


A top-down view of three donuts and a cup of coffee. On the left is a chocolate-glazed donut with white sprinkles. In the center is a pink-glazed donut with multi-colored sprinkles. On the right is a white-glazed donut with orange stripes. In the top center is a small white cup of coffee with a golden-brown foam and dark specks.

FINDING FOOD FREEDOM

By Kirsty McIntyre

A collection of fresh ingredients scattered on a white wooden surface. It includes a halved avocado, a whole strawberry, several blueberries, a sliced mushroom, a whole mushroom, a sliced apple, a bunch of spinach, a sprig of mint, and several pieces of farfalle pasta.

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ABOUT ME

Hey! I'm Kirsty

Emotional Eating | Binge Eating Disorder Specialist & Licensed Eating Freely Practitioner.

i personally had a very poor relationship with food for many years, I thought that becoming a Personal Trainer would be the answer to all my problems. I learned exactly how to work out and what to eat. I taught clients to do the same. Yet I still lived in a constant Yo-Yo of restriction or feeling out of control around food.

I was introduced to the world of coaching and psychology when I became an NLP Practitioner. I realised that for myself and most of my clients, food and exercise wasn't the answer. The most important changes begin with the mind.



I went on to get my BSc, studying Approaches to Mental Health. I'm now part of a global network of Emotional Eating & BED specialists. I help people to find freedom around food and to move forward with their lives.

INTRODUCTION

As children, we're born into the world with a strong sense of intuition. Babies know when they're hungry and pull their heads away when they're full. Throughout the years, we're told things like "finish what's on your plate or you won't get dessert" or "you better eat all your vegetables" which can teach us to eat past fullness. We're given a lollipop when we do well in school or when we fall over in the playground; we learn that food is a way of celebrating and also a way of soothing.

Sprinkle in a bit of diet culture which teaches us some food is good and the rest is bad. Salads will make you thin and chocolate will make you fat, none of which is inherently true.



Your relationship with food is one of your earliest and most meaningful relationships. It's also a relationship you will have for the rest of your life.

It might as well be the best relationship that it can be.

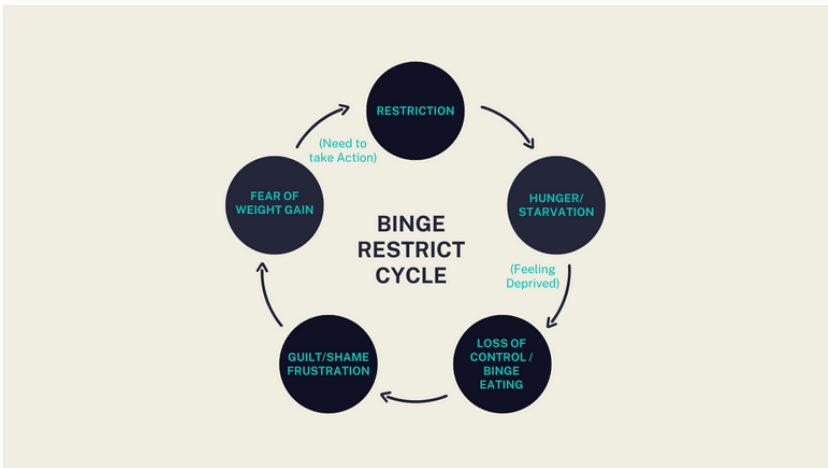


~ Dietitian Deanna

We learn to ignore our hunger in favor of diet plans and recommended portion sizes. We learn to judge ourselves if we eat for pleasure over hunger. Enter thoughts like "I shouldn't have eaten that" or "I've been so bad today". The result? We become completely disconnected from our inner signals and we start running on a hamster wheel of yo-yo diets, often finding ourselves in the binge-restrict cycle.

THE BINGE RESTRICT CYCLE

Often, when we want to feel better about food, we jump onto the next diet trend. Hoping that this time, it will work out better than the last. This time we'll be a little bit more disciplined and we won't fall off track. This time, we'll be able to maintain the results. Sadly, for 65% of people that isn't true. They will regain the weight back within 3 years.



As you work through this guide, you will see that our relationship with food can be incredibly complex. We need to explore the layers of food beliefs developed through childhood. We might have to untangle the rules we've been taught by diet culture. We need to re-connect with our body's signals which we've spent years overriding and we need to find ways to identify and process emotion without seeking comfort and avoiding feelings with food.

