

## INTUITIVE EATING ALONE WON'T HEAL YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

A lot of people mistake me for an “intuitive eating coach.” Although as you already know, I think intuitive eating is a wonderful communication tool, helping people “eat intuitively” is not really my ultimate goal, for reasons which I’ll explain in a moment.

As you have been practicing intuitive eating for a couple of weeks now you will know that, in essence, intuitive eating means making decisions based on what your body wants, rather than what your mind thinks it should eat. Learning to connect with your body and listen to its needs, after years of dieting and over-reliance on the mind to make decisions about food is incredibly liberating, healing, and has massive implications for our emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing.

There’s a ton of information about this on the internet as well as many many books – none of which I’ll name explicitly for reasons that I’m about to get into; however, intuitive eating is the best \*first step\* to getting off the diet-binge roller coaster.

Now, all that being said, the following is why I’m NOT an intuitive coach. Over and over again, I see women fall into the “intuitive eating diet” trap where they clutch tightly to “hunger and fullness” as a set of rules by which to judge their performance around food.

“But what if I’m at a dinner party and I’m not hungry? Am I allowed to eat?”

“I lost control and ate a muffin when I wasn’t hungry! I suck!”

“I had a spoonful of peanut butter when I wasn’t hungry and it turned into a full-on binge!”

Yeah...because binges are what happens when you think you’re doing something wrong.

As long as you’re on the “intuitive eating diet,” there’s still a wagon to fall off. I also call this the “don’t-eat-emotionally-diet,” where women “give themselves permission to eat what they want” except beat themselves up whenever they “eat emotionally,” (which by the way is a really fuzzy term, with a way worse rep than I think it deserves – more about this in our next session).

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In summary, I'm not an intuitive eating coach, because I don't actually care what you put in your mouth — I care about how you feel about what you put in your mouth; THAT's the difference between "normal eating" and "feeling crazy around food." And interestingly enough, there's a lot of science to back up the claim that people who don't feel ashamed of their behaviors with food, don't binge-eat, and eat their feelings wayyyy less than people who beat themselves up for "eating emotionally."

While intuitive eating is a wonderful communication tool that is teaching thousands of women how to connect with their bodies perhaps for the first time in their adult lives, the "intuitive eating diet," doesn't work.

Get off of it now.

The principles of Intuitive Eating are just information and your physical hunger cues are just communication from your body letting you know what it wants.

Neither your mind nor your body should rule the other with an iron fist. It's okay to eat a cupcake for no other reason than that you want one



### 8 MINDFUL EATING TIPS

Keep in mind as you're reading through this list that different things work for different people, and some of these will be much easier for you than others. My goal is to present you with as many options as possible that have worked for me or others so that you can pick and choose those that fit best with your habits and lifestyle.

#### **1. Put your fork/spoon/sandwich/chocolate bar down between bites.**

This is a really good one that I always practice and it makes such a difference. It enables me to eat slower and enjoy my food more.

#### **2. Chew more**

Chewing is probably the simplest and most effective way to develop the habit of eating mindfully. If you have no idea how many times to chew, I recommend around 25 chews per bite here, but likely anything over 20 chews will provide a benefit. The most important part is that you just make more effort to chew your food more than you do now.

#### **3. Feed yourself with your non-dominant hand (101)**

Making things more difficult is a great way to force yourself to pay attention to what you're doing. One simple way to do this is to force yourself to eat with your non-dominant hand, which for 90% of us is our left hand. It might be too much to do this for every meal, but trying it for breakfast and snacks is a good place to start. Be careful though, if you get too good at it you can slip back into your mindless habits.

#### **4. Take your first bite with your eyes closed**

I have heard of a restaurant where the entire dining experience, including being seated at the table, occurred in the pitch dark. The idea was to focus exclusively on the experience of eating, without the distraction of vision. I would like to try this I must say.

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I get that while eating all of your meals in the dark, or even with your eyes closed, is not very practical, taking the time to taste your first bite with your full attention can help you eat the rest of your meal more mindfully. Focus on all the flavors in your mouth and how they blend, as well as the smell and textures. This will help you both appreciate your food and eat more slowly.

### **5. Try to identify every ingredient in your meal**

Trying to taste and identify all the different ingredients in your meal is another great way to focus on the present moment and eat more mindfully. This is particularly fun at restaurants when you didn't make the food yourself. A bonus of this technique is it may also help you become more creative in the kitchen.

### **6. Put your food on a plate**

It may sound obvious, but eating out of a bag is not a very mindful practice. Get in the habit of placing even small snacks and desserts on a plate before you eat them. This will force you to acknowledge exactly what you're eating and will help you to be more present with the food.

### **7. Sit at a table**

Once your food is on a plate, you may as well go the extra mile to sit at a table. Formalizing your dining experience can help draw your attention to your food and your eating habits.

### **8. Eat in Silence**

Put away your phone. Turn off the TV. Hide your kids. Hide your husbands. Any sensation that you experience outside of taste and smell while you're eating can distract you and make mindful eating more difficult.

While going through an entire meal in pure silence may be a bit much for most of us, designating the first 3-5 minutes of a meal for quiet and mindful practice can be an effective strategy.

When you are out for dinner or on a social eating occasion, just become mindful of your food whilst you are enjoying the conversation.