



## Mindful Eating Exercise

This is an experience of mindful eating with Linda Smith from Duke Integrative Medicine.

You can prepare for this exercise by choosing a special food to experience it with. Many people choose a raisin or a piece of chocolate or something that is delightful for you.

First take the food and hold it between your pointer finger and thumb. Bring your attention to it, if it's a raisin, as if it were a novel item, imagining that you have never seen one before in your life.

Take the time to observe the raisin carefully - really see it - gaze at it with care and full attention. Let your eyes explore every part of it, noticing its shape, colors, and surfaces. Examine its grooves, where the light shines and shadows.

Rotate and move the raisin between your fingers, continuing to explore its texture. Apply a small bit of pressure to notice whether it is soft or hard. You might close your eyes if that helps you to focus and enhance your sense of touch.

Recognizing this is a raisin, note any thoughts you might have about raisins - any memories about them or feelings of liking or disliking them.

Hold the raisin under your nose, and inhale naturally. With each in-breath, notice any aroma or smell that arises. Bring awareness also to any effect in your mouth or stomach.

Now bring the raisin slowly up to your mouth, noticing how your hand and arm know exactly how and where to position it. Being aware if you are salivating as the mind and body anticipate eating.

Place the raisin gently into your mouth, without yet chewing. Hold the raisin in your mouth for at least 10 seconds, exploring it with your tongue, feeling the sensations of having it there. Notice this pause and how it feels to take some time before eating the raisin.

When you are ready, prepare to chew the raisin. Take one or two bites into it and notice what happens, bringing your full attention to its taste and texture as you continue chewing.

Take time to chew without swallowing, noticing the taste and texture of the raisin in your mouth and how it may change over time.

When you feel ready to swallow the raisin, bring awareness to the sensation so that even this is experienced consciously.

Lastly, notice what is left of the raisin as you swallow and it travels down to your stomach. Notice how your body as a whole is feeling after completing this exercise.

Now take a few moments to write down your reflections on the following questions:

1. How was this experience the same or different from how you normally eat?
2. What, if anything, surprised you about the experience?
3. What did you notice with the raisin (or whatever food you chose) in terms of sight, touch, sound, smell, and taste?
4. What thoughts or memories popped up while doing this exercise?
5. What is one tip for yourself that you are going to take from this experience to apply to your eating habits in the future?



Many people choose to use a special dish or plate and to find one meal that they can eat slowly and consciously. Taking a bite, putting the fork or spoon down for a moment, fully enjoying the sensation of the food as it is chewed and swallowed. And then taking another bite to have the full sensory experience and enjoyment of the food that we eat.