

Why Did I EAT That?



Roni Davis

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I should tell you a little about me, in case you're thinking, who the heck is this lady and why should I listen to her?

I'm the founder of Cognitive Eating and creator of the Cognitive Eating Academy.

Prior to doing this, I spent over 8 years in the fitness industry as an award winning trainer/nutrition and wellness coach & nationally qualified figure champion. I also spent over 12 years studying, eating, breathing, & living not just weight loss and nutrition first personally and then professionally but also, more recently mindfulness, neuro-science and psychology.

In my past fitness life, I worked with the best of the best in entire fitness industry – Oxygen magazine cover models, Olympia

winners and nobody knows more about the math of fat loss and body recomposition than the people training champions in the bodybuilding world.

I've been a nationally qualified figure champion, an award winning personal trainer and nutrition and wellness coach, I've written for bodybuilding websites, I've been featured in Muscle Insider Magazine, as a Transformation Titan on bodybuilding.com and in one of their print ads. So, I know the fitness industry, I know weight loss, I know bro-science, and I know fad diets.

I also spent over 2 decades at war with myself & my body, struggling with my own weight and food.

I went on my first diet in my teens & somewhere around 115-120lbs

I thought I was fat.

It was low-carb - those were the Atkins days. I gained about 5lbs on that first attempt and it started a nearly 2 decades long battle with food & continued weight gain/failed weight loss attempts.

By my early thirties, I was overweight and living at war with myself, my body and food.

A war that, at its worst, resulted in a hospitalization for bulimia and my going to bed many nights feeling like I was going to die in my sleep I had eaten so much. It often literally felt like I was trying to kill myself with food.

My story is extreme but every where I go, every single day, I hear stories from complete strangers who are all living varying degrees of the exact same disordered eating that I lived before and after the eating disorder. I had NO idea how pervasive it was because we're not talking about it. We're not talking about the truth about what dieting is really doing to us, to our relationship with food

and to our relationship with ourselves because we're blaming ourselves and sooo damn ashamed of all the "failures" to just "stay on track".

It often literally felt like I was trying to kill myself with food.



PART 01

MEET MARY

**Mary is me. She's you.
She's your sister,
your friend, your co-
worker, your mother,
your daughter. She is
all of us.**

Mary is 54 and she's been dieting for 40 years – but she's still really unhappy with her weight.

So despite the fact that she's already wasted 40 years chasing them, she's starting, another supposed “quick fix” – low carb or keto or whatever the current trend is that's promising super fast and easy weight loss – because she just desperately wants something to “fix” her “problem” fast and doesn't want to have to think.

She also starts (another) exercise program, to make it happen faster. She's a busy mom, running a household and even her own company.

She's brilliant, accomplished and capable – but now she has this list of what she's allowed and not allowed to eat – and that exercise program is just another chore added to her long to-do list every week. Before long, she's craving all the things she's not “allowed” to have anymore & no matter how hard she tries to willpower her way through cravings, she keeps caving.

She misses a workout because she “screwed up” anyway and she's super busy taking care of everyone else.

When the scale drops a couple pounds, she's excited and proud. When it goes back up, she feels defeated & overeats.

Food obsession, scale obsession, guilt and shame hover over her every day and eventually, she gives up. If she managed to lose any weight, slowly it just piles back on and the cycle just keeps repeating itself over and over again. Before she knows it, 20 more years pass -- she's heavier than she's ever been and blaming herself for all the failures.

Sound familiar? That scene is replayed millions of times every day all over the world. Millions. And I know first hand because I was one of them.

I spent 20 years in that cycle, slowly gaining more and more weight and often felt in a war with myself, my body and food -- a war that, at it worst, resulted in an eating disorder.

The saddest thing? In the middle of that full-blown eating disorder, I was technically a 'diet success' because at that point, I had finally managed to keep weight off.

And that's what we do, right? We blindly follow whatever diet or food rules become the most recent trend, then give the diet credit when we lose weight or feel better but always end up blaming ourselves for how badly we struggle to keep it up, and just do what we're supposed to do... consistently.

