



# An Introduction to Non-Diet Nutrition



Begin your journey towards food freedom and  
lifelong health



Hi there! I am so happy you downloaded this free guide and want to learn more about the non-diet approach to food and nutrition.

Are you tired of cycling through various diets, food rules and restrictive meal plans? If so, I hear you! Dieting often leads to confusion around what to eat and guilt whenever food rules aren't closely followed. The thing is, if you've tried dieting and haven't had success, or you have been left with frustration, it's not your fault. It's the diet's fault. Diets simply don't work.

So, if diets don't work, what does?

We each have a unique history and relationship with food that shapes what works well for us. In addition, we have various needs that are best met through individualized attention. Therefore, a "one-size-fits-all" nutrition plan likely won't work.

Ultimately, it's important to develop eating habits that honor your health, add joy to life, allow room for flexibility and make you feel at peace with food and your body.

Ready to begin developing a healthy relationship with food? Read on to learn about the aspects of non-diet nutrition!

To health and happiness,

Nicole Merryman, RD

# Strategies to help you break free from restrictive dieting methods so you can reclaim your health in a balanced way:

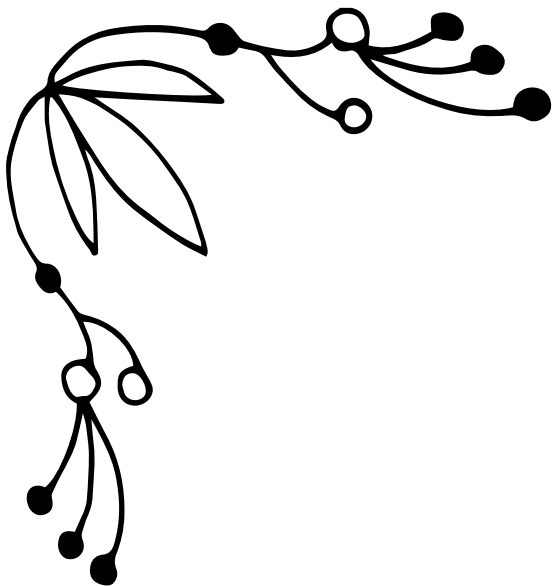
- **Ditch the diets.** The diet cycle can be harmful. Not only can it take a toll on our bodies, it can also negatively impact our mental health. The shame and guilt that often accompanies dieting can become hard to escape. Learning to be gentle with yourself and focusing on building sustainable, non-restrictive habits are key to maintaining a healthy relationship with food based on nourishment and enjoyment.
- **Release judgement and replace it with curiosity.** Yes, this applies to self-judgement! We tend to be our own worst critics. This can relate to how we judge our eating habits. On top of that, society embraces the "tough love" approach to forming healthy habits. This can backfire since that type of motivation does not stem from a healthy mindset. Learning to release judgement so you can get to know yourself and your body can help you create habits that come from a place of sincere self-care.
- **Let go of the idea that you must eat perfectly.** Nutrition is important. There is no doubt about that. With that being said, our overall habits are what matter most. This means that you won't compromise your health with one meal or snack alone. Looking at your habits from a sort of "bird's-eye view" offers a gentler approach to healthy eating that can prevent any undue stress around food.

- **Remember that you are more than a number.** Diet culture makes it appear that weight is the ultimate marker of health. While weight can play a role in our health, there are many additional factors to consider, including how we nourish our bodies, exercise, social connections, mental health and more. On top of that, body diversity is natural. This diversity should be respected and celebrated. It is much more helpful to focus on building health-promoting behaviors, rather than focusing solely on weight. As you develop healthy habits you can maintain, the body will often stabilize at a weight that is healthiest for you.
- **Reflect on how you can care for both your health and happiness.** While food plays the important role of nourishing our bodies, it plays many other roles as well. Food provides ways to connect, celebrate, add joy to life and so much more. Embracing the many ways food adds value to our lives is crucial to forming a healthy relationship with food.
- **Trust your body.** Knowing how to nourish your body well is invaluable. Aside from the knowledge we obtain about food, trusting your body's signals is an important way to care for your body on an individualized level. The body has systems in place that are meant to guide your eating habits. Getting back in touch with these natural hunger, fullness and satiety cues can assist you in adopting healthy habits that meet your unique needs. Instead of relying heavily on external sources of guidance, such as food rules and diets, listening to your body is one of the best tools you can use. Our eating experiences are unique to each one of us. At the end of the day, you are the expert of your own body.

