



NOURISH Advanced Nutrition-Lifestyle Training

# LEVEL 3

## Making Peace with Food

### *Mindful + Intuitive Eating*

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# *Intuitive Eating Fundamentals*

## Introduction to Intuitive Eating

### ***#1: What is Intuitive Eating?***

***“Eat when you are hungry, drink when you are thirsty, sleep when you are tired.”***

Taoist adage

**Intuitive eating** is a nutrition philosophy based on the premise that becoming more attuned to the body's natural hunger signals is a more effective way to generate health, and attain & maintain a healthy, comfortable weight, rather than using traditional weight loss methods e.g. calorie / fat / carbohydrate gram counting, blind observance of a nutrition philosophy (modern or ancient), and other forms of restrictive dieting.

Intuitive eating goes by many names: ***non-dieting or non-diet approach*** (such as that embodied by the Health at Every Size or HAES movement), ***normal eating, wisdom eating, conscious eating, and attuned eating***. It's not a new concept - the underlying philosophies of intuitive eating are thousands of years old and exist in most eastern and some western religions.

### ***#2: Two Oars of a Boat***

In our modern world, intuitive eating is best used in synchrony with basic nutritional knowledge. We can't use one without the other.

Using **nutrition knowledge** (diet plans, meal plans, “healthy eating” guidelines, etc) tells us what to eat, when to eat, and how much to eat. What and when we *feel* like eating does not stem from these hard “food facts”. Using **nutrition knowledge** alone will not generate autonomy and calmness around food; rather, we constantly turn to outside information whilst ignoring our body's natural inner cues, likes and dislikes.

Using our **intuition** alone means *eating whatever we feel like, whenever we feel like it*. However this can lead us to follow our senses evolutionarily geared for high fat/sugar/salt foods, which tend to be overtly available and nutrient depleted in our culture.

Nutrition knowledge and intuition are like the 2 oars of a boat - *we need both to move towards a healthy, comfortable weight* that we can maintain! **Most people have lost touch with their oar of intuition**. So we need to strengthen our “intuition muscles” to balance out the oars of the boat and once again move in a straight line towards our optimal healthy weight!

### **#3: Four Pillars of Intuitive Eating**

These 4 “HOWS” of intuitive eating can be viewed as **4 pathways to trusting your body and breaking free of diet dogma**, or steps to trusting yourself to simply eat well:

1. **SATISFACTION** is nature’s way of telling us we have nourished ourselves enough. If we are listening to and satisfying our hunger, there will be no need to restrict and binge. **Many people no longer know what being hungry or full feels like.**

Re-discovering your internal hunger and fullness cues means *you can eat whatever you feel like, whenever you feel like it*. Asking yourself “**Am I physically hungry?**”, placing your hunger from 1-10 on a hunger/fullness scale, and keeping an eating journal all allow you to see patterns and habits that may be stopping you from achieving optimal levels of health.

**Your body is wired to maintain a healthy set-point weight**, and satisfaction keeps our setpoint stable. Chronic dieting raises our setpoint, making it harder to maintain a healthy comfortable weight.

2. **MINDFUL EATING** is the experience of **joyous eating in the present moment**. Eating this way helps us to detect our body’s messages, and to know what we like and don’t like at any given time, and respond to that.

It slows us down, enhances digestion and assimilation of nutrients, and reduces the symptoms of hurried eating such as gas, bloating, and reflux. It allows us to derive more **pleasure and satisfaction** from food.

By eating mindfully, we enjoy the smells, sights, textures, sounds, tastes, colours, and feelings of eating. This is fully conscious ***eating with the body, not the mind!*** *In the absence of mindfulness, we become numb to our bodies.*

*\*\* Mindful Eating Exercise : See the Apple Meditation in the Appendix*

***You can be present to eating food anytime, even if it’s just toast with peanut butter!***

3. **EMOTIONAL BALANCE**. **In our culture food has become inextricably bound up with emotion and situation**. A brief hunger/fullness assessment (1-10 on scale) will show us that we often eat for reasons other than physical hunger. This is called ***non-hungry eating***.