We tell ourselves we're too weak and pathetic and stupid to stick to anything, or that we're food addicts and can't control ourselves, or just need more motivation...

BUT NONE OF THOSE THINGS ARE TRUE.

In the following pages I'm going to tell you why that's all wrong. It's not your fault you've been struggling.



PART 02

THE BEST WAY TO EAT

Cutting through the noise and conflicting information of the nutrition world.

Despite the claims of literally every diet, there simply isn't a best/healthiest diet. What makes one body feel its best, won't always do the same for another person's body.

And research proves over and over again that over time, no one diet works any better than another for fat loss. In terms of what's healthiest... no one can even agree.

Stop obsessing over the headlines because nobody can even decide—the nutrition world is full of professionals who have been studying nutrition, researching food, getting a ton of degrees—all experts in the field, with completely polar

opposite opinions, and all fighting with each other about how and why the other side is wrong. It's insanity that you are encouraged to tune out of from now on.

So you can officially stop searching and falling prey to all the headlines. We're going to talk more about what to do instead shortly but first I want to talk about more about what the research shows so you GET that it isn't YOUR fault that you've been struggling for so long.

Despite the claims of literally every diet, there simply isn't a best/healthiest diet. What makes one body feel its best, won't always do the same for another person's body.





03 PART 03

THE BIGGEST MISTAKE

The biggest mistake everyone makes when trying to lose weight or eat healthier.

The biggest mistake everyone makes when they want to lose weight or eat healthier is exactly what we've been taught to do.

Dieting, following other people's food rules, food restriction & focusing on the weight.

Basically the exact thing we've been programmed to do - that's why our entire population is struggling so much to "stick to anything"!

If that's what we've been taught we're supposed to do, why on earth do I say they're the biggest mistakes you can make?

Because when you actually spend time researching the effects of dieting, what it actually shows is that despite all their miracle claims, only a tiny little fraction of dieters ever actually sustain any weight loss.

What long term research shows is that dieting is not working.

There is simply no evidence anywhere to suggest that dieting is working as a means of weight management for the majority of people AND worse, the majority of people who diet are more likely to get heavier over time, than those who don't.

But before we even get to the research, we all already KNOW this, don't we?

I mean, it's become a running joke that diets fail and gym memberships go unused?

It's not only a joke, it's the expected outcome – you're expected to fail if you try to lose weight or get fit.

