

Your Personal  
Guide  
to a  
Healthy  
Weight:

Eating System  
or Eat with Wisdom

by  
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# Chapter One

Think back to a time when you automatically knew you were hungry, when you lost interest in food as you ate, when food was just not *special*, when your weight was never out of control.

This relaxed relationship with food and your body can be yours again. You can successfully manage your food, eating and weight--without all the dieting, restricting, or “healthy” eating; without portion control, calorie counting or any of the other techniques you may have tried.

With all these techniques, you need to distract yourself from and ignore physical hunger. In fact, this is exactly what weight management “experts” recommend: “Lose weight without feeling hungry.” “Eat food with lots of volume (i.e. vegetables) so you don’t feel hungry.” Weight management programs teach you to use your *mind* to control food intake, to ignore your body and your hunger.

What they don’t tell you is that when you ignore your *body*, and your hunger, you will lose your ability to stop eating when full!

Have you ever watched a baby eat? When they are satisfied, they will steadfastly refuse any additional food, no matter what you offer them. (Even chocolate cake!) Why? Because their hunger is satisfied. They lose interest in food and have NO drive to keep eating.

But if you are not in touch with hunger when you begin eating, you will also not be in touch with the subtle signals

that help you quit eating when satisfied. You will not lose interest in food, and you must find a tactic to force yourself to quit eating—possibly yet another program that may cause momentary weight loss, but leaves you increasingly out of control around food, and makes it more and more difficult to manage your food intake.

When you realize that losing touch with and/or ignoring hunger erodes your ability to naturally stop eating when you feel satisfied, you will begin to understand just how these strategies leave you struggling to figure out how to eat. You have lost touch with your innate ability to manage your eating, your *eating wisdom*.

The good news is that you still have those complex mechanisms that cause you to lose interest in food as you become satisfied and remove the drive to keep eating. You don't have to force yourself away from the table because you 'think' you've had enough to eat, or because you've reached

your caloric allotment. You can tap into this innate ability. But first, you have to get back in touch with your hunger.

Unfortunately, there is little support to help us re-connect with and re-learn to use hunger and satiety to successfully manage our food and weight. In fact, never once in my extensive formal education, a Bachelor's in Nutrition, a Master's in exercise physiology, and a PhD in Nutritional/Symbolic Anthropology, did I ever hear that this was possible. It was NEVER mentioned! As you may guess, I pursued this education to try to heal my own eating problems. I just wanted to eat healthy and lose weight. I kept reading that I just needed to follow the right program, the right eating system, and I would accomplish this. Eventually, I read every new diet book, including Dr. Atkins' Diet Revolution (which first came out in 1981), tried most of the diet programs, including Weight Watchers, and even saw a Registered Dietitian. All of this just made my food more and more out of control. Thinking I was the failure, I kept seeking advice.

Finally, while desperately seeking yet another system that would finally get my food and weight under control, I discovered the concept of “internally-regulated eating” (which, over the years has been given catchier names, including intuitive eating, attuned eating and mindful eating). Because there was little organized information about this approach, I struggled for years, reading everything I could, inventing techniques, and creating tools. Eventually, I realized as long as I had part of me stuck in trying to eat “right,” I would not succeed. I had had to completely let go of the old paradigm and jump into the new one with both feet.

After several years of using internally-regulated eating successfully, I began using it with clients. As I saw them break free of eating struggles, feeling lighter and freer than they had in years, I realized I had truly found the answer. Over the years, I’ve refined my approach into a program I now call *Eating Wisdom*.

I am now 100% certain that I failed with all of the externally-regulated formulas because they failed me.

Our culture is flooded with plans and programs and systems that are supposed to help you gain control over your food and weight. They are automatically accepted as THE way to manage eating and weight and are rarely scrutinized. The beliefs surrounding eating, nutrition and health that support this externally regulated eating are insidious, like the air that we breathe. We don't even know they need to be challenged.

You need to completely let go of the eating system approach to find your eating wisdom again. Because of that, we need to take some time to look at why the externally-regulated approach to eating does not work—how that approach has failed you. We'll do that first. Then we will explore eating with wisdom—eating in a way that honors the uniqueness of your body and its individual needs.

Once, I heard a well-known dietitian say that she was going on a cruise. She knew she would overeat, so before she left, she lost five pounds. In fact, this was her recommendation for anyone going on a cruise—weight gain was supposedly guaranteed with all that food aboard, so lose weight before you go and you wouldn't have to worry about it.

I was flabbergasted. Aside from basically teaching binge eating (restrict your food intake, then go on a cruise and overeat), this “pre-dieting” is completely unnecessary. Once you learn to eat with wisdom and become an “intuitive eater,” you will be able to go on a cruise and not feel compelled to overeat. There will be no need to lose weight before or after the cruise because there is NO weight gain.

To me, this is just a fact of life. Going on a cruise as an intuitive eater means no weight gain. It also means being able to focus on more fun and rewarding things than calories and the scale.

Several years after that dietitians comment, a client named Rachel called saying she wanted to make an appointment in three weeks. “Why?” I asked. “Your last appointment was over six months ago, and you were doing really well with intuitive eating. Has something happened?” She assured me she was happy with her eating and weight, but she assumed that weight gain was inevitable on the cruise and wanted an appointment to deal with it. I reminded her that as an intuitive eater, she eats when hungry and quits when satisfied, ensuring she does not take in more food than her body needs. Also, because she no longer viewed certain foods as *special*, she would not feel compelled to overeat them. And, lastly, because she did not judge her eating, she would not be overeating due to guilt.

And the same will be true for you. As an intuitive eater, you will go on vacation, go on holiday, go on a cruise, whatever, and your weight will be stable. You will eat when you are hungry, quit when satisfied and be able to walk away from

“goodies” because they are just not *special*. There is no reason to overeat, so there is no weight gain!

I explained this to Rachel, suggesting that she did not need a follow-up appointment. She called when she got back to tell me how easy it had been to negotiate the surplus of food, and was happy to report she had no desire to overeat. And, she did not need another appointment. I loved hearing that!

You, too, can leave behind the stress and angst, the calorie counting and portion control, and re-learn to eat with wisdom. But first, let’s take a quick look at why eating plans and weight management programs fail.



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