**Emotions** are the biggest cause of non-hungry eating. *When we eat out of emotions we tend not to listen to internal cues of hunger and fullness!*

**How do I get a handle of emotional eating, overeating, binge eating?** Addressing emotional eating involves first getting present to emotions before you eat, naming them, and feeling them. It means taking care of yourself, and showing self-compassion. Here are some ways you can take of yourself:

Watch a favourite movie.  
Go for a walk or bike ride.  
Buy flowers for yourself.  
Talk to a friend.  
Write in your journal.  
Take a bath, or sit in the sauna or hot tub.  
Play with your pet.  
Spritz yourself with perfume or burn some incense.  
Garden.

Work on a crossword puzzle, jigsaw puzzle, or Sudoku.  
Curl up with a blanket, herbal tea, and a good book.  
Get a manicure or pedicure.  
Watch reruns of your favourite sitcom.  
Read a trashy magazine or novel.  
Take a drive.  
Go for a massage.

Paint, draw, collage, bead, knit, write poetry, scrapbook, or create something (without judging yourself).  
Clean out a closet or drawer (amazingly invigorating!)  
Take a nap.  
Listen to relaxing music.  
Put on your favourite song and have a boogie!  
Breathe/meditate.

4. **PLEASURE** is nature's way of rewarding us for looking after ourselves. If a food is delicious, we're highly motivated to eat it. ***In a healthy body, fresh wholefoods taste delicious!***

When we eat a lot of processed foods, over time the artificial stimulation alters taste buds and food preference. You can re-sensitise your taste buds to enjoy nourishing whole foods so that they are again highly pleasurable to eat.

*\*\* Experiential Eating to Ignite your Senses! Exercise in Appendix*

What and how you eat

## **connects to everything else in your life.**

That is why diet books fail – they give the “what” and sometimes the “how” of eating without connection to one's body, their emotions, sense of self, ability to love and speak their truth, be intuitive, and feel united with nature.

**Innate, Attuned, Intuitive, Instinctual , Conscious Eating** – call it what you will. It is the bigger picture behind everything we have explored so far. It is the backbone – without it, we are just following a bunch of rules – it just becomes another diet. The way we eat needs to be aligned with our personal values, our sense of self, and our hearts. This to me is truly intuitive eating.



# Your Innate Body Wisdom

## *#4: We're wired to maintain a healthy weight*

*"There is more wisdom in your body than in your deepest philosophies."*

Friedrich Nietzsche

Like a thermostat, you have a **healthy and comfortable weight** that lets your body function optimally. This is called your **SETPOINT WEIGHT** – and it is actually a weight range rather than a fixed number.

If you keep “jiggling” with the thermostat via diets, your body fights harder to retain control – you may even gain extra weight as your body sends the setpoint higher to protect against future diets.

Through a number of **hormones and chemical messengers**, your body tries to maintain your fat at the level at which you were designed to function best!

So why fight it? Give up counting calories and trying to control your eating through dieting. Instead, *let your body do the regulating for you*. I promise you'll have far better results!

## *#5 – What takes us away from our setpoint?*

**Your setpoint** is the result of a complex interplay of genetics, environment, and the lifestyle choices made today as well as in the past. So why have we been seeing expanding waistlines over the past 4 decades? Two reasons:

1. **We don't trust our own judgment anymore.** We no longer allow the process to work. External rules such as “good/bad foods”, inappropriate amounts and times to eat, rushed eating, and emotional eating, drown out our innate ability to respond to setpoint cues.
2. **We're physically hungrier** due to rising setpoints, a result of environment & lifestyle choices. **Your weight** at any one time isn't just dependent on calorie balance (diet and exercise) as is commonly believed! It also heavily depends on:
  - **Genetic inheritance.** If you like the majority of people have inherited the “thrifty genes”, your body is super-efficient at storing fat. This internal weight regulation system is crafted for the environmental conditions of the past, not the food abundance we are surrounded by today...
  - **Types of food** we're eating nowadays. **If foods could be scientifically engineered to encourage weight gain, our modern food processing industry has done it!** It's now easy to get concentrated calories that bypass our weight regulation system. **WHAT** we eat more is

more important than HOW MUCH. *Continually eating certain foods increases the drive to eat and reduces energy spent, while eating other foods has entirely opposite effect.* Hydrating, unprocessed, naturally flavourful, ripe, fresh, fibre-rich, and nutritious foods **satisfy** us most!

