

How Intuitive Eating Principles Apply to Eating Disorders*

Core Principle	Anorexia Nervosa	Bulimia Nervosa/Binge Eating Disorder
1. Reject Diet Mentality	Restricting is a core issue and can be deadly.	Restricting does not work and triggers primal hunger, which can lead to binge eating.
2. Honor Your Hunger	Weight Restoration is essential. The mind can not function and think properly. You are likely caught in an obsessional cycle of worrying about food, and have difficulty making decisions. Your body and brain need calories to function. Your nutrition therapist will work with you to create a way of eating that feels safe.	Eat regularly—this means 3 meals and 2 to 3 snacks. Eating regularly will help you get in touch with gentle hunger, rather than the extremes that often occur with chaotic eating. Ultimately, you will trust your own hunger signals even if they deviate slightly from this plan.
3. Make Peace with Food	Take risks, add new foods, when ready. Do this gradually with baby steps.	Take risks, try “fear” foods, when ready and not vulnerable. (Vulnerable includes, overhungry, overstressed, or experiencing some other feeling state.)
4. Challenge Food Police	Challenge the thoughts and beliefs about food. Take the morality, judgment, and rigidity out of eating.	Challenge the thoughts and beliefs about food. Take the morality and judgment out of eating.
5. Feel Your Fullness	You can’t rely on your fullness signals during the beginning phases of recovery, as your body likely feels prematurely full, due to slower digestion.	A transition away from the extreme fullness that is experienced with binge eating. Once regular eating is established, gentle fullness will begin to resonate. If you are withdrawing from purging, especially from laxatives, you may temporarily feel bloated which will distort the feeling of fullness.
6. Satisfaction Factor	Frequently, there are fears or resistance to experiencing the pleasure from eating (as well as other pleasures of life).	If satisfying foods and eating experiences are included regularly, there will be less impetus to binge.
7. Cope with Emotions without Using Food	Often emotionally shut down. Food restriction, food rituals and obsessional thinking are the coping tools of life. With re-nourishment, you will be more prepared to deal with feelings that emerge.	Binge eating, purging, and excessive exercise are used as coping mechanisms. Can begin to take a time out from these behaviors to start experiencing and dealing with feelings.
8. Respect Your Body	Heal the body image distortion.	Respect the here and now body.
9. Exercise	Will likely need to stop exercising.	Over-exercising can be a purging behavior. Moderate exercise can help manage stress and anxiety.
10. Honor Your Health	Learning to remove the rigidity of nutrition—where there is a strict adherence to “nutritional principles”, regardless of their source. Recognize that the body needs adequate amounts of fat, carbohydrates, energy, and a variety of foods	Learning to remove the rigidity of nutrition. There is a strict belief as to what constitutes healthy eating, and if this belief is violated, purging consequences can ensue (if bulimic Recognize that the body needs adequate amounts of fat, carbohydrates, energy, and a variety of foods

*From: Tribole E and Resch E, *Intuitive Eating*, 2nd edition, 2003.

10 Principles of Intuitive Eating*

1. **Reject the Diet Mentality.** Throw out the diet books and magazine articles that offer you false hope of losing weight quickly, easily, and permanently. Get angry at 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. If you allow even one small hope to linger that a new and better diet might be lurking around the corner, it will prevent you from being free to rediscover Intuitive Eating.

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 re-building trust with yourself and food.

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 food, eating will be experienced with such intensity, it usually results in Last Supper overeating, and overwhelming guilt.

4. **Challenge the Food Police.** Scream a loud "NO" to thoughts in your head that declare you're "good" for eating under 1000 calories or "bad" because you ate a piece of chocolate cake. The Food Police monitor the unreasonable rules that dieting has created. The police station is housed deep in your psyche, and its loud speaker shouts negative barbs, hopeless phrases, and guilt-provoking indictments. Chasing the Food Police away is a critical step in returning to Intuitive Eating.

5. **Respect Your Fullness.** 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 a meal or food and ask yourself how the food tastes, and what is your current fullness level?

6. **Discover the Satisfaction Factor.** The Japanese have the wisdom to promote pleasure as one of their goals of healthy living. In our hurry to be thin and healthy, 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 and conducive, the pleasure you derive will be a powerful force in helping you feel satisfied and content. By providing this experience for yourself, you will find that it takes much less food to decide you've had "enough".

