



# **INTUITIVE EATING**

**A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO LIFESTYLE NUTRITION**

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This manual is not meant to be used as medical treatment or treatment for eating disorders. If you or a loved one is in need of professional resources for an eating disorder, please see the below list for professional resources:

Treatment and Coaching

<http://eatingdisorders.ucsd.edu>

<http://www.centerforbalancedliving.org>

<http://tabithafarrar.com>

For Caregivers

<http://www.feast-ed.org>

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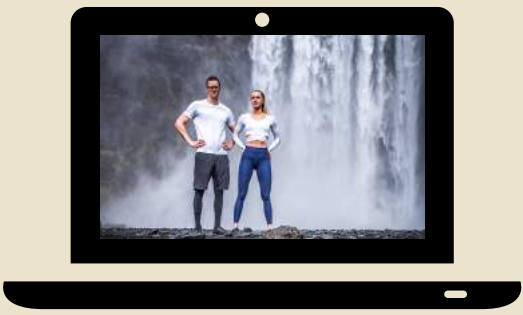
# ABOUT HIITBURN



HIITBURN's mission is to simplify the world of health and fitness and is focused on transforming the lives of millions around the world through lifestyle health and fitness information.

HIITBURN is founded by Kelsey and Dennis Heenan, who are personal trainers, nutrition coaches, and lifestyle fitness experts who want to simplify the world of health and fitness for their clients.

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# **HIITBURN INTUITIVE EATING GUIDE**

Welcome to HIITBURN's Intuitive Eating Guide. The purpose of this guide is to outline some basics of the principles for Intuitive Eating.

Before we dive into Intuitive Eating, we will outline a 'Dieting Mentality'. We will go in depth for with what is Dieting Mentality, some contributing factors to it, and the problems that come from this type of mentality.

As we first learn about Dieting Mentality, take notes on aspects that feel relevant to your experience and areas that you would like to change about your own eating habits to experience more flexibility, freedom and in turn, better results.

After the section on Dieting Mentality, we will then dive into Intuitive Eating. We will cover the benefits of Intuitive Eating as well as a practical guide to how you can start incorporating this flexible strategy into your daily life!

## **What is Intuitive Eating?**

Intuitive eating is an eating strategy that helps you listen to your body's natural hunger cues and eat accordingly. This approach can help you become in tune with your body's needs to end chronic dieting and no longer associate food choices with rigidity, guilt, and not labeling foods "good and bad."

With Intuitive Eating, you don't count calories, macros, or weigh your food. You simply eat when you are hungry and until you are satisfied. You give your body nourishment when it needs it and you don't have to worry about specific amounts or measurements.

While Intuitive Eating takes practice, it is an excellent way of learning how to fuel your body well. We will go into depth on how to incorporate Intuitive Eating into your life later, but first we will go over Dieting Mentality to unpack what you may be currently experiencing, so we can better lay a foundation for Intuitive Eating.

With Intuitive Eating, you can feel freedom in your food choices and in order to do that, it's important to unlearn the negativity of Dieting Mentality.

## **What is Dieting Mentality?**

Dieting Mentality is basically having strict rules and judgments around food which then inhibits your ability to enjoy several types and amounts of food.

Sometimes, Dieting Mentality is very apparent to the person, but some people have dieted for so long, that certain dieting behaviors now are subconscious.

Dieting Mentality has a wide spectrum of thoughts and behaviors and can take many shapes and forms.

## **The Problem with Dieting Mentality**

Dieting Mentality may feel very relevant and frustrating in your life or maybe you don't even realize that you do have a Dieting Mentality. There are a few typical traits of Dieting Mentality and some problems that come out of these traits.

Often with Dieting Mentality comes elements of:

- Cutting out major food groups
- Counting calories, macros, and/or weighing your food -This naturally creates strict rules and judgments around food.

## **Cutting Out Major Food Groups**

Dieting Mentality can often lead to cutting out major food groups.

