



Reclaiming Challenge Foods

Body Brave
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Content Warning

Please note that the visuals and examples that we share during this presentation cover a wide variety of foods.

We have chosen to include this content to normalize that all foods can fit and that there are no "good" and "bad" foods.

You may be at a place in your recovery where thinking about or seeing visuals of certain foods is triggering. We encourage you to take care of yourself and reach out for support as needed.

Agenda

Land Acknowledgement

Learning Objectives

Non-Diet Approach

Understanding Challenge Foods

The Importance of Reclaiming Challenge Foods


Step-by-Step Guide

Other Ideas and Tips

Concluding Thoughts



Land Acknowledgement

A top-down view of a dark-colored bowl filled with white, fluffy popcorn. The popcorn is piled high and fills most of the bowl. The background is a light, speckled surface.

Learning Objectives

Understand what challenge foods are and identify some of your challenge foods.

Learn the importance of reclaiming challenge foods.

Learn about a step-by-step approach for gradually reclaiming challenge foods.

The Non-Diet Approach

- Based on Health at Every Size[®] (HAES) principles and framework
- Eating for wellbeing and a positive relationship with food
- Weight-inclusive
- The non-diet approach isn't just for those recovering from eating disorders or disordered eating, it can benefit many people!



What are challenge foods?

- Avoided, feared, threatening, 'bad,' scary, trigger... Foods that hold **POWER**
- Often trigger an emotional response
- Trigger disordered eating thoughts and/or behaviours
- They can be foods you eat regularly, foods you avoid completely, or foods you eat occasionally
- Challenge foods are different from food preferences and foods that aren't well tolerated by your body/trigger a reaction that isn't supportive of your wellbeing





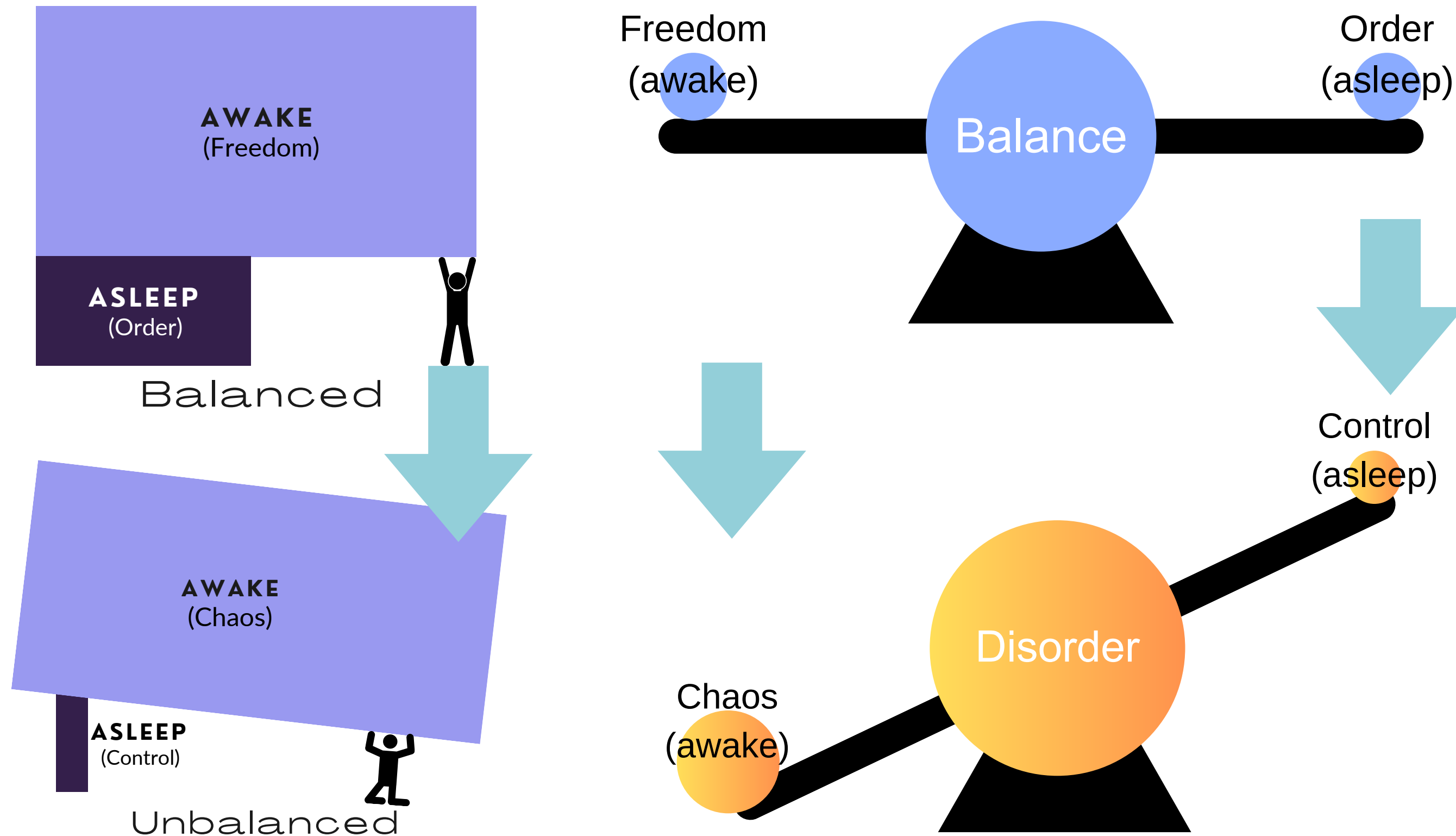
Take a moment to reflect...
What are your challenge foods?

Why Challenge Foods Exist

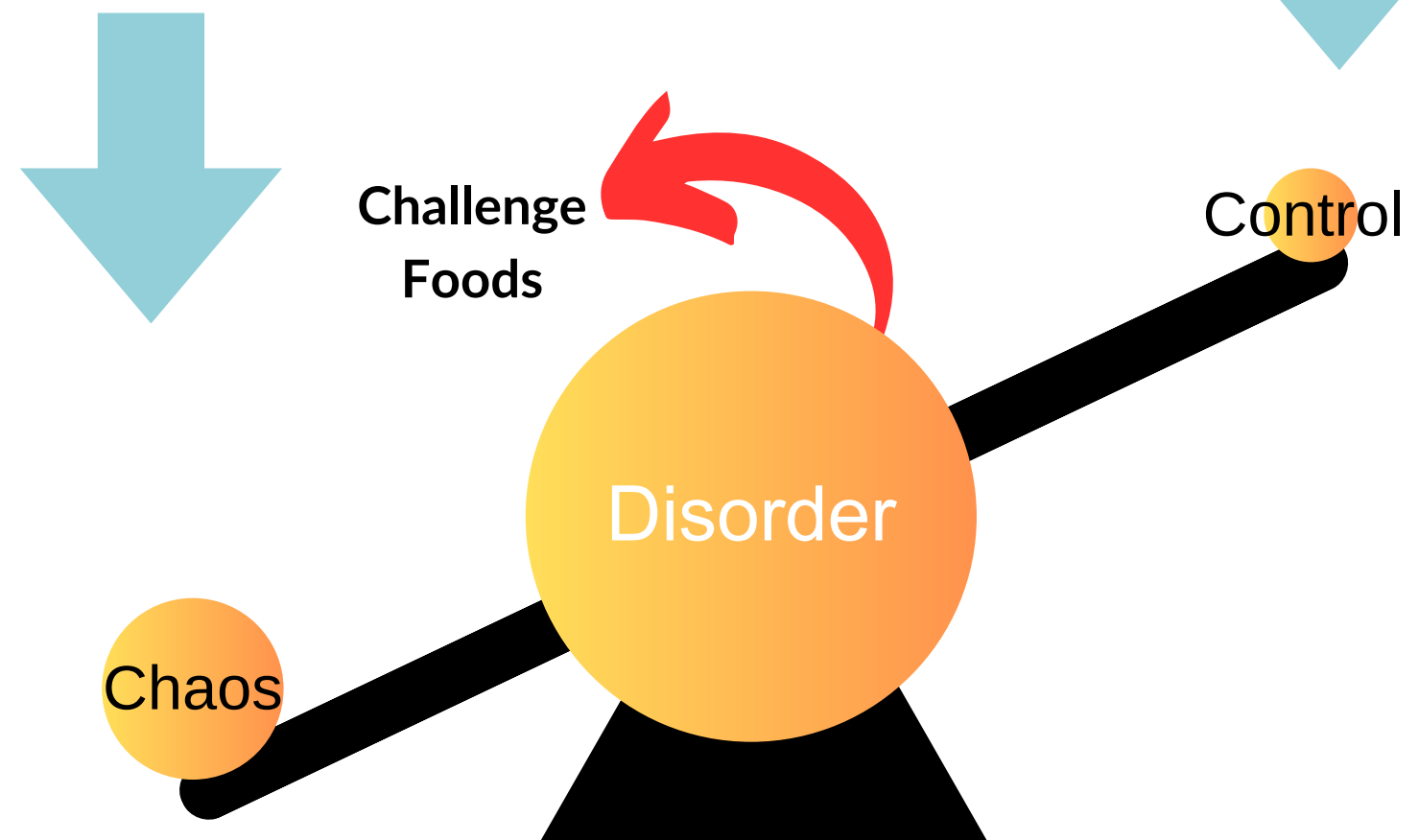
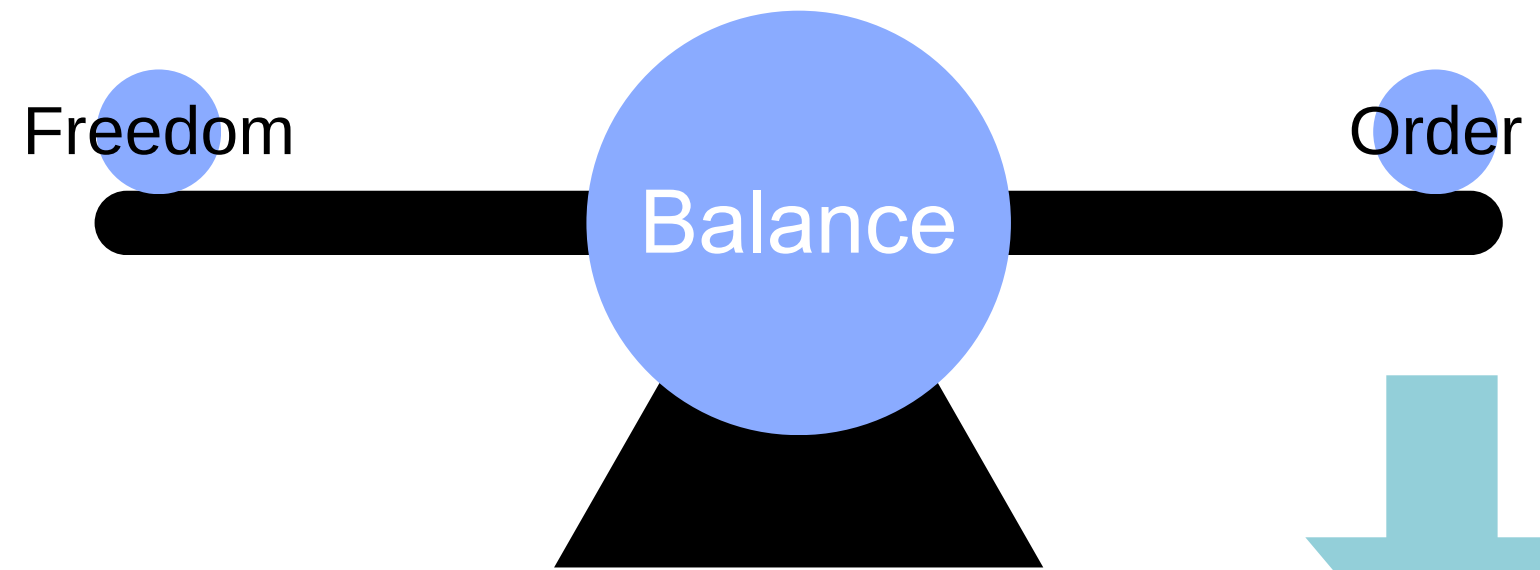