*Because as many
as 98% do.*

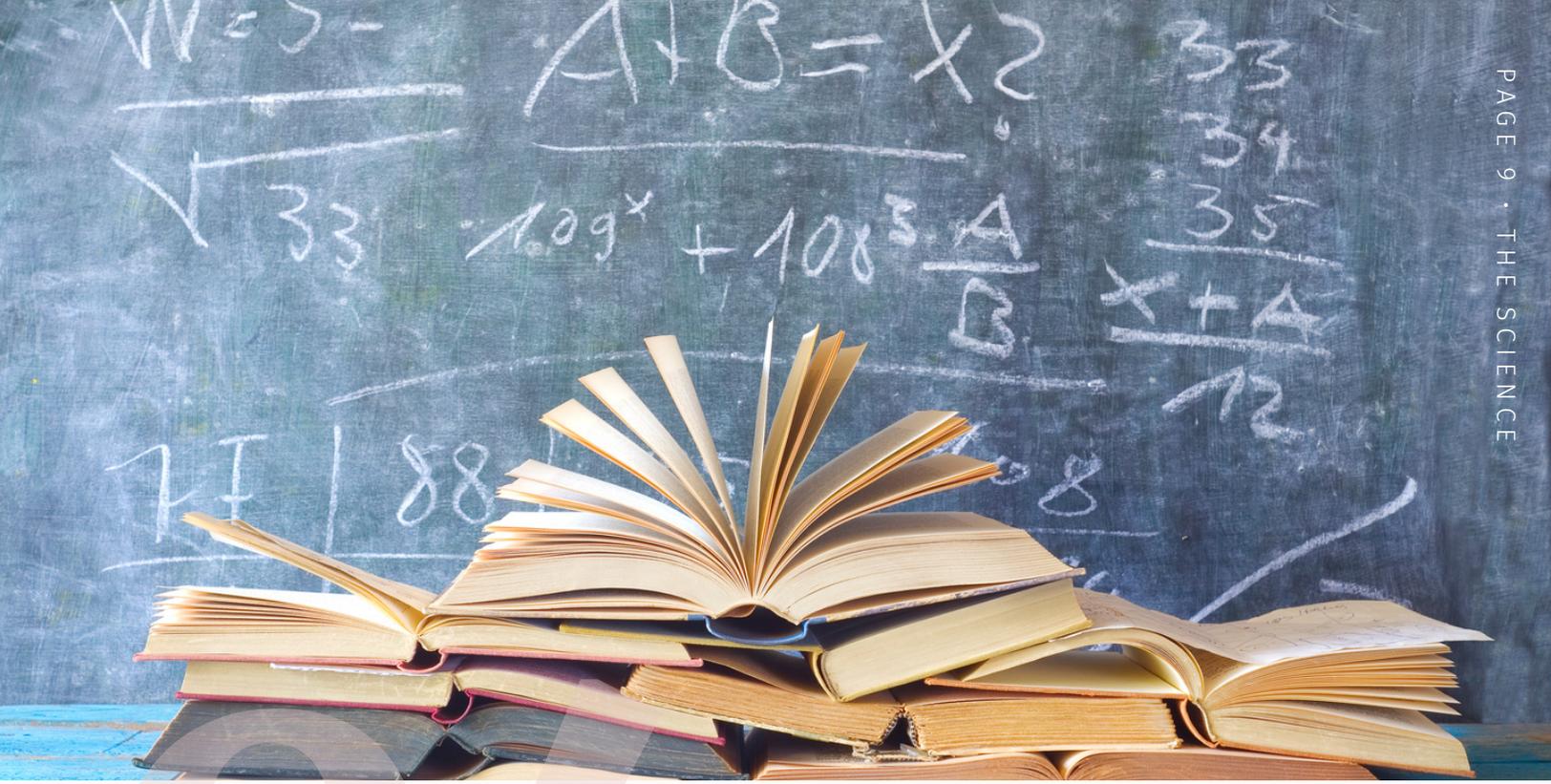
Oh sure, we often see people successfully manage to lose weight. We've likely already done so a half dozen times in our own lives when if we've ever managed to "stay on track" with something.

But how many of those people actually keep it off? VERY few – only about 2-5%. And that's the success rate – the people who actually lose weight when they diet. It doesn't even include all those diet attempts that fail to result in any weight loss at all. it's actually making

Friend: how's your diet going???

Me:





PART 04

THE SCIENCE

A look at what the science says about dieting and obsessing over weight loss.

- ➔ According to the National Institute of Health, as many as 98% of people who lose weight on a diet will regain all the weight they lose
- ➔ According to American Psychologist, as many as two thirds of them will weigh 11 pounds more than when they started within 5 years
- ➔ Researchers from eatingdisorders.org have stated that dieting is the number one cause of eating disorders

- ➔ Researchers from the university of California at Los Angeles, published an analysis of more than 30 long term diet studies in 2007 titled “Medicare’s Search for Effective Obesity Treatments: Diets Are Not The Answer.” They concluded that not only do diets not lead to sustainable weight loss or health benefits for the majority of people, most people would have been better off having not ever dieted at all
- ➔ The average woman makes 3-4 diet attempts every single year for most of her entire adult life. Anecdotally, I’ve heard from women who have been dieting 20, 30, 40, even 50 years and are still struggling with food and their weight.
- ➔ Researchers the University of Minnesota determined in 1950 that food restriction actually creates long lasting food obsessions and compulsions and binge eating
- ➔ Research from the Society for the Study of Ingestive Behavior has shown that the younger girls are when they start their first diet, the more likely they are to struggle with their weight, use extreme weight control behaviors like vomiting or laxatives, and even abuse things like drugs and alcohol by the time they’re in their 30’s.

