



Intuitive

E A T I N G

S C U L P T Y O U G U I D E

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WHAT IS INTUITIVE EATING?

Intuitive Eating (IE) is an evidence-based, weight-inclusive, non-diet approach to eating. The term was first introduced by **Registered Dietitians, Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch**.

IE was developed as a way to heal your relationship with food after years of dieting, restriction, over-eating, and yo-yo dieting. It involves using self-reflection and mind-body practices to make food decisions by learning to tune into your body's internal cues rather than relying on external cues.

The goals of intuitive eating are to:



Develop a positive or neutral relationship with food



Honor your hunger and fullness sensations



Differentiate between physical and emotional hunger



Eat foods that you enjoy without judgment, guilt, shame, worry, or anxiety



Eat without feelings of restriction



Eat foods that provide your body with the type and quantity of nutrients it needs



Eat in a way that supports your physical, mental, and emotional health

Intuitive eating is not a diet, meal plan, or list of foods to avoid. There is no counting of macros, calories, or points involved. Intuitive eating is not a weight-loss diet since it does not focus on weight at all. There is no fear of “falling off the wagon” because you can’t fail when you’re learning to listen to your body.

The purpose of IE is to let go of the metrics we have used to determine our health, success, and/or self-worth like weight, inches, clothing size, calories/macros, or days of compliance with a diet. IE does not require you to follow any rules or guidelines but instead encourages you to tune into your body's innate wisdom to make choices from a place of empowerment.



DISCLAIMER

This guide is not intended to over-simplify the mental, emotional, and physical complexities of developing an intuitive approach to eating.

This guide is not intended to serve as or replace medical and/or mental health advice. Please consult with your physician before making any changes to your diet, especially if you have a medical condition or history of chronic illness. It is recommended that a Registered Dietitian, physician, and mental health professional be involved in the health and nutrition care of those with current or previous eating disorder diagnoses.

Dieting can be used as a temporary tool to improve health conditions and biomarkers that are related to weight as appropriate under medical supervision. Addressing food and body-related beliefs, behaviors, and habits can be triggering to some individuals.

Please be kind to yourself and respect your boundaries when working through this process and discussing it with others.

THE 10 PRINCIPLES OF INTUITIVE EATING

Intuitive eating involves **10 principles** to help individuals improve their eating habits and their relationship with food. These principles are designed to build upon one another, but you're welcome to work through them in whichever order feels right to you.

1

REJECT THE DIET MENTALITY

2

HONOR YOUR HUNGER

3

MAKE PEACE WITH FOOD

4

CHALLENGE THE FOOD POLICE

5

DISCOVER THE SATISFACTION FACTOR

6

FEEL YOUR FULLNESS

7

COPE WITH EMOTIONS WITH KINDNESS

8

RESPECT YOUR BODY

9

JOYFUL MOVEMENT

10

HONOR YOUR HEALTH WITH GENTLE NUTRITION

CULTIVATING AWARENESS AND REJECTING THE DIET MENTALITY:

Have you ever given much thought to how many diets, “detoxes”, and food rules you’ve followed in your life? Even with the best of intentions, most people have at least 1 or 2 experiences that have left them feeling hungry, restricted, out of control, and out of touch with their body. Living in the age of information, we are more exposed than ever to new research, food trends, marketing, fad diets, and programs that promise things like easy and quick weight-loss, clear skin, and better health. It’s no wonder why we feel so overwhelmed and confused with nutrition information.

The problem is that about 98% of diets don’t work (meaning that they lead to weight regain, a slower metabolism, and the inability to respond to our body’s cues).

To understand why let’s first take a look at how calorie restriction impacts our body:




Our hunger and fullness hormones are altered - Ghrelin (the hunger hormone) increases while Leptin (the fullness hormone) decreases

Our Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR), the number of calories your body needs at rest, decreases (this leads to weight-loss resistance which is why someone who is technically under-eating/dieting will maintain a higher weight on much lower calories than someone without a history of dieting)

We become hyper-focused on food

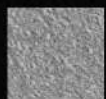
Our sense of smell and taste is heightened

Calorie restriction leads to a state of stress in the body which negatively impacts our thyroid, liver, digestive, and adrenal health (the sum of all of our body’s processes is known as our “metabolism”). The effects of this can last for years and may include absent hunger and fullness sensations, hormonal imbalances, fatigue, blood sugar-insulin dysregulation, weight-loss or weight-loss resistance, mood disorders, impaired digestion, etc.

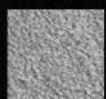


The biological effects of under-eating make it difficult to maintain a diet long-term. **Use the checklist below** to help identify ways in which dieting has impacted you physically:

Checklist



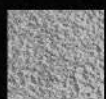
DIFFICULTY LOSING WEIGHT



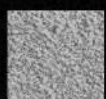
CRAVING FOR SUGARS/CARBOHYDRATES



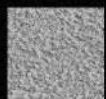
RARELY FEELING HUNGRY, ESPECIALLY UPON WAKING



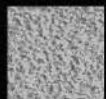
FEEL FATIGUED OFTEN



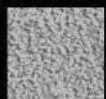
EXPERIENCE HAIR LOSS, BRITTLE NAILS, AND/OR DRY SKIN



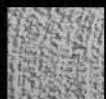
DECREASED METABOLISM



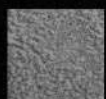
FREQUENT EPISODES OF LOW BLOOD SUGAR



IMPAIRED ABILITY TO RECOVER FROM EXERCISE



FEELING COLD OFTEN, LOW BODY TEMPERATURE



DECREASED LIBIDO



PAINFUL, IRREGULAR, OR MISSING PERIODS

THERE ARE ALSO MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES THAT DIETING AND RESTRICTION PRESENT:



Dieting often requires you to label certain foods or food groups as “unhealthy”, “off-limits”, “cheat foods”, etc. The problem with this is that when we restrict certain foods or nutrients, we are likely to become hyper-fixated on food which will result in eating in excess at a later time. This is a mental/emotional component of what is referred to as the “restrict and binge cycle”.



