

# Intuitive Eating

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## What is a diet?

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A way of eating that you are emotionally tied to. You either feel good or bad about yourself based off your food choices.

Verb: Restrict oneself to small amounts or special kinds of food in order to lose weight.

## Why diets fail us:

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When we attempt to control our food in a restrictive way, we will inevitably lose control.

Eventually our body wins. Our hunger wins.

It is very common for our binges to happen in direct proportion to the degree in which we are restricting.

Believe it or not there is zero evidence out there that a diet actually that works long term.

None.

There is, however, a lot of evidence out there that proves diets don't work and ultimately make you gain weight.

It isn't uncommon to have success for a few months, maybe a year, some make it up to 3, but inevitably they lose control.

And then they experience the 'rebound effect'.

Go off the hinges and binge their face off to make up for lost time.  
(I have absolutely done this)

Another way dieting fails sets us up to fail is that it creates a "last supper mentality".

Some of you may have even experienced this before joining this course.

This is basically the feast before the famine.

A few days before I joined a 12-meeting for food I WENT. TO. TOWN.

I was eating all the things.

There was NO stopping me. Day old pastries at coffee shops, Taco Bell, Mc Donalds, hitting up Plaid Pantry and 7/11 for all the candy bars they had on sale, 50% off racks at grocery stores.

You name it I was eating it.

During this time I would convince myself, "Clearly I REALLY need this 12 step group because I am out of control!!"

However, it wasn't that I was out of control around food. It was the anticipation of restriction and deprivation that was leading me to binge.

It wasn't the food.

It was the fear of the food being taken away.

Which, might I add, is a VERY healthy and normal response.

## So what the hell do I eat?!

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This is where Intuitive Eating comes in.

The idea behind intuitive eating is to connect your mind AND your body.

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(Given ALL the information we have about how no diet works long term and how much MORE they eff us up than help us , it is insane that they are still so prevalent and prescribed. Now though, they are being masked as wellness plans or "healthy eating" or things like Noom. \*eye roll\*)

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Diet plans, meal plans, programs, points are all external. All pushing us away from intuitive eating. The goal is to bring in your mind and body.

For example, when you go out to order food at a restaurant, do you really stop and think, "what sounds good to me right now? Something lighter or heavier? Something cold or hot? Do I feel like some comfort food or maybe a lighter soup?" Or is it more like this, "I bet there is a ton of calories in that," or working out so you can eat a meal without guilt.

Perhaps you skip the entree section all together and just go straight to the salads.

I remember the first time I ordered exactly what I wanted off the menu. I remember not having to stay in the salad section. I remember scrolling through all the pages thinking, "I can have whatever I want. It was SO FREEING!

*We are all born as Intuitive Eaters.*

As babies we would cry when we were hungry and naturally stop when we were full.

Our body actually WANTS us to feel good. We are designed to know how to eat. The problem is, we get messages from diet culture/society that we are NOT ok. We need to look smaller. Be more toned. Be more muscular. More feminine. And we begin to diet.

Pushing us further away from what we intuitively want. Pushing us away from listening to our hunger cues. Further away from taking care of ourselves in a way that feels good and instead trusting some website to know better.

Intuitive eating has 10 principles that you can read about more depth in their book.

I HIGHLY recommend you listen to the podcast on 10% Happier with Evelyn Tribole to better understand IE and the principles. It is episode #220.

### **Intuitive eating is not something you can get wrong.**

Try to let go of the idea that you can do this perfectly. As women with a history of dieting, we are taught that there is a right and wrong way to eat. Right and wrong amounts. Right and wrong times. Trying to do this perfectly will actually keep you from ever really getting it.

There are days where you will eat a lot of food and others not so much. Days where you want to feel lighter and eat a salad for lunch and other days you are just HUNGRY and have 2 breakfasts before 9 am and seconds at dinner. All of it is ok. Try to resist the urge to judge. The goal is to just listen to your body.

This is where *mindful eating* will help in the process. Mindful eating is slightly different from Intuitive Eating- this is discussed in the suggested podcast. Mindful eating will give you a chance to slow down actually LISTEN to what your body wants vs standing up in the kitchen, hovering

over the sink, trying to get it all in before anyone comes home.

Doing that, eating in a panicked and rushed way, makes it very challenging to pay attention to your body. To notice how it feels. To get the sensation of fullness. You also digest food differently when you eat it in a stressed out state like that vs putting it on a plate and enjoying it.

For right now, try to give yourself time to eat.

Put it on a plate. Taste it. Feel it.

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Your body knows better than any external source what it needs. Better than any calorie counter, macro plan or system. Once you get back in touch with your body, and also use your mind, you WILL want a variety of foods. You WILL want vegetables. You WILL crave movement.

The way that I see people "fail" at this the fastest is removing availability to food. Intuitive eating, and just all around sanity around food, cannot happen unless you are in complete allowance.

If you eliminate sugar or bread from your diet, you better believe the second you are around it you are going to eat ALL OF IT.

Restriction does not work. Portion control is just another diet. Again, your body is going to want different foods, in different amounts, daily!

Depending on your activity level, your hormones, your energy, your mood. It will never be perfect and it will always vary. You are not a robot. Diet plans are written for robots. No one can adhere to them. And then when they fall off, because everyone always does, we feel guilt and shame and eat all the foods that were "off limits".

You must be in complete allowance around food for IE to work.

Two other suggestions for making your journey into intuitive eating as easy as possible:

**1. Stop following health gurus. Stop analyzing every nutrition label.**

I'd be willing to bet if anything you know TOO MUCH about food rather than not enough. It is the amount of information you have swimming around in your head that makes it harder for you to eat intuitively. You do not need more information.

