that saturated fats are harmful to one's health. I did appreciate that there was information on overcoming exercise resistance, which is a topic too often left uncovered in other books on emotional eating. As I had already read a number of books on mindful and emotional eating at the time I picked up Savor, I found that for me personally, this was the most helpful

section of the book.

The book also goes on to cover ways in which to make one's community more supportive of a healthy lifestyle, etc, which seemed like far too much to tackle in just one book. I think perhaps that was one of the book's failings: Trying to cover too broad a scope without going deep into some of the things that really are critical to mindful eating. There were also numerous references to weight loss, which can be triggering to or unwanted by readers struggling with real eating disorders/disordered eating who want to learn how to achieve a more peaceful relationship with food without necessarily worrying about their physical size. In addition, some people with disordered eating are not overweight by medical/conventional standards, so a focus on weight can detract from the more important aspect of learning to make peace with food and breaking out of a restrictive, damaged, or diet mindset when it comes to food.

Overall the book did tend to place a stronger emphasis on nutrition and exercise science, which I understand is because the co-author is a doctor. However, I think for someone seeking an emotional guide to mindful/intuitive eating and/or a guide that goes to the root of why people emotionally eat and/or a primer on learning about and coping with emotional eating, there are better options available.

Happyreader says

For a book presented as improving your eating habits through mindfulness, it read as mindless and scattered. A quick intro to Buddhist thought followed by dietary and exercise guidelines followed by tips and a plea for a more mindful global food community. I feel like the true author, Lilian Cheung, was looking for a new angle for a diet book and applied mindfulness as a trendy hook. I'm not sure how helpful this book would be to anyone who is unfamiliar with Buddhist thought or the current dietary guidelines (which are changing in December since dietary guidelines are impermanent). Would it confuse them or prompt them to investigate either mindfulness practice or planning a healthy diet further? As someone who is familiar with both, I felt like I was being offered a string of commands – eat without your iPod or TV, eat more vegetables, walk more and mindfully. One meditation did make me laugh – “Breathing in, the remote control is in my hand./Breathing out, why am I watching television?”

If this had truly been a Thich Nhat Hanh book, it would have focused solely on being mindful and being present and engaging with what comes up when you eat, feel the urge to eat, and how you engage with your body, movement and your environment. It would have had more depth and focused less on mindfulness as a form of behavior modification and more on mindfulness as truly staying present with the actual emotional reactions and responses so that they could have been transformed through awareness. There would have been moments when suddenly you saw something in a new light and that never happened for me with this book.

The advice in the book is valid just not presented with any depth that could truly transform your relationship with food and eating.

Quinn says

As a Buddhist, I really appreciate this book about eating, health, and exercise that is written from a perspective of mindfulness. It is helping me overcome some of my own barriers to regular exercise and

helping me examine my eating habits.

My only critique is that the first chapter consistently equated fat with unhealthy rather than exploring the complex reality that there are both skinny unhealthy people and healthy fat people. That and the repeated use of the phrase "your weight problem" almost turned me off of the book completely, but I'm glad I stuck with it.

After getting through those minor issues the rest of the book has been very helpful at looking at eating and exercise as they are linked to facing emotions and a willingness to be in the present moment. I am finding it very helpful in examining all aspects of my daily life and trying to live in a more mindful way.

Lisa Butterworth says

I do not recommend. I almost wonder if it was not written in English and had a bad translation. the language was totally fat shaming, it was all about weight loss (not why I'm here) rooted in *fat* is always unhealthy shameful ugly and bad, totally preachy about endless topics. there was a literal metric ton of nothing to address real challenges. lots of painfully obvious "you shoulds" (exercise more? I hadn't heard!) basically most of the book made me want to eat a bunch of French fries while watching Netflix in my underwear, just to piss off the smug judgey writers.

there were a few not- bad bits about mindfulness, but I've read better in literally every other mindfulness book (there are a million and I've read tons of them) some of them by Thich nhat Hanh.

Mrs. Europaea says

In **Savor: Mindful Eating, Mindful Life**, *Thich Nhat Hanh* and *Lilian Wai-Yin Cheung* present not just another weight loss fad but an actual guide to show how one can build a strong foundation to living a mindful life by coining three essential terms: inEating, inMoving, inBreathing. With these three terms the authors repeatedly demonstrate how ones personal diet is connected to our most basic actions and more importantly, how to change not just your diet but your entire mindset for long term positive benefits.

Admittedly, while I did thoroughly enjoy this book and found its contents insightful and encouraging, it was hard for me to read more than one chapter at a time. The writing was not the issue, I'm not sure if it was my mind-frame or the fact that I read it on kindle which is not my favorite format. Whatever the case may be, my progression with the book was slow but not in a discouraging way. Sometimes books have a way of setting there own pace for the reader, and in this case, the extra time it took allowed me to fully absorb the material and the message.

