

Eating Meditation

1. The purpose of eating meditation is to cultivate appreciation of the present moment and reduce preoccupation with the past and future.
2. Eating meditation encourages the application of “beginner’s mind”—the fascination and interest in new experiences—to everything in life, even experiences that have become mundane.
3. Begin by gazing at the food and contemplating the events that took place to produce it—the growing of plants and other species in the food chain; the involvement of sun, soil and water; the role of people who reaped and processed the food; the machinery used; the steps required for packaging the food; the delivery of the food; etc. Try to picture the occurrences in your mind and perhaps imagine taking part to heighten your awareness of the processes involved.
4. Look at the food and notice all of the qualities of its appearance—color, shape, contour, consistency, etc. What is appealing or interesting? What is not?
5. Smell the food. Notice the nature of the aromas and their effect on you.
6. Listen to the food. Do you hear anything?
7. Depending on the food, you may notice its tactile nature—hard or soft, smooth or rough, etc.
8. Bring the food to your mouth, being mindful of the sensations of moving your arm, holding the food or utensil, opening your mouth, and depositing the food inside your mouth.
9. Notice how the food feels in your mouth and how your mouth responds.
10. Pay attention to the sensations of chewing, the involvement of the tongue, the taste, etc.
11. Notice the sensation of swallowing. What does the food feel like as it descends your digestive tract?
12. Notice how you feel having eaten the food. Can you sense it in your stomach? Do you feel any differently having eaten it?
13. Experiment with doing all of the above and also paying attention to the rest of your moment-to-moment experience, including noticing the sensations and use of your whole body, your breathing, your sensory perceptions, and your emotions. Practice focusing in close to the food and moving away to the larger picture—as though you had a camera lens.
14. This practice is intended to cultivate enjoyment and not to become another “should” or burden. You may view it as a way of enhancing your eating experience.