

# **Recovery Hunger**

**By Emily Spence**

**A guide to all things hunger. Topics covered include: mental hunger, extreme hunger, doubting your hunger, how to take ED rebellious actions, fear foods, my food abundance approach and MUCH more.**

## No. 1: My Recovery Hunger

When I was in recovery I ate a lot, and I mean a LOT of food.

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I ate all day, every day, for months on end. I ate biscuits, by the box, and everything else by the share pack. I ate whole family puddings in one sitting, regularly. I ate snacks between snacks between snacks. I ate large McDonalds meals between first lunch and lunch dessert. I ate Muffins by the four pack. I smashed out mountains of chip shops chips. I cleared my plate, and then everyone else's (left overs?! HA!).

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I was physically hungry and mentally starving and consequently, honouring that with zero restriction meant eating a LOT.

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Professional services failed me because even they were so entrenched in diet culture that the idea of being really REALLY hungry after a period of starvation was deemed inappropriate and excessive.

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I was told to 'slow down', to 'ease off' and to 'put a bit of control back in place'.

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Their words made me doubtful, frightened and uncertain. It was like being hit a sledge hammer and the only thing that benefitted from their advice was my eating disorder.

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I began to doubt my hunger. I began to doubt my body. I started searching for ways to skirt around honouring my mental hunger. I trawled the internet for hours in search of some reassurance that what I was experiencing was 'normal'. I desperately sought ways to eat the things my body was craving without eating EVERYTHING. I would ask people who had come out the other side what they did hoping that someone would offer me a less overwhelming option than to 'just keep eating'.

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Looking back it makes me so ANGRY that they said this to me when I was so newly into recovery and doing such a bloody brilliant job of honouring my hunger.

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My recovery hunger saved my life.

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So for anyone who needs to hear it... It is absolutely OK to be really, really hungry when recovering from a restrictive eating disorder. You are not broken. You are not a unicorn. You are not going to eat like this forever. You are hungry. And the answer to that is to eat.

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Keep it simple. Trust your body. And know that feasting after a period of restriction is not only normal, it's essential.



## **No. 2: It's Ok to be Hungry**

It's ok to feel hungrier than normal. It's ok to want more than those around you. It's ok to want the burger in a table of salads. It's ok to finish your plate in 12 seconds and want more. It's ok to be hungry half an hour after dinner. It's OK to be HuNgRy.

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What's isn't ok is feeling that hunger and then doing anything other than fully responding to it.

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Sometimes big appetite days happen, sometimes the lunch you had doesn't completely satisfy you, sometimes your body wants a meal at a time you'd usually snack. All of these are TOTALLY ok... as long as you listen to your body, trust it and give it what it's asking for.

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No matter what you've had last night/this morning/an hour ago, the ONLY thing you should do is listen to your body, respond to the hunger and eat what you're craving. No food is bad. No food is too much. Listen to your body: it knows best.



### No. 3: Eating More Than Others

It's ok to eat more than others. It's ok to eat more than the portion size. It's ok to eat more than you did yesterday. It's ok to finish your meal before others. It's ok to have the pizza at a table of salads. It's ok to want seconds or thirds or fourths. It's ok to be hungry when others aren't.

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Check out the Fajita Burger I had the other night at Annie's Burger Shack 😍👍.

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The table next door did nothing but talk about how 'huge' they were and how 'overwhelming' they were and how they were 'SO glad' they'd ordered one between two so they could each have half because the whole one would be 'FAR too much' 😊🤔.

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All I can say is PAH 😊. I demolished my burger and chips and it was absolutely bloody DELICIOUS.

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My body wanted what my body wanted. My body wanted every single crumb on that plate and that's exactly what I had. The women on the table next to me are different people with different bodies on different journeys. My body wanted the whole burger so that's all I need to think about. And even that doesn't need much thought: I wanted it, I ordered it, I loved it, I finished it and I got on with my evening.

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It's ok to listen to your body. It's ok to trust your body. It's ok to eat. It's always ok to eat. ALWAYS.



## No. 4: ED Rebellious Eating

Go against your ED, they say. Rebel, they say. Take opposite actions, they say.

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I remember when reading or hearing these words felt like someone handing me a balloon but letting go just before I'd had a chance to wrap my fingers around its ribbon tail.

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Rebel. Act oppositely. Go against.

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Simple to read. Easy to say. But what on earth does that really LOOK like?! What does 'taking opposite actions' actually mean?! Where do you start with that?! I remember feeling so utterly lost by those words. So confused. So mixed. So unsure.

