**A step-by-step guide to practicing mindful eating.**

Mindful eating is a means of eating with attention rather than necessarily intention; we are focusing on our own individual experience of the meal/ food rather than utilizing it for a specific purpose.

Involving ourselves in a moment wholly and completely may help improve our relationship with food and self.

I invite you to do this while you read or to read about it first and then have your own experience without the distraction of reading. Try this regardless of whether you like raisins.

1. Get a raisin and set it down in front of you. STOP; do not throw a handful of raisins into your mouth. (OK, so there is a rule, but there is a good reason, which you will understand soon.)
2. Imagine you have just been dropped off on this planet, and you know nothing about where you are. You have never experienced anything from Earth. With no experience, there are no judgments, fears, or expectations. It is all new to you. Take a few deep breaths and relax.
3. Look at the raisin and pick it up.
4. Feel its weight.
5. Examine its surface—the various ridges, shiny parts, dull parts; really look for the first time at this strange object.
6. Smell this object and notice how you react.
7. Roll the raisin between your fingers and listen to hear what sound it makes. Notice its stickiness.
8. Notice what you are feeling about this object.
9. Place the raisin between your lips and just hold it there for a few moments. What do you notice happens inside you?
10. Let it roll back into your mouth, but do not chew yet, just roll it around. Is there a taste? Do you salivate? What do you want to do?
11. OK, bite down, just once. What do you notice?
12. Slowly begin to chew, noticing what each bite brings.
13. Chew the raisin until it is completely liquefied before you swallow.
14. After swallowing, close your eyes for a few moments to notice the consequence of what you just experienced.

This is the practice of mindful eating; explore it with other foods (such as those you may some anxieties around) at a rate and manner which is comfortable with you.

Eating mindfully is about bringing full awareness to each plate or bite of food. It begins with the first thought about food and lasts until the final bite is swallowed and the consequence of the episode is experienced. Some of the following suggestions will be useful in teaching methods to eat mindfully:

* Before reaching for something automatically, stop and take a moment to notice what you are feeling and what you might want to fill you up. Are you stressed, bored, angry, or sad? Are you lonely? Or, are you actually physically hungry? Be mindful of your reactivity and make a choice instead.
* If your desire is not about hunger, do something else more appropriate for the desire.
* Eat intentionally and only eat. Put away other distractions and pay attention to your food.
* In addition to how you experience a food, consider what it took to bring this food to you. Who was involved in the growing process and production? Consider the sun and soil it took to grow the ingredients and ask yourself where in the world it came from. Appreciate all of what it took to bring it to your plate.
* Savour each bite the way you did the raisin in the earlier exercise.
* After each bite, check in with your body to see how you are feeling. Have you had enough? Do you need more? Is it time to stop? Then move on to whatever you have chosen.

Eating mindfully is a practice that requires a commitment to behaviour change similar to that needed for any diet or eating plan; at a diet’s core is the need to pay attention. It is important to restate that the main benefit of mindful eating is not weight loss. However, it is highly likely that people who adopt mindful eating as a regular practice will lose excess weight and keep it off.