- **Your dieting history.** Yoyo dieting raises your setpoint. In our genetic memory, dieting feels like famine. The result? Escalating weight, eating disorders, stress, and emotional anguish.
- **Microbes in your gut.** Antibiotic use and food additives have changed the balance of our tummy bugs! Some microbes are better at wringing calories out of your meals than others.
- **Environmental toxins.** Endocrine disruptors, obesogens, plastics, and environmental oestrogens wreak havoc with fat metabolism, create digestive disorders, and put gut bacteria out of balance. This is why *basic ongoing gentle detoxification* is so important!
- **Your mum's nutrition** + habits when you were in utero affect your body weight later in life.
- **Sleep deprivation** alters hormones so you're hungrier and don't feel as satisfied after you eat.
- **Stress** generates short and long term stress hormones such as cortisol which lay down fat and increase insulin resistance.
- **Viral infections.**

As you can see, losing weight in and of itself is counterproductive to maintaining a healthy weight in the long term. **HEALTH needs to be the focus, not WEIGHT!** Much benefit can be had from moving away from a weight-centred approach to a health centred approach, e.g. *HAES (Health at Every Size)*.

## ***#6 – Developing your ability to eat intuitively***

**How can you find your own setpoint?** By **not** dieting. By *eating intuitively* i.e. listening to your body and eating normally. When you eat naturally, in response to signals of hunger, fullness and appetite without fixating on your weight or food habits; when eating is effortless and enjoyable – you are eating intuitively.

Ironically it's through NOT dieting, that you attain and maintain a healthy, comfortable weight in the long run!

### **Respect, not rules**

Having sound information from the field of food science enables you to work with this internal knowing more easily. It comes back to balancing nutrition knowledge with intuition.

Knowledge about wholefoods, detoxification, alkalising etc. can be powerful, but it can also be abused just like any other nutrition information! **\*\* PLEASE DO NOT USE THIS INFORMATION TO CREATE OR JUSTIFY SELF-PUNISHING RULES FOR DEMONISING FOOD OR RESTRICTING YOUR INTAKE.**

If you wish to create a happy relationship with food and enjoy a well-nourished body, clarifying the **intention** that informs your food choices is of utmost importance. Suppose your intention **is to develop your ability to eat intuitively**. Instead of viewing food choices in terms of their potential effect on your weight, you'll be tuning in to how various foods make you *feel*.

***What's your intent in learning about nutrition?  
Can you use your knowledge to help you tune in to your body,  
rather than creating food rules?***

## Applying Intuitive Eating

### ***#7 - Understanding cravings***

#### **Genetics**

There are **genetic reasons** you like the food you do. A chemical called PROP is a bitter-tasting substance, but only those with a certain genetic makeup can taste it. PROP is used in scientific experiments because it's a strong marker for taste sensitivity in general. You can be a PROP super-taster, taster or non-taster.

**Do you prefer coffee black (no milk/sugar)? Like grapefruit, cabbage and brussel sprouts?**

**Overwhelmingly NO?** You're likely to be a **super-taster or taster**, you perceive strong tastes easily.  
**Definitive YES?** You're likely to be a **PROP non-taster** and be less sensitive to strong & bitter tastes.

**Your past experience** with food plays an even larger role in directing your desires than your genes! Eat the same flavours over and over and you generate more cells that convey the same receptivity to those flavours, while generating fewer cells sensitive to tastes you encounter less often. Basically, *the more salt you add to your food, the more you'll "need" to detect the same level of saltiness!*

#### **Modern Food Culture**

We are evolutionarily adapted to seek and like **high-fat, high-salt, high-sugar foods**. In addition, **food industry** has manipulated our taste buds into preferring intensely high-fat, high-salt, high-sugar foods *with added flavour chemicals*.

Did you know you can *retrain your taste buds back into preferring natural, fresh, quality, nutritious foods?! Your taste buds only have a 3 week lifespan*. If you wish to reduce the amount of salt you need to flavour your food, switch to low sodium foods and after 3 weeks very salty food no will no longer appeal to you. This method also works with sweet and high-fat foods.

