

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a lit sparkler. The hand is wearing a teal-colored, textured knit sleeve. The sparkler is bright orange and yellow, with many sparks flying out. The background is a blurred image of a person's face and upper body, wearing a light-colored shirt. The overall mood is warm and celebratory.

THE NEXT STEPS

# KEEP YOUR PERIOD

THIS GIRL AUDRA

This one goes out to all you awesome girls who believed in yourself, had a little faith, and decided to change your life. ❤️

# Table of Contents

- About Me...4.
- Disclaimers...8.
- Intro: Did You Read My “Get Your Period Handbook” First?...13.
- START HERE:The “Get Your Period Checklist”...17.
- “The Perfect Diet for Keeping Your Period:” What It’s NOT...27.
- “The Perfect Diet for Keeping Your Period:” What It Actually IS...48.
- The “Keep Your Period” Must-Haves Grocery List...60.
- Learning the Secret of Intuitive and Mindful Eating...64.
- Setting Boundaries for Long-Term Success...113.
- The Worst Exercises for Keeping Your Period...143.
- The Best Exercises for Keeping Your Period...157.
- The Absolute Best Way to Exercise: Intuitive Exercise...184.
- How to Deal with Your So-Called “Triggers”...192.
- FAQ on Keeping Your Period...203.
- My Letter to You...297.



## About Me

Hey! I'm Audra, the girl behind "This Girl Audra." :) I am a National Academy of Sports Medicine Certified Personal Trainer, a Certified Weight Loss Specialist, certified in Plant-Based Nutrition, and have a

Bachelor of Arts in Christian Studies. After dealing with my own hormonal issues and weight issues (both needing to lose weight and gain weight at different times in my life), I decided to dive deeper into research, studies, and my own personal experience to figure out exactly why things were going wrong with my body. I finally figured out how to fix all these issues in a healthy, sustainable, and life-altering way.

This book is all about what worked for *me* and what continues to work for *me* today. I actually ended up losing my period twice - the first time from not eating enough calories to fuel my workouts and the second time I lost it because I jumped back into exercise too quick and was stressed out from other things in my life! So, this book is the sequel to my first book, "Get Your Period Handbook" (which hopefully you've read, if not, I would definitely

start there!), and it will give you all the tools you need to know to keep your period moving forward (so you don't make the same mistakes I did)!

Sadly, there are a lot of girls out there suffering silently (just like I was) and have nowhere to turn for help. You've maybe gotten your period, back but it's a little iffy at this point or maybe it's gone again and you don't know what to do! So, I decided to put together everything that I did and still do that has helped me keep my period, and also has improved my relationship with food, exercise, myself, others, God, and my whole outlook on life, in general. This is simply an account of the things that I did, the things I changed, the things I added and stopped with my routine, and the results I got (awesome results, by the way!).

I'm just a girl who has been through it all when it comes to diet, exercise, weight gain, weight loss, period issues, etc. and I just want to share my story with you. However you decide to take my story and apply it to your life is totally up to you - this is just what worked for me and all the research, studies, and lessons I've learned along the way. I just want to share my story, research, and experience in hopes of helping you girls in any way at all :)

My opinions are based off my morals, values, beliefs, research, education, personal experience, other girls' experiences, and basically, what actually worked for me

(and others I've helped, too!) There's tons of information out there about taking this pill or doing this diet/exercise plan, but none of them take into account the concept of keeping your normal, natural period for the long-run. In my experience, the things I lay out in this book are tried and true and last a lifetime. It's not a quick fix, it takes effort, but with the right attitude and making the right decisions, you'll see great results. Likewise, because there is so much info that goes into this book, I HIGHLY recommend you read the *entire* book before making any changes. I'm not saying you have to agree with me (that's fine!), so at the end of the day, make the decisions and take the course of action you believe is healthiest for you!

Finally, I kindly ask that you please not share, re-sell, give, or provide the information in this book to anyone else who hasn't purchased the book. Obviously, this is a given, but I really want each girl to read all the info in this book for themselves. It's easy to say, "Oh, you just do this or that," but there's so much more to it than just *doing* certain things. This book isn't just about taking certain actions to heal your physical body, but it is even more so about healing your mind. By just skipping over all those parts, your healing journey and moving forward free from all of this stuff is going to be a lot longer and not as enjoyable. Many girls want a quick fix for their issues, but they don't understand that it takes a lot of time and

changes they have to make in their lives to really see a difference in their physical and mental health. There are so many different topics and concerns covered in this book that each girl needs to read and understand for herself. So, I would be very grateful for letting each girl decide her course of action on her own based off the suggestions in this book. Thank you!

And LASTLY, above all else, I want to say a BIG “THANK YOU” to YOU for embarking on this journey with me. It’s my hope and prayer that my past experiences and all the stuff I’ve been through can somehow help you in one way or another. Thank you for your continued support and encouragement in MY life because I am so inspired and motivated by you and your determination every day. We’re in this TOGETHER, we can learn from each other and we can encourage and grow together. So, thank you for trusting me, having a little faith, and getting this book. I hope it helps you in more ways than one :)



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# PERSONAL DISCLAIMER

I am not a doctor. The information I provide is based on my personal experience, thorough studies through my health and fitness certifications in Plant-Based nutrition, Personal Training, as well as my degree in Christian Studies. Any recommendations I make about weight training, nutrition, supplements or lifestyle should be discussed between you and your doctor because any of these can involve risks.

“This Girl Audra’s Keep Your Period Handbook” is not written to promote eating disorders or other health issues. As the referenced information provided, the entirety of the advice given, as well as the education resources provided are referenced throughout, I am not held liable for the interpretation or use of the information, warranties or representations, expressed or implied, as to the accuracy or completeness, timeliness or usefulness of any opinions, advice, services or other information contained, or referenced to, in this document. I do not assume any risk for your use of this information as such materials or content may contain the most recent information. This resource is not individually tailored. It is simply a compilation of my advice from my own personal

experience, the experience of others, and scientific literature, where applicable.

## RESULTS DISCLAIMER

I make every effort to ensure that I accurately represent my products and services and their potential for you keeping your period, helping with body image issues, as well as your connection to food and exercise. Keeping your period and/or other issues with body image, exercise, and food results made by me and my clients are estimates of what I think you can possibly earn. There is no guarantee that you will experience the same results and you accept the risk that results differ by individual.

As with any health program, your results may vary, and will be based on your individual capacity, previous experience, ability to take action and level of desire. There are no guarantees concerning the level of success you may experience. The testimonials and examples used are typical results and are not intended to represent or guarantee that anyone will achieve the same or similar results. Each individual's success depends on his or her background, mental and physical health, dedication, desire and motivation.

There is no assurance that examples of keeping your period back can be duplicated in the future. I cannot guarantee your future results and/or success. Nor can I guarantee that you maintain the results you experience if you do not continue following the program. I am not responsible for your actions.

The use of my information, products and services should be based on your own due diligence and you agree that I am not liable for any success or failure of your mental or physical health that is directly or indirectly related to the purchase and use of my information, products and services.

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If this disclaimer scared you off from taking action then my information, products and services are not for you. If this disclaimer inspired you to step up and give my real-world solution an honest try – congratulations and I look forward to working with you.

# Chapter 1 Intro: Did you Read My “Get Your Period Handbook” First?

Alright, so here you are. You’ve got your period back, right?! Well, hopefully you do by now! Maybe it’s just been a few weeks or even a few months, but regardless, you got it back! If not, I highly encourage you to start off with my “Get Your Period Handbook” before diving into this one. There is so much valuable information in there that you *need* as your foundation before you just start trying to jump ahead. In my “Get Your Period Handbook” I cover all the basics of how to get your period back, why it’s important to have a normal, natural (no medication-induced periods), talk all about what causes period loss and irregular periods, and cover tons of topics from restrictive diets, unhealthy means of weight loss, over-exercise, body image issues and a whole lot more.

Likewise, let’s say that you have read the “Get Your Period Handbook,” but you still have some lingering disordered eating issues, exercise addiction tendencies, lots of stress

in your life, etc., then I would definitely re-read through the “Get Your Period Handbook” first, apply those principles until all of that is ironed out, and then start on this book.

The thing is, if you *don't* start with the “Get Your Period Handbook” first and you just jump right into this one, you could potentially be missing some **extremely** important information that you need to know.

**No, these two books are not the same.**

They are designed differently depending on what phase of your “period recovery” journey you’re on. If you’re still stuck in the restrictive mindset, the over-exercising, the obsessed with your weight, looks, and size of your jeans, and all you think about is food, diet, exercise, and looking a certain way, then **THIS BOOK IS NOT FOR YOU** (right now). I’m really begging you, please do not make the mistake of not reading the first book because without having that background information you could easily fall very easily back into old habits and take things that I say in this book the wrong way.

**If you bought both of these books together, then I would REALLY encourage you to put this one aside and not read it until all the things from my first book have**

*changed in your life. TRUST ME. I wouldn't be saying this if I didn't really care about you and your future in healing!!*

\*I really want to stress that disclaimer for your own benefit. You have to look at this whole health journey as a marathon, not a sprint. We all want results (whether it's weight loss, getting our periods back, learning how to eat intuitively again, etc.) over night. We expect these things to happen extremely quickly, but the truth is that your body doesn't work like that, especially your hormones and weight after years of abuse. It's going to take time for your body to heal, but the most important thing of all of this is not your body.

*It's your mind.*

If you don't take the time to REALLY fix your mind and thought patterns because you're wanting to rush through this, it's going to be a very long road for you! If your mind is in a dark place and you're still flirting with bad habits, you need to get that all worked out first (which is what my first book is about). Until you get that all sorted out and you're in a much better place mentally, I encourage you NOT to read this book. This book is for those that have gotten to a place in their health journey where they are focused on their TRUE health, both physically and mentally. And it's key that you understand that it has to be



BOTH physical and mental health, not just physical. Yes, you can do all the “right things” from a physical perspective to be healthy, but if you’re driving yourself crazy in the mind, then you’re **NOT REALLY HEALTHY**.

Likewise, this book is for those who have conquered their fear of foods, are living a **NEW** life, free of stress and worry and self-hate all due to their diet and exercise routine, and have gotten their period back after following my advice from my first book.

Just because you might have gotten your period back (even after reading my first book), doesn’t mean you’re in “the clear” or “healed” from all the other issues that might be going on in your mind when it comes to your body. Yes, getting your period back is a **HUGE** sign that you’re headed in the right direction physically, but you **have to be sure** you aren’t still stuck in old habits and old ways that could potentially drag you back down the wrong path.

All of this is up to you. This is just me putting a huge **DISCLAIMER** out there for you that if you haven’t gotten everything sorted out, especially from a mental perspective on how you view diets, foods, your body, exercise and so on, then I would be very leery of moving forward and neglecting the things that really need attention. Please look at this as a serious issue and don’t

sell yourself short. Trust me, you don't want to go back down the same road you just came from in a few years all because you wanted results super quickly. Take the time to work it out, focus on healing your mind and body, and don't put the cart before the horse. Trust me, YOU (and your body/hormones) will be so glad you did!

# Chapter 2 START HERE: The “Get Your Period Checklist”

Alrighty, so, let’s say you got past the last chapter, you know you’re physically and mentally stable to move forward, and you are ready to keep going on your health journey. If you skipped over the last chapter, **GO BACK AND READ IT.** It is extremely important. Seriously, I cannot stress that enough.

Now, remember, all of this takes time. It’s not a sprint, it’s a marathon and what you do *before* implementing the things from this book will determine your potential for long-term success. So, as a quick re-cap, we’ll go through the “Get Your Period Checklist” to be sure you’re ready for this next step.

**WARNING:** If you are still dealing with this stuff, especially in a severe way, I would **REALLY** consider fixing these things first. You can’t rush it when it comes to your hormones and physical and mental health. It doesn’t work like that. No shortcuts. If you do try to take the easy way

out then at some point you'll be right back to where you started, doing this all over again.

You *don't* want to do that, right? No way! So, you might as well fix this thing 100% now and *then* start to move on with your life in a healthy, sustainable way. Remember, don't cut yourself short on this. This is your decision and choice with what you do, not mine or anyone else's. So make the right choices and do the right thing for YOUR body.

So, below is the checklist I want you to read through and honestly answer, "yes" or "no" to each of these statements. Obviously, the goal is to say "yes" on every single statement. If you can't say "yes" to certain statements, then go back and re-read my "Get Your Period Handbook" and not go any further in this book. I would take some time to work through why it is that you are answering "no" to the statements. What is making you do that? What habits are leading you to do certain things? What have you not sorted out that you need to spend some more time on? Then, you spend *all the time you need* sorting those things out before coming back to this book, reading it, and applying the rules of this book.

**Please trust me on this. This is very important.**

If you find yourself answering “no” to lots of these check points, then you know that you’ve got some extra work to do before moving on. If you answer “no” to a lot of these, but you say, “Oh well, I’ll just deal with it later, I want to finish this book first,” I can promise you that you won’t “recover” the way that you need to in order to be successful in the long run. Put your health first, don’t rush it. **TRUST ME.**

The “Get Your Period Checklist:  
Answer YES or NO depending on your current  
situation:

I no longer feel like I have to be on a restrictive diet every day of my life to be “healthy.”

YES    NO

I am no longer a slave to exercise, especially as a means to lose weight/burn calories. If I exercise at all, it’s because I *genuinely* enjoy it and it’s not a chore.

YES    NO

I have faced my fear foods and have realized that food is just food - some of it is more nutrient dense and has a

lot of vitamins, whereas others taste really good and makes me smile.

YES NO

I'm no longer isolated, following strict routines, or have tons rules for myself. If I break out of those rules/lines/restrictions that I used to have for myself, then I know my life will go on and the sun will rise tomorrow.

YES NO

I'm doing the things that I truly love, am passionate about, enjoy doing, I'm good at, and make me smile every single day (things not related to food and exercise). I'm no longer super depressed, anxious, worrying all the time, and hating my life.

YES NO

I'm back to hanging out with my friends, meeting new ones, being more social, and living my life to the fullest.

YES NO

I've gotten away from the orthorexic tendencies of researching the vitamins, minerals, supposed health benefits, and reactions of all types of foods. I'm not scared of food anymore. I eat a wide variety of foods and see all the rules I used to have as silly. I eat the foods I enjoy, make me feel good, and that I actually like, not what someone else has told me to eat.

YES NO

I don't spend all my time reading, researching, watching videos, and scrolling through pictures, images, movies, books, magazines or social media accounts and drool over the food, wishing I had it. My time is filled with more meaningful stuff, things I actually love and care about, not things that control me.

YES NO

My social media outlets and other forms of entertainment aren't just centered around food, diet, exercise, other people's bodies, health and fitness. That might make up a small part of what I follow, but I'm more diverse now with friends, family, funny accounts, inspirational stuff, nature, animals, art, poetry, crafts, etc. My life isn't just health, fitness, and food.

YES NO



I have deleted/changed my “recovery” account and I no longer post depressing, Debbie-downer, negative posts about how I “slipped up” and ate extra cookies or how I’m feeling “extra fat” today. I could care less. I’m more concerned about just living my life.

YES NO

I have unfollowed all the other “recovery” accounts that I used to watch and wonder about. \*If you haven’t done this yet, due to the fact that you’re most likely friends with these people who run the accounts, I would send them a message/email and let them know that it’s nothing personal and you still want to remain friends, but you are working on getting any type of “recovery” stuff out of your life so you can focus on moving forward. Also, encouraging them to do the same would be awesome, too!

YES NO

I have reached a healthy weight for my body. Even if I gained extra weight, that’s ok, but I’m definitely not underweight anymore.

YES NO

My appetite has leveled off - I'm no longer experiencing "extreme hunger" where I could eat everything in the house and still be hungry for more. I now eat what I want, when I want, and don't feel the need to over-eat or under-eat. I just eat. Maybe sometimes I eat a lot and maybe sometimes I wish I had more, but it's not even an issue any more.

YES NO

I have had my period consecutively for 3-6 months (with 6 months+ being the preference).

YES NO

My friends, family, co-workers, etc. have all noticed, and maybe even mentioned, how much I have changed, how I'm a different person now and how I'm so much fun to be around. They no longer talk about how worried they are about me, I don't get in fights over food and workouts, and they are finally enjoying being around me again.

YES NO

I realized what I did to my mind and body, see it as irresponsible and stupid, and I know I won't go through

that ever again. I want to finally be REALLY healthy and do it the right way this time around.

YES    NO

Depending on how you answered each of these questions, you now have a good idea of where you stand on this whole “recovery” journey you’re on. Again, if you find that you’re *really* struggling with a lot of these things, I would seriously stop, give it some time, work on these issues, and not try to get through all this faster than you can handle. Addressing these issues slowly but surely and making sure you’ve got a good grasp on them is the key here. Whatever you decide to do moving forward is up to you, I just really encourage you to be honest with yourself and let your body and mind continue to heal if they need to. If you decide to go forward KNOWING that these underlying issues haven’t been dealt with and then in the future you experience more issues, then remember, you have to go back to the beginning and work on the CAUSE, not the symptom!

And realize that no, you’re not going to be perfect and be able to answer “100% YES” to every single question (I get that), BUT, all I’m asking you to do is be very honest with yourself (because you know you better than anyone else does), and don’t skip over the glaring issues at hand just to move ahead faster. Be careful with that! I don’t want

you to get scared about moving forward either. Don't have this "black & white" type of mentality about this. When you're ready, move forward, if you're not, stay put. Don't overthink it and scare yourself into not doing anything at all! You know you better than anyone else and that's all I'm wanting you to focus on :)

However, if you feel like you've mastered or gotten really good at dealing with these things, you're living your life again, your past disordered habits and thoughts are behind you (for the most part, we're not talking about being perfect here, but hopefully you get the gist of what I'm saying), then let's get started on the perfect diet for keeping your period. You're going to do awesome! Get excited, you're about to become a new you.

# Chapter 3      The Perfect Diet for Keeping Your Period: What It's NOT

Just like how the first yes or no circle for “Getting Your Period” is you no longer feeling like you have to follow a perfect diet to be “healthy,” the same goes for keeping your period.

Repeat after me: *“I DO NOT HAVE TO FOLLOW A PERFECT DIET TO BE HEALTHY. There is more to health than just what foods I put in my mouth.”* Say that again and again and again.

The truth is, don't forget, following, searching out, researching, dragging your mind and body through torture, and obsessing over that “perfect diet” is most likely what got you to where you were a few months ago - period-less, miserable, unhappy, isolated, depressed, and actually, *UNHEALTHY*. So, rule number one that you have to always remember is: You do not have to follow a perfect diet to be healthy. In fact, over the last few months of NOT following such a diet, you've probably felt

more alive, more energetic, and more *healthy* than you ever did trying to be super clean, pure, and perfect with your food choices, right? Because it's true, your health is made up more than just what you put in your mouth. You can be eating the healthiest food in the world, but hate it and dread the thought of it, but even your mental connection to the food is going to cause you to be unhealthy. This is why you've seen such a turn around in the past few months of just letting go of control, eating the foods you like, and living your life. You're now *healthier* because of that, regardless of the foods you were eating. See how that works?

The “Perfect Diet for Keeping Your Period” isn't like any other diet out there that has tons of different guidelines you must follow, times you have to eat at, amounts of food you can eat or shouldn't eat, etc. This isn't about figuring out how many calories you should eat every day, following a predetermined meal-by-meal plan all to ensure you get your period, and having more routines and rules around food. **No.** All of that is relative. And honestly, for your goals of keeping your period, all of that is unnecessary and potentially hurtful.

The “Perfect Diet for Keeping Your Period” is going to be based primarily around one thing and one thing only:

**YOU.**

Below we will talk about certain guidelines and boundaries that I suggest you stay within, but apart from that, the perfect diet for you keeping your period is going to be 100% up to *YOU* and *YOUR* body. This is not a meal plan, a calorie goal, or a regimented way of eating. And hopefully, by now, after reading through the “Get Your Period Handbook” you’ve come to understand that we *are all different*. What works for one girl might not work for another girl and **THAT’S OK** and that’s to be expected.

The thing is, everyone wants to know the specific ins-and-outs of their diet. I’m sure you’re wanting me to tell you *exactly* how many calories you should be eating each day, the perfect amount of fat grams, carbohydrates, and protein you should eat for each and every day. Why? Because you like control and you want to have all your I’s dotted and T’s crossed. But, I’m not going to tell you that! Why? Because there is **NO** perfect number for all this stuff, especially for each and every girl! You and your body and your body’s needs are *completely* different from the next girl. Maybe she does awesome eating a certain number of calories, but you, on the other hand, would be starving on those calories, or maybe you’d be too full. Who knows? Maybe she loves eating x amount of fat every day and that’s what helps her get her period and stay happy, but for you that would be too low (or too



high). Do you see my point here? We're all so different, so throwing out arbitrary numbers and rules won't be helpful *at all*. If anything it will be harmful and keep you from progressing in the long-run.

However, I will lay out some guidelines and boundaries below that everyone should stay within, but what you do in those boundaries is up to you. This is about you continuing what you've been doing up until this point, maybe tweaking a few things here or there, but understanding that your food choices are up to you and they are based off your likes and dislikes, not some arbitrary diet that gets you back into that whole cycle of obsessing over food again.

Remember, the idea of getting your period back in the first place was about what? Freedom. And we're not about to go back into diet slavery and bondage again. We're still going to continue being free, but this time we're going to make a few minor changes to ensure we feel our best, we reach our optimum weight, we can fuel our workouts, we feel confident and attractive, we are respecting ourselves and lastly, we're loving ourselves and our bodies the way they should've been loved a long time ago. *This go around we're going to get it right once and for all*. So, let's first talk about what the "Perfect Diet for Keeping Your Period" is *NOT*, and then we'll get into what it is.

## This is NOT an extreme diet.

You (hopefully) know by now that extreme diets are not the answer when it comes to both getting and keeping your period. Here's the thing: Your body and hormones HATE extremes. Absolutely hates them. It's like we talked about with getting your period - if your body senses something is completely out of control, especially on the side of lacking, it will fight back and it will begin to shut things down (i.e. your period, hormones, energy, thyroid function, etc.).

So, the “Perfect Diet for Keeping Your Period” is *NOT* one of low calories, low carbs, etc. Remember, “Extremes are easy, balance takes practice?” Well, the same is true when it comes to the perfect diet. In the past, if you have taken on one of these types of diets (or some sort of mixture of them), and you had hormonal issues, then that's a sure bet that *your body and hormones do not like that*. No more extremes. You need balance. Your body needs balance. What you might consider “extreme” might not be extreme for the next girl, so don't judge by other people's diets and what they're doing, judge by how **YOUR** diet effects **YOU**.

And again, remember, just because your best friend Susie follows a specific type of diet and still gets her period, doesn't mean that if you follow that same diet you will, too. We're all different! Moral of the story: focus on yourself! What may seem "extreme" for Susie's diet might not be extreme for you. You have to find what YOUR BODY considers extreme. Maybe going too low in fat or carbs is extreme for your body, but not so much for Susie's and that's fine. FOCUS ON YOUR BODY, NOT SUSIE'S.

*This is NOT a low-calorie diet.*

Even if you have gained weight over the last few months of working to get your period back, that is OK and actually that was totally needed. So, first off, be proud of yourself, love your body, respect it, and be thankful that it is finally working properly again after years of not doing so. However, I'm sure you're ready, wanting, and tempted to jump right back into a super low calorie diet to lose the weight you gained, right? Well, trust me. That's not a good idea.

What did we just talk about above? No extremes, right? So, if you've been eating a lot for the last few months, got your period back, but now you want to just drop your calories really quickly to lose weight. Don't do this.

Remember, this is a marathon, not a sprint. The best diet for you keeping your period and having it stay with you for the long-run is not going to be a low calorie diet, by any means.

Now, this is where things change a little bit. Just because this is not a low calorie diet, does not mean that it is not a *lower* calorie diet than the one you've been on for the last few months. If you've been force-feeding yourself and gained a lot of weight, again that's ok, now it's time to pull the reins back a little bit and start to find good balance. You don't want to keep going on your whole life stuffing your face just for the sake of doing so, right? That's when things get out of balance on the other side of things. Remember, we want *balance*.

This is not a low calorie diet, but it could *\*potentially\** be a lower calorie diet depending on what you've been eating the last few months. But again, I really want to point out that this is not going to be a conscious decision of lowering your calories (that's what most likely got you into this period predicament in the first place). You got obsessed with calories and with keeping them low or burning them off. That's not what I want you to do here. Instead, you'll be switching out certain foods for others, eating more of specific foods, and finding a good variety that works for you and your body and not even worrying about the calories because the variety of foods you'll be

eating will give you the right amount of calories and carbs you need, keep you satisfied, keep you enjoying your meals, and keep you from obsessing over everything you're eating. The potential of eating a lower amount of calories will ultimately work itself out on its own and will also depend on where you're coming from during the time of getting your period back.

\*However, I want to clarify that your new way of eating might *not* be “lower in calories” (technically speaking) due to the nature of any new exercise you might be doing, or the sheer fact that you enjoy eating the amount you eat now and it works great for your body and hormones. At the end of the day, low calorie is not what you want, but if you've been living off of junk food for the past 6 months and you switch that out for more whole, unprocessed foods, then you will, by definition, most likely be lowering your calories without even thinking about it. However, if you find yourself getting all obsessed over this again, you need to work on finding that happy-medium for yourself. You know yourself better than anyone so stick with your gut instinct for what is going to help you stay free from any past bad habits and tendencies and keep you healthy and getting your period for the future. The key is that you don't even worry about the calories, just eat good food and move on with your life :)

## This is NOT a restrictive diet.

Just like this isn't a low calorie diet, it's also not going to be a restrictive one. When you think of the word "diet," what is the first thing that comes to mind? If you're like me, it's probably, "Oh gosh, what am I going to have to give up?? Not my beloved chocolate and bread!!" The first thing you think about are all the things you've gotta stop eating, cut out of your diet, all the "bad, unhealthy" foods you really don't want to give up, and you try to sike yourself out to be on a new diet, right? Well, that's not what this is.

You won't be giving up *ANY* foods at all. None. You can continue to eat the foods you love, enjoy, and look forward to. The only difference is going to be that you will start to find a good, healthy balance with these foods. Instead of living off of fun foods, extremely high calorie foods, or junk foods (which maybe you've been doing for the past few months), now you'll still be filling your diet to have a majority of more nutritious foods, but *STILL* enjoying all the foods you love every single day, just not in huge amounts like you might be used to. So, take a sigh of relief, because no, you won't be giving up any of your favorite foods (unless you just decide you don't feel good eating those foods at all anymore). That's not what this is about. This is about learning how to eat a good, healthy

diet that is sustainable, enjoyable, nutritious, but also, at times, fun and unrestrictive. However, you might have found throughout this process that you just don't really want any "fun foods" anymore and that's ok, too. DO WHAT MAKES YOUR BODY FEEL BEST. Which leads us to the next point...

*This is NOT a temporary, quick-fix diet.*

Just like we talked about above with this diet not being restrictive, it's also not something that you'll follow for a certain, specific amount of time. When we think of the word "diet," our minds first go to the idea of restriction, but then we think about, "Well, how long do I have to do this?" We see it as a specified amount of time - maybe it's two weeks, one month, three months, etc., but we always see it as a block of time and once that time ends then the diet probably ends.

But, the "Perfect Diet for Keeping Your Period" isn't like that. I hate even using the word "diet" because it brings up so many bad connotations, because really it's more of a lifestyle or nutritional therapy, of sorts. It's not about weight loss in the traditional sense of the word, but rather it's about getting your body to a healthy, sustainable, enjoyable weight for both your physical health and your mental health that you can continue on

throughout the rest of your life, ensuring you feel great, enjoy the food you eat, and continue to have properly working hormones. So, this isn't something that you just do for a few weeks or months. This is something I encourage you to do for the rest of your life.

## *This is NOT a meal plan.*

If you've read the "Get Your Period Handbook," then you know my thoughts on meal plans, but let me explain a little bit further. Meal plans aren't only just tedious, sometimes boring, and at times restricted, but they can also be very stressful and inflexible. And these two things (stress and inflexibility) are not two things that you want to carry with you throughout this "keeping your period" journey. One of the most frequently asked questions that I get is, "Can you just give me a meal plan that I can follow to reach my goals?" And my answer is always, "No!"

Reason being is because it is not up to me, a doctor, a coach, or anyone else to tell you what you should or should not eat, when you should eat it, how much you should it, why you should eat it, how you should eat it, etc., especially long-term (granted, there are some exceptions to this, but for our purposes, we'll be staying away from meal plans). The goal for you now and for the



rest of your life is for *YOU* to figure out what *you* like to eat, how much *you* like to eat, why *you* like to eat, when *you* like to eat, where *you* like to eat, how *you* like to eat, etc. Only *you* can figure these things out in a way that will allow you to be successful and happy for the long-run. And the second goal is for you to **STOP** worrying about what, why, how, when, and how much everyone else eats and comparing yourself to them and their routines. This is most likely what got you into a lot of trouble in the first place, worrying about everyone else. Instead, take all of that time and effort and turn it around on yourself and start focusing on *YOU*. Let everyone else do their own thing with their diet.

Putting yourself in a box that keeps you restricted, obsessed, and following something that someone else created isn't going to help you grow in your own responsibility when it comes to you and your health. So, there is no meal plan. The meal plan is what *YOU* want it to be, not what I tell you to follow. And I encourage you not to create any meal plans for yourself - let things be fluid, organic, and flexible. Hopefully by now with getting your period back you've gotten used to understanding a meal plan isn't in your best interest, so don't go back down that road!

## This is NOT a force-feeding diet.

Sadly, yes, there are many people that think that a restrictive, low-calorie diet is the only way to live their life, but just as common are those that think, have been told, and have been lead to believe that they have to force-feed themselves to be healthy. And maybe this is you. Maybe you've gotten in the mindset that you have to just eat and eat and you're nervous and anxious that if you *don't* do that then you'll be unhealthy and potentially lose your period. You've been so brainwashed (either from your own mind or outsiders) that if you happened to eat just until satisfied, not stuffed, then you'll like die or something. This is EQUALLY as dangerous as consciously eating too low calories.

By consciously eating too many calories, you're doing the same thing by eating low calories: you're throwing your body, appetite, hunger levels, and so on, off balance. Remember, this is about *balance*. It's not about too little and it's, equally, not about too much. And don't forget, this is something you want to do for the rest of your life, it has to be sustainable, enjoyable, and yes, healthy. Force-feeding yourself just for the sake of packing in tons of calories is going to be detrimental to not only your health in the long-term, but also your mind, your appetite, and your true hunger signals.

The ultimate goal is for you now to reach a point where you can eat when you're hungry, stop when you're satisfied, and move on with life. It's not about just shoving in as much food as you can just to say you did. That's not normal, nor sustainable, nor healthy in the long run. So, keep that in mind: just like it's not healthy or sustainable to consciously restrict yourself from foods, it's just as unhealthy and unsustainable to consciously force-feed yourself.

Now, I will make a disclaimer because I know that someone reading this will take this as a green light to stop eating so much. No, that's not what this is about. This is about you finding a good, healthy balance. Figuring out your hunger signals, eating till satisfied, seeing food as just food and also as fuel to give you energy for the day (and potential workouts), and just moving on with life. It's not about complicating food, calories, too little, too much, and so on, it's about you just eating the foods you like, having a good variety and balance of healthy and fun foods, and you enjoying your life. It's that simple. And, yes, if you do get back into exercising, you *will* be eating more, so don't use that as an excuse to restrict or not eat as much. You're going to need the extra food and calories when you workout.

## This is NOT a junk food diet.

Many of you have maybe been living off super high calorie, fun, tasty, delicious junk foods for the last few months, right? Maybe others of you have just decided to eat a ton of “healthy” foods and gain weight, face your fear foods (that still happen to be healthy foods) and do it that way. Regardless, if you are in the first camp of people, this is where things will be changing a lot for you. Yes, I’m sure you’ve had a blast eating all the cookies, pizza, cake, and candy you want - it’s been fun, right? And that’s awesome and honestly I’m so glad you’ve done that. It’s definitely been a huge step in the right direction, you’ve made a ton of progress mentally and physically, and you’re enjoying all the delicious foods.

However, if you have literally been *living off* these foods for a while, I want you to start making a slow transition. Not a HUGE transition, but a slow one. And again, this is totally up to you and you have to keep yourself accountable in this. If you start getting these negative, anxious thoughts about, “Oh gah, now I’ve gotta stop eating all the foods I love!!” then don’t transition into this just yet. Let this be a natural progression. But, what I want you to do is to start incorporating more wholesome foods into your diet. This doesn’t mean you can’t still have all your favorite fun (remember, this is NOT restrictive or

extreme diet), but this *is* about learning to eat a healthy diet in a way that you can continue to do sustainably for the rest of your life, while also enjoying the foods you truly love.

So, if you've been living off tons of junk food up until this point, I want to challenge you to start incorporating *some* nutritious food into your diet, with the goal of, over time, having a good, healthy balance of mostly nutritious foods, with your fun foods thrown in. But again, this is up to you: the rate and way in which you do this is on you. You have to figure out what works best for both your mind and body for the long-term, and that is totally *your* decision, based off where you are currently mentally and physically with your health. On the flip-side, maybe you need to continue eating all your favorite fun foods in abundance just to prove to yourself that it's just food, you're beating your fears and life is going great. If that's you, then keep doing that until the time is right to start adding in more nutritious, wholesome foods. But, if you read this and you see it as a new form of restriction, I'm here to say, *that's not what it is*. This is about balance and about *you* figuring out your own personal balance.

## This is NOT a “clean eating” diet.

Just like this isn't a full-on junk food diet, it's also not a 100% “clean eating” or “I-only-eat-perfectly-healthy-food diet.” Most diets out there tell you that to be healthy, fit, and happy, you can **ONLY** eat from a certain list of “healthy, clean foods” and when you stray from these foods then that's when you get unhealthy, gain weight, and feel bad. But this isn't true. The truth is that you can be perfectly healthy (and even way happier) by having a good amount of your foods coming from wholesome foods, but also throwing in those fun foods every now and then, too (if you want, but you definitely don't have to). Not only is this awesome for your body physically, but even more so, mentally.

Like we talked about above, everyone hates diets because they have to just live off of “healthy” foods and never get to have a cookie, a piece of cake, or a slice of pizza. They end up fearing those foods, yet at the same time, idolizing those foods, all ending up in a huge binge fest (which is what you *don't* want). So, instead of completely following a perfect “clean eating” diet, you're going to be eating the *majority* of your foods from these types of good, wholesome foods, while also giving yourself the permission to have all your favorite fun foods every single

day, every few days, once a week, or however that works best for you.

Again, this is all up to *YOU* and what you prefer. I can't tell you how often you should eat a cookie or go out for pizza - that's totally up to you. And even with that being said, I would encourage you to be very careful of not turning this into a planned type of thing. Let it be natural. Just like other normal people out there eating their foods every single day, sometimes they want a cookie and sometimes they don't. They don't overcomplicate it or dwell on it. They don't plan it out, mark it down on their calendar, or day-dream about it. If they want it, they eat it, enjoy it, and move on with life. If they don't want it, it's not because they are being "restrictive," but rather they just didn't want it right then or that particular day for whatever reason. And this is the goal for you got to get - if you want it, eat it, if you don't, don't. Let it be normal and natural and don't overcomplicate it.

The good news is, as you eat the majority of your foods from wholesome, natural, healthy foods, you will still have room for fun foods, but you won't feel the need to overindulge in those things. It's the perfect balance. You're eating tons of healthy foods, feeling satisfied, and maintaining a healthy weight, while also having the freedom to enjoy the foods you really like and that taste good if and when you want to.

The last thing I'll say about this is that even though it might not be a "clean eating diet" 100%, you want start to find a healthy balance with yourself when it comes to the foods that make you FEEL the best. If eating tons of healthy "clean" foods makes you feel amazing and you just don't care for junk foods, THEN DON'T EAT THEM. The whole point of this entire process is to stop stressing, stop overanalyzing and stop worrying over every little food decision you make. If you like healthy food, eat healthy food. If you want a cookie, have a cookie. And then be done with it all and move on to the next thing in life.

*This is NOT a "One-Size-Fits-All" diet.*

When it comes to the absolute perfect diet for *you* keeping *your* period, there's one thing you've got to understand: What works for you and your body is going to be different, sometimes drastically different, than what works for another girl. When you think of all the mainstream diets out there, they are all set up to be the same type of diet, same type of foods, and same type of regimen for each and every person following that diet. But this time it's going to be different.



