

## Mindful Eating Exercise

Many of us eat on the go; in our cars, at our desks, in front of the TV or with others at a restaurant. This exercise will help you tune into all the sensations while eating to make it a more meaningful experience. This exercise will also help you become aware of the bodily sensations while you eat: hunger, when you stop feeling hunger, and when you feel satisfied.

Practice the following exercise in a place where it is unlikely that you will get interrupted. Try to find a quiet space and make it enjoyable. Put your food on nice dishes and use good silverware.

1. Sit down in front of your food and take several deep breaths. Notice the color, shape and texture of the food in front of you. Does it seem appealing to you? How does it smell? Notice how the food makes you feel: excited, reminiscent, happy or anxious. Just notice these things.
2. Be aware of your intention to begin eating. Move your hand slowly toward the silverware and then toward the food. While you do this, say these actions in your head “I am reaching for the silverware. I notice how it feels in my hand. I put my silverware into my food.” This will help keep you in the moment and keep you aware.
3. Watch your hand move the utensil toward your mouth. As it gets closer, become aware of the smell and notice if you start to salivate. Notice how your body reacts to the food being near your mouth.
4. As you take your first bite, notice your teeth chewing the food. After your first bite, how is the food positioned in your mouth? Does your tongue move to get the food closer to your teeth? Begin chewing slowly. What are the sensations in your mouth, on your tongue? What tastes are you experiencing? Are there several different tastes such as salty, sour, and sweet? Where is your hand with the utensil? Did you put it back on the table? Were you aware of this movement?
5. When you swallow, try to become aware of the muscles in your esophagus contract as the push food to your stomach. Where is the food when you have finished swallowing? Can you feel it in your stomach? Where is your stomach? Is it empty, full, or somewhere in between?
6. Continue to eat the meal this way noticing as many sensations as you can. Notice when your stomach begins to feel full. Notice if the taste of the food

changes as you begin to feel satisfied. Does it taste as good as that first bite? Continue to say the actions in your head to keep your mind in the moment, “My arm is resting on the table as I chew. I pick up my utensil and prepare to take another bite.” You may want to eat with your non-dominant hand. This awkwardness will help you slow down.

Davis, M., Robbins Eshelman, E., & McKay, M. (2000) *The Relaxation and stress reduction workbook, 5<sup>th</sup> ed.* New York, MJF Books.