



stage 4: **making peace with food**

video 2 workbook

use this workbook to help you implement the teachings from this video

Brought to you by Registered Dietitian, Intuitive Eating Counselor, and your diet-ditching gal pal behind @no.food.rules on Insta, Colleen Christensen!

no food rules.

are you ready to break your food rules?

It's super important to know if you're ready for this step. When learning to find food freedom it's important to first focus on the biological side of things, eating enough food and getting back in touch with our hunger and fullness cues before moving on to this step of breaking food rules.

Read the following questions and check the boxes of the ones that apply.



- Are you able to eat, for the most part, without feeling guilty?**
- Are you able to identify biological cues of hunger, ranging from ravenously empty to gentle hunger?**
- Are you able to clearly identify biological cues of fullness, ranging from gentle fullness to painfully stuffed?**
- Are you able to distinguish between the uncomfortable sensations of guilt versus the uncomfortable sensation of feeling too full?**
- Are you able to distinguish between “meal hungry” and “snack hungry”?**
- Are you able to experience pleasurable satisfaction from eating?**
- Are you able to tolerate the uncomfortable feeling of “too full” from eating, without compensating by skipping a meal or paying “exercise penance”?**

If you checked the boxes of the majority of these questions, it indicates you are likely ready for this step. Keep in mind, that when you put this into practice you still might not feel ready, even if you answered, “yes”. That's okay, you don't have to continue on. It's important to proceed at a pace that is comfortable to you.

If you answered no, proceed with more caution and know that this will be much more difficult and not necessarily advisable. Instead, focus on the previous information in The SociEATy stages. This is not a race. There is no shame in not being ready for this step. Moving at too fast of a pace can actually elongate your entire journey.

breaking food rules through habituation

Breaking food rules is based on something called "habituation". This essentially means that when we eat a food more often it becomes less new and novel and we have less of a strong response to the food. This is a form of exposure therapy. Food is just no big deal.

The goal of the process of habituation is not to "burn out" on the food, so that you'll never eat it again (that is actually a form of deprivation). Rather, it is to remove the heightened excitement of something called the "forbidden fruit syndrome" or the allure of off limits foods that causes us to feel loss of control.

The key to breaking food rules is not to break them all at once, but to break them in a specific order. In a previous workbook you began your list of food rules. Grab that list and now create another list (worksheet on the next page) where you put these food rules in order from what you feel will be the easiest to break to the hardest to break.

Work through your food rules one at a time and in this specific order, from easiest to hardest. This might not seem like the "sexiest" way to do it. There won't be a big huge grocery trip where you fill your cart with all of your previously deemed "bad" foods and there is a reason for that. Typically, that is too overwhelming for most people and causes some of the diet mindset to creep back in with some all-or-nothing thinking.

I can say from my years of experience working with clients as well as my own personal experience that this stepwise process is the most sustainable and realistic way to go about making peace with food.

Create your official food rule breaking action plan on the following page.