Instead of you following a set, planned, regimented diet that is made to fit everyone else, you're going to be following one that actually *fits* you. And not just fits you from a health perspective, but even more so from a taste, preference, and amount perspective. I want you to be eating the foods that taste good to *you* (not me or someone else you see on the internet or in a magazine), the type of foods *you* enjoy, and the amount of food that *your* body needs (not what I or someone else tells you that you need). This is all about *you* and about *your* body, not everyone else's.

Chances are, you've probably spent a ton of time looking at, researching, wondering about, and trying to match what everyone else is eating. Maybe you follow a bunch of people on social media that say, "Eat this, eat that, copy me!" Or maybe you're trying to eat the exact foods your friends or family eat, but you really don't like them, it's too little or too much food, and you've basically just gotten away from what *your* body is telling you to do. You've gotten out of touch with yourself and your hunger, preferences, tastes, appetite, and satiation.

So, this is all about you getting back to you. Stop worrying about what everyone else is doing, stop thinking you need to be following the diet Susie is on (even though you would hate her diet), and start focusing on you. Because truth be told, if you would spend as much time

focusing on you and the foods you like, the foods that make you feel good, and getting back in touch with your hunger cues as you do worrying about what everyone else is doing, you'd probably be a lot further in your "health/diet journey" right now. Remember, this is about *you* starting to eat in a way that allows *you* to be happy, healthy, and keeping *your* period around, not someone else.

# Chapter 4

## What the “Perfect Diet for Keeping Your Period” Actually IS

Now that we’ve talked about what the “Perfect Diet for Keeping Your Period” is **NOT**, let’s talk about what it actually **IS**. And this is the most important part of all of this. Once you understand how freeing, open, and non-restrictive this is going to be, you’re going to feel so relieved and actually excited about this new journey.

Likewise, if you’ve been all over the place the last few months with your eating, this is going to give you a better idea of what your future is going to look like: no more force-feeding yourself, binging for hours on end, or worrying if you’ll always eat the way you’ve been eating. This is about getting back to normalcy, eating a well-balanced, nutritious, and delicious diet, full of both healthy and fun foods, in a way that is both sustainable and enjoyable for the rest of your life.

## This IS a PERSONALLY-BALANCED & customized macronutrient diet.

Incase you don't know what a "macronutrient" is, I'll explain real quick. Basically, macronutrient is the term we use for the "big" nutrients that make up the food we eat. So, for example, the three major macronutrients we'll be focusing on are carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. The other type of nutrients, "micronutrients," are the smaller nutrients and these are your vitamins and minerals. While those are *extremely* important, right now we're going to be focusing on the macronutrients. So, depending on where you came from in the past, this could possibly be the first time in your life that you'll actually be following a healthy, well-balanced diet. Maybe you've been on all types of diets (extremely low-fat, low-carb, high-fat, high-carb, low-protein, high-protein, super "clean," bingeing and purging, restricting and purging, and so on) and all these types of diets have caused you to be so clouded in what "balance" actually means.

From my own personal experience, and my experience of working with other girls trying to keep their periods, your hormones really, really, really like balance. They *hate* extremes. Too low in one things or too high in another, too much back and forth with the bingeing, purging, restricting, etc. and it can potentially throw things off.

Remember like we talked about in the “Get Your Period Handbook,” your hormones and period prefers *peace and normalcy*, not crazy extremes with lots of stress. You might not feel “stressed” when you go on some type of extreme diet, but trust me, your hormones definitely do.

So, the goal is to get your macronutrients of your diet balanced in such a way that is both healthy and enjoyable. Now, again, I want to point out that this is going to be different for everyone. What works for your best friend and how much fat, carbs or protein she eats, is going to be different than what works for you. What works for me might not work for you. What works for your sister, mom, neighbor, or girl you see on the internet might not work for you. Why? Because we’re all different. You’re different from the girl on social media who eats super low carb, low fat, low protein, high fat, high protein, or high carb. *We’re all different.* The goal is for *you* to find the sweet spot for *your* body. And you can find this sweet spot by doing just some simple trial and error.

If you know that you *lost* your period eating a certain type of extreme diet, then there’s your clue. For example, let’s say that you went on a very low carb, high fat, high protein diet and you lost your period. Well, it’s pretty clear that you were eating enough fat and protein, but what about the carbs? Obviously, *your* body likes carbs and when you started eating more of them, you got your

period back, right? Or, let's say you went on an extremely low fat diet, lost your period and once you started eating some more fats again, it came back. Well, there's your answer. If you're like the former example, your body just needed more carbs, and if you're like the latter, your body just needed more fat. Simple as that.

But, I know what you're thinking, how come your best friend Susie can eat a low carb or extremely low fat diet and get her period and you can't? Because *you're* different than Susie. And that's the biggest thing you've got to keep in the back of your mind. If a certain way of eating just doesn't work for you, then it *just doesn't work for you!* So, my biggest tip is to stop trying to force it, do some trial and error, see what *your* body and hormones feel best eating and go from there. And for the best long-term results, *keep it that way.* Don't keep going back and forth, flip-flopping, and reverting back to old ways that you **know** aren't going to be beneficial for your body, hormones, and mind. That's the danger zone you want to stay away from. Remember, balance is key.

*This IS a wide variety diet.*

This is not the type of diet that you limit yourself to just a handful of foods. This isn't you trying to live off 10 "safe foods," for fear of weight gain, health consciousness, or

restrictive tendencies. This isn't you following some type of meal plan that says you can only eat from one specific list of foods, whereas all others are "off limits." This is a way of eating that encompasses tons of awesome, delicious, healthy, and nutritious foods to give your body the fuel it needs to work optimally. And the biggest thing about this variety is that it's up to *you*. You get to choose the foods you like to eat. Later in the book I'll give you some ideas of foods to focus on, but this is not about me, or anyone else, telling you what you *have* to eat. It's about you understanding your options, choosing from those, and learning to eat based off the foods *you* like, based off *your* hunger cues, based off *your* cravings, and based off *your* needs.

So, a huge part of that is going to be the great amount of variety of food you'll be eating. If you're one of these people who only eats a few foods and never branches out, now is the time to change that. Start trying new foods, order something spontaneous at a restaurant, try out new recipes, have fun with it. Food should not only be nutritious, healthy and delicious, but it should also be fun. It's a huge part of our lives, so having a big variety of things to choose from on any given day will keep you balanced, happy, trying new things, excited, and successful in the long run.

## This IS a healthy diet.

When we hear the phrase, “healthy foods” or “healthy diet,” it seems to conjure up something different for each of us. Some people think healthy is low calorie, some think it’s only eating low carb or low fat foods, some think it’s eating foods cooked a certain way (or not cooked at all), whereas some think the health and nutrition of a food doesn’t really matter that much at all, it’s all about the taste. The truth is, all of these ways of thinking can have bit of truth in them, but at the end of the day, I think we can all agree that the foundation of any “healthy” diet is whole foods. And not just an obscure idea of “whole foods,” but specifically whole *plant* foods.

Though we might like to label our “healthy” diets differently, we can most likely agree on what “healthy foods” actually are. For example, if you were to start randomly surveying people on the street, asking them to give you a few examples of what they thought “healthy food” was, what would the vast majority of them say? They would most likely start spouting off things like, “apples, carrots, broccoli, spinach, oranges, etc.,” right? And what do these all have in common? They’re PLANTS. I highly doubt anyone is going to say, “Candy bars, fried chicken, and cheesecake!”



So, what I'm trying to say is that we can all, at the very least, agree that the *foundation* of any diet should be predominantly fruits, vegetables, whole grains, etc., which also happen to be *whole plant foods*. And notice the emphasis that I put on the word "*foundation*." This is something that you want to really understand and get right as you move forward in your healthy eating, keeping your period, journey.

The word foundation is appropriate because it signifies what is going to be making up the majority, or bulk, of your food choices. And not only that, but it also signifies just how important these foods are. When it comes to building a tall building, the first, and most important thing, is going to be the foundation. If you skimp on that, you're going to have some issues somewhere along the way when you start building more and more on top of that. But, if you actually take the time to put in the right foundation, use the right materials, make sure it's done correctly, then the rest of the job is a piece of cake. Same thing goes for your diet. By laying the proper foundation of eating the majority of your calories from *whole plant foods*, you're automatically setting yourself up for success.

But, I want to point out another very significant thing about the idea of "foundation." Is the foundation all there is? Is a really tall building *just* the foundation and nothing else? No, it's not. The foundation is the first and foremost,

most important part of the building, but it's not the *whole* building. The rest of it is the fun parts, the parts that make it beautiful, interesting, and different. The parts that, depending on the architect, are special to their style and way of building. It should be the same way with your diet. You set the foundation of it with healthy, whole plant foods, and then you start adding in other things that make it unique to you. The interesting, fun, different things that set it up to where it works awesome for you.

Don't worry about how everyone else is "building" their diet, worry about yours. All you have to be sure to do is make sure your foundation is set up good, focus on whole plant foods, and then go from there. Following the building analogy, however "tall" or "high" you decide to go with your diet-building is up to you. Some people like to keep it pretty low to the foundation and have a whole lot of their foods coming from whole plant foods with minimal interesting, fun, and different things thrown in. Others like to really go all-out and eat lots of whole plant foods, while always mixing it up and trying new things. That's all up to you. The key though, is the foundation. A healthy, delicious, nutritious, strong foundation of whole plant foods.

Now that we've talked about how you're going to set it up (with having whole plant foods as the majority of your food intake), let's talk about what exactly this means. But

what does “whole” even mean? “Whole” means that the food hasn’t been messed with, processed, or altered in any way. It’s all the foods you find in the produce section of your grocery store. It’s a whole, fresh apple instead of boxed apple juice. It’s whole, starchy potatoes instead of potato chips. It’s whole, creamy chunks of coconut instead of coconut oil. Those types of things. Now, does that mean you can’t/won’t/don’t ever eating the apple juice, potato chips, or oil and if you do you’ll just die? No, it just means that the majority/foundation of your diet is going to come from the *whole* versions of these foods. The “non-whole” foods are what you build on top of the foundation you’ve already built with the WHOLE foods.

And again the biggest part about this is YOU. This is not about you becoming Orthorexic again and avoiding all processed foods - this is just about you understanding that *balance* is key and that having a good foundation of whole, healthy foods, is the proper starting point. So, this is totally up to you to hold yourself accountable on. You know where you’ve come from with your disordered eating tendencies, so you need to be sure you’re setting up and staying within the boundaries you’ve made for yourself. The other things would be what you want to start adding on top to build your diet-building higher. Remember, it’s not an all-or-nothing, black and white type of thing. It’s full of variety and options, with the focus on whole plant foods, with the other stuff thrown in.

But why whole plant foods? What's the big deal? Well, for starters, plant foods are the only foods that contain fiber. You can't get fiber from any other food except plants, especially *whole* plants. And fiber is going to act beneficially for your body in a number of ways. Fiber helps you to feel satisfied. Try drinking glass of fruit juice (where all the fiber is removed) vs. a smoothie (where all the fiber is still intact). You'll see that after the juice you're still hungry, because there was no fiber to fill your stomach. When you drink the smoothie, you are more filled up because of the fiber. Likewise, when you take the fiber out of something you're risking having some blood sugar issues because the fiber in the food is put into place to help slow down the digestion and the rate at which that food raises your blood sugar. Eating foods that have more fiber in them will not just help you feel satisfied (and feel satisfied *longer*), but also it will help \*clean out\* your system, bulk up your stool, and keep you regular. It's crazy how bad, sluggish, and gross you can feel when you can't and don't go to the bathroom. Being "regular" makes you feel light, energetic, and amazing, so fiber for the win! :)

Not only is fiber a huge part of whole plant foods, but even more is the idea that whole plant foods are **PACKED** with vitamins, nutrients, minerals, and water that can be easily assimilated by your body. Likewise, a plant foods are cruelty-free (nothing had to die for you

to eat them), they're easy on the environment, they're cheap, easy to come by, and are our species-specific food source. The countries that eat the most whole plant foods are the healthiest, live the longest, and have the least amount of diseases.

So, what are some examples of whole plant foods? A lot of these foods you'll find in the produce section of the grocery store. These are things like fresh fruits; fresh vegetables; starches like potatoes, pumpkin, different squashes; whole grains like oatmeal, buckwheat, brown rice; beans and legumes like black beans, pinto beans, lentils; and some healthy fats like avocado and some nuts and seeds. Having these types of foods as the foundation of your diet is going to make you feel amazing, look amazing, reach your perfect weight, fill you up, give you the nutrition you need and help keep your period around for good.

The main goal with all of this is for you to get it *right* this time. This isn't a anti-health food diet and it's not a Orthorexic-type diet, either. The truth is, **WE NEED HEALTHY FOOD**. And obviously, we all know that, right? But the key is, finding that perfect balance for *you*. You can take a little bit from this or that, but at the end of the day, you've got to find that perfect balance and mix for yourself. Not necessarily following exactly what Susie does or says. The difference this time around is for you to

eat healthy, nutritious foods, but not in such a mentally extreme way that could trigger you to go back to square one.

And again, this is going to be different for *everyone*. For one girl it might be tons and tons of fruits and vegetables and that's what she thrives off of, feels best on, and it just works for her. But for you, if you were to try to do that, you'd fail miserably and feel awful. Does that mean just fruits and veggies is wrong? No, it's just not working for you. So, maybe you do amazing off lots of whole grains, starches, veggies, nuts and seeds and you don't really care for much fruit. If that's the case, then go for it! Or maybe you like to just eat whatever you want, have some fun foods every day, and go from there and that's what works great for you: you feel great, you love your body and you love the food, then go for it! There is not right or wrong way to do it when it comes to the food choices (though I *highly* recommend you stick to a plant-based diet), but it's more so to do with your mind and it's connection to the food. Remember, food is objective. The way you approach it and how it affects you personally is what matters in the end.

# Chapter 5

## The “Keep Your Period” Must-Haves Grocery List

Below are some ideas of things to buy when you’re out at the grocery store and wondering what in the world classifies as a good, nutritious “whole plant food.” And again, these are the foods that I suggest you make up the “foundation” of your diet with. Maybe you’ll eat foods that JUST come from this list, and that’s ok! Or, maybe you’ll “build” a little bit above the foundation and add in some other stuff, and that’s ok, too! I just encourage you to choose MOST of the foods you eat on a daily basis from these types of foods listed below. The more “whole” they are, the better. What you decided to add or take away is completely up to you, but the more of these the better you’re going to feel, look, and be helping your hormones!

### Non-Starchy Vegetables

Broccoli	Peppers
Cauliflower	Cabbage
Brussel Sprouts	Celery
Eggplant	Summer Squash
Green Beans	Zucchini
Mushrooms	Leeks
Onions	Garlic
Okra	Tomato

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AUDRA

### Leafy Greens

Spinach	Collard Greens
Leaf Lettuce	Swiss Chard
Kale	Rainbow Chard
Arugula	Romaine
Endive	Radicchio
Mustard Greens	Frisee
Turnip Greens	Iceberg
Bok Choy	Escarole

## Starchy Vegetables

Russet Potato	Artichoke
Sweet Potato	Butternut
Squash	
Yam	Parsnip
Japanese Sweet Potato	Carrot
Red Potato	Purple Potato

## Whole Grains

Oats (Rolled)	Millet
Oats (Steel-Cut)	Spelt
Quinoa	Rye
Buckwheat	Corn
Barley	Brown Rice
Wild Rice	

## Fruits

Banana	Grapefruit
Apple	Orange
Date	Lemon & Lime
Mango	Apricot
Strawberry	Fig
Raspberry	Tangerine
Blueberry	Pineapple
Cherry	Watermelon
Papaya	Cantaloupe
Honeydew	Peach
Grapes	Plum

## Legumes

Black Beans	Green Peas
Lentils	Chickpeas
Pinto Beans	Split-Peas
Kidney Beans	Black-Eyed Peas
White/Navy Beans	Butter Beans
Soy Beans	

## Other Foods

Whatever other foods you want to throw in on top of these are up to you. You can add from this list, or even take away, but I advise this be the foundation of your diet. Whatever else you want to add will be up to your individual preferences, tastes, cravings, and desires, so have fun with it and make it work for you :)

## Fats

Avocado	Flaxseeds
Coconut Meat	Hazelnuts
Walnuts	Olives
Almonds	Brazil Nuts
Peanuts	Cashews
Sunflower Seeds	Pecans
Chia Seeds	Pumpkin Seeds



The above list is just a rough outline to give you a good idea of the types of foods you want to be choosing when you go grocery shopping or out to eat. This definitely isn't a complete list of every vegetable or fruit in the world, but hopefully you get the gist.

\*NOW, let's have a little talk real quick so you don't leave this chapter freaking out and thinking your life is over and all you get to eat is lettuce and black beans for the rest of your life lol.

First off, I encourage you to make this the **FOUNDATION** of your diet. You can choose to add to or take away from this as you please. I'm simply saying for **BEST** results from a hormonal, energy, and body perspective, these foods should make up the big bulk of what you eat. Instead of living off of potato chips and fried chicken as the bulk of your diet, change it to these foods listed above. It doesn't mean you have to eat *just* from this list (you certainly can if you want!), but this is definitely where I advise starting from.

You make **YOUR** perfect diet and figure out the foods that **YOU** like, make you feel your best, and work great for your body. Don't worry about everyone else. And at the end of the day, if you feel like you *don't* want this to be the foundation of your diet, that's fine, too! This

is just my suggestion based off my own personal results and the results of others I've worked with. So, you focus on YOU.

A lot of people see these types of foods as boring and tasteless, but I encourage you to make this FUN! And remember, NO, this isn't a "diet," this is about choosing the best foods for your body, mind, energy, and hormones LONG-TERM. Read back over the "Perfect Diet for Keeping Your Period" chapter and realize that this is going to be different than anything you've probably ever done. You're finally going to be feeding your body good, wholesome foods, throwing in other stuff if you want, all while feeling amazing and having tons of energy, great hormones, and a great outlook on life. So, have fun with it! Google different recipes, come up with your own, try to re-create your favorite recipes and make these food fun and interesting in different ways that you can enjoy and share with your family and friends.

And lastly, if you find yourself getting restrictive and obsessive about all this again then you need to BACK OFF and take an honest look at where you're at. Because remember, it's not the foods that's the problem, it's *your mind and perspective* that's the problem. And that is what needs fixing. So, get your mind fixed up and figured out first and focus on HEALTH, both mental AND physical and you'll do great. :)

# Chapter 6 Learning the Secret of Intuitive & Mindful Eating

In the last chapter we talked all about “The Perfect Diet for Keeping Your Period.” Pretty simple, right? So, now you know WHAT to eat, but maybe you’re confused on exactly HOW to eat. Since your restrictive tendencies and crazy dieting of the past, maybe you’ve totally forgotten HOW to even eat. You’ve been so out of touch with your body, hunger signals, and satiation cues that you literally don’t even know where to start. That’s what we’re going to re-learn in this chapter, so no worries, girl :) So, let’s start talking about what I like to call “Intuitive & Mindful Eating.”

Now, I’m sure you’re probably wondering, “Ok, I get that this is supposed to be a go-with-the-flow, healthy-eating type of lifestyle, but I don’t even know where to start!” Well, this is when “Intuitive & Mindful Eating” comes into play. I’m sure you have probably heard of the term, but if not, let’s do a quick recap to make sure you understand exactly what Intuitive & Mindful Eating really is. Because like I said, this is not just another meal plan, calorie-

counter, macro-tracker type of diet. This is to help you learn how to be set free from those types of things once and for all, learn to listen to *your* body and continue to create a healthy, respectful relationship with your body and food for the rest of your life.

A meal plan, counting calories, a regimented diet with tons of guidelines, counting macros, etc. are only temporary things. They aren't sustainable. And by now I'm sure you've figured that out. The goal in all of this is to get away from those sorts of things and to get in touch with what it is your body is saying to you. It's always talking to you, you just have to listen. The problem is, we've gotten away from listening to our own bodies and now we're listening to other people, other restricted diets, other rules, and we've gotten out of touch with what our body's have been saying to us all along. This is going to be about getting back to that, mending the relationship, getting back into communication, and learning how to listen and respect our bodies when they are speaking to us loud and clear.

Below are my “Top 10 Tips to Mindful & Intuitive Eating.” Yes, these things can take some time to master, but the goal is to continue making little progressive steps every single day. Don't get discouraged if you're still working on these things in a few months (or even years), that's normal. Everyone will progress at different rates when it comes

to this, so be gracious with yourself, don't compare yourself to others and keep going. Likewise, the amount of time that you've been "out of touch" with your body doesn't really matter. Maybe you've been recovering from an eating disorder that you've had for 10 years or maybe you just had a few weeks of restriction. It doesn't matter. For the 10 year disordered eating girl, she could snap out of it and start practicing all these things over night, whereas the few weeks girl could take a little longer. Point is, don't let your past determine or cause detriment to your future. Focus on the now, start making the right changes, and keep going. **DON'T STOP.**

## 1. Stop with the "Fad Diets"

What's a "Fad Diet?" This is any type of eating routine you have that is 100% *not* sustainable for the rest of your life. And when we talk about sustainability, we're talking about *everything* that goes into the diet and how it affects you, your body, and your life.

For example, if you're following some sort of "Fad Diet" that is extremely restrictive, low in calories, nutrients, food options, etc., that's going to be extremely difficult to stick to for the rest of your life.

If you're following a diet that yes, may be healthy, but is seriously messing with your mind in a negative way, that's not going to be sustainable for the rest of your life.

If you're following a diet that might give you “positive” aesthetic results, but it disrupts your hormones, your happiness, and your energy, that's not going to be sustainable for the rest of your life.

If you're following a diet that requires you to track, count, weigh, log, and obsess over every little bite of food you put into your mouth, that's not going to be sustainable for the rest of your life.

If you're following a diet that you keep “falling off” of and feel guilty, beat yourself up, and have to “start over on Monday” literally every single week, then that's probably not going to be sustainable for the rest of your life.

Do you see what I'm saying? So, it's not just about the food you get to eat, the foods that are excluded or the calories in that particular diet, that makes it a “Fad,” but it's also about how that diet affects you mentally, physically, hormonally, and really, in every area of your life.

At the end of the day, if you're following some sort of diet that you **honestly** can't see yourself doing *for the rest of your life*, you need to stop. And, if you're considering

adopting some type of diet like this, I *highly* encourage you to stay far, far away. The goal of this whole thing is to learn to live today like you want to be living when you're 80 years old. If it's not sustainable for the long term then chances are it's not going to be healthy for you even in the short term (especially NOW, after you've just gone through everything you have).

## 2. Eat When You're Hungry, Stop When You're Satisfied

What does it mean to *truly* be hungry? Aren't we all so confused by this? We're told, "Don't eat unless your stomach rumbles or hurts. Don't eat unless it's been 3+ hours. Don't eat unless you've drank a liter of water first. Don't eat if you think you could be bored. Don't eat if etc. etc. etc." So, we're bombarded by all these outside forces telling us to wait to eat, not eat, only eat x amount, etc. that again, we're listening to those things instead of our bodies. The truth is, your body *will tell you* when it's hungry. You just have to listen. But, there's a trick to this and I believe this is where a lot of people go wrong with Intuitive & Mindful Eating:

You need to focus on eating the *right foods* to know your *true* hunger.

Huh? I thought I could eat whatever I wanted!?

Yes, you can eat whatever you want, but I stress that you choose the majority of your foods from whole *plant* foods, foods from the produce section of the grocery store.

Why? Because first, these are extremely nutritious, delicious, and natural for your body to assimilate and break down. But second, from a hunger stand point, they are the foods that will help you figure out just how hungry or full you truly are.

Let's break this down a little bit.

Let's say you go eat a chocolate chip cookie. Is that off-limits? No, not at all. If you want the cookie, eat the cookie. **But**, be aware that the cookie has basically zero fiber, nutrients, vitamins, minerals, etc. Does that make it bad? No, it just makes it a cookie. No big deal.

However, if you were to say, "Ok, I'm going to make a whole meal out of cookies," you're going to be in some trouble from a satisfaction/fullness perspective. Why? Because they aren't going to fill you up near the amount that a plate full of veggies, starches, beans, fruits, etc. would. The latter is extremely fiber-filled, packed with water, and fills your stomach in a way that your body can



digest slowly over time, leaving you energized, satisfied, and stable until the next time your body says, “Hey, I’m hungry again!”

Now, obviously you’re probably saying, “Well, duh, eating a whole meal of cookies is a little extreme, nobody’s going to do that for every single meal.”

True, they probably won’t. But you know what most people eat for every single meal? The equivalent of cookies. Extremely processed, high-calorie, junk food basically. \*\*Yes, you have probably been eating *a lot* of these foods calorie-dense, processed foods since reading my “Get Your Period Handbook” and that is a **good** thing. It’s what your body and mind body needed for that time in your life. But, after you’ve gotten your period back, kept it for a few months, and even start to get sick of these types of foods, it’s time to transition into eating more whole foods that will help your weight stabilize to your body’s happy weight, keep you truly satisfied and lead to true hunger, all while keeping your way of eating sustainable for the long run. Living off junk food can be fun for a time (which I’m sure it has been!), but that’s not sustainable, nor healthy to do for the *rest of your life*, right? So, if you find yourself constantly living off these types of foods yet never being able to figure out if you’re hungry or satisfied (regardless of how many calories

you've eaten), it's because your body is having a difficult time connecting the dots with what you're eating.

As a side note, yes, these types of processed foods can be great for helping your digestion after a time a restriction because they lack fiber and can easily pass through your system, giving you the calories you need. So, if you're still finding you're having issues from a digestive perspective and even dealing with some Gastroparesis (what we talked about the "Get Your Period Handbook"), then you will want to keep some processed foods in your diet until things settle down. You can slowly begin transitioning into a more whole foods plant-based diet and see how your stomach and digestion goes. Be patient, though! It takes time, it's not going to happen over night.

Now, back to eating whole plant foods... Think of it like this. Let's say you eat a meal of strictly processed foods. No whole starches, no beans, veggies, fruits, etc. (basically ZERO fiber). And let's say you ate a lot of calories in that meal, but when you're finished you just don't feel satisfied. So you go back for more. And then more. And more until you are able to fill your stomach with as much food as you can to "feel full." The truth is, you could've gotten a similar fullness feeling if you had've eaten even just a half of that meal out of whole plant foods that would've provided you with the fiber, water, vitamins, and minerals that your body needs to let you feel *truly satisfied*.

And not only that, but the worst part is that just a few hours later you're going to be hungry again, and most likely reaching for more processed foods. Why? Because you have had zero fiber. Fiber is the key to satiation, slow release of energy in digestion, and helps you understand when your body actually gets truly hungry.

So, I say all of this to say that yes, it's ok to have some cookies, or chocolate, or whatever your thing is, but remember, it's all about *balance*. If you're trying to just live off processed foods all the time, you're never going to feel satisfied and you're going to have a hard time figuring out when you're truly hungry. So, fill your meals with good, wholesome whole plant foods and if you want a treat here and there have it. This isn't about restriction, this isn't about overeating, this is about being healthy and learning to fill your body with the foods that are going to make you feel your best. By eating tons of whole plant foods, you will find that you start to get in touch with your hunger and satiation signals right away.

Trust me, you're going to be hard-pressed to over-eat on a plate full of steamed whole potatoes, lots of veggies, some avocado, and some black beans. You'll be full, satisfied, and energized for the rest of the day and when your body is done processing that and has used up the energy from that meal, it will let you know that it's hungry again.

The last thing that I want to point about about the hunger and satiation factors is that a huge part of this is going to be focusing on carbohydrate-rich foods. Seeing that whole plant foods are primarily made up of carbohydrates, sticking to these types of foods are going to be your best friend. The biggest reason why is because if your body is lacking in carbohydrates (and/or calories), at some point you might get thrown into some type binging episode because your body feels threatened from the lack of nourishment and carbs. Remember, your body *loves loves loves* carbohydrates (especially your hormones) and particularly those types of carbohydrates that come from whole plant foods (starches, veggies, fruits, whole grains, legumes, etc.) These are the foods that are going to help your body feel it's best, look it's best, perform it's best, identify with hunger and satiation the best, and give it the perfect amount of nutrients and nourishment it needs for the long haul.

### 3. Get Rid of the "Meal-Time Mentality"

A *huge* part of Intuitive & Mindful Eating is getting in touch with *when* your body is actually hungry. You've got to get away from the idea that you must, at all costs, eat your meals at specific times during the day. Your body doesn't work like that.

Too many of us think that we have to have breakfast at 7am, then we can't eat (even if we're hungry) until 12pm, and then we just have to have our afternoon snack at 3:30pm, even if we're *not* hungry), and finally if we don't eat dinner before 7pm then we're going to gain tons of weight and fail at life (especially if our dinner reservations get pushed back to 7:30pm).

The truth of the matter is that this has absolutely **NOTHING** to do with Intuitive & Mindful Eating, but it has **EVERYTHING** to do with **control**.

A huge part of Intuitive & Mindful Eating is letting go of control. Actually, that might be one of the biggest things about this whole thing. Your desire to want to be in complete control is actually what is hindering you from progressing forward, especially when it comes to the timing of your meals.

Here's the thing: your body does not work on a clock, a schedule, or a preformed plan that you've been told or lead to believe it does. There might be days when you wake up early and you're legitimately *not* hungry until around 10am. If you were to eat, even though you weren't hungry, that would be going against what your body was telling you, right? Same thing goes if you wake up early and you've told yourself you can't have breakfast until 9am but it's 7am and you're absolutely *starving*. You keep

telling yourself that you can't eat, you have to wait, and you have to "stick to your plan." This is totally going against your body literally screaming at you to eat. So, it works both ways.

By eating based off of a clock and schedule rather than listening to your body, you can end up forcing yourself to eat when you're not hungry and not eating when you actually are hungry. Same goes for if you just ate, thought you got enough, but maybe 15-30 minutes later you kinda get a little bit hungry again. If you're on the clock schedule, then you're not going to let yourself eat until your next meal time, therefore further messing up the relationship you have with your body.

**This is just setting you up for further issues down the road.**

Now, I want to make a small disclaimer about this, because yes, there can be exceptions. Even with this, there is the idea of balance. Don't get caught up in the black and white, all or nothing, this or that mentality. Remember, Intuitive & Mindful Eating is fluid, it changes, and it has a lot to do with what you're doing that day, where you're at, your schedule for the day, etc. So, for example, let's say you wake up early and you're not really hungry, but you have a meeting at 10am and you won't be done until 12pm. You know that if you don't eat anything

now then you might get way too hungry during that meeting and won't get to eat for hours later. So, what do you do? Do you "mess up" that relationship you have with your body and eat something now even though you're not really hungry to keep from being hungrier later on in the morning or what? Well, you could definitely eat right then if you wanted to, or you could simply pack a meal to take with you to the meeting (or to eat right before the meeting). See how that works? It's really as simple as that.

There's no need to overcomplicate it. It's really, very basic. If you're hungry, you eat. If you're not, you don't. A clock or meal plan or time schedule doesn't dictate it. Your body does.

So, I encourage you, if you're one who gets caught up in the timing of eating and it stresses you out if you're "off" to really challenge yourself with that, stop looking at the clock to tell you when to eat, and start focusing on what your body is telling you instead. Again, all you've got to do is listen, because trust me, it's definitely talking to you.

## 4. No More "Cheat Days": The Food Isn't Going Anywhere

One of the main things about becoming and remaining an Intuitive & Mindful Eater is by realizing that the food isn't going anywhere. Lord willing, it will always be there. There will always be your favorite food on the shelf at the grocery store. The food in your kitchen cabinet isn't going to mysteriously disappear over night. It will be there in the morning. The food that you have left on your plate, you can easily just store in a container in the fridge and eat it later when you're hungry again. Bottom line: each meal isn't the last meal of your life, there will be another one (probably in a few hours from the first one...)

This is so important to remember and seriously understand as you begin working on Intuitive & Mindful Eating. Why? Because there's no need to have the urge to finish off every single bite of food, especially when you're already satisfied. Just because it's on your plate or in the bowl, doesn't mean you absolutely, 100%, without a doubt have to finish every single last bite **ESPECIALLY** if you're already full! It's pointless, and it completely goes against what your body is saying.

Just like it's not normal to keep yourself from eating food when your body is clearly screaming out for some, it's



just as much abnormal to eat more when your body is saying, “No more!”

This is one reason why I hate the idea of “cheat meals” or “cheat days.” This teaches you that you must, at all costs, get that specific food inside of you and sometimes (not always) get in as much of that food as you can. It can easily turn into this race for eating as much of a “bad food” that you possibly can because once that meal is over then you have to go back to eating your boring, bland, “diet foods.” It sets up this idea that the food is going to magically go away and you have to eat it now to get it in before it’s too late. Too often this leads you feeling sick, bloated, guilty-laden, and can easily throw you into a restrict/binge cycle. This is unhealthy and wrong.

There’s no point in setting up certain foods and putting them on a pedestal in your mind that you essentially create a “love/hate” relationship with. You hate the food because you see it as something “unhealthy” and “off-limits.” However, you love the food because it tastes so good and it makes you weirdly happy when you eat it. The thing is, if you’re not careful, you can live your whole life like this and find yourself binging on these foods more often than not.

A lot of this comes from the mentality that you can’t have that food for a certain amount of time, or even worse,

ever again. This puts your mind into a tough situation because you've just told yourself that it's going to be a whole week before you get that food again (or you never get that food again). By doing this, it puts that certain food at the forefront of your mind (whereas you'd think it would put it in the back of your mind, but it does the opposite) and then all you do is think about that food. Then, if and when you cave and decide to eat that food again, you eat it in such a way that it's almost as if you're never going to get that food again. You eat and eat and eat, uncontrollably at times, and then you blame that food as being "bad" and say it's "off-limits" again, just setting yourself up for another week of restriction until you start craving that food again. The cycle just keeps going on and on.

How do you break this? You realize that those foods are *always going to be there*. So, if you want them, don't 100% cut them out. Have a little bit each day so you don't feel deprived, you don't see it as off-limits, and you don't allow them to be put in the forefront of your mind so you obsess over them all week long.

Remember, the food isn't going anywhere! There's no need to plan out cheat meals or cheat days and eating like you'll never see that food again. Have a little each day and learn to be at peace with that specific food(s).

## 5. Don't Let Food Become Your Therapist

We all know what it's like to throw ourselves head first into a pint (or half gallon) of ice cream when we're down, depressed, stressed, worried, or upset. We all know what it's like to have a long day at work and just crack open the jar of peanut butter and digging in. We all know what it's like to be on vacation and feel "excited and free" so we binge on all the junk food at the hotel's buffet.

What do all these situations have in common?

**Emotions.**

In each and every one of these situations (and more) we use food as an emotional tool. Interestingly, we only hear about doing this when we're sad or upset (the ice cream example), but the same is true for when we're tired, we're happy, or we're in a familiar, comfortable situations or around specific people. For some strange reason we turn to food to enhance or fix the situation at hand.

A big part of Intuitive & Mindful Eating is tuning into what it is that your body is exactly wanting and *needing*. And not just from a hunger and food perspective, but also from an emotional perspective.

Instead of turning to food to solve our problems or enhance the situation, we need to be figuring out other, more beneficial, more healthy ways to deal with these things. For example, when you're down or depressed, instead of turning to the ice cream to **temporarily** numb your pain, find something more constructive and beneficial to fill that void. Call a friend, read the Bible, watch a funny movie, etc. Instead of going for the junk food when you're stressed or worried, try taking a walk around the block, doing some light yoga, and getting outside for some fresh air. When you've had a long, exhausting day at work, come home, grab a nice, refreshing glass of water, take a seat on the couch and give yourself a quick foot massage (or get your kids or husband to do it for you!). When you're on vacation, don't think that the food, tastes, and variety of options is going to make the vacation even better; instead focus on building memories with your loved ones, seeing the sights and having fun. When you're at your friend's apartment who has "the best food" that you always find yourself binging on because it's a comfortable environment for you and it just makes you "happy," be more aware of this and realize that the time spent with your friend should be about you two hanging out and having fun, not all centered around food.

