

Intuitive Eating The Paleo Way

By: Dominique Martin on June 9, 2018

The Paleo lifestyle reaches beyond the notion of adhering to a strict diet for the sole purpose of rapid weight loss and it's not a quick-fix program promising unrealistic results. Paleo is about transforming the way we eat by placing real food at the forefront—so the body can heal itself naturally, age gracefully, and thrive the way it was intended to.

Our bodies thrive when properly nourished and nourishment is more than just the food we eat. It's about creating physical, emotional, and spiritual balance and the way that we achieve that balance is by creating a healthy relationship with food.

This article serves the purpose of introducing the unfamiliar with how to truly connect with the art of eating and how using one's intuition can guide one to eating in a way that creates the positive, long-lasting results of living the paleo way.

What is Intuitive Eating?

To put it simply, intuitive eating is dining with intention and being fully present with our food. It's a philosophy that stems from the core principle of listening to our body and acting on the messages it sends us without experiencing guilt or deprivation. It allows us to reconnect with the pleasure of eating—a pleasure that we once indulged in freely before we learned to place rules and restrictions around food.

As children, intuitive eating was a natural mechanism and our appetites shifted from phases of being ravenous to having little desire to eat much of anything. This was our bodies innate way of balancing out food and energy intake until we were taught to connect "good behavior" with finishing our plate.

Intuitive eating aims to reshape the patterns unintentionally passed down to us and learn to eat in a way that honors our body and leaves us satisfied.

Integrating Mindfulness Into Paleo Lifestyle

So how can intuitive eating be integrated into the Paleo lifestyle?

Living Paleo asks us to reflect on our food choices from the perspective of our early ancestors and intuitive eating stems from a similar principle. Eating mindfully prompts us to think beyond the realm of the kitchen and consider all the influences on our body—such as our relationship with food, our emotional state when eating, how much we're putting into our body, exercise, stress levels, thoughts, etc. All of these aspects are interconnected and play a role within the mindful eating cycle.

Let's explore 4 principles of intuitive eating that can be used to guide us into being more aware of our food habits:

- ❑ **Principle 1. Connect With Your Emotions.** Food is often used as remedy to cope with emotional stress and we never stop to ask ourselves why we're eating. Before you head to kitchen, pause for a moment and check in with how you're feeling. Are you truly hungry—or are you bored, lonely, or stressed out from a rough work week? Emotional eating can become a vicious cycle when we use food as a way to stuff down unpleasant feelings. Connecting with our emotions can assist us in identifying triggers and dealing with our emotions in a healthier way.
- ❑ **Principle 2. Honor Your Appetite.** Eating beyond your body's capacity can negatively impact your physical, emotional, and mental health—because we are bypassing signals our body (and intuition) is telling us it has had enough. About half way through your meal, pause and ask yourself how the food tastes. Tuning into the sensations of your body will help you to better recognize the first signs of fullness.

- ❑ **Principle 3. Exercise With Intention.** Movement plays a prominent role in living paleo and there is no better way to make all the systems of the body thrive harmoniously—but exercise doesn't have to be militant and draining. Shift your focus to how you enjoy moving your body and what emotions arise from the movement, rather than how many calories the movement is burning. Do you feel more energized, calm, or joyful? Those are good signs you are moving in a way that is natural to you. Tuning into how working out makes you *feel* creates body awareness and may inspire you to move more often.
- ❑ **Principle 4. Spend Time In Nature.** Nature is the perfect way to practice mindfulness and is an integral element of the Paleo lifestyle—as our hunter-gatherer ancestors spent an abundance of time outdoors. It can be as simple as taking a stroll through the park or as elaborate as planning a day trip to your local forest preserve. The purpose is to breathe in fresh air, connect with your senses, and observe the harmony of nature by being present in the moment.

Final Reflections

Adapting to the Paleo way of life is a slow and steady process—and the same goes for intuitive eating. We learn to eat mindfully by identifying the blockages that are preventing us from fully connecting with what we're putting into our body and make small changes everyday to shift the behavior until it becomes a natural state of being.

Transforming the way we eat is a journey, but if you have the courage and the patience—you can establish a relationship with food that is joyful, fulfilling, and healing.