



# THE RETURN TO INTUITIVE EATING IN RECOVERY

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# AGENDA

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Nutrition Assessment of an Eating Disorder (ED) patient

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10 Principles of Intuitive Eating

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Roadmap to Recovery

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2 Case Studies

# ED DIETARY ASSESSMENT



**WEIGHT  
STATUS**



**MEDICAL  
STATUS**



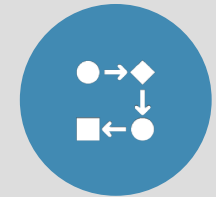
**NUTRITIONAL  
STATUS**



**RELATIONSHIP  
WITH FOOD**



**RELATIONSHIP  
WITH BODY**



**RELATIONSHIP  
WITH  
EXERCISE**

A close-up, top-down view of several slices of kiwi fruit. The slices are arranged in a circular pattern, showing the vibrant green flesh, the white core, and the numerous small, dark, oval-shaped seeds. The lighting is bright, highlighting the texture of the fruit.

# 10 PRINCIPLES OF INTUITIVE EATING





# REJECT THE DIET MENTALITY

Diet Mentality is the school of thought that there is one right way to have a body and all people should be striving to look like that one body. This leads people to dieting behavior:

- Caloric restriction
- Food group elimination/Food rules
- "No pain, no gain" exercise
- Perpetuates weight stigma & fat shaming

\***Dietitian Role:** Educate on the harms of dieting/ED and help clients remove their dieting/ED tools, validate and calm fears about not dieting





## HONOR YOUR HUNGER

Diet culture teaches us how to trick our body out of hunger.

Hunger is our body's "low fuel" alarm, we should respond accordingly

**\*Dietitian Role:** Educate on science of hunger, hunger cue suppression during ED, physical hunger cues, impacts of delaying meals/snacks on hunger, attunement disruptors, and calm fears of responding to hunger

## MAKE PEACE WITH FOOD

In eating disorders, foods are “off limits” which leads to a deprivation mindset

Deprivation mindset → strong cravings → break the deprivation → feel “out of control” → guilt/shame → false evidence → deprivation

- Unconditional permission with food breaks this cycle

**\*Dietitian Role:** Educate on habituation process, conduct exposure sessions, validate and challenge fears of making peace with food





# CHALLENGE THE FOOD POLICE

The food police is the mean voice deep in someone's psyche that maintains oversight over food rules and diet mentality "order" of the brain.

This leads to A LOT of negative food talk that makes a person anxious to eat. This may lead to eating disorders for some

To heal from the negative food voices, we change the narrative and replace these with an intuitive eater voice

\***Dietitian role:** Identify client's food rules, provide accurate nutrition education, conduct dietary exposures, help them nurture their intuitive eater voice



# FEEL YOUR FULLNESS

Fullness is a complex body signal that many are unsure how to listen for. Comfortable fullness can be challenging to identify.

Understand that hunger and fullness changes are gradual, not like a light switch

Trying to find the “last bite threshold” where fullness is most satisfying

**\*Dietitian Role:** Educate on fullness cues and how to create a satiating meal/snack, inaccurate fullness cues during ED, teach mealtime mindfulness techniques, explore “clean plate” messages, complete a mindful meal and the connection between hunger and fullness



# THE SATISFACTION FACTOR

Satisfaction is the HUB of intuitive eating

Satisfaction comes from:

- Eating an amount of food that allows for some degree of fullness
- Eating foods that are pleasing to the palate
- Mindful techniques that allow us to savor food

**\*Dietitian Role:** Educate on sensual qualities of food, conduct mindful meals, balancing food groups at meals, variety across eating occurrences





A woman with long dark hair is sitting on a light-colored couch. She is wearing a grey and white striped long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. She has her hand on her forehead and is looking off to the side with a thoughtful or concerned expression. The background shows a white door and a green plant.

## COPING WITH EMOTIONS WITHOUT USING FOOD

Food can be a coping skill AND we want to develop other coping skills so that food isn't our ONLY coping skill

Developing coping strategies and maintaining self care help us cope with our emotions

**\*Dietitian Role:** Listen for emotions and the connection to food, encourage application of developed coping skills at mealtimes or when feeling ED urges, assess self-care strategies

# BODY RESPECT



The body has a happy weight that is individualized for each person. Embracing our body's happy weight is a great step forward.

Even if a person doesn't like their body, there are certain behaviors that can be adjusted to support body respect

**\*Dietitian Role: Educate on Health at Every Size® principles, weight stigma, set point theory, identify and reduce body checking behavior, and support therapist with body image thoughts**





## JOYFUL MOVEMENT

Some people's only experience with exercise is in the context of dieting

Exercising while eating appropriate amounts of food feels different.

