

INTUITIVE EATING



*SIMPLE STEPS TO GAIN PEACE,
FREEDOM, AND HEALTH WITH FOOD*

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WHEN YOU
REACH THE END
OF WHAT YOU
SHOULD KNOW,
YOU WILL BE AT
THE BEGINNING
OF WHAT YOU
SHOULD SENSE.

KAHLIL GIBRÁN



INTRODUCTION

One of the first challenges anyone has after deciding to make healthy living a priority is figuring out what to eat. Eating can be a significant source of stress. Consider how stressful each of the following can be:

- Forcing yourself to eat healthy food you don't really enjoy
- Eating when you don't feel like eating
- Abstaining from food when you feel like eating
- Abstaining from foods you love to eat
- The guilt you experience after eating foods you know you shouldn't eat
- Not being certain if you ate a healthy food or an unhealthy food

Consider how often the medical community has changed its recommendations. The changes never seem to end:

- Is meat healthy or unhealthy?
- Are eggs good for you or will they instantly harden your arteries?
- Milk? Cheese?
- Bread and pasta?
- Potatoes?
- Butter?
- Are all oils unhealthy or is it all oils except olive oil and coconut oil?

- Nuts? Are peanuts even actually nuts? Are they healthy?

Is being super lean healthy or is it one step short of being anorexic?

Are we supposed to eat one meal a day? Three? Small meals every 3 hours?

Intuitive eating is a new approach to eating that eliminates the stress and indecision associated with food. It can greatly enhance your relationship with food and help you to have a greater degree of mastery over your mind and body.

Intuitive eating is a different perspective on health and food. It is free from willpower, diets, discipline, and counting calories.

Your body will tell you when you need to eat. Your mind knows what you need to eat. **Your mind and body both possess an intuition that you can use to eat intuitively.**

This is a challenging process. You likely have several unhealthy eating habits that resulted from ignoring your intuition. You've also been bombarded with an incredible amount of conflicting information.

But, remember that you were once an intuitive eater. The vast majority of children will only eat

when they are hungry, while most adults will gleefully eat their favorite food whether they are hungry or not. Even when a child does manage to overeat one day, they greatly reduce their intake the next.

The hardest part of intuitive eating is learning how to trust yourself, but peace, freedom, and health are the rewards.

INTUITION IS ALWAYS
RIGHT IN AT LEAST TWO
IMPORTANT WAYS;
IT IS ALWAYS IN RESPONSE
TO SOMETHING.
IT ALWAYS HAS YOUR BEST
INTEREST AT HEART.

GAVIN DE BECKER



Consider these topics as a way to learn more about your relationship with food and how intuitive eating can positively impact your life:

- 1. Chapter 1: Benefits of Intuitive Eating.** Intuitive eating is chock full of benefits, and you're going to learn about them. You'll discover the significant impact that intuitive eating can have on your body and your mind. There's so much to be gained from following the intuitive eating lifestyle.
- 2. Chapter 2: Emotional Motivation to Eat versus Real Hunger.** Do you think you only eat when your body requires more food? Of course, you don't. There are a lot of reasons why you eat besides true hunger. You'll learn about eating triggers and understand what drives your urge to eat.
- 3. Chapter 3: How to eat Intuitively.** How does one actually eat intuitively? This chapter has you covered. You'll have a framework that you can apply to your life immediately.
- 4. Chapter 4: Alternatives to Eating.** If you're eating when you don't need to eat, what should you do instead? You'll know soon enough.

5. **Chapter 5: Why Diets Don't Work.** Diets rarely work. You'll understand the reasons why.
6. **Chapter 6: First Steps.** A primer on how to get started right now.

INSIGHT IS NOT A
LIGHTBULB THAT GOES
OFF INSIDE OUR HEADS.
IT IS A FLICKERING
CANDLE THAT CAN
EASILY BE SNUFFED OUT.
MALCOLM GLADWELL



CHAPTER 1: BENEFITS OF INTUITIVE EATING

Many of the benefits of intuitive eating are more challenging to measure than those of conventional diets. **Remember that intuitive eating isn't focused on pounds and inches.** The benefits of intuitive eating are spectacular but can take some time to become apparent.

