

A HANDBOOK BY "THIS GIRL AUDRA"

Get Your Period

HEAL YOUR BODY, FIX YOUR MIND, CHANGE YOUR LIFE



Special thanks to my amazing family & friends for supporting me and encouraging me in writing this book! :)

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About Me



Hi! I'm Audra, the girl behind "This Girl Audra." :) I am a National Academy of Sports Medicine Certified Personal Trainer, certified in Plant-Based Nutrition, and a Certified Weight Loss Specialist. 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. Sadly, there are a lot of girls out there suffering silently (just like I was) and have nowhere to turn for help. So, I decided to put together everything that I did that helped not just get my period back, but also to change my entire life for the better. 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!). 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 lesson 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 drinking that magic potion will help get your period back (which maybe it will!), but 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's something I've had to commit to for the long run, and it has changed my life! Likewise, because there is so much info that goes into this

book, I HIGHLY recommend you read the *entire* book before making any changes, if you decide to do so. There are tons of FAQ's in Chapter 14 that you will want to read and understand before making any changes in your lifestyle. You need to have all the info you can before making any decisions! Again, 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! Likewise, this book isn't written for only a specific group of people who only follow the "XYZ diet." This book is for ANYONE and EVERYONE, regardless of the way you choose to eat (due to health concerns, ethics, etc.). This is written for a broad spectrum audience, not with one specific group in mind.

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 in 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 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!

Why the “Get Your Period Handbook?”

If you're reading this right now, you know the feeling. All your friends are talking about how bad their cramps are, asking for a pad or tampon, and wanting to go eat chocolate and watch sappy movies. You, on the other hand, either a. have never experienced those feelings before (when by this time in your life you clearly should have) or b. it's been months or even years since you remember having these issues. I know just how you feel! I, too, was in your exact same situation! I lost my period just like you. And when I say “lost my period,” I'm not talking about it being gone for a month or so, but rather months and months that turned into years and years, only with them showing up every now and then. Sadly, I had nowhere to really turn for answers - one person told me to just get acupuncture (which didn't work...), another said that everything was ok and it was perfectly normal to not have one (which was totally wrong!), another wanted to put me on hormone pills, creams, superfoods, and weird herbs and teas (and I ended up spending WAY too much money on all that stuff...), while another told me it would magically show up one day without me doing anything at all (plus a ton of other advice that wasn't too helpful!). To no avail, when none of this worked, I started out on a research-driven, education-focused, make-myself-the-science-experiment journey to heal my hormones once and for all. And guess what? IT WORKED and it continues to work for me and others I've worked with to this day. I wish that I had've known someone or some program that could've given me that answers I was looking for instead of feeling all alone and hopeless about my situation, but I honestly thank God that I went through what I did so that I can share my experience, research, and knowledge with you.

So, I decided to create this handbook for YOU! After helping hundreds of girls on their period issues, thoughts about food, their body image, and their overall happiness in life, I wanted to compile all the information in one place to give you all the tools you need to succeed (based off what I did to succeed!) In this book you'll find tons of information and research about

food, exercise, your period and hormones, testimonials from other girls who have been successful using my methods, practical tips and advice, as well as plenty of recipes to get you started. For many people, the information in this book might come as a surprise and go against everything that you've ever learned was "healthy." That is the point! Too many of us have gotten to be so "healthy" that now we're unhealthy (or you wouldn't be reading this book!) I'm not saying you have to agree with everything I propose in this book, I'm just asking that you consider it. At the end of the day, the decisions regarding your life and your body are totally up to you. I'm just giving you something extra to think about.

I am so happy to write you this! I followed your advice and after only four months I did get my period back! Finally, after almost 5 years of not having one. Me and my close friends are celebrating and I wanted to thank you. You really know, what you are doing. I stopped the crazy amount of exercise and do not plan to go back to four intense hours at the gym per day. - Paula

Sadly, when it comes to diet, exercise, health, and weight, everyone wants to know all the specifics, all the numbers: What's the best diet? How many calories should I eat each day? How much should I weigh? How long should I exercise? How much sugar is too much? Are carbs and fat bad? Is there a certain time I should stop eating each day? And on and on and on... Here's my answer to all of those questions rolled up into one: **JUST STOP!** If you think back to when all of this started, it was the rules you placed on yourself (or you let others place on you), that got you into this predicament in the first place, right? You got so obsessed with this diet, or that exercise, or cutting these calories, etc. and now you can't get it out of your head. This book is all about allowing yourself the freedom to just live your life, free from the rules, restrictions, guidelines, guilt, and thoughts that you've placed on yourself, society has placed on you, or others outside people have placed on you. No more!

And more than that, this book and what it encourages isn't just about food. Food is just a small part of a much bigger puzzle that's going on in your life. In this book, we'll talk about exercise, body image, relationships, stress, sleep, happiness, school, and so on. This isn't just a book to "get your period back" (though it will help that!), but it's more so a whole *lifestyle change*. I'm

asking you to look at your **WHOLE** life (not just your thoughts about food) and make some changes that aren't only going to benefit you getting your period back, but will benefit all the other areas of your life, too.

If you're like I was when I started this journey and finding it hard to cope with such a huge lifestyle change, this book is going to give you the info you need to accept the fact that your body needs to heal, your life needs some big changes, and it's time to finally love yourself. It's a recharging, of sorts. The goal of this book is to get your period back, yes, but also to break you from the bad habits you've carried for so long, teach you to love yourself, and teach you to not be scared of food. My biggest tip about this whole process is that you've gotta focus on both your physical *and* mental health when it comes to food, exercise, your life and your body. And that's what I'm here to help you do. And, remember, a **HUGE** part of all of this is your mental health. Yes, we're going to fix your physical body, but it all starts in your head. **REMEMBER THAT!** Likewise, if you have already had a one-on-one consultation with me, you may see that there's a few differences from your situation versus this book. Why? Because your consultation was *individualized*, so stick with the original plan and add in things from this book accordingly and as you please.

*One big tip that I have is to grab a pen and paper and keep notes as you're reading through this book. It is **A LOT** of information and can sometimes be overwhelming for a lot of people. Not to mention, not everything in this book will pertain to you, or you might not choose to do (which is fine!), but I would keep a pen and paper nearby just to jot down a few things that really influence you and that you want to consider implementing in your own life. Then, once you've finished the book, you can just go back to that notepad and have all the things that pertain to you so you can start focusing on that, instead of flipping back through the book to find where it said xyz. Just an idea!

The Birth Control Pill

I'm assuming you know what "The Pill" is, but if not, let me explain. Basically, "The Pill" is a nickname for the Birth Control Pill. This pill is prescribed by a lot of doctors to help prevent unwanted pregnancies, help control painful, irregular or even missing periods, while also using them to treat things like acne and hormonal imbalances in young girls and women. Sadly, so many of us start taking this medication for all the "up-sides," that we forget something this powerful probably has some severe consequences, which indeed, it does.

I got on the pill when I was 20 years old due to excruciating cramps, horrible periods, and as a method of birth control (everyone told me that birth control was so normal, "everyone is doing it!") So, I was put on a high-estrogen pill and right away my cramps and horrible periods went away! It was like a miracle! I never knew "periods" could be so simple. Why wasn't everybody taking this stuff? Sadly, nobody told me that simply changing up my diet, sleeping better, and de-stressing my life to get my hormones back on track would do so much for my hormones instead of taking a pill that would affect me years later. I was on the pill for about 3 years and when I got off my hormones were all over the place! So, in my experience, being on the pill wasn't as good as I thought it was. Yes, it helped my bad cramps and periods, but it was more of a bandaid to a much deeper issue that needed to be addressed. And yes, later when I stopped the pill (essentially pulling off the bandaid), I was left with a mess on my hands that I should've dealt with in the first place.

Believe it or not, in a perfect world our periods should be quite a breeze to go through. There should not be awful cramping, lots of pain, and other PMS symptoms. Yet, we're told this is normal and the way to fix it is to take "The Pill," along with a slew of other medications to cover the awful symptoms we experience during menstruation. To understand this whole picture, we have to look at the female reproductive system as a whole. It's not just, "Hey, I don't want to get pregnant, so let me take this pill," or "I've

got bad cramps, a pill will fix it.” (or maybe in your situation, “Hey, I don’t even have a period, so let me get on the pill to give me one!”) It goes much deeper than this. When a girl experiences extremely bad cramps, painful

6% of women who take the birth control pill actually end up getting pregnant!

periods (yes having pain is normal, but it should not be excruciating!), and even irregular periods, this is most of the time caused by imbalanced hormones. This problem gets made even worse when you start taking

a high-estrogen birth control pill (the most common used today). What happens? Most girls experience a lot of unwanted symptoms from the influx of estrogen in their bodies (weight gain, tender breasts, moodiness, etc.) These high levels of estrogen continually builds up and increased levels of estrogen are never a good thing (studies have shown it can lead to cancer).¹

Again, in a perfect world, your natural menstrual cycle is just that, a cycle. Throughout the month, you go through phases of falling and rising levels of estrogen and progesterone. This is important because it signals to your body when it’s time to ovulate (increasing your chances of pregnancy), and if you don’t get pregnant, you then menstruate (have your period), and then the cycle starts all over again the next month. Here’s a closer look to explain further:

- * Right after your period is over, both your progesterone and estrogen are at their lowest. During this time most girls feel a little more tired and have a decreased libido (sex-drive).
- * After about a week, your estrogen levels start to rise, you'll have more energy, your libido increases, and you have more cervical mucus. This is usually when you feel your best - you can focus, you have energy, you're coordination is good, everything feels great! Biologically speaking, your libido is increasing to get you ready for reproduction. It knows ovulation

¹ <http://envirocancer.cornell.edu/factsheet/general/fs10.estrogen.cfm>

is right around the corner and so making you more interested in sex will help your chances of conceiving.

- * Next is ovulation. You'll start to notice an "egg white" type of cervical mucus and maybe cramps, acne, or low back pain. If your goal is to get pregnant, now's the time to act! If not, now's definitely NOT the time to act! Ovulation can last up to a few days, but it won't last long.



Try my Soft-Baked Chocolate Chip Cookies on pg. 212

- * After ovulation, you'll notice that your body has really warmed up quite a bit (temperature-wise), maybe even feeling a little feverish. Your progesterone has really skyrocketed. You might even feel a little bloated, during this time. Likewise, you might start to notice a few premenstrual symptoms: maybe you're a little more irritable, anxious, experiencing mood swings, etc.

* If you don't get pregnant during this time, your period should be coming up soon. You start experiencing cravings for carbs or sugary foods, notice you're a lot more hungry, and you just don't feel 100% you. Your serotonin levels have dropped so your mood might not be that great, either.

- * Finally, there's a big drop in both estrogen and progesterone, causing you to have your period. You might cramp, have blood, etc. depending on how the hormones your body are functioning. Many girls find this time to be a time of relief, have a sense of euphoria, and are pretty carefree once this passes. Periods can last from a few days to over a week, depending on the individual. After this, the whole cycle starts all over again.

Now that you understand how your monthly cycle works, you'll be able to see how the birth control pill intervenes with this natural process of your body. Different types of birth control do different things as far as how it affects your period (some prevent implantation, others thicken the your cervical mucus so sperm can't get through, others prevent ovulation, etc.), but all-in-all, most birth control pills raise your estrogen levels, tricking your body into thinking it's pregnant the whole duration of taking the pill. So, what happens is the synthetic hormones from the pill tell your body not to release an egg (ovulate), so when a sperm enters the picture, there's no egg to meet the sperm and therefore there's no baby to be born. Likewise, the mucus is thickened so there's a slim chance the sperm can do much at all.

Basically when you take the pill, you will be taking 28 days worth of medication. Most have 21 pills of active/hormone medications, and the other 7 are sugar pills. You take 1 pill each day, in sequential order. When you get to the 7 days worth of sugar pills, your body is depleted from those other 21 days of actual hormone-filled pills, and the hormones drop, causing you to bleed, aka "withdrawal bleeding." Many think, "Oh, I got my period!" But, no, this is not a real period. It just seems like one. When you have a real, legit period, your body naturally sheds it's uterine lining. Interestingly, when drug developers were making the pill, they knew that it would be too odd or abnormal for women not to experience bleeding once a month, so that's why they added in the 7 days worth of sugar pills, so that you would bleed and think you're having your period (though you're biologically not). There is no true rise and fall of estrogen and progesterone taking place by your body naturally, it's all synthetic from a pill. However, the high levels of estrogen contained in most birth control pills can cause many problems, especially when taken for a significant length of time.

When estrogen levels are high (meaning they aren't balanced out with progesterone), various side effects and consequences can occur. Migraines, increased risk of breast cancer², increased blood pressure, weight gain, breast tenderness and swelling, decreased sex drive, infertility, moodiness, increased

² <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/behindtheheadlines/news/2014-08-01-contraceptive-pills-may-double-breast-cancer-risk/>

risk of stroke, heart attack and blood clots³, fluid retention, bone density loss, and hair loss are just a few of the things caused by estrogen dominance. Likewise, the way that your liver metabolizes birth control pills requires more levels of zinc, vitamin C, magnesium, and B-complex vitamins, causing nutrient deficiencies in many women. The pill can also cause yeast overgrowth and infection, destroying the beneficial bacteria in your gut, leading to all type of digestive issues! Finally, studies have shown that bone mineral density was measured at lower values in those who took oral contraceptives than those who did not.⁴ And to note here, if you have experienced restrictive food tendencies, over-exercise, and you lost your period, your bone density could be lowered even more! So, I really encourage you to go see a local doctor and get a DEXA bone scan to figure out how your bone health is. Many girls (even in their teens), find that after years of restriction, exercise, and/or birth control pills, they already have osteopenia or osteoporosis at such a young age! Doing this DEXA bone scan will give you that extra push and motivation you need to realize, “Hey, I gotta get my stuff together and heal my body once and for all!”

Many girls find that once they decide to get off the Pill, they experience post-pill amenorrhea, meaning they don't get a natural period after ceasing the medication (this happened to me!). Because the pill prevents your body from making hormones needed for menstruation and ovulation, your body has a hard time knowing how to make these hormones, which is only magnified the longer you have been taking the pill. Most women resume their natural period after about 3 months of being off the pill, but for many, this is not the case (especially when there is calorie-restriction, over-exercise or other disordered health habits). Their hormones are even further imbalanced. Likewise, there are many potential long-term complications of hormonal birth control include blood clots, links with certain cancers such as cervical cancer and breast cancer, ectopic pregnancies, gallstones, etc. These definitely aren't health issues that you want to take lightly, so please remember this before popping the pill. In a nutshell, the pill messes up the natural hormone rhythm of your body, which can end

³ <http://www.bmj.com/content/339/bmj.b2890>

⁴ <http://www.toyourhealth.com/mpacms/tyh/article.php?id=541>

affect you not only while you're on the pill, but even for years after stopping it, too.

Now, I want to be really clear about about how hormones are different for each and every person. Some women have too much estrogen, some have too little, some have too much progesterone, some have too little. And some have too little of both! So, the healing process is going to be different for each and every person. Some need to lower their estrogen and raise their progesterone, others vice versa, and others need to raise both. A lot of this will depend on where you are in your life (age, your past with diets and exercise, eating disorders, length of time you've been on the birth control pill, etc.) So, figuring out what exactly is going on with your hormones is a big thing. Yes, blood tests can be helpful, but they aren't always an accurate representation because your hormones are constantly fluctuating from day to day. You can definitely go get your hormones tested, if you like, but remember that even if they are all in the "normal" ranges and you still don't have a period, doesn't mean you're good to go. **YOU NEED A PERIOD.** So, the absolute best

"Just to let you know, I have gotten my 4th period in a row, and I am on track for my 5th! I started working out again last month, and I feel better than ever. It is so nice to workout because I want to, and not because I feel like I have to. Thank you again for spreading your amazing message! Couldn't have done it without you." -Whitney

thing that every girl or woman can do to help balance her hormones is to be sure you're eating enough calories, be sure you're sleeping as much as you can, be sure you're not over-exercising (I suggest restorative exercises like yoga, walking in nature, tai chi, etc. - nothing intense!), resting, de-stressing, and enjoying your life. And you have to remember, fixing one hormone isn't going to fix all your problems. Our bodies work wholistically, not mechanically. If one thing is thrown off (reproductive hormones in this case), tons of other things can be thrown off (sleep, sex drive, energy, etc.). It's like a domino-effect. Everything works in tandem. You can't just fix one problem, you have to fix the whole thing (which is what this book is all about!)

So, hopefully you can now see that taking the birth control isn't going to just NOT fix your problems, but it can possibly make them even worse! So, I really encourage you to reconsider the pill, talk to your parents, if needed, speak to your doctor, whatever you need to do, and realize you CAN get your period back naturally, without the use of a synthetic hormone pill! *Again, I am not a doctor and I encourage you to talk to your doctor before getting on or off the pill. Do your research and know what you're getting into before taking the plunge either way. Just because everyone else may be doing it, doesn't mean it's right! And at the end of the day, taking the birth control pill to make you "feel" like you're having a period, when before you weren't, is only putting a small bandaid on a huge problem! You want to get a *natural* period, this is what the the "Fix My Period" Handbook is all about!

"I just got my period for the third time in a row after not having it for almost three years. I cannot tell you how happy I am to have found your Youtube channel, you totally changed my life. The first weeks after our consultation were really hard because I had to overcome my fear of gaining weight and I was also afraid that it would all be for nothing because I did not have a period for such a long time. But after some time I experienced cramping and sore breasts and so I knew I was on the right track. I continued eating whenever I was hungry without counting calories and weighing myself and after three months of following your advice I got my period for the first time. Yes, I gained 20 pounds, but that's probably what my body needed. I included some healthy fats into my diet as well which makes my meals more satisfying and not trying to be as low fat as possible takes some weight off my shoulders and it's also easier to eat out with friends and enjoy my life." - Kathy

Why Are You So Bloating? + How to Fix It

When a girl decides that it's time to stop restricting calories, back off the exercise, and give her body a break to heal, one of the first things she'll most likely experience is digestive issues, namely bloating, gas, stomach pains, and a longer transit time for the food to digest. Most girls basically self-diagnose themselves with having IBS, gluten intolerance, Celiac disease, lactose intolerance, etc., yet that isn't always the case. (though it could be, so be sure to speak with your doctor about this). However, most of the time, they have been so restrictive in their food choices that they are literally living off a handful of foods, their "safe foods," both from a caloric/health standpoint, but also from a digestive standpoint. They know if they just stick to these few foods, everything will be ok, making them fear and even avoid other foods even more! (*If you DO have a diagnosed, blood-tested, tried and true allergy or issue with some type of food, that is another story. But for most people, a lot of this is in their head or something they've chosen to avoid because of something they've read or seen on the internet, in a magazine, etc. So, I encourage you to go get tested, talk to your doctor, and see what is really going on with your body, because yes, you COULD have a medically-diagnosable issue, so you always want to be sure!)

This exact same thing happened to me. After eating so "healthy" for so long and starting to eat more foods, I walked around bloated and in pain all day long. I couldn't figure out why! I was eating all "health foods," especially tons of fruits and vegetables, all the high fiber foods I was told to eat, etc. But over time, I soon realized that those foods were the things causing my problems. Every time I ate low fiber, low water, high calorie-dense foods, everything changed! I wasn't bloated as much, I wasn't in pain. So, I started researching and talking to doctors, holistic nutritionists, and Traditional Chinese Practitioners and figured out that the reason for the bloating was due to too much fiber. I had totally ruined my digestive system, gut flora, and healthy gut bacteria (even though I was eating tons of "healthy foods") and my issue was I was suffering from something called Gastroparesis.

So, here I'm going to explain what could be going on (meaning, you're probably not intolerant to every food on the planet! Hooray!) and explain how you can try to fix this, slowly but surely. First off, I want to introduce

"Gastroparesis" is a condition in which the spontaneous movement of the muscles (motility) in your stomach does not function normally. Ordinarily, strong muscular contractions propel food through your digestive tract. But in gastroparesis, your stomach's motility works poorly or not at all. This prevents your stomach from emptying properly."

you to "Gastroparesis."⁵ This word can easily be broken down into two parts: "gastro" = stomach and "paresis" = paralyzed or weakness of voluntary movement. When we put those two words together we basically get "paralyzed stomach or stomach that can't voluntarily move/work very well." Why am I talking about this? Because if you've EVER had any type of restrictive

tendencies (cutting calories, cutting carbs, taking laxatives, using skinny teas, throwing your food up, skipping meals, fasting, taking pre-workouts, drinking a ton of coffee/caffeine, overexercising, etc.), or you've eating LOADS of fiber, you are a good candidate for experiencing gastroparesis. From a scientific point of view, gastroparesis is actually a survival mechanism that our bodies use to slowly empty our stomach contents over a longer period of time. Why? Because when we have restricted our calories very low, pack in too much fiber, skipped meals, purged, etc., our bodies are afraid that we might not get fed again any time soon so it wants to maximize on the small amount of food/energy that IS coming in.

A lot of times, we end up coming to different conclusions because of this. Either a. we diagnose ourselves with having one or several food intolerances and start avoiding certain foods or food groups altogether or b. we might not think we're intolerant to anything, but we find ourselves continually steering away from foods because we just *know* they're going to make us sick. Because of this, we are only exacerbating the problem since

⁵<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/gastroparesis/basics/definition/con-20023971>

our stomachs are still not having to work like they should due to the continual low amounts of food we're consuming.

Another conclusion many people will jump to is the thought that perhaps their body is just “so toxic,” and needs a good cleanse, detox, or reset to get things back on track. And yet again, we fast, drink just water or juices for days on end, put foreign detox pills into our systems, eat only certain “healthy” foods and hope that will clear things up. But again, this only makes the problems worse! It's not a cleanse or detox our stomach needs (especially with high fiber foods), because these types of foods would be the absolute **WORST** thing for someone suffering from gastroparesis. Because your body has been starved down in one way or another, your beneficial gut bacteria and digestive enzymes have been altered.⁶ Your body is needing more calories and easy-digesting foods, not more bulky, high fiber foods that take forever to digest. Therefore, trying to live and subsist off of extremely low-calorie, high-fiber, high water-content foods, is going to make your stomach issues worse. *This is NOT to say that high fiber, high water foods aren't healthy for you (they definitely can be!), but they won't help with the situation of gastroparesis at this point in time.

So, how do you fix this? First of all, if you struggle with calorie restriction, on a low calorie diet, purging (either physically, through exercise, using laxatives, colonics, enemas, suppositories, drinking coffee to go to the bathroom, using diuretics, etc.), focusing on super high fiber foods, you are going to have to stop. This is messing up your digestion, gut function, bacteria, and digestive enzymes. Second, I suggest avoiding large amounts high fiber, high water-content foods, especially raw and/or cooked vegetables and most fruits. These foods are not only lower in calories, but their fiber and water content are going to be a nightmare for someone dealing with slow gastric emptying.⁷ (NOTE: If you were to research Gastroparesis, you might notice that many of the suggested meal plans start off with a liquid diet for stage I depending on how serious your problem is. This is when I highly suggest that you work with a skilled local practitioner to determine what is best for you.

⁶ <http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-topics/digestive-diseases/gastroparesis/pages/facts.aspx>

⁷ <http://www.arizonadigestivehealth.com/gastroparesis-diet/>

So, by making these high fiber, high water foods a staple in your diet during this time is going to leave you doubled over in pain, bloated like you're 8 months pregnant, and extremely uncomfortable. If you want to continue eating these types of foods, I highly recommend you cook them REALLY good, like basically to a mush for a while at first to help with the digestion. But even with that, relying SOLELY on these foods to give you the calories you need to repair your body is going to be a difficult task and a long road, to say the least. Obviously, you don't want to cut these foods out completely (because they are full of vitamins and nutrients), but cutting back on them for a little while so your digestion can heal will really help.

So, my recommendation is to incorporate some more processed foods and higher calorie, easy-to-digest foods into your diet. I'm sure you just cringed reading the words "processed" and "high calorie," but let me explain.

Because processed foods are lower in fiber, higher in calories, and quick to digest, these will be your best friend if you

suffer from bad bloating, digestive, issues, stomach pain, etc. This is what I did and it helped more than anything! Not only did it help my digestion to hurry up and heal, but it also gave me the chance to enjoy foods that I had written off as "unhealthy" for the longest time. It's up to you to make the decision as to what processed foods you eat, because no, not all processed foods are "junk foods." There's a whole list of food ideas later on in the book, but even just eating things like rice cakes and bread (which are both "processed") will help a lot! As a general rule of thumb, the more processed a food is, the less



A perfect example is my "Blueberry Muffins" on pg. 219

energy our bodies have to expend on that food to break it down. (And remember, using up energy, whether it's from endurance exercise, digestion, or just walking around town, is still using up energy, i.e. burning calories). So, the first good thing about eating processed foods is that they won't take so much energy (burn so many calories) to digest. Therefore, you're able to conserve those calories instead of burning them off (and remember, the goal is to conserve as many calories as you can so those calories can go to healing other areas of your body, specifically your hormones.)

Second, eating foods that are super low in fiber and water and are quick to digest will ease your stomach and keep you from getting bloated, gassy, and in lots of pain from all the high fiber, high water foods. This is kind of like a way for you to trick your body from a caloric standpoint because you're not eating a high volume of food necessarily (such as loads of veggies and high water fruits), but you'll be eating a higher density of calories with a lowered volume of food. This lower volume of food, coupled with the high calories, essentially is like lighting two candles with one flame: you're getting the calories you need, while also giving your stomach a chance to heal. Not to mention, with so many girls experiencing orthorexic tendencies of having a long list of "fear foods," this is a great way to beat those fears once and for all. Make a list of all the foods you fear or won't allow yourself to have and tackle one food each day. Most girls fear processed foods so this is a great time to go ahead and deal with that issue.

An extra tip that will help ease the pain and stomach bloat is to begin eating smaller meals more often throughout the day - Kind of like grazing all day long. So, instead of focusing on eating a ton of food for just three meals, space it out and eat smaller meals more often, even every hour if needed. This will ease the bloating, help with digestion, and keep you eating calories on a consistent basis all day long. Definitely don't allow your body to go for too long without eating, for this is only going to cause the gastroparesis to take longer to heal. I'm not saying you have to do this for the rest of your life, obviously, but at least for now until your stomach gets better. And these don't have to be full-on meals, they can be smaller snacks of super calorie-dense foods. For me, I carried around different candy, dates, dried fruit, trail mix, and crackers everywhere I went. When I started getting hungry (but not starving for a big meal), I would snack on these things instead of always

eating apples, celery, carrots, and bananas. By snacking on these calorie-dense foods every few hours I was giving my body the calories it needed, giving my digestion a break from all the high fiber stuff, keeping a steady and constant influx of food so my body never thought I was going without again, and started eating foods that I thought were so bad for so long. This is what worked great for me, so give it a try if you'd like!

"Just wanted to let you know that I got my period again :) yay!!!! I'm happy, regular with my period and healthy. Thanks so much for your help again." - Lydia

Another thing to try is to never eat alone. Always eat with another person or more people. Why? Well, I advise this for a few reasons: 1. if you are super

paranoid about your stomach issues, bloating, digestion, pain, etc. the WORST thing you want to be doing is sitting there wondering to yourself about if what you're eating is going to cause problems. Why? because your gut and mind are SO connected. If you think you're going to get sick or bloated from a certain food and that's all you're worried about, stressed over, and anxious about the whole time you're eating, guess what's going to happen? Your stomach is going to get super restricted and tense up and you're going to end up getting sick, having bad digestion, and get bloated. This is true! think about when you get really scared or stressed. Let's say you're riding on a roller coaster and you're about to go down the really steep drop - what happens to your stomach? You tense it up, right? Can you imagine eating something on that ride with your stomach feeling like that? Or let's say you're in an argument, or your little brother jumps out to scare you, or you're running late for work rushing through traffic, etc. All of these situations are causing stress in your body, especially in your stomach. You wouldn't want to be eating or even find food appetizing in any of these situations, would you? Probably not. So even though you're just sitting down to eat a meal, the stress coming from all your anxiety, fear, and worry about the food you're about to eat is causing that same type of stress in your stomach. So, (back to my point, haha!) when you eat with other people around you, what happens? You are de-stressed and you're not thinking about your stomach issues as much. This is best when you're with a lot of people and there's a good conversation going or multiple conversations that you're a part of. The WORST thing you can do is eat alone and just sit there focusing

on how bad your stomach problems are. So, eat with others as often as you can and make it fun! Also don't eat when stressed, rushed, in an argument, mad, worried, anxious, etc. Just like I said above, eating in these type of situations can be a nightmare for your stomach. Eat when you are relaxed, happy, and in a good mood. Wait until the stress passes then eat. Basically, in a nutshell, stop isolating yourself, stop stressing over every bite of food you eat and how it's going to affect you, and start making eating fun again. Eat with your friends and family, go out to your favorite restaurants and just have fun!

Typically, most people see a huge different in even the first few days of lowering their fiber and high water-content food intake, backing off drinking a ton of water, eating smaller meals more often, and eating tons of calorie-dense processed foods. I noticed a difference literally within the first day. I stopped eating lots of veggies and high water fruits and other high fiber foods, and stopped drinking a gallon of water a day, and right away things changed. For the gastroparesis to fully go away, it will depend on the individual and the damage that has been done. No two people will heal exactly the same. For some it may take weeks, others months, but regardless of how long it takes, the best thing is to do is keep going. Don't force-feed yourself and don't restrict. Listen to your own body and give it what it needs when it needs it - you know your body and mind better than anyone else! As

“Audra I got my period!!!!!! I never thought this day would come so quickly (maybe it has something to do with the blue moon today??). Anyways, thank you so much for your help and support, I am SO happy right now!” - Hope

you notice your stomach starting to tolerate different foods or even more foods, then you can start adding in more higher fiber foods to see how your stomach goes. Trying to force something that your body can't handle isn't a great idea. It's a trial and error type of thing - take it slow and one day at a time.

Some of the favorite options for foods that have helped others are cereal, crackers, chips, cookies, cakes (you can even make these at home - see my recipes at the end of the book for some ideas!), bread, nut butters, dried fruits, dates, white rice, white pasta, maple syrup, fruit juices, blackstrap molasses, eggs, chicken, beef, fish, or basically anything that YOU like. Again,

this is up to you to decide on what to eat - this isn't a meal plan or anything like that. If you want to eat cereal and bread, go for it! If not, that's fine, too, just be sure to eat a lot of other easily digestible foods that are lower in fiber and water to start off. Do what makes you feel comfortable and at ease, especially mentally. Find what works for you! The food choices are up to you to pick and choose, I'm just throwing out ideas :) At the end of the Handbook, you'll see a list for "Grocery Must-Haves" that are all great ideas for someone experiencing extreme bloating, gas, and stomach pain due to gastroparesis. They are full of calories, low in fiber and water, and taste delicious, so check them out!

To conclude, keeping your foods super high-calorie, low-water, and low-fiber will definitely help your stomach issues. And don't worry about constipation or any of that due to "lack of fiber" - with the amount of food you'll be eating, that won't be a problem at all. Actually, I found that my digestive issues got so much better right away! In fact, people suffering from gastroparesis *can't* digest all the roughage from tons of high fiber foods and it can end up forming a "bezoar." A bezoar is when all the high fiber foods can't be digested, they end up getting compacted together and can block the outlet of the stomach and have to be surgically removed!⁸ I also highly recommend you go see a Gastroenterologist to see if there's anything else going on in your stomach like an ulcer, an allergy, some type of infection, etc. because sometime it can be something different, so always revert back to your consulting physician for more info. Lastly, I know there are many people that claim that when it comes to high fiber foods that you just need to give your body a chance to get used to digesting the large amount of fiber, some claiming it takes over a year to get used to. Though this may be true in some

"I immediately deleted my calorie counting app and stopped weighing my foods. I started eating what I craved: I have avocado almost every day now and I bought a German pretzel today which has gluten in it and I did not get any rashes afterwards. It is that simple but I already feel so much freer. I think I needed someone to tell me this before I could actually start changing my habits again." - Alicia

⁸ <http://gpdfoundation.com/get-help/nutrition/>

cases (which if it is for them, that's great!), but if you are constantly forcing your stomach to digest foods that are causing you severe pain, bloating, and undigested food in your stools, I might take a step back and consider a different way. What's it going to hurt?

Are You Addicted to Exercise?

In our world today, exercise is touted as one of the “best” things you can do for your body and overall health. We all hear that you need at least “30 minutes per day,” and how doing so will help lower your risk of certain diseases, obesity, etc. Quotes like, “No pain, no gain” or “The only bad workout is the one that didn’t happen” and “A good workout: when you wake up and feel sore all over,” are constantly thrown at us, making us feel guilty about our intensity and time committed to exercise. Likewise, the sad thing is that our idea of exercise has gotten totally out of control, specifically in the younger generation. The “30 minutes per day” mentality has slowly morphed into a “more is better” approach, which is clearly not the case. Also, people forget that exercise can actually be a form of restriction (just like any other type of restrictive behaviors with food, i.e. anorexia, bulimia, low-cal diets, etc.). Even though exercise doesn’t have to do with food necessarily, it does have to do with body image, calories, and energy expenditure, which are all common in eating disorders. Though not defined as an eating disorder by the DSM-IV (yet), Anorexia Athletica and Exercise Bulimia are major issues for people, especially young girls and guys, today.

