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## ***Mindful Eating Meditation***

We eat several times a day, but how often do we really pay attention to what we are eating *while* eating it? Do you usually eat with other people? In front of the television? In the car? While reading a book? The following is a mindful eating meditation. Try it during a meal or snack when you are alone and not likely to be disturbed.

- ❖ Sit down in front of the food and take several deep breaths. Notice the colors, shapes, textures, and smells of the food you are about to eat. Take a moment of gratitude for this food, and all of the people involved in making it possible for this food to be on your table today. Does the food appeal to you? Do you find yourself with an urgency to eat the food? Take note of whatever you're feeling.
- ❖ Be aware of your intention to begin eating. Move your hand slowly toward the food. Focus on the physical sensations of the utensils or food itself in your hands.
- ❖ Watch the food move closer to your mouth. When it nears your mouth, take a moment to smell the food. What smells do you recognize? How is your body reacting to the smell? Do you notice your mouth watering? Notice the sensation of your body desiring the food.
- ❖ As you take the first bite, feel your teeth bite into the food. When the bite is complete, how is the food positioned in your mouth? How does your tongue work to move the food so that it is between your teeth? Begin chewing slowly. What are the sensations in your teeth? Your tongue? How does your tongue move while you are chewing? What tastes are you experiencing? Can you identify any specific flavors or textures? What part of your tongue experiences the taste?
- ❖ When you swallow, try to be aware of how the muscles in your esophagus contract and relax as they move the food down your throat. Where is the food when you have finished swallowing? Can you feel the sensations in your stomach? Is it empty, full, or somewhere in-between?
- ❖ As you continue to eat, stay aware of as many sensations as you can. Try eating with your non-dominant hand because the awkwardness may serve as a reminder to stay mindful. For some people, using chopsticks requires extra attention and can be a tool to increase awareness while eating.
- ❖ When you have finished eating, take a moment to experience what it is like to have the food in your body. Do you feel a sense of satisfaction? Did you notice things about the food itself or the experience of eating that was new information for you? Take a moment to thank your body for allowing you to derive pleasure from eating, and for being able to convert this food to useful energy for your body.