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So firstly, if you can relate to those feelings then please, PLEASE see this as a big sign that you are NOT alone. I get it. And that's why, although I certainly don't have all the answers, I want to share with you what I learnt about ED rebellion through my recovery journey.

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Rebelling against your ED isn't a background thing in recovery: it's the core of it. Taking action against your ED isn't an end goal: it's the structure of every single step you make towards your freedom.

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Opposite actions aren't wishy washy concepts. They are feisty, erratic, gutsy and (often) unplanned. ED rebellion is fierce, impulsive and as adrenaline fuelled as playing Russian roulette with your hand and a crocodile's jaw.

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🍷 Marching back to the kitchen to grab that chocolate bar and eat it in 2.4 seconds in a F U to the disorder that held you hovering at the cupboard for half an hour.

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🍷 Urgently eating the spilt food on the counter that your ED had you 'oh so accidentally' knock out the bowl or off your plate as you were cooking/making/serving it.

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🍷 Ramming half the croissant down your throat before you've even finished paying for it as a feat of defiance against the rule that you can't have it until X number of ED hoops have been jumped through.

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🍷 Bringing the whole cake to the sofa with a fork and tucking in because the goalposts for the slice your ED had approved had changed so many times in the past hour that you just couldn't be bothered with its sh\*t anymore.

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ED rebellion is an FU to restriction. It's acting on those flickering thoughts of freedom, swapping your knee-jerk No's for knee-jerk Yes's, and just bloody DOING it.





## No. 5: The Abundance Approach: Part 1

So I mentioned a few days ago something that changed recovery BIG time for me... something that I, for now, will call the 'abundance approach'.

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Arguably the two most important aspects of recovery from a restrictive eating disorder are nutritional rehabilitation and neural rewiring. Totally unrestricted eating is key to both of these but something that helped me MASSIVELY on the neural rewiring front was having an 'abundance approach' to the way I ate, shopped, prepared and stored my food.

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But what does this mean?

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Well, the best way for me to explain it is as a way to reinforce the 'food is no longer scarce' message that unrestricted eating gives your brain and body. Please note... REINFORCE... this does not work on its own... it HAS to be combined with totally unrestricted eating.

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So by combining unrestricted eating with this abundance approach I was able to intensify the neural rewiring process and the changes I noticed within just a couple of weeks were absolutely incredible.

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Does any of this sound familiar?

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You avoid sharing packets of things and if you have them you take an allowed handful rather than just eating from the bag. You put everything neatly on a plate before eating it. You like food to be separate on the plate, nothing touching or overlapping. You get anxious when people say "oh have the large because if you don't eat it all now you can just save it for later". You feel an urge to feed others/give food away if your cupboards or fridge seem overly full (like after a party or post-Christmas for example). You regularly put things back at the shop because 'you don't want to get too much'. You embrace extreme hunger but via hundreds of trips to the kitchen for little plates of different things.

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If so then you, like I did, might benefit BIG time from embracing an abundant approach around food.

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But what does that look like?

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Well... it means SHOWING your brain and body that food is no longer scarce by creating an environment around it that suggests that.

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The abundance approach is about making your eating totally unrestricted in not only WHAT you eat but also in the WAY that you eat.



## No. 6: The Abundance Approach: Part 2

So what did I actually DO?

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I filled the cupboards with food. I made myself BIG portions of things, often more than I could genuinely finish. I ALWAYS made enough so that I could go back for seconds and thirds. I ate cake, not by the slice, but by sitting down with the whole thing and a fork. I ordered more than I thought I'd finish and committed to eating as much as I wanted and then taking the leftovers home. I ate crisps from the share bags, biscuits from the tin and chocolates from the box. I quit ALL measuring and counting of food. I served my food so that it was piled up and touching. I stopped using small plates and started using a hungry tub. I stopped eating so damn slow! I carried snacks with me EVERYWHERE. I stopped heating my food



up over and over again just as a way to draw out the meal. I took the trolley, not the basket, at the supermarket. I had bowls of snacks all over the place.

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By combining the following changes with a commitment to totally unrestricted eating I was able to show my brain that food was no longer scarce not only through WHAT I ate, bought and did but also through the WAY I ate, shopped and acted.

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Your brain is an incredible piece of biological engineering that is hardwired to survive at ALL costs.

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Making the above changes enabled me to SHOW my brain, on a whole new level, that food was no longer scarce; it could literally SEE me eating, shopping, cooking and storing food in a WAY that proved it was plentiful.

