



EATING A RAISIN WITH MINDFULNESS

"Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished."

—Lao Tzu

OVERVIEW

Focus intently on a raisin and engage all of your senses in the simple act of eating it to develop attention skills and sensory awareness.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Any time during the year
- Before class begins, during prep time, during lunch, at the end of a school day
- When you are feeling stressed and overwhelmed
- As a staff meeting activity

TIME REQUIRED

- 5 minutes

LEVEL

- Adult
- College

MATERIALS

- A quiet place to practice
- A raisin or another small piece of food, perhaps chocolate

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

You will:

- Practice using all your senses to observe and eat a piece of food

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs](#)
- [Making a Practice Trauma-Informed](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- How does it feel to slow down for this simple exercise?
- How often do you take time to focus on the experience of eating a piece of food?
- If you are leading this mindfulness practice with a group, consider how the participants might respond. How can you prepare yourself to slow down, focus, and exhibit calmness and curiosity?

INSTRUCTIONS

- Whether alone or leading a group, take a few deep breaths.
- Settle into a quiet mental space for reflection.
- If leading a group, remind participants that they are encouraged but not required to participate. (Students or staff are welcome to sit quietly if they choose not to participate.)

1. Holding: First, take a raisin and hold it in the palm of your hand or between your finger and thumb.

2. Seeing: Take time to really focus on it; gaze at the raisin with care and full attention—imagine that you’ve just dropped in from Mars and have never seen an object like this before in your life. Let your eyes explore every part of it, examining the highlights where the light shines, the darker hollows, the folds and ridges, and any asymmetries or unique features.

3. Touching: Turn the raisin over between your fingers, exploring its texture. Maybe do this with your eyes closed if that enhances your sense of touch.

4. Smelling: Hold the raisin beneath your nose. With each inhalation, take in any smell, aroma, or fragrance that may arise. As you do this, notice anything interesting that may be happening in your mouth or stomach.

5. Placing: Now slowly bring the raisin up to your lips, noticing how your hand and arm know exactly how and where to position it. Gently place the raisin in your mouth; without chewing, noticing how it gets into your mouth in the first place. Spend a few moments focusing on the sensations of having it in your mouth, exploring it with your tongue.

6. Tasting: When you are ready, prepare to chew the raisin, noticing how and where it needs to be for chewing. Then, very consciously, take one or two bites into it and notice what happens in the aftermath, experiencing any waves of taste that emanate from it as you continue chewing. Without swallowing yet, notice the bare sensations of taste and texture in your mouth and how these may change over time, moment by moment. Also pay attention to any changes in the object itself.

7. Swallowing: When you feel ready to swallow the raisin, see if you can first detect the intention to swallow as it comes up, so that even this is experienced consciously before you actually swallow the raisin.

8. Following: Finally, see if you can feel what is left of the raisin moving down into your stomach, and sense how your body as a whole is feeling after you have completed this exercise.

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- What did you notice in yourself as you engaged in this practice?
- Which aspects of the practice were most memorable? Smelling, tasting, touching, etc?
- What would happen if you practiced eating in this way during part of your next meal?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

The “raisin meditation,” a key practice featured in Jon Kabat-Zinn’s Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, is one of the most basic and widely used methods for cultivating mindfulness. In addition to increasing mindfulness more generally, this practice can promote mindful eating and help you to foster [healthier relationship with food](#).

MBSR, which has been adapted and studied over the last several decades, includes other practices like the body scan, a walking meditation, and mindful breathing. Research tells us that these practices help people to manage chronic [pain](#), [stress](#), [anxiety](#), and [symptoms of distress](#).

In fact, teachers who practice mindfulness for just a few weeks report a range of [positive outcomes](#), including a decrease in [burnout](#), [stress](#), [anxiety](#), and [depression](#). They also experience a range of physical [health](#) benefits, including better [sleep quality](#).

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

As we increase our sensory and mental awareness, mindfulness can help us to navigate our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors at school and at home so that we ultimately respond to others more constructively. Teachers who practice mindfulness report [reduced interpersonal problems](#) and more [emotionally supportive](#) relationships with the students in their classrooms.

SOURCE

["Eating One Raisin: A First Taste of Mindfulness."](#) Extension Service, West Virginia University.

Adapted from: Williams, M., Teasdale, J., Segal, Z., & Kabat-Zinn, J. (2007). [The Mindful Way through Depression: Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness](#). New York: Guilford Press.