



TOGETHER IN NUTRITION

Basics of Intuitive Eating

Did you know we were all born with an innate ability to regulate how much and what types of food to consume, and that our bodies can regulate their own weight without dieting or restriction? This is why you will see toddlers turn down cookies and cake, when most of us can't imagine easily doing so. If the child is no longer hungry and feels satisfied – no food will appeal to them. Unfortunately, as we grow older we are taught that certain foods are only for special occasions, to question our hunger/fullness, or that our bodies can't be trusted to regulate our weight – which can be especially problematic in times of physical changes such as pregnancy and adolescence/puberty. By strengthening the connection between our bodies and our brains, we learn to once again trust our bodies' abilities – and true health emerges.

Intuitive Eating is the concept of making peace with food, rejecting the diet mentality, and listening to and trusting one's body. Intuitive eating is essentially eating without external influences (rules, diets, norms) and has true health and wellbeing in mind- mental, emotional, and physical.

Below is some supporting research and information regarding intuitive eating.

- Research shows that intuitive eaters participate in physical activity because they want to and enjoy doing so rather than feeling like they should ¹
- Although intuitive eating is looked at from a weight neutral standpoint, studies find that intuitive eating is inversely associated with BMI ²
 - Intuitive eating can help you reach your set point weight range- the weight your body naturally was born to be at
 - Intuitive eaters are likely to maintain their set point range throughout their lives
- Intuitive eaters show decreases in binge eating, increases in metabolic rate, lower triglyceride levels, higher HDL, decreased preoccupation with food, decreased or no feelings of deprivation, and a decreased sense of failure
- Intuitive eating teaches you how to trust your body to feed itself rather than use external sources to guide your eating (a diet plan, the time of day, food rules, the scale)
- Parents, your children model behavior they see from you, dieting behavior included. They hear and internalize the language you speak to yourself and to them about food and their bodies. By learning to re-trust your body through intuitive eating, you have the opportunity to teach them how to trust theirs so they grow up to have a healthy relationship with food and their bodies

Intuitive Eating is broken down into 10 principals: An example of each is provided below each principal. To learn more, attend the workshop and pick up a copy of the Intuitive Eating book by Evelyn Tribole MS, RD and Elyse Resch MS, RD

1. Reject the diet mentality.

Diets don't work. Research shows that diets are actually a predictor for weight *gain*. Why? For one thing, your body thinks it's being starved and will hold on to energy for fear of future starvation (another diet) with potential for an increased set point weight, slowed metabolism, and a never-ending cycle of binging and restriction.

2. Honor your hunger.

We are told that skipping meals is an effective weight loss solution. Unfortunately, ignoring cues likely leads to overeating and potentially disappearance of hunger cues altogether.

3. Make peace with food.

There is no "good" food or "bad" food. Labeling food as "bad" will likely lead to deprivation, leading to inevitable overeating of that food bringing up feelings of guilt and shame and the cycle repeats. Giving yourself unconditional permission to eat all foods takes the allure of "bad" foods away and allows all food to just be food. You may even find a new-found desire to eat veggies and whole grains when you truly taste the food instead of eating it because you "have to".

4. Challenge the food police.

Challenge those thoughts in your head that tell you that eating a salad instead of a burger makes you "good" or vice versa or that certain foods should "never" be in the house. When we learn to talk back, we can tune into what our body is actually telling us to eat and enjoy it without the food police eating with us.

5. Feel your fullness.

Just like riding a bike, obtaining a comfortable level of fullness takes practice. Tools like the hunger and fullness scale can help!

6. Discover the satisfaction factor.

Fullness and satisfaction are different feelings. Have you ever eaten foods on a diet and felt like you wanted something more? Come to the workshop to learn about this and how to obtain satisfaction more often.

7. Cope with your emotions.

While eating is an inherently emotional experience, using food as one's only coping mechanism for hard emotions is not constructive. Finding other ways to feel and experience emotions can help you develop a better relationship with food and yourself.

8. Respect your body.

Accept the body you were given. Would you expect your size 8 foot to fit into a size 6? Learning to honor one's body is a crucial step in walking away from the diet mentality.

9. Exercise- feel the difference.

Have you ever thought about exercising to just enjoy moving your body instead of using it to manipulate your body? How much more fun would a class be if we weren't there just to achieve steps and burn calories but to actually enjoy the music, the people, and the endorphin rush!

10. Honor your hunger with gentle nutrition.

Gentle nutrition teaches choosing food that honors your health and your taste buds! We can't get to this step without first learning to reject the diet mentality and honor our bodies.

Gast, J., Nielson, A. C., Hunt, A., & Leiker, J. J. (2015). Intuitive eating: Associations with physical activity motivation and BMI. *American Journal of Health Promotion, 29*(3), e91-e99. 10.4278/ajhp.130305-QUAN-97

Camilleri, G., Méjean, C., Bellisle, F., Andreeva, V., Kesse-Guyot, E., Hercberg, S., & Péneau, S. (2016). Intuitive eating is inversely associated with body weight status in the general population-based NutriNet-santé study. *Obesity, 24*(5), 1154-1161. 10.1002/oby.21440