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Taking an abundant approach to food enabled me to SHOW my brain that the 'famine' was over and that was a game changer for me ☆.

## No. 7: Mental Hunger: Your Questions Answered

Why do I have it?

Because your body is HuNgRy.

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How do I know if I have it?

Thinking about thinking about mental hunger is mental hunger: if we get really honest with ourselves it's not hard to spot MH but what gets in the way of us accepting its validity is our fear of eating in abundance without any restriction. Stop second guessing. Start eating.

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But honouring it means I'll be eating all the time?!?

Ok, so what? There is no 'too much' in recovery... if you are thinking about food all the time, that means your body is hungry all the time & honouring that without restriction (which is what you NEED to do) means eating all the time. Go and start honouring that hunger!

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How long will it last?

As long as your body needs it too.

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Will it go on forever?

If you honour it, no.

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What if I'm already weight restored?

1) According to who?

2) Full nutritional rehabilitation involves more than just restoring weight, it's about getting out of energy deficit and if you still have mental hunger then that indicates that you are still in an energy deprived state. Drop the judgement and let your body do the eating it needs to do to repay its energy debt.

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What if I'm physically full but mentally hungry?

Keep eating. And if you get to the point where you really seriously can't fit anything more in then relax, have a nap and as soon as you are able too- keep honouring.

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What if I all I want is 'junk food' and sugar? Isn't this unhealthy?

Your body wants what it needs and needs what it wants. If your body is asking for chocolate and takeaways on repeat then that is what you give it; without judgement.

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What if I just want the same thing over and over again?

That's ok: once again- your body wants what it needs and needs what it wants. That might be mean nothing but bread, or cake, or cheese, or cereal on repeat for a while and that's ok. T might also mean that you cycle through intense cravings for certain things from one day or week to the next. This is all ok. Honour your cravings and trust your brilliant body: it knows what it's doing! Permission is the solution.

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In summary: Mental hunger is valid. Honour it.





## **No. 8: Identifying and Honouring Mental Hunger- My Top Tips**

1. If you're thinking about food/meals/meal plans/if it's ok to have lunch at 11am/what your sister is sat eating/what birthday cake you'll have next year/what you would order at your favourite cafe if you were there right now/what the crisps would have been like in that packet you just noticed on the floor etc then YOU ARE HUNGRY. Eat. Seriously! Just eat.

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2. Eat the thing that you thought of first because that is what you are actually craving. The "maybe you should have XYZ instead" is your ED mind-set trying to hold you in a place of restriction. Listen to your body, trust the signals that it's sending you and eat what YOU want.

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3. Know that mental hunger is JUST as important as physical hunger. I would never have recovered if I hadn't followed my mental hunger.

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4. Tell someone what it is you're thinking about. Voice it -> Own it -> Eat it!

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5. If you're thinking about LOADS of different things at once; feeling like your brain is flitting from pizza to ice cream to bread to cake to nachos to chocolate, then try this. Start with one of them, any of them, and go from there. If you finish it and still want something else (likely AND normal) then just get that too. Don't let your ED paralyse you in the 'I don't know what I want stage'. Pick something you're thinking about, and remind yourself that you can have as much of all those things as you like, whenever you want them, and this phase of recovery will not last forever.



## No. 9: Tune into Your Mental Hunger.

Mental hunger is your bodies most energy efficient and effective way of communicating to you what it NEEDS. It is a valid hunger signal and very often, in recovery, it is a FAR more reliable indicator of what/when/how often/how much you need to be eating than your physical hunger cues are.

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Physical hunger cues are made unreliable by:

- 1) The anxiety, stress and guilt experienced when you action real recovery eating and rebel against the ED mindset.
- 2) The disruptive effect that restriction has on the hormones responsible for your bodies physical hunger/fullness signals.
- 3) Your body deeming physical signals to be a waste of energy in the food scarce environment that it believes you are in.

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It is for this reason that in recovery we have to tune into our mental hunger and accept it is as valid hunger signal that needs to be honoured by eating.

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Thinking about food? Eat.

Looking at cook books? Eat.

Scrolling through foodie content? Eat.

Struggling to concentrate when food is near you? Eat.

Wanting to make yet another recovery plan? Eat.

Planning your life around your food? Eat.

Wanting to tell that person who is supporting you in recovery about everything you've eaten in the day so far? Eat.

Thinking about food on the way back from a meal out? Eat.

Thinking about food straight after you've just eaten? Eat.

Thinking about what other people are eating? Eat.

Being drawn to 'look around' places selling food? Eat.

