

5 STEPS TO DITCH FOOD

guilt



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HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED THE FOLLOWING THOUGHTS AFTER EATING?

"I shouldn't have"

"Why did I give in?"

"If only I had more willpower"

"My diet is ruined"

"Now I have to start all over"

"I need to burn this off asap"



If so, you're in the right place! At some point, many of us have experienced food guilt: a feeling of responsibility or remorse for making the perceived wrong choice about food.

In this guide, I'll show you how to get rid of the guilt so you can enjoy what you eat and honor your health.

Letting go of food guilt can help you:

- understand your cravings
- confidently make food choices without overthinking
- distinguish emotional from physical hunger
- ditch arbitrary food rules
- improve your relationship with food

Let's get started!

UNDERSTANDING YOUR FOOD GUILT

Okay, first things first. You should know that food guilt is not your fault. We're taught to feel guilty around food. We're taught that if we stick to a diet, we're good and if we deviate we're bad. Associating the terms "guilty pleasure," "guilt-free," and "sinless" with food primes us to feel bad about what we eat.

Sometimes it may even seem that guilt-tripping yourself is the best way to meet your health goals. But since you're reading this guide, deep down you know that food guilt is preventing you from reaching your goals. Because if you're feeling guilty, it's really hard to nourish yourself, listen to your body, and think about things beyond food.

Letting go of food guilt will free up precious mental space so you can tune into your hunger and fullness signals, enjoy what you eat, and move on with your day without added stress!

are you ready to let go of food guilt?

It may take some time, but it is 100% possible to eat without guilt. Be compassionate with yourself as you work through this guide. The outlined steps do not have to be completed in order, so skip around if you choose. Please reach out if you have any questions along the way. I'm here to support you!

- Erica Ingraham



STEP 1

LET GO OF BLACK & WHITE THINKING

THERE ARE GOOD
AND BAD FOODS



THERE ARE
DIFFERENT FOODS



Classifying foods as "good" and "bad" may seem like a helpful habit. But with this logic, if you eat a "good" food you are being good, and if you eat a "bad" food you are being bad.

This black and white way of thinking sets the stage for food guilt.

Food cannot be labeled as good or bad because it holds no moral value. Food is complex, and these simplified categories just don't do it justice. Remember that food is not a crime so you don't need to punish yourself.

Instead, think about foods in terms of their similarities and differences. For example, an apple is not good and a cupcake is not bad. They have some things in common; they both contain carbohydrates that supply the brain and muscles with energy. They also contain different amounts of vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

Using the word different instead of good and bad may seem like a subtle shift. But by adopting a neutral perspective, you can make food choices without fear and judgement.

PRACTICE

1 | Make a list of foods that you really enjoy.

Nothing is off limits here!

2 | Put a check mark next to the foods on your list that you label as "bad" Maybe it's a food you only allow yourself to have once in a blue moon or not at all.

3 | Make a new list of all the "bad" foods from step 2.

4 | Next to each "bad" food, write 1-3 positive or neutral characteristics. This exercise will help you shift away from black and white thinking and embrace the shades of gray. See this example as a guide:

FOODS I LOVE

- ✓ Cookies
- ✓ Chocolate Cake
 - Apples
 - Arugula
 - Peaches
- ✓ Pizza
 - Feta
 - Chickpeas
 - Orange Juice

FACTS ABOUT THE FOODS

Cookies - they contain carbohydrates, and my brain and muscles need carbohydrates to function well

Chocolate Cake- my grandma's recipe brings back happy memories from my childhood. I enjoy eating it with my family.

Pizza- It contains all three macro nutrients: carbs,protein, and fat

STEP 2

CREATE ABUNDANCE

AVOID FOODS
YOU LOVE



ALL FOODS CAN FIT



Have you ever wanted what you can't have? I think we all say YES to this one! Because it's human nature. Research confirms that when we restrict or forbid ourselves from eating certain foods, our desire for them intensifies. Labeling an item as "off limits" encourages a sense of urgency around food that sets the stage for the restrict-binge-guilt cycle.