The truth is: long term studies and meta-analysis show over and over again that not only do traditional weight loss methods not lead to sustainable weight loss or health benefits for the majority of people, most people would have been better off having not ever dieted at all. It's actually making the majority of people GAIN WEIGHT over time.



WHY?

05

PART 05

A LOOK AT WHY

**Why is it not working?
Fundamental flaws in
the entire paradigm
on every conceivable
level.**

So, it's not just you and it's not your fault.

And it's not just dieting, it's healthy eating attempts too. There are literally billions of pieces of information, content, books, websites, etc.. dedicated to telling us how to eat healthier but the majority of people, for the most part, still don't.

The current paradigm is NOT working.

Because for generations, we've been focusing solely on the externals of weight loss. The scale, the food, the exercise... that's all just external math and doesn't take into account that we are people with not just bodies but brains - very

complicated brains. And our brains control everything!

They control our thoughts, emotions, beliefs, habits, behaviors ...all of which being the very things that actually determine our results.

Why did you gain weight in the first place? Or why are you eating garbage that makes you feel like crap?

Whatever those reasons are, they are the cause of the weight or unhealthy eating issues.

Weight gain or feeling like crap is only the symptom. But we're taught that weight gain is the problem, that it happens because we're lazy gluttons and we just need to start dieting and exercising to "fix" the problem. It's just that easy right?

They all promise that but all those things are fundamentally untrue at every conceivable level.

How does forcing ourselves to follow rules do anything about WHY we're eating the way we're eating that's causing the problem in the first place? It doesn't, it makes it worse. Keep reading because I'm going to explain how.

Whether it's a fad diet or a meal plan or clean eating, whatever we start, has rules. Good foods, bad foods, allowed and not allowed.

What's the first thing that happens when certain foods are off limits? The second you decide a food is off limits you suddenly can't stop thinking about it and craving it.

That's a survival instinct that's literally been hard wired into our brains since the beginning of time.

Neuroscientists have traced our habit-making behaviors to a part of the brain called the basal ganglia. Decisions are made in a different part, called the prefrontal cortex.

As soon as a behavior becomes automatic, that is, a habit, the decision-making part of your brain, basically goes to sleep while your habit center runs on autopilot.

The brain starts working less and less and can almost completely shut down. And this occurs because our brains are inherently wired to survive, NOT to succeed.

The more you act in a certain

way, especially if what you're doing feels good like when you allow yourself to eat things that previously restricted because of whatever diet you were on, or if you use food to numb uncomfortable feelings, the more you teach your brain that what you're doing is actually essential for survival.

Food restriction activates that millennias old survival center of our brain and creates urgencies, compulsions and strong desires that force us to “cave”.

AND then when we do, the habit center of our brain, gets rewarded so it wires this act of “caving” into an autopilot habit that you don't even really control after awhile.

That's why it feels like it gets harder and harder to "stick to anything" the longer you've been living in this cycle.

