

How Food Rules Complicate Our Relationship with Food:

Food rules are formed over time and can develop in various ways. It may be exposure to the pervasive diet mentality in society, growing up in a home where someone diets, being told by a coach to cut down on carbs in order to get lean and become faster/stronger, learned behavior that dessert is only allowed after dinner, your friend starting the keto diet and losing weight, etc.

Food rules and beliefs can invade our thought processes and then influence our behaviors. We may ruminate about the food rule, and as we do, use this rule to inform our behavior. Let's take for example, someone with the rule that they can only have bread once a day. They think about this all day, which only leads them to use their time and energy for holding out for bread until dinner, instead of for their studies and relationships. Once they eat the bread, they feel better and the thought isn't as pervasive in the short term. But, the next day it starts again. Now, what happens when that person has bread twice a day? They break their rule! Perhaps they went to a catered event with bread for lunch, and really wanted bread for dinner, too. They feel guilty after dinner, and say to themselves 'I won't have bread tomorrow to make up for this.' What problem could arise here? What could this thinking lead to?

Many times, food rules and beliefs become behaviors when people are undernourished and/or eating erratically. We know from research that when people are eating regularly, and adequately, they may have food rules/beliefs, but they are able to challenge them and decrease the propensity for them to turn into behaviors. Also, when someone eats more regularly, and adequately, their food beliefs and rules dissipate over time.

What Are Your Food Rules?

Rule : _____

Is this rule based on science? _____

When did this rule pop up in my life? _____

Does something trigger me to behave in line with this rule? _____

How is this rule helping me? _____

Not helping me? _____

Write down one challenging thought to this rule: _____