How is Diet Culture Affecting Me?

Before Getting Started…
Take a few minutes to discuss the following questions with your nutritionist:

- What have you heard about dieting and other weight-loss strategies?
- Do you think dieting is a healthy way to lose weight?
- What do you think of when you hear the word “intuitive eating”?

Why is Our Culture So Diet and Weight-Focused?

Kids Are Exposed to the Thin Ideal at a Young Age
Female dolls, toys, and cartoons are often tall and thin while male action figures and cartoons tend to be tall and muscular. If most toys were life-size, they would be very disproportionate to a healthy body size.

People in Larger Bodies Can Be Misrepresented and Mistreated
In contrast to the thin ideal, TV shows, movies, and social media often send the message that people in larger bodies are lazy or lack willpower. Weight bias is prevalent in our society and can lead to bullying and being treated differently than others.

Social Media Use Increases Body Image Concerns
Research shows that the thin ideal and weight biases promoted in the media as well as through social media contribute to unhappiness. Specifically, the more teens are exposed to “body perfect” ideals on social media, the more unhappy they are with their own body, regardless of the type of media.¹

More time spent on social media

More body image concerns

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The Diet and Weight Loss Industry is Money-Driven, Not Always Health-Driven

The diet and weight loss industry is estimated to be worth over 60 billion dollars. By marketing weight loss and diet products as quick, easy, and harmless and associating thinness with health and happiness, many people are drawn to products and programs without fully understanding whether something is safe or healthy for their body.

Why Does This Matter to Teens?

Most Teens are Unhappy with Their Body Size or Shape.²

Negative Body Image Can Lead to Unhealthy Weight Loss Strategies:

About 20% of teen boys and 45% of teen girls in the U.S. reported dieting or using unhealthy behaviors to control their weight.³

Regardless of Body Size, Negative Body Image Can Harm Teen’s Health.⁴,⁵,⁶

Negative Body Image
“"I feel fat"
“"I hate my [arms, legs, stomach, etc.]"
“"I wish I could look like...”

Teens are More Likely to...
• Binge eat
• Exercise less
• Have anxiety and depression
• Have metabolic syndrome and high lipid levels
Why Can Dieting and Weight Control Behaviors Be Unhealthy?

Compared to teens who have never dieted, teens who diet…

• Gain more weight on average⁷
• Are more likely to binge eat or develop other disordered eating behaviors⁸
• Are more likely to have nutritional deficiencies, lower bone density, and more growth and fertility concerns.⁹
• Have more inflammation in the body and greater perceived stress¹⁰
• Have higher risk of developing heart disease and diabetes¹¹

If Not Dieting… Then What?

Dieting forces you to rely on external cues like calorie counting or food rules to try to control your weight or body size. Intuitive eating, on the other hand, is about making food choices based on your body’s physical hunger and fullness cues rather than situational cues. Here are some key differences between dieting and intuitive eating:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIET &amp; WEIGHT-FOCUSED MINDSET</th>
<th>INTUITIVE EATING &amp; HEALTH-FOCUSED MINDSET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Am I allowed to eat this?</td>
<td>• Am I hungry? Does this sound tasty?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Will this make me gain weight?</td>
<td>• Will this leave me energized?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Today’s my cheat day so I can eat whatever I want.</td>
<td>• Today’s my friend’s birthday so I’m going to enjoy cake at the party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I’m being “good” today and only eating #### calories.</td>
<td>• I’m taking care of myself and giving my body the energy it needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• [Brownies, bread, etc.] are my weakness, I can’t be around them.</td>
<td>• If I don’t eat a [brownie, bread, etc.], will I feel deprived?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I was “bad” at lunch so I’m not going to eat dinner.</td>
<td>• Lunch was so filling and satisfying, I think I’ll have a smaller dinner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I exercise so I can eat.</td>
<td>• I eat so I have fuel to exercise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I exercise because I hate my body.</td>
<td>• I exercise because it feels good.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10 PRINCIPLES OF INTUITIVE EATING
Developed By Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch

1. Reject the diet mentality. 2. Honor your hunger. 3. Challenge the food police.
4. Make peace with food. 5. Respect your fullness.
6. Discover the satisfaction factor. 7. Honor your feelings without using food.

Why Focus on Intuitive Eating?
As babies, we’re born with the ability to eat when we’re hungry and stop when we’re full by listening to our body’s signals. Responding to hunger and fullness cues allows us to meet our energy needs and reach a healthy weight range for our bodies. While dieting, food rules, and calorie counting disconnect us from our bodies, intuitive eating reconnects us to hunger and fullness cues so we become experts of our own bodies.²,³,⁴

Intuitive Eating: Making food choices based on hunger and fullness cues, focusing on energy level and food enjoyment

- Supports a healthy weight for your body
- More food enjoyment, less food anxiety
- More self-esteem and greater quality of life

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**Why Is Body Respect Important?**

**Body Respect:**
Valuing your body as it is, even if it's different from your desired weight or shape, appreciating all that your body can do for you.

- More likely to exercise and find exercise enjoyable
- More likely to have lower blood pressure and cholesterol
- More likely to practice healthy eating habits long-term

People who are unhappy with their body size have higher blood pressure and fasting glucose levels compared to people at the same weight who feel satisfied with their bodies.

Next time you make a choice about food or exercise, ask yourself:

*Am I doing this because I care and respect my body or because I don’t like my body and feel shame and guilt?*

**What Does This Mean For Me?**

1. Why do you think many teens are unhappy with their body size or weight?

2. Do your thoughts about food and exercise fall more into the diet and weight-focused mindset or the intuitive eating and health-focused mindset?

3. What are one or two intuitive eating principles that you feel most comfortable working on now or in the future?

**To Learn More:**
Bacon L, Aphramor L. *Body Respect* (2014) and website ([www.lindabacon.org](http://www.lindabacon.org))
Scritchfield, R. *Body Kindness* (2016) and website ([www.bodykindnessbook.com](http://www.bodykindnessbook.com))
Tribole E, Resch E. *The Intuitive Eating Workbook* (2017) and website ([www.intuitiveeating.org](http://www.intuitiveeating.org))
The Body Positive: [www.thebodypositive.org](http://www.thebodypositive.org)
Ellyn Satter Eating Competence: [www.ellynsatterinstitute.org](http://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org)
References:
12. Tylka, Tracy L., Rachel M. Calogero, and Sigrún Daníelsdóttir. "Is intuitive eating the same as flexible dietary control? Their links to each other and well-being could provide an answer." Appetite 95 (2015): 166-175.