

30 - 45 MINUTE EXERCISE - STILLING

INTRODUCTION

For this version, you will need enough apples for everyone in the class to have one, and preferably a few more in reserve as sometimes pupils reject them. Aesthetics are important, so I also suggest that you have a few nice big ceramic bowls to place them in. They should be placed in the middle of the group on a tablecloth, and it would be good to have a small table with a candle on it which can be lit at the start of the time.

Having welcomed everyone and explained that you will be using practices that they are already familiar with, mention that in the middle you will also be taking time to really focus on eating an apple as if it was the first time you had ever done this.

1. It might be helpful to start with the shorter Stilling Exercise – Muddy Bottle taking 5 minutes as usual. Preface this by saying that, to prepare for eating an apple as if you have never done it before, you need to prepare your mind so that it is fully aware and appreciative of the gift each person is about to receive in the apple.

2. APPLE EATING EXERCISE

Once you have done the Awareness Exercise, invite pupils to continue to be quiet and thus preserving the atmosphere. Take an apple each, coming up in pairs or threes so that it does not become disorderly.

They should choose an apple that each of them feels comfortable with. You might need to have a few other pieces of fruit/vegetables available for those who do not like apples, but try not to mention this if possible, or pre-arrange it so as not to make a fuss about it. It is quite powerful if all the children can share in their experience of eating the same fruit.

In terms of location, it is good if this can be done in a space, either indoors or outdoors where each person has individual space and is not overly conscious of the noise and presence of others.

Once each child has their own piece of fruit, then I suggest you follow this script:

There are many simple delights present in the simple act of eating an apple.

The first thing is to give your undivided attention to eating the apple. When you eat the apple, just concentrate on eating the apple. Don't think of anything else. And most important, be still.

Don't eat it while you are walking. Don't eat it while you are reading. Just be still. Being focused and slowing down will allow you to truly savour all the qualities the apple offers: its sweetness, aroma, freshness, juiciness, and crispness.

PAUSE

Next, pick up the apple from the palm of your hand and take a moment to look at it again. Breathe in awareness a few times to help you focus and become more in touch with how you feel about the apple.

Most of the time, we barely look at the apple we are eating. We grab it, take a bite, chew it quickly and then swallow. This time, take note: What kind of apple is it? What colour is it?

How does it feel in your hand? What does it smell like? Use all your senses. Going through these thoughts, you will begin to realize the apple is not simply a quick snack to quiet a grumbling stomach. It is something more complex and exciting.

PAUSE

Then, give the apple a smile and slowly, thoughtfully take a bite, and chew it. Be aware of your in-breath and out-breath a few times to help you concentrate solely on eating the apple: what it feels like in your mouth; what it tastes like; what it's like to chew and swallow it.

There is nothing else filling your mind as you chew—no work, no worries, no fears, no sorrow, no anger, no past, and no future. There is just the apple.

PAUSE

When you chew, know what you are chewing. Chew slowly and completely. Chew consciously, savouring the taste of the apple and its nourishment, fully immersing yourself in the process. This way, you really appreciate the apple as it is.

As you become fully aware of eating the apple, you also become fully aware of the present moment. You become fully engaged in the here and now. Living in the present, you can really experience what the apple offers you, and you become more alive.

PAUSE

3. FEEDBACK

Feedback as a group about the experience, in a THINK/PAIR/SHARE format.

- a) What did I experience afresh, differently or for the first time from the experience of eating the apple in this way?
 - b) Share this in pairs
 - c) Share in a group setting
4. Finish with the 5-minute **STILLING EXERCISE Thank you /Sorry/Please**. It would be natural to focus gratitude on the apple and the food which we so easily take for granted. End with the grace or another similar verse of scripture which is grateful and appreciative in nature.