

# Mindful Eating: Create a Habit of Nourishing Your Soul at Every Meal

## *General Instructions for Learning the Skill of Mindful Eating*

- Step 1:** During the training phase of this practice, prepare a small amount to eat while using this app.
- Step 2:** Choose a time to study this skill when you're not feeling famished or pressured to eat quickly.
- Step 3:** Before you begin eating, take five seconds and reflect on one of the following questions. **JUST CHOOSE ONE QUESTION AT ANY MEAL.**
- 🕒 How stressed do I feel right now on a scale of 1 to 10?
  - 🕒 Is my breath smooth, relaxed, rhythmic, and deep? Rate your answer on a scale of 1 to 10.
  - 🕒 Have I generated a thoughtful, creative, open state of mind? Rate your answer on a scale of 1 to 10.
  - 🕒 Does my normal way of eating damage my digestion, my weight, or my food choices? Rate your answer on a scale of 1 to 10.
- Step 4:** Make sure that you spend plenty of time on the final bite in the sequence, which is labeled: Instructions for Evaluating Your Overall Experience of Eating Mindfully on page 3.
- 🕒 Being consistent with the final bite instructions will help you make every meal into a vacation from worry.
- Step 5:** Make an intention to always begin every meal with at least six mouthfuls that you eat in a completely mindful way, even when rushed.

## *Instructions for Bites that Prime Your Mind for Mindfulness*

- Step 1:** Begin with Cognitive Priming. To do this, read a couple of sections from the Appendix: Examples of Sensations on page 4.
- 🕒 It's not necessary to read very much for Cognitive Priming to help you focus on mindful eating. Just read a little bit.
  - 🕒 Whenever you return to reading this Appendix, read a different section so that your mind is primed in different ways each time. This will build your overall skill.
- Step 2:** Pick up a bite of food. Focus on one sensation involved with picking up food, such as the color of the food on your fork.
- 🕒 Say a word to help you focus, such as the word, "Color" or the word "Orange."
- Step 3:** Put the food into your mouth. Focus on another aspect of eating—such as the food's texture.
- 🕒 Say a word to help you focus, such as the word, "Carrot" or the word "Crunch."
  - 🕒 Notice when you're using words that you read from the Appendix: Examples of Sensations on page 4. This will give you an appreciation of the value of Cognitive Priming.
- Step 4:** Focus on another aspect of eating—such as the taste when you start to chew.
- 🕒 Say a word to help you focus, such as the word, "Sweetness" or the word "Raw."

- 🕒 Don't worry if the word feels inappropriate, such as the word "Raw." What's important is keeping your mind focused and a single word will help you use your left brain efficiently for this.

**Step 5:** Focus on another aspect of eating—such as how the taste changes as you start to chew.

- 🕒 Continue saying words to help you stay focused, but don't get anal about whether they're any good as labels. It really doesn't matter.
- 🕒 Notice sensations you might not ordinarily notice, such as how your food moves back and forth in your mouth, how you automatically swallow when you've processed a specific amount to the back of your throat, and how the texture changes as you chew. Label every sensation you can.

**Step 6:** After the food settles in your stomach, set down your fork. Focus on the sensations you feel as the food settles into your stomach after swallowing.

- 🕒 This step often takes two to five seconds to complete.
- 🕒 Don't start the next bite until your stomach says that it's ready.

**Step 7:** When you're ready to test your mindfulness level, go on to the next section

## ***Instructions for Bites that Measure and Reward Your Mindfulness Level***

**Step 1:** Pick up a bite of food. Focus on one sensation involved with picking up food, such as the color of the food on your fork. Count this sensation as "One."

- 🕒 The sensation might be the same as the sensation in your first bite, such as the orange color of the carrot.
- 🕒 The sensation could also be completely different. It doesn't matter.
- 🕒 Say the number out loud to help you focus.

**Step 2:** Put the food into your mouth. Focus on another aspect of eating—such as the food's texture.

- 🕒 Count this sensation as "Two."
- 🕒 As in step 1, it could be the same sensation or something completely different.

**Step 3:** Continue counting as many levels of experience as you can.

- 🕒 With a crunchy salad, you might count 15 sensations.
- 🕒 With apple sauce, you might only count four or five sensations.
- 🕒 It doesn't matter, so long as you have a number that goes with that food.

**Step 4:** Mentally applaud your success.

- 🕒 Imagine gurus, coaches, meditators, or angels from all over applauding you for being mindful for this number of sensations.
- 🕒 Hear the sound of applause in your mind.
- 🕒 Visualize fireworks, cheerleaders, or other a vast audience.

**Step 5:** Repeat this process for your next few bite.

**Step 6:** However, for your following bites, applaud only if you equal or beat your record for the second bite or your average for all bites.

**Step 7:** Be generous if you wish. You can choose to applaud anything that reaches 80% of your average.

**Step 8:** Repeat this step several more times, if you wish, before going on to the phase of unaided mindfulness.

### ***Instructions for Your Unaided Mindful Bites***

**Step 1:** For this phase of training, eliminate the crutch of Cognitive Priming labels or of counting sensations.

- 🕒 Simply be mindful.
- 🕒 Don't relax your focus, but try to intensify it.

**Step 2:** After swallowing each bite, consciously ask yourself, "Am I still eating as mindfully as before?"

- 🕒 If the answer is "Yes," eliminate labeling and counting sensations for another bite.
- 🕒 If the answer is "No," return to labeling your sensations and counting them.
- 🕒 Asking this question aloud or by whispering it will help you stay focused much better than just thinking it will.