While there is a time and place for cutting out certain food groups, with a Dieting Mentality this action often goes far beyond necessity. For example, times to cut out certain foods makes sense if you have allergies, intolerances, certain illnesses, or religious beliefs that require abstaining from certain foods.

Unless if you have the above mentioned reasons to abstain from certain foods, most cases of cutting out foods beyond that are a result of Dieting Mentality and are unnecessary.

The difference is that when you have the Diet Mentality and cut out foods, it is more of the mindset of these types of examples:

"I don't eat white rice because I read that white rice is empty calories, so I only eat brown rice."

"I only get 'skinny' lattes because they have less calories."

"I don't eat anything over 'X' grams of fat/carbs."

"I can't eat that because it doesn't fit my macros."

"I'm trying to 'be good,' so I always pass on dessert when out with friends at restaurants."

"I don't eat beef or pork because it's too fatty."

While these types of behaviors may have started out well intentioned, they often have very negative consequences.

These behaviors can affect your ability to have a balanced relationship with food and fully enjoy it. Restricting foods can lead to feelings of guilt, anxiety, and potentially binge eating if you ever have a 'slip up'. Beyond that, they inhibit your ability to live an enjoyable lifestyle when there are so many rules.

So, how do you balance healthy, nutritious foods and allow yourself foods that aren't as nutritious without restricting or cutting out food groups, while still making progress towards results? We'll outline it all for you in a later section.

## **Counting Calories, Macros, and Weighing Food**

Counting is often a culprit of Diet Mentality.

While having a general understanding of what makes up your food is important, counting calories, macros, and weighing your food may be negatively impacting your mindset and results.

It's important to understand what types of macronutrients (macros) make up your food. Macronutrients are proteins, carbohydrates, and fats.



All of the food you eat includes a combination of the three macronutrients. Food is categorized as certain macronutrients based on how your body metabolizes them and how your body uses them (energy, circulation, tissue repair, brain function, etc.)

Macronutrients all fuel your body differently and have specific purposes. All three macros are essential for healthy body function.

## **Protein**

Made of amino acids which are often called the "building blocks" of the body. Protein makes up your organs, tissues, muscles, hormones. It helps stabilize blood sugar, supports nutrient absorption, concentration, keeps your hunger satisfied for longer, and boosts energy.

## **Carbohydrates (Carbs)**

Your body's most efficient source for energy.

Your body metabolizes carbs at different speeds depending on the type of carbohydrate.

Simple Carbohydrates are typically processed carbs that metabolize very quickly. This causes your body to quickly release glucose (sugar) into the bloodstream, which cause a quick spike in blood sugar, but it also drops very quickly, leading to energy crashes, cravings, and overeating.

Complex Carbohydrates are typically whole, one-ingredient, carbs like sweet potatoes, potatoes, quinoa, rice, beans, fruit, and oats. These carbs metabolize more slowly, releasing glucose at a more moderate speed, giving you longer-lasting energy while avoiding the energy crashes.

## **Fats**

Healthy fats are the second most efficient energy source for your body. They are important for protecting your organs, essential for optimal brain function, vitamin absorption, and many more functions. Healthy fats don't make you fat. They are essential for your body to function properly.

It's good to choose a variety of fats like avocados, nuts, seeds, olive oil, and higher fat meats like grass-fed beef.

People often refer to a certain food as one macronutrient group, based on whatever the highest macro count is for that food.

For example, people often refer to chicken as a protein, because it's highest macronutrient is protein, even though it does contain some fat.

It's important to have a general understanding of the types of macros that make up your food so that you can understand how to fuel your body efficiently.

However, please be aware that a lot of people run into problems physically, mentally, and emotionally when they begin counting calories and macros. A common belief surrounding counting calories and macros is "calories in, calories out."

The idea of "calories in, calories out" is not as effective as it may seem. "Calories in, calories out" is saying that you simply have to burn more calories than you are eating to lose weight.