**2. Stay off the damn scale.**

This just doesn't help. Especially in the beginning. Especially when trying to regain trust with your body. Every time you step on the scale, all trust you have built is tossed out the window.

## **Legalization**

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This is something I didn't learn about until years into recovery. I had no idea this was a thing. I just thought I was crazy in the beginning.

Legalization is allowing *all* foods, which I mentioned before, is a prerequisite for this work. Allowing carbs, sugar, etc.

This may stir up a variety of emotions for you. Possibly excitement and joy to finally be able to eat ANYTHING you want in ANY amount. For others it might be sheer terror. You probably have the thought that if you allow yourself to eat whatever you want you will NEVER STOP EATING. And I promise you, this is not true.

It is completely normal to want more of your previously restricted foods in the beginning.

Try not to fight or resist this.

Also try not to anticipate when it will end.

This best approach for all of this is to just be in the moment. If you are eating donuts, really taste them. Savor them. Pay attention to your body, how they are making you feel and also when it says it has had enough.

When is the last time you ate a cookie or bagel or bowl of ice cream, without guilt?

Like, truly enjoyed it. Tasted it. Weren't rushed. Didn't feel like you were doing anything wrong.

Years??

When I was in the early stages of "recovery", or healing my relationship with food or whatever words feel best to you, I ate a LOT of ice cream and cereal.

Almost daily.

For months.

It is not uncommon to go through a phase of wanting everything that was previously restricted or off limits aka legalization.

Try to remain calm.

Stay connected to your body.

This is where the mindful eating work will come in to play. This will pass. You won't continue wanting 10 cookies a day for a year. Or, maybe they sound good and you want them but you know you don't have to eat them because you've built that trust with yourself that they will also be there tomorrow and the next day and the next.

# Meals

There is more and more research out indicating the importance of having full, satisfying meals. This also goes in alignment with my own experience and the work I have done with clients.

Give yourself the opportunity to get full several times a day.

Snacking all day doesn't feel good to most people.

Sit down, eat a hearty meal, and get full, multiple times a day.

How do you know your meals are big enough??

If you have a meal you should be full for 3 to 4 hours.

If you find yourself snacking after an hour or so of having lunch, odds are, that meal just wasn't quite large enough. It isn't a huge failure, it isn't anything to freak out about, it doesn't mean this is a problem, it just means you needed more food.

There is no PERFECT level of hunger and fullness nor will it always be the same. Some days you may have a burrito from your favorite Mexican restaurant and struggle to finish it all.

Other days you have eat a basket of chips, have the burrito and want ice cream after.

Our levels of hungry and fullness vary.

The work is getting comfortable with all of that. A variety of hunger and fullness.

## What about PMS?

This always comes up so I thought I would briefly address it here.

You will want and need more food on your period. The problem is not that you are more hungry, the problem is that you just aren't that comfortable eating more food yet. That is ok. Try to let yourself eat more. Pay attention to your cycle so you don't feel like a crazy person out of the blue (which honestly, happens to me EVERY SINGLE MONTH!! Like every month I am surprised by it.) More hunger, more chocolate, more exhausting, more tears, very normal. Bring your PMS problems to a call and we will work through it :)

# Why Intuitive Eating fails most people

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Example: You are on vacation (or at a birthday party or out at a restaurant). You see your favorite dessert on the menu but just had the best dinner of your life and just aren't hungry. But this dessert looks SO good! You decide to eat it. 1 of 2 things can happen here.

1. OH NO! I am not hungry but ate the cake. While eating the cake you are thinking of how many calories are in it and how you aren't really listening to your hungry and you have failed YET another thing.
2. You eat the cake. It was good. You weren't hungry. Now you are quite full. The end.

*This is not the. "hunger-fullness diet", which many people turn it in to.*

You WILL eat when you aren't hungry. You WILL emotionally eat. It happens to even the normalist of normal eaters. You don't have to be a certain level of hunger to eat. You can just do it because it sounds good in the moment.

There is no morality in what or how you eat. It is just food.

INTUITIVE EATING DOES NOT SOLVE EMOTIONAL EATING.

Intuitive eating simply helps you get back in touch with your body. It was not created to cure all emotional and binge eating.

People will start Intuitive Eating and either turn it into a diet or think all their emotionally eating problem will now be gone. When everything isn't resolved they assume that this is another diet/thing that failed them. Or that they failed. And find another diet.

The intention this week is to start to pay attention to your body.

Maybe you follow your body's directions, maybe you don't, just start paying attention.

Ask yourself:

"Is this physical hunger or emotional hunger?"

"How did that dinner sit in my stomach?"

"How am I feeling?"

"What sounds good?"

## You Don't Have To Test Yourself

If I buy ice cream, I am going to eat it.

If I have chocolate in the cupboard, I plan on eating it.

You get to use your own judgement here. If you aren't at the place where you can keep Oreos at home without eating them all, maybe don't buy them right now.

If you love ice cream but you just know you won't be able to focus if it's in the freezer, go out and get ice cream instead of keeping it at home.

There are no rules with intuitive eating.

You get to decide how you want to eat and what you want it to look like.

This gets easier with time.

I promise.

The first couple weeks, or months, you may feel like a baby giraffe trying to walk.

This is like learning to play the piano. It feels weird and clunky in the beginning and requires much more thought. But, the more you do it, the easier it feels and before you know it you do it without thinking.

This isn't a race.