There are many benefits you can expect to enjoy after committing to intuitive eating:

- 1. A healthier relationship with food.** With time, you'll have a better perspective on food and eating. You'll be able to eat in a way that is enjoyable and keeps your body healthy. You'll see any unhealthy attachments to food fade away.
- 2. Stronger physical and emotional health.** If you eat when you're truly hungry, and avoid eating when you're not, you'll be much healthier both physically and mentally. Unhealthy attachments to food create a variety of health issues.
 - You can expect to lose weight and receive all the other benefits that

conventional weight-loss diets provide.

- You'll be less obsessed with your weight and have fewer body-image related challenges.
- 3. Decrease in emotional eating.** Learning to recognize and neutralize emotional eating will go a long way toward boosting your health and fostering a positive relationship with food.
 - 4. Lowered likelihood of developing eating disorders.** A healthy perspective on food, separating your emotions from eating, and minimizing the effects of eating triggers will go a long way toward preventing eating disorders.
 - 5. Greater self-esteem.** When you have control over your eating, your self-esteem is sure to get a boost, too. You'll also notice that you have more self-confidence.
 - 6. You'll learn to understand your hunger and how to deal with it.** There are reasons you have the urge to eat that have nothing to do with hunger. There are many people that haven't been legitimately hungry in at least a decade.

When you learn to only eat when you're physically hungry, stop when you're full, make healthy food choices, and attain a healthy body weight, there are dozens of benefits that come as a result.

Food can become a relatively minor thing in your life that you enjoy and are able to maintain a healthy relationship with. **Intuitive eating allows you to enjoy food in a very positive way.**

With all these great benefits, it's worth giving intuitive eating a fair chance!

AT TIMES YOU HAVE TO LEAVE
THE CITY OF YOUR COMFORT
AND GO INTO THE
WILDERNESS OF YOUR
INTUITION.

WHAT YOU'LL DISCOVER WILL
BE WONDERFUL. WHAT YOU'LL
DISCOVER IS YOURSELF.

ALAN ALDA



CHAPTER 2: EMOTIONAL MOTIVATION TO EAT VERSUS REAL HUNGER

There are many challenges for adults to regain an intuitive eating perspective. At some point in your lifetime you probably faced most or all of the following:

- Learning to finish everything on your plate
- Feeling guilt around eating too much or throwing food away
- Receiving dessert as a reward
- Losing dessert as a punishment
- Being forced to eat foods you disliked
- Being sent to bed without dinner
- Your parents may have been economically challenged and food was scarce in your home.
- Receiving the biggest portion or eating the most may have been a competition among you and your siblings.

All of these things impact your emotional reactions to food and eating. However, it goes much further than this.

Consider the reasons you might choose to eat other than being legitimately hungry:

- Boredom
- Loneliness
- Stress
- Sadness
- Everyone around you is eating.
- Habit. Maybe you eat breakfast each day no matter what.
- The anticipation of feeling good after eating a particular food.
- There are many reasons you might eat other than hunger.

Your brain is often working against you when it comes to food.

Many thousands of years ago, there weren't inexpensive, readily available supplies of food. Humans had to find something, hunt something, or grow something to eat. It frequently wasn't easy to be a well-fed human.

So, which humans survived the most successfully, at least until reaching reproductive age? The humans that ate the most when they could. Overeaters were more likely to survive,

because there was no telling how long it might be until another meal was available.

However, our environment has changed. Most of us have endless access to food.

Your ancient ancestors ate whatever they could, and as much as they could. Picky eaters didn't survive. Those that chose to stop eating when barely full didn't survive. It was the eager feeders that stood the best chance of survival.

The fact is that the right food can make you feel wonderful, at least in the very short term. It's also a fact that your ancient ancestors naturally overate whenever the opportunity was available.

Those are some pretty big obstacles to overcome, especially when you consider the wide variety and volume of food most of us have available.

OWNERS OF DOGS WILL HAVE NOTICED THAT, IF YOU PROVIDE THEM WITH FOOD AND WATER AND SHELTER AND AFFECTION, THEY WILL THINK YOU ARE GOD.

