

# Intuitive Eating

Creating A Healthy Relationship  
With Food And Your Body



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## **Intuitive Eating:**

How many times have you thought or said, "I wish someone would just tell me what to eat so I could be healthy and lose weight?"

Most people have wished for that exact same thing at least once. It usually happens when you're sitting in front of the news or reading the paper and once again getting health advice that conflicts with the health advice you heard last week.

For example, one week eggs are bad for you and cause heart disease, and yet the next week they're a great source of healthy fats and protein. Which is right? How do you know if you're helping or harming your body?

Struggling with losing weight and dieting is the other reason people often wish there was a magic approach to eating, one where someone tells you what to eat - and it's perfect and easy and you lose the weight you want to lose.

What if there really is someone to tell you what to eat to lose weight and improve your health? And what if that person was you? We're talking about intuitive eating and it can change not only the way you look at food but also how you live your life.

## **What is Intuitive Eating?**

Intuitive eating is often called mindful eating or the "anti-diet". It's an approach to eating that embraces the concept that when you listen to your body and pay attention to the sometimes subtle signs that it sends, you know what to eat, when to eat, and how much to eat to stay healthy.

It's about awareness. 'So many' of us eat unconsciously. We eat by the clock and we eat based on what sounds good right now. Cravings and deprivation are often synonymous with diet and losing weight. We pay very little attention to the ingredients in the food we eat and how it impacts our immediate and long-term health.

Intuitive eating embraces a few principles that are quite simple in practice. We're talking about the concept of learning to recognize when you're full and eliminating overeating. These principles can take some time to learn, recognize and embrace, yet once you make them part of your life they're easy to hold onto. They become part of who you are and how you eat.

And you'll be amazed at just how easy, eating healthy can become.

No more deprivation or yo-yo dieting.

And the vicious circle of exhaustion and energy spikes will disappear. Your digestion will improve, you'll feel healthier and stronger and your mental clarity and function will improve, too.

There are so many subtle benefits to intuitive eating that you'll wonder why we ever approached food any other way.

In this report we take a look at the principles of intuitive eating including:

- Reject the Diet Mentality.
- Value/recognize Hunger.
- Learning to recognize fullness
- Let go of emotional eating.
- Ignoring the food police
- Enjoy your food.
- Respect Your Body.
- Exercise.
- Value/respect your personal health.

We'll also talk about the challenges of intuitive eating, the benefits of it and how to get started. The getting started section also shares tips and tricks to help you fully embrace intuitive eating into your diet and your lifestyle.

Ready to change how you think about food?

Let's get started!

## **The Principles of Intuitive Eating:**

The principles of intuitive eating are the foundation on which the approach is built. For too long people have struggled with food, with their weight, and with their health and they're all connected. Somewhere along the way we got on the path of believing that deprivation and dieting were positive things and enjoying your food and eating healthy were impossible together.

Healthy food tastes terrible, it's expensive, and too much work. Sound familiar? Let's talk about the principles of this revolutionary, and oh so simple, eating approach so you can begin integrating it into your life today.

### ***Reject the Diet Mentality;***

How many times have you dieted and how many diets have you tried? The statistics are staggering. It's estimated that by the time a woman is 45 years old, she's dieted 61 times. The age of "dieters" is getting younger and younger, too. It's not uncommon to find an 8 year old on a diet.

And it's no longer gender specific. Men and women are struggling with their weight. The diet mentality will tell you to cut your calories, to eliminate specific foods, and they'll require you to count, measure, and track everything you put into your mouth. Intuitive eating asks you to forget all about this approach and never diet again.

Instead, you'll start paying attention to what foods make you feel healthy, strong, and energetic. You'll start eating when you're hungry and stopping when you're full. To make intuitive eating part of your life, it's time to let go of the concept that there is a diet somewhere that will work for you. There isn't. Dieting doesn't work. Eat to live.

## ***Value and Recognize Hunger;***

There are many signs that your body gives you about the food that you put into it. For example, you might get a headache when you drink wine or you might get bloated when you have dairy. These signs are valuable because they tell you what you're eating isn't agreeing with your unique body and systems.