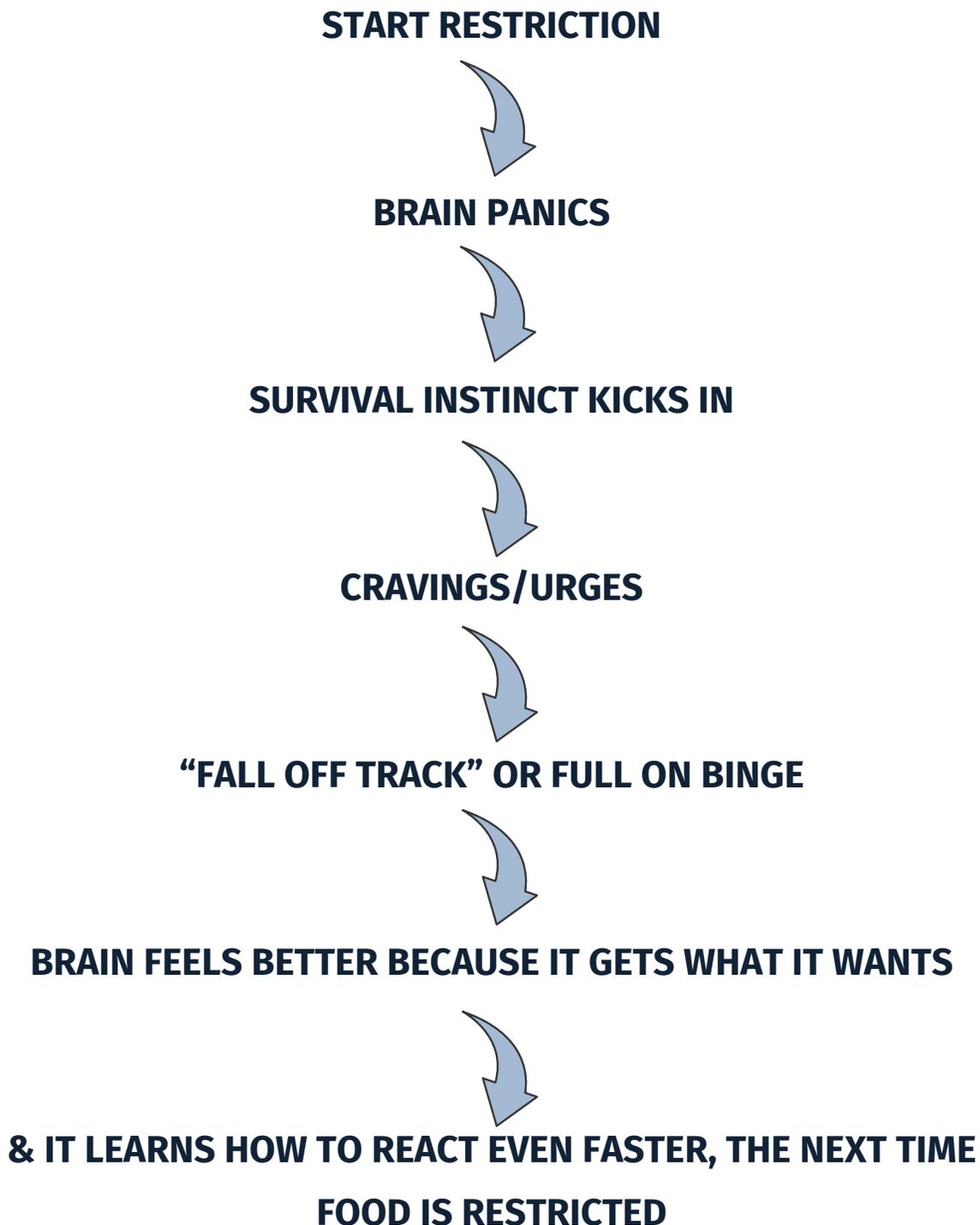
So, one of the biggest roots of these compulsions or all the “caving” and “falling off track” lies in the circuitry responsible for detecting threats – meaning that the compulsion to “cheat” on your diet, over eat or binge comes, at least in part, from the threat of starving.

These habits usually start the first time we're uncomfortable

on a diet or trying to “restrict” things to eat healthier... whenever we try to restrict food in a way that fires up our survival instinct... it urges us “blow it” and “fall off track”.

**Our brains
are wired to
keep us alive
so food
restriction
sends our
survival
center into
over drive**

Here's How It Works...



It actually wires new neurons to reproduce those actions automatically, and even faster, in the future.



06

PART

06

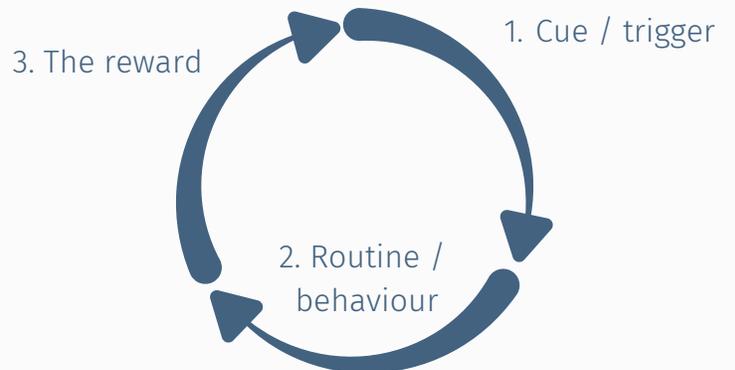
HABITS

A deeper look into how and why habits are formed.