If you're ready to break free from this cycle, grab your journal! We're going to do some detangling and get you back on the path towards food freedom!

STEP ONE

To help understand your relationship with food today. I invite you to reflect on your past. It's best to do this when you have some time. You might want to do one section per day so you can really dive into each without being disturbed. There are no right or wrong answers here. Write down whatever comes to mind, even if you think it sounds a bit crazy! Just notice what comes up for you as you explore each question.

1

Are there any foods you consider to be bad? If so, list these out.

2

Are there any foods you consider to be good? If so, list these out.

3

What were meal times like when you were growing up? (Was it a calm or stressful time?).

4

Were there rules around meal or snack times? (eg. finish what's on your plate, eat your veggies).

5

Were any foods less available or purposely restricted? (only for weekends or capped amount).

6

If there was less availability or restriction, what was the reason for that?

STEP TWO

Notice how you're feeling after finishing step one, did anything surprise you? Or maybe you couldn't think of much? That's totally fine! Moving into Step Two, we're going to start connecting some of the dots and exploring how your past might be showing up in your present.

1

If you eat something from your bad foods list, how do you normally feel afterwards?
What thoughts come to mind after eating?

2

If you eat something from your good foods list, how do you normally feel afterwards?
What thoughts come to mind after eating?

3

Looking at the rules you identified in Step One, Q3. Do you still try to follow any of these rules today?

4

Looking at the foods you identified as less available in Q4. What is your relationship like with these foods today? How do you typically feel after you eat them?

By now, you might have identified a few food beliefs you learned as a child. You might be surprised to notice you still follow a few of them today. If you're a parent, you might even find you implement similar rules with your own kids.

The Power Of Diet Culture

The diet industry is ever changing and we receive subtle (and not so subtle) messages all day long about what we should or shouldn't eat. Growing up, I was taught that low fat margarine was a better alternative to butter. Nowadays, people promote adding butter to their morning coffee.

Ask for diet and fitness advice and people will run to tell you to try intermittent fasting, to stop eating after 6pm, go Keto or try the Dukan diet.



STEP THREE

Very often the first people to give advice, are those who are always on a different diet themselves. So, are any of them actually working? Is it any wonder we get caught up and confused? With that in mind, let's have a look into your relationship with diets.

1

Are you currently attempting to diet or restrict certain foods for weight loss?

2

How many times would you say you have attempted to diet throughout your life?

3

Out of those diets, how many were you able to maintain the results?

4

Thinking back to the diets you've tried. What did you like about them? What worked for you?

5

What did you dislike about them? What didn't work for you?

6

Reflecting on those diets, are there any that you would be happy to live on forever? (I mean FOREVER! No cheat days, breaks or holidays?).

Often we get so hooked on the weight loss high we felt from our first-ever diet. That initial period when it was working so well, when boredom and cravings were yet to kick in. We try to recreate that feeling time and time again through different methods, convincing ourselves that we are the problem; we're just not disciplined enough anymore.

In reality, it's often the diet itself that was the problem. We cling onto it like we're grasping to the honeymoon phase of what is now a toxic relationship, reminding ourselves of how good it once was!



I hope you found it useful to reflect on what may have worked for you and what didn't. I encourage you to spend some time reflecting on Q6 and be REALLY honest with yourself! If you answered, "Yes, I can live on that diet forever". Amazing! You found something that works for you. If your answer was no, then might it be time to try a new approach?

Letting go of dieting can be frightening! I get it! Just remember, not dieting doesn't inherently mean you will gain weight! It's about getting off the hamster wheel, learning to trust your body and finding an approach to eating that you can easily stick with, forever!



The moment you banish a food, it paradoxically builds up a "craving life" of its own that gets stronger with each diet, and builds more momentum as the deprivation deepens.

~ Evelyn Tribole



STEP FOUR

Understanding your triggers can help you identify when you're likely to emotionally eat and can help you to get ahead of those triggers before you kick into autopilot and head for the fridge.

1

When are you most likely to emotionally eat? (at work, when you come home, weekends etc?)

2

Where does the eating normally take place? Is it normally in front of the tv or maybe in the car?

3

Which kind of foods do you gravitate towards? (Notice if these are foods you normally restrict).

4

Think back to the last time you emotionally ate, what were the circumstances that happened leading up to it?

5

How were you feeling at the time? (use the HALT acronym on page 14 to help).

