

FIT LIFE

Fit Life / Are You a Caloric or Intuitive Eater?

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The food and diet industry continues to offer consumers a variety of diet pills, meal plans and weight-loss solutions. Many of these products have transformed eating into a confusing and obsessive task due to misleading information and hopeless results. If a person progresses to the obsessive stage, eating becomes a frustrating game and leaves the mind questioning every detail of food. This may lead to restricting a macronutrient or manifest into an eating disorder.

Eating should be a pleasurable and enjoyable time of day and not a moment where self-guilt and negative thoughts intervene the natural process. The first step toward natural, healthy eating and making lifestyle changes is to create awareness about your eating style.

Eating styles tend to fall between two major categories: caloric and intuitive, or mindful, eaters. The number-one goal for eating and changing habits is to first recognize obsessive thoughts related to eating. The aim is to bring awareness and intention to your eating habits, which includes thoughts, actions and behaviors. Therefore, discovering what eating style fits your lifestyle, goals and personality is essential for success.

Begin by asking yourself the following three questions:

-How do I currently eat? -Does it help or hinder my progress, thoughts or habits? -What habits can I adopt to create a healthier change?

Caloric Eaters

Caloric eaters do well when tracking caloric intake and expenditure. Generally, these are “number people” who maybe logical, rational and analytical. Tracking calories is successful for the caloric eater because they can analyze and make connections to certain foods and their caloric costs. Therefore, this helps them rationalize the quality and quantity of a food through the caloric and number eye. For example, eating pasta with tomato sauce at home versus at a local restaurant greatly varies in caloric, nutrient and daily value numbers. Reading a food label to illustrate the awareness or decision-making in purchasing a food can be of great importance to the caloric eater.

These individuals generally do not obsess, but find success, in tracking weight and body-fat goals. They enjoy seeing progress and results that are measurable in numbers. When cooking at home, caloric eaters generally follow a recipe directly from the cookbook. They use the exact, precise measurements depicted in the recipe. And meal portion sizes are measured through cups, scoops or scalable portions.

The caloric eater does well with fitness tools such as a Fitbit or online food trackers to keep them focused on their goals. Also, these tools help users track specific goals, such as taking 10,000 steps in one day or shaving minutes of their personal best running time. Overall, tracking numbers is a precise habit and structured for their success.

Intuitive Eaters

Intuitive eaters find success when not obsessing or tracking calories. This may be due to their personality or because of a past, negative weight-loss experience, which triggered obsession. These individuals may be more creative, spontaneous and have a less-structured work schedule (e.g., flight attendant or traveling salesman). These individuals are more concerned with the overall quality of their food versus the caloric quantity. For example, they would prefer to eat a denser, but higher metabolic quality, cashew snack rather than a 100-calorie snack pack of crackers.

When it comes to weight loss and health habits, they find more success in how they feel. This includes focusing on how their clothes feel, overall energy and health improvements. They measure success in external factors such as being able to do something that they could not complete before their journey versus what the scale reads or how much body fat they’ve lost.

In terms of eating, intuitive eaters are visual, thus incorporating the plate method for portion sizes and stimulus of the senses with multicolored, whole foods. When cooking a meal, intuitive eaters are spontaneous; therefore, they may not follow the precise measurements of a recipe, but rather add, delete or substitute ingredients based on their palate and cravings. When shopping for food, they may be more prone to reading the ingredient label to rationalize quality rather than obsessing over how many calories or macronutrient grams are in the food.

Their awareness evolves from internal cravings through the “gut brain,” which recognizes internal biological hunger pangs. (Note: Intuitive eating is an awareness process and not an “excuse” to fulfill emotional cravings or unhealthy habits.) Much of the awareness comes from their biological hunger drive. For example, after a strenuous hike or workout, their internal body craving may signal for a carbohydrate- and protein-dense meal. In addition, their choices are followed from the gut and digestion; therefore, they are more likely to choose or eliminate foods that will aid their digestion and energy levels. “Following the gut” better preps the eater for making smart choices at parties, functions and restaurants. And when fully in tune with the gut and digestion, many unhealthy and junk foods do not look, smell or taste “good” or pleasurable, which helps the individual naturally (or eventually) stay away from non-nutritious foods. Overall, intuitive eaters are more in tune with body signals, sense stimulation and feelings of fullness.

Most people fall into one category or the other, but it is common for people to adopt habits from both caloric and intuitive eaters. Remember, in terms of eating, the most important goal is to remove

feelings of guilt, shame and obsession when eating a meal. Determining your eating style and preference can help set you up for success in achieving future goals, especially in terms of weight loss and maintenance.



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