



Food & Body Neutrality Community Guide

SHE RECOVERS

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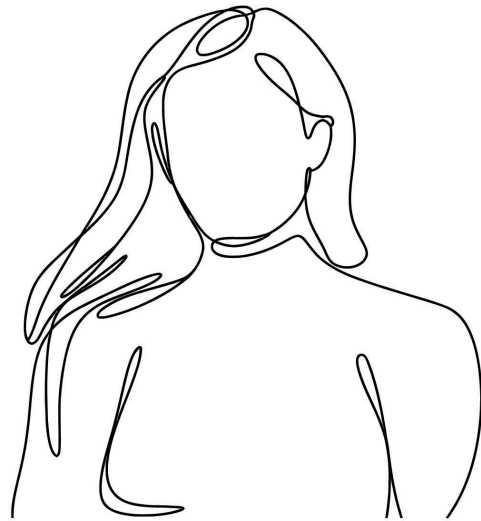
This guide offers shared language and principles for food and body neutrality in SHE RECOVERS spaces.

It's a tool to help us practice talking about food and bodies more inclusively — inspired by the [SHE RECOVERS Food & Body Philosophy](#).

We recognize that people have different relationships with food, movement, health, (dis)ability, aging, and their bodies.

And, we do not tell people what they should eat, how they should move, what recovery path they should follow, or how to identify.

What we do ask is that community members **share their experiences in ways that reduce harm to others**, are mindful of collective well-being, and create a greater sense of belonging for everyone.



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Why This Matters

At SHE RECOVERS, we believe recovery belongs to everyBODY.

Our [Food & Body Neutrality Philosophy](#) was created in response to individuals who shared that conversations that included diet culture and body hierarchy were making it difficult for them to feel welcome, supported, and included in recovery spaces.

Such conversations can reinforce shame, fear, and comparison and lead folks back into patterns of disordered eating, self-harm, and more.

Asking everyone to practice food and body neutrality is an act of community care that helps lessen the harmful effects of diet culture and body hierarchy in our spaces and beyond.

We Prioritize the Most Vulnerable

As a trauma-informed, recovery-focused, weight-inclusive, and fat-positive organization, we have adopted food and body neutrality to counteract the effects of diet culture and body hierarchy and prioritize those in our community most likely to be negatively impacted.

This includes people recovering from:

- Anorexia nervosa
- Bulimia nervosa
- Orthorexia
- Avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder
- Binge eating disorder/compulsive eating
- Chronic dieting/diet culture
- Body dysmorphic disorder
- Body shame/grief
- Weight stigma and anti-fat bias
- Body-based negative self-image & lack of self-worth

Language We Avoid in Our Community Spaces

To support a welcoming, inclusive, and recovery-supportive environment, **we ask participants to avoid speaking about:**

- Intentional weight loss
- Weight gain
- Clothing sizes
- Calorie counts
- Diet plans & programs
- Fasting, cleansing, detoxes & food restriction practices
- Eliminating specific foods
- Labeling foods as good, bad, clean, unhealthy, junk, toxic, or cheat meals
- Fear-based, health-related food & body claims
- Before & after narratives
- Your own or another person's body size or appearance
- Promoting a certain body type as a measure of recovery, health, or worth

This includes statements that may unintentionally reinforce food fear, food rules, restrictive behaviors, or body hierarchy.

Before sharing, consider:

Could my share
be activating for
someone recovering
from disordered eating?

Am I centering food,
weight, or appearance
instead of my feelings?

Could my share
invoke shame or further
perpetuate anti-fat bias
or weight stigma?

Am I sharing in a way that fosters a greater sense of inclusion or discrimination?

Could my share create comparison or reinforce hierarchy?

Am I describing my experience or prescribing a solution?

Why Food Is Different

You may wonder why we might support conversations about **abstinence** from alcohol or other substances and/or behaviors while asking participants to avoid discussions about food restriction.

The fundamental difference is that food is essential for survival—we cannot abstain from it.

Unlike alcohol, other substances, and/or behaviors, **escalating food restriction can become physically dangerous and, in some cases, life-threatening.**

Recovery from food and/or body-related life experiences often involves challenging food fears, dismantling rigid food rules, questioning beliefs that uphold the thin ideal and other body hierarchies that shape how we see ourselves and others, and rebuilding trust in both our bodies and ways of eating.

For someone seeking to repair their relationship with food, conversations about fasting, cleansing, detoxing, eliminating foods, avoiding certain foods, or restricting intake can reinforce the very thoughts and behaviors they are working to recover from.

SHE RECOVERS, and those who steward our spaces honor all recovery pathways and patchworks, and we know the language of those pathways varies.

