



# An Introduction to Mindful and Intuitive Eating



Begin your journey towards food freedom and  
lifelong health.



# What is Mindful Eating?

In today's hustle and bustle, it can be difficult stay in the moment or focus on one thing at a time. It's common to see each other scarfing down breakfast in the car on the way to work, or checking through the day's emails while sitting down for lunch. Under these conditions, it can be difficult to give important things in life, including food and eating habits, mindful attention. In addition, we are exposed to diets that promote laundry lists of food rules that are typically designed under a "one-size-fits-all" approach. These types of diets don't keep an individual's personal needs and preferences in mind. Mindful eating is a way to reconnect with your unique relationship with food.

Eating mindfully involves bringing full awareness to the experience of eating, without judgement, while taking into consideration both internal and external events. At the heart of mindful eating is the practice of combining what we observe about our bodies, the knowledge we obtain about food, and awareness of our unique needs and experiences to guide our food choices.

One of the main objectives of eating mindfully is to become aware of our thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations surrounding eating to make choices that honor our health and happiness. The goal is to be able to acknowledge the nourishing opportunities through food choices and pair that with our mindful awareness of ourselves to influence our eating habits. Evidence supports several benefits of adopting mindful eating practices, which include more satisfaction with meals, positive health outcomes, forming a healthy relationship with food and your body, and making peace with our unique eating experiences.

# Mindful Versus Mindless Eating

## Mindful

Being aware of thoughts, emotions and physical sensations while eating and using that awareness and attention to guide you in choosing food that is satisfying and nourishing

Using all senses to be fully present and connected to food while eating

Acknowledging physical hunger cues

Acknowledging physical fullness cues

Select and prepare foods while considering where they came from, their impact on our health, as well as their impact on the world around us



## Mindless

Making most food selections based on external guidance (diets and food rules)

Eating with distractions, such as television, cell phones or work

Waiting until starving to eat or eating when you are not hungry

Ignoring fullness cues and eating until uncomfortably stuffed

No consideration of where the food originated, how it was prepared, it's cultural significance, or the influence it has on our health and the environment

# A Mindful Eating Exercise

If you want a taste of mindful eating, please try this exercise!

## The Hunger-Fullness Scale

A great introduction to mindful eating is learning how to use the hunger-fullness scale. As diet culture takes over and promotes external food rules that dictate when and how we should eat, it can be difficult to stay connected to our body's natural signals, such as our hunger and fullness cues. This practice can help you reconnect with some of your body's signals so you can honor your individual needs as best as you can.

The next time you eat, try reflecting on where you are on the hunger-fullness scale before, during, and after you eat. It is typically best to start eating around a 3 or 4, and to stop around a 7. It is important to emphasize that this is a tool and not a rule. Therefore, we aren't striving for perfection or the ability to reach an exact number. Instead, this can be used to determine roughly where you are on the scale so you can use that awareness to influence your eating patterns.



- 1- **Ravenous:** Irritable, dizzy, physically ill. Can't think of anything else but eating. High risk of overeating.
- 2- **Very hungry:** Need food very soon. Moody, gnawing emptiness in stomach, headaches.
- 3- **Hungry:** Ready to eat. Need energy. Eating is more pleasurable at this point.
- 4- **Getting hungry:** Beginning to feel stomach growling. Stomach feels slightly empty. First thoughts of food.
- 5- **Neutral:** Neither hungry or full. No noticeable sensations in stomach.
- 6- **Mild fullness:** Beginning to feel full but not completely satisfied.
- 7- **Full:** Satisfied. No longer hungry.
- 8- **Very full:** Stomach feels stretched. Feeling sluggish and slightly uncomfortable.
- 9- **Uncomfortably full:** Too full. Wishing you hadn't eaten so much. Bloating and drowsy.
- 10- **Sick and overstuffed:** Feeling ill, like you need to lay down or unbutton your pants.

# What is Intuitive Eating?

Intuitive eating is a non-diet framework that was developed by 2 registered dietitians in the 1990's. It is a weight-neutral and evidence-based model. The goal of becoming an intuitive eater is to be aware of the mind-body connection, including any signals from the body that communicate what is needed for physical and psychological health. It encompasses the same concepts from the mindful eating framework, but takes it a few steps further by integrating additional principles that help us form a healthy relationship with food. This framework is designed to help you ditch the diet mentality, find peace with food and your body, and form healthy habits that can be maintained for life. It consists of 10 basic principles, which are listed below:

- 1.** Reject the diet mentality
- 2.** Honor your hunger
- 3.** Make peace with food
- 4.** Challenge the food police
- 5.** Discover the satisfaction factor
- 6.** Feel your fullness
- 7.** Cope with your emotions with kindness
- 8.** Respect your body
- 9.** Movement- feel the difference
- 10.** Honor your health- gentle nutrition

# Benefits of Becoming an Intuitive Eater

There are over 120 studies on intuitive eating to date (November, 2020). A list of recent studies can be found on the intuitive eating website: <https://www.intuitiveeating.org/resources/studies/>. Some of the benefits of becoming an intuitive eater, as found through these studies, are:

- Better weight management
- Lower body mass indexes
- Lower triglyceride levels
- Higher HDL (good) cholesterol
- Improved body image
- Higher self-esteem
- Lower rates of disordered eating and eating disorders
- Improved blood sugar control
- Increased well-being, positivity and satisfaction with life

Want to learn more? Check out the intuitive eating website at: <https://www.intuitiveeating.org/>. A registered dietitian like myself can help you explore the principles of intuitive eating and find ways to implement them in your life in practical ways.

Are you ready to ditch dieting to build sustainable eating habits for health and happiness? Let's chat! You can visit my website at:  
<https://www.nicolemnutrition.com/>

Visit my website or contact me by email at [rd@nicolemnutrition.com](mailto:rd@nicolemnutrition.com) to **schedule your free, 30-minute discovery call!** I can't wait to hear from you.

### About me:

My name is Nicole Merryman and I am a registered dietitian with an online private practice based in California, where I provide virtual, one-on-one nutrition consulting. I help clients ditch the diet mentality for nourishment rooted in mindful and intuitive eating practices. I am here to help you build a healthy relationship with food and your body, free from confusion, stress, guilt, and shame. In my practice, I take a personalized approach in order to help clients develop a healthy lifestyle with their unique needs and preferences in mind.

### Disclaimer:

This document is for educational and informational purposes only and solely as a self-help tool for your own use. I am not providing medical, psychological or nutrition therapy advice. You should not use this information to diagnose or treat any health problems or illnesses without consulting your own medical practitioner. Always seek the advice of your own medical practitioner and/or mental health provider about your specific health situation.