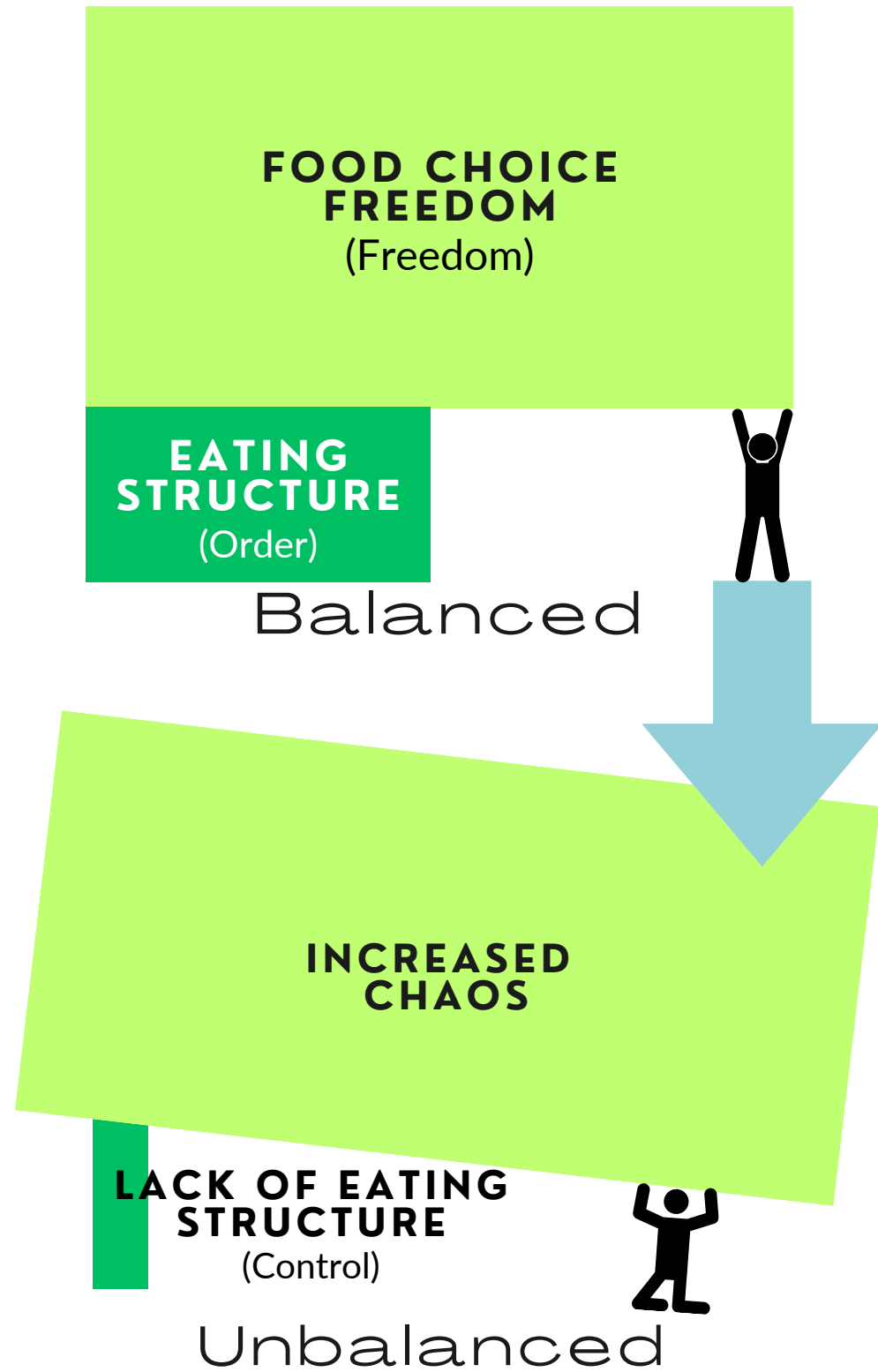
- A struggle for balance between conflicting forces
- Battling extreme thinking
- Need to overcome the “out of control” feeling and/or the extreme anxiety / fear
- Navigate the fight from “chaos and control” to “freedom and order”



