

Four Ways to Nourish Happiness



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Do you want to be happy? I know I want to be happy and I bet the person next to you wants to be happy, too. Everyone wants to be happy. The desire is part of our biology and hard-wired into our brain. But the reason why happiness arises is varied and complex. Many people think that you find happiness; however, happiness isn't a thing, so it is never lost. Happiness is an experience, and the conditions for you to have the experience of happiness are surprisingly common. Here are four ways mindful eating can help nourish the conditions for happiness, which are already all around you.

The easiest and most obvious way to nourish happiness is to give yourself permission to indulge in the sensory pleasure that abounds when eating. Every time you notice the beauty of food, breathe deeply and smell the aromas of your meal. Notice the sensation of food in your mouth, the touch of the fork in your mouth, or the sound of a bite as you chew. You are nourishing happiness! *Go ahead and jump right into the sensory pleasure that is present when eating!*

The second way is to observe and appreciate when helpful mental states, such as joy, self-compassion, and patience arise. Life is stressful and challenging, which is why the ability to offer self-compassion and to have patience in these moments of stress is a special gift. You can start your practice by noticing joy, because pausing and looking for what is "good" in a situation when life is going your way will help you find these stabilizing feelings

when you are faced with challenging situations. *Look for the happiness that arises when you have helpful thoughts!*

The third way is to focus your attention, instead of dividing it into many pieces. When you give yourself permission to focus your attention on one thing, one project, one experience the typical chatter and distraction that surrounds you begins to quiet and the mind is free to concentrate on the tasks at hand. Creating the opportunities to concentrate the mind and focus your attention on one thing is a precious gift for an over-scheduled life. *Savor the joy of concentrating your mind and thoughts on the task at hand.*

The fourth way to nourish happiness is to let go of any expectations you may have; for example, the idea that eating mindfully will help you do "X" or "Y." Don't distract yourself with tomorrow. Become present and savor the wonder of awareness, the arising of wisdom, the sense of excitement that emerges as you practice mindful eating. *Welcome the joy of insight.*

If you think about it, the way to eat more mindfully is to practice the skill of noticing the joy and pleasure that is present every day! Nourishing these four types of happiness on a consistent basis when life is good and enjoyable makes every moment more fun. At the same time, it builds emotional strength and resilience when life is challenging.

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Four Types of Happiness

- 1) The happiness of sense contact
(looking, tasting, smelling, feeling, touch and sound)
- 2) The happiness of positive mental states
(joy, loving-kindness, compassion, equanimity)
- 3) The happiness of concentration
(focusing the mind and thoughts on a single project)
- 4) The happiness of insight
(experiencing the interconnectedness and common humanity that is part of the human experience)

Meditation on Gratitude to Nourish Our Souls



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Many of us struggle with eating. Amid our fears, we forget to appreciate the wonderful things within and around us. Try this meditation to cultivate joy, love and happiness right before you eat a meal.

Find a quiet spot where you won't be disturbed while you eat. Sit down, close your eyes and be still. Make a quick scan of your body from head to toe, noticing the physical sensations. Perhaps sensations of temperature, humidity, touch, weight, pain or tension, or sensations of hunger.

Without judging or changing anything, gently bring your attention to your breath. Take two or three deep breaths, focusing on the sensations on your nose, chest and belly as the air enters and leaves your body. Let your breath take a natural rhythm. As best you can, allow your body to relax and release any tension or stress with each exhale.

Bring your attention to the area of your chest, acknowledging the unconditional work that your heart and lungs do for you, beating and breathing non-stop day and night. See if you can feel gratitude, joy, appreciation and compassion for your heart, your lungs and your whole body, appreciating it for sustaining your life and letting you enjoy all what you enjoy.



As you breathe in and out, bring to heart and mind all what you feel thankful for in your life. Perhaps the fact that you are breathing, feeling, being you, right here, right now. Perhaps you are grateful for the people you love and their presence in your life. Pause and cultivate gratitude for mother nature and all its wonders: air, water, space, plants, animals, beautiful landscapes, the tiny beings that your eyes can't see and this food in front of you. Allow this appreciation for life nourish your soul, expanding your feelings of love, joy, gratitude and compassion towards yourself and everything around you.

Now, bring to your mind the food you are about to eat. Aware of

the interconnectedness of all things and beings. Thank the Universe for the opportunity to eat and nourish your body. Thank all the beings, human and not human, and all the conditions that came to be a part of this gift.

Now, bring to your heart all those people in all the corners of the planet who do not have food available to nourish their bodies. With generosity send them wishes of health, love, security and nourishment and prepare yourself to eat in such a way that their suffering is diminished.

Finally, thank yourself too, for all your efforts and for nourishing your spirit, despite the challenges of your life.



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