

Intuitive Eating

By- Hannah Feinberg, Cornell Wellness Dietetic Intern

Dietitian: (noun) an expert on diet and nutrition. This definition, and the word itself, implies that dietitians promote the use of *dieting* but that isn't entirely true. Approximately 45 million Americans diet every single year, many whom are unsuccessful in their endeavors.

Have you ever dieted before? When you were dieting, did you find that you became more preoccupied with food? Did food become the enemy? Did you feel guilty when you were or were not eating certain types of foods? Those emotions are completely normal and should be expected because dieting is a form of short-term deprivation. We as humans cannot outsmart biology. When your body is hungry, your metabolism slows, and certain mechanisms are triggered that remind your brain that it needs to be nourished. One of these triggers is to obsess about food, which makes dieting even more difficult and magnifies these negative emotions surrounding food.

According to the law of least effort, nature's intelligence functions with effortless ease, meaning we are innately lazy and irrational. We will subconsciously choose the easiest option, and therefore we need to manipulate our environments to make the healthiest choices the easiest options. Diet culture has helped us form false perceptions around how we should look and feel, while offering 'quick-fix solutions' in the form of fad diets. Contrary to diet culture is the concept of intuitive eating, which is a nutrition philosophy, written about by authors and registered dietitians Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch, that helps individuals become attuned with their bodies instinctual hunger and satiety cues to more effectively attain a healthy weight.

One of the main concepts with intuitive eating is that no foods are off limits and that all foods can fit in a healthy diet. It takes practice, but with time you can learn how to trust your amazing body and the signals it is sending you. Before, during, and after eating, check in with yourself to see how hungry or full you are. Listen to these signals, because your body is telling you what you need in terms of nutrition. If you feel hungry, eat. If you feel full, stop eating. If you're craving something, eat it. The first step to managing your relationship with food is to trust that your body is telling your brain everything you need to know. With the permission to eat any food you desire comes choice, which leads to feelings of empowerment and improved self-worth.

Here are 10 tips from the book [Intuitive Eating](#) to help find the intuitive eater in you:

1. Reject the Diet Mentality.
2. Honor your Hunger.
3. Make Peace with Food.
4. Challenge the Food Police.
5. Respect your Fullness.
6. Discover the Satisfaction Factor.
7. Honor your Feelings without Using Food.
8. Respect your Body.

9. Exercise- Feel the Difference.
10. Honor your Health.

There is more to intuitive eating than, "don't worry about what, when, or how much you eat, just listen to your body." Many of us have become disconnected from our intuitive eating signals and need guidance to rebuild trust in ourselves to make appropriate dietary decisions. If you are wanting to ditch the diet mentality and heal your relationship with food, make an appointment with a Cornell Wellness registered dietitian nutritionist today.

References

Tribole E, Resch E. Intuitive Eating: A revolutionary Program That Works, Third Edition. New York, NY: St. Martin's Griffin; 2012.