A common coping mechanism is to completely isolate oneself to avoid food-related situations where fears of overeating or judgment regarding food choices may occur. Many people who feel they are addicted to food have a history of restriction. Of course, if you have food allergies and sensitivities, they should be avoided. If you suspect that a food doesn’t sit well with you, consult with a Registered Dietitian to discuss whether it should be eliminated and to help find alternative ways to obtain those nutrients



Dieting takes the fun out of eating. When we start to place rules and guidelines around our food choices, the amount of joy, satisfaction, and creativity that goes into food preparation and eating often diminishes. Food is not only physical nourishment. It also provides opportunities for connection, education, celebrating tradition, and pleasure.



Diets typically focus on short-term goals rather than long-term health. Most diets promise results in 21, 30, 60, 90 days, but what are you supposed to do after the diet ends? The problem with these short-term diets is that the focus is not on creating sustainable, healthy lifestyle changes, but rather quick, dramatic, and not-so-healthy methods of achieving results. Once the 30 or 60 days are up, that person has not truly learned the valuable nutrition information or skills needed to continue on this journey. This often leads a person right back to the same place as they started or even worse from the effects of dieting. This usually results in the individual looking for yet another diet to try out. This is known as “yo-yo dieting” which studies have shown to increase the chance of developing chronic diseases regardless of weight.



Diets don’t take into consideration how unique you are, both inside and out. Nutrition should be individualized. Yes, on a cellular level, we all require much of the same things, but the state of our metabolism, our relationship with food, our diet and health history, and our eating habits should all be assessed when looking to change our diet in a way that best serves us.

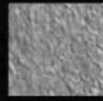


Diets can be overwhelming. Picture this: you have just found what seems to be the “perfect” diet for your current health and/or physique goals. You’ve been given a list of foods to omit, a sample meal plan, and guidelines/food rules to follow (don’t eat past 6 pm, chew your food 20 times, drink a glass of water before meals, etc.). You’re expected to follow this diet to the tee from start to finish (after all, it’s only 21/30/60 days). The problem is that instead of focusing on changing one habit at a time, you’re now focusing on making 20-30 changes that day.

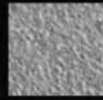


Weight is not the best indicator of health yet most diets use it as the primary measure of success. A person can experience improved cholesterol, blood pressure, blood sugar, digestion, and self-esteem without losing or gaining a single pound. Assessing other aspects of a person's health such as biomarkers, digestion, sleep quality, anxiety/stress around food choices, and hunger and fullness levels can be more helpful in evaluating a person's response to nutrition and lifestyle changes.

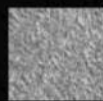
Checklist



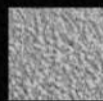
I EAT DIFFERENTLY AROUND PEOPLE (THE TYPE OF FOODS, QUANTITY)



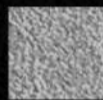
I JUDGE OTHER PEOPLES FOOD CHOICES



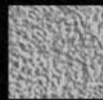
I AVOID SOCIAL SITUATIONS THAT INVOLVE FOOD



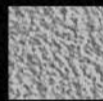
I FOLLOW STRICT RULES ABOUT HOW I EAT



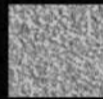
I'M AFRAID OF EATING "UNHEALTHY" FOODS AND NOT BEING ABLE TO CONTROL MYSELF



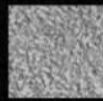
I THINK ABOUT FOOD OFTEN



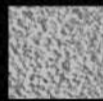
I EAT FOODS THAT I DON'T EVEN ENJOY JUST BECAUSE THEY'RE PRESENT



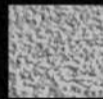
I EAT PAST THE POINT OF FULLNESS OFTEN



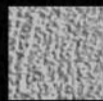
I EAT EVERYTHING ON MY PLATE EVEN IF I'M FULL BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO "WASTE" ANYTHING



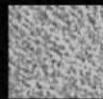
I FOLLOW A STRICT DIET ALL WEEK THEN OVEREAT ON THE WEEKENDS



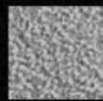
I DON'T EAT MUCH THROUGHOUT THE DAY THEN I OVEREAT AT NIGHT



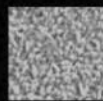
I'M AFRAID OF FEELING HUNGRY OR OVERLY FULL



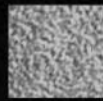
I EXPERIENCE GUILT IF I EAT SOMETHING "UNHEALTHY"



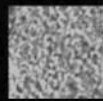
I PUNISH MYSELF FOR MY FOOD CHOICES WITH FOOD RESTRICTION OR EXERCISE



I EAT MORE WHEN I'M STRESSED OR DEPRESSED



IF I BUY ANY FOODS THAT ARE "OFF-LIMITS" ACCORDING TO MY DIET, I EAT THEM QUICKLY TO GET RID OF THEM



I MAKE A NEW PROMISE TO MYSELF EACH WEEK THAT I WILL BE COMPLIANT WITH MY DIET

Journal Prompts

What foods have I given labels like "off-limits", "unhealthy", "fattening", "cheat meals", "clean"? Where did these labels come from?

Do I currently trust my body to tell me when to eat and when to stop?

If not, when was the last time I didn't worry about calories, macros, portion sizes, or dieting?

When I think about a diet or food plan that I've followed that promised weight-loss, were the results temporary or long-term?

When I follow a diet, how is my social life impacted?

When I follow a diet, how is my mood impacted?

Have I ever used dieting as a way to feel more in control?

Have I ever used dieting as a way to punish myself?

If you no longer diet, do you still have thoughts or behaviors leftover from your experience?

How do my eating habits impact how I feel about my body and myself?

If weight-loss was not the main focus of an eating plan, would I still explore it?

What food rules have I already challenged and let go of?