The whole "it takes 21 days to form a habit" thing is a huge lie.

That's why those all those 21-day fix things never change anything long term.

True habit formation takes longer than that and starts with a psychological pattern called a "habit loop," which is a three-part process.



It works like this:

First there's the cue, or trigger. This tells your brain to go into automatic mode and let a behavior unfold. So in this case it may simply be the act of restricting certain food or overall calories too severely when starting a diet is the cue or trigger. Or if you're an emotional eater, it may be uncomfortable feelings that you want to avoid.

Then there's the routine, which is the behavior itself.

Third is the reward: something that your brain likes that helps it remember the habit loop in the future. And our brains like FOOD. That's the reward. So the habit loop is actually wiring your brain to fail.

Have you ever noticed yourself at the other end of an empty bag of potato chips and wondered how you got there?

Or mindlessly wandering around the kitchen looking for food without even really being hungry? Or notice that you struggle to stick to diets more and more as you get older?

That's this cycle in action - your brain's habit center running its autopilot habit of keeping you alive.

Imagine, now that you know this, and you know that much of the "failures" you've had in the past with dieting, have been largely the result of your brain and its wiring - how is another diet or more food restriction going to change that?

It's not. It just continues to reinforce it and make it worse.

I want to share an interesting study with you that was done in the 40's that really illustrates the effect that food restriction has on people.

THE STARVATION STUDY

In 1944 Researchers at the University of Minnesota created a year long experiment on the psychological and physiological effects of starvation on 36 mentally and physically healthy young men.

They closely monitored the physiological and psychological changes brought on by calorie restriction.

During the most restricted phase (they were eating 1600 cal, which is actually a lot more than most diets today) the changes were dramatic.

Physically the men became gaunt in appearance & there were significant decreases in their strength, stamina, body temperature, heart rate, and even sex drive.

Psychologically, the effects were even more dramatic and mirror those almost any one with any history of dieting can completely relate to.

They became obsessed with food. Any chance they had to get access to more food resulted in the men binge eating thousands of calories in a sitting.

Before the restriction period, the men were a lively bunch, discussing politics, current events and more. During the restriction period it quickly changed. They dreamt, read, fantasized and talked about food all the time.

They became withdrawn, irritable, fatigued, and apathic. Depression, anxiety, and obsessive thinking (especially about food & oddly enough, their waistlines) were also observed.

Many got kicked out for not being able to adhere to it. For those who completed the program, the obsessive thoughts about food continued even after it was over.

The inability to follow diets or food rules is not your fault, it's not just you and it's not because you lack willpower. It's literally the way our brains are wired.

Food rules and restrictions set us up for failure and lifelong struggles on a neurological level.

On top of that, it causes changes in your brain that make food more appealing and even taste better – so it becomes harder and harder to resist.

On top of THAT, it changes your metabolism so that regaining the weight becomes easier and easier.

AND on top of all THAT – it changes your hunger hormones – making you more hungry more often and not fill up as quickly.

So, dieting is not only programming us to fail on almost every conceivable level, it's making most of us gain weight over time.

But somehow, we've been trained to give the diet credit when we lose weight (or the food rules credit when we feel better because we've been "eating healthy") but we blame ourselves for being weak when we regain or if we "fall of track" and we let it slowly erode our self worth.



PART 07

FOOD SHAME

**The damaging effects
of food labels and
shame**

If all that wasn't bad enough, then we assign morality labels to food.

They tell us alllllll these 208,597 different foods are BAD (and they change depending on who you talk to) and not to eat them.

Those good and bad food labels place morality on food and to suggest that there is a "clean," moral, uncorrupt, blameless or even "smart" way to eat, requires the opposite to also be true... anything else must then be impure, sinful, corrupt or "stupid".