Many are confused on this topic because they believe that disordered eating is just “anorexia or bulimia,” which is completely wrong. You don’t have to have a diagnosed “eating disorder” to have a problem. The ironic thing is that many people think their diet and exercise routine is healthy, when in reality it’s actually unhealthy! This is seen especially in girls and women experiencing Female Athlete Triad. Female Athlete Triad is when a female is an athlete and isn’t getting enough energy in (through calories) and she’s burning too much energy through exercise. At the same time, she has no period and she has a loss in bone density, causing her to experience either Osteopenia or Osteoporosis at a very early age!⁹ This is serious, girls! The truth is, yes, exercise and weight-bearing activities are extremely good for our bones, joints, muscles, and overall health, but this is in otherwise healthy individuals. If you’re not getting a normal, natural period (due to the fact that you exercise TOO much and you don’t get enough calories to

⁹ <http://www.femaleathletetriad.org>

support that exercise), you're not a healthy individual! So, I want to be clear that exercise is a great, necessary, and healthy part of life, but when done in the right context, with the right mindset, and with enough food and calories being eaten to support the exercise. Remember, you have to have a good balance - whenever we tend towards extremes (in anything in life, really!), things can get thrown off and there can be bad consequences. So, to be clear, yes exercise is great, but it needs to be done in the right way and for the right reasons.

I really want to emphasize the fact that not getting a period is NOT healthy, because many girls are being told by their coaches, friends, or others that to not have a period as an athlete is normal and common. I'm sorry to say but, they are WRONG. Just because it might be common for a lot of girls to stop their period due to their training, does not mean it is healthy. Diabetes, heart disease and cancer are all common, but does that mean they're healthy? No! I was told that not having a period was normal and ok so there was nothing to worry about, especially since I was so "healthy and active."

"Oh my goodness! I got my period this morning! I had to Email you right away. It must have been the prayers because I wasn't expecting it to come this soon! Although it has been about 3 months since I left my old stressful job and have now been working at the vegan cafe. I also have been drinking a cup of raspberry leaf tea every night. Yesterday my boobs were sore and I had cramps! I was like omg is this what I think it is?! Then this morning I got my first period in a whole year! Thank you soo much for your prayers audra! Lots of love" - Rachel

The scary thing is that Exercise Addiction gets easily masked and ignored because exercise is supposed to be "healthy," right? The problem is, we're taking this way too far and it has definitely gotten out of control! For a lot of us, our connection to exercise can turn into obsessive concerns about being overweight or "fat," having body dissatisfaction, fear of being "unhealthy," binge eating, skipping meals, and other varieties of dieting and purging behaviors. Many think bulimia is the only form of purging, but it is equally true of exercise bulimia (your exercise is a way of purging calories or

maintaining a low bodyweight), in addition to taking laxatives, colonics, diuretics (and not just in pill form, but also in food form too - eating tons of high fiber foods like dates, prunes, watery foods, etc. so you go to the bathroom more often). They are all the same, it's just that Exercise Addiction is masked differently and people think if their issue isn't diagnosed by a doctor, then they're okay. Sadly, it can end up being worse for you because Exercise Addiction (as well as the other aforementioned forms of purging) goes by undetected for so long, whereas with actual Bulimia, you'd be more apt to fixing the issue and getting treatment! The key is, you have to identify these issues and work towards fixing them as soon as possible, just as you would any other type of self-destructive behavior. I really encourage you to reach out to a local therapist or counselor to help work with you through these types of behaviors. Having someone to talk to, express your struggles with, and explain how you feel will be invaluable throughout this process. We'll talk more about this in Chapter 13, "Asking for Help," but I just wanted to throw that out there to keep in the back of your mind - if you need help and feel you can't handle this alone, **GO GET HELP!!**

So, not only does Exercise Addiction go by undetected with a lot of people, but it also ends up making a lot of people deal with overtraining symptoms. For most people, they are so used to their bodies constantly feeling tired, worn down or exhausted, that they believe that is how they should feel all the time! This is totally wrong! The great thing is, most people find that when they do stop exercising like crazy, they instantaneously start feeling a million times better. Here's some symptoms of overtraining you definitely want to be on the look out for:

- You're tired all the time, constantly fatigued.
- Your performance during your exercise has decreased. In the beginning maybe you had a lot of energy, but now you find yourself having to "push harder" and "be more disciplined," despite you actually hating the activity itself (yes, you might feel an "endorphin" rush after the exercise, but let's be honest, if you didn't feel like you *had* to be exercising, you wouldn't.)
- Your heart rate, blood pressure, ability to sweat and/or digestion have all decreased and slowed down (or maybe it's just a few of these, not all have to be present).

- You're experiencing decreased anabolic response, meaning your testosterone has dropped. This is common in both men and women, showing symptoms like loss of sex drive, less enjoyment during sex, depressed, lethargic, and tired.
- Your stress hormone, cortisol, has increased, causing your body to be in a heightened level of stress all the time. This is made even worse by using some sort of caffeine supplement before workouts (pre-workouts, coffee, energy drinks, pills, etc.). Likewise, you find yourself extremely groggy in the morning and have most of your energy at night time, if at all.

"hi I don't know if you remember me but I just wanted to thank you for doing what you do everyday. If I wouldn't have found your Instagram page and YouTube videos I would still be doing HIIT workouts restricting my calories even though I was doing a high carb vegan lifestyle. I never understood the importance of healing your body, and having a period etc. Now I'm 15 years old and just got my first period by resting & eating a ton of high calorie processed foods. Now I don't worry about exercise and food it's amazing. much love" - Isabelle

- You're not sleeping as well, maybe even experiencing insomnia.
- You're not excited about things like you used to be, you've lost your "emotional excitement."
- You have a difficult time concentrating (perhaps your mind is always racing or you're always thinking of food).
- You're constantly sore and/or stiff.
- You have lost your period.
- You have adrenal fatigue or exhaustion.

Most people believe that a lot of the above symptoms are normal and they go on living their

life as if everything is ok. But these are not normal, they are red flags that need to be addressed. So, let's take the Exercise Addiction Quiz to see where you're at. These are all "yes or no" questions, and obviously the more you answer "yes" to, the more extreme your addiction to exercise is. Simply write a "Y" or "N." Also, I would come back to this quiz every few months and re-take it to see where you've improved and what areas you need to continue to work on. It's a great accountability tool - Let's get started!

1. Do you keep a high level of activity consistently every day? Do you feel like you have to be active and moving matter what? Do you get antsy or anxious if you can't be as active as you normally are?

2. Are you uncomfortable with times of rest or relaxation? For example, you can't sit still, you must be moving. Sitting in class or at work all day stresses you out, you love standing, you hate "rest days," you even end up having "active rest days" where you do some type of exercise, but write it off as "resting?"
3. Do you depend on exercise for defining who you are and for stabilizing your mood? Do you say, "Exercise is the ONLY thing that de-stresses me!"? You feel calm, in "the zone," a high, etc. when exercising?
4. With your workouts, is there a strong drive that becomes self-perpetuating and difficult to change? Do you just keep pushing and pushing and pushing and can't stop?
5. Do you feel compelled to keep exercising even while feeling a lack of control and an inability to stop doing it? You're just so wrapped up in it mentally you can't find a way out and literally can't stop.
6. Do you LIKE the feeling of being worn out, fatigued, exhausted, hungry, etc. after a workout? It makes you feel more accomplished, like you actually *did* something and you weren't "lazy" that day?
7. Do you find yourself rationalizing and defending your exercise and workouts all the time? Perhaps people make remarks about how much you exercise and you get very offensive and come up with excuses of why you do it, such as "it's healthy, it's your ME time, it's your stress-reliever, you're training for an event/race/sport, etc."

Not having a period not only causes bone loss, but it also prevents bone gain because of the high stress levels of cortisol, the essential adrenal hormone that is a leading cause for Osteoporosis/Osteopenia (even in girls as young as 12 years old!)

8. Are you a person that is very achievement-oriented, independent, have a lot of self-control, have OCD-like tendencies, perfectionistic, very persistent and disciplined? Does everything have to be perfect all the time?¹⁰
9. Do you LOVE the feeling of being sore, achy, or stiff? Do you feel like you have to feel this way and if you don't you've been lazy and not trained enough?
10. Have there been conflicts or arguments that have happened between you and family, friends, parents, spouse, etc. over the amount of exercise that you do? Can you see a pattern of your exercise routine causing issues and even ruining relationships, at times?
11. Have you consistently increased the amount of exercise you do in a day? Maybe it started at just 20 minutes and now you're up to an hour or more?
12. Do you get frustrated, moody, irritable, or upset if you miss an exercise, it doesn't go as planned, it gets interrupted, etc? Does it literally ruin your day?
13. When you do cut back on exercise, do you restart again right where you left off (same duration, intensity, and volume)?
14. Do you exercise regardless if you're injured, sick, etc.?
15. Do you skip out on other things in life (hanging out with friends, family, doing other hobbies, etc.) to go exercise?
16. Do you crave exercise, feel like you're suffering without it, is it the most important thing your life and basically all you think about?
17. Does even the thought of not being able to exercise (due to traveling, injury, sickness, inconvenience, no gym nearby, etc.) stress you out? Do

¹⁰ Alayne Yates, M.D., *Compulsive Exercise And The Eating Disorders* (Routledge Press, 1991)

you get anxious and nervous just thinking of the possibility of not being able to exercise?

“Addiction is a condition that results when a person ingests a substance (e.g., alcohol, cocaine, nicotine) or engages in an activity (e.g., gambling, sex, [exercise], shopping) that can be pleasurable but the interferes with ordinary life responsibilities, such as work, relationships, or health. Users may not be aware that their behavior is out of control and causing problems for themselves and others.” - Psychology Today

18. Are you dishonest and lie about the amount of exercise you *truly* do? When people ask you about it, do you lie a little bit and make it sound not as intense?

Hopefully that quiz was a little more eye-opening than you had first thought and you can probably see some unhealthy patterns that have begun to develop in your own life. And here's the big thing, if you really want to get your period back, you've

got to address your Exercise Addiction. Remember, right now your body needs calories, lots and lots of calories. However, not only does it need calories, but it needs to be conserving those calories. If you eat a lot of calories and then go burn them off with exercise (regardless if it's dancing, hiking, running, or HIIT training), you are still burning calories, precious calories that your body could be using to go to repairing your organs, tissues, hormones, bones, etc. So, I highly encourage you to stop all exercise for the sake of regaining your menstrual cycle.

Will this be tough? Yes, it probably will. The tougher it is to give up exercise the more addicted you know that you are to it. It's just like any other addiction. Let's take cigarettes, for example. For someone who's just been smoking a few cigarettes a day for a few weeks is going to have a much easier time breaking that habit than someone who's been smoking packs of cigarettes a day for years. Obviously it's going to be much more difficult for the latter because that addiction has become a part of their life, routine, and sometimes, even a part of who they are. Same goes for exercise addiction. The more addicted you are, the tougher it's going to be to give it up. But, it is totally doable and you will feel so much better when you beat this!

The key to beating Exercise Addiction is really quite simple. Obviously, it's easier said than done, but at the end of the day, all you have to is replace that time that you would've spent exercising on some other non-active hobby. For example, let's say your exercise routine was to get up every morning and go for a run for an hour. Well, now that you've decided to stop exercising, if you wake up early and just sit there thinking, "I really want to go run, but I know I shouldn't, so I guess I'll just sit here and let the time pass..." you're going to have a really tough time! Instead, choose a non-active hobby to fill that time slot. You could definitely just go back to sleep (which would be the best idea!) or you could get up and do some type of art, listen to music and read, spend time with your family, meet a friend at a local place for breakfast, etc. The opportunities are endless! The key is to replace that time and activity with something else that interests you from a non-active standpoint, likewise allowing you to broaden your horizons a little bit and learn to live life again. There's more to life than your workout routine! Here are some ideas to think about:

You could start....Acting, caring for animals/pets, arts, boardgames, go the beach, bird watching, blogging, cooking food and bringing it to shut-ins or elderly people or making them gift baskets, making candles, cartooning, playing chess, going to church, coloring, making music, doing crafts, crochet, cross-stitch, crossword puzzles, card games, taking online classes or classes in any subject of interest at a local community college, gardening, watching TV and movies, working on handwriting, making jewelry, fly a kite, knitting, learn a language, learn to play an instrument, take up cosmetology classes, painting, scrapbooking, people watching, photography, pottery, reading, relaxing, reading to the elderly or volunteering at a school to read to kids, sleep, make soap, travel, play video games, work in a food pantry, work on your car, write, do poetry, write a song, etc. This is what makes up life, activities like this! Take some time to just "be." You need to relax and enjoy life! And to be honest, you probably were very involved in a number of these things before exercise took over your life. So, stop being so obsessed with exercise and get back into the things that made you who you are! You will soon see that your life becomes much more diverse and filled with new opportunities, new people, new friends, and new experiences. These are the things you've most likely been missing in your life - the FUN things you used to do and now skip out on because you have to go work out. Don't let this happen anymore! Make a

change! Not only are you doing all this to replace it with exercise, but equally important is the fact that you're actually having fun and living life again, which is a huge part of healing your hormones and de-stressing your life.

This is going to be one of the most important things you do as you let your body heal. A huge part of the healing process definitely IS the physical aspect of eating and resting, but it goes hand-in-hand with the mental side of things, too. Let's say you "heal" your body, get your period back, gain some weight, and heal your bones, that's great, right? But, if you don't give your mind a chance to heal, give your mind a chance to get back to the things that you really love to do, broaden your horizons and get back into other hobbies in life, the chances of you going back down the Exercise Addiction road are very high. Remember, you want to keep your life **BALANCED!** And taking a **MUCH** needed break from exercise to focus on other areas of your life is going to do wonders for both your mind and body in the long run :)

I feel that I'm finally getting there with it all. Your support and advice kick-started the change, but I understand that I needed to throw myself in to make it all better. I haven't weighed myself in over a month, I'm more relaxed to be around, I'm able to focus more on my job - all because I don't stress about food and exercise. Most excitingly; I've found love. For the first time in two years I've actually let down my boundaries and be with someone who makes me feel blessed to be alive and to have the body that I do. Thank you for everything my girl - you are one of the people who enabled me to make positive changes... Lots of love xx" - Kate

The funny thing is, if you really think about it, your life before your new diet and exercise routine probably didn't involve much exercise at all. It's not like you grew up running 10 miles every day or doing crazy HIIT workouts every morning. No, before all this you maybe went to the gym every now and then, maybe went on some hikes or for a bike ride, or maybe you were pretty active, but it was nothing extreme. Now, since you've had a taste of what it's like to exercise all the time without ever taking a break, you're afraid your life is going to come to an end. But you haven't always been doing it like this, right? Your life **ISN'T** going to end! If anything, you're thinking right now, "Gosh, I wish I could just go back to who I was before all of this, when

food didn't control me and I wasn't obsessed with exercise..." This is what you're thinking right? Well, here's the thing - you CAN go back to that, but *you* have to make the decision to do so. You have to ask yourself, "What are the daily habits and routines that I am currently doing that are keeping me from living that happy, stress-free life again?" Write those things down and work at those every day. I'm sure after reading this chapter your crazy, obsessive, can't-ever-miss-a-day exercise routine is at the top of the list. So, take a break. Does it mean you can't ever exercise again? No, it doesn't but I just really encourage you to back off a little bit and reevaluate your life and your priorities. And again (I'm going to keep saying this over and over again), what you decide to do is up to YOU. Whether you decide to keep exercising or not is your decision. So, I don't want you to get depressed over this and think you'll never be able to go to the gym again - you will! Just take it slow, chill out a little bit, give your body (and MIND) some much-needed rest and I promise both your body and mind will thank you.

I Love to Exercise!

This is usually the first question that I get asked once I tell a girl that stopping exercise is something they need to consider. A lot of times this is mentioned innocently out of mere curiosity, but most of the time it's because she is literally scared to death to go without exercise and the sooner she can get back to it, the better off she thinks she's going to be. Having this type of attitude or mentality around exercise should be a red flag for you, making you to realize that your love of exercise might be a little bit deeper than you think. If you've taken the "Exercise Addiction Quiz" in the previous chapter and answered "yes" to various questions, this is something that you need to be very aware of and work at fixing. Maybe you just answered "yes" to one question or maybe it was a "yes" for all of them, but either way, there is still a deeper issue that needs to be resolved. And remember, the goal of this isn't to get away from exercise completely and never exercise again, but rather address the mental state you're in concerning exercise. Exercise is a great, healthy, normal, and natural part of life, as long as it's done in the right way, with the right mentality behind it!

First off, once you come to grips with the fact that you do in fact have an issue that needs to be addressed, the best course of action is to own up to it and admit it. Admit to yourself that you do have this deep-seeded reliance on exercise and that it has, in

"For while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." 1 Timothy 4:8

one way or another, compromised your health and/or your happiness. Maybe even admitting this to family members, spouse, friends, etc. will help you realize this even more (not to mention the support you will get from them by doing this). I actually really encourage you to let others in on this because it will be a sort of accountability for you. Having others praying for you, checking up on you, and holding you accountable in this area will prove to be SO great in the long run, so let those close to you know what's going on. I also encourage you to tell them in a way that isn't so much about self-

pity, but rather giving them a job to do: tell them you want their help. You value your relationship with them and you want them to check in on you every so often in this area of your life. That way they feel more connected to you and what's going on and they have a sort of job to do. They don't just feel sorry for you and feel like you're weird or something for suddenly stopping. They actually care and want to help. This will help you out a lot and even help grow your relationship with that person in the end.

Second, after you've admitted it, decided to rest and let your body heal, and have started to incorporate other non-active hobbies into your life, something awesome is going to happen. You are going to slowly, but surely, start to realize that there is more to life than your workout routine. All the things that you used to love to do (maybe it was art, music, singing, crafts, hanging out with friends, going to your favorite restaurant, going to movies, being in nature, etc.) all start to seem way more enjoyable and important to you all of the sudden. You start to see that your life can be more balanced, diverse, and happy. You feel more alive, more connected to who you really are, and you find yourself more calm and peaceful. You will start to see that you're getting out of the house more, you're going out and seeing friends, the rules you used to have with exercise are going away, and you're able to live life now free from a crazy exercise regimented schedule. You're laughing again, you're making memories, and you're having fun.

Next, you'll begin to see that the stress that has been lifted off of you from your workouts is slowly subsiding and you are, day by day, losing that urge to want to feel sweaty, exhausted and tired from a "hard workout." You even start to think back to when you were working out weeks or months ago and even laugh to yourself at how crazy you got, realizing that there's so much more beyond just exercise. As the weeks and months go by, you notice that your time is now filled more and more with hobbies you love and make you who you are actually are, all of which have no connection to burning calories or looking a certain way from a body image perspective. Your life is slowly starting to come back to normal, the way it was before you lost your period, went through a time of disordered eating, and/or overexercised. You're started to get used to this and really enjoy it, wondering why you ever treated your body the way you did!

Finally, depending on how much you are actually resting and are you actually eating, you notice that your period comes back! You've never been so happy to welcome such a bittersweet visitor in all your life, but this instance literally brings tears to your eyes and you think back to all the times you took this for granted before. This is the first sign that your body is thanking you for taking care of it (through eating tons of calories and getting tons of rest). It's literally a gift from your body to you! But then, a quiet voice comes into your mind and reminds you of exercise... So, since you have your period back, you can start back exercising again, right? Well, not exactly.

The good news is, yes, your body is definitely saying, "Thank you!" for all the calories you've consumed and all the rest you've gotten over the past weeks or months (and that is definitely something you don't want to forget!) However, getting your period just once, after it's been MIA for months or years, is not necessarily a green light to get back into exercise, specifically the exercise that was a part of causing you to lose your period to begin with. So, here's my general guidelines. This is based off my research and what has worked for the hundreds of girls I've worked with. How you decide to do this is up to you!

1. Give your body a good three to six months of continual healing before you reintroduce exercise. The key is to keep doing what you've been doing thus far to let your body continue trusting you and continue to heal the damage that has been done. Getting a period for another three to six months (normally and naturally) is a great indicator that your body is getting back on track.
2. If you want to add in any type of exercise during this three to six month time frame (again, key word is "want" - you definitely DON'T have to!), I would only add in "Restorative Exercises," such as light yoga, leisurely walking, tai chi, light stretching, etc. The thing to remember is that you do not want to do anything intense, where you are sweating, heart is pounding, you're getting exhausted, etc. Because remember, at this point it is still about energy conservation. If you start burning more calories while your body is in repair mode, you're going to be undoing everything that you've worked so hard to fix these past weeks or months. So, I this with a big "CAUTION" sign around it, but take it extremely easy! Using these

restorative types of exercising can not only be great for your body, but also your mind.

3. After the three to six months is up, you've had a normal, natural period for this duration of time and you feel like maybe you want to try your hand at exercise again, there's a few things to consider. You definitely cannot try to pick up where you left off with your workouts. Let's say that you were used to running 10 miles every day when you lost your period to begin with and now that you're ready to get back into it, so you think you should start at 10 miles again. NO! Definitely not! This is the building phase, a gradual increase over time to let your body adapt. Because remember, hopefully throughout this experience you've come to understand that it's about energy in vs. energy out, and if there's not enough energy coming in and too much going out, you're setting yourself up for failure again. So, this has to be slow and steady, do not rush this! Some girls find that they can't run 10 miles like they used to without having more period issues and some girls find that they can't run at all! It's all about trial and error at this point. Take it slow and ease into exercise, nothing drastic or extreme.
4. I really stress the importance of taking this slow, because a lot of girls push it too hard to fast and end up missing their period again. This is obviously the last thing you want to do. You've worked so hard to rest and eat a lot of calories and now that you've jumped back into exercising again at a higher level than your body is ready for, you miss your period and you're devastated. This is just your body saying, "You did too much too fast! You have to slow down and let me continue to heal so I can keep up!"
5. A big part of this too is if this specific exercise triggers you or not. For a lot of girls, their exercise of choice brings up too many bad memories (including the diet they were on, their body image and shape, counting the calories they burned with that exercise, etc.) and is too triggering for them to resume. So, if this is you in even the slightest bit, I encourage you to find a new exercise. Instead of running, try walking, dancing, swimming, etc. You don't have to go back to that exercise if it makes you feel uncomfortable or it's too intense on either your body or your mind, or

both! I encourage you to try other exercises out: instead of running, try cycling, yoga, weight training, etc. Be diverse and switch it up and most of all, find something that you LOVE to do! Maybe get into dancing, or Zumba, go hiking outside, etc. Find something that is fun and doesn't even feel like a workout - those are the best!

6. I do want to be clear that resuming exercise is NOT a requirement. Just because you were an athlete before does not mean you have to go back to being an athlete now. And interestingly, most girls find their love of exercise has completely diminished at this point! They're not too busy living their lives doing non-active things, which is totally fine, and often times, preferred to jumping right back into exercise. So, let it be a natural thing. Don't force it or feel pressured that you HAVE to go back to exercise. Take it slow and find what makes you feel the BEST (both mentally and physically), not just what might make you "look the best," in your opinion.
7. The biggest take away from this is realizing that hopefully, through your time of rest, relaxing, eating, and discovering new non-active hobbies, you have had enough time to come to grips that exercise isn't everything. It is only a very small part of our lives. It is meant to be enjoyed, pleasurable, and healthy from a physical and mental standpoint, not to be abused or inflicted on you like some type of punishment. If you ever, at any point, find yourself getting back into this type of mindset with exercise, you need to back off and re-evaluate where you're at with your body image, food, diets, exercise, calories, and rest. Remember, the last thing you want to do is go back down the road you just traveled, and trust me, it happens all the time! So, guard yourself, be aware that you can be tempted and slip back into these tendencies at any time. Focus more of your attention, time, and energy on non-active activities and make exercise enjoyable, fun, natural, and something to be embraced, not a form of punishment, a requirement, or something you absolutely HAVE to do.

What Can We Learn from the “Minnesota Starvation Experiment?”

If you have been following me on Social Media for a while, you’ve probably heard me talk about the “Minnesota Starvation Experiment” a lot. Why? Because it is one of the only studies and experiments we have on actual humans that shows the effect (mental, physical, psychological, emotional, etc.) that starvation has on people. Likewise, this is one of the most influential studies that completely changed my outlook on food, metabolism, exercise, and health, in general. Even though it might be one of the only experiments we have to go off of, it is still a great tool to use when talking to people who are trying to recover both mentally and physically from a past of restrictive food intake. So, I want to give a quick summary of the whole experiment and shed some light on what we can learn from it from a health stand-point, specifically referring to the necessity of “re-feeding.”

Basically, back during World War II, a doctor, Ancel Keys, decided to see what the effects of starvation would do to a grown, adult man. So, he rounds up 36 participants and tracks their every calorie, movement, thought, and habit over the next few months (blood pressure, cholesterol, electrocardiograms, metabolic studies, etc.). Likewise each man was required to keep their own personal journal to document the experience. He wanted to see what starvation was like for war-torn countries during that time and what a true rehabilitation period would look like.

For the first three months, the men were placed in a standardization period, where they were monitored and allowed 3,200 calories per day. After these first three months, Keys began the “semi-starvation” period, where the men were only allowed ~1,570 calories per day for the next six months (depending on how much weight they were losing). The foods that made up these 1,570 calories mimicked the same foods that European people would

have eaten during the war (potatoes, rutabagas, bread, macaroni, turnips, etc.) Finally, the last period consisted of three months of rehabilitation or “re-feeding,” where the men were given one of four calorie-specific diets to follow to gauge just how many calories are needed to restore someone’s body after starvation. Likewise, throughout this whole experiment, the men were only required to walk 22 miles per week (3.1 miles per day) and just do light housekeeping and administrative duties around the laboratory.¹¹

“Cookbooks, menus, and information bulletins on food production became intensely interesting to many of the men who previously had little or no interest in dietetics or agriculture. The volunteers often reported that they got a vivid vicarious pleasure from watching other persons eat or from just smelling food” - Ancel Keys

(Note: they were NOT doing excessive exercise, endurance training, etc. They were living a normal life with only walking 3.1 miles per day, which is far less than what most of us walk in a day).

During the standardization period, the men reported feeling good, well-fed, and energetic. No complaints at all (they’re eating 3,200 calories at this point, which is common for most grown adult men with moderate activity levels to eat on a daily basis). However, as they began to shift into the “semi-starvation” period, they sit down to their first meal of a small bowl of farina, two pieces of toast with a little bit of jam, some jello, fried potatoes, and a glass of milk, so their calorie intake is severely reduced. Throughout this period they were only fed two meals per day on Monday through Saturday (8am and 6pm), while on Sundays they had a larger meal at 12:45pm.¹² The goal was to lose 25% of their original body weight by the time the six months was up, meaning around 2.5 lbs per week. Their rations were dependent on how close or far they were from that goal each week. Many of the men (interviewed later) said that it was so difficult for them to go through the cafeteria line and see their friend getting five slices of bread, while they were only allowed three (because remember, the goal was to

¹¹ <http://jn.nutrition.org/content/135/6/1347.full.pdf+html>

¹² <http://jn.nutrition.org/content/135/6/1347.full.pdf+html>

keep all the mean losing 2.5 lbs per week, so some got more food and some got less.)

Here's some of the things they experienced during the "semi-starvation" period. I've put some follow-up questions in parentheses to think about for yourself:

- Many of the men complained of being irritable and impatient with each other, due to the limitations of the calories they were consuming. (We always joke about being "hangry," but they really were!)

- They said that even the little things about their friends that barely bothered them before, really annoyed and got to them now. The way they ate, little quirks they had, etc. They were basically annoyed at everything. (Do you find yourself getting annoyed at little things more easily now?)

Christopher Fairburn describes how some of the effects of being underweight (i.e. having a BMI below 17.5) contribute to maintain the eating disorder: being preoccupied with food and eating, becoming socially withdrawn and losing interest in other things. Becoming indecisive, feeling a heightened need for routine and predictability, and feeling heightened sensations of fullness after eating, all help create vicious circles in which the only way to avoid mental or physical discomfort in the short term is by keeping on starving, but the only way to escape these problems in the long term is to regain weight. - *Cognitive Behavior Therapy and Eating Disorders (2008: Chapter 11)*,

- Likewise, they stopped being able to tolerate cold temperatures, always asking for more blankets at night and wanting to keep warmer even in the middle of summertime. (Are you ALWAYS cold, even when others are hot or at a normal temperature?)
- They complained of having less energy and became more "introverted." (Has your personality changed since starting your new diet?)

- They experienced “dizziness, extreme tiredness, muscle soreness, hair loss, decreased coordination, and ringing in the ears.”¹³ (All of these are common issues for people who have severely limited or restricted their calories, yet many of us think this is normal and just every day life!)
- Many of the men were forced to drop out of their university classes because they didn’t have the motivation to follow through with it and the concentration to study. (Do you find yourself unmotivated and unable to concentrate on things other than food?)
- They became obsessed with food. “... eating became a ritual ... Some people diluted their food with water to make it seem like more. Others would put each little bite and hold it in their mouth a long time to savor it. So eating took a long time.” (Does this sound familiar to a lot of us who add volume to food to make it seem like we’re eating more, when we’re really not? Like eating a lot of soups, adding extra water, etc?)
- Some collected cookbooks and recipes, and their reading of choice for the day was a cookbook. (Do you find yourself constantly looking at recipes, pictures of food, scrolling through Instagram staring at food pics, etc?)
- One of the men, Harold Blickenstaff, recalled how he got so frustrated over how his whole life revolved around food: “I don’t know many other things in my life that I looked forward to being over with any more than this experiment. And it wasn’t so much ... because of the physical discomfort, but because it made food the most important thing in one’s life- ... food became the one central and only thing really in one’s life. And life is pretty dull if that’s the only thing. I mean, if you went to a movie, you weren’t particularly interested in the love scenes, but you noticed every time they ate and what they ate.” (IS THIS YOU? Is food your number one priority in life?)
- Several men indicated that right after the “semi-starvation” period began, they all lost their desire for women, dancing, and sex. When the men would go see movies with their dates, they were more interested in the scenes

¹³ <http://jn.nutrition.org/content/135/6/1347.full.pdf+html>

that involved food and eating than they were just spending time with the girl. (Have you noticed your sex drive has dropped or even completely diminished? Do you want to be physically touched less, could care less about intimacy, and find yourself always thinking of food, even when you're with your significant other?)

- The men's appearance began to change (sunken in faces and cheeks, thin stomachs, ribs showing, swelling in their legs, ankles and faces from edema.) Likewise, they experienced skin issues, neurological problems, and anemia. (Do you experience any of these things?)

Basically, their whole life began to revolve around food. They couldn't wait to eat, they savored every bite, they became obsessed with cookbooks and recipes, they lost weight (which was extremely noticeable), and their energy and health was rapidly declining, not to mention their personality.

So, at the end of the six months for "semi-starvation," they then entered the rehabilitation, or "re-feeding period." Each man followed a different calorie-specific diet to see what level of calories were required to completely restore both their physical bodies, but also their minds, when it came to their health. The first group was only allowed 2,200 calories to re-feed on (but Keys soon increased this number when he realized the men were not making any improvements). Keys released this statement, indicating that rehabilitation for a grown man cannot be done correctly and efficiently off of just 2,000 calories per day:

"If you regain weight, not only the physical effects of your current state – being constantly cold and weak, sleeping and concentrating poorly, bad hair and skin – will disappear, but so will the ways in which you currently think and feel. Your body is starved, and your character and your thoughts are dominated by this starvation, and will cease to be so once you allow yourself to regain weight." - Emily Troscianko
www.psychologytoday.com

"Enough food must be supplied to allow tissues destroyed during starvation to be rebuilt . . . our experiments have shown that in an adult man no appreciable rehabilitation can take place on a diet of 2,000 calories a day. The

proper level is more like 4,000 daily for some months. The character of the rehabilitation diet is important also, but unless calories are abundant, then extra proteins, vitamins and minerals are of little value.”¹⁴

*The above quote is VERY important, because he is emphasizing the fact that regardless of your focus on getting in certain vitamins and nutrients, if you’re not getting enough calories then all the rest is of “little value.” Calories are

KEY! Yes, you need vitamins and minerals, but if you’re not eating enough calories, just focusing on those vitamins and minerals isn’t going to do you much good. It’s like taking a multi-vitamin and thinking that all your daily needs and requirements are met, but you’re hardly eating any food... it doesn’t work like that!



“PB&J Pancakes” recipe on pg. 207

As soon as the men began re-feeding, some of them noticed a quick drop in weight, due to the loss of water, or edema, they were carrying around (which is why some of you might notice when you start eating more, right away you might lose some weight). Likewise, they noticed they began less apathetic and less dizzy, but the effects of their low sex drive, being

tired, and weakness was still lagging behind. One man mentioned that he knew he was starting to get better when his sense of humor finally came back.

