What is Natural Eating?

- Natural eating allows your body to return to your normal weight and maintain it.
- Natural eating includes at least three meals daily.
- Natural eating means planning balanced meals.
  - A balanced meal includes:
    1. Dairy (milk, yogurt, cheese, etc.)
    2. Meat or meat alternative
    3. Grain or starch
    4. Fruit and/or vegetable
    5. An additional source of fat
- Natural eating is pleasurable. Use seasonings, sauces, dressings, sugar, and salt to enhance the flavor of foods.
- Natural eating leads to hunger at 3-5 hour intervals through the day. You eat when you are hungry and stop eating when you feel neutral. Meal size is regulated by internal feelings unrelated to how much food is available or how much food you think you should eat.
- Natural eating can include snacking. Snacks are in response to hunger and are small enough that they do not interfere with regular meals. Although they are small, snacks still need to be satisfying. Include carbohydrate, protein, and fat; for example, peanut butter and crackers.
- Natural eating includes overeating and undereating. Overeating happens to everyone sometimes and is not about your strength of character or lack of will. It simply feels uncomfortable. On the other hand, undereating is not something you plan for or celebrate as a victory. Your discomfort signals that you are not getting enough food.
- Natural eating is flexible. It allows you to adjust to the different needs of each day.
- Natural eating gives you the energy to do the things you want to do.

Adapted with permission from Karen Creswell, MS, RD.