



welcome to the
**NON-RESTRICTIVE
NUTRITION GUIDE**





HEY THERE FRIEND!
i'm so glad you're here.

Are you sick of constantly fretting over, worrying and thinking about your food choices?

Are you tired of fighting with your body, ignoring hunger when you feel it or trying to distract yourself when it pops up - only to end up overeating, feeling guilty and vowing to start the whole process over again the next day/week/month?

If you're jumping out of your seat right now saying "yes yes yes!!" then you're in the right spot.

I'm Caitlyn, a Licensed Registered Dietitian Nutritionist. I've been where you are right now and understand the joy and freedom that comes with breaking free of these patterns and behaviors. That's why I'm so passionate about helping people just like you work towards achieving a lasting positive relationship with food. I'm living proof that it can be done, freeing you up to live life fully without relentless mealtime tension & anxiety.

In this totally free guide, I'm sharing 6 critical steps to get you started on your journey toward making peace with food & ending the restrict/binge cycle for good.

If you're up for the challenge, let's dive in!

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step one Commit to It

First off, congratulations for getting yourself here! Just seeking out this guide and cracking it open is a major first step and you deserve some serious props for that.

You've decided you're ready to be rid of restriction (yay!). You're done with that awful restrict/binge cycle that comes with dieting, you're sick of feeling fear & anxiety over food and your hunger and you're pumped to launch yourself into the first step that will take you toward a lifetime of freedom from it all. So let's get to it!

The first thing you need to do in order to truly achieve this freedom is commit to it.

Not in the fervent way you commit to a new diet program (you know, the one that wanes quickly after starting). But a deep-down-you-feel-ready-in-your-soul-to-make-this-change-once-and-for-all type of way. This means no more promises of trying another diet or quick fix, no more self-imposed food rules & restrictions, no more categorizing foods as "good" or "bad."

If that feels overwhelming or scary, don't worry. **This is not something you tackle all at once. It's a step by step process and entails a lot of learning & self-discovery along the way.** It's not going to happen over night. Like any habit, it takes time and effort to break the ties that bond you to your restrictive patterns. But if you're ready to put in the work to make it happen, I guarantee you'll achieve it and it will last.

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TOOLS TO HELP YOU commit to it

Take Note

You might want to go ahead and get a blank notebook that you take with you on this journey. Writing down thoughts/feelings/emotions that come up along the way can be really helpful both as a release and a way to better understand them. If you have one handy, crack it open and write down your commitment to free yourself from restriction.

Tell Someone

Do you have a friend, co-worker, family member or loved one you can declare your commitment to? Having someone you can check-in with or talk to (especially through some of the more difficult aspects) can be invaluable in helping you stay firm in your commitment.

Remind Yourself Why

Whether this comes in the form of a daily mantra you speak aloud or write down, a Pinterest board full of inspiring quotes or images, a note you add to your daily alarm or a vision board you create, remind yourself regularly why you've chosen to break your restrictive habits. It can be all too easy in the harder moments to forget and fall back into old patterns, so it's important to continually reinforce those deep-down-in-your-soul reasons. The more you do this, the sooner those reasons will surface effortlessly and become part of your psyche.

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step two Respect your Body

The very moment after you declare your commitment to a restriction-free life, I want you to give your body a nod of recognition. It doesn't matter whether you say the list out loud, write it down, think it in your head - you just have to do it. Then rinse & repeat, daily.

Respecting your body just as it is right at this moment (and for every day moving forward) is absolutely critical in order to achieve freedom from restriction. That doesn't mean you have to fully appreciate and accept your body at this very moment. If you have a difficult relationship with your body, that's okay. Just your interest in this guide shows that you're working on that. **Respecting your body simply means understanding that you deserve care, compassion and nourishment no matter your shape or size.**

That inner voice we hear every day? It makes more of an impact than you might realize. When you stop constantly putting your body down and begin replacing negative messages with respectful, appreciative and/or positive ones, it changes the way you see yourself. The softening of that critical voice alone allows your relationship with your body to begin healing.