And then we're told we are what we eat.

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And then we're told we are what we eat.

So, we place moral classifications on food, we believe eating those things is bad or stupid, and we believe we are what we eat.

So, we believe the good or bad, smart or stupid label then applies to the person eating it, not the food itself.

"Eat smart, be smart!" after all, right?

No more is this more evident than in the vegan world where meat eaters are often literally

called murderers but it's not isolated to just that, it applies any time we place "good", "bad", "clean", "dirty", or even "healthy", "not healthy" labels on what we eat. Because... "you are what you eat".

And when you feel like you're bad because you ate something bad, you punish yourself.

We punish ourselves with abusive thoughts. We call ourselves stupid, weak, pathetic, bad - we feel guilt and even worse, shame when we eat something on that ridiculous list of "good" versus "bad" food that no one can even agree on and keeps changing daily.

And we punish ourselves with food. We go home and eat everything "bad" the rest of the day or week because we were already bad once today so the day is ruined, may as well just eat everything else that's bad now because we can't have again when we start "being good again", right?

You know how many times I've heard someone start a sentence about their eating habits with "I'm so stupid..." or "I'm so ashamed..."? Too many to even begin to count.

We go through life ashamed of ourselves because of what we're eating and that shame begins affecting every aspect of our life.

Our body image (as though it wasn't already bad enough) get impacted because our bodies are physical manifestation of who we are.

It's impossible to feel good about our bodies if we feel like we're bad for eating "bad" things and it's really hard to WANT to make good choices for ourselves and our bodies when we feel like we're bad.

Our feelings about what we believe we deserve in life or from relationships gets affected, our self trust gets destroyed.... nothing is unaffected.

Have you ever justified yourself for eating something "bad" when someone else was looking? That's food shame. Food rules and restrictions create shame and shame is that insidious voice in your head that says you, at your core, are bad.

It creates distrust in yourself, convinces you that you are not capable of change or worthy of love, connection, belonging, goodness or acceptance.

So we punish ourselves, and because we lose trust in ourselves, we're terrified to just allow ourselves compassion and joy with food ever again.

The problem starts with food labels and is exacerbated 10 fold by following that with the message, we are what we eat. There are no "good" or "bad" foods. There are no "clean" or "dirty" foods. Those are made up buzz words used to sell you crap.

Even the more accurate labeling of "healthy" vs "unhealthy" is damaging because it still suggests we're eating "bad" things if we make an "unhealthy" choice.

"Unhealthy" things are "bad" for us, so again, if we eat that thing that's "bad" for us... we're bad.

Of course some foods are more nutritious than others but I'm not here to tell you what the right way for you to eat is, and nobody else should either.

Why? Because NOBODY knows what makes YOUR body feel and function its best better than YOUR OWN BODY. You've just gotten out of the habit of listening to IT and into the habit of allowing faulty wiring

in your brain to make the food choices.

So yes, of course some things are more nutritious and will help us look and feel better than others.. but the labels need to die.

ALL of them.

And so does the guilt, shame and fear over food.

Your body is really friggen smart and nobody can tell you what foods will make it feel it's best better than your own body can. You have to learn to trust it and I promise you can.

We've already looked at how food rules and restrictions high jack the habit center of our brain to sabotage our results, so now let's look at how adding food LABELS plays out in terms of your results.

It is almost impossible to make good choices for yourself when you hate your body and judge yourself in these ways.

Food rules force us to “cave” by firing up our survival instinct. The morality labels create the belief that we’re bad if we eat something bad. So when we cave, we think we’re bad.

That thought creates feelings of guilt and shame.

The feeling of guilt and shame causes you punish yourself with more abusive thoughts, and/or with food (either restricting further or by eating more “bad” stuff) and for most people, also causes them to look in the mirror in disgust.

That then destroys body image by prompting the next thought, ‘my body is disgusting’.

That thought creates a corresponding feeling of inadequacy (or even hatred) for not having “willpower” or for being so “lazy” or for not being able to “stay on track” which compounds the feelings of guilt and shame.

