

Zazen-Inspired Mindfulness Exercise to Breathe Through Food Anxiety

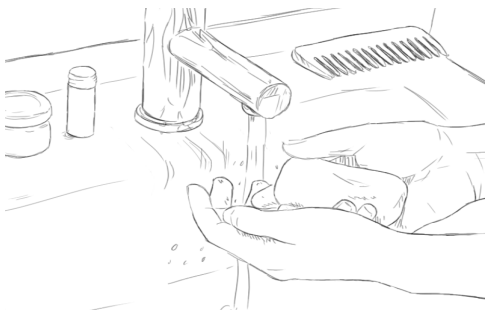


Food anxiety is complicated because it addresses the superficial pressure of being “beautiful” in the eyes of society with the very real fear of the health consequences that come with being overweight. We all face it at one point or another, but we feel it even more so during times of distress, intense anxiety, and extreme change and instability. It is during these times that we find ourselves overeating, undereating, wondering what these changes are doing to our body yet simultaneously doing our best to ignore it to cope with other stresses at hand.

But this is unsustainable, and ultimately hurts our emotional health. Instead of ignoring these tendencies and letting these stresses build up in my mind, I use Zen Buddhist *zazen* meditation to breathe through food anxiety.

How To For Beginners:

1. Wash your face and hands so you feel refreshed. Starting off with a clean body helps you lean into the relaxation.



2. Sit cross-legged on a thick but flat surface, such as on a yoga mat or carpet on the floor. Sit up straight, with your hands in your lap, folded together in a mudra pose.



3. Repeat the following two exercises until you feel calmer:

Kanki-issoku: Breathe in from your belly through your nose, exhale opening your mouth slightly.

Kakusoku: Thoughts will come into your mind, but instead of engaging with them or struggling against them, simply leave them alone to drift off freely. Kakusoku is about waking from distraction and dullness, and finding awareness in the moment.



4. When you are done, move slowly and open your eyes.