Popping into that bakery 'just to look'? Eat.

Thinking 'am I hungry?' Eat.

Scrolling through recovery content? Eat.

Day dreaming about food? Eat.

Thinking about what you might/could/would/will have at some point in the future? Eat.

Looking at the menu for the place you are going out to tomorrow? Eat.

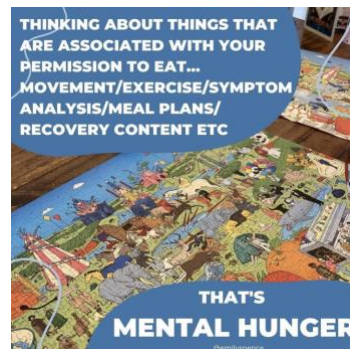
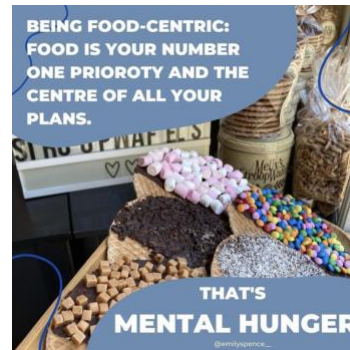
Thinking about what movement or exercise you will do/won't do/shouldn't do/want to do? Eat

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Tune into your mental hunger, drop the judgement and get busy honouring it.

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And remember... it can feel like your intense recovery mental hunger will blast on forever whilst you're in the thick of it but the TRUTH is that as you get out of energy deficit your mental hunger will naturally decrease and you will start to feel more 'normal' again. **You can trust your body.**



## No. 10: Extreme Hunger: What it is, and What it is Not

Extreme Hunger is extreme. It's insatiable, overwhelming and near impossible to ignore or avoid.

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I remember feeling desperately hungry but physically full. I remember eating several pizzas followed by a family sized pudding and still feeling like a bottomless pit. I remember the seemingly never ending challenge of keeping up with my mental hunger. I remember eating like a wild animal because I simply couldn't get the food into my face fast enough. I remember feeling like I'd never stop eating so much. I remember being certain that I was the anomaly, the one with the broken hunger signals who would just eat and eat and eat forever.

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But I wasn't broken. My body used extreme hunger to do what it needed to do and once that was done the fog-horn blaring hunger died down and my appetite normalised.

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Extreme hunger was my body hitting boost mode on recovery and honouring it saved my life. BUT...

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I see lots of posts about very normal looking recovery days being labelled as 'EH' days. I also see lots of very restrictive looking meals/snacks being labelled as 'EH' meals/snacks. This bugs me because it is 1) not accurate, 2) potentially triggering to people actually experiencing EH and 3) utterly wrapped up in ED BS.

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EH is not having breakfast and then being hungry again an hour later. EH is not eating a large Domino's pizza to yourself and then wanting pudding. EH is not eating more than your partner or friends. EH is not finishing a share bag of crisps or chocolates to yourself.

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Basically EH is not just hunger, it's not even just recovery hunger; it's EXTREME hunger and remember... ANY amount of food that your ED doesn't approve of is going to feel 'extreme'.

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So stop labelling your hunger and just eat. Let go. Trust your body. Accept that recovery means eating more, A LOT more, and that that is not only ok, it's great. Maybe you'll experience EH along the way like I did, maybe you won't. But either way, don't believe your ED's BS and start labelling your normal recovery eating as extreme hunger because in reality whilst EH is a component of recovery, eating more than your ED approves of is something you will be doing for the rest of your life.





## No. 11: Accepting Extreme Hunger

The best thing I EVER did in my recovery was to accept extreme hunger and just go with it. I tried ignoring it, fighting it and controlling it but inevitably my body would, eventually, override my disordered brain and MAKE me eat. My body was asking for lots of food because it NEEDED lots of food and as soon as I accepted that I saw MASSIVE improvements ☆.

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Responding to EH nourished my brain and body on a deep level: my thinking became less disorder-skewed and even though my body kept on asking for A LOT of food I was far more able to cope with it.

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I had Extreme hunger for several months straight (probably about 9/10) and then on and off for the next few years. After that I would get it more and more sporadically and the only time it ever really came back was when I consciously or subconsciously restricted my intake.

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Extreme hunger is NOT forever as long as you don't resist it. By honouring ALL of my EH, I am now in a place where my body no longer requires that amount of food so it doesn't ask me for it.

