

Participating

Name: _____ Date: _____

When we are fully participating in an activity, we are aware and in the present moment. This means that we are not “living in our heads” by ruminating over past or future issues. Instead, we are actively conscious and aware of the current present activity. If we are eating, we are focusing our attention on eating, not the tv or the newspaper. If we are having a conversation, we are giving our full attention to the other person and not texting or playing on the tablet. If we are dancing, we are dancing like nobody else is watching, fully aware without self-consciousness.

For this exercise, you will need a small item of food like a raisin, a grape, a cherry, or a piece of chocolate. It should be small enough to fit into the palm of your hand. When you have such a food item, complete the activity worksheet below.

STEP ONE

Hold the food item in your hand. Observe it and describe it to yourself. How many colors do you see? What is its shape? How do the light and the shadow fall on it? Do the views of the food item change if you rotate it around in your hand? Observe and describe it using the spaces below.

Describe the food item’s color. How many colors do you see? What are they?

Describe the food item’s texture. Is it smooth or rough? Variegated or uniform? Or some other texture?

Describe the food item’s weight. Is it light or heavy? Dense or porous? How does it feel in your hand? If your eyes were closed, could you identify it solely by its weight and texture?

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STEP TWO

Now place the food item on your tongue, biting it once and only once to release the flavor. Allow the flavor to dissipate across your tongue. Where on your tongue can you first taste it? The four basic taste buds are sweet, sour, salt, and bitter. Can you taste each of these sensations? Which did you taste first? Which did you taste last?

Observe and describe its taste using the space below.

STEP THREE

Now continue to chew the food item slowly, savoring the experience. Nothing exists in the world but this food item, and all of your attention is directed solely on the experience of eating and enjoying it. Pay close attention to your sense of smell as you continue to chew. Can you notice any aroma as you eat the food item? If so, describe it. Imagine you had no sense of smell (it may help to briefly pinch your nostrils as you chew). Would that change the experience of enjoying the food? If so, how?

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STEP FOUR

Now savor the food item as if it is the last piece of food on earth. There is nothing to do right now but to enjoy this piece of food. Continue to fully participate in the eating until the food is completely gone. Notice the aftertaste that remains on your tongue and note any lingering aromas now that the food item is gone. Pay particular attention to your appetite. Did focusing your attention this way leave you more satisfied with less food?

Did the exercise above change your experience of the food in any way? If so, you've learned the art of fully participating.

Describe your experience below.

[illegible]