Hunger is another sign and it's a valuable one. How often do you actually wait until you experience hunger before you eat? And how often do you find yourself ignoring your hunger signs until you're so famished that you eat the closest and most convenient option, which is usually junk food?

Paying attention to your body and becoming aware of the early signs of hunger help you begin to embrace food as the solution rather than the enemy.

## ***Learning To Recognize Fullness;***

How often do you find yourself pushing away from the table feeling like you've eaten too much? Maybe you've even had to unbutton the top button on your pants. It's happened to everyone and it happens for a number of reasons. We just talked about ignoring hunger signals. When you do this your blood sugar drops dramatically and your body needs fuel to function.

You become exhausted and suddenly the fastest calories feel like the best calories. Fast calories often contain a lot of sugar. It might be a starchy carb like a bag of chips or a handful of cookies. You're so hungry that you consume ten times what you really wanted or needed and then you're overstuffed.

Mindless eating also causes problems. It's easy to eat too much when you're not paying attention to what you're doing. Learning to recognize fullness helps you stop eating before you feel awful. Balancing signs of fullness with signs of hunger is half the challenge. Master these two skills and intuitive eating will become second nature.

### ***Let Go Of Emotional Eating***

What do you eat when you're stressed out? What about when you're sad? Sugary foods and/ or salty foods are often the food of choice. Some people head straight for a bag of chips or a tub of ice cream.

Emotions often make eating decisions, and unfortunately when you focus on your emotions and let them rule your choices, you're not paying attention to what your body is telling you. Learn to be more aware of your emotions and how they impact your behavior.

You'll be able to recognize your emotions for what they are. That doesn't mean you don't feel them. Emotions are signals that other things are going on in your life. However, they shouldn't be part of your food making process. Your body should be your best reference.

### ***Ignoring The Food Police;***

Ugh, how many people do you need in your life telling you what you can and cannot eat? Don't eat fat. Eat fat. Watch your calories. Stay away from meat. Eat meat. It seems that everyone has an opinion and they want to share it with you.

And the food police aren't just external voices telling you what you can and cannot eat. You have your very own internal food police as well.



This is the voice that tells you you've been good so you can have a cookie or you've been bad so you have to run an extra mile today. This voice is negative and it's often quite dumb. Food isn't a reward and exercise isn't a punishment.

And too much of any food probably isn't great for you and most anything in moderation is just fine – even cookies and ice cream. Start ignoring these negative voices inside your head and outside, as well.

## **Enjoy Your Food;**

Food is fuel. It's also more than that. It's part of your culture. It's a part of how we celebrate, spend time with friends and family, and it's often how we connect to one another. Intuitive eating is about more than being aware of what your body wants and needs, it's also about appreciating food and enjoying it.

We spend so much time feeling bad about what we eat that it ruins the relationship with food. It becomes the enemy rather than the life giving fuel that it is.

## ***Respect Your Body;***

Do you ever think about what your body does for you? It protects you. It moves you from one point to another. It dances and smiles and skips and runs and so much more. Your body is amazing. Whatever it looks like and whatever package you came in, that package is simply astounding.

It is constantly working super hard to keep you alive and functioning on a high level. Fuel it well and treat it with kindness.

Learning to respect your body and all that it does for you shifts your relationship with it.

Instead of it being something that you dislike, or despise, it becomes a part of you that you're grateful for and we tend to take great care of things and people that we're grateful for. Be grateful for your body. You wouldn't be here without it. Treat it with loving kindness and feed it well.

## ***Exercise***

How often do you hear someone say, "I'm gonna have to work off that meal."? Or "I'm going to have to...fill in the blank... to make up for eating that....fill in the blank...."?

It happens all the time. People have a punishment/reward relationship with exercise and food. Both should be pleasurable and part of how you take care of yourself. If exercise is a punishment, a chore, and something that you do because you should, then it's not the right exercise for you.

Your body was designed to move. That's first and foremost. Move it. It wasn't meant to sit at a desk all day or on a couch or in a car. It is meant to move. Walk, jog, roller skate, dance, jump, swim, do whatever you want to do that feels good and makes you smile.