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My EH looked like several pizzas followed by a family box of biscuits followed by a whole cheesecake followed by 5 bowls of granola... etc etc. It was overwhelming, frightening and frankly pretty uncomfortable. But I got past it and so can you... as long as you LISTEN to it and HONOR the signals that your body is sending you.

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I also want to add that my EH was mainly mental not physical. Looking at food menus/planning tomorrow nights dinner/talking about food/reading cookery books/being hyper aware of what other people around me were eating/dazing off into a food day dream when I noticed a crisp packet on the floor/organising the fridge/strolling around supermarkets for 'fun' 😊 etc.

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Extreme hunger is NOT to be a feared or demonised or avoided; ignore your ED and listen to your body. EH is your bodies way of hitting boost mode on recovery. Trust it!.





## No. 12: Extreme Hunger: My Top Tips

1. Know that you are not a freak/the only one/broken/going to be a life-long binge eater/addicted to food. Your body needs the food it's asking for. Trust it.

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2. Get yourself a decent sized biscuit tin/food tub, fill it with the foods your craving and make it your recovery hungry tub. I used to fill a big old biscuit tin with all sorts of different chocolates, biscuits, cake bars and sweets. (BONUS TIP: if calorie counting/ food number obsession is something you struggle with then scrap the packaging and just pour all your favourites into the tub- you can do this yourself or get someone else to help you. Remember: your body is not a calculator; you do not need to micro-manage it). Then whenever I fancied something from it I would take the whole tin, sit down and have whatever I wanted from it. The tub helped me own my hunger and it stopped me spending ages just staring into the cupboard trying to work out what to have when actually I just wanted everything. Own it. Honour it. Beat it.

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3. Don't torment your body with little portions on a plate. Take the whole pack and show your brain that food is no longer scarce.

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4. Keep having your normal meals and snacks around your extreme hunger. I found that having three meals and three snacks every day NO MATTER WHAT helped to combat the 'oh you ate loads at lunch you don't need anything for the rest of the day' ED thoughts. For example, no matter how big my morning snack ended up being due to my extreme hunger I would still, ALWAYS, have a proper lunch.

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5. REST; Let your body use the food to repair and restore itself. Compensating for extreme hunger by movement or any other means only prolongs the process.



### No. 13: But I'm Not Hungry?

I talk about high levels of hunger in recovery a lot but something I've not discussed before is what to do when your appetite has hit rock bottom and you just don't fancy anything.

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First things first. You're in recovery from a restrictive eating disorder: not eating, is NOT an option. No ifs. No bits. No excuses. It's not an option.

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Some reasons for low hunger in recovery:

- 😞 Anxiety.
  - 🤢 Psychosomatic fullness.
  - ☹️ Low mood.
  - 🤒 Being unwell.
  - 👤 The wonderful GI side effects of recovery (bloating, gas etc).
  - 🛒 Fancying everything but also nothing.
  - ⚡ Being too busy: appetite avoidance (this can be conscious or subconscious... you may not even realise that's why you're a compulsive busy bee).
  - 🏠 Difficult recovery environment.
  - 🎮 Thinking that your hunger should be physical.
  - 😬 Fear.
- 



If you are experiencing low appetite levels please know that you are not alone, broken or doing things wrong. Maybe your hunger is usually like a fog horn but one day you wake up to silence. Maybe your fear overrides everything. Maybe you are solidly slumped in that 'urgh... food' zone. Maybe your hunger is massively erratic and you yo-yo back and forth between ravenous and stuffed.

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But no matter what the cause or presentation, not eating is NOT an option. You're in recovery. You're healing your body. You're rewiring your brain. You need to eat: and not the barest minimum... you need to recovery eat.

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So here are some of the things I did in recovery when I didn't feel hungry:

- 📅 Prioritised energy dense foods: hummus, biscuits, chocolate, cheese, ice cream and nuts.
- For GI: avoided high fibre foods, wore loose fitting comfy clothes, and rested lots.
- 🍷 Ate my favourite things.
- 🌀 Noticed that my fear/anxiety based fullness peaked just before meals and learnt that that sensation, no matter how real it felt, was not a true representation of my bodies actual hunger/fullness.
- 🥤 Lots of liquid calories.
- 🧠 Recognised mental hunger as valid hunger.
- 🍷 Challenged my fear foods head on.
- 🗄️ Forced myself to quit the busy-bee BS: created space and time to actually listen to my body.