WHEREAS OWNERS OF CATS ARE COMPELLED TO REALIZE THAT, IF YOU PROVIDE THEM WITH FOOD AND WATER AND SHELTER AND AFFECTION, THEY DRAW THE CONCLUSION THAT THEY ARE GODS.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS



Identifying Your Reason for Eating

When you have the urge to eat, have you ever considered why? Most people don't. **If you never consider the reason for your desire to eat, you're probably eating too much and more often than necessary.** There are lots of reasons you might have the urge to eat that have absolutely nothing to do with genuine hunger!

What are the real reasons behind your urge to eat?

1. **Are you interested in food in general or just in a specific food?** Would you gladly eat an apple, a salad, or a piece of salmon? Or do you really have a craving for potato chips and nothing else will do? If you're genuinely hungry, you won't be super picky.
 - A craving for a specific food is usually to increase comfort, rather than to provide satiety.
2. **Ask yourself, "Am I hungry?"** This is simple enough. Ask yourself this question and listen carefully for the answer.

3. **Is your hunger above the neck or in your gut?** Where is the urge to eat located in your body? Do you feel it in your head or in your stomach? True hunger is centered in the stomach.
 - Before eating, ask yourself, “What part of my body am I eating to satisfy?”
4. **Was there a trigger?** Did you just have an argument with your boss or spouse? Did you just receive an unexpected bill? Did your friend snub you? Did you just receive bad news?
 - What happened right before your urge to eat?
5. **Was the urge to eat sudden or has it been coming on slowly?** Real hunger isn’t sudden. Your body doesn’t suddenly need food. That’s your brain howling for a little comfort.
 - If you’re significantly hungry right now, you were moderately hungry an hour or two or more ago. You were also mildly hungry several hours ago.
 - If you weren’t hungry an hour ago, you can’t be more than very mildly

hungry right now if your urge to eat is true physical hunger.

For the next few days, identify the reasons behind your urge to eat. So, each time you think about eating over the next few days, ask yourself why you want to eat. **Are you truly hungry, or is it something else?** Make a list of all the motivations you discover.

Answer the above questions every time you think about eating, too. You'll learn a lot!

When you learn why you eat and understand your hunger, you begin the process of developing a healthy relationship with food.

CAKES ARE HEALTHY
TOO, YOU JUST EAT A
SMALL SLICE.

MARY BERRY



What are Your Eating Triggers?

If you've been identifying the reasons behind your motivation to eat, you've already taken the first step to recognizing your eating triggers. **Eating triggers are those unique things that suddenly give you the urge to eat.** It might be an emotion, a situation, or something else altogether.

Many people are vaguely aware of a few of their food triggers, but few people are as aware as they could be.

Identifying your eating triggers can fortify your resistance to them.

Use these cues when trying to figure out what triggers you to want to eat:

- 1. Events.** Parties? Family get-togethers? Meetings? Holidays? What are those special events that cause you to throw caution to the wind?
- 2. People.** Do certain people trigger you to eat? Your ex? Best friend? Maybe you have a friend that loves to eat that always encourages you to eat more.
- 3. Places.** Are you triggered to eat at certain places? Work? Your mother's? Your

friend's house?

- Name a few places where you always seem to resent your eating pattern afterwards.

4. Emotions. Are you more likely to eat non-intuitively when you're sad? Bored? Lonely? Stressed? Depressed? Feeling hopeless? What emotions trigger you to want to eat in spite of not being hungry?

5. Situations. Maybe you're more likely to eat while sitting on the couch at night and watching TV. Or maybe you realize that you overeat when someone else is paying for your meal. Do you want to eat when you're out socializing with work friends? Are you especially hungry after going to the gym?

- Identify the situations when you're most likely to eat when you're not hungry.

6. Access. Do you eat junk food just because it's in your pantry – just waiting for you? It's harder to eat unhealthy foods if you don't have easy access to them. Keep these items out of your house as much as possible.

Consider all of the triggers you've identified. What next?

- What can you do to avoid those triggers?
- Of the triggers you can't avoid, how can you better manage them? What are some alternatives?
- What do your eating triggers tell you about yourself? What can you learn from your triggers?
- Imagine a person that has all of your eating triggers. What would you deduce about this person if you didn't know anything else about them?

Many eating triggers are nearly universal, such as stress. Others can be quite unique. Take the time to identify and understand your eating triggers.

THE ONLY TIME TO EAT
DIET FOOD IS WHILE
YOU'RE WAITING FOR
THE STEAK TO COOK.
JULIA CHILD



CHAPTER 3: HOW TO EAT INTUITIVELY

Now that you've dealt with your eating triggers, you're probably wondering about how to actually eat intuitively.

