

INTUITIVE EATING GUIDE



THE ANTI-DIET:

HOW TO HAVE SUCCESS IN FITNESS WITHOUT COUNTING A SINGLE CALORIE

You've counted calories. You've done the points. You've cut carbs. You've cut fats (don't ever do that again). You've tried it ALL.

Why doesn't any of this ever work (or rather works for a small population of people)?

Actually, they do work.. on paper.. in a lab. The problem is, you're human, not a robot or test tube. You have feelings, emotions, stress, etc.

Intuitive eating is all about that human factor. It's the opposite of restriction and guides people like you and I to our health and fitness goals *without* sacrificing our mental health.

Popular diets try to trick us into adhering to a set of rules, to hopefully lose weight. We put all our eggs in a basket, hope to never ever trip, inevitably tripping, and giving up only to go back where we came from.

Intuitive eating isn't a diet so therefore, there's no diet to "go off of". **There's no pass so there's no fail.** All of the sudden, the pressure is off and you're free to be human.

I know what you're thinking, "if I just eat whatever I feel like, I'll get farther from my goals not closer!"

And you're right but, Intuitive eating **isn't** "eat whatever you want". It's a set of guiding principles that help you make the best decision for yourself, at *that* moment.

Your body comes with everything you need to know exactly what the right meals look like. The problem is, your body and mind, are rarely on the same page.

Modern foods are designed in a lab to trick you into overeating, having cravings, and gain weight. They're far from the foods our body has learned to run on for thousands of years, found in nature.

Even some natural foods are now causing big health issues due to industrial farming practices (i.e. gluten)

How in the world do you navigate the complexity of trying to eat healthy & listen to your body in today's world? Intuitive eating is your solution.

AWARENESS:

SELF-JUDGEMENT

Much if not most of our eating is based on emotion. Adding a layer of judgment to our eating complicates the process of making improvements.

The biggest step in moving towards a way of eating that honors our body's real signals is to remove this layer of judgment.

This even applies to eating "healthy". When we zoom out and look at someone's eating habits, we find the true issue not to be their inability to find & consume healthy foods over unhealthy ones. Rather, it's the fact that they identify with their food.

If I eat good I am good. If I eat bad I am bad. Processed foods are a nightmare for our health & fitness, yes but, a lot of their "power over us" comes from the fact that we give them that power by identifying with how we eat.

But what if identifying with your food worked? What if you stuck to the plan, you eat not a single calorie of "bad foods". You. are. good. You're losing weight. You're charged up. HOW could this be bad?

That sounds great. Until a friend comes over. Until it's thanksgiving. Until you're on a date. Now what? You've found yourself in what feels like a moral dilemma. Do I become bad and eat this food? Do I say no thanks and absolve myself from enjoying an experience with friends or family?

There's no good option! Unfortunately, we see all too often, people discovering counting macros or a dietary framework they love, they lose weight, they make progress they've been struggling to make for years, then slowly, this becomes a stressor in their life.

Their friends call them obsessive but, hey, obsessed is what the lazy call dedicated right? I mean, this is objectively good! I'm healthy! Better than them eating cheeseburgers and drinking beer every other day. I'm not crazy.

Except, the inability to eat food without stress IS an eating disorder. That's right. Regardless of how healthy it is. And you're friends and family will see that stress.

This is what drives so many people away from fitness. They see the results but they also see the stress people take on to get them.

AWARENESS:

REDIFINING OUR MOTIVATION

Most people initially change their eating because they don't like how they look or feel. Their motivation is fueled by a negative experience.

That in itself has problems but, even when people use it to hit their goals, it ends up trapping them in fear. Fear of returning to that "bad" place.

I don't want to gain that weight back. I don't ever want to be that skinny again. I don't want to be that weak or tired again.

It's understandable but, decisions made out of self-hate are destructive (even if they seem healthy). The decisions we make because we are honoring our body and our health, are different (even if the two look the same on the surface).

In one scenario, you look in the mirror and you hate what you see. You're fed up with it. You get a gym membership. You change your diet. You workout super hard to make this feeling go away. You're even eating foods you don't like because you don't think you deserve tasty foods.

Eventually you miss a workout. You miss a meal. You've failed. Why aren't you good enough to force these goals to happen? The resulting negative emotions and already being "off the wagon" cause you to binge eat.

You've ruined your progress. You hate yourself. You recover mentally, and you try again. Wash. Rinse. Repeat.

Compare that to looking in the mirror, and seeing a body that reflects a person who is anxious, dealt with depression, feels disconnected, and as a result has added excess body fat, and/or lost some muscle.

Instead of punishing yourself for being a victim of life, you decide "I want to take better care of myself". Now, exercise and nutrition are additive experiences. Tools you use to address deeper problems that end up creating a healthy, happier person.

Now, when you go out to eat with a friend, you recognize the meal's value as social and that enjoying the experience with friends adds so much more to your life than one "bad" meal ever could.

AWARENESS:

LISTENING TO YOUR BODY

When we learn to listen to our body, eating for our goals becomes so simple, it's almost intuitive. But, listening to our body doesn't work in the modern food system. This is a skill we have to develop.

