

THE  
**INTUITIVE  
EATING**



**HOW-TO GUIDE**

6 steps to healing your relationship  
with food and your body

BY ANNETTE KUTILEK, RD

[WWW.NODIETS.CO](http://WWW.NODIETS.CO)

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N O D I E T S . C O

# ANNETTE KUTILEK

*registered dietitian*

## WELCOME

This resource consists of 6 actionable steps that will help you achieve the life-giving and joyful relationship you've always wanted to have with food and your body. It is intended to start you on your Intuitive Eating journey, or to help you go deeper on your path to healing you've already begun.

## MEET THE AUTHOR



# ANNETTE KUTILEK

*FOUNDER OF ANNETTE KUTILEK RD, LLC*

Hi there! I am a Registered Dietitian and Nutrition Therapist, and an expert of not putting you on a diet. My day job consists of working with men and women who struggle with intrusive food thoughts and a negative body image. Together, we work on unlearning the lies told to us by diet culture, removing the barriers to healthy behaviors, and learning to tune into the messages our bodies give us.

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# FIRST, A DISCLAIMER

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Many folks who are ready to implement the principles of Intuitive Eating have expressed they would like more of a “how-to” guide. I myself have been down the Google rabbit hole on more than one occasion looking for such a resource, but have yet to find it.

So, voilà!

Ideally this resource will help answer that question of “Okay, love the idea of Intuitive Eating, but how do I DO it?”.

I will go on to say that because each person and set of circumstances is unique, no static guide can give us a perfect answer to this question. It is like trying to provide a how-to guide for healing from trauma—perhaps helpful, but can only get us so far without personalized support from a human trained in trauma.

Intuitive Eating is also not meant to be a step-by-step process leading you from A to B. It is intended to be a lifelong journey of discovery that can pave the way for a vibrant and healthy relationship with food and self.

What I have written here may help you start your journey, but it is in no way meant to replace the guidance and expertise of a professional.

To get additional assistance in working through these steps, feel free to schedule a call with me at [nodiets.co](https://nodiets.co) to discuss your options for getting more support or take a look at [intuitiveeating.com](https://intuitiveeating.com) where you can find a directory of intuitive eating providers.

Now, let’s rock n’ roll. Grab yourself something to write with, your beverage of choice (coffee, beer, or something stronger), and the last shreds of your dignity.

Buckle up buttercup; it's gonna be a bumpy ride.

---

# WHAT IS INTUITIVE EATING

Intuitive Eating is an **evidenced-based, self-care eating framework**, created by the dietitians Elyse Resch and Evelyn Tribole, that includes 10 principles and is a process intended to **increase interoceptive awareness**, which is the ability to understand and respond to our body's messages.

It operates off of the knowledge that your body **inherently knows** what it needs far better than any diet plan or your aunt Linda.

It is a **self-empowerment tool** that puts you back in the driver's seat of your own body and mind.

It helps you **end yo-yo dieting, the restrict-binge cycle, and shame** around food and your body.

It is a **way forward** if you feel stuck about what to eat, how to feel about your body, and how to exist around food.

It is **anti-diet and HAES® (Health at Every Size) aligned**, meaning it rejects diet culture and the false belief that our weight is directly correlated to our health.

Overall, it is a **journey of discovery** that allows you to heal your relationship with food and come home to your body.



# WHAT INTUITIVE EATING IS NOT

It is not a **rigid set of rules** to learn.

It is not a **precise formula** that you can simply follow to solve a problem.

It is not **just eating ice cream and fried chicken** for every meal.

It is **not a diet** to help you lose weight. (You might lose weight by reconnecting to your body signals and eating more in tune with what your body needs, but you also might not – especially if you are already at a weight that your body wants to be at.)

It is not **simply mindful eating**, although it can include mindful eating.

It is **not anti-health or anti-weightloss**.

It is not **the many social media influencers** who are skinny and tell you what they eat in a day to stay small while using the hashtag #intuitiveeating.





# IS INTUITIVE EATING RIGHT FOR ME?

Intuitive Eating can be used by anyone with a body. It can be for those who:

- have an okay-ish relationship with food and their body, but want to improve it
- have spent years on many different diets and are #overit
- are trapped in the binge-restrict cycle
- are always trying to lose weight, but never really getting anywhere
- track macros, calories, and/or exercise religiously
- hate their body and are sick of hating their body
- have many food fears and “off-limits” foods
- have a strict set of rules around food, eating, and exercise
- spend much of their waking hours thinking about and obsessing about food
- feel shame around food and their body
- have a diagnosed eating disorder, and want to pursue it with the support of their healthcare team<sup>12</sup>

If any of the above states speak to your experience and you want to change that, Intuitive Eating is for you. If I didn't list your specific experience and you want to pursue Intuitive Eating, it is right for you too.

# CAN I DO INTUITIVE EATING ON MY OWN?

The answer is, **maybe**.

For some, simply reading that weight is not a good indicator of health is enough to end the battle with their weight and food, and they can move forward feeling confident in practicing the steps on their own.

For others, years of dieting, restriction, and shame have led to intense feelings, beliefs, and actions that need the support of a professional as they work towards healing.

Only you know what you need and so only you can answer that question.



# *THE INTUITIVE EATING* **HOW-TO GUIDE**

## **Let's go!**

The following 6 steps are intended to help you get started on the track of healing your relationship with food and your body.

You will likely have questions as you work through this that are not answered in this guide. Honestly, I could just keep writing....and writing....and writing about this subject, but I wanted to make it as simple and approachable as possible.

Feel free to reach out to me if you'd like more guidance on a specific topic, or you can always do your own research. I will also warn you that Intuitive Eating has been co-opted by diet culture--so if you ever see anything showing you how to lose weight with Intuitive Eating....run.

I encourage you to use this guide however you want. You can start at Step 1 and work your way through it chronologically, or you can skip around. Not all steps will be applicable to each person.

If you are a tactile learner, print it off and mark it up.

If you need something soft to cry into, make sure your fluffy cat is nearby.

If at any point in this process things get too messy, feel too big, you get stuck, or you just want to go deeper, please reach out to me and we can chat about next steps.

So, without further ado, here are your 6 steps to begin your journey of healing your relationship with food and your body through the process of Intuitive Eating.