Repeat the last two questions for as many occurrences of emotional eating as you can think of and notice if any patterns emerge.

Am I?

Hungry

Anxious

Lonely

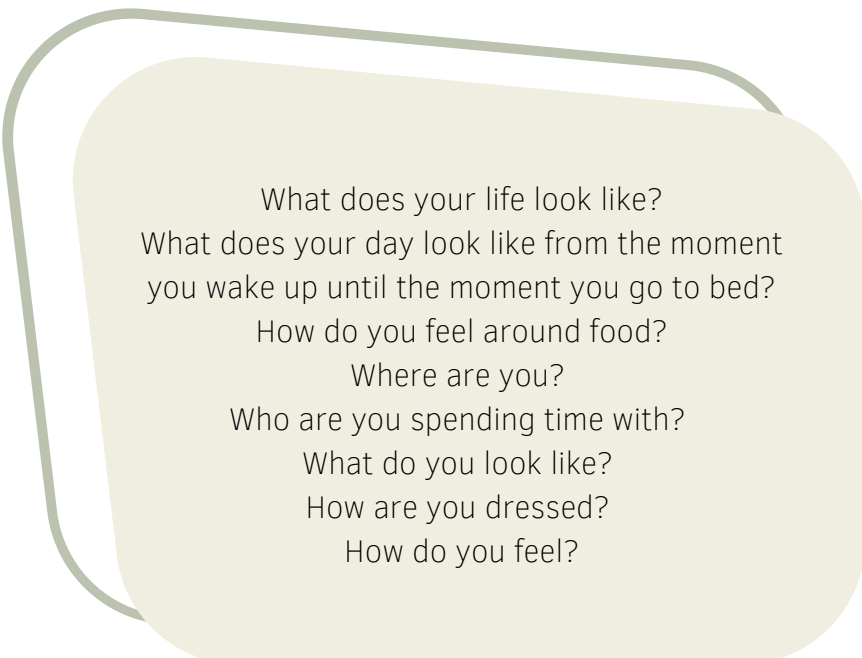
Tired

or maybe Bored?

STEP FIVE

Eating in a way that leaves us feeling sluggish, bloated and sleeping poorly can have a huge impact on our gut health, mood, energy levels, confidence, and the way we show up in the world each day. We're going to take a look at designing your future. It's time to leave the past in the past and step into the best version of you!

Imagine, I give you a call one year from now to ask how you are. Since completing the 5 steps in this guide, you now feel completely free around food. Nothing is holding you back anymore! You're full of energy and your entire life has shifted for the better. You're on the path to becoming everything you've ever dreamed of.



What does your life look like?
What does your day look like from the moment
you wake up until the moment you go to bed?
How do you feel around food?
Where are you?
Who are you spending time with?
What do you look like?
How are you dressed?
How do you feel?

1

Thinking of the perfect future you just envisioned, what behaviors are you currently doing that are getting in the way of achieving that?

2

Are any of the rules, behaviors, or beliefs you identified in the first four steps holding you back from achieving this future?

3

If you were to start by choosing ONE of those rules, beliefs or behaviors to let go of today, which one would it be?

4

What is ONE step you can take today that will help you move towards that perfect future you described?

“

Every action you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become.

”

~ James Clear



MY COMMITMENTS

I invite you to take the two changes you are going to make that are aligned with your perfect future (Q3 & 4) and write them in the commitments below. Put it somewhere you will see it as a reminder of the commitment you have made to yourself, to step towards food freedom and into the best version of you!

1

Starting from today [date] _____, I commit to letting go of the [rule/belief/behavior] _____

2

Starting from today [date] _____, I commit to taking the step of [insert chosen step] _____

A NOTE FROM ME

I'd love to hear about your experience working through this guide!

If you would like to share your thoughts or if you would like more support to help you heal your relationship with food, please do get in touch!

The Eating Freely Program addresses all aspects of Emotional Eating & BED.



Cognitive Behavioral Therapy tools to reduce episodes of emotional eating immediately.

Nutritional Rehabilitation to reset gut health & energy levels. A happy gut is vital for a happy brain.

Neuroscience to understand when you are being triggered and to replace unhelpful automatic habits.

Mindfulness & Coaching to rewire negative self-talk, improve self-care and create a transformation that lasts.

BOOK A CONSULTATION

VISIT MY WEBSITE:
www.kirstymcintyre.com

LET'S CONNECT ON:

