



Practice: Mindful Eating of a Raisin

Key learning:

It helps us to identify how our experiences can help us to “wake up” in each moment- the slowness of the practice and appreciation of the taste are often commented upon.

We can start to investigate what happens in the mind when asked to focus upon a specific task- the tendency of the mind to be in autopilot.

Even the most ordinary of tasks have the capacity to teach us new perspectives and deepen understanding of ourselves.

Resources:

Mats/ chairs, bolsters, blankets, cushions, clock, bells / singing bell, handout for client, recording for client to have for home practice.

Benefits:

That mindfulness can be done anywhere and anytime with the most mundane objects

Things right under your nose can be appreciated

By slowing things down the senses are heightened

There is a tendency for the mind to wander

Our mind is often in autopilot and are unaware of the ebb and flow of thoughts and moods. I have often see a participant take a raisin and throw it into their mouth even though they knew they had to await further instructions

Potential Difficulties Arising:

Teaching the Practice- considerations

Ensure that you have enough “in date” raisins.

Use a clean plate and teaspoon to separate and distribute for hygiene reasons

Allow anyone with OCD to wash hands first

Ask if anyone is allergic to them

Provide kitchen towels or wipes afterwards if necessary

There is a tendency for some to reflect their minds back to where it came from, exploring it's history

An emotional attachment can be very quickly formed to an inanimate object

The senses can facilitate us being in the present

Inquiry process can make connections to other ways of living life habitually

Awareness of judgements arising in the form of likes and dislikes.

Guidance:

Decide whether you are going to offer each participant 1 or 2 raisins each. If 1, guide them through the practice, if 2, they can do the second one silently.

Giving 2 offers the opportunity to observe judgements and comparisons arising in the mind.

Ask them to keep it in their palm and investigate the colour, texture, light, weight, indentations etc.

With a sense of curiosity and interest they can turn it over and observe the differences on the other side

Ask them to imagine this is the first time they had ever seen a raisin (beginner's mind)

Ask them to smell it and notice any physiological or emotional responses

Ask them to take it their ear and listen for sounds, noticing any thoughts arising- suggest some possible thoughts such as "this is silly"

Ask them to place it on their lips and notice any urges, or saliva.

Ask them to put it in their mouth and feel the tongue working

Bite into it and be aware of the sensations of taste

Swallow it down and notice how the tongue automatically cleans around the teeth.

Notice any sense of the raisin once it has gone.

Inquiry

Ask about the participants' experience of the practice and acknowledge and explore any benefits and potential difficulties which come up.

Examples of useful questions to start the inquiry process with the client:

During or after the practice ask them to notice:

Their sensations with a sense of curiosity and exploration

Urges arising

What happens in the mind- we don't control where it goes much of the time so we can expend a lot of energy ruminating about the past or worrying about the future

The difference between this and how we normally eat raisins- the opportunity for change is ever present

How other members of the group have similar/different experiences

That our expectations may differ from our experience

What happens in the body, mind and emotions as we focus on one thing at a time