

CHOCOLATE MEDITATION: SAVORING LIFE'S SWEETNESS

By Khanh Doan

I love to eat, and it is fair to say that I am an advocate of good food. However, I never cared much for sweet treats, especially chocolate, until I was introduced to Chocolate Meditation. Fortunately, this delicious exercise was included in my Order of Interbeing training as a creative activity when my mentor, David Viora, and I were exploring the Fifth Mindfulness Training. Chocolate Meditation was a special experience for all of my senses.

We began the practice by placing the unopened chocolate in front of us. We then recited the Five Contemplations together. After the bell sounded at the end of the contemplation, we took a few mindful breaths, bowed to each other, and began to pick up the chocolate with our eyes closed.

Would you like to experience Chocolate Meditation with us? Pick out your favourite bar of chocolate and follow these instructions:

EXPERIENCE OF SOUND: Mindfully remove the wrapper of your chocolate bar. Pay attention to the sound of the wrapper being removed. Different wrapper materials can create very different sounds. If you listen closely enough, maybe you can hear your heart beating or your belly growling in excitement.

Slowly open your eyes and break off a small piece of chocolate to hold in your hand.

EXPERIENCE OF VISION: Carefully examine the chocolate's appearance. Is it glossy or matte? Does it look smooth or rough? Can you see other ingredients in the chocolate, such as nuts or pieces of fruit?

When you've finished examining the chocolate, close your eyes again, holding the piece of chocolate in your hand or between your fingers. When we close off one of our senses, the other senses become heightened.

EXPERIENCE OF TOUCH: Enjoy how the piece of chocolate feels in your hand or fingers. Is it cold, or is it warm from the heat of your body? Does it have a smooth surface or can you feel the bits of nuts or fruit in it? Is it still firm or already melting in your hand? Do you like how it feels?

Keep your eyes closed as you bring the chocolate close to your nose and maybe let it touch your lips a little bit.

EXPERIENCE OF SMELL: Take a long, deep in-breath and enjoy the aroma of your chocolate. Exhale as you observe how the smell makes you feel. Does it remind you of anything you've experienced before? What are you feeling right now? Do you feel relaxed or are you excited and anxious to taste the chocolate in your hand?

Take a small bite of chocolate—as small as you can—and hold it between your tongue and your palate.

EXPERIENCE OF TASTE: Feel the chocolate slowly melt in your mouth. Bring your awareness to the taste. Is it dark or milk chocolate? Can you taste the bitterness and/or sweetness of the chocolate? Can you taste the flavors of other ingredients, perhaps nutty, minty, or flowery? Before you take another bite, allow the first bite of chocolate to dissolve fully in your mouth.

For each bite, follow the same mindful eating practice, taking time to savor the chocolate with all of your senses.

Since my experience of Chocolate Meditation, eating chocolate and other food has not been the same for me. My gratitude for the offerings of “the Earth, the sky, numerous living beings, and much hard and loving work” increases with every mindful meal I enjoy. The art of mindful nourishment has taught me not only how to enjoy my food but also how to prepare my food with love, using only ingredients that are healing and beneficial for my mind and body. I've found that when I prepare a meal, or when I know that food is being prepared with mindfulness and love, my enjoyment of the meal intensifies.

Khanh Doan, Eternal Wholesomeness of the Heart, has been practising with Sydney Sanghas since 2012. She enjoys bringing mindfulness into her everyday life, especially her work as a vegetarian/vegan caterer and yoga instructor. For Khanh's easy recipe for raw vegan chocolate, visit mindfulnessbell.org/mindful-eating.