



Principles of Natural Eating

1. **Determine if your hunger is physical or emotional. FYI, typically if you have to wonder, it's emotional.** Physical hungry is quite obvious. (Don't worry if you feel that you've lost connection with the natural signals of hunger and fullness. I've been at this a long time, hands on with many hundreds of people and they've always been able to identify when they're truly hungry and truly full within the first week or two of simply inviting themselves to ask if they're hungry before they eat and by checking in in the middle and at the end of a meal to see how full they feel.)

2. **If your hunger is emotional:**
 - a. **Acknowledge** that you need some comfort and nurturing right now. Ask yourself what you were just thinking or what just happened that might have triggered you to feel anxious or unsettled or to need to numb or soothe yourself with food.

 - b. **Validate:** Your feelings are valid. It doesn't matter whether others feel the same or are judging your emotions. Your feelings let you know that you have needs that aren't being met and your responsibility to yourself is to acknowledge and validate them and seek to identify and meet the unmet need(s) that triggered them. Ask yourself what you would need in that moment in order to feel completely peaceful. I guarantee you, it won't be food.

 - c. **Do not restrict:** If, after you have checked in, you still wish to eat, tell yourself "you need comfort now and it is okay." Do not restrict yourself as restriction is punishment and only creates negative feelings and a desire to binge. You will not always need food for comfort but you do now and, most importantly, you are working now to find out what you really need and how to give that to yourself. Every time you take the time to identify what triggered you before you reach for food to cope you are taking a big step towards healing. Don't take a step back by restricting yourself and kicking into The Diet Mentality if right now you still need a little soothing and numbing from food.

3. **Remember there are no good or bad foods:** Everything is fine in moderation – if you catch yourself thinking of foods as legal or illegal or of yourself as good or bad or as having a "good day" or a "bad day" depending on your food choices, remind yourself that this kind of labeling and judging is diet mentality and will only keep you stuck in compulsive eating.



4. **Eat what you want whenever you're hungry:** Don't buy into The Diet Mentality and tell yourself what you "should" have - break the mold – don't be afraid to have pancakes for dinner if that's what will satisfy you. Have what you want, you'll eat much less and enjoy it much more. It's a total win-win.

5. **Stop when you feel physically satisfied:** Try not to wait until you feel that over-stuffed feeling – check in with yourself throughout your eating experience and be honest about how full you feel. If you want to continue eating despite feelings of fullness remind yourself that you are seeking to fill a need for comfort and review step 2. You may need to do this a few times during some meals in the early stages of healing but it takes just a second and will relieve much of your guilt and anxiety about allowing certain foods or certain quantities, which frees you to be more present and to make changes to your behaviour, which is what you want, right?

6. **Remind yourself frequently that you can always have more later:** You will not restrict yourself anymore, right? That's just The Diet Mentality and you're done with that. You can expedite this healing process and relieve any fear you may have about stopping to check in if you reassure yourself that you won't restrict yourself should you identify that you are still hungry or that you need food for emotional comfort at that time. If the need for emotional comfort is driving you, just remember step 2.

7. **Eat as often as you feel the need, regardless of the time:** Let go of scheduled mealtime eating. If you are not hungry at dinner wait until you are hungry and have your meal then. Likewise, if you get hungry in the afternoon, don't force yourself to wait until dinnertime to respond to your body's signals. You'll enjoy your food so much more when you do eat; you won't trigger the Drill Sgt. or The Diet Mentality; and you're far more likely to eat less.

8. **Do not let your Drill Sgt. or The Diet Mentality run away on you – In other words, don't buy into guilt around food:** Guilt is a throwback from the diet mentality. Whenever you catch yourself feeling guilty about what you've eaten or what you want to eat, remind yourself that **to restrict yourself is to punish yourself**. The more you restrict yourself in terms of when and what you eat, rather than just focusing on eating when you're hungry and stopping when you're full, the more you will reinforce the message that you are undeserving and you will continue to be plagued by bad thoughts about yourself.

This method of eating naturally may feel odd to you at first and it is appropriate for it to take a little time for you to master. This is the best and fastest way to put food back in its rightful place as a method of sustenance and not as our sole method of release and comfort.