**What is Intuitive Eating?**

 Intuitive eating is a dynamic mind-body integration of instinct, emotion and rational thought. It is a personal process of honoring your health by paying attention to the messages of your body and meeting your physical and emotional needs. It is an inner journey of discovery that puts you front and center. Only YOU are the expert of your own body. Only you know your thoughts, feelings and experiences. Only you know how hungry you are and what food or meal will satisfy you. No diet plan or nutritionist can possibly know these things.

**There are ten principles of intuitive eating. They work in two key ways:**

1- some of them help you cultivate body attunement - which is the ability to hear and then respond to the physical sensations that arise within your body - like biological cues of hunger and fullness.

2- some principals work by removing the obstacles to body attunement.

**How to cultivate attunement:**

The ability to perceive bodily sensations is known as interoceptive awareness. Biological states like having a full bladder or feeling sleepy or hungry, have a physical sensation. Being attuned to the physical sensations of your body gives you powerful information into your physiological and psychological state, which helps you determine what you should do to meet your needs. Maybe you need sleep, or to eat or play, or maybe just need a break. You can find out this information by learning to tune into your body.

**How to remove obstacles from attunement:**

 If you are used to repeatedly following diet crazes, you may find yourself thinking that you don't know how to eat anymore. You may feel confused, conflicted, and mistrust for your body. Obstacles to interoceptive awareness usually originate from your mind, in the form of thoughts, beliefs and rules - such as rules about what you should or should not eat, beliefs about what a healthy body SHOULD look like and judgemental thoughts about good food versus bad food. Part of this work is challenging these beliefs, rules, and thoughts, while cultivating a kind and compassionate view along your journey to becoming an intuitive eater.

**Self Care:**

Self care is a theme throughout intuitive eating. If you are not getting your basic needs met - such as enough sleep, it can interfere with body attunement. At best, it may make it difficult to hear, let alone respond to, the messages of your body in a timely manner. At worst, you might find yourself turning to food to self-soothe and cope. That's why you will be learning a lot about self care.

**Some health benefits of Intuitive Eating to date:**

Increased well being, lower risk of eating disorders, and improved biomarkers, such as blood sugar and cholesterol. Intuitive eaters also enjoy eating a variety of foods and have better interoceptive awareness.

By working through these principles and the activities that go along with it, you can expect to achieve a healthy relationship with food, mind and body. This is called “authentic health” because it reflects your inner state of attunement with your body and mind - it also integrates health guidelines from scientific research. Health includes many factors such as physical, mental and social well being. While working through the principles of intuitive eating, we will work on authentic health - not just physical health, but also mental and social well being.

**A commonly asked question - will I lose weight?**

By following the ten principles of intuitive eating, you will normalize your relationship with eating and your body. Weight loss may or may not be a side effect. If you do focus on weight loss, that preoccupation will interfere with your ability to make choices based on your intuitive signals, and it will place the focus on appearance rather than inner wisdom. There is also a profound body of research based on millions of people cumulatively that shows that weight, especially BMI, is not a good indicator of health. Also, a scientific review has concluded that the pursuit of weight loss alone is linked to diminished health. On the other hand, placing your focus on healthy lifestyle behaviors, rather than on weight, provides health benefits with or without weight loss.