Focusing on movements that we enjoy and make our body feel good increases the likelihood of life-long joyful movement

**\*Dietitian Role:** Ensure adequate nutritional intake, educate on benefits of movement not related to weight loss, explore exercise barriers, assess for ED exercise behaviors, encourage play and adventurous movement





# GENTLE NUTRITION

Intuitive Eating is not devoid of nutrition!

This is the stage in which we can identify nutrition recommendations that may enhance our life. This will be individualized.

This may include:

- Chronic Illness Management
- High energy needs that require supplementation
- Navigating pregnancy

Focused on taste, quantity and quality





# ROADMAP TO RECOVERY



STOP 1:  
ACKNOWLEDGE  
THE STARTING  
LOCATION

Summarize the findings from the initial assessment and explain what it means.

Eating Disorder (ED) behavior cessation is key!

*Example for Restricting ED behaviors: “Based on your initial assessment, I see that you are not eating enough nutrition throughout the day. I know this because you shared you are dizzy when you stand up, feel tired, have sleep disturbance, constipation and minimal hunger cues. This was also confirmed by your lab results from the doctor. This is serious because it means your body is very hungry that it’s using the protein in your heart and GI tract to nourish itself. In order to help heal your body we have to give it the nutrition it is hungry for.”*

**Intuitive Eating Goal:** Bring awareness to dysfunctional beliefs about food, body, exercise. This can be connected to [Reject the Diet Mentality](#).



## STOP 2: PLAN YOUR ROUTE

Establish a regular eating pattern where someone is eating every 2-4 hours and has all food groups represented throughout the day\*

Moving from more structured to less structured approach

\*Note: this may take the form of a meal plan or may not

**Intuitive Eating Goal:** Consistent eating allows for development of hunger cues and fullness cues and allow for more satisfaction at meal times. Having all food groups encourages making peace with food and challenging the food police.

## STOP 3: DO SOMETHING THAT SCARES YOU

Encourage client to create a list of foods that they used to enjoy but experience distress eating these foods now

Complete dietary exposure sessions and provide education to help them challenge their thoughts

*Example for binge/purge ED behaviors: "So I hear you saying this is scary because you used to binge and then purge this food because you were scared of the "carbs" and eating it now makes you feel out of control. Carbohydrates (carbs) are our body's primary fuel source. Its function is to provide energy to the brain and muscles and they taste good. Carbs are so important that our body has a neuropeptide that is called the "carb craver" to signal when our body is too low on carbohydrates."*

**Intuitive Eating Goal:** Identifying and regularly eating fear foods encourages making peace with food and challenging the food police. Once we accept all foods with unconditional permission we can be truly satisfied with eating experiences.



## STOP 4: RIDE SOME WAVES

Recovery comes with a lot of emotional ups and downs and treatment plans need to be flexible to address the need of the individual

My role is to help clients connect how mood impacts food and vice versa

Working with a Therapist can help a client understand emotional triggers and coping skills

**Intuitive Eating Goal:** Emotion regulation allows someone to cope with their emotions without using food which helps preserve their relationship with food over time.

## STOP 5: OPTIONAL STRETCH BREAK

Explore a client's current relationship with movement and any change they want in their relationship

Help them move away from a narrow definition of exercise into a broader understanding of what "counts" for movement

*Example for Compulsive Exercise ED behavior: "I hear that you are saying this type of movement was disordered for you in the past. I want us to take a break from exercise for now to preserve your relationship with exercise in the future. While we pause movement, I want you to consider what type of movements you want to have in your recovery and we can explore that."*

**Intuitive Eating Goal:** Identify and remove pathologic exercise behavior. Explore joyful movement that is not for the purpose of weight loss but for the purpose of health and feeling good. Learn that all types of movement can support health.



## STOP 6: FIND THE BEAUTY

Body dysmorphia is a HUGE part of most eating disorders

Provide education on Health at Every Size® principles and body neutrality/acceptance

Encourage clients to change their narrative around their body by reducing body checking behavior and embracing their values/unique characteristics

**Intuitive Eating Goal:** Reject the diet mentality that says thinness is a prized body type and find ways to respect the body as it looks right now. This changes the relationship with food, exercise and body.

## STOP 7: SOLO ADVENTURE

Each individual will have unique dietary needs

Teach clients how dietary needs and external health values can be met within the context of intuitive eating

Some areas may include:

- Diabetes
- Sports Nutrition
- GI Disorders
- Cardiovascular conditions
- And Many More...