- **Focus on what you can add, rather than what you can restrict.**

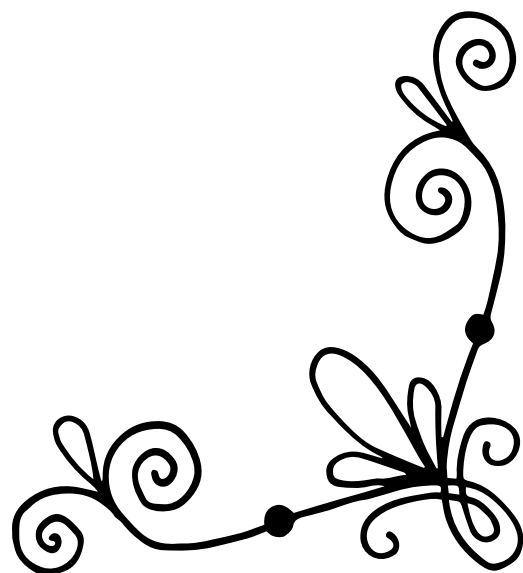
Diets often promote restriction as the best way to reach your health goals. The problem is this approach is usually unsustainable. Plus, adding a variety of nutrient-dense foods to your meals is important to obtain all the nutrients your body needs to function well. Variety is beneficial for both health and feeling contentment in your eating. Try reframing how you look at developing healthy habits. Instead of, "What foods do I need to avoid?" ask yourself, "What health-promoting behaviors and food choices can I add to support my health and well-being?"

These are just a few of the many strategies you can get started with. There are two significant nutrition and health frameworks that carry these same values. They were designed to help others develop a non-restrictive and healthy relationship with food. Those frameworks are called mindful eating and intuitive eating. Continue reading to learn the more about them!



# A Beginner's Guide to Mindful Eating and Intuitive Eating

Discover the foundations of these two non-diet frameworks. These are tools that have been designed to help you develop a healthier relationship with food, connect with your body and form sustainable, healthy habits.



# What is Mindful Eating?

In today's hustle and bustle, it can be difficult stay present 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, which 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 body and 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 factors. 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. 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 your eating experiences.

To learn more about mindful eating, you can visit the website for The Center for Mindful Eating at:

<https://thecenterformindfuleating.org/>

# Mindful Versus Mindless Eating

## Mindful

Being aware of thoughts, emotions and physical sensations while eating and using that awareness 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 and their impact on our health and 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 physically hungry

Ignoring fullness cues and eating until uncomfortably stuffed

No consideration of where the food originated, how it was prepared, its 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. Under diet culture's influence, it can be difficult to stay connected to our bodies. Some of the most helpful signals we receive from our bodies include hunger and fullness cues. This practice can help you reconnect with your hunger and fullness cues so you can use them to guide your eating habits.

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 begin eating around a 3 or 4 on the scale, and to stop around a 7. Keep in mind 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 improve our awareness of what our bodies tell us so we can create healthier and sustainable habits.



- 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? Do you want to build sustainable eating habits for health and happiness? Let's chat!

Visit my website at <https://www.nicolemnutrition.com/> 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 Nicole:

Thank you for downloading this guide! My name is Nicole Merryman and I am a registered dietitian with an online private practice based in Sonoma County, California. In my practice, I provide virtual, one-on-one nutrition consulting for residents of California. I help clients ditch the restrictive diet mentality so they can eat well without any stress, guilt or shame attached. I provide the tools they need to feel empowered to make healthy choices that are best for them. My goal is to help clients build a healthy relationship with food and their bodies so they can focus on what matters most- enjoying life!

### 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.