

RECOVERY SESSION:

FLEXIBLE EATING



DISCLAIMER

This resource is a living document and is open to change. It was created by students from within the Body Brave community and may not be fully representative of the spectrum of experience. If you have any suggestions to improve this resource or lived experiences that you don't see represented here, please email us at info@bodybrave.ca.

WHAT IS FLEXIBLE EATING

Spontaneity and flexibility are important components in nutritional recovery because it allows your relationship with food to be more natural. Spontaneous and flexible eating means allowing yourself foods that you haven't planned for or doing things that involve eating moments, unexpectedly. Spontaneity in eating patterns allows people to socially integrate more freely and respond to unforeseen situations, which helps in sustaining recovery for the long term.

However, increasing food spontaneity and flexibility is not one of the immediate goals of recovery. Most often, increasing flexibility is addressed further along in recovery once other nutrition priorities are addressed.

NUTRITION PRIORITIES AND THE 'RAVES' MODEL

RAVES is an acronym that describes eating principles that are integral to the development and maintenance of a positive relationship with food. The RAVES model was developed by Dietitian, Shane Jeffrey. The goal of the RAVES model is to bring eating patterns back to the basics, without dietary rules, and to support overall health and a positive relationship with food. In order of priority, the principles are:

1. **Regularity**
 2. **Adequacy**
 3. **Variety**
 4. **Eating Socially & Mindfully**
 5. **Spontaneity & Flexibility**
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RAVES MODEL

Regularity

Regular eating moments help to improve digestion and gut function, keep blood sugar levels stable throughout the day, and fuel the body to perform necessary functions. Regular eating patterns can be highly individual but are generally characterized by:

- 3-6 eating moments per day (e.g., 3 meals and 1-3 snacks).
- Spacing eating moments no more than 3-4 hours apart

Adequacy

Once a regular pattern of eating has been established, we look at ensuring eating patterns are adequate. Adequacy consists of two main components:

- All food groups are included (e.g., grains and starches, meat and alternatives, dairy and alternatives, fruits and veggies, fats and spreads, desserts/sweets)
- Enough foods are being consumed from across the food groups in an appropriate quantity to meet requirements

While regularity and adequacy support physical health and wellbeing, they may not necessarily support emotional health and wellbeing. An individual could essentially meet nutritional requirements by eating just one food from each food group if enough was consumed. However, it is important to honor the pleasurable functions of food, including taste, and social and cultural connectedness, and food availability. These quality-of-life elements are addressed by the V, E, and S of the RAVES model.

Variety

All food has its place in a healthy diet and maintaining variety among food choices reinforces this. Variety sets a platform for eating socially, challenges the need for dietary rules, assists in reducing dichotomous thinking surrounding food, and recognizes the changing availability of foods.