However, these other areas **MUST** be considered within the context of eating disorder recovery

**Intuitive Eating Goal:** Embrace *gentle nutrition principles as able* while maintaining eating disorder recovery.



A pair of black-rimmed glasses is resting on a stack of books. A red bookmark is visible in the foreground. The background is slightly blurred, showing more books and a wooden surface. A white rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text 'CASE STUDY I'.

# CASE STUDY I

## MEET CL

- 13 years old cis-gender female
- Wanted to get healthy by eating “clean foods” and losing weight
- Diagnosed with an eating disorder 6 months later
- Behaviors: restricting, compulsive exercise, anxiety with eating, limited food acceptance
- Her individual roadmap to recovery:
  - Weight restoration with progressive meal plan + education on set point theory
  - Stop exercise
  - Exposure therapy around fear foods + learn challenge thoughts and coping skills
  - Explore impacts of anxiety on her appetite
  - Learn and discover joyful movement + create a relapse prevention plan

Where is she now??



A pair of black-rimmed glasses is resting on a stack of books. A red bookmark is visible in the foreground. The background is softly blurred, showing more books and a wooden surface.

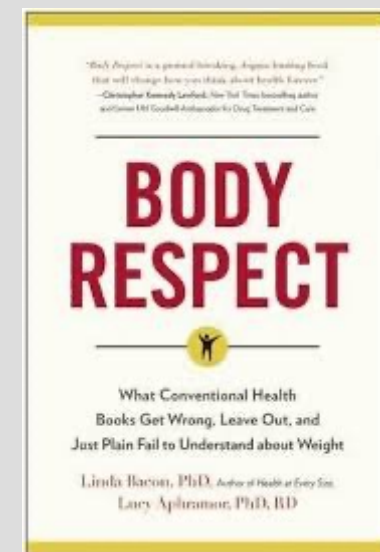
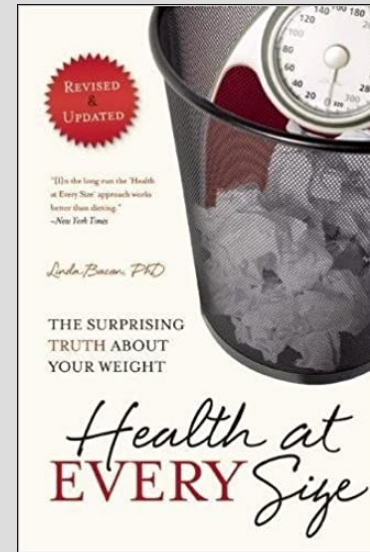
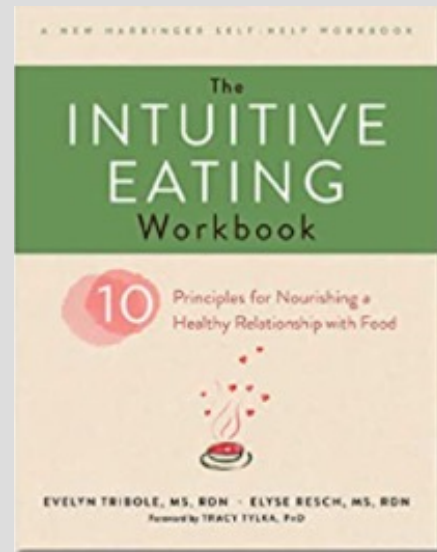
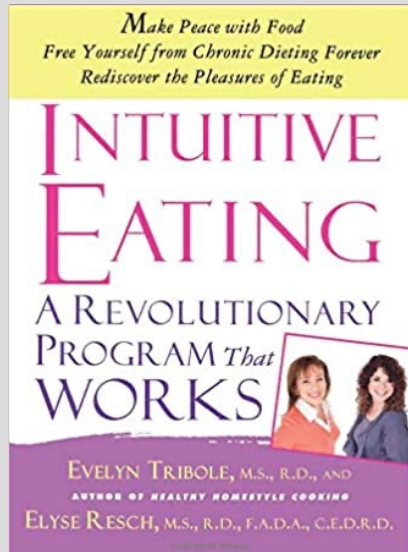
## CASE STUDY 2

# MEET JS

- 30 years old cis-gender female
- “Always struggled with body image and eating too much”
- Diagnosed with binge eating disorder
- Behaviors: restricting, bingeing, night time eating, shame around eating, afraid of eating in public
- Her individual roadmap to recovery:
  - Nutrition stabilization with consistent meals and snacks
  - Education on set point theory + weight suppression
  - Explore emotions that contribute to binge behavior
  - Exposure therapy around fear foods + feared eating situations
  - Learn and discover joyful movement

Where is she now??





# RESOURCES



THANK YOU