

RAISIN MEDITATION

Difficulty: **CASUAL** | Frequency: **1X/DAY** | Duration: **5 MINS**

WHY YOU SHOULD TRY IT

Many of us spend our lives rehashing the past or rushing into the future without pausing to enjoy the present. Distracted from the world around us, our life might feel only half-lived, as we're too busy to savor—or even notice—everyday pleasures.

Practicing mindfulness can help. Mindfulness helps us tune into what we're sensing and experiencing in the present moment—it's the ability to pay more careful attention to our thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations, without judging them as good or bad. Research suggests that it can not only reduce stress but also increase our experience of positive emotions.

One of the most basic and widely used methods for cultivating mindfulness is to focus your attention on each of your senses as you eat a raisin. This simple exercise is often used as an introduction to the practice of mindfulness. In addition to increasing mindfulness more generally, the raisin meditation can promote mindful eating and foster a healthier relationship with food. Try it with a single raisin—you might find that it's the most delicious raisin you've ever eaten.

TIME REQUIRED

Five minutes daily for at least a week. Research suggests that mindfulness increases the more you practice it.

HOW TO DO IT

1. **Holding:** First, take a raisin and hold it in the palm of your hand or between your finger and thumb. Imagine that you've just dropped in from Mars and have never seen an object like this before in your life.
2. **Seeing:** Take time to really focus on it; gaze at the raisin with care and full attention. Let your eyes explore every part of it. Examine the highlights where the light shines, the darker hollows, the folds and ridges, and any uneven parts or unique features.
3. **Touching:** Turn the raisin over between your fingers, exploring its texture. Try doing this with your eyes closed if that enhances your sense of touch.
4. **Smelling:** Hold the raisin beneath your nose. With each breath in, take in any smell, aroma, or fragrance that may arise. As you do this, notice anything interesting that may be happening in your mouth or stomach.
5. **Placing:** Now slowly bring the raisin up to your lips, noticing how your hand and arm know exactly how and where to position it. Gently place the raisin in your mouth; without chewing, noticing how it gets into your mouth in the first place. Spend a few moments focusing on the sensations of having it in your mouth, exploring it with your tongue.
6. **Tasting:** When you are ready, prepare to chew the raisin, noticing how and where it needs to be for chewing. Then, very consciously, take one or two bites into it and notice what happens in the aftermath. Place close attention to any waves of taste that come from it as you continue chewing. Without swallowing yet, notice the bare sensations of taste and texture in your mouth and how these may change over time, moment by moment. Also pay attention to any changes in the raisin itself.
7. **Swallowing:** When you feel ready to swallow the raisin, see if you can first notice the urge to swallow as it comes up, so that even this is experienced consciously before you actually swallow the raisin.

8. **Following:** Finally, see if you can feel what is left of the raisin moving down into your stomach, and sense how your body as a whole is feeling after you have completed this exercise.

EVIDENCE IT THAT WORKS

Praissman, S. (2008). [Mindfulness-based stress reduction: a literature review and clinician's guide](#). *Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners*, 20(4), 212-216.

Raisin Meditation is one of the practices included in [Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction](#) (MBSR). Developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn and based on [Buddhist teachings](#), MBSR is a six- to 10-week program that teaches various mindfulness techniques through weekly sessions and homework assignments. More information about this program is available in Kabat-Zinn's book [Full Catastrophe Living](#).

A review of research published between 2000 and 2006 concluded that MBSR is an effective treatment for reducing the stress and anxiety that accompany daily life and chronic illness.

Who Has Tried the Practice?

While there is no demographic data included in the above review, at least one study found that a mindfulness-based group therapy incorporating Raisin Meditation and [Body Scan](#) was effective in Japan. After eight weeks, [Japanese people](#) with depression and anxiety decreased in clinical symptoms and increased in self-compassion.

Research suggests that MBSR benefits the mental health of various groups, including the following:

- People in different cultures and countries, such as bilingual [Latin-American families](#), university students in [China](#), disadvantaged families in [Hong Kong](#), low-income cyclo drivers in [Vietnam](#), males with generalized anxiety disorder in [Iran](#), Indigenous people in the [Republic of Congo](#), and [Aboriginal Australians](#).
- Women around the world, including [pregnant women](#) in China, [rural women](#) in India who experienced still-birth, [at-risk women](#) in Iran, [Muslim women college students](#) in the United Arab Emirates, American [survivors of intimate partner violence](#), and socioeconomically disadvantaged [Black women](#) with post-traumatic stress disorder.
- People with certain diseases, such as New Zealanders with [rheumatoid arthritis](#), male patients with [heart disease](#) in India, patients with [diabetes](#) in South Korea, [cancer](#) patients in Canada, [breast cancer](#) survivors in China, and HIV-positive individuals in [Toronto](#), [San Francisco](#), [Iran](#), and [South Africa](#).

More research is needed to explore whether, and how, the impact of this practice extends to other groups and cultures.

WHY TO TRY IT

By increasing awareness of internal mental and physical states, mindfulness can help people gain a greater sense of control over their thoughts, feelings, and behavior in the present moment. Paying closer attention to the sensations of eating can increase our enjoyment of our food and deepen our appreciation for the opportunity to satisfy our hunger. Mindfulness can also help people become more attuned to hunger and fullness signals and therefore avoid overeating or "emotional eating." In the words of mindfulness expert Jon Kabat-Zinn, "When we taste with attention, even the simplest foods provide a universe of sensory experience."

SOURCES

["Eating One Raisin: A First Taste of Mindfulness."](#) Extension Service, West Virginia University.

Adapted from: Williams, M., Teasdale, J., Segal, Z., & Kabat-Zinn, J. (2007). [The Mindful Way through Depression: Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness](#). New York: Guilford Press.

FOR MORE

Visit the [Center for Mindfulness](#), founded by [Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D.](#), at the University of Massachusetts Medical School

This practice is part of [Greater Good in Action](#), a clearinghouse of the best research-tested methods for increasing happiness, resilience, kindness, and connection, created by the [Greater Good Science Center](#) at UC Berkeley and [HopeLab](#).

