

INNER/OUTER WISDOM

For each of these items, please indicate how true each feels for you. Place a check in the column that best applies, using the scale to the right. The goal is not to have any number of inner or outer wisdom boxes checked. Rather, the goal is to reflect and see—what do you most depend on right now?

- 1 - never / not at all true for me
- 2 - rarely / only sort of true for me
- 3 - sometimes / somewhat true for me
- 4 - usually / pretty true for me
- 5 - almost always / very true for me

SIGNPOSTS OF STRONG OUTER WISDOM	1	2	3	4	5
I generally know how many calories are on my plate and in the foods that I'm eating.					
I pay attention to or track the macronutrients that I consume in my meals.					
I know a lot about nutrition and dieting science, and I stay up to date on new health trends or research.					
I like to learn about and try out new diets.					
I eat certain foods in an effort to be healthy, and I intentionally don't eat other foods or food groups because I've learned they're unhealthy.					
I trust certain health experts and turn to them for health advice.					
I follow a specific meal plan and/or meal prep regularly.					

SIGNPOSTS OF STRONG INNER WISDOM	1	2	3	4	5
I am in touch with my emotions, and I know how to recognize and name them.					
I have healthy emotional coping mechanisms (i.e., journaling, therapy, art, rest, support network, etc.).					
I am aware of my emotional eating triggers.					
I tune in to my body to assess my hunger before, during, and after a meal.					
I stop eating when I'm full, and sometimes I end up leaving food on my plate.					
I take my time while eating, and I enjoy the flavors and textures of my food.					
I give myself permission to eat unhealthy foods without anxiety, in the amounts that taste and feel good to me at the time.					

SIGNPOSTS OF DISCONNECTION BETWEEN OUTER & INNER WISDOM	1	2	3	4	5
I struggle to manage my stress and my emotions, and I'm often stressed out.					
I regularly turn to food for comfort or as a reward.					
I rely on food rules and diet rules to keep me on track.					
I tend to eat fast and with many distractions.					
I eat until my plate is empty.					
I regularly overeat, and I don't realize I'm full until it's too late.					
When I eat certain 'bad' or unhealthy foods, I fall into an "I've blown it" mentality that leads me to binge.					
I try to compensate for what I've eaten with exercise, and/or I reward myself with treats or extra calories after a hard workout.					



Inner/Outer Wisdom

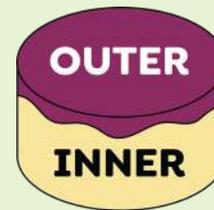
Did you learn anything about yourself during this exercise?



Cake without frosting is still cake—there's structure, & it's tasty! This is inner wisdom.



Frosting is outer wisdom. Frosting without the cake can be consumed—but it has no structure on its own, and it's easy to overdo it on sweetness.



We need the cake as a foundation to really balance out the frosting. Cake can go without frosting, but frosting isn't much without a cake!

A few years ago, I completely depended on outer wisdom. I had plenty of nutrition education, and I valued science and expert opinions—but I didn't know what inner wisdom was. When people would say “listen to your body,” I understood in theory, but didn't know how to practice it. ***I was perpetually stressed*** and didn't know how to manage it. My main coping mechanism was over-using exercise. I relied on food for comfort, often eating fast, and then over-eating, only to realize I was uncomfortably full when it was “too late.” I would eat according to external cues—like whether or not food was in front of me. I cleared my plate, regardless of my hunger levels, because I thought that's what I was supposed to do. I didn't think about hunger or fullness as “signals” from my body. In fact, all of the dieting I did made me think, for some reason, that I should not be hungry! I felt safe with dieting and rules, though, and ***had a lot of fears around food***—especially “unhealthy” foods. Categorizing foods as “good” and “bad,” ***my pendulum was constantly swinging*** back and forth between bingeing and restricting, anytime I “blew it.” I was always waiting for the next Monday to start my new diet over again.

It wasn't until I established a foundation of inner wisdom that I was able to make a meaningful change. I got in touch with my emotions and emotional eating triggers, and ***developed healthy coping mechanisms*** instead of turning to food to fill an emotional hunger. I finally learned how to practice listening to my body with meditation and mindfulness, and learned how to tune into my inner wisdom of hunger and fullness, or what foods brought me joy.

I know, all of this may seem unrelated to physical health. But the truth is, ***our minds and bodies are connected—physiologically!*** That's what stress is—our mental and emotional stress affects us physically, and we need to give time and attention to all three of those parts of us in order to achieve true health and wellness.

As you reflect on your own experience, remember that there is no scoring at all, and ***there is no “right” or “wrong” answer*** with this practice. It is merely an opportunity to get to know yourself and meet yourself where you are now. If you notice and find you're not as connected with your inner wisdom as you'd like, consider building up your toolbox in these areas! I'll be sharing many tools to help connect with this inner wisdom more deeply in the coming days and weeks.

