
Mindful Eating Practices

2 Essential Exercises to Improve Your Relationship with Food & Eating

“The Raisin Meditation”

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- ❖ Focus on the raisin as if you’ve never seen anything like it before. Focus on seeing it. Scan it, exploring every part of it. Turn it around with your fingers and notice what color it is. Notice the folds and where the surface reflects light or becomes darker.

- ❖ Next, explore the texture, feeling any softness, hardness, coarseness, or smoothness. While you’re doing this. If thoughts arise such as “Why am I doing this weird exercise?” “How will this ever help me?”. “I hate these objects,”, Then just see if you can acknowledge these thoughts. Let them be. Then bring your awareness back to the object.

- ❖ Take the object beneath your nose and carefully notice the smell of it.

- ❖ Bring the object to one ear, squeeze it, roll it around, and hear if there is any sound coming from it.

- ❖ Begin to slowly take the object to your mouth. Noticing how the arm knows exactly where to go. Perhaps becoming aware of your mouth-watering.

- ❖ Gently place the object in your mouth. Place it on your tongue, without biting it. Simply explore the sensations of this object in your mouth.

- ❖ When you’re ready. Intentionally bite down on the object. Maybe noticing how it automatically goes to one side of the mouth versus the other. Also, notice the tastes it releases.

- ❖ Slowly chew this object. Be aware of the saliva in your mouth and how the object changes in consistency as you chew.

- ❖ When you feel ready to swallow. Consciously notice the intention to swallow. Then see if you can notice the sensations of swallowing the raisin. Sensing it moving down to your throat. Into your esophagus on its way to your stomach.

- ❖ Take a moment to congratulate yourself. For taking this time to experience mindful eating

Urge Surfing

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❖ Take a few moments to notice where you experience urges in your body. You can do this by taking some time to sit in a quiet place, and if you are comfortable doing so, closing your eyes, and just allowing your attention to go to the place(s) in your body where you tend to feel urges. For some people they notice that urges are most connected to sensations in their abdomens; for others, they notice urges in their mouth (e.g., their mouths water when experiencing an urge to drink). There is no right or wrong place for an urge to be located. What is most important is that you notice where in your body you most notice urges when they show up. If you are having trouble noticing urges, think back to a time when you experienced an urge to engage in an old habit. *If you are concerned that thinking about a particular instance when you had an urge will lead to doing the habit, pick a situation where the urge was less strong or you successfully prevented yourself from acting on the urge. Picture the situation as clearly as you can in your imagination. Once the situation is clear in your mind notice where in your body you are experiencing the urge.*

❖ Once you have noticed what part of your body is most connected to the urge, focus your attention on it (if you notice that more than 1 area of your body is connected to an urge, start with the place that you most intensely notice the urge).

❖ Take note of the sensations you are having in this body part. What do the sensations feel like? Does it feel like pressure, tingling, warmth, or coolness? How much space do these sensations take up in this place in your body? Try to draw an outline around the place where the sensations are felt. See if the sensations have any movement. Some people tend to associate sensations with colors or temperatures. Check to see if you notice any colors or temperature associated with these sensations. For some people it can be helpful to silently describe the sensations in an objective and non-judgmental manner (e.g., I notice warmth and tingling in my belly). If more than one part of your body is associated with an urge, go through this exercise with each body part.

❖ Bring your attention to your breath. You do not need to change your breathing at all. Notice your breath for the next 1-2 minutes. Some people find it helpful to bring their attention to a particular place in their body where they notice their breath (e.g., the abdomen); some find it helpful to say phrases like “breathe in,” “breathe out” as they inhale and exhale.

❖ Gently shift your attention back to the part(s) of your body where you notice the urge. Allow yourself to notice whatever sensations come up in these places. If it becomes overwhelming to notice the sensations, gently return your attention back to breath for a few moments and then go back to noticing the sensations connected to the urge. You may find it helpful to imagine sending your breath to the parts of your body that are associated with the urge (e.g., you can breathe into your shoulders and let your breath fill up that part of your body). Notice if and how the sensations change as you watch them. Be sure to practice this step for at least 1 minute, but longer is probably better.

❖ This next step is optional: Imagine that the sensations connected with your urge are a wave. Watch the wave rise and fall over and over again as the intensity of your sensations peak and subside. Your job is to use your breath as a surfboard to ride these waves. No matter how big the wave gets, no matter how much you feel as if the wave will consume you, you are a skilled surfer and you will use your breath to ride each wave as it comes. Practice this for at least 1 minute, but again, longer is probably better, particularly the first few times you practice this.

❖ As you're riding the wave (or just noticing the sensations), you may find it helpful to silently describe the sensations in an objective and non-judgmental way (e.g., I notice warmth in my belly that is increasing...the warmth in my belly is decreasing and my belly feels cooler).

❖ When you are done surfing the urge, take a moment to thank yourself for taking the time and being willing to do something different with your urges. You can also use this time to set your intention for the next few minutes, hour, or day.

❖ You can practice this technique in two ways: You can start urge surfing whenever you notice yourself having an urge. This can be a particularly useful technique when you notice urges to go back to old habit that you are trying to break. Alternatively, you can practice this on a regular basis by setting aside time to practice using the technique. Many people find that listening to an audio recording of the technique is useful at first. Through this kind of formal practice, you can get better at urge surfing so that you're better at it when you need it.

❖ You'll find that, with practice, urges will become easier to ride out. You may even start to feel a sense of pride or accomplishment as you successfully surf urges and act according to your values, instead of according to your urges.