**Step 3:** If you're able to stay focused, periodically applaud yourself with visual and auditory cues.

**Step 4:** As often as you wish, go on to the final phase and evaluate your overall experience of eating mindfully.

### ***Instructions for Evaluating Your Overall Experience of Eating Mindfully***

For several bites, contemplate the rewards of eating mindfully.

**Step 1:** Start by comparing your progress with what you estimated before you began. You might have asked yourself one of the following questions:

- 🕒 How stressed do I feel right now on a scale of 1 to 10?
- 🕒 Is my breath smooth, relaxed, rhythmic, and deep? Rate your answer on a scale of 1 to 10.
- 🕒 Have I generated a thoughtful, creative, open state of mind? Rate your answer on a scale of 1 to 10.
- 🕒 Does my normal way of eating damage my digestion, my weight, or my food choices? Rate your answer on a scale of 1 to 10.

**Step 2:** If your self-evaluation indicates progress, applaud that progress with visual and auditory cues.

**Step 3:** In addition, ask yourself about other rewards you might be experiencing, such as:

- 🕒 Are you now enjoying food more while eating less?
- 🕒 Does slowing down feel healthier?
- 🕒 If these questions don't return a positive answer, ask yourself other questions until you find some that have rewarding answers. Be creative.

**Step 4:** Then return to the first phase of the training.

## ***Applications: How to Combine Mindful Eating with Reading***

It's possible and actually very positive to combine mindful eating with reading, socializing, or other activities. Watching a film is more challenging, but before I produce an app with this skill, I'll create instructions for that. To read and eat mindfully at the same time:

- Step 1:** Do not eat while reading, but wait to put the bite in your mouth until you can stop for a short break.
  
- Step 2:** When ready to eat, set the book physically aside and focus your attention entirely on the food.
  - 🕒 Before you pick up the fork, be prepared to either label or count the sensations involved in picking up the fork.
  - 🕒 Completely set aside your thoughts about what you're reading and just be present with the food for one or two bites.
  
- Step 3:** When you're ready to go back to reading, set your fork on the plate or table. Move the book back in front of you.
  
- Step 4:** Before starting to read, think back to what you read before. Did it raise a question in your mind?
  
- Step 5:** Read a few more paragraphs with the same deliberate, unrushed feeling of savoring this bite of words.
  - 🕒 Be mindful of all of the nuances of what you're reading, including questions, creative thoughts, and reactions.
  
- Step 6:** When you're again ready to let go of all thoughts of what you're studying or reading, set the book aside, pick up the fork, and eat another bite mindfully.
  
- Step 7:** Repeat this process. However use this unhurried pace to enable yourself to reflect on what you've read thoughtfully.
  - 🕒 When Evaluating Your Overall Experience, notice the greater depth of understanding you are achieving.

## ***Appendix: Examples of Sensations***

### **Opening—Preparing to Receive the Bite**

- 🕒 Move—lifting the spoon and reorienting it towards your mouth.
- 🕒 Metal—smooth spoon in hand
- 🕒 Colors—the colors and shape of the food in the spoon
- 🕒 Pungent—as you blow, the smell fills your nose
- 🕒 Heat—the warmth of the food radiating from the bowl against the face. Definitely too hot.
- 🕒 Pucker—blowing the food to cool
- 🕒 Blow—blowing some more.
- 🕒 Judging—you sense the food is still too hot.

### **Taste and Mouth Feel**

- 🕒 The distinctive taste of what you're chewing
- 🕒 Water—as you chew at first, the food gives off water
- 🕒 Chunky—biting the first bite and noticing the size of the bites.
- 🕒 Heat—it's still hot, but bearable

- ④ Fleeting nuances of taste.
- ④ Smaller—reducing the size of the chunks, redistributing to the cheeks.
- ④ Rich—the combination of foods create a rich mixed feeling

## Sounds

- ④ Scrape—sound of the spoon picking up food
- ④ Tight chew—the sound of chewing moves from long slice through the food to only the impact when your teeth hit the now pulverized food, a very short-sounding thud

## Controlling the Food

- ④ Chipmunks—moving the food into your cheeks
- ④ Chew muscle—awareness of the jaw muscle
- ④ Pulverize—the cooked food is systematically allowed to exit the cheeks to be pulverized
- ④ Redirect—moving food from one cheek to another
- ④ Catch bits—moving the tongue and cheeks around to pull in bits of food from the between the teeth and upper cheek
- ④ Final sweep—the tongue does a final review of the area between the upper teeth and the cheek, pulling out a final trapped piece of food and swallowing it.

## The Sensations of Swallowing

- ④ Changes in texture as the food liquefies.
- ④ Liquifying—moving the last bit from the cheek into the mouth with the tongue. Feeling around for any remaining bits. Contorting the cheeks for the last cleaning of this area.
- ④ Swallow—the involuntary swallow when the collected amount reaches a certain amount
- ④ Swallow heat—the warmth in your throat after the passage of the last swallow, which isn't as warm as the first swallows
- ④ Last swallow—the final bits of the bite go down, a much cooler swallow
- ④ Throat—the mush is collected near the back of the tongue
- ④ More please—your attention turns to the next bite.
- ④ Stomach heat—you still feel the heat of that bite in the stomach.
- ④ Satisfaction—the bite registers in the stomach

## Gestalts – Sensations of the Whole

- ④ What is it that makes this particular bite so pleasurable? Inventory every facet involved in making a bite particularly tasty, interesting, or subtle.
- ④ Whole being—what it's like to be a human who eats. Noticing its place in our lives, what our bodies are doing, other things at a more whole-being or global level.
- ④ Your attitude towards food.
- ④ Your entire flow of experience, including sounds, touch, and body sense.