



BRACHOT (BLESSINGS) AND INTUITIVE EATING

When you have eaten and are satisfied, give thanks to your God for the good land given to you. (Deuteronomy 8:10)

The Torah describes the bountiful lifestyle the Jewish people will have in the Promised Land by highlighting satisfaction rather than fullness. Eating until you're satisfied is very different from eating until you're full. Satisfaction is reached with self-awareness and being mindful of what your body needs to function properly. When writing about the importance of good dietary habits in the service of God, 10th-century Jewish scholar Maimonides explained that:



Since maintaining a healthy and sound body is among the ways of God...if they are ill, they must avoid that which harms the body and accustom themselves to that which is healthful and helps the body become stronger. (Hilchot De'ot 4:1)

Additionally, he wrote:

Overeating is like poison to anyone's body...Most illnesses which afflict mankind are caused by harmful foods or by ... filling (one's) belly and overeating, even of healthy foods. (Hilchot De'ot 4:15)

The verse above highlights how after we have eaten healthily and are satisfied, we bless God. But how do we eat in a way that's mindful of our bodies and levels of satisfaction?




©2023 The Blue Dove Foundation All Rights Reserved



BRACHOT (BLESSINGS) AND INTUITIVE EATING

“Intuitive eating” is a mindset in which one rejects the idea of “diet culture” and develops a more natural, healthy relationship with food. It encourages us to be more in touch with our body’s natural signals, which many adults lose over time due to age, stress, mental or medical illness, and cultural/environmental factors. Without those cues, it can be very difficult to tell when your body is satisfied, allowing for overeating or eating too little, both of which can be very unhealthy for your body.

Jewish rituals surrounding food can be a fantastic tool for developing mindful eating practices and strengthening our ability to eat intuitively. According to Jewish tradition, before and after eating any food, a blessing should be said. However, the blessing recited before eating is not a generalized prayer of gratitude. Rather, each blessing is specific to the kind of food you are eating. For example, before eating a food that grew from the ground, one would say:



**Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech
Ha'Olam borei pri ha-adamah.**

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך
העולם בורא פרי האדמה.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the earth.

Alternatively, someone eating fruit would say:



**Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech
Ha'Olam borei pri ha-aitz.**

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך
העולם בורא פרי העץ.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

Jewish tradition outlines specific prayers to be recited for specific foods. These invite individuals to be thoughtful about what they are putting into their bodies, creating space to pause and bless the food with intention before consuming and expressing gratitude afterward. This offers the opportunity to transform eating experiences into a mindfulness practice that may benefit an individual’s intuitive eating practice.



BRACHOT (BLESSINGS) AND INTUITIVE EATING

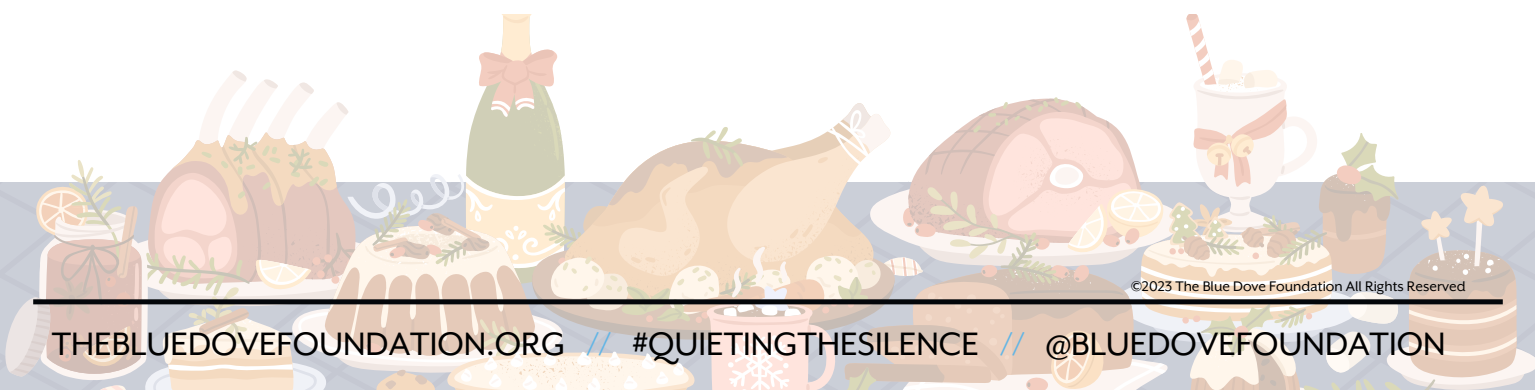
Unfortunately, eating intuitively—eating when we are hungry and stopping when we are full — is not common in our modern, busy culture. Restaurants often serve portions that are unrealistic — either way too small or way too large. We are often encouraged to rush through mealtime, while other activities like work and child care, i.e., “productivity,” are generally valued more than taking time to enjoy a long meal. Fortunately, there are strategies and information available to help us work back toward developing a more intuitive relationship with food and eating. It begins with the following 10 concepts:

1 **Reject the Diet Mentality**

Most “diets” (structured plans designed to help one lose weight) are ineffective over the long term and may even be harmful physically and psychologically. Depriving yourself can lead to some weight loss, but you will inevitably gain weight back, in addition to absorbing harmful messages of shame and guilt you don’t need. No matter what your personal health/weight goals are, they are not likely to be achieved and maintained by food restriction or deprivation.

2 **Recognize and Honor Your Hunger**

Your body is equipped with signals that let you know when and how much food to eat. When we put ourselves in artificial states of overfullness or deprivation, we lose our ability to be in touch with our body’s cues that let us know what we need. It is helpful to take the time to familiarize yourself with how your body’s hunger and fullness cues work before and after eating, so you can feed yourself adequately when you begin to feel hunger rather than waiting until you are so deprived that you cannot help but overeat.





BRACHOT (BLESSINGS) AND INTUITIVE EATING



Make Peace with Food

Eat what you want, when you want to eat it! When we avoid foods we enjoy, we are setting ourselves up to feel deprived and compensate for it later. If you develop balance and intuitively eat the foods you truly enjoy, then you are more likely to feel satisfied with what you have and will be less likely to seek that satisfaction later.



Challenge the 'Food Police'

Along with rejecting the “diet” culture, feel free to kick food judgment to the curb. When eating intuitively, there is no such thing as a “good” or “bad” food, and you are neither good nor bad when you enjoy it. Eating is an act that provides our bodies with nourishment, not a punishment or reward. Truly embrace the idea of food freedom, and do your best to let go of any judgment or values you may carry along with them.



Feel Your Fullness

Become familiar and comfortable with feeling full as well as with being hungry. Many people are programmed to believe fullness is bad, but it is neither good nor bad. The goals of intuitive eating are to be in tune with your body and eat when you are hungry—not because of some other habit or emotional reason.



Discover the Satisfaction Factor

It is OK to enjoy what you eat. Experiencing pleasure is a key part of being human, and eating for pleasure is a huge component of that experience. When you do take the time to eat a food you truly enjoy, make it a pleasurable experience. Sit down, eat with a friend, and take your time. Put your fork down between bites, and enjoy every last bit —until you are full, of course.



BRACHOT (BLESSINGS) AND INTUITIVE EATING



Cope with Your Feelings Without Using Food

Many people use food to manage emotions. The physical act of eating or feeling hungry or full can distract from the discomfort of a difficult emotion. Work toward breaking this unhealthy cycle, and find new (and hopefully more effective) ways to manage your feelings.

In addition, when we experience strong emotions, especially when we feel angry or anxious, we are unable to accurately feel hunger and fullness. So intuitive eating might not be the best strategy when you are upset.



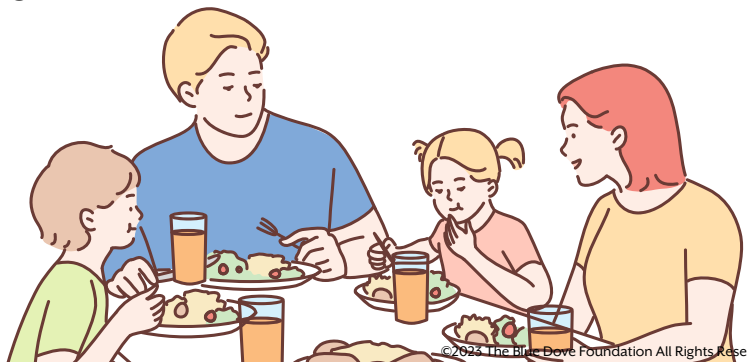
Respect Your Body

Your body does a lot for you, so learn to appreciate it just as it is. Even if your body is not the way you want it to be or think it “should” be, it is yours, and it is keeping you alive every day. Find things you like about yourself and your amazing body, and treat it with the respect and kindness it deserves. If you would not want a loved one to do something to themselves, you shouldn’t do it either.



