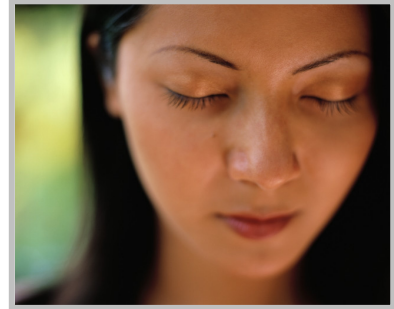


Come Back to Your Hunger

By LATOYA J. WILLIAMS, MA

“Close your eyes and follow your breath. If your mind wanders off, just come back to your breathing.”

You may be familiar with hearing this type of direction during a guided meditation session. Developing awareness about your sometimes entertaining and exasperating stream of thoughts and feelings is one benefit of a meditation practice. To experience the peace, joy, and well-being found in the present moment, you can simply follow your breath and allow your thoughts and feelings to fade into the background.

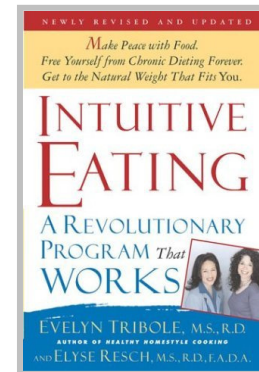


Like meditation, the practice of *intuitive eating* allows you to become familiar with a host of vital body signals, which many of us overlook, override, or suppress. Returning to your breath helps you gain relief from stress and experience peace of mind through meditation. Your body’s hunger signals offer a similar calming freedom for your eating life. If you are ready to stop struggling with food and your body, then intuitive eating is for you!

Listening to Your Body Gets Results

Have you been frustrated by restrictive dieting plans? Have you lost weight on a regimented eating plan only to regain that weight? Are you willing to never diet again? Exit the dieting rollercoaster by learning to *listen to your body*.

An internet search on the phrase “listening to your body,” will lead you to the ground-breaking book *Intuitive Eating* by Evelyn Tribole, MS, RD and Elyse Resch, MS, RD, FADA. **Intuitive eating is a non-dieting approach consisting of a set of 10 guiding principles.** You will create a healthier, happier, and more balanced body by incorporating these principles into your everyday life.



Here are the 10 Principles of Intuitive Eating:

1. Reject the Diet Mentality
2. Honor Your Hunger
3. Make Peace with Food
4. Challenge the Food Police
5. Respect Your Fullness
6. Discover the Satisfaction Factor
7. Honor Your Feelings Without Using Food
8. Respect Your Body
9. Exercise--Feel the Difference
- 10 Honor Your Health--Gentle Nutrition

The titles of each principle give you an *intuitive* idea about the process and what it takes to become an intuitive eater. You can also read a more detailed description of the [10 Principles of Intuitive Eating](#). Hopefully, you are now among the “intuitive eating curious” after learning about these simple, yet powerful principles.

Get ready to discover some key insights about the benefits and challenges that may emerge as you begin your own intuitive eating journey. Then, find out the answer to the number one question asked about intuitive eating.

Eating as a Self-Discovery Practice

Eating is one of the most basic methods that we have to care for ourselves. Therefore, our eating behaviors have a critical impact on our sense of well-being. Through practicing intuitive eating, you will become familiar with the unique sensations that your body offers when you are physically hungry. Each of us have heard and felt gurgles or growls, and may have experienced a sensation of hollowness in our stomachs. While investigating my unique body hunger process, I discovered a growing sensation of heat in my abdomen immediately before I'm hungry. Previously, I had no awareness of that indicator.

Interpreting your unique body signals helps you optimize your ability to respond properly to your body's needs. **Being clear about your true hunger signals allows you to know when you are truly hungry versus when you are using food to deal with emotional or physiological needs.** Knowing your true hunger will help you minimize or eliminate overeating. Additionally, eating intuitively helps reveal your own distinct experiences of satisfaction with food during and after you eat.



Developing your "intuitive" sense has a host of other potential benefits. For example, the natural signals for when your remarkable body wants to move and express itself will also become much clearer. There are invaluable and numerous insights on the intuitive eating journey. What wonders will you discover? Start practicing and let your body take the lead.

Moving Beyond Fear

Of course, the shift into a life beyond dieting has its challenges and pitfalls. Many people have fears of uncontrollable weight gain should they liberate themselves from the restrictive diet mentality. However, according to Carol Muntzer & Jane Hirschmann, authors of *Overcoming Overeating* and *When Women Stop Hating Their Bodies*, **weight gain is actually a result of the "dieting/binge cycle"**. In effect, people diet, rebel by bingeing or overeating, and then regain weight, which oftentimes includes more pounds.

