



# Food-Body Relationship Struggles

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You can quit smoking. You can quit alcohol. You can quit drugs. It's not an option to quit food. That is why diets and cleanses are such a lucrative business. The truth is there's a secret no one is telling us. There is no way around fixing your eating habits or controlling your weight except to create a balanced relationship with food, exercise and rest. Let's take a quick look at the food relationship.

I've spent the last 12 years as a full-time nutrition consultant and eating disorder consultant. I've also had personal experience spending plenty of time at extreme ends of the diet spectrum – from a no carb, no fat, no sugar, no fruit bodybuilder and fitness model to an all natural, all organic, fasting/cleansing superfood yogi. At this point, I can say a few things about diets and cleanses:

Too much long term restriction sets you up to fail and blame it on yourself. The body's natural instinct is to balance itself (aka homeostasis). This means at some point your body will stop responding to the steady calorie deficit and will start going in the opposite direction no matter what you do to stop it. Then you become afraid of food and stop trusting yourself. When you are losing weight, you are on a high – like a drug. Confidence and success becomes dependent on that weight loss. When you are done the cleanse or fall off the diet (which are both pretty much guaranteed to happen), your self-esteem suffers and you feel worse about yourself now than when you started. Now you see yourself as fat and a failure. Your body and mind disconnect and your senses become dull. You become so disconnected to what your body needs that you become dependent on someone else to tell you what, when and how you should or shouldn't eat. Dieting and cleansing adds stress to your life.

When on a cleanse or diet the biggest complaint is lack of variety, so the focus becomes directed to ***“what can I get away with within the limitations of the diet?”***. This often ends up in consumption of too many empty calories. New diet companies have tried to address this issue by packaging nutrient enriched meals that fall within the calorie limits of the diet. Smart business – now we have an empire that not only plays on low self-esteem, but also traps its customers into a dependency relationship and discourages cooking.

Creating a balanced relationship with food takes awareness, diets rarely do. Diets and cleanses teach us to eat based on information outside of ourselves – to eat according to writing on a piece of paper or a guru dictatorship. We do it because we think that it's easier to just be told what to do than it is to figure it out. But in the end, you discover it's not easier and you've learned nothing. Instead, you've spent your one and only life fighting against a basic root relationship – the connection with food and eating. If that relationship has you stumped, how can you expect to have rewarding intimate relationships that require a hell of a lot more subtle awareness than food – like sexual chemistry and love and collaboration?

When you are balanced in your relationship with food, you will be able to eat what you need, when you need it, and in portions you are content with.

The first step is awareness – raw truth awareness of the quality of your current connection with food and eating. The other problem with diets is that they are designed to present an immediate, structured solution for your panic reaction. When we are unhappy with our body weight/shape and a large percentage of our self-worth is dependent on how our body looks, we will do almost anything to change it. We grasp for the solution way too quickly when we don't even really understand the scope of the problem.

***“You can't solve a problem that you cannot define.”*** – Wolfgang Max.

Chill out and relax 'Chillax'. Understand that you are far more than just a body – you are a person who feels, thinks, creates and experiences life. Then take some time and watch your relationship with food. Carry a small note pad around with you and make notes on your common thoughts and actions when it comes to food and your body. For women it is important to do this for at least one month or one full menstrual cycle. A woman's relationship with food can change quite dramatically from one week to the next. If you can't be objective enough to watch yourself, then ask your husband/wife/room mate/parent for feedback on what they see.

After the observation phase, review your notes and you will be surprised at how much you learn about your relationship with food, eating and your body. It is from this point that you can start to strategize your first habit to break in order to repattern your thoughts and actions toward what you believe to be a balanced relationship.