Even after the three months of rehabilitation or re-feeding, the men still did not feel normal again (YES, 3 MONTHS! It takes a LONG time to heal your body! And remember, they weren’t even “starving” for THAT long compared to most of us doing crazy extreme diets and workouts today!) They experienced intense times of bingeing and eating thousands and thousands of calories, some even having to get their stomach pumped, eating

¹⁴(1945) ‘U’ Experiment Proves Starved People Can’t Be Taught Democracy. Minneapolis Star-Journal. September 26, 1945: 18.

until they were physically sick, and eating so much that their stomachs were packed with food, but they were still wanting more, they were still hungry. Many even said it took up to a year to heal from. As they continued eating, they gained back the much needed weight, averaging about 10% over their normal set point weight (the weight they started the experiment and the weight their body's naturally likes to be at). However, within the next year (and in some cases two years), their body's naturally lost the weight, putting them back down to their pre-experiment set point weights. (This is extremely important because many believe that they will never be able to lose weight, which isn't necessarily true. According to this study, the men gained 10% above their normal set point and then lost that weight over more time, 1-2 years for most. This is why it's so important to give your body A LOT of time to heal and recover. This isn't a quick-fix type of thing. It can take years for some people, so be patient and go slow, but most importantly, LIVE YOUR LIFE IN THE MEANTIME!)

Of the 36 original participants, only 32 finished it successfully. Two of the participants could not stick to their diets and ended up being asked to leave. One of the participants was caught eating milkshakes, stopping at bakeries, and stole food, while the other man was obsessive chewing gum and eating scraps from the garbage. (And just a note here, they were allowed to chew gum throughout the experiment, but some were chewing up to 40 packs per day! Do you find yourself chewing a ton of gum to stave off hunger?) The two latter men suffered severe psychological distress from the semi-starvation period and ended up in a psychiatric ward.

*There is SO much more that these men experienced, both from a physical and mental perspective, so I really encourage you to go read the book and the summaries of the experiment for yourself. You can find tons of articles and info about it on the internet if you're interested.

So, if you're like most people who have ever had restrictive tendencies with food (whether it was conscious or not, meaning whether you consciously said, "Ok, I'm restricting my calories" or even unconscious, meaning you just went on a diet not realizing you would be lowering and restricting your calories), you can probably identify with much of what these

guys went through. But, I want to paint this picture a little more clearer for you (if it's not already clear enough) and make some very important points:

1. These guys were only walking ~3 miles per day (in addition to just their every day activities at work and stuff). Read that again. Only **WALKING** ~3 miles per day. Think about the exercise that you do (or have done in the past). I'm guessing it's not just walking 3 miles per day. It's most likely running, cycling, swimming, cardio, high intensity, weight training, long hours and miles put in every single day, right? So, that is a **BIG** difference. Imagine what they went through just by walking 3 miles per day, then compare that to what your body is going through doing whatever exercise you're doing!
2. They were eating ~1570 calories per day (give or take, depending on their weight loss over the six months). Now, imagine the amount of calories you've restricted yourself down to. 500? 800? 1,000? 1,200? 1,500?
3. They only did this for six months. That's it. This wasn't for a year, three years, etc. like most of us do, it was **JUST SIX MONTHS!** How long have you been under-eating and overexercising for? My guess is that it's way longer than just six months...
4. Now, couple these three ideas together: your extreme exercise + your low calorie intake + the length of time you've been doing this = what? Health? Happiness? **NO WAY!** As you can see, it didn't give either of those things to any of these men! It only left them fatigued, lifeless, starving, and obsessed with food!

I GOT MY PERIOD!
omg it happened!!!! Just as I was getting
anxious 😓 WOW I can't thank you
enough. This really is surreal. Wow. I
remember how I felt when we first had the
consultation. I was desperate for help but
so incredibly scared. I'm so glad I got
your support and made it through. I
finally feel like I can say goodbye to my
ED once and for all and make a LIFE for
myself <3 I'm healthier and happier than
ever. And this is only the beginning of
becoming the greatest version of myself.
Thank you thank you thank you. You
saved me -xoxo Marissa

5. Knowing that they dealt with extreme hunger, weight gain, edema, etc. during the lengthy rehabilitation phase (and their “starvation” period only consisted of six months, ~1570 calories, and just ~3 miles of walking per day), there’s no wonder that YOUR recovery issues are probably twice as intense considering what your body has been through!
6. Do you find yourself adding water or other fillers to your food to make it look like more? Reading modern day cookbooks like scrolling through Instagram, Pinterest, blogs, etc. just to look at food pictures? Have you lost your sex drive? Become more cranky? Lost your personality? Have similar physical symptoms like anemia, fatigue, feeling cold all the time, muscle aches, etc?

Granted, many people will argue that these are “grown men” and that ~1,570 calories per day would be too low for them. But, according to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans in 2010, girls between the ages of 9 and 13, generally require 1,400 to 2,200 calories, while girls between the ages of 14 to 18 usually need 1,800 to 2,400 calories each day during puberty. Active girls going through are going to require more calories than those with low activity levels.¹⁵ Think about that: girls that are 9 years old need up to over 2,000 calories a day. A NINE YEAR OLD GIRL. How old are you and how much are you eating? Boys during puberty need more calories than girls because they have larger body frames and more muscle. Boys between the ages of 9 to 13 need at least 1,600 to 2,600 calories, while teen boys ages 14 to 18 require at least 2,000 to 3,200 calories per day to maintain healthy body weights. Teenage athletes who regularly participate in vigorous sports training may require up to 5000 calories per day. According to Hasbro Children's Hospital, preteens and teens ages 12 to 18 require about 13.6 to 27.3 calories per pound of body weight each day. Using these weight-calorie guidelines, a 13 year old boy, who weighs 115 lbs and is going through puberty needs 1,564 to 3,140 calories, and a 13 year old girl, who weighs 110 lbs and is going through puberty needs between 1,496 and 3,003 calories per

¹⁵ Caprio S, Cline G, Boulware S, Permanente C, Shulman GI, Sherwin RS, et al. Effects of puberty and diabetes on metabolism of insulin-sensitive fuels. Am J Physiol. 1994;266:E885–91. [\[PubMed\]](#)

day depending on activity level.¹⁶ Again, these numbers can even be LOW for some people, depending on how active you are. And I am definitely not saying to count your calories, I'm just using this to show you that young people, specifically those going through puberty, need to be eating a TON of calories (at times close to what the men were eating in the beginning period of the experiment, ~3,200 calories per day!)

Not only would young people experience what these men did from both a physical and mental standpoint, but it seems that their need for recovering is even more important and detrimental to their long-term health. Not getting enough nutrients (or calories, in general) as a child, pre-teen or teen, is the most important cause of growth retardation worldwide. Poverty in the poor countries and self-induced food restriction in the rich countries (or malabsorption and chronic systemic diseases) are the most common causes of stunted growth in younger kids. (Read that again: “self-induced food restriction” - this is you consciously starving yourself. In other poor people who don't have the money to afford food they are starving and are malnourished, but here you are with tons of money and food at your

disposal, but you choose to voluntarily starve yourself! This is backwards!) Primary or secondary malnutrition leads to serious consequences including impaired growth, osteopenia, anemia, and different syndromes caused by deficiency of vitamins, minerals,

essential fatty acids and amino acids, and trace elements.¹⁷ Sadly, many of you reading this book are experiencing this type of malnutrition, not by chance (like those who can't afford enough food every day), but by choice. Opposed to those who are living where they can't get enough food, we are **CHOOSING** to not eat enough food, basically consciously starving ourselves. And lastly, if this isn't the icing on the cake, chronic primary

A 9-year old little girl requires up to 2,200 calories at times... how much have you been eating (or not eating...)?

¹⁶ Dietary Guidelines for Americans. 2010. [Last accessed on 2010 Dec 02]. Available from: <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/publications/dietaryguidelines/2010/policydoc/policydoc.pdf> .

¹⁷ Rogol AD, Roemmich JN, Clark PA. Growth at puberty. J Adolescent Health. 2002;31:192–200. [PubMed] and Forbes GB. Influence of nutrition. In: Forbes GB, editor. Human body composition: Growth, aging, nutrition and activity. New York: Springer-Verlag; 1987. pp. 209–47.

malnutrition during childhood actually regulates the timing of adolescent sexual development in both sexes. It's likewise associated with later age of menarche/menstruation (as well as secondary amenorrhea - or not getting your period).¹⁸ So, the more malnourished you are as a pubescent girl or guy, the later your sexual and reproductive hormones are going to develop, which gets even scarier when you're talking about secondary amenorrhea (loss of your period which is what this whole book's about!)

I hope you can see the devastating effects that these men went through and how what you are doing to your body correlates and mimics this whole "starvation experiment" as a whole. Don't turn your body into a walking experiment. Don't think that what you're doing is healthy or going to make you "fit." That is the furthest thing from the truth! It took a long time for these guys to get back to normal with food, their weight, and their health, but it is totally doable, if you will follow your hunger signals (and they'll be strong!), let your body rest, be patient, and take it one day at a time!

¹⁸Kulin HE, Bwibo N, Mutie D, Santner S. The effect of chronic childhood malnutrition on pubertal growth and development. Am J Clin Nutr. 1982;36:527-36. [\[PubMed\]](#)

Do You Have “Orthorexia?”

Maybe you’ve heard of Orthorexia, maybe you haven’t. It’s a relatively new word floating around regarding eating disorders, health food, and restrictive tendencies in both girls and guys alike. What is it? Basically, Orthorexia is when someone has an unhealthy obsession with healthy foods. Sounds kinda backwards, doesn’t it? How can you have an unhealthy relationship with something healthy? Well, that’s the interesting part. It’s basically a fixation on “righteous/healthy eating.” You will only eat certain foods that you, personally, have deemed as “healthy,” and you won’t come close to touching anything that doesn’t fit on that list. Each day is a new day for you to eat better, cleaner, purer, and more healthier than the day before. Sadly, if you “slip up,” you punish yourself in one way or another (you cleanse, use laxatives, fast, exercise excessively, detox, use “skinny teas,” take diuretics, etc.). Your self-esteem becomes so wrapped up in purity of your diet that you actually feel more confident in yourself if you’re “good” that day. But, when you slip up, your confidence is shattered. You’re so focused on your healthy foods that it ends up getting in the way and causing problems in other areas of your life...

Sadly, Orthorexia isn’t, at this moment, classified as a legit “Eating Disorder” by the DSM-5, but it most certainly shows some disordered eating patterns and it’s causing a lot of problems for a lot of people. The problem is, it is so easily masked and hidden, even from your own perspective. Maybe you started out on a new fitness or health journey and you innocently decided to change up your diet a little bit. Grilled chicken instead of fried, whole wheat bread instead of white, and egg whites instead of whole eggs. However, as time passed, you’ve noticed yourself getting even more strict on what foods you consider to be healthy and unhealthy. Maybe you’ve even seen that the foods you used to think were really healthy are now on your “Do Not Touch” list. Also, what you consider healthy might be different from what another Orthorexic considers healthy. Each person with these tendencies makes up their own rules regarding food. You might find peanut butter healthy, but someone else with Orthorexia might have peanut butter on their forbidden list, and this can happen with any and every food, from vegetables, fruits, grains, meats, dairy, etc. (You won’t eat a banana, but

another person might live off of them). You can see how this can start to get out of control.

And it's difficult to catch because our culture and society is ultra-obsessed with health and fitness, always pushing us to make better choices, stay away from junk foods, choose healthier options, be thin and fit, etc. So, many people with Orthorexia slide by a lot longer than someone with Anorexia or Bulimia because it's not as noticeable (a lot like Exercise Addiction!) This serious illness is most of the time undergirded by the fact that you're just a "healthy eater," so no one says anything (unless it gets extreme). Plus, it can easily be explained away as, "Well, I'm just eating

healthy" or "I'm a health freak/health nut." People might even praise you for your discipline and drive when it comes to your food choices, making comments like "I could never eat as healthy as you! It takes too much discipline!" This ends up fueling the

Eating "healthy foods" can be good, but taking it too far can be dangerous!

disorder even more because you feel like you are well above others and they just aren't "as healthy" as you (which is actually far from the truth). Remember the unhealthy obsession with healthy foods?

A big part about Orthorexia is its connection to "Dietary Cognitive Restraint." What is this? Basically, this is the level of which you consciously keep yourself from eating certain foods in order to maintain a low body weight or in an effort to lose weight. For example, let's say you have two girls that are identical twins, they are exactly the same (just go along with me here). They go to a party and as soon as they walk in the door, they see a big plate of cookies. The first girl, Susie, who thinks she's fat and needs to lose weight, has heard cookies are bad for her and she needs to stop eating them, sees the plate of cookies and automatically wants them right away. However, because she's on a diet now and she isn't "allowed" to have them, she consciously tells herself, "no." She really wants them, even keeps staring at them, and can hardly focus on having fun and talking with her friends. She keeps having little conversations in her head: "Gosh, those cookies look good, but I know they're so bad for me. I wonder how many calories are in them... Maybe I could have just one, would that be bad? No, stick to your

diet, Susie! Have some self-control!” This goes on for a while until finally she gives in and eats the cookie. On the Cognitive Dietary Restraint scale, she is considered being “High.” She constantly sees a food she wants, thinks about it over and over again and “restrains” herself from that food, and eventually gives in. Basically, she is thinking about that food way too much, causing her to have a “high” level of Cognitive Dietary Restraint.

Debbie, her identical twin sister, is a little different. As soon as they walk in the door and see the plate of cookies, Debbie says, “Oh, awesome, cookies! I want one!” She grabs a cookie, eats it, enjoys it, and spends the rest of the time talking, catching up with friends, and enjoying the party. She didn’t even think twice about the cookies. She saw it, wanted one, got it, ate it, and went on with her life. There was no, “Is this bad? should I cheat on my diet? Will this make me fat?” She didn’t allow the cookie to control her in any way at all, she gave no power to the cookie. In Debbie’s case, her level of Cognitive Dietary Restraint is very low. She isn’t restraining herself from foods at all.

How much do you fret over and think about keeping yourself from eating certain foods?

The reason why I bring this up is because this isn’t just about who will eat the cookie and who won’t. This goes much deeper than this, even affecting your hormones, your period, and your bone density! As we spoke about in the Exercise Addiction chapter, when your hormones are thrown off, your bone density suffers and pays the price. It’s all connected! It’s not just, “oh, I stopped getting my period, oh well...” No, it’s more like, “I stopped getting my period, I’m stressed over everything I put in my mouth, my bones are thinning (whether I realize it or not), and my stress levels are super high!!!” So, what happens when you stress over the food you eat (or don’t eat)? Well, there have been numerous studies done that show that women who scored high levels not the Cognitive Dietary Restraint scale had lower levels of bone mineral density and bone mineral content than those with low levels. Not to mention, those with higher levels of Cognitive Dietary Restraint also had more incidences of amenorrhea (missing periods) than those with lower CDR. Finally, those with high levels of CDR also

excreted more cortisol (your stress hormone), causing them to be more miss their periods and lose bone density. THIS IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT!¹⁹

Now, I know you're probably sitting there saying, "So, you're telling me to just go eat cookies and other foods that I know I shouldn't be eating all the time?! Isn't that unhealthy and isn't that why there's so many people out there with health and weight issues today??" Well, not exactly. Obviously, the level of when you eat healthy food vs. staying away from food you know is

bad for you is a *balancing act*. The point I'm trying to make is just chill out a little bit. You don't have to see everything in black and white. The goal is to not let food control you to the point to where that's all you think about all the time and you can't even live your life because of it (Debbie couldn't even enjoy the party because she was so focused on keeping herself from eating a cookie!) And to be honest with you, this isn't just about the idea of eating "junk foods." For many

Hey Audra!!! I woke up today and after 2 and a half years with no period....BAM! There it was!!! Thank you so much for making all of your videos and your Instagram posts. Without you, I would have not discovered what it means to love myself again and that food is not the enemy. I stopped exercising on April 11th and began to really eat as much as my body desired. And here I am today on July 30th, with my first period since March 2013. I AM SO HAPPY. THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! - Whitney

of you, you've created such a prison for yourself that even eating a piece of bread, some peanut butter, more than one piece of fruit, or anything that isn't on "your diet" is causing you to have high levels of CDR. So, this isn't just about junk food or unhealthy food, this is about ANY food. Any food at all that you constantly are keeping yourself from eating and really driving yourself crazy over falls into this. It's not just about going to eat cookies or ice cream, it's also about eating more fatty foods (if you're afraid of that), or more protein-rich foods (if you've been told protein is bad), or more carb-filled foods. Somewhere along the way you started to categorize foods as "good and bad" and now you have to figure out how to deal with that. You

¹⁹ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16799147>
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12781168>
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15215776>

have to find this happy-medium for yourself. Take a deep look at your current eating routine and ask yourself if you could chill out a little bit with all the rules, restrictions, boundaries, and guidelines ESPECIALLY if these things are messing with you mentally. If eating healthy doesn't cause you any issues at all, that's fine! But if you're reading this book and if you're 100% honest with yourself, I'll bet there's some level of chilling out that needs to take place in your life in one way or another. You figure that out for yourself and find a good balance that works for you :) And the funny thing is, when you do finally chill out, you're going to feel SO MUCH BETTER, especially mentally! This is why I say to give yourself some of your favorite foods every single day. For me, doing this has literally changed my whole outlook on food, "healthy food," and my whole relationship with food, in general. By doing this you're not constantly thinking about them all the time, eventually ending in a huge binge or even higher CDR. Have a cookie or even a few bites of a cookie every day is far better for you both mentally and physically than continually restricting yourself from it or ending up bingeing out on it!

Are You at a Greater Risk for Developing Orthorexia?

There's a few tell-tale signs that you can look out for to recognize if someone might be more at-risk than others:

- You want to keep yourself extremely safe from getting sick, having poor health, or getting a disease
- You have a strong desire to be thin or stay thin no matter what
- You are constantly looking for ways to improve your self-esteem
- You want to escape from your fears or stresses in your life
- You use food to create your identity ("health nut, healthy eater" on a certain diet)
- You have a strong compulsion for control (not just with food, but in many areas of your life)
- You search for spirituality and meaning of life through food (you have a deep "connectedness" with food)

Take the Quiz!

So, do you have Orthorexia? Well, let's find out. This quiz below is something that you can read through and answer yes or not to, or maybe even "a little." I want you to read each question and be EXTREMELY honest with yourself. Even better, if you have someone close to you that you don't mind sharing this with, ask them the questions about you and see what their response is (usually others can tell us more about ourselves than we can!) And just like the Exercise Addiction Quiz, I encourage you to come back to this quiz every now and then to reevaluate where you're at with this. So, let's get started.

Audra,
I GOT MY PERIOD!!!! Like for real! Like a full, normal period! I can't even express how happy I am! I never thought I would be so excited to get a period in my life. And, I finally feel good and love who I am and my body even though I'm not as lean as I was. It's such an amazing feeling to know that all the work and sacrifice is paying off. I'm not gonna change a thing, and just going to keep moving forward. Thank you so much, Audra, for all your encouraging words and helping me and so many! I would not be where I am without you, so thank you! Kendall:)

1. Do you ever wish you could just eat and not worry about the quality of your food?

Do you ever just think, "I wish I could just go to the grocery store and not freak out about whether the food is organic or not, or cross-contaminated, free-range, 100% organic, doesn't have preservatives, and just buy the food I really want and go home!"? Do you ever just wish you had freedom from these types of thoughts?

2. Do you ever wish you could spend less time on food and more time just living your life?

Do you feel like the amount of time you spent prepping, planning, cooking, scheduling, weighing, counting, tracking, and thinking about food take away from the rest of your life?

3. Do you spend more than 3 hours a day thinking about food?

This would include cooking, shopping for food, reading about different diets, reading about your specific diet, researching food, talking about food with friends and family, watching cooking tv shows just for the food, reading cookbooks, reading cooking magazines, etc.

4. Do you plan out tomorrow's food today?

Do you think a lot about upcoming meals and planning menus? Maybe you have already planned out what you're going to eat tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, this weekend, or even next week or month, and sometimes next year! Do you plan and schedule and think about a "cheat day" all week long?

5. Do you feel guilty when you stray from your diet?

Many times those with Orthorexic tendencies really beat themselves up if they get off their diets at all. Maybe you feel really down, depressed, frustrated, anxious, angry, upset, etc.

6. Are you constantly researching and looking for ways that foods are unhealthy for you?

Do you spend a lot of time trying to figure out what the worst thing about a food is? Maybe it has gluten, causes premature aging, has less vitamins, can cause weight gain, etc.

7. Does it seem too far-fetched to eat one meal cooked by someone else - just one meal! - while not trying to control it in any way?

Do you find yourself constantly anxious and stressed out if you're unable to cook, someone else cooks and offers you food, or even going out to eat?

8. Do you view yourself as "healthier" than everyone around you and you can't understand why they would eat such unhealthy food?

Maybe every time you're with your friend or family, you are always eating your "healthy" food, while they eat their "unhealthy" food, and you just sit there thinking, "They have no idea how bad that food is for their bodies. I'm so glad I'm so healthy!"



Do you have an unhealthy obsession with "healthy" foods?

something you're still eating that could be potentially harmful or unhealthy for you...

10. Do you care more about how healthy the food is than how it actually tastes?

Maybe you don't even really enjoy the food you're eating (it's bland, tasteless, and dry), but you've convinced yourself it is so healthy so you find pleasure in the fact that it's healthy, not that it's enjoyable.

11. Have you seen that as the quality of your food gets better, the quality of your life, relationships, hobbies, passions, etc. get worse?

Do you find that as your diet keeps getting more and more intense, that other areas in your life that used to give you so much joy and pleasure, are slowly starting to diminish? Maybe there's strained relationships, you stopped

doing your favorite hobby, and all you can focus on is the healthfulness of your food.

12. Do you say “no” to the fun things you once enjoyed, so that you can stick to your diet 100%?

Maybe you’ve quit spending so much time with your friends or going out to eat with them because they go to restaurants or eat food that you consider unhealthy. Or maybe you turn down invitations to hang out with people because you know less than perfect food will be involved.

13. Do you find yourself thinking of food even while you’re in the middle of another important or even attention-grabbing type activity?

Perhaps you’re in class or at work and all you think about is food and when you get to eat again. Or maybe you’re at the movies, a sporting event or play and you can’t even focus on the event because you’re thinking of food, specifically healthy food.

14. Do you feel more in control and better about yourself when you stick to your diet perfectly?

Do you get this sense of accomplishment if you have followed your diet 100%? Even if everything else in your life is falling apart (job, relationships, stress, etc.), you still get a sense of peace and happiness knowing that you stuck to your diet that day.

15. Do you constantly weigh your food, track or count your calories or macronutrients, obsess over if you got enough vitamins that day depending on what your calorie-counting app says, etc.?

Many people find themselves trapped when it comes to calories, macros, vitamins, etc. and feel that they must continue tracking these things to be sure they are eating the right foods, in the right amounts, and in the right ratios. There is an **OVERWHELMING** sense of fear to let go of control and just eat normally without knowing exactly everything you’re putting into your body.

16. Does your diet isolate you from your friends and family?²⁰

You are so strict and rigid about the foods you'll eat that you can literally only eat at home. When you go out to eat, the majority of the restaurants don't have anything you consider healthy so you either 1. get very annoyed and anxious because you worry what's in the food and you can't even enjoy it 2. you bring your own food in tupperware or baggies 3. you eat at home before hand and then go meet your friends and 4. you decline the invitation altogether and eat alone at home.

Audra!!!

I GOT IT! I finally got my period back!!! It's been 9 long months of feeling like a total alien, but it's finally back! At some points I was really doubting myself, but listening to my body has been the best step I ever made! Sure gaining a few pounds is annoying at first, but not having my period was my biggest stress. I feel like a huge boulder has been lifted off my shoulders! My mom is so thankful I found you! I know it was God's plan for me all along!...

THANKS YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU!!!

**God bless you Audra!
Hayley**

I'm sure that might have been both a very introspective and maybe even painful to go through, but I believe it is very eye-opening and is a great tool to see just where you fall on this spectrum. There seems to be a trend and commonality among people that tend towards orthorexic tendencies and it's the fact that most of them are very extreme people, even in other areas of their lives. Maybe you see everything in black or white, yes or no, good or bad, right or wrong, 0% or 100%, all A's or fail, top of the class or bottom, etc. There is no in-between. So, if you find yourself tending towards these types of extremes in other areas of your life, be very careful not to let that bleed over into

your diet and food choices. This happens slowly, yet quickly. One day you're

²⁰ Quix adapted from <http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/orthorexia-nervosa> and <http://www.foodrenegade.com/am-i-an-orthorexic/>

“making better choices,” and the next you’re only allowing yourself steamed broccoli and apples to eat. Be careful!

Some of my best tips for overcoming these types of tendencies are below:

1. Stop being a control freak. Let other people do things for you (let someone else cook you a meal, let someone else pick the restaurant you’re going to eat at, let someone else choose the time you’re going to eat, etc.). By taking yourself out of the driver’s seat, it frees up your mind to chill out a little bit and go with the flow. Will this be easy the first time around? No, it probably won’t. But, with time, it **DOES GET EASIER**, I promise!
2. Like I said, yes, it does get easier, but that is only if you are up for letting go of that control and taking the proactive steps you need to in order to free yourself from these thoughts. Do whatever you gotta do to take away the controlling aspects of your life. Unfollow certain people on social media, stop reading certain blogs and books, stop listening to certain YouTube videos, stop doing anything that is keeping you in this mindset.
3. When it comes to the food, exercise, and body image specifically, stop checking ingredients, nutrition labels, counting calories, tracking macros, checking your vitamin intake, weighing your food, etc. **THIS IS UP TO YOU**. If all of this stuff is literally driving you crazy (maybe it’s not, but if it is!), you’ve got to make some changes. You have to be the one to delete your calorie apps on your phone. You have to be the one to throw away your food scale and measuring cups. You have to be the one to **NOT** look at nutrition labels. You have to be the one to throw out your bathroom scale, stop taking pictures of yourself, stop looking in every mirror you walk by, stop comparing yourself to other girls you see on the internet, stop comparing yourself to your friends or other girls you pass on the street, stop looking up the restaurant ingredients and calories, stop trying to fit into clothes that don’t fit you. Basically, you get the gist: **YOU HAVE TO STOP**. Nobody can do it for you - this is totally in your hands!

4. A trick for nutrition labels is to 1. not look 2. cut out the label if its on a box or bag and put the food into another container 3. have someone else put the food in another container for you so you're not tempted to look 4. cook your food in bigger batches (not just meal-by-meal) so you can't visually guess and see how much of a portion you're eating 5. let other people cook for you and eat foods that are family style or buffet/ casserole dish-style 6. go out to eat **WAY** more often (not just for the food and the fact that you don't know what all the calories are, but mostly for the fun and to get you out of the house to start living again!).
5. If you're one of those people that just *has to eat* at a specific time on the dot, you've gotta break this. Make yourself eat at various times during the day. If your rule has been to eat at 8am, 10am 12pm, 3pm, 5pm and then you're done and you can't eat again and if you miss one of these times you'll go crazy - make yourself stop this! And again, only **YOU** can do this. Eat at 9am then 11:30am then 2pm then 6pm then 10pm. Mix it up, because remember, **NO** routines. You want to be as flexible and as free from all this as possible.
6. Get rid of your calorie burn-counting devices or steps-in-a-day trackers. They aren't necessary at this point in your life. You want to focus on conserving calories, not burning them!
7. Get the idea of "dieting" out of your mind. There's no need to stick a specific "diet" with tons of rules and guidelines (and this includes your own little personal diet that you make for yourself!) Eating healthy, wholesome food is great, but there has to be a balance to where you get far away from extremes!

Your mental connection to foods are more telling about your eating habits than the actual foods you eat! A granola bar for one person might be a quick go-to breakfast with no thought behind it, but for the next person it could be a way to restrict! It's still just a granola bar, but the thoughts of the two people are what matters. How do you view food?

Basically, in a nutshell, you have to let go of control and set yourself free from this. Purposely putting yourself in uncomfortable situations is going to help you more than anything. Make yourself do things that are out of your routine or out of your little bubble. This is the only way you're going to break these bad habits and get your life back! You can do this and you'll feel SO much better when you do! :)

And I want to make the differentiation between eating healthy and Orthorexia, because I believe there is a FINE line. Yes, we want to eat healthy foods, right? We want to give our bodies the nutrients and minerals it needs, true. BUT, the difference between those who can eat healthy and not have severe issues like Orthorexia is all how it is effecting their mind. That is the key. I'm sure you know plenty of people personally that eat a very healthy diet and you might even wonder, "Why don't they obsess over food so much? Why is it so easy for them? They eat healthy, so I'm going to do like them!" And the thing is they *aren't* mentally obsessed with it - there is a big difference.

For example, let's say you have two girls, Susie and Debbie. Susie wakes up Monday morning and she is running late for work. She gets out of bed, hops in the shower, rushes around to grab her stuff and get out the door, and totally skips breakfast, but grabs a granola bar to eat on the way to work because it's fast and she's running late. She is more concerned about getting to work and not losing her job than she is eating breakfast. In her mind, she'll figure that out later, but right now she's gotta get to work! Likewise, though she may grab a granola bar and eat pretty "healthy" most of the time, if she's ever offered something not on her diet, she can accept or reject depending on if she wants it or not. It's not a big deal for her. She'll eat it and move on with life, or she'll pass on it and move on with life. Either way, there's not much thought that goes into it. She understands there's more to life than a "perfect diet" and will enjoy herself as she desires. Debbie on the other hand, wakes up Monday morning, she's hungry because she stopped eating the night before around 6:30pm, but she has a rule that all she can have for breakfast is a 150-calorie granola bar because that is "healthy" in her mind. She consciously tells herself, "This is healthy so I have to do this every day. If I get off my plan then I'll need to back off calories or skip a meal later in the day or better yet, I'll do extra exercise to make up for it. That way I can lose

fat and be toned and be super healthy!” Not to mention, unlike Susie, Debbie FREAKS OUT anytime she is confronted with something that doesn’t fit on

her “healthy diet.” The invitation to go out to eat, go to someone’s house, be offered something off her diet, or be in a situation where she’s not in control of her food intake really bothers her and throws her into a complete tailspin. She NEVER allows herself to stray from her “healthy diet” and if she does there’s always some type of self-induced punishment involved (be it fasting, skipped meals, exercise, pills, laxatives, skinny teas, self-hate, and now her whole day is ruined!)

Now, did they both eat a 150-calorie granola bar for breakfast? Yes, they did. But what’s the difference? Susie had NO mental connection to it. If anything, had she woken up on time, she would’ve had a big breakfast and enjoyed her morning routine of watching the news while she made her favorite breakfast. However, Debbie, on the other hand, CONSCIOUSLY chose the 150-calorie granola bar and even stopped eating earlier the night before all in an effort to consciously restrict/lose weight/“be healthy,” in her mind. There is a BIG difference here. They did the same thing, but the thought process behind the two girls was totally different.

“I just wanted to say a BIG thank you to you again!!! I wrote you a few month back saying that I got my period back. It was in February and only lasted for one day. Since then I haven't had my period again and I was so confused and disappointed (thinking of listening to my doctor and taking pill again as I was really scared that I won't be able to get it back naturally). But I listened to you and stucked with your recommendations. And guess what? Today I got my period again!! I'm so so happy and grateful for you! I wish all doctors knew that natural way of getting your period back after ED and restrictions and not just prescribed you some pill to mask the problem...”

And also, besides getting my period back, your videos helped me so much with my ED! I feel so free now! I don't care about my weight anymore at all. I feel so great the way I am now. I remember last year being 10kg lighter but so miserable and unconfident so it wasn't worth it at all. I'm so happy to put all this weight issue behind and focus on much more important things, like actually LIVING and enjoying my life!

Thank you, Audra! You are truly amazing person!” <3 - Natalia

This is the same thing for you and the girl you know who eats healthy and doesn't have Orthorexic issues with food. Is she choosing "healthy food?" Yes, she is. But what's the difference? She's not *obsessed* and constantly consciously thinking of it all the time like you are. So, where are you at **MENTALLY** with food? Is it just another healthy meal for you and you move on with your life? Or, is it that you constantly obsess, fear, worry, get anxious, and plan every single little thing? Is there any freedom or is it all controlled, like literally, *everything* is controlled? Will you only eat certain foods and straying from this list of foods freaks you out (even the thought of it?) Do you only go to certain restaurants because they're "safe?" This is something you have to work through personally and really take a long, deep introspective look into your mind, habits, and connection to food. There is nothing wrong with eating healthy food (I mean, yeah, it's good for you!!). But there is something definitely wrong with being completely obsessed with it to the extent that it ruins and controls your life. This is when things go bad. So keep a close eye on this, be honest with yourself, and always remember that freedom is better than restriction and obsession any day!

