

Core Principles of Intuitive Eating

Often Intuitive Eating is mistaken for a diet or weight loss method. Intuitive Eating is weight neutral and associated with Health at Every Size, anti-diet nutrition and weight inclusivity. Weight is simply not the focus.

1 Reject the Diet Mentality

Throw out the diet books and magazine articles that offer you false hope of losing weight quickly, easily, and permanently. Get angry at diet culture that promotes weight loss and the lies that have led you to feel as if you were a failure every time a new diet stopped working and you gained back all of the weight. If you allow even one small hope to linger that a new and better diet might be lurking around the corner, it will prevent you from being free to rediscover Intuitive Eating.

2 Honor Your Hunger

Keep your body biologically fed with adequate energy and carbohydrates. Otherwise, you can trigger a primal drive to overeat. Once you reach the moment of excessive hunger, all intentions of moderate, conscious eating are fleeting and irrelevant. Learning to honor the first biological signal of hunger sets the stage for rebuilding trust with yourself and food.

3 Make Peace with Food

Call a truce—stop the food fight! Give yourself unconditional permission to eat. If you tell yourself that you can't or shouldn't have a particular food, it can lead to intense feelings of deprivation that build into uncontrollable cravings and, often, bingeing. When you finally "give in" to your forbidden foods, eating will be experienced with such intensity, it will usually result in Last Supper overeating and overwhelming guilt.

4 Challenge the Food Police

Scream a loud NO to thoughts in your head that declare you are "good" for eating minimal calories or "bad" because you ate a piece of chocolate cake. The food police monitor the unreasonable rules that diet culture has created. The police station is housed deep in your psyche, and its loudspeaker shouts negative barbs, hopeless phrases, and guilt-provoking indictments. Chasing the food police away is a critical step in returning to Intuitive Eating.

5 Discover the Satisfaction Factor

The Japanese have the wisdom to promote pleasure as one of their goals of healthy living. In our fury to comply with diet culture, we often overlook one of the most basic

gifts of existence—the pleasure and satisfaction that can be found in the eating experience. When you eat what you really want, in an environment that is inviting, the pleasure you derive will be a powerful force in helping you feel satisfied and content.

6 Feel Your Fullness

In order to honor your fullness, you need to trust that you will give yourself the foods that you desire. Listen for the body signals that tell you that you are no longer hungry and observe the signs that show that you're comfortably full. Pause in the middle of eating and ask yourself how the food tastes, and what your current fullness level is.

7 Cope with Your Emotions with Kindness

First, recognize that food restriction, both physically and mentally, can, in and of itself, trigger loss of control, which can feel like emotional eating. Find ways to comfort, nurture, distract, and resolve your issues. Anxiety, loneliness, boredom, and anger are emotions we all experience throughout life. Each has its own trigger, and each has its own appeasement. Food won't fix any of these feelings. It may comfort for the short term, distract from the pain, or even numb you. But food won't solve the problem. You'll ultimately have to deal with the source of the emotion.

8 Respect Your Body

Accept your genetic blueprint. Just as a person with a shoe size of eight would not expect to realistically squeeze into a size six, it is equally as futile (and uncomfortable) to have the same expectation about body size. But mostly, respect your body, so you can feel better about who you are. It's hard to reject the diet mentality if you are unrealistic and critical about your body size or shape. All bodies deserve dignity.

9 Movement—Feel the Difference

Forget militant exercise. Just get active and feel the difference. Shift your focus to how it feels to move your body, rather than the calorie-burning effect of exercise. If you focus on how you feel from working out, such as energized, it can make the difference between rolling out of bed for a brisk morning walk or hitting the snooze alarm.

10 Honor Your Health with Gentle Nutrition

Make food choices that honor your health and taste buds while making you feel well. Remember that you don't have to eat a perfectly to be healthy. You will not suddenly get a nutrient deficiency from one snack, one meal, or one day of eating. It's what you eat consistently over time that matters—progress, not perfection, is what counts.