Take sugar for example. In today's environment, avoiding sweets just isn't realistic. Even if you don't bring sugar into your home, it'll be at your next party, family gathering, or in the office break room. Taking a restrictive approach and avoiding sweets will likely intensify your cravings. At some point when you are presented with ice cream (or the food you're actively avoiding) you're likely to eat past your fullness because it will feel like "the last supper." Then the guilt will set in again, and the negative cycle will continue.

With an abundance approach, the forbidden fruit becomes less alluring. You're now on an even playing field with food; giving yourself permission to eat all foods will actually alleviate stress. Without restriction, you can think clearly about whether you want the ice cream now or later.

When any food is consistently available, you become habituated to it over time, reducing the likelihood of a binge episode. Can you imagine eating chocolate all day every day? Even if chocolate is your favorite food, it would get boring after a while!

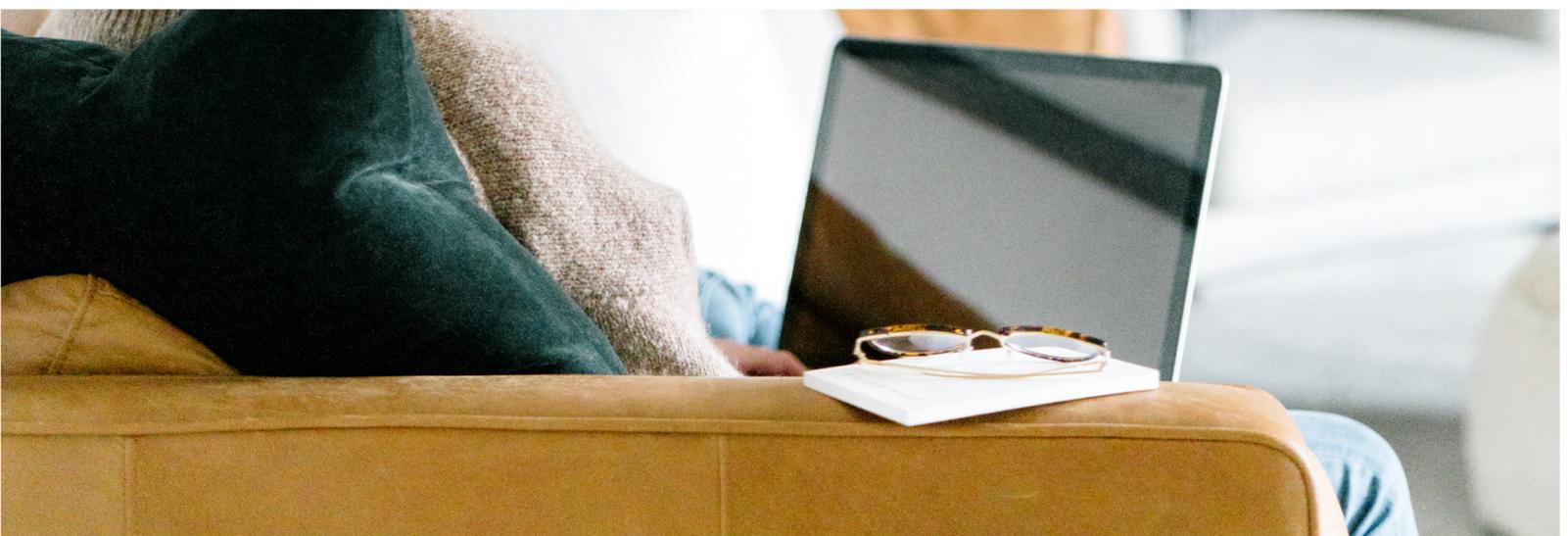
PRACTICE

1 | This exercise is about making room for the foods you love. Create a list of the foods that you enjoy but avoid. Maybe it's bagels, ice cream, chocolate, or chips.

2 | Choose a food from the list to add to your grocery haul this week. To start, pick an item that feels the least overwhelming to have around the house.

3 | Once it's in your home, give yourself permission to eat this food whenever you want. When you choose to eat it, focus on your experience. Pay attention to how it tastes, the texture in your mouth, and how you feel after eating. Ideally, try this exercise seated when you're free from distractions like your phone or tv.