While in theory it is true that being in a calories deficit is important for losing weight, it is not the full story. Calories in, calories out doesn't take into account the impact that different foods have on our metabolism and hormones.

100 calories of chicken is metabolized much differently than 100 calories from a candy bar.

Solely counting calories doesn't take into account how different types of foods impact the way your body functions.

While counting calories over simplifies eating for health, function, and results, counting macros over complicates eating.

Counting macros means you not only calculate the number of calories you need for certain results, but you also calculate the number of grams or the percentage of protein, carbs, and fats you need to consume.

Again, in theory, this seems like something that can be helpful, However, in actuality, it often leads to several negative practices.

## Problems with Counting Macros

### 1) Not fueling your body properly.

When you count calories and macros, it doesn't take into account your natural hunger cues. Some days, you will be hungrier than others, based on a variety of factors (activity level, types of food you are eating, etc.).

Many people run into physical issues, when they are still hungry but have already hit their macros goals for the day, so they end up not eating. If you are hungry, it means your metabolism is working and your body needs more fuel.

### 2) Mental and Emotional Distress

Counting macros can often lead to feelings of anxiety, depression, and stress because of the preciseness required for this strategy.

Many people communicate that they feel guilty when they get hungry while counting macros because they aren't allowed over a certain amount of food and are nervous that they will want more than their allotment. This also rings true for many people who weigh their food (which is often a part of macro counting). Many people feel senses of failure when they go over their calorie or macro allotment by small percentages.

In addition, counting is very time consuming and there is a lot of work required to keep track of the macros and amounts of food that you eat. There is so much unnecessary anxiety, pressure, and stress that comes with counting macros and weighing food.

Stress increases the production of cortisol in your body which is often called the "stress hormone." Increases in cortisol can lead to your body holding onto fat, weight gain, acne, depression, and high blood pressure. Sometimes stress can initially cause a loss of appetite, but if stress is chronic and ongoing, it can actually boost your hunger and lead to overeating.

It is important to find ways to decrease overall stress in life for overall health and happiness. If counting calories and macros leads to additional stress in your life, it is probably not very helpful for your progress and overall well being.

### 3) Over Eating Highly Processed Foods

A trend in the macro counting community is manipulating the macros to be able to eat highly processed foods, simply because the food "fits the macros."

Similar to 'calories in, calories out,' this approach does not tell the full story. As mentioned earlier, different types of food metabolize differently. Often in counting macros, food quality is disregarded and food choices are reduced down to the types of macronutrients it contains.

A motto frequently used is, "If it fits your macros, you will lose weight." However, the strategy does not take into account the types of preservatives, artificial sweeteners, fillers, and overall food quality.

A lot of people counting macros eat artificial sweeteners because they don't add extra calories or count toward their macro allotment.

It's important to know that regularly eating artificial sweeteners can actually impact how your body metabolizes and responds to the food. Even though artificial sweeteners typically don't have calories (or very few calories), they can still cause your blood sugar to spike higher than if you were to just eat regular sugar.

In addition, artificial sweeteners trigger receptors on your tongue that tells your body you are eating something sweet which can affect how your body metabolizes the food, leading to further cravings for sweets.

The point of this is not to say "don't ever eat sweets or processed foods." Actually, our point is on the contrary. We want you to be able to enjoy lots of foods freely, without having the stress of tracking and needing to "earn" treats.

People can find early success when counting macros, but it can easily turn into obsessive behaviors and anxiety around food. It can achieve certain fat loss and muscle gain goals for a short amount of time but it can be considered nutrition for "looks" vs. nutrition for health, longevity and for results/looks (which is Intuitive Eating), since macro counting doesn't take food quality or your body's hunger cues into account.

In a later section, we will go more in depth on this and how you can incorporate treats, while maintaining a balanced lifestyle through Intuitive Eating.

## Strict Rules and Judgment of Food

Rules and judgment of food is a common problem for chronic dieters, but can also be a problem for people who identify as those who simply "watch what they eat."

