

WOMAN'S INTUITION

Rena Reiser's Unique Approach to Health

The Rebbe's Apple

Two men. Each took an apple, made a *bracha*, and bit into the fruit. One was Rabbi Aharon from Karlin, a famed Chassidic Rebbe, the other was his student. When they finished eating, the Rebbe turned to his student and said, "Do you know the difference between you and me? You were hungry and wanted to eat an apple. To do so, you first needed to make a *bracha*. In my case, I looked around at the beauty of our world, and desperately wanted to call out in praise of G-d. [...] In other words, you made a *bracha* to eat the apple, and I ate the apple to make a *bracha*!"

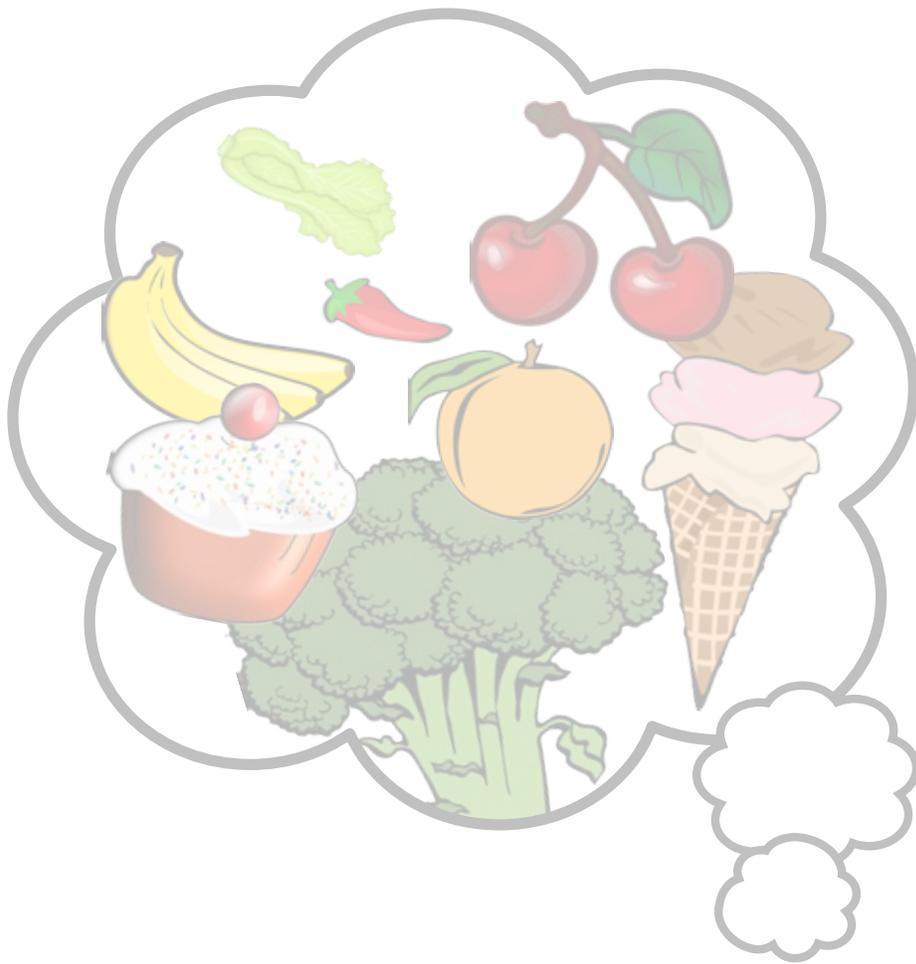
On a very basic level, this story compels us to ask the question: why do we eat? Most people hear this story and are awed by the lofty level of the saintly Rebbe, who used food as a vehicle to connect with The Creator. Yet what about the student who ate an apple because he was hungry? Sounds pretty simple: he was hungry, so he ate. But let's take a moment to appreciate the fact that he was in touch with his body enough to listen to its signals, and then ate nourishing food when he felt hunger.

In our culture, we are pulled in one direction by an overabundance of decadent food tempting us to indulge, and in the other by a barrage of diet-trends and unattainable body-messages encouraging us to "get fit." Our brains are so overloaded with conflicting messages about food and weight, that the whisper of the body gets drowned out by the screams of the world around us.

Intuitive Eating

How do we make sense of all of this confusion? Enter Rena Reiser, a certified health and wellness coach. Living in the beautiful Northern Israeli city of Karmiel, Rena presents as a typical wife and mother. Yet beneath her unassuming veneer, Rena is a truth-seeker to the core. "The falsehoods of the world have always made me crazy," she shares. When she entered the health coaching world, she found herself frustrated by the band-aid solutions that only offered short-term success, without addressing root issues. "While working with my clients, I noticed that everything would go really well, until something would come up and throw them off kilter, and they wouldn't be able to incorporate the healthy habits I was giving them anymore."

Always seeking to learn and grow, Rena sought a better approach to help her clients, which eventually led her to Intuitive Eating. Founded by prominent registered dietician and nutrition counselor Evelyn Tribole, who Rena eventually trained with, "intuitive eating is an approach that teaches you how to create a healthy relationship with your food, mind, and body — where



you ultimately become the expert of your own body.”