## How to reclaim your taste for nutritious foods

Is your sugar/fat/caffeine habit causing you harm? You can figure out how to enjoy food and eating without being constantly dogged by the need for more. Try these:

1. **Pump up your self-care skills.** Look for other things you can sometimes do that are more effective at giving you the comfort or high you seek – cultivate other avenues of pleasure! Friends, sports, museums, outings, nature, volunteering, family...
2. **Explore alternatives that provide the good stuff.** If you love sugar, try a nearly-too-ripe peach, apples dipped in honey, stevia, and natural sweeteners.
3. **Mindful eating.** Pay attention to the first few bites – see if food is delivering on its promise. You may find the next few bites are less and less rewarding! This is **Negative alliesthesia**.
4. **Pay attention to the whole experience** of food rather than focussing on in-the-moment pleasure.
5. **Check for deficiencies.** Blood tests may reveal you're low in certain nutrients or have hormonal imbalances that may lead to certain cravings.
6. **Consciously choose your value system.** Increasing your social and environmental food consciousness can result in healthier food choices. *What's good for the planet is good for you!*

***Your goal is to re-educate your palate to appreciate a wider range of flavour sensations and tone down the cravings that may be causing you harm.***

The best approach toward eating is not one of denial and restriction. The best approach is one that **cultivates pleasures and honours food** and the act of nourishing yourself. By becoming more attentive to and respectful of your food and the eating process, you will be drawn to more wholesome choices, learn to better appreciate the flavourful nuances of nutritious foods, and be able to better hear your body's signals of hunger and fullness. All of which, in turn, optimise your health and help you to maintain a healthy weight.

## ***#8 – Intuitive eating: your compass!***

**No perfect diet exists**, yet many different dietary systems claim to be the best. Diet is a highly individual, adaptive, and intuitive response to many factors including: environment, season, genetics, physiology, natural cycles, life stage, health, gender and personal preference.

*“Be careful about reading health books – you may die of a misprint!”* - Mark Twain

There are many dietary approaches that could potentially fit an individual: selecting the correct one is an ability many of us have slowly lost! To regain this ability, you can

**Develop and use your intuition.**

***Intuition is a vital source of information in determining our perfect diet.*** It is a valid form of information along with observable phenomena and measurable data. Gut feelings, sixth sense, intuition etc are an

evolutionary mechanism based in a physical part of the brain! **Albert Einstein took it further in saying, “The only real valuable thing is intuition.”**

## **Traditional wisdom, intuitive experience, and scientific insight can be mutually enriching.**

If you're driving in pitch black, why would you use keep your car's lights on low when you could use the brighter high beams and arrive not only more safely, but faster? Thinking we should only use science, or rigidly stick to traditional approaches, or use only our intuition in our approach to eating is just as shortsighted.

Rather than being constricted to just one of these tools, they can be used simultaneously to help you determine which way of eating is best suited to your needs, at any time.

## *In closing...*

Food isn't simply a means to feed physical appetites; it also feeds emotional and spiritual appetites.

When you eat mindfully and savour your meals, **you savour your life!**

We can shift our attitudes and find a deeper sense of joy simply by changing our approach to food. There is an interconnection between our eating and our living. If we can understand our relationship with food, we can start to understand and discover aspects of our inner selves and our outer behaviours.

By undertaking this training, it is my wish that you will become something of a soulful nourisher of yourself and others, a “mystic chef” in the kitchen. This definition of a mystic chef from *The Mystic Cookbook* by Denise & Meadow Linn, beautifully summarises the qualities of an intuitive eater:

### ***The mystic chef / intuitive eater:***

- *Eats what she loves and loves what she eats*
- *Savours her meals and by extension savours her life*
- *Understands that food is made up of energy and vibration, and she can enhance a meal with love, intention, and blessings*
- *Makes mealtimes a time of celebration, ritual, and community*
- *Knows that food is not just fuel or calories, but that it is instead sustenance that feeds both physical and spiritual appetites and balances mind, body, and spirit when cooked and eaten mindfully.*

*May we nourish ourselves consciously, mindfully, and peacefully, without guilt, violence, fear or a sense of punishment or deprivation. May we be mindful of other living organisms, practice non-violence, and be harmonious within our environment. Namaste.*

# Appendix

## **Experiential eating to ignite the senses!**

Eating with the senses is soulful and spiritual. The aroma of chocolate chip cookies in oven on a cold and blustery day, the vibrant crimson juice of ripe cherries, Watermelon bright pink smashed on ground. These are food experiences that go far beyond simply putting something in your mouth to fulfil a base need for nourishment, wouldn't you agree?

The most pleasurable meals are the ones in which the senses are tantalised by an array of colours, sounds textures, smells, and feelings, beauty on the plate and around you. Think back to your most profound food memories, what makes them stick in your mind?