In an earlier section, we mentioned some common "rules" that dieters and those with food rules may impose. These are simply a few of the endless rules that dieters could impose:

"I don't eat white rice because I read that white rice is empty calories, so I only eat brown rice."

"I only get 'skinny' lattes because they have less calories."

"I don't eat anything over 'X' grams of fat/carbs."

"I can't eat that because it doesn't fit my macros."

"I'm trying to 'be good,' so I always pass on dessert when out with friends at restaurants."

"I don't eat beef or pork because it's too fatty."

Food rules may start off as a genuine attempt to be healthier, but they can often turn into anxiety-laced compulsions.

These types of compulsions can lead to disordered eating, stress, not fueling your body properly, and unhealthy behaviors, such as skipping social events based on the type of food that will be served

Judgment of food becomes a problem when the eater has a negative emotional reaction to eating certain foods.

For example, a person who beat him or herself up over eating a cookie, or are filled with anxiety and fear of gaining weight from eating the cookie.

Many people end up judging themselves negatively for eating certain types of foods that are not "approved" or view themselves as "being good" for choosing foods perceived as healthier.

To break the Dieting Mentality of strict food rules and judgment, it's important to understand that food does not determine your morality.

## The Morality of Eating

Dieting Mentality often comes to light negatively in how people view themselves, when it begins feeling like a moral issue.

Have you ever heard people say "I was really bad today" or "I was really good today" as if what you eat determines your morality? Perhaps, you have even said this yourself.

When you have a Diet Mentality, what you eat on a day-to-day basis can feel like the same type of thing as the story of Adam and Eve, where one bite of forbidden food eternally banishes you to hell.

Have you ever felt that way? That one treat or eating carbs automatically means YOU are bad, have fallen off track, and have completely failed.

When you say things like "I was good" or "I was bad" you're putting yourself in a vulnerable position for feeling guilty when you don't need to.

What you need to know is, your food choices do not determine your worth as a human being, nor does it make YOU good or bad.

When you can internalize and truly believe that, it takes the pressure off of needing to have a "perfect diet." News flash: there is no perfect diet!

The key is finding a balance that finding an approach for eating that:

- ✓ Fuels and nourishes your body
- ✓ Allows you to enjoy the foods you eat
- ✓ Gives you freedom to enjoy meals out and gatherings with friends and family
- ✓ Provides you enough guidance to reach your goals in a healthy, maintainable lifestyle

You are great because of who you are...NOT because of what you eat or don't eat.

## **Breaking Dieting Mentality and Learning Intuitive Eating**

Now that we've covered Dieting Mentality in depth, we can transition into how to break this mentality and move into a flexible, balanced lifestyle of Intuitive Eating.

In this next section, we will cover how to get started with Intuitive Eating and make it a lifestyle.

### The Lifestyle of Intuitive Eating

Let's quickly refresh on what we learned at the beginning about Intuitive Eating.

This is an eating strategy that helps you listen to your body's natural hunger cues and eat accordingly. This approach can help you become in tune with your body's needs to end chronic dieting and no longer associate food choices with rigidity, guilt, and not labeling foods "good and bad."

With Intuitive Eating, you don't count calories, macros, or weigh food. You simply eat when you are hungry and until you are satisfied. You give your body nourishment when it needs it and you don't have to worry about specific amounts or measurements.

While Intuitive Eating takes practice, it is an excellent way of learning how to fuel your body well. We will go in depth into how to incorporate Intuitive Eating into your life in this section to lay a strong foundation for Intuitive Eating.

With Intuitive Eating, you can feel freedom in your food choices and in order to do that, it's important to unlearn the negativity of dieting mentality.

# 10 Steps to Start Eating Intuitively

Intuitive Eating can take some practice, but we have 10 steps that can help you get started in finding balance in nutrition and your relationship with food.

## 1) No More Dieting

This means, unlearning the mindset of dieting that we talked about earlier. Unlearning things like feeling the need to count calories and/or macros, stop weighing your food, and not restricting yourself to only be allowed to have certain amounts of food based on self-imposed rules or judgements.