Exercise and Feel the Difference

Movement is important to being a healthy human being. Find physical activities that feel good for you and the body you have, and do them not because you feel you have to or because you are trying to change yourself or your body; do them because you want to and they feel good.

©2023 The Blue Dove Foundation All Rights Reserved



BRACHOT (BLESSINGS) AND INTUITIVE EATING



Honor Your Health

Make food choices that honor your health and taste buds while making you feel good. Remember that you don't have to eat perfectly to be healthy. You will not suddenly get a nutrient deficiency or become unhealthy from one snack, one meal, or one day of eating. It's what you eat consistently over time that matters. Find a healthcare team that, rather than judging you, supports you as you try to eat and balance your nutrition in an intuitive way.



The Katie Hate Hunger Scale is a fantastic rating scale for the spectrum of hunger/fullness. As you move through your day, take a few moments when you sit down to enjoy a meal or a snack. How do you feel at mealtime? Look for patterns in your day; are you able to find time to eat when you are more in the middle of the scale (3-4)? If not, how does that affect your eating?

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Starving: You are extremely hungry, dizzy, and weak. | 6 Satisfied: You have eaten enough to feel full but not overly stuffed. |
| 2 Very hungry: Your stomach is rumbling, and you have a strong desire to eat. | 7 Comfortable: You feel a bit full but not uncomfortable. |
| 3 Hungry: You are beginning to feel hungry and think about food. | 8 Full: You feel full and could not eat another bite. |
| 4 Slightly hungry: You feel a little bit hungry but could still go a while without eating. | 9 Very Full: You feel very full and may even feel some discomfort or bloating. |
| 5 Neutral: You are neither hungry nor full. | 10 Sickeningly Full: You feel uncomfortably full to the point of feeling sick. |





BRACHOT (BLESSINGS) AND INTUITIVE EATING

Record your observations below:

After you eat, how full are you? Is there a connection between your rating before and after you eat? Do you eat more/less when you are hungrier beforehand?

Record your observations below:

Also, take some time to make a note of your state of mind, i.e., what you are thinking, as well as your emotional state while you are noting your level of hunger and fullness.

The physiological mechanism of intensive emotion (particularly anxiety, anger, and fear) directly interferes with our ability to sense physical hunger and fullness. The more upset and agitated we are, the less in touch we are with our body's needs. When we are in that state, we are more likely to engage in eating to regulate or soothe our emotions rather than to nourish ourselves.

How does this process affect you?



LIST OF FOOD BRACHOT (BLESSINGS)

Before consuming, one should hold the food in their hand or on their fork, and recite one of the following:

When Eating Vegetables:

**Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech
Ha'Olam borei pri ha-adamah.**

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך
העולם בורא פרי האדמה.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the earth.

When Eating Fruit:

**Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech
Ha'Olam borei pri ha-aitz.**

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך
העולם בורא פרי העץ.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

When Eating Bread:

**Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech
Ha'Olam Hamotzi lechem min haaretz.**

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך
העולם המוציא לחם מן הארץ.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth.

When Drinking Wine or Grape Juice:

**Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech
Ha'Olam borei pri hagafen.**

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך
העולם בורא פרי הגפן.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

When Eating or Drinking Miscellaneous Food (meat, poultry, eggs, fish, dairy products, candy):

**Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech
Ha'Olam shehakol nihiyah bed'varo.**

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך
העולם שהכל נהיה בדברו.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, by Whose word all things came to be.

When Eating Grain Products:

**Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech
Ha'Olam borei minei mezonot.**

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך
העולם בורא מיני מזונות.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Who creates various kinds of sustenance.