



Raising an intuitive eater: What works for kids and teen

Enlighten Nutrition, Counseling and Care, LLC



Who are we?

Enlighten Nutrition, Counseling and Care, LLC is an evidence-based, all-inclusive practice that focuses on supporting individuals as they overcome some of the many challenges that arise in eating disorder recovery. We help individuals explore their own relationship around food, while they begin to let go of diet culture, guilt around food, and body image struggles. Recovery is about progress, rather than perfection. We here at Enlighten help shed light on the journey as opposed to the finish line, to not only help you manage your disordered behavior, but help you start your journey towards a healthy relationship with food.

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What is Intuitive Eating?

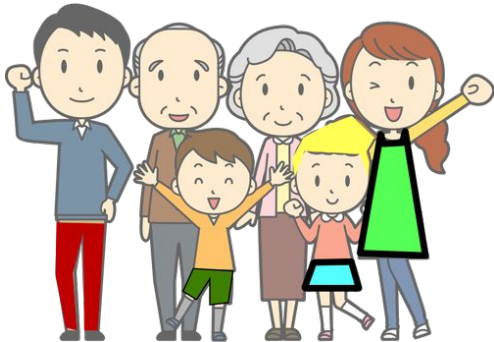
Intuitive eating focuses on making peace with all types of food. Unlike traditional **diets** that restrict or ban certain foods, intuitive eating requires you to stop looking at food as “good” or “bad.” Instead, to listen to your body and eat what feels right for you.

You might think this means you just eat whatever you want, anytime you want. That’s not the case. Experts say intuitive eating means tapping into your body’s natural ability to tell you when you’re hungry or satisfied.

When you eat intuitively, you also let go of the idea that you need to lose or **gain weight** so you can look a certain way. The idea is to help you focus on foods that work best for your overall physical and **mental health**.



Supporting your child's innate relationship with food



Children grow in spurts. Sometimes they eat as much as an adult and sometimes as little as an ant. If left alone and not nudged, they'll get everything that they need over time

Children's food preferences vary regularly. Don't worry if your child only wants peanut butter and jelly for many weeks and then won't look at it for months afterward.

- If no judgment is made (" you've always loved this") the child is likely to go back to this food sometime in the future.
- Alternate foods every few days to maintain children's interest in different foods

Look at the whole week, instead of a particular meal or day of eating, any you will see that your child will get everything that they need.

Children Seek Autonomy

Honoring your children's developing autonomy is key for nurturing their inner Intuitive Eater

- Allow your child to serve them self as soon as they are developmentally able to do so. If you serve them, you are presuming how much they need to satisfy their hunger.
 - They will take what they need without feeling pressured to “clean the plate”
- Involve children in food shopping and meal preparation- they'll be more interested in eating the foods they pick and prepare.

Introducing new foods is an art



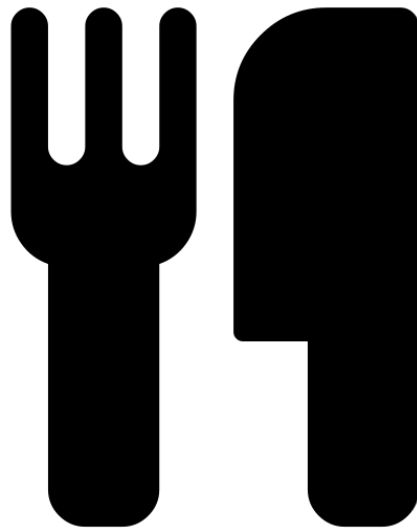
Parents often expect their children to try a new food when offered, even if it's only a bite. Feeding conflicts can arise without understanding how children react to new experiences.

- Experimenting with food is one part of the battle, especially if introducing a new food or new style of food being prepared. When presenting new food, be sure to have some familiar foods at the table as well.
 - Presenting several new foods at once can be overwhelming and they may refuse everything.
- It may take up to 20 exposure for a child to accept a new food.
 - Keep serving from time to time, without any pressure.

