

# The 10 Principles of Intuitive Eating

*A Guide to Making Peace with Food and Your Body*

*[beyondeatingrecovery.com](http://beyondeatingrecovery.com)*

## What is Intuitive Eating?

Intuitive Eating is an evidence-based, mind-body health approach created by two dietitians, Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch. It's a weight-inclusive, self-care eating framework that integrates instinct, emotion, and rational thought. The ten principles help you create a healthy relationship with food, mind, and body—where you ultimately become the expert of your own body.

These principles work together to help you break free from chronic dieting and reconnect with your body's natural wisdom about eating.

### Principle 1: Reject the Diet Mentality

Throw out the diet books and magazine articles that offer false hope of losing weight quickly, easily, and permanently. Get angry at diet culture that promotes weight loss and the lies that have led you to feel as if you were a failure every time a new diet stopped working and you gained back all of the weight.

#### Key Actions:

- Recognize that diets don't work long-term (95-98% fail)
- Unfollow social media accounts that promote diet culture
- Challenge the belief that thinness equals health or happiness
- Acknowledge the emotional and physical toll of dieting

### Principle 2: Honor Your Hunger

Keep your body biologically fed with adequate energy and carbohydrates. Otherwise, you can trigger a primal drive to overeat. Once you reach the moment of excessive hunger, all intentions of moderate, conscious eating are fleeting and irrelevant. Learning to honor this first biological signal sets the stage for rebuilding trust in yourself and in food.

#### Key Actions:

- Learn to recognize early and subtle hunger signals
- Eat regularly throughout the day to prevent extreme hunger
- Remember that hunger is not an emergency, but a normal biological signal
- Give yourself unconditional permission to eat when hungry

### Principle 3: Make Peace with Food

Call a truce; stop the food fight! Give yourself unconditional permission to eat. If you tell yourself that you can't or shouldn't have a particular food, it can lead to intense feelings of deprivation that build into uncontrollable

cravings and, often, bingeing. When you finally 'give in' to your forbidden foods, eating will be experienced with such intensity, it usually results in Last Supper overeating and overwhelming guilt.

**Key Actions:**

- Remove the labels of 'good' and 'bad' from foods
- Allow all foods to fit in your eating pattern
- Notice how restriction leads to preoccupation and overeating
- Practice eating previously forbidden foods mindfully

## Principle 4: Challenge the Food Police

Scream a loud no to thoughts in your head that declare you're 'good' for eating minimal calories or 'bad' because you ate a piece of chocolate cake. The food police monitor the unreasonable rules that diet culture has created. The police station is housed deep in your psyche, and its loudspeaker shouts negative barbs, hopeless phrases, and guilt-provoking indictments. Chasing the food police away is a critical step in returning to Intuitive Eating.

### Key Actions:

- Identify your inner food police thoughts
- Challenge and reframe judgmental thoughts about eating
- Replace guilt with self-compassion
- Recognize external food police (diet culture messages, diet talk from others)

## Principle 5: Discover the Satisfaction Factor

The Japanese have the wisdom to keep pleasure as one of their goals of healthy living. In our compulsion to comply with diet culture, we often overlook one of the most basic gifts of existence—the pleasure and satisfaction that can be found in the eating experience. When you eat what you really want, in an environment that is inviting, the pleasure you derive will be a powerful force in helping you feel satisfied and content.

### Key Actions:

- Ask yourself what you really want to eat
- Create pleasant eating environments when possible
- Pay attention to taste, texture, and enjoyment while eating
- Notice that satisfaction helps you feel content with less food

## Principle 6: Feel Your Fullness

In order to honor your fullness, you need to trust that you will give yourself the foods you desire. Listen for the body signals that tell you that you are no longer hungry. Observe the signs that show that you're comfortably full. Pause in the middle of eating and ask yourself how the food tastes, and what your current hunger level is.

### Key Actions:

- Check in with your fullness levels during meals
- Pause mid-meal to assess hunger and satisfaction
- Remember you can eat again when hungry—food is always available
- Practice eating without distractions to better feel fullness cues

## Principle 7: Cope with Your Emotions with Kindness

First, recognize that food restriction, both physical and psychological, can trigger loss of control, which can feel like emotional eating. Find kind ways to comfort, nurture, distract, and resolve your issues. Anxiety, loneliness, boredom, and anger are emotions we all experience throughout life. Each has its own trigger, and each has its own appeasement. Food won't fix any of these feelings. It may comfort for the short term, distract from the pain, or even numb you. But food won't solve the problem.

### Key Actions:

- Develop a toolkit of coping strategies beyond food
- Practice self-compassion when using food for comfort
- Identify your emotional triggers and patterns
- Remember that emotional eating is not the same as binge eating

## Principle 8: Respect Your Body

Accept your genetic blueprint. Just as a person with a shoe size of eight would not expect to realistically squeeze into a size six, it is equally futile (and uncomfortable) to have a similar expectation about body size. Respect your body so you can feel better about who you are. It's hard to reject the diet mentality if you are unrealistic and overly critical of your body size or shape. All bodies deserve dignity.

### Key Actions:

- Practice body neutrality or appreciation rather than forcing body love
- Focus on what your body does rather than how it looks
- Wear comfortable clothes that fit your current body
- Challenge appearance-focused thoughts and comparisons

## Principle 9: Movement—Feel the Difference

Forget militant exercise. Just get active and feel the difference. Shift your focus to how it feels to move your body, rather than the calorie-burning effect of exercise. If you focus on how you feel from working out, such as energized, it can make the difference between rolling out of bed for a brisk morning walk or hitting the snooze alarm.

### Key Actions:

- Find movement that feels good and is enjoyable
- Release exercise rules and rigid routines
- Focus on how movement makes you feel (energized, strong, calm)
- Remember that all movement counts, not just formal exercise

## Principle 10: Honor Your Health with Gentle Nutrition

Make food choices that honor your health and taste buds while making you feel good. Remember that you don't have to eat perfectly to be healthy. You will not suddenly get a nutrient deficiency or become unhealthy from one snack, one meal, or one day of eating. It's what you eat consistently over time that matters. Progress, not perfection, is what counts.

### Key Actions:

- Add nutrition gently without restriction or rigid rules
- Consider how different foods make you feel physically
- Balance nutrition with satisfaction and pleasure
- Remember: health is about the big picture, not individual food choices

## Your Journey Forward

Intuitive Eating is a journey, not a destination. It takes time to unlearn diet culture messages and reconnect with your body's wisdom. Be patient and compassionate with yourself as you practice these principles. There is no perfect way to do Intuitive Eating—it's about progress, self-discovery, and ultimately, peace with food and your body.

If you're in eating disorder recovery or struggling with disordered eating, consider working with a qualified professional who specializes in Intuitive Eating and can provide personalized support.

For more resources, visit:

***[beyondeatingrecovery.com/resources](https://beyondeatingrecovery.com/resources)***