

A smiling woman with blonde hair is holding a plate of food. The plate contains a roasted chicken, broccoli, and orange cubes. The background is dark and out of focus.

Intuitive Eating *Guide*

HOW TO DITCH RIGID RULES
AND MAKE PEACE WITH
FOOD

INTUITIVE EATING 101

What is it?

Are diet culture and food rules sucking the joy out of eating? Wish you could ditch diets and just learn to trust your body's cues? Well, you can my friend. That's the goal of intuitive eating.

What is Intuitive Eating?

Well, for starters, intuitive eating is NOT a diet plan. It's an **approach** to eating.

Unlike diet plans, intuitive eating doesn't label foods as "good" or "bad." Instead, it aims to **tune you into your body** and help you **listen to your hunger and fullness signals**.

With intuitive eating, there are no rigid rules on when to eat, or what foods to eat or avoid. You simply tap into your body's needs in each moment.

Potential Benefits of Intuitive Eating

- Improve body image
- Boost self-esteem and quality of life
- Promote a healthy attitude toward food
- Help you trust your intuition
- Reduce the risk of disordered eating habits

History of Intuitive Eating

The term "intuitive eating" was coined by registered dietitians Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch. Their book Intuitive Eating introduced the framework in 1995 when the 90s diet culture was rampant.

At the time the concept was considered radical. But three decades later, it's boomed in popularity, thanks to growing confusion around diets.

In the book, the duo shared a 'revolutionary anti-diet approach,' to help people learn to trust their inner wisdom about food. The book highlights **10 core principles to help you reconnect with your body's inner signals**. This guide covers these principles as well as tips for how to get started.



INTUITIVE EATING

Principles

- 1 – **Reject diet mentality.** Step one is to stop dieting and let go of anything diet-related. This could mean getting rid of your scale, tossing diet books, deleting diet apps, or unfollowing toxic social media accounts. This will open space to help you begin a new relationship with food.
- 2 – **Honor your hunger.** Your body sends signals when you're hungry. But often we're disconnected from our bodies and ignore them. The trouble is waiting too long to eat can lead to hangry cravings and binge eating. The solution? Pay attention to your body's hunger cues and honor them. More on this later...
- 3 – **Make peace with food.** Stop labeling foods as "bad" and give yourself permission to eat whatever you like. Making certain foods off limits can lead to feelings of deprivation, intense cravings, and binging. So call a truce on food, and see them all as fair game.
- 4 – **Challenge the "food police."** The "food police" are those voices in your head that judge your food choices. It spouts out criticisms and negative barbs about what you eat, which can lead to feelings of guilt and shame. When the food police strikes, challenge its negative beliefs.
- 5 – **Feel your fullness.** This principle goes hand in hand with #2. Your body sends signal when you're hungry and when you're full. Pay attention to those cues. When you feel satiated, stop eating.



INTUITIVE EATING

Principles continued...

- 6 – **Discover the satisfaction factor.** Eating is meant to be enjoyable. And this satisfaction is enhanced when we do it mindfully. This principle encourages us to create an inviting eating environment, be present, and savor each bite.
- 7 – **Cope with your emotions with kindness.** We often look to food to comfort us when we're sad, stressed, lonely, or bored. The trouble is, food doesn't fix our feelings. Instead, emotional eating often leads to guilt and shame, and makes us feel worse. Look for other ways to deal with uncomfortable emotions, whether it's going for a walk, doing some yoga, or calling a friend.
- 8 – **Respect your body.** This principle is all about accepting your body, exactly as it is. We're each born with a "genetic blueprint" -- and it's what makes us unique. *All* bodies deserve respect and celebration.
- 9 – **Exercise -- feel the difference.** Shift your focus away from calorie burning to how exercise makes you *feel*. Aim to move your body regularly in ways you enjoy.
- 10 – **Honor your health -- gentle nutrition.** Make food choices that honor your well-being... and your taste buds. Your overall food habits should be nutritious. But an indulgence here and there won't undo your health. What you do consistently is what matters most. Progress over perfection.

HOW TO GET STARTED

With intuitive eating

The basics of intuitive eating are pretty simple: **eat when you're hungry and stop when you're full**. The thing is, our desire to eat *isn't* just fueled by physical hunger. Emotions can trigger cravings too.

So the first step to intuitive eating is to **become more aware of your hunger cues** -- physical or emotional. That way, you know the best way to respond.

Signs of Physical Hunger

- Stomach feels empty
- Stomach grumbling
- Hunger comes on gradually
- Irritability
- Fatigue or lightheadedness
- Trouble concentrating
- Headache
- No specific cravings, any food will satisfy
- Often happens 2-3 hours after eating something satisfying

Signs of Emotional Hunger

- Stomach is quiet
- Hunger comes on suddenly
- Hunger occurs with the onset of intense emotions (e.g. sadness, stress, anger)
- Hunger sensations often tied to desire for soothing, relaxation, comfort, or numbing
- Cravings are for specific foods or flavors (e.g. salty, sweet)
- Happens regardless of the last time you ate

Pay attention to these hunger cues. If your body tells you that you're physically hungry, then eat! If your **hunger is more emotional, think of another way to satisfy that craving**.

For example, if you're craving ice cream because you're feeling lonely, call a friend. Or if stress has you reaching for the potato chips, go for a walk instead.

The scale on the next page will help you better understand how hungry or full you feel.

INTUITIVE EATING

Hunger & Fullness scale

OVERHUNGRY

1

Painfully hungry, may feel dizzy or physically ill

2

Ravenous, irritable, gnawing emptiness in stomach

3

Very hungry and ready to eat, stomach growling

4

Slightly hungry, ready to eat but can wait

5

Neutral, not hungry or full

6

Slightly full, but could eat a bit more

7

Satisfied and comfortably full

8

Overfull, slightly uncomfortable

9

Overstuffed and uncomfortably full

10

Painfully overfull, may feel sick or nauseous

IDEAL EATING RANGE

OVERFULL

The more you use this scale, the more you'll tune into your hunger and satiety cues. Ideally, aim to **eat when you reach #3-4** on the scale, and **stop when you hit #6-7**.

INTUITIVE EATING

Resources

This guide gives you the basics of intuitive eating. And it's a great starting point if you're new to the practice.

But if you'd prefer a deeper dive into intuitive eating, check out the resources below:



Intuitive Eating Resources

- **The Intuitive Eating book.** Written by Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch, this [best-seller](#) is what sparked the intuitive eating movement.
- **Intuitive eating website.** The original intuitive eating duo share tons of info on their [site](#). There's even a community where you can connect with others on their intuitive eating journey.
- **Evelyn Tribole's website.** Evelyn, one of intuitive eating's OGs, has a lots helpful tips on [her site](#) too.
- **Listen to a podcast.** More of an auditory learner? No problem. Check out this [podcast episode](#) where Dan Harris interviews Evelyn Tribole on the ins and outs of intuitive eating.
- **Join a support group.** Change is always easier when you have support. Consider joining an [Intuitive Eating group](#) with others embarking on this shift.
- **Work with a coach.** If you prefer 1-on-1 support, consider working with a [coach](#) experienced with intuitive eating.