



MINDFUL EATING

The first step in helping the group utilize mindfulness to enhance emotional regulation is to help the group listen to their feelings rather than react to them. The somatic aspect of the emotional experience is often overlooked, yet it offers a useful pathway to help create the observing mode inherent in mindfulness and emotional regulation.

Mindful eating is a simple exercise that allows us to identify sensory experiences that are likely unnoticed or ignored. This exercise often uses raisins to introduce the concept of mindful eating, although any food can be used. Apple slices, fig bars or tangerines are good choices as well. Introduce the group members to the idea that you are going to help them learn to listen to their body and how it communicates to them through the senses. Explain that, just like in mindful listening, they need to pay attention with an open and curious mind.

The exercise begins with asking them to take a moment and to hold the food in their hands.

When they look closely at the food with their full attention, what do they notice?

What happens when they focus on the color of the food or the feel of it in their hands?

Ask them to notice any sensations they feel in their bodies.

As they raise the food to their mouth, what do they notice?

When they take one bite and slowly savor it, what happens?

Encourage the group to continue slowly and mindfully. As you process this experience, make sure both you and the group are using the curious nonjudgmental attitude that is so important in mindfulness. Ask them how it was to listen to their bodies in this way, and then open to a discussion of how Emily uses this skill and how it helps her in her journey.