Have you experienced the dieting/binge cycle? Have you felt guilt and confusion after regaining the weight you worked so hard to lose? A fundamental transformation in your awareness will occur when you truly understand the dieting/binge cycle. **Rebellious and excessive eating, along with preoccupation with "bad" foods, is triggered by dieting.** According to researchers, two-thirds (75%) of dieters regain the weight they lost and more within four to five years. Dieting is a path to gaining weight. Intuitive eating is a liberating and sustainable way to support your body in finding its natural healthy size.

Reading *When Women Stop Hating Their Bodies*, whether you are a woman or a man, will enrich and improve your ability to provide care for your body. You may not actually hate your body. However, your ability to care for yourself may be underdeveloped.

Avoiding a Tricky Trap

One pitfall on the intuitive eating path occurs when a person misinterprets the 10 principles as *a strict set of rules* and then turns these principles into another diet. As a result, rebellious eating arises and intuitive eating gets thrown into the pile along with all of the other "been there, done that" diets. Remember that *it is impossible to fail at intuitive eating*. Why? As you continue to practice, you get a clean slate with each new meal. You can always simply come back to honoring your body's hunger (and fullness) signals. Any time I eat in a non-intuitive way, I know that I have an opportunity to come back to my hunger signals at my next meal. Consistency over perfection is an attainable goal.



It does take time to become an intuitive eater. However, the time you invest is much less than staying trapped in the never-ending cycle of dieting and regaining weight. I began my intuitive eating journey with the intention of "finding balance." For decades, I had lived with a chronic fear of gaining weight and observed that I gained weight easily. Eating intuitively has liberated me from weight gain fears. I finally learned how listen and respond to my body. Like me, you will come to understand that honoring biological hunger signals is necessary to support your body's natural ability to regulate and maintain a healthy weight. ***Making peace with food and your body is possible.***

An Answer Revealed

So, what's the number one question asked by the "intuitive eating curious"?

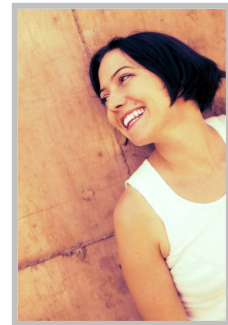
"Does intuitive eating really work?"

What people are really asking is "*Will I lose weight?*" Authors and practitioners in the non-dieting field will tell you that your body will find its "natural weight." Some people have lost weight, some have gained weight, and some have experienced no change in weight at all. Ultimately, you will experience a variety of life-enhancing results by practicing intuitive eating. Weight loss may be one of the many benefits on your intuitive eating path.

A focus on weight loss, the goal of dieting, will keep you in conflict with your body. Dieting forces a superficial and unnatural weight shift. With intuitive eating, you learn to support your body's innate intelligence. Your body performs all sorts of amazing feats each day from pumping blood through millions of miles of veins to repairing itself. Your body is well equipped to manage your weight, if you listen and respond with care.

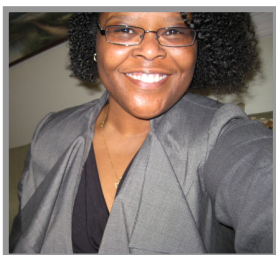
Like any person living in this weight obsessed culture, thoughts of "losing weight" do surface regularly. When thoughts arise in meditation, we *notice them*, sometimes *name them*, and *let them go*. Compassionately remind yourself that "weight loss" is just another thought and come back to following your body's hunger and fullness signals.

Ultimately, when you choose to end the dieting war and make peace with food, you will discover that only your body can reveal the answer to the question: "*Does intuitive eating really work?*" In response to your growing ability to care for your body in nurturing ways and to honor its signals, *your body may naturally respond by shifting sizes.*



Eat intuitively, move joyfully, love your body.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Latoya J. Williams has worked as a professional consultant for over 10 years. She completed a MA in Transpersonal Psychology at [John F. Kennedy University](http://www.jfk.edu/) in 2007. She graduated from [Carnegie Mellon University](http://www.cmu.edu/) with a BS in Business Administration and a BS in Information and Decision Systems (double major) in 1999. Latoya focuses on helping people experience optimal wellness through creative self-care practices. Latoya will be completing advanced Intuitive Eating practitioner training and is pursuing certification as a holistic nutrition coach. Learn more about her professional intuitive eating philosophy at www.transformativeeating.com . Latoya lives in Raleigh, NC.

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Article published:

April 21, 2010 | Living Holistically with a Sense of Humor: <http://www.holisticwithhumor.com/hunger-pangs-stop-dieting-and-start-eating-intuitively>