There are just a few rules. You're going to use your intuition after all. However, that doesn't mean you can just eat whenever you want, whatever you want, and as much as you want.

Remember that your intuition is flawed at the moment. All those diets, food rules, conflicting advice, well-meaning parents, and a slew of bad habits have had an impact.

You'll need a few rules to stay on track.

Eating intuitively is a lifestyle decision that you make each day.

Try these tips to help you eat intuitively:

- 1. Respect your physical hunger. True hunger is the message that your body and brain require more food.** Hunger isn't something to fear or to despise. Hunger is a gift. It's a signal that your body needs

more food in order to function at its best.

- Avoid overriding your hunger. When you're hungry, eat. If you attempt to avoid eating, you'll increase the odds of overeating later.
- This works both ways. Avoid eating when you're not hungry. If you give your body food when it doesn't need it, you're creating an unnecessary challenge for your body.
- Overeating creates body fat. Too much body fat is detrimental to your health. We also like to beat ourselves up emotionally when we overeat.
- Respect your hunger and your lack of hunger. Overriding your hunger or lack of hunger is a poor choice. In other words, **eat when you're hungry, avoid eating when you're not, and stop eating when your hunger is satisfied.**

2. Exercise. It's too easy in our society to avoid moving around in a meaningful way. Many of us crawl out of bed into the shower. Drive to work. Sit all day. Drive home. Sit on the couch. Go back to bed. Repeat.

- Everything in your body works better if you exercise each day.
- 3. Allow yourself to change slowly.** Our minds and bodies resist when we try to change too much, too soon. Do a little better each week, and it won't be long before you're a pro at eating intuitively. **Focus on making a little progress each week.**
 - 4. Eat what you desire.** If you're craving ice cream, have a little ice cream. Avoiding your cravings 100% only creates more challenges down the road. If you want ice cream, you're eventually going to eat it. **Satisfy the urge while it's still manageable.**
 - 5. Eat slowly.** It's not a race. Eating too quickly results in eating too much. You'll be surprised how much your portions decrease if you eat slowly. This is especially true when it comes to foods high in fat or sugar. A little can go a long way if you'll just slow down.
 - 6. Avoid beating yourself up.** You're neither "good" nor "bad" just because you ate a certain way or failed to eat a certain way. If you skipped breakfast because you weren't hungry, that's great. If you had a strange urge to eat a bagel for breakfast, doing so is just as great.

- **When you satisfy real physical hunger, with the foods your body desires, in reasonable portions, you can be happy that you're doing the right thing.**

7. Respect feelings of fullness. It's worth mentioning again! Pay attention to your hunger as you're eating. You should've been hungry before you started. At some point, you won't be hungry anymore. Recognize when that happens and stop eating when it does.

- After a few bites, ask yourself, "Am I still hungry?" Stop when the answer is "no."

8. Respect your mealtimes. Eating is one of the most influential things you do for your body. It's serious business! Give it the attention and time it deserves. Ideally, you'll eat when you're not stressed, rushed, or distracted. Give the eating experience your full attention.

9. Avoid using food to manage your emotions. Seek out healthy ways to deal with negative emotions. Using food to deal with loneliness, boredom, or stress only creates more challenges.

- **Food will never address the source of your negative emotions. It only serves to ease the discomfort for a few minutes.**

10. Avoid tracking. Tracking calories, carbs, proteins, and fats works for some people, but it can create a lot of anxiety in others. It can also put a lot of your focus and attention on food. This is unnecessary.

- Pay attention to food when it's time to pay attention to food. There's no reason to be thinking about food when you're not hungry.

Eating intuitively is simple but challenging at first. **All habits can be challenging to change but eating habits can be especially stubborn to manage.** Use the above list of items to get started on your intuitive eating journey.

A good first step can be all it takes to begin the process of changing your life!

WAIT. WHY AM I THINKING
ABOUT KRISPY KREMES?
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE
EXERCISING.

MEG CABOT



CHAPTER 4: ALTERNATIVES TO EATING

So, you have an urge to go to your favorite ice cream place and eat a banana split, but you also realize that you're not physically hungry. **What do you do?** Or, imagine that you're lonely and stressed about work. A big bag of potato chips sounds perfect, but you're not physically hungry. What do you do?