Rena relates with enthusiasm how she felt upon discovering Intuitive Eating. “These are the tools that I’d been trying to give my clients, but didn’t have the words for. It gave me a structure to help bring them to a greater sense of health, one that is actually sustainable for life.” Instead of being the type of health coach who cheers “let’s get that green smoothie on the table!” the Intuitive Eating framework has helped Rena address what’s really holding her clients back from living healthy lives.

More Than Just Food

Rena’s passion for her work is evident. “I see Intuitive Eating as life changing.” Through this method, Rena’s clients are not just overcoming their issues with food, they use Intuitive Eating tools to improve their marriages, their mothering, their work habits, and ultimately, their relationship with themselves. “It just ends up spilling over into every area of our life, and it’s no longer about the food,” Rena says.

Her approach to intuitive eating is refreshingly holistic. She emphasizes “listening to your body’s signals about what foods feel good, so you’re eating food to energize you and make you feel amazing, and you’re making choices in life that feel good and amazing, and no longer doing things that deplete you of energy, or eating foods that deplete you of energy.”

THE 10 PRINCIPLES OF INTUITIVE EATING

Reject the Diet Mentality

Honor Your Hunger

Make Peace with Food

Challenge the Food Police

Respect Your Fullness

Discover the Satisfaction Factor

Honor Your Feelings Without Using Food.

Respect Your Body

Exercise – Feel the Difference

Honor Your Health – Gentle Nutrition

www.intuitiveeating.com

Everyone starts out as an intuitive eater. Babies cry when hungry, and eat until comfortably full. When do we lose our way and stop listening to the natural mechanisms of hunger and satiation? “Oftentimes it happens from well-meaning parents,” Rena explains. We lose our natural body intuition when we are told “you have to finish what’s on your plate. You have to eat your vegetables. You can’t have dessert unless you finish eating. No you can’t have a snack now; it’s not the right time. You can’t be hungry, you ate enough.” In addition, comments about body image from adults who are constantly dieting or putting themselves down can also damage a child’s relationship to food.

In contrast to traditional therapy, coaching is very forward-focused. Still, Rena does do a minimal amount of digging with her clients to understand where their food issues originate.

When “Diet” is a 4-Letter Word

Why don’t diets work? Rena explains that diets don’t take into account the fact that we are human beings. “We’re not inanimate objects that just need the same thing all the time. We’re constantly changing; our energy needs are always fluctuating, as are our nutritional needs, especially as women. No one diet is able to really cater to everybody.” Though statistics show that diets are successful for a minimal 3-5% of the population, most dieters don’t experience long term maintained weight loss. She cautions, “There’s not some magical diet out there that you just haven’t discovered yet.”

Rena reveals the psychology behind the inefficacy of a diet: “When we

restrict ourselves from anything in this world, that’s when we want it even more. When we give ourselves unlimited permission to eat or do something, that’s when the desire for it goes down.” The hunger dieters experience from reduced calorie intake can create an obsession with food, and bring cravings for foods that are less nourishing. Restricting a specific food leads to the “forbidden fruit” mentality, and the diet inevitably backfires.

While many weight-loss programs are based on the notion that certain foods — namely sugar and white flour — are addictive and should thus be avoided, Rena doesn’t buy the claim. Despite the oft quoted brain imaging research revealing that sugar affects the brain in the same way as cocaine, Evelyn Tribole underscores that none of the studies on food addiction control for food restrictions. The current research ignores that dieting and restrictions trigger overeating.

Don’t Look at the Scale

Originally, many presented intuitive eating as a weight loss tool. However, when people are focused externally on weight, they are unable to truly listen to their bodies. Additionally, current research suggests that weight is a symptom of health problems, not the root cause.

Rena explains this with an example: “you wouldn’t give a smoker Crest Whitestrips to improve his yellow teeth. Once he stops smoking he will be healthier, whether or not his teeth whiten. The yellow teeth are a symptom, not the cause.” So too with an overweight person

with a heart disease, once they feel free around food and make healthy, nourishing choices, their health will improve whether or not they lose weight.

Why a Coach?

“In the shtetl,” Rena jokes, “it used to be that people had closer relationships with friends who they could open up to and be held accountable by.” In our frenetic world, a dedicated health coach like Rena can provide that listening ear. She is 100% focused on helping and guiding her clients. As an objective coach, she’s not afraid to say anything to her clients; it’s her job to push them to become the best version of themselves.

With clients ranging in age from age 17 to mid-60’s, Rena is starting a revolution in the Torah world, helping *frum* women bring the practice of intuitive eating into their lives. The goal is to be able to sit down with amazing food and to enjoy every bite of what you’re eating. “As Jews, food is a very central part of our lives,” Rena acknowledges, but she adds, “the food is there to *enhance* our *simchah*, as opposed to *being* the *simchah*.”

“The way we do one thing in life is usually the way we do everything else, so the way we relate to food is also the way we relate other things in our lives.” Through Rena’s work, her clients improve and elevate their relationship with something as mundane as food, and in turn, elevate their whole lives. 🏠

To find out more about Rena’s work and register for her free class, go to: www.mindovermunchies.com