In what ways have I listened to my body to determine whether a food or diet was the best choice for me or not?

As you can see, diet culture can have a huge effect on how we feel about foods and our bodies. Diet culture thrives on taking away our autonomy and ability to trust that we can make the best decisions for our body. Rejecting the diet mentality is a crucial process of IE that involves a lot of patience and self-compassion.

Exploring how dieting has impacted our beliefs around food, how our body utilizes nutrients, and how this may impact our physical, mental, and emotional health takes time and a lot of self-reflection.

Hunger

UNDERSTANDING

HUNGER is a biological signal from our body telling us that we require fuel (carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals, etc.). The purpose of hunger is to keep our body in a biologically fed state so that it can perform functions optimally. If we don't give our bodies enough or the right type of fuel, many unpleasant things can happen. Have you ever suppressed your hunger, either by choice or force (an example-work schedule not allowing you to go eat lunch as early as you expected), and then once a few hours have passed, you're no longer hungry? That's the body bringing back down our hunger hormone. If we ignore our hunger cues for too long, our body eventually stops giving you cues altogether. Overriding these signals can lead to us distrusting our bodies which can lead to overeating, intensified cravings, and a lack of feeling satisfied. Eating is a signal to the body that it's safe.

The urge to eat can be powerful when we've tried so hard to ignore it or use our "willpower" to remain compliant with our diet. Our brain is saying "no, don't eat that! It has too many calories/it's not "healthy" while our body is saying "I'm ravenous! I need to eat this as well as everything else I can get my hands on!" There is a huge disconnection between our mind and body and we're not able to be fully present for our eating experience. This often leads to a repeating cycle of guilt and shame which is where we begin to fear hunger. There can also be fear, guilt, and shame about overeating. Maybe you've felt guilty for eating something that you've labeled as "off-limits". Maybe you've felt guilty for overeating in the evenings or on the weekend. Feelings of guilt imply that you've done something morally or legally wrong so unless you've stolen that food, there's no reason to feel guilty.

In the last section, we explored a few ways in which dieting and diet culture impact how we respond to our body's cues and our relationship with food. Diet culture makes us believe that we should be eating less food than we actually need (this is where the 1,200 calorie recommendation comes in *cue the eye roll*). It makes us feel that we shouldn't be hungry as often as we are and some diets even include tips for suppressing hunger and cravings. Tell me this, why would we want to suppress a biological response like hunger when we don't suppress other responses like the urge to urinate, sneeze, or sleep? Chronically under-eating and feeling hungry all of the time is a stressor to the body. Our body can't distinguish between the stress of a real famine and nutritional trauma and the intentional act of dieting so it reacts in the same way. It results in poor concentration, poor exercise recovery, low energy levels, anxiety, depression, sluggish thyroid and digestive function, increased food cravings, and increases the likelihood of bingeing. Hunger is not the enemy and it should not be optional whether we honor it or not. Having regular meals and snacks can help normalize our hunger response and assist us in redeveloping the trust in our mind and body.

USING THE HUNGER AND FULLNESS SCALE

The hunger and fullness scale is an internal scale to serve as a guide while you relearn how to get in touch with your body's cues. It's meant to help you identify physical feelings of hunger and fullness. The numbers and descriptions may look and feel different for you so be sure to check-in regularly to see how you feel and adjust the metrics as appropriate. A separate hunger and fullness scale for active individuals is also included.

1 PAINFULLY HUNGRY

- Can't focus on anything, may feel like pain, cramping, or emptiness in the stomach.

2 RAVENOUS - VERY DISTRACTING

- You feel distracted from completing tasks because your body is signaling that you're hungry.

3 VERY HUNGRY - STOMACH IS GROWLING, YOU ARE READY TO EAT NOW

- Less ability to choose what to eat, your body just wants food.

4 NOT STARVING, BUT HUNGRY

- You could eat now, but it's not urgent. You can wait until your next meal arrives or give yourself enough time to make something you enjoy.

5 NAUTRAL

- Pleasant, not obsessing about food. You are neither hungry, nor full.

6 SLIGHTLY FULL

- Beginning to feel physical sensation of fullness in your stomach.

7 FULL AND SATISFIED

- You feel content and like you've had enough to eat.

8 BEGINNING TO FEEL A LITTLE OVERFULL

- You start to feel a bit overfull and slightly uncomfortable.

9 UNCOMFORTABLY FULL

- You don't want to think about food at all. It's off putting at this point.

10 PAINFULLY FULL

- You may feel nauseous, sick, or jittery due to how full you feel.

USING THE HUNGER AND FULLNESS SCALE FOR ACTIVE INDIVIDUALS

1 PAINFULLY HUNGRY

- Can't focus on anything or do a workout, due to pain, headaches, low blood sugar etc. Workouts and energy are suffering. Eat now!

2 RAVENOUS - VERY DISTRACTING

- You feel distracted and sluggish during workouts. Your body is telling you it needs fuel. You may feel angry and short-tempered.

3 VERY HUNGRY - STOMACH IS GROWLING, YOU ARE READY TO EAT NOW

- You can still complete a workout, but motivation and energy are diminishing. Eat a snack if possible.

4 NOT STARVING, BUT HUNGRY

- You could eat now, but it's not urgent. If you have a workout in 1-2 hours, eat a small snack.

5 NAUTRAL

- Pleasant mood and symptoms, not thinking about food. Blood sugar is balanced. This is a good time to complete a workout.

6 SLIGHTLY FULL

- Beginning to feel physical sensation of fullness in your stomach. It's still possible to start a longer workout at this point and feel energized.

7 FULL AND SATISFIED

- You feel some slight physical fullness. If you are planning to workout wait 30+ minutes to allow your food to digest.

8 BEGINNING TO FEEL A LITTLE OVERFULL

- You might start to feel a little too full, slightly sluggish, and uncomfortable. Don't workout in this state. Allow 2+ hours for food to digest.