If you love to bend and twist and feel the power and stillness in your body then try yoga. If feeling strong and empowered makes you feel alive then try weight lifting. If you thrive on variety, consider CrossFit. Love to dance? Zumba might be in your future or check out a tango or ballroom dancing class. Love the water? Go swimming.

And if walking is your thing, then you'll be glad to know that walking is one of the best exercises that you can do.

## ***Value and Respect Your Personal Health;***

Finally, when you shift your mindset about your body and your health, when you stop fighting it and begin to listen to it and work with it, you'll find a new respect for your health. Many people find themselves blaming their body and their health.

They feel like a victim and that being healthy is a battle. When you're able to stop battling with yourself and work to listen to your body, you will find that eating healthy and losing weight becomes easier.

Okay, so if all you have to do is ignore diets, fads, and negative talk and thoughts about food and embrace your body, listen to it, and stay positive about your health and well-being, then why isn't everyone eating this way? The truth is that it can be difficult. Over the years you've probably established some pretty entrenched thoughts and feelings about food.

For example, do you believe that you have to have breakfast and that skipping breakfast is bad for your health? Many people, including nutritionists and physicians, believe this to be true. But what if your body feels better if you don't eat breakfast?

What if your body feels better if you exercise first and maybe eat a few hours later? Which is better? Which is right? Intuitive eating says that you listen to your body and you skip breakfast but that may go against everything you've ever learned and have been told to believe.

And this is a simple example. Many other thoughts and fears about food aren't so easy to identify and deal with. So before we talk about how to embrace intuitive eating, let's talk about some challenges to intuitive eating.

## **Challenges to Intuitive Eating:**

While intuitive eating is easy to understand, it's not always easy to implement. However, understanding the challenges beforehand can help you be aware of them. And ultimately intuitive eating is about awareness.

### ***Fear;***

One of the primary goals for intuitive eating is to give yourself permission to eat anything. Yes, anything. If you want French fries drizzled with chocolate syrup and topped with bacon, then you are supposed to be comfortable, and not feel guilty, eating that.

There is a lot of fear around giving yourself permission eat anything. Getting past this fear begins with recognizing it and questioning it. What are you afraid of and why are you fearful? What's the worst that can happen, and is your fear realistic?

### ***Preconceived Myths Or Beliefs About Food;***

What do you believe about food? Do you believe that cookies are bad and carrots are good? Do you believe that fat makes you fat? What about calories? Are they all created equally? We all have beliefs about food that we've grown up with.

We adopt them over time and don't often question whether they're really true. Start writing down what you believe about food, eating, and health. Then start exploring why you have those beliefs and whether they're true. You may find that most of your negative or limiting beliefs about food aren't really true, which is liberating.

## ***Emotional Eating;***

People tend to have emotional triggers that elicit certain behaviors. Some people shop when they're stressed or sad. Other people eat. They eat when they're stressed. They eat when they're sad or overwhelmed or angry. Think about when you eat and what emotional triggers may be involved with your food choices.

For example, after you get yelled at by your boss, do you hit the fast food drive-through on the way home? Spend some time contemplating what makes you eat emotionally and start thinking about new habits that you can embrace instead. If you tend to have an emotional eating episode after a bad day at work, another option might be to call a friend or listen to upbeat music. Start learning how to distinguish "emotional hunger" from actual hunger.

## ***Fatigue;***

When you're tired, it's difficult to pay attention to your body. You just want to get something into your stomach so you can do what you need to do and so you can go to sleep. It's a common issue and it's part of living a hectic lifestyle and fueling your body with foods that don't support good health.

Rest assured that as you begin to pay attention to your body and fuel it well, the fatigue will go away. You'll have more energy from your food choices. You will also likely sleep better and you may be more relaxed about food and eating. Additionally, if you incorporate exercise into your lifestyle, your energy will increase.

While fatigue will become less of an issue for you as you begin to eat intuitively, it's also a part of life. Sometimes you're just tired. That means it's also important to learn how to manage it and still make

the right decisions for you and your body, regardless of how tired you are.

