

A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO

# Intuitive Eating

FIVE PRINCIPLES TO GET YOU OUT OF YOUR  
HEAD AND BACK IN TUNE WITH YOUR BODY

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redwood  
WELLBEING

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# Intuitive Eating

HELLO! I'M ALYSSA – CERTIFIED HEALTH AND NUTRITION COACH. I TAKE GREAT PLEASURE IN SUPPORTING WOMEN IN THEIR FOOD RELATIONSHIPS AND BODY IMAGE JOURNEYS.

## WELCOME

My own intuitive eating journey was a struggle for MANY years as I suffered from eating disorders, the dieting cycle and poor body image. I didn't know what it *meant* to eat intuitively let alone ever attempt it!

I was in a binge/restrict cycle that only ever allowed me to make food decisions based on weight loss and 'start tomorrows'.

My persistence and determination to recover from Bulimia and Binge Eating Disorders, as well as my psychology training, school teaching, mentoring and health coaching roles, have all led me to gain insight into healthy food relationships.

I now eat intuitively and with great joy, and I'm excited to help you do the same.

- So let's get started!



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## WE WERE ALL NATURALLY INTUITIVE EATERS ONCE

As infants, we are strongly in tune with our food needs, as we cry out to signal hunger, and then stop eating when we feel satisfied. Infants know when and how much they want to eat each meal, which can vary day to day, week to week, while maintaining an overall balanced intake.

Unfortunately, it doesn't take long before we start to lose our intuition surrounding eating, as rules and restrictions, rewards and bribes steer us away from the wisdom of our bodies. We begin to rely on external cues that influence the mind, and our ability to eat intuitively gradually decreases.

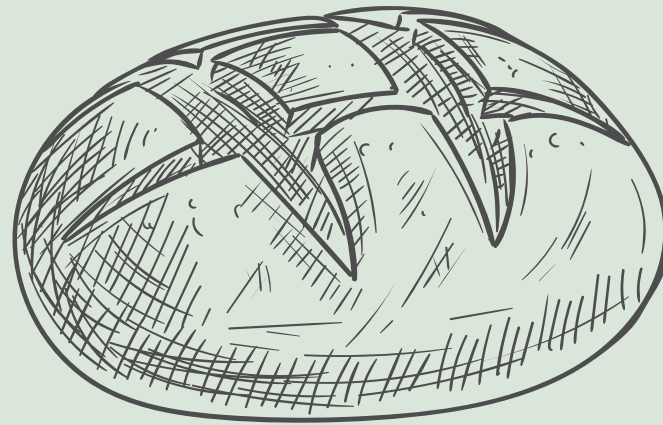
We live in a diet culture that has created 'good' and 'bad' foods, and where thinner is seen as better. Now, you may be thinking "I'm not on a diet - this doesn't apply to me", but even if you're not following a specific diet plan like Weight Watchers, Palaeolithic or Keto etc, the reality is that dieting encompasses any external motivation for eating. This includes portion control, counting calories, not eating before or after a certain time of day, 'clean eating', cheat meals and more.

## YOU'RE IN THE RIGHT PLACE IF YOU FIND YOURSELF EATING IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS;

Emotional eating  
Bored eating  
Secretive eating  
Comfort eating  
Pre-diet eating  
Dieting  
Mindless eating  
Good girl' eating  
Binge eating  
Scheduled eating  
Meeting eating  
FOMO (fear of missing out) eating  
Rushed eating  
Celebratory overeating



# INTUITIVE EATING



– MOVING AWAY FROM EXTERNAL  
MOTIVATORS OF EATING,  
AND GETTING IN TOUCH WITH OUR  
INTERNAL CUES –

Intuitive eating is a natural approach to food that puts the focus on reconnecting with your body and instincts, and using internal cues like fullness and hunger. This intrinsic way of eating rejects external influences to eating such as dieting, food rules, and media impacts. It shifts us toward a peaceful and balanced approach that can offer us a multitude of health benefits.

