

Mindfulness, Healthy Eating, and Weight Loss

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Why is diet so important?

- A poor diet is associated with a range of health problems (e.g. obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease.)
- Two thirds of adults are now overweight or obese (Public Health England, 2014).
- Overweight and obesity are also associated with a wide range of health conditions (type 2 diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer, metabolic syndrome, osteoarthritis, Kopelman, 2007).
- In 2007, overweight and obesity are estimated to have cost £4.2 billion to the NHS and £49.9 billion to the wider economy (Butland et al., 2007).



Why do people eat too much of the wrong things?

Some common reasons:

- It's a **habit** that's difficult to break
- It's a response to a particular **mood**
- **Food cues** in our environment make us want to eat.

Cleobury & Tapper, 2014; Verhoeven et al., 2012



Can mindfulness help?



Research in this area is still in its infancy....

- Can mindfulness help? If so, how much?
- How much practice is needed to see benefits?
- Are some mindfulness strategies more helpful than others?
- Is mindfulness more effective for certain types of individuals / eating behaviours?
- How do mindfulness strategies bring about their effects?

What does research show?



There are two main lines of research:

• Intervention studies

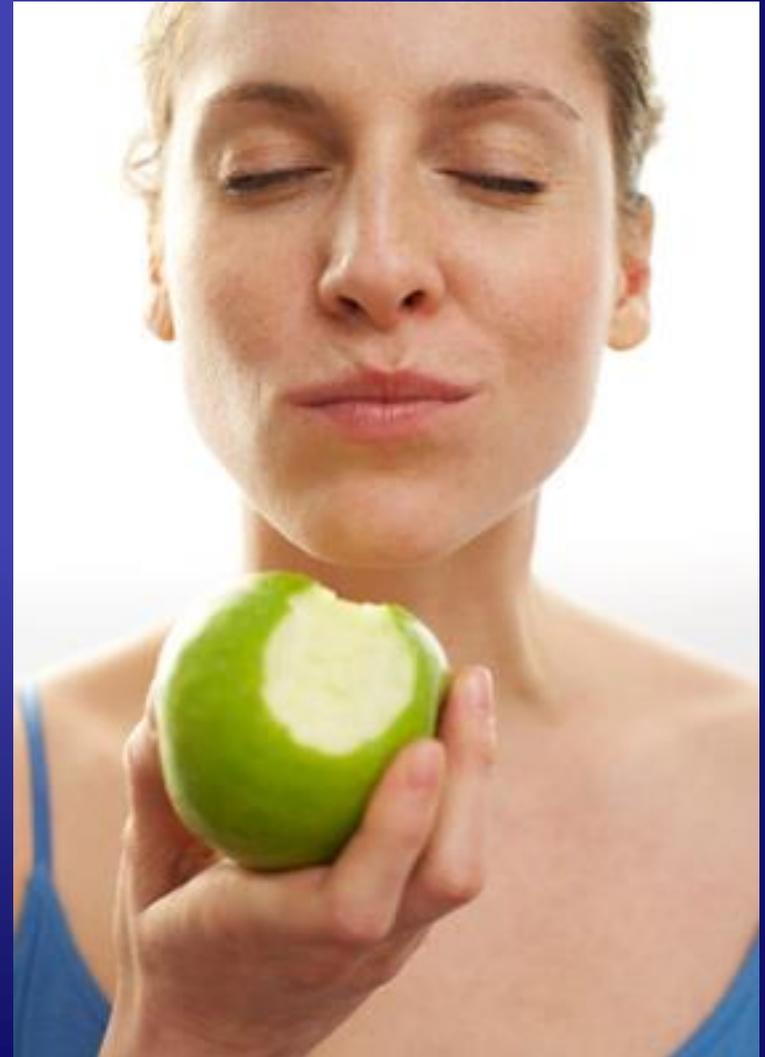
- A recent review showed significant weight loss in 13 out of 19 mindfulness weight loss interventions (Olson & Emery, 2015)....
- ...but it was unclear whether these changes were brought about by increases in mindfulness.

