

4.9 Agree To Be Hungry

Allowing ourselves to be hungry for a time can improve our relationship with food.

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Some people cannot bear the thought of being hungry, even for a little while. This creates an unhealthy relationship with food. They may begin planning their next meal well before they actually need to eat in order to eliminate the anxiety of feeling even a slight sensation of hunger.

The way you eat is probably still conditioned by habits you developed in childhood. Maybe you come from a household where you were told you had to finish everything on your plate at every meal. Alternatively, perhaps your parents said that you were eating too much and should lose weight. These messages, or other unhealthy experiences around food, may have caused you to want to eat more, even to the point of developing a food addiction!

Consciously listening to your body and agreeing to be hungry for a while can give you more control over your eating habits, allowing you to better meet your dietary goals. Additionally, there is some evidence to suggest that eating infrequently and allowing your stomach to empty between meals is healthy and helps digestion.

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- You learn to tune into your body's appetite signals.
- More agency over your eating choices.
- Better focus on your everyday activities.

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- Facing the fear of being hungry can be hard.
- Rewiring deeply ingrained habits takes willpower and persistence.

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This tool starts with making a choice to accept that there will be moments when you feel hungry. This starts with being present in your body, becoming aware of the sensation of hunger, and then choosing to allow that sensation instead of following a pattern of eating the moment you feel hunger. This is an ongoing commitment to accepting hunger and being okay with not immediately satisfying the urge to eat. It's not a one-off choice.

The choice to look hunger in the eye can put you in a difficult emotional state, even to the point where you tell yourself that you are "starving" and that your survival depends on eating right away. You might even abhor hunger to the degree that you obsess about planning meals hours before you are actually hungry. If you find this tool challenging, remind yourself that you're not really going to perish if you are simply hungry for a short while.

