

Mindful Eating Exercise

For use with honey stick during Healthy Ever After Lesson “Why Do We Eat?”

by Dr. Brittanny Boulanger (Dated: April 4, 2013)

Source: <http://blog.harvardvanguard.org/2013/04/smart-kids-practice-mindful-eating/>

“Mindful eating requires you to be in the moment and to deliberately pay attention. Mindfulness is being aware of what is present for you mentally, emotionally and physically in each moment. With practice, mindfulness cultivates the possibility of freeing yourself of reactive, habitual patterns of thinking, feeling and acting. For those SMArt Kids who start to eat mindfully, it could mean that they may eat less often (when hungry rather than out of habit or from emotions), may eat less volume and hopefully desire healthier foods.

Here are some mindful practices you can try at home.

Mindful Eating Practice

Time: About Five- Seven Minutes (2 -3 times per week)

Prepare for Exercise – (two minutes) Abdominal or Diaphragmatic Breathing: Use the following script to guide yourself and your child through this exercise to prepare for a mindful eating practice.

- Let your body rest comfortably in the chair. Notice your legs and feet. Relax them. Let any tension move out of them.
- Close your eyes
- Notice your shoulders, arms, and hands. Let the tension out of them. Relax your hands, your arms, let your shoulders sink into a relaxed state. Place a hand on your belly so you can feel the air come in and go out.
- Now focus on your breath. Slowly breathe air into your body.
 - First in through your nose or mouth
 - Let it fill up your chest.
 - Then fill up your belly (full diaphragm) and feel your belly rise as your lungs fill with air
 - When your belly is full, slowly exhale: first empty the air from you belly, feel the belly get smaller.
- Continue to slowly move the air out through your mouth.
- Repeat the full breathing process one more time. Then slowly open eyes and prepare to begin the mindful eating activity.

Mindful Eating Practice (3- 4 minutes)

Place the selected food on a plate in front of your child (remember the raisin example). Take your child through the script below, varying it as you feel appropriate.

“Look at the (food’s name). What is its shape? What size is it? What color is the (food)? What smell do you notice? What sensation do you notice in your mouth as you look at the (food)? What’s the feeling in your stomach? Pick up the food slowly. Hold the (food) in your fingers and look at it in your grasp. What does the (food) feel like in your hand: its texture, temperature?

Bring the (food) slowly to your lips. Before putting the food to your mouth, pause and be aware of what you are experiencing in your mouth. Slowly open and place the (food) on your tongue for a moment without biting into it. Feel what your mouth wants to do with this (food). Take a few moments before you bite into it. Feel its texture on your tongue and in your mouth. What do you taste?

Now bite into it noticing what you taste and what it feels like. As you continue to taste, try not to swallow the (food) right away. Does the taste and feeling change as you are chewing? Feel the food going down as you swallow. Refocus on your mouth. Notice your stomach and what it may be feeling. Notice what you are feeling? Now you have finished your exercise.”

Adapted from: Willard, Christopher, 2010, A Child’s Mind: Mindful Practice to Help Our Children Be More Focused, Calm, and Relaxed, Parallax Press, CA”

- See more at: <http://blog.harvardvanguard.org/2013/04/smart-kids-practice-mindful-eating/#sthash.5fSE2Pqo.dpuf>