

## **The Spiritual Practice of Conscious Eating**

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The holiday of Thanksgiving is such a great occasion. When better to take some time out to count blessings, practice gratitude, and in general, reap the limitless benefits of a thankful heart. And because Thanksgiving is a very food-oriented holiday, I've always thought it is a great time to practice what I call Conscious Eating.

What is Conscious Eating? Well, the technique is quite simple. First, just take a moment or two before each meal to consciously remember all the people who have brought you the food on your plate.

Think about the farmer who plowed the soil, planted the seeds, watered, weeded, and hovered over the crops until harvest time. Think about the harvesting, loading of baskets and boxes, loading of trucks. Think about the truck driver who transported the whole food to a grocery store or to a factory for processing. Think about the factory workers who may have ground the grain or processed the sugar to put in the cereal that comes from the box. The more processed the food, even though it may be less healthy for us to eat, the more people that have been involved in bringing it to us. And of course, think of the person who made the money to purchase this food for you, and the person who went shopping and brought the food home, and the person who did the menu planning and cooking and cleaning up before the food made it to the table. And don't forget to put yourself on the list, for taking the time and energy to give your body the gift of a good meal.

There was a time in our history when most of these jobs were completed by people we knew or even by ourselves. This is not commonly the case today. Today, the list of workers bringing us our sustenance is long. And it's hard to go through this list of people without being filled up with awe and gratitude. I think meal time is a great time to send some of that gratitude radiating back out toward that multitude.

Now for the second part of Conscious Eating, take another moment to feel the life in the food. Remember how it grew from the warm soil, used the sun and the rain to grow and grow. Or perhaps more profoundly, remember how it was born and grew to walk on the land and felt the breezes and ate and slept and ultimately gave its body for your meal. Take this life force into your own body so that it might grow strong and live and help you to fulfill your destiny.

In this way, two or three minutes before eating can turn into a moment of awakening our awareness to the incredible acts of nurturing and caring that take place with each meal. Whether you're sitting down to a home cooked meal or grabbing an Oreo in the car on the way to your next meeting, the process of feeding yourself is no small event when you look at it in this spiritual context.

For me, Conscious Eating is a way of expanding and deepening my relationship with Source energy. It is a way to remember my place in the cycle of life. And maybe most importantly, it is a way to remember that I am giving myself life in a very literal way when I eat. And I don't do that alone. So, so many others feed me every day.

The feeling of gratitude and appreciation that this awareness brings me fills me with upliftment, contentment, and a deep stillness. Ultimately then, the practice of Conscious Eating can feed us with a deeper sense of connection to the life force, and I think, make our food even more beneficial to our cells. Happy Thanksgiving.