

### Blogging It Off

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# Healthy Shape

- LIGHT BITES
- SLIM SUMMER
- NEW DIETS
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## How to think yourself thin

Lose a fast 10—or a whole lot more—without even counting a calorie.

BY LESLIE GOLDMAN

You can learn a lot by watching a 3-year-old eat. She carefully inspects her food, smelling and touching it, before cramming it into her mouth. She pushes away her plate as soon as she's full. And she doesn't dive face first into a bag of Oreos because she feels lonely.

In fact, 3-year-olds are masters at "intuitive eating." New research shows that the practice of mindfully listening to your body's natural hunger cues—instead of dieting or emotionally eating—can help you lose weight and get healthier.

Women who eat intuitively have lower BMIs than nonintuitive eaters; they also report higher levels of appreciation for their own bodies. Other studies show that mindful eating can reduce binge eating and lower cholesterol levels and cardiovascular-disease risk. Anyone can learn to tap into inner food cues. Turn the page for step-by-step secrets in "Your Think-It-Off Guide"—and meet three women who lost big.



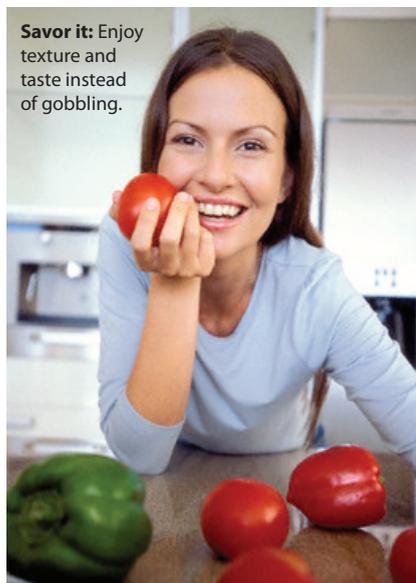
## Your think-it-off guide

“Eating can be an automatic behavior, almost like brushing your teeth or tying your shoes, so it’s important to focus all of your attention on it” instead of just gobbling, says Susan Albers, PsyD, an Ohio-based clinical psychologist and mindful-eating expert. First, before you even pick up that chip, slow down and ask yourself these six questions.

**Are you really hungry?** Figure out if your craving is from the neck-up or shoulders-down, Albers says. In other words, is it emotionally-driven or true hunger? Do you obsess over chocolate all afternoon or seek comfort in a pint of Chubby Hubby? Distract yourself from emotional eating by calling a friend or polishing your nails. If you hear your stomach rumbling or feel low on energy, then that’s actual hunger, so dig in. See “The Hunger Meter,” page 51, and use it to stop automatic munching.

**Do you spend at least 20 minutes on every meal?** That’s the amount of time it takes for your brain to recognize satiety, says George Blackburn, MD, PhD, associate director of the Division

of Nutrition at Harvard University Medical School and author of *Break Through Your Set Point: How to Finally Lose the Weight You Want and Keep It Off*. Most of us wolf down our food faster than that and keep on eating, because we can’t tell how full we actually are. The more slowly you eat, the more you’ll enjoy your food, and the more satisfied you’ll feel.



**Savor it:** Enjoy texture and taste instead of gobbling.

**Do you use all of your senses when you eat?** Mindful eating means being fully aware of a food’s tastes and textures—even the sounds around you—to help you naturally slow down and

*(Continues on page 51)*

## No more dieting!



### ^ Lost 100 pounds

**Heidi Bylsma, 46, Cool, California**

Heidi Bylsma used to swing between hiding behind an overweight body and extreme overexercising and dieting. A stint at Weight Watchers left her thinner but feeling obsessed with food and her body. “I’d lose weight but the problems would still be there,” she says. When a friend introduced her to the mindful-eating-centered, faith-based plan Thin Within, Bylsma realized she could ask herself, “Am I physically hungry?” If the answer was no, the question became, “What am I looking to food to do for me right now?” Bylsma began heeding her body’s hunger signals—and she lost weight. Now, at 150 pounds from a high of 250, she says, “I feel free. I could never go back to weighing food.”

## Her slimming secret? Slow down and enjoy!



### <<< Lost 50 pounds

**Shira Miller, 41, Atlanta**

When Shira Miller began listening to her body’s hunger cues more than 15 years ago, there was no official name for “intuitive eating.” But she used key principles, such as savoring each bite of her beloved carrot cake, to drop pounds. “Instead of eating a whole piece in three chunks, I’d taste the frosting first and enjoy it like someone might enjoy a glass of wine.” She also kept a food-and-mood diary to track emotional eating patterns and started working out three times a week. “The more I pay attention to my food—such as not rushing through lunch at my desk or not eating dinner in front of the TV—the better I can maintain my weight,” Miller says. “It’s sort of like taking my time to honor the process of dining.”

get more pleasure from your meal. Close your eyes for a moment to enjoy flavors without anything interfering, Albers says.

**Do you multitask at meals?** Eating while driving, munching during *Lost*, or chowing down at your desk limits your ability to truly pay attention to what's going in your mouth, Albers explains.

**Do you listen to your body's natural "stop-eating" signals?** Just as you would think about when to *start* eating, tune in to when you should *stop*. You should feel satisfied but not completely full, Albers says. Try pausing after half your food is gone. Use the hunger-meter test (below). And watch portion sizes—keep them small if you need visual cues so you know when to quit.

**Want some chocolate?** Go for it! Ditch the diet mentality and make peace with previously off-limits foods. Giving yourself permission to indulge can help intense cravings dwindle—but set boundaries for yourself. Blackburn suggests using individually packaged servings like a single, wrapped piece of chocolate to stay on track. If you buy a giant sugar cookie, immediately divvy it up into quarters and put all but one portion away before the whole thing disappears. ●

## She beat binges!



### ▲▲ Lost 36 pounds

**Gillian Hood-Gabrielson, 39,  
Paradise, California**

Though she exercised regularly through her 20s and even became a personal trainer, Gillian Hood-Gabrielson struggled with obsessive thoughts about food. At 28, she met a registered dietician who introduced her to intuitive eating. It took time to embrace a concept so at odds with her diet-centered mentality ("It's scary to give up the idea of dieting when that's all you know," she admits), but Hood-Gabrielson found that paying attention to what and why she ate enabled her to break the cycle of restricting food, bingeing, and feeling guilty—while also losing weight. "Food doesn't taste as good as you get closer to being full," says Hood-Gabrielson, who is now an intuitive-eating coach. "Before I eat, I ask myself, 'How do I want to feel when I'm done?'" She no longer uses food as a crutch. And she exercises because it feels good, not simply to torch calories.

## The hunger meter

Before you sit down to eat, follow these simple steps.

1. Take a moment to assess your hunger.
2. Give it a rating on a scale of 0 (ravenously hungry) to 10 (Thanksgiving stuffed).
3. When your hunger is a 4, it's time to start eating; waiting until you're at 2 or 1 could put you at risk for overeating.
4. Start slowing down when you get to a 6 or 7 and reassess: Are you still eating to satisfy your hunger? Or are you simply munching mindlessly?