9 UNCOMFORTABLY FULL

- You don't want to think about food at all. It's off putting at this point. Think about how you feel after eating a big holiday meal. You may feel tired, sluggish, and experience slight stomach pains. You can't even think about working out right now.

10 PAINFULLY FULL

- You may feel nauseous, sick, or jittery due to how full you feel. Try to tune into your fullness cues before reaching this point.

WHEN SHOULD A PERSON BEGIN EATING?

A good rule of thumb is to start eating when you're somewhere between a 3 or 4. By waiting until you've reached 1 or even 2, you're more likely to eat quickly and overeat.

WHEN SHOULD A PERSON STOP EATING?

This is very individual since the scale is based on a person's unique hunger and fullness cues, but I would say to aim to stop somewhere between 6 and 7.

In the beginning, you may rely on the numbers of the scale a bit more than you will once you've learned where your hunger and fullness thresholds lie.

Many people may associate the feeling of fullness with overeating because they've been under-eating for so long. It may take some time and practice to reframe this thought pattern. Fullness is not "bad" or something to be feared. It's a normal outcome of an eating experience. It's also okay to eat past the point of fullness sometimes, especially as you're learning what that feels like for you.

EXPLORING THE 4 TYPES OF HUNGER



Physical hunger occurs when our body is running low on energy and needs food and nutrients to refuel. This is the main type of hunger addressed in the previous sections and with the hunger-fullness scale.



Taste hunger occurs when we have a desire for a specific food or taste because it sounds good or we're being triggered by our environment. An example could be getting popcorn at the movie theater even if you're not physically hungry.



Practical hunger is less about actual hunger and more of a preventative measure. An example of this is when we take our lunch at noon even if we aren't hungry just because that's when our break is. Or eating a larger meal before an event that we know will run over in time so that we aren't extremely hungry in the middle of it. Though eating when you aren't hungry may seem to go against IE practices, this is just another way of being aware of your hunger responses and honoring them when you can.



Emotional hunger occurs when we have the desire to eat because of our emotions like loneliness, frustration, or boredom rather than an innate practical or biological hunger. We use food to comfort, entertain, and distract us from what is making us feel uncomfortable. Though people may experience guilt and shame around emotional hunger, it's a valid hunger. We have to remember that eating can be an emotional experience. If emotional eating is something you experience often, it may be telling you that something is being emotionally neglected or ignored within you. Recognizing and differentiating between physical and emotional hunger is a skill and allows us to choose whether we will soothe ourselves with food or try something else. The power lies in the ability to choose what is best for us.

WAYS TO SOOTHE EMOTIONS WITHOUT FOOD:



Self-massage (feet, hands, face, neck, etc.)



“Brain-dump” your feelings, write absolutely everything out



Talk to a friend or family member



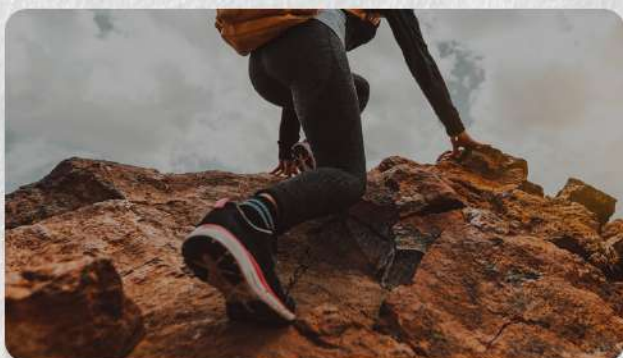
Talk with a mental health professional



Meditation or prayer



Work on a creative project



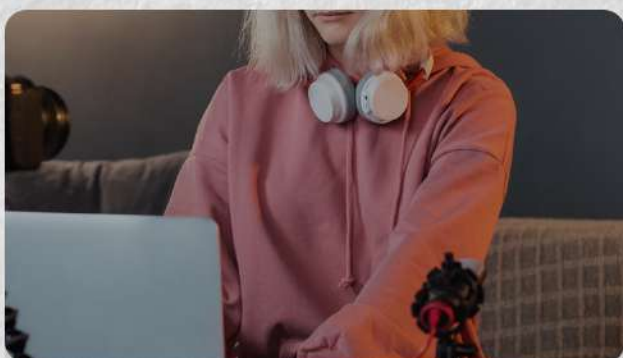
Go for a hike or walk



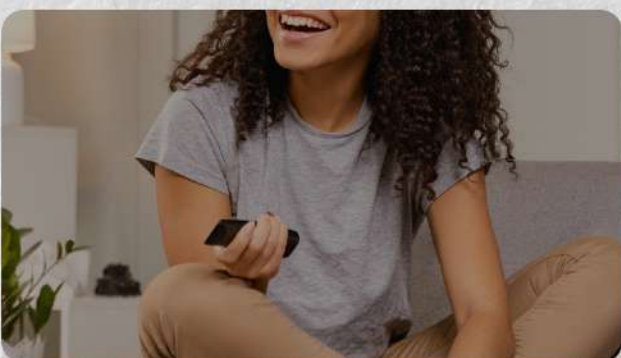
Yoga



Read a new book



Listen to a podcast



Watch a new TV show or movie



Sleep/Rest



Take a warm shower/bath



Visit a local coffee shop



Play a game



Journaling



Write and recite positive affirmations



Spend time with your pet



Volunteer



Clean your room/living space



Decorate your room/living space



Make a new music playlist













WHAT IF YOUR HUNGER CUES ARE ABSENT?

If you’ve tried listening to other signs that your body is hungry (fatigue, low blood sugar, loss of concentration, etc.) but you can’t seem to tune into them, it may be beneficial for you to follow an eating schedule or meal plan written by a Registered Dietitian as your sensations begin to normalize. Eating every 2.5-4 hours is a great place to start.



We’re all subjected to stress and life situations that can disrupt our hunger and fullness cues or interfere with our ability to respond to them.

