

the act of sitting in stillness on a cushion, on a meditation bench, or in a chair and focusing on your breath—simply watching it go in and out—for a given period of time.

Walking meditation is another healthful practice and has the added benefit of being doable during much of the day. And mindful eating enhances your meals and improves your digestion.

In all three cases, mindfulness works in part by helping people to accept their life experiences with joy and equanimity. The more you practice mindfulness, the more you are capable of dealing with your problems without responding in a way that you later regret.

I have attended many mindfulness retreats since my visit to Shasta Abbey all those years ago. Each involved a variety of practices

About the author:
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ranging from sitting meditation, walking meditation and mindful eating to deep relaxation and chanting.

These retreats are wonderfully refreshing. Spending several days in meditative silence offers me a rare opportunity to survey my life, to look deeply into what I'm doing in order to recognize what I can do to make life better for my family, my friends and society in general.

At Shasta Abbey I learned just how powerful mindful eating was. I continue to enjoy sitting down at a well-laden table to enjoy a meal with friends or family, but whenever I eat alone I practice mindful eating. I swear, the food tastes better when I pay close attention to it. □

WEEKLY DOSE



Drink it up

Next time you're at the grocery store, it might be worth reaching for some mate tea. Studies of the herbal infusion—made from brewing the dried leaves of a species of holly plant—already have reported benefits of protecting against infection and inflammation, lowering cholesterol and preventing cardiovascular damage. But the tea also is effective when it comes to suppressing weight gain, according to a recent study published in the *Journal of Functional Foods*. Scientists from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign gave caffeine from mate tea to rats with a high-fat and high-sugar diet (the equivalent of about four cups of coffee per day for humans). The results? They gained 16 percent less weight and 22 percent less body fat than those given decaffeinated mate. The outcome was similar when the rodents were fed synthetic caffeine and caffeine from coffee as well, concluding that mate tea and caffeine itself can be considered as “anti-obesity agents.”

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