

MINDFULLY EATING A RAISIN

The ellipses represent pauses of five seconds.

Therapist: Throughout this exercise, all sorts of thoughts and feelings will arise. Let them come and go, and keep your attention on the exercise. And whenever you notice that your attention has wandered, briefly note what distracted you, and then bring your attention back to the raisin.

Now take hold of the raisin, and observe it as if you're a curious scientist who has never seen a raisin before ... Notice the shape, the colors, the contours ... Notice that it's not just one color—there are many different shades to it ... Notice the weight of it in your hand ... and the feel of its skin against your fingers ... Gently squish it and notice its texture ... Hold it up to the light, and notice how it glows ... Now raise it to your nose and smell it ... and really notice the aroma ... And now raise it to your mouth, rest it against your lips, and pause for a moment before biting into it ... And notice what's happening inside your mouth ... Notice the salivation ... Notice the urge to bite ... And in a moment—don't do it yet—I'm going to ask you to bite it in half, keeping hold of one half and letting the other half drop onto your tongue ... And so now, in ultraslow motion, bite the raisin in half, and notice what your teeth do ... and let the raisin sit there on your tongue for a moment ... and I invite you to close your eyes now, to enhance the experience ... And just notice any urges arising ... And then gently explore the raisin with your tongue, noticing the taste and the texture ... And now, in ultraslow motion, eat the raisin and notice what your teeth do ... and your tongue ... and your jaws ... and notice the changing taste and texture of the raisin ... and the sounds of chewing ... and notice where you can taste the sweetness on your tongue ... and when the urge to swallow arises, just notice it for a moment before acting on it ... and when you do swallow, notice the movement and the sound in your gullet ... and then notice where your tongue goes and what it does ... and after you've swallowed, pause ... and notice the way the taste gradually fades ... but still faintly remains ... and then, in your own time, eat the other half in the same way.

Afterward debrief the exercise much as for the Mindfulness of Your Hand Exercise. Clients commonly comment with amazement on how much taste and flavor there is in one raisin, and how much activity goes on in the mouth. Ask your client how she usually eats raisins, and she'll usually mime chucking a whole handful into her mouth. Use this exercise as a metaphor for life: how much richer it is when we're mindful. This exercise can be very useful for depressed or dysphoric clients who complain they get no pleasure from previously enjoyable activities; it's hard to get pleasure or enjoyment from an activity if you are not psychologically present (that is, if you're fused with an ongoing stream of negative thoughts).