

Chocolate Meditation

Mindfulness Worksheet

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

Thoughts? Heart? Body? None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



CHOCOLATE MEDITATION

When we do silent meditation retreats, one of the times we tend to notice the silence the most is at meal times, since this is a time we are generally social.

After the retreat, it's also often common to hear people talk about how obsessive we often become about food, particularly dessert. On one retreat I attended, the cook made these delicious chocolate chip cookies, and I would think about them all morning. How many should I have today? Could I have more if I went for a longer walk? Would there be enough for me to have as many as I wanted? Should I bring one with me for an afternoon snack?

Food is such an interesting part of our consciousness. We need food... and we can also "use" food. Food can be a kindness to ourselves, and we can use it as punishment to ourselves.

We all know the feeling of shoveling food into our faces, and feeling like we didn't taste any of it, or like it was over way too fast (this might apply in particular to chocolate chip cookies). We also know the feeling that comes over us when we want to eat more of something, even though we know we've already had enough.

Psychologist Jean Kristeller at Indiana State University and colleagues at Duke University conducted a study of mindful eating techniques for treatment of binge eating. The randomized controlled study included 150 binge eaters and compared a mindfulness-based therapy to a standard psycho-educational treatment and a control group.

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Both treatments produced declines in bingeing and depression, but the mindfulness-based therapy seemed to help people enjoy their food more and have less sense of struggle about controlling their eating. Those who meditated more (both at mealtimes and throughout the day) got more out of the program.

My root teacher, Namgyal Rinpoche, said that what you put into your body isn't half as important to your health as the state you're in when you eat that thing.

MINDFUL EATING CAN ENCOMPASS MANY THINGS:

- being present with the taste and the experience of eating
- being aware of how our body is receiving the food
- being aware of what's around us while we're eating
- chewing very slowly in order to help with digestion

Eating mindfully can be a great time to practice gratitude for all the work and sacrifice that's gone into what we put into our bodies, and for the nourishment and sustenance it gives us. This is a lot harder to do when most of us don't grow, harvest, raise or kill most of our food.

If you struggle with classic sitting meditation, mindful eating can be a lovely way to practice mindfulness within your daily routine – with all these added health benefits!

TIPS:

- Try eating with your non-dominant hand; i.e. if you're right-handed, hold your fork in your left hand when lifting each bite to your mouth.
- Use chopsticks if you don't normally use them.
- Eat in silence while doing nothing and feel what's going on in your body as you eat, and what sensations and emotions arise
- Sit quietly for 3 minutes after you've finished eating and observe the feeling in your body and of not jumping up and doing something else (which we so often do.) Try to allow the love and care that's been given to this food nourish you as well.

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Take a few deep breaths. Slowly let go of any tension you might be holding in your muscles. You want to start your chocolate meditation as physically relaxed as possible.

Open the chocolate. Inhale the scent. Let it wash over you, like a wave of smell. Notice if your mouth is responding to it as well. Look at the chocolate. See how that affects all of your senses.

Break off a piece and look at it. Really let your eyes drink in what it looks like, examining every nook and cranny – the bubbles and the cracks, the individual grains of cocoa.

Now, if you're comfortable, close your eyes.

Finally!... take a small bite of your chocolate. Let it sit on your tongue and melt slowly in your mouth. Notice the flavours becoming completely absorbed in what you're experiencing right now. Notice the sensations in your mouth. Notice your breathing.

See if it's possible to hold the chocolate on your tongue and let it melt. Notice any resistance to that, or any craving or desire... not judging, just noticing.

Chocolate has over 300 different flavours. See if you can sense some of them.

After the chocolate has completely melted, very slowly swallow it. Feel the sensations and your body's response as it goes down your throat.

Notice how your mouth feels now. Notice the feeling of wanting, or not wanting, to take a second bite. Try to even follow the feeling of your hand coming up towards your mouth, and any emotions that arise. How does it feel? Once the chocolate is in your mouth, how does that feel?

If other thoughts drift into your mind as you're absorbing your chocolate, gently turn your attention back to the flavours and sensations you're experiencing now.

Repeat this with one other piece. This time, consider who grew the ingredients of this chocolate. Where they may have come from. The beings who made it possible for you to be eating it. The beings who made it possible for the plants to grow.

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Say a word of thanks for the food you're about to eat.

When you're finished eating your chocolate, you might choose to continue your meditation. Or you might gently return to the sights, sounds and sensations around you.

“Mindful eating is very pleasant. We sit beautifully. We are aware of the people surrounding us. We are aware of the food on our plates. This is a deep practice.”
– Thich Nhat Hanh

*“Take care of your body.
It’s the only place you have to live.”*
– Jim Rohn

REFLECTION

What are the particular sensations that you've felt while doing this meditation?