# THE STEPS

1

TAKE INVENTORY

2

UNLEARN THE 2 BIG LIES

3

EAT WHAT YOU WANT

4

LEARN HOW TO LISTEN

5

BODY RESPECT

6

JOYFUL MOVEMENT



*S T E P 1*

# THE EFFECTS OF DIET CULTURE: TAKE INVENTORY

# First things first.



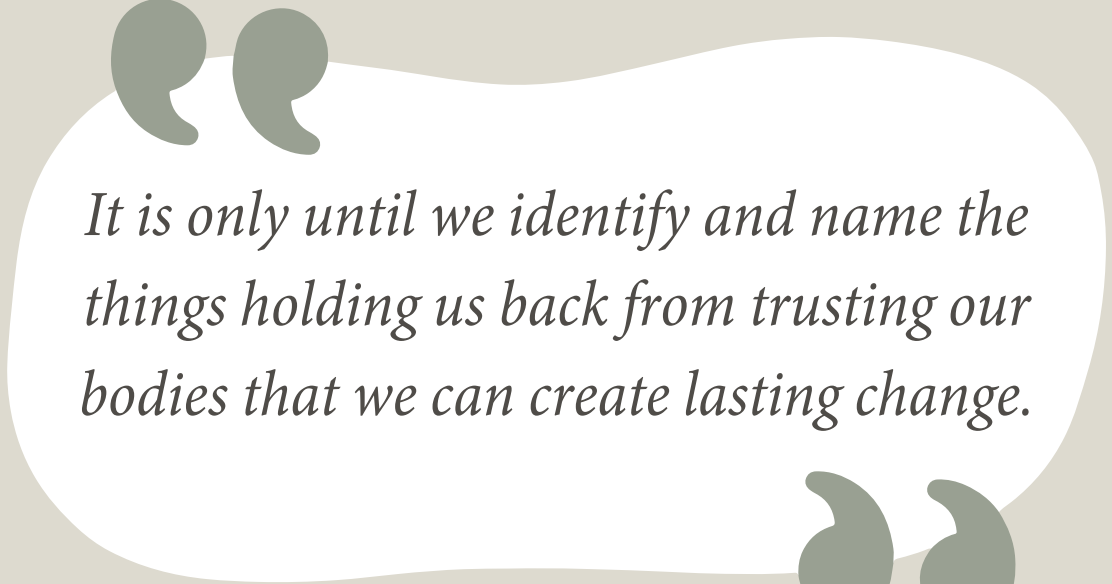
It is time to take an inventory of the ways in which diet culture has affected your thoughts, actions, and overall quality of life by answering the list of questions on the following two pages.

The first page is about the **beliefs and assumptions you have about your body.**

The second page is about **how those beliefs and assumptions translate into habits and practices** in regards to your food choices.

This is intended to give us a “map” of the road to recovery that you will travel.

I encourage you to get detailed here, and answer the questions as honestly as possible. Not all of the questions will apply to each person.



*It is only until we identify and name the things holding us back from trusting our bodies that we can create lasting change.*

# BELIEFS ABOUT YOUR BODY



When was the first time you felt the need to diet or lose weight?

What has been the longest period of time you were able to “keep the weight off”?

If you could quantify how much time you spend thinking negatively about your body, what would it equal in a day? A week? A year?

What else could you spend your time and energy doing or focusing on if you didn’t have body worries? How would your life change?

What do you believe about your body? Name adjectives to describe your body.

What do you believe about people who live in fat bodies?

What do you believe about weight and health? What have you been told?

If you have an ideal weight you’d like to be at, where did the number come from?

What do you think might change about your life if you could get to your ideal weight?

Are there things you are choosing to not do until you are thinner?



# FOOD AND DIETING PRACTICES



Make a list of all of the diets, lifestyle changes, “cleanses”, “resets”, exercise programs, or rules you have followed to try to “fix” the problem of your body or weight.

Do you have rules about the **types of foods** you are allowed to eat and not eat? What are they?

Do you have rules about **how much food** you are allowed to eat? What are they?

Do you have rules about **when** you are allowed to eat during the day? What are they?

What do you do when you feel like you’ve “broken” one of your food rules, or when you’ve eaten more than you feel you should?

What have these thoughts, patterns, or actions cost you in terms of...

Money?

Time?

Mind and mood?

Relationships or social life?

Your physical health?

True or False: I don't trust myself around food.

True or False: I oftentimes find myself eating past a comfortable level of fullness.

Now that we have taken inventory of the ways in which the pursuit of weight loss and negative body image has affected your life, it is time to unlearn the “Two Big Lies”.



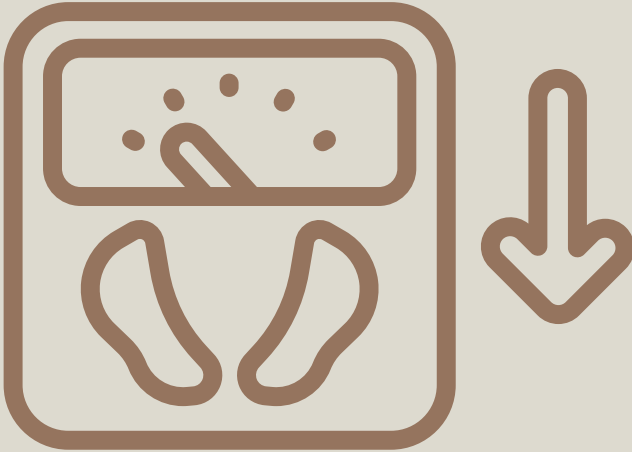


# 2

*S T E P 2*

**UNLEARN THE  
TWO BIG LIES**

# THE 2 BIG LIES WE MUST UNLEARN



OUR WEIGHT IS A  
VALID INDICATOR  
OF OUR HEALTH  
AND WORTH<sup>1-4</sup>

DIETS WORK TO  
FIX OUR WEIGHT  
AND/OR HEALTH  
PROBLEM<sup>5-7</sup>



This step is crucial as it focuses on the separation of our lives from diet culture, which is a necessary component in cultivating food and body trust. Diet culture's \$60 billion-per-year existence relies on the unquestioning belief of these two ideas. Unfortunately, most people still believe that they are true, even most health professionals.

**They are not true. They are lies.**

# Activity #1:

## Let's Start with a Question

*On a scale of 1-10, how confident are you that these 2 big lies are just that, lies?*

So this means that a 1 is full confidence that they are truths, and a 10 is full confidence that they are lies.

Answer honestly with where you are right now, not what you'd like to believe or what you wish you could believe. This allows us to know how much unlearning we need to do and how to do it.

If you find that you are on the lower end of the scale, meaning you are currently leaning towards believing that our weight is a valid indicator of our health, and that diets can help our weight or health problems, just know that this is normal and expected, especially if this is a newer idea to you.

We live in a culture that shouts this from the rooftops day and night, and it is so insidious and prevalent that we likely don't even recognize the messaging anymore. It is found in social media, billboards, food packaging, healthcare, movies and TV shows, grocery stores, magazines, gyms, everywhere, everywhere, all the time.

So it is no wonder if you find yourself not-so-easily swayed. It is hard to believe something that you hear once or twice, when faced with an endless and extremely loud barrage of arguments against it.

If you fall under this category of the lower end of the spectrum, and are interested and curious about starting to unlearn these 2 big lies, first ask yourself this:

**Why don't I believe that they are lies?**

And then,

**What purpose is it serving me to continue to believe in them?**

Once you fully understand the concrete reasons for why you are still holding onto these ideas, you are provided with a starting place from which to work in order to move closer to a 10. You can do this in your nutrition counseling sessions, through personal research, with your therapist, with your own journal, etc.

Conversely, if you find yourself on the higher end of the scale, meaning you feel pretty confident that yep, Annette is telling the truth here, then how can you get to a 10 if you aren't quite there yet? If you are an 8, what is standing in the way of your becoming a 10? (ctd...)