Why Diets and Workouts Haven't Worked for You

So, I'm not going to talk about why diets and exercise plans fail because people can't stick to them and we need more discipline, blah blah blah. Truth be told, it's probably the complete opposite for you. Instead, I'm going to talk about it from a different perspective. Most likely, in your case you stuck to the diet and/or exercise plan great... actually TOO great. Too perfect. Too strict. Too intense. Too extreme. And not only that, but you most likely added more to it. You said to yourself, "Ok, if the diet says to cut out XYZ to be healthy, then I'll do that, but I'll also cut out ABC and that will make me even healthy!" Or, when it comes to exercise, you read somewhere that doing 20-30 minutes of moderate cardio a few days a week is healthy for weight maintenance, weight loss, and heart health. So, you said to yourself, "Ok, if 20-30 minutes of moderate cardio is good a few days a week, then I'll be even 'healthier' or lose weight quicker (or whatever your goal was) and instead I'll do an hour of high intensity cardio, plus weights, plus I won't take a day off and I'll try to burn more calories throughout the day as much as I can." Sound familiar? In your quest for health, weight loss, toning up, getting healthier, etc. you took things too far. Were your intentions good? Sure, they weren't bad - all you wanted to do was reach your goals, right? There's nothing wrong with that is there? No, there isn't. All of these things are totally normal, honorable, and realistic goals. But, these are all goals that, when reached correctly and are able to be kept for the long-run, have to be reached slowly, in a healthy way, and with the right mindset behind them.

Here's the thing: diet and exercise are objective things. It doesn't matter what "diet" you go on, all of them are simply objective. It's just a diet. Same thing for exercises: be it running, HIIT training, weight-lifting, Crossfit, workout videos, etc. They're all objective. So, what goes wrong? Why are you here today reading this book after your diet and/or exercise plan was supposed to be "so healthy?"

Well, it's really simple actually. Yes, you had good intentions to lose weight, get fit, get abs, get stronger, look better, or whatever. I'll give you that. We all have our own goals and desires when it comes to our health, looks, and physique and that's not such a bad thing. But, what IS a bad thing is when we take our goals (no matter what they are) and use these diets and exercise plans to our advantage, in an extremely subjective, manipulative way. We take a diet and say, "Alright, I need to lose weight. I'm going to go on this diet and lose weight." Is that so bad? Wanting to lose weight (especially if you need to)? No, it's not. But what is bad is the fact that you are taking that objective diet and using it to extremes in your own subjective way. Same goes for exercises. You decide you want to start running, but you end up taking it to extremes. It's not the running's fault, it's your subjective approach to that particular exercise.

"I just wanted to give you a short update after my 2nd period. My water retention is gone, especially from around my stomach.

I'm currently at my heaviest weight and honestly I don't care at all anymore. I really don't, I feel like I look good matter what! I faced so much fear foods and really, I could care less about the nutritional label, calories, carbs, fat etc. I'll just eat what I want, according to my appetite. My libido is still high, but my extreme hunger is still somewhat prevalent - I'm still eating through it though.

I just have one question in regards to exercise and I need your advice!

You see, my friends have been quite interested in weight training and wanted me to join as it would be something we'd do together as a group of friends. I told them I wanted to wait another month or so - at least until I got my 3rd consecutive period. I was wondering if you think it would be okay for me to participate? Obviously this isn't going to be for every day, and I'd DEFIANTLY don't want to go super intense, especially in the beginning - I'd never want to lose my period again which is why I'm never doing HIITS or fasted cardio EVER again. However, I do want to incorporate a bit of movement in my life and it's been something I always wanted to try. I just wanted some advice before starting anything, thank you Audra!" - Angela

Basically, there's thousands of different diets and exercises you can do out there. Walk into any book store and you find tons and tons of books on these things to choose from. Now, are these diets and exercises the problem? Is eating a vegan diet bad? Is doing HIIT training unhealthy? Does every runner have an exercise addiction? Is IIFYM inherently evil? Is counting calories always wrong? Does every girl who does Crossfit have a problem? The answer to these questions is IT DEPENDS. It's all about how these things are affecting you both physically and mentally. Because here's the reality, some people actually can do IIFYM and it doesn't effect them negatively at all. But, for the next girl it's her worst nightmare: all the numbers, rules, regulations, etc. drives her crazy. She get too obsessed, has to weigh out every single little piece of food and ends up feeling like she's in a prison. But with the first girl she actually feels somewhat free and it's second nature for her. It has helped her reach her weight loss goals (or even weight gain goals) and she's lost weight/gained weight, lowered her blood pressure and is finally enjoying life again. Was IIFYM bad in that situation? No, it actually helped the second girl, but the first girl, not so much. Same goes with weight training. For one girl it is something that she just enjoys - if she misses a few days it's no big deal, it doesn't control her life or get in the way of her relationships, sanity, or overall happiness in life; it's not an obsession for her. But for the next girl, she's so obsessed with being at the gym that she spends hours there, never misses a day, passes on hanging out with her friends to go workout, etc. Obviously you can see there's a HUGE difference between the two girls in these situations. So, I want to be very clear that I'm not putting off the vibe that any and every diet, exercise routine, etc. is EVIL and you have to stay far, far away. But, what I AM saying is that you need to do some serious personal reevaluations of yourself, your intentions, and methods and see just how much all of this is affecting you. I'm advising you to chill out a little bit. If counting calories is ruining your life, I'm saying chill out and stop. If it doesn't affect you in a negative way (be honest with yourself about this!), then keep a careful eye on it moving forward to be sure it doesn't get out of control. If running x amount of miles every day is messing with your mental and physical health, take a step back and chill out. Get the point?

So, how are you looking at the diet or exercise routine you've been doing? Are you a slave to it? Do you even enjoy it? Have you taken an

objective diet or exercise routine and totally manipulated it to use for your own subjective desires in an unhealthy way? And the same thing can be said of some other things I'll talk about in this book. For example, is running ALWAYS bad? No, it's not. BUT, it is bad when you're using it as a way to burn calories excessively, you're addicted to it, you're not getting your period and you're stressed out. That's when I would say, "Back off the running!" Does it mean you can't ever run again? No, it means take a break, do some reevaluating, and find a HEALTHY BALANCE with it (or just don't run again if that's that negative for you).

So much of this is all about just that: balance. I will explain more about this later in the book, but my favorite quote when it comes to diet and exercise is, "Extremes are easy, balance takes practice." And I think this quote is extremely helpful and necessary for the perfectionistic, OCD-like, super disciplined people who are most likely reading this book. The second part of the quote "balance TAKES practice" is so true. This is not a passive type of thing. This is active. It is up to YOU to practice this balance. And that's where everything has gone wrong. You've read about some diet, started some exercise, or a combination of the two and you have taken all the objective approaches to these things and taken them out of balance (or maybe the diet or exercise was totally out of balance to begin with, but you ended up falling it for whatever reason!) Regardless, BALANCE is the key.

Hiya ♥

I just wanna say thank you for everything you did for me.

After almost a year of not having a period i had it back today, after 20 days of following your recommendations, and i just feel so happy i found you.

Keep doing what you re doing, you re amazing!!

***Lots of love,
Marilena***

With some things, there might not be any balance at all because you just need to stay away from that thing 100%. It is up to you to find out what things you need to stay far away from and not even bring the idea of balance into. For example, there's no point in trying to "have balance" when it comes

to counting calories if you just *know* it drives you crazy. Some things you will be better off staying away from completely, but that is totally up to you to figure out. My biggest tip with figuring out what these things are that you need to find a balance with is to keep a notepad or jot it down in your phone any and every time you start to do something that causes you some type of anxiety, you find yourself super controlling over, or that really irritates you when it doesn't turn out the way you want it to. For example, let's say you're doing an exercise program that you just *dread* doing and get super anxious about beforehand. That area of your life needs some serious thinking through and balance. Say you're really into fixing your own food and it has to be perfect every single time, eaten at the same time, even with the same utensils and you are super controlling with this. You need to find balance. Say you freak out when you wake up and it's raining outside and you were supposed to go run this morning. It literally ruins your day and now you're super irritated. Find balance.

So, whatever you're doing in your life that is causing you to hate, stress, worry, get anxious over, etc., write it down and start to make some changes. There will be some things you can alter a little and find that balance with, while there will be other things you need to just get away from completely. You decide. Maybe you need to stay away from running completely, or IIFYM, or certain diets, or whatever. But that is up for YOU to decide. Maybe you need to get away from certain things for a while and then come back to them to see if your perspective and the way these things affect you have changed. Maybe you started a workout routine or diet and it didn't go so well at first because you were super obsessed with it. So, take some time off and away from it and come back to it to see it with a fresh new look. If it still causes issues, back off again **DON'T FORCE ANYTHING** just because you think you have to, you feel guilty, others are pressuring you into it, or whatever. You need to do some serious soul-searching and focus on YOU. Stop worrying about what everyone else is doing. Stop worrying about the fact that Susie can count her calories, be on a vegetarian diet, do HIIT training, and still live her life happy and care-free. Stop worrying about the fact that Debbie doesn't count calories, eats whatever she wants, only exercises a few times a week, but is still "skinny" and happy. Or maybe you see a girl on Instagram that follows a certain diet and when you try to do that diet it all falls apart. It works great for her, but when you do it, for

whatever reason, it just doesn't work, feel right, makes you feel awful, restricted, stressed, and too obsessed with food. Just because that way of eating didn't work for you, doesn't mean it's absolutely horrible - it just didn't work for you! And not to mention, maybe it might work for you later on down the road, but don't force it now, there's no point! Truth be told, you've probably spent more time worrying about and thinking about what all these other girls are doing, how they're able to do it, and how you could change things with your diet and exercise to look like them. If you had spent half as much time focusing on yourself and what YOUR body was actually trying to

tell you (both from a food and exercise perspective), you'd be much further along by now.

"Hi Audra, My name is Sarah and I'm from London. I just wanted to email you to say a huge thank you as I got my period back yesterday! I haven't had a consultation with you but I have been following you on Instagram and watched all your YouTube videos. Your videos and advice had been the main reason I have been able to get my period back..." - Sara

So many girls want to know why it is that their friend can run 10 miles a day and eat healthy, but when she tries to do that she ends up with all these problems. Well, first off, don't compare yourself or your body to anyone else - you'll end up doing this for the rest of your life and being

miserable, so stop! Just focus on yourself! And second, seeing that you are completely different from your friend, if you took it to the extremes of cutting calories, spending hours working out, and extreme dieting, you're just setting your metabolism up for issues. Had you have done it in the right way - slow and steady with plenty of rest, rehabilitation from your workouts, stress-free, and not getting all caught up in the whole process, you'd probably be at your goals right now. I say all this just to make the clarification that not *everything* in the health and fitness community is "bad" (obviously there's a lot of debate about which diet is right, what is the best way to workout, etc.), but I'm just making the point that these things are all objective. When we bring out subjective desires and goals to these diets, that's when things can go wrong. Because let's face it, not every person who does endurance athletics is suffering. But on the same token, there's plenty of people who are

into endurance training that **NEED TO STOP!** Does that mean that endurance exercise is bad in and of itself? No, it means the person who came to that exercise took it too far, didn't do it correctly, or became way too obsessed with it.

So, the reason things have gone awry in your situation is because you took it to the extremes. And here's the good news: you can be healthy, eat healthy foods, move your body, etc. But you have to do it in the right way. And even before that, you have to let your body heal 100% before trying to do all these things you want. You can't get around the healing process. The more and more you try to side-step it, the more frustrations or problems you're going to have. There's nothing wrong with wanting to be healthy and in shape and active - we all want that, don't we? But the problem is when we do it in the wrong ways, take it to the extreme, and don't know what we're really doing. So, because this has happened to you in one way or another, I wouldn't spend anymore time frustrated or upset over it - take this time to **HEAL** so you can get on with your life. Let both your mind and body heal so when you come back to wanting to get legit healthy, you know how to do it in the **RIGHT** way. This is why I really encourage you to not fall into any prescribed diets that are super restrictive with tons and tons of rules and regulations anytime soon (or ever again, if they still negatively affect you!) Same goes for exercise plans. The more restricted and confined you feel, the more likely you are to go crazy and have it affect your life in a negative way.

And remember, your mind is extremely important when dealing with this topic. If your mind is constantly obsessing, worrying, doubting, and stressed out over everything that's going in your mouth and when your next workout is and if you miss it you'll just die, then that's when things go wrong. Like I mentioned in the chapter on Orthorexia, some people can be on a certain "diet" or exercise plan and have absolutely no issues with it at all. It's like second nature to them, there's really no thought put into it. But, when you try to do what they're doing, it drives you crazy... literally! All the rules, ins and outs, regulations, etc. feel extremely restrictive on you (though they might not be restrictive for the other person at all) so it causes you to create some bad habits. Does that mean what that other person is doing, be it their diet or exercise routine, is bad? No, it means it's bad for you. So, at the end of the day, there's nothing wrong with trying out what someone else

is doing, but you need to be extremely cautious and really guard yourself on the way that it effects you both mentally and physically. If things start going wrong or seem a little off you need to change some things up. Regardless, right now you don't need to be worrying about any type of diet or workout but rather worrying about healing from all the dieting and working out you've been doing to yourself for months and years in the past. I just want to throw it out there that these diets and workouts aren't "evil" in and of themselves, but rather they turn bad when we use them in the wrong way, for the wrong reasons, and in the wrong circumstances. So, be careful, be honest with yourself, let your body heal, take care of yourself, and find balance.

Signs That Your Period is Right Around the Corner

For many of you, depending on how long you've been without a period (months or even years), it's easy to forget just what having a period actually feels like. Not only that, but also trying to remember the signs and symptoms that our bodies show us that we're about to get our period is not so easy either. So, I want to give you a few things to look out for that will both let you know your period is coming up and also be a type of motivation for you to keep going and not look back - it's almost here! *And a little side note on this - if you feel any of these things, or even if you THINK you feel any of these things, CELEBRATE that and be excited (whether it's really happening or not!) Yes, sounds crazy, but this will help de-stress your mind and put your thoughts in positive place, which is exactly what your body needs right now - remember NO STRESS, just positive vibes.

These signs will vary from girl to girl and some will experience them more so than others. Just because you might not experience some of these things is okay. These are just common occurrences most girls notice when they get their period back after not having it for so long. And again, if you have any of these signs, celebrate them! Let that be an encouragement and motivation to keep resting, eating, and relaxing. Any hormonal movement is better than nothing, so see it as a good thing! All of these things, though unpleasant as they may be, are actually GOOD signs that your hormones are starting to move and groove again:

1. Low Back Pain: your lower back (right above your tail bone) will start to get sore, achey, etc.
2. Sore Breasts and Nipples: you might start to notice that your breasts feel more full, bigger, and sore. Likewise, your nipples will feel very sensitive and sometimes even hurt.
3. Acne or breakouts: you might notice more pimples or zits come up on your face, chin, forehead, etc.

4. Night sweats: when you're asleep, you may experience sweating, either light sweating (back of the neck, chest, etc.) or even extremely heavy sweating (where you literally have to change your clothes and bed sheets).
5. Fatigue and Tiredness: you may notice that your energy level has dropped quite a bit and that you can't do all the things you used to do with so much vigor. You just want to lay around all day and rest. The important thing about this one is to embrace it and rest! Don't fight it and think you're being lazy; your body is trying to conserve energy to go to healing your organs, tissues, hormones, etc., so it is zapping your energy to go towards fixing those things first. It doesn't want you moving around a lot (because that is burning up energy and it wants to keep that energy, so rest!) Rest is so important!
6. Hot Flashes: throughout the day, you will be in a normal temperature room and all the sudden get really hot and maybe even sweating a little bit.
7. Increased Sex Drive: your sex drive will start to REALLY increase and you'll notice that you no longer feel limp or apathetic towards sex. (Note: having sex or not is totally up to you - be careful and be safe! Just because you have one, doesn't mean you have to act on it! Focus on you, healing your body, and living your life in the meantime.)
8. Increased Appetite: you'll most likely experience a huge increase in appetite right before your period, specifically for very calorie-dense, sugary foods. Don't go against this and try to fight it. Eat enough calories and foods you enjoy and be patient!

"I'm doing well, I have my good days and bad days. I just try to remind myself that I am more than a number on the scale and that I truly want a healthy, full life more than I would like to be thin and miserable." - Rachel

9. Cravings for Chocolate: yes, this isn't just a myth when it comes to periods, it's actually true! A lot of girls find themselves craving chocolate when their period rolls around (even if they aren't very fond of chocolate at all!) There's a reason for this, which I'll explain in the next chapter.
10. Low Stomach Cramps: both right before your period and before ovulation, you might experience some lower stomach cramps, or "period cramps."
11. Irritable and Moody: you might see that your attitude changes and your patience for even small things gets really tested easily. Take a deep breath, relax, and don't get frustrated, especially with the people around you that love you and are there to help.
- Most girls find themselves super tired when their period is getting close, so rest and don't push yourself! Your body needs the downtime!**
12. Bloating: your lower stomach might seem more bloated than normal and it might be difficult to wear certain clothes. This type of bloating is different than the bloating you get from after eating foods. This bloating is more constant and located in your lower stomach, where you might get "period cramps."
13. Discharge: this is a HUGE sign for hormonal function and any type of discharge is better than nothing at all! The discharge could be clear, white, creamy, lumpy, sticky, or even at times you might experience light blood spotting.
14. Spotting: you might end up just spotting for the first "period" your experience, and this is totally normal. Don't let this discourage you, but rather see it as an encouragement that your body is headed in the right direction! This might last a few hours or a few days and not seem like a full period, but that's okay. Keep eating and resting and let your hormones work themselves out.

15. Fluid Retention: you could start to notice that maybe you're carrying extra water weight throughout your body. The worst thing you can do is try to lose weight, go exercise, etc. The water weight will dissipate, just be patient and keep going!
16. Emotional or Anxious: most girls get extremely emotional or anxious before the onset of their period. You don't really feel like yourself, you're kinda out there, and you cry at the drop of a dime or get worried over the smallest things. If you experience this, try to relax, read something calming (like the Bible, poetry, etc.), listen to peaceful music, take a bath, and chill out.
17. Digestive/Stomach Issues: you might see that your tummy gets a little rumby when you are approaching our period. This isn't so much about cramping like I spoke about above, but rather serious digestive disturbances (think diarrhea, gas, bloating, running to the bathroom, etc.) You might even feel like you're getting the "stomach bug," but all it is is your hormones are fluctuating, which can cause digestive upset. This usually passes within a few hours/days.

There may be other signs and symptoms you might experience, but these are the most common. Basically, depending on how long it's been since you've had your period, it's going to be like you're going through puberty all over again with the acne, the sex drive, the bigger breasts, etc. Your body is finally getting to do what it did years ago, but in the right away all over again. And for those of you who have never been through puberty or even gotten a period to begin with, this will be a whole new experience for you, so embrace it and enjoy this time! This means that your bod is finally starting to function as it should: as a WOMAN. Remember, you are no longer a child, you're growing into a young lady, or for some of you, you're going through puberty again even in your 20's, 30's and sometimes 40's. So, hopefully being aware of the above symptoms will give you something to look out for, but also be encourage by when you do receive these little hints of something greater to come!

Tips for Dealing with PMS

In the previous chapter, I talked about some of the signs and symptoms you might experience right before (or sometimes weeks before) your period shows up. Though these signs are good news, they can also come with a lot of unwanted side effects that make you feel even worse.

- **Low Back Pain:** take a hot Epsom Salt bath (you can buy this at your local drug store or grocery store). Also, using a heating pad can be helpful, as well.
- **Sore Breasts and Nipples:** sadly there's not much you can do about it! Try to find some comfortable bras, like sports bras, and don't wear tight shirts.
- **Acne and Breakouts:** lowering your consumption of animal products will help a lot! Also, go easy on the make up, give your face a chance to breath, and for zits, I love to put a little bit of Apple Cider Vinegar (with "the Mother") on a cotton ball and dab it on the zit. It might burn a little, but it helps a lot!
- **Night Sweats:** unfortunately night sweats are one of those things you can't really control: it happens in your sleep and you never know when it might come about. My biggest tip is to sleep in a pair of shorts and a t-shirt, set the temperature in your room below 70 degrees fahrenheit, and even set an extra pair of clothes next to your bed that you can change into if you happen to wake up in the middle of the night soaked.
- **Fatigue and Tiredness:** this is one you **DON'T** want to ignore. If you are tired, fatigued, exhausted, etc. you need to rest as much as you can. See this as your free ticket to take a much needed break!
- **Hot Flashes:** keep a miniature fan around, dress in thin clothes (go for something light), and try to keep as cool as possible. Drinking calorie-dense smoothies is great for this (bananas, dates, maple syrup, coconut sugar... yumm...)

- **Increased Sex Drive:** Realize that having a sex drive is super important and a sign of healthy hormonal function - whether you decide to act on it is totally up to you, but you definitely want to have a sex drive!
- **Increased Appetite:** this is another one of those things that you need to just go with. Your appetite increases before your period because menstruation is very taxing on a girl's body. Your body is doing a lot of work during that time and it is requiring more energy (calories) to get the job done. So, go with it, focus on foods you enjoy, and let it pass.
- **Chocolate Cravings:** the reason you are craving chocolate is due to you having low levels of Magnesium in your body. Chocolate contains a lot of Magnesium and your body knows that from past experience, so now it's wanting more, especially with your period approaching! My best tip of advice is either 1. go get some chocolate ;) or 2. go get some Magnesium Oil at your local health food store. They come in spray bottles and you can spray it all over your body, or even on your lower stomach if you're cramping. It will absorb and leave a oily/salty-type residue on your skin. It may itch a little bit, but it will go away with time. * I suggest testing in on a very small portion of your skin to start with to be sure you don't have any type of adverse reaction. Like with all things, if you find you have an allergic reaction, go see to the Emergency Room right away!

"I'm so happy. I'm really really happy. My friendship with my friends is like before I started going crazy about calories, exercise, etc. Now every friday I go out with them and we eat WHATEVER in town.

Before, I remember I didn't go out with them cause I was too worried about workout everyday, burn calories and afraid of eating outside my house and don't control my calories ... but now OMG I'M SO HAPPY. My friends and I spend so great nights together and I'm so so happy I can live that moment with them and not being inside my house."- Inma

- **Low Stomach Cramps:** some of my best tips for this is definitely the lowering of animal products in your diet, take hot Epsom Salt baths, use a heating pad, and also get some magnesium oil (at your local health food store or you can order it online) and spray it on your lower stomach where the cramps are. You can actually use magnesium oil for any type of muscle cramps/aches, to relax, de-stress, etc. You may find that it burns or tingles a little bit, but that is normal. Feel free to re-apply the oil as you feel needed. And be sure to spray the oil on your skin, don't eat it :)
- **Irritable & Moody:** it would be a great idea for you to take some time every single day to focus on you. Get in a quiet place, relax, take a bath, read the Bible, write in a journal, watch a heart-warming show, and just chill out. If you're getting easily annoyed at people around you, even if it's family and friends, take some deep breaths and just realize they are there to help and care for you, not hurt you. Be easy on people and easy on yourself!
- **Bloating:** backing off the animal products will help a lot with this, but also try drinking some warm fresh ginger tea with lemon juice to help ease the bloat.
- **Discharge:** so obviously there's not much you can do about this, but buy some panty-liners if it gets too intense.
- **Spotting:** same goes for spotting. Not much you can do, but panty-liners would be a great idea. Also, some girls will experience spotting as opposed to a full-blown period and end up getting frustrated and upset because they didn't get a "real period." But don't get upset! Even having some spotting is a HUGE step in the right direction. It's a sign that your hormones are trying to get back on track and any type of discharge, whether it's brown, clear, creamy, red, or whatever, is better than nothing! So, celebrate this, keep doing what you're doing, and wait until the next month to see how things go.
- **Fluid Retention:** being sure to drink enough water (not tons!) is a big

Taking an Epsom Salt bath is great for easing your chocolate cravings (which is really just "Magnesium cravings" in disguise!)

player in fluid retention. Also, you have to realize that since you're most likely recovering from a restrictive or excessive exercise past, your body is going to be holding on to water for quite some time. This will pass with time as you continue to eat enough and rest. I really discourage any uses of skinny teas, diuretics, colonics, laxatives, excessive caffeine, etc. to take away the water weight because it will just further alter your electrolytes and cause the retention to last longer. So, drink some water, rest, and eat enough calories.

- **Emotional & Anxious:** my best tip of advice for this is to take some time out every single day to focus on you. Just relax and de-stress. Take a bath, read a book, listen to calming music, watch a funny show, talk to a friend, etc.
- **Digestive Upset:** the best thing for digestive issues (like diarrhea, gas, bloating, etc.) due to hormone fluctuations is to let it pass and try to rest as much as you can. Be sure you're around a bathroom (!) because you might need to frequent it more than often :) Usually this passes within a few hours or within a day or so for more girls.

So, at the end of the day, you will most likely experience most, if not all of these symptoms, so be on the look out and be ready! The good news is, any of these symptoms are great signs that point to the fact that you're getting ready to have your period. Celebrate that and be thankful for this! Even though it might not be extremely physically appealing, it is a great sign that your hormones and body are starting to get back on the right track. Keep going!

What Are the Best Foods to Get Your Period Back?

The first thing you have to understand is that in a roundabout way, your period is missing because there is too much of an energy deficit. This energy deficit can be from a number of things, the top things being not enough calories, not enough sleep, too much exercise, and too much stress. These four things can cause severe energy deficits in our body's and over time, as we keep pushing and pushing (not eating enough, exercising too much, not getting enough sleep, and being stressed out due to relationships, work, school, or even little things), our body's really suffer. So, our energy can get zapped by these things, but there's only one way to fix this energy deficit: eat lots of calories and get lots of rest. Essentially, all you're doing is the complete opposite of what got you here in the first place. The prescription is eat more calories, stop all exercise, get more sleep, and de-stress as much as possible. That's it!

So here's the thing: Calories are energy. The goal is to eat a ton of calories and rest, sleep, and de-stress as much as you can so that you can be conserving those calories. If you're eating a lot, but you're still exercising, not resting and sleeping, and you're chronically stressed, the calories that you're eating will be burned off, which is the last thing you want to happen! You want to conserve those calories so that they can go towards healing your body.

What needs healing? Well, specifically-speaking, your hormones. But, we can't stop there. Likewise, your bones, hair, skin, nails, tissues, organs, and literally every cell in your body. They can all be healed and fixed off of eating a lot of calories and getting a lot of rest. That's it! If you're not eating enough and continuing to exercise and be stressed out, your body can never get the chance to fully heal. Why? Because your body is too focused on providing all this energy for your daily exercises and stresses and never gets the opportunity to go to actually fixing the issues. Those issues are pushed aside because your body's number one focus is to keep you alive, so that's what it's going to do. It's going to use all the energy and calories that you are eating

and put it towards just keeping you alive, never getting the chance to completely and finally heal your body (which is what desperately needs to take place first and foremost.)

So, what you gotta do is focus on eating tons of calories, specifically carbs & fats, and especially those foods that you actually really LOVE. A big part of recovering from your restrictive tendencies is facing your fear foods. What are fear foods? These are the foods that you're afraid of for whatever reason. Maybe you're scared they're going to make you gain weight, make you feel sick, make you bloated, they're really unhealthy or any other things that keeps you from eating that food. I really



Try eating some rice cakes with your favorite toppings - I love peanut butter, jelly, chocolate, and blackstrap molasses on mine :) pg. 218

“So everything's been real good lately, I'm feeling so much better now. I'm having my periods regularly now, every 30-31 days. I'm eating almost all foods that I want! Currently in going through the phase of enjoying fresh salads ;) - almost every day I remind myself how awesome it is to eat normal foods because just a few months ago I couldn't even dream of eating them. I still probably think about food a bit to much but it's so so much better now - the thoughts are probably there just because I get so excited that I can actually eat stuff that I previously thought I never would be able to eat again!” - Dominika

encourage you to go to the grocery store, buy your favorite foods (fear foods included) and go home and enjoy them. This doesn't mean go home and binge out on tons of food, but rather start eating foods you actually like, even if you add in just a little every day. For your fear foods, take one food each day and incorporate it into your day. It can be just a few bites, a full serving, or more than usual, but whatever it is, at least eat it. This will show you that no foods are above others and no foods have power over you. We'll talk more about this later.

In addition to your fear foods, focusing on tons and tons of carbs and fats is great. The more, the better. Likewise, the best foods that are going to give you the calories in the fastest way possible to help heal your body are those foods that are low in fiber and water and high in calories. So, this means that you would want to limit your raw foods, vegetables, super watery fruits, etc. If you want some fruit, you'd be better off eating dates and bananas than you would eating watermelon and blueberries (unless you're eating a TON of watermelon and blueberries). Likewise, you want to be sure to be eating fat, too. Adding some avocado, nuts, seeds, nut butters, etc. into your diet is a great idea. The reason for this is one, a lot of people are scared of fat, so you might as well go ahead and face this fear. And two, fat is very calorically-dense so it's easy to get in more calories by eating more fat. So, eat up, don't be afraid of food, go out and have fun, invite friends over and go out to eat, and just live your life. Don't let food control you any more. It's just food, that's it! We need it to survive and thrive, but it's only a very small part of our lives. Eat what you like and what you want and move on with life!

Guard Your Mind

While eating enough calories and getting enough rest are big issues when it comes to getting your period back, equally important is the idea of being sure your mind is in the right, positive place. This is extremely important for your success both now and in the future, as it pertains to your physical and mental health. So, let's talk about why keeping your mind healthy and guarded is essential during this time.

Your mind is SO powerful. Whatever it is constantly exposed to is what you're going to end up thinking about and ultimately being! Take a minute and just think about what you are usually listening to, watching, reading, and exposing yourself to each day. Is it a bunch of drama? Is it just pictures and videos about food? Is it blogs and sites about diets and exercise? Is it photos of thin and/or fit women talking about their diet and exercise routine? Is it encouraging, balanced, positive? Is it someone else's eating disorder recovery journey? Is it depression, sad, or down? Is it social media drama? Really think about it. And even write it down. Write down what you watch, read, view, listen to, etc. for the next few days and see how it all lines up. This is going to show you a lot about not only you, but also will explain a lot about why you're feeling the way you are right now!



My “Easy Homemade Bread” topped with tahini, jelly, and maple syrup is great for getting your hormones going again :) Recipe pg. 216

Thank about it: If all your mind is exposed to every single day is food, diets, exercise, fitness, health, other people's bodies, drama, depression, etc.,

that is ALL you're going to think about every single day. No wonder food is the only thing on your mind. No wonder looking a certain way or weighing a certain amount is all you care about. No wonder all you think and dream about is exercising and your diet. Do you see how important this is? And do you also see just how sneaky this can be? You probably didn't even realize how much stuff was going in and out of your mind every single day, not to mention the effects it has on your thinking and actions!

So, here's what you need to do: I really encourage you to go through all the accounts you follow, blogs you read, Tumblrs you read, YouTube channels you watch, magazines you read, TV shows you watch, songs you listen to, snapchats you follow, Facebooks you're friends with, Twitters you subscribe to, and whatever else and unfollow or stop viewing any of these that are messing with your mind at all in any way! This is SO important. Whatever your mind is taking in all the time is going to affect you in such a profound way. So, stop! If you're constantly seeing things that tell you to stop eating this, start exercising more, start doing this or that and it's messing with your head, you need to get far away from it. And again, this is all up to YOU! You literally have to make yourself unfollow, unsubscribe, delete, de-friend, etc. And this is for your own good!

Instead of wanting to know what's going on with everyone else, wondering what type of diet or exercise plan that girl is on, wondering what the newest drama is, wondering how healthy this or that food is, and so on, you have need to start focusing on YOU! Because here's the thing: Your life is not about what all the other girls in the world are doing. Your life isn't about your weight, your diet, your exercise, or everyone else's weights, diets, and exercise. Your life is about you and living it for the purpose you're created for. Think about all the hours you've spent being obsessed with looking at food, researching diets, following someone else's journey, etc. All that time could've been spent on something else far more worthwhile and important in YOUR life.

So, here's a few tips:

1. Obviously, I would unfollow all these types of accounts, blogs, Tumblrs, etc. but also replace them with other things. Because remember, your

mind is going to gravitate towards whatever you're filling it with every day. So, I really encourage you to start finding a more balanced approach and broaden your horizons a little bit. Follow animal accounts, funny stuff, art, music, travel, etc. Read different magazines and blogs. Watch different tv shows and YouTube channels. Find the things, outside of fitness and diet, that you enjoy and follow them. And to be honest, this might take some getting used to. Depending on how long you've been engrained in the health, diet, and fitness world, it might take some self-control in this area and even some new self-discovery as you find out what exactly you DO enjoy and like.



