

Food & Drink: Mindful Eating

Introduction

This eating meditation is meant to bring mindful awareness to where and what you actually eat. Let's begin with some questions. So, think about where you go for your food. Is it a restaurant? Is it your refrigerator? Do you go to the store? Do you go to a community center? Think about a place where you go to eat, and as best as you can, go to this place in your mind's eye noticing how this place looks. Does it have any smells? Any sounds? How does it feel to be here?

(Pause)

Next, picture something you often order or prepare for yourself to eat. It could be a snack. It might be leftovers. It could be a slice of pizza, or soup and salad. It could be a container of yogurt or some carrots. It might be an apple or orange. It could be take-out. And, as best as you can, in your mind's eye, picture that food item. What does it look like? Does it have smells?

Practice

Now, find a comfortable sitting posture. Both feet should be on the floor. Your body can be both relaxed and attentive, and your back straight.

(Pause)

Begin with 3 cleansing breaths. Breathe in deeply into the abdomen. It might resemble or feel like a small balloon. If it is comfortable, hold the breath for a few seconds and then exhale, allowing the outbreath to be longer than the in-breath.

(Pause)

Repeat this two more times at your own pace.

(Pause)

Next, in your mind's eye, take a moment to focus more on the food you chose. Is it familiar? What is your relationship to it? Are you on good terms with it, or maybe not-so-good terms? Just notice your relationship to the food as best as you can. Letting go of judgment, and bringing kindness to your experience right now.

(Pause)

Is it possible to look at this food as if it were the very first time you saw it? See if you can bring your curiosity. Looking at it as if you were seeing it for the first time.

(Pause)

What do you see?

(Pause)

Look closer, going beyond first impressions.

(Pause)

Noticing color.

(Pause)

Are there shades of color?

(Pause)

What about the shape?

(Pause)

Is it a square, a circle, a triangle, or a jumble of shapes?

(Pause)

Just noticing how the object looks and holding the intention of looking at this object, as if it were the first time you've ever seen it.

(Pause)

Next, in your mind's eye, bringing the object to your mouth in whatever way works best – a fork, your fingers, or so on.

(Pause)

Notice what happens here.

(Pause)

What are some of your thoughts, if they are present?

(Pause)

What feelings do you notice?

(Pause)

What are some of your body sensations?

(Pause)

Anything else?

(Pause)

And, whatever your experience, letting it all be just as it is, without having to do anything about it. This is an experiment of sorts. We are slowing the eating process down to see what happens or unfolds. Then we ask if what we observe, notice, or feel is important for our health and well-being.

(Pause)

Next, in your mind's eye, bring the object to the mouth and take one bite.

(Pause)

Can you feel your tongue moving in your mouth?

(Pause)

Where do you notice sensation on the tongue?

(Pause)

Do you notice sensations on the tip, the outside or the middle of the tongue?

(Pause)

Can you feel your jaw as it contracts and releases?

(Pause)

As you chew, do you note any thoughts or memories?

(Pause)

What about feelings? Do you notice any of those?

(Pause)

Any other sensations?

(Pause)

Next, when you are ready, swallow. Feel the muscles in your throat.

(Pause)

After the object has been chewed and swallowed, what do you feel in the mouth?

(Pause)

Any lingering physical sensations?

(Pause)

Any lingering thoughts?

(Pause)

Any lingering feelings?

(Pause)

Return to the place where you most often eat. How do you feel about this place? Does it affect how it felt to eat the food? What is positive about this place, and what is not?

(Pause)

Whatever your experience, can you allow it to be just as it is? Not having to fix or do anything. Just noticing. Not having to do anything in this moment. Simply allowing. Letting be.

(Pause)

Next, bringing you attention to your sitting posture. Feeling the body in this posture.

(Pause)

Perhaps taking one cleansing breath. Let's breathe in, hold, and then breathe out.

(Pause)

If your eyes are closed, please open your eyes.

Welcome back!

Questions

1. What do you feel in the body after doing the eating practice?
2. If you did this regularly, how might it affect your health, well-being and stress level?
3. What came up for you about your relationship with food?
4. Would you be willing to consider doing an eating mindfulness awareness practice once a day?