Jackie B. - Death by Tsundoku says

The concepts explored in Savor are simple, logical, and practical. Thích Nh?t H?nh and Cheung provide a guide to build a mindful life related to food and diet through three terms: inEating, inMoving, and

inBreathing. These terms are used to demonstrate how our diet and relationship with food is connected to our most basic actions and mindset. They tie together sound, well-researched, nutritional advice with Buddhist principles in a direct way which makes all feel possible.

The focus of this book is truly on nutrition and exercise science, which I found unexpected as Thích Nhất Hạnh's name is listed first on the book's cover. The Buddhist concepts covered are very broad and provide little depth which would have added to my experience. This book claims not to be a means to an end, but a beginning of a new path for someone to follow towards living their best and healthiest life. Unfortunately, I was already fairly far down this path.

In the end, the book provides a lot of useful information. It just wasn't for me. And it's not going to be for everyone. If you or someone you know struggles with their relationship with food, diet, and exercise, this could be a great book for that. There's a lot of data-backed food science in these pages which are educational and worthwhile to understand. But if you already have a basic understanding of food and exercise science or even mindfulness, this book isn't for you.

Pam says

Auto-pilot is the concept of the century when it comes to just about everything. We work hard just so we can slack off, looking for the next quick fix to make life easier. But at what price? It seems like we're doing more damage to ourselves than we are helping ourselves.

This is the concept that Buddhist leader Thich Nhat Hanh and Harvard's Dr. Lilian Cheung breakdown in their new book Savor. The book is not a diet book and it's not a solution. It's a meditation on what our lives have become in an over processed, under nourished world.

We are too quick to buy ready-made, factory farmed food because we've been working late or don't have time to pay attention to what our bodies need. The pair notes that this is from a great lack of mindfulness, or awareness of the things our body and mind need to function at a healthy, natural level. If we are able to stop, breathe, listen and refocus on our thoughts and bodies, we will be able to not only control the size of our waistline but also the size of our stress.

One of the best things about Savor is that it is not a diet book but, instead, a meditation on reclaiming our path in health and fitness. It teaches us to embrace the emotions and the subsequent actions that do us so much harm in terms of over eating. We are taught to "cuddle" fear, anger and anxiety. By taking charge of these unhappy emotions, we acknowledge them as present and move on instead of putting them on the eternal back burner to simmer and nag at us. Goals are focused less on a scale number and more on the number of breaths we are taking. By taking the hyperactive quantifiers out of the health and weight loss game, we are actually better able to find our way to ultimate happiness and fitness.

Again, this is not a quick fix but the introduction to a practice. It is a step away from the neon self-help books and ready-made weight loss plans. This is more about changing gears altogether before we find ourselves in a place of bodily and spiritual no-return. I highly recommend it for anyone who feels he or she is stuck on the conveyor belt of life, moving too quickly and too unaware. It's a moving book but also a helpful book and a great introduction to the thoughts behind Buddhist mindfulness as well as intelligent, deliberate nutrition.

Francois says

I think the 300 pages could have been contracted into 40 interested ones. I read the French translation though I'm sure the English version is identical. I'm always curious about eating healthy and I know bad habits are hard to break. I was hoping that the combination of a Zen Master and a nutritionist would be interesting. Too superficial to my liking.

Gwendoline Van says

If you've dabbled into mindfulness prior to reading this book, most of it feels like old news applied to a new topic. Which, the authors explain, is the essence of mindfulness--being mindful of _____.

In this case, it's consumption, specifically food and health.

A few favorite gems:

- Name your urge or cravings. Here, they call it the "habit energy." So, when you reach for the oreos automatically after a day's work, say, "hello habit energy. I know you are there." Then, act differently.
- Pretas, or Hungry Ghosts: Mythical beings desperate for food, with insatiable appetites but mouths too small to feed. Ravenous, the act of eating doesn't help them overcome negative emotions and cravings. Instead, they have more pain and agony. If you consume like a Hungry Ghost, ask yourself why. What are the obstacles? How can you make different choices in the present moment?
- "Ask yourself where you are in this healthy-weight journey. Focus on whether or not you aspire to be a different person, to feel better about yourself, to be able to function better, to be happier. Ask yourself what this extra weight means to you, and ask yourself whether you are truly ready to let it go. It is very important for you to believe that you can achieve a healthy weight." (p. 29)
- Four Nutriments: 1) Food and Drink (choose what you put into your body), 2) Sensory (choose what your senses pick up, whether it's pleasant, joyful images or violence and distress), 3) Volition (our will, true desires -- what type of life does your desire create?), 4) Consciousness (what seeds of consciousness do you feed and water in your own mind? Is it hate, anger, mindfulness? Whatever we allow to conjure up, it is what we are eating.)
- "Only by looking deeply into the nature of our suffering can we discover its causes and identify the nutriments that have brought it into being. After we have practices for some time, we will see that transformation always takes place in the depths of our consciousness; our store consciousness is the support, the base for our consciousness. If we know how to acknowledge and recognize the presence of the mental formation, embrace it, calm it, and look deeply into it, we will gain insight. This insight can liberate us and transform our afflictions in their form as seeds, so that they no longer arise in mind consciousness." (p. 61)
- "Mindfulness is the moment-to-moment awareness of what is occurring in and around us. It helps us to be in touch with the wonders of life, which are here and now. Our heart opens and is immersed in the present