Your body is the ultimate judge but, only if we ask it the right questions!

After all, how do so many people have so many health issues if all they have to do is listen to their body? Part of it is we've been taught to ignore these signals. To mask them as much as possible, rather than to listen to them.

Don't believe me? Let's see:

Got heartburn? Take a tums.

Can't sleep? Take a Nexium.

Can't wake up? Have a monster.

Feeling anxious? Have a Lexapro.

Constipated? Ducalax.

Indigestion? Pepto Bismol.

Oily skin? Aldactone.

Headaches? Excedrine.

Bruising easily? Iron pill.

The list almost never ends of signals from our body that our diet is off.

You can ignore these signals and suffer the consequences until you develop a disease that your body forces you to address or, we can start now, by modifying our diet, sleep, lifestyle, and exercise and not only avoid the consequences but reap the benefits!

On the following page, you'll find a list of negative body signals. If you experience 3 or more of them more than once a month or 1 or more frequently (more than once a week), it's a sign you're in need of change.

The good news is, change doesn't have to be scary or difficult! You also don't have to do it alone (i.e. Uplift Fitness is your ready-made community).

On the second column, you'll find a list of positive signals you'll also want to look for. Remember, this isn't just about avoiding the negative consequences of our diet, it's about recognizing and maximizing the benefits!

AWARENESS:

NEGATIVE SIGNALS

- Less than one bowel movement a day
- Diarrhea
- Bloating
- Strong smelling flatulence
- Puffy eyes
- Dry brittle hair
- Weak brittle nails
- Skin rashes
- Acne
- Energy Crashes
- "Brain fog"
- Loss of libido
- Shakiness
- Lightheadedness
- Halitosis
- Strong body odor
- Excessively dry or oily skin
- Allergies
- Irritability
- Difficulty sleeping
- Strong cravings
- Mood swings
- Frequent illness
- Hot or cold sensitivity
- Heartburn
- Poor fitness performance
- Difficulty building muscle
- Anxiety
- Headaches

POSITIVE SIGNALS

- Calm, even, and consistent energy
 - Moderately elevated mood
 - Sound restful sleep
 - Regular, fully formed, easy to pass bowel movements
 - Clear, supple skin
 - Bright eyes
 - Preference for minimally processed foods
 - Strong, healthy, and shiny hair
 - Strong, fast-growing nails
 - Strong immune system
 - Tolerance to temperature contrast
 - Neutral body & breath odor
 - Fast recovery from workouts
 - Resilience during workout
 - Healthy and fulfilling libido
 - Stress resilience
 - Sharp mind
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AWARENESS:

HOW TO LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

Learning to listen to your body is a skill and the best place to start is listening to the signals closest to your meals (before, during, and after).

In order to do this, we must SLOW DOWN.

Take note of the following:

BEFORE YOUR MEAL:

- Are you anxious to eat?
- Are you dreading the meal?
- Do you truly feel hungry?
- Do you strongly feel this meal will positively or negatively impact your physical appearance? ("If I don't eat this I'll lose muscle" or "If I eat this I'll get fat")
- Is this a craving
- Am I thirsty?
- Am I eating because it's time to eat?
- Is this social eating?

DURING YOUR MEAL:

- Do you feel rushed?
- Are you washing down every bite with water or a drink?
- Are you distracted or not present? (on your phone or in deep conversation).
- Are you unaware of how your food tastes with each bite?
- Are you full but still eating?
- Do you feel the need to clean your plate?
- Are you standing while eating?

AFTER YOUR MEAL:

- Do you crave sugar?
 - Do you feel excessively full or stuffed?
 - Do you have indigestion?
 - Do you have the urgency to use the restroom?
 - Do you have flushed skin or increased allergy symptoms?
 - Are you sleepy?
 - Do you feel excessively unmotivated?
 - Do you feel compelled to eat more even though you are satisfied?
 - Are you belching?
 - Do you have sharp or painful digestion?
 - Are you bloating?
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AWARENESS:

HOW TO LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

A yes to any of the former symptoms on their own isn't much.

A yes to three or more of the above, or any one felt extremely strongly, might be an indicator that your emotional connection to feed may be less than optimal and/or the way you are eating and the food itself may not be ideal.

This includes your surroundings, how you chew your food, your company, or activities done while eating.

These short-term signals surrounding your meals are a great place to start but don't forget about the longer-term signals that take a while to kick in. For example, foods that don't work well with your body may result in acne after a week, not an hour.

Once you get good at listening to your pre, during, and post-meal time signals, the longer-term signals become easier and easier to identify.

Next, let's dive into some techniques to help you develop your awareness and begin to draw conclusions about your eating that can help guide your choices!

TECHNIQUES:

#1 EATING AWARENESS

While you can certainly get obsessed with tracking your food and cause harm to yourself psychologically (we see it every single day), knowing what is going into your body is very powerful! Without the knowledge, you (and every human) will greatly overestimate how much or little you're eating based on what your goals are. Aka we think highly of ourselves! Tracking your food allows you to make more informed decisions but, shouldn't replace listening to your body.