Context for Challenge Foods

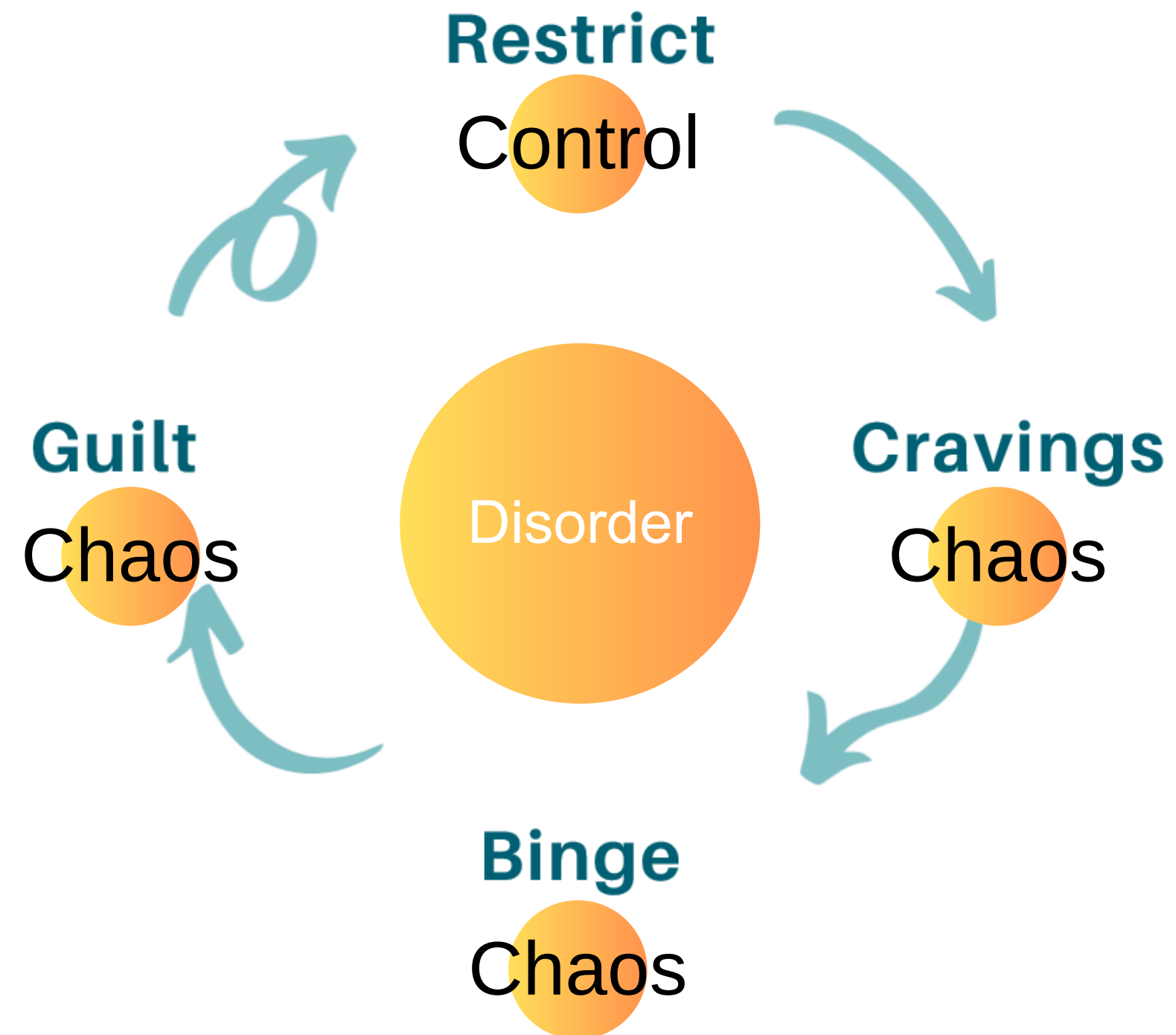


Context for Challenge Foods