moment, so that we can understand its true nature. By being present and mindful of the present moment, we can accept whatever is at that moment as it is, allowing change to happen naturally, without struggle, without the usual resistance and judgement that cause us to suffer more." (p. 68)

- We resent ourselves for having weight problems or other distresses, but we need to realize that these problems are not separate entities from ourselves. We cannot solve them from the outside. They are not separate from us. They are our own body, our feelings and mind, all connected to the greater world.

- Four Foundations of Mindfulness: 1) Body (this is YOUR body; own it, know it, love it), 2) Feelings (have awareness of our feelings), 3) Mental Formations (have awareness of our mind's activities), 4) Object of Mind (consciousness is always consciousness of something; we are not separate from the objects of our mindfulness)

- Appreciation for all that your body does, your functioning organs, etc.

- Recognition that you and the universe are one--your metabolism is the sun, the minerals from the stars make your cells, etc.

- Desire means unwholesome longing. Like the Habit Energy, acknowledge the Desiring Mind. Recognize when the Desiring Mind is present or not present. Desirelessness leads to greater happiness because there is unattachment.

- Work through unpleasant emotions with mindfulness. For anger, acknowledge that you are angry. Approach it with compassion and understanding. At the time of feeling anger, you are one with your anger, not separate from it. The more compassion there is towards an emotion, the more you can forgive and let it go.

- Internal Knots: Mental knots are born from habit energies and misperceptions of reality. These are blocks of sadness and pain tied up deeply in our consciousness, learned from families and society. They transform into cravings, addictions, avoidance behavior, burying the unpleasantness. The only way is to work through them and recognize them. Then, let it go.

- Seven Practices of Mindfully Eating: 1) Honor the food (universe, gift, farmer, moderation, health, pleasant emotions, unplug from distraction), 2) Engage all the senses, 3) Serve modest portions, 4) Savor small bites and chew thoroughly, 5) Eat slowly to avoid overeating, 6) Don't skip meals, 7) Eat mostly plants

- Countering speed eating: Make each bite mindful, take small bites, put utensils down between each bite

- Overeating: Smaller plates and utensils, avoid distractions

- Stress / emotional eating: Be aware where you work (move your office if it's close to the kitchen), reduce your stress (relaxation tapes, meditation, read book, soft music, bath), distinguish physical vs. emotional hunger

- Answer these questions: Why do you want to eat more healthfully? What's bad about eating foods that are unhealthy for you, or eating too much? What are obstacles that make it hard for you to eat mindfully, and how do you circumvent them?

- Weekend overeating: Journal, make social time active time

- How active should you be for health benefits AND keeping weight off? Moderate-intensity aerobic activity, 200-300 min/wk (walking, biking, gardening), strength training, 2-3 days/wk, flexibility/stretching, 4-7 days/wk
 - Strive to be mindful all day long, but begin with chunks of time -- set aside time to be mindfully moving, mindfully eating, mindfully breathing and sensing as you do these things
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Cara says

The practice of mindfulness and mindful eating is something everyone can benefit from. I found it annoying and distracting that the author assumes the reader is overweight. Every time he talked to the reader, it was about imagining how great your life will be when you aren't too heavy to _____. I felt disconnected from the narrative because of this.

The book has great suggestions for mindfulness exercises, how to be grateful for everything, how to recognize the interconnectedness of everything, and how to practice mindful moving meditations. If you are someone who doesn't know about nutrition or the benefits of physical exercise, there is a lot of great science and general dietary guidelines, all backed up with sources. Because Savor is written by a Buddhist, he pushes the idea of minimizing suffering in many ways by reducing or eliminating meat and animal products from your diet. Of course, as a vegan, this is something I fully support :), but I can also see that some readers might feel like they need to make too many changes too quickly. Of course, we all know that rarely leads to success.

Perhaps the best part of the book is a 10 week mindful living plan that each week includes one small thing to do to improve diet, one thing to improve exercise, and one thing to improve mindfulness / moving meditations.

My only take-aways are the guided mindfulness practices, but even with just that, I'm glad I read the book.