Yes, food is an extremely important part of our lives. You're going to have to eat dinner after work at some

point. You're going to have to eat on vacation. That's a given. But the issues arise when you start viewing food as the one and only way to chill out, de-stress, have fun, or bring life to an event. This is when we start putting way too much focus on food and how it affects our emotions. Yes, food can make us happy and smile, but relying on it like we would our own personal therapist isn't the answer.

Moving forward, I challenge you to start being very aware of how you see food, especially in emotional situations. When you're sad or upset, take a conscious look at what exactly is going on and ask yourself what other things you can do, besides eating, to help resolve the situation. When you're super excited or happy, take the same conscious look at what's going on and ask yourself how can you filter that happiness and excitement into doing other things that do not directly relate to food. Start living your life in such a way that you are more aware of how and why you use food for emotional purposes.

## 6. Know the Difference Between "Satisfied" and "Full"

We always talk about being "full" after we eat. But nobody really knows what that means. Likewise, we get confused over just how "full" we're supposed to be.

Should be feel physically sick? Our stomach hurting?  
Unable to take another bite? Extremely uncomfortable?  
The food doesn't taste good anymore? We've finished  
every bite on our plate? We ate the whole "serving size?"

No. We're supposed to feel and be "satisfied." There's a  
big difference between the two.

The truth of the matter is that over-eating (not just from  
a caloric standpoint, but also from a volume standpoint)  
can be just as burdensome on your body, digestion, and  
overall well-being as unseating can (though in a different  
way). Just like you want to respect your body's signals of  
saying, "FEED ME NOW!!," it's equally true that you want  
to respect it when it says, "PLEASE STOP EATING!"

The real art is finding the balancing act between the two.

First off, let's talk about what being "full" is, or at least  
how we define and refer to it today. Yes, it's true, when  
some people talk about being "full," they are equating that  
same feeling with feeling satisfied. However, there's a  
growing number of us that think that being "full" means  
that we should feel a discomfort (most of the time a  
negative discomfort) in our stomach or digestion. This  
can actually be very tricky, because yes, you want to  
obviously feel like you've eaten some food, right? And if  
you're eating lots of high fiber, water-rich foods then you

will even see visually that your stomach is extended temporarily (which is a good thing!), but this is completely different than literally feeling sick after eating.

The latter is not a good thing.

If you find yourself stuffing your face with food, your stomach is hurting, yet you keep putting more and more in without ever taking a break, then that's where things get a little out of balance. Now granted, I want to be clear that every day and every meal isn't going to be perfect with rainbows and kittens and you eat the perfect amount of food at each and every meal. I'M NOT SAYING THAT. But, what I am saying is to be more aware of consciously overeating (just like you'd be conscious of under eating).

Yes, you want to feel “full” in the sense that you've had enough food, but not to the point of feeling physically nauseous.

Which leads us to what “satisfied” actually means.

Being “satisfied” after eating has a lot to do with the type of foods you're eating (lots of high fiber foods will get you satisfied quicker and keep you satisfied longer), whereas lots of processed foods won't satisfy you as quickly or for as long). So, if you're having issues feeling

satisfied after eating tons of junk food, then there's your problem! Add in some extra veggies, fruits, beans, avocado, etc. and you'll see that you're satisfied much quicker, feel much better, and have more energy to go on about your day.

Likewise, "satisfied" is understanding that the food you're eating doesn't offer you anything other than fuel for your body and the temporary pleasure of eating it. Like we talked about above, food should not be your therapist. Too many of us turn to food expecting it to give us the comfort, peace, security, happiness, and joy that it CAN'T GIVE, all the while never going to the other sources of things in our life that actually can provide us with those things. We then become attached to food in a way that makes us believe that without that specific food or that specific amount of food then we can't be fully satisfied.

This is wrong and both physically and psychologically unhealthy. It's literally like idolizing food.

Instead, realize that food tastes delicious, we need it for nutrition purposes, and it's the fuel that runs our body. Sure, having a cookie here and there if you want to is fine, but if you're always turning to specific foods to make you feel "satisfied" from a hunger perspective then realize that it might be more emotionally driven than it is hunger driven.



And again, I want to be clear that this isn't something you have to stress over and go crazy about. It's just something to be more aware and mindful about, especially if you have issues with actually feeling satisfied. I don't want you to leave this page and think, "Ok, now every time I eat I have to consciously stop after every bite and figure out if I'm satisfied or now!"

*NO!*

Again, if you fill the majority of your plate with good, wholesome whole plant foods, be that fruit, veggies, starches, legumes, etc., then you will soon see that you get satisfied much easier, it's more sustainable, and it's more authentic rather than filling your plate with 100% processed foods that aren't going to satisfy you, they could be taxing on your digestive system, and they won't keep you satisfied for long.

\*Notice that I keep using the words "majority" or "100%" or "mostly," etc. I want you to understand that the way you go about eating and the foods you chose to eat is all up to you. Again, this is not a regimented, restricted, "you-can't-ever-have-a-cookie-for-the-rest-of-your-life" type of diet. This is just to teach you that eating good wholesome plant foods is the foundation to any and every healthy lifestyle and what you choose to add into that is totally

up to your discretion. A cookie a day, a cookie a week, a cookie a month, or hardly any cookies at all is going to be subjective based off you and your desires. Regardless, don't get caught back up in the "good food vs. bad food" mentality. Fill your meals with wholesome, whole plant, natural foods and add in from there. :)

## 7. Eat in a Pleasant Environment

In today's world we're all just go, go, go all the time. We're driving, on the phone, running errands, trying to make it to class, don't want to miss that appointment, cleaning up after the kids. It's almost as if we don't have even two seconds to sit down and just breathe... let alone eat. Because of that, a lot of us are eating on the go, eating when we're rushed, eating when we're in a bad/stressed/upset/frustrated mood, and so on. We just eat and then don't even realize what we just ate!

Over time, we lose touch with the importance of actually sitting down and enjoying our food. Eating in your car on the way to work isn't exactly enjoyable. Granted, I'm sure a lot of times you don't have a choice, but for the majority of the time I really encourage you to strive to have your meals in a nice, comfortable, low-key, pleasant setting.

Even if this takes a little extra planning on your part, be very aware of where you're eating and your surroundings. This will not only make the meal much more enjoyable, but it will help you to become a mindful eater better.

If you're constantly eating in front of the TV, your computer, while playing on your phone, in your car, running out the door, etc. then you're not really getting the chance to connect with the food you're eating, savor every bite, focus on your satisfaction factor, and appreciate that food for what it is.

Likewise, try to get to where you're eating *with other people*. This is HUGE for being a "normal eater." So many times (which I'm sure you can relate), we get in the habit of just fixing our food, taking it to our room, shutting the door, and zoning the world out. We're isolated. Alone. And a lot of times sad, depressed, and lonely.

Instead, get your family or friends together as much as possible and enjoy a meal with them. We're societal creatures, we need community, especially when it comes to eating and *especially* when it comes to eating for someone who has a past of disordered eating habits. Being around other people, especially "normal eaters," will help you to feel more comfortable around food, pick up on the way they eat and their satisfaction signals, and also (and this is the most important), it will take the

importance and the significance off of the food and put it onto the other people, the conversation, and the event at hand.

When we tend to eat alone (especially when binges take place), we begin to analyze, overdramatize, and focus *way too much* on the food we're eating. We give it too much power and attention. It's just food! Instead, when we eat with other people, we're more focused on the conversation, what everyone is doing, and so on. By eating with other people, especially in a good, comfortable, inviting environment, you will begin to see food as something that shouldn't be idolized and obsessed over, but rather just tasty, delicious, nutritious fuel that brings people together.

So, don't eat alone, sit alone, eat in your car alone, or any of that. Find someone, even a stranger, ask to sit with them and TALK. Make conversation. Make a friend. Learn about someone else and more important things in the world than just focusing on the food on your plate. :)

## 8. Don't Eat When You're Stressed or Mad

Similar to the whole idea of not eating when you're rushed, in a bad environment, or on the go, you NEVER EVER want to try to eat when you're stressed out, mad,

in an argument, worried, anxious, etc. Eating in this type of mind space is going to cause SO many issues from a digestive standpoint, a mindful eating standpoint, and even a satiation standpoint.

Digestively speaking, when you eat when you're anxious, worried, stressed, etc., you're sending signals to your stomach that it needs to halt digestion. When you're stressed (it could be over anything including an argument, school, work, or even the very food you're eating), your stomach slows its digestion, knots up, so to speak, and can cause horrible side effects like improperly digested food, bloating, gas, constipation, diarrhea, nausea, etc. Why? Because, physiologically speaking, your body's number one goal is survival. So, if your body senses that you're stressed for any reason at all, it is going to stop or slow down the other bodily functions to focus on the matter at hand, the stress. So, if you're eating when you're stressed, all your body is thinking about is that stress you're going through, it's not focused on digestion. Throwing food in on top of a stressful situation is asking your body to do too much at once. The best thing to do in this situation is NOT eat right away, get away from the situation, take some deep breaths, go for a short walk, clear your mind, and come back to the food when you're completely chilled out.

When it comes to a mindful eating and satiation perspective, eating when you're stressed, anxious or worried is keeping you from truly connecting with your genuine hunger signals and satisfaction cues. We tend to severely either overeat or under-eat when we're anxious and worried. For a lot of us, stress gives us a free pass to just eat and eat, while for others of us it actually shuts down our appetite and we don't eat enough. Moral of this story is to be in a good place mentally before eating, make sure you're in a positive, stress-free mood to really connect with the act of eating.

Interestingly, there have been a lot of research and studies connected to the actual digestion of particular foods and their effect on your body depending on the state of mind you're in when you start eating those foods. The thing is, there's a HUGE connection between stress, food, and your digestion.

Let's take a little detour real quick and talk about how stress affects your metabolism:

Anytime you're stressed, be it psychological, relationship, financial, school, or even if you're stressed over the specific food you're eating (i.e. you're afraid of it, scared it's going to make you fat, etc.) your body senses that stress as an attack on your body. And remember, your body doesn't know the difference between you being

super stressed, heart racing, and screaming and yelling at the person in front of you in traffic and you being super stressed, heart racing, and screaming and yelling while you're running away from a lion in the jungle. It's all the same to your body. Stress is stress, and chronic stress, the type that happens over and over again, day after day, is the worst.

What happens when your body senses stress is the blood flow of your body redirects to your brain and your legs and arms. Why? Because you need that extra blood flow to tackle the stress, be it physiological (your brain) or physical (your arms and legs). So, if all your blood is flowing to these areas, what happens to the rest of your body? It basically, temporarily, shuts down. This includes your reproductive hormones, sex drive, metabolism, and... digestion.

Stress is highly connected to cortisol and insulin, both of whose jobs are to store fat, gain weight, and not gain any muscle mass. Because don't forget, your body's number one goal is *survival*. It's not about you being a certain body fat percentage, weighing a certain amount, wearing a certain size of jeans, etc. And a huge part of survival is your body storing that fat for energy reserves.

It's like when a country goes to war. When they are attacked (stressed), they send all of their troops and

attention to that specific area to fight off the attackers. Everything back at camp is left alone, not a lot of attention given to them at all. However, smart armies know that while all the troops are out fighting, it's a really good idea to have lots of storage and backup supplies in case things get really bad in the future. So, that's why there's a huge stock pile of supplies, food, reserves, etc. for them to come back to when they need it. If there wasn't an attack (stress) then there'd be no reason to store up a lot of reserves. Maybe some extra food in the cabinets would be ok, but there'd be no need for a huge stockpile.

The same is true for your body. When your body senses that stress or attack, it sends all of its "troops" to go and take care of that, leaving everything back at the "camp" deserted and alone (basically not working up to par). And since your body is so smart, just like that army, it will continually store up reserves (fat and weight gain) in case of time of continued stress. It knows your body might need to use those energy stores/fat stores if things continue to be stressful. However, when there is no stress or attack on your body, your body doesn't feel the need to store a ton of fat, there's no need for tons of reserves.



Now, a huge part of this is the fact that your body's "camp" that is left alone and deserted and not functioning properly is your digestive system.

The first way that your digestion is affected by stress is that it can actually *slow down*. This is when you experience a lot of constipation, gas, bloating, weight gain, stomach pain, etc. after or while eating. If you're eating when you're stressed, upset, frustrated, worried, etc., then you might notice that you deal with these things. Why? Because, remember all the "troops" and blood flow is going to the rest of your body to deal with the attack and stress, instead of it being focused on your digestion. The last thing on your body's mind is digestion. And remember that digestion is a VERY complex thing that your body does and it needs to be set up for success, not failure!

Same thing happens in the opposite way. For a lot of you, maybe you've experienced a lot of diarrhea when you're eating when stressed. You know the feeling when you're really nervous right before a big event, a big game, a stressful situation, etc. and you end up having diarrhea? This is all due to the stress you're going through. A lot of people don't realize that over time, as this happens chronically, it can actually lead to nutrient absorption issues and nutrient deficiencies. We've always heard the saying, "You are what you eat." But the truth of it is, "You

are what you digest and absorb.” If you’re eating all the right healthy foods but you’re not actually absorbing those foods then you’re really just spinning your wheels. So, if you find that you have a lot of diarrhea or that you’re noticing a lot of undigested food particles in your stool, really focus on de-stressing and chilling out while you’re eating and right before.

You guys know my obsession and belief in the whole “Mind-Gut Connection” thing. And yes, I believe this is HUGE for health and overall well-being. The most important thing about this is realized that the majority of your immune health comes from your gut. Yes, seriously. You can take a ton of medicines, and eat Vitamin C-rich foods, but it’s actually your good, healthy gut bacteria that helps to fight off illnesses and viruses from entering your system.

When you are stressed, especially chronically, there’s a chemical reaction that takes place that completely wipes out and destroys your good gut bacteria. Likewise, this whole situation is magnified by you also taking a lot of over the counter medications (they’re HORRIBLE for your good gut bacteria!) All of this wiping out of good gut bacteria leads your immune system to be compromised, causing you to get sick, increase in inflammation, and gain lead to unnecessary weight gain in the long run.

Same thing goes for the digestive distress of heartburn. So many people deal with heart burn and GERD, it's not even funny! Digestive aids and antacids are one of the top selling drugs on the market today. Why? Yes, it's true people need to clean up their diets and stop smoking, but even more important is that people need to **CHILL OUT** and de-stress before and while they're eating. Reason being is because stress can cause the sphincter that closes off your esophagus from your stomach to spasm uncontrollably. This spasm obviously isn't supposed to happen, but when it does all you stomach acid gets a free pass to break through the gate and get up into your throat and mouth. Too many people working in stressful environments, hating their life, and being scared of the foods they're eating are getting GERD and heartburn unnecessarily.

And remember, it's **NOT** just about the stress going on at your job, in your marriage, with your kids, sitting in traffic, the tests you're taking at school, and so on, it's also the stress you have over the specific foods you're eating (or not eating). **ANY TYPE** of stress can cause these issues.

So, what are you supposed to do?

**DE-STRESS** and **DON'T** eat when you're stressed in any way at all.

If you're rushed, frustrated, heart is racing, anxious, worried, upset, etc. around meal times, then don't eat right then. Wait until you are in a better mind space to eat. Even if you have to wait 5, 10, 30 minutes or even an hour before you can calm yourself down, then wait. It will be worth it, I promise.

Go for a walk around the block, get out of the house, wait to eat when you get in a calm place, take some deep breaths, get around positive people, and don't eat "just because" it's "time to eat," but rather wait and let your body tell you when it's a good time to eat, because eating when stressed is NOT that time!

## 9. Eat Foods That Make You Feel Good

This one is going to be different for everyone. And this is a huge part of the "Keeping Your Period" diet - you have to learn to eat the foods that make you feel the best. Not the foods that you feel like you *have* to eat, the foods that someone else told you to eat, or following some meal plan that you feel like you have to follow, and definitely don't be eating foods that make you feel HORRIBLE!

This could potentially take some time for you to do some trial and error to find out the foods that really make you feel great, both physically and mentally. You could keep a

little diary or jot down how you feel after eating certain foods - are you energized, happy, ready for the day, or are you sluggish, tired, and sick feeling?

Also, a big part of this is understanding the *amount* of these foods you eat. Yes, you're probably going to feel horrible after eating a whole box of cookies, but how do you feel after eating just one? See the difference?

So, focus on eating the foods that make you feel *amazing*. They give you energy, vitality, a positive focus and outlook on life, make you want to get out and live your life.

**DON'T** eat foods (or amounts of foods) that leave you feeling sluggish, tired, fatigued, lethargic, apathetic about life, and sick. What's the point?

You have to start seeing the food you eat as **FUEL**. That's what it is. The calories, energy, fiber, water, vitamins and minerals are what is going to give your body the fuel it needs to get through the day, exercise, move, work, play, think, and just live your life. If you're filling your diet with all junk food (though it might be tasty), you're not going to *feel* your best. Yes, having some fun foods every now and then isn't a huge deal, but if you're eating basically all of your food from these types of food choices then you're probably not going to feel so great. You're not going to feel like doing much, you'll be tired, apathetic,

probably a little depressed, have some bad digestive issues, and lose your vigor for life.

So, again, I want to stress that I'm NOT saying "don't eat cookies" or whatever, but rather I'm saying, realize that living off of cookies isn't going to make you feel awesome. Instead, save the cookies for a treat and fill up on fresh fruits and vegetables, whole starches (potatoes, pumpkin, root veggies), whole grains (rice, oatmeal, buckwheat, etc.), beans and legumes, etc. These are going to be the foods that give you energy, life, and vitality.

Now, when it comes to these different foods, it's up to YOU to decide what works best for you in the right amounts. There is no perfect, set plan for all of us to follow. The goal is for you to figure out if you feel better after eating lots of fruit or lots of starch, lots of whole grains or lots of beans, etc. Some people do better eating more of this or that and others not so much, so that is when you do your own trial and error to figure that out.

Likewise, even though we've been talking about it from a *physical perspective*, I also want you to take it into account from a *mental perspective*.

What do I mean?

Well, it's one thing to eat the foods that make you feel good physically, but you also want to be eating the foods that make you feel good mentally. Nobody wants to feel guilty and bad about the foods they just ate, right? Well, the funny thing is, most of the foods that make you feel awesome physically are also going to be the foods that make you feel good mentally. Why? Because you *know* that you're choosing the right foods for your body. You know you're going to be nourishing your cells, hydrating your body, eating energizing foods that are going to be benefiting your body in so many ways. All of this is obviously what we want for your physical body, but it's also easy on your mind. There's not a lot of thought that goes into it, really. Just go to the produce section of your grocery store and fill up on all the fruits and veggies. Both your body and mind are going to thank you, I promise! There's no better feeling than having a big smoothie, a plate full of colorful fruits and veggies, or a big salad with tons of stuff on top. You'll feel good mentally about your food choices, but also you'll feel amazing physically.

So, as always, this is a balancing act. And honestly, it shouldn't be that hard. Don't put too much thought into it. It shouldn't be something you obsess over and overanalyze. All you gotta do is choose good wholesome foods, there's no guilt involved, you'll have tons of energy and you'll feel great both mentally and physically.

## 10. Don't Over-think It

The MOST important part about Intuitive and Mindful Eating is to not overthink, overanalyze, and obsess over it. One of the worst things you can do is jump from one analytical, obsessive, perfect way of life (like restriction, counting calories, low cal/low carb diets, etc.) to the other side of the coin where now you're overly obsessed with doing everything "perfect" when it comes to eating the right way and the right types of foods.

You definitely don't want to be bringing your perfectionistic, OCD-type mentality over from your past into your new way of life. This new you is about FREEDOM, not restriction and perfection. The LESS you can think about all of this, the better off you're going to be.

Yes, I know that sounds a little contradictive, because this is about "Mindful Eating," right? But here's the thing: You *can* be a mindful eater while still not being obsessed with it. It's one thing to be aware of how you feel when you eat, consciously choose the right foods, and actually listen to your body, but it's a whole other thing to do all these things in a non-obsessive way. And the cool thing is that the longer you are more "unconsciously mindful" around the foods you eat, the more it becomes like second



nature to you. Instead of walking into a grocery store and thinking, “Ok, I’m only getting healthy food, fruits and veggies, shopping in the produce section, getting the fiber-filled stuff, etc.” over time your mind will start to shift to where you walk into the store and think, “Ohh yes, the fruits and veggies! They’re so delicious, colorful, nutritious, make me feel amazing and taste delicious.” It literally becomes like second nature to you. This is just matter of habit that you’ll begin to create as you continually choose good foods over time. And remember, it’s all about perspective. That’s what matters. Just like we talked about in my “Get Your Period Handbook,” it all boils down to your mindset, your perspective on the whole thing.

You probably know some people in your life that eat healthy foods, exercise, are happy and are maybe even slim, but what’s so different about them? They’re not obsessed about it. They just eat the healthy food, do their workouts, they don’t overanalyze it and the move on with life, all while enjoying life the whole time. They don’t weigh themselves obsessively every day, they don’t count calories, they don’t restrict their food, they don’t freak out at restaurants, but they’re still “healthy,” right? It’s like their health lifestyle is just a part of them, it’s not something they have to agonize over every moment of the day. It’s second nature to them.

So what's the difference between them and maybe your friend (or you) who is trying to do everything right all the time, be perfect, only eat xyz foods that you're super obsessed over because that's what "healthy people" do, right? Well, technically, yes, you're right, but they aren't **OBSSESSED**.

So, that's what this is all about. Choosing healthy things to eat, healthy exercise to do, and healthy ways of looking at food in a NON-obsessive way. That's the goal. But how do you do that? Aren't the two always going to be intertwined?

Well, here's the secret...

There's one major consistency in those that are *obsessed* with health (yet end up being extremely unhealthy), vs. those that aren't obsessed, yet they are extremely healthy.

It's your focus, preoccupation and *obsession* with your **weight**.

**That's what it all comes down to.**

If your number one focus in life is your weight, I can guarantee you that you'll always be that perfectionistic,

obsessed, OCD-driven type person who can't really get "healthy," because you're too worried about your weight. You'll always been fixated on your weight, your body image, the size of your clothes, your body fat percentage, the way you compare to your friends or the people you see on the street, magazines, or online.

Your obsession with your weight is what is causing you to have the wrong perspective about health. You're conflicting two categories: health and weight. Just because you're at a specific weight (your "goal weight") doesn't mean that you're going to be healthy. **HOWEVER**, you can be at your "goal weight," but be healthy. Confusing?

The problem is how you're going about reaching that healthy/goal weight. Chances are in your innocent quest for health, you went down the wrong road did it the wrong way (the unhealthy way). And at the truth of the matter is that you might have been on a quest for health, but that ever so slowly turned into a quest for weight loss/body image.

So, this is to show you that the quest for health isn't such a bad thing. But it can easily turn bad when it becomes **SOLEY** about weight loss. That's when things get scary. You'll end up doing whatever you can to lose weight - calorie-restricting, low carb diets, fad diets, over exercise

without enough calories to replenish, fasting, etc. You know the drill.

The moral of the story is *STOP FOCUSING ON YOUR WEIGHT* and start focusing on your TRUE health.

The problem is, if your weight is always your number one focus, you're going to do all kinds of crazy things to get the weight off, keep the weight off, or continue to lose weight. You will inevitably be stuck in this crazy cycle of self-hate, damaging your metabolism, over-training your body, and literally ruining your life. That's what the focus on weight does to you. You begin to tell yourself to do whatever it takes to lose weight, no matter how bad it could ruin your body in the long term.

You CAN be truly healthy and you WILL be truly healthy all by choosing healthy, wholesome foods, moving your body in a sustainable way, fueling yourself with enough calories to cover your exercise, practicing self-love, de-stressing, and moving on with life. Don't take any drastic measures to get there. You can't cut corners. You have to let your body heal, let your mind heal, and live your life in the meantime. No more quick-fixes or fad diets that will only leave you worn out and gaining more weight over the long term. Instead, commit to TRUE health, the type of health that involves REALLY loving yourself RIGHT NOW, not waiting until you've reached your goal weight.

Commit to eating the right foods, moving your body, sleeping well, de-stressing and LOVING YOUR LIFE. That is the secret.

Yes, it will take time, but think about how long it's taken you to get to where you are today. Think about all the years you've put your body through some sort of abuse (not feeding it enough, throwing up your food, taking all kinds of pills and medications to suppress your appetite, exercising yourself into the ground, skipping meals, etc.) I'm guessing it's been years of this kind of stuff, right? So you can't just expect to get extremely healthy in the matter of weeks. It takes time and that's why it's so important to love yourself along the way. Have fun with the journey. Get out of the house and do new things. Make new friends. Make memories and JUST LIVE. The time will fly by and you'll be happier and healthier than you've ever been in your life.

## Intuitive & Mindful Eating is Just Like Peeing

Ok... I know you're probably like, "Uhh... what? How is eating anything like peeing?!" But hear me out, because this will actually blow your mind.

If you're having a hard time connecting all the dots when it comes to Intuitive & Mindful Eating, you find yourself

second-guessing yourself on are you really hungry, are you really satisfied, are you just bored, did you wait too long to eat, etc., I want you to try to think about it like this:

What do the acts of eating and peeing have in common?

They're both *natural* body processes, right?

Think about it: we have to eat to live. And we have to pee to live, too. They are both things that we have to do whether we like it or not.

The funny thing is, nobody has any trouble understanding their body's natural cues of peeing. It's kinda hard to get confused on when you need to pee, have you peed enough, how much pee is too much pee, etc.

So, my question to you is, why is the act of eating any different? If they are both natural, normal bodily processes that we humans must do to survive, why have we totally misconstrued the act of eating, but not the act of peeing?

Let's break this down a little bit and you'll see what I mean.

I want you to think about all the sensations, thoughts, urges, and energy that you put into peeing every day. Let's start from the minute you wake up in the morning.

You open your eyes, see the light shining through the windows, roll over to turn off your alarm clock, and sit up in bed. Some mornings you hardly even have anytime to do any of that because you've been "holding your pee" all night long, so you jump up and run to the bathroom to go. But on this particular day, let's say you sit up and you kinda have to go to the bathroom, but it's not super urgent. So, instead, you throw on some clothes, leash up your dog and take it for its morning walk around the block. As your walking, you notice that the urge to go is increasingly growing more and more, but you can't just go right there on the side walk, right? So, you hold it until you get back inside. Finally, it's time to go. You go, use the restroom, and you're sure to go as much as you needed to. Nothing more, nothing less. When you're finished, you feel relieved. Once you're finished, you go on about the rest of your day, cleaning the house, going to school, getting ready for work, and all the other things that go on in your day, only stopping to use the restroom when you get that same urge again. Sounds pretty simple, right?

Well, let's dig into this a little bit further and ask ourselves some very important questions.

Did you jump right out of bed and run straight to the bathroom even though you really didn't need to go that much? Did you wait until a specific time to use the bathroom, based off of some chart you saw on the internet or some personal trainer gave you at the gym? When you actually did go pee, did you only pee just a little bit, in fear of going too much? Or did you pee too much and not hold enough in? Did you measure how much you peed? Did you portion it out? Do you count the amount of times you pee every day, jotting them down in a "peeing journal" with graphs and goals and inspirational quotes next to the numbers to keep you on track? And the biggest question of all, did you really even THINK about peeing that much? No, the only times you would *really* even start thinking about having to pee is when you had to go really, really bad and you had to wait to go. But, after that, once you've gone, you'd be fine and not even think about it until the next time came around for you to pee.

Hopefully you're catching my drift by now, but if not, I'll lay it out for you here.

If we wouldn't do all of these things when it comes to peeing (a totally normal, natural bodily process), then why in the world would we do these things when it comes to eating (a just a normal, natural bodily process)?? Do you



see how far and complicated and overanalyzed and crazy we've become with the act of eating?

You would never “restrict” yourself from peeing too much or force yourself to pee more than you needed, it wouldn't be natural at all (and yes, your body would suffer in some way for that). You would never measure out how much you peed, portion it out, weigh it out on a “pee scale,” only pee at certain times during the day, not pee after 6pm, hold your pee in during your early morning workout, watch “What I Pee in a Day” videos to try and match how much other girls are peeing, or really even give any thought to it at all, would you? No, and if you did, you'd be considered a little bit crazy!

But, why do we do this with eating?? By doing this, we have totally messed up the normal, natural act of eating. Do you see how messing with the idea of eating can cause our bodies and our minds to have problems as time goes on? No wonder we have so many issues figuring out when we're full, hungry, have we had enough, etc. We've totally turned the simple act of eating into a full-blown science experiment, with devastating side effects.

It's NOT normal to eat only at specific times, only allow yourself to have a certain amount, eat more than we should, measure out every bite/calorie/macronutrient of

food, think about eating all the time and revolve our lives around food. We don't do any of those things with peeing, which is just as normal as eating, so it's crazy!

So, if you haven't gotten anything out of the Intuitive & Mindful Eating tips I've given above, at least remember this one: eating is just like peeing. You pee when you gotta pee and you stop when you don't need to pee any more. You don't pee on a schedule, it's not measured, and you don't think about it all day long, unless you really have to pee and there's no place for you to go at the moment. Once you've finished peeing, you don't second guess yourself and worry that you went too much or too little, you just move on with life and wait until you have to pee again.

You need to treat eating the same way. You eat when you gotta eat and you stop when you don't need any more food. You don't eat on a schedule, you don't measure it, and you don't think about it all day long, unless you get really hungry and you don't have any food around at the moment. Once you've finished eating, you don't second guess yourself and worry that you ate too much or too little, you just move on with life and wait until you get hungry again.

It's really as simple as that.

So, the next time you're all worked up over schedules and calories and amounts of hunger cues and allllll that stuff, ask yourself how your current situation relates to the act of peeing. Would you do the same thing when it comes to peeing? Then you'll have your answer :)

# Chapter 7

## Setting Boundaries For Long-Term Success

We all know about the importance and necessity of setting boundaries in certain areas of our life, right? Maybe it's with relationships, maybe it's with how much we work, maybe it's making sure we don't get too many plates spinning at one time with everything life has to throw at us, but we all understand that boundaries can be good, helpful things. And not only are they good and helpful when it comes to how we deal with other people or work, school, and so on, but they're also good and helpful for ourselves, for dealing with the things that we personally struggle with. We can set up boundaries all day long with how close we let someone get to us emotionally, how much work we put in at the office, etc., but do we ever think about setting up some boundaries for *our own* well-being, both physically and mentally?

Think about this: Imagine that you're driving, it's a beautiful day, the sun is shining, and you and your family are headed out on a road trip across the country. You're driving through the countryside and the land starts to

change: there's now beautiful rolling hills that eventually turn into big, peaked mountains. You have to change the gears of your car to get up the hill and you're driving extra careful now because the last thing you want to happen is you drive off the side of the cliff, right? (sorry, I know that escalated fast, but you'll see my point soon). As you're driving you notice guard rails on the side of the road and you think to yourself, "I'm glad those things are there, this mountain is steep and we're up pretty high! The last thing I want to happen is to end up flying off the side of this cliff!" You might even think to yourself that first of all, the guard rails don't seem like they could even stop your car from going over (they're so small, right?), but you're definitely glad they're there. And, at the same time, you're consciously more aware of how you're driving, the speed you're going, your surroundings, and how other cars, animals, or things in the road could affect your driving all because you see those little rails on the side of the road.

The same thing applies to your own life, especially when it comes to your perception of food, exercise, body image, and ultimately keeping your period. Just like it's a good idea to have those guard rails keeping your car from flying over the side of a cliff, it's also a good idea to set up some of your own personal boundaries for YOU to keep you from going over that horrible cliff you just climbed

out of (disordered eating, exercise addiction, body image obsessed, etc.).

And here's the really interesting thing about these guard rails on the road: have you ever noticed when they actually start? Do they start right at the very last point, right before the curve gets really, really bad and you have the highest chance of going over the cliff? No, they start wayyyy before, sometimes miles or hundreds of feet before the worst part of the road even appears (not to mention all the road signs you'll see miles ahead of the worst part of the road warning you for what's about to come). How stupid would it be to be driving up some crazy, curvy road, never seeing any guard rails and then, right when you get to the worst part and curve of the road, there's this tiny little guard rail and sign that says, "oh yeah, slow down, cliff ahead...", supposedly put there to help "save" you if something went wrong? It's almost like you'd just be constantly flirting with the idea of driving over the cliff, seeing how close you could get to the side, seeing how dangerous and crazy you could make it without actually going over.

The same thing applies to *you*.

You don't put up boundaries right before the worst part happens. You put them up *way before*. You don't keep flirting with danger, flirting with temptation, flirting with

seeing just how close you can get to that line before things are destroyed. That's the dumbest thing you could ever do.

Instead, you want to put up these boundaries, or guard rails so to speak, in your own life, way in advance. You don't want to wait till the last minute. Why? Because you're just ASKING for trouble. Without the proper boundaries in set up, you could be all over the place! Your mind, body, mental health, physical health, period, and even your friendships, marriage, job, school work, thought life, relationship with God, and so on can all be affected either positively or negatively depending on those boundaries.

And here's the thing about boundaries that most people don't understand:

**Boundaries without consequences aren't boundaries, they're just suggestions.**

Think about that for a minute. If you're setting up boundaries for yourself and there's no consequences for when you break those boundaries, then guess what? They were never a boundary to begin with, they were just suggestions. What do I mean, exactly?

Well, think about it like this. Let's break down these two words and talk about their differences, because this is going to be a HUGE part of you understanding why you don't just need to set up "suggestions" for yourself, but rather firm, hard boundaries that you stay with in for best results.

The dictionary defines boundaries as a "dividing line," or a "line that marks the limits of an area, subject, sphere, or activity." It's literally separating two things. So, on one side of the equation we have you and on the other side we have, let's say, some particular YouTube channel, Instagram, or Facebook that you follow and subscribe to. And these aren't just any social media accounts, but these are accounts that you *know* when you watch their stuff, read their content, or follow them, they effect you in a *negative* way. Maybe they bring up bad body image tendencies for you, maybe they bring up bad memories, maybe they make you want to count your calories obsessively, maybe they make you feel lazy for not working out for hours every day, etc., but whatever it is, you just *know* that when you come across this certain page(s) in your feed, they're going to mess with your head. So, this is when it would be a great idea to set up some boundaries, a "dividing line" between you and that account. What is that line? Well, you could start with unfollowing, unsubscribing, de-friending, and so on, but basically you've gotta set up some type of separation between you two, right? (This is



a huge part of what we talked about in my “Get Your Period Handbook” - keeping your mind clear and focused on the right things).

But, when it comes to **KEEPING** your period, you now have to take it a step further. In the last book we talked about how getting away and unfollowing all these types of accounts that mess with you mentally is a good idea to kind of cleanse yourself from those thoughts and images. But now, having come from that and having made those steps to do that, you have to understand that if you don't keep those boundaries up, there could be *consequences*.

What are those consequences?

Your mind. Your thoughts. Your mental health. Your body image. Your self love.

All of these things can be altered and subject to change for the worse if you don't keep those boundaries in place.

Maybe you've got your period back, you've been doing great both mentally and physical and you think to yourself, “You know what, I think I can handle Susie's Instagram page now, I'm a lot stronger than I was a few months ago. All her pictures of her abs, or her workout posts about pushing it to the limits, and her talking about

her being fat all the time really won't bother me now, I'm all good." But, ever so slowly, guess what happens?

You end up right back where you started dealing with all this kind of stuff, hating your body, exercising like crazy, counting your calories and restricting your food, and then you miss your period.

## IT HAPPENS EVERY DAY.

You think you're strong enough, and yeah, granted, maybe you've grown a lot, but the problem is, you've either 1. let those boundaries down that you once had in place or 2. you got too close to the side of the mountain and now you're flying off the cliff wondering how this ever happened again. And it's really very simple - those "boundaries" that you thought you put into place weren't actually boundaries, they were just suggestions that you gave yourself.

So, back to the boundaries vs. suggestions idea. If a boundary is a dividing line with consequences, then what is a suggestion?

A suggestion is defined as "an idea or a plan put forward for *consideration*." It's a recommendation, a proposal, or just advice. It's nothing set in stone. It doesn't have any consequences because it's not firm, solid, or unyielding. It

just is kinda like, “Hey, here’s an idea to consider, think about, ponder, but not really *have* to put into place. You can try it, if it works, great, if you don’t really like it or you get tired of it then stop, no worries.” It’s wishy-washy, changes, and doesn’t have much to stand on.

