

The Basic Mindful Bite

The basic technique of mindful eating is the Basic Mindful Bite. You can use this technique with any solid food.

1. First take the food and hold it between your pointer finger and thumb. Bring your attention to it as if it were a novel item, imagining that you have never seen one before in your life.
2. Rotate and move the food 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.
3. Recognizing this is a XXX, note any thoughts you might have about XXX - any memories about them or feelings of liking or disliking them.
4. Hold it 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.
5. 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.
6. Place the raisin gently into your mouth, without yet chewing. Hold it 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 XXX.
7. When you are ready, prepare to chew the XXX. Take one or two bites into it and notice what happens, bringing your full attention to its taste and texture as you continue chewing.
8. Take time to chew without swallowing, noticing the taste and texture of it in your mouth and how it may change over time.
9. When you feel ready to swallow the XXX, bring awareness to the sensation so even that is experienced consciously.
10. Lastly, notice what is left of the XXX as you swallow and it travels down to your stomach. Notice how your body as a whole is feeling after completing this exercise.

All the other mindful eating strategies we will review involve this Basic Mindful Bite.

Arriving Strategy: 30 Seconds of Silence

You will now learn some techniques to “arrive” at food. When you arrive at food, you become aware before a meal or snack before you eat it.

Getting in a “mindful” state, even before a meal begins, helps you to slow down, and concentrate on eating so you will only eat what you really need.

Before you begin eating any meal or snack, become silent for 30 seconds. During these 30 seconds:

- Take a close look at the food. Notice colors, shapes and arrangements.
- Bring your face close to the food and detect all the odors in the food. Move your nose above each food and mindfully enjoy the aromas you sense.
- Imagine yourself eating each food attentively and on purpose.

If you do this activity seriously, you will have truly arrived at your meal. This sets the stage for you to continue your mindfulness during your eating.

Awakening Strategy: Four Chips Encounter

Get four potato chips. Before eating the chips, arrive at them. Smell the chips; enjoy their aroma. Feel the chips in your fingers. Notice the salt and oil. Imagine yourself eating these five chips in a mindful way.

CHIP #1: Pick up one chip and look at it before you eat it. Notice its shape, colors, shadings and curls. Now, eat this chip mindfully. Take your time and be aware of each chew. Make this bite a basic mindful bite.

CHIP #2: Notice the flavor of this chip as you eat it. Put it in your mouth and chew it slowly and thoroughly. Pay attention to the tastes you experience. Notice the potato flavor. Keep chewing until it's completely chewed up, and then swallow. Stop. Notice the aftertastes. Enjoy the chip!

CHIP #3: With the next chip, you're going to notice textures. Pick up the chip and look at it. Then, put it in your mouth, but don't chew right away. Move your tongue against the chip and briefly explore its edges, roughness, etc. Then, begin chewing. Pay attention to how the textures change. Notice how your chewing creates new edges, new textures. As you chew, the texture changes; follow how these changes occur. Chew slowly and thoroughly, and then swallow.

CHIP #4: Chewing creates noises, and with the next chip, you'll pay special attention to the sounds of eating. Put the chip in your mouth and begin chewing. Listen carefully to every bite. Hear the sound of chewing and how that sound changes over time. Even when the chip is thoroughly chewed, there is still some sound. Swallow after you've completely chewed the chip.

If you want more chips, please help yourself, but with each bite continue to use the techniques you've learned. The goal here is to enjoy your chips---or whatever food you eat---and be fully in the moment.

This approach is far better than denying yourself foods such as potato chips. When you deprive yourself of foods you love, you set up a self-sabotaging system. Eventually, you will get tired of being deprived and you'll go back to the old, unskilled way of eating the foods you avoided.

By Awakening to food, you allow yourself to eat any food. But you establish a new way of eating it---with care and attention. Over time, you may find that you're eating much less of the food but that you're enjoying it far more than you ever did before.

Tuning in Strategy: How Many Chews?

This activity requires you to become aware of how many chews it takes for you to chew your food completely. You can use this activity with any food that must be chewed.

- Take a **normal** bite of food. Begin counting chews as you chew it. Make this bite a basic mindful bite. Be sure that the food is completely chewed up before you stop counting. Whatever number you came up with is your baseline number of chews. With any bite of food at any time, you can use this baseline number as your general goal for the number of chews to use.
- Next, take a bite of the same food, but make it **smaller** than the normal bite. Again, count the chews and make this a mindful bite. Did the smaller amount of food reduce the number of chews needed?
- Next, take a bite of the same food, but make it **larger** than the normal bite. Count the chews and make this a mindful bite. Did the larger amount of food increase the number of chews needed?
- Now, take a normal bite, but this time, chew it **twice as fast** as normal, counting the chews. Did the increased speed make any difference in how many chews are needed?
- Now, take a normal bite, but this time, chew it **twice as slow** as normal, counting the chews. Did the decreased speed make any difference in how many chews are needed?

Any time that you want to bring more mindfulness to your eating, you can use this technique to tune into yourself, bringing your mind fully on the act of eating.