Eating Meditation•

You eat every day, but how often do you really pay attention to what you are eating while you are it? Do you usually eat with other people? In front of the TV? While reading a book? Can you usually finish a three-course meal in ten minutes or even less time?

The following is a conscious-eating meditation. Try it someplace where it is unlikely anyone will

want to come over and eat with you. For the sake of this example, the food in question is a cheese

sandwich.

1. Sit down in front of your food and take several deep breaths. Note the food's color, shape, and texture. Does it seem appealing to you? Can you barely restrain yourself from gobbling it up? Whatever you're feeling, notice it.

2. Be aware of your intention to begin eating. Move your hand slowly toward the sandwich. As you do this, make a quiet mental note of the action. You may say to yourself, *Reaching... reaching. .. reaching*. By labeling your actions, you are more likely to keep in mind your purpose-to stay aware. As you pick up the sandwich, notice that you are lifting...lifting...lifting.

3. Watch your hand move the sandwich closer to your mouth. When it nears your mouth, take a moment to smell the food. What smells do you recognize? Can you smell the mayonnaise? How is your body reacting to the smell? Is your mouth watering? Notice the sensation of your body desiring food.

4. As you take your first bite, feel your teeth penetrate the bread. When the bite is complete, how is the food positioned in your mouth? How does your tongue position the food so that it's between your teeth? Begin chewing slowly. What are the sensations in your teeth? Your tongue? How does your tongue move when you chew? What tastes are you experiencing? The tomato? The cheese? What part of your tongue experiences the taste? Where is your arm? Did you put it back on the table? If so, did you notice the motion?

5. When you swallow, try to be aware of how the muscles in your esophagus contract and relax as they push the food to your stomach. Where is the food when you have finished swallowing? Can you feel the sensations in your stomach? Where is your stomach? What size is it? Is it empty, full, or somewhere in between?

6. As you continue to eat your sandwich, try to stay aware of as many sensations as you can. Silently label each movement if this helps. Try eating with the hand you don't normally use, because the awkwardness may serve as a reminder to pay attention. As with your basic meditation, when thoughts arise, notice them and then return your attention to your food.