"Healthy Eating"...
what does it really mean?

A lot of the time, "healthy eating" is used to define what we "should" and "shouldn't" eat – often with the goal of losing weight. When "healthy eating" is thought of in this way, we start to label food as "good" or "bad."

In reality, there is no such thing as a "good food" or a "bad food." **All foods fit into healthy eating.** But it can be hard to believe this when you are unhappy with your weight or shape. It can be hard to believe this when only some foods seem "safe" or if you are worried about losing control of your eating.

If you have been experiencing negative thoughts about your body or your relationship with food feels challenging, we have some information resources to share with you. A lot of these use the words "eating disorder"– but, you don't need to be diagnosed with an eating disorder to benefit from some information about feeling better in your body and nourishing yourself.

Healthy eating means eating enough to meet your body's needs, and feeling comfortable in a variety of situations that involve food.

Adequate nourishment helps us to:

- Connect with other people
- Feel good about choices to support our wellbeing
- Feel more emotionally steady
- Be more confident about our decisions
- Avoid falling into cycles of eating too little, then eating a lot, to the point of over-fullness
- Have the energy to participate in the activities we love
- Think more clearly in school and work
- Start to believe that maybe we and our bodies really are okay as we are

Healthy eating is regular eating

While the meaning of regular eating varies among people, some general guidelines are:
- Eating 3 meals throughout the day, with at least 2-3 snacks in between
- Not going extended periods of time (more than 3-4 hours) without eating
- Including some satisfying, energy-dense food in each meal

Regular eating fuels your brain and muscles and it helps keep your energy levels stable. **All these things help you engage fully in your day-to-day activities and do the things you love!**

Healthy eating also involves balance and variety

Balanced eating means choosing foods from all food groups.

This looks like not limiting yourself to certain groups and not unnecessarily avoiding others. All foods can be part of balanced eating.	Eating foods from different food groups helps us meet our needs for the many nutrients that are essential for our health	Exploring new flavours and adding different colours to your plate could be a way to add variety to your meals and snacks	Eating socially with family and friends is also a part of our day-to-day activities, eating socially can provide opportunities to share and try new foods

How to get started?

Working on all these tips at the same time may feel challenging--choosing one can be a good place to start.
- Some people find it helpful to set a schedule and use an alarm or an agenda to remind you that it is time for a meal or a snack
- Planning ahead can also be helpful to ensure you have available a variety of snack and meal options as well as your go-to foods
- Working with those around you for support could help you identify goals on a timeline that is appropriate for you. **You are not alone!** We strongly recommend working with a dietitian to determine your individual needs. If helpful, your FREED champion can support connecting you to a dietitian.

Remember, be gentle with yourself and work with those who support you to create and revisit your goals to meet you where you are at.