This is when you take away the boundaries, forget about the consequences, and just start following your own suggestions, considerations, and “good ideas.” In our example from above, this would be like you saying, “Well, it’s probably a good idea that I don’t check in on Susie’s account every day, but you know what, who cares, it’s not going to hurt anything. It’s not *that* big of a deal.” But then guess what happens? You fly off the cliff. You didn’t set up any hard, firm boundaries and you forgot about the devastating consequences that could happen. And when it’s all over with you think to yourself, “How did this ever happen? How did I get back to hating my body, restricting my food, and being obsessed with my weight again?”

It’s because you didn’t set up those boundaries.

You just thought you could get away with the “Oh, that’s a good idea” type of mentality and forgot that there will be certain things that you just cannot do, places you cannot go, things you cannot watch, or images you cannot look at. And that’s what the boundaries are for.

Interestingly, many people actually *hate* boundaries and see them as legalistic, too confining, and intrusive on their lives. They don't want to have anything telling them they can or cannot do something, even themselves! So this is why a lot of you won't actually put up any boundaries, you don't want any "rules" holding you back from doing whatever you want. But, here's the truth:

*Boundaries are set in place to protect you.*

That's it. They aren't there to hurt you, but to protect, help you, guide you. The guard rails on the side of the mountain aren't trying to hurt you, they're literally there to save your life! They're a huge warning sign telling you that if you go past a certain point, danger is a sure outcome.

When you really think about it, who *wouldn't* want boundaries? Why do we hate the idea of having to stay within a certain box? Why can't we just do whatever we want? Well, hopefully you can now see from your past and where you just came from that you're not perfect, you've made some mistakes, and both your body and your mind has paid for it. Much to our surprise, we don't *always* know what's best for us. We think we do, but sometimes we can deceive ourselves and start heading down the wrong wrong. These boundaries are set up to

protect us, keep going down the right road, and help us stay on track.

And remember, these guard rails on the road start way before the worst part of the curve and you have to do the same thing with setting boundaries in your life. Don't set them to where they only come up when you're at the very end, the closest to danger and at your breaking point. Set them WAY before, keeping you in line, following the right track and not even thinking about venturing off to the far side of the mountain where you could go over. The sooner you set these up, and the more progressive that they get, the better off you are both mentally and physically.

Likewise, when it comes to boundaries, a big component of this is your mental connection to them. When you see the guard rails on the side of the road, they look pretty small, right? You might even think they couldn't stop your car from going over the cliff. Which is true, they probably wouldn't help do much from a physical standpoint in stopping your car, but what do they do mentally to you? They totally change your perception, right? They're like this constant little reminder that keep telling you to drive slow, drive safe, stay in your lane, be cautious, and don't do anything crazy because there's danger below. Even though they might not stop your car from physically flying

off the side of the mountain, they definitely affect you and the way you act and think on a mental level, right?

Again, the same thing is true about setting these boundaries in your life.

Even by just *knowing about* or *seeing* these boundaries can help keep you in line. Subconsciously you're more apt to stay committed and strong in your decisions because you *know* and *think* those boundaries are in place than you are if they weren't there. So, great tips for this is writing yourself little reminders, using pictures of positive, happy things, etc. can help keep you on the right track.

Another huge part about this boundary-setting thing is realize that everyone's boundaries are going to be different. What your best friend can do, get away with or expose herself to might not be the same thing for you. **AND THAT'S OK**, that's normal (and that doesn't mean you can't **EVER** be around or exposed to such things, but you need to know your limits).

Back to our family vacation road trip through the mountains analogy: when you're driving you see all types of cars and vehicles. Not only that, but you also see all types of different signs for those types of vehicles. You might see huge 18-wheeler trucks, moving trucks, SUVs, compact cars and even motorcycles and they're all going

down the same road, in the same direction. However, you also see different signs meant for those different vehicles: maybe there's a sign that says 18-wheelers have to go a certain speed limit, or motorcycles are only allowed in a certain lane, etc. but everyone is going a different speed, they're in a different vehicle, and their rules/boundaries are different.

This is how it is with you and all your friends (or other people you notice going down the same “keep your period” road as you). Maybe you're the 18-wheeler and you have to go super slow, change gears, and even pull off to the side of the road at times to be sure you stay safe and careful. Whereas all your friends are buzzing by you in their convertibles and motorcycles. Regardless, the key is to not worry about everyone else and what they're doing, what they're boundaries are, and what their progress is all about. The key is for you to focus on **YOU**, set *your* boundaries, stay within *your* boundaries, and don't get caught up in everyone else. Because again, we're all different. We're all coming from different backgrounds, different histories, different pasts. We all have our own personal “stressors” or “triggers” that can really mess with us, whereas for the next girl, it doesn't even phase her. The goal for you is to focus on you and not worry about anyone else. Stick to your boundaries, stay within your lines, and keep pushing forward and you will be successful as the future goes on.

Now, obviously, sometimes there are accidents, right? Sadly, we all have seen or heard about horrible accidents of cars going past the guard rails and ending in disaster. And yes, the same can happen to you. Are you going to be perfect and always stay within these boundaries you set up for yourself? No, probably not. And guess what, *you're human*, you're not perfect, and you will make mistakes. It's inevitable. But, the key is this (and if you don't get or understand anything else from this chapter, please, please, please understand this!):

*It's all in how you respond to that mistake.*

What's the difference in successful people and people that fail? The successful people keep going, keep pushing, even when they fail at times, but they get right back up and back on track and don't stop. They know there will be bumps in the road, but that doesn't stop them. The people who fail let everything outside of them and inside of them effect them to such a large degree that they end up quitting, giving in, or going back to old habits. They get so far off track they feel hopeless and think they can't ever get back so they just give up.

**DON'T LET THIS BE YOU.**



If you cross over the boundaries, temptation gets the best of you, or you mess up, *don't beat yourself up over it*. Admit to yourself (and others, if needed) that you did wrong, figure out and realize *where* you went wrong, set up some more boundaries to keep you from getting that far again, and forgive yourself and move on. Pick right back up where you left off and keep going.

*Do not dwell on your mistakes or let them get the best of you.*

The absolute worst thing you can do is first, fly past those boundaries, go over the cliff and then remain at the bottom of the mountain, crying about it and staying down there where you started. Instead, forgive yourself, get out of the valley, and get back in your car and keep driving, being extra careful to stay within those boundaries and guard rails as you continue your trip.

That's what is going to make you successful in the long term and that's what will differentiate you from the next person: it's all in how you react to your mistakes.

Understanding that you *will, undoubtedly* have slip-ups.

They *are* going to happen, I promise you. The secret is all about how you deal with them. Do you give up, give in, and go back to the old you? Or do you say, "Nope, not again. I might have made a mistake, but I'm better than this and I'm not letting this mess with my head anymore!"

The difference between those two attitudes is everything

and will ultimately determine your success in how you move forward with keeping your period, loving your body, and living a healthy lifestyle for you.

Now that we've talked about boundaries, the importance of putting them in place, and understanding you might have slip-ups along the way, let's talk about some practical boundaries you can put in place for yourself to keep you accountable and moving forward.

The first thing I want you to think about is *your particular situation*. You know you better than anyone else. You know the things that can make or break you when it comes to what you watch, listen to, view, read, eat, etc. I can't tell you **WHAT** these boundaries need to be for you (because I could potentially set up a boundary for you that you *don't* need and it could hurt you in the long run), but what I can do is help guide you in figuring out what boundaries are best for you. You choosing those boundaries and putting them into place, sticking to them, and not seeing them as just suggestions, is totally up to you. You gotta make that choice yourself. And likewise, I want you to understand that as you continue to grow, mature, get stronger, and feel more confident, **SOME**, not all, of your boundaries could change. It's like we talked about in my "Get Your Period Handbook," there are some things that are considered non-negotiable in your

life that are never, at any time, place, reason, or situation good for you AT ALL. Here's a quick recap:

Yes, I often say that there needs to be a balance for most things in your life (especially concerning diet and exercise), BUT at the same time, I definitely believe there are things that I like to call “Non-Negotiables.” These Non-Negotiables would be things that are never, no matter what, healthy, beneficial, or good for any person, at any time, in any place, for any reason at all. These are the things you would ask yourself, “Is this going to benefit me now and in the future in a healthy, sustainable way?” So, here's my list of Non-Negotiables and things that I would encourage you to NOT find any sort of balance in, but stay far, far away from:

1. Drugs: Using any type of mind-altering drug (be it legal or illegal) is never a good thing. And just because something is legal doesn't make it right.
2. Steroids: You don't need steroids, end of story.
3. Diet Pills: There is so much marketing and gimmicks out there about diet pills, crazy supplements, drinks, teas, etc. for weight loss. You don't need this neither now or ever.
4. Smoking: Do your lungs a favor and quit ASAP.

5. Excessive Alcohol: There's no point in drinking excessively. How is that going to benefit you in any way at all?
6. Low Calorie Diets: Hopefully you've learned your lesson on this one! They are pointless, stem for selfish desire, lead to serious health issues down the road and totally mess up your relationship with your body and food.
7. Exercising When Injured, Exhausted or Sick: What are you even doing? Just stop!! Let your body rest and heal!
8. Self-Induced Starvation: There's people all over the world that don't have a choice about their food intake and therefore are starving involuntarily. But you, on the other hand, are starving voluntarily. This is messed up, just stop.
9. Cutting: If you struggle with cutting or other self-harm practices, I encourage you to seek professional help and get things under control and worked out. Many who deal with this claim it helps to deal with the "pain," but in actuality it's only making the pain worse. Please get help for this!

10. Purging: This would include self-induced vomiting, over-exercise, or excessive use of laxatives, diuretics, skinny teas, enemas, colonics, cleanses, etc. All of these things are highly addictive and aren't helping you in any way to reach your goals in life.

Again, I'm sure there are more "Non-Negotiables" out there, but these are the top 10 I can think of regarding health and fitness. The gist is that none of these things are going to help you reach your goals in life, make you a better person, help you learn to love yourself more, bring you closer to God, or permanently take away any pain that you have going on in your life. These are all temporary fixes, ways to numb yourself. But that's just it. They just numb you - they don't give you life, a fulfilling, happy, enjoyable life. Staying far away from these types of things and not finding any type of balance in them at all, will be what helps you become a more productive, happy, stress-free, loving-life type of individual.

Also, if you desperately struggle with any of these things, I really encourage you to get some help with this stuff. A lot of times it can be so over-bearing that you don't even know where to start, so seek help. And please know, I will be praying for you every single day and asking God to give you the strength and courage to make the changes you need to make to move on with life and be set free from all this.

All of these “non-negotiables” are things you DEFINITELY want to put some serious boundaries around. Do whatever you gotta do to make this happen. Let a friend or loved one know about it so they can help you stay accountable, but regardless, these are definite no-no’s. Make the boundaries and don’t go past them, because yes, there will be consequences... and no, that’s not a suggestion!

Now, when it comes to you setting up some boundaries for yourself, we’re going to talk through some stuff so you can start to figure this out on your own and start holding yourself accountable. Because remember, I won’t always be there. Your therapist or dietician won’t always be there. Your coach or counselor won’t always be there. And that’s a good thing! You need to start learning how to do this stuff, function, think, workout, and eat all on your own - it’s YOUR body and you know it better than anyone else.

First off, let’s just start with the ultimate, end goal. What is the goal with all this? Yes, it’s definitely to keep your period, but it goes even deeper than that. If keeping your period is all you’re concerned about then other things in your life can be thrown off balance. What do I mean? Well, there’s lots of girls and women out there who have a period and have it regularly, but they aren’t necessarily healthy, happy, thriving, and balanced in their diet, fitness, and health lifestyle. Just because you get a period

regularly doesn't mean you're necessarily healthy in other areas of your life. Yes, it can be a great step, but remember, this is about looking at your body and life from a wholistic perspective, not in pieces or parts.

So, the main goal for your life (speaking specifically for diet, fitness, health, sleep, etc.) is **balance**. And what that balance looks like to you could be different from someone else (again, I can't emphasize this enough - just focus on *you* and you alone, don't worry about what everyone else is doing).

What you have to do to find this balance is start to understand where you personally tend to fall on extremes. Again, don't worry about what might Susie might be doing that is extreme, that doesn't matter, you focus on **YOUR** extremes. So, what this looks like is you starting to understand and be aware of the things that you do and think that are extreme **FOR YOU**. When you do these types of things they really mess with your mind, your body, your overall feeling of well-being, your happiness, and ultimately your period.

Remember in my "Get Your Period Handbook" we talked about how and why certain diets and workout plans haven't necessarily worked for you when they work for everyone else? Remember how I said that diets, calories, workouts, etc. are all just objective things and they can be made to be positive or negative based off the individual?

For example, maybe your friend loves to run, she's been doing it for years and it's just her thing. Maybe she even runs in marathons or races and you notice that it just never seems to affect her negatively in any way. She does it because she enjoys it, and then she moves on with life, that's it. But you, on the other hand, when you try to do the same running program as her, you get all frustrated, obsessed, always looking at the watch and calorie burner app, always looking at your body in the mirror seeing if you've changed, and literally it just overcomes and overtakes your life. You obviously had a very negative experience with that running program, right? But, here's the difference: there's nothing inherently evil about running, it's all in how you view it and how it affects you *personally*. Just because you have a hard time with it doesn't make it a horrible exercise. It just didn't work for you in that time and place. Maybe you could come back to running later on and see how it works, but for that specific time, it didn't.

So, moving forward in your health journey, it's this type of mentality that you have to carry over throughout the rest of your life. You have to find that healthy balance for *you* when it comes to diet, exercise, and health. Finding this balance is what is going to help you put the right boundaries into place. And the way you find that balance is you first identify where you tend to fall into extremes.



I want you to just do a little brainstorming right now. I want you to write down all the extremes that you know you struggle with. Maybe it's the temptation of thinking you have to be on a low calorie diet all the time to "be skinny." Maybe it's thinking you have to workout every single day for an hour straight and if you don't then you'll just die and gain tons of weight. Stuff like that. You know your extremes, you know your temptations, and you know your triggers. These would be the things that when you think about the process of doing them, you get this uneasy sense of stress that boils up inside of you. It's kinda like you think, "I know if I went on that low calorie diet I could lose some weight... buuuut, I also know that I'll be constantly obsessed with food, my body, weighing myself, etc. Buuuut, I'm going to do it any way..." and then you end up right back and square one.

These are the type of things you want to start setting up boundaries for in the health and fitness areas of your life. And again, this is going to be different for everyone. Perhaps you need to continue resting your body and not jump right back into exercise. Or maybe you're ready to slowly incorporate some, a little at a time. Perhaps you're not quite through the "extreme hunger" phase that we talked about in the "Get Your Period Handbook" and eating all that you care for, whatever food you like, is where you need to hang out for a while. Or maybe you're reading to start eating some more good, whole foods.

That's up to you to figure and decide based off your current state of mind with all of this. There is no right or wrong, set in stone, black and white answer for every person to follow to a "T" - it's going to be different depending on where you are currently and where you've come from.

Hopefully, depending on how long you've been working to get your period back you've already faced a lot of these things and have it all figured out, but maybe you don't or you're in the process. If so, below are some things that possibly could be some areas that you want to think through and consider setting up some boundaries for yourself. It could be all, it could be none, it all depends on you.

- Reading through certain books or magazines
- Watching certain YouTube channels, following certain Instagram accounts
- Continuing to have a "recovery" account, or following other "recovery" accounts and letting them negatively affect you
- Trying to fit into clothes that no longer fit
- Weighing yourself, or even being around a scale
- Calorie counting apps
- Calorie burning apps

- Body checking (measuring, looking at, taking pictures of your body obsessively)
- Constantly talking to yourself in a hateful, negative way
- Detoxes, fasts, cleanses, weight loss pills, fad diets, etc.
- Appetite suppressants (coffee, tea, caffeine, pills, etc.)
- Any person, place, thing, event or emotion that causes you to question your progress forward to actually getting truly healthy, happy, and set free.

Again, I want to point out that all of these things aren't necessarily *evil*, but they definitely are EVIL and tempting (and potentially threatening) to you, specifically at this point in time.

Sometimes stepping on a scale can be a good idea for a certain person, but if you know that's going to mess with your head, that's a boundary you need to set into place. Maybe it's a good idea for someone to use a calorie counting app for a little while for whatever reason, but you know that's a bad place for you to go = set up some boundaries. *And you know these things about yourself.* I don't know these things about you, I can just give you some ideas to think about. And this isn't a complete list, there could easily be many other things out there that need some boundaries put around them. Whatever it is, identify them (they'll most likely be the things that stress

you out, make you go to extremes, and you have that gut feeling they're going to hurt you in the long run).

Lastly, I want you to remember, that this is about getting back to being normal, living a good, healthy, balanced life, and not running away from all of your problems all the time. Some of these things will be things that you just know you have to stay away from and not even consider... ever. Whereas others are things that you need to learn how to actually cope with. Let's say your mom talks about dieting and weight loss all the time. What are you going to do, leave your house and never talk to your mom again all because she stresses you out over this?

No! These are the type of things that you need to learn to work through and understand that people are always going to be talking about diet, food, health, etc. and it's not *their* problem, it's *yours*. It's all in how you let it affect you, how you respond, and how you learn to deal with things in a normal way, just like anyone else out there who's never even struggled with this type of stuff. That is the goal. But again, clearly, there will be things that you need to stay away from completely and that is up for you to decide. Then, there will be things that you need to stay away from and have boundaries around for a while, but eventually you learn to cope with them in a healthy way. It's a process, so let it be natural and normal and take one day at a time.

So, I'm sure now you're wondering, "Ok, I've got my list of the things I need boundaries around, but how do I do that exactly??" Here's the steps you'll go through to do so after you've written down all the things you know need boundaries:

1. Be aware of your limits and what exactly it is that you can tolerate. Ask yourself how far is too far which each of these things. What stresses you and what are you comfortable with?
2. Figure out just how strong each boundary needs to be. Tune into your feelings with this and ask yourself, "On a scale of 1-10, how severe does xyz affect me?" For example, if you know going to the gym really stresses you out and is tempting to go head first back into your exercise addiction, that would be considered a 10. So, instead, set up the boundary that you don't go to the gym, but instead you find other exercises you can do at home, with a friend, etc. that aren't as stressful for you to deal with. Then, let's say later on, a few months down the road, you come back to this list and come across the "going to the gym" point and now you're only around a level 3. Then, at that point, you could consider trying the gym again (if you want, you definitely don't have to!) and see how it goes. If it brings up bad, tempting feelings again, then realize that boundary needs to stay in place for a while longer until you feel comfortable moving ahead.

3. Take the proactive steps to make each boundary a reality. It's one thing to say, "I know I have issues with weighing myself and it's not a good idea..." but's a whole other things to say this, but then actually *do* something about it. Like throwing your scale away, limiting how much you weigh yourself, etc. Just like we've talked about before, you *have* to take the necessary steps to set yourself up for success. So, this is when the removing, deleting, de-friending, unsubscribing, stopping, slowing down, limiting, and holding yourself accountable takes place. I mean, think about it like this using our road trip analogy: Let's say that road developers were having a big meeting and they were like, "hey, you know what, wouldn't it be a good idea if we put up some guard rails on the side of the road right where that big cliff is just to remind people about the danger of going over?" yes, of course that would be an awesome idea, obviously. But then let's say they leave the meeting and all they did was just *talk about the idea*, they didn't actually *do* something about it. They didn't put any guard rails in place. They never got put up. It was just an idea, a mere thought. One without any action behind it. The intention was good, but without actually doing something about it the thought and idea was really pointless wasn't it? And what was the result? Tons of people driving without guard rails and a whole lot more accidents. You don't want this in your life. You want to *take the necessary*

*steps and actions* to put up the boundaries. Don't just let them remain ideas or thoughts.

4. Give yourself permission to take your time with each of these boundaries. It can take some time to figure out just where you are with all of these things. And that's ok. It's a learning experience. You'll have good days and you'll have bad days, but that's all a part of it. Remember, this is about you setting yourself up for long-term success, not just for a few weeks. You want to create the right disciplines, habits, and thoughts now that will help you move into the future in the right way.
5. Ask for support. Having others help you, talk to you, encourage you, pray for you, and hold you accountable to these boundaries is going to prove to be a huge factor in your success with all of this, especially as time goes on. Sometimes we can trick ourselves and think that we're "ok" and "all better," when in reality we're really just going back down a really unhealthy road. The good thing about having someone right there by your side through all of this is that they can see things you don't and see it from a different perspective. Likewise, they can sometimes be better at holding you accountable to your goals and boundaries than you are yourself. They see you when things start going bad and they're just that little extra push of motivation to keep going. So, if you already haven't, I encourage you to find someone (or more than one person), and let them



know what's going on. Tell them about your boundaries and how you're really appreciate if they helped hold you accountable. This could be your best friend, parents, spouse, boyfriend, counselor, therapist, or whatever. But doing this alone is a scary place and having others there to encourage you will be a big factor in your success.

6. Stick to your boundaries (especially the ones you REALLY need). Don't get in the habit of flirting with these boundaries or seeing just how far you can get away with something without seeing negative results. This is when DANGER happens. And this is why you want to put up boundaries for certain things WELL in advance (not right before the worst part comes, like our road analogy). Putting them up in advance will help keep you from getting "too close to the line." Don't entertain the thoughts of these temptations, justify them, analyze them, reason with them, explain them, etc. Just get AWAY FROM THEM! Because here's the way this works: most of the time it's not a sudden thing that makes you go back down the wrong road. It's not like you're driving and you just make a sharp right. No, it's a gradual, slow turn, right? Same thing with you falling back into old habits. Very rarely is it ever going to be this sudden mess up (it might feel that way, but truth is you've been gradually building up to that mistake). It takes time, and ever so slowly, you start to



do and think things that lead you in the wrong direction. Be aware of this and stop “playing with fire!”

7. Don't become a freak and perfectionist about this. A lot of people who deal with disordered eating, exercise addiction, etc. very “black & white, this or that, yes or no, all or nothing” type of people. Remember, the goal is *balance*. Don't turn the idea of setting boundaries into something super legalistic and causing you even more stress. Don't get to the point where you're like, “Oh gosh, I had these boundaries around exercise because I used to be addicted, but now I'm on the other end of extremes and I'm afraid to every exercise another day in my life!!” NO!!! This is not balance, this is just going to the other extreme and that's what I'm wanting to help you break. You've got to live in the real world and you've got to learn how to deal with the things that life is going to throw at you. The key is to learn how to get back to normal, find that good balance, set up boundaries where you need to, but also live your life. Remember, “Extremes are easy, balance takes practice!”

# Chapter 8      The Worst Exercises for Keeping Your Period

Alrighty, one of the biggest questions you're probably wondering about when it comes to keeping your period is, "How am I supposed to exercise? What are the best exercises, what are the worst? I'm afraid I'll do the wrong workouts and lose my period again!" So, let's talk about this a little more in detail.

Let's start off by talking about what the worst exercises are for you successfully keeping your period in the long run. And just as a little disclaimer: A lot of this is probably going to fly in the face of everything you've ever read, heard, or been told about "being healthy." You might even disagree or even get a little upset with me (haha) because I've just crushed your dreams of doing these exercises. BUT, here's the thing: everyone will be different with this. Some girls can get away with doing these exercises and still get their period, while others clearly can't. And if you're one of those that can't get away with it, that's ok, there's plenty of other options! And it also doesn't mean

you won't ever get to do these exercises again, it just means you might have to ease into it a little bit or back off if you see things getting a little "off." However, the following exercises have been linked to causing issues with women's menstrual cycles in a lot of cases. However, again, I want to stress "a lot of cases," not necessarily ALL cases. So, this is up for you to figure out, do some trial and error, and find what works best for you. As always, hold yourself mentally and physically accountable, find what works best for you and be open to change.

The key to success is going to be for YOU to find that "sweet spot" in exercise that works great with your mind, body, and hormones. *Everyone is different.* You might be able to run every single day and still get your period, whereas your friend can't. Or, maybe your friend can do lots of high intensity exercises every week, but yoga is what works for you. The goal is for *you* to find what works for *you* and not worry about everyone else. And when I say "works for you," I don't just mean from a weight loss standpoint, I also mean from a mental attachment, injury, hormonal, and enjoyment standpoint. However, below are a few exercises to reevaluate take extra precaution with as you continue on in your health journey.

# 1. Endurance Exercises

Oh yes, I know a lot of you are shifting in your seat right now because your 10-mile runs and 2 hour elliptical sessions were once your favorite part of the day. And this doesn't mean you can't continue doing those things, just to be on the look out if you start seeing some hormonal issues coming up.

The thing with endurance training is that it has been shown and researched over and over again that prolonged endurance, strenuous exercise is associated with menstrual issues. Interestingly, amenorrhea caused from working out too much is most prevalent in long-distance runners and ballet dancers, with a prevalence of up to 66 percent!<sup>1</sup> Why does this happen? Because the release of GnRH (gonadotrophin-releasing hormone) is actually messed up during exercise when it should be released. This results in low gonadatrophin and oestrogen levels (which is what many of you probably experienced before you decided to get your period back - you were doing a lot of running, or other endurance sports, and you found out you had low estrogen levels. Well, that's why. Likewise, according to one specific study, elite

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9889498>

training in younger girls can delay puberty (meaning lowered bone mass and lowered growth potential).

Likewise, this gets even worse when you're coupling intense endurance training with the demands (either put on you by yourself or others like a coach, trainer, etc.) for having a low body weight. If you're constantly working towards keeping your weight low, you're in a sport where you have to keep your weight low (running, cycling, ballet, etc.), and you're doing a lot of exercise, this is obviously a recipe for disaster. It's been shown that long-distance runners who stopped having their period have a high incidence of bone mineral density loss in their lumbar vertebrae (not to mention the incidences of stress fractures, too).

Another study of 205 premenopausal women (running 0-140 km/week, 0-86 miles/week) and sex hormone disturbances were extremely related to the training intensity. Compared to women considered "normally active," the runners had their estradiol and progesterone reduced by up to 25-44%!<sup>2</sup> Having amenorrhea (no period) went from 1% to 11% in the runners compared to the "normally active" women. This is HUGE. And hopefully you see just how tricky and sensitive your body, as a woman, can be when it comes to exercise.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8328497>

Yes, we're told all day long that, "Exercise is healthy, more more more, no excuses, be disciplined, never skip a day, etc." but the problem is, our bodies, as women, are just not designed to work like this, especially over and over again, and *ESPECIALLY* when we're in a state of calorie deprivation/restriction. They can only take so much. And you couple this with our intense (crazy) desire to be thin and things go crazy, we go crazy, our bodies go crazy. It's not normal, natural, or *healthy*. We think that exercises makes us "so healthy" and that more is better, but is it really healthy to be missing your period, losing bone mass, having all types of injuries, and not reaching your fullest growth potential as a child all because of your desire to do endurance exercises?

Just think about it this way: our bodies aren't meant to be exposed to such excessive exercise for long periods of time. Is it *really* natural for us, especially as women, to run/jog for miles on end numerous times a day? Can we do it? Sure, we *can* make our bodies go through it, but that doesn't mean it's a good thing, especially when we're suffering. We can also make ourselves stay up for two days straight (or even more!), but does that mean it's necessarily normal, healthy, and natural and what our bodies prefer? No, I think we would all agree that our bodies LOVE sleep and need it, right? And same goes with

exercise: Our bodies love moderate, natural, healthy, balanced exercise.

So, this is something really rethink and reconsider. If you're doing these types of exercises right now and you're feeling awesome, you've got tons of energy, you're eating enough, and you're getting your cycle then no worries at all! BUT, if you're doing these things and you start to eat less, miss a period, have injuries, etc., then that is when I would encourage you to make some reevaluations and consider taking a break for a little while. Same goes for if you find yourself getting chronically addicted and feel guilty when you miss a workout. Your mental connection to exercise is just as important as the exercises you're actually doing. Does it mean you *can't* do entrance exercises? No, it just means to be extra careful and aware of how your body responds, everyone is different with this :)

## 2. Intense, Physically Stressful Exercises

Similar to the endurance exercises causes issues hormonally, intense, stressful exercises work in the same way. A very popular way of exercising today is known as HIIT, or High Intensity Interval Training. Basically, you do a series of alternating between “work” and “rest” for

anywhere between 10-20 minutes (i.e. sprinting for 20 seconds, resting for 20 seconds, etc.).

I'm sure a lot of you are thinking, "Ok, well if I can't do a lot of endurance exercising, then I'll just do a lot of High Intensity Interval Training and lose weight and 'get fit' that way." Well, not so fast. HIIT exercises can be beneficial, but they can also be very dangerous if you're not careful and you go overboard. A lot of us like to think that "more is better" so when we hear that HIIT is healthy for us, we end up doing it every single day or many times per week, and for 30, 40, 60 minutes at a time, at least. However, if you push your body too hard and stress it out too much (because yes, exercise is a form of stress on your body - at times good, at times bad), you can end up breaking your body down, becoming fatigued, exhausted, and worn out. Interestingly, HIIT workouts are actually specifically *designed* to stress your body: they push your body to a certain point where your muscles have to adapt, change, grow, and get bigger and stronger over time (as well as increasing your cardiovascular health). The tricky part is figuring out just how much is too much.

When does this healthy stress become unhealthy stress on your body? The truth is, a HIIT workout is literally "High Intensity," and the more intense a workout or exercise is, the more rest and recovery your body is going to require to heal. Too much can easily turn into



“overtraining,” causing issues of constant fatigue, injury, disrupted hormonal activity, low sex drive, loss of muscle mass, etc.

So, again, all of this is going to be dependent on you, your particular situation, and your specific goals and comfort levels. My rule of thumb is to limit HIIT workouts (if you even want to do them, you *definitely* don't have to!) to the absolute most of 3 times per week, if you're even going to do them at all. \*And this might be *too* much for a lot of people, so it's not a one-size-fits-all rule of thumb. For you, it could be twice a week, or just once a week, or maybe even not at all. That is totally up to *YOUR BODY* to decide, not necessarily you.

If you start doing HIIT workouts and you start noticing some overtraining issues, then you clearly have overdone it and you need to back off or stop completely. And this is where you really have to frequently tune in with your body and see how you're doing. Don't keep pushing and doing it just for the sake of sticking to some plan or out of guilt (hopefully you've gotten past all that now). Some weeks maybe you do 1 HIIT workout, another week maybe 2, and another maybe none. But whatever it is, if you decide to start using HIIT as a part of your exercise routine, here are some guidelines to help you not take it too far:

1. Start SLOW. Let your body have a chance to adapt to this new way of working out and don't jump right in doing 30 minutes right off the bat. Instead, start at 8-10 minutes for a few weeks, see how your body does, see how your hormones do and then consider increasing or staying the same.
2. Limit HIIT workouts for up to 3 times per week MAX (most won't even do this much and that's OK and actually preferred. I'm speaking more about those that can "get away" with doing HIIT, for those of you you'd want to limit to 3 times per week). And I even say this to be taken with a grain of salt, because for most people even 3 times is too much so play with it and see what works best for you.
3. HIIT workouts should not be done back-to-back from one day to the next. For example, a Monday/Wednesday/Friday set up would be better than a Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday set up, being sure to give your body enough time for rest in between.
4. The amount of time spent doing HIIT should be limited to 20-30 minutes MAX (and honestly, 30 minutes is really pushing it for most). Most do fine and get the benefits from HIIT by doing just 10-15 minute workouts.

5. Seeing that HIIT is based off the idea of “intervals” that means it’s largely connected to your heart rate. If you are trying to do intervals, but your heart rate is never getting a chance to go down, then you’re doing it wrong and risking overtraining. Even between the intervals, your body needs a chance to lower your heart rate and “rest” before you go back into the “work” set.
6. Good form should be maintained at all times. If you’re starting to get sloppy, either slow down or stop completely.
7. If you start hating, loathing, getting stressed even from the thought of it, and not looking forward to doing HIIT (or any other exercise for that matter), then you need to stop, take a break, do some low intensity exercises like yoga, walking, stretches, etc. and not come back to it *until* you’re actually looking forward to it and have the energy to do so.
8. If you find yourself sore the day after, or even a few days later, after your HIIT workout, don’t “push through the pain” and workout again. Let your body rest and recovery and only get back to it when your body feels best.

9. If you start to find yourself obsessed, addicted, and guilty if you don't get to workout, you need to *back off* and go back to the "Exercise Addiction Quiz" from my "Get Your Period Handbook" and keep yourself accountable and in-check.
10. Listen to your body, listen to your own intuition and don't overdo it either mentally or physically. You know your mental limits and your body will communicate your physical limits, so be very aware of both and don't push the boundaries.
11. If doing HIIT triggers or brings up bad memories or tendencies from your past, then stay FAR, FAR away from it and find a new type of exercise that you love, enjoy, and look forward to. There's plenty of ways to be healthy and active without having to do HIIT.

### 3. Emotionally Intense & Stressful Exercises

You guys know how often I talk about the power of your mind when it comes to your period, but even more so in the totality of your overall health. And this becomes especially important when it comes to your choice of exercise. So, here's a couple of things to keep in mind when you're deciding how you're going to workout in the future.

- Any exercise that you start doing and have these thoughts at any point (like a “gut feeling”) that it’s just “too much,” then I would, at the very least, slow down, or even stop if you need to. Don’t push yourself beyond your limits “just because.” The whole mentality of “No excuses! Keep pushing! Discipline, exhaustion, etc.” is not a good combo for the long-run with your hormones.
- Any exercise that brings up bad memories, triggering thoughts, or causes you to get too close to those boundaries you’ve got set in place need to take a back-seat in your workout routine. For example, if in the deepest, darkest places of your disordered exercise habits and eating tendencies, you were a big runner and now you’re trying to come back to it again, yet it is causing some negative emotions and starting to tempt you to back into bad habits, then I would stop, find something new to do, and leave that exercise alone. If, and only if, you get to a point when you can do those exercises without any ill side effects, then let yourself pick them back up. But until then, stick with exercises that don’t bring up stressful, or emotionally intense thoughts.

Again, I want to stress the importance every girl is going to differ when it comes to first, their choice of exercise,

and second, the exercises that work good with their hormones. However, the MOST important thing I can say when it comes to any and every exercise, but especially these listed above, is that you *have to make sure you're eating enough food*. Chances are, it's not the exercise's problem, it's the food problem. It's the fact that perhaps in the past you set out on a "weight loss journey," and you drastically increased your exercise while simultaneously drastically decreasing your calorie intake. This is where the issues started. Instead, if you're going to exercise a lot, you *have to be sure* that you're eating plenty of calories to fuel these workouts. And remember, eating a lot of food doesn't necessarily mean lots of calories. You can eat buckets of broccoli and only get a few hundred calories, whereas if you were to eat buckets of dates or mangoes you'd get a lot more.

So be sure you're not exercising a ton and trying to fill up on loads of low calorie foods. Your body needs to be properly fueled to get you through that workout, while also giving you the energy your body needs to recovery and repair. Truth be told, this is most likely what happened to you in the past. You just weren't getting enough calories. And, this is always most likely why all your friends can keep doing their workouts and sports with no ill side effects, because they are eating more calories than you to keep them sustained, their period going, and helping to repair their body. So, at the end of the day,

these exercises described above are not “evil” in any way, they can actually be very healthy when done in the right way, with the right intentions, and when you’re eating enough calories. Moving your body is great, but you gotta be smart about it! \*And the last thing I want to say is that you don’t *have* to do any of these exercises to be healthy. These would only be if you just *wanted* to. Simple doing some walking, stretching, and a few body weight exercises would be more than enough to keep you healthy, these are just if you enjoy exercising on a higher level.

What it all comes down to is becoming very aware of the exercises that you get mentally stressed over (you dread doing, you get physically nauseous thinking about, you literally hate), as well as the exercises that physically stress you out (i.e. run you down, completely exhaust or injure you, and/or make your hormones go crazy like missing your period). These are the things you want to stay away from, at least for a time, until you’re in a better head-space or physical state of being. This doesn’t mean you can’t ever do these types of activities again, it just means you need to be extra aware and cautious of them and how they could potentially affect your body and mind.

# Chapter 9

## The Best Exercises for Keeping Your Period

Just like there's lots of exercises that can be bad for your hormones, there's also some exercises out there that can, in fact, *help* your hormones get back on track, stay on track, and are sustainable and easy to do for the rest of your life. However, just like everything else, you can't take these things to the extreme - remember, *balance is key*. Finding a good balance of these things, whether it's just one of these or all of these, will ensure that you're successful in keeping your period, being actually *healthy* and maintaining that throughout the rest of your life.

