



Escaping the Dieting Mentality

A “dieting mentality” is an all-or-nothing view that focuses on numbers and temporary goals. It often involves rules, limits, and judgmental statements. Your decision to eat or not eat depends on what you think you should do, rather than what you want to do.

The Dieting vs. Non-Dieting Mentality

A “non-dieting mentality” means trusting your body and listening to your instincts. It means heeding hunger and fullness, caring about your health, and being physically active because it makes you feel good. It is realizing that happiness involves a healthy lifestyle rather than a certain weight.

The table below shows examples of dieting and non-dieting statements. For some of us, a simple mindset shift is all that is needed to switch from a negative diet and body-image-focused mindset, to a positive health-focused mindset.

The Dieting Mentality	The Non-Dieting Mentality
<p>Physical Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I focus on calories burned. I feel guilty if I miss a day of exercise. I exercise more if I feel I ate too much. 	<p>Physical Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I focus on feeling good. I exercise when I can and give myself breaks. I use exercise to relieve stress.
<p>Eating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I avoid eating “bad” foods. I feel I do not deserve to eat sometimes. I feel guilty if I eat certain foods. 	<p>Eating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I allow all foods in moderation. I eat when I’m hungry. I ask myself if I really want to eat it.
<p>Behavior Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I measure progress by how many pounds I lose. I am successful if I look better. I worry about what others think about my weight. I concentrate on willpower. 	<p>Behavior Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I measure progress by changes I have made. I am successful if I feel better. I think about health benefits. I trust my body to know hunger and fullness.

If your thoughts usually fall in the “dieting mentality” column, what are some things you could do to change your attitude? How do you think this might affect your success?