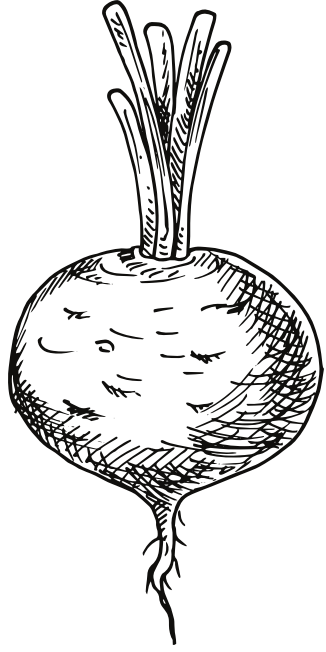
Intuitive eating has shown to have lasting positive impacts on those who are consistent. Increased optimism, body and life satisfaction, and resilience are just some of the indicators identified.

It can feel difficult to initially make this change in your eating because we are so used to being bombarded by conflicting messages about food rules and 'healthy' eating, and rarely can we allow permissive thinking to take over. However, a re-learning of eating is such a worthwhile pursuit for lasting positive wellbeing. Below are five principles of intuitive eating to help you begin your journey to food freedom.

*It is important to note that the following five principles are not 'rules' to replace the external cues you are rejecting - rather they serve as a guide to encourage freedom in your eating. It can be tempting to want to follow a 'plan', but please remind yourself that you are now doing things differently, and it will take some getting used to.*

# Five Principles of Intuitive Eating

## 1 Ditch the Diet



Even if you are not on a specific diet, we are still part of a strong and damaging dieting movement that infiltrates every aspect of our society. While we can't escape it, there are steps you can take to support your own wellbeing and food relationships. Before we look at food specific support in your intuitive eating practice, it is important that we make choices that will help separate us from the diet culture.

Some examples are listed below. *Feel free to take any other action that you feel will support you moving forward.*

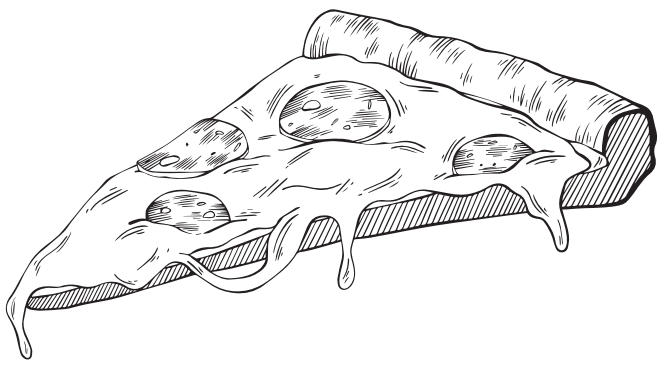
- Unfollowing any social media accounts that make you feel like you aren't good enough as you are right now
- Not buying magazines with messages of 'ideal' body types and weight loss.
- Being a part of a fitness community that promotes overall health benefits rather than weight or shape.
- Speaking up when around friends or family that use dieting language or negative body talk
- Challenging those that make you feel like you are not good enough at your current weight/size.
- Removing scales from your home if you feel they are making you anxious about your weight
- Removing any old pictures of yourself or reminders that make you want to change your body or look how you used to

It can feel difficult moving from the dieting mindset (external cues) to the intuitive eating mindset (internal cues), so be patient and kind with yourself. Creating a positive and supportive health environment for yourself will set you up well for success with consistent intuitive eating practises. It can take months or years to shift this mindset, but know that you are creating lasting change in your mind.



# Five Principles of Intuitive Eating

## 2 Break the Rules



HAVE YOU EVER SAID THESE PHRASES TO YOURSELF?

'I want another biscuit, I already had one'

'I shouldn't have dessert tonight, I'm going to be good'

'I'm so full, I'd better have a longer workout tomorrow to burn it off'

'It's not lunch time yet, I can't eat until then'

'I'm not eating bread this week'

Many of us have grown accustomed to this internal judge, constantly reminding us of the 'shoulds' and 'shouldn'ts' of eating, and allowing food rules to dictate our choices instead of our internal body cues. Breaking the rules means going against the grain of our dieting culture in the following ways.