All we ask is that community members adapt the way they speak about food and bodies in our shared spaces.

We aren't asking anyone to abandon their personal framework, only to keep language about food and bodies neutral, out of consideration for those most vulnerable.

Food Morality, Body Hierarchy, and Food Fear

Many of us have been taught to think about **food and bodies through a lens of judgment, control, and fear.**

Food morality assigns value or virtue to certain foods while attaching shame, guilt, or failure to others.

Body hierarchy is the belief that certain bodies are more worthy, healthy, acceptable, or deserving of belonging than others.

Food fear occurs when foods become associated with danger, illness, loss of control, or personal wrongdoing.

These beliefs can show up unintentionally when sharing and still reinforce food fears, inflexible food rules, restrictive thinking, or body control.



For Individuals Struggling

If you are currently experiencing urges related to disordered eating or body distress, you are not alone, and your feelings are valid.

When sharing in this community, we encourage you to focus on the emotions and needs beneath the urge rather than the specific details of the behaviors or thoughts.

Instead of sharing details about restriction, compensatory behaviors, or specific body-focused anxieties, **consider using language that centers your well-being, such as:**

“I am feeling really vulnerable and need some extra support today.”

“I’m having a hard time grounding myself and could use some encouragement.”

“I’m noticing some old patterns coming up and am looking for connection, not advice.”

By focusing on your need for support rather than the mechanics of the struggle, you help keep our space supportive and inclusive for everyone.

If you find yourself needing to process the specific details of your struggle, we encourage you to reach out to a trusted professional or dedicated support person within your recovery network.

SHE RECOVERS has curated a list of food- and body-related resources aligned with the [Food & Body Neutrality Philosophy](#), as well as professional support in the [Trusted Resources Directory](#).



Neutral Examples of Sharing

We can absolutely talk about food and body recovery in our spaces; we just need to be mindful of how we talk about it.

Using neutral language such as:

“Since having a child, I don’t feel at home in my body anymore. I’m trying to be gentle with myself, but it’s hard.”

“I have a pattern. When I get home from work, I binge. And after that, I feel uncomfortable. I’m looking into why I do that.”

“Part of my recovery is nourishing myself and noticing when and what I eat. Another part is accepting my body just as it is.”

“I’m pretty athletic and have always exercised, but after exploring SHE RECOVERS Yoga and Dance, I have expanded my repertoire to include embodied movement modalities that nourish my mind and spirit too.”

Other examples:

Instead of saying:

“I’ve cut certain foods out of my diet.”

Consider saying something like:

“I’ve been exploring what helps me feel nourished.”

Instead of saying:

"I need to lose weight."

Consider saying something like:

"I am struggling to feel at home in my body."

Instead of saying:

"I don't eat sugar."

Consider saying something like:

"I am eating in a way that feels supportive for me right now."

Instead of saying:

"I feel ashamed for eating that."

Consider saying something like:

"I am trying not to judge myself for what I eat, but it is hard."

Instead of saying:

"I binged on ice cream"

Consider saying something like:

"Last night, I binged. I am struggling to see what led up to that episode. I can't feel my true hunger or fullness cues."

Instead of saying:

"I need more self-control."

Consider saying something like:

"I am feeling overwhelmed and looking for more helpful ways to cope."



Looking Beneath the Story

Food and body concerns are often **expressions of deeper recovery experiences.**

When appropriate, we invite curiosity around questions such as:

What am I
trying to soothe?

What am I afraid of?

What am I grieving?

What need
is going unmet?

What story
have I learned
about my worth?

What am I
trying to control?

What am I restricting
from my life?

What feels
vulnerable right now?

What am I longing for
more of?

What support
do I need?

These questions often lead us closer to the heart of our recovery than conversations about food, weight, or appearance.

Expectations

We do not expect perfection.

We do ask for curiosity, compassion, accountability, and a willingness to learn.

You do not need to agree with every aspect of the SHE RECOVERS Food & Body Neutrality Philosophy to participate in our community.

We simply ask that you respect our shared commitment to co-creating inclusive spaces of belonging that support the needs of those most vulnerable to harm.

If you are still unsure whether something you want to share aligns with the SHE RECOVERS Food & Body Neutrality Philosophy, we encourage you to further the conversation by reaching out to a member of your recovery support network such as a therapist or mentor.



Resources

- SHE RECOVERS Food & Body Neutrality Philosophy
<https://sherecovers.org/food-body-neutrality/>
- Trusted Resources directory
<https://sherecovers.org/trusted-resources/>

Together, we can create recovery spaces where everyBODY feels connected, supported, empowered, and worthy of belonging.

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