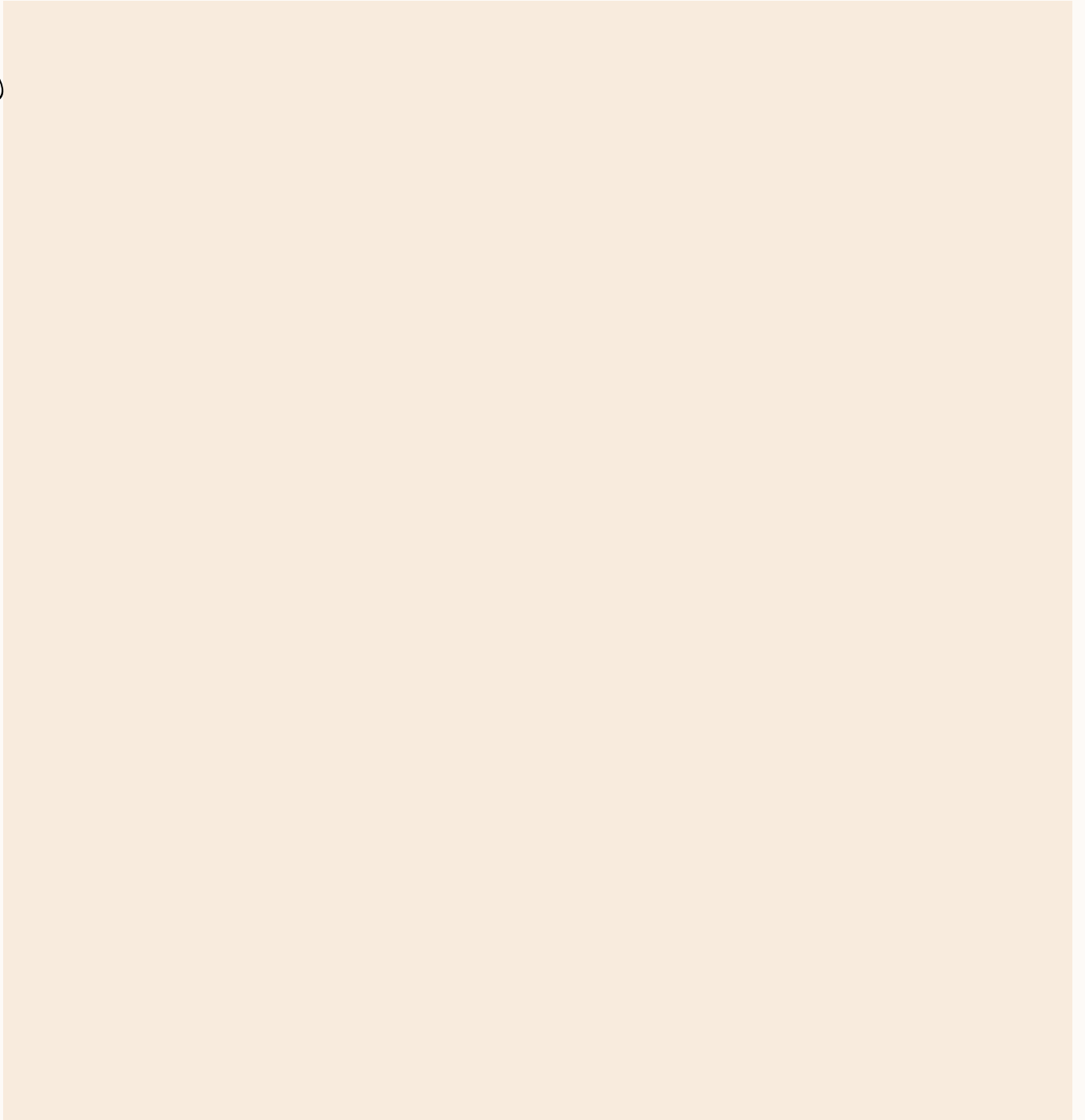
your official food rule breaking list

List your food rules from "easiest" to break to "hardest".

easy



hard



habitualizing food

The goal of habituation is to exposure yourself to this food enough so that it is no longer scary, makes you feel guilty, etc. It's about normalizing the experience of eating it. This is done through creating as many "touch points" as possible.

Firstly, you're going to want to think of when and how you will eat this food throughout a week. A week is a good time frame to think about this but that does not mean you will break the food rule in a week. This doesn't mean you're just going to eat that food all day, every day. Although, you could. But, what I recommend is to think "How can I weave this into my eating throughout the week?" And I want you to get creative about this and try to include that food in different ways and also at different times of day.

For example, let's say your food rule is around a cookie. Rather than just buying cookies and saying "Okay! I'm going to eat them!" I want you to think how you can weave them in as much as possible. This looks like, yes, eating the cookies when the craving strikes but it also looks like crumbling it on top of oatmeal, smoothies or yogurt. It might look like having some at lunch, as well as giving permission to have them in the evening. Really try to get creative with this and think outside the box. The more "touch points" that you can create with this food the faster it will be normalized or habitualized.

Use the following template each time you are working to break a food rule.

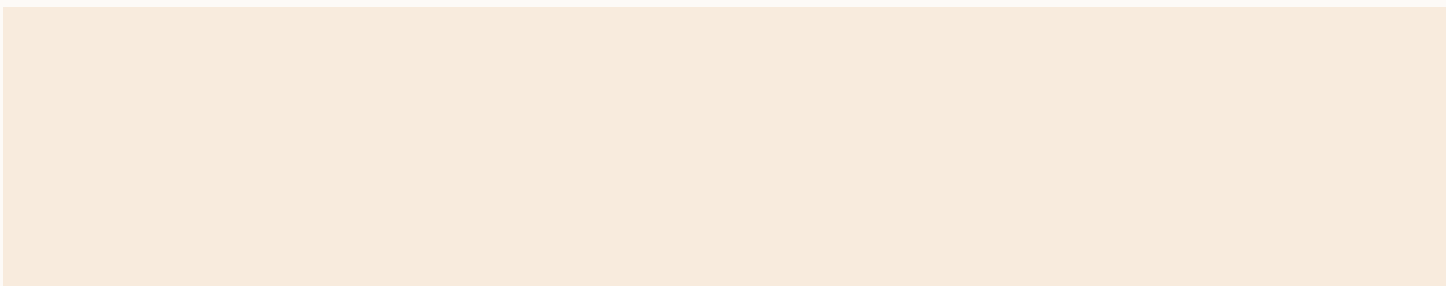
Food rule:

What are a few ways that I can incorporate this food throughout the week (different ways to eat it, different times to include it, etc.) Brainstorm 3-5 ways to break this food rule.

