



ROOTED RECLAIMERS FOUR PILLARS · BOOK 3

FREE BASICS EDITION

Nutrition

Steady Meals for Stressful Times

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A companion to *Journey from the Edge* · rootedreclaimers.com

About this guide

This is the free Basics edition of *Nutrition*, one of four Rooted Reclaimers pillar books: Breathe, Movement, Nutrition, and Connection. The pillar books are companions to *Journey from the Edge: From Weaponized Survival to Self-Reclamation* by Dr. Stephen Thompson.

This guide explains the core idea of the Nutrition pillar and gives you a few practices you can start today. It takes about fifteen minutes to read.

Before you begin

This book offers education and self-directed practice. It doesn't diagnose, treat, or cure any condition, and your own medical, mental-health, and emergency providers stay in charge of your care.

- **Go at your own pace.** You can adapt, shorten, or skip any practice.
- **Stop a practice** if it causes pain, dizziness, lightheadedness, distress, or worsening symptoms. Return to your usual breathing, look around the room, and reach out for support if the feeling continues.
- **Check with your clinician first** if you're pregnant, recovering from surgery or injury, or living with a heart, lung, seizure, eating, or other medical condition that these practices could affect.
- **Use what fits.** Some pages discuss stress and trauma. You can use every part of this book without reliving a painful experience.

If you're in crisis right now: In the US, call or text **988** (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline), text **HOME to 741741** (Crisis Text Line), or call **911** if you or another person is in immediate danger. Outside the US, contact your local emergency number or find a crisis line at findahelpline.com.

Why Nutrition matters

Food has long been a source of comfort and care, and for many of us it's also complicated, especially after trauma, stress, or long stretches of just getting by. Maybe food was scarce or unpredictable when you were growing up. Maybe you learned to eat fast, eat alone, or ignore hunger because there were bigger things to worry about.

What and how you eat is shaped by where you live, what you learned from your family, what's available and affordable, and what you've had to do to survive. Many Black, Latino, Indigenous, Asian American, and immigrant food traditions reflect generations of skill and creativity, and families kept those traditions going through hard times. The dishes that matter to you belong on your table.

Stress changes eating too. Food affects energy, digestion, and mood, and researchers are still learning how. Stress can change how quickly food moves through the gut and make the gut more sensitive (Konturek et al., 2011). Across many studies, stress is also linked with small shifts in what people eat, and those shifts vary a lot from person to person (Hill et al., 2022). Some people find hunger and fullness harder to read when they're stressed. Some people skip meals during hard times. Others reach for whatever is close and quick. These are common, understandable responses to long-term stress.

Grocery costs are rising, many neighborhoods have few grocery stores, and many people never had the chance to learn to cook. If you've felt guilty about what you eat, remember that feeding yourself takes real effort when money and time are short and stress is high.

This guide keeps things simple and low-cost. It focuses on three steady basics: fluids through the day, fairly regular meals, and easy foods you can keep within reach. You won't count calories, cut out foods, or follow a meal plan. Start where you are, with what you have.

Three steady basics

Fluids through the day

Drinking enough fluids through the day supports digestion and may help you feel more alert. Water is usually the cheapest option, and tea, milk, and diluted juice count too. Many people forget to drink when they're busy or stressed, so a simple reminder can help. If your clinician has asked you to limit fluids, follow that advice.

Fairly regular meals

Long gaps without food can leave some people tired, irritable, or very hungry later in the day. Regular meals may help you feel steadier. Many people do well with three meals, or two meals and one or two snacks. Find a rhythm that fits your day. If you tend to forget to eat when you're stressed, a phone alarm or a snack

linked to something you already do each day can help.

A meal can be very simple: a bowl of beans and rice, an egg on toast, or a cup of soup with a piece of fruit. Protein, fat, and fiber slow digestion, which can help blood sugar rise more gradually and help you feel full longer. When you can, include a little of each.

Easy foods within reach

On hard days, you'll usually eat whatever is easiest. Frozen and canned foods count. They often cost less, they last, and they're ready when you are. Keeping a few no-cook or low-cook foods on hand means a steadying option is there when your energy is low. Leftovers count too. Cool cooked food and refrigerate it within 2 hours, and eat leftovers within 3 to 4 days or freeze them.

If money is tight, food pantries and community meal programs can help. In the US, SNAP and WIC offer food support if you qualify. These programs exist to help you eat, so use them without shame.

