

Mindful Eating

Objectives: Slowing down the activity of eating while paying attention and exploring each step with all of our sense teaches us about one form of informal practice. To explore our relationship to food. To learn about the mind-body connection.

Preparation

- Bring enough (seedless) tangerines or other easy-to-eat food (eg. raisins) for everyone and napkins. Avoid nuts!
- This can be done with a plate of POPS lunch instead of the above.*
- Remember your tone of voice delivers as much information as what you say; keep it kind, light, curious, invitational...

Facts

- Anything can become a mindful practice by slowing it down and paying attention.
- Our thoughts and feelings of anticipation, imagination and memories can affect our physical reactions.
- Being thoughtful or aware where our food comes from connects us to others, and can also allow feelings of gratitude.

Discussion (5 - 7 minutes)

- Do you believe that just thinking about something can make a certain reaction in your body? Yes or No? (*Kids raise hands*) Think about eating a lemon – really imagine biting into a lemon slice. Does anything happen to your lips or mouth? *Discuss...*
- Today we're going to practice mindfulness of eating. This is an **informal mindfulness practice**, so we won't establish our mindful posture and we will keep our eyes open. It's kind of an experiment, and in order for it to work we all need to quietly do the same thing at the same time, so please listen for my instructions at each step.
- *IF USING TANGERINES OR OTHER FOOD YOU BROUGHT**: I'm going to say three sentences, and while I say each thing I want you to notice any reactions or thoughts you have in response (*Pause briefly between each sentence*):
 - 1) I brought you each something today. 2) It's something you can eat. 3) I brought you tangerines. (*Continue with Tangerine Exercise on next page*)
- Can a few of you please share your reactions to these statements? Raise your hands if anyone else also had the same reactions... Why or why not?
- *OR: IF USING POPS LUNCH**: If you've already gotten a plate of food, try to wait but if you're too hungry, take a couple of bites, then wait for the others to join us. Everyone, please listen to the prompts whether or not you've already gotten your plate of food. (If you haven't gotten your food, please go get it and practice the prompts as you're getting it.) Notice your reactions to seeing the food, what made you choose each food and how much. to put on your plate? Notice if you're anticipating the taste of certain foods.
- (*Continue with POPS Lunch Exercise on next pages*)

***Exercise with Tangerines or other food brought in (15 minutes)**

1. I'm going to pass out the tangerines now and I want you to leave it on your desk in front of you. You can look at it, but that's it. *Note: Students answer all questions silently.*
2. As I'm passing out all the tangerines, take a moment to think about all the people involved in getting the tangerine to you: me buying them, the grocery store buyers, stockers and cashiers, the people who loaded them and the truck drivers who brought them to the store, the packagers who crated the boxes and bags, the pickers on the farm, the farmer who grew them,,,,... Look at your tangerine and see all the people involved...
3. How was nature involved? The farmer needed to take care of the soil, harness the power of the sun, bring in water, there may have been wind or stormy weather that affected the crop ... all of these elements played a role in bringing this tangerine to you. Take a moment to contemplate all of this...
4. Look at the tangerine: its color, how shiny or dull is it? What's the skin texture look like?
5. Now pick up your tangerine and feel it – what's the texture? Now smell it –is there any smell? Quietly to yourself notice any physical reactions in your body Hunger in your tummy? More saliva in your mouth?
6. Now, let's **slowly** peel the tangerine together. Feel your fingers piercing the skin – is it thick or thin? Is the feeling unpleasant or pleasant? Is the smell of the tangerine more intense? Do you notice any more physical reactions? Answer quietly to yourself as you peel the tangerine.
7. Now let's all take just one segment and look at it and feel it. What does it feel like in your hand? Is it cool or warm? Smooth or bumpy? Does it have a smell?
8. Now place the segment in your mouth – but **don't bite it just yet!** Notice how hard it is not to bite down right away – what's it like to anticipate what it will taste like? Take another moment before biting it – is it warm or cool? Just feel the segment in your mouth.
9. In another moment we're ALL going to bite the tangerine segment **at the same time.** Ready? Bite! What do you notice? Anything surprising? What happens as you chew? What do you taste? Is it pleasant or not? Can you notice your teeth, tongue or any other parts of your mouth interacting with the tangerine? Do you taste different things on different parts of your tongue? Do I want to swallow it or let it linger? What does it feel like to swallow?
10. Now that it's gone, is there any lingering taste? Do you miss the segment or was one bit enough? Do you want more? Is it hard not to immediately grab another piece?
11. Go ahead and eat the rest of the tangerine segments slowly and see what other thoughts or feelings you have as you eat. Answer the following questions quietly to yourself: Did the tangerine taste good? Did I chew on the right side, left side, back or front of my mouth? Did I swallow quickly or slowly? Close your eyes if it helps you focus or to experience it more fully.