This can take time and practice. However, the goal is to give some strategies throughout these steps that will help you overcome these habits.

## 2) Throw Out Your Scales

Bodyweight scales, food scales, any sort of calorie or macro counting system you have... Throw them away, and also...delete the macro and calorie counting apps you're using..

These tools may be helpful for people who are under doctor's supervision for specific dietary needs, but for the general population, it's completely unnecessary and actually is often a hindrance to your physical, mental, and emotional well being. If you find your mindset and actions are hindered by them, then they are doing more harm than good.

In fact, if you just got scared of me telling you to throw the scales away and delete the tracking apps - that's even more reason to get rid of them.

The truth is, bodyweight scales tell you little about your actual health and progress. Water weight can fluctuate massively day-to-day, but if you see a number go up or down on the scale, it can impact your mood and feelings of accomplishment.

In addition, if you are eating well and working out, your body composition is changing (losing fat and gaining muscle), but the scale does not account for those changes. So, while you may be making incredible progress, the scale might not budge which can also lead to discouragement, feelings of failure, and eventually, quitting a lifestyle that is actually working.



When you weigh your food or count calories and macros, you have essentially reduced yourself to a calculation, which doesn't account for how sophisticated your body is and what fuel your body needs on a particular day. Some days, you may be hungrier than others, but with calculations, you don't have the flexibility necessary to fuel your body according to its needs.

By getting away from numbers, it helps free you up to start listening to your hunger cues and focus on performance, which will lead to less stress, more happiness, and better results.

### **3) Burn Your "Never Ever List"**

When you "can't have" certain foods you end up feeling deprived. A part of the Intuitive Eating lifestyle is learning to pick and choose the times to enjoy certain foods.

Part of making nutrition a lifestyle is learning to honor your hunger and even honoring your cravings. Your mindset shouldn't be "I can't have this." Rather, flexibility is about being mindful and choosing moments of indulgence.

Granting yourself permission to eat ANY food will help take away the lust of never being able to have it.

If you try to completely cut out chocolate forever, what happens if you accidentally slip up? You're more likely to have feelings of guilt, bouts of binging, and yo-yo dieting. All negative side effects that come with a Dieting Mentality..

If you know that you can have chocolate at some point again, you are less likely to over-indulge, have anxieties, and will more likely just need a little bit to satisfy that craving, allowing for satisfaction and less calories consumed overall.

### **4) Shut Down Negative Thoughts**

When you get a pang of anxiety if you eat something you thought you shouldn't have, or if you've eaten a little more than you think you should have, catch yourself in that moment and internalize the fact that it's OK!

On the flip side, shut down the "reward" thoughts for eating small amounts or only certain types of food. Of course you can be proud of yourself for making healthy choices, but the difference is that reward thoughts are when you believe you've been "good" today for only eating 'X' amount, or restricting certain types of foods to be a better dieter.

Eliminate negative self talk and thoughts by speaking the truth to yourself - even if you don't FEEL like it's the truth at the time. This practice can help calm you and remind you of the real truth about yourself.

Make a list of truths that you can speak to yourself when you have anxiety about food that you are about to eat, or have just eaten. Here are a couple examples of truths that you can start with:

Truth #1

One meal or treat will not make or break my results.

The most important thing about lifestyle nutrition is consistency over time, this takes the pressure away from the need to be "perfect."

Truth #2

Food fuels my body, but I am more than what I eat.

I am a daughter/son/spouse/sibling/friend/loved one who is important in this world and what I eat does not make me a better or worse person.

Truth #3

I can enjoy (have enjoyed) this treat because I am living my best, balanced life.

Balance will help you get and keep better results over time because you will not be depriving yourself. Balance and flexibility will help you be healthier and happier in the long run.

## **5) Learning When Your Hunger is Satisfied**

This can feel challenging at first, but it is well worth the patience it takes to learn!