2. Think back before you had any issues with food or exercise and try to remember the things you loved to do. What were your non-active hobbies? Was it art, music, photography, hanging out with friends, reading, going to church, being with your family, sketching, studying? What did you used to LOVE to do? Whatever it was (outside of anything having to do with food and exercise), incorporate that back into your life.



3. Focus on getting back to who you REALLY are, and get all the other stuff out of your head. All the drama, diets, rules, measurements, weight, someone else's progress, etc. Take it all out of your mind and focus on you! Take the proactive steps you need to to guard your mind from all this stuff. You gotta take the initiative on this! It will take time, but you can do it, and I promise it gets easier as each day passes.

Your mind is like a computer processor: Garbage in = garbage out. Literally. Whatever you are putting into your mind (both consciously or subconsciously) is going to affect you on some level or another. I really encourage you to make a list of all the things you are viewing, listening to, reading, looking at, involved in, etc. and ask yourself the questions, "How is this affecting me? Is this making me feel better or worse about life? About

myself? About my situation?” If the answer is “worse,” or even teetering on the line of worse, stop allowing that thing to come into your mind.

The best thing I’ve ever done for this (and still continue to do from time-to-time) is to take a social media-internet-research-youtube-all-the-technological-stuff-especially-that-related-to-diet-and-exercise FAST and get away from it all. Take a week, two weeks, a month, or even indefinitely and GET AWAY from it all. I promise you that when the days pass you will find that you are a NEW PERSON. No doubt. You will think clearer, have more time on your hands, get out of your house and be having fun, spending more time with your friends and family, and making time for yourself. You won’t be caught in the web of social media drama, reading about some other girls recovery journey, or comparing yourself to this girl and her diet and exercise routine. You’ll be focused on YOUR life, your happiness, your health, and your healing, which is exactly what you need to do!

This is what you’ve got to do! Disconnect, unplug, unfollow, and start living YOUR life. Don’t live someone else’s life through social media - it’s a waste of your time and isn’t going to benefit you in any way at all! It’s so easy to get caught up in all of this and until you consciously make the decision to stop and get away from it, it will continue to influence you in ways you probably don’t even realize. The decision is up to you, so make it happen!

The Power of Positive Thinking

In the previous chapter, we talked about just how powerful your mind is and how the things you constantly expose it to can alter your thinking and ultimately control your life. We talked about how to change some things up and stop following, reading, listening to, and allowing certain things in your mind, going back to your real passions in life. Doing this is going to for sure take you a long way, but there's also another important part of this: the power of positive thinking.

What do I mean? Well, think about this: if you are constantly down on yourself, down about your situation, depressed about your weight, frustrated that you don't have your period yet, stressed about school and your relationships, etc., then you are basically just setting yourself up for failure. It's kind of like the idea that where your mind leads, your body follows. And this is SO true in your situation right now. Seeing that you are experiencing amenorrhea (namely, "Hypothalamic Amenorrhea") your body *and* mind are too stressed out.

We can definitely take care of the stress when it comes to your body by eating more calories, stopping all exercise, and sleeping better. When it comes to your mind, the prescription is twofold: 1. Clear out all the clutter that you're exposing your mind to (everything in the previous chapter) and 2. Start thinking more positively about **everything** in your life. Yes, literally everything! This means waking up with a smile on your face, making the most out of each day, having as much fun as you possibly can, and *especially* celebrate any and every sign and symptom you might even remotely think you're experiencing as far as getting your period back.

Why do you want to do this? Because it's kind of like the Placebo Effect, like we talked about a little bit before. Basically it's a phenomenon that acts like a fake treatment of sorts. It's like having a disease, going to the doctor and getting prescribed with sugar pills, and then taking those pills (not knowing they're sugar pills, but actually believing they are the real thing), and then you end up beating the disease. Was it the sugar pills that cured your disease? No! It was the fact that you *thought* you were going to get

better based off the pills you were taking. You had confidence in your treatment. You had faith in the fact that the doctor knew what he was telling you to do. You believed that you were going to get better. This works in the *exact same way* when it comes to getting your period back. And here's why...

Seeing that your body and mind are both stressed out, the goal is to lower the stress, right? So, by constantly thinking happy, positive, encouraging, uplifting thoughts, especially regarding your period. This is why I say that if you ever experience any of the signs of symptoms of your period coming, you need to seriously **CELEBRATE** it! Like, really, go celebrate. If your boobs get sore, if you get lower stomach cramps, if you get some acne, or have some discharge, this is amazing news and this should make you feel even better about your situation. By celebrating these types of things, no matter how small they may seem (and even if it's not even anything at all!), you'll increase your chances of experiencing the Placebo Effect. You'll end up getting your period sooner because you're actually **believing** that you're going to get it. Just like taking the sugar pills to cure the disease, the positive thinking about getting your period back can work in the same way.

I know this may seem crazy, but trust me! The power of thinking positively can do wonders for getting your period back. Likewise, a huge part of this is the fact that you want your body to be as de-stressed as possible. So, by thinking positive thoughts, being confident, having fun, and just living your life, in turn you're proving to your body (namely you're Hypothalamus) with the peace and comfort that it needs. And that is exactly what it wants: lots of relaxation, de-stressing, and plenty of food, rest, and happy thoughts. Again, start focusing on living your life and having fun, that's what it's all about. Think positive thoughts, eat plenty of food, rest, don't exercise, and just enjoy your life! Don't worry, be happy :)

For me, when I was trying to get my period back, I knew that I needed to be positive and live as if I definitely was going to get my period back. There were days when I would start doubting, getting down, think about the weight I had gained, worry about if my body ever would be fixed, etc. Would I ever get my period back? What if I didn't? Could I ever exercise again? I read blogs, researched like crazy, asked all types of people on social media for help. I was desperate and every single day was filled with figuring out my

problem! It was all I thought about, talked about, wondered about, read about, and it was literally controlling my life. What if I had some crazy disease that only I had and my situation was totally different from everyone else? All these questions started driving me crazy and I got to the point to where I had to just STOP. I had to stop overthinking it and filling my life 24/7 with these thoughts.

My period came today! Woohoo! Lol Resting and eating what my body craves has helped so much. Definitely taking the time I need to rebalance my hormones and body with sleep and lots of calories. Even though it was hard to sleep more and not go to the gym, clearly my energy output was too much for too long. Still have much rebalancing to do but well on my way! Thank you for the encouragement, advice, and your awesome channel! You have been so helpful and uplifting to my spirit.

***God bless Xx
Bianca***

So that's what I did. I stopped. I stopped researching, wondering, doubting, worrying, etc. and I swapped all that time for living my life. I shut off my phone and computer, I got out of the house, I went to hang out with friends and I decided I wasn't going to let this control or define my life anymore. I started eating the foods I liked and continued to rest my body. I changed my thoughts from "what if?!" to "this is a great day and I'm doing what's best for my body, regardless if my body changes. I need to HEAL!" Doing this every day and having this type of attitude daily led me to get my period back. Was the eating more, letting go of control with food, and resting helping? Yes, for sure. But even more importantly was letting go of all the stress I was putting my MIND through. Had I ate more and rested more, yet kept up with the crazy researching and worrying, I *might* have gotten my period back, but it would've been a much longer road and a much more stressful road.

I changed my mindset from, "this is awful! I'm going to gain weight and I can't work out - my life is awful!!" to "THIS IS AWESOME!! I literally get a free pass to eat the foods I want, let my body rest, go hang out with friends, sleep in, and enjoy my life!" And that's exactly what I did. I started living life

again, even while my body was healing. And this is so important - You've gotta get back to who you *truly* are. Don't seclude yourself or stress out. Do what you really love to do, what you enjoy most in life (outside of exercise, nutrition, food, etc.). There is so much more to life than food and exercise and you've got to find that.

Asking for Help

Asking for help is one of the best things you can do as you heal your body and mind and work to get your period back. When I say help, I am talking about getting some support, encouragement and accountability. Getting people who love you and care about you to encourage you and hold you accountable is going to be invaluable for you as you keep going. It will get tough - at some point you're going to second guess yourself and think you need to go back to dieting. You're really going to want to start exercising again. You're really going to think that it's not worth healing your body and mind just to get your period back. These days will come and having people involved in this with you is key! I encourage you to let the person/people closest to you know EXACTLY what is going on. Don't sugar-coat anything or lie or make things seem less serious than they really are. And honestly, if you're reading this book, these people that love and care for you already probably know there's something deeper going on, so they already probably expecting this topic to come up.

Here are my best tips for talking to certain people in your life about what's going on:

1. **Parents:** I know a lot of girls get really anxious about telling their parents about their issues with food, diets, exercise, eating disorders, and their period. They're afraid their parents will see them as failures or not good enough or weird. The BEST way of going about doing this is to sit them down and let them know you have something you want to share with them. Be as honest and open as you can about what is going on and what has been going on. Tell them that you have been struggling and you're reaching out for help. You respect them and you love them and you know they love you, so you're asking them for their encouragement and support. Tell them you're tired of doing this alone and you need some extra help and support. If you have parents that don't think it's right to eat more food and not exercise for a time (maybe they even constantly stress you out and your weight or the idea of gaining weight), here's what you say: let them know that if you don't get your period, your chances of ever getting pregnant or them having grandchildren is slim to

none. Tell them if they really want you to thrive, be happy, have children one day, and for them to enjoy taking their grandchildren to the park, they need to encourage you to heal your body. This can be a touchy situation and discussion for a lot of families, but this is something that needs to be said and talked about. It's nothing to be ashamed of, it's something that needs to be supported and encouraged. Having your parent's support is vital as you move forward.

2. Spouse: Maybe your spouse has no idea what is going on, but being open and honest is always the best. Get them to be your accountability partner - have them hold you in check when it comes to exercise, get them to take you out to eat a lot, get them to get you out of the house and go have some fun. You two are a team and that's what they're there for. Let them help you, you don't have to do this alone!
3. Friends: Some of us have great friends that totally understand, are there for us and are willing to help in any way they can. Let your closest friends know you're struggling and you would appreciate their prayers and their support. Ask them to check in on you every few days and ask how you're doing. Don't get annoyed when they do this, welcome it and be thankful you have friends that care! Likewise, we might also have some of those friends that are "triggering" to us in one way or another (and not just friends, but this could be family members, too). If this something common in your life, I would encourage you to sit down with those people and explain the situation. Let them know the way they talk about exercise or diet or weight all the time really affects you. Be honest and open, be do it in a way of love and respect. Saying things like, "hey, I really appreciate our relationship and I want to share something with you. I've been really struggling and I need your help. Could you help me not focus so much on exercise, food, weight, size, etc.? I'm struggling with this kinda stuff right now and talking about this really effects me. So, could you help me not to worry about this stuff and let's just have fun and talk about other stuff?" By approaching them this way, it take the blame off of them. Obviously they are the one probably talking about all this all the time, but as soon as you let them know that it's you with the issues and you want their help stopping, they will automatically be more aware of how often they talk about it and now they know that it affects

you negatively. Maybe you'll even influence them positively by doing this, too! Also, giving them a job is a great way to get them involved. Asking them to call you every few days to check in on you, asking them to ask you to go out to eat at THEIR favorite restaurant (not yours) to help challenge you, ask them to get you to go do something that doesn't have anything to do with exercise or nutrition, but is something you two can do together. By placing a responsibility like this on them really gets them involved and makes them take ownership of their role in your healing process.

4. Professionals: I really encourage anyone reading this book to consider seeing a professional therapist or counselor to talk with about the things going on in your life (both personal and health-wise). This will help so much! Getting everything off your chest, talking to someone about it, having some feed back, and just getting it out is awesome. You can use the internet to search local counselors/therapist/eating disorder clinics in your city, talk to your parents/family about it, and set up some sessions to work through some stuff. Likewise, whenever you go see doctors of any kind, you need to be 100% honest with them about EVERYTHING that is going on in your life. Don't sugar-coat anything or make your issues seem less than they really are. Don't go into the gynecologist and say, "oh, I don't have my period and I don't know why!" when you've clearly been exercising like crazy and not eating enough food. Tell them everything. They need to know so they can help you best.
5. Social Media: though I think it can be good to take a much-needed break every few days, weeks or even indefinitely from social media, I also believe that it can be helpful and motivating at times, too. So, if social media isn't a negative thing for you, use it for good! I highly encourage you to connect with other girls who are also working to get their periods back so you can encourage each other (however, if you find them bringing you down in any way at all, I would unfollow and get in a better state of mind. Remember, what goes in your mind is what's going to come out in your life!) So, definitely find me on social media (Instagram: @thisgirlaudra; YouTube: This Girl Audra; and use the hashtag #getyourperiod). By using this hashtag, you can get in contact with other girls who are doing the same thing. You girls can encourage each other,

pray for each other, give each other tips, etc. This is a great way to stay motivated and even inspired, have a sort of accountability, and encourage others along the way.

6. Last, but certainly not least, is ask God for help. Pray, take some time to be alone, get out in nature, take some deep breaths, meditate, rest, get away from all the health and fitness stuff that has been consuming your life for so long and get back to reality. Go volunteer at a local homeless shelter, soup kitchen, church, animal shelter.... basically, go do something for someone else. A lot of the time when we put our focus on serving and loving other people, we are the ones who actually get the benefit in the end! All this obsession with your body, diet, weight, fitness, etc. is really, in the big scheme of things, is meaningless. You aren't here on this earth for you and your own desires, specifically when it comes to your diet, body, and workouts. There's so much more to life than all this and God has a great plan for your life!!

Lastly, don't be afraid of reaching out for help. Finding a support group, having your family and friends involved, getting your pastor/church leaders to pray for you, etc. is always a great idea. I'm not saying you have to go spread your problems all over town, but even just getting a handful of people to understand what you're going thru or even just one person you really trust can be better than nothing. Who you involve and don't involve is up to you, but you need to have someone there for support. Don't rely on other girls with issues on Instagram or reading thru comments on YouTube. You need face-to-face interaction and help.

And more than anything, make this about the future and healing. Don't make this about the past or all the bad things. Make it about positivity, joy, happiness, and your new life. Get away from all the old things that bring up bad memories or trigger you in any way. Focus on today and the future, the past is the past, it's over. This is a NEW you and a new beginning. And at the end of the day, realize that this is totally up to you. You can have tons of support, get into the perfect eating disorder clinic, have great counselors and therapists, etc. but if you aren't 100% committed to making it happen and changing your life then it's not going to happen. This is YOUR life. Make it happen.

Frequently Asked Questions

Below are some of the most frequently asked questions I get on a daily basis about how all this works. Most of the information provided in the first chapters of this book are enough for you to get going, but there are a lot of “what ifs?” that girls have. So, I’ve compiled all the questions that most of you might be thinking of as you’re reading this book into one section to help you get past those small hurdles in getting your period back. Also, I want to stress that all of my answers are based off of my experience working with others in the same or similar situation as you. I am in no way acting as a doctor, therapist, or nutritionist in working out your dietary needs. I’m simply stating what worked for me and the others I’ve helped so take it and use it as you wish! :)

I. what is “re-feeding syndrome” and can i get it?

re-feeding syndrome is when someone is recovering from an eating disorder or some sort of starvation and in doing so their electrolytes are thrown off balance and there can be severe consequences. *** THIS IS WHY I HIGHLY SUGGEST YOU WORK WITH A SKILLED PROFESSIONAL AT AN EATING DISORDER CLINIC IF YOU BELIEVE YOU NEED THE HELP AND ACCOUNTABILITY AND ARE AT RISK FOR DEVELOPING THIS. YES, THIS IS A LIFE-THREATENING CONDITION AND CAN BE AVOIDED WITH THE RIGHT HELP *** this condition usually occurs at the very beginning of recovering and happens when people go from eating an extremely low amount of calories (or who have been purging often, taking laxatives, diuretics, etc.) and jump straight into tons of calories right away. basically, their body can’t handle the huge influx of calories, their electrolytes get thrown totally off balance, and they can start experiencing symptoms like dizziness, nausea, extreme hand and feet swelling, non-induced vomiting, and fever just to name a few. basically, this isn’t like, “oh gosh, i just ate too much i feel sick,” but rather, “OH MY GOSH! I NEED TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL NOW!!” you will KNOW something is wrong and you’ll be begging to go to the ER (and you definitely should!) however, re-feeding syndrome is extremely rare and can be avoided by working with a professional/doctor/specialist so they can monitor your intake. it is said to slowly increase your

calories from the super low level up to 2,000 calories then continue eating from there. again, because this is so serious and is a possibility, this is why I HIGHLY ENCOURAGE THAT YOU WORK WITH A PROFESSIONAL. especially if you've kept your calories SUPER low (1,000 or lower), have purged a lot, or been addicted to laxatives, diuretics, skinny teas, etc. They will work with you to help you slowly increase your calories to get a level of where you can eat enough and it won't effect your body. **this is also why i am against following certain calorie guidelines, meal plans that force you to eat a ton right away, and go from eating very very low to a ton of calories literally over night. I AM NOT SAYING TO DO THIS. i am saying to chill out around food, face some fear foods, eat more calories (even have them monitored by a doctor to be safe), and listen to YOUR body, not some arbitrary number telling you that you need to eat x amount of calories to heal. obviously, you're going to need more than what you're eating now (especially if your calories are extremely low), but going from one day eating super low and the next to eating thousands and thousands isn't a good idea. this book isn't about shoving in the calories for the sake of shoving them in. it's about finding a balance with food, getting over your body image issues, accepting yourself for who you are, not what you look like, and getting out of these obsessions with fitness, diets, health, etc. and move to and live your life. it's about getting past these issues and learning to live your life in normal, healthy way for the long haul. making new routines and new habits to help you keep a sustainably healthy lifestyle. HOWEVER, you have to face the fact that your body most likely needs to do a lot of recovering, especially if you've dealt with a serious eating disorder. so, just sweeping the healing side under the rug and thing you can just side step it isn't a great idea. so, finding a local professional can help you get all this sorted out, figure out the cause of all this, work through the deep-seeded issues in your life, help you increase your calories in a healthy way, and give you continual support as you continue on. if this is something you think might benefit you, then i would take advantage of that!

2. what if i eat “junk food” forever?

First off, you don't even have to eat “junk food.” And the idea of junk food is different for every person: some people think junk food is chips and cookies, while another things junk food is bread and sushi. Do you see the problem

here? It's not so much about junk food as it is HIGHER CALORIE foods (you can eat junk food if you want or you can eat other "healthy" high calorie food if you want, or you can eat WHATEVER YOU want), but you want to be sure you're eating plenty of calories. So, here's how it usually happens: the short answer is, "NO! you won't be eating JUST all these super high calorie foods, be it junk or "healthy" high calorie foods forever." this is why i believe you should start, even now, to find a healthy balance between healthy foods and "fun foods" that will last a long time. the long answer is: as you continue to feed your body high-calorie foods, it will definitely take it's share, no doubt. however, over time, as you keep eating these foods (especially the cakes, cookies, candy, pizza, ice cream, etc. i.e. "junk foods"), eventually your body will say, "you know what, i don't want 10 cookies today, how about just 1 or 2?" then eventually your body will say, "hmm.. how about instead of 1 or 2 cookies, you eat an apple and save the cookie for later on this week?" foods or even super high-calorie foods over time. i actually encourage you,

like i said above, to start this balance now. eat good wholesome meals and add in some of your favorite foods. the good trade off here is that now you have beaten all your fear foods and you're eating a good, well-rounded diet, with even your favorite foods woven in your diet every now and then. likewise, if you are dealing with gastroparesis and you can't eat a lot of veggies, that's fine. give it time and slowly add them in over time.

3. can i be at a "healthy" weight or overweight and still not get a period?

yes! you may be surprised, but there are TONS of girls and women out there that are at a good, healthy weight, but also even overweight that still don't have their period. granted, there are other reasons for not having a period

***I hope you're well Darling!
Myself, I think I'm very well... guess what?! (I'm sure you know...) I GOT MY PERIOD BACK! It started really slowly and I didn't notice it was coming (or I didn't want to believe the 'signs that weren't there' - but they were!).
You can add me to your success story book ;-)
but seriously, I'm so so happy!!!
It took almost exactly 2 months, I was hoping it will happen sooner but didn't really believe it will so i was giving myself at last 3 months and here we are now. - Dominika***

(medical issues and so on), but when the history of the girl is restriction, too much exercise, lots of stress in her life, not enough sleep, and self-hate, that is a recipe for a period-disaster! the goal for a girl in this situation would be very similar to an underweight girl (except more weight gain, though you possible could gain some weight - at the end of the day, your body just needs to feel loved and be fed consistently. you have probably been in a yo-yo cycle of trying diets and exercise routines only to quit and fail after a short time. you then go and binge on junk food, hate yourself, and go back to restriction again, and the cycle continues. sound familiar? if this is you, you have to break the cycle! your body needs to be fed consistently and not abused with exercise, purging, laxatives or diet pills. feed it good food and stop abusing yourself with exercise, purging, hating yourself, talking negatively to yourself, etc. the funny thing is, once your body sees that you are finally feeding it right, it will let go of the weight, you'll get your period back, and you actually are eating more and exercising less. and you most likely won't deal with intense extreme hunger like underweight girls will. your hunger will most likely settle quicker, but let this happen naturally, don't force it.

4. how many calories should i eat each day?

there is not a calorie minimum or maximum to try to hit. the goal is to eat till satisfaction (specifically mental satisfaction, not just physical). your body is smarter than me or someone else, so listen to it! some days will be more, some will be less - that is natural and normal. just go with it and eat. if you are eating enough high calorie foods and eating until satisfied, you will get all the calories you need :)

5. but what if i'm just "emotionally hungry" and not physically hungry at all?

this can happen, and honestly, it probably WILL happen, more often than not. when you went through the period of restriction, purging, excessive exercise, or whatever it

"Since i've been watching your videos i've been enjoying my life so much lately. i haven't gotten my period yet but i have a greaaaaat feelings that its gonna come soon. i just wanna thank you so much for helping not just me but also others out."
-Elif

was, your hunger signals got all messed up. basically, your mind and your gut quit communicating like they normally would. think back to a time when you considered your eating habits to be “normal:” you ate whatever you wanted when you were hungry and you stopped when you were full. sure, maybe you had some emotional nights eating out of a tub of ice cream after a stressful day, but it wasn’t anything severe. or maybe you were really excited or happy and were celebrating something and decided to have an extra cupcake, not because you were necessarily hungry for it, but because you just emotionally wanted it, right? well, since your body was deprived of calories, you burned too much, or a combination of both, now that you are eating again your body is trying to figure out is it emotional or physical hunger going on. my biggest tip to getting over this and back to normal again is to just eat regardless if it’s emotional or physical hunger. your body will balance out over time.

6. what if i just ate 30 minutes ago, my stomach is really full, but i’m still wanting food? should i eat?

yes. just like i explained in the question above, if you’re hungry AT ALL you need to eat. it isn’t necessary to eat a giant meal, but even just a snack or a few bites of something really helps prove to your body that yes, food is readily available and if it says “feed me!” you will do just that. this is why i really recommend keeping snacks on hand at all times. dried fruit, trail mix, pack a sandwich, chips, dense fruits, a homemade baked good, cookies, pretzels, etc. are great on-the-go options to snack on whenever you get that urge to eat.

7. what do i do when i go out to eat or over to someone’s house?

well, you literally just go out to eat or go to their house! i know that sounds too simple, but it’s true! many girls find themselves freaking out over going to restaurants or being invited to a friend or family member’s house: “what am i going to eat? do they have ‘healthy food?’ should i bring my own food? i know they’re going to add xyz to the food and that’s not on my diet and it’s SO unhealthy, etc.” these are the things that go thru your head, right? well, my biggest tip is to just GO and have FUN. think back to a time when you used to go do this and had a blast. made so many memories, loved every

moment of it and didn't want to go home. what has changed since then? the *rules*. the *restrictions*. you have got to take these all away. set yourself free. stop the control. and just go have some good fun. eat some delicious food and make it more about the people you're going to be with than the food that will be served. the sooner you can just let loose, let go of control, and go have some fun, the quicker you'll get to the point to where you'll realize just how crazy it was for you to go months and years of just sitting at home eating your "healthy food" by yourself, missing out on all the fun times your friends and family were having without you!

8. i have a serious eating disorder (or i've had one for years) and i need help. what do i do?

GET HELP!!!! THIS IS MY BIGGEST TIP OF ADVICE. yes, this book can help you in ways of getting your period back, helping you with some food ideas, and encouraging you to get things headed in the right direction again, but if you feel, deep down, that you need serious help and support, you need to go get professional help, specifically at a qualified eating disorder clinic. these are all over the world, so just search the internet for local places near you. you can even check with your insurance company to see how they will help cover you for your time there.

THIS IS NOT SOMETHING TO PLAY AROUND WITH. you want to stop this as soon as possible and move on with your life, right? so, you've got to make the decision to make it happen. tell your

parents, spouse, or whoever, and let them know you need help (and honestly, they probably already know this and they'll be glad to hear you want to make the change!). and if you've been in and out of eating disorder clinics, i encourage you to **GO BACK** and finish it up. the reason i advise these types of places so much is because they not only will help you with your food intake, but they will even help you on a mental perspective, with your body image, give you tools, tips, and advice on how to work through things, and help set you up for lifelong success.

Second month having my period! I was really nervous cause I wasn't sure if I would get it again but I did and I couldn't be happier! Thanks again, thank you for your prayers and for the help. - Ana

9. but i thought we were supposed to drink 8 glasses of water day and now you're saying back off the water?

yes, exactly. a few things about this: think about the idea of 8 glasses a day for each and every person. 8 glasses of water for a 5'3, 100 lb girl is going to look a lot different than 8 glasses of water for a 6'0 250 lb man, right? these set-in-stone recommendations have good intentions, but aren't balanced and fair at all. likewise, most of us aren't drinking 8 glasses of water, we're drinking (or ingesting through our foods) way more than that. too much water has been correlated with over-hydration, lower body temperature, lower blood pressure, lower heart rate, decreased digestive enzyme activity, throws off the electrolyte balance and even bloating. another way to think about this is to think about your cat or dog: do they go gorge themselves on water when they aren't really thirsty? no way! they only drink when they're thirsty, taking a few sips every now and then. granted, after they've been outside for a long time and are really hot or exhausted from running, they'll drink a ton (to re-hydrate), but you don't see them waking up first thing in the morning and drinking a ton of water, making sure they get in their 8 glasses or 1 gallon per day, and forcing themselves to finish water just because someone told them to. (*i'm not saying let's act like our pets or wild animals, i'm just proving the point that we don't need SO much water all the time, especially if you suffer from the symptoms i mentioned above). so, my rules of thumb (which has worked for me and countless others) is to drink when you're thirsty. don't force it. if you want to drink more water "just because," go for it, but let it be natural, no forcing anything.

10. i feel so guilty when i don't exercise so then i restrict that day! how can i stop?

again, this goes back to the conscious decision of *making yourself stop* and getting used to that uncomfortable feeling. it is all a control issue that needs to be addressed and resolved. some people can do this on their own and others need some outside help from a counselor, therapist, etc. (which i highly recommend!) there is no special formula to make yourself stop, you just literally have to say, "no more!!" so it's about controlling your mind, your thoughts, getting out the negative/guilt-laden thoughts and replacing them

with positive, joyful, and life-enhancing thoughts. instead of saying, “gosh i feel so bad i didn't work out today! what am i going to do? ill restrict or do more exercise tomorrow!” (no!!), replace these thoughts with “how can i take advantage of this situation to change my habits for the better?” look at it as an opportunity to do something that you normally wouldn't do because of your exercise routine, your thoughts about exercise, and the time you use to revolve your life around your exercise schedule. you could read, watch a funny show or movie, go see a friend, write in a journal, go volunteer somewhere, write someone a letter, call a friend, etc. there is SO much you can do besides exercise that will be so much better for you any way, so why not? another big tip is to get an accountability partner to hold you up to your end of the deal for not exercising. this could be a friend, parent, spouse, sibling, boyfriend, etc. let them know your struggles with this and have them check in on you, ask you the hard questions, and be 100% honest with them. get them to help you focus on other things besides exercise. there is more to life than exercise and food!

11. is it bad to eat the same foods (even “unhealthy/junk foods”) every day?

this is how it happens for most: they think, “for me, right now, no. actually this could be one of the best things i can do for both my physical health and mental health!” first off, physically, the junk foods/ultra-processed foods, have the most calories, and calories is exactly what you need right now. likewise, they also are low in fiber and water and digest so easily, so they won't cause bloating, gas, and abdominal pain. they are quick to digest, get in the calories you need, and taste delicious, so what else could you ask for? from a mental perspective, you've probably been avoiding these foods like the plague for weeks, months, or even years, so to break your fear of these would be so great for your mental health. it will show you that all foods are equal and to not place them in hierarchy anymore. facing these fears and breaking the rules is what you need to do! now, i want to clarify, some girls freak out and think they'll end up living off of donuts and ice cream for the rest of their life (i did, too!) but again, this wasn't the case for me or others! you will find that at some point, your body will say, “ok, i dont want any more cookies or cakes, i want some apples and veggies right now.” it happens naturally. it's not a conscious decision you have to make, it's not a restrictive mindset to go

back go different foods, it's a normal transition. and again, i'm not saying you have to eat junk all day, you figure out what works for you. I actually encourage you to eat a good amount of more wholesome foods with a good balance of fun foods, too. however that looks for you, that's fine, just realize that eating only low calorie stuff is going to make this a long road. i just really suggest you watch yourself with the restriction and all the rules - if you don't stop it now it will never stop! this will heal you better than anything. this mentality helped me so much when getting my period back - it really made me see food as equal and allowed me the freedom to eat the foods i wanted. even to this day, i still have some of these foods whenever i want. sometimes thats once a day or maybe it's every few days, but there's not rules, guidelines, or stress over it. why? because *it's just food*.

12. how do i lose weight once my hunger normalizes again and i'm over all my disordered issues?

i can't say specifically how it will happen for you (because we're all different!), but for most, within about a year, they naturally lose that weight without even trying to "diet" or cut calories. granted, once they get their period back, eat the foods they had been staying away from for so long and get to a relationship healthy with food again, they naturally start tending towards "healthier," more wholesome foods. they no longer want tons and tons of calories all day long. their body just doesn't want or need it anymore and their hunger levels get fixed. they start eating when they are actually physically hungry and stop when they are satisfied. they start eating a good variety of foods. they have a good balance of everything. by doing this, their body finally realizes that they are feeding it exactly what it needs to continue working properly. they no longer think about food anymore, no longer have this urge to lose weight, no longer wanting to have "cheat meals," no longer stress

***Hey Audra! Would you believe...yesterday evening i got my period, not super heavy but definitely not just spotting...Thanks so much, if it weren't for your videos I wouldn't have thought about fixing the issue in such a helpful way.
Love and light,
Elle Xxx***

over going out to eat because the food doesn't fit in their diet, etc. they just eat and move on with life. instead of saying, "you can't ever have cookies again," they say, "ill eat a cookie or two a day so i won't end up feeling restricted again and going crazy like last time!" basically, what do they find? BALANCE. sadly, a lot of girls want to get their period back, but once they gain weight they're ready to get that weight off asap! but this will just put you back to square one. so, my encouragement to you is 1. love yourself 2. get out and live your life and do something fun every single day 3. be patient 4. realize you're healing both your body and mind and just because you might get your period back doesn't mean that you are 100% healed, especially mentally. it takes a long time and it doesn't just go away. it is something you have to work at and guard yourself and hold yourself accountable for on a daily basis. remember, this is a LIFE change, not a quick fix.

HEY AUDRA, GUESS WHAT I SPOTTED TODAY.....BLOOD!!!! I finally spotted some blood, and I am SOOOO happy that I proved to myself that I can do it :) I hope it doesn't turn out like it did in August, where it was a light period that lasted 3 days, but a lot has changed since then within myself all thanks to you. Thank you, Audra. You changed my perspective on food and on life. I don't think 100 times before I eat any of my "fear foods" anymore, and in fact, I'm going to celebrate with some icecream tonight 😊 I escaped from being depressed and negative all the time to being happy and positive. (I literally just got my period less than an hour ago, and my first instinct was to email you cause I'm way too excited, so you can tell how much I appreciate you and your advice.) One last THANK YOU, and I will continue to eat to my desire in order to have 3 consecutive periods before I slowly start back into exercising YAAAY !! - Chaya

13. will i have to gain weight? i don't want to!!

it all depends! some people won't gain weight, some will gain a few pounds, some will gain more. it all depends on where you're starting from, what all your body has been through, how much healing your body needs, and how long your body has been unhealthy, especially without a period. and if you find yourself gaining weight by just eating a normal amount of food then you KNOW that you have some metabolic issues. eating a normal amount of calories for your body and gaining weight off of that is a sign that your metabolism has been seriously lagging behind and needs a

chance to heal. if your metabolism was working properly, you wouldn't be gaining tons of weight when eating a normal amount of food for your body. usually this happens when you've been on a low calorie diet, far below what your body normally like to run off of. what's the solution to the problem? never go on extreme diets or exercise routines again and let your body heal once and for all. my thing is, you gotta think about it like this: you want to be truly *healthy*, right? so, if you're skinny, thin, fit, ripped, whatever, but aren't truly *healthy* (especially hormonally), then what's the point? you will have to face this at some point, so you might as well heal your body now instead of prolonging the process. the sooner the better! don't worry so much about the weight. let your body heal, your weight balance, and focus on just living your life. you are NOT your body. if you see your body gaining weight and not fitting in your smaller clothes, the solution is simple: go donate your old clothes and go on a shopping spree and find some new clothes, simple as that. :)

14. can i still workout?

please go read the full chapter on this, but in a nutshell, i wouldn't, not right now. the less calories you burn, the more calories you conserve. and remember, your body needs to be conserving those calories to go to healing your bones, organs, tissues, hormones, brain, etc. it doesn't need to be burning them all off. once they're burned off they can't go to healing. for me, the less i worked out and tried to burn calories, the better off i was! if you want to do some light stretching, light yoga, easy walking, etc. that is fine, but again, i would be extremely careful with using this as a way to burn calories, further your exercise addiction, etc. you need to figure this out for yourself, if you want to do some light restorative exercise, then that would be fine, but again, this is your decision and for me (and others), stopping was the key.