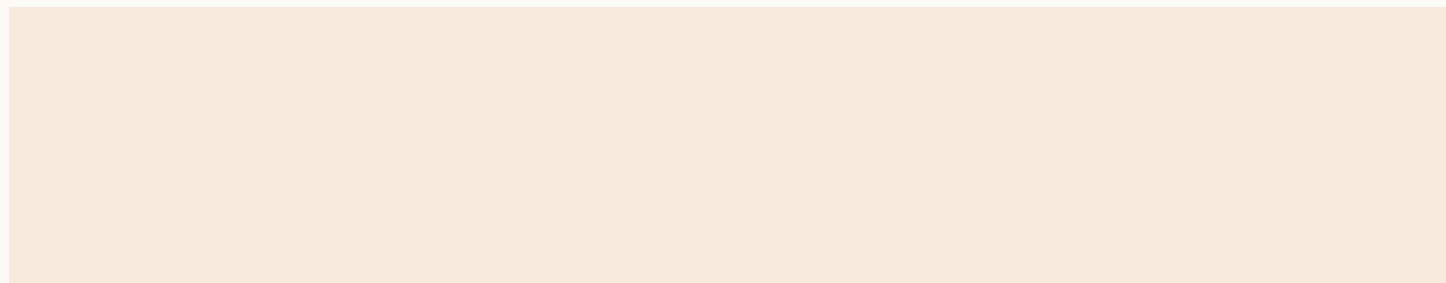
food rule breaking reflection

As you work to break your food rules throughout the process of habituation it's important not to stop at just eating the food. It's important to really reflect on the whole eating experience to truly make peace with food and break your food rules. Below are some questions to consider as you work to break your food rules.

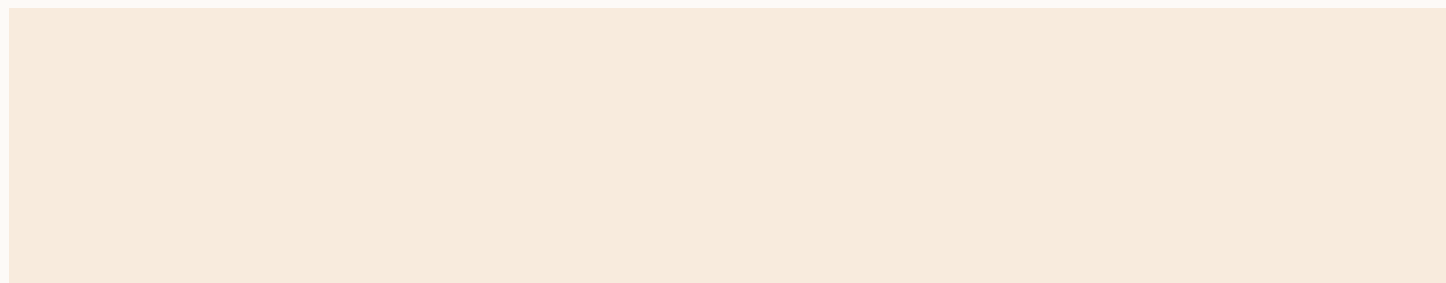
Take note of how you feel before you eat it. What thoughts or emotions are coming up?



As you eat it, what are you experiencing? Do you enjoy this food? Is it as delish as you expected? How does it feel in your body?



When you're done, think about the experience as a whole, this includes immediately after but also as time goes on. Did the eating experience meet your expectations? Did it feel good to your body? Would you change anything for next time?



food rule breaking tips

It's important to break your food rules in a certain way. This is strategic! Take a moment to review the following tips and check them off as you go.



Avoid breaking a food rule when you're feeling too hungry. Biological hunger will always win and you won't feel in "control". Instead, try to be comfortably hungry when eating.

Lessen the variety of the food as much as possible. If it's cookies, rather than buying chocolate chip cookies, Oreos and sugar cookies, stick to one to start. Then you can try another. Adding too much variety, or breaking too many food rules at once, hinders the habituation process.

Make sure that you make it a total eating experience. I don't recommend eating chips out of the bag or ice cream from the carton. As much as possible, plate your food, sit down, remove distractions and truly experience it. You will get to a place where you can pull the family size tub of ice cream from the freezer and eat right out of it easily stopping when full and satisfied but we need to work up to that. There is a lot of learning to be done first! Even if it's a cookie and it seems silly to put on a plate, I'd recommend it! This just helps you to focus on it more.

Think about the environment that you'll eat it in. Does it feel safe to you? As much as possible try to have a comfortable atmosphere. Maybe you don't work on this around judgemental co-workers that trigger you and may make food comments. It's important that you feel relaxed during this as much as possible.

