



MINDFUL MEALS

“Wear gratitude like a cloak and it will feed every corner of your life”

-Rumi

The purpose of a regular meditation practice in MIM is to support you in bringing more awareness and mindfulness into everyday life.

The Mindful Meal is a meal you can either have by yourself or host with a group of old or new friends. It will support you to be mindful as you eat and mingle.

Eating is something we do each day but so often we don't appreciate or even taste our food, as we rush through meals or eat while on the go. Using our meals as a trigger to be mindful is an easy way to slow down and bring more mindfulness into everyday life.

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HOW TO HAVE A MINDFUL MEAL

We encourage you to embrace the following six principles when having a mindful meal:

- 1 Arriving at Food** - Take a moment before taking your first mouthful to notice the food and bring a sense of appreciation to the effort it has taken to grow and cook the food.
- 2 Experiencing Food** - Notice every aspect of the food itself before, during and after eating it. Notice the different colours, textures and smells.
- 3 Tune into the Body** - Pay attention to your body as you eat. Notice the movement of muscles, limbs, fingers, lips, teeth and tongue. Tune in to your level of hunger and notice if you are eating despite feeling full.
- 4 Chew Patiently** - It's not easy, but try to slow down, bring mindfulness to actually chewing your food rather than eating it without properly digesting it.
- 5 Pause frequently and consider silence** - Experiment with having 5 minutes of silent eating. Set your timer and notice what it's like to eat with others in silence. If talking, be fully present in conversation. Slow down and bring full attention to your conversation with others during the meal.
- 6 Be mindful of your mood** - How does it feel to be engaging in a mindful meal with others or yourself? Are you calm, happy, bored, content, distracted, full, hungry? Where do you notice contentment, boredom or restlessness in the body? Emotions arise in the body, but often we are too distracted to notice. Explore what emotions feel like in the body. Ask yourself "Am I still hungry?"

Do it in a group:

Having a Mindful Meal with friends and family is a great way to cultivate a sense of mindfulness around you. Practising mindfulness in a group provides a unique opportunity for deeper and more authentic connection. You'll be surprised and inspired by what you can learn from one another as people relax and open up as a result of stilling the mind and connecting with greater intention and presence.

Below is a recommended format you can use if you wish to host a Mindful Meal with friends, friends-to-be or family. During MIM you may like to create your own gathering and experience a new way of connecting with food and those around you.

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MINDFUL MEETUP

Purpose

Facilitate deeper and more authentic connections with one another. Allow time and space to get together with friends and like-minded people over food and conversation.

Benefits

- Space and time for meditation and shared practice
- Yummy food - Lovely people - compassionate, generous, open-hearted
- Fulfillment through real connection
- A space for creativity and serendipitous meetings of like minded people

Time

6.30pm onwards for a 7pm start and 9pm end.

Process:

1. Mindful Meditation (7.00pm: 10-30min)

Decide on the length of your meditation depending on the needs and setting of the group. You could play a guided MIM meditation or sit in silence with a timer. It may be a shorter practice to set the mood, or as you become more experienced you may increase the duration.

2. Mindful Mouthfuls (7.30pm: 45min). Everyone brings a plate to share (decide before hand on dietary requirements). If there are people new to mindfulness the host can read from these guidelines about the purpose and process of Mindful Meals. This will set the scene to be more mindful whilst eating and sharing conversation.

3. Mindful Mingling (8.15pm: 30-45min). Opportunity to share and reflect from the heart in a circle or more causally during the meal, practising mindful listening. Make your own meaningful questions or reflect on the ones below. Each person can take a turn to reflect on answers while others bring mindful attention to the speaker. If you feel inspired, add a dash of poetry to the night. Find a poem that inspires you and read it to the group.

Some questions you can mindfully contemplate with the group during your mindful meal:

- What makes you feel most alive in life?
- What gives your life most meaning?
- What is a story that you can share that speaks of a moment of appreciation in your life?
- What is one thing you are most proud of in your life so far?
- If this circle could infuse you with a quality you need more of in your life at the moment, what would it be and how would you use it?
- What are three things you are most grateful for today?

Some recommended poets for inspiration:

Invite people to bring a poem to the meal and read it to the group during the meal.

Rumi, Hafiz, David Whyte, Mary Oliver

photo: Amy Crawford www.theholisticingredient.com food blog

www.mindfulinmay.org

