Shifting Perspectives: Embracing a Non-Diet Approach to Care

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Disclosure

Dana Notte is an employee of Green Mountain at Fox Run, a wellness retreat for women who struggle with food, weight, and body image, that pioneered the non-diet mindfulness-based approach to ending eating and weight worries.

This session is sponsored by Green Mountain at Fox Run.
Learning objectives

- Describe the non-diet approach to changing eating behavior and differentiate from more traditional approaches to promoting healthful eating.

- Summarize the benefits associated with non-diet interventions (physiological, psychological, and behavioral).

- Identify several strategies that can be used to help clients adopt a more mindful or intuitive eating practice thereby encouraging more sustainable health-supportive eating behaviors.
The Non-Diet Approach: Introduction & Rationale
## Non-diet vs. traditional approach

<table>
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<th>Non-diet approach:</th>
<th>Traditional approach:</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Weight neutral</td>
<td>- Weight focused</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Non-restrictive</td>
<td>- Restrictive</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Flexible</td>
<td>- Rigid</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Internally driven</td>
<td>- Externally controlled</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Views weight and health as complex</td>
<td>- Overly simplifies weight and health</td>
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Traditional approach defined

1. Assumes weight is a major determinant of health; as such, achieving a “healthy” or “healthier” weight is often among the primary treatment goals.

2. Assumes that weight loss can (and, perhaps, should) be achieved through intentional weight loss efforts.
Traditional approach: What does research say?

“There was no clear correlational relationship between weight loss and health outcomes related to hypertension, diabetes, or cholesterol calling into question whether weight change per se had any causal role in the few effects of the diets. Increased exercise, healthier eating, engagement with the health care system, and social support may have played a role instead.”

“Our findings are consistent with several large-scale epidemiological studies suggesting that metabolically healthy (obese and non-obese) individuals have a lower risk of CVD than metabolically unhealthy (obese and non-obese) individuals.”

Traditioanl approach: What does research say?

“Relative to normal weight, both obesity (all grades) and grades 2 and 3 obesity were associated with significantly higher all-cause mortality. Grade 1 obesity overall was not associated with higher mortality, and overweight was associated with significantly lower all-cause mortality.”

Determinants of health

Physical environment
- Water and air quality
- Safe work, home, and community environments
- Access to healthcare
- Food access
- & more…

Social & economic environment
- Socioeconomic status
- Education level
- Social support networks
- Stigma & discrimination
- & more…

Individual behaviors & characteristics
- Diet
- Physical activity
- Genetics
- Age
- & more…

Determinants of Health
Traditional approach: What does research say?

The majority of people who engage in intentional weight loss efforts will regain most, if not all, the weight that they lost.

“...research has shown that approximately 20% of overweight individuals are successful at long-term weight loss when defined as losing at least 10% of initial body weight and maintaining the loss for at least 1 y.”

Traditional approach: What does research say?

**Figure 1.** Average weight loss of subjects completing a minimum 1-year weight-management intervention; based on review of 80 studies (N26,455; 18,199 completers [69%]).

Traditional approach: What does research say?

…and some will gain back more.

“…[we] found that higher frequency of dieting is associated with a higher probability of subsequent obesity. We also found that dieting is associated with a higher probability of subsequent weight gain versus weight maintenance or weight loss. These findings were irrespective of baseline obesity status or BMI, health, psychological distress, physical activity, smoking, and socioeconomic factors.”

Traditional approach: Potential consequences

Restrict food intake

Feelings of deprivation & hunger

Become preoccupied with food

"Give in"
Overeat or binge

Overcome with guilt, shame, defeat

Restrict-Binge Cycle
Traditional approach: Potential consequences

**Dichotomous thinking**
On-the-diet/Off-the-diet
“What the hell” effect
Last chance thinking

**Body awareness & trust**
Lose trust in and/or disconnect from internal hunger/fullness cues.
Lose trust in ability to make decision about eating.
Traditional approach: Potential consequences

Weight Stigma

“Negative attitudes and beliefs directed toward individuals due to weight and is usually expressed through stereotypes (e.g., overweight people are lazy), prejudicial attitudes (e.g., negative attitudes from employers), and discriminatory behaviors (e.g., ignoring overweight individuals)”

Papadopoulos S, Brennan L. Correlates of weight stigma in adults with overweight and obesity: A systematic literature review. Obesity. 2015;23(9):1743-60.
Traditional approach: Potential consequences

Traditional approach: Potential consequences

Non-diet approach defined

A weight-neutral practice that focuses on improving health and well-being of individuals through holistic interventions that target health and wellness behaviors, not body shape or size.

