

Food for thought

<https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/what-gives-you-food-for-thought-/7692856.html>

Food for thought is a set noun phrase. It describes something that should be thought about and considered carefully. The “food” can come from many different sources. A news story, an idea, an offer, an opinion, or advice can all give us food for thought – just to name a few.

When you give someone food for thought, you make them consider carefully, or think seriously, about something.

Food for thought can also make us see things in a new way. It can make us look at something with new eyes. Or we can say it opens our eyes or is eye-opening.

Now, let's hear two friends use some of these expressions.

A: I read a story the other day about beekeeping. It was eye-opening.

Did you know that some people use it as a way to reduce stress?

B: Really? I know it helps the environment.

But I did not know that it also helps the beekeeper.

A: The story really opened my eyes to the possibility of beekeeping.

So, I've decided to start this summer. Do you want to help?

B: No, thanks. I'm afraid of bee stings. But you've given me food for thought.

Working to help the environment and reduce stress sounds like
an interesting idea. Maybe I can find another way.

A: I'm sure you can!

Food for thought is meant to be processed or digested... just like, well, food! In fact, we sometimes use the word “digest” when talking about thoughts and ideas.

Here’s an example:

The writer’s conference gave her much food for thought. It took her weeks to digest everything she learned.

Food for thought can be used in formal and informal situations.

There is a food-related phrasal verb that is similar to food for thought, although it is much more informal – to chew on something. Like eating food, when you “chew on” something, you think about it thoroughly. Here’s an example:

When my friend was offered a job, he chewed on the offer for some time. In the end, he decided that the job was not for him and did not accept it.

If you want to sound formal, you can use verbs like reflect or contemplate. Food for thought often leads to reflection and contemplation.