15. can i work out the same way i did before i lost my period once i get my period back?

this one can be tricky and will be differently for every girl. my general rule of thumb for me and others was to wait at least 3-6 months after having a normal, natural period before introducing any type of intense, sweat-inducing exercise. light yoga, light walking (not heart-pumping, only about 30 minutes a

day) is fine once you first get your period back. however, when it comes to adding in the exercise you used to do, here are my general recommendations:

1. start SLOW!! the slower the better. you definitely don't want to jump right back in to where you left off. for example, let's say you're a runner and you had built your distance up to 10 miles/day. don't jump right back into 10 miles a day. instead start at 1 and work up slowly. however, realize that you might not be able to get away with the 10-mile days anymore, but then again, maybe you can. it's up to *your body*. some girls find they start back to exercise too soon and miss their next period. so it's all trial and error with this.
2. if the exercise you did before you lost your period causes you any type of disordered thoughts, triggers you, brings back bad memories, or brings you back to where you were when all the bad stuff happened that got you into this, i would say it's time to find a new exercise. some girls see that they can't go back to the exercise they did before because it brought back too many memories that hindered their health and progress forward. again, this is up to you and you have to figure this out. i can't tell you yes or no - go with your gut on this. and again, it can be trial and error. if you start back to that exercise and start having those thoughts, stop the exercise and switch it up to something else. trust me, you'll be glad you did!
3. realize that we are doing WAY too much exercise in today's world, especially us girls. we're constantly bombarded with health and fitness magazines, shows, movies, blogs, videos, and accounts that we think if we're not exercising like all the

“One big thing - my sex drive is back, big time ;) it's taken a bit longer than I hoped but I finally feel my normal self in this area of live. My husband is so happy too and he's so supportive I can't believe it. I've gained weight (not sure how much because I don't weigh myself) and it's quite noticeable but he says he loves the way I look now even more than when I was toned and 'fit' because I'm so much more feminine and confident now- you can imagine how big of a self confidence boost that is!” - Dominika

other girls then we're lazy and doing something wrong. NO! find something you LOVE to do that doesn't even feel like working out.

4. if you hate the exercise you're doing, but you're doing it just because you think it's best for your body or for weight loss, i would encourage you to stop and do something you LOVE and something that is fun. if you hate the exercise you're doing, whether it's getting you "results" or not, chances are you're most likely not going to stick with it.

at the end of the day, it is all about trial and error and how your body and mind reacts. i will emphasize that i do not suggest endurance athletics unless you're able to keep your calorie intake extremely high and not fall back into the thoughts and routines of your past. let your period be your guide - if you get it, great. if it starts getting lighter and lighter or they start missing completely, then you know you've gone too far and need to back off again. the last thing you want to do is get right back to where you started with all this and have to go through the healing process all over again!

16. how do i deal with the stress and anxiety of eating my fear foods?

the biggest thing is making this whole process fun. my advice is to get your family and/or friend involved. make a big deal out of it. not saying it has to be a "fear food party!" or anything like that, but make it more enjoyable than you just driving to the store and buying a cookie and eating it alone in your car. instead, get your family or friends together for whatever reason and get everyone involved. go to your favorite restaurant, celebrate something big in someone's life, have a get-together "just because," have a themed dinner party, etc. realize that food is more than just how it tastes, the health of it, or the virtue of it, it is also about how it brings you together with other people and spend time with them. so make it fun and enjoy that time together! lastly, realize that *it's just food*. that's it. the sooner you can face these issues the better. and again, nobody is saying go eat a whole pack of cookies (if you want to that's fine!), but if you just want a few each day or whatever that's fine, too. the goal is to just see that the food isn't going to hurt you, it's most likely going to *help* you get your period back and clear your mind with food, which is what is going to free you from all this and allow you to just live your life.

17. how do i deal with eating more food than i'm used to now?

the best way to deal with this is to choose those low fiber, low water, high-calorie dense foods. when you choose these types of foods, the volume of your food isn't very high, but the calories are still kept high. also, you just have to realize that what you've been eating obviously hasn't been the best thing for your body, so you actually should be less stressed about your new way of eating. if you really think about it, the thoughts of *not* eating enough, *not* feeding your body, *not* giving it all the nutrients and calories it needs, should cause more stress and anxiety than eating enough foods now. you should now feel relieved, de-stressed, and excited to finally be feeding your body the amount of food it actually needs.

18. how do i deal with gaining weight, even when i know it's needed and healthy for me to do?

this one has everything to do with your mind and your sense of who you are. too many of us are sadly giving ourselves worth and value based off of our weight, size, appearance, etc. as i always say, "you are NOT your body. you are YOU. Life is not all about you being worried and stressed about food, diet, exercise, etc." because of this your body is NOT what matters at the end of the day. throughout your life, your body *will* change, there's no stopping it. yes, you can prevent some things, but at the end of the day you will go through external changes and that's normal and that's ok. and honestly, that's why you shouldn't place all of your focus and value and worth on your physical appearance, because it will fade with time. the best way i can explain this to really get your attention is to imagine this: tomorrow you leave your house and you're driving down the road and you get hit by a car. sadly, you end up losing both of your arms and legs, and all that's left is your torso and head. that's it. the question is, would your life be over? what would you do? if your value and worth are all tied up in how you look (because obviously you look extremely different now, right?) then your life would be over. how could you go on? if you're sitting there right now thinking, "gosh, my life would be over because i would have nothing in terms of my looks! what would i do with my life? what would be the purpose of my life?" then there's a deeper issue at hand. you've got to stop putting all your

self-worth and value on your looks, your body, your aesthetics. do you know there's people out there who have lost all their arms, legs, etc. and they are actually out *living* their life and enjoying it to the fullest? why? because they have realized that their life is NOT about what they look like - it's about who they are on the inside, who their soul is. that is what matters. the outside is so temporary. the soul is eternal. that is what matters in the world, your soul, who you are on the inside. that's what matters to others and that's what matters to God. at the end of the day, you have to learn to focus on who you *are* versus what you look like.

19. can i eat less food once i get my period back?

the question isn't really "can i?" but instead, "will i?" i say this because asking "can i?" already shows that you're concerned about eating less food again (remember, this is what got you into this predicament in the first place). so instead, will you eat less food after you get your period back? most likely, yes you will. but then again, it's all dependent upon you, what your body wants, what it needs, and how much healing needs to be done. my biggest piece of advice is to say don't worry with that right now. keep eating and not restricting at all in any way. if you want food eat it. end of story. but yes, over

time, there is the *possibility* of you eating less, but that **WILL NOT** be up to you consciously starting to restrict again. it will be up to your body and it basically saying, "hmm.. i just don't want *that* much any more." again, i really want to stress this because i don't want you to take this as a free pass to start eating less once your period resumes. that's the not the goal. the goal is to eat what your body needs,

not trying to manipulate it. however, as you continue to feed your hunger signals (especially those extreme hunger signals), your body and appetite will eventually even out and you'll see that you're not *as* hungry as you were before. but again (i'm stressing this!!) this is not up to you, it's up for your body to decide! basically, all you're doing is learning how to just eat again -

I've been watching your videos... and I've been following your advice for about three months, and today I.... I got my period back!! I reached a healthy weight about 1-2 months ago.

Thank you so so so much, I'm so grateful to you and what you are doing. I'm such a happy girl now and I feel healthy. - Kaja

some people call this “intuitive eating” but really it’s just eating, just like you used to “just eat” before all these issues started.

20. my doctor said i have hypothyroidism. what can i do?

many girls find that after they go through a time of food restriction and/or overexercise, they end up having hypothyroid symptoms, and even low thyroid test results. a lot of this has to do with the fact that all of our hormones are connected, they are not separate and work independently. when you don’t get in enough calories to sustain your daily functions, in addition to your exercise, all of your hormones down-regulate (even your thyroid hormones) and cause a lot of problems. this would explain why you don’t have a sex drive, are losing hair, have cold hands and feet, have off thyroid levels, etc. I encourage you to work with your doctor, but eating more and resting is always great for your thyroid, no matter the situation :) again, i’m not a doctor, but i know from past experiencing of being diagnosed with hypothyroidism myself, by healing both my body and mind, all my issues went away. keep up with your doctor on this and focus on healing yourself in the best way that works for you.

21. do i have to stop my sport to get my period back?

most likely, yes. i would. and i even had to stop doing sports when i was working to get my period back, too, so i feel your pain! but here’s the thing, it doesn’t have to be for forever. but for now, yes. remember, no matter what the activity is (working out, exercise, sports at school, physical education class, dancing around your house, or going on long hikes on the weekend) it is still burning calories. you want to be conserving calories, not burning them off. i really encourage you to talk with your parents, coach, etc. and let them know that you need to take an extended break from your sport and support the team in a non-active way. some ideas are to be the team manager, write encouragement cards for the girls who will be playing, help keep stats, etc. my biggest tip of advice would to be the biggest encourager for your teammates as possible. obviously we all want to be the star players, but there’s also a big need for the behind-the-scenes people who encourage those who are playing. so take the role. and again, this won’t be for forever. the sooner you can restore and heal your body, the sooner you can be back

to your sport. like i say about any form of activity, i encourage you to wait at least 3-6 months of getting normal periods before you start back at your sport. and even then, take it easy, don't jump right back into the high intensity that you were doing before. if you miss your period again then you know you pushed too hard. likewise, you will need to be sure that you're eating a ton more calories than normal to help sustain your training. this is so important! you don't want to go back down the road you just came from! however, if you absolutely cannot stop your sport, then i would focus on eating more calories to compensate for those calories being burned up during exercise. but again, your recover will most likely be longer.

22. why do some really skinny girls get their period and i don't?

there are a lot of factors that go into this. first off, some girls are naturally skinny, they are eating enough and aren't stressing their body out with too much exercise, emotional stress, or disordered eating habits, or maybe they aren't getting a real period (perhaps they're on birth control). for the naturally skinny and thin girls, they just are lucky. really, that's it. genetically their bodies are allowing them to have a period even while being what you might consider "skinny." however, at the same time, you've got to remember, many of these really thin girls are still going through puberty and their hormones are still getting worked out and their bodies are still developing, so they might not always be that "skinny." likewise, even those girls that are thinner or leaner as they get older and still have their period, their situation might be far different than yours. perhaps their stress levels are very low, they sleep good, they don't have anxiety attacks and worry about every little thing, they eat plenty of calories to sustain their activity, etc. there is more that goes into a girl having her period besides how skinny or lean she is. on the other hand, there's the girls that claim they have a "period," when in reality they are just taking birth control pills, causing them have a withdrawal bleed. obviously, no, this isn't a period. and finally, my biggest tip of advice for you when it comes to comparing yourself to other girls or women who you consider to be thin or lean and still get their period is this: focus on you. don't worry about what everyone else is doing or isn't doing. your body is totally different than everyone else's. you have been through a different past with food, diets, exercise, stress, emotional turmoil, etc. the best thing you can do is stop comparing yourself to other girls or women and their

"First of all I just wanted to thank you so much for the consultation. I have watched literally every single one of your videos since I found out about you in June. Therefore I am very familiar with what you wrote in the consultation. Okay, so since June, since I have found out about you, I have really been trying to follow your words to eat more to get a period back. And even though I cannot really slow down my exercise as much as you promote, I have really been trying to eat a lot more and to have a careless attitude about what I eat and not stressing out about what I put in my mouth. I knew that I was so close to getting it because my boobs were soo sore. After I read your email I kind of freaked out because you told me to just eat whatever foods I want with no restrictions, rules, regulations, or limits. I just did not want to gain any more weight that I have. So the next day, I did not follow your "rules". However, the next day, some sense knocked into me and I read your words in the email over again and I told myself that I needed to do this if I want my body working at optimum level again and if people in my life have a problem with me gaining a little weight then they should not belong in my life anyways. I also read an article on the Minnesota starvation diet like you said <http://junkfoodscience.blogspot.com/2008/02/how-weve-came-to-believe-that.html> I thought this article was soo good!!! A statement in the article really stuck with me, it stated that when you are referring your body after having a history of restricting calories, the calories literally are needed to rebuild the tissue of your organs. I am a premed student and I realize how dumb it is that I am damaging my perfectly healthy organs by not eating enough, my poor organs that work so hard to keep me alive and well!. SO the next day, I followed your words and I had a carefree attitude and a "f" it attitude and I was like "I'm going to eat whatever I want vegan) including delicious cookies and foods that I love and crave right now and I am going to enjoy the process" So I do not know if it was my carefree and free of stress attitude but all of a sudden when I was at work I could feel myself get so crampy and the lower back pains kicked in. And what do you know, I go to the bathroom and I got my period!!. I have never felt so proud in my life. I felt like I was finally treating my body correctly and I feel happy that my body is getting enough nutrients because it was healthy enough to get a period. I am now seeing my body like a best friend in real life and I would never make a friend restrict calories and allow my friend to damage her organs. I really feel like I got my period yesterday because of my stress free attitude about what I ate and when I ate. Usually when I miss my period, I get all of the symptoms but I am usually so stressed out about what I put in my mouth because I want to be skinny that I never actually get my period, but not this time, this time I literally felt so free and didn't put any stress on myself and allowed myself to eat a huge lenny and larry's vegan chocolate chip cookie in the morning right after breakfast and by that night I had a period! I just wanted to say thank you so much and I am not stopping the efforts because I don't just want one single period, I want several in a row!!" - Brianna



physique and wondering how they can get by with being so lean, but still have a period. it doesn't matter. focus on you and healing your body, that's what matters. trying to figure out who you might be able to manipulate your body to work like Susie's is only going to cause further issues. so focus on YOU.

23. my life isn't that stressed, but i still don't get my period. how do some women who have a really stressful lives get their periods and i don't?

it is true that stress, in any form, can prevent a girl from having their period. however, stress isn't the only case. some women live in very stressful living situations, but they are eating enough calories, aren't exercising like crazy, and their hormones are functioning properly. it can be different for everybody. and again, just like the question above, i would really encourage you to focus on you and your situation. don't worry about how she gets by with the stress in her life and gets a period, but you don't have your period, always comparing yourself with others. just focus on you, de-stressing your life (in all areas) and working on healing *your* body. there is so much that goes into getting or not getting your period, so the sooner you can address these issues in your life, the sooner you'll get yours back. however, i do want to point out that just because you have a period doesn't mean that

So, I just thought I would tell you that I had pizza last weekend! Two slices and a breadstick! That's the first time I've had pizza in 4 years!! I didn't even feel bloated at all, and most of all I felt so good mentally! :) I try not to make it seem like a big deal when overcoming fear foods, because I'm trying to be "normal" again. But it's so hard to not get excited over it! I know that God didn't give me the gift of life to waste it counting calories and worrying about staying a certain number on the scale. My purpose on Earth is for Him and being a light to others. I love myself more in knowing that I'm created in His image, and knowing I deserve to treat myself the way that God loves His children is so comforting to me. So much anxiety has been lifted, and seeing your perspective has helped so incredibly much!! My parents and I are ordering pizza again tonight. Although I do have a little anxiety, overcoming that and eating the pizza will be so liberating and rewarding! I can't thank you enough. Your words stick with me and give me courage to keep going! - Jessica

you are healthy or stress-free. because remember, stress is never good. and like these women you are asking about (the ones who live stressful lives and get a period), stress is still a bad thing, regardless if you get a period or not. that's why i really encourage you to not just try to "fix your period," but to fix your life. every part of it. all areas of your life, especially the stressful ones, need to be addressed, worked on, and sorted out. don't worry about how the other girls with high-stress lives get their periods and you don't. that's doesn't matter. again, focus on working on you and your life.

24. will i get my fertility back? and how will i know when it's back?

most girls find that when they get their period back they also begin to ovulate. ovulation is needed for you to get pregnant. your body will produce and egg that will (hopefully!) meet a sperm to then result in conception. so yes, getting your period back would be the first step in healing your fertility. as far as when you know it's back... well, you'd get pregnant :)

25. how can i deal with the pain of eating more food?

eat low-fiber, low-water, ultra calorie-dense foods. stay away from lots of raw fruits and veggies unless they are the super calorie-dense. there's a lot of options you'll find in my "grocery must haves" section later on in the book. processed/high calorie foods are a great option to eat when your stomach is very painful from increasing your calorie intake (again, processed doesn't necessarily mean "junk food" - you make that decision on what you want to eat). eating less fiber and water foods will keep the bloating down, the gas and indigestion away, and help with digestion because they digest so quickly. the more fiber and water you eat, the more space is taken up in your stomach so you aren't able to get in the calories you really need to get your period back. so, stick with the lower fiber and water foods and you'll feel so much better.

26. will my boobs start growing when i get my period back?

they definitely could, but that's totally up to your body where it decides to store fat. however, yes, most girls find that their boobs, definitely get a lot

bigger as they feed their bodies and get their hormones back on track, so that's good news!

27. will i get taller if i went through disordered eating during puberty and didn't grow that much?

again, obviously i can't say this for *certain,* but possibly you could! as you start feeding your body the calories it needs, you will most likely grow. however, i can't look into the future, but your best bet is to go on and recover because you're not making any progress doing what you're doing now, right? so what do you have to lose?

28. why do i have a big appetite some days, but then not hungry at all on other days?

your body is going through so many changes right now, and based off your past with dieting and exercise, your hunger levels can definitely take some time to even out. this is really common for girls who decide to start eating more and letting their bodies rest. some days you'll not even really care for much food (and that's ok! don't force feed yourself!), whereas other days you are completely ravenous (and that's ok, too!) the key is to learn to just go with what your body is telling you to do each and every day. this is why i really encourage you to tune-in with what your body tells you to do on a daily basis - don't follow a diet plan, meal plan, etc. just eat what, when, and how much you want each and every day and get your body used to just eating again. every day will be different, and every day *should* be different. our bodies change, our tastes change, and our needs change, so we have to go with that. don't try to keep yourself in a box or sticking to a plan that is that same thing every single day. your body and appetite don't work like that. go with what your body is telling you to do. if you're hungry, eat. there were days when i didn't want a lot of food at all, while the next day i was starving! just go with what your body is saying - don't restrict and don't force-feed - remember, this is about you finding your natural hunger cues again.

29. why am i losing so much hair?

hair loss can be a very complex issue and many girls can be losing hair for various reasons. and hair can be extremely finicky too - most find they don't start losing hair until 2-4 months after a very drastic event that has happened in their life. for example, if you lost a lot of weight 2-4 months ago and it was too drastic for your body, your hair wouldn't start falling out until 2-4 months later. same goes for something like chemo for cancer treatment. you know how people lost their hair during this type of treatment? well, it doesn't happen right away after the treatment, it happens 2-4 months later. however, hormonal issues can be different. some girls see hair loss around the time of their period due to drastic drops in hormone levels. so, there can be maybe one reason or numerous reasons why girls lose hair, so here are some ideas that i encourage you to look into and research for your own personal situation:

Audra! This is crazy but today I got my period!!!!!!!!!! It's pretty light but hey its still a period! I can't believe it! Before I got a coaching session with you, I been trying to follow your videos on Youtube and the advice you gave to other girls! I can't stop smiling:))))))
Thank you so much!! God is Good! - Jacqueline

1. get your iron levels checked. a lot of girls find they are iron-deficient or even anemic, which both can cause hair loss. eating more blackstrap molasses is great for this.
2. get your zinc levels checked. zinc-deficiency can cause hair loss, too.
3. some girls lose their hair due to their eating disorder, so eating properly again will help. likewise, including zinc-rich foods like pumpkin seeds, beans, almonds, beef, eggs, and oatmeal are great sources.
4. some girls lose their hair during recovery. this is very common and some see this as they begin eating more, they have more hair loss. in this

situation, keep eating and healing your body. you wouldn't think you'd lose hair after eating, but this is your body's way of healing.

5. hormone fluctuations can cause hair loss. as your estrogen and/or progesterone levels rise and fall, you might see more hair loss. as your hormones balance this will get evened out.
6. stress is a huge reason why people lose hair. and this could be any type of stress - work, relationships, not enough sleep, school, or stressing over hair loss! so don't stress at all!
7. drastic weight loss is another reason - if you've lost tons of weight, especially in a quick amount of time, you might notice hair loss.
8. drastic diet changes can cause hair loss. maybe you've cut your fat too low, or protein or carbs too low. maybe you've cut calories or done fasts/cleanses, etc. any of these that happen suddenly can be very stressful on your body.
9. deficiencies in various vitamins and minerals can cause hair loss. being sure you eat a good, well-balanced, NON-extreme diet is the best course of action to prevent this from happening. if you're eating a plant-based diet, i encourage you to eat a WIDE variety of foods to make sure all your nutritional needs are easily met (eat lots of beans, whole grains, veggies, starches, nuts and seeds, avocados, fruits, etc. You need a good variety of foods.)
10. stopping the birth control pill can cause hair loss, especially since you're removing the synthetic hormones from your body. as your body starts to rid itself of all the extra synthetic hormones, there is a drastic drop of these hormones in your body, which can cause hair loss.
11. post-pregnancy, many women see they lose hair due to the hormone fluctuations. if other things in their life are ok and set in place, this will resolve itself.

12. some girls see they lose hair when switching to a vegetarian or vegan diet. there's a few reasons for this: you are no longer ingesting a great level of hormones from animal products so the loss of those hormones causes a fluctuation in your body; the sudden drastic change of fat, protein, or carb intake can be too extreme from your body; perhaps you're not getting enough calories or variety of nutrients in general. regardless, any type of diet change can come across as stressful/extreme/ or just different for your body. it's not saying these are bad, so to speak, but it's just *different* for your body and that can create different effects in your body, namely your hair.
13. scalp conditions from improper hair care can cause fungus and other bacteria to grow that cause hair loss
14. certain medications, pills, or supplements can cause hair loss.
15. external scalp issues (bacteria, infection, etc.) can cause hair loss. so be sure to keep your scalp clean and wash your hair!

there's also other reasons for hair loss if none of these things pertain to your situation. regardless, i encourage you to be sure to get a regular routine blood test done, as well as see a trichologist (hair doctor) to make sure there's nothing extra going on with your hair. finally, rest assured that as you are eating more and finally healing your body you are most definitely doing the best thing for your health (and your hair) in the long run.

30. should i keep eating even when i don't have an appetite and i'm not hungry?

this one can be kinda tricky because for some people they don't have much of an appetite at all, like ever. if this is you (meaning you hardly eat at all all day every day) then you definitely need to make yourself eat. the longer you go without eating, the more you don't want to eat. however, if you do have an appetite and you just ate and feel satisfied, then no, you don't have to keep eating if you're not hungry. however, be sure there's no restriction going on at all. if your mind or your body is saying, "eat!" then go eat something. it doesn't have to be a full-blown meal, but something is better than nothing. fix

yourself little snack or have a few bites of something to make the “hunger thoughts” go away. at the end of the day, you don’t need to be force-feeding yourself. this is all about you figuring out what it means to be hungry, satisfied, full, etc. and learning that process over the next months and years. it will be really hard to grasp what that means if you’re constantly force-feeding yourself. so, no, don’t force-feed, but also don’t restrict. if you’re hungry, go eat!

31. won't i get constipated if i just eat low fiber foods?

your digestion is going to be a little whacky as you start to eat more food in general. if you are eating enough calories (especially carbs), you shouldn't get constipated. however, you have to take into account all that your body has potentially been through up to this point. were you using laxatives, diuretics, colonics, enemas, “skinny teas,” or diet pills? do you drink a lot of coffee or other digestive stimulants? were you on the birth control pill? have you ever purged, restricted, fasted, or done a cleanse? all of these things can mess up your gut flora/bacteria and overall digestion and it's not a simple fix. it takes

time! the last thing you want to do is use any of these tactics to make yourself go to the bathroom. being sure you eat plenty of calories, drink some water (not a ton!), and resting will help heal your digestion, as well as the rest of your body, so give it some time!

***Basically the game plan is eat more, rest more, gain weight, cut coffee, and heal my mind from the disordered and negative thought patterns. I will try to go cold turkey with this as much as possible, it will be hard for sure. I've lived being wrapped up in food, calorie counting, weighing myself, overexercising, and comparing myself to every skinny I came across for SO LONG! I feel like this is sadly who I am, I have to learn what my REAL PASSIONS are aside from food and exercise and the only way to do this is one step at a time and day by day. Thank you for the work that you do,
- Rachel***

32. so, not having my period means i'm not at my ideal weight?

not exactly. some people believe that having a period is all about being at a certain

weight or having a certain amount of body fat. and for some people that is

true. however, there are SO many other things that go into not getting a period: stress, body fat, sleep, diet, exercise, etc. there are some girls that are even overweight and not getting their period due to the amount of stress, exercise, sleep or food they're getting. so, my thing is, you WANT to be at a healthy weight regardless if you get your period at that weight or not. i would really deter you from trying to sidestep the weight thing and get your period back at a lower weight. err on the side of caution, get to a healthy weight, but don't stop there. remember, it's not *just* about your weight. gaining weight won't always fix your problems. it's a whole-life overhaul that has got to take place.

33. when can i start losing the weight i gained after i get my period back?

as explained before, some people will gain weight (and need to!) and some people might not. again, that is up to YOUR body to decide, not you. now, if you *did* gain weight there are a few things you need to keep in mind:

1. your number one goal right now is NOT to focus on weight loss. your focus should be healing and health. if you're just doing all of this so you can then go lose a ton of weight, then your goals are misconstrued and you won't be successful in the long run. i encourage you to get weight loss out of your mind and enjoy this time of reconnecting with your body, your health, and your life.
2. keep in mind that your journey and striving for weight loss was most likely what got you to this point of having no period today. the goal of this book is to help show you that weight loss is NOT the utmost goal in life. we are obsessed with wanting to be thin and sadly our health suffers for it, so again, right now you need to be focused on healing!
3. if you do gain weight (which you probably will and that's a GOOD thing!), i wouldn't suggest that you actively/consciously try to lose weight anytime soon. most girls see that as their bodies begin to heal, along with their mental connection to food, they effortlessly drop a few pounds that they gained when eating and resting. their bodies finally trust them again and aren't feeling that threat of starvation that caused them to hold onto the

weight. again, i want to stress that this is not up to you to do anything about. your body will take care of this on it's own. i did this and it was a huge mistake - it made me lose my period again! my body didn't get a chance to 100% heal so take it easy!

4. remember, you don't have to force-feed yourself either. if you are tired of eating a certain high calorie food after eating it every day for weeks or months, you don't *have* to keep eating that food. go with what your body is craving. if you finally reach the point to where you want more fruits and veggies, then eat those. remember, the goal is to be normal with food again.

I just wanted to let you know that I sort of got my period:) the reason I say "sort of" is because its very light , its barely there but yet its there... So I wanted to thank you so so much for all your advice and motivational videos- Such a tremendous help! ...Thank you so very much!! - Perry

5. stay tuned for my e-book "Keep My Period" for those of you that get your period back and need a general idea of great foods to keep eating and ways to exercise that make you feel healthy and happy, while keeping a natural period.

34. why am i retaining so much water?

because you have restricted, over-exercised, dieted, taken certain supplements, etc. for so long, the electrolytes in your body are totally out of whack. so, when you start eating more calories or food again, your body starts to hold on to the extra sodium, magnesium, potassium, and calories in general, as an effort to heal your body. likewise, if you have been dieting for weeks, months or years, now that you're eating so many more calories (specifically, carbs) you are replenishing and filling up your glycogen levels. glycogen is stored primarily in your liver and muscles and when re-filled causes you to hold onto water (especially if your glycogen has been extremely low for a long time). this is why when people decide to go have a "cheat meal" after dieting all week long, they can end up standing on the scale the next morning and it says they gained sometimes up to 10-15 lbs!

was this 10-15 lbs of pure fat? no, it is mostly water and glycogen that has been replenished. so, when recovering, you're not only restoring your glycogen levels, but you're balancing out your electrolytes, and holding on to water and calories to go to fixing your organs, hormones, and body. this will eventually dissipate (can take months and differs from girl to girl), but realizing this is normal is important. maybe you see that you feel a little fluffy or tingly. obviously, talk to your doctor or an eating disorder specialist about this if you feel you need to, but i'm just saying it is normal. i retained a lot of water for a few months and then it slowly started going away. your body is using it as a protective mechanism to heal your body. my biggest tips are stop trying to fit in your small clothes, get some stretchy pants, drink some water, and let your body rest. remember, healing takes time!

35. but i want to weigh what i did when i was a teenager again!

lots of girls go through eating disorders or restrictive tendencies in their teenage years, specifically the time when they are going through puberty. this is actually really dangerous because it's essentially setting up the rest of your life with the expectation of being at that pre-pubescent weight even as an adult. this is what gets so many girls in trouble. let's say a girl weighed 90 lbs when she was in middle school and that's when she started to go through puberty. she saw her body change, noticed she was getting bigger boobs, her body started to fill out a little bit, and she inevitably gained some weight. this can cause a lot of girls to get really uncomfortable with their body because they think they're supposed to be that "child-like" look, thin and trim, forever. (especially if they have friends who haven't hit puberty yet and they are growing so much faster than their peers - not to mention their daily influx of media and society telling them they should like a certain way!). so, the eating disorder and body image issues begin. trying to always get back to looking like you did when you were 90 lbs or 12 years old is not only dangerous, but it goes against the natural growing-up process of your body. you aren't supposed to stay a little girl or teenager forever. you are naturally supposed to grow into a woman: one with curves, boobs, thighs, arms, etc. the obsession with wanting to weigh and have the same body type you did when you were younger will drive you crazy! embrace the fact that you are growing up, becoming a woman, and you're no longer a child. a feminine body is so beautiful and letting your body naturally become that will be your best

bet. and i want to mention here, when i talk about my personal journey and how i gained weight then naturally lost that weight over a years worth of time, i did not lose down to what i thought was my preferred weight (basically the weight i was at when i was dieting and exercising a lot) - that weight obviously wasn't the weight my body felt best at because i was having so many issues, especially hormonally. i lost down to a weight that my body enjoyed being at, it worked great at, i felt amazing at, got my period at, and just settled naturally at.

36. should i follow a meal plan?

many people advocate for a meal plan for those with disordered eating habits in an attempt to get them to eat a balanced diet and a decent amount of food. if you're working with a doctor or other professional then you want to work with them and let them know how you feel about this. but i'll share my opinion since you asked :) in my opinion and experience, i find that meal plans can sometimes cause more harm than good. this is why i

Audra i got my period back!! it took 6 months of eating a ton and no exercise but it's here!! - Isabel

encourage you to eat when, what, and how much you want whenever you want. with you coming from a background of disordered eating, the last thing that is going to help you is to have someone else tell you when, how much, and what to eat.

however, some girls find this helpful

because it gives them a foundation to start on. so, you need to figure this out on your own, while also working with your parents, doctors, therapist, etc. to figure out IF a meal plan is a good idea for your or not (because, yes, they can be very beneficial for some!) so, if you're already doing a meal plan, i'm not telling you to stop, but encouraging you to branch out a little bit more and start to make your meals more intuitive. talk to your parents/doctors and see about adding in more foods. eat what you really like, eat when you're hungry, eat what you want, and eat the amount you like, especially if you're not eating enough. some meal plans will only allow you a certain amount of food, whereas your body and mind are craving more (specifically if you're underweight and have a history of disordered calorie restriction)! if this is you, you need to eat more. if you're hungry, eat. your appetite is there for a

reason! i'm all about getting you to the point of being able to live your life with food and exercise independent of anything or anyone else. it's not going to help you live a productive life having me or anyone else always telling you when, when, and how much to eat. you're a productive, functioning girl who can make decisions on her own and sometimes having a meal plan can keep you from doing that. likewise, i find that meal plans can sometimes make you feel like you are in a little box that you feel you have to follow or everything is going to fall apart. you need to learn to eat on your own, not follow a list of guided rules.