It's also important to point out that intuitive eating doesn't say you can't have a cookie or ice cream or potato chips. It's not about deprivation. It's about paying attention. If you want a cookie, eat a cookie. It's about moderation and awareness. When you know that you can eat whatever you want, whenever you want it and as much as you want, you'll end up eating fewer cookies, cakes, and chips. You know you're not restricted, so you won't feel deprived and you won't overdo it.

### ***Peers/Media;***

You're going to receive external pressure from your peers and from the media. You'll hear people talking about what they eat or don't eat. You'll hear the media talk about what you should and shouldn't eat.

Tuning this out can be really difficult. Consider creating a mantra or an affirmation. For example, "I listen to my body and pay attention to what it wants and needs. That's how I stay healthy and manage my weight." You can repeat this to yourself and to your peers when you feel pressured or criticized for your choices.

While these challenges may seem difficult, the proof is there. Intuitive eating is worth it. Imagine living your life without being concerned about what you eat, when you eat and how much you eat. You simply eat. Instead of stressing about it, you listen to your body and trust that it's telling you what you need to know. You know when you're hungry, when you're full, and when you should have vegetables and lean meat and when a hamburger and fries is okay.

And the science is there. It backs intuitive eating. In fact, an article published in *Public Health* showed that intuitive eating is linked with lower BMI and better psychological health. People who practice intuitive eating are happier and healthier.

The benefits are substantial and they're backed by story after story of people who have found a new relationship with food and their body. This relationship and approach leads to:

1. Weight loss
2. Weight control
3. Improved health
4. Better sleep
5. More energy
6. Less stress about food, more happiness
7. No more diets!

Sounds pretty good, right? Let's talk about how you can begin to eat intuitively and say goodbye to dieting forever.

## **Getting Started with Intuitive Eating:**

Intuitive eating changes lives. It re-frames how you think about food, how you feel, and how you live your life. Getting started is an exciting time. It can be filled with a bit of anxiety because you're challenging your beliefs and habits. So let's start simply and begin at the beginning.

### ***Step One: Checking In With Your Body;***

The first and fundamental component of eating intuitively is to eat when you're hungry and to eat until you're full. You want to learn to become aware of your body. What does it want and need and when does it need it?

Start asking questions. Consider checking in with your body on an hourly basis.

- Assess hunger. Ask yourself, am I hungry? Learn to recognize what hunger feels like. It can take some time to get used to this feeling. Most people wait until they're famished or they just eat by the clock. Start learning your hunger signals. And honor them by eating when you feel them.
- Assess fullness. Ask yourself, "Am I beginning to feel full?" It takes your body a full 20 minutes to send this message. If you gobble down your food, you're not going to get the signal until long after you've finished eating. This means that you may miss the signs. So part of learning to assess fullness is to slow down when you're eating.

It's also a balancing act because you want to stop eating before you feel full. Again, this can take some time to learn. As you eat your meals over the next week, pause several times during the meal and tune into your body and your digestive system. How does it feel? Is it full? What does "full" feel like? What does almost full feel like?

- Assess Cravings. Start asking yourself why you're craving a food or avoiding a food. Awareness is as much mental as it is physical. It's important to learn your triggers. We talked about emotional eating earlier. Emotions and your mental state help you make decisions about your food.

When you find yourself craving a snack, ask yourself why you're craving it. We're not suggesting that you judge your reasons for wanting a particular food, only that you become aware of your reasons. There's strength and power in knowing that you want a cookie because you're stressed. You can then make an educated decision about that cookie. You might have it. You might not but at least you're eating with awareness. As you go through your day and you find yourself thinking about food or craving a particular food, ask yourself why you want it. You'll be amazed at some of the answers you uncover.



## ***Step Two: Stock Your Shelves;***

Take a trip through your home including your pantry, cupboards, and refrigerator. Consider removing the items that you want to cut back on. You might not throw them away but put them somewhere out of sight. They'll be less tempting to you and you'll have to be intentional when you eat them. For example, put the cookies in your laundry room cupboard or on a high shelf somewhere.

Then, stock your home with healthy options that you enjoy eating. Start looking for delicious recipes and fun and tasty foods. Remember that eating is supposed to be enjoyable.