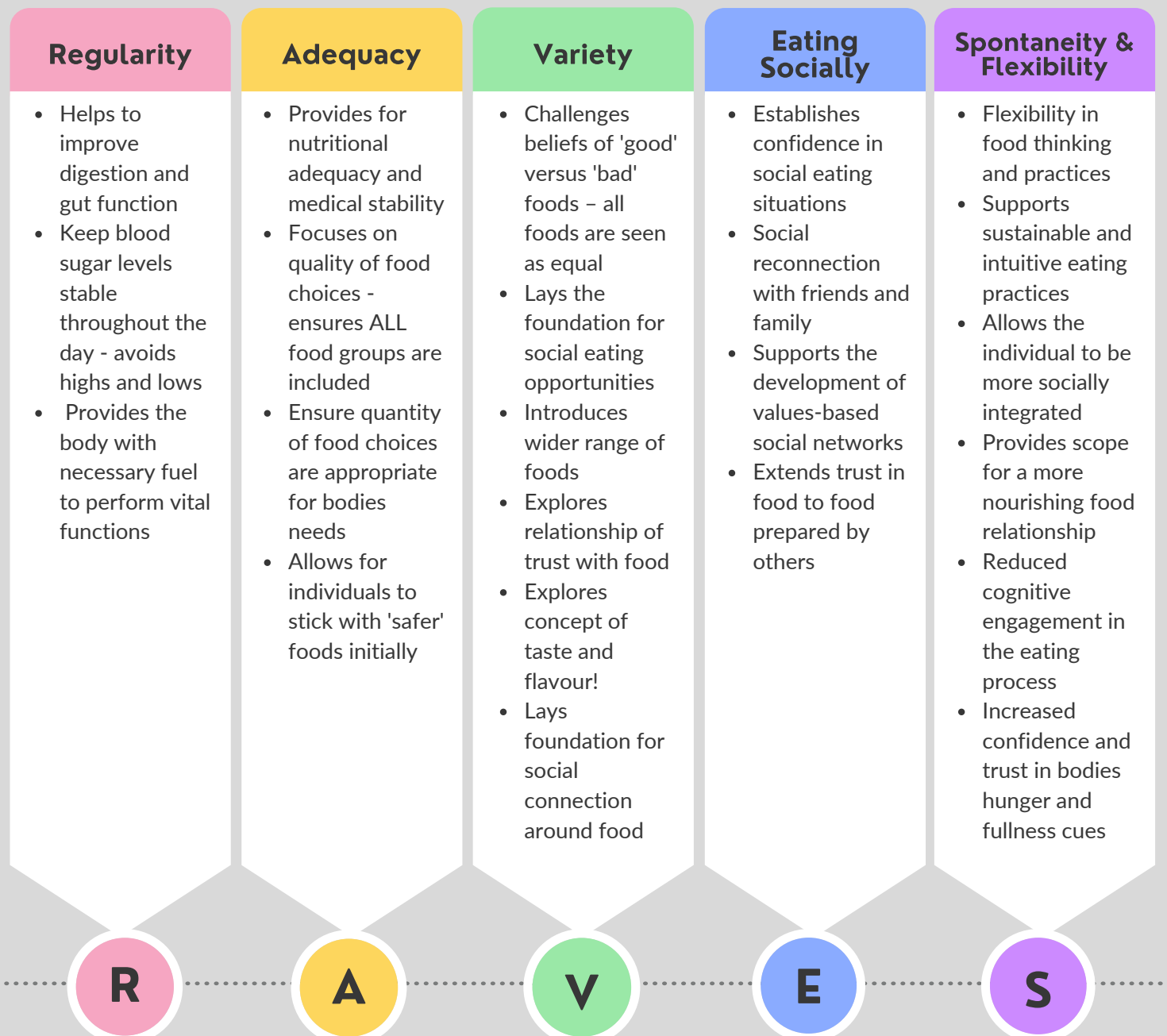
Eating Socially and Mindfully

This element of the RAVES model is integral to enhancing satisfaction, connectedness, and enjoyment surrounding eating occasions. Eating socially and mindfully also allows enjoyment of foods people may not prepare at home, encourages enjoyment of celebrations and social events involving food, supports sustainability in dietary change, challenges social isolation and eating concerns, and encourages people to value the many aspects of an eating experience.

Spontaneity and Flexibility

Spontaneity and flexible eating allow people to engage with the body's intuition and innate wisdom. This principle challenges many external messages about food and nutrition in modern society. Spontaneity and flexibility accommodate for uncertainty, allow unplanned activities and meals, respect the dynamic nature of food choices and eating patterns.

The final and arguably most important component is **self-compassion**. Each step of the process is underpinned by the notion that individuals should strive to take care of themselves as they would a friend or loved one. Practice self-care, rather than self-control.



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★ Time to Reflect:

Take time to reflect on where you are in your recovery journey. What letter in the RAVES model do identify with most at this point in time?

★ Time to Reflect:

What would incorporating 'flexibility' in eating moments look like for you right now?

A NOTE ON RECOVERY FROM THE BODY BRAVE TEAM

Often, recovery is a daily practice of a million little things combined, it's an unraveling of conscious and unconscious beliefs around diet culture messaging. It's learning new ways and unlearning old ways, of how to cope and navigate uncomfortable thoughts and emotions that affect life in so many ways.

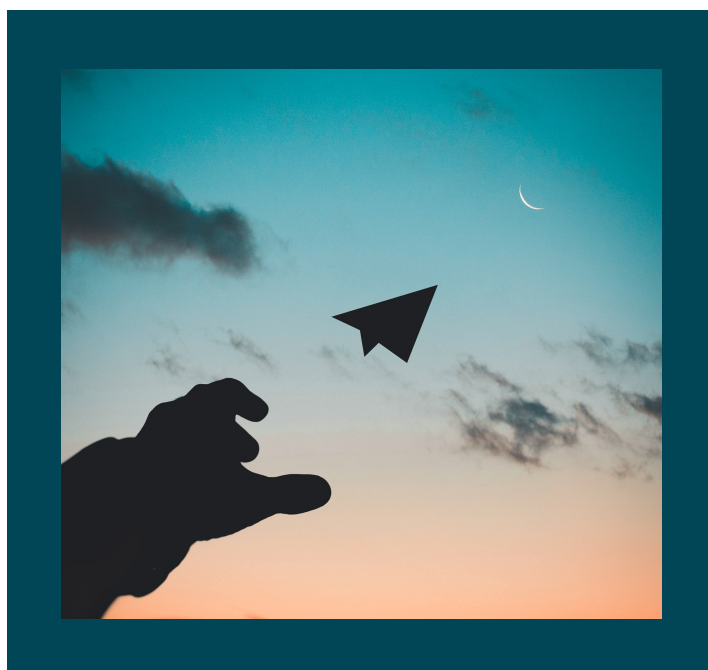
It's a combination of experimenting with small goals, trying out various techniques and coping strategies to see what does and does NOT, work. It's making teeny tiny baby steps one at a time, and slowly finding things that keep us on a path toward rebuilding our relationship with food and body.

It's consciously practicing self-compassion and giving yourself permission to readjust goals that don't work out. It's recognizing that figuring out what doesn't work, is just as valuable as learning what does.

And over time, it's leaning into the unknown, being flexible not just with our eating patterns, but in how we navigate life.

"When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it"

-Henry Ford



FURTHER LEARNING

Podcasts

Food Psych with Christy Harrison

A podcast about intuitive eating, body image, and diet culture to help challenge restrictive dieting behaviors and learn some useful body-confidence strategies along the way.

The Body Image Podcast with Corrine Dobbas, MS, RD

The Body Image Podcast is a podcast about body image and the many layers that go into making peace with our bodies. Like intuitive eating, self-compassion, mental health, self-care, body and size acceptance, embodiment, rejecting diet culture, and more.

The Recovery Warrior Show

A podcast dedicated to boosting the emotional intelligence and resilience of people struggling with depression, anxiety and eating disorders.

People to follow:

- [@bodybravecanada](#) - Body Brave
- [@encouragingdietitian](#) - Christyna, MS, RDN, LDN
- [@breadbhavandbeyond](#) - Bhavin Mistry,
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