Mindful Eating: A Taste of Mindfulness

Try this exercise with any meal, a part of a meal, or even one mouthful. You will find there are many occasions for practicing mindful eating. The idea is to eat with awareness. Focusing moment by moment on seeing the food, taking it in, chewing, tasting and swallowing. It is easier to practice mindful eating if you eat in silence than if you converse with other people. However, in a group you can eat mindfully if you concentrate on doing so.

- First, look at what you are about to eat.
    - What is it? How does it look? Where does it come from?
    - How do you feel about putting this food into your body right now?
    - How does your body feel anticipating eating in this moment?

- Tune into your breathing as you look at the food, knowing you are about to take it into your mouth.

- Feel the food in your mouth. Chew it slowly and focus your energy on the food's taste and texture. You might try chewing longer than you normally do to fully experience the process of chewing and tasting.

- Note any impulse you have to rush through this mouthful so that you can go on to the next. Let such impulses remind you that you already had food in your mouth, so you need not go on to the next bite to have a complete experience of eating. Stay in the present moment with THIS mouthful, rather than rushing on to the next one.

- Before swallowing, be aware of the intention of swallowing. Then feel the actual process of swallowing so that you become more conscious of this action as well.

- Approach each mouthful in the same way. Bring awareness to how much you are eating, how fast, how your body feels during and after the meal and whether you are eating in reaction to events in your life and to feelings, especially anxiety or depression, that may result from them.