(...ctd) Whether you are a 2 or an 8, knowing what beliefs you are still holding on to is crucial in paving the way for a total and complete separation of your life from diet culture. You can then start to question if the beliefs you are holding on to are true or not.

Once you understand what is holding you back from believing that your weight is not a valid indicator of your health and diets do not work, it is time to do some unlearning. And that looks different for each person. For you, the unlearning might be assisted by research articles if you dig the science and evidence (see resources page and my website, nodiets.co) or it might be letting go of the false hope that one last diet will work, or it might be looking at your environment to see what is making it hard for you to let it go (ie, is your tik tok or instagram full of thin people, dieting, and/or weight loss tips?).

The way you start to poke holes in your specific belief system about food and your body will be unique to you, and will depend upon your personal set of circumstances and history of what has led you to believe what you do today. This is oftentimes best done in your nutrition therapy sessions, but can certainly be done on your own too.



So, to summarize:



It is time to end your relationship with diet culture and its false promises once and for all.



It is time to get angry about the time, energy, money, and mental space that it has taken from you.



It's time to take your life back.

## Activity #2: Let's Pretend

For our second activity in Step 2, Unlearn the 2 Big Lies, let's imagine that you **deeply and fully believe** that your weight is **not** a valid indicator of your health or worth, and that diets do not work. You are a 10 on the belief scale.

Now, go back through and re-answer the "taking inventory" questions from **Step 1** with this new knowledge.



How much do your answers change?

How much would your life change?

**When will you allow yourself to believe that this "pretend" version of life is yours for the taking?**



# 3

*S T E P 3*

**EAT WHATEVER THE  
HECK YOU WANT**

# YEP, YOU HEARD ME RIGHT

*It's time to eat whatever the H-E-L-L you want.*

For some, this might sound terrifying. For others, exhilarating. And then still for others, flippin' stupid.

Evelyn and Elyse, the two founders of Intuitive Eating, call this “giving yourself unconditional permission to eat”.

The idea operates off of the knowledge that restriction leads to feelings of deprivation, which leads to 1) simultaneously **over-eating** and **under-eating** and 2) **disconnection from your body**,<sup>9-11</sup> which are the things that have gotten many of us into trouble in the first place.

It operates off of the shared human experience that **we all want what we can't have**.

The goal of this step is to remove the excitement and “magic” of forbidden foods through systematic habituation (aka exposure therapy), which is in contrast to intentionally “eating so much of that food that you can't even stand to look at it anymore”, which is really another form of deprivation.

Before we talk about how to make this step happen, I'd like to introduce the idea of the “restriction pendulum”.



# THE RESTRICTION PENDULUM

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The restriction (or "dieting") pendulum works off of these 4 truths:

1

If you are always restricting, you will inevitably swing to the opposite side and experience binge-like behaviors. This is (thankfully) due to your body's strong biological mechanisms at play which insure you eat and don't die.

2

If you are always bingeing or "overeating", you will inevitably swing back to the dieting, or restricting, side due to the shame and discomfort of bingeing and the endless quest to be thinner.

3

If you choose to stop dieting, and eat whatever the heck you want, you might temporarily swing to the opposite side of overeating or bingeing as a compensatory reaction to ending the restriction.

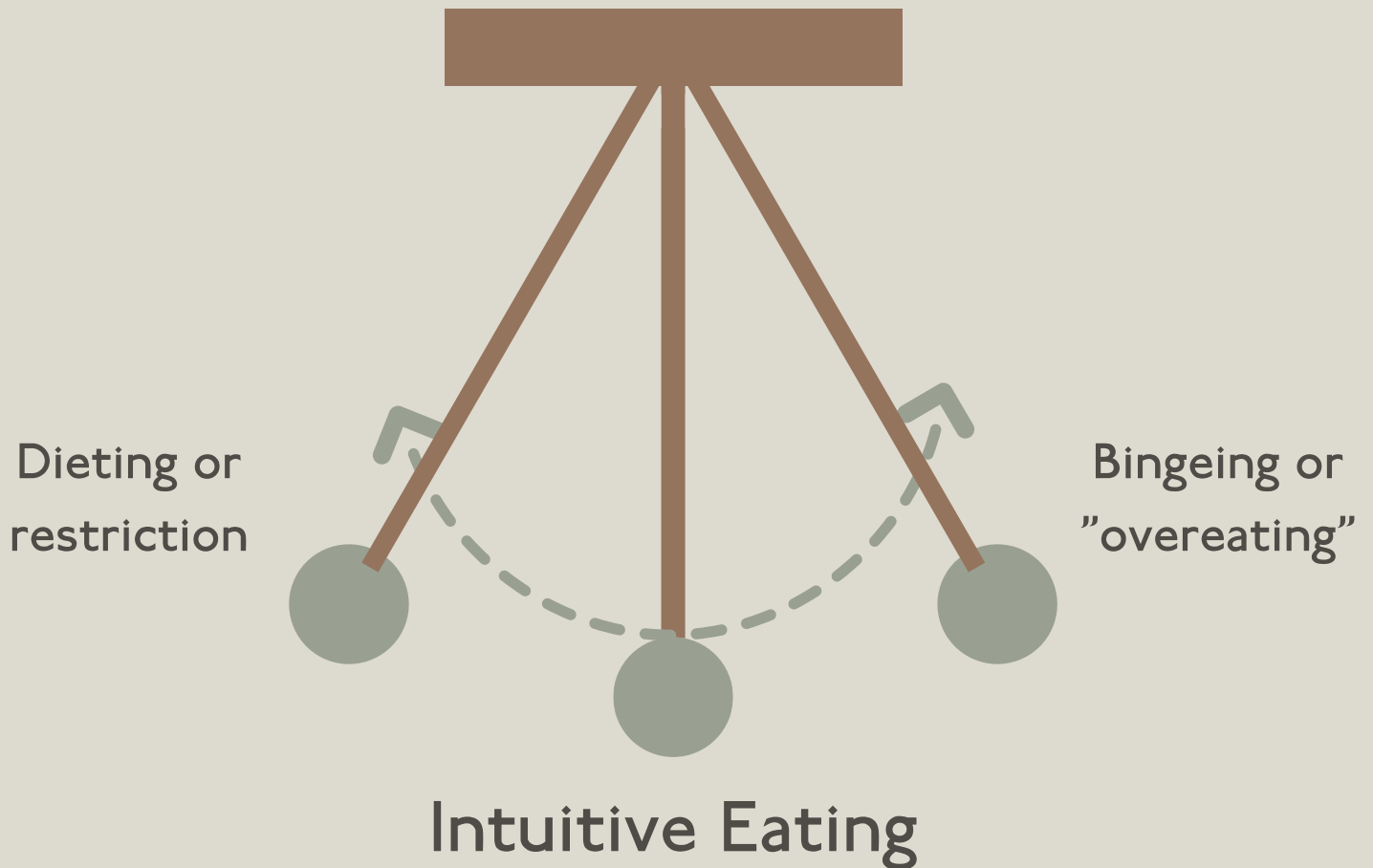
4

If you continue to eat whatever the heck you want and don't choose the knee-jerk reaction to diet after the binge, you will eventually and naturally fall in the middle, which is where we want to be. You will end the cycle.