### UNSCHEDULED EATING

A widely held belief in the western world is that we need to have breakfast, lunch and dinner, and morning tea and afternoon tea in between (dessert is sometimes 'allowed'). Intuitive eating means breaking free from that mentality and eating when you feel like eating (Of course we do not all have this luxury all the time, as work, children, school, and other scheduled commitments require eating at certain times). When able, using your internal cues as a guide, start to notice what happens when you remove the set timings of meals and snacks. It also means removing the rule that each meal is expected to look a certain way. There is such freedom with allowing ourselves to eat anything, anytime, so when thinking about what you want to eat, go wild! It doesn't have to fit into the mould of 'dinner food' or 'breakfast food'.

### REMOVING THE MORAL VALUE OF FOOD

One of the hardest tasks you may have when beginning to eat intuitively is to put aside the notion of food being 'good' or 'bad' - FOOD IS JUST FOOD. You will be much better able to listen to your body when you challenge the food police and honestly permit yourself to any food. This step takes time, so be patient with yourself.

### REJECTING AND REFRAMING RIGID THINKING

One of the most important steps you will take in your intuitive eating process is rejecting rigid thinking about food and what you 'should' or 'shouldn't' eat. Reframing those thoughts will gradually shift that diet mentality and allow for a positive and kind food relationship.

Include any of your own affirmations to the following;

-I am doing so well in this process

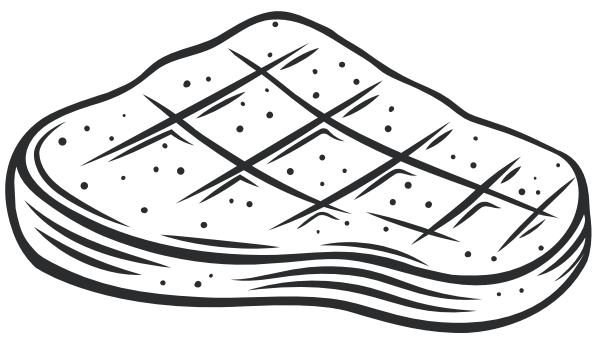
-I am learning to eat intuitively with patience

-When I listen to my body's signals, I will eat the right foods for me

-I am trusting and honouring my body

# Five Principles of Intuitive Eating

## 3 Be aware of your Hunger / Fullness



Our bodies are constantly sending messages to our brain about its needs, and it's our responsibility to listen and respond as best we can. Intuitive eating involves relearning our own hunger and fullness (satiety) cues which may take time. Some people admit that they can't remember the last time they felt hungry (because they eat so frequently), or satisfied (because they follow certain food rules or diets).

A helpful tool when beginning to pay attention to your cues is the hunger/fullness scale below. Get into the habit of checking in with yourself regularly and what number you might be at, particularly just before, during and after meals.



While it is not recommended that you allow yourself to get to 0 or 10 on the scale, only you can know what is best for your body when it comes to recognising your hunger/fullness and acting upon it. It may take some experimenting to figure out what feeling is associated with which number of the scale. Once you have become overly familiar with the scale, it will become a habit to check in with yourself without having to refer to it, and you will be able to better know your 'comfortable' and 'satisfied' internal cues that are more subtle.

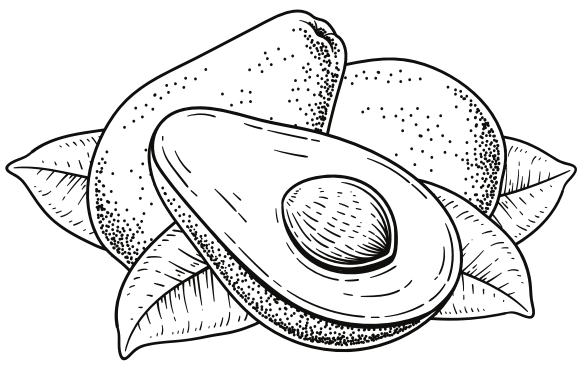
### SOME QUESTIONS YOU MAY LIKE TO ASK YOURSELF:

- What does hunger feel like in my body?
- What sensations do I get?
- What do I notice changing when I start to feel full?

How much you want to eat will vary from day to day, so don't be concerned if the same meal makes you 'getting full' one day and 'feel I could eat' the next. The scale is not intended to become an external cue that creates rigidity in your eating. Remember to listen to your body, bringing more consciousness and awareness to mealtimes.