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7. Honor Your Feelings Without Using Food. Find ways to comfort, nurture, distract, and resolve your issues without using food. Anxiety, loneliness, boredom, 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 into a food hangover. But food won't solve the problem. If anything, eating for an emotional hunger will only make you feel worse in the long run. You'll ultimately have to deal with the source of the emotion, as well as the discomfort of overeating.

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 as futile (and uncomfortable) to have the same expectation with body size. But mostly, 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 about your body shape.

9. Exercise--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. If when you wake up, your only goal is to lose weight, it's usually not a motivating factor in that moment of time.

10 Honor Your Health.--Gentle Nutrition Make food choices that honor your health and tastebuds while making you feel well. Remember that you don't have to eat a perfect diet to be healthy. You will not suddenly get a nutrient deficiency or gain weight 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.

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Attunement

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Appendix A

Intuitive Eating Scale (21 Items)

Directions for participants: For each item, please circle the answer that best characterizes your attitudes or behaviors.

1. **I try to avoid certain foods high in fat, carbohydrates, or calories.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
2. **I stop eating when I feel full (not overstuffed).**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
3. **I find myself eating when I'm feeling emotional (e.g., anxious, depressed, sad), even when I'm not physically hungry.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
4. **If I am craving a certain food, I allow myself to have it.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
5. **I follow eating rules or dieting plans that dictate what, when, and/or how much to eat.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
6. **I find myself eating when I am bored, even when I'm not physically hungry.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
7. **I can tell when I'm slightly full.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
8. **I can tell when I'm slightly hungry.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
9. **I get mad at myself for eating something unhealthy.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
10. **I find myself eating when I am lonely, even when I'm not physically hungry.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
11. **I trust my body to tell me when to eat.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
12. **I trust my body to tell me what to eat.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
13. **I trust my body to tell me how much to eat.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
14. **I have forbidden foods that I don't allow myself to eat.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
15. **When I'm eating, I can tell when I am getting full.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Appendix A (continued)

16. I use food to help me soothe my negative emotions.				
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
17. I find myself eating when I am stressed out, even when I'm not physically hungry.				
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
18. I feel guilty if I eat a certain food that is high in calories, fat, or carbohydrates.				
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
19. I think of a certain food as "good" or "bad" depending on its nutritional content.				
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
20. I don't trust myself around fattening foods.				
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
21. I don't keep certain foods in my house/apartment because I think that I may lose control and eat them.				
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Scoring Procedure

Total score. Reverse score Items 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21; add these reverse scored items with Items 2, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, and 15; divide this summed total by 21.

Unconditional Permission to Eat subscale. Reverse score Items 1, 5, 9, 14, 18, 19, 20, and 21; add these reverse scored items with Item 4; divide this summed total by 9.

Eating for Physical Rather Than Emotional Reasons subscale. Reverse score Items 3, 6, 10, 16, and 17; add these reverse scored items with Item 2; divide this summed total by 6.

Reliance on Internal Hunger/Satiety Cues subscale. Add together Items 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, and 15; divide this summed total by 6.

Note

- Item 1 was Item 1 referenced in the article.
- Item 2 was Item 2 referenced in the article.
- Item 3 was Item 3 referenced in the article.
- Item 4 was Item 4 referenced in the article.
- Item 5 was Item 5 referenced in the article.
- Item 6 was Item 8 referenced in the article.
- Item 7 was Item 11 referenced in the article.
- Item 8 was Item 12 referenced in the article.
- Item 9 was Item 14 referenced in the article.
- Item 10 was Item 15 referenced in the article.
- Item 11 was Item 16 referenced in the article.
- Item 12 was Item 17 referenced in the article.
- Item 13 was Item 18 referenced in the article.
- Item 14 was Item 19 referenced in the article.
- Item 15 was Item 20 referenced in the article.
- Item 16 was Item 21 referenced in the article.
- Item 17 was Item 22 referenced in the article.
- Item 18 was Item 23 referenced in the article.
- Item 19 was Item 25 referenced in the article.
- Item 20 was Item 26 referenced in the article.
- Item 21 was Item 27 referenced in the article.

Permission to use this measure is not required. However, I do request that you notify me via e-mail if you use the Intuitive Eating Scale in your research.

(Appendixes continue)