• Experimental studies

- These show particularly promising results in relation to two mindfulness strategies:
 - Attending to the sensory properties of food
 - Decentering

Attending to the sensory properties of food whilst eating

- Attending to the sensory properties of food as you eat, may reduce later intake (Robinson et al., 2014; Higgs & Donohoe, 2011).
- Reductions equated to approximately 100 calories.
- This may work by enhancing the person's memory for the food they've eaten.



Notice the initial flavours of the food.
What does it taste like? Is it similar to any other flavours
you know? What different flavours can you detect?

Notice the textures of the food and how they change as
you chew. Pay attention to how the flavour
changes as you chew.



Decentering

- **Decentering may help a person resist tempting foods** (Jenkins & Tapper, 2014; Lacaille et al., 2014; Moffitt et al., 2012; Papies et al., 2015).
- **Individuals provided with a decentering strategy ate less chocolate over a 5 day period compared with those given a relaxation strategy** (Jenkins & Tapper, 2014).
- **Reductions equated to an estimated 165 calories during the 5-day period.**



Decentering strategy – The Mind Bus

Seeing your thoughts differently

Throughout your life you will make many plans, such as doing more exercise, changing jobs, or trying to eat more healthily. Sometimes it's difficult to stick to these plans. One reason is that our thoughts can sabotage our intentions. For example, you may find that you tell yourself that just one chocolate won't do any harm, that it's too difficult to resist chocolate when you're so tired, or that you will try harder tomorrow.

In situations like these it can be helpful to think of yourself as DIFFERENT from your thoughts.

Imagine you are the driver of a bus, driving towards healthy eating. Your thoughts are a bit like passengers on the bus. They may say 'I really need chocolate', 'I can't concentrate on work without chocolate', or 'I'll just have one chocolate and eat less at dinner time'. Your job as the driver of the bus is to stick to your planned route, regardless of what your thoughts are saying.

Here are a couple of strategies you might like to try:

- 1. Describe your passengers.**

For example, 'This passenger is telling me 'I'm tired and I need a sugar boost'.

Then KEEP DRIVING!

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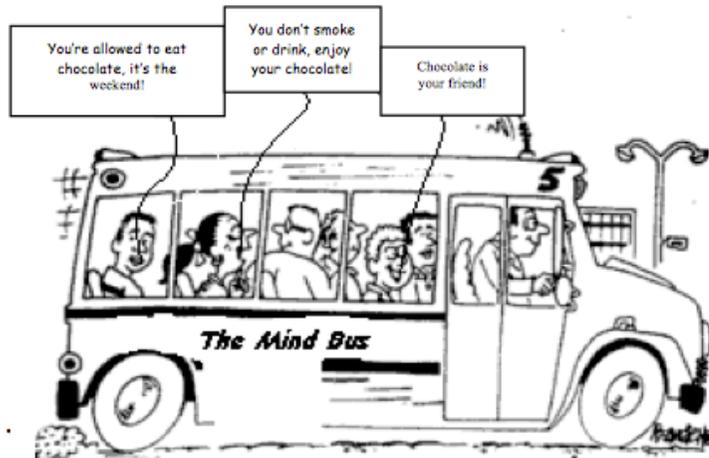
For example, 'This passenger is telling me 'I'm tired and I need a sugar boost'.
Then KEEP DRIVING!

2. Let your passengers know who's in charge.

If your passengers are telling you to buy chocolate, let them know who is in charge. Then KEEP DRIVING!

3. Give your passengers a voice.

For example, if you find yourself saying 'I can't resist this chocolate any longer', try saying it with a different accent, or even singing it. Then KEEP DRIVING!