And what kind of behaviours result from feelings of inadequacy, guilt and shame?

What do you tend to do when you feel badly about yourself? If you're like most people, you eat more "bad" things and don't treat yourself well.

What choices do we make for things we hate or judge?

NOT good ones. NOT choices that are in our best interest.

So, those feelings create negative actions towards the objection (in this case the thing we see: our body).

We slam it with insults, berate it, punish it, give up on it (and ourselves).

Your body didn't decide to starve itself or chase a half gallon of ice cream with a bag of potato chips and two glasses of wine just because you ate one cookie and are a pig and couldn't stop or because the scale went up 2lbs.

And our hearts are so tired from fighting the same war it's just looking for ways to numb itself – often with food.

That's why we keep getting the same results. That's why we struggle with “staying on track” or “being good” or making “good” choices.

There's not a single diet on the entire planet that can fix any of that. They're a big part of the cause and they just make it worse.

The results we're getting on the outside with our bodies and in our lives, are merely the result of the actions we're taking because of the thoughts, beliefs and habits going on IN us.



PART 08

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

**To answer your next
questions - what do I
do instead?**

I've outlined a number of the reasons we can struggle with weight loss or healthy eating in this booklet and at this stage you may be starting to feel rather hopeless about ever changing any of it but I promise there is hope!

Understanding what's driving the weight and food obsessions is the best place to start in terms of learning to end them so you can be happy, healthy and start feeling better.

That's why I spent so much time talking about it - so you can begin to understand that none of it your fault and start working on things that will actually change it all.

When we switch the thoughts, emotions and beliefs driving self-destructive choices, those choices automatically and effortlessly, change because positive thoughts create positive feelings.

Think about it. How do you treat something you have positive feelings about? You treat it with love, kindness, and care.

Choices based on love, kindness and care create, you guessed it... some pretty awesomely positive results.

You stop wanting to eat as much of the things that make your body feel terrible when you begin to unravel all the crap that causes the poor choices in the first place – and diet culture is right there at the top of the list in terms of causes.

Ending the war with food and our bodies, actually trusting ourselves, being mindful and present in our bodies, listening to them, making choices from a place of love, and honoring their needs changes literally everything.

The food rules REALLY need to die. There cannot be ANY judgement about food left

because if you're judging and angry at yourself, you'll stay stuck where you are and will struggle with the next part.

Learning to trust, connect with and listen to your body.

Before you eat start asking yourself:

What do I feel like eating?

WHY do I feel like eating right now? Am I actually physically hungry? If no, what's going on around me or in me? What thoughts was I just thinking?

Why do I want THAT particular thing?

Do I need to have that or can I have something else?

How will I feel if I have it?

Do I want to feel that way? Why?

*that last question is a doozy because you may start to notice that the answer you get is, "I don't care". That can feel frustrating and like a dead end.

"Oh great, I don't care... see, I can't control myself. I knew it" is a common way to feel when we notice that we don't care and are purposely eating things that

we know are going to make us sick but don't let yourself fall into that trap.

If you truly don't care, if you're about to eat something that you KNOW is going to make you feel like garbage and you really just don't care, you are purposely punishing yourself. Becoming aware that you're even doing that is the first step in learning how to stop so be grateful when you notice that happening! It's the first step to having the power to change it.



REPAIR

your relationship
with self & body by
changing thoughts
and beliefs that drive
self-destructive
choices



REBUILD

your relationship
with food by
removing guilt, fear
and shame so eating
becomes joyful and
easy



REWIRE

your brain to change
the patterns of
thoughts, beliefs &
behaviors that drive
self-destructive
eating patterns

Basically, you have to get a solid understanding of all the underlying reasons you've been eating the way you've been eating and work on changing them.

When you do that, everything changes - forever.

Need some first steps?



Get the free course!

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR WEIGHT & FOOD FREEDOM

Start practicing the most essential elements for freedom from dieting and learning to end the weight & food war

>>> LEARN MORE <<<