***Exercise with POPS lunch (15 minutes)**

Note: Students answer all questions silently to themselves.

1. Look at the food on your plate: the colors, shapes, textures. What does it look like?
2. Now, take a moment to think about all the people involved in getting this food to you: (Volunteer name) who picked up lunch today, the folks who cooked the food, and then packed the food and washed the dishes etc. at the restaurant, the buyers who order or buy the food supplies for the restaurant, the grocery store stockers and cashiers, the people who loaded the truck and the truck drivers who brought the food to the store or restaurant, the packagers who crated the boxes and bags, the pickers on the farm or folks who work on the meat processing plants, the farmer who grew the fruits and vegetables or cared for the animals,,,,... Look at your food and see all the people involved...
3. How was nature involved? The farmer needed to take care of the soil, harness the power of the sun, bring in water, there may have been wind or stormy weather that affected the crop ... all of these elements played a role in bringing this food to you. Take a moment to contemplate all of this...
4. Now bring the plate near your face and notice all the smells... Do you notice any reaction in your mouth or belly when you smell the food? Now pick up a piece of food. Feel it or look at it if it's on your fork – what's the texture? Quietly notice any physical reactions in your body: Hunger in your tummy? More saliva in your mouth?
5. Now place a bite of food in your mouth – but **don't bite it just yet!** Notice how hard it is not to bite down right away – what's it like to anticipate what it will feel like when you bite down? Take another moment before biting it – is it warm or cool? What textures and flavors do you notice? Just for a moment feel the food in your mouth without biting.
6. In another moment we're ALL going to bite the food **at the same time**. Ready? Bite! What do you notice? Anything surprising? What happens as you chew? What do you taste? Is it pleasant or not? Can you notice your teeth, tongue or any other parts of your mouth interacting with the food? Do you taste different things on different parts of your tongue? Do you want to swallow or let it linger? What does it feel like to swallow?
7. Now that it's gone, is there any lingering taste? Do you miss the food or was one bite enough? Do you want more? Is it hard not to immediately grab another bite?
8. Go ahead and eat the rest of your lunch slowly and try to notice what other thoughts or feelings you have as you eat. Answer the following questions quietly to yourself: Did my food taste good? Did I chew on the right side, left side, back or front of my mouth? Did I swallow quickly or slowly? Did my food taste different than when I eat "normally"?

Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. Share the “Facts” section at the top of the first page.
2. Students can reflect on *these questions*: Is this different from how I usually eat? How did the food taste compared to how food tastes when I eat normally? Would I like to try eating like this again? Why or why not? *Open it up for students to share and discuss.*
3. *More Questions to ask, if time*: Were you surprised by anything when eating in this way? Did you learn anything new? Did this exercise make you think about food and eating in different ways? How might you apply this in your regular life?
4. What other things that you do regularly might become and **informal mindfulness practice**? Let’s brainstorm together. (*Ideas: Anything that uses any of your senses, like walking, showering, looking closely – let the students come up with their own ideas!*)