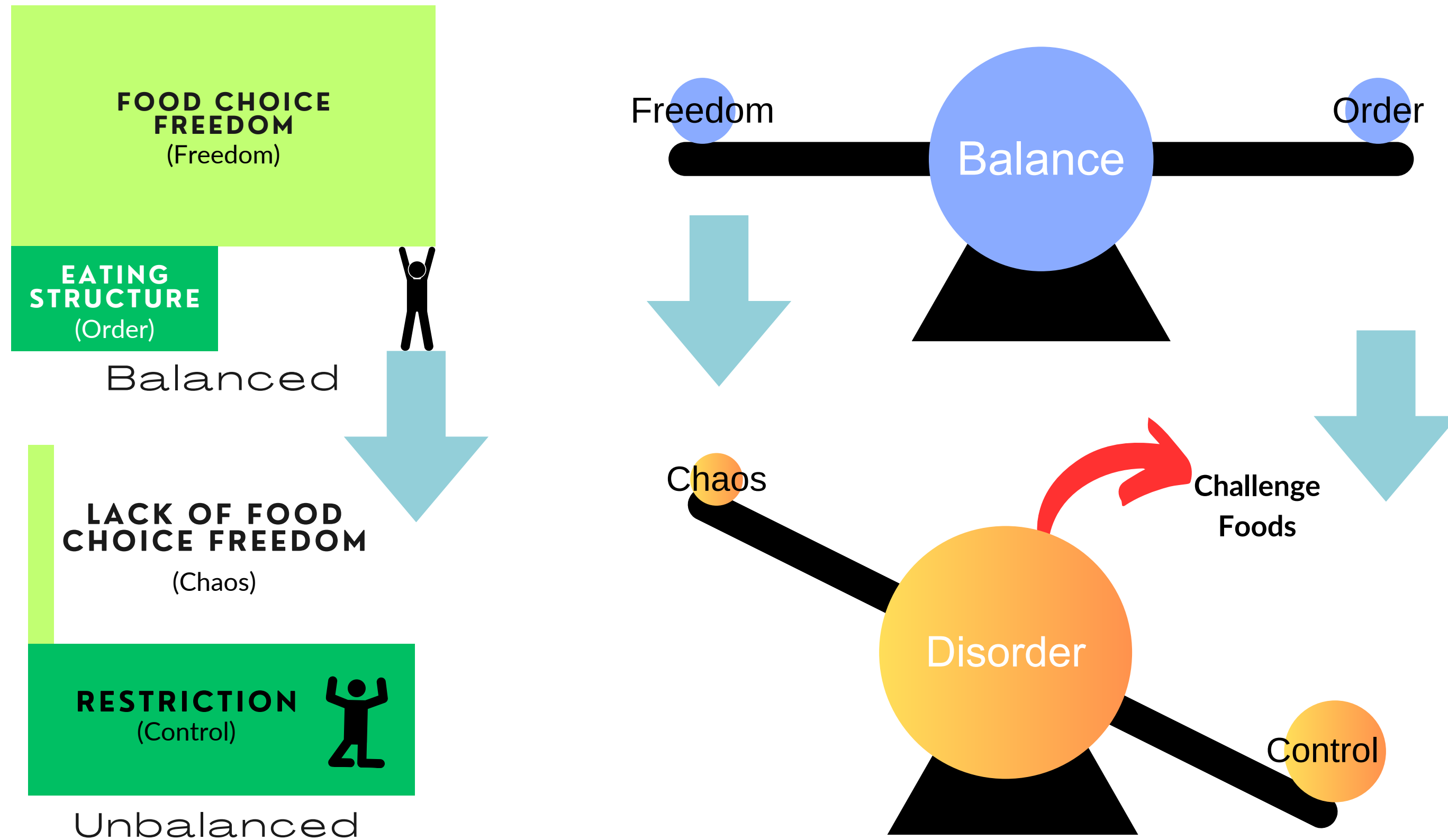


Context for Challenge Foods

The Binge-Restrict Cycle mirrors this as well!



