

Mindful Eating Script

Kerry Makin-Byrd , PhD

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INTRO

In this mindful eating exercise, participants use their five senses to experience a bite of food as if for the first time. The mindful eating exercise practices present centered awareness and can be useful for teaching caregivers a new way to drop into the present moment and strengthen the beginner's mind skill for observing their child.

SCRIPT

Today I'm going to lead you in a mindful eating exercise. First begin by finding a small piece of food, about a bite size. It can be natural food like a fruit or vegetable or whatever you have close by.

So the purpose of this mindful eating exercise is to introduce you to a new way of seeing. We can call this mindfulness or awareness or presence is a way of seeing that is available to each of us. Whenever we choose, we know how to do it, and we can practice it today. We're going to apply that way of seeing to eating. And one of the skills we're going to use is called beginner's mind. Beginner's mind is an attitude of doing something or experiencing something as though for the first time. Now, when we've done something many, many times like eating, it's easy to lose beginner's mind, and we float into autopilot.

Let's try beginner's mind and strengthen our mindful awareness. Begin by taking your small piece of food and holding it in your hand. Let's pretend you have never seen the thing that you are holding in front of you before. We're going to examine this unknown thing.

One sense at a time, and we'll begin with **looking**. First notice the light and dark parts. Noticing the surfaces, maybe moving the object, looking at it from different angles, noticing the variety of colors, maybe the variety of textures.

Next let's roll the object between our fingers or maybe touch it Again. Notice again, noticing the variety of sensations, Maybe dry, maybe sticky,

And now holding it up to your nose. Hmm. Maybe inhaling, noticing the smell.

And I'm going to invite you to do something a little courageous or maybe a little silly and hold it up to your ear...rolling it between your fingers and listening, listening to the sounds the object makes.

Now just holding the object for a moment, not moving it. Perhaps imagining, just imagining putting the object into your mouth.

Kerry
Makin-
Byrd

PSYCHOLOGIST &
EXECUTIVE COACH



LIVING ACT

learn - do - grow

What do you notice?

Now, bringing the object to your lips and just resting it on your lips. Noticing this is another practice of feeling, Feeling with your lips instead of your fingers. What's this like?

Now placing the object on your tongue. Not moving your teeth, but noticing any urges. Again, sensing, feeling the object just with your tongue...noticing any other changes.

And now biting down just once. What happens? Continue chewing until there's almost nothing left. Paying attention to the movements, your tongue and your cheeks make. And then allowing yourself to swallow.

And with that, we come to the end of our exercise.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What did you notice?
- How is this the same or different from how you normally eat?
- What felt familiar?
- What was new or different?
- Where was your attention as we did the exercise?
- Where else can you imagine practicing beginner's mind?
- What would it be like to observe your child with beginner's mind?
- Would you be willing to try?

TAKE HOME

After this first exercise it can be useful to invite caregivers to use their beginners mind and observe their child for a few minutes and then journaling about any observations, surprises, or things they notice. This exercise allows parents to practise opening to new information in reading themselves in the present moment period.

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