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TOOLS FOR IMPLEMENTING body respect

Practice a Daily Mantra

Use the guide below to help you come up with one if you need it. Fill in the blanks thoughtfully and either read it, write it, or say it to yourself daily. Change it up as often as you want, just make sure you work with it daily (even if it makes you feel a little silly at first! Eventually you'll see the power of it).

Create Your Daily Mantra

I appreciate my _____ because _____

I am grateful for my _____ because _____

I love my _____ because _____

Feel free to shift/change the verbs here to fit your comfort level.

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TOOLS FOR IMPLEMENTING body respect

Embrace Joyful Movement

If you typically view exercise as a form of punishment for the food you've eaten or simply as a way to burn calories, take time to consider what you're currently doing and if you even like it.

If you don't, what would you enjoy doing? Not to burn calories or hit your daily step goal, but movement that would just make you feel *good*. It might be practicing a few yoga poses each morning, stretching before bed or taking a lunchtime walk. It could even be going for a run, but leaving your watch behind so you're not concerned about distance or time.

Discovering the activities that make you feel good is not only a way to respect your body, but also a great way to find the joy in movement again.

If you've struggled with over-exercising or exercise addiction, go ahead and give yourself permission to rest. Allow your body time to heal. When it comes to respecting your body, appropriate rest is just as important as finding activities you enjoy.

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TOOLS FOR IMPLEMENTING body respect

Wear Comfortable Clothes

If you consistently feel uncomfortable in the clothes you're wearing, pull out some that feel better. Or better yet, use it as an excuse to buy yourself a few new pieces that fit well. **Not only do you *deserve to feel comfortable*, but you'll be surprised what a difference it makes in how you view & hold yourself when you are.** Wearing clothes that don't fit quite right will make you constantly aware of your body complaints. If you're wearing something you can move freely in and feels good, you're much more likely to set aside your body hang ups. And while you're at it: get rid of any clothes you've been holding onto as "motivation" to lose weight. Hanging on to clothes that are too small will only serve as motivation to criticize your current body size.

Nix Body Checks

Body checks can be different for everyone. It could be compulsively checking your body in the mirror or obsessively stepping on the scale. Perhaps it's pinching or wrapping your hands around your waist, thigh, arm or other body part. It can also be any combination of these. **Part of respecting your body means nixing these behaviors if you practice them.** They're not constructive and the obsessive nature of them does nothing to serve your health or your goal of body respect. To break the habit, you may need to throw out your scale or cover your most-used body check mirrors with a sheet or towel. Do whatever will best help you stop these practices.

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Challenge ^{step three} your Restrictions

Now that you've committed to a non-restrictive life and are ready to respect your body, we're really ready to dig in and start tackling your restrictions.

Rules and restrictions might come in the form of only allowing yourself to eat certain types of foods or having strict guidelines around the times of day you're allowed to eat.

They might be thinking you have to earn or deserve your food or putting foods into "good" and "bad" categories. Regardless of what yours look like, the tools below will help you to recognize and begin to challenge them.

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TOOLS TO CHALLENGE your restrictions

Take Note

Remember that blank notebook I talked about in the previous step?

It's time to break it out again (or you can use the worksheet I've provided for you on the next page).

Writing down your food rules and restrictions can be so helpful not only in recognizing them, but also in understanding them.

Once you get them all written down and explore why you have them, you'll be much better able to set a plan of action for tackling them, one at a time.



TOOLS TO CHALLENGE your restrictions

Create a Plan

Once you've got your restrictions written down and you've taken time to think about why they're in place, **pick one that you feel most ready to tackle first, and come up with a plan to challenge it.**

Maybe you've written down "Limiting or avoiding chocolate" with "I overeat it every time I have it" as your reason. Think about a change you could make that feels manageable, but will also challenge that rule. Perhaps it's "add chocolate to every lunch this week." It's okay to start small. There's plenty of time to build on your goals. Remember, this is a lifelong change, it's worth it to take your time and do it right. Work on each challenge for 10-14 days (longer if needed). If you feel really stuck on one, leave it and work on another, revisiting the one you set aside when you feel ready. With each restriction challenge you accomplish, you can tackle another, until one day you realize you are free from all of your restrictions.