## No. 14: Fear Foods? Or Superfoods?

A little while ago I posted a story asking, with absolutely zero context, what your top superfoods were. I then asked what your top fear foods were. I was thrilled that so many of you answered (thank you to all who did!) and I'll include below a condensed version of the answers I received:

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'Superfoods': Blueberries. Tomatoes. Avocado. Cucumber. Rice cakes. Porridge. Sweet potato. Potatoes. Peanut butter. Nuts. Oats. Kale. Dark chocolate. Prunes.

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'Fear' foods: Deep fried food. Pizza. Liquid calories. Pasta. Cheese. Cream and creamy stuff. Pastries. Chocolate. Crisps. Takeaways/meals out. Desserts (cheesecake etc). Cookies. Butter.

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Now I don't need to go into any great process of analysis because frankly the above answers were exactly what I was expecting. The purpose of me asking those two questions to you all was more to confirm my thoughts and to enable me to raise a suggestion that maybe a shift in the way you look at your 'fear' foods could help in the tackling of them.

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By definition a superfood is simply a marketing term for a food considered beneficial to health and well-being. It is not a term used regularly by professionals, for various reasons, and there remains to be no official or legal definition of what a superfood is.

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If I was to ask you which foods are the best for your recovery I imagine that many of the answers would come from the 'fear' list above. Not only are those fear foods the best for your recovery in terms of neurally rewiring and taking ED dis-approved actions. They are also the best for your body in terms of physical restoration and energy deficit defiance.

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So basically, your fear foods are in fact your recovery SUPERFOODS.

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Embrace the things that your ED is scared of. Make yourself a list of all your recovery fear foods and ATTACK them. Think of them as your super foods and take ownership of including them as much as you possibly can throughout the day.

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I did a minimum of one every single day and would continue to challenge them until they were totally detached from my ED's sneaky little tendrils. You can find the challenge planner templates that I used in my recovery story highlights.





## No. 15: Restriction Can Be Insidious

Restriction doesn't just mean skipping meals, cutting out whole food groups or needing to run 10 miles before having that 'treat' you've been fantasising about all day. Yes, it certainly means those things, but it can also be much subtler and in a world where diet culture is so engrained it can easily be overlooked as social acceptable or in some cases, even desirable.

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Restriction can be insidious.

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🍫 If you want the mars bar but end up buying the maltesers, that's restriction.

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🍷 If you're craving something but choose to ignore it, that's restriction.

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🍰 If you fancy the New York cheesecake but find yourself choosing the sorbet, that's restriction.

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🍕 If you want to finish the pizza but don't because your friend has left some of theirs, that's restriction.

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🥣 If you go downstairs thinking about a big bowl of granola but end up pouring bran flakes, that's restriction.

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🛍️ If you want the whole bag but only allow yourself a handful, that's restriction.

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🍰 If you want a slice of cake but when offered, ask for a slither, that's restriction.

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🍔 If you know you like cheese on your burger but swap it out anyway, that's restriction.

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Restriction can be blatant and drastic, but it can also be subtle and slight. Either way, it's restriction and with its insidious nature it's important to be vigilant about it.

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Recovery means committing to unrestricted, unconditional eating free from compensation. Recovery and restriction, be that drastic or subtle, are absolutely, 100%, NOT compatible.

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Eat the food. Break the rules. Be rebellious. Choose YOU.





## No. 16: Proper Portions Are Crucial

ED's = food scarcity mindset.

Recovery = food ABUNDANCE mindset.

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And shifting into that food abundant, recovery mindset is not about thinking or wishing or waiting or dreaming. It's about DOing.

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Be BRUTALLY honest with yourself. Shine a light on your ED BS. Listen to your (recovery reliable) loved ones and support network. Choose for pre-ED you. Serve for the you, you want to be. And if it helps... imagine you are cooking for someone else in recovery.

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Then it's about getting seriously proactive in your portioning:

🗑️ Ditch the small bowls/cutlery.

🛒 Grab the bag/box/tub/tin.

👤 Think big when serving.

👤 Find ways to gain perspective on what proper portions look like: eat out (hearty not fancy!), order takeaways or pass over the portioning to someone else for example.

👤 Make extra: more than more than enough.

♥️ Ask for support!

🗑️ Think big when ordering: go large!

🗑️ When deciding what you want remember that it's AND not OR.

🛒 Buy as plentifully and abundantly as you are able to.

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And remember that your ED driven, food scarcity mindset is incapable of making an accurate judgement on what is enough, let alone what is RECOVERY enough.

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Predict that your ED will disapprove. It will say it's too big/excessive/more than everyone else/unnecessary/going to mean you don't want dinner later etc. Predict it. Prepare for it. And know that your recovery is dependent on you taking action WITH those ED thoughts: let them play on in the background and know that the ONLY thing that will truly drown them out is to eat straight through them.