These may include:

-  *Food rules*
-  *Inner food voices*
-  *Distractions*
-  *Stress/Burnout*
-  *Exhaustion/fatigue*
-  *Dehydration*
-  *Illness and disease*
-  *Over-exercising or intense exercising*
-  *Lack of self-care*
-  *Poor sleep*
-  *Exhaustion/fatigue*
-  *Medications that impact hunger and fullness*



As we mentioned earlier, the body doesn’t understand the difference between types of stress. Stress activates our body’s fight-or-flight survival system which means it pulls blood flow from our digestive system to our extremities to help us deal with stress. This means we have less energy for digesting food and accessing its nutrients. This also impacts our hunger and fullness responses. Think about it, if you’re running from a bear, do you think your body is going to prioritize digesting your last meal or giving your legs the energy it needs to get out of Dodge ASAP? So whether it’s a bear or an email from your boss about a deadline, the body reacts in the same way.

INNER FOOD VOICES

The IE book talks about different types of food voices that you may experience. These voices can help us better understand our hunger and identify food rules.

THE FOOD POLICE



I also like to call this one “The Bully”: A destructive, judgmental voice. This is the tone of most diet culture. You’re either “good” or “bad” in relation to your food choices. This voice makes the rules around food, judges your choices, and makes you feel guilty about them. This voice is not helpful.

IT MAY SOUND LIKE

“You should choose a side salad instead of a loaded baked potato at lunch because it’s healthier.”

THE NUTRITION INFORMANT



Aligns with the food police and provides evidence that falls in line with diet culture. It makes statements in the name of health, but the nutrition informant creates a hyper-focus on health and food that takes away from intuition. Essentially, it’s using nutrition as a vehicle to keep you dieting. This is the voice that I see the most in individuals who suffer from orthorexia, an eating disorder classified by an obsession with “clean” eating. This voice is also not helpful and keeps you in the diet mentality. Once the nutrition informant learns to challenge and silence the food police and diet voices, it becomes the more neutral Nutrition Ally.

IT MAY SOUND LIKE

“You shouldn’t eat fruit because it contains sugar. Stick with veggies only.”

THE FOOD ANTHROPOLOGIST



Makes neutral comments without judgment. The food anthropologist is a voice of observation and teaches you how to interact with food behaviorally and internally. This is one of the voices that are helpful when learning to tune into our hunger and fullness cues.

IT MAY SOUND LIKE

“I just ate a piece of fruit and I’m still hungry. I should pair it with a protein and fat source next time so that it will sustain me until my next meal.”

THE NUTRITION ALLY



A neutral, non-judgmental voice that helps you make food decisions for energy, nutrients, satiety, and satisfaction. As stated earlier, the Nutrition Ally is the Nutrition Informant that has renounced the food police. It helps you make decisions about food with intuition and practicality. It helps you learn how to care for yourself around food and comes from a place of curiosity.

IT MAY SOUND LIKE

“Drinking a cup of coffee first thing in the morning may sound good, but remember how it made you feel last week when you had it on an empty stomach? Nauseous, jittery, etc. Having breakfast first will prevent blood sugar drops, cortisol spikes, and give you more sustained energy in the morning.”

THE NURTURER



Offers positive self-talk and compassion. I like to think of this as the wiser, more loving version of myself who only wants to see myself happy and thriving. This nurturing voice tells you that all will be okay, you’re not “bad” for eating certain foods or overeating.






IT MAY SOUND LIKE

“It’s okay if you want the fried pickles for an appetizer instead of the raw veggies and hummus. The pickles sounded more appealing today. Maybe the veggies will sound more appealing next time and if not, that’s okay!”



Now that we’ve explored the concept of hunger, let’s look at fullness. The goal of IE is to fuel your body adequately and consistently on your own terms without the influence of diet culture. IE is much more than “eat when you’re hungry, stop when you’re full”, because the goal of IE is to feel not only physically full but also satisfied. So what’s the difference and how can we use the Hunger and Fullness Scale here?






To determine your fullness, it can be helpful to stop in the middle of eating and check-in with yourself. You may ask yourself questions like:

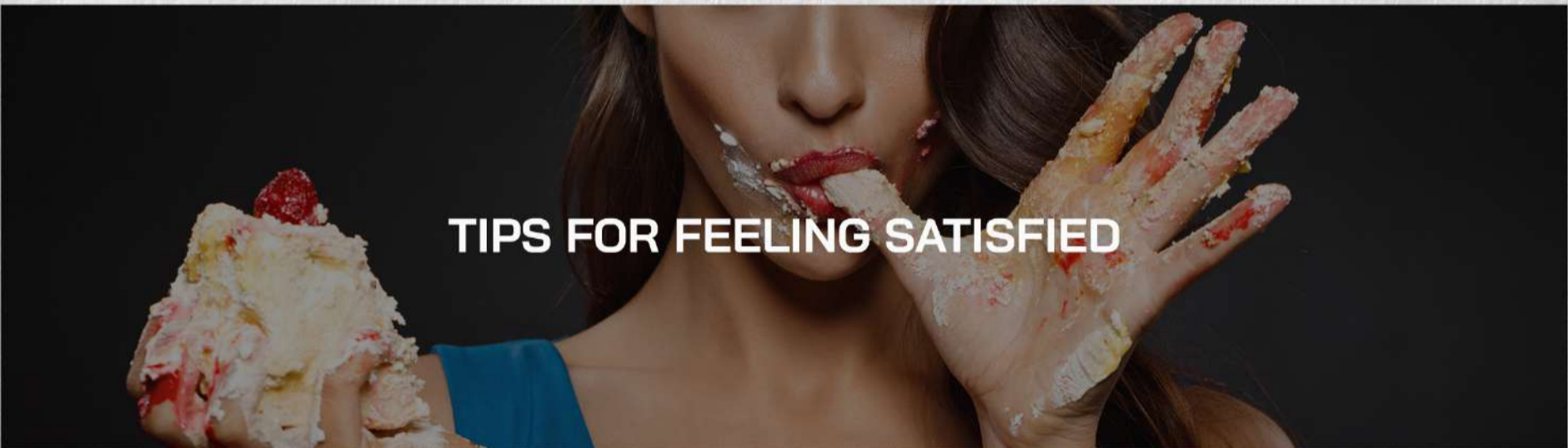
-  *Am I still hungry?*
-  *From 0-10, how hungry/full do I feel right now?*
-  *Am I eating what I planned to eat, am I eating as much as I want?*
-  *Would I be satisfied, both physically and mentally, if I stopped eating my meal right now?*
-  *What about this meal/snack do I enjoy?*