Evaluate

Take time each week (or every day) to reflect on, write or think about how each challenge went. Maybe the challenge you set was too small or maybe it was too much. **Reflect on how breaking each restriction made you feel, what went well and what you want to focus on for the following week.** Feel free to revisit the same challenges as many times as you need.

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TOOLS TO CHALLENGE your restrictions

Block Out the Noise

If you are prone to dieting, nothing can be more difficult than being around others who are still in the diet cycle. When I worked in NYC, my office was filled with women who were constantly talking about their diets. They would come in Monday, excited to get started then brag about the results they were seeing by week's end.

But you know what? The next week they'd come in and talk about how they had a crazy weekend, couldn't stick to their diet and gained back all the weight they had lost. If I had allowed myself to listen to and be swayed by their diet talk, I would've spent money I didn't have on a diet that didn't work only to realize once it was too late that I would've been better off just blocking out their noise. The unfortunate thing about the far-reaching clutches of the diet industry is that diet talk is seemingly everywhere.

What can you do to block out that noise? Come up with a few things that you know will help you when you're faced with this. Maybe it's repeating in your mind over and over why you've chosen this journey, or something as simple as "diets don't work." Maybe it's simply walking away or turning back to your computer and putting your headphones in. **Find a few things that you feel comfortable doing and that you know will work, then arm yourself with them so you're ready when this situation arises.**

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CHALLENGE YOUR RESTRICTIONS worksheet

Restriction:

Why:

Manageable Challenge:

Evaluation:

Next Week I Want to Work On:

5 Ways I Can Block Out the Noise:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

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step four Understanding the Role of Emotions

Regardless of what you weigh, food and emotions have a significant relationship. **There's no denying that eating can be a very emotional experience.** Whether celebrating an achievement, a special occasion or just getting through a hard day – it's easy for food to become connected to love, comfort and reward. Add restriction to the mix and a whole set of other emotions can end up intertwined in your food relationship.

Everyone eats now and then for reasons other than biological hunger. However, nibbling on a few things because we feel bored then moving on is an entirely different from consistently eating in attempts to deal with uncomfortable feelings.

Gaining a better understanding of the emotions that drive you to overeat, binge or restrict is an important part of ending these behaviors. If you feel much of your relationship with food is driven by emotion, the tools that follow can help.

TOOLS TO UNDERSTAND the role of emotions

Take Note

Time to break out that notebook again. **Before each meal or snack, I want you to take time to ask yourself “Am I biologically hungry?”** If the answer is yes, then honor that and eat.

If the answer is “no” or “yes, but I won't eat,” ask yourself “What am I feeling?” Try writing down those emotions, talking to a friend or loved one about them and/or working with a therapist to get at the root of what's driving these behaviors. Putting these feelings down in writing or talking them out with someone can help you begin to understand what emotions are leading to these behaviors. Once you understand them, you can begin to create a plan to address them.

Note: Sitting in and allowing yourself to feel the emotions you've been working so hard to drown out with food or restriction can be uncomfortable. Have patience with yourself throughout this process. **If it feels hard, try simply acknowledging or sitting with the feeling for as long as you can tolerate.** The more you face these feelings, the longer you will be able to sit with them. When you get to the point where you can fully acknowledge them, you can then move on to addressing them.



Photo by Ana Tavares on Unsplash

TOOLS TO UNDERSTAND the role of emotions

Evaluate

Emotional eating can often be a result of an unmet need. You may be eating because you're thirsty, exhausted or stressed. You may be restricting because you feel powerless in other aspects of life.

Take time to sit and ask yourself what it is you actually *need*.

Again, have patience with yourself here if those needs feel big or hard. Sometimes just acknowledging that there's an unmet need is all you can tackle at first. Simply being aware of what is causing your behaviors makes them more conscious, which is important.

Once you've figured out what your unmet needs are, you can take steps to meet them, which can help curb emotional food behaviors.

Use the following worksheet to help guide your process. Note that I've provided an example situation to help guide your use.