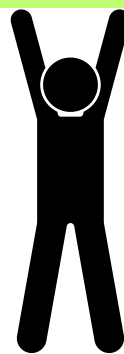
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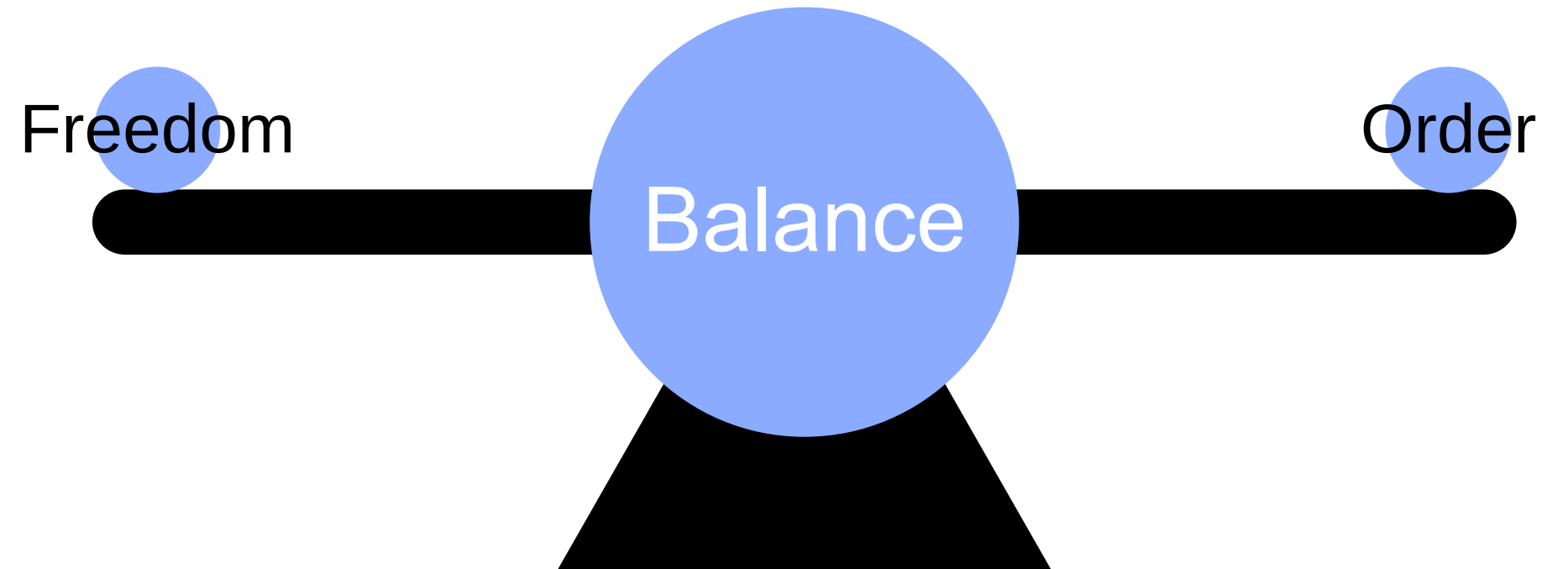
Context for Challenge Foods

**FOOD CHOICE
FREEDOM**
(Freedom)

**EATING
STRUCTURE**
(Order)



Balanced



Balance will bring about a healthy
relationship with food

Why Reclaim Challenge Foods?

- Restriction of certain foods limits **variety**
 - Increases risk of inadequate intake and nutrient deficiencies
- Increases likelihood of continued disordered behaviors
 - Increased food preoccupation
 - Activation of the binge-restrict cycle
- Can impact ability to maintain social relationships and enjoy food in social settings



Our Approach to Nutrition Priorities During Recovery

Phase 1

Regularity

- Helps to improve digestion and gut function
- Keep blood sugar levels stable throughout the day - avoids highs and lows
- Provides the body with necessary fuel to perform vital functions

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

- Provides for nutritional adequacy and medical stability
- Focuses on quality of food choices - ensures ALL food groups are included
- Ensure quantity of food choices are appropriate for bodies needs
- Allows for individuals to stick with 'safer' foods initially

As a general guideline:

- Aim for 3 or more food groups at larger eating moments (i.e., meals)