Food Talk

Talk about foods in non-moralistic terms, rather than 'good' or 'bad'

- Telling children that some foods are 'bad' can instill feelings of guilt.
 - instead , tell children that 'play food' isn't necessarily nutritious for the body, but exists just to taste good.
 - Try to let go of the term 'junk food', as that could elicit shame for eating something perceived as having no value.
- These kinds of discussions, paired with unrestricted access to a wide range of foods, reduce the risk of your child gravitation toward and fixating on the play food at another child's home.

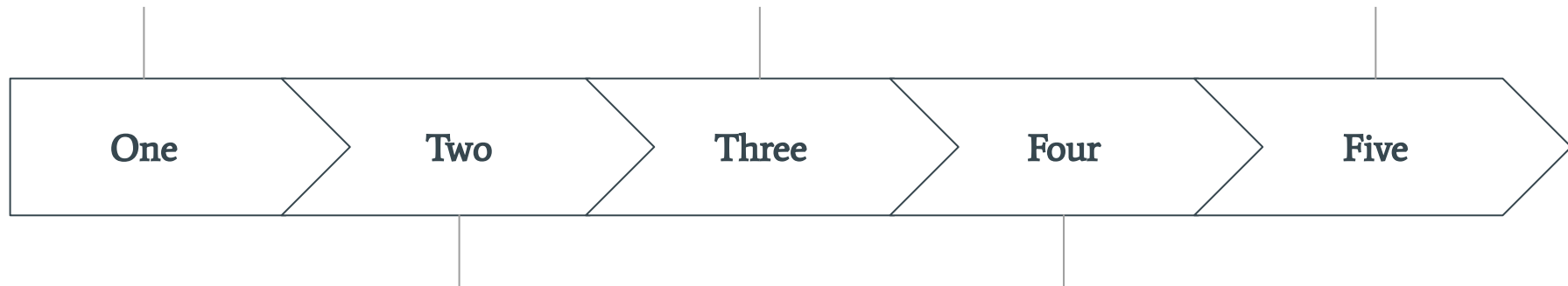


5 points of support

Share the benefits of nutrition early on.

Pack lunches that have a variety of choices, including play foods.

Trust your child's innate abilities,



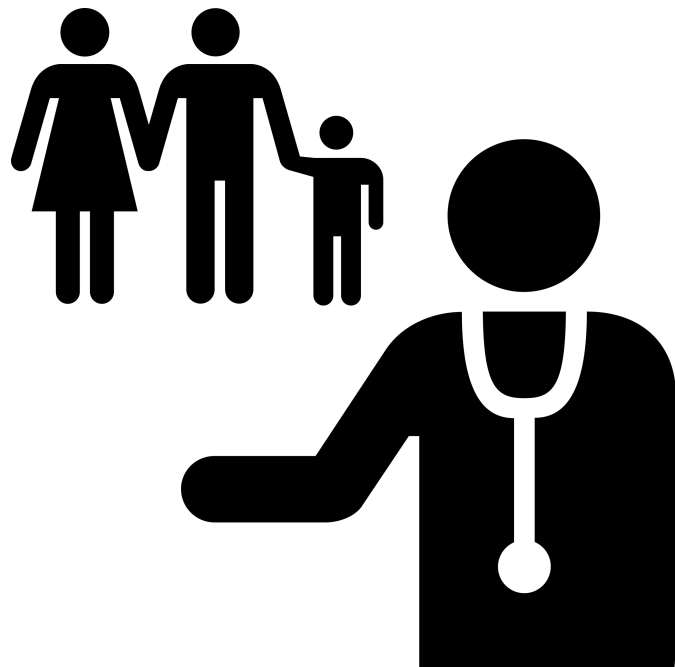
Put a variety of foods on the table.

Make nutritious snacks available for your children.