This is a very important issue. If you don't find a way to deal with these urges in a healthy manner, you'll find yourself eventually giving in and moving in the wrong direction. This is probably the biggest reason for obesity: Failing to find a proper way to deal with non-physical hunger.

Follow these steps when dealing with non-physical hunger:

1. **Focus on what will happen if you give in.** Instead of imaging yourself eating that delicious food, focus on what happens after that. Imagine how you're going to feel when you've finished eating that food.
 - How will you feel right after you've eaten the last bite and the flavor has faded away? How will you feel

about the fact that you gave in again and ate something when you're not even hungry?

- Project further into the future how that behavior will affect your life if you repeat that pattern. What will happen to your body and self-esteem if you keep eating that way?

2. **Look for other ways to change your emotions.** There are plenty of other ways to change how you feel that don't involve food. It's true! Make a list of all the activities you can think of that alter your mood. Here are a few ideas:

- Watch a movie. It could be scary, funny, sad, dramatic or exciting. If you think about why you like a particular movie, it's because it makes you feel something.
- Read something.
- Listen to music.
- Cuddle with your dog.
- Have sex.
- Get a massage.

- Think of a happy memory.
 - Go for a walk in nature.
 - Dance.
 - Sing.
 - Eat something you hate. If you want to change your emotion, bite into a food you can't stand.
 - Take a cold shower.
 - Relax in a hot bath.
 - What else can you think of?
3. **Celebrate when you're successful.** If you're able to circumvent your urge to eat, give yourself a slap on the back. That's amazing work! You've just proven to yourself that you can do it.
4. **If you do give in, eat extremely slowly.** How slow is extremely slow? We're talking about taking a full minute to eat a single potato chip. Use a timer and really focus on the flavor. Most of your favorite unhealthy foods aren't as delicious as you think they are if you consume them slowly.

- What if you're craving a healthy food, but you're not hungry? The same rule applies.
5. **Avoid feeling guilt when you fail. Failing only shows you that you have some more work to do.** Tell yourself that no one is perfect and that you'll do better next time. Analyze the situation now and brainstorm what you can do next time instead of eating.
 6. **Find a hobby.** You'll be less likely to eat unnecessarily if you have something else enjoyable to do. Have at least one hobby you can do alone at a moment's notice.
 - If your hobby is dependent on other people, good weather, or requires traveling to another location, your hobby won't always be available to you when you need it.

This might be a shocker for a few people, but you don't have to eat just because you have the urge to eat. **Consider how your life would be different if you only ate when you were hungry and stopped when full.** It's mind-blowing when you think about it. Such a simple and powerful change that would be.

Use every trick you can think up to avoid eating when you're not hungry. There's always a better and healthier alternative.

AM I TOUGH? AM I STRONG? AM
I HARD-CORE? ABSOLUTELY.

DID I WHIMPER WITH
PATHETIC DELIGHT WHEN I
SANK MY TEETH INTO MY HOT
FRIED-CHICKEN SANDWICH?

YOU BETCHA.

JAMES PATTERSON



CHAPTER 5: WHY DIETS DON'T WORK

If you've been on more than one diet, you already know they don't work. **The diet industry wouldn't be so vast if diets worked.** The medical industry would take a huge nosedive, too. Both are thriving largely because diets are ineffective far more often than not.

It's a fact that the vast majority of diets fail for the vast majority of people. Here are a couple of stats:

- 95% of the people that lose weight on a diet regain it in 1 to 5 years.
- 41% of those people that regained their weight actually ended up heavier than they started.

Why is this?

Diets don't work for a variety of reasons:

1. **Most diets aren't sustainable.** Diets are viewed as a short-term activity. "I'm going to follow this diet until I lose 20 pounds. Great, but what are you going to do afterwards?"