# THE RESTRICTION PENDULUM

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Many people spend their entire lives swinging wildly between the 2 extremes. It is an exhausting existence. The goal is to slow, and then halt, the momentum. To eventually land, peacefully, in the center, so that your entire life is no longer spent obsessing about food and your body.

**The center is where we find freedom.  
The center is where we find joy in  
food and our bodies.**

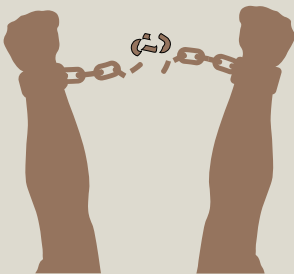
If you can take the leap of faith and truly let yourself eat, **whatever you gosh darn feel like, whenever the heck you want**, you might be surprised at what happens.

One of a few outcomes (not limited to these 3) might happen to you in this step:

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You discover that when you don't restrict and shame yourself, the food doesn't sound so interesting anymore. **You are free to objectively experience the food** and decide if you even want it. You realize that maybe you don't like Oreos all that much, but you've obsessed about them for years simply because they've been "off-limits".



If you have had a long history of restriction and deprivation, **you might go ALL IN**. It might feel out of control. It might happen a few more times until you decide that hey, I don't really like feeling this way after I eat the entire pizza. That is ok. It is part of the process of learning where your stopping point is and regaining autonomy over your food choices.



**You might give yourself pseudo-permission.** You still feel shame and like you "shouldn't" be eating this food. This halts progress as it still inevitably leads to restriction, which means you are still not in the driver's seat. You have to truly give yourself unconditional permission in order to make headway, and maybe a step-by-step approach might work better for you (see option 2 below).

# So, shall we put this step into action?

**We've got two options here:**

**ONE.** Some of you may be ready to fully give yourself unconditional permission to eat and want to dive right in. I say, go for it. YOLO.

**OR**

**TWO.** For those of you who may rightfully have a bit of fear and anxiety about really letting yourself go for it, the following systematic exercise might be helpful:

- a. Make a list of foods that are currently “off-limits” or that you are “careful” with. For some, the list could be long. Entire categories of foods may be off limits, so in this case, just list the general category.
- b. Choose which food you'd like to start with. It doesn't matter which food you start with, that choice is up to you.
- c. Pick a time and a place where you will give yourself full permission to eat the food, and as much of it as you want.
- d. Check in with yourself through the process. How do you feel before eating? During? After? How does the food taste? How was the overall experience? Did anything surprise you about eating this food with full permission?
- e. Keep doing this practice with your list of “off-limits” foods until you feel more confident in your ability to truly eat whatever you feel like. This switch will likely happen way before you can work your way through even half of your forbidden foods list.

# HELPFUL TIPS

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The following tips may be helpful as you embark upon this step:

1

Choose a time to do this when you are not ravenously hungry. Ravenous hunger will always feel scary and out of control, and that is not what we want for starting this process.

2

Try eating without distraction (no TV, phone, etc) so you can fully experience the process.

3

Focus on eating mindfully: paying attention to the flavors, textures, how the food feels in your body after you are done eating.

4

When feelings like shame, doubt, or fear creep in (which they likely will), try simply getting curious about them, kindly acknowledging them, and then gently setting them aside. They are valid, but are not serving you right now so you can kindly tell them to get the hell out.

## AS TIME GOES ON:

The goal of this step is to get you to a place where you feel like you **truly can eat what you want, and no foods are off-limits**. It is a necessary step as it ends the restrict-binge cycle and allows you to regain autonomy over food and your body.<sup>8</sup>

But, many people mistake this step and believe that this is the end of the road with Intuitive Eating. Almost as if it's just the “eat whatever you want while giving no shits” diet.

But that misses out on the scope of the framework in its entirety:

**It's not just about what sounds good in the moment and what tastes good (although that is part of it), but it is instead a complex interplay between what your body needs, what your mind is telling you, and what you have to work with.**

**In Step 3** we removed the fear of forbidden foods and gave ourselves unconditional permission to eat in order to remove the shame around food and end the restrict-binge cycle.

**In Step 4** we will expand upon this idea, learning how to truly listen and learn the signals your body is sending your way. It is in this step that you will learn how to eat in a holistic way that is best for your body and mind.



# STEP 4

**LEARN HOW TO LISTEN**

**If you had to assign percentages  
to the amount of time you...**

---



**EAT IN LINE WITH  
WHAT YOUR BODY  
IS TELLING YOU IT  
NEEDS AND WANTS  
(LISTENING  
INTERNALLY)**

**EAT IN LINE WITH  
WHAT EXTERNAL  
INFLUENCES ARE  
TELLING YOU YOU  
NEED AND WANT  
(LISTENING  
EXTERNALLY)**



**...where do you think you'd land?**

---

# MANY OF US HAVE BECOME CONDITIONED TO ONLY FOLLOW EXTERNAL EATING AND NUTRITION CUES.

Meaning, we have become conditioned to primarily listen and respond to arbitrary ideas, rules, and guidelines for what we should and shouldn't eat, regardless of what our bodies are telling us.

This is due to the persistent and LOUD voice of the wellness/diet industry telling us what is okay and not okay to eat right now, because we cannot be trusted with our out-of-control glutinous desires.

We need someone else, anyone else really (yes, even that tik tok video from that teenage boy telling us what

he "eats in a day") to keep us on track.

And stay vigilant my friend, because the rules and expectations will change on a dime and how DARE you eat carbs because don't you know fat is the new cure for all diseases and obesity?

To many of us, this way of eating by listening to anyone else but ourselves has become status quo.

Our ability to eat intuitively has become de-conditioned as we are told time and time again that we cannot be trusted to make our own food choices by listening to our bodies.





# BUT, IT HASN'T ALWAYS BEEN THIS WAY.

At one point in our early lives, we all ate intuitively. We were all born intuitive eaters; it was not a skill that needed to be taught. We ate when we were hungry, we stopped when we were full, and we ate what sounded good without giving it a second thought.

Do you remember the last time you felt like food and body concerns didn't rule your life? That you were free to eat when you were hungry, stop when you were full, and not think twice about if your food choice was "good" or "bad"?

For some, eating intuitively was co-opted at a very early age by well-intentioned caregivers. For others, it may have been more recent. But at some point, that innate ability to trust our inner wisdom about what and how to eat was taken from us.

**Intuitive Eating is all about how to get back to that place.**



# AND THE FIRST WAY WE DO THAT IS BY LEARNING HOW TO DROP BACK INTO OUR BODIES AND LISTEN.

Then, we work to rebuild trust in ourselves as the only authority we need to listen to when it comes to what we choose to put into our bodies.

For many, learning how to listen and then respond can be complicated. You may have spent years and decades of your life pushing down and ignoring your internal cues.

**Ignoring hunger, ignoring fullness, ignoring cravings, desires, and pleasure.**

Or, on the flip side, **worshiping hunger, fearing fullness, and only giving into cravings and desires in a way that feels anything but positive and life-giving.**

When we ignore something for long enough, it learns to stop speaking up. So if you no longer know what hunger or fullness feels like, just know that this is a normal and common experience.