37. what if i'm already at a healthy weight or overweight? should i still eat more and not exercise?

if you LEGIT are at a healthy weight (meaning you have a BMI over 20+), or you're even overweight, i'll share what others have done and you can take it for what it's worth. they actually ate more, because they were on a yo-yo diet of restricting and overeating for so long, and they changed their exercise to being more low-stress, because they were doing too much stressful exercises. basically their bodies were too stressed. so, your problem is most likely that you've been on some type of yo-you diet, binge/purge cycle, restrict then binge, etc. and that is what has kept the weight on you (perhaps not, but that is my guess and is usually what it is!). i encourage you to eat more often (three meals a day with snacks included) to get your body on a more regular eating schedule. what has happened is after months or years of the yo-yo, back and forth dieting, your body has held on to the weight and won't let it go, because just like someone who is underweight and starving, your body has just stored the fat and left you overweight and starving (and yes, you CAN be overweight and starving!) so the best thing to do is to eat more often and eat more whole plant foods (anything from the produce section is awesome!) obviously, body fat and body weight are not the issue for you, but most likely something else going on in your life, namely stress (either too much intense exercise in an effort to lose weight, not enough sleep, too much self-hate, other emotional or physical stressors, medications, etc.) once you get these issues sorted out, let your body rest and get it to trust you again, your body will not only drop weight, but also get your period back, too :)

38. when you say, “no exercise!” like, really, no exercise?!

yes. no exercise! (or at least the lowest amount possible)! the reason why is because your body is probably seeing that exercise as a form of stress and remember, stress is the worst thing for your hormones! what does this mean? basically, the less you move, the quicker you'll heal. as i've explained above, you have to think about it this way: your body has had a calorie-deficit for a matter of days, weeks, months, or even years. those calories are long gone and your body has suffered because of it (hormones, bones, hair, skin, nails, organs, digestion, etc.) all of these things work off of energy (i.e. calories) that not just comes into your body through eating, but is also *conserved* in your body (or kept/stays in your body). so, for however many days, weeks, months or years that your body hasn't gotten enough food and/or burned too much, this causes the issues to happen. so, what's the solution? you do the opposite of what you did in the first place. instead of not eating enough calories and burning too many, now you want to eat a ton of calories and not burn any. you're essentially just doing the reverse of what got you into this predicament. if you view it like this type of equation, then you'll soon realize that the *more* you eat and the *more* you rest, the *quicker* your body will heal. just like the *less* you eat and the *less* you rest, the quicker you are to burn out and have issues.

more calories + more rest = quicker healing

less calories + less rest = quicker problems

so, looking at it like this you can also see the following two ways that girls will try to sneak around the healing process, essentially prolonging their problems:

more calories + less rest = SLOWER healing

less calories + more rest = SLOWER healing

many girls will try to just eat more calories, but still keep doing their exercise. **SOME** can get by with this (though their journey will be far longer and more frustrating), but most can't get their period back eating more

calories and still exercising. on the flip side, many will try to just eat less calories since they know they're not going to be doing the exercise they were before. again, this can be super frustrating and take forever to heal your body (and some would argue that doing it this way, you can't really truly heal!). so, the plan is

MORE CALORIES + MORE REST = QUICKER, MORE SUSTAINABLE HEALING

so, the best thing you can do is to cut out as much MOVEMENT as possible.

i'm not even going to use the word "exercise" here because some people equate exercise with just something they do at the gym and forget that they are still burning calories when they bike or walk to school, go hiking on the weekends, work their day job as a waitress walking around all day long, go to Zumba class, or participate in p.e. class at school. this is all considered movement that burns calories. so, the less you can do right now the better.

again, no, you will not have to do this forever. exercise and moving your body is definitely an important and healthy thing in life, when done in the *right* way with the *right* amount of calories fueling your body, and with the right intentions. but for now, you want to start conserving all these calories you're eating to go to healing your body. if you want to do something very, very light, doing some light yoga is ok. and again, when i say light i mean LIGHT! no sweating, heart-pounding, hot yoga stuff. literally, just some stretching. this is what really helped me out, both physically and mentally, and helped my whole body heal a lot faster.

I bought a consultation from you about 10 weeks ago. I just wanted to let you know that I have successfully gained 5lbs since changing my lifestyle. I'm being more flexible with my food choices and not planning my days around exercise. I'm spending more quality time with my friends and family and have stopped weighing everything that goes into my mouth. I listen to my body and eat when I'm hungry. - Kate

39. will i be getting enough vitamins and minerals if i'm not eating "healthy" food all the time?

a lot of girls get really concerned that if they aren't eating "super healthy food" while trying to heal their body that they won't be getting in enough vitamins and minerals. most of these girls are the ones that spend a lot of time tracking their calories and seeing where all their vitamins and nutrients are coming from, yet are having all these serious issues! but here's the thing: obviously, what you've been doing eating tons of what you consider to be "healthy" food hasn't really helped, right? maybe you've been hitting all your vitamins and minerals, but here you are extremely unhealthy right now. so, right now you need to be focusing on calories. that is the goal. if you're concerned about getting vitamins and minerals, take a multivitamin. but again, i want to stress, that you won't necessarily be eating this way for the rest of your life - this is only for a time to let your body heal and get your period back and get your mind right with food again. if you think working with a dietician or nutritionist is a good idea for you, go for it! look up some local ones in your area and tell them what's going on - they can help you create some meal ideas that will cover all your nutrient needs if you're concerned about that :)

40. what if my job is very active (i'm standing or walking pretty much all day long)?

if you have an extremely active job where you are walking or standing or doing lots of exercises all day long (maybe you're a waitress, work as a barista, lift heavy objects, are an exercise instructor, work outside or whatever it is), you have two options. the BEST option, in my opinion, is to either find a new job (that is far less active) or take a break from your job. talk to your boss and see if you can take a break for a few months/weeks until things get settled with your period, health, and mind. because remember, movement of any kind still burns calories (it's not just exercise that causes calorie burn). or maybe even ask if you can switch to a different role that isn't as active. so the less movement and calorie-burning you can do, the better. now, i know a lot of you don't have a choice and have to work this job, so this just means you need to be eating even more calories to compensate for the calories you're burning off at work. i would bring some

snacks with you to work and snack on them as often as you can (great ideas are dried fruit, dates, trail mix, peanut butter crackers, peanut butter and jelly sandwich, rice cakes with peanut butter, baked goods, etc. I wouldn't be packing carrots and celery or apples and oranges - remember, you need calories!). you can pack these in little bags and eat them on your break, between customers, go in the bathroom and eat it if you have to, tell your supervisor you need to be eating snacks for health reasons, etc. the last thing you want to do is be going hours and hours without food while walking around and working all day. this is a recipe for hormonal disaster (not to mention if your job is super stressful!)

41. can i take certain herbs to get my period back?

i definitely think herbs can be beneficial, BUT (and this is a big but), they need to be used in the right way. the WORST thing you can do is think, "oh i don't have to change anything else in my life. i want to stay skinny, eat my favorite safe foods, keep exercising, not gain weight, and live the life i want to live, so ill just take this herb and i'll be ok." haha... no. herbs can be a great addition to all the other positive changes you're making in your life, but there's a big catch to this. before you start ordering tons of different herbs and taking all kinds of pills, i HIGHLY recommend you get your blood levels

check and see what your hormone are doing, while also working with a professional. you don't want to be taking a supplement that causes your estrogen to lower if you already have low estrogen. same goes for not wanting to take something that potentially lowers your progesterone when you need it to be higher. you want to be sure you're taking the right

Your words and advice have really helped me a lot. I've let go of needing to live up to this perfect body image and realize that intense exercise and restrictive eating aren't actually making me healthier. Mentally and physically. My hair stopped falling out, my skin is clear and glowing. It's all good! I just hope my stomach catches up with my mind soon enough and calms down. Thanks for your help. - Gabi

things and at the right time. i never recommend or prescribe any of these because i'm not a doctor and this is a personal decision that needs to be

carefully thought thru and researched before you dive right in. my biggest tip would be hang off on the herbs as a last resort. focus on the other areas of your life that need changing first.

42. should i be counting fat grams, carbs, and protein? how much do i need every day?

no, no, no, no, and....no. i wouldn't be counting anything right now (especially if you've had a bad experience with this in the past). you need to just eat. get away from counting and numbers and percentages and grams for now and **JUST EAT!** again, if you decide to come back to this later in life, that's up to you, but i would really challenge you to take a step back from this and just start eating.

43. what if i've gained weight from extreme hunger and i'm at an unhealthy weight now, but i'm still craving junk foods. should i make myself stop?

remember, this is about balance. if you gained a ton of weight it was because you needed to. if you're still craving junk all day long, it's most likely because you're not eating enough other foods. i encourage you to start eating other wholesome foods to balance things out. remember, this is about getting your body and mind healed, yes, but it's also not about you becoming severely overweight and unhealthy from the other extreme. yes, there is a sense of self-control when you get to this point (just like there's the idea of self-control in all areas of life), but, honestly, if i had to guess, i would say there's something else going on here. nobody can eat candy bars all day every day and not get sick of them, (granted there may be some exception to this), but if you're used to restricting then this probably isn't you, especially if you used to eat super healthy and know what that's like! before you write it off as "oh gosh, i'm so fat now, i can't stop eating all this junk food," do a small inventory check to be sure you're keeping everything else in line: are you eating regular-sized, balanced meals? are you skipping meals and saving your calories for later in the day? are you restricting in any way throughout the day so you can eat a ton of junk and write it off as extreme hunger? if all of these things are in line, i would start eating more wholesome meals, focus on whole plant foods, but don't cut out your favorite foods, allow yourself a

little bit of these foods every day to keep you from binging on them. remember, you want to get healthy and get your period and mind in order, but you don't want to go so extreme that you are totally unhealthy in another way. buying a good variety of foods once you reach this point is where you would start eating a more balanced diet. this isn't about force-feeding and binge eating, it's about finding a healthy balance and living your life. and finally, remember, you most likely have some type of distorted image of your body and weight. some girls see their bodies change and freak out thinking they're "fat." just remember, your body needs to heal. and stay tuned for my next e-book, "keep your period," which will talk all about making good choices with food after you've beaten your fear foods, exercise, and keeping your period for the long-run.

44. i can't stop weighing myself, what do i do?

throw your scale away! THERE'S NO POINT IN WEIGHING YOURSELF AT ALL. it literally means nothing. it's just your gravitational pull to the earth- that's it. a number on a digital box on the floor in your bathroom should

Hey Audra ! Just wanna share a great news :), today I got my period back after 14 months :). I'm happy due to 5 kg weight gain in 1 month... Thank you, thank you, thank you again and God bless you. - Maja

have 0 control over your life. again, this is something YOU have to do. go in there right now, throw it away, and never weigh yourself again. so many girls are literally obsessed with weighing themselves, even numerous times each day. this is honestly ridiculous - STOP doing this. you are not a number. think about it,

the number will NEVER be good enough. you will weigh and maybe it will be more than you want it to be, so what's going to happen? your whole day is going to be ruined. what if the number is less than you were expecting? you'll have a temporary party in your mind and then you'll say, "ok, well, maybe i can lose more... i'll start cutting calories more." and it goes on and on and on. so you have to stop. throw it away. this is up to you to do.

45. i track my calories/weigh my food/count my macros, etc. should i stop? don't i need to know how much i'm eating?

no, you really don't need to do this, nor do you have to know how much you're eating. however, this is left 100% up to you. in my opinion, at this stage in your journey, i would take an honest evaluation of yourself and ask yourself just how controlling this is for you. for some people, it doesn't bother them at all, it's actually somewhat freeing and helpful, but for others it's super obsessive. yes, counting and tracking can be helpful and ok for some people, but my guess is that it's not that way for you. so, i want to point out that calories (just like diets and exercise) are objective. the way we view them and manipulate them are all in subjective ways. so, yes, there actually are a lot people out there that count their calories and it doesn't affect them on a mental, physical, or stress level and that's ok! that doesn't mean counting calories or macros is inherently wrong and it might even be helpful for a lot of people. but, my guess is that it has seriously taken control of your life and has become something that is messing with your head. if this is you, then you need to reevaluate. perhaps counting calories can help some people if they need to lose weight or even gain weight in a controlled way. likewise, some people find that it helps them with portion control (for legit overweight/obese people), eating enough calories for those with no appetite, or whatever the reason is. however, i would just encourage you to reevaluate, perhaps take a break, find a good balance and even stop, especially if you find your life revolving around it and it's an obsession/addiction for you. my guess is if you're reading this book, you probably really struggle with this in one way or another. you want to get in the right headspace before tracking calories/macros (if you even want to, though you probably won't!) and this is totally up to you to figure out. maybe it's ok for you, but maybe you need to stay far, far away. that's up for you to decide! most people find that when they stop they feel so much more free, while others stop, get in a better place and use it in a more healthy, sustainable way later on down the road (if they even want to, but most don't!) so, you've got to find the balance. be honest with yourself and keep yourself in check with this. and for those of you that are afraid you "won't eat enough without counting," trust me, you'll be fine. if you're eating lots of high calorie foods until you're satisfied, you'll be getting plenty.

46. is it normal to get your period then skip the next one?

yes. when it comes to hormones and getting your period back after it's been gone for a while, there's so many different things that could happen. you could skip a month, it could be a long period, a short period, you could just have spotting, you could have other signs and symptoms that come and go each month, etc. it can be crazy! but yes, getting a period once and then missing it being late the next month is normal at first. however, this isn't normal or good if right after you got your period back you started restricting, dieting, or exercising again. this would cause you to miss your period. so the best course of action is to keep doing what you've been doing and keep going forward. just because you get one period doesn't mean everything is fixed for good. this is an ongoing process that you'll have to learn to keep with as life goes on.

47. will you be making more e-books about what to do after we get our periods back? like weight loss, exercise, etc.?

yes, my "keep your period" handbook and journal covers all these topics!

48. can i save all my calories to eat at night? or can i just eat once or twice a day?

no, i wouldn't do this, especially at first. it can potentially create unhealthy and abnormal eating patterns. i don't like meal plans, but i do like eating normally, especially when you've been so abnormal for so long. and by normal i don't mean at the exact same time every single day and if you miss it by a minute then your whole world is going to fall apart!! what i mean is, you need to be eating breakfast, lunch, and dinner (like normal eaters do) and some snacks, if you want, in between. i suggest you do this for a while at least to get yourself back to normal eating again. obviously over the span of your life things might change (maybe you won't like to eat snacks or breakfast later in life and once you heal), but for now, stick to **NORMAL**. hoarding and saving all your calories at night is just going to get you in a restrict-binge type cycle which is not good at all. same goes for just eating once or twice a day, especially when these things turn into full-on binges. since your body hasn't been getting and/or conserving calories, continuing to

confuse it with weird eating times will just make things worse. your body wants to feel comfortable and fed, so eating often is best. this doesn't mean you have to eat full-on thanksgiving feasts every time you eat, but even just a little snack will help a lot. right now, the more that your body realizes it's being fed, the better off you're going to be. if you get to a point later in life where this changes and you're still healthy physically and mentally, that's a different story. but for now, think "normal."

49. what is the difference between "extreme hunger" and over-eating?

*please go back and read the question about re-feeding syndrome and why i highly encourage you to work with a skilled professional/physician when recovering your body, especially if you've been eating very low calories for a

while.* for people recovering from restrictive issues, overexercise, etc., you're most likely always going to be experiencing extreme hunger or just legit hunger. why? BECAUSE YOUR BODY IS HUNGRY! "extreme hunger" is different than over-eating in the sense that it's totally uncontrollable. it's those times you find yourself in the kitchen at midnight eating everything in sight: jars of peanut

Hey audra! I wanted to tell you I just got my period for the SECOND time!! Other than it's one day early, it's right on schedule!! Thank you so much for all of your help! My mom is so great full and thankful for you too and how much you have helped me, especially that we didn't have to go to the doctor to fix my issues:) - Kendall

butter, boxes of cereal, your mom's casserole left over from the night before, leftover pizza, etc. and you're not even connected to the experience. it's kind of an out of body-type experience. you just eat and eat and eat and you're eating tons of high calorie foods for the most part (especially the foods you've consciously restricted up until this point). you're not even tasting the food really, you're just putting in your mouth, chewing and swallowing. maybe you jump around from food to food, eating a little ice cream, then chips, then cookies, then cake, then the casserole, then back to the ice cream. it's almost like a panic with food. you feel your stomach getting fuller and fuller, but your mind is not satiated. there's a huge disconnect between your mind and body as far as knowing you're satisfied. you eat until you literally feel sick, your

stomach is hurting and bloated like you're 9 months pregnant, but you still are kinda like, "i could eat more..." why does this happen? because your body is starving, it wants calories, it's searching out the highest calorie foods possible, and because you've restricted or burned too many calories through exercise, now your body is trying to make up for all those calories you should've eaten beforehand. and yes, this can happen even if you *think* you're eating enough now (and maybe you are), you still have to take into account all the calories that you skipped out on, burned, purged, or restricted from weeks, months, and years past. this eventually will catch up with you in one way or another. and this is only made worse and continue longer when you eat a ton, feel guilty, purge, overexercise, skip meals, fast, etc. this isn't a matter of self-control, discipline, or will, it's a matter of your body being legit hungry, especially if you've restricted, are at a low weight, and obsess over food all the time. likewise, this can happen various times throughout your healing journey: you might experience it for a day or two (or more!) and then have a little chill out time and then it will hit all of the sudden out of nowhere again. it comes and goes (this isn't to be confused with cravings and increased hunger when you get your period back, because remember, that's one of the common symptoms of getting your period back, your hunger will increase). a lot of people call this "binging," which it is in a sense, but regardless of what you call it, the cause is still the same: you haven't been eating enough so now you're body is starving and it wants a lot of food. but here's the good news, extreme hunger does go away with time. but be careful with this - just by telling yourself, "oh, it's extreme hunger," doesn't make it extreme hunger. my tip is to eat, get satisfied, but then move on with life. if you find yourself eating more and more at certain times, especially at night, yet you're restricting at breakfast, lunch, skipping meals, taking pills, etc. and this is what you're writing off as "extreme hunger," your best bet is to start eating more during the day. have a bigger breakfast followed a by a snack a few hours later then lunch and more snacks. don't try to "do good on your diet" until 6pm and then eat 5 jars of peanut butter and call it "extreme hunger." your body needs food daily and all throughout the day. where a lot of people go wrong with this is they say, "oh gosh, i just can't stop binging!" and they then start their diet the next day or they restrict, skip meals, etc. and then what do you think happens? they end up eating a ton again! this is a vicious cycle that only YOU can stop. think about it like this: in your mind you're probably terrified of eating more throughout the

day, right? maybe you think you're going to gain weight, get fat or whatever, but here's the reality: if you would eat normally throughout the day, eat more good wholesome foods, and eat the foods you really like, too, your body will see that you are being genuinely fed. yes, you might deal with some extreme hunger, but it won't be near the same as for those who keep restricting in one way or another. the extreme hunger will pass quicker because your body is getting the calories it needs to function properly. so, instead of binging, then restricting/overexercising/purging/taking laxatives or whatever else you're doing every single day and being stuck in this horrible nightmare of a cycle, start to eat normally every single day. because if you keep up with the restrict/binge cycle, you're actually ending up eating MORE calories in the long-run and stressing out your body and system even more. yes, more calories are what we want, but you want them in the right way. you want them steadily, in a normal, natural fashion that your body appreciates and sees that you're taking care of it. the extreme is eating tons and tons of calories (which is good, yes), but then going and throwing it up, restricting for days, taking all kinds of pills and teas, and making your body go into shock again. it's so confusing for your body and that's when it actually ends up holding onto more fat in the long run and shutting down hormonal function. why? because the drastic up and downs of eating a ton, then restricting, then eating, etc. confuses your body and it is thinking, "so, this girl is nuts with her food... she eats a ton one day then i'm starving for days on end and don't know when she might feed me a ton again. so, in the name of survival, i'm going to hold onto some extra fat because fat is protective and will keep her alive. if i'm afraid of being starved to death, never knowing when she might feed me again, at least i can hold on to some fat and that will keep me alive, because with her eating schedule i never know what could happen!" this back and forth of extremes is so confusing for your body - all it wants is to be fed, to be loved, to de-stress, to rest, to be happy and joyful and at peace. it needs a constant influx of calorie to do this and plenty of rest and relaxation. on the other hand, over-eating is when you don't restrict your calories in any way at all and you're at a birthday party and you're already satisfied but you see the cupcakes and want a cupcake. you eat it and you feel kinda like, "oh i probably shouldn't have eaten that, i've eaten too much." this happens all the time, specifically with people who are normal eaters. at the end of the day, if you find yourself getting hungrier and hungrier than normal and you're eating more and more than normal, especially at on point

during the day, that's a sure sign you've restricted in one way or another, be it during just that day, the last few days, the past week, months, or even years. at some point your body is going to fight back and say, "feed me." and the longer that you go restricting yourself from eating foods, all those calories that you restricted from and needed in the past are going to add up and your body is keeping track. it will make up for those calories as best as it can, which usually ends up being a whole gallon of ice cream. so, to save yourself from this, stop the restriction. eat enough to feel good and satisfied, and move on with life. moral of the story: if you've restricted, overexercised, purged, etc. then you're going to get hungry, so you need to eat more normally every single day. yes, you might gain weight, but why did you gain weight? because you damaged your metabolism and body and it needs a chance to heal. if you're eating normal calories and normal meals and you find yourself gaining weight, then you know there's a metabolic problem and you need to heal 100%.

50. if restriction is never good, then how are people supposed to lose weight? don't you have to restrict calories to lose weight?

there's various ways to lose weight, and yes calories have everything to do with it. but i want to differentiate between *restriction* and *being in a calorie deficit*. restriction is a negative connotation - it's negative in the sense that you are automatically thinking, "how can i cut that out? that's so bad for me so i'm never eating that again! i ate too much last night so now i'm skipping breakfast. i'm going to throw up my food to cut calories. i'm going to take laxatives or always eat super high fiber foods to go to the bathroom a lot to lose weight. i'm going to smoke and drink coffee and energy drinks to keep my appetite suppressed. i'm going to just live off super high fiber veggies and fruits to make me feel 'full,' but in reality, i'm starving. i'm going to exercise off all the food i ate last night and burn off all those calories." all of these types of statements are coming from a mindset of RESTRICTION. it's all used in a harmful, controlling, obsessive way. and my best bet is that you are coming from this type of mindset. now, on the other hand there is the idea of being in a calorie deficit. this is when you are taking in less calories than what your body is burning in order to lose weight. there is a FINE LINE between restriction and being in a calorie deficit, because they somewhat mix a little but here's how: restriction is ALWAYS about being in a calorie

deficit, but being in a calorie deficit ISN'T always about restriction. get it? for example, some people who want to lose weight understand that restriction is NOT the way to go about doing it (they know that the negative connotations about restriction isn't what they want to do). so, they put their bodies in a *slight* calorie deficit to lose weight. how do you do this? you eat less calories than what your body needs or you burn more calories than what you're taking in, or you do a little bit of both to create that slight calorie deficit. and i put a BIG emphasis on the word "slight," because that is the key and that's where things went wrong with you. you didn't do a SLIGHT deficit, you did an EXTREME deficit. had you have gone super slow and done it in the right way, you wouldn't be where you are now. but here's the thing: have you ever known someone to lose a lot of weight and keep it off for a long time in a healthy way? 9 times out of 10 they lost the weight very slowly. that is the key. yes they cut calories A LITTLE bit or they exercised A LITTLE bit more than they were eating, but it was EXTREMELY LITTLE. the people reading this book didn't do that (or you wouldn't be reading this book) - you've cut your calories or increased your exercise (or both!) in extreme measures. you read in a magazine that you needed to be eating 1200 calories a day, so you went from 2000 to 1200 overnight. sure you might have lost a few pounds, but at some point it caught up with you, right? you started getting super hungry. started having more "cheat meals," started having "less self-control and you needed more discipline." started missing your period, getting super tired, losing your sex drive, being irritated all the time, thinking of food all day long, right? you started finding yourself facedown in a deep-dish pizza on a weekly or even nightly basis. why? because you went to the extremes. you went too much too fast. so again, have you ever known someone to lose weight really quickly, only to gain it all back in a few months or years? sure you have, and maybe this is even you! i see people like this all the time! they are so into wanting to lose weight that they want it to happen extremely fast. they workout for hours, cut their calories, don't eat any "bad foods," and lose a ton of weight. they feel awesome, get tons of compliments, and love their new body, but all the sudden the cravings hit and their body says, "nope, no more, i need food. enough is enough." it's a SURVIVAL MECHANISM. your body is trying to keep you alive and eating tons of calories is the only thing that's going to do that. so, yes, to lose weight, there has to be a calorie deficit, but that deficit needs to be as low as possible to lose weight as slow as possible. anything

extreme is going to throw your body in a tail-spin. this is why crash diets, extreme diets, quick weight loss and all that stuff doesn't work. the slower the better with weight loss, especially from a hormonal perspective. the slower you lose weight, the better your hormones are going to be able to keep up. if you lose weight super quickly, your hormones are going to be thrown off. it's too drastic for your body to handle. if you are having a difficult time with your weight and you want to know how to lose weight, maintain your weight, or get healthy in a SUSTAINABLE way, stay-tuned for my e-book "Keep Your Period," which will be all about how to do this the right way so you don't suffer like you currently are.

51. what about my basal body temperature?

maybe you've never heard of "basal body temperature." basically, this is the core temperature of your body right when you wake up in the morning, before getting out of bed, eating, drinking, going to the bathroom, etc. and is a great representation of your metabolism and hormonal function. most women chart and track their basal body temperature to know when they are ovulating so they can plan (or not plan) on getting pregnant. as your period goes (in a normal, natural way), you will see your bbt rise and fall throughout your cycle. in a perfect world, your bbt would drop right before ovulation (indicating you're ovulating) and then rise until you menstruate again. then it will be steady, drop, and rise again. it goes in a cycle and it's easy to track to see how your temperature is going depending your period. all you do is take your temperature every single morning (before even getting out of bed, drinking anything, etc.) and write it down. for any of you that

aren't getting a normal cycle (which you probably aren't if you're reading this book), then your temperatures can be all over the place and won't show any signs of ovulation, because you're probably not ovulating if you're not menstruating! so, charting your bbt for this reason is kinda pointless right now. however, bbt is a great

So after taking my temperature for a long while I noticed it had reached 98.3 quite consistently and then dropped to 97.3 today! After getting home from work I got my period!!!! Eating every 3 hours, no exercise except for yoga in the morning! So happy!!!!!! Thank you! - Lydia

indicator of your metabolic function. girls who are cold all the time, being underweight, are avoiding salt and higher fat/carb/calorie, have cold hands, feet, tip of nose, etc., experience hair loss, no sex drive, inability to lose weight/gain weight, brittle hair/skin/nails, no period, infertility, anxiety, low blood pressure, have bad digestion, have a slow heart beat (or times of super fast heart beats). etc. (all of which can be low thyroid symptoms), indicate that your metabolism has been lowered. how has this happened? from not eating enough calories or burning too many calories or both. so you need to get your temperature back up! the ideal temperature for a “healthy” metabolism is 98.6 degrees F (37 degrees C). this is why if you’re used to binging on high carb/high cal/high fat foods, you feel your body really warm up a lot! so, when you first start taking your temperature, you’ll most likely see that your temperature is low, maybe even extremely low (some girls i’ve worked with have temps in the 94’s or 95’s - this is NOT good!). so, go get a digital thermometer (preferably a “bbt thermometer” - you can get these at your local pharmacy), put it by your bed a night, and as soon as you wake up in the morning (not when you wake up at like 4am to go to the bathroom, but rather when you wake up for the last time to get up for the day), take your temperature and record it on a calendar or piece of paper. Do this often but DO NOT become obsessed with this. I would suggest doing this every few weeks just to give you a good idea. This is a GREAT marker of your health and lets you know the rate at which your metabolism is running. But there is a way to fix it and get it back up! Once you do this, you’ll see everything start turning around and feeling a whole lot better. Here’s a few things to start incorporating to get your temperature up: 1. Sleep as much as you can. Get in bed early and sleep as long as you want, even up to 12 hours if possible, at times. 2. Stop drinking so much water - you do not have to be drinking a gallon of water a day, be peeing every 15 minutes, etc. Back off the water just for the sake of drinking it. If you ever drink a lot of water at once (say you just got really thirsty or you’ve been outside and it’s been super hot), always eat some salty or super sweet carb with it (pretzels, dates, raisins, dried fruits, bread, oatmeal, etc.) Also, instead of water, start drinking more sweet drinks between meals, especially if you feel your hands and feet getting cold. Drink some orange juice, apple juice, etc. 3. Stay away from really watery fruits, or at least counter balance them with very dense fruits (dates, dried fruits) or salty foods. 4. Add some SALT to your diet, especially Iodized Salt. Sprinkle on potatoes, oatmeal, rice, even fruit. Salt is extremely

warming and helps raise blood pressure and body temperature. Iodized salt contains iodine which is especially needed for proper thyroid function. 5. Stop the chronic cardio and start doing weights once you get your period back for 3-6 months. resistance training is great for increasing metabolism. 6. Start eating more cooked foods and back off the raw foods until you get your temps up. but again, i want to be clear, do not get obsessed with this - a lot people reading this book are extremely black and white, perfectionist, OCD-type people and will chart this like crazy and freak out if their bbt isn't good all the time - so DON'T do this. i would just take it to begin with, see where you're at, implement all the tips and advice, and go live your life. then come back and check it every now and then. the reason i say don't focus on this so much is because it can really stress you out. just like weighing yourself every day, you get so focused on a number and your whole life starts getting based off what your body temperature was that day. don't let this happen - you gotta have some self-control in this area. i know for me, when i first started tracking my bbt when working to get my period back, i was in the low 96's. over the course of about 3 months, i got it up to over 98 (which is when all my problems went away, specifically my period problems). so it takes time. let it happen, be patient, but don't get caught up in it.

52. how do i find myself after years of my eating disorder, self-harm, and depression have characterized my life for so long?

this is obviously a very serious issue, even life-threatening, so here are a few things to keep in mind. first, i HIGHLY recommend you seek professional help and work through the issues that are going on in your life, specifically the deep-seeded mental and psychological issues that are plaguing you.

perhaps it's something in your past, a bad experience, or whatever, but regardless of what it is, you need to work through this and work through it with someone that can challenge you and talk to you and help you grow past

Hey Audra. I turned in my doctors' note two days ago and got my period the same day. I didn't do much in gym this past week so it worked. I just wanted to let you know and thank you for all the work you do. If I hadn't found your channel I would still be in the same place I was just a few months ago. Thank you! :) - Jelena

the memories and the pain of whatever is haunting you. you need to heal from this and move on with your life. obviously you can't change your past, but you can change your present and future and that's what matters. some great ideas is working with a professional that specializes in CBT (or cognitive behavioral therapy) and/or DBT (or dialectical behavioral therapy). these will be invaluable to your healing. likewise, a big part of this is you finally making the decision to change your life. most likely you're used to the same routine, day in and day out. you get up and have your perfect routine, you go to the same place (if you even leave the house), you watch the same shows/youtubes/instagrams, etc., you eat the same food, and keep yourself isolated, all with the same depressing, negative, self-hate thoughts. **YOU HAVE TO CHANGE THIS.** you have to break these habits. you have to love yourself. you have to say, "you know what? today i'm getting out of the house, going to see some friends, going out to eat, going to see a movie, walking around town, appreciating the scenery, and being thankful i'm alive. i'm tired of these issues controlling and haunting my life. i want to LIVE!" getting a part-time job doing something you LOVE, volunteering at a fun place, being around other people, getting involved in a local church, and just getting out of the house and **HAVING FUN** is so huge with this. you have to make the decision to change - just like everything else in this book, it is up to you. nobody else can do it for you, especially when it comes to these types of issues. be aware of your triggers, face them and make them stop controlling you. be aware of the things that cause you anxiety, stress, etc. and get far away from them and learn to deal with them. there will always be stress and things that make you worry - the key is figuring out how to deal with them and react to them in a healthy way, not turning to food, purging, self-harm, depression, over-exercise, drugs, alcohol, isolation, etc. instead, change those reactions to good, positive things. read a book, take a bath, watch a funny movie, go for a walk, take deep breaths, read the Bible, go to church, surround yourself with positive people. again, this is all in your power. working with a skilled professional can give you more tips and tricks to dealing with this, but even with that being said, it's in your control. you have to make the decision, once and for all, to change. maybe you need a new environment, new job, new school, just some new surroundings to start over. if so, make it happen. also, as far as moving forward with the idea that you used to do all these things, you've got to realize that was in the **PAST**. these things don't define you, your past doesn't define you. today you have the

opportunity to change all of that. even if you were doing these things to yourself for years and years doesn't mean you can't change and be the person you want to be now. it's never too late. the decision is yours! believe in yourself, ask God for help and guidance, and love yourself. you can do this!