If you think about it, when you first set out on your journey for health and fitness, your major goal probably was to lose some weight, have more energy, etc., but all-in-all, your overall desire was health, right? We see news reports about it all the time on TV, read about it in magazines, hear about new studies that have been conducted, but we all, deep down, are searching for health. However, the way we go about attaining this



“health” is, most of the time, done in the wrong way (obviously, based off your past, right?). The good news is, you CAN reach an awesome level of health *and* fitness WITHOUT doing all the crazy exercising, dieting, calorie counting, and burning calories that you think you have to do. Health and fitness is so much more than that and, honestly, we’ve seriously overcomplicated it. Most of us think we *have* to work out tons, sweat like crazy, have sore muscles, and be on some strict diet to be healthy because we’ve been told that lie for years and years.

That’s all we’re surrounded by.

But, here’s the thing: how many people do you *really* know that do all this and can actually maintain it for the long run, especially when their diet and calorie intake isn’t matching up and fueling with their workout routine?

Sure, they might be able to lose some weight, keep up with their “boot camp” classes, and their intense endurance cardio sessions for a few weeks, months, or even years, but, at some point, they burn out, get injured, mess up their hormones, lower their metabolism, and end up gaining all the weight back (and sometimes, even more than what they began with). Then they just end up chasing that same “result” for the rest of their life... sound familiar?

The problem is, they're actually doing *too much*. Yes, there is such a thing as “too much of a good thing.”

And even more interesting is the fact that the *truly* healthy, fit, and even, most of the time, thin, people are the ones doing the opposite of what most of us think will produce all of this (and a lot of the time effortlessly!). So, doesn't it make sense to look at what these people are doing to stay fit and healthy and perhaps mimic them as much as we can? That sounds sensible, right? Especially since they have been successful at this for centuries and centuries, it's not just this newfound “secret” that the media and “fitness experts” are trying to always come out with...

When we're talking about the healthiest people, the top 5 healthiest countries in the world (as of 2016) are Iceland, Sweden, Japan, New Zealand, and Finland. Not only are all their diets primarily plant-based (which, yes, obviously diet is a huge part of health), but since we're focusing on the best exercises, the question is, “How do they exercise to stay fit, lean and healthy long term? What's their secret? Do they run 10 miles every day, train for marathons, do the latest trend/secret in the fitness industry, do they ‘power lift,’ etc. They've got to be doing some type of intense exercise to stay so thin, right?!”

Actually, no. They don't.

The funny thing is, they actually do the opposite of what all of us think we have to do to be lean, fit, and healthy. They do the types of exercises we think are for “lazy” people or the exercises we’ve been told won’t give “any results.” But yet they have *awesome* results, not just physically and aesthetically, but also hormonally and from a longevity standpoint.

So, let’s talk about what it is that they do and what it is that I *highly* recommend you start to implement into your exercise routine both from a weight loss/maintenance standpoint, a physical stress perspective, and for the best hormonal benefits. So, let’s get started...

## 1. Walking

Yes, walking. Not running, but walking. Walking is the most basic movement for us humans. Just about anyone can walk any time, any place (unless you’re the exception due to injury, handicap, accidents, etc.) But, we all can pretty much walk. And interestingly, the healthiest people in the world don’t necessarily see walking as their “exercise” per say, but rather as their mode of transportation. Instead of riding in a car everywhere, they walk. Granted, most of these people live in smaller towns and communities where it’s actually doable to get around,

but even still, their primary mode of transportation is walking. So, I encourage you to start implementing more *walking* into your daily routine. It can honestly be as simple as walking to the store, getting outside for a hike, taking your family or friends to the park, taking the stairs, parking further away from the store, getting off your phone, computer and turning off the TV and just being more intentional about moving your body from a walking perspective. This doesn't have to be insane, crazy incline walking with weights on your ankles or walking for miles on end. It should be natural, normal, and just a part of your daily life.

There was a study done on women who were classified as obese for 12 weeks. They required the women to walk for 3 days a week for anywhere between 50-70 minutes. At the end of the study, the results showed that the walking helped to decrease their abdominal obesity and serum insulin resistance (meaning their belly fat decreased and their insulin levels improved).<sup>3</sup> Did they do any type of HIIT training, marathon running or crazy workout DVDs? No, they just walked for about an hour 3 days per week!

There is no set amount as to how much walking you should do each day. I don't really recommend you use a

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25566464>

pedometer to count your steps, see how many calories you burned, etc. since for a lot of people that could potentially cause more obsession and worrying with numbers (not everyone, but you know who you are!) Instead, just be more intentional about moving your body, walking more, getting up off the couch, getting outside, going on hikes, etc. And make it fun! Grab a friend or family member, listen to some podcasts or music, and make it an enjoyable experience. Maybe go for a walk in the city, in the woods, by the beach, see some beautiful stuff and see how enjoyable it is just to get out and move.

Now, I want to be very clear about this next point, because I think this is where I could lose a lot of you. Just because walking is super healthy, doesn't mean that it can't *possibly* negatively effect your hormones either. There is such a thing as doing TOO much walking: just because we talked above earlier that walking is super great for anyone and everyone, there is a point where it's too much (and where it can even effect your hormones negatively, too). Again, a lot of this has to do with just how much food you're eating to fuel these walks, but if you're walking miles and miles every day and not eating enough, you'll see that you might end up having hormonal problems. Because remember, it's like we talked about in the "Get Your Period Handbook" - your period is all about energy balance. The more energy you're taking in vs. the energy you're burning, the better your chance is at

getting and keeping a period. And your body doesn't care if that burning of energy is happening because of too much walking, too much yoga, or too much marathons. It's still **TOO MUCH** of an energy deficit at the end of the day. A little bit of an energy deficit is ok, but if you create too much you're just asking for problems.

I met a girl once that said all she did for her exercise was walking (and she played it off very nonchalantly), but when the truth came out, she was literally walking over 20 miles **EVERY. SINGLE. DAY.** Yes, seriously. And again, if she was properly fueling her body with the right food then maybe that wouldn't be such an issue, but she clearly wasn't and that was why she was having so many issues (not to mention a serious addiction to exercise in general). So, there is a thing as overdoing it and that again is up to you to work through and find the right balance for you, even when it comes to these "healthy" exercises.

## 2. Yoga and/or Stretching

Oh my gosh, let me just tell you how much I used to *hate* doing yoga, and even stretching. It was so boring to me, kinda weird, and honestly, extremely difficult, and I hated when any of my friends invited me to go do yoga with them, especially hot yoga! But, over the years I have come to respect and actually love the practice of yoga,

especially when it comes to hormones and weight maintenance/loss. How many people have you seen you become “yogis” and they not only change their stress levels, out look on life, and flexibility, but also their weight seems to shift, from an outsider’s perspective, effortlessly. Obviously, I use the word *effortlessly* very lightly because any advanced yogi will tell you there is quite the amount of effort that goes into their practice! But, I’m am speaking from more the perspective (that we’re all most likely coming from) that more exercise, more cardio, more calories burned, and the crazier the exercises we do, then, and only then, will we “see results.”

**This is clearly wrong.**

There are millions of people all over the world doing yoga as their number one form of exercise and they are getting awesome physical, and mental, results.

So, let’s talk about yoga from a physical perspective and why it’s a great idea to start implementing it into your daily routine from a hormonal perspective.

A huge part of your hormonal balance is your endocrine system. These are the collection of glands that produce the hormones in your body. All the different postures, poses and stretches actually make these glands secrete hormones in a rhythmic fashion.

One of these major glands is called the Pituitary Gland - this is known as your “Master Gland.” This is basically where all the other hormones get their “go-ahead” to start working. And interestingly, there are some poses you can do (i.e. handstand, supported headstand, wheel, pigeon, etc.) that help to activate the Pituitary Gland, causing it to work more efficiently.

Likewise, we all know and have heard about the stress-relieving, calming benefits you can get from yoga. This will be HUGE for your hormones to get on track and stay on track as time goes on. As you remember from the “Get Your Period Handbook,” stress plays the number one role in losing your period, keeping it, and having it work properly. So, you’ve got to start implementing some stress-relieving activities into your daily routine, yoga being one of my favorite.

Yoga is awesome for anyone and everyone to get involved in because it doesn’t matter your age, weight, location, etc. It’s a low impact exercise (which is great for your period), gets progressively more difficult over time (increases muscle strength and growth), and can easily be implemented into your daily routine (you can do it anywhere and at any time of the day!).



Likewise, yoga helps to stimulate the production of Serotonin and can help regulate your appetite, libido, sleep, attitude, and even body temperature. At the same time it helps to stimulate the Parasympathetic Nervous System, a.k.a. the “Rest & Digest” system. The deep-breathing involved in yoga allows your Parasympathetic Nervous System to work optimally: you’re less stressed, your heart rate slows down a bit (a huge issue with anxiety and worry), increases your intestinal activity, and actually relaxes the sphincter muscles throughout your digestive tract, allowing for digestion to work better. It also helps your body to secrete a proper amount of Estrogen, which is obviously huge for getting and keeping your period.

I, personally, love to Google different YouTube videos, download yoga apps on my phone, go to a class with a friend, or even come up with my own sequence and routine. Likewise, playing some calm, uplifting, relaxing music can really set the mood, help you to chill out, and allow you to enjoy your practice.

There is no set amount of how long you should do yoga, though most will say a good amount is anywhere from 30-90 minutes a day, or at least a few days a week. That will be totally up to you. However, I will encourage you to *take it slow* at first, especially if you’re not already pretty flexible or you’re new to yoga. Start with the “beginners”

videos/sequences and work your way up. Don't jump into it too quickly, because yes, you can get injured even doing yoga, so take it slow!

Also, as far as the new trend of “Hot Yoga” goes, that again is totally up to you to decide. I would just caution you to not take it too far, especially from a dizziness and electrolyte perspective. If you're sweating *a ton*, be sure that you're properly hydrated both before and after and you're also replenishing your electrolytes with something that contains sodium, potassium, magnesium, etc. (bananas, celery, a pinch of Himalayan salt, greens, blackstrap molasses, coconut water, and of course, water are some great place to start).

Lastly, one of the biggest benefits of yoga is going to be the increased flexibility you'll gain from it. Being flexible is something that we have come to overlook in the health and fitness industry. However, being flexible is a huge part of being healthy, mostly because it helps to prevent against injury from other activities you're doing, especially weight lifting and resistance exercises.

### 3. Weight Lifting & Resistance Training

First, we're going to talk about how weight lifting and resistance training can help you out with weight maintenance or weight loss, as well as your body composition, and then we'll get into how it affects your hormones and how it's great for keeping your period. Because yes, resistance training is going to be the secret to you reaching your desired body composition, while still being able to keep your period, all without having to spend hours exercising every single day.

So, I know, I know... the first thing that you're thinking is, "I don't want to be bulky and look like a man!!"

BUT, hear me out!

Here's the thing: so many of us see pictures of all these beautiful girls and women who are "toned, fit, lean, etc." and we think that the way to reach that type of look is to do hours and hours of cardio to "burn calories," right? We think that if we can just run off all the fat then our bodies would be toned with cute little muscles and a cute butt (you know what I'm talking about...)

The funny thing is, if you haven't been doing any type of weight training or resistance training, you most likely *don't* have any of those cute little muscles to magically show up from all the cardio you're doing. If you don't have any

muscles mass, there's not going to be any to show through!

Interestingly, the problem with most of our bodies is not so much that we have too much fat, but we also don't have enough muscle.

And this is SO TRUE I can't even begin to tell you. We're all so obsessed with chasing the calorie burn, burning off the "fat," and sweating like crazy to feel like we've done a "proper workout," but let me ask you something...

How many girls or women do you know that you see running down the street all the time, are always on the treadmill, spend hours on the elliptical, and are always doing the craziest new cardio workouts, yet every time you see them they seem to either not have lost any weight, or even worse, have **GAINED** weight!?

But, on the other hand, when you're at the gym, who is predominantly **NOT** on the cardio machines?

**The guys!!**

Maybe even your boyfriend, husband, or best guy friend goes to the gym with you and as soon as you two walk in, he heads to the weight area and you go to the treadmill

and elliptical. You notice most of the guys hardly ever do the cardio machines. They go straight to the weights.

Why is that? What's the difference?

When you look around and you see the people who actually *have* that “toned, lean, fit, muscular” look, they are most of the time the guys that are spending the majority of their workout time in the weight section of the gym.

Now, that's not to say that cardiovascular exercises aren't important, but when you're talking about wanting to build muscle, you're going to be hard-pressed to do so by just jogging on the treadmill...

Your muscles only grow when they are exposed to a stimulus/challenge that requires them to change and grow. And what is that stimulus/challenge?

*Weights and resistance.*

For your muscles to grow, they have to be put under some type of stress. Think about it like this: let's say that you're out in the jungle and there's a big rock that you need to move out of the way. It's not too big, but it's heavier than what you're used to lifting on a daily basis. So, you move the rock and what your muscles do is they say, “Ok, that was pretty tough, we haven't had to deal

with that recently. But, incase it happens again in the near future, we need to be ready, grow a little bit, and get stronger so we can make sure we can handle that next time.” They were introduced to a stimulus (the rock) and they were pushed to a certain extent to where they needed to grow so next time they can handle it again.

Now, let’s say that you come back again the next week and there’s a different rock there, this one is a little bit heavier. So, you work at moving the rock again and the same thing happens. Your muscles do the same thing, they begin to grow, and they get stronger incase you have to come up against the rock again.

But, think about it in reverse. Let’s say you’re walking around and there’s some small rocks. You lift them, no problem, and move on with life. They aren’t anything heavier or more difficult than what you’re used to lifting on a daily basis. Are your muscles going to grow any? No, because there’s no need for them to. They weren’t put up against a challenge or stimulus that would require them to grow. They’ll remain the same size.

Now, imagine that you didn’t move any rocks at all. You never even lifted the small ones, you just walked around the big ones, and your muscles never were put in a situation to have to actually work. Do you think your

muscles will grow then? No, of course not! If anything, they'll get smaller over time!

Basically, when you're lifting the heavy rocks, your muscles are going through a type of stress or trauma. The muscle fibers are essentially broken down and then repaired (over the next few days during sleep and rest) and increased/grow to be able to deal with that heavy object again, yet this time with greater ease. And as these muscles grow, then guess what? You see that growth in your own body. Those cute little muscles start to peak through!

The truth of the matter is that your muscles have to be exposed to some type of stimulus in order for them to change. And that stimulus is *resistance*, being from heavy objects, like weights, your own body weight, resistance bands, etc. All of these forms of resistance will give you results when it comes to growing muscle mass. Whether you decide to lift weights at the gym, do some body weight exercises in your living room, or grab your resistance bands in your own bedroom, it doesn't matter just make your muscles do something they're not used to and, over time, you will see results.

Likewise, regardless if “seeing visual results” are even something you're interested in or not, resistance exercises are extremely beneficial for building strong

bones, something you might have struggled with during the time you didn't have your period (Osteopenia, Osteoporosis, etc.). So, doing weight-bearing exercises can be extremely beneficial in increasing bone mineral density, BUT only if your body has recovered from your past issues and you're fueling it properly. The effect that resistance training has on your bones has more of a positive effect of increasing bone density than that of aerobic or cardio workouts.

Now, let's talk about how weight training is a good idea for your hormones. Maybe you're out there and you don't really care about building lots of muscles to look a certain way, but rather you just want to be healthy, fit, and keep your body in good shape, being sure you do the best for your hormones.

When it comes to resistance and strength training, one of the biggest hormonal benefits is how it can lower your cortisol levels. Remember, cortisol is your stress hormone, it's what goes crazy when you're doing too much, too fast, too long, too hard, too intense, and too extreme. And interestingly, long, endurance, or even prolonged high intensity exercises can *increase* cortisol levels, causing many to get burnt out, exhausted, and even storing body fat over time (this is a big reason why you see a lot of overweight, long term, long distance runners -



their body's have been so stressed out and they're unable to lose weight).

So, in contrast, weight lifting helps LOWER cortisol, while simultaneously increasing anabolic hormones like testosterone. Now, I know when you read the word “testosterone” you're freaking out because that's a guy's hormone, right? Well, yes, it is, but females also have testosterone, just in smaller amounts. And when even women have too low of testosterone, we, too, can experience muscle loss, low energy, and even a loss of sex drive. Even as women, we want to be sure that we don't get our testosterone *too* low, or we could also suffer from these things. Like we talked about before, doing too much intense cardio and HIIT sessions has actually been shown to lower testosterone, as well as other hormones, over time. That's why we want to switch our exercise routine to focus on more low intensity exercises, weight-bearing routines, and things we actually enjoy.

The more stressed out body our minds *and* bodies are, the worse ALL of our hormones are going to be. And don't forget, your hormones work as a giant system, they don't work independently. When one is off, there's a huge change many, if not all, of them are thrown off. The goal then is to balance all of them. As you probably remember from the “Get Your Period Handbook,” messing with the stress hormone, cortisol, is one of the things that can

throw all the others off. So, as always, the biggest goal when it comes to exercise, mental stress, etc. is to CHILL OUT, be happy, do what you love, keep it basic, simple, not crazy and extreme, and give your hormones the chance to work properly.

## 4. Rebounding: The Mini Trampoline

Ever wonder why your grandma always jumped around like a weirdo on her mini trampoline? Or maybe you remember those cheesy 80's TV shows of all the women doing rebounding exercises on Saturday morning? Yeah, that. And there are SO many awesome benefits to rebounding that can help your health, bones, and even hormones.

First off, let's talk about your Lymphatic System. Your Lymphatic System is what is responsible for clearing out the waste of your cells. However, it doesn't have a "pump," so to speak, to help clear the waste out of your cells. A lot of diseases, sicknesses, and ailments have been linked to slow lymphatic movement, especially cancer. You don't want all the waste to just sit around in there stagnant, so we gotta get it moving! The secret is, the "pumping" is up to us, and the only way to get it to start working is through exercise.

Lots of different exercises can do this, but researchers have found that rebounding on a mini trampoline is the absolute best. It acts as a gentle “massage” to your internal organs, helps to ramp up your intestinal activity, while also helping to improve your eyesight by stimulating and moving the fluid inside your eyes. However, when we’re talking about the “pumping” of the lymphatic system, the big thing is the “G-Force” that rebounding does. The “G-Force” is the movement that takes place when you jump up and down on the trampoline. It’s different than just jumping on the ground, you can only get the benefits of the “G-Force” from the combination of the acceleration, deceleration, and gravity all working together (which is why rebounding is so awesome for this).

Your lymph fluid runs vertically throughout your body and only goes one way, not back and forth. So, when you start jumping on the rebounder, you are effectively pumping that fluid along the lymph lines. The more you jump, the more lymph that gets pumped. By doing so, you’re not only pumping out waste, but you’re also strengthening your immune system, muscles, internal organs, bones, joints, ligaments, etc. It’s extremely low-impact, easy to do, and can be done at any time during the day.

One of the greatest benefits of the rebounder is that this is actually what NASA astronauts use when they first return back to earth after being out in space for an extended amount of time. While being in an environment of zero gravity, they are susceptible to losing a great amount of bone density. However, researchers have seen that when they begin using the rebounder, their bone mineral density increases dramatically! This is great news for any of you that have suffered lower bone mineral density, Osteopenia, Osteoporosis, or any type of bone thinning due to past disordered eating habits, over exercise, malnutrition, and so on. GET A REBOUNDER!

Finally, when it comes to your hormones and keeping your period, the great thing is that rebounding is extremely low-impact, fun, and stress-free. You can turn on the TV, watch a movie, or even listen to some music while you jump. It's fun, easy, and you'll be giving your body a quick, non-invasive detox, while also massaging your internal organs and getting your digestion going. :)

## 5. Cycling: Especially Outdoors

Yes, many would consider cycling an endurance exercise (which it definitely can be), but I lump cycling in a different category than running for a few reasons. First of all, cycling is EXTREMELY easy on the body and is an

extremely low-impact sport. Though many of you love running (and that's totally fine if your body is ok with it, too), it *can* be very hard on your joints, knees, and over all body and it can be a difficult exercise to carry on with you throughout the rest of your life in a safe, sustainable way (not saying it can't be done, but it can start to wear on you after a while).

Cycling on the other hand, **ESPECIALLY** outdoors, can be an *amazing* way for you to get in some exercise and move your body in a fun, enjoyable, low-impact, low-stressful type of way. The reason why I stress the outdoors so much is because when you're out on a bike cycling around town, the countryside, next to the beach, etc., you almost kinda get lost in the current situation. There's no girl running on the treadmill in front of you at the gym, there's no count down clock on the stationary bike, there's no calorie counter telling you just how much you've burned. You don't have any of that floating around in your head and it makes it such a stress-free experience.

Granted, yes, I'm sure there will be some people that even cycling outdoors stresses them and their bodies out, but on the whole, it can be an extremely enjoyable way to move your body. And the great thing about cycling is that you can do it just about anywhere, you can do it with a friend or in a large group, and you get to see the world

while you're doing it. You're not stuck inside a gym, TV's and monitors everywhere, sitting in the same place all day long and wondering when is the time going to be up.

The only thing I will caution you about when it comes to cycling and your period is to be sure you're fueling your body enough. None of this low calorie, low carb stuff and then trying to ride around on your bike. NO. You're going to have to fuel yourself properly to be sure your body has the right amount of energy it needs to replenish and restore your muscles and cells. This means eating beforehand, during the ride, and right after. Pack some snacks with you (like dates, granola bars, or trail mix) so you can have something to eat if you're planning on riding long distances.

Likewise, when you're biking outside, obviously take the correct safety precautions when it comes to wearing a helmet, obeying traffic laws, riding on the sidewalk on busy streets, and understanding basic cycling rules.

Cycling can be an awesome, fun, low-impact way to get outside, enjoy the beautiful weather, be with your friends, get some fresh air, all while moving your body. And even better, it's something that is sustainable and that you can do for rest of your life! (unlike tons of HIIT workouts, powerlifting, etc.) However, as always, with that being said, there are plenty of girls who lose their periods by cycling

too much (just like there's plenty of girls losing their periods from walking too much. Yes, walking!) so this might be one of those trial and error type of things. If you're envisioning 100-mile bike rides the first month after getting your period back, you're probably going to be a little disappointed when you don't get a period next month. Remember, take it slow, increase at a gradual speed (if at all) and LISTEN TO YOUR BODY. Don't push too hard, too far, too fast. You gotta figure out what your body thrives best on (and cycling could, or could not, be it).

## 6. Any Fun, Enjoyable Exercise That You Love

This is going to be the BIGGEST one that will help you keep your period for the long run. You have got to find some type(s) of exercises that you absolutely LOVE.

These are the types of exercises that you make you feel like you're not even exercising. Maybe it's walking. When you get outside, have your friend with you and you two are just talking and enjoying the beautiful weather, and the time passes and you don't even realize you've been walking for over an hour. The opposite of actually enjoying and loving the idea of walking is that you would view it as a chore: you absolutely *HAVE* to go walk, if you miss it you're going to beat yourself up, feel guilty, and

consciously restrict your calories that day, you count every calorie you burn while walking and you absolutely make sure you get x amount of steps in. It's not enjoyable, it's almost like torture.

Or maybe you absolutely love cycling. You and your friends meet up, ride around the city, talk, laugh, and enjoy a nice ride. There's not crazy commitment or routine or guilt, it's just enjoyable and fun. But on the other hand, maybe you're obsessed with it, have to go a certain distance every day, and count all the calories you've burned and are obsessed with losing weight. There's a huge difference in these two scenarios!

The fact of the matter is that some of the BEST exercises you can do for being healthy, fit, losing/maintaining your body's healthy weight, and keeping your period are going to be those that are the most enjoyable, fun, and sustainable for the long run.

If you hate it, loathe it, dread it, it's like a chore, you feel guilty when you miss a day, and you're constantly obsessed with it, chances are it's just going to continue stressing you out mentally and stressing your body and hormones out physically.

So, when it comes to finding exercises that you love, I encourage you to just get out there and try new stuff.



Maybe take up a dance or Zumba class. Try a spin class. Just start walking or hiking around the city/countryside. Get into rock climbing or jogging. Sign up for a yoga class or a sports team league in your city. Do some body weight exercises at home. It doesn't matter. Just do what you LOVE to do and the thing that when you do it it doesn't feel crazy, obsessive or too intense for you.

I also encourage you to not just pick one exercise, but find lots of different things to do. Mix it up a little bit. Maybe do yoga one day, go for a walk the next, do the barre class on Wednesday night with a friend, go for bike ride, etc. As long as you're moving, having fun, not stressing over it, feeling awesome, and fueling your body properly, it really doesn't matter what you do.

Now, here's a BIG disclaimer about this whole idea of "exercising the way you love." There possibly be some exercises that you genuinely DO love. You're not obsessed, addicted, crazy, counting calories, and going nuts over it. You really enjoy it, time flies by, and it's fun for you. BUT... that doesn't always mean it's going to be a good fit for your hormones (either just temporarily or ever).

Just because you might absolutely love that particular exercise, doesn't give you a free pass to keep doing it. Because remember, it's not so much about what *you* like to do, but rather what *your body* likes to do. You, mentally,

might love a good long run, breaking a nice sweat, and getting outside pounding the pavement. But your body might not like that. It could see that as too much stress, too much intensity, or too much of an energy expenditure (especially if you're not countering that with lots of good calories).

So, my biggest tip when it comes to finding the exercises you love, is to be sure they align with the type of exercises your body loves. A huge part of this is going to be understanding that you and your body are *one*. It's not you vs. your body. It's you two working together to create the healthiest, happiest, and best version of YOU. Getting in tune with what your body thrives best at doing, listening to it when you know you've pushed too hard and too much, and respecting it in those ways is going to pay off dividends for your health journey success in the long run.

At this point you might be thinking, "Well, I have a hard time figuring out exactly what it is my body enjoys. I don't know how much is too much or what is pushing it..." Which leads me to my next point, which is all about *Intuitive Exercise*.

# Chapter 10

## The Absolute Best Form of Exercise: Intuitive Exercise

Just like we talked about “Intuitive Eating” earlier, now we’re going to bring that same concept over and apply it to our exercise routines. How many of us have really even considered the idea of “Intuitive Exercise?” We talk about Intuitive Eating all the time, but we never think about how our exercise routine should be intuitive, too. Think about it, yes, it’s healthy to exercise, just like it’s healthy to eat good food, but when things get too structured, obsessive, planned, and regimented, can we end up hurting our bodies?

I’m going to argue, yes. We definitely can.

This is so similar to intuitive eating it’s not even funny. Just think about it. If we’re so big on learning to get in tuned with our bodies, listening to our hunger and satiation signals, and learning to respect our bodies desire for food, why wouldn’t we do the same with exercise?

This is one of the reasons why I really encourage you to start finding the exercises that you absolutely LOVE to do. I am *not* a big fan of a structured, strict, systematic exercise plan where you have it written on your calendar to do x amount of minutes of this or that exercise on these certain days and if you miss that exercise then you feel guilty, frustrated and like a failure. And not only that, but you can, many times, end up forcing your body to exercise when it's really asking you to just take a break.

Think about it like this: If it's not respectful to your body to physically starve yourself or keep yourself from eating food when you're actually hungry or making yourself eat more (until you feel sick) when you're really not even hungry, wouldn't you also want to respect your body and let it rest when you're really tired/injured/sick/exhausted/sore/etc?

Now, I know what you're thinking, "Well, I'd never exercise or workout if I had that type of mentality! I would literally just lay around and never go to the gym or for a jog..."

Well, there's a big difference between laziness and listening to your body. It's the same thing as saying that it's easier to just eat junk food all day long and never make the conscious decision to choose healthier options. Yes, you're consciously choosing to do the right thing.

And the same thing is true with Intuitive Exercise. You want to consciously choose the right activity based off how you feel, how much energy you have, how your muscles feel, if you're even mentally into it, and so on.

I want to be clear that I'm *not* saying to just use the excuse of, "Oh, I don't have to work out because I don't 'intuitively' feel like it" (i.e. I'm just super lazy). Instead, I'm actually saying the reverse of this. I'm saying that if you're one of those type of people that really pushes yourself (literally to exhaustion) all just so you can check off the exercise box on your calendar (regardless if you're sick, tired, injured, etc.) then this would be a good discipline to start implementing.

If you're always signing up for workout programs that cause you to go *against* what your body is telling you to do, then you need to start listening to your body and not to the program. If you're following this regimented routine that yes, might be great exercise, but you are mentally pushing your body beyond it's limits and ignoring what it's trying to tell you, then I would encourage you to give intuitive exercise a shot for a while.

Just like intuitive eating, where you focus on listening to what your body is really telling you based off your fullness level, your hunger level, your digestion, your cravings, etc.,

intuitive exercise works the same way. You focus on how much energy you really have, how tired you are, how sore/flexible your muscles are, how motivated and really “into it” you are, and so on.

On the flip side, just like how with intuitive eating you don’t just “intuitively” eat tons of junk food all day long and call it “health in the sake of intuitive eating,” with intuitive exercise you don’t just lay on the couch all day every day just in the name of “intuitively exercising,” We all know exercise is healthy and should be a part of a healthy lifestyle, but it’s all about balance. And finding that perfect balance for you, both mentally and physically. If you’re pushing your body too hard, pushing your mind too hard to be “perfect,” thinking that you have to follow this certain plan to a “T” or you’re a failure, etc., then that’s not really doing it intuitively, is it? Just like with your food choices, it makes no sense to be following some meal plan that’s telling you to eat food when you’re not hungry and not eat when you’re starving. It completely goes against what your body is saying. Same with intuitive exercise.

So, the take-home message from all this is to begin to learn and get in touch with YOUR body. Again, don’t worry about everyone else out there. Don’t worry about your friend, your neighbor, the girl at the gym, your sister, or the girl on Instagram or Youtube. What they’re doing

doesn't matter. The more you focus on them, trying to do exactly what they do, and setting unrealistic expectations for yourself, the more miserable you're going to be and out of touch with your own body you're going to be (not to mention all that time wasted thinking/worrying about them that could've been spent on yourself!)

Instead, use all that time and energy to focus on learning more about yourself, getting in touch with your body, how you really feel, what exercises you actually do enjoy and how long you enjoy doing them. I can promise you, if you were to spend as much time on yourself as you do researching, stalking, and worrying about what everyone else is doing, you'd be so much better off, trust me.

When it comes to intuitive exercise, I encourage you to start branching out and finding new ways to be active. It doesn't have to be a 1 hour gym session 5 days a week (all the while you're hating every second of it). Start finding other ways to be active that are actually FUN and enjoyable for you. Pay attention how your body feels, how your mind is perceiving the activity, and how you feel afterwards. Realize that you don't have to follow any regimented plan to be fit and healthy, you can simply get outside, hike at the park, play with your dog, rollerblade around the neighborhood, and join the local basketball league.

Now, I want to be very clear on one thing I'm *NOT* saying. If you are one of those people who really do enjoy having a plan, a routine, a schedule and that works great for you, then by all means, keep at it! There's nothing wrong with workout plans that keep you consistent and motivated at all. BUT, what I'm trying to point out is to become more aware of what your body is telling you, learn to really get in touch with it. If you're following a certain Monday, Wednesday, Friday plan and by the time Friday rolls around you're completely exhausted, your muscles are sore, you didn't sleep well the night before, and the last thing you want to *\*really\** do is go workout, then LISTEN TO YOUR BODY, take the day off, sleep in, do some light stretching, and rest. Don't force it. Obviously your body is trying to tell you something and this is the time to intuitively listen to it and not push it beyond what it can handle. That's what this is all about.

And likewise, let's say that you're following a certain plan and you're only supposed to do xyz that day but you have so much energy that you feel like doing just a little bit more, then go for it! If your body is craving it, then that's fine! And that's the beauty of learning to listen to your body from both perspectives. Let it rest and relax and recover when it needs to and let it go, play, run, and expend energy when it needs to.



What does this look like exactly? Well, maybe one day you just feel like your body is craving a good jog around town. Or maybe you're just in the mood to lift some weights. Or it could be that you're exhausted, had a long week at work and stayed up late Friday night but you've got your scheduled boot camp class at 6:30am Saturday morning: instead of dragging yourself out of bed to go because you feel like you "have to," you sleep in, get up later on and do a little yoga and take your dog for a walk. Maybe it's just going to the park and playing volleyball with all your friends.

My point is, it doesn't have to be this structured, set-in-stone type of thing. And honestly, I can promise you that you'll not only feel better physically, but your body will begin thanking you in more ways than one. Your period will be better, yes, but also, you might start to notice that your body is shedding weight a lot easier than it was when you were pushing it like crazy. Why? Because it's no longer stressed out - it no longer feels like it has to hold onto every little bit of fat on your body due to the constant stress it's under. Instead, it feels at ease and at peace by moving and doing things it actually enjoys.

So, it's all about balance, getting in touch with YOURSELF, and choosing the best option and decision in that particular moment. No forcing anything just for the sake of following some plan, keeping up with the person you

idolize on Instagram, or trying to be perfect. I can promise you it's not worth it in the end. Focus on you, focus on your body, and learn to give it what it wants and needs when it wants and needs it.

# Chapter 11

## How to Deal with Your So-Called “Triggers”

The word “trigger” has been an increasingly popular word in the world of eating disorders and body image issues. If you don’t know what a “trigger” is, it’s basically anything that you see, hear, read, or experience that “triggers” you (or hits you the wrong way, stays in your mind negatively, or alters your positive thinking about a subject) and causes you to potentially go back to bad habits. And honestly, I hate using the word “trigger” because a lot of people will use their “triggers” to make a lot of excuses instead of taking responsibility for their thoughts and actions, but I want to teach you how to deal with those things, put them behind you, and move on in life so you can live productively and free from the things that weigh you down, ultimately becoming “trigger-free.”

So, an example of what most people call “triggers” would be, let’s say you’re doing really well, loving life, you love your body, no problem at all. But a commercial comes on TV of an extremely thin, attractive woman and all the sudden you feel very insecure, feel like you need to go

work out, feel like the food you're eating is "bad" and you obsess over wanting to change the things in your life so you can look like her. That one instance of that short commercial threw your mind into a tail-spin and things have never been the same.

Triggers are the things that most of the time cause disordered eating and bad body image issues, but they also are the things that keep them going.

And a trigger can be *anything*. There are no rules or guidelines when it comes to triggers. Some people get triggered by pictures of other people, movies, videos, etc. For others it's hearing people talk about diet, exercise, and their body. Maybe someone made a comment about the way you looked (whether it was intended to be negative or not), but it just hit you the wrong way. It could even be something that has absolutely nothing to do with diet or exercise, but it's a very emotional type of think you go through (a divorce, separation, loss of a loved one, moving locations/jobs/schools, a bad breakup, sickness, rejection, etc.). Or it could even be a combination of any of these things. And the list goes on and on. It's different for everybody.

And since it's different for everybody, your particular plan of action is going to be different than the next person's. So, let's talk about how you can deal with these triggers,

beat them for good, and move on to live a healthy, happy, productive life regardless of these things that keep trying to pull you down.

1. You've got to identify the INITIAL trigger(s). Think back over the past few years of when this health, body, and life crisis all started for you and try to pinpoint the very things that threw you into a tail-spin. I would encourage you to write these things down. Was it family problems, relationship issues, did you see a certain movie, watch a certain video, read a certain magazine? What was it? Write them down. Now, I'm not one to dwell on the past and dig up old bones, but this is important to do for a few reasons. First, many of us are unaware of the things that have happened in our lives that have influenced us to do the things we've done. We're denying reality and the truth and until you can come to terms with that, it's going to be a long road for you. We like to repress the things that we don't want to deal, but the problem is we psychologically still dwell on them and that comes out in the way that we think, act, live, and our behaviors (most of the time for the worse). So, whatever it is, think through it, write it down, be aware of how that certain thing/situation/experience has affected you.
2. Depending on what these triggers are, I want you to take some action in reconciling them as best as you

possibly can. What do I mean? You've got to face them head on. No more running from them, ignoring them, or pushing them away. If it was a relationship that went wrong, either a. talk to that person face to face and get things off your chest, or let it go from your memory and move on. If it's someone close to you that constantly talks about their weight, workout plan, diet, and it really bothers you either a. let them know upfront or b. learn to let it go. Obviously, there will be some triggers that can't be 100% talked through, forgotten or reconciled with the other person (if other people are even involved), but the goal of this is to at least be aware of what triggered you in the past and what continues to do so even today. The more knowledge and awareness you have around these things, the better equipped you're going to be with beating them successfully for good.

