



# Intuitive Eating for individuals with an eating disorder

## What is Intuitive Eating?

Intuitive Eating (IE) is an approach that aims to support you to create a long-term positive relationship with food and eating. IE encourages you to learn how to listen to and respond to your natural appetite cues, such as hunger and fullness. It helps you to learn the difference between physical and emotional feelings of hunger and fullness and build trust in your own body's cues. IE can support you to have a more calm, flexible and peaceful relationship with food.

If you've had an Eating Disorder (ED), or have one currently, IE will be part of the recovery process. However, the steps along the way will look different for everyone. Seeking support from an ED dietitian can be helpful. For example, you may be starting from a set meal plan, or you may already be eating regularly and need more support in a different area of recovery.

Please note: If your weight is below a natural weight for you, you will need to seek guidance from your healthcare team with regards to appetite-led eating. Beginning this process too early may be unhelpful to your recovery.

## Your path towards IE in ED recovery will most likely include:

- Reducing, then getting rid of any 'diet rules'
- Becoming familiar with your own appetite cues
- Giving yourself full permission to eat, whilst responding to your body's cues
- Enjoying all foods, including foods that may not be seen as 'healthy' but are pleasurable or enjoyed socially
- Taking part in social eating in a relaxed manner
- Finding ways to cope with difficulties in life without using food as the only way to cope
- Moving your body in ways that you enjoy and that support your well-being
- Learning about how changes to your eating pattern can be done in a way that supports your well-being. This can be especially helpful if you have a health condition in which food and eating plays a role.

IE falls under what is known as the Non Diet Approach and Health At Every Size® (HAES®) paradigm. HAES® is an evidence-based, weight-inclusive approach focussing on health and well-being for people of all sizes.

**Further reading:** Intuitive Eating, 4th edition.  
E Tribole & E Resch. 2020 St Martin's Press.