**But more importantly, know that you can re-learn how to listen.**



# RE-LEARNING HOW TO LISTEN



No matter how clear or cloudy your internal signals sound to you right now, you can use the following steps to reconnect with your inner wisdom. You can use them before, during, or after eating, or at any other times of the day you'd like.

Mastering the following skills will allow you to be the only authority figure you need to listen to when it comes to making food choices.

This practice will be where you tie in Step 3, eat whatever the heck you want, with a broader and more holistic way of feeding and caring for yourself.

1

Get present

4

What will help me thrive?

2

Get physical

5

Aim for satisfaction

3

Am I hungry?

6

What do I have to work with?

# Get present

---

Find yourself in the present moment. Take some deep breaths and sense the world around you. Simply notice how you are feeling mentally, physically, and emotionally with gentle curiosity, letting go of any judgment.

# Get physical

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How is my energy level? Am I tired, do I feel slow or sluggish? How does my stomach feel? How does my head feel? Do I feel empty or full? Am I satisfied, or is there something I need? Am I thirsty? Are there any other physical sensations happening in my body that are wanting to be acknowledged?

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# 3

## Am I hungry?

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yes

Ask yourself the simple question: what sounds good to me right now? What tastes, textures, or types of foods sound best?

---

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no

Am I bored? Am I looking for a distraction? What emotion am I feeling that I am not wanting to feel? Am I thirsty? Do I feel like I “should” eat because it’s dinner time, but I’m not actually hungry?

If you can identify what you are feeling, it can be helpful to give yourself whatever you need in relation to that feeling. For example, if you are feeling lonely, perhaps calling a friend could help. If sad, you could try taking a soothing bath with a glass of wine.

Simply taking a hot minute to try to figure out what you are feeling, without using food as a quick fix, can greatly help with non-hunger eating, if that is something you are currently working on. No amount of food will fix an emotion that is demanding to be acknowledged.

# 4

## What will help me thrive?

---

This is where you can invite your mind into the experience. Not all of our food choices will be exactly what we want at that moment, because much more goes into our eating than simply taste and cravings.

Here are some examples:

--> I've got a big meeting coming up and won't be able to eat for a while. I need something to stay alert and focused during the meeting, so I'll eat something now even though I'm not super hungry.

--> I feel like a huge bowl of ice cream, but I know I always get a stomach ache when I eat it before bed. I hate feeling that way, so I'll eat something satisfying that won't upset my stomach so I can sleep well tonight.

--> I am super short on time, but need to eat a meal. I will snag a burger and fries at McDonald's because that will save me time, and I know it will keep me satisfied and patient when I pick the kids up from school and help them with homework.

--> Pancakes sound great this morning, but I need something that will stay with me because I've got a big workout planned. I'll eat a bowl of oatmeal with some peanut butter because I know that will give me some solid staying power.

# 5

## Aim for satisfaction

---

Insuring you are satisfied, as opposed to simply “full”, will set you up for success as you will end each meal feeling as if you don’t need anything else.

For example, you can eat a pound of carrots and feel full, but there is no way in hell you will be satisfied.

Or, you can order the salad at lunch, when really you feel like the burger, and then you go home and eat a pint of ice cream when really you could have just ordered the burger and left feeling full and satisfied.

**Our bodies are hardwired to feel satisfied, and usually the more satisfied we feel, the less food it takes to decide we’ve had enough.**

When we remove the pleasure and satisfaction from eating delicious foods, we are left feeling incomplete, depressed, and like we can never get enough. Try thinking about any diet you’ve ever been on. How often did you feel satisfied? And were you ever able to convince yourself that feeling “full” as opposed to satisfied was enough for you?

To ensure you will feel satisfied after a meal, first think about what sounds good to you. Consider what kind of textures, smells, flavors, or temperatures sound appealing to you. How do you want to feel after the meal? Then, "Eat the food Tina!"

# 6

## What do I have to work with?

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It is a simple reality of life that sometimes we have to work with what we've got, and that is enough.

Sometimes all we have in the fridge is some moldy leftovers and a piece of cheese, so grilled cheese it is even if that might not be what we want. Or maybe we can't afford the types of foods we know will taste great and make us feel our best, but we get the next best thing we can afford and make due. Or even still, we've waited too long to eat and are ravenous, but all we have is a bunch of leftover Halloween candy and we need something NOW, and so it is - give me those Sour Patch Kids!

The most important thing to remember is that life is not perfect, and as a result neither can our food choices always be.

Life happens, and we need our ability to feed ourselves to be flexible enough that we can manage our constantly changing eating environment and options, without shame spiraling each time we can't make the most optimal choice.

The one constant about life is that it is never constant. If you have kids, travel, have a life outside of work and home, don't have a consistent schedule, enjoy going out to eat, etc etc, then you must be able to adjust and make sacrifices when it comes to your food choices. (ctd)

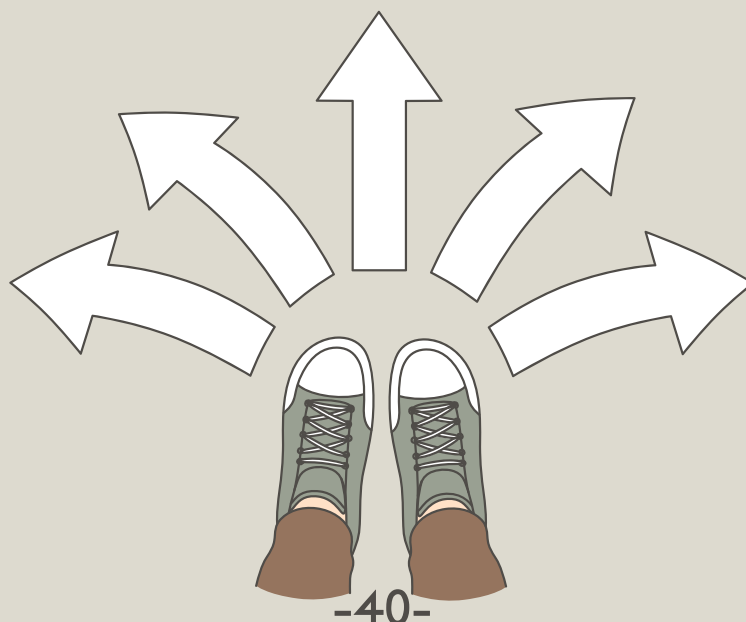


(ctd) Health through good nutrition happens over time, not with one meal or one day of eating.

A week on vacation while eating nothing but churros and hotdogs at Disney World with the kids will not have a lasting impact on your health. What will have a lasting impact is if you are constantly worrying about what you can and can't eat and so are unable to enjoy the vacation with your family.

It is true that our nutrition does have an impact on our health, but not to the extent that our culture makes it out to be. It is simply one factor of health, along with many others (social relationships, stress, sleep, mental health, physical activity), so putting too much emphasis on what we should and shouldn't eat oftentimes does more harm than good.

Just remember: it is ok to relax around food and remove the shame from not being able to make the most ideal food choices every single time. Sometimes all you can do is make due with the best of what you've got.