Be sure not to set limits with this. Instead of saying "I can have one cookie right now" try "I'm going to eat this cookie then see how I feel. I can have more. I can choose to not have more. I get to decide." Remember, setting limits is a food rule and it will prevent you from truly making peace with food. The same thing stands for only eating foods at certain times, like only having cookies as dessert.

Lastly, have support. Remember: this is a learning experience! You likely won't hit the nail on the head at first and you might feel frustrated. You have so many amazing humans here in The SociEATy ready to help you through this and show you that you CAN do this! We are all here for you to talk it out with, to give encouragement and to pick you back up when you need it!

one week rule breaking assessment

We've talked about doing this food rule breaking work in week intervals. This is typically a good time frame for you to gather some data to reflect on. This is not the recommended time frame for a rule to be broken but it is enough time for you to have some thoughts on the habituation experience. At the end of the week assess how you feel about the food/rule. This will help you understand if you're ready to move onto another food rule or if this one needs more work.

At the end of the week complete the following worksheet to assess your progress and to know when to move on to another food rule.

How do you feel about this food rule now?

How was the process of breaking the food rule? Was it enjoyable? Did it feel good?



- Do you no longer feel guilt, stress or anxiety when breaking this food rule?**
- Do you feel like you're able to listen to your body and be "in control" around this food?**

Checking the boxes above may signal that your food rule is broken and that you can move on to the next. If you are unable to check the boxes it's recommended to stay on that food rule and continue working to habitualize it.

Remember, this is more than just eating the food- it's a lot of psychological work to re-wire our brain too! Don't forget that piece of the puzzle- go beyond just eating it!.

entitlement eating

Entitlement eating is the type of eating driven by a rebellion against diet culture versus the food choice coming from YOU. The choice to eat or not eat something should come from what you find to be enjoyable, satisfying, and feels good. It's saying "I can eat this so I will eat this".

Entitlement is needed at first for us to feel like we can allow ourselves to break the food rules- this is normal. However, it can be a place where some people get stuck, always eating the foods regardless of their body's cues. The choice to eat the food is actually still coming from diet culture because instead of following what it says you're now just doing the opposite. But regardless, diet culture is still dictating this choice.

This type of eating isn't super satisfying or enjoyable and it likely won't feel great to your body. Remember, you have nothing to prove here. You have permission to eat the, say, donut. And you have permission to not. What matters is YOU are making the choice and there is no guilt, stress or anxiety one way or another.

Sometimes there can be confusion between entitlement eating and allowing yourself to feel like you have permission to eat something in order to break a food rule. There are differences between entitlement eating and breaking food rules. To help differentiate between the two check the boxes below that apply.



Eating a food (even if you're not truly craving it) to work to prove to yourself that the food is not off limits or scary (this is exposure therapy, how we break food rules!)

Allowing yourself to make a decision as to whether or not you enjoy the food itself

The decision comes from you because you're deciding to eat it to help to achieve food freedom and come to your own determination as to whether or not it's what you want

Checking these boxes may indicate breaking a food rule, not entitlement eating



You've worked through the food rule around the food and allow yourself to eat it without guilt, stress anxiety

Thoughts of "Ha! Screw you diet culture! I'm eating this because you say I can't" without regard to what YOU want

Not being mindful during the eating process and not taking note of satisfaction, how your body feels, and enjoyment

The decision to eat it doesn't truly come from you but rather what you think you "should" do and/or rebellion

Checking these boxes may indicate entitlement eating

food rules VS preferences

A food preference is making a food choice based on what you enjoy most, find most satisfying, feel best eating, etc. based on your body's needs and desires. This decision comes from within you, not based on diet culture or what you feel is the "right" answer. It's you genuinely liking one thing over another. Here are a couple examples of food preferences:

food preference examples

- Preferring wheat bread to white bread because it keeps you full longer with some added fiber
- Including protein at meal times to help with satiety
- Enjoying 2% milk VS whole milk because of the consistency and mouthfeel



Do you feel guilt, stress or anxiety over the other option (what you think is not your preference)?

Example: If you think you prefer wheat bread VS white, would you feel guilt/stress/anxiety over eating the white bread?

The biggest thing to note with a food preference and how you can differentiate it from a food rule is that there is no guilt, stress, or anxiety if you have to do the other thing. For example, maybe the sandwich shop only has white bread. Do you feel anxiety or is it just kind of a bummer but no biggie? If there is anxiety or stress or guilt? It's a food rule that needs breaking. No biggie? You're likely just having a food preference.

If you're not sure what one it is, test it. Try it both ways and see what thoughts, feelings and emotions come up.

Even if you think "But I don't even like white bread" I do still recommend breaking by using the process discussed. If it is a true food preference it may be quicker for you to break and you might need less exposure. But we will need to put ourselves in the situation in order to overcome the negative associations around the food so that we can feel neutral about it.