

Eating Mindfully

One of the very nicest things about life is the way we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and devote our attention to eating.

~ Luciano Pavarotti

When I was four years old, my mother used to bring me a cookie every time she came home from the market. I always went to the front yard and took my time eating it, sometimes half an hour or forty-five minutes for one cookie. I would take a small bit and look up at the sky. Then I would touch the dog with my feet and take another small bite. I just enjoyed being there, with the sky, the earth, the bamboo thickets, the cat, the dog, the flowers.

I was able to do that because I did not have much to worry about. I did not think of the future. I did not regret the past. I was entirely in the present moment, with my cookie, the dog, the bamboo thickets, the cat, and everything. It is possible to eat our meals as slowly and joyfully as I ate the cookie of my childhood. Maybe you have the impression that you have lost the cookie of your childhood, but I am sure it is still there, somewhere in your heart. Everything is still there, and if you really want it, you can find it. Eating mindfully is a most important practice of meditation.

~ Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace is Every Step*

Keep track of all you ingest over three days before you begin your cleanse. Fill out the Food Diary on the next page. Include everything that passes your lips, including all liquids as well as foods.

Eat one meal mindfully: no TV, electronic devices, reading, conversation or other distracting activities. Just be present with the experience of eating a meal slowly and mindfully. Try putting down your fork or spoon or sandwich or whatever between bites. Notice whatever you observe going on within you as you eat in this manner.

Look at what you are about to eat before putting it in your mouth. Notice its characteristics. Think about its origins.

Notice any sensations in your body as you bring the food toward your mouth. Feel the food in your mouth, chewing slowly, noticing both the taste and texture. Notice the impulse to rush through one mouthful to get to the next. Notice the sensations of swallowing.

Approach each bite in this manner. Notice how much you are eating, how fast and how your body feels before and after the meal or snack.

Notice any emotions: feelings of impatience, irritation, anxiety, relaxation, peace, sadness, anger, contentment or any other feelings that occur during this exercise.