## IN SUMMARY

Learning and trusting what your body wants and needs can be anxiety-provoking and can take some time, especially if it's been a while since you've trusted your body to make these decisions for you, or since you've been able to hear your body's messages.

It is also important to constantly remind yourself that this is a practice you will **continually work at over time**. There is no such thing as getting this right or wrong, it is simply about checking in with yourself and working to meet yourself exactly where you are at.

Finally, the more you work this muscle of learning to listen, **the better you will become at it**. At first, it might feel like you are thinking way too hard about what to eat. That is normal and expected.

Eventually, listening to your body's signals will be second nature and your food choices will become simple and intuitive.





# 5

*S T E P 5*

## **BODY RESPECT**

# GET COMFY AND SETTLE IN, IT'S TIME TO KICK SOME BODY SHAME ASS

This is the step where we work on body shame and body image, which I believe is the cornerstone of Intuitive Eating work. I also believe it can be one of the most challenging steps in making peace with food and your body.

Until we can move away from the shame, hatred, and disgust of our bodies, we will never be truly free. So buckle in my friend, things are about to get real.



The creators of Intuitive Eating, Evelyn and Elyse, have thoughtfully used the term “body respect”, as opposed to “body love”, because it feels like a more manageable place to start. Many people truly hate their bodies, and so the idea of body “love” can feel totally unreachable when starting out on this journey.

Ideally, getting to a place where you fully and unconditionally love your body and find joy in your body is the goal, but for now, we will start with simply respecting your body, as that is the first step in full body acceptance.

# BODY RESPECT

Respecting your body means many things.

It means ending the constant war on your body to look a different way.

It means no longer forcing it to do things it doesn't want to do or simply can't do.

It means stopping the game of comparing your body to other more "ideal" body types.

It means changing the words we use to speak about our bodies, whether in our minds or out loud.

**It means accepting where you are right now, not waiting until your belly or thighs or arms look a certain way.**

Because here is the thing: our bodies will never reach the level of perfection that our culture expects. Bodies come in ALL shapes and sizes, some thin and some fat, and no body is more deserving of respect than any other body.



# SIZE DISCRIMINATION



Saying that, it is also true that we live in a culture where not all bodies ARE respected and treated equally.

So even though it is morally and practically true that we are all deserving of the same treatment, no matter what size we are, our broader culture doesn't always follow that same logic.

It has been said many times over that weight discrimination is the last overt and socially-acceptable form of prejudice. From doctor's offices to social media channels, prejudice and discrimination abound.<sup>13</sup>

So it is no wonder that so many of us will go to all sorts of lengths to change our size in order to be accepted by society.

At a basic human level, we all simply want to feel valued and accepted. Like we belong. And when we don't feel that way, we will oftentimes do what it takes to get there at great costs to ourselves.

Here are two truths:

**There are real and harmful implications for existing in a body bigger than society deems "acceptable".<sup>14, 16</sup>**

**The problem is not you or your body. The problem is our culture. The answer to that is not to also hate your socially-unacceptable body or try to change its size.**

So then what is the answer?



WELL, MY FRIEND,  
IT SEEMS WE HAVE A  
CHOICE TO MAKE

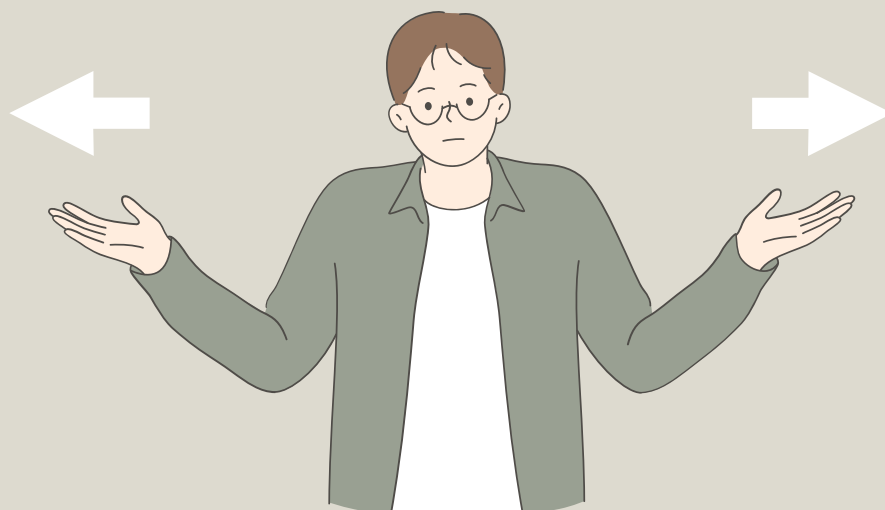
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## OPTION 1

Do what society asks of me and try my best to shrink my body and look perfect in all the other ways we are expected to look perfect.

## OPTION 2

Respect and love myself for who I am and what I look like right now, regardless of what others might think of me.  
F\*\*\* the man!



# ANY OTHER OPTIONS? BECAUSE THAT SEEMS DEPRESSING

Uh, yea, we can't sugar coat this. Honestly, it's not easy either way you cut it.

**If you choose Option 1** and diet and over-exercise and try your darndest to look how society wants you to look, you have to make many sacrifices. You essentially have to give up your own wants, desires, and needs in order to fit in.

Which, actually, fitting in will never happen because the quest of perfection is never attainable. Our teeth will never be white enough, our bellies never small enough, our butts never curvy enough.

If you choose Option 1, you are essentially like Sisyphus, being forced to roll a boulder up a hill only for it to roll back down every time you near the top, repeated for all of eternity. Losing a bit of weight over and over again, only to gain it back over and over again – for the rest of your life.

**If you choose Option 2**, dropping the game, surrendering the fight, and working to respect your here-and-now body, flaws and all, you will be subject to what others think of you. You will be choosing to exist in a society that is not setup to serve you first, which is scary and painful in its own right.

Depressing huh?

**But, I need you to believe me when I say that there is hope.**





## If you choose Option 1

I don't believe you can ever find true freedom from food issues and body shame, and I think you know that too.

## If you choose Option 2

You and I both know this is the only way to get to the other side of this mess and find true joy and freedom in food and your body.

Even if some people don't understand.

Even though we can't pretend it will be dancing through a field of rainbows and butterflies the whole time.

Even if you don't know what respecting and, then, loving your body even looks like.

Even if you are scared and don't believe you can do it.

Trust the process, and let me believe for you.

**Trust the process first, and then you will prove to yourself that you can trust you.**

If you choose Option 2, and I truly hope you do, the following pages list 6 steps that can help support you as you work towards healing your relationship with your body.

# HOW TO RESPECT YOUR BODY



These 6 steps are all about finding ways to practice the work of body respect. Starting small and building positive habits to begin to change your automatic (and oftentimes negative) thoughts about your body is the only way we can truly change the way we think about our bodies.

The work of healing the shame we feel about our bodies can be filled with trauma and roadblocks, and it is oftentimes best done alongside someone trained in this subject. Feel free to reach out to me to talk about your options, if you find yourself in that place.