4 | Journal your experience with that food over the week. Do you notice any changes in your thoughts or eating patterns?



Remember that as you practice this exercise, you might initially eat beyond your fullness and that's okay! It's a normal part of the process. Your body may take some time to calibrate, but it will adjust. You might even discover the chips you once felt crazy over aren't that tasty after all.

STEP 3

BEFRIEND CRAVINGS

CRAVINGS ARE BAD AND
NEED TO BE CONTROLLED



CRAVINGS ARE NORMAL
COMMUNICATION SIGNALS



Somehow cravings have gotten a bad rap! You've learned that they are a sign of weakness and need to be controlled. You blame yourself for having them, when in reality cravings are a normal part of being human.

Cravings can occur for a variety of reasons, but they don't need to be feared or mistrusted. Think of it this way: a craving is the body's way of trying to get your attention.

Rather than beating yourself up or ignoring your cravings, can you get curious about them?

Maybe you're craving sugar because you didn't eat enough calories today and your body needs a quick energy source. Maybe you're stressed out and looking for a way to cope. Maybe you're subconsciously restricting food. In any case, managing your cravings with self compassion can help you understand them.

**Important Note: if you are craving non-food substances such as ice, dirt, or clay, you may have a nutrient deficiency. Speak with a trusted registered dietitian or physician asap.*

PRACTICE



Okay, time to get curious about your cravings! When your next one strikes, ask yourself some questions. Talk to yourself like you would talk to a best friend: with an open mind and without judgement. This exercise will help you problem solve productively.

When a strong craving strikes, ask yourself:

- What sounds good to me right now?
- Did I eat less than usual today?
- Am I restricting myself?
- Does this feel like physical hunger?
- How can I best support myself and my body in this moment? (if it's not with food, is it with a meditation, walk, or talk with a friend?)

Repeat to yourself:

- Cravings are natural and normal
- My body is trying to communicate something to me
- I give myself permission to eat the food I am craving

STEP 4

REPLACE "I SHOULD" WITH "I WANT"

I SHOULD EAT
THIS NOT THAT



I WANT TO EAT
THIS NOT THAT



If you tell yourself you should do something but life gets in the way, how do you feel? Guilty.

You may think that if you beat yourself up around food, you're more likely to reach your health goals.

But ask yourself, is putting yourself down working? Or is it getting in your way?

Focusing on what you "should" eat draws your attention to external (and arbitrary) food rules rather than your own internal wisdom. When you trust a food rule over your body, you're likely to feel guilty around food.

Instead, shift your focus to what you want to eat. Trusting your hunger, fullness, and satisfaction signals is the key for fueling yourself adequately. When you learn to trust your body, you can reach a comfortable point of fullness and move on without overthinking.

PRACTICE



When deciding what to eat for a meal or snack, shift your thinking away from "should" and focus on what you want.

Instead of "I should eat _____"

Ask yourself:

- What does my body need to feel great right now?
- What sounds good to me?
- What foods sound satisfying at this time?

With this exercise, think about your intentions behind your food choices. If you eat something just because you think you should, you'll likely feel dissatisfied and deprived. But when you choose to eat something that you want (when you want), you will feel more satisfied.

STEP 5 ZOOM OUT

I ATE ____, MY
DIET IS RUINED.



NO SINGLE MEAL CAN MAKE
OR BREAK MY HEALTH



Nutrition is about the big picture. No single food or meal will prevent you from reaching your health goals. You can achieve success while making room for the foods you love!

Plus, good health is not just about food: stress, sleep, work, and relationships all contribute to our health status. Finding a healthy balance of these things is key. If you are spending a lot of time in the food department trying to eat perfectly, you're likely neglecting other important areas in your life.

Food is flexible and forgiving. Remember that you are allowed to have your cake and eat it too.





CONGRATS ON COMPLETING THIS GUIDE!



You've taken an important step to ditch food guilt for good. With practice, you will continue to build trust with your body and cultivate a positive relationship with food.

If you'd like more intuitive eating tips, hang out with me on instagram & TikTok! @listennutrition.

If you're looking for a safe space to connect with other intuitive eaters, join my private [Facebook Community!](#)