



FULL SPECTRUM EATING: A SUMMARY

Full Spectrum Eating is a road map designed to help people navigate through myriad techniques for eating and weight management and approach food in a straight-forward, easy-to-understand manner. It is a tool that can be used for healing from both eating disorders and disordered eating.

We all want the act of eating to be simple and pleasurable. At some point in history, it presumably was. Food was eaten and prepared by a community, and production and access to food was limited. But now we have so many choices—both in what to eat and in ways to eat—that our heads spin. We are urged to diet, then we are told to forget dieting; we're told to eat carbs one day, and to avoid them completely the next; protein is bad then presto, protein is OK again. An act that should be simple and pleasing is now, for many people, complex and distressing.

As a psychologist, I've spent more than 30 years helping people with eating disorders and weight management issues, and I've seen firsthand the pain they experience as they work to make sense of it all. I've seen people struggle as they try to tune into their own needs and desires, and watched them suffer shame or feelings of failure when they feel they can't do it, or it backfires.

In my quest to help my patients be less obsessed with eating approaches or diets and more focused on allowing themselves to benefit from whichever approach seems best for them, I've developed a concept I call Full Spectrum Eating. The idea is built on specific eating modes that I've observed in patients over the years, from Point 1 to Point 5. Here is a synopsis of each mode; people move without judgment to the mode or modes which are most beneficial for them.



Point 1: In this mode, the person's food plan is extremely limited and does not vary, through personal choice or imposition from the outside.

Point 2: Choices remain limited, but provide for more variation in diet than those of Point 1.

Point 3: A more balanced mode of eating, but still somewhat structured in terms of types and amounts of food choices.

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Point 4: In this mode, food choices are not limited, but some structure, such as a timetable for eating, can still be observed.

Point 5: A completely unstructured mode of eating, informed only by what and when the person feels like eating.

The crux of the Full Spectrum Eating concept is to recognize that making conscious choices about when and how to use the modes and learning when to move in and out of them can create a dramatic positive shift in one's approach to food.

For instance, when life is stressful, it can be soothing to move towards Point 2 or even Point 1, but this does not tend to work well for long-term use. As capacity to tune into needs and desires increases, less structured modes can be used, if desired, such as Points 4 and 5 eating. Point 3 eating provides a balance between structure and choice that many people find useful in facilitating a healthy relationship to food. At times, it can be helpful to work with a psychotherapist or registered dietician (it is best to work with practitioners who specialize in eating disorders and disordered eating) to facilitate applying these modes to your own situation.

Full Spectrum Eating does not tell you to eat more or less meat, more or fewer vegetables, or more or less anything. It simply allows you to approach eating in a flexible manner that supports psychological health and nutritional balance. It requires experimentation and practice, but with time and patience, clients come to trust their ability to move between the points and restore their ability to see food as a source of nourishment and pleasure.



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