1

Body gratitude

4

Social media

2

Body checking

5

The scale

3

Your closet

6

Genetics



# Body Gratitude

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These bodies are all we've got. As nice as we think it might be, we can't trade them out for something different.

We must learn how to thrive within the body we have right now - not the one we are "working towards" or hope we will have one day.

Studies on gratitude have shown time and time again that focusing on what we appreciate right now can increase feelings of happiness and contentment and decrease feelings of stress, depression, and anxiety.

Make a list of what you appreciate about your body. What does it do for you that you can respect it for, right now? What do you like about how your body looks?

For example:

**I like that my body can pick up my baby and rock him to sleep.**

**I love my eyes and hair.**

**I am grateful I can dance.**

**I love that I can go to yoga and feel my body move.**

Notice when you mentally or verbally make a negative or derogatory comment about your body.

"My arms look so gross in that picture."

Immediately follow it up, mentally or verbally, with something you like about yourself.

"I love my smile in that picture."



# The Mirror Challenge

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Trying this body gratitude practice regularly allows you to come face-to-face with all parts of your body, which is a necessary component of unconditional, full-body acceptance. It can be uncomfortable at first, but the more you do it, the more you will notice your negative feelings changing - moving from disgust and disassociation, to neutral acceptance and respect, and then maybe, even, to love.

1. Stand in front of a mirror in nothing but your birthday suit (yep, fully nude baby).
2. Place a hand on your heart or on your belly and take some deep breaths.
3. Starting at the top of your head, slowly scan your body, noticing what parts of your body you like, and what parts bring up feelings of resistance.
4. Feel gratitude for the parts of your body that you love.
5. Acknowledge the parts of your body that you dislike.
6. Try doing this in a nonjudgemental, curious, open-hearted manner. When you find yourself wanting to look away in anxiety or disgust, try to sit with the discomfort and keep your gaze on that body part.
7. If you can, invite these challenging parts of you in, as opposed to pushing them away.
8. Try doing this for 5 minutes a day, or start small and try once a week. The more you do it, the quicker you might be able to move towards body acceptance and respect.



# Body checking and comparing

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2

How often do you walk into a room and immediately check your body in relation to other bodies? How often do you walk past a mirror or window and automatically take inventory of how thin or fat you look?

Noticing how often and when you do this, and what this does to your sense of self-worth, is an important part of being ok with exactly what you look like right now. Continuing to engage in this habit only contributes to suffering.

## Your closet

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3

Take stock of your closet. Get rid of clothes that are too small, but that you are saving for the day you “finally lose the weight”. Get rid of clothes that you don’t like or feel good in. Ensure you only have clothes that fit you right now, and can comfortably fit into, without having to suck your belly in or feel discomfort in.

Wear clothes that show off your body and that you feel sexy and confident in. Set an intention to wear it regardless of how you think others will perceive you.

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# 4

## Social Media

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Take a look at your social media environment. Who are you following? Does anyone look like you? Or is it filled with thin women or ripped dudes telling you how to “eat in a day” so you can look just like them?

Social media is literally crawling with unrealistic ideas of how to lose weight and what we should look like. It's fake. It's not real. And it does real harm.

What is awesome though is that there are tons of folks you can follow right now on social media who are promoting the idea of body respect. See my website, [nodiets.co](http://nodiets.co), for a list of some of my faves.

Take the time to unfollow those who make you feel worse about your body or “not enough”, and follow those who allow you to see yourself in a different, more positive, light.



We start to believe the things and ideas that we surround ourselves with, so choose to only surround your digital landscape with people and ideas that make you feel good about your current body size and shape.

# 5

## Get Rid of the Scale

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Yep, it's time. Throw out your scale.

**Like literally throw it away in the garbage because it's a worthless piece of shit.**

Or chuck it off of the nearest cliff.

Or burn it with any other tools of dieting with a group of your closest anti-dieting friends while you dance and sing around the fire in order to symbolically cleanse the dieting evils from your soul and body. Like a strange but healing ritual.

Too far? Never. But seriously:

It's time to admit that the scale does nothing for you besides constantly ensuring your obsession with an arbitrary and unrealistic number. With a version of you that is not real.

A scale can only do one thing: and that is give you a number. It says nothing about your health, worth, or success.

And many folks' days are determined by that number. If the number is too high, it'll be a shitty day, whereas if the number is lower than expected, it can produce a temporary high that keeps us wanting more of that feeling, but that only keeps us stuck in the never-ending obsession with our bodies as defined by a single number.

Like a bad, emotionally-dependent relationship, it's over. Oh, and it's you, not me.

# 6

## Genetics and Weight

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Turns out that the degree to which genetics affect our body size is great.<sup>17</sup> Take a look at your family history. Do your family members tend to be heavier, or thinner?

**There is only so much we can do to change our genetic blueprint.**

Would you try to cram your feet into a size 9 shoe if you are actually size 11?

Your body is designed to do its darndest to remain in a pretty narrow weight range (think +/- 10 lbs) if left to its own devices. If you are eating when you are hungry, stopping when you are full, and moving your body semi-regularly, you will more than likely remain at a stable weight range.

How many times have you temporarily lost weight, only to regain it later? Your body is destined to maintain the weight your genetics instruct it to.

Your body will always work to override your best attempts to try to shrink its size. It will do all it can to keep you alive and at a weight where you will thrive.

If you try to intervene and make it smaller through dieting, your body will make up the difference. It can stop your period, decrease your sex drive, slow your metabolism almost like a bear going into hibernation for the winter, etc, all to protect you from starvation.

Although it can be difficult to fully accept your body size and genetics, it is truly the only way forward. There is an entire community of folks right now breaking free from diet culture and rediscovering joy in their here-and-now bodies. You can join them; this is a choice you can make.



# A Note on Body Grief

Most of us who are working on improving our negative body image and ending the war on our bodies cannot get to body acceptance without experiencing **body grief**.

**Body grief is the experience of loss.**

Loss of the body you thought you'd have one day or were "working towards".

Loss of the things you thought you'd have or do when you reached your ideal body size.

Loss of the pursuit of thinness, which can actually be a cover-up for deeper issues like trauma or depression.

**It is the deep sadness** you experience when people in your life don't accept you in your current body.

**It is the anger** you feel when accessibility becomes an issue for you and people do not want to accommodate you.

**It is the depression** you feel when people assume things about your health just by looking at you.

This idea of body grief stems from the concept of the stages of grief from loss of a loved one, as coined by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross.

The stages are: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

Folks can spend years in one or multiple stages, and it can be helpful to identify the stage you are in now and to know that that stage will naturally evolve over time as you work towards full acceptance of your here-and-now body. (ctd)

# Body Grief Ctd.

**And, I hate to say it, but in order to move from one stage to the next, you must feel the feelings.** All of the feelings. Only then can you move through each stage of grief without getting stuck.

We get stuck when we choose to suppress our emotions or unique experience. And it makes sense, these feelings can be so hard to feel.

Also know that it might get worse before it gets better, especially if you've been suppressing or ignoring your feelings for years. So if you are feeling worse now than you were feeling before starting this journey, know that this is a normal part of the process.

The only way out is through, and so we must bravely confront these uncomfortable feelings head on.