Variety

- Challenges beliefs of 'good' versus 'bad' foods - all foods are seen as equal
- Lays the foundation for social eating opportunities
- Introduces wider range of foods
- Explores relationship of trust with food
- Explores concept of taste and flavour!
- Lays foundation for social connection around food

Eating Socially

- Establishes confidence in social eating situations
- Social reconnection with friends and family
- Supports the development of values-based social networks
- Extends trust in food to food prepared by others

Spontaneity & Flexibility

- Flexibility in food thinking and practices
- Supports sustainable and intuitive eating practices
- Allows the individual to be more socially integrated
- Provides scope for a more nourishing food relationship
- Reduced cognitive engagement in the eating process
- Increased confidence and trust in bodies hunger and fullness cues

Phase 2

R

A

V

E

S

When should you reclaim challenge foods?

Phase 1

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Phase 2

Begin to reclaim once in phase 2

R

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Reclaiming Challenge Foods

- Neutralizing the power held by the food
- This can take time! Some foods will be easier to reclaim than others, and that's ok!
- Often achieved through:
 - Exposures
 - Habituation
 - Unconditional Permission
 - Shifting the narrative around challenge foods
- Trying out a challenge food as an experiment
- Important to break it down into small steps



If the eating disorder voice says...	Try responding with a nutrition affirmation like...
<p>“X food is bad” or “X food contains too much/too little of Y”</p>	<p>“There are no good and bad foods-food has no morality.” “All foods provide my body with energy.”</p>
<p>“If I eat X food, then my body will change...”</p>	<p>“I am more than the food I eat.” “I don’t have to love my body to nourish it.”</p>
<p>“I should have X instead of Y because...”</p>	<p>“Any food is better than no food.” “All foods provide my body with energy.” “I can eat well without eating ‘perfectly.’”</p>

Step-by-step guide to reclaiming one challenge food at a time

1. Are you eating enough food regularly?
 - If yes, move on. If no, focus on the basics of structured eating first
2. What foods hold power? AKA what are your challenge foods?
 - Do a brain dump! Write them down
3. Next, identify what foods have more or less power
 - Order them from easiest to hardest, or give each a rating score from 1-10, or divide them into 2-3 categories based on difficulty. Consider why each food is important for you to reclaim.



Step-by-step guide to reclaiming one challenge food at a time

4. Pick 1 food from your list to work on normalizing
 - Consider starting with a food that is ranked lower in terms of difficulty
 - Break it down into smaller steps as needed
 - Consider: what are you afraid will happen in eating this food? What could go well?
5. Plan out how you are going to test this prediction
 - Consider all variables –specifically what will the food be and how are you acquiring it, who will be involved, where will you eat the food, when will this take place, etc.
 - Consider what you will need to take care of yourself after having the experiment with the challenge food. Have a plan for how you will navigate any emotions that come up or ED thoughts/behaviours.



Step-by-step guide to reclaiming one challenge food at a time

6. Have the food!

- How were you feeling? What was helpful about the experience? What wasn't so helpful? What could you try differently next time?

7. Offer yourself lots of compassion after having the food and use strategies you identified in step 5 to take care of yourself.

8. Continue to find opportunities to normalize the food until you feel the power has been dismantled.

- Repeat the goal with a few tweaks based on what you learned, or try changing a variable (example, change the location, or change the size or amount of the food)





Other ideas and tips

- Pair a challenge food with a food that feels safer/has already been reclaimed.
- Consider meal support
- Work on reframing the way you talk about food –get rid of labels such as ‘good’ or ‘bad’!
- Give yourself a non-food reward when you achieve your goal.
- Be gentle with yourself! Self-compassion is HUGE
- Learn from your experiences
- Give yourself permission to hit pause on this process, or loop back to certain foods at a later date
- Seek support from a registered health care provider

Resources

Podcasts:

- Join Our Table (Meal support podcast)
- Free worksheets from Centre for Clinical Interventions
 - Tackling Avoided Foods handout is great
- Recovery Record (app)
- Explore other Body Brave workshops, recovery sessions, and treatment groups

Closing Remarks



Thank You!

Please take a moment to complete our
feedback survey

email: info@bodybrave.ca