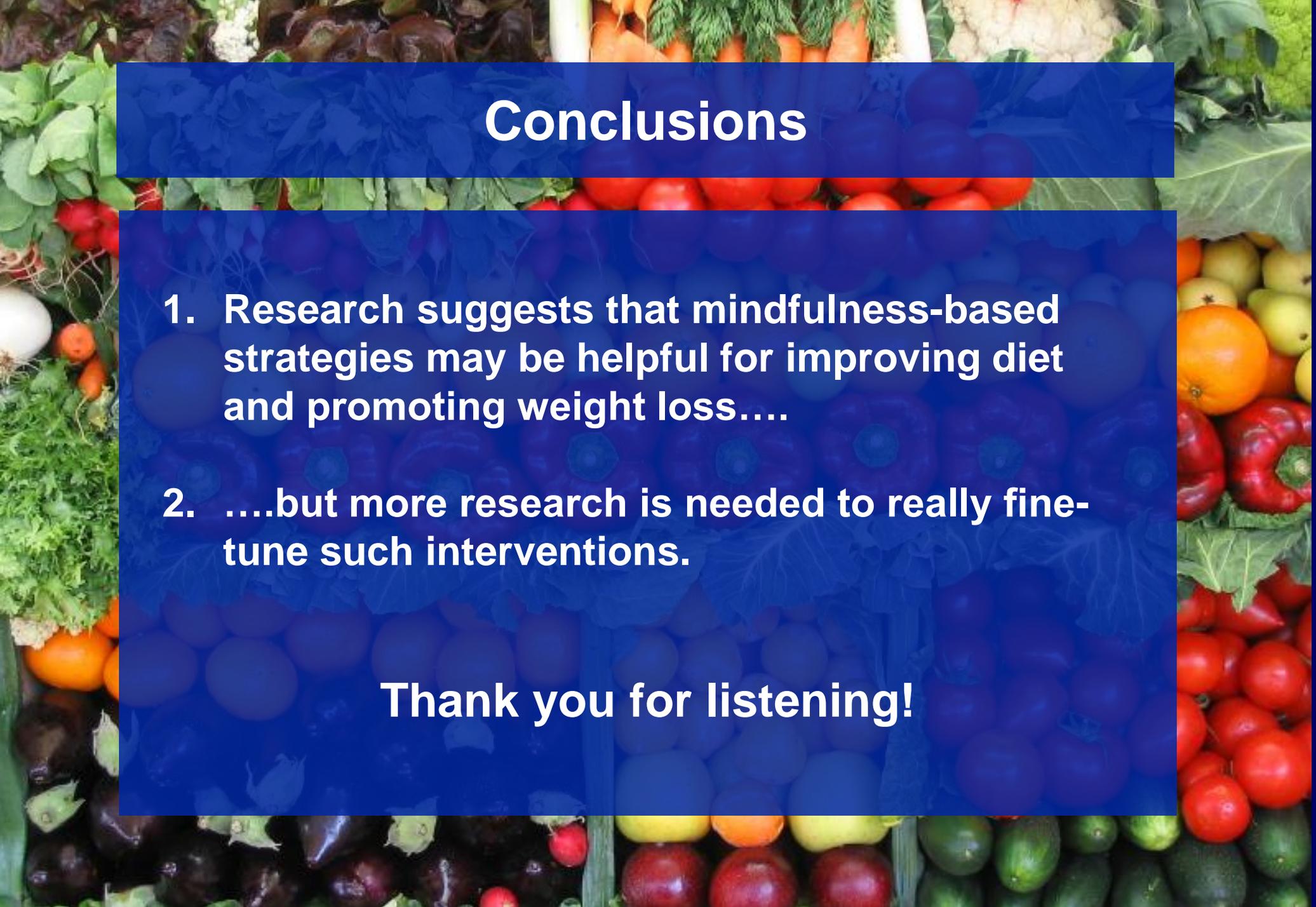


**Remember, you are
the driver of the bus
- your thoughts are
simply passengers!**

The Mind Bus technique – how does it work?

- There is some evidence that it works by helping to break habits (Jenkins & Tapper, 2014).
- It may also help bring weight loss / healthy eating goals to mind (Tapper & Ahmed, unpublished data).





Conclusions

1. Research suggests that mindfulness-based strategies may be helpful for improving diet and promoting weight loss....
2.but more research is needed to really fine-tune such interventions.

Thank you for listening!