Try this

TAKE CARE

Check with your clinician or a registered dietitian first if:

- you have diabetes or prediabetes, or you take insulin or other medicines that lower blood sugar. Changing when or how much you eat can affect your blood sugar safety.
- you have kidney disease, heart failure, or a fluid limit.
- you've lived with an eating disorder, or food routines tend to raise urges to restrict, binge, or purge. In the US, the ANAD Helpline offers free support at **1-888-375-7767**.
- you're pregnant, have food allergies, or take medications or supplements.

Practice · A water cue

Time: a few seconds, a few times a day · **You'll need:** a cup, glass, or bottle

1. Pick something you already do every day, like waking up, sitting down to a meal, or getting home.
2. Link a drink to it. When that moment comes, take a few sips of water or another drink you like.
3. Keep a cup or bottle where you'll see it.
4. At the end of the day, notice how you felt, without keeping score.

Make it easier: Start with one cue a day. Tap water, tea, or water with a splash of juice all count.

Check with your clinician if: you've been told to limit fluids, you have kidney or heart disease, or you feel very thirsty all the time, since constant thirst can be a sign of high blood sugar.

Practice · A simple steady meal

Time: 5 to 10 minutes · **You'll need:** whatever you have on hand

1. Pick a base you like: toast, rice, tortillas, oats, potatoes, or crackers.
2. Add a protein: eggs, beans, canned tuna or chicken, yogurt, peanut butter, or tofu.
3. Add a little fat if it isn't already there: a spoon of oil or butter, nuts, or seeds.
4. Add a fruit or vegetable if you have one, fresh, frozen, or canned.
5. Sit down to eat if you can, even for a few minutes.

Make it easier: Two out of the four is still a meal. A peanut butter sandwich and a glass of water counts.

Check with your clinician if: you have diabetes or take medicine that lowers blood sugar, you have kidney disease, or you have food allergies. Your care team can help you choose foods that fit your plan.

Practice · An easy-food shelf

Time: about 10 minutes, once · **You'll need:** a shelf, a basket, or a corner of the fridge

1. Choose three to five foods you like that keep well and need little or no cooking.
2. Put them together where you'll see them.
3. When one runs out, add it to your shopping list.

Low-cost ideas: canned beans, canned tuna or sardines, peanut butter, oats, rice, whole grain crackers, bananas, apples, plain yogurt, hard-boiled eggs (kept in the fridge), and bags of frozen vegetables or fruit.

Make it easier: Start with one food for tomorrow's hardest moment, like a banana by the door or crackers in your bag.

Check with your clinician if: you have food allergies, kidney disease, or diabetes, or if keeping food in sight makes eating feel harder to manage. Your care team can help you set this up in a way that works for you.

Your first three days

Each day, try one of the three practices. Afterward, jot down a few words about how it went.

DAY	PRACTICE	WHAT I NOTICED
1		
2		
3		

REFLECT

- Which practice felt easiest to fit into your day?
- What got in the way, and what's one small thing that could make it easier tomorrow?
- Did you notice any change in your energy, mood, or digestion? Noticing no change is useful information too.

Add it to My Ground Plan

Choose the practice from this guide that felt most doable, and write down the smallest version you'd still be glad to do. On harder days, that small version is enough.

My smallest nutrition step: _____

Inside the full book

- Introduction: Food, stress, and starting where you are
 - Chapter 1: Survival nutrition and how stress shapes eating
 - Chapter 2: How food, the gut, and mood connect
 - Chapter 3: Foundations of restorative nutrition
 - Chapter 4: Everyday food practices
 - Chapter 5: Tools for noticing what helps
 - Chapter 6: Community and rituals of nourishment
 - Quick reference: starter nutrition practices
 - Example days
 - References
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Go deeper

The full *Nutrition* book has every chapter, more practices, a practice log, and the research behind each practice.

Rooted Reset includes the full book. The 30-day guided program comes with all four full pillar books, 30 daily lessons, a weekly live group session, and My Ground Plan.

- **Start free:** Starter Ground, a free seven-day introduction, at rootedreclaimers.com/starter-ground.html
- **Go further:** Rooted Reset, at rootedreclaimers.com/rooted-reset.html
- **Read the framework:** *Journey from the Edge*, available on Amazon

About the author

Dr. Stephen Thompson, DC, DACM, BCTMB, CNT, FAIHM, is an integrative clinician, educator, and author based in the Twin Cities, Minnesota. He treats people living with chronic pain, burnout, autoimmune conditions, and long-term stress, and he teaches clinicians and organizations.

He wrote *Journey from the Edge* and founded Rooted Reclaimers, the first stage of The Founded Project.

rootedreclaimers.com • thefoundedproject.com

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