# Five Principles of Intuitive Eating

## 4 Come back to your senses



Focusing on what your senses are experiencing before, during and after eating, is a mindfulness practise that brings presence to the body. Becoming aware of the tastes, textures, smell and appearance of your food will help you to find satisfaction in the meal and know when you've had enough. The practice of mindful eating is being conscious of what you're eating, why you're eating, and how you're eating.

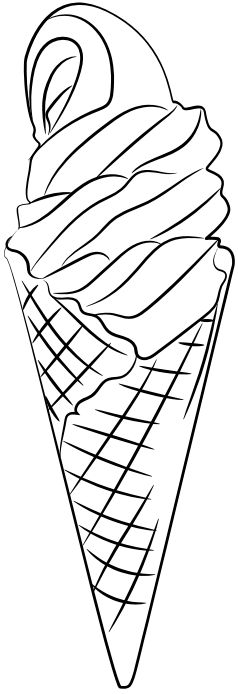
*Here are some ways you can bring awareness to your body while eating;*

- ⦿ If intuitive eating feels too difficult to begin with, start with one meal per day or just the first 5 minutes of each meal-time where you do nothing other than pay close attention to your body.
- ⦿ Remove distractions where possible - ie phones, ipads, TV, putting away work notes or books.
- ⦿ Check in with yourself and how you're feeling before, during and after eating. Refer to your hunger/fullness scale when necessary.
- ⦿ Notice your meal before taking a mouthful – the appearance, the smell, the texture.
- ⦿ Put your fork/spoon down after each bite and slow your chewing down. Take a slow deep breath before the next mouthful.
- ⦿ Practice allowing yourself to leave food (even one bite) on the plate if you feel satisfied.
- ⦿ If you choose to eat the leftovers once you feel physically satisfied, prevent feelings of guilt occurring by reminding yourself that there are no rules, and everything is permissible. Sometimes we just really like the taste and that's okay!
- ⦿ Once finished, where possible, spend time enjoying the feeling of satisfaction before moving on to the next part of your day.



# Five Principles of Intuitive Eating

## 5 Honor your Holistic Health



Intuitive eating means allowing food to be eaten that isn't always nutritionally valuable, but feeds the soul, and brings joy to you without guilt. Health is more than just food intake, as it encompasses social, physical, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions that also need nourishment.

Here are some examples of how you can be intuitive with food, while honouring all dimensions of health.

### EATING FOR PLEASURE

While out to dinner, you may feel physically satisfied after eating your meal, but you want to try a particular dessert on the menu. If you decide that you will have some but you don't want to feel stuffed full afterwards, consider your options. You still may want to finish it after checking in with your fullness scale, or you might choose to share the dessert with a friend or leave some on the plate. Whatever the decision, make it mindfully and with peace.

### RESPONDING TO YOUR EMOTIONS WITH KINDNESS

If feeling particularly emotional one day and your usual default is to buy 'comfort food' – first take some time to notice the feeling and sit with it for a time. Be curious and non-judgmental and allow for a kind internal dialogue to take place, as if you were comforting a good friend. Ask yourself what it is you really need at that time, also considering non food self-care alternatives. Remember that if you decide intuitively that you do in fact want to eat, you do not need to feel guilty because food is not just for energy, it's also comforting and delicious!

### MOVING YOUR BODY

Shift the exercise focus from weight loss or burning kilojoules from what you ate, to movement for enjoyment and overall health benefits.

Choose to create healthy physical activity habits regardless of your diet – one need not be affected by the other.

### ILLNESS, MENSTRUATION AND STRESS

Our bodies have different food requirements when going through different phases, and we can serve our bodies nutritional needs that may differ from time to time. Intuitive eating may feel more difficult when stressed, menstruating or unwell, so it can be helpful to plan ahead with options for simple, nutritious meals that you may want at the time, but not have the energy to make.



Thank you for being here.

I hope you have found this guide helpful. This is a process of patience and practice, but you now have the tools to get you started on your journey to eating intuitively. I'd love to hear how you're going with your intuitive eating progress by getting in touch with me on my socials or email.

If you would like 1:1 support with your wellbeing journey, please contact me for a FREE introductory coaching session. I look forward to hearing from you.

*Alyssa*



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