

# Eating Meditation

## Mindfulness Worksheet

Date / Time:

What have you brought mindful awareness to today? Check all that apply.

Heart

Mind

Body

Breath

Environment

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



### PURPOSE / EFFECTS:

Eating food is one of the places where people exhibit the greatest degree of unconsciousness, grasping, aversion, and indifference. For most Americans, eating is just “putting food in the hole” while doing something else, like watching television, talking, or even driving! Yet eating is potentially one of the most important things in our life.

It sustains our physical body, brings pleasurable sensations, can fill us with emotional joy and satisfaction, and can be a powerful source of spiritual insight.

Furthermore, eating meditation, like any other “mindfulness” or Vipassana practice, while reinforce the core skills of concentration, sensory clarity, and emotional equanimity.

Eating meditation can even increase your physical health, by removing a common source of obesity. Eating too fast usually means that we are also eating too much. The feeling of being full takes a little while to come to our attention, and during this time we may still be loading our stomachs with more and more food, unaware that we are already full.

By eating slowly and bringing awareness to our bodies during the activity of eating, we will probably eat quite a bit less food, and therefore not gain as much weight.

Many people report huge personal changes from the simple act of eating meditation.

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### METHOD:

#### Summary

Pay close attention to the physical activity of eating slowly, while contemplating the food itself.

#### Long Version

1. At a meal, take a single piece of food (like a raisin, a piece of pizza, a spoonful of yogurt) and hold it in front of you.
2. Pay close attention to the sensual quality of the food. If it is in your fingers, how does it feel? What is its texture? Feel its weight, shape, and physicality. Notice how it looks. What color(s) is it? What aromas does it give off? In every way possible, deeply encounter the food on the level of your senses (without putting it in your mouth yet).
3. Tune in to your emotions around this bite of food. Are you attracted to it? Do you feel in a hurry to get it into your mouth? Are you annoyed at having to slow down and consider the food? Or are you perhaps unattracted to this food, and filled with a sense of disgust and not wanting to eat it? What are you hoping to get out of eating this food?
4. Now consider where this food came from. Think of the farms where it was grown, the farmers who worked to grow it. Think of the sun and the rain it required to grow, the air and the soil which supported it, and so on. Then consider what it took for this food to get to you. It may have been picked, sorted, moved many miles in trucks or trains, sorted, packaged, and so forth. It may have then been shipped to a grocery store, where people unpacked it, displayed it, sold it, and bagged it. Once in your home or in the kitchen, the food then had to be cooked or prepared in some way, even if only by washing. An enormous, complex web of interactions, elements, people, and perhaps animals and machines had to come together, all to bring you this single bite of food. It may even have come from the other side of the planet, all so that you could eat it now.
5. Now slowly and mindfully put the food in your mouth, but do not chew it yet. Simply feel the food on your tongue. Taste how it tastes before being chewed. Take in its smell, and its texture on your tongue. Notice how your whole body reacts and changes to the food in your mouth. Salivation begins. The stomach may become active. Pay close attention to this entire process. You may wish to close your eyes.

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6. Next slowly and mindfully chew the food (assuming it needs it). Attempt to chew in an attentive, active manner. As much as possible, remove the robotic, mechanical, mindless aspect of chewing. Instead, make each chomp a conscious act, done with great care and consideration. Notice how chewing the food changes it in many ways. New flavors and aromas are released. The texture and size of the food undergoes a remarkable change. As much as possible, keep your attention on the food and the act of chewing it. Let go of all other thoughts. Again, closing your eyes helps.
7. Feel the food going down your throat. Feel if you can sense it entering the stomach, and the sensations of the stomach receiving the food and working to digest it.
8. Let go and relax, noticing all the sensations that arise from having eaten this bite of food.
9. Repeat this process until the meal is ended.

### HISTORY:

Eating meditation is a common practice in Vipassana and Zen Buddhism. Formal Zen eating meditation is different from what is presented here. It is called oryoki.

Prayer before meals could be considered a basic form of eating meditation, by formally stopping all other activities, and bringing our attention to the sacredness of the act of eating.

### CAUTIONS:

You may wish to do this alone, or only in the presence of other practitioners, as it can make non-practitioners uncomfortable.