Inspired by Health at Every Size® (HAES), which encourages:
1. Eating in a flexible manner that values pleasure and honors internal cues of hunger, satiety, and appetite.
2. Finding the joy in moving one’s body and becoming more physically vital.
3. Accepting and respecting the natural diversity of body sizes and shapes.
Goals of a non-diet approach

– Restore body awareness and trust;
– Heal relationship with food;
– Encourage movement that feels good;
– Improve body image;
– Reduce internalized weight stigma; and
– Adopt self-care practices that promote well-being.

...Regardless of body size.
Terminology

- Terms that are often used to describe non-diet interventions include:
  - Non-diet
  - Health at Every Size® (HAES)
  - Intuitive Eating
  - Mindful Eating
The Non-Diet Approach: Benefits & Research
Non-diet approach: Summary of benefits

**Physiological**
- ↓ cholesterol
- ↓ blood pressure
- ↑ glycemic control
- ↑ body weight regulation*

**Psychological**
- ↓ body image concerns
- ↓ depression & anxiety
- ↑ self-esteem
- ↓ body dissatisfaction

**Eating & Moving Behaviors**
- ↓ food cravings
- ↓ emotional eating
- ↓ binge eating behavior
- ↑ diet quality
- ↑ physical activity
Non-diet approach: What does research say?

“...health at every size group participants showing sustained improvements in many health behaviors and attitudes as well as many health risk indicators associated with obesity (including total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, systolic blood pressure, depression, and self-esteem, but not HDL cholesterol). The data suggest that a health at every size approach enables participants to maintain long-term (2 years) behavior change, whereas a diet approach does not.”

Non-diet approach: What does research say?

“Weight-neutral approaches that emphasize intuitive eating and size acceptance, although they may not lead to weight-loss as shown here, are still effective for improving a range of health indicators (LDL cholesterol, total cholesterol, dietary composition, physical activity, quality of life, self-esteem, waist-to-hip ratio), and they warrant serious attention from researchers and clinicians seeking non-stigmatizing health promotion strategies.”

Non-diet approach: What does research say?

“Individuals who participated in an 8-week MBCT-based eating intervention reported significantly lower levels of food cravings, dichotomous thinking, body dissatisfaction, emotional eating and external eating after the intervention period, compared to a waiting list control group...These findings suggest that increasing mindful awareness of internal experiences and automatic patterns related to eating, emotion regulation, and self-acceptance may help to reduce problematic eating behavior.”

Non-diet approach: What does research say?

“…the HAES® intervention was successful at increasing the intuitive eating scores at short and long term.”

“…women who participated in the HAES® intervention made short-term improvements in diet quality, as shown by an increased HEI and a decreased consumption of high-fat/high-sugar foods after the intervention...”

“The significant correlations observed between the intuitive eating total score…and the HEI score at post-intervention and 1-y follow-up among women in the HAES® program…[suggests] that intuitive eaters have a better diet quality...”

Non-diet approach: What does research say?

“In all three programs, the significant improvements in dietary quality...scores at 1 year were maintained at 2 years.”

Non-diet approach: What does research say?

“Overall, studies that encourage individuals to eat intuitively help participants abandon unhealthy weight control behaviors, improve metabolic fitness, increase body satisfaction, and improve psychological distress. Results from our review favor the promotion of programs that emphasize a nonrestrictive pattern of eating, body acceptance, and health rather than weight loss.”

Non-diet approach: What does research say?

"...the literature suggests potential efficacy of non-diet interventions on several outcomes including improved blood lipids, glucose, and blood pressure; decreased dietary restraint and disinhibition, emotional eating, and eating disorder symptoms; increased body image, self-esteem, physical activity; and improved dietary patterns."

The Non-Diet Approach: Intervention Strategies
Goals of a non-diet approach

- Restore body awareness and trust;
- Heal relationship with food;
- Encourage movement that feels good;
- Improve body image;
- Reduce internalized weight stigma; and
- Adopt self-care practices that promote well-being.

...Regardless of body size.
Mindful eating vs. intuitive eating

**Intuitive eating**
- Eating for physical rather than emotional reasons;
- Relying on internal hunger and satiety cues;
- Granting unconditional permission to eat; and
- Honoring one’s health, or practicing ‘gentle nutrition’.

**Mindful eating**
- Includes all components of intuitive eating; and
- Non-judgmental awareness of physical and emotional sensations while eating or in a food-related environment.