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Proper portions are crucial, abundance is key!



## No. 17: But I'm Weight Restored?

But do I really need to eat that much if I'm already weight restored?

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I get asked this a lot. And I understand why, at one time this was a hurdle for me too. —

Did I really need to honour my recovery hunger when my doctor had signed me off as medically fit and well?

Did I really need to honour my recovery hunger when my pre-ED clothes fit properly again?

Did I really need to honour my recovery hunger when everyone was saying how much better I looked?

Did I really need to honour my recovery hunger when I could feel my body evolving around me?

Did I really need to honour my recovery hunger when I no longer 'needed' to gain weight?

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The simple answer was yes, yes I did.

And my answer to you is the same.

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You don't get to decide when you're done with recovery. You don't get to decide when your body is weight restored. You don't get to decide when your body has nutritionally rehabilitated. You don't get to decide when your recovery hunger is no longer necessary.

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Your body knows what it is doing.

—

It doesn't have an ulterior motive. It doesn't have a secret plan. It doesn't have any devious intentions. It just wants to live.

—

My truth is that if I had stopped honouring my recovery hunger when I was weight restored, I would never EVER have reached a place of full recovery. My body had a purpose for the food it requested and so does yours.

Don't slip into that disordered place of analysis paralysis. Don't demonise your bodies good intentions. Don't go searching online for external sources of validation because really, the only validation for eating you need, comes from the very body your searching takes you away from.

—

Your body is on your side: focus your attention, on joining it there.



## No. 18: But I Don't Know What to Eat?!

Reality check👉.

—

You DO know what you want to eat.

—

You just don't want to eat, what you know you want to eat.

—

Don't fall for your own ED fuelled bullsh\*t.

—

📄 You DO know what you'd like to eat.

🧠 You CAN imagine things that would taste nice.

🛒 You HAVE seen something at a restaurant/cafe or in your local shop that you'd like to buy.

🔍 You COULD find something you fancy in the cupboard/fridge.

🗣️ You DO know what the scariest option is.

🗂️ You CAN think of a number of different things that would challenge you.

👉 You HAVE got something that springs to mind when asked 'what would you like if you could have anything?'.

🎲 You COULD go and get that thing right now.

—

You do. You can. You have. You could.

—

Don't fall for the ED's rubbish. Own your reality, own your strength and own your ability to take the actions you need to, right here, right now, exactly as you are.

—

Repeat after me... I CAN. And I WILL.





## No. 19: Hunger Doubts

I remember doubting my hunger.

—

Am I really this hungry? Do I actually need this much food? Is mental hunger really a reliable hunger signal? Am I just addicted to food? When will my hunger normalise? Will I want to eat like this forever?

—

I remember doubting my fullness.

—

Have I forgotten what it feels like to be full? Has restriction broken my mind-body connection? Would it be better if I grazed less throughout the day? Or had bigger meals? What about if I ate different types of food? Maybe I need to just wait 30 minutes? If I ate to fullness I'd never stop eating, surely that's not ok?

—

I remember doubting my cravings.

—

Why are they so relentless? I crave something, I eat it and half way through I crave something else. Why?! Surely I don't actually need any more chocolate? It's not normal to want pizza this much! Why do I never fancy fruit or veg? That can't be healthy... right?! Could I just be thirsty? I'm thinking about cake but maybe my body actually wants cereal.

—

I remember SO many doubts in my recovery journey. So. Many. Doubts. But do you know what didn't have any doubts? My body.

—

My body knew what it needed to do. It knew how much food it needed. It knew what food it needed. And it knew how to make those things the focal point of my world. It knew exactly what it was doing. All I had to do was listen, trust it and honour it through my actions.

—

So next time you're doubting your hunger, or doubting your lack of fullness, or doubting your cravings, hold onto the following two things:

—

- 1) The ED mind-set uses doubt to engulf you in uncertainty and set you off chasing your tail simply to distract you from doing the things that will save YOU and destroy it.
- 2) Your body knows what it needs to do. Trust it, eat.





## No. 20: Real Full Day of Recovery Eating

Ok so I am not a fan of the whole 'Full Days of Eating' thing. But I am also not a fan of people being triggered by inaccurate representations of recovery eating and feast eating/extreme hunger. This was a typical day of recovery eating for me...

—  
Breakfast: Big bowl of cereal with scrambled eggs on toast.

Post breakfast graze: Unportioned biscuits from my jumbo snack box.