To do this, eat slowly, and then pause periodically throughout your meal. Do a quick check:

-How does the food taste? Am I still enjoying it or am I mindlessly eating because it's there?

-How is my hunger? Do I still feel hungry? Am I feeling my stomach is just about satisfied? Am I almost or already pretty full?

These simple questions can help you determine if your body needs more food or if it is satisfied with the amount you've already eaten.

It's ok to go back and eat more food if your body is telling you that you are still hungry. On the flip side, it is also ok to leave some food on your plate if you feel like your hunger is satisfied (you can always box it up and save it for later!).

If you know that there is always the option to go back and get more food if you are hungry now or later, you will be less likely to overindulge and listen to your natural hunger cues.

## **6) Cope with Feelings Outside of Food**

Some people tend to overeat or undereat when they get stressed, anxious, or depressed. This pattern can be harmful to your health, as well as mental and emotional well-being.

Find ways to cope outside of food. Some examples to cope in a healthy way could be talking to a therapist or trusted loved one, journal about your feelings and then focus on gratitude, go for a walk, listen to calming music, meditate or pray, take a bath, get a massage, draw, paint, or do something artistic, among many other things you could enjoy!

## **7) Acknowledge and Respect Your Body and Shape**

Our bodies are all structured very differently. Understanding and respecting your body can relieve pressure, stress, and frustration. For example, someone who is six feet tall physically cannot be an ultra petite, five foot tall gymnast and someone who is naturally more straight and narrow, may not be able to get the super curvy, hourglass figure.

That's not to say you can't build muscle to get curves, or trim down to move towards a more tone look, but it is important to recognize your general shape and set attainable goals from there.

Be the best version of yourself. Know and respect what you are working with to become the healthiest version of you.

## **8) Shift Your Workout Focus to Improvements in Strength and Movement**

Shift your focus from needing to workout for a certain number of minutes/hours or needing to burn 'X' amount of calories in order to lose 'X' amount of pounds into a new focus on strength and movement.

For example, shift your focus to improving your lifts, being able to do more pushups, going through a circuit and getting a faster time.

These new focuses take away the Dieting Mentality and switch to power and improvement. You will be surprised with how much faster you progress when you switch to these types of goals, in addition to feeling less stress.

## **9) Practice Balance**

Eating nutritious foods most of the time is a great habit, because you can allow yourself the flexibility to enjoy treats regularly when you don't have harsh rules.

After a while, you'll learn what your body needs. We like to teach a balance of 80/20, which means 80% of the time focus on nutritious, whole, one-ingredient foods and 20% of the time, enjoy other types of foods and treats that you desire. 80/20 doesn't necessarily need to be 'tracked' but it can help puts some structure around the point of eat nutritious foods MOST of the time while still enjoying periodic treats.

When you practice balance you don't feel deprived which means you're more likely to stick with the plan long term.

## **10) Give Yourself Grace**

It's ok to have times of more focused nutrition and times where you are more flexible.

Just keep the mindset that honoring your body, honoring your hunger cues, honoring your strength and endurance, and honoring your mind, takes practice, balance and grace.

This can take some time and practice, but that is what grace is all about! It's not about perfection, but rather learning to be consistent over time.

Learning to give yourself grace with balance and flexibility in nutrition will allow you to stay healthier and happier for the long term.

## **Next Steps**

Thank you for joining us for the Intuitive Eating Guide!

Practicing Intuitive Eating is a great strategy for building a happy, healthy, and balanced lifestyle. It takes time and practice, so give yourself grace along the way while you learn how to truly listen to your body.

We teach flexible Carb Cycling as a vehicle for learning how to eat intuitively. There are different types of Carb Cycles that you can follow during your learning process to eat intuitively and also work towards whatever goals you may have.

We can teach you how to incorporate intuitive eating into a flexible Carb Cycle to get started in building healthy habits that also help you get results as a lifestyle.

To learn more, go to [HIITBURN.com](https://HIITBURN.com) for additional articles, videos, and programs.