Satisfaction can be difficult to define and may feel differently for each person. If you feel physically full, but you’re still craving something (an example would be wanting ice cream even when you’re physically full from dinner), it could be that your meal didn’t leave you feeling mentally satisfied. Maybe you didn’t like the food you ate, maybe you were only eating something because it was on your food plan. Or maybe you tried to make a “healthier” substitution that just didn’t cut it for you. The difference between fullness and satisfaction is that we only feel full after we eat but we can experience satisfaction during and after eating.

Satisfaction with your foods doesn’t always mean including sweets or what some people classify as “unhealthy” foods. It may also mean enjoying different textures, flavors, and temperatures like crunchy, savory, sour, warm, or cold. For most people, reaching satisfaction with a meal also means including a balance of all 3 macronutrients-carbohydrates, protein, and fats. This isn’t always the case, but if you feel physically full but not satisfied, it’s worth giving a second look.



-  *Include all 3 macronutrients at each meal and snack*
-  *Add dairy products and fat sources*
-  *Begin eating when you're at a 2, 3, or 4 on the H-F scale and check-in with yourself regularly throughout the meal*
-  *Avoid distractions at meals (TV, phone, driving, etc.)*
-  *Eat slowly and mindfully*



-  *Include different textures, colors, and flavors*
-  *Avoid low-fat products*
-  *Use seasonings and sauces*
-  *Add a savory component to your meal (cheese, egg yolks, tahini, avocado, etc.)*
-  *Eat slowly and mindfully*

HOW DO I KNOW IF I’M EATING ENOUGH?

At the beginning of this guide, we explored how under-eating/dieting impacts our physical, mental, and emotional health, but to expand on this, some typical signs of under-eating include:

- UNINTENTIONAL WEIGHT-LOSS
- WEIGHT-LOSS RESISTANCE
- FEELING FATIGUED CONSTANTLY
- POOR IMMUNE FUNCTION
- FEELING COLD ALL OF THE TIME (HANDS, FEET, TIP OF THE NOSE)
- HAIR LOSS
- IRREGULAR OR MISSING MENSTRUAL CYCLE
- CONSTIPATION
- NUTRIENT DEFICIENCIES
- MOOD SWINGS, ANXIETY, AND DEPRESSION
- INABILITY TO FOCUS
- BEING HYPER-FOCUSED ON FOOD

If you find that you experience many of these symptoms, you’re most likely not eating enough. You may begin to ask yourself questions like:

- Am I including all 3 macronutrients at each meal and snack?
- Am I having snacks throughout the day?
- Am I going long periods without eating?
- Am I skipping breakfast?
- Am I having an early dinner and waking in the middle of the night?
- What days this week have I had more energy? What do I think made the difference on those days? How were my eating habits?
- Am I feeling hungrier than normal?
- Have I been exercising more/less than usual?
- Am I experiencing any additional stress?



Food

MAKING PEACE WITH

To reduce the guilt and shame associated with hunger, fullness, and our food choices, we must make peace with all food. This means recognizing that a slice of pizza is emotionally equal to a big salad-not nutritionally equal, but emotionally. Neither food choice should evoke feelings of superiority, shame, or guilt compared to the other. As a reminder, our food choices are not a reflection of our worth, character, or morality. When we allow ourselves to eat foods of all nutrition compositions, we may start to crave the “off-limits” foods less.

Once we trust that eating the foods we love won't be followed by abstinence of food, we begin to eat in a healthier, happier, and more balanced way. Once we've stopped the cycle of restriction and binging along with the guilt and shame that comes with it, we can start to learn how to tune into our body's hunger and fullness cues, incorporate gentle nutrition, and move our body in a way that feels nourishing to us. This is a long-term practice that provides lifelong benefits.



This principle of IE is about respecting the genetic blueprint that you were born with instead of always looking to change it. In our culture, we see people who fit a certain body type experience more privilege. There is this idea that we should all be the same size and shape, but celebrating body diversity is key in developing a healthier relationship with oneself. There is also this idea that not having a physique-related goal will keep you from achieving health. The problem here is that health is not determined by a specific body size or type. It's determined by a variety of factors and health behaviors. IE doesn't preach that we have to love every part of our body every day but instead encourages us to focus on acceptance and respect.

A few things we can do to show our body respect include:



Expressing gratitude for what your body does for you daily rather than how it looks



Tossing out clothes that don't fit anymore and buying ones that make you feel your best and most comfortable



Ditch the scale. Throw it out. Bash it with a hammer. Whatever you have to do. The number on the scale fluctuates daily and does not tell us anything about our health.



Stop comparing. We're all unique and that's part of what makes us beautiful. You will never be anyone but you. Don't waste your life wishing you were someone else.



Check your belief system. Reframe negative thoughts you have about your body into positive or at least neutral thoughts

INCORPORATING JOYFUL MOVEMENT

hough the focus of Intuitive Eating is mostly on food and eating practices, developing a healthy relationship with exercise is just as important and will impact our nutrition needs. Learning to move our body in a way that feels good can help shift the focus from goal-oriented exercise to feeling-oriented exercise. Instead of approaching exercise as a way to change our physique, we can focus on how good it makes us feel— energized, awake, and strong!