During this time, it is essential that we offer ourselves radical self-compassion - giving ourselves what we need, forgiving ourselves for any perceived sense of wrong-doing, and trusting that these feelings are temporary and will not destroy us.

And I can promise you this:

**The payoff is worth it.**

Note: there is so much more about body grief than I have discussed here. If you would like to learn more, Brianna Campos is a leading expert on body grief and has a fantastic podcast, The Body Grievors Club, and a website full of helpful info, [bodyimagewithbri.com](http://bodyimagewithbri.com).

# YOUR BODY IS BEAUTIFUL

**Your body is beautiful and is worthy of love and belonging simply because you exist.**

Each one of us has inherent worth and dignity, and this is not determined by our size or shape. If someone tells you otherwise, or if you are made to believe otherwise, know that this is not okay.

It is time to demand that you deserve to be treated with love and respect, from yourself as well as others. You do not have to hold space for people or thoughts that do not give you that.

This is the work. This is the step that can dramatically change your life if you are open to the process, willing to sit with the discomfort, and trust that you can and will get to the other side.





# 6

*S T E P 6*

## JOYFUL MOVEMENT

# JOYFUL MOVEMENT

It is undeniable in the research that movement has a countless number of positive effects on our lives. From our physical health to our mental health, moving our bodies is one of the best things we can do for ourselves.<sup>18</sup>

But the word “exercise” can immediately conjure feelings of guilt and anxiety for many of us, as it is often given as a recommendation to help us lose weight, burn off the calories, or “get in shape”, and usually prescribed in a militant, soul-sucking way.

The idea of “going to the gym” or “going for a run” can sound like you’d rather poke your eyeballs out if that is not your cup of tea.

How many times have you joined a gym or tried a new “exercise plan” only to stop doing it as soon as you start? If this has happened to you, first know that it is not a failure and has nothing to do with your self discipline. It does not mean you are lazy.

**It does mean, however, that your motivation for why you are exercising might not be so compelling OR that you haven’t found the type of movement that speaks to your soul.**



# WHEN IT COMES TO MOTIVATION

If you are exercising for unrealistic aesthetics, because someone else told you to do it, or because you feel you “should”, your ability to continue in the long run is usually poor.

**Most people don't know that will power is a finite resource.**

I've heard so many times, “if I just had more will power...”, but the thing is, once our will power runs out (this usually happens pretty dang fast), we can't re-fill the tank with more.

That's all there is folks.

Which is why it is so, so important to wisely choose your motivation for why you are exercising.

If you are exercising for the simple pleasure of feeling your body move, because it makes you feel like a million bucks, if you would like to lower your risk of chronic disease, or if you love the socialization it provides you, you will not have to rely on your willpower to keep you going.

All you will need to do is remember your intrinsic motivation, and ideally that is enough to keep you showing up and gettin' 'er done.



# WHAT SOUNDS LIKE FUN?

The other reason many of us can't stay consistent with exercise is that we've chosen the wrong type of activity.

**It cannot be stressed enough how important it is to choose a form of exercise that gives you joy.**

If you can look forward to exercising as a way to have fun and enjoy what your body can do, you will never need to rely on will power.

The list of physical activity options is endless, and you can get creative here.

## What sounds good to you? What sounds like fun?

- Gardening
- Dancing
- Olympic weightlifting
- Swimming
- Surfing
- Hiking
- Intramural sports like ultimate frisbee, soccer, or flag football
- Skiing
- Mountain biking
- Rock climbing
- Cycling
- Jiu Jitsu
- Crossfit
- Pilates
- Ping-pong
- Kayaking
- Paddle-boarding
- Ice skating
- Skateboarding
- Yoga
- Rollerblading
- Parkour

# A NOTE ON ABILITY

We will all go through seasons of life where we can't move or choose to not move for whatever reason.

Whether due to injury, a demanding schedule, a new baby, mental or physical illness, etc, we will all go through periods of non-movement.

Also, some of us have had a long history of either over-exercising for the pursuit of weight loss, or feeling guilty and/or lazy for not moving enough, and sometimes it is necessary to take a complete hiatus from exercise in order to regain autonomy over our choice to move or not.

It is okay to not move during these times.

If it bothers you to not be able to move in the way you want to, just know that these times are usually temporary and will pass.

Stillness and rest are equally as important when it comes to our mental and physical health, and so I urge you to let go of any guilt, shame, or anxiety you are feeling about not being able to move in the way you want to, or at all, right now.





# A NOTE ON WEIGHT LOSS AND EXERCISE

Many individuals are motivated to exercise in order to lose weight.

But, the research is pretty clear that this is not a sure-fire way to lose weight.

Many folks do not lose weight at all while exercising, and some gain, due to the increase in muscle, which is heavier than fat.

So if our motivation to exercise is to lose weight and that doesn't happen, it is all too easy to stop, which means we lose out on all of the benefits of movement like improved mental health, increased energy, and a decrease in stress.

This brings us back to why it is of crucial importance to know your intrinsic motivation for why you want to move in the first place.





# CONCLUSION



# WHELP, I GUESS WE ARE DONE HERE.

JK. The work of healing your relationship with food and your body is never finished.

Plus I love a good old-fashioned Midwestern goodbye.

(Let's say goodbye inside, then at the door, then outside, then from inside the car with the window down.)

And by love I mean hate. The Irish goodbye is far more preferable to me.

Anyways, yes, although this e-book is finished, your Intuitive Eating journey is not over.

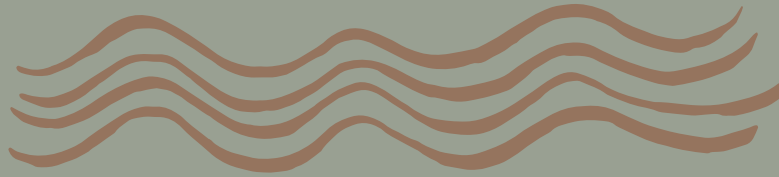
I want to stress the reminder that this is a lifelong practice, and is something we will all go through many ups and downs with.

Sometimes we will feel free, confident, and like we can trust ourselves. And sometimes we will feel doubt, full of shame, and fear.

The key is to not mindlessly react to the doubt when it kicks in - to not fall back into our old automatic habits and patterns that kept us feeling trapped and miserable.



# The key is to ride the wave.



To ride the wave of uncertainty, distrust, or fear while continuing to use the practices we've discussed here.

Even when it is scary to do so.

To trust that this wave will end and you will find yourself in calmer waters once again, having not given into that fear.

Every time you practice these steps, whether with full confidence or with a mountain of doubt, know that you are that much closer to a life free from food fears and body shame.

And once again, if you find yourself in a place where you could use some extra guidance, know that there is help available.

You can search for anti-diet dietitians or therapists in your area, or you can contact me.



# FINALLY, I WANT TO SAY THANK YOU



Thank you for purchasing this e-book, staying with me until this point, and trusting me to help guide you through your journey of Intuitive Eating.

I take it as the greatest compliment.

And yes, I am bidding you farewell with a lame and contrived photo of me next to an exit sign.

It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me.

[NODIETS.CO](https://nodiets.co)

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