You can ignite all the senses during a meal to make it a powerful and spiritual experience. When you're fully engaged with your senses, you're in the present moment – as you saw in mindful eating. Think of Julia Roberts in Eat Pray Love eating spaghetti – simple dish, but the opera music in the background, lovers kissing nearby, the way she slurps and chews with absolute abandon! It all goes into creating the moment. Try these exercises to sharpen your senses and enhance your food experience!

## **Taste: Eating with the Mouth**

*Take five minutes to describe a food to a friend. Start with a fruit, vegetable, meat or grain rather than a complete dish. Don't reveal what food you're describing, and see if your friend can guess. Assume she has never tasted anything like it before. Remember this is an exercise based on taste. Colour, shape, size, texture, and any other physical and auditory traits don't count. What words would you use? What flavours most represent this food? Salty, sweet, sour, bitter, or savoury / umami? Now switch and have your friend tell you about a particular food. Can you guess what it is?*

## **Smell: Eating with Your Nose**

*Blindfold yourself and have a friend give you a morsel to eat while holding the scent of something else under your nose. Can you guess what you're eating? Try this with a few different foods. What do you notice? What is the experience of eating with your nose?*

## **Hearing: Eating with your Ears**

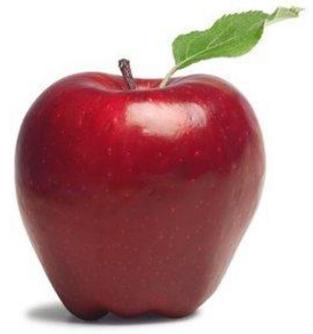
- *Dine in silence. For first 10 minutes of lunch. No music, no conversation. Listen to your food. What sounds does each ingredient or dish make? You can put in earplugs and continue the meal. Are the flavours of your meal enhanced, or does the lack of sound detract from them?*
- *Play different music while you eat. Conversation about the food you're eating – does it enhance the experience?*

## **Touch: Eating with your Tactile Senses**

*Eat an entire meal with your fingers. What's the texture of the food? How does it feel between your fingers? How does the experience of dining change when you ditch your fork and knife?*

## An apple meditation

This simple meditation from Buddhist master Thich Nhat Hanh will show you how to find more joy in your life by slowing down and savouring.



*Take an apple out of your refrigerator. Any apple will do. Wash it. Dry it.*

*Before taking a bite, pause for a moment. Look at the apple in your palm and ask yourself: When I eat an apple, am I really enjoying eating it? Or, am I so pre-occupied with other thoughts that I miss the delights that the apple offers me?*

*If you are like most of us, you answer "yes" to the second question much more often than the first. For most of our lives, we have eaten apple after apple without giving it a second thought. Yet in this mindless way of eating, we have denied ourselves the many delights present in the simple act of eating an apple. Why do that, especially when it is so easy to truly enjoy the apple?*

*The first thing is to give your undivided attention to eating the apple. When you eat the apple, just concentrate on eating the apple. Don't think of anything else. And most important, be still. Don't eat the apple while you are driving. Don't eat it while you are walking. Don't eat it while you are reading. Just be still. Being focused and slowing down will allow you to truly savour all the qualities the apple offers: its sweetness, aroma, freshness, juiciness, and crispness.*

*Next, pick up the apple from the palm of your hand and take a moment to look at it again. Breathe in awareness a few times to help you focus and become more in touch with how you feel about the apple. Most of the time, we barely look at the apple we are eating. We grab it, take a bite, chew it quickly and then swallow. This time, take note: What kind of apple is it? What colour is it? How does it feel in your hand? What does it smell like? Going through these thoughts, you will begin to realise the apple is not simply a quick snack to quiet a grumbling stomach. It is something more complex, something part of a greater whole.*

*Then, give the apple a smile and slowly, mindfully take a bite, and chew it. Be aware of your in-breath and out-breath a few times to help you concentrate solely on eating the apple: what it feels like in your mouth; what it tastes like; what it's like to chew and swallow it. There is nothing else filling your mind as you chew—no projects, no deadlines, no worries, no "to do" list, no fears, no sorrow, no anger, no past, and no future. There is just the apple.*

*When you chew, know what you are chewing. Chew slowly and completely. Chew consciously, savouring the taste of the apple and its nourishment, immersing yourself in the process one hundred percent. This way, you really appreciate the apple as it is. And as you become fully aware of eating the apple, you also become fully aware of the present moment. You become fully engaged in the here and now. Living in the moment, you can really experience what the apple offers you, and you become more alive.*