



## Mindful Eating

[A handout from the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation's Spiritual Guidance Program]

- A pause before the meal to relax may be useful in lowering blood glucose.
- Relaxation promotes better insulin action (Stress hormones can raise blood glucose and interfere with achieving healthy glucose levels).
- Quick strategies for mindful eating may include a pause for appreciating the food or a few deeper breaths.

This exercise can be done with any meal or snack. You'll find there are many occasions for practicing mindful eating. The idea is to eat with awareness, focusing moment by moment on seeing the food, taking it in, chewing, tasting, and swallowing. It is easier to practice mindful eating if you eat in silence than if you converse with other people. However, even in a group you can eat mindfully.

- First, look at what you are about to eat. What is it? How does it look? Where does it come from? How do you feel about putting this food into your body right now?
- Take a moment to appreciate the path this food may have taken to come to nourish you. Where was it grown? How did the sun, water and other elements help form this food?
- Tune in to your breathing as you look at the food, knowing you are about to take the food into your mouth and body.
- Feel the food in your mouth. Chew slowly and focus your energy on the food's taste and texture. You might chew longer than you normally do to fully experience the process of chewing and tasting.
- Note any impulse you have to rush through this mouthful so that you can go on to the next. Let such impulses remind you that you already have food in your mouth, so you needn't go on to the next bite to have a complete experience of eating. Stay in the present moment with this mouthful, rather than rushing on to the next one.
- Before swallowing, be aware of the intention to swallow. Then feel the actual process of swallowing so that you become more conscious of this action as well.
- Approach each mouthful in the same way. Bring awareness to how much you are eating, how fast, how your body feels during and after the meal, and whether you are eating in reaction to various events in your life and to the feelings, especially anxiety or depression, that may result from them.