3. Now, let's go back to the whole idea of "letting it go." I'm sure you might be thinking, "Uh.. it's not that easy to just let it go... This was something that really effected me in a negative way and it's even a huge part of my life." And yes, I totally understand that there are certain things that happen to us that can really effect us, but here's the thing (and I want you to hear me out). In the grand scheme of things, you are in control of your thoughts. 100%. When you see, hear, read, or experience something that triggers you, the way you

REACT and how you let it fester in your mind is what really matters. Though you might not be able to stop everything that happens to you in your life, you can stop anything from running rampant in your thoughts, but it is totally up to you. And this is why I say that you don't want to start getting into the habit of hiding, running away, isolating yourself, or cutting yourself off from people or things all because they "trigger" you. Because the reality is that these things are *always* going to be around. Your "triggers" aren't going anywhere, they'll always be there in some form or fashion. There will always be pictures of thin models in magazines, people you meet who talk about their diet, body, and workouts, TV commercials that mention how you need to lose weight or go on a certain diet, and so on. **THEY WILL ALWAYS BE THERE.** So, you have three options. 1. You can become a hermit, move to a cave somewhere far away and never be a part of the world or real life ever again. 2. Continue to complain every time someone says something that triggers you, you see something on TV that rubs you the wrong way, or you constantly stay stuck in the issues of your past. Or 3. You learn to COPE with these things, beat them, overcome them, and move on with your life. Honestly, those are your three options. And you shouldn't look at them as, "Oh gosh, my life is doomed, I'm never going to be able to do this!" Because then you're already starting off on the wrong foot with all this.

Now is the time to accept where you are, what you've been through, and decide to make a change. Every single day from this point forward. No one can do it for you except yourself! And YES you can do it, trust me! If you've made it this far in your journey, this part is going to be simple for you. Think about all you've been through, all the changes you've made and how much your life has changed in the last few months. **YOU CAN DO THIS, I BELIEVE IN YOU!!** Though you might not be able to change the actions or words of others, the things that come on TV, the articles published in magazines, you can change **YOU** and that is all that matters. So, do it!!

4. So, a practical way to start implementing this type of attitude in your every day life, specifically in regards to those things that either seriously, or even minutely, trigger you is to face them **head on**. No more shying away from them. No more making excuses. You have to face these fears, prove to yourself that they don't control you, and start living your life with confidence and purpose. If not, you will always revert back to being the scared, helpless, unconfident, woe is me type of person who stays trapped in the prison of your own mind. Let's talk about a few steps you can take in each triggering moment to help you get past it, grow from it, move on from it, and erase it from your mind altogether (these will help so much, you just gotta start



making them a habit and a regular part of your life when you experience negative “triggers”):

1. Ground Yourself. No, not literally like lie on the ground LOL, but find certain objects or smells or breathing techniques that you can latch on to that will bring you back to reality. Yes, seriously. I’m sure you’re like, “Girl, what are you even talking about...?!” But trust me on this. Many times when we’re triggered by something it brings up memories from the past (most of the time negative) or unrealistic expectations for the future. The goal is to ground yourself to be in the present moment, the now. A few things that can help with this is to using things that effect your senses (smell, sight, hearing, taste, touch) that can bring your mind back to focusing on the now. This could be smelling a certain fragrance, listening to a certain song, having a small object that you can focus on, etc. These things use one, or more, of your sense to psychologically take you out of that realm of thinking, specifically negatively. Obviously, you want all of these different things (songs, smells, objects, etc.) to be a **positive** thing. Don’t go smell a certain perfume that reminds you of your bad break-up, but rather one that reminds you of an awesome time in your life. Have a little object that maybe your loved one gave you and it’s special to

you. Recite a specific Bible verse or quote you like that is fitting for these stressful situations. Listen to a song that makes you super happy. Whatever it is, it doesn't matter, but using the types of grounding techniques can be very helpful. Basically, just find something that effects your senses in a POSITIVE way and can bring you back to ground zero, that's the goal :)

2. Be Honest With Yourself. A lot of times when we're dealing with triggering situations we let our minds run wild and dream up crazy things. We go from one rabbit hole to the next, letting our imagination and fears take us over. We start with just seeing a picture of someone and next thing we know we're off in some crazy La-La Fantasy Land thinking about our life and body in a different dimension far, far away from reality! The funny thing is, all of this stress and worrying does absolutely *nothing* beneficial for us and is a complete LIE that we build up and fabricate in our minds. Whenever this happens, come back to center, back to reality, and realize that what you're perpetuating in your mind is a lie. Doing these crazy diets to "lose 10 pounds in a week!" is a lie. Starving yourself to look like the girl on the magazine is a lie. Thinking you can be happy based off a number on a scale is a lie. Thinking you can

finally find peace in life through counting your calories because your family situation is so bad is a lie. And once you start to call out these lies, you can then begin to live in the truth, the reality of today. But again, this is all up to you. You have to stop these thoughts in their tracks and call out the lies as they are. Start telling yourself TRUTHS. Truths about who you ARE, your accomplishments, the blessings in your life, what you're grateful for in your life, the great things God has blessed you with (your gifts, talents, character, quirkiness, humor, etc.) Those are the things that matter and those are the TRUTH, not lies.

3. Tell Someone. As always, you know how big I am when it comes to accountability. Hopefully by now in this journey of your health you've got someone (anyone!) that is close to you that you feel comfortable and trust with telling them how you're feeling, they're speaking truth into your life, and you're taking their advice and wisdom to heart. In these moments of triggers, I **really** encourage you to use your support system to help you out. If you're triggered to go purge after something you saw on TV, call your friend, tell them what's up and let them help you talk through it. If you're triggered to go on some other extreme diet, let your mom know and have her hold you

accountable to continuing down the right, healthy path. Reach out for help. Don't feel like this is all up to you and on your shoulders. The people in your life that love you and care for you are there to help and you will need them through this journey. Don't try to do it all on your own.

4. Smile, Deep Breaths, & Move On With Life. If I had to say the number one trick to dealing with triggers, this one is it, and it's the easiest, too. Anytime something comes across your mind, take some deep breaths, put a smile on your face, and carry on as normal with your life. Yes, I know, that sounds too simple, but I can assure you that it works every single time. When you have a smile on your face, it's very difficult to be angry, stressed, or anxious. When you're taking deep breaths, I've very difficult to hold on to that stress. And when you consciously make the decision to move on with your life, letting all of that go and leaving it behind you, then you are taking a huge step in beating those triggers once and for all.
5. Again, I cannot stress this enough: *all of this is up to you*. It is your responsibility to take ACTION and make things in your life change. If not, things are *always going to be the same*. If you keep doing what you've always done, you're going to keep getting

what you've always gotten. It's as simple as that. Until you decide, "Alright, I'm making a change and stopping all of this nonsense right now," then you will continue to stay in the same place you've been: anxious, depressed, triggered by every little thing, a victim of the world and those around you, worrying all the time, and not living your life to the fullest. IT'S UP TO YOU and again, YOU CAN DO IT!! All it takes is just the first step and honestly, after all you've been through in the past, you are so much further than you think. So, don't stop, keep on going. It's all in your hands, girl!

# Chapter 12

## Frequently Asked Questions

1. If I gained too much weight, how do I reduce it to a healthy weight while still keeping my period?

Alright, so let's break this down a little bit because there can be some confusing information out there about "too much weight gain" that I want to be sure you guys understand. Here's the thing: your idea of gaining too much weight might not actually be *too much weight gain*. What do I mean? Well, your body's idea of a healthy weight is most of the time drastically different than YOUR idea of what your body's weight should be. If you have gained weight once you started eating more due to your past of restriction, purging, overexercise, etc. then your body NEEDED that weight, especially so it could repair all the damages that were done to your body. Yes, you needed to gain weight. It was a GOOD thing. So many of us think that weight gain is ALWAYS this horrible, bad, unfortunate thing that should never happen to anyone, anytime, anywhere. But that's not true. Just like it would be extremely healthy for a lot of overweight people to

lose weight, it would be equally healthy for a lot of underweight, or malnourished, or disordered eating people to gain weight. So, that's the first thing to understand: Your idea of your body's perfect weight might not be aligned with your BODY'S idea of a perfect weight for you. And at the end of the day, *your body's* preference is what matters. The more you try and try and restrict and purge and push your body beyond it's limits to lose weight (especially in unhealthy, quick-fix, non-sustainable ways), the more your body is going to fight back to regulate and maintain a weight it is comfortable with for survival purposes.

AND (let me make a big point here), even if you're at a "healthy weight" for your body, yes you can still gain over that depending on your restrictive and disordered tendencies. Even some people at what would be considered a "normal weight," yet still have restrictive tendencies with their diet and exercise habits will notice they might gain a bit of weight in the beginning because their metabolism is adjusting. When you've been restricting calories, overexercising, not sleeping enough, being constantly stressed out, etc. your metabolism slows down and adapts to your new way of life (regardless of your weight.) Once you start eating normally, letting your body rest, and so on, seeing that your metabolism has been so low from your past lifestyle, now it's seeing this extra rest and calories as a form of recovery. So it's going

to hold onto some weight to help repair the damage from your past tendencies so your metabolism can then adjust to your new way of life. It's not the extra weight that "heals" you, but rather the extra weight is protecting your body, it's a survival mechanism. It puts on weight because when it feels stressed and threatened with life (yes, calorie restriction and too much exercise means "threat of life" to your body), FAT is what equals survival. So, it adds some extra fat and weight to keep you alive. Your body is extremely smart.

This is why people who effortlessly maintain a healthy, slim figure without restrictively, obsessively, crazily limiting their calories and working out like a mad woman can do so with ease - their body trusts them because they don't abuse it and make it go into crazy starvation/survival mode. This is the goal you want to get to with your body, right? But you have to understand that the "recovery" you just went through was NECESSARY and it was your body's way of keeping you alive. Over the coming months and years, as you begin to love your body, treat it right, listen to it, feed it good foods, get enough rest, don't push it too hard, over time your body will naturally reach it's perfect, healthy weight all because it trusts you again.

So, you have to stop all the quick-fix, fad diets, quick weight loss gimmicks, etc. and let your body heal. Even if



you gained weight (even a lot of weight) your body most likely needed it, **ESPECIALLY** if you've come from a disordered eating/exercising background. The **absolute worst thing** you could do is try to lose weight very quickly (especially by consciously restricting your calories, lowering your carbs, exercising too much or too intensely, etc.) because it is just going to put you right back to where you started (and actually worse off) because you'll end up gaining even more weight on top of that!

So, what's the answer? Follow the guidelines outlined in this book in terms of eating nourishing, whole plant foods. Move your body in a way that is enjoyable. Don't stress, get to sleep, love yourself, and let your body continue to heal. And my biggest tip when it comes to all of this is to shift your focus. Instead of focusing on "weight loss, weight loss, weight loss" all the time, change your focus and perspective to **HEALTH**. And not just your physical health, but also your **MENTAL** health. Ask yourself before you do anything, "Is this going to be seriously healthy for **BOTH** my physical and mental health? Or is this just something I *\*think\** is going to be healthy for my physical health, so my mental health can just deal with it..." When you start putting your attention on the things you can do on a daily basis to make you more mentally and physically healthy, **THEN**

you will start to see a change in not only your body, but also your thought processes concerning your body.

If your only goal in life is to lose weight, get toned, fit, lean, skinny, etc. then you will start to do things that aren't healthy for you - both mentally and physically. You'll start hating your body, isolating yourself, talking to yourself negatively, trying different gimmicks to lose weight, fasting, going back to old habits, and so on. **THIS IS NOT THE GOAL.** You have to understand that your body has been through a lot and it is still in it's healing phase. Focus on health, feed your body good, nourishing, whole plant foods, get out and move your body, love yourself, love your life, and live life to the fullest every single day and things will begin to change. Trust me, your mental and physical health are so much more important than your weight at this point, and over time they will continue to align perfectly for your body to reach it's perfect weight, not some weight you have dreamt up in your mind that you think is what it should be at.

Lastly, I just want you to think about this: wouldn't you rather be happy, carefree, in love with life, appreciating your body, confident and having fun every day all while you're at a "healthy" body weight (though you might not look like a certain girl on Instagram that you idolize). OR, would you rather spend all your time, energy, focus, attention, free time, and life on looking in the mirror,

weighing yourself numerous times a day, comparing yourself to every passing girl on the street, isolating yourself, counting your calories, weighing your food, and never being able to live your life FULLY all because you want to look a certain way? Because the truth of the matter is that you actually could do that. It's your decision. You definitely can spend the rest of your life fighting against your body to look a certain way, but you're most likely going to lose your vigor for life in the process. So why not just chill out a little bit, love your body, feed it good food, listen to it, exercise in enjoyable ways, and not worry about it so much? The decision is yours! It really just comes down to priorities and what it is you really want out of life: Is it to kill yourself to look a certain way or weigh a certain amount? Or is it to love and appreciate your body, take good care of it, and live your life? And the interesting thing is that most women find that when they FINALLY stop abusing their body and mind with unrealistic expectations, they actually begin to see their body AND mind change in just the way they were hoping for! So, you make the decision, it's totally up to you. I will just encourage you to think about your future and your life on a whole. What do you really want out of life? Just your looks or to actually LIVE?

2. If you started taking Maca Powder (or other hormonal herbs) to regain your period, should you keep taking these things once your period returns?

This is one of the reasons why I really encourage girls to shy away from using such herbs, especially in the beginning, because you can build up a psychological crutch to these things and think that if you don't have them then you're doomed to get a period regularly. My biggest thing is work on getting your period back through natural ways outlined in my "Get Your Period Handbook" before adding in any of these things, if ever. However, if you have gone ahead and started taking these herbs, you've gotten your period back and you're at the point of deciding whether or not to continue taking them, here's what I would suggest:

First, a lot of it is going to depend on just how long you've been taking the herbs. If it's only been a few weeks, then getting off of them isn't really going to be a big deal. However, if it's been months or even years, then your body has most likely built up a tolerance to them and your hormones are now starting to rely on those herbs instead of your own natural hormones working on their own. The end goal is to get your hormones to work without the addition of any extra herbs, right? So, I would begin to slowly wean yourself off of them. Start with the daily dose. If you're taking 1 tbsp of Maca Powder every

morning, begin to take 1/2 tbsp every day for a few weeks. Then back down to 1 tsp a day. Then go every other day, every 3 days, once a week, every other week, etc. until you're no longer using them.

However, you've got to remember that if your other lifestyle choices are not in line and done properly (eating enough, sleeping enough, resting enough, de-stressing, self-love, etc.) then taking or not taking the herbs isn't really going to matter. A lot of girls will take the herbs, get their periods, think they're in the clear, but then start restricting calories again, exercising too much, while simultaneously getting off the herbs, then they lose their period and think it was because they stopped the herbs. No. You lose your period again because of the other lifestyle factors at play here. So, my first rule of thumb is to hold off on the herbs altogether and really focus on getting your body and mind balanced out naturally, without the addition of other added supplements. But, if you did/do take them and want to stop, slowly decrease them over time until you're no longer using them at all (all while keeping the other lifestyle things in check).

**3. After you start getting your period again, how long does it take for the cycles to become regular?**

There is no specific amount of time that it takes each and every girl to get her cycles regular. It will be different for

every one and it will be 100% dependent on your lifestyle choices. Are you continuing to eat enough? Sleep enough? Rest enough? Get out all the negativity and self-hate in your life? Deal with the stress in your life (both physical and mental)? All of these things go into play with regular cycles. For one girl, she might get her period back after taking a few months to get her life back on track, and then get them every month regularly from then on out. However, for the next girl, she might get her period back after a few months of changing her life, but once she gets it back she thinks that's the green light to start trying to lose weight again, restrict her calories, exercising lots more and then her periods go wacky again.

So it all depends on YOU and your lifestyle. And even if you are doing everything correctly and keeping your life and thoughts under control, it can still take some time for some girls for their hormones to balance, especially depending on how long you went without a period for, how old you are, your past habits of restriction/purging/exercise/self-hate/medications/drugs/etc. The point is you just have to keep going, stick with the plan, love yourself, and be patient. Don't stress over it because that only makes it worse! The goal is to love life every day and let it work itself out, knowing you're doing all you can to help the process!

#### 4. Is it normal for your period to always be super light and short after you get it back?

This one again is going to depend on the individual. Some girls will find that when they first get their period back it is actually extremely heavy, long, and painful, while others find that theirs are a little more of a “normal” flow and length, and finally some notice theirs are shorter and lighter. There really is no “perfect period” so to speak, it really all depends on the girl and her particular hormones. Not to mention, a lot of it will depend on your particular diet. If you’re eating a lot of animal products and tons of high fat foods, you might experience more heavier, lengthier periods. However, if you back off the animal products and decrease your fat intake (again, not zero fat, but not high, either), then you might notice your periods are a little shorter and lighter. But these are not hard and fast rules, it all depends on the individual.

At the end of the day, it is going to be your body that determines *your* perfect period. However, I will say, if you’re continually having extremely heavy periods, very painful, long, lots of blood, etc. then you want to take a look into your lifestyle and see what needs changing. But, having light monthly periods isn’t a thing to be concerned about, especially if you are actually getting them monthly.



5. If you lost your period due to disordered eating and you were put on birth control by your doctor, how do you know if you have gained it back naturally and your hormones are ok?

Sadly, the majority of doctors today treat missing periods with a bandaid, birth control. A girl realizes she missed her period, tells her mom, they go to the local gynecologist, let the doctor know what's up and instead of asking about their diet, lifestyle, exercise habits, and self-love/hate, they automatically prescribe them with birth control because, "hey, it'll regulate your period!" No. It doesn't regulate your period, it is a **fake** period. All it is is a withdrawal bleed from the week's worth of sugar pills you'll be taking in the little package. When you start taking the sugar pill (yes, literally sugar pills), your body has a week where it isn't ingesting the synthetic hormones from the other 3 weeks worth of pills. So, it starts bleeding due to withdrawal from these hormones coming in. A girl who hasn't had a period in years due to her restrictive disorders and exercise tendencies will jump for joy because now she's got her period! No. LOL. It's not a period!

So, if you were one of these unfortunate souls who were put on bandaid birth control to "get your period back," then I would really consider getting off birth control and letting your period regulate and normalize on it's own.



(Again, I am not a doctor so I am not diagnosing or prescribing you with doing this or that, I am asking you to **CONSIDER** it and to do your own research). There's no way for you to know if you could get a *real* period without getting off birth control, because every "period" you have while you're on birth control is **FAKE!**

## 6. Is there a relationship between Zinc (or other deficiencies) and periods?

First let's talk about where this type of question *possibly* could be coming from. Just like the idea of wanting to just take a lot of herbs to fix your period (while not addressing the real root causes of your problems), a lot of girls think that if they can fix just one deficiency they have (most of the time through supplementation, not actual food), then they can get around the truth of needing to actually rest, eat more, recover, and fix their whole life. If you've read my "Get Your Period Handbook," you know **THIS IS NOT THE WAY**. You have to treat the **WHOLE** situation, not just one little part.

I know it's a lot easier to think to yourself, "Ok, so I don't have a period, but my doctor says I'm Iron/Zinc/B-12/Vitamin D deficient so instead of actually eating more, backing off my exercise and practicing self-love, I'm going to keep doing my restrictive tendencies and I'll just go get a supplement from the store to fix this problem. Then, I

can still stay super skinny, workout as much as I want, AND get my period! I've figured out a way to get around it all, yay me!"

## **No! LOL DON'T DO THIS. AND HERE'S WHY:**

Even if you were to perhaps get your period back by fixing this certain deficiency, is that really worth it? You're still crazy with your food and diet routine, your exercise regime, and you're obviously not practicing self-love and stress maintenance so what's that really going to do for you in the long-run? I am NOT about just putting a little bandaid on something to get the *temporary* results you want. You have to fix the WHOLE thing. That's the key.

So, I know a lot of you might be coming from this type of mentality and it's very tempting to adopt, but I really encourage you to think about your future, long-term. Fix all of this now so you don't have to worry about it in the future. Now, let's say you have done and are continuing to do all my tips and advice from my first book, then I would say you're going to be HARD-PRESSED to find that you're deficient in anything. Why? Because, what causes nutrient deficiencies? Simply not getting enough calories and not eating a good variety of foods. So, if you're following my plan of getting your period back, you should then therefore be eating PLENTY of calories, enough to cover all your needs.

However, I'm not naive enough to believe that there are certain circumstances where girls might have deficiencies due to absorption issues and other underlying conditions, so, if you find you are following all of my advice for getting your period, yet you find out you're still nutrient deficient, then yes, you definitely want to fix that deficiency. But again, I really stress the importance of knowing that the deficiency isn't occurring in an isolated way. There are things you've done that have lead up to that deficiency, are exacerbating it now, and can keep you in that deficiency if you don't change them. Just taking a pill isn't always the answer to your problems, especially long term and **ESPECIALLY** if you're not willing to change your old habits for more healthier ones now. So, be sure you're eating enough, following my plan for getting your period back (both mentally and physically), and then take a look again at the deficiencies. Just don't think that by simply taking a pill everything will be resolved, because most of the time it won't!

**7. What is a good diet meal plan that will help me hit all of my requirements for nutrients (especially Iron, Zinc, and Protein)?**

As I explained in my "Get Your Period Handbook," I **do not** believe in prescribed meal plans. Why? Because we are all different, what I tell you to eat might not be what

you like to eat, you could be eating too little or too much for your particular needs, and they keep you constantly reliant on someone else outside of your own body and mind telling you what foods to eat every single meal. This is messed up. You don't need me, or someone else, or some random plan you come across in a magazine or on the internet to tell you what you should eat every 3 hours of the day.

**I REALLLLLLLY** want you guys to start to learn to listen to YOUR body, find the foods you love to eat, the foods you don't really care for, let your body tell you when you're actually hungry and when you're satisfied, and let it be your guide, not me. If you always have to have someone or something else tell you what, when, where, why, and how much to eat, what kind of life is that? You've just given away your body's inherent knowledge and wisdom to someone else and this is what causes disordered eating over time. Trying to make your body fit something that it's not up for and trying to make your mind follow something that it doesn't need. **DON'T DO THIS.** Find the foods you love and make you feel good, eat them when you're hungry, stop when you're satisfied, and move on with life. **IT'S JUST FOOD.**

Second, if you are particularly concerned about getting certain nutrients, I would encourage you to eat a wide variety of foods. For Iron, my favorite foods are

blackstrap molasses, greens, and beans. For Zinc, you can eat a lot of beans, nuts and seeds, whole grains, etc. And for protein, that's something you really don't have to worry about because you'll get all you need from eating whole plant foods. However, if you want to be more intentional about getting protein, you can focus on legumes, greens (yes, greens!), whole grains, and more nuts and seeds. Basically, eat enough calories, keep a wide variety of foods, and figure out the foods you love and feel best on, not what someone else tells you to eat!

## 8. How can I eat more healthy fats (15-30%) and lose weight/keep it off long term?

At this point, I actually do not recommend eating fats above 20% for health reasons. Likewise, the higher your fat content goes the the less your carbohydrates are going to be. And remember, our bodies RUN off carbohydrates so you don't want to be skimping on them so you can eat tons of fats. You'll most likely feel more lethargic, unmotivated, and your hormones might suffer. However, this question could just as easily read, "How can I eat fats around 5% and lose weight/keep it off long term?" Though the amount of fat you intake can affect your weight, it also has a lot to do with the quality of your food and just how much you're eating of everything else, which is why I really encourage a whole foods, plant based diet. The more of these foods you can center your

food choices around the better off you're going to be in the long run.

As always though, I would also encourage you to stop counting your macros and percentages and just start eating the whole plant foods that you enjoy. If that ends up being around 15-20% fat no problem, but consciously calculating it all out will drive you crazy, regardless if you're able to keep the weight off long term. My question would be, do you want to count macros/calories long term? No way, right?! So, focus on whole plant foods and you will be fine.

## 9. How do you know if you're ovulating or just having a period?

So, if you're having a regular period, you're *most likely* ovulating. I say most likely because someone might actually have, what they think, is regular periods, but have a hard time ovulating and experience "anovulatory cycles." Many women will see they experience anovulatory cycles during their first few months of getting a period in their teens, when they're nearing menopause, while they're breastfeeding, and also right after they get off The Pill.

Basically what happens is when you do bleed you think you got your period, but could be a build up of blood in

the lining of your uterus or a sudden drop in estrogen. To know if you're really ovulating you can look out for certain signs: do you have stretchy, egg-white consistency cervical mucus? Has your basal body temperature increased? Has your sex drive increased? Are you have lower ab cramps (similar to period cramps) between your periods? These are certain signs to look for for regarding ovulation. If you feel like you might *not* be ovulating then you want to go back to square one and figure out what's going on. Have you followed all the tips I suggest regarding sleep, rest, food, stress, self-love? That is where I would start to make sure everything good to go.

Likewise, some girls will use "Ovulation Predictors," kind of like pregnancy tests, that you can buy at the drug store to see if and when you might be ovulating.

However, for most people who aren't ovulating or can't figure out if they are or not (especially if they're coming from a background of restriction), most of the time their issues are going back to their lifestyle - calorie intake, food choices, exercise, sleep, stress, self-love, etc. So you've gotta take a look at this first and foremost and then go from there!



10. How can I lose weight/get toned up/get muscle without losing my period and getting obsessed with exercise and cutting calories?

Follow everything I lay out in this book! It has all the info you need to eat the best, most nutritious, healthiest food for your body, the best way to exercise in a way that you genuinely enjoy, can be consistent with over the years and will help you be active and fit, and how to love yourself and learn more about your body as you continue this journey. That's what it's all about. Looking at yourself and your life apart from just weight loss all the time - once you focus on both MENTAL and PHYSICAL health then that's when everything changes. You've gotta have both to be successful in the long run. Don't get caught up in the people you see on social media, your friends or anyone else out there that is losing all this weight and being all crazy with their exercise routine. Chances are, if it's seriously unsustainable, then they aren't going to last very long. It's not about who can get "fit" and healthy the fastest, it's really about who can do it in the most sustainable, enjoyable way that will last LONG-TERM. Would you really want to do all kinds of crazy diets and exercises just to lose weight and look good for a short time, only to have a huge rebound in a few months? OR, would you rather put in the work to heal both your mind and body, learn what foods work best for your body and make you feel amazing, find a way to exercise that is



enjoyable, sustainable, and beneficial to your health and fitness in a way that you can stick to for the rest of your life, giving you **LONG-LASTING RESULTS**? I know which one I would choose! That's the question you have to ask yourself and look at it from a **LONG-TERM** perspective! Don't fall for the fads and the quick-fixes, they will always come back to bite you, I promise! :)

**11. How do I deal with orthorexic thoughts when I'm trying to treat a disease (like acne, digestive issues, etc.) with my diet?**

This can be a tricky one, but it is totally doable. First of all, you have to understand that Orthorexia isn't necessarily a food problem, but rather your personal psychological issue when it comes to certain foods. And that's the big thing about Orthorexia that I want you guys to understand, is that it's not a food problem, it's a mental problem.

And it's an *individual* mental problem. What you might consider "healthy vs. unhealthy" might be **COMPLETELY** different than what the next girl thinks. For one girl, she might be deathly afraid of carbs and her biggest fear in life is eating a banana, yet she'll eat all the nuts, seeds, and avocado (higher fat foods) in the world. But for the next girl, she might be deathly afraid of fats and practically live off bananas. So you can see there's a big difference here.

And at the end of the day, what you're going to have to do is work on your OWN personal Orthorexic tendencies. And only *you* know what these are and yes, they'll be different from what the next girl needs to work on. So that's where I advise starting with first:

Figure out what foods you're particularly scared of from the "healthy vs. unhealthy" perspective. That's what Orthorexia is all about. Now here's where things change a little bit. When it comes to healing a certain disease or health condition, then your perspective on certain foods and how those foods interact with your body will change. It's no longer about, "OMG, this food is going to make me fat!" But rather, "I'm consciously choosing not to partake in this food because I know that it will cause a certain reaction in my body that isn't good for this particular sickness or disease I have." And when you look at it from that perspective then things change.

For example, it's kind of like someone who suffers from seizures when they eat particular foods. So they have to be extremely careful to not eat peanuts, or shellfish, etc. Does that mean they have Orthorexia from peanuts and shellfish? No, it means they are consciously making the decision to avoid those foods because of how they will cause issues in their body in a negative way. Now, the biggest part about this is going to be up to you deciphering exactly where you draw the line. Because

anybody could just be like, “Yeah, I don’t eat XYZ because it’s going to give me ABC” and you can end up fooling yourself about the certain “condition” you’re trying to “heal.” This is all up to you to wade through and figure out the foods that you should exclude.

However, Orthorexia and various health conditions that require you to make specific food choices are two different things. What’s the difference? Your mind. That’s what matters. So, choose the foods that you know are going to make you feel your best, but realize that it’s just food. There’s not a lot of thought that needs to go into it. If you have Celiac, accept that and say, “Alright, I can’t have wheat/gluten, no big deal. I’ll choose the gluten-free options.” Don’t just sit there and obsess over it and let it over take your life. That’s when things go bad.

Understand that there are people all over the world who have to consciously avoid certain foods due to their certain health condition and that’s OK. It doesn’t mean they are Orthorexic. BUT, at the same time, it doesn’t mean they’re NOT Orthorexic. So, yes, there can be times when you have both a health condition where you need to stay away from certain foods and be Orthorexic about it, but again, remember, it’s **ALL ABOUT YOUR MINDSET**. And only **YOU** can determine that. So, I would begin changing your perspective on things and instead of looking at it from an Orthorexic “it’s gonna kill me” type

mindset, start saying, “I know this certain food isn’t going to benefit my health condition in any way, so it’s not even worth me thinking twice about. I’ll just take that food over there and have it instead. No problem at all.” That’s the difference.

However, at the end of the day, if you **KNOW** you have a certain health condition, yet you also think you have Orthorexia over the foods you can/cannot eat, but you choose to eat them anyway to “beat” your Orthorexia, I would caution you to be very careful with this kind of thinking because you have to put your health first, especially if it is a **SERIOUS** health issue. Remember, it’s all about your mindset and perspective you **PERSONALLY** have that needs fixing, not the food itself.

**12. If I am a long distance runner/endurance athlete, what type of diet/nutrition should I be eating to keep my period?**

**A HIGH CALORIE, HIGH CARBOHYDRATE DIET.** If you are an endurance athlete, you want to be sure you’re eating **PLENTY** of calories, especially from carbohydrates. The thing that a lot of girls run into is that they go out on their “health & fitness journey” and start up endurance sports to burn calories or lose weight, but then they start restricting their calories so their body isn’t getting the energy and nutrition it needs. Once you do get your

period back and you continue to run or do these types of sports, you need to be sure you're eating A LOT OF CALORIES. Again, I can't give you a specific number because everyone is different, but you definitely do NOT want to be restricting yourself. Eat a diet that is high in carbohydrates, has a good variety, and makes you feel energized, recover better, and keeps your period. If you find that you're skipping periods again, then you need to either back off exercise, increase your calories, or do both at the same time. Some great staples I would keep in your diet would be bananas, mangos, dried fruit, dates, rice, potatoes, pasta, bread, blackstrap molasses, quinoa, etc.

**13. Is it normal to be getting your period every 2 weeks the first few months after you've started your period after not having it for a while?**

Kind of, but then again, it all depends. This can be what a lot of girls deal with, but it's not actually considered "normal." Remember, your hormones have been practically non-existent for the last few months/years and now they're trying to get back on track again. At first, especially, they can be a little weird and all over the place. Shorter periods, lighter periods, longer periods, heavier periods, etc. This is just your body's way of balancing itself out. Keep going, keep doing what you're doing and give it some time! Don't rush it! Hormones are different than

other things in our bodies and life - they take a lot longer to get balanced and under control. It's not going to happen in a few days or even weeks. It can take months, so keep going! And if you feel concerned at ANY POINT you need to go see your gynecologist/doctor.

14. I got my period for a while, changed up my diet a little bit (I'm eating Vegan now), and now my period is getting a lighter and lighter each month. I'm eating enough calories, eating more fat, and I'm at a healthy weight, but why is this happening?

Remember, any major change in any area of your lifestyle can cause issues hormonally, specifically from a dietary perspective. If you decided to cut out animal products, either one of two things could be happening. Either a. you also simultaneously unconsciously lowered your calories (because animal products are more calorie dense than plant foods) and you're not getting as many calories as you need. Or b. your body is trying to regulate it's natural hormones since not having the constant influx of synthetic hormones coming from the animal products (they're pumped full of hormones and antibiotics and when those enter out systems they can wreak havoc on our hormonal system). So, either you're not eating as much as you think, your hormones are trying to balance since not having those animal products hormones coming in, or a little bit of both.

However, even though you changed your diet a little bit, I would still look into other areas of your life that could be a little off: are you stressed? sleeping enough? exercising too much? moved recently? go through a bad breakup/relationship? loving yourself? being social and not isolating yourself? All of these things play into hormonal health so be sure all your i's are dotted and t's are crossed!

## 15. How do you handle PCOS and not feel like birth control is your only answer?

I would handle PCOS as naturally as you can at first and definitely don't go running to the birth control pills right away. However, as always, I do advise that you go see more than just one doctor to get a correct diagnosis and see what you're array of options are. (That's assuming you *REALLY* do have PCOS and you weren't misdiagnosed like we talked about in my first book.) Sadly, too many girls are being misdiagnosed with PCOS when they *REALLY* *DON'T HAVE IT* and it's messing up their health and system even more (this happened to me and it wasn't a pretty picture). I actually have a whole YouTube video about this so I won't go much into it here, but if you've been diagnosed with PCOS, yet you're coming from a background of restriction, purging, disordered eating, underweight, over exercise, and you're having missing periods, then I would be leery of that diagnosis. However,



if you, in fact, do have PCOS, then changing many parts of your lifestyle, specifically your diet and exercise routine will help *immensely*. Adopting a low-fat, plant based, preferably starch-based or fruit-based vegan diet will seriously help your insulin levels, hormonal issues, and aid in weight loss (if needed). Centering your diet on whole plant foods like whole potatoes, brown rice, beans, whole grains, corn, tons of veggies or lots of fruit, you can seriously turn your issues around. Keep the fat on the lower end due to your insulin levels and let your body balance out over time. Likewise, from an exercise perspective, doing daily physical activity (the types of things you love, it can be anything!) will help improve your insulin levels, lose weight, and give you the energy and vigor for life you're looking for. I would be very cautious of running directly to a quick-fix/bandaid approach without giving your body a chance to naturally heal itself. Taking out the animal products, high fat food, lots of processed foods and beginning to move your body in a healthy way will do wonders for you! Again, look at your lifestyle, your diet, your exercise, and get more than one opinion, always!! (and most of the time, more than 2 opinions, if possible!)

**16. How do you handle low estrogen and not feel like birth control is your only answer?**



Do everything I talked about in my “Get Your Period Handbook!” Most find they can get their estrogen up to a healthy level by changing up their lifestyle as outlined in my GYP Handbook.

**17.** I was only successful at getting my period back when I cut out all exercise (except light walking). Now, whenever I do some sort of intense exercise my period disappears. Why?

Because it's **TOO MUCH** for your body to handle right now. Your hormones are very sensitive right now, especially right after you get your period back. And this is where a lot of girls go wrong (and what I warned against in my first book!!). You think that since you got your period back then you've got a go-ahead to jump right back into intense exercise again, but this is the **WORST** thing you can do! Getting your period just shows that your body is headed in the right direction, it doesn't mean it's a done deal. You have to keep loving it, giving it what it needs and working with it (which is what this book is all about, it's a life-long approach).