Regular movement has been linked to numerous health benefits such as:



Increasing energy levels



Maintaining and increasing bone density and muscle mass



Reducing stress and improving mood



Improving self-esteem and confidence



Improving skin health



Improving and maintaining cognitive abilities like memory and concentration



Preventing chronic disease

However, exercise can also be abused. This is more common when someone has physique goals.

A few signs of over-exercising or having a poor relationship with exercise include:

- ☐ *Never taking full rest days*
- ☐ *Using exercise as a way to punish yourself for overeating or eating certain foods*
- ☐ *Working out when you're sick*
- ☐ *Experiencing anxiety when you skip a workout*
- ☐ *Skipping social events you would otherwise look forward to in order to exercise*
- ☐ *Feeling like a workout didn't "count" if you're not incredibly sore or didn't workout for a certain amount of time*
- ☐ *Doing extra cardio sessions when you're already under-eating*
- ☐ *Using exercising solely to lose weight*

Creating a healthy relationship with exercise can prevent burn-out and injury while allowing us to engage in a behavior that is both joyful and fulfilling.

SO HOW CAN YOU INCORPORATE JOYFUL MOVEMENT?



Listen to how your body responds to movement and lack of movement



Be present during your workouts



Move in a way that you enjoy



Try out different activities (if you're used to only weight-lifting, you may consider a kickboxing or yoga class)



Find extra ways to move throughout the day. Take your dog for an extra walk, use the stairs, park further away (if it's safe to do so), walk to the coffee shop instead of driving, etc.

GENTLE NUTRITION

The final principle of Intuitive Eating is to honor your health with gentle nutrition. The reason why Gentle Nutrition is the last principle is because it's important to heal your relationship with food, your mind, and your body first. Gentle nutrition is an ongoing process of learning and rediscovery what foods make you feel the best physically, mentally, and emotionally.

We do this by asking ourselves questions like:

- ?

What specific foods and meals make me feel nourished and satisfied?
- ?

What's my favorite meal to make when I'm low on time?
- ?

What motivates my food choices?

- When we're learning how to eat intuitively and honor our health, here are a few reminders:
 - *All foods fit. The IE mindset incorporates room for all foods in a healthy diet and lifestyle. Your diet doesn't have to be perfect to achieve health. One meal, snack, or full day of eating will not suddenly result in a nutrient deficiency or chronic disease diagnosis. What matters most is consistency with your health behaviors. The stress of making food choices can have more of a negative impact on your health than the actual food would.*
 - *Include variety. What can you add to your meals? More protein? More carbs? More fats? Fiber? Omega-3s?*
 - *Eat at home more often. Meal prepping is a great way to save money, include more nutrient-dense food sources, and develop a relationship with cooking. Cooking at home can remove some of the pressure we face when eating out.*
 - *Pay attention to how foods make you feel. Take note of what foods give you more energy and which ones make you feel sluggish. Consider what may need to be adjusted in your meals and snacks to help you feel your best.*

TIPS FOR ACTIVE INDIVIDUALS



Instead of focusing on what foods you should restrict, shift your thinking to what foods you can include that are more nutrient-dense while allowing less nutrient-dense foods occasionally



Remember: Balance is KEY! Just because a food is nutrient-dense does not mean that it's the only thing we should eat (for example, spinach is healthy but an all-spinach diet is NOT healthy)



Avoid going long periods between eating. Check-in with yourself every 2.5-4 hours to evaluate where you are on the hunger and fullness scale



Eat foods that you enjoy and skip the foods that you dislike even if they're "healthy"



Avoid eliminating or restricting any one type of food (carbs, fats, fruits, bread, dairy, gluten, etc.) (unless it's related to an allergy or sensitivity of course)



Choose foods that will help you feel full (include fats, fiber, and protein for this)



Know that some days you will eat more than other days based on what your body needs



If you desire a bit more structure, use portion sizes as a way to build in automatic stopping points where you can pause to reflect on how hungry or full you feel. If you're still hungry, you can always eat more.



Balance rigidity and flexibility with food. You may need to be a bit more rigid around mealtimes to ensure you feel good for workouts or athletic performances. For example, that may mean that you intuitively want a bacon cheeseburger and fries before your workout, but you may need to opt for something lighter that won't cause digestive upset.



Embracing too much rigidity can be detrimental. Active individuals, especially athletes, are at a higher risk of developing eating disorders and disordered eating patterns. You must understand that any "cleanses" and other fad diets are likely going to hurt your performance and are not worth your time and energy.



Intense exercise can disrupt hunger so you may not feel hungry after a workout, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't eat. Your muscles need fuel to repair and recover and the sooner the better. In this case, try to tune into those other hunger sensations - feeling tired, extra sore, dehydrated, hyper-focused on food, etc. to determine how hungry you are

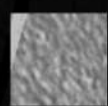


If your workouts are leaving you feeling more tired and sore than usual, it may be worth looking at how you're fueling yourself to ensure you're getting enough calories

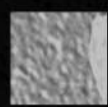


If you're overeating as a result of under-fueling throughout the day, you may get to the point of feeling excessively full. Making sure to eat enough before, and sometimes during, a long workout can help you avoid the feeling of intense hunger afterward

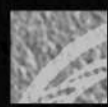
Affirmations



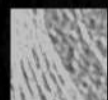
I WILL TREAT MY BODY WITH CARE AND RESPECT BY NOURISHING IT WITH WHAT IT ASKS FOR.



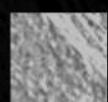
I WILL SHOW MY BODY THAT IT CAN TRUST ME BY NOT RESTRICTING FOOD.



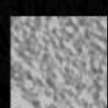
I WILL LISTEN TO AND HONOR MY HUNGER AND FULLNESS SENSATIONS.



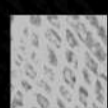
I WILL SEE ALL FOOD EQUALLY, NO FOOD IS GOOD OR BAD.



INTUITIVE EATING IS A JOURNEY AND I AM LEARNING AS I GO.