Snack: Whole bag of salty almonds and a milkshake.

Lunch: Pizza (and not the pizza express £5-but-tiny BS) and a microwave hot pudding with ice cream for pudding.

Snack: Magnum.

Snack: Chocolate chip muffin.

Dinner: Fish and chips from the chip shop with mushy peas and loads of ketchup. Tub of pic n mix for pudding.

Snack: Unportioned graze from my biscuit/chocolate tub and a bowl of cereal.

—  
And this was a typical extreme hunger day for me...

—  
5AM: Part-baked baguette with loads of marmite and a big bag of crisps. Then back to bed (woke up early feeling hungry).

Breakfast: Two BIG bowls of weetabix minis and a whole pack of digestives with jam and icing sugar.

Half an hour later: More biscuits and a family New York cheesecake attacked with a spoon.

Snack: Four pack of muffins.

Snack: More packs of biscuits.

Lunch: Part baked baguette filled with whatever was in the fridge and a platter of crisps and nuts. Craved McDonalds mid-way through, finished this then went to McD's for a large meal. Also went to the garage near it for a share bag of walkers and a Greg's iced bun.

Home again: More biscuits.

Snack: Fancied some birthday cake so went and bought one. Attacked it with a fork. RIP cake.

Snack: More biscuits.

Dinner: Family meal at Zizzis (we went there a LOT because I craved it ALL the time). Garlic bread, roasted veg and calamari to start followed by a pizza. Then to a local desert place for a huge ice-cream sundae with ALL the extras.

Home via the shops for more snacks: Un-portioned biscuits and chocolate from my snack tub and a tube of pringles.

Snack: Multiple bowls of crunchy nut clusters with chocolate curls.

—  
So there you have it. Two very real, very honest What I Ate in a Days. Common theme? LOTS of food.



## **No. 21: Ignore your ED: Listen to Your Body**

In recovery I couldn't sit casually with open packets because I was too busy devouring them.

—

My ED told me I was addicted to food.

It said I was becoming a binge eater.

It said I would never be normal again.

It said my hunger would never ease off.

It said I was the one that unrestricted eating wouldn't work for.

It said that my extreme hunger was off the charts and not ok.

It said that I wasn't sick for long enough to merit this amount of eating.

It said that I was making this whole thing up just so that I could do nothing and eat loads.

It said that I was greedy and lazy and broken.

—

My ED was wrong.

—

I got out of food scarcity mode by taking a food abundance approach.

—

By honouring ALL of my hunger and eating without any restriction my body healed, restored and got out of energy deficit.

—

And because of that I can now sit and play board games and eat snacks with everyone else whilst feeling calm, contented and totally at ease.

—

I can eat the whole pack.

I can graze at random.

I can get totally distracted and forget about them completely.

—

Restriction made my body feel crazy around food, not because it was broken or wrong or addicted, but because it was HuNgRy. REALLY bloody hungry. And eating LOTS of food was THE solution.

—

Ignore your ED.

Listen to your body.

Honour your hunger.



## No. 22: The Joys of Full Nutritional Restoration

Can I just say how AMAZING it feels to give ZERO craps about food. Literally zero.

—

Seriously, I just don't care...

—

I eat when I want too, I stop when I am full/have had enough, I'm chill about my cravings and I feel zero need to try and micromanage my appetite.

—

I am so blissfully food neutral and it is quite honestly brilliant.

—

I used to spend every waking minute either thinking about food or planning to think about food. I would schedule my days around it, cancel social outings because of it, make decisions based on it and ensnare my self-value within it.

—

I used to think I would always be this way, but I was wrong. SO wrong.

—

I wasn't broken. I wasn't addicted to food. I wasn't crazy. I wasn't a unicorn.

—

I was hungry. Plain. Simple. Hungry. Right to the core of my being. And all I needed to do was rest and eat.

—

Rest, LOTS. Eat, LOTS. Repeat, LOTS.

—

And now, because I committed to those three things...I'm free.

—

I no longer do things just to distract myself from food. I no longer see the time between meals as a countdown timer. I no longer think food-first.

—

I get immersed in films and lost in books. I daydream about mountains and fantasise about adventures. I dance as I Hoover, sing as I drive and laugh as I cook (safely, I might add 😊). I'm closer to Andrew, more open with friends and more real with everyone.

—

I'm living. Not existing, or enduring or surviving. No, living. And it's brilliant.

—

Here's to giving your body what it needs, when it needs it. Here's to quitting toxic comparison. Here's to trusting the process. Here's to food freedom!



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