Step 1:

Download MyFitnessPal to your phone. Get familiar and record everything you eat and drink for the next 14 days. Do NOT follow the guidelines given to you by the app. They will be far from smart goals. Do NOT change your eating habits based on the numbers you are seeing. Simply track your normal eating habits for 14 days.

Step 2:

After one week, look back on your food logs. You should already start to consciously connect negative and positive signals with certain food choices. If you haven't, now is the time to do that with intention! What you should find is that taste, is becoming less and less important to you. Yes, it is still very important but, you might find that while you enjoy the taste of certain vegetables less than sweets, you enjoy how you feel eating them, much much more!

You may find that eating your grandmother's special pie she only makes at Christmas leaves you feeling bloated, but the sense of joy and nostalgia it delivers is worth it! So, you still enjoy it, but you eat a serving instead of binging so you enjoy all the joy without any guilt.

Step 3:

After 14 days, give yourself 1 or 2 actionable goals that you can perform daily or frequently that will lead to you eating more of the foods that you have identified with positive connections, and less of the foods that have negative connections. Over the next 14 day, you'll have an amazing starting point to adjust up or down your calories or macronutrients based on your goals!*

****If you need help doing this, we highly recommend hiring an Uplift Fitness Certified coach! Find a link at the end of this guide.***

TECHNIQUES:

#2 TRACKING YOUR FOOD INTAKE

While you can certainly get obsessed with tracking your food and cause harm to yourself psychologically (we see it every single day), knowing what is going into your body is very powerful! Without the knowledge, you (and every human) will greatly overestimate how much or little you're eating based on what your goals are. Aka we think highly of ourselves! Tracking your food allows you to make more informed decisions but, shouldn't replace listening to your body.

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TECHNIQUES:

#3 UNDULATING YOUR CALORIES

Consistency is king but monotony is a killer. Ultimately, when people get into tracking their food, they end up hitting the same marks. Every day. Forever. And that can be great! Truth is, however, unless you have very very specific and serious physique goals, it probably isn't necessary. Actually, for some physique goals, there's a lot of evidence for variance in our diet.

Consider this; our genes were made to thrive in the environment they evolved in for thousands of years. Think 10,000 B.C. to 1500 A.D. The biggest problem for that entire period of time was the availability of food. This means, we probably didn't have the resources to eat exactly the same calories and foods every single day. In turn, our bodies learned to thrive with variety.

Our body adapts to extreme consistency very quickly and thus, once it's adapted we no longer get progress.

So, what if I told you that you can have great variance and great consistency at the same exact time? This is called daily undulation. Ultimately, if you aren't eating processed foods, your body will do this decently naturally but, you can put in a little effort and really hit these marks well if you chose to do so.

For example, if your goal is a 500 calorie a day deficit*, rather than eating 500 calories less per day, you would eat something like this:

Monday:	-800 calorie deficit
Tuesday:	0 calorie deficit
Wednesday:	-500 calorie deficit
Thursday:	+200 calorie surplus
Friday:	-1000 calorie deficit
Saturday:	-700 calorie deficit
Sunday:	-700 calorie deficit

*Need help calculating your calories needs & hitting your fitness goals? [Hire an Uplift Fitness certified coach here.](#)

TECHNIQUES:

#3 UNDULATING YOUR CALORIES (CONT.)

Once you've gotten comfortable giving yourself calorie, macronutrient, and food choice goals, it's time to start implementing full intuitive eating days. Before, you were doing so with less knowledge. Now, you have more experience listening to your body and know much more about portion sizes.

To implement full intuitive eating days, you'll still track your food (for data) but you won't aim for specific calories, macros, etc. You'll simply listen to your body as you've learned how. You'll continue to eat foods that honor your mental and physical health.

Eat when you are hungry. Don't eat when you're not. Don't feel alarmed if these feel like "eat whatever you want days". They do feel that way, especially if you're a person who has been tracking your food for months (or years).

Don't pass judgment. Listen to your body. Observe. Keep practicing.

Then, you can gradually increase intuitive eating days each week as you feel your skill develops. The important thing is to be honest with yourself, without guilt. Where people go astray is they use intuitive eating to fool themselves into thinking they can eat whatever they want and not have any consequences. It's okay to say "I didn't eat enough protein today." That is an objective fact. It doesn't, however, have to translate into guilt!

Remember, progress is not linear! You'll have dips and surges. You may even have to return to tracking your food for a while to recalibrate. That's okay!

TECHNIQUES:

#4 ELIMINATION DIET & FASTING

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APPLICATION

GET STARTED.

Reading about a change doesn't do a thing. Here's your permission to take action. Use the space on this page to jot down a plan. Better yet, use our goal planning worksheet which you can [download here](#).

If you want an extra eye on your goals and plan, you can also get a FREE overview and plan built by one of our CPT's [by clicking here!](#)

[If you still have questions, check out our library of guides here.](#)

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