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CHALLENGE YOUR RESTRICTIONS worksheet

<p>Today I felt: <i>exhausted</i></p> <p>While I was: <i>eating past the point of fullness</i></p> <p>What I really needed was: <i>sleep</i></p> <p>Action Plan: <i>go to bed 30-60 mins earlier</i></p>	<p>Today I felt:</p> <p>While I was:</p> <p>What I really needed was:</p> <p>Action Plan:</p>
<p>Today I felt:</p> <p>While I was:</p> <p>What I really needed was:</p> <p>Action Plan:</p>	<p>Today I felt:</p> <p>While I was:</p> <p>What I really needed was:</p> <p>Action Plan:</p>

step five Reconnect with Your Body

Now that you recognize the importance of respecting your body (no matter its shape or size) and you've come up with a plan to cope with your emotions, it's time to re-learn the skill of trusting your body.

This takes time, effort and most importantly, patience. If you've been restricting and overeating/bingeing for some time, it's normal for your body to be confused and a little out of balance.

A huge part of learning to trust your body again is reconnecting with the signals it send, but it takes time to be able to hear them if you've consistently been pushing them away for years.

Working through this can take time and a little bit of work (don't worry, this guide will give you some tools!), but once you're able to achieve this, you never have to rely on an outside rule or guideline again to fuel yourself.

You will be able to trust your body to guide you in a way that will help you maintain the weight that's right for you.



TOOLS TO HELP YOU reconnect with your body

Fuel Your Body

While I always recommend eating according to your hunger & fullness cues, being in tune with those signals can take time if you've been consistently overriding them in favor of pre-established rules & guidelines.

The first thing you need to do is bring your body back into equilibrium. To do this, **aim to fuel your body every 3-4 hours with a mix of carbs, protein & fat.** This does NOT mean this is all you can eat in a day. Just that every 3-4 hours you're going to take time to provide yourself nutrients that can help nourish and energize your body.

This form of steady nourishment can be incredibly helpful when trying to break out of the restrict/binge cycle and ultimately reconnect with your internal signals. When your body is well-fueled, it becomes a lot easier to hear those internal cues because it's not in a desperate state of trying to survive.

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TOOLS TO HELP YOU reconnect with your body

Listen Closely

Taking the time to really listen to the cues your body provides is critical to gaining reconnection. In addition to providing your body with steady nourishment, there are a few things you can do to help reconnect to these signals:

Eat slowly. Take your time while eating (as much as realistically possible). If you have trouble with this, try eating with utensils you're unfamiliar with (such as chopsticks), putting your utensils down between bites or eating with your opposite hand.

Eat without distraction. Again, this is not going to be possible all the time. But whenever you get the chance, try to accomplish this. It's much easier to listen to your internal cues and be in touch with what you're feeling when your full focus is on the act of eating.

Check In. Check in with yourself at the beginning, middle and end of a meal. With each check-in, consider how you feel and what your hunger, fullness and satisfaction levels are. Note that it's *okay* if you finish a meal & find you're overly full. Taking note of that can be helpful in identifying what that feels like, so you can stop before you get there next time.

Repeat these behaviors whenever you're feeling disconnected from your internal signals.

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TOOLS TO HELP YOU reconnect with your body

Feel It

In addition to listening to your internal cues, take note of how certain foods make you feel. Does your body respond differently to a sandwich than it does a salad? Do you feel more energized or satisfied when you eat certain foods over others? How much of a certain food does it take to make you feel satisfied without being overly stuffed?

Taking note of these things will help you begin to understand the mix and amount of foods that make you feel your best. Contrary to the messaging often put out there, there's no one-size-fits-all diet pattern.

If you're feeling like this all seems a bit tedious, I hear you. But putting in the time and effort to accomplish make this reconnection now means that you won't have to think about them in the future, and can instead simply rely on your body.

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NEED MORE GUIDANCE EVALUATING YOUR hunger & fullness cues?

Practice the below guided exercise to begin reconnecting with your internal signals.

Review the Hunger/Fullness scale on the next page so you're familiar, or simply print out the page and keep it with you as you go through this practice.

Pick a few meals or snacks a week to practice this activity with (and repeat as needed when you're feeling out of touch with your internal signals).