2. **Most diets are too restrictive.** What happens when you starve yourself for too long? You'll eventually binge, and after a long period of calorie restriction, you'll gain weight like crazy.
3. **Diets can cause obsessive thoughts and behavior.** When you're eating less food than your body wants, you're going to be thinking about food a lot. You'll drool over TV commercials that feature food and restaurants. Your brain and body will do everything they can to break your will.
 - Diets create physical and emotional stress that no one can successfully resist forever.
4. **Diets can impact your metabolism.** When you go too long with insufficient calories, your body will make some adjustments so that you burn fewer calories. This makes weight loss slower, and it also ensures that weight gain will be greater when you start eating again.
5. **Diets typically result in failure, which breeds more failure in the future.** After you've failed at a few diets, you're developing a habit of failing at dieting. Failing at food restriction becomes familiar. Most people that start a new diet expect to fail, because they've

failed so many times before.

6. Diets promote and demonize particular foods in an unhealthy manner. There are diets that push excessive amounts of a single food or a type of food, such as grapefruit, potatoes, or fats. Other diets are unnaturally restrictive and treat particular foods as the root of all evil.

- This goes against the basic idea of intuitive eating. While some foods are certainly healthier than others, there's a time and a place for everything.

7. Diets can wreak havoc with your hunger cues. So, your body will tell you when food is needed, but you've decided to ignore those cues. This causes some confusion. So, what does your body decide to do? It cranks up the hunger messages, which you also try to ignore.

- Maybe your body will decide that there's a food shortage. When food is available (such as when you decide to eat again), it's going to try to get as much food as it possibly can. You'll still be eating long after you're not hungry anymore.

Let's agree to give up on the idea of a "diet." Let's focus instead on the concept of a food and eating "lifestyle." **Diets are ultimately a source of failure, shame, and low self-esteem.**

A diet is temporary. **A lifestyle is sustainable.**
Let go of your urge to diet and seek to eat intuitively instead.

WE MUST HAVE A PIE.
STRESS CANNOT
EXIST IN THE
PRESENCE OF A PIE.
DAVID MAMET



CHAPTER 6: FIRST STEPS

You know everything you need to know to begin your intuitive-eating journey. All that's left to do is begin. It can be easier to get started if you have a plan to follow. If you feel that you can develop your own plan, fantastic.

If you'd like a plan to follow to get started, here's an option to consider:

- 1. Fill your kitchen with healthy options.** You'll eventually eat any food that's in your house. It's a fact, just like gravity. So, get rid of the unhealthy food and fill your pantry and refrigerator with healthy foods that you love to eat. **Avoid underestimating the importance of this step!**
- 2. Identify and track your urges to eat.** Whenever you have the urge to eat, figure out why you want to eat. Are you feeding true hunger, or is it something else? Make a list.
- 3. Identify and track your eating triggers.** Make a list of all the eating triggers you experience for at least the first couple of weeks.

4. **Avoid eating when you're not hungry.** If you're not hungry, don't eat. Find something else to do.
5. **Eat slowly.** You're not in an eating competition. **Take your time and enjoy your food.** Chew your food thoroughly and pay attention to the taste. Periodically, check to see if you're still hungry.
6. **Stop when you're no longer hungry.** "No longer hungry" means exactly that: you're no longer hungry. That's not the same as completely full! Eat until the physical hunger is gone.

Notice there was no mention of eating certain foods and avoiding others. **However, be a reasonable and responsible adult.** You "intuitively" know that eating a bag of pork rinds or a pound of sausage isn't a healthy option. You're not eating to win a figure competition, but that's not an excuse to be a fool, either.

DON'T WRECK A SUBLIME
CHOCOLATE EXPERIENCE BY
FEELING GUILTY.

CHOCOLATE ISN'T LIKE
PREMARITAL SEX. IT WILL NOT
MAKE YOU PREGNANT.
AND IT ALWAYS FEELS GOOD.
LORA BRODY



CONCLUSION

Intuitive eating is for the huge majority of the population for whom diets simply don't work. That's nearly all of us!

Intuitive eating is a return to how you ate as a child, only with a better understanding of healthy versus unhealthy foods. **There was a time when you only ate when you were hungry, and you stopped when you were full.** How amazing!

There is a part of you that intuitively knows when, what, and how much to eat. We've covered up that intuition with bad habits, bad experiences, conflicting advice from experts, and failed diet attempts.

Intuitive eating is an amazing way to enhance your relationship with food, boost your physical and emotional health, and greatly reduce your stress around food and eating.

Be patient with yourself and keep growing each day as you relearn how to eat intuitively. Learn to have a healthy relationship with food, and your life will change for the better.