Mindful eating vs. intuitive eating

At their core, they are both:
- Non-restrictive;
- Internally driven;
- Weight neutral; and
- Encourage a healthy relationship with food and body.
Principles of mindful eating

#1 Recognize and Manage Physical Hunger
- Predictable eating times
- Recognition of internal hunger (and non-hunger) and fullness cues
- Balanced meals

#2 Give Permission to Eat What You Want
- Disengage deprivation & end power struggle with food
- Increase flexibility with and variety of food
- Reduce fear, judgment, and shame around food

#3 Focus on the Eating Experience
- Slow down, tune in, engage senses
- Build non-judgmental awareness around food
- Notice reactions to certain foods, quantities, and eating patterns
Structured eating plan

- Eating within the first 2 hours of waking
- Eating every 3-4 hours thereafter

- 7:00 pm – 8:00 am
  **Morning meal**
- 11:00 am – 12:00 pm
  **Afternoon meal**
- 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm
  **Afternoon snack**
- 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm
  **Evening meal**
- 8:00 pm – 9:00 pm
  **Evening snack**
Nutrition counseling tools & strategies

Practice pausing

Recognize hunger  |  Permission to eat  |  Focused eating
Nutrition counseling tools & strategies

HUNGER & SATISFACTION GUIDE
LET YOUR BODY BE YOUR GUIDE

Individual appetite cues can vary and these are just suggestions. Explore how your body informs you.

Nutrition counseling tools & strategies

**THE GREEN MOUNTAIN GUIDE TO SUPPORTIVE EATING**

- **Mindfulness**
  - Grains & Starchy Vegetables (G/SV)
    - At least one serving
    - Bread, pasta, cereals, grains such as rice, barley, quinoa, millet, oats, potatoes, yams, winter squash, corn, green peas, parsnips & plantains
  - Protein Food (P/P)
    - At least one serving
    - Meat, fish, poultry, beans, legumes, tofu, nuts, nut butter, eggs, and dairy, including milk, yogurt, cheese & soy milk
  - Fats (to taste)
    - Olive oil, other oils, butter, sour cream etc.
- **Social**
  - Vegetables & Fruits (V/F)
    - At least one serving
- **Compassion**
  - Fluid
    - Water, tea, milk, coffee
- **Essential Self-Care**
  - Fun Foods

*Choose at least half of your servings from whole grain.*

**Recognize hunger**

**Permission to eat**

**Focused eating**

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THE OPTION APPROACH
FOR OVERCOMING THE
DIET MENTALITY

HOW TO PRACTICE GIVING YOURSELF PERMISSION TO EAT WHAT YOU WANT

TELL YOURSELF
This is my Option.
I can have it if I want it.

ASK YOURSELF:
DO I REALLY WANT IT?
Consider quality, timing, hunger, physical reaction.

IF YES:
Eat mindfully and savor.
Then, let it be...

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Nutrition counseling tools & strategies

Other strategies to help with permission:

- Approach incorporating these foods back into the diet in steps.
- Build challenge foods into meal plan and plan to practice with them.
- Eat these foods as part of a meal rather than a stand alone snack.
- Let go of external dietary controls (calorie journals, measuring utensils, etc.)
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**Short-term:** Tune into the eating process.

*Practice:*
- Engaging the senses
- Slowing down
- Removing/minimizing distractions

**Long-term:** Observe patterns and trends.

*Notice your reactions to:*
- Certain foods
- Quantities
- Meal composition
- Timing
Nutrition counseling tools & strategies

Eating awareness journal

- Time of eating
- Description of food item/meal
- Hunger level before
- Fullness level after
- Thoughts, comments, observations regarding eating experience

Recognize hunger  Permission to eat  Focused eating
In summary

The non-diet approach is a non-restrictive, internally-driven, weight-neutral approach for providing care to clients. Research shows that this approach has the potential to improve markers of health typically associated with weight loss, while also improving psychological well-being and other health behaviors, even in the absence of weight loss. Additionally, non-diet approaches aim to reduce weight stigma.

Dietitians can incorporate non-diet interventions into their practice by following principles of mindful and intuitive eating and removing weight as a marker of progress or success.
Recommended Resources

- Green Mountain at Fox Run
  (www.fitwoman.com)
  Subscribe to our blog and professional newsletter & follow us on social media

- Association for Size Diversity and Health (ASDAH)
  (https://www.sizediversityandhealth.org)
  Lots of great Health at Every Size® (HAES) resources

- The Center for Mindful Eating (TCME)
  (https://www.thecenterformindfuleating.org/)

- Intuitive Eating: A Revolutionary Program That Works, Third Edition
  – Evelyn Tribole MS, RD & Elyse Resch MS, RD, FADA
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