When you're told your child is "overweight"

Fear around the "obesity epidemic" warns that children living in larger bodies are at a higher risk for many health issues without evidence to show causation.

- In the United States, a child is 242 times more likely to have an eating disorder than type 2 Diabetes.
- Studies support that parents using restrictive feeding practice backfires, leading children to eat when they aren't hungry, often resulting in extensive overeating.



In a study of five-year old girls of varying size, those whose mothers used restrictive feeding patterns were shown to have the greatest level of overeating behavior by age nine.

In another study of five-year-old girls, those who perceived parental pressure and control around food began to restrict certain foods and eat emotionally.

A 2003 study found that dieting was associated with binge eating among both preadolescent and adolescent young people.



Quick Exercise

1. Take a few minutes and identify if you follow any of the following food rules
 - ☐ When I eat out at restaurants, I choose entrees that have the lowest calories or points
 - ☐ I weigh myself frequently
 - ☐ I measure my food (i.e. scale, measuring spoons/ cups, etc)
 - ☐ If I think I ate too much food, I will compensate with exercise
 - ☐ I avoid foods that contain sugars or fats
 - ☐ I count calories regularly

Children are extremely receptive to the behaviors you follow, ultimately affecting their relationship with food and movement.

What can you do?

- Create a conversation with your child and see what they may want help with.
 - They may appreciate help with breakfast or lunch, or even ideas of things that can be put together.
- Don't fall into the trap of telling your teen that they can only watch television or be on their phone or computer after school while they're having their afternoon snack.
 - Connecting relaxation with food can fuel behaviors of mindless eating.
 - Alternatives could be, having a snack available for he or she to choose when they are hungry, and then suggest a non food-related activity to relax before starting their homework.
- Talk to your teens about people they're following on social media. Help guide them away from people who endorse dieting or weight-stigmatizing messages.

Movement

We know exercise has many benefits such as stress relief, increased bone strength, decreased blood pressure, increased metabolism, reduced risk of chronic diseases, and the list goes on. BUT stop and think. What is your attitude towards movement?

Building a positive relationship with movement for your child starts with your own

- Break through the exercise barriers
- Focus on how it feels
- Decouple exercise from weight loss

No one can deny a small child's natural desire to move, but there are many explanations to why so many children become inactive

Similar to Intuitive Eating by serving, eating a wide variety of foods yourself and modeling positive relationships, moving and being an active family helps children and teens maintain an innate desire to move

Intuitive Eating Approach to Physical Activity with Children and Teens

These 5 guidelines can help establish a lifelong appreciation for movement

1. Build intuitive sense about movement through infancy and toddler ages to promote and maintain movement in teenage years.
2. Encourage your child to be involved in groups sports, dance, martial arts, or other forms of movement.
3. Role modeling is imperative.
4. Be aware of the effect of extended media use on children and teens.
5. Physical activity should NOT be promoted as a means for weight loss.

Give your child the confidence to trust in their innate ability to eat and move.

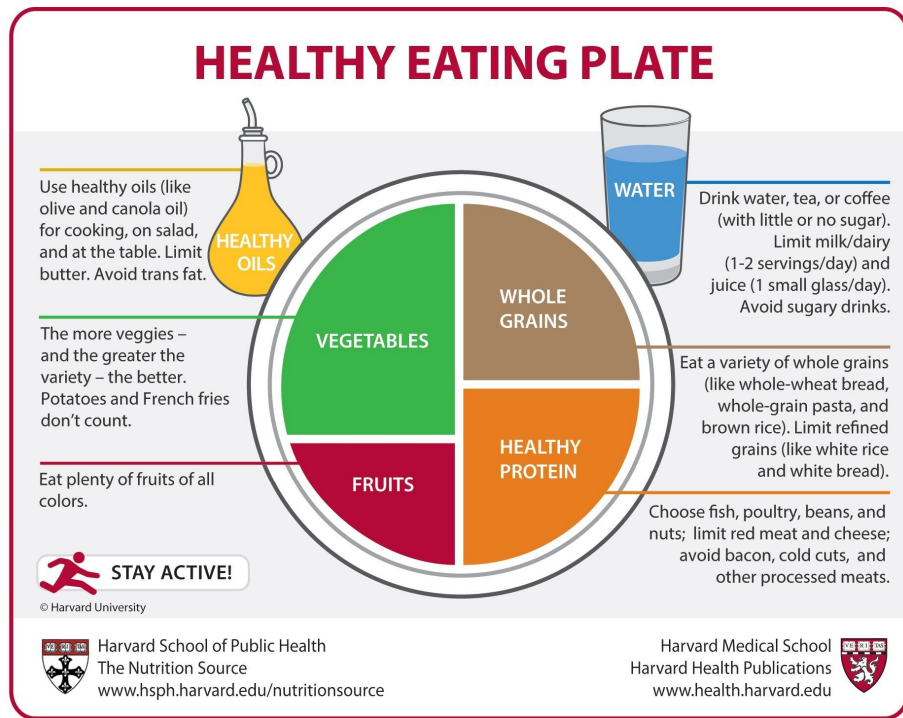
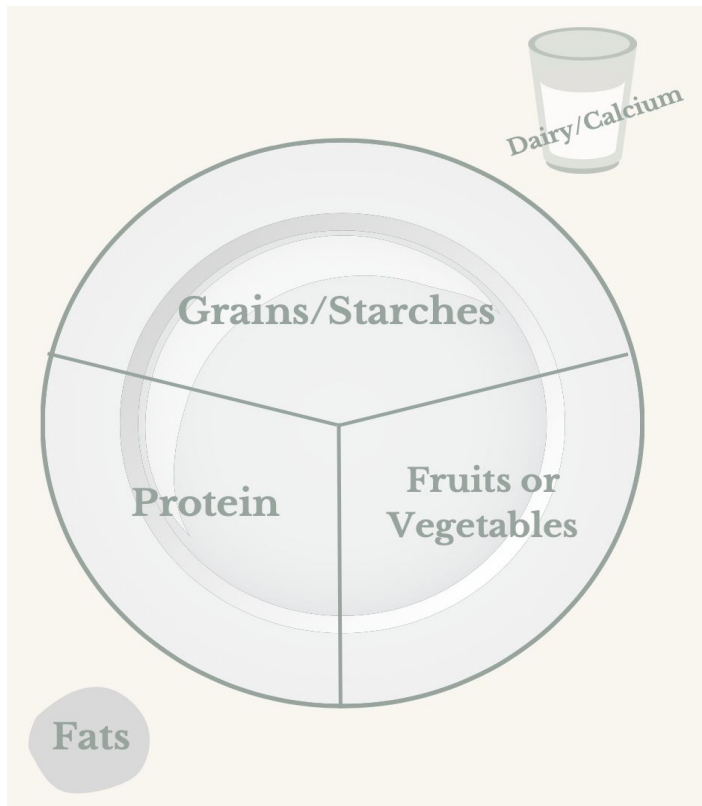
Clean Plate Club

Encouraging your child to ‘Clean their plate’ before they are able to leave the table creates an externally based pattern of eating and a barrier to experiencing genuine fullness.

- Allow pause to experience fullness, rather than stopping when the plate is empty.
- Similarly with packaged food, stopping using internal cues rather than finishing the package.
- Factors that can make this challenging and reinforce ‘cleaning the plate’ is when experiencing extreme hunger, eating too fast, or fear of deprivation.

Practice Activity: To break the tendency of automatically eating all the food on the plate, try leaving one bite or two bites of food uneaten and welcome curiosity. The purpose being creating space to practice assessing fullness levels.

The Plate-by Plate Approach versus USDA My Plate



What behaviors to look out for?

1. If you notice your child is binge eating or barely eating, recognise this may be a sign of emotional distress or unmet needs.
 - a. Explore quality time with them
 - b. Add enjoyment to meal time
 - c. Let it be known that their feelings are appropriate and may be expressed as much and for as long as needed.



2. If your child is under eating or overeating and it becomes clear that they need support.
 - a. Seek a counselor, psychotherapist, and/ or nutrition therapist who is trained in intuitive eating and eating disorders.

Warning Signs of eating disorders

There are some key signs to look out for, however. Prominent indications of an eating disorder include:

- Dramatic weight loss or weight gain
- An obsessive preoccupation with food or body image
- Changes in food intake
- Purging, restricting, or binge eating
- Excessive exercise
- Misuse of diet pills or laxatives
- Eating in secret or hiding food
- Feeling out of control with food
- Co-occurring mental health conditions such as substance use disorder, anxiety, depression, or trauma
- Medical complications, including dizziness or fainting, menstrual irregularity, heart disease, and digestion issues

How are eating disorders treated?

Eating disorders require a multidisciplinary treatment team that can address the medical, psychological, and nutritional components of the illness. Each member of the care team plays an important role in developing and delivering comprehensive treatment.

- Medical: Physicians, physician assistants, nurses, and other medical professionals provide medical monitoring, intervention, and management. They monitor vital signs and symptoms, as well as examine and treat the physical complications of eating disorders, including gastrointestinal/refeeding concerns and cardiac issues.
- Psychological: Licensed therapists and other members of the therapeutic team provide individual, family, and group therapy to help patients acquire the skills, behavior, and knowledge to challenge their eating disorder. Leveraging a variety of approaches including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), and Family-Based Treatment (FBT), this team engages and coach patients in therapeutic interventions.
- Nutritional: Registered dietitians and dietetic technicians provide guidance and education on nutrition, challenging the eating disorder food rules and restrictions. Among their responsibilities are developing nutrition assessments and supporting therapeutic meals and snacks with patients and their families.

Resources

AED – Academy for Eating Disorders: is an international transdisciplinary professional organization that promotes excellence in research, treatment and prevention of eating disorders. The AED provides education, training and a forum for collaboration and professional dialogue.

ANAD – National Assoc of Anorexia Nervosa & Related Disorders: The National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders, Inc. is a non-profit corporation which seeks to alleviate the problems of eating disorders, especially anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

BEDA – Binge Eating Disorder Association: is committed to helping those who suffer from binge eating disorder conquer their disorder. So if you or someone you care about lives with binge eating disorder, BEDA can help.

EDC – Eating Disorders Coalition: Their mission is to advance the federal recognition of eating disorders as a public health priority.

IAEDP – International Association of Eating Disorder Professionals: is well recognized for its excellence in providing first-quality education and high-level training standards to an international multidisciplinary group of various healthcare treatment providers and helping professions, who treat the full spectrum of eating disorder problems.

MEDA – Multi-Service Eating Disorder Association: is dedicated to the prevention and treatment of eating disorders and disordered eating. MEDA serves as a support network and resource for clients, loved ones, clinicians, educators and the general public.

N.A.M.E.D. – The National Association for Males with Eating Disorders: is to provide support to males with eating disorders, to educate the public on the issue, and to be a resource of information on the subject.

NEDA – National Eating Disorder Association: is the largest not-for-profit organization in the United States working to prevent eating disorders and provide treatment referrals to those suffering from anorexia, bulimia and binge eating disorder and those concerned with body image and weight issues.

National Alliance for Eating Disorders: is formerly The Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness and is a national non-profit organization dedicated to the outreach, education, early intervention, support, and advocacy for all eating disorders.

BeyondHunger: is dedicated to helping individuals overcome the obsession with food and weight and find a natural, loving and peaceful relationship with their food, weight, and selves.

Q & A