

## Mindfulness of Eating



Eating is a necessary and important activity. We make a point to eat periodically every day and select food that we think we would enjoy. Unfortunately, if we do not pay attention, we often do not enjoy the tastes and textures of food. We might “gobble down” something as we rush to/from work. Or we might be snack mindlessly while watching T.V. or a movie. In either case, by not paying attention to what we eat, we lose touch with the present moment and the enjoyable experience as it unfolds. “Tasting” should not be restricted to when we have a glass of wine, but also encompass other activities, like “breakfast”.

Here’s a primer on mindful eating as adapted from the Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction program developed by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn. The primary purpose is to become aware of as many sensory elements associated with eating as possible. If thoughts or judgments arise, simply turn your attention back to eating as soon as you notice that you have become distracted.

- Visually examine your food. Adopting an attitude of curiosity and openness, notice the colors, shapes, and shades of what you are about to eat.
- If appropriate, fondle the food in your fingers. What does it feel like? Is it soft, hard, bumpy, smooth, cold, or warm? What kind of information do you receive from your sense of touch?
- Bring the food to your nose and smell its aroma. What do you notice? What does it smell like? Can you discern any particular spices?
- Bring the food towards your mouth and notice the mechanics associated with this movement. Become aware of how your arm bends and parting of your lips.
- Place the food in your mouth and notice what happens. Do you notice any change in your salivation?
- Slowly move the food around in your mouth and feel its texture with your tongue.
- Gently and slowly begin to chew your food. Maintain full awareness of its taste. Slowly, move the food around in your mouth to different areas of your tongue. Different areas of your tongue are sensitive to different tastes, like bitterness, sweetness, sourness, etc. What taste differences can you detect in the same bite of food as you move it around in your mouth?
- When you feel ready to swallow, notice the intention or desire to swallow as it arises. Swallow your food, and pay attention to the changes in your mouth and throat.
- Notice where your thoughts go afterwards. Are you considering your next raisin? Are you somewhere else mentally? Bring yourself back to the present moment and maintain awareness of eating as you finish your snack or meal.

