

MINDFULNESS EXERCISE

To begin these exercises simply read through the instructions and have a go yourself.

Mindful Eating

Usually eating is something we do automatically while we engage in range of other activities such as talking with our children, preparing dinner or thinking about problems in our life.

For this exercise you need to find some small bits of food. Chocolate is a favourite, or maybe you might choose something else like a grape or a raisin.

Before you start hold the piece of food – look at it carefully, noticing if you have any ideas or thoughts already in your mind about what it is like to eat it. Then try and let go of these thoughts. Try to approach this exercise like it is the very first time you have ever seen or tasted this item of food. Look carefully at the food item sitting in your hand. Notice its shape, its texture, notice the way the light in your room falls on its surface.

Now mindfully pick up the food, touching, squeezing and sensing the food with your fingertips. Now raise it to your nose and smell the raisin. Notice how your body and mind respond. Now lift the food to your mouth, noticing the movement of muscles in your arm as it moves closer to your mouth. Touch the food to your lips. Notice the feel of saliva in your mouth. Now, paying attention to the sensations of your lips, teeth and tongue, place the food in your mouth and leave it on your tongue for about 30 seconds noticing its texture before you slowly start to chew.

Be aware of the burst of flavour, whether it is sweet or sour, notice the scent of the raisin, notice the texture of the food as you chew and it breaks down in your mouth. Notice the movements of your mouth and tongue as you chew it into smaller pieces and it slowly moves down your throat.

Then be mindful of the absence of the food in your mouth. Pay attention to whether you feel tempted to place another bit of food in your mouth and then another and another.

When you have finished this mindfulness exercise you might reflect on how this way of eating is different than your usual way of eating food. We usually eat on automatic pilot and don't give much attention to the actual process of eating.

In the coming week you might choose to eat some of your meals in a more mindful way. When you are eating dessert, be mindful of every flavour you taste instead of having a conversation or thinking about something else. When you are being mindful you are not thinking about whether it is good or bad to be having dessert you are just having dessert. Being mindful of eating can mean we actually eat less but enjoy it more. Food eaten in a mindful manner will also be easier to digest.

Try mindful eating with the whole family!