

## MINDFUL ME

# MINDFULNESS AND FOOD

### TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

Social and emotional learning (SEL) helps children manage emotions, learn how to feel empathy, create and achieve goals, and make good decisions. An important goal of teaching SEL skills is to help students make good decisions in their day-to-day lives. Teaching students how to use mindfulness at mealtime will make it easier for them to make healthy choices.

#### BEFORE READING

Talk to the reader about his or her favorite foods.

**Discuss:** What does this food look like? How does it taste? Who makes it for you, and where does it come from?

#### AFTER READING

Talk to the reader about his or her favorite foods again.

**Discuss:** What does it mean to eat this food mindfully? What are some ways you can use mindfulness at your next meal?

#### SEL GOAL

Research suggests that children who are equipped to make healthy food choices and decisions are less likely to struggle with obesity. By teaching students techniques to slow down, show gratitude for their food, and pay attention to what they are eating, you will move beyond categorizing food as bad or good and provide children with skills they can use into adulthood.

### GOALS AND TOOLS

#### GROW WITH GOALS

There are many ways to practice mindfulness with your food.

**Goal:** Take your time! Eating slower can help you be more mindful of your food. Try using chopsticks or setting your fork down after each bite.

**Goal:** Don't be scared! If there are foods you don't like, try to eat them again. Use all of your senses when you eat. Maybe you'll realize you like it now!

**Goal:** Grow your food! Having a garden can help you be more appreciative of the food you eat. You can start small. Try growing an herb plant, like basil or parsley.

#### MINDFULNESS EXERCISE

Try the raisin exercise to help you practice mindfulness with food. Put a raisin in your hand and pretend you've never seen it before.

1. Look at the raisin. What do you notice?
2. Smell the raisin. Describe its scent.
3. Feel the raisin. Is it bumpy or smooth?
4. Put the raisin in your mouth and chew slowly. Notice how it changes as you chew.
5. Write down how this exercise made you feel about the raisin. Did anything unexpected happen?



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