So, if you've recently increased your exercise and you're missing your period again then you have your answer. You've just done too much too soon. So you need to back off, let your body chill a little bit and ease into it. I know it can be frustrating but think about all your body

has been through. It's asking for some TLC right now and that's what you've gotta give it. Think about how frustrating it will be dealing with period issues your whole life just because you won't give your body a break! Let it chill, eat, rest, love yourself and be patient! And don't feel like you *have* to do some type of "intense" exercise, **YOU DON'T!!** Stop with the intense stuff, and go find something you **LOVE** to do, that is fun, enjoyable and **NOT** intense. I promise you your body will thank you :)

**18. Should you continue to take Calcium and Vitamin D supplements to protect any reduction in bone density that could have occurred during amenorrhea?**

First off, you want to be careful when supplementing with Calcium because too much can be a bad thing. I would first focus on eating Calcium-rich foods like bok choy, collard greens, broccoli, cabbage, kale, mustard greens, okra, black strap molasses, beans, and nuts and seeds. Focus on getting them from **REAL, WHOLE** foods first. Deciding whether or not to supplement with Calcium is your own personal decision. Likewise, when it comes to Vitamin D, I would begin with the source first instead of relying on supplementation all the time. Get outside in the sunlight as often as you can (don't burn!), but don't use sunscreen and let as much of your skin come in contact with the sun as possible. The more the better!

However, if you live in a cold/dark/non-sunny place, then supplementation is totally up to you!

### 19. Is bone loss, caused from amenorrhea, reversible?

YES! That's the awesome thing about recovery. When you start giving your body the energy it needs to repair your bones, tissues, hormones and cells it will do just that!

Moving forward, be sure you're eating good wholesome foods, you're eating enough calories, you're not burning yourself out, you're resting, loving yourself, not stressing, getting to bed early, and living a healthy lifestyle. Other things that can help is doing resistance training, walking, yoga with long holds with each pose, and rebounding on a little mini-trampoline. It takes time, but it can definitely happen (especially as you cut out the highly acidic animal products that leach calcium from the bones).

### 20. How do I know when I'm "weight restored?"

So many people get caught up in the idea of being weight restored that they focus too much on the number on the scale and not enough on their quality of life. What do I mean? Well, here's the thing: Focusing on a number on the scale is going to keep you from fully living your life and reaching your highest potential in life. Why? Because it will literally become the focus of your life. All you'll think about is that number and you'll equate that with being "healthy" and finally arrived. But that's not the case. The

truth of the matter is that your weight *doesn't matter at all* (especially when you're recovering from your past of *disordered eating*).

So, I don't like to look at as if you're trying to get "weight restored," but rather you need to focus on getting "life restored." You gotta focus on more things than just your weight. Because the truth is let's say that you do reach a "good, healthy weight," but you're still all messed up mentally around food, with your body image, your diet, and your exercise routine. Does being at that "healthy weight" really fix anything? No! Not at all! You might be "weight restored," but is the rest of your life restored? Are your thoughts around food fixed? Is your body image fixed? Are you still obsessed with calories, macros, and meal plans? Those are the things that matter, your weight does not matter. Take the focus off your weight and put it on the other things in your life that actually **DO** matter and actually **DO** determine how you're going to feel, function, and live years from now. That's what matters! Love yourself, love your life, and get out and have some fun, girl, that is what it's all about!!

21. My parents/friends/co-workers/etc. are giving me a hard time about the weight that I've gained while recovering from my disordered eating. How do I deal with this?

I'm not a big fan of just saying, "If they don't align with you 100% then cut them out of your life forever! You don't need them anyway!" Yes, I understand in certain toxic situations that might be the case, but I would really encourage you to go directly to the source and address these issues up front. You don't want to get in the habit of always avoiding or running away from things in your life. Instead, actually talk them out, confront them, and be confident in your thoughts and feelings.

If someone in your life is continually making comments to you that make you feel uncomfortable, don't look at that as something to fight about, but rather something to talk through. Let them know how you really feel (in a nice, respectful way - they'll always react better when you're not being rude to them, regardless if they were rude to you to begin with!) Let them know that you have gone through so much physically and mentally and you're finally at a place of true happiness, regardless of what you look like or weigh. Tell them that the place you came from (depression, isolation, disordered eating, obsessive thoughts about food and your body, etc.) was the worst place you've ever been in your life and yes, though you

might have been “thinner;” that didn’t necessarily mean that you were happier or healthier (especially *without* a period. But now, things are different. You’ve healed your body, your hormones are back on track, and you want to move on from that point in your life and just start living for today and for all the things that life has to offer. You want to be done with the thoughts that kept you back for so long and you want their encouragement and support in doing so.

The thing is when it comes to other people, a lot of the time there’s a big issue with miscommunication. And we automatically assume that they know our thoughts and feelings. But the truth is, **THEY DONT!** And they won’t ever know unless you literally sit down and tell them. So I would really get in the habit of sharing your feelings with other in a nice, respectful way. Even if it turns into a 2 hour conversation, that’s fine. Don’t just continue to go through life listening to their comments and then either brushing it off, or only responding with a little one-liner comment that you think will get your point across to them, because it won’t. You have to be thorough in your explanation and get everything off your chest. Likewise, giving them some sort of task or responsibility will do wonders for the whole situation. Instead of just telling them to “Stop talking about it,” give them a task like checking in on you every few weeks to see how you’re doing, praying for you, etc. This lets them be a little more

connected to the situation and they're actually helping you and not feel like they're leaving you all alone to figure it out by yourself.

## 22. What is considered the “perfect menstrual cycle?”

There really is no “perfect menstrual cycle” for all women, but rather what is perfect for YOU, individually. Some women will have lighter periods and others heavier. Some women will experience some cramping, others not so much. Some periods will last for 3 days and other up to a week and the whole cycle tends to range anywhere from 21-35 days in length, with most women seeing they get a period around every 28 days.

However, I say all of this to be taken with a grain of salt because there are certain things you want to be on the look out for and not just write off as “well, this is *my* perfect period.” Things like continually spotting or bleeding between periods, extremely heavy flow, horrible debilitating cramps, skipped periods, periods every two weeks, etc. are things that aren't considered “normal” for any woman at all. This is when you want to take a look back at my “Get Your Period Handbook” and work through those things to figure out where things have gone wrong. Likewise, working with your local gynecologist and even getting some blood tests run would be a good idea, too, if you experience any of these



abnormal things. But all in all, there is not one-size-fits-all period. It will be a little bit different from girl to girl. If you are experiencing some really scary stuff, DO NOT be afraid or wait to go to the doctor/ER just because you think, “oh, this might just be normal or a fluke thing...” It’s better to be safe than sorry!

### 23. Should I use pads, tampons, or what during my period?

I am not a fan of tampons AT ALL for numerous reasons. First, they are laden with tons of chemicals and substances that when inserted into your body can leach into your blood stream and cause all types of issues (unless they are 100% organic tampons made from just cotton). Pads can be helpful, but they are a little annoying and make you feel like you’re wearing a big diaper all the time. However, if you’re a fan of wearing pads, I would look into getting some organic pads that don’t have all the chemicals and additives in them, too.

Finally, my favorite is the “period cup.” I know that sounds gross, but it’s like a small device that fits inside of you very comfortably, you don’t even feel it, it catches the blood and then you can remove and pour it out. It is BPA-free and it’s something you can use over and over and over again. There’s no trash or waste or having to buy more and more pads and tampons. It’s easy to travel



with and works just like a tampon in the sense of using it when you're active, swimming, etc., so that's what I would get! Basically, the less invasive, the less chemicals, the less waste, and the less additives something has the better!

## 24. What is "Toxic Shock Syndrome?"

Toxic Shock Syndrome, or TSS, is a bacterial toxin that can occur, for our purposes, when you wear tampons (especially the "super absorbency" tampons on your "light" days - basically, on your light days, you're supposed to be using "light tampons," or none at all, but many girls still use the "super absorbency" kind even on their light days). When your body tries to fight the bacteria, if your immune system is compromised at all, then TSS can happen. If you just have to wear a tampon (though I really would find a better alternative), you want to be sure you always choose the lowest absorbency possible, change it every few hours (don't go like 8 hours wearing the same tampon), don't wear tampons when you're not on your period, and really, just **STOP USING TAMPONS** altogether! Why even chance it? Some of the symptoms include muscle aches, rashes, bloodshot eyes, high fever, vomiting, diarrhea, dizziness, fainting, and even death. So, it's definitely not something you want to play around with! This is why I really encourage you to get away from tampons altogether, invest in a good period/menstrual cup (you can order these online or get them from health

food stores), and save a ton of money and health issues in the long run!

**25. Is it normal for me to have waves of extreme fatigue, even months after getting my period back?**

Yes. Remember, just like we talked about in the “Get Your Period Handbook,” your body is going to take a little while to balance out, and that is **OKAY!** You might find that you go through extreme fatigue at the very beginning of finally healing your body and then it goes away for a little while and then comes back. That’s totally normal and it’s just your body saying, “Hey, I need to do a little bit more repairs before we move forward.”

Likewise, you have to take into account where you currently are and what your current health status, activity level, and caloric intake is. Many girls go through a sort of “semi-recovery” and only partially let their body heal then they jump right back to their old bad tendencies of restriction, overexercise, purging, pills, etc. and they have to go through it all again. Your body wants *constant* respect, care, and love. It’s not one of those things where you just let your body heal then go right back to what you were doing before hand and not expect any ill side effects. You live and you learn, right?

So, if you're going through extreme fatigue even a few months later, I would first take an inventory of what you're doing in your life - have you started restricting calories again? Doing too much exercise? Or even a combination of both? Are you sleeping enough? How are your stress levels? That's where I would start investigating. And if nothing has changed with your life then ride it out, your body is asking for that down time and rest for a reason, so listen to it and it give it what it wants!

26. I have been experiencing all types of “period symptoms” (moodiness, cramps, hot flashes, night sweats, discharge, bloating, backache, acne, etc.) but I’m not actually bleeding. Am I still getting my period?

For you to *really* get a period, the lining of your uterus must shed (i.e. bleeding). However, don't lose heart! What's basically happening is your **HORMONES ARE MOVING** and that is a *great thing*. For a lot of girls they find they go through a time of hormonal fluctuations and their body does some weird stuff, just as if you were about to get your period. Regardless if you get a period or not, the key is to **KEEP GOING**. Keep doing what you've been doing thus far and your period will come! And remember, any hormonal movement is better than **NONE** at all, so **KEEP GOING** and give it time, your body will thank you soon, I promise!! :)

27. I occasionally experience times of “extreme hunger” like I did when I first started my recovery. Is that normal?

Yes, just like the extreme fatigue you might encounter a few months later, extreme hunger can be the same way. Again, it’s your body trying to balance out. However, just like I said with the extreme fatigue question, you want to be sure that it’s not something else going on. Have you been eating enough? Letting your body rest enough? Are you nearing your period (we get wayyyy hungrier before our periods)? These are all things to take into account. Regardless, don’t fight it. You need to eat till satisfied and fill up on good wholesome foods that give you the energy, nutrition, vitamins, and carbohydrates that your body is craving.

28. But I didn’t restrict/overexercise for that long. Why did it take so long for me to recover and get my period back?

It doesn’t matter how long you restricted/overexercised for. It could’ve been for a few days or weeks or months but the LONGER that you do that, the more of a back log of calories your body has to catch up on to create an energy balance within your body. Let’s say you went on a 1500 cal/day diet and you started exercising more (yet let’s assume that it takes around 2500 cal/day for you to

be healthy, maintain your weight, etc.) And let's say you did this diet for a few months until you finally reached the point of just binging out on all kinds of junk. Think of all those calories that your body was missing (and burning!) when you were on that diet and exercise plan. Your body desperately needed those calories to go towards your every day activities and keep you alive, but you were restricting them and burning them off, putting your body in a huge calorie deficit. At some point, your body says, "I NEED MORE ENERGY/CALORIES, SO LET'S EATTTT!!" And then you end up eating everything in the kitchen. Your body is simply just trying to even out the energy balance again because all those calories it missed out on in the past both from caloric restriction and exercising too much are all back-logged and need to be made up for (not to mention all the repairs that your body needs to do in your body with your cells, hormones, bones, hair, skin, nails, etc.) It's making up for all the calories lost/restricted during your dieting phase. So it's gotta get them in now! And no amount of "will power" or "discipline" will stop your body from doing so. This is when you start feeling down on yourself and saying, "Oh gah, I used to have so much discipline and will power when I started and now I've just fallen off the wagon..." Which yes, the "will power" and "discipline" were much easier at the beginning because your body hadn't gone through a long time of restriction or burning too many calories. BUT, at some point, your body will

OVER-RIDE that “will power” and “discipline” and cause you to EAT because it is not a matter of SURVIVAL, a matter of life and death (from your body’s point of view).

Now, it is all going to depend on just HOW LONG you’ve been dieting, overexercising, restricting, using pills/teas/etc. for your body to balance out. Obviously, the shorter amount of time you restricted/overexercised/purged/used diet pills/abused laxatives/etc., the quicker your body can balance out. The longer you did it, the longer it will take. And again, as always, it is up to YOUR BODY based off what it went through, your age, your height, your weight, your gender, your activity level, all of that. The best thing you can do is not worry with all the numbers and time, but rather feed your body when it’s hungry, give it good food that you enjoy eating, and live your life. The time frame is going to be different for everyone so the key is to just focus on you, eat good healthy foods, be happy with your life, get out and have some fun, and let your body heal. And don’t forget, that it’s NOT just about the diet or exercise that you were doing. It could’ve been the amount of physical or psychological stress you were under, a toxic relationship you were in, moving to a different school/state, a traumatic event that happened in your life, your sleep patterns, etc. so work at getting everything back in balance. That’s what matters in the end!

## 29. Will “Seed Cycling” help me keep my period long term?

First off, let's talk about what “Seed Cycling” is for all the newbies. Seed Cycling is a nutritional tool that many women will use to help balance their hormones by eating certain different seeds throughout the duration of their cycle. It is a non-invasive, natural approach to getting your hormones balanced, simply through food and eating certain seeds that work with certain times during your cycle. This has a close connection to the idea of the moon and your cycle (yes, they are related!). In a perfect world, you would ovulate on the full moon (which would be day 14 of your cycle) and menstruate on the new moon (day 1 of your cycle). Based off of this moon schedule and your period, you would eat certain seeds depending on which part of your cycle you're in.

So, for days 1-14 of your cycle, you would eat 1 tbsp each of raw pumpkin seeds and raw flax seeds. For days 25-28, you would eat 1 tbsp each of raw sunflower seeds and raw sesame seeds. Ideally, you're supposed to grind these seeds up (using a coffee grinder would be great), and eat them every day. The reason for these different types of seeds at these different parts of your cycle is because each of these seeds aids in helping balance out the phases of your cycle.



The flax seeds and pumpkin seeds are said to contain lignans, which help your body detox extra estrogens that can mess up your hormones during this first phase of your cycle. Likewise, the sesame and sunflower seeds contain a lot of zinc and selenium which help progesterone production for the second half of your cycle. Many women have reported having great results doing this, but it does normally take a while for your hormones to start balancing out (the time length can be different for everyone). It can take around 3-4 months for your body to get in sync with this, so be patient if you do this.

My thoughts on this is that i honestly don't think it could hurt! Give it a try! If anything, you're eating lots of good, healthy fats and that's going to help you no matter what when getting your period back. Likewise, even if it *doesn't* actually work, it still could work on the level of being like a placebo effect, so it's worth trying just because of that! So, I say, give it a try!

A few disclaimers is that you want to eat the seeds you're supposed to be eating during each phase of your cycle only within that phase of the cycle. So, for example, if you're between days 1-14, don't be snacking on sunflower or sesame seeds, save those for days 15-28. By mixing them in when they should be held for the other cycle can throw the rhythms of your hormones off a little. Likewise, if you're cycle becomes irregular and you don't know



when to start (like, you don't know when you're "day 1" is), then start the seed cycling on either the full moon or the new moon (you can just do an internet search of what moon phase is today and see when the next full moon or new moon is or go to [http://www.moongiant.com/phase/ today/](http://www.moongiant.com/phase/today/)). Once you find the next full moon or new moon coming up, then you'll start eating the seeds that coincide with that moon phase for the next 14 days. After that, you'll switch over to the other seeds for the following 14 days. Then you'll switch back and forth and so on in a cyclical fashion, just like your cycle, and just like the moon. Obviously this may sound a little complicated, but it's really not that difficult, it just takes some extra planning on your part!

So, what does the moon have to do with menstrual cycles? Well, there have been long-standing connections, studies, and observances of how the moon cycles and our menstrual cycles are closely related. The idea of this before the invention of light bulbs, cell phones, lamps, and TV's, we were sleeping in dark rooms (or even outside), with some of the moonlight shining in. The moonlight, which obviously changes daily based on the moon's cycle, affects our menstrual cycle. This is why it's so important that you lower/dim the lights at night, get off your cell phone or iPad, turn off the TV and get to bed early, because your menstrual cycle is effected by light, especially at night.

One reason why so many women and girls are having issues with their menstrual cycle is because their natural body rhythms and routines have been disturbed by modern conveniences. We stay up too late, we watch TV, surf the web, get in a stressful conversation right before bed, scroll social media at night, we work the graveyard shift, and sleep with the TV on or have our neighbors lights shining in our windows at night. Though your eyes may be closed or you may be asleep, the connection of the light, your body's exposure to the light, your body's production of Melatonin at night and your sleep cycle is affecting your menstrual cycle. Some claim that there is no connection between the two, but then there's many that claim there is a very strong connection.

Regardless, my biggest tips regarding this is to play it safe and turn off the lights! No more late night social media scrolling, watching TV, staying out all night, and sleeping with the TV on. Instead, sleep in dark room as much as possible, especially if there are artificial lights shining in your windows. Close the blinds, cover up any lights you can see even with the lights off, and even wear a sleep mask to make it even darker. If you can sleep in the natural moonlight that would be awesome, but if not, then try to keep it dark and keep the TV and phones off (also, turn your phone on "Airplane Mode" and/or move it to another room across your house)! These artificial light exposure can throw off your Melatonin, Cortisol,

and other hormones that work in tandem with your reproductive hormones - remember they all work together!

So, to come full-circle and answer the question at hand, there is no guarantee that Seed Cycling is going to prevent you from never missing a period for the rest of your life. Why? Because if you let other things in your life get off track (stress, exercise, diet, sleep, etc). then no amount of seed cycling can fix that. It's a great tool to implement, but just like using herbs and other botanical pills for hormonal balance, you've got to remember that it's not a quick-fix type of thing, it's a whole lifestyle change! But definitely give it a go and see how it works, the extra healthy fats from the seeds would be great for you regardless! :)

**30. Is it ok if I exercise on an empty stomach first thing in the morning?**

**NO! I NEVER, EVER EVER** advise exercising on an empty stomach (especially for high intensity exercises, endurance training, or exercises that are long duration).

First off, your body has been fasting overnight and to go throw it right into some workout routine *without* any food is literally like torture for your body. Literally, your Cortisol hormones can easily spike, causing your body to feel stressed, worn out, and actually hold onto fat if you're not careful. I always advise girls to eat at least a little

something before they exercise (some fruit, some toast, etc.)

Likewise, you *definitely* don't want to be taking any type of pre-workout supplements that contain caffeine in them, because then your cortisol will *really* sky-rocket. If you plan on exercising in the morning just grab yourself a banana, drink some water and then head out. Trust me, your body AND HORMONES will thank you.

And regarding all the new fad “fasted cardio” routines that people do to “burn fat,” just remember there are PLENTY of healthy, active, fit, and lean people out there NOT doing fasted cardio and they still have amazing results (especially hormonally), so don't get caught up in all that. Eat a little snack and then head out. Don't put your hormones and health at risk just to *\*think\** you're going to burn a little extra fat. Even if you were, is it really worth jeopardizing your period again? I don't think so :)

### 31. What about Intermittent Fasting to help with my eating and weight loss efforts?

Intermittent Fasting has definitely caught on in the main stream in the last few years and promises to have awesome “results.” However, most of these results are purely visual and aesthetic, yet they do not take into account the actual things that are going on inside of your body with your hormones, especially for women. For a lot of women (again, NOT all), when we go for too long

without eating, our hypothalamus and pituitary gland are suppressed from working correctly. They get stressed out and don't signal to our ovaries that they need to work properly (i.e. ovulation and menstruation). And as we'll see below, this isn't for EVERY.SINGLE.WOMAN, we're all different, but let's talk about why it happens to a lot of women when they try to do IF:

A huge part of this is the idea of "Cognitive Dietary Restraint." I have a whole YouTube video on this topic that you can check out, but for simplicity sake, women with "high" CDR are more likely to have disrupted periods or loss of periods than those with "low" CDR. What is CDR? Basically, it's the measure of how often and intensely you consciously restrain yourself from food.

For example, let's say that you and your twin both attend a business meeting. As soon as you walk in, you both notice there's a big plate of freshly-baked cookies sitting in the middle of the conference table. Let's say your twin's name is Susie. Now, when Susie sees the cookies, she thinks, "Oh yum, cookies. I'll take one, please. Thanks! Mmm.. these are so good. Ok, so what's the meeting about today?" And she basically is fully engaged in the entire meeting, ate her cookie, enjoyed it, and went on about the day, not really giving any thought to it. You, on the other hand, walk in, see the cookies, and kinda freak out a little bit. "They aren't on my diet. They have "too much sugar and/or fat." But they look so good. Maybe just

one won't hurt. But no, I just started my diet over today. But maybe just a bite. I wonder how many calories are in one... What if I ate one now then I could skip lunch and make up for it.... I did have small breakfast today so it won't hurt. But, they're unhealthy. OH GAH!!!” Basically this back and forth internal thinking goes on pretty much during the whole meeting, you're not even paying attention to what's going on and all you can think about is the cookies. Finally, you give in, grab a cookie, eat it and then beat yourself up even more over it. The difference between you and your twin, Susie, is that Susie has what's called a “low cognitive dietary restraint,” meaning she doesn't obsessively restrain yourself from certain foods. If she wants it, she eats it. If she doesn't, she doesn't. No big deal. But you would be considered to have a “high cognitive dietary restraint.” You are thinking A LOT about those cookies and obsessively trying to restrain yourself from them (even though you ended up eating one). The scary thing about this is that there have actually been studies and research done on this showing that women with high CDR actually have more hormonal disruptions, missed periods, all leading to low bone density (crazy, right? But yes, it's true!)

But, how does this connect to Intermittent Fasting? Well, think about it. If you're consciously, consistently, obsessively KEEPING yourself from eating food, especially when you're actually hungry, this is going to cause the

same issues. This is why so many girls and women have hormonal issues when doing Intermittent Fasting, even with calories are sufficient. Remember, there's more that goes into it than just your caloric consumption, exercise, amount of fat you eat, etc. A lot of it has to do with your MIND and how you think. You've got to remember that.

So, I highly suggest against consciously, obsessively, and consistently making yourself "fast." There's plenty of people out there NOT doing Intermittent Fasting and they are at a perfectly healthy weight.

Now, I want to make a disclaimer that many women *can* do IF and have no ill side effects. Likewise, many of us might just naturally not start eating till later in the day or stop earlier in the night and not give much thought to it. That is something different. Remember, it's not so much about when you eat, but the THOUGHTS that go behind that.

Maybe you know someone in your own life, your sister, for example, who wakes up and \*naturally\* doesn't start eating until around 11am. She literally puts ZERO thought into it. She's not consciously restricting herself from food, she's just literally not interested in it at that point in the day. She starts eating when she's actually hungry. Likewise, let's say you guys have dinner that night around 7pm and afterwards she's done, she doesn't eat anything else before bed. She just eats dinner, watches some TV, talks



on the phone, and then goes to sleep. No big deal. So, technically, did she do Intermittent Fasting? Yes, she did. She literally fasted up until 11am and then stopped eating that day at 7pm. But was she consciously, obsessively, manipulatively thinking about it, looking at her watch, restricting herself, etc. during those times? No, it literally wasn't even an issue for her.

But, let's say on the other hand that you see her doing it and you read all about IF and you say to yourself, "Ok, I can only eat x amount of hours a day and I have to fast for the rest of the time..." but when you do it it seriously drives you crazy, you're hungry, you're thinking of food all the time, you're obsessed with it all and it really messes with your head. But you did the same thing your sister did, right? Yes, you did, but what's the difference? YOUR MINDSET.

So, this is why I say some women can do it and they feel fine, get their period and it's no big deal for them. Whereas for others, they can't and it really messes with them body mentally and physically. What you have to figure out is where you fall on this spectrum and go from there.

Just like so many other things we've talked about, IF is just an objective thing. It doesn't become dangerous until someone comes to it with their subjective approach and uses it in a way that is harmful to them. So that's all you



have to decide and figure out about yourself. It's all individual and it's completely up to you to figure out. And at the end of the day, if IF works for your friend or someone you see on Instagram then that's great for them! It just doesn't work for you and that's ok. Don't feel like you have to do it just to do what they're doing, focus on you and what YOUR body likes and thrive off of.

32. How can I use tracking my Basal Body Temperature for predicting my period and ovulation? And should I even worry with doing this, is it really *that* important?

A lot of girls find that tracking their Basal Body Temperature, or BBT, can be helpful in predicting their period, ovulation, and help explain some hormonal symptoms they might be experiencing. So, let's first talk about how you can do this and then we'll get into if you should even worry about it.

Basically, how this works is that you will have a digital thermometer and place it right next to your bed before you go to sleep at night. As soon as you wake up, you'll take your temperature orally and write it down so you can track it. You want to do this before drinking any water, getting out of bed, using the restroom, eating any food, etc. You literally just wake up, roll over, and take your temp. As the days go by, you'll be able to learn a lot about two things with your body: 1. your metabolism 2. your menstrual cycle. Regarding your metabolism, you

want to have your temps be in the 97's to 98's, depending on which part of your cycle you're currently in (we'll talk about this more below). Anything below that, would indicate that your metabolism is running subpar and you want to start eating some more food, eat more "warming foods" (cooked foods, root vegetable, grains, a little more sodium/salt, back off the water if you're just guzzling it down (literally, forcing it down), and let your body get some rest). These things can help warm up your body and get your temps up.

Now, this isn't going to necessarily happen over night, it can take some time, so be patient! (literally, like weeks and months) When it comes to your cycle though, you can begin to see how your temperatures will fluctuate depending on where you currently are in your cycle. So, let's say you're getting a normal 28-35 day cycle. Your cycle is broken down into 3 parts: pre-ovulatory (when you're not really fertile), the ovulatory (when you're most fertile), and the post-ovulatory (when you're not really fertile again). So, as you can see, the most fertile time of your cycle is during ovulation. That's not to say you *can't* get pregnant during the other phases, but it's not as likely (be careful though! Especially if a baby isn't really in your plans right now!) Depending on which phase you're in, your temperature will be different. Before you ovulate (in the pre-ovulatory phase), you'll find your temperatures are around the low 97's to 97.5. Right before you

ovulate, you'll see your temperature drop (quite drastically) and then do a big jump, up into the 98's. It will stay in the 98's until you either get your period or find out that you're pregnant. If you don't get pregnant and have your period, then you'll see your temps start to follow the same pattern again the next month.

A lot of women find this helpful because it gives them an indication of ovulation (especially if they're trying to get pregnant), helps explain some of their hormonal symptoms before they get their period, and helps them plan their life around their period, etc. A few things that can disrupt or alter the reading of your BBT is not getting enough sleep the night before, drinking alcohol the night before, using a heating pad or electric blanket to warm your body externally, you have a fever from being sick, taking your temperature at a way different time than usual (you want to try to keep it around the same time every day, not like 6am one day and the 10am the next type of thing, try to keep it consistent), or you have underlying thyroid conditions.

Now, let's talk about whether you even need to worry with taking your BBT and charting it every day. Again, every girl and woman is going to be different, but here's my biggest tip with this: if you ever get to a point to where it is seriously stressing you out to do this, then you need to stop. How could this get stressful? Well, if you have an OCD-type personality and want to have

everything perfect all the time, this could be one of those trigger things for you, especially if your periods are already irregular. If you're not getting the readings that you like you can get frustrated and upset, which can lead to everything being extremely stressful. Same goes for if you're trying to get pregnant. At that point, everything starts to focus on your cycle, your temperature, when you're ovulating, etc. and this can be very stressful for couples. Finally, you can just end up placing too much emphasis on your body, food, etc. and all that gets really stressful, too. However, I encourage you to try it out (if you want to, you certainly don't have to do this at all), and see how it goes. But if at any point it starts stressing you out, then stop. Remember, the less stress in your life, the better!

### 33. Should I be concerned if I skip a cycle?

Just starting out (the first few months of getting your period back), skipping your cycle can be very normal. Your hormones are simply just trying to get worked out and readjusted and it can sometimes take an extra few weeks to do so. However, let's say that you've had a normal period for months and months now and then you skip one. I wouldn't say you'd need to be "concerned," but rather take an inventory of what all is going on with your life and see what things may be off. Are you sleeping enough? Are you stressed in a new way? Did something life-changing happen recently (traveling, moving, death,

divorce, new school, new job, etc.)? Are you eating enough? Are you exercising too much? Are you resting and recovering from workouts enough? Are you on a new medication? Are you having relationship issues? All of these things can effect your cycle so you should check into those, fix them, and see how it goes. Usually by doing that you'll find the problem and once it's resolved you'll be good to go!

### 34. Should I be concerned if my periods are super heavy and painful?

Yes. If you're periods are literally unbearable, *extremely* heavy, and literally MISERABLE, then you definitely need to go see your gynecologist. Extremely heavy and painful periods are NOT normal (although a lot of doctors and pharmaceutical companies will try to convince us that they are and we'll end up just taking a pill to "fix it," but please do yourself a favor and realize these types of fixes are just bandaids trying to cover up a big problem. You need to get to the root cause of *why* you have such heavy, painful periods, because there IS a reason. One thing you can do that will help A LOT is to cut out the dairy, eggs, meat, and processed junk food from your diet. By taking out the animal products in your diet, most women see that their cycles gets a lot better extremely quickly. If you do that and you still have heavy, really BAD periods then I would definitely go get some tests run, get an ultrasound and see if there's anything more serious going on.

However, remember, a lot of it has to do with your diet and lifestyle so take good care of yourself and you'll see, over a few months time, your cycle gets easier for you to deal with.

### 35. Should I be concerned if I'm always spotting between periods?

Yes. If you're *always* spotting between periods, then you should go get checked out to see what's going on. If this has only happened once or twice then that is left up to your discretion, but spotting between periods isn't normal either, so go get it check if you're concerned.

### 36. When is it safe to start trying to lose weight again?

I would first take a look at the way this question is asked because it is very telling about the certain motivations behind it. Remember, the overall goal in life is *not to lose weight*. The goal is to be **HEALTHY**. If you're only concerned with weight loss, then you'll do just about anything, any unhealthy tactic, to get there. Right? Just think about your past and all the crazy things you've put your body thru just to "lose weight." So, instead, you need to be focusing on **HEALTH**, from **ALL DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES**.

Too many of us think that health is just about what we weigh or look like. But hopefully by now you know that to be only a half-truth. Sure, you can be eating super

healthy food and be at what you consider to be a “healthy” weight, but how healthy are your hormones? How healthy is your mentality around food? How healthy is your relationship with foods, life, and just living every day? Those things count as health, too. So, we have to tackle them all together. We can’t just focus on the “healthy weight,” and neglect the healthy mentality of food, just like we can’t just focus on the healthy mentality of food and neglect the healthy weight.

But, here’s the problem: we often don’t address these in the correct order. We get it backwards. We go for the weight and looks aspect first and put the way we think about food and our body image on the back-burner. Why? Because we all want to LOOK good on the outside to others, we don’t think it really matters how we think on the inside, because nobody sees that, right? BUT, if you neglect this for too long, you’re going to end up having issues with the your mental state AND your physical state before too long, so you better do it right the first time.

So, we need to focus on our MENTAL health first and *then* worry about the physical side of things. Why? Because once we get the mental thing under control, the physical thing will happen almost EFFORTLESSLY. Once you get your mind right with food, you see that junk food tastes good and isn’t going to necessarily kill you right then and there, you get past your fear foods, you start



eating foods you actually enjoy and you start to find the foods that make you feel good, and are healthy for you, over time you begin to start eating more nutrient-dense, satiating, vitamin-rich foods and your weight begins to take care of itself. That's what we talked about in the beginning of this book about starting to incorporate more WHOLE foods into your diet. Once you've gone through the phase of eating all the foods you've been scared of for so long and you start craving and desiring more wholesome foods, your weight will naturally take care of itself.

So, you want to be very careful with this whole, "I'm ready to lose weight again!" mentality because if you're not careful you can end up right where you began. This is when those "boundaries" we talked about come into place. You want to lose weight, sure, and yes it's healthy, but, you want to do it in the RIGHT way and enjoy the process this go-round. Likewise, remember, your "perfect weight" is up to your body, not 100% up to what you think it is.

Finally, the last note I want to make on this is that for a lot of you, depending on your age, if you're younger (in middle school, high school, and for some, even college) and you went through your disordered eating or overexercise phase during these times, your body most likely hasn't had the chance to actually develop. So you will see that you naturally gain a little weight as you grow



into a young adult. **THIS IS NORMAL AND HEALTHY.** Don't expect to look like or weigh what you did when you were 12 years old. You're going to grow up, fill out, build more bone mass, get taller, grow breasts, grow muscles, etc. This is a part of growing into an adult. So, if this is you and you keep thinking, "Ok, when I was 13 years old I weighed 100 pounds, so now I'm 20 and I've recovered and I weigh 140 pounds, so I want to 'lose the weight' and get back to 100 pounds!" **NO.** You're not 13 anymore, you're 20 now. Be careful with this thinking and be **REALISTIC**. Let your body heal, stop focusing on your weight so much, and just **LIVE YOUR LIFE!** There's so much more to life than your weight. And oh yeah, throw your scale away! It's pointless!! Focus on how you feel, not what you weigh.

### **37. How can incorporate cardio back into my exercise routine without losing my period?**

Slowly. As we talked about before, your body might still consider that as a stressor so you have to take it slow. Likewise, if you are jumping right back into exercising like you were before you stopped, then that could definitely be the problem. Let's say that you were used to running 5 miles every few days before you decided to take a break from exercising. Now, after a few months, you've stopped exercising so much, got your period back and now you're ready to get back into exercising again. So, you say to

yourself, “Well, the last time I really ran was 5 miles every few days, so I’ll pick back up there.”

This is the **WRONG** thing to do. You need to **SLOWLY, SLOWLY, SLOWLY** build up.

And here’s the thing: you might not be able to build up to 5 miles again (**UNLESS YOU’RE FUELING YOUR BODY ENOUGH TO STILL GET A PERIOD**). If you find that when you start doing cardio again you lose your period there’s a few reasons why: 1. you’re not eating enough to fuel those workouts 2. you’re doing too much too soon 3. you’re not recovering/resting enough 4. it’s too soon to start doing this type of cardio again 5. the stress of that particular exercise could be too much for your body to handle. If that’s the case, I would consider looking into new forms of exercise where you can still be active, but not lose your period in the meantime.

Finally, if you keep going back to an exercise that is mentally very hard on you (meaning you associate that exercise with negative thoughts from your past), you want to either work through that and then continue on, or give it some time, find a new exercise, and potentially return to that original exercise as time goes on, if you even decide to go back to it at all. What I mean is that if you ran for so long and had a certain body type that is your “goal” so-to-speak, you decided to fix your hormones, you got your period back, and now you think

you can go back to the way you looked and exercised the way before and NOT lose your period, well that's probably not going to be the case. Remember, your mind is very powerful in this. You have to be in a good place mentally for things to work right, as well.

### 38. What is a good macronutrient ratio for weight loss?

Oh yes, the question everyone wants to know the answer to! “What’s the best macronutrient ratio, the best amount of calories, how many calories should I burn every day, etc. for weight loss?” Aren’t all of these the types of questions everyone is desperately searching for the answers for? Some fitness/diet gurus claim you need tons of fat and protein in your diet with very little carbs, others say you need tons of carbs with very little fats and protein, some say you need an equal balance. But here’s the thing: there is no “perfect” macronutrient ratio for weight loss. You can technically lose weight eating zero carbs, eating zero fat, or living off Twinkies (yes, this is true! A professor actually did an experiment and proved you could lose weight eating only junk food.)

But here’s the thing: yes, you might be able to lose weight eating no carbs, or eating extremely low fat, or eating 100% junk food, but there’s two very important questions you need to keep in mind: 1. How are you going to feel eating xyz way? and 2. How *sustainable* is that way of eating for you?

Let's just say for the sake of the argument that I could tell you the PERFECT macronutrient ratio for weight loss. However, the break down of those macros didn't really make you feel physically good (though yes, you lost some weight), but you didn't actually enjoy the food that you were eating, you were always craving something different. But, hey, you lost weight, right?! Yay you, right?! Maybe at first, yeah you're excited because of the weight loss, but then when you see just how unenjoyable and unsustainable it was, what is most likely going to happen? You're probably going to fall off and end up binging or something, right? Yep, that's how it always happens.