## ***Step Three: Find Alternatives;***

There will be challenges to your intuitive eating process. There will be times when stress, fatigue, and pressure from the outside world will influence your eating choices. This is okay. It's a learning process. The goal is to begin to identify alternatives for these challenges. Remember that alternatives can be anything that works for you. If you eat unconsciously when you're stressed, you might find that listening to a song or looking at a funny cat video does the trick.

It's important to understand and to fully embrace that intuitive eating is a process. It's about relaxing a bit and learning to feed your body the way it needs to be fed. Instead of listening to the outside world and your negative and limiting thoughts about food and your body, you listen to your body and respect all that it does and will do for you.

Your body is amazing and it can show you how to eat right for you. Start listening to it. Tune everything out and enjoy the tremendous benefits of intuitive eating.

## **Intuitive Eating Checklist:**

Intuitive eating is a process. Over time, you'll learn to become aware of the signs that your body sends you and you'll be able to make the best decisions for your health and weight loss goals.

### ***The Principles of Intuitive Eating;***

I would get rid of the "Diet" materials around your home. It's time to let go of the diet mentality. Unsubscribe to any dieting blogs and newsletters you receive. You never have to diet again. Intuitive eating is the path of long-term health and weight management.

I've learned the signs of my hunger. I know when I first feel the signs of hunger. Paying attention to your body and becoming aware of the early signs of hunger help you begin to embrace food as the solution rather than the enemy.

I've learned to recognize the signs of fullness. I am able to stop eating before I feel overfull or I've eaten more than my body needs or wants.

I've learned to be more aware of my emotions and how they impact my relationship with food and my eating. I understand my triggers and have created alternatives so that I am able to eat consciously and intuitively.

I've become aware of the negative stories and voices in my head about food and health. Start ignoring these negative voices inside your head and outside as well. I am learning to tune out the food police.

Appreciate your food. I've learned to enjoy my food. I take time to taste every bite and eat foods that make me feel good.

Respect and love your body. I am finding gratitude for my body and I treat it with loving kindness and feed it well.

I've found exercise that makes me smile. I know that exercise is a powerful way to improve my health and help me feel energetic, healthy, and positive.

### ***Challenges to Intuitive Eating;***

I've given myself permission to eat anything. Getting past this fear begins with recognizing it and questioning it. What are you afraid of and why are you fearful? What's the worst that can happen and is your fear realistic?

I am aware of my limiting beliefs about food and health. I've explored what I think about food and have begun to examine whether those beliefs are true and how they support or challenge me.

I'm aware of my emotional eating triggers and I've adopted new habits to help me cope with stress, overwhelm, sadness, anger and other emotions that may cause me to eat unconsciously.

I listen to my body and pay attention to what it wants and needs. That's how I stay healthy and manage my weight. I am able to tune out influences from peers and the media.

## **The Benefits of Intuitive Eating and Getting Started:**

I understand that the benefits of intuitive eating are significant and life changing. I know that it will help me lose weight and keep it off. I'll experience improved health, better sleep, more energy, less stress about food and more happiness. I'll never be on a diet ever again.

I'm learning to recognize the difference between hunger and fullness and I am able to assess my cravings. I understand that intuitive eating is about paying attention to my body and what it needs and wants. It's about making conscious decisions about what I eat rather than reacting based on emotions, fatigue, or because I'm too hungry to think straight.

I've filled my home with foods that make me feel good. I have delicious healthy options to satisfy my hunger. Any treats are tucked away so that I'm able to make a conscious decision to indulge rather than an unconscious one.

I understand that intuitive eating is about moderation and enjoying food and that I am able to eat anything that I want. There is no such thing as a "bad" food or a food that's off limits.

I know and fully embrace that intuitive eating is a process. It's about relaxing and learning to feed my body the way it needs to be fed. Instead of listening to the outside world and my negative and limiting thoughts about food and my body, I listen to it and respect all that it does and will do for me.

Use this checklist to help you on your path to eating intuitively and achieving the best health of your life.

OK - That's it Folks.

But for a whole lot More! ....

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