- As you're sitting down to eat, take note of the time, the meal or snack you're eating and where you're at on the hunger/fullness scale. Use the comments section to jot down any other useful pieces of information (such as "I'm feeling very stressed right now" or "I'm having a tough body image day").
- When you're about halfway through your meal or snack, pause for several seconds and take note of what you're feeling. Listen to your body, feel what's happening in your stomach, then write down where you are now on the hunger/fullness scale and any comments you have.
- Finally, once you've finished eating, pause once more and again check-in with and listen to your body. Record your hunger/fullness level and any remaining thoughts or comments (such as "that meal felt too heavy and has left me feeling lethargic" or "I feel energized but wholly satisfied after that snack").

Repeat this activity as needed until you feel confident you have reconnected with your body. The more times you do this activity, the easier it will be to hear and feel your internal signals and eventually, you'll no longer need to do this.

Once you've completed the above activity several times, step back and analyze the patterns you're seeing. Are you eating more often when you're comfortably hungry or are you often sitting down only when you're ravenous? Do you notice any patterns around the times you're eating and how you feel? **This worksheet can provide useful insights that can enable you to make adjustments to your meal timing and composition to best suit your needs.**

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HUNGER & FULLNESS CUES worksheet

Time: _____

Meal/Snack:

Hunger/Fullness Rating at Start (0-10): _____

Comments:

Hunger/Fullness Rating at Start (0-10): _____

Comments:

Hunger/Fullness Rating at Start (0-10): _____

Comments:

HUNGER & FULLNESS scale

1. Ravenous, feeling weak & jittery
2. Extremely hungry, headache or fatigue
3. Hungry & ready to eat, food is top of mind
4. Mild hunger, food sounds good
5. Satisfied/neutral, feel content & comfortable
6. Pleasantly full, no longer actively hungry but could likely eat a little more
7. Fully satisfied, feel satiated without discomfort
8. Very full, feel slight discomfort
9. Too full, may have to unbutton pants to offset the pressure in your stomach
10. Overly full, feels painful

note: hunger & fullness will feel slightly different to everyone. use this as a guide until you are more connected with yours. feel free to create your own once you are more in-tune with your specific signals.



step six Have Patience

You've made it to the very last step of this non-restrictive nutrition guide!

All you need to do here is have patience - both with yourself and this process. It might seem like a simple task, but we are living in a society of quick-fixes and overnight miracles, which can make having patience through hard, effortful work feel extremely difficult.

There's a reason why quick-fix diet programs do so well. They prey on human impatience. Everyone loves a quick fix. Believe me, I know how easy it can be to be persuaded by the messages of life-altering change promised to you in just 2 weeks time. But that's why you've armed yourself with ways to block out the noise and protect yourself from these false promises! Remember, often the quicker the fix, the shorter the results last.

So yes, learning to reconnect with your body, make peace with food and get off the restrict/binge cycle for good takes time and effort. You will not always going to make progress by leaps and bounds throughout this process. That said, the progress that you make is going to last, because you've put in the work.

I once read that “nearly everything that generates enduring value requires effort, focus, and discomfort.” [mission.org] This couldn't be more true of the non-restrictive nutrition process.

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It is rarely a straight line and there will inevitably be days that are hard, aspects that you can't wrap your mind around at first, challenges that make you feel like you're moving backwards, etc. In those moments, remind yourself that what you're working through is huge and important. And huge, important changes take time.

Remember Your Why

Remind yourself (every day if you need to!) how sick you are of getting up every Monday morning, vowing to restrict certain foods, only to have broken it by the afternoon.

Remind yourself that it's not worth missing out on moments with friends and family so that you can uphold your food restrictions, how tired you are of gaining and losing and feeling like you've failed.

Whatever your reason is for wanting to free yourself from this cycle, repeat it to yourself as often as you need.

AND WE DID IT! give yourself a pat on the back

We did it! If you've hung in this long, you're a total rockstar and I just know you're going to get to where you want to be with non-restrictive nutrition.

I truly hope this guide serves you well as you embark or continue on your journey toward a positive relationship with food.

If you liked what you got here, follow along with me on my site, [Cait's Plate \(https://caitsplate.com\)](https://caitsplate.com) as well as on my [Instagram \(@caitsplate\)](https://www.instagram.com/caitsplate) where I'm constantly creating more content around this topic.

Until we meet again my sweet friend,

Cait