Regardless of how much weight you lost or how many pant sizes you lost, if you felt horrible, hated the foods you were eating, always wanted something different, and were just following the macro ratio JUST for weight loss, then you're going to be in for a long road.

The goal for you is to find a way that you find ENJOYABLE, sustainable, and that fits YOUR specific needs. It makes no sense at all for me to give you a cookie-cutter breakdown of macros to follow if you're going to be miserable doing it. That is why "the best diet to keep your period" is going to be completely individual and up to YOU to figure out for yourself. Some people are going to want to eat more, or less, fat than others. Same goes with protein and carbs. That's just the way it is.

But I can help you out with a few suggestions that might help you figure out exactly what **YOU** need to do. Like we talked about before, aim to choose the majority of your calories and foods from whole plant foods. Not only do these foods taste good, they super healthy for you, but they are filled with fiber, water, and nutrients, all things you're going to need to *feel* and *look* your best. Likewise, I would just caution you to be careful about totally neglecting one of the macronutrients (especially if you're not feeling well, you're having ill side effects, you're craving it, or you're deathly afraid of it). All of these things point to a deeper issue going on that needs to be addressed (and most of the time that is fixed and addressed by just eating more of that macro that you've excluded for whatever reason).

So, to wrap this question up: there is no one, perfect, cookie-cutter macro nutrient breakdown that will give you weight loss. I really encourage you to stop worrying so much about macros, calories, grams of this and that and to just focus on the foods that make you feel your best, give you the most energy, you actually enjoy eating and they are **YOUR** favorite foods (not some other girl's that you see on Instagram and YouTube or in a magazine.) Remember, we can spend so much time watching and analyzing what everyone else is doing that we forget to focus and care for our own needs, desires, and tastes.

Quit looking for the holy grail of macros and just eat good, wholesome foods that you enjoy!

39. So you're telling me I can just eat the foods that I want and still lose weight?

No, I'm saying that if you focus your diet around whole plant foods then your body will reach a weight that it is comfortable staying at naturally. If you're eating a bunch of junk food because "you like it" and you're wondering why you haven't lost any weight, then you might want to reassess what it is you're eating. How many fruits and veggies are you eating? Starches? Beans and legumes? Nuts and seeds? Etc.? Are you stuffing yourself just for the sake of stuffing yourself? Are you eating till you're satisfied? Are you trying to hit a certain calorie level? Are you binging on junk? Do you even NEED to lose weight, or are you at a great weight for your height, age and gender?

Most of the girls I work with who are desperately wanting to lose weight **DON'T NEED TO LOSE WEIGHT!** Our culture is **OBSESSED** with weight loss and it's fueling this horrible disease of always wanting to be thinner, skinnier, bonier, smaller, weigh less, etc. But when is it ever going to be enough? I can assure you, once you hit that "goal weight," it's not going to be enough for most of you. You're going to want more. And even if it is enough for you, if you got there by doing any

type of crazy diet or exercise plan, you're most likely going to gain it all back because your methods were completely unsustainable for the long run. And not only that, but let's say you do reach your goal weight and it is good enough for you, if you didn't learn to love yourself along the way, especially at the very beginning, you're still going to have a hard time loving yourself even in your new body. Because self-love isn't just about your body, it's about who you ARE.

So, that's the biggest question you need to ask yourself: do you *REALLY* need to lose weight, or is this just an obsessive desire that you continue to have in your life? If you legit need to lose weight, eating whole plant foods in their natural state (lots of veggies, fruits, beans, starches, nuts and seeds) till you're satisfied and not stuffing yourself, will get you to a healthy weight for your body. If you're already doing that and you're at a healthy weight for your body and your hormones, body, and mind are all functioning correctly then I would start working on some serious self-love and realize you're more than your body!

No, there's nothing wrong with changing things with your body, but being obsessed about it to where it consumes your every thought is going to be dangerous and lead you right back down the road you came from. Love yourself, friend. Feed your body good wholesome foods. Move it daily. And enjoy life. You've only got one.



40. When I first got my period back I had a lot of PMS symptoms (tender breast, cramping, discharge, moodiness, increased hunger), but I'm still having them. Is that normal?

Yes! haha PMS is a normal thing for a lot of women, especially depending on how long you've had your period back for. However, I will say that it shouldn't be absolutely unbearable. If your cramping like crazy, feeling like you have the flu for days on end, and are just miserable then you want to go meet with your gynecologist and let them know what's up. In the meantime, be sure you're taking that inventory of your OWN life (sleep, stress, diet, exercise, medications, etc.) because lifestyle determines SO much about our hormones and periods. Make sure everything is in line, first and foremost.

41. How do I find a trustworthy primary care physician?

Obviously I can't tell you who to trust or not trust, but here's a great website you can visit for plant-based doctors ([www.plantbaseddoctors.org](http://www.plantbaseddoctors.org)) Even if you still consume animal products, the difference in a lot of these doctors versus the mainstream is that seeing that they're "plant-based" then they are going to be more in-tuned with diet and lifestyle and how that effects your health vs. just prescribing you a pill to temporarily "fix" your problem. I can't speak to if they actually are trustworthy or not or if they will prescribe you different medications,



if needed, but seeing that they're focused on diet and lifestyle to be used as a preventative measure, then they might be a good start. As always, use your best discretion, read a lot of reviews, ask a lot of questions, and go with your gut. Don't waste your time (or money) on someone you don't feel comfortable with.

**42. What if one of my periods lasted 5 days and the next only 3 and it was much lighter? Is that normal?**

It depends. Have things changed in your life? Were you eating less, stressing more, not sleeping as well, exercising more, etc. this past month? That could play a big part in it. Or, it could be that your hormones are balancing out. Or it could be that you did something drastically different in your lifestyle and now your period is starting to disappear again. Or, it could be just completely normal and the first month your body said 3 days and the next it said 5, not big deal. Whatever it is, if you've changed up something drastically in your life, you gotta go back to what you were doing before and let your body rest up and heal. Remember, our bodies HATE extremes, so get back to a good, healthy balance.

**43. How many fat grams should I be eating every day to keep my period?**

This is going to be different for everyone. Some girls can eat very little fat, while others need quite a bit., it all depends on YOU, YOUR body, and YOUR personal

preference. The goal is to find your “sweet spot.” But remember, it’s not just about the fat in your diet. Sure, fat is important, but it’s the **WHOLE** picture that matters. Your diet can be perfect, eating plenty of fat, lots of calories and eating lots of nutrition foods, but if you’re stressed out at work, in a toxic relationship, hate yourself, and only sleep a few hours every night, the no amount of fat in your diet is going to fix your problem. Remember, it’s about a *balanced lifestyle*, not just one thing.

#### 44. What about using artificial sweeteners to help cut calories and lose weight?

I never advise eating artificial sweeteners, especially in large quantities. Why? Because they’re *artificial*, they aren’t **REAL** food. They’re just fake. However, I have to say this with a disclaimer to be sure I don’t lead anyone astray. When it comes to the artificial sweetener thing, this isn’t something to become overly obsessed with to where if you find out you had a food with artificial sweetener in it then you’re going to go purge all your food and run 10 miles.

**NO.**

This is one of those things where you don’t consciously choose to seek out artificial sweeteners to consume, especially for the idea of lessening your calories, adding a bunch of fake sugar to food to make it sweeter and losing weight at the same time. If you want something sweet,

then eating something naturally sweet (fruit is a great place to start). I would just be careful about getting in the habit of looking for fake foods that are void of calories to eat. I'd actually just choose regular, REAL sugar over fake sugar.

There's been studies done that show that actually eating artificial sweeteners messes up your body's craving for sweets because they are 0 calorie and they keep your body constantly searching out more sweet stuff to satisfy that craving. Not to mention, other studies have shown that people actually gain more weight drinking diet sodas than they do just drinking the regular thing!

Obviously, your dietary choices are up to you, but in my opinion I would pass on the fake stuff whenever you can. Finally, remember, the goal isn't to start "cutting calories" and filling your body with a bunch of fake stuff that will trick your body into thinking it's been fed when it actually hasn't. The goal is to start feeding your body the right foods so you will fill your best long-term. No more quick-fixes!

45. What about oil? Should it be a part of a "balanced diet/lifestyle?" I feel like if I avoid it then I'm consciously restricting again...

This is really two different issues rolled up into one, so let's break this down a little bit. The issues of oil being a part of a balanced diet and you feeling like you're

restricting if you avoid it are two different things in two different categories.

Let's first talk about you. When it comes to your idea of "restriction," you have to figure out what that really means for you. "Restriction" and "choosing what's best for your body" are two different things (granted, yes, they sometimes can be intertwined and lead to Orthorexic tendencies when taken to the extreme), but for the most part, they're different. We all know that eating pizza and ice cream every day for breakfast, lunch and dinner probably isn't the healthiest thing for our bodies, right? But what would you say to me if I told you that you were restricting because you weren't eating pizza and ice cream for every single meal of the day? I mean, you don't want to be "restrictive," do you? I mean, OMG, you have an eating disorder because you're not eating all the food all the time!! So, if everything is just a free-for-all, then let's just all eat junk all day long so we're never "restrictive"!!!

But that's crazy thinking, right?

Why? Because you know it's not a healthy decision to make. It's not about you restricting, it's about you understanding and knowing that pizza and ice cream isn't the best thing for your health all the time. Same goes for if you had a certain condition where you couldn't eat certain foods because of your body's reaction to it. Let's

say you're allergic to wheat/gluten, or shellfish, or peanuts, or anything for that matter and every time you eat that food your body negatively reacts. But what if I told you that you were being restrictive because you wouldn't eat a peanut butter and jelly sandwich (even though you basically have a seizure when you eat peanuts) or you're restrictive since you won't eat some crackers (yet you have Celiac and you're allergic to gluten). That would be crazy, right?

Now, there is a difference between avoiding lots of pizza and ice cream because it's unhealthy and not eating a certain food that you're allergic to versus avoiding oil, but what I'm trying to show you is that it all boils down to your personal perspective. Some people avoid oil because it's literally empty calories, doesn't make them feel good afterwards, gives them a stomachache, makes their acne flare up, whereas other people avoid it because they are *deathly* afraid of it. So, you have to figure out where you fall on this spectrum and what your perspective of that food, be it oil or whatever, is.

Now, when it comes to it being a part of a healthy diet, again, this will be up to you. The thing with oil is that it has zero nutritional value, it's literally just 100% fat, with no vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients, etc. That doesn't make it necessarily a *bad* thing, but when you really think about it, it's just unnecessary. Kinda like dumping lots of sugar on top of my already sweet bananas, I just don't

really need it, ya know? From a health perspective, oil has actually been studied to damage the epithelial cell walls of your blood vessels. When these cells get damaged, the contracting and expanding of our blood vessels (namely for our hearts) can be negatively effected. Yes, oil is “natural,” but it takes a lot of work/processing to get all that oil out of that particular food. Instead of eating tons of olive oil, coconut oil, or avocado oil, why not just eat whole olives, coconut meat or avocado?

So, after knowing all of that, it does come down to being a health issue, doesn't it? The thing is, oil is just about in every packaged food, and most of the time, most of the dishes you'll order at restaurants. Depending on where you fall on the “perspective spectrum” will determine how comfortable you are with consuming those products or not. Some people choose not to cook with oil in their own home, but if they're out and their dish has some oil it then they aren't going to make a fuss over it. Others don't cook with in their home and when they're out they be sure to speak with the chef to make sure they don't add extra oil to their meal. While others eat it at home, pour it on their salads, and even ask for an extra side of it when dining out. This all depends on YOU and personal preference.

However, I will warn you to really start being aware of your perspective on all foods, not just oil. If you find yourself consciously obsessing over every little thing, well,

then you know where that's going to lead you (back where you just came from). Quit being so hard on yourself, stop trying to be a perfectionist all for the sake of health because we all know that obsessing over health can easily make you UNHEALTHY.

Just remember, at the end of the day, it's all about perspective. You can have two girls, Susie and Bonnie. Susie avoids oil because she doesn't feel the need to consume it, there's really no point, and she's read some articles talking about how it effects one's epithelial lining. Likewise, eating a lot of it causes her acne to break out, but she doesn't fret if she goes out to eat and there's a bit in her food. Does she avoid it? Yes, but she's not obsessive with it.

Bonnie, on the other hand, also avoids oil. It might give her breakouts, she might have read the same health articles that Susie did, but she has a little bit of a different perspective. She obsessively reads every single ingredient label at the store, spending hours comparing this box to that box, walking up and down the aisles and even second-guessing that the company that produced the product is actually lying. When she goes out to eat she is adamant that there be no oil. She also doesn't trust the cooks in the back of the restaurant and if she even thinks there could be a bit of oil she won't eat the food, all while planning how she can "cleanse" the next day. Does she also avoid oil, just like Susie does? Yes. But you see the



difference between the two. So, it's not just "avoiding oil," it's your perspective on the whole matter. And that is up for you to work through on your own.

**46. How do I mentally deal with my new weight gain that my body needed to heal?**

First off, you've got to realize that the weight gain is exactly what you said, "NEEDED." And not just "needed," but "needed to HEAL."

Healing is such an important thing. Just think about the idea of healing. It's something that we all want to experience if we're ever hurt or sick, and also if we know someone who's hurt or sick. Healing is what we need. Let's say you were snow skiing down a mountain, acting goofy in front of your friends, but you fell and broke your leg. Think of how much you would pray, hope, and wait for your leg to heal. You would be so excited once you were able to walk without a cast or crutches again. Not only that, but you'd learn from your mistake of going down the mountain too fast (so you don't have to go through healing another broken bone), right?

Same thing goes for if you were goofing around on a skateboard and you fell and scraped your knee. You've got a big, unsightly gash that eventually scabs over, it's sore to the touch, and isn't that cute when you wear your favorite skirt. Again, you'd probably pray, wish, and patiently wait for it to heal. You'd also learn from your



goofiness and not be so careless on the skateboard next time, right?

Same thing goes with healing your body. You prayed, wished, and patiently waited for it to heal. Likewise, you've (hopefully) learned from your past mistakes and have a plan moving forward that you won't be so "goofy," so-to-speak, when it comes to your body (not feeding it enough, speaking badly/negatively to it, pushing it to extremes with exercise, not letting it sleep and rest enough, etc). Just like with breaking your leg or scraping your knee, it's a *good* thing to let your body heal. Once you wrap your mind around how your body needed this and healing is always a good thing, then you start to see this whole process from a different perspective.

Now, let's talk about the weight gain and how you don't particularly like it. But here's the thing:

*You have to learn to love yourself, no matter what you weigh or look like.*

I know that you've heard this a thousand times and you're probably sick of hearing it, but I'm going to reiterate this concept and try to explain it a little deeper than just what you hear not the surface.

Let's imagine you and your best friend Susie are out on the town, driving around the city, about to stop and meet some more friends at the best local restaurant in town.

You've got your newest dress on, your makeup is all done up cute, and you're excited for the night ahead. But then, let's say, Susie takes her eyes off the road, swerving the car into the other lane. You're hit, head-on, by an 18-wheeler. The car flips, spins, and flies out of control. You're knocked unconscious and wake up hours later in a emergency room hospital bed wondering what in the world just happened (sorry, I know that went from like zero to a hundred real fast, but keep following with me here lol).

You're covered in all types of bandages and can't really feel your body at all. Once you get your bearings straight, your mom comes in the room and tells you what just happened, you catch a glimpse of yourself in the mirrors reflection and notice that you don't even recognize yourself. Your face has been completely mutilated. There are burns, cuts, scrapes, and even disfigurements that weren't there before. And not only that, but even worse, the doctor comes in to tell you that they had to amputate all of your limbs, both arms and both legs...

Now, obviously this is the most drastic scenario that could ever happen to someone (though it happens to people every day), but at this moment in your life you have to make a decision. Just hours before, you were in your newest dress, all dolled-up, and ready for a night on the town. You were confident, happy, smiling, and felt

beautiful... life is great. Now, you don't even recognize yourself.

So, here is the big question: What is your **FIRST** thought when you read that story and thought, "What if that happened to me?" Was is, "Oh my gosh, if that happened to me, I literally could **NOT** go on with life. I would rather be dead than live the rest of my life in that state!"

*But, here's the thing: When your whole life, all your confidence, and all your worth and value are only drawn up in your looks, your body, your weight, and how you appear to others, you're in for a long road (regardless if you went through this type of accident or not).*

**You have to understand that YOU ARE MORE THAN YOUR BODY.**

God has blessed you with your own specific gifts, talents, quirkiness, character, heart and soul. You are not just your body. You are not just what you appear to others, or yourself, on the outside.

If gaining some weight is the *absolute worst* thing that has ever happened to you, then I'd say you're pretty lucky, especially considering the fact that these type of horrible, tragic accidents happen to people every single day.

And you know what's awesome about a lot of their stories. They don't give up on life. They don't say, "I hate

myself and my body.” Instead, they are some of the most inspirational and motivational people you’ll ever hear about. They make news headlines, write books, and do more with their life AFTER the accident than they were doing before.

*Why? Because they realized there is more to life than the way their body looks. They realize their true potential in life isn’t about the size jeans they wear or the number their bathroom scale reads in the morning, but rather in how they can impact the world in positive way, how many lives they can influence and inspire, what good they can do in the world., what people they can bless.*

That’s what it’s all about. It’s not about your weight, your jean size or what you think other people think about you. It’s about you living life to the fullest every single day, taking the gifts, talents, and blessings that God has given you and using them to change the world. And when you begin to see your life that way and the potential impact you could have on those around you, your community, and ultimately the world, your life will transform. Trust me, it’s not about your weight.

47. I think I’m emotional eater, how do I stop?

A lot of people talk about emotional eating today and there’s a lot of differing opinions on the topic. Some say it doesn’t exist and that you’re just hungry or lacking in a

certain nutrient/vitamin so your body is making you eat to fulfill that need, while others swear they experience it on a daily basis. I firmly believe in emotional eating and I also believe that you can beat it with some thought and effort. But, let's first talk about what emotional eating is NOT, because you might think you're an emotional eater, but really there's something different going on.

So, if you are still recovering from disordered eating habits, or you're even still doing some disordered eating tendencies, then you will just basically be HUNGRY. For some reason, we're continually being taught that being hungry is a bad thing. It's not. We have to eat to live. Hunger and food are things we're never going to get away from because if we totally swear them off, we'll die! Hunger and food aren't like alcohol and cigarettes where you can just say, "Ok, I'm never doing this again!" No, you have to eat. So, if you're legit hungry, then you need to eat. If you've restricted your calories in the past (be it just meals/hours, days, weeks, months, or even years), your body has a huge backlog of those calories that it needs to make up for. So, it's going to eat and eat and eat (maybe even like "Extreme Hunger" like we talked about in my "Get Your Period Handbook"). So, if that's what you're experiencing then you wouldn't necessarily be considered an "emotional eater." However, yes, the two CAN overlap at times. You could be recovering and still doing some emotional eating, but for you, at this point, food is your

friend. Focus on recovering and then worry about the emotional eating later.

Now, for the real emotional eaters: what does emotional eating even mean? Basically, this is when you experience some sort of extreme emotion, be it sadness, anxiety, worrying, depression, anger, rage, OR even the “good” emotions on the other end of the spectrum like being really excited, happy, surprised, or anticipation and you use food to comfort you, or magnify that experience, during those times, in addition to the fact that you’re not even really hungry - you’ve already eaten and had enough food for the day, but your emotions are causing you to reach for food again. You know, the common eating a tub of ice cream after a bad breakup kinda thing.

And as a quick side note here, I want to touch on the issue of emotionally eating in the “happy” category of emotions, because so many of us think emotional eating is just when you’re sad or depressed. But that isn’t true. It can happen with any and every emotion (specifically the really intense ones). When it comes to emotionally eating during times of excitement, happiness, being surprised or anticipation, this is when you get a phone call of good news and you get this rush of excitement so you go and eat lots of cupcakes. Or you’re anticipating this really exciting thing to happen in your day and while you’re waiting you eat lots of comfort foods because it’s just such an exciting time. Same goes for certain fun/happy

holidays or events like weddings, Thanksgiving Day, your birthday, Christmas, birthday parties, etc. You get to the event and it's just so happy and fun that you want to make it even better by eating food.

As you can see, this can start to be problematic as time goes on because we're human and emotions are a major part of our being. We can very easily get sad and upset just like we can get really excited or happy all of the sudden. But here's the problem: when we start using food to fill these voids, amplify these experiences or comfort us during these times, we begin to mix different categories of our being. All the emotions that we experience on a daily basis are different from hunger. When we get hungry, what do we need? Food, right? When we get hungry, we don't run to any emotions to feel that hunger-need. We don't say, "Oh, I'm starving, let me just get happy real quick and then the hunger will go away" or "Gosh, I haven't eaten in hours, let me just get in a really bad mood to take care of that then I won't be hungry anymore." No way, that sounds crazy doesn't it?! We don't fulfill the need of hunger with our emotions, we fulfill the need of hunger with food.

**IT WORKS THE EXACT SAME WAY IN REVERSE.**

There is no point of experiencing a particular emotion and fulfilling that with food. Food is not what fulfills that emotion. Food is for hunger. Dealing with those emotions



in other healthy, emotion-specific ways is what fulfills them, not food. So, that's step one: realizing that your emotions can be very strong and change drastically from moment to moment. But, the answer to fulfilling them is not in food. Food is for when you're hungry.

Now, there's two common things that I see happen with most people when they are experiencing emotional eating. First, many people are very unaware of their emotions and the amount of stress they carry in their daily life. They live in a city they don't like, working a job they hate, dealing with co-workers and bosses that stress them out, aren't doing the hobbies they actually enjoy, let their next-door neighbor get to them and go through a vast array of emotions and stress daily. However, they have accepted that this is their life. They aren't even really looking to change, it just is what it is and the only thing that makes their long day at work better, their horrible relationship with their partner seem less boring, or making their kid's birthday party seem more enjoyable is food.

If this is you, I encourage you to grab a piece of paper and a pen and start taking an inventory of the things in your life that cause you any sort of stress (big or small). Become aware of these things. They could be things as obvious as a toxic relationship or even things from your past that affected you in one way or another that you still carry with you today. But whatever it is, it's gotta come



out and you gotta realize how these things are negatively affecting you. I would write everything down and become more aware of these things - you'll probably be surprised to see just how many little things are affecting you and you didn't even realize how they all add up.

The second thing I see with most emotional eaters is that they already know their stressors and what's causing them these intense emotions, but they keep pushing it back, sweeping it under the rug, and repressing it. You don't want to face these things. It's easier for you to turn to food to calm you down, make you happier, or de-stress you than it is to actually confront the issue at hand.

Maybe it's something from your past that you can't let go of or get over. Maybe it's a relationship, your job, your school schedule, or whatever. The key to reconciling these things is to be aware of the fact that they are negatively affecting you, ignore the urge to push them away, and face them upfront. If you continue to let your emotions and stressors dictate your food intake, it's going to continually grow into a habit that will be incredible difficult to break. So, how do you make the change? How can you stop emotional eating?

1. You've got to identify your stressors and the things that make you extremely emotional (both the good emotions and the bad). Write them down. Dig deep. Figure out what the apparent things are plus the

things that you've got hidden deep down that you don't want to pull to the surface.

2. Write it down. Trust me, there is power in writing things down.
3. Visually SEE what these things are and begin to train yourself to become more SELF-AWARE of how when these emotions arise inside of you, you begin to turn to food. Instead, stop the desire to turn to food to fill your emotions (remember, food is for hunger, replenishment, fuel, etc. - yes it can be tasty, fun, and bring people together, but it's MAIN job is to fulfill our hunger cues) and find new ways to channel your emotions so you can fill those "voids" with more healthy, sustainable, appropriate things. For example, if you're really stressed, instead of reaching for the ice cream to make you feel better, realize the ice cream is for hunger/treat and use deep breathing, hot baths, walks through nature, Scripture memory, or yoga to de-stress. Instead of running to the pizza and cake at your brother's birthday party because it's "such a special day and you're so excited!!," see the birthday party for what it is: celebrating the birth of your brother, and instead of focusing on the food at the party, focus on the people at the party. Yes, the food will be there, but it's only a small part of the party. The party should be about the memories to be made, the pictures to be taken, the celebration of your

brother's life and all the fun things that are going to be happening at the party. Sure, the food will be tasty and special, but it shouldn't be the *main* focus of the party (or your day).

4. And lastly, for those issues that you don't want confront, you're literally going to have to. And if it isn't something you can confront because it happened in your past, then you need to let it resurface and let yourself address why that event is still affecting you the way that it is. There's so many things that happen in our lives that we don't have control over - things that just happened, traumatic events, things other people did to us, mistakes we made, or whatever. We all deal with them. The difference between someone who is not living in the past and is set free from those damaging thoughts vs. the next person who let's their past define them is the decision to **MOVE ON** and not let that thing define you. If meeting with a therapist, counselor, pastor, or some other person to talk with it about is something you'd be interested in then I highly recommend doing it! Specifically asking these professionals if they specialize in CBT (or "Cognitive Behavioral Therapy"). This would be an awesome place to start and would benefit you in more ways than one. And remember, there is **NO** shame in reaching out for help, especially if this is

something you really deal with and you want to be set free from.

5. All-in-all, you gotta be aware of your emotions, how they affect you and your continual reaching for food. Just remember, food is for hunger, not to fulfill an emotion. You wouldn't fulfill hunger with becoming anxious or happy, just like you wouldn't fulfill depression with food. They don't match, they're different categories. \*Lastly, I want to point out that it's not *always* a bad thing to eat when you are experiencing an emotion. Perhaps it is a celebratory moment and you want a piece of candy, no problem. The issue arises when you continually turn to food during emotional times and it has become damaging to both your body and your psyche.

48. I recently got a new job/moved to a new city/switched schools/went on a vacation overseas and I've had my period normally for a while now, but now it's gone. I'm eating the same, not exercising too much, and I've never been happier, so why is it gone?

So, yes, as you hopefully know by now, stress is the **WORST** thing for your hormones. Stress from a bad job, toxic relationship, not enough sleep, too much exercise, not enough food, school workload, etc. are all things we can positively identify as "stressful" for us so they are much easier to catch and change around for the better.

However, remember, just because something might not seem stressful to you in your mind (and it might even be something AWESOME that makes you super happy), that isn't always the way your hormones interpret that. These types of things (moving to a new city, starting a new job, changing schools, traveling overseas) can be great for your mind, happiness, and overall mood (and maybe it's exactly what you needed right now in your life and you're feeling so much better!), but they're what I like to call "Pseudo Stressors:" they are actually GOOD things for your life, but seen as stressors by your body.

The sudden change of environment, the difference in time zones, the new surroundings, etc. can affect your hormones which appear to be negative (because at this point you're uber sensitive to how things affect your hormones), but will really prove to be POSITIVE things in the end. Remember, it's a one-two punch for keeping your hormones going. You have to have the positive attitude plus the stress-free lifestyle. But in this case you've got the great attitude and even, from your perspective, the stress-free lifestyle, but your hormones are seeing this big change as somewhat of a stressor. So, if you've got the positive attitude and continuing to live the stress-free lifestyle, these "Pseudo Stressors" will only last for a short time. Your body just needs a little extra time to see that everything is A-OK, you're happy, you're stress-free, you're sleeping well, eating well, and loving life,

and this new change is actually going to help you KEEP your period even better than before. All it is is your body trying to balance out and take in all these new changes. Don't let this stress you, but rather realize this happens A LOT and just keep doing your thing. It will come back (if everything else is in line, too). Enjoy this new change in your life and don't worry about it!

49. Since I've started eating more wholesome, "healthier" foods lately, I've noticed I don't want anymore "junk foods." Is that ok or am I restricting again?

If you genuinely don't want junk food, then you genuinely don't want it! What usually happens when you start eating more healthy foods, you start actually (yes, seriously) CRAVING those foods. This happens for a few different reasons.

First, your taste buds begin to change over time. The foods that you used to crave and eat a ton of (like processed foods, junk food, high sugary/fatty foods) have not been replaced by more wholesome foods and overtime your tastebuds adjust to that.

Second, you start to craving these new, healthier foods because you realize just how GOOD & ENERGIZED you really feel. Unlike the foods that just taste really good but don't have a lot of vitamins and minerals in them, they can sometimes leave you lethargic-type state, not really feeling your best. However, when you eat a lot of the

foods that are actually really nutritious for you, you don't just start to crave them from a tastebud perspective, but you also start craving that amazing, energizing, good feeling you get physically after eating them. And this is a **GOOD THING!**

Don't look at it as a "restrictive" thing if you legit don't want any junk food. You don't *have to* eat it if you don't want it. Don't over-think this, just eat the foods you seriously want and that you know will make you feel the best and you'll be good to go! :)

50. What if I've got my period back, I no longer have any disordered issues or over-exercising tendencies, I'm loving life and all is well, but I'm still having digestive issues (like Gastroparesis, bloating, etc.) when I eat really fiber-filled foods. Should I keep eating the foods suggested in the GYP Handbook or start eating more wholesome foods now (not so much processed anymore)?

I would just take it SUPER slow. Try to mix it up a bit. If you're still having really bad bloating/slow digestion/Gastroparesis-type conditions due to your restrictive past, I would slowly start incorporating more wholesome foods as your body allows. **DON'T FORCE ANYTHING!** Most usually see that their conditions get better with time, but that's the thing, it takes time and for everyone that time frame can be different. For some it might be a few weeks, while for others it could be upwards of a year.



Regardless, just go with the flow, don't force anything, be gracious and patient with yourself and slowly start incorporating more wholesome foods at your own speed. There's not race in this, it's all up to YOU individual and YOUR body. Listen to your body, do the best you can, and above all else **DON'T STRESS**. Stress and digestion are the **WORST** two things you can combine. So, if you're stressing over every little piece of food you eat and you notice you get really bloated after eating the stress that you're putting your body under can cause digestion to slow down and not work as good, so **DON'T STRESS**. Take it slow, do what you can, be patient, and always go see a doctor if you're concerned!

**51. What would you say are the MOST important things to keeping my period for the long-run?**

Ok, here are my “Top 10 Things to Keeping Your Period!”

1. Stay as stress-free as possible (both the little stressors and the big ones, they all count).
2. Set up boundaries for yourself and stay inside of them. This goes for fitness/exercise, diets, who you watch/follow on social media, what you read, listen to, and let in your mind. **THIS IS 100% UP TO YOU TO STICK TO.**



3. Find an exercise that you love and enjoy, not one that you feel like you *have to do* and do it in an enjoyable sustainable way.
4. Eat a diet filled with a variety of whole plant foods, the foods that make you feel the best, are the most nutritious, and give you the fuel and energy to live your life to the fullest.
5. Stop tracking and counting your calories, macros, fat grams, etc. Just eat and move on with life.
6. Unfollow (and don't refollow) blog, SnapChats, Instagram accounts, YouTube channels, Tumblrs, etc. that "trigger" you or make you reconsider going back to old ways.
7. Practice self-love and positive self-talk EVERY. SINGLE. DAY. Ask yourself, "Would I say the things I say to myself on a daily basis to my best friend?" Most likely not.
8. Get into and stick with the hobbies, extracurricular activities and passions that you have that don't involve food, exercise, nutrition, and fitness. Yes, fitness and diet are a part of life, but they shouldn't make up who you are entirely. Get back into and stick with playing a musical instrument, art, learning a new language, volunteering, acting, etc.

9. Surround yourself with as many “normal” people as much as you possibly can. People who are living life, working their jobs, having fun. People that make you forget you even had any “problems” in the first place.
10. Forgive yourself from you past, let it go, learn from it, and move on. No dwelling on the woulda, shoulda, coulda's, but rather see everything that you went through as a learning opportunity, a stepping stone, an important part of your life that is behind you and now you're living a life in the NEW YOU. Free, happy, and in love with your life.

If you can do these 10 things then you will be WELL on your way to solving this whole problem for the rest of your life. Are you going to be perfect? No.

You'll definitely have some slip-ups, make some mistakes, take some wrong turns, make a bad choice or decision, and maybe slip back into bad habits at some point in time. You're human!

Don't strive for perfection, but strive for PROGRESS.

Progress is what matters here. Setting up unrealistic expectations for yourself to be able to never make another mistake for the rest of your life, always be perfect and beat yourself up when you do slip up, isn't an attainable goal.

Instead, work on these 10 things and you'll be fine. But even with that, learn to LIVE YOUR LIFE in the meantime. Don't let your life become all encompassed in your "recovery" and all that. Accept what happened, learn from it, move forward, do the best you can, and just LIVE. Don't over-analyze or over-think everything. Love yourself and live your life!

# Chapter 13

## My Letter to you

Well, you've made it to the end! This is it! I'm SOOO proud of you and you should be SO proud of yourself. Seriously, look at how far you've come in these past few weeks/months!

**YOU HAVE LITERALLY CHANGED YOUR LIFE!!!** Just think about that for a minute...

Think back to where you were in your deepest, darkest time. And now look at where you are with your body and mentality about your life today....**YOU HAVE DONE AN AMAZING JOB** and that is something to be seriously proud of!!

If you read through my "Get Your Period Handbook," plus this book, you are **WELL** on your way to being successful with not just your period and hormones, but also your body image, thoughts about food, exercise habits, and overall lifestyle. The last thing that I want to leave you with is just a little encouragement.

What is this all about, this whole process you've gone through over the last few months or years? It's about learning, growing, changing. And all of those things are *good* things. If we never learn, grow, or change, we'll

always remain the same; we'll never experience what life really has to offer, We'll remain stagnant, stuck, and the same. And THANK GOD you're no longer stuck in the phase of life you were in months ago with your body image, exercise, and eating routine. You have learned, grown and changed so much in the past months that you are LITERALLY a new person now. That is just crazy to think about isn't it?!

So, here's the deal: I can give you all these tips and principles, the success of how they work out for you is going to be up to one thing:

**YOU.**

Not me, your parents, your best friend, your boyfriend or husband, your therapist or counselor, but you. And only you. Yes, these people can encourage you along the way, but you have to make up your own mind to change... and to STAY changed.

No looking back. No guilt, no doubt, no flirting with old habits. No beating yourself up if you make a mistake.

*You know you better than anyone else.*

A good rule of thumb is that if it goes against your gut, it's probably not a good idea right now (or ever).

So, a lot of this has to do with continuing to get back in touch with yourself. Learning about yourself. Learning your habits, “triggers,” routines, thought patterns, motivations, desires, etc. This whole process can be an amazing thing if you look at it from the right perspective, the perspective of growth and building the NEW you.

The MOST important thing I can tell you is really the most simple:

**GO LIVE YOUR LIFE. GET OUT AND DO IT, GIRL.**

Quit the competition with yourself (and others). Quit the worrying, the self-hate, the obsessions, just stop. And make the commitment right now to live every single day to the fullest. Get out and go meet new people, do things you're passionate and excited about, make memories, take pictures, be goofy, eat good food, move your body, put a smile on your face, and **GO LIVE YOUR LIFE.**

Until you change your overall perspective and realize that most of this stems from your own isolated, insecure, depressed, and anxiety-driven thoughts, you'll never be able to get past the old you. And that old you is **GONE, DONE, OVER. NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN!**

***THIS IS THE NEW YOU.***

And know that I am in your corner. I am literally praying for you **EVERY SINGLE DAY**, asking God to give you the strength, the peace, and the motivation to keep going, to take the focus off yourself and to start using the gifts He has given you to live a life of purpose (not a life of anxiety, despair, and comparisons).

Remember, this is your decision, your choice. You've got to be on guard and protect your mind. It can be your biggest ally or your greatest enemy. Don't look back, keep pushing forward, and live your life to the fullest **EVERY SINGLE DAY**.

No, you're not going to be perfect and that's not what this is about. You're human, you'll make some mistakes, you'll fall, you'll have a little "swerve off the road," so-to-speak, but it's all in how you **RESPOND** and **REACT** to that. Don't keep going off road. Take control of the wheel, get your head back on straight, and keep moving forward. That's the secret. **YOU CAN DO THIS!**

Sending you  
love and  
prayers. You  
got this, girl!  
God bless,

Audra xx



"More than anything you guard,  
guard your mind, for your entire life  
flows from it."

Proverbs 4:23