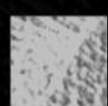
MY WORTH IS NOT DETERMINED BY MY FOOD CHOICES.



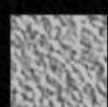
WHAT I ATE YESTERDAY DOES NOT DICTATE WHAT I EAT TODAY.



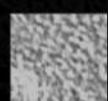
I DESERVE TO NOURISH MY BODY.



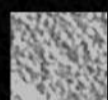
I DESERVE TO EAT.



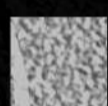
I FORGIVE MY PAST SELF FOR DIETING AND I CHOOSE TO BE FREE FROM DIETING.



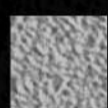
IN ORDER TO BECOME COMFORTABLE WITH FOOD AGAIN, I MUST FIRST LEAN INTO BEING UNCOMFORTABLE.



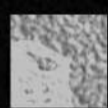
REGARDLESS OF WHAT MY BODY LOOKS LIKE, I AM STILL ME.



I GIVE MY BODY PERMISSION TO CHANGE.



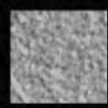
I GIVE MYSELF PERMISSION TO EVALUATE MY FOOD CHOICES AS OFTEN AS I WANT.



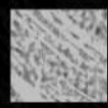
I CAN EAT ANY AND ALL FOODS WHENEVER I WANT. THERE IS NO NEED TO BINGE.



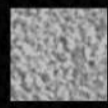
I FEEL AMAZING WHEN I'M NOURISHED.



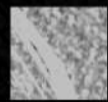
I DESERVE TO FEEL HEALTHY, HAPPY, AND NOURISHED.



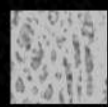
I CHOOSE NOURISHMENT OVER NEGLECT.



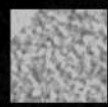
I RESPECT MY BODY FOR ALL IT DOES FOR ME DAILY.



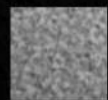
I'M OKAY WITH BEING IMPERFECT. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS PERFECTION.



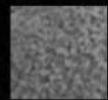
I MAKE CHOICES BASED ON WHAT MAKES ME FEEL THE BEST REGARDLESS OF WHAT ANYONE ELSE IS DOING.



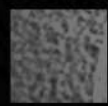
IT'S OKAY TO BE OUT OF TOUCH WITH WHAT MY BODY NEEDS RIGHT NOW. I'M LEARNING.



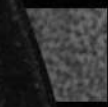
I SAVOR EACH BITE.



I ALLOW MY BODY TO GUIDE MY FOOD CHOICES.



I EAT WELL SO THAT I CAN LIVE WELL.



I RELEASE PAST GUILTY AND NEGATIVE FEELINGS ABOUT FOOD.



FAQs



Can IE help me lose weight?

Intuitive Eating is not a weight-loss diet. Your body's set point (the weight your body is most comfortable at), current eating patterns, and your relationship with food will all determine whether you gain, lose, or maintain your weight. So the question becomes: "how will IE change my restrict and overeat cycle and how will that impact my weight?"



If IE doesn't result in weight-loss, what's the point?

IE can result in weight-loss or weight-gain, but research has shown that IE may help to improve cholesterol, blood pressure, blood sugar, body image, metabolism, self-esteem, and satisfaction with life. It's also been shown to decrease rates of stress and disordered and emotional eating. You can experience all of these things and not drop a pound.



I feel addicted to food, how can I engage in IE?

Food addiction behaviors are only evident in times of restriction so you may feel out of control with food as a result of the history or current experience of restriction and dieting. Dieting causes an unhealthy obsession with food and this can be mitigated by learning to eat intuitively. As you begin IE and start to include foods that have been restricted, you may eat them in excess—this is completely normal. However, this phase is usually short-lived dependent on how long you've been dieting or how extreme the restriction has been.



Can I follow IE if I have an eating disorder, am over-/under-weight, or am a picky eater?

Some people, like those with an eating disorder or those who have suppressed hunger and fullness cues to the point of them being absent, may need to work with a Registered Dietitian through some form of "mechanical" eating like a meal plan or eating schedule. Once they've achieved weight restoration and are more in tune with their body's needs, then the other principles of IE can be worked on and embraced. Even if you aren't ready to honor your hunger and respect your fullness, you could begin by rejecting the diet mentality or challenging the food police.

RESOURCES



- The Intuitive Eating Workbook: Ten Principles for Nourishing A Healthy Relationship with Food by Elyse Resch, MS, RDN and Evelyn Tribole, MS, RDN
- Intuitive Eating for Every Day: 365 Daily Practices and Inspirations to Rediscover the Pleasures of Eating by Evelyn Tribole, MS, RDN
- The Intuitive Eating Workbook for Teens by Elyse Resch, MS, RDN
- The Mindful Eating Workbook: Simple Mindfulness by Vincci Tsui, RD
- The Mindful Eating Journal: Prompts and Practices to Restore Your Relationship with Food by Alyssa Snow Callahan



- Intuitive Eating (4th Edition): A Revolutionary Anti-Diet Approach by Elyse Resch, MS, RDN and Evelyn Tribole, MS, RDN
- The Intuitive Eating Plan: A Body-Positive Approach to Rebuilding Your Relationship with Food by Kirsten Ackerman, MS, RD
- Anti-Diet: Reclaim Your Time, Money, Well-being, and Happiness Through Intuitive Eating by Christy Harrison, MPH, RD, CDN
- Unapologetic Eating: Make Peace with Food and Transform Your Life by Alissa Ramsey, MS, RD
- Nourish: How To Heal Your Relationship with Food, Body, and Self by Heidi Schauster
- Health At Every Size: The Surprising Truth About Your Weight by Linda Bacon
- Body Kindness: Transform Your Health From The Inside Out and Never Say Diet Again by Rebecca Scritchfield



- Food Psych Podcast with Christy Harrison, MPH, RD, CDN