

FRIEND VS. FOE

MENDING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

by Emilia Muniz



Introduction

Let's not beat around the bush here: Having any sort of disordered relationship with food can be exhausting, depressing, and isolating. But the reality is, approximately 30 million people will struggle with an eating disorder at some point in their lifetime in the United States alone. Mike Gurr, a licensed professional counselor and executive director at an eating disorder treatment and recovery center in Wickenburg, Arizona said that "approximately 40 percent of incoming college freshmen will already have some sort of struggle with disordered eating. Maybe not full-blown eating disorders, but they enter college with less-than-healthy relationships with food to begin with. And when you look at only females entering college," he said, "that number goes up to 80 percent" (Campbell).

As a college-aged woman, I can vouch for the fact that disordered eating and body dysmorphia are highly prevalent issues within this demographic of people. Inspired by my own disordered relationship with food, this article is designed not just to motivate you to work toward healthier attitudes regarding eating but to demonstrate the fact that you're not alone and that there are options out there for recovery.

Fitting a Description

What is important to remember about disordered eating is that one doesn't have to fit into a category or fit a description to be worthy of bettering their relationship with food. My own disordered relationship with food is something that I've only just begun to understand and accept, largely because I invalidated my struggle, telling myself that I am undiagnosed and therefore not worthy of treatment or recovery.

If you are someone who invalidates their struggles because they fail to fit a description, remember that you deserve to enjoy food and to live a life where food is not an enemy, but a teammate in life, and you don't need to fall into one category or another for that to be true.

What Can I Do?

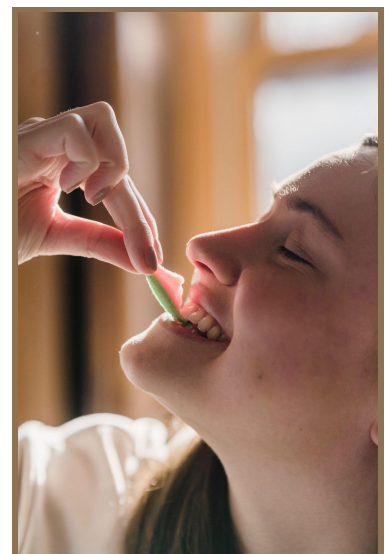
After conducting a short survey of nine female Elon University students, over 50% of them replied that they feel drained or somewhat drained by how much they think about food or eating. If this small sample of Elon students is any representation of the larger population of college-aged women, we're looking at over half of the general population of college-aged women battling a disordered relationship with food. It doesn't have to be this way! Let's look at the ways you can kickstart your journey toward a happier lifestyle and a better relationship with food.

Research Intuitive Eating

In short, intuitive eating was founded on 10 personal and dynamic principles that include rejecting diet mentality, honoring your hunger, respecting your body, and making peace with food (Tribble). Each principle works in two key ways:

- (1) Cultivates attunement to the physical sensations that arise from within your body to get both your biological and psychological needs met.
- (2) Removing the obstacles and disruptors to attunement, which usually come from the mind in the form of rules, beliefs, and thoughts.

Helpful resource linked [here](#).



Learn to Practice Body Neutrality

The body neutrality movement rests on the concept that it's possible to embrace and accept yourself as you are even if you don't actually love your body. It promotes acceptance of your body *as it is*, encouraging you to recognize its abilities rather than its physical characteristics.

"Taking a neutral perspective toward your body means moving away from the idea that you have to cultivate love for your body or make an effort to love it every day" (Raypole).

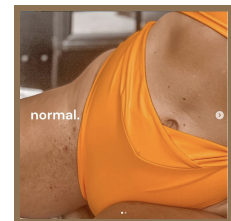
There's nothing wrong with practicing self-love, body neutrality just promotes the idea that although you may not always love your body, you can still live a happy and healthy life.

Helpful resource linked [here](#).

Expose Yourself To Body-Positive Influencing

For those who turn to social media to de-stress or spend free time, it's important to be aware of how toxic that environment can be for someone working on their relationship with food. Social media is a hotbed for unrealistic imaging regarding the way women's bodies should or should not look, and perpetuates unattainable societal expectations.

If you're someone who spends a lot of time browsing social media, surround yourself with content that promotes healthy and realistic expectations for women and spend time researching influencers who practice body-neutrality or body-positivity themselves.



Helpful resource linked [here](#).

(@mikzazon on Instagram)

Remember:

Every woman deserves to view food not as an enemy, but as a teammate and partner in life. Remembering that you are capable and deserving of bettering your relationship with food is the first step toward a happier and healthier lifestyle. As women, we are constantly put on the scale, refined, retouched, and undervalued for just being as we are. Start your journey today and remember that there are always women feeling just as you are who will support you. You are not alone.

Sources Cited

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