53. my doctor says i have PCOS. when i research and ask what i should do about this, i'm told to eat a "low carb diet and keep exercising." what should i do?

again, I AM NOT A DOCTOR, i am just sharing my personal experience and similar experiences of what has happened to other girls i've helped and the research i've done on this topic, so you can take it for what it's worth! i personally was diagnosed with PCOS because i went to the doctor, told them i hadn't had a period in a while, they did an ultra-sound and said i had "cysts on my ovaries" and therefore I had PCOS. i was told that i needed to take more hormone medications to regulate my issue. i went home, researched PCOS for months on end and realized this wasn't the case. what i had was "hypothalamic amenorrhea." my body was too stressed out to get a period. likewise, i had NO other signs of symptoms of someone who actually DOES have PCOS. if you think you have legit PCOS (which you definitely could, because some girls do), you would also have other signs and symptoms:

- male-pattern baldness (not hair loss or excess shedding, but legit like you're balding on the top of your head like an older man)
- facial acne and body acne (especially on your back)
- high androgen hormone levels on a blood test
- irregular bodily hair growth, or "hirsutism" (random dark, thick hairs growing your chin, cheeks, neck, chest, etc.)
- deeper voice
- dark skin patches on random areas of your body
- you're obese and have extreme difficulty in losing weight (i'm not

hey audra, so i just wanted to let you know that i got my period back!!!!!!!!!! OMG I'm so so happy, I'm am so thankful for you and for just allowing myself to be patient...all your support, encouragement, and advice! you are so awesome!!! please continue to always help girls because you do an awesome job! - Jenna

talking about girls who “think they’re fat” and clearly aren’t). this is literally those who are legit overweight/obese (and NOT due to recovering and gaining weight from a restrictive disordered eating habits).

- polycystic ovaries (i’ll talk about this more below)
- irregular periods (note: this is IRREGULAR periods, not missing periods. girls with legit PCOS have random periods every now and then. maybe they’re normal for a few months, then they skip a few then they are long, etc. girls who don’t have PCOS but have messed up periods due to disordered eating or too much exercise don’t get periods at all. they aren’t “irregular,” they’re just GONE! they don’t come and go every few months, they’re gone for good, maybe even months or years.)

for me, i had NONE of these common symptoms except the ultra-sound showing i had cysts on my ovaries and a missing period (again, not “irregular,” which is what real PCOS girls have). after i did some more digging, researching, and talking to holistic practitioners, i figured out why i had cysts on my ovaries. because MANY, if not most, women have cysts on their ovaries. it is NORMAL. these cysts usually form during ovulation each month and for someone who had gone months without a period, my ovaries had basically just shut down and stopped working. it was a ghost town. there wasn’t any hormonal function going on so nothing was moving or changing. it was just left that way from before when things were working right. so what did i do? i decided let my body heal 100%. and guess what? i got my period back. simple as that. i DID NOT have PCOS and in my experiencing of speaking and working with other girls who have had a similar experience the SAME thing has happened to them, too! so again, i am not a doctor and i’m not saying you *don’t* have PCOS, but what i am saying is be careful with this diagnosis. sadly, a lot of doctors are diagnosing girls with PCOS left and right just because they have missing periods and cysts on their ovaries. the thing is, these girls don’t have any of the other signs and symptoms of PCOS that would be extremely apparent. for those who legit have PCOS, you KNOW you have it. it’s obviously. there’s no hiding it. if you’ve been told you have it but have hardly any of these symptoms, then i would get a second opinion, and really be honest with yourself and your doctors about your past and eating and exercising habits. have you dieted, cut calories/carbs, lost a lot of weight, had issues with food, purged, over-exercised, used diet pills, teas, laxatives, etc., lost a lot of weight, and so on? if so, and you’ve lost your

period around this time, then i would reconsider the PCOS diagnosis. but again, i have to keep saying this, i would just get a few more opinions, talk to different types of doctors (not just your one local gynecologist, but even an eating disorder specialist, a reproductive endocrinologist, etc.) to rule out other underlying issues. for those of you who actually DO have PCOS, you have all the signs and symptoms, can't lose weight, have irregular periods, irregular hair growth, etc. the best course of action is to work with your doctor figure out what is best for your particular situation. all in all, make your own decision and be sure to get a second opinion if something doesn't seem right. this is your life and your health and getting more than one opinion, especially from a variety of doctors and professionals, is always the smartest and safest way to go. and as always, be 100% honest with them. tell them about your past with food and exercise. don't down-play it as if you don't know what's going on, you're super healthy, and can't figure out why this is happening. if you're depressed, sad, cutting calories, trying to lose weight, exercising a ton, etc. TELL THEM. they need to know what exactly is going on, so don't try to make it seem less than it really is. if you really want help, you've got to give the professional the info they need to help you best.

54. so if i really do have PCOS, losing weight is ok?

yes, if you legit have PCOS (and have those other symptoms, not just an "irregular period"), i would encourage you to lose weight, because you're most likely overweight or obese at this point. and i only encourage you to lose weight if you legit ARE overweight. and when i say "lose weight" this doesn't mean go on some crazy diet or use crazy measure to do this. at the same time, if you are overweight or obese, legit have PCOS, yet are still having issues with restriction, purging, etc. then you need to stop all of that ASAP. that's not the answer! if you're underweight, you don't need to lose weight. the thing is, right now you're probably trying to lose weight in unhealthy ways by skipping meals, fasting, crazy diets, exercising like crazy, etc. so, eating a good wholesome diet (not an extreme diet, but eating the majority of your foods from healthy, whole foods) will make you feel amazing, lose weight, and help get you back on track. extreme low calorie diets are not the answer, balance is the key! but yes, losing weight is important in this case and can happen in a healthy, balanced way by adopting a predominantly

whole foods diet and moving your body on a regular basis (again, nothing extreme!)

55. what do you mean by “extremes are easy, balance takes practice?”

this is one of my favorite quotes i found a few years ago and it totally changed my life. basically, it is so easy to fall into extremes: the black and whites, this or that, all or nothing type of mentality. think about it. it's so easy to go to the extremes (even in anything in life!). you either do something all the time or you don't do it at all. you either swear off cookies forever or you eat 10 boxes in one sitting.

you either have to workout for an hour every single day to feel good or the days you miss your specifically-planned workout for whatever reason and you feel like a failure. these types of extremes are easy to follow. why? because you feel in control. everything in your life is focused towards these extremes. your thoughts, actions, words, interests, and even dreams are focused on these things in extreme amounts, no matter what it is. but, when

you see the phrase, “balance takes practice,” wow, that's monumental. what does that mean? it means that instead of it being this or that, it is finding a middle ground. it means instead of swearing off cookies or eating 10 boxes you find a good balance and have a cookie a day. (and when it comes to food, it takes time, especially if you're experiencing extreme hunger!) it means instead of working out every day and if you don't you feel like a failure, you see exercise as something that is good for your body and mind, but your life isn't revolved around it. balance can look different for everyone, and will look different for everyone, so it's up to you to find that balance for yourself.

I got my second period on Tuesday this week :) :) it was a bit late but still ok just 34 days apart. I'm so so happy! Digestion issues are almost completely gone now, I can have fresh salads etc. and one more thing that I've noticed recently- only now after almost 3 months of 'rehab' ;) I feel like my hunger is going back to normal. First time in ages now I'm able to say 'actually, I'm not hungry'. Before that I'd just be hungry or crave something all the time... And I didn't realize it until now. How messed up my body was, I just can't believe it?! - Dominika

that's what this book is about: helping you find a happy, healthy balance in your life. this book IS NOT about you never eating vegetables again, never exercising again, never staying out late with your friends after 10pm again so you can get in bed early, etc. but rather finding a good balance with that in your life. things will change, things will happen, and that's ok. that's just life. but you have to find a balance in it all. food, exercise, stress, sleep, relationships, etc. THIS IS UP TO YOU TO FIND. i can't tell you what balance is for you. maybe it's eating a cookie a day or it could be backing off the cookies. YOU DECIDE. and the thing is, you *know* the areas of your life that need more balance. are you working too much (or not at all?) are you spending too much time on social media, spending enough time with your family and friends, looking at yourself in the mirror too much? there's so much that goes into this, but i encourage you to make a list of the things in your life that you think need some balance. work on these things. find a good happy-medium. maybe even get your best friend, spouse, or parents to sit down and do this with you. they will most likely shed some light on the things that need some changing. be open to their comments and help and take that to heart. this is about changing your whole life, not just getting your period back - remember that!

56. i am addicted to coffee! especially because i know it will help me go to the bathroom...

the consumption of coffee is such a hotly-debated topic, so i will just share my opinion. from my research and experience, coffee can be extremely stressful on your body, hormones, and digestion, ESPECIALLY if you have all the issues i've talked about in this book. many girls turn to coffee for its laxative-type effects, to suppress their appetites, or use as a diuretic.. they can't go a day without their coffee. likewise, many use it for that extra energy boost. but you don't need this. i encourage you to drink 100% caffeine-free teas if you want that warm drink on a daily basis. leave the caffeine alone for now. it is way too much of a stimulant boost and seriously stresses out your body, especially with the current state you're in. even if you don't feel the stress physically, it still is. it can be very stressful on your adrenals (stress) hormones, which then act like a domino-effect on your reproductive hormones. likewise, if you're taking in a lot of caffeine (be it coffee or pre-workouts, energy pills, or energy drinks) before you workout, this can

severely raise your cortisol levels, causing your body to go into super stressed mode. and remember, **YOU DO NOT WANT TO BE STRESSED.** so, from a stress perspective, i say stop the coffee. and from a digestive perspective, you want to quit because you're using this for a crutch. most girls addicted to coffee are also not eating enough food and calories in general. as you start eating more food, you'll start going to the bathroom a lot better every day. but you have to stop it. don't let it be a crutch. give your stomach and digestive system some time to work itself out. the sooner you can quit the better! this doesn't mean you can't have coffee ever again but take a break for now.

57. I've been on laxatives, diuretics, diet pills, skinny teas, used saunas/ made myself sweat a ton every day, and/or purging for a long time and since i've stopped i'm holding onto a lot of water. what can i do?

the reason you're retaining so much water is because your electrolytes have been messed up. now that you aren't using these things anymore and you're eating a normal amount of food for your body, your body is going to spend some time working out your electrolytes and the amount of water that is in your system. it can take some time to go away. however, i would be

Hey Audra, today I got my period :) I am so excited. It's not much and i don't know if it lasts for a few days, but it's such a good sign and I'm really happy. Thank you Audra! It feels so good and I'm glad that my body is healing. - Mascha

VERY careful with this because messed up electrolytes is not something you want to deal with. I **HIGHLY ENCOURAGE YOU TO WORK WITH A QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL** and tell them everything about your past. they need to know what you are dealing with and how they can best help you from a physical standpoint when it comes to your health. just like i explained with re-feeding syndrome, the electrolyte imbalance is something you need to be sure you work with your doctor on, it can be a serious issue. so, stop all these types of methods that you're using, go find a local professional/ doctor/eating disorder clinic, tell them everything, and get their help with this.

58. can not having your period for a long time cause infertility?

the answer to this is both yes and no. the longer you go without a period, the worse your hormones are getting and overtime that's never a good thing. there's been plenty of women who have gone years and years without a period and haven't been able to get pregnant. however, there is hope! i've worked with girls who've gone 10+ years without a period and have decided to finally heal their body once and for all and have gotten pregnant. so, moral of the story is, don't wait. the sooner the better. and along with that, be positive!

59. i've never had any disordered eating issues with food at all - i've always eaten whatever i've wanted and never had a problem. why did i lose my period?

again, not having a period isn't just about if you've had an eating disorder or not. interestingly, some girls can have an eating disorder and STILL get their period, but that doesn't mean they're healthy, does it? no! so, just because you've never had disordered eating habits and don't get your period, doesn't mean you're healthy either. also, remember, there's more that goes into it than just food. perhaps you're an athlete and you've exercised too much and haven't eaten enough food to fuel your workouts. perhaps you've been under a lot of stress lately from school, relationships, drama, moving cities/school/countries, got a new job, had a tragedy happen, work, etc. maybe you aren't sleep enough or as well as you used to. there's SO much that goes into periods and hormones so hopefully if you've gotten this far in the book you've realized that it's a LIFESTYLE change that needs to happen, not just a diet or exercise routine. It's about every single area of your life that needs to change - your stress, your sleep, your self-image, your joy and happiness, your relationships, your calorie intake, your exercise level, etc. it's not just one thing, most of the time it's a combination of a lot of things that need to be addressed and changed.

60. can i be a raw vegan and get my period back?

i'm not going to say it "can't" happen (because there's always a possibility), but i would err on the side of caution and say, most likely, no unless you

were extremely strategic with it. you would have to eat loads and loads and loads of food to get enough calories in to heal your body. and if you're coming from a background of restrictions and you're suffering from gastroparesis, then eating all those raw fruits and veggies is going to be a nightmare for you - the pain, bloating, gas, and discomfort will probably be unbearable! so again, i'm not saying it can't happen, but it would be extremely difficult in my opinion. likewise, if you are following a raw vegan diet as a form of restriction or out of fear for other foods, that is something you need to work through from a mental perspective to be sure you're in the right state of mind when it comes to food. raw veganism can be extremely restrictive for a lot of people (not just from a food perspective, but also in the sense that it can be difficult to live your social life a lot of times), so i would do a serious reality check and ask yourself what your motives behind doing so are. likewise, if it is limiting your life in any unearthly or abnormal way at all, you need to reconsider. there is nothing wrong with eating a lot of

fruits and veggies, but if you're being super dogmatic about it i would take a step back and figure out what's really going on. the biggest thing about being raw vegan and trying to get your period back is the stress that revolves around staying 100% raw vegan all the time. always having ripe fruit, always having prepped meals, always going grocery shopping, always having fruit on hand, always packing food to take with you, etc. can really raise your cognitive dietary restraint, especially

if you're day-dreaming and consciously restricting yourself from cooked food all the time because you've heard it's poison and toxic. remember, the higher your level of cognitive dietary restraint, the more likely you are to suffer from amenorrhea (no periods) and lower bone density, as well as higher cortisol (stress) hormones. and lastly, you want to be very careful that you don't take raw veganism to the extreme. and i would definitely not do a low-fat version of raw veganism, be sure you're including lots of avocados, nuts, seeds, nut butters, coconut products, etc.

***Dear Audra,
Now I have overcome my sickness and my stomach is all normal again, so I can start on focussing to gain weight and get healthy =) finally I managed to cut down my workout to half without feeling bad about it and this week without exercising at all. I visited a lot of friends, went on holiday for a few days and focussed onto learning for my study exams... Thank you so much for your tips and your support!! -Ronja***

61. is having a lot of gas normal when eating more?

yes! get ready, you're probably going to be having a whole lot of gas depending how bad your past was and how long you've been restricting. because remember, your digestion, gut function, and healthy gut bacteria have all been compromised, so when you start introducing more food and a larger volume of foods, your digestion has to get used to working again. it won't be like this forever, so don't worry. just go with it, stick to low fiber foods, and let your stomach heal. it takes time, so don't worry haha!

62. i have gained so much weight!! i'm so fat now, what do i do?

first off, for most people who gain weight, as i've said over and over again, they **NEED** to gain weight. i gained weight and i needed to! and honestly, you have to remember that your perception of your body and what a healthy weight and body image is has totally been distorted due to your past with disordered eating. you have a preconceived image in your mind about what you should look like and how much you should weigh, all coming from our past of disordered habits. yes, it can be difficult seeing and feeling your body change. but this is needed for your body to heal. some girls will gain more than others, but all of that is up to your body to decide. this is why i don't recommend a certain calorie range or meal plan because everyone is different. this is why i also don't recommend force-feeding yourself (but at the same time, i don't recommend restricting, either). i suggest you loosen up with your food choices, eat the foods you love, face your fear foods, and move on with your life. get away from letting food control you- it can only control you as much as you let it. don't let it take over your mind and every thought. with that being said, if you find yourself gaining weight by just simply eating more food than your super low calorie diet, while also stopping your intense exercise program, then that just shows you how bad your body was abused and how bad it needed to gain weight. this isn't your fault or someone else's fault, it's just the way the human body works. your metabolism has been lowered and now as you eat more and stop burning so many calories, it is going to gain weight to adjust to your new way of eating and living. if weight gain is the biggest fear you have then there is a much deeper issue going on in your life than just food and exercise. there is a

serious eating disorder at hand. that's what eating disorders are all about. they're about you using food and exercise to control your weight at a low level and you have a deep, intense fear of gaining weight, so you'll do whatever it takes to keep it low. if you are seriously struggling with this, i **HIGHLY** encourage you to go seek professional help from a local eating disorder clinic. you can stay there, live there, take classes and courses about food, body image and self-love, and finally work through the deep-seeded issues that are causing you to place all your emphasis on your weight and looks instead of other areas in your life. the thing is, every girl is different with this: some girls **WANT** to gain weight and when they do they feel awesome, love their new body, love their curves, feel amazing, and are happy as can be. on the other hand, other girls resist the weight gain so much, hate themselves, isolate themselves, go back to restriction tactics, and get super depressed. why do these girls do this and first don't? it's because they are placing way too much emphasis on their looks. they, too, could be happy, fun, and love themselves if they stopped putting all their focus and attention on how they looked and what they weighed. if you're one of these second type of girls, i would really encourage you to get professional help and also realize that you are **NOT** your body or a number on a scale. you have to realize this for yourself. you are a beautiful girl with a great purpose to live out on this earth. you're not here to look in the mirror all day long, weigh yourself numerous times a day/week, weigh out every piece of food, log all your food in a calorie-counting app, stare at food pictures all day, and wish you looked like some girl on the internet. what kind of life is this? **YOU ARE WORTH MORE.** so you have to make the decision to change your perception about not only how you look, but about who you are. the way you look doesn't make you who you are. God made you who you are, and how you look is only a tiny part of that. my biggest tip: **LOVE YOURSELF** and let your body **AND** (more importantly) your mind heal.

63. when will my weight redistribute? i've gained back up to my healthy weight, but i don't look like i did before...

weight redistribution can take different amounts of times for different people. and where your body decides to store that weight is up to your body. you can't spot gain in certain place (i.e. there's no promise that your new weight gain is going to go directly to your boobs! haha, don't we wish!)

some girls gain more in their legs, some in their arms, face, belly, boobs, or all over. but the good news is it will distribute over time. will you look like you did before? no, most likely not. why not? because 1. your weight is going to redistribute however it wants and 2. you're most likely older now and you're not at that younger age with that younger body frame as before. you're growing up! so again, give it time, get out of the house, go have some fun, and don't worry about it so much!

64. will you coach me along for as long as i need you to? i really need someone to talk to...

i do offer one-on-one coaching plans and if you're interested in that, you can email me and we'll figure out if you're a good candidate for coaching (my email is thisgirlaudra@gmail.com) and you can also see my one time consultations on my website www.thisgirlaudra.com. my goal for you is to get you to a point to where you can do this on your own, making your own decisions, and taking matters into your own hands, and being responsible for your own actions and thoughts. so if you want some coaching upfront, just contact me and let me know!

I talked about you, your videos and our consultation to my sister who was missing her period since last year. She binge-watched your videos and took your advice. She stopped training (big time endurance junky) and caring about food (big time portion control freak). She put on just about 2 kg in a month-ish, started yoga and went on a 2 week vacation with a friend. A week after that (so not even 2 months later all in all) she got her period back. She thanked me but as I told her it's all the last to you. So I know it's indirect but thank you so much for helping her. She looks amazing and feels tremendously relieved. - Charlotte

65. my doctor told me to take progesterone to get a period. i took it and it worked/didn't work. what does that mean?

a lot of doctors will prescribe girls who have missing periods progesterone to do a "progesterone challenge." basically, they are just giving you a synthetic hormone to see if you will bleed (or "get a period" - which again, isn't a real period because it's coming from synthetic hormones). just

because you bleed (or don't bleed), doesn't really mean much. it doesn't mean, "oh yay! you're healthy now and you can do whatever you want and keep restricting and exercising a ton! a pill fixed your problems!" no, this isn't the case. it just means you took another from of a synthetic hormones, besides birth control, and it made you bleed. that's it. the best thing to do to fix this once and for all is everything i've laid out in my book. eat, rest, sleep, de-stress, and go have some fun :)

66. how can i increase my estrogen?

do what i suggest in this book :)

67. i have read that i need to eat "paleo" to get my period back...

if you want to do a paleo diet, that is totally up for you. but like i've explained all throughout this book, i would really focus on low-fiber foods that are extremely calorie dense. the paleo diet is pretty high in veggies and see how that goes.

Hey Audra!...I printed out your health plan for me and I have been reading it religiously! Thank you so much! It is a whole lot of information to take in, but I know that this is putting me on the right path to HEALTH! Even though it's been only a week.. I am already feeling a difference in many different areas of my life: I am starting to listen to my body more and eat whenever I'm hungry, NO RESTRICTIONS! I made a list of all my fear foods, and I'm starting to face them one food at a time. (One of my fear foods is butter, and I found this vegan butter with all these natural oils that I'm starting to spread on toast. I'm not feeling guilty at all!) I made the goal to avoid ALL nutrition labels and just eat food based off of the way my body responds to it. This has instantly brought out so much stress in my life. I am starting to find interests in other things not containing food and exercise- painting, makeup, fashion, friends, etc. I cleared out all fitness and food blogs, pages & accounts on all social media! But it's still hard seeing people that I know uploading bikini pictures which ends up with me comparing myself and beating myself down. I am SO happy that you said I don't need a scale!!! - Julia

68. how do i face my fear foods? i'm so scared of xyz and how it's going to make me gain weight!!

first off, you probably need to gain weight, especially if you've been restricting for a while now and you're underweight. second, fear foods are different for every single person. some people are terrified of eating bananas, but they'll eat loads of

peanut butter. on the other hand, some people are terrified of peanut butter and they'll eat loads of bananas. we all have our little quirks and rules we place on ourselves (or take from what other people/society says). maybe you've heard that eating gluten is the devil or too much fruit is bad or whatever it is. regardless of that, i highly encourage you to face as many of these fears as possible. as i've talked about earlier in the book, there's a few reasons why this needs to happen and how it works for others:

1. you don't want any food(s) controlling you in any way. it is **JUST FOOD**. that's it. it doesn't have super powers or anything like that. the only powers or control that it does have is what you give to it.
2. most people start fearing foods when they start restricting those foods. for example, you decide to start eating "healthier" and you say, "never again will i eat cake. never ever. this is the last piece of cake i'll ever have and then my diet starts tomorrow." well, for most people that cake most likely turns into numerous pieces of cake, right? it's hardly ever just "one last piece of cake." why? because as soon as you say "never again!" your mind clicks into another gear and it starts thinking, "oh my gosh, i can't ever have this again so i better enjoy this now!" and you end up bingeing on cake before your diet ever starts. then you start your diet and what do you constantly think about? cake. all you think about is that cake you cut out of your diet because it's so bad. that cake is "unhealthy, too much sugar, will make you gain weight, has gluten, preservatives, etc." (or however else you label it), so now that cake has control of you and you fear the cake. but what happens next? at some point, sooner or later, you're going to find yourself face-first in the cake again. you've restricted that cake for so long and you've craved it and day-dreamed about it so much that now the "self-control" is all gone and you're bingeing on cake (which is really your body just saying, "please feed me calories, i'm starving. how about that high calorie cake you cut out of your diet, you've been wanting that lately, so let's go eat that!") so you eat a whole cake, hate yourself, feel gross and then say, "ok, no more cake, ever again! i'm starting my diet tomorrow!" so, then starts the cycle all over again. restrict/binge, restrict/binge, restrict/binge, etc. so, how to you stop this from ever happening? **YOU NEVER CUT OUT CAKE**. you let yourself have some cake, even if it's a bite or two, each day. this way the cake

doesn't control you anymore. it's still there. it's not going anywhere, and it's JUST cake. granted, maybe you want to swap out the cake for something else (maybe dark chocolate or whatever, which is fine!) but just don't ever say "never ever again will i eat cake, it's evil!" this is when you run into problems.

3. now that you realize how elevating and giving powers to certain foods happens, it's time to start facing these foods you've elevated. maybe you're different from the example above. maybe you don't binge on these foods. maybe you haven't allowed yourself a piece of cake in 10 years because in your mind it literally is evil. but all you do is think about that cake and you just want a bite. how do you fix this? here's a few tips:
 1. take one fear food each day (or every few days, doesn't matter when but just do it), and decide that you're going to face this fear.
 2. let's say your fear is chips and salsa. before your "healthy eating habits" you used to love chips and salsa. it never controlled you. you ate it when you wanted it, never restricted it, etc. but now you just KNOW if you get around it you can't control yourself, so you're scared of the powers it has over you. first, you've got to realize you have this fear and you've elevated that food above others (and you're probably going to have a lot of fear foods, not just one!).
 3. eat the fear food: maybe have some friends over and do a "taco night!" decorate the kitchen, have people dress up, play games, have fun and eat some chips and salsa. simple as that. or go out to eat at your favorite mexican restaurant with your family and eat some. or have a potluck with your friends, church, etc. and bring the chips and salsa. make it a big deal. have fun with it. see that it is just food, it's a part of life and it can be fun. put some chips and salsa on your plate (along with other foods), eat it, enjoy it, eat the rest of the food, and have a blast with your friends and family. realize that IT IS JUST CHIPS AND SALSA. you're not going to die right then and there from eating it. if anything, you're going to feel a HUGE sense of relief. you're going to say, "oh wow, this tastes really good and it's actually really fun to be

here with my loved ones, eating good food, talking about cool stuff, and having fun together. it really is JUST FOOD.”

4. why eat with other people in a fun setting? because, you want to realize (and remember from earlier in your life), that food is an important part of life: it brings people together. and not only that, but the by having the people that you love around you, seeing that you’re having fun, and seeing that food is JUST FOOD, you will start to realize how food shouldn’t have any control over you and it will only have as much control and fear as you give it.
5. also, by eating your fear foods in these types of settings, it keeps you from being alone, eating alone, thinking and wondering and have tons of anxiety alone, etc. you don’t want this. you don’t want it to be that food is this thing you eat in secret or hide from others or whatever. because remember, the goal is to get as NORMAL as possible. so to get normal, you have to start doing things and acting in normal ways, even if it doesn’t feel normal at first. but the more you can build up normalcy, the more normal your life is going to get. so, being around other normal people who eat normally (instead of being alone, sitting alone, eating alone, and isolating yourself from the rest of the world), the quicker you will see just how abnormal with food you have become.

Hey Audra... I have got the second period (after a year of not havin it) after exactly 28 days from the first, just by following your advice. And I can t quiet believe it!!! I will never thank you enough for this. - Marilena

4. a great way to look at this is to surround yourself with kids and mimic and watch how they eat. kids love food. they don’t have fear foods, they see all foods as equal (except for those foods they seriously hate), and they eat when they’re hungry, stop when they’re full, move on with life and don’t consume their whole day in what, when, where, how, why, and in what manner they’re going to eat. they just eat. that’s it. they don’t put

any second thought into it. sometimes they might overeat on cupcakes and feel sick, but they don't go throw up, take laxatives, or run it off. they might skip breakfast because they were too busy playing with their friends, but they didn't skip breakfast to cut calories or lose weight. there was no thought even put into it. and the thing is, this use to be you!! think back to when you were a kid. everything was great. you ate what you wanted, when you wanted, where you wanted, how much you wanted, why you wanted, etc. but at some point you were introduced to the idea of calories, fat grams, carbs, weight, body image, etc. and that's when things went wrong. maybe you wanted to lose some weight, but it went to the extremes and now here you are today. maybe it's just been a few weeks or maybe even a few years, but regardless of that, don't you see now that all you have to do is get back to normal?

5. so, just like i've said throughout this whole book, to get back to normal you have to surround yourself with normal. think about it like this: just like in the chapter about "Guarding Your Mind," you are going to end up being and thinking and living whatever you are constantly surrounded by and letting into your mind. if you're constantly watching "what i eat in a day" videos, freaking out over weighing your food, obsessively counting calories/macros, checking yourself in the mirror, weighing yourself, watching cooking shows, reading other girl's eating disorder/recovery stories, reading about fitness, nutrition, diet, and exercise all the time, seeing images of super thin/fit/muscular/etc. women all the time and listening to podcasts and YouTube videos about all this stuff, what do you think is going to become of your life?!?! BUT, if you take ALL that stuff away and start focusing on other things in life that have nothing to do with food or exercise, start hanging out with NORMAL eaters, start getting out of the house and get around other people, and start putting yourself in situations that cause you to change your old, BAD habits, then YOU WILL CHANGE. it is inevitable. you are what you fill your mind with and what you surround yourself with. it is a fact of life. so this is ALL UP TO YOU. you have to make the decision to change, once and for all. all this negative/hurtful stuff that is coming into your mind and life is only coming in because you're letting it and you're inviting it in. once you throw it away, delete it, distance yourself from it and remove it from your life and fill that void with other POSITIVE, NORMAL,

ENCOURAGING, and HAPPY/JOYFUL things, you will change. that's how it happens. but don't expect it to just happen if you're not willing to make the change yourself. if you're not willing to break from all your old bad habits and stress and what you're letting into your mind you won't ever change. that's the truth!

6. so, sorry for getting off track there (lol) but the point of this all is to stop letting food (or other negative things) control your mind. this is all up to you. face your fear foods, hang out with normal people, and have fun with it! facing fear foods shouldn't be something you dread or get super anxious over. it needs to be something you genuinely look forward to because you know it will be fun and you'll enjoy it and it will be just another step in the right direction.
7. when it comes to how many or exactly what fear foods you decide to conquer is totally up to you. i encourage you to face them ALL in one way or another. ****NOTE:** do not face any foods that you are clinically diagnosed as being allergic to or intolerant of. if you are allergic to peanuts and that is one of your fear foods so now you think you need to face that but you know you'll go into anaphylactic shock from doing so, **THEN DON'T DO IT!!** this is about facing foods that you have elevated over others because of your idea of "healthy vs. unhealthy." likewise, if you don't consume certain foods for moral or ethical reasons that is different too - BUT (and this is a big but), there is a fine line between fearing these foods and using the excuse of ethics to cover up your intention of restriction. this is a question you need to work through yourself and be extremely open and honest with yourself about. if restriction is involved in any way at all, you need to reevaluate your perception of that food.

69. my family/friends stress out so much! i don't know how to deal with it.

seeing that so much about getting your period (and entire life, for the matter) back in order has to do with stress, taking the necessary steps to fixing that stress in your personal relationships is a big deal, and definitely needs to happen! we all have different family structures and different

relationships with our parents, siblings, step-family, grandparents, friends, etc., but at the end of the day, you want there to be little to zero stress coming from any of these relationships. this is a hard question to answer because all of our situations are different but here are a few tips:

1. i HIGHLY encourage you to have a sit down one-on-one open conversation with whoever in your life is causing you stress or you have issues with. the key to this is being honest, open, but RESPECTFUL and kind. letting them know that you want to share something with them and telling them how you feel and what is bothering you in an honest, open, and respectful way is always the way to go. no yelling, cussing, blaming, finger-pointing, bringing up the past, etc. should be happening at all. this is simply a time for you to get off your chest what is bothering you and let them know how you feel. because truth is, most of the time, the person(s) causing you stress probably don't even know they're causing you that much stress! so how are they going to stop if you don't let them know and tell them? they won't! so you have to let them know!
2. be ready for any type of back-lash or counter-argument that they might present to you. because relationships work both ways, there's always two sides to the story. you see it from one perspective and they see it from another and that's ok, that's just how it is. however, realize that they too have a side to share and you need to act and respond in a way that is both respectful and kind. listening to their concerns, their comments, their criticisms, and their frustrations is something you're going to have to do (and learn to work on). none of us are perfect and none of us have all the answers. we see things one way and someone else sees them a different way. we hurt in one way but the other person hurts in another way. so the goal is to meet in the middle, in love and respect. listen to their side and be ready and willing to apologize, as for forgiveness, reconcile, and move on. this takes a lot of will power and self-control, but the more you do it the better you'll get. and you are NOT to be fake. be real. that's what this is all about. but in your realness, be respectful and kind. it will go a much longer way than saying, "you know what, this is who i am! i don't have to listen to you! i'm not fake, this is me and this is how i act!" that's great, that might be how you act, but acting like that isn't going to help the situation. so calm yourself down,

take some deep breaths, and be willing to compromise with the other person.

3. once things have been resolved, hold up your end of the deal. if that other person let you know the things that concerns, frustrates, or bothers them, then be aware of that and work towards working on that. let that person know you're not perfect and you're probably going to mess up, but you hear and understand their requests, you want to honor that, and you're going to take that into consideration and do the best you can. keep as level headed as possible. this isn't an "eye for an eye" type of retribution thing. this is genuine talking, listening, honesty, forgiveness, and moving on. that's it. be the mature person you are and work toward this daily.
4. now, there are probably some people in your life that are so toxic and stressful in whatever way that even having such a sit-down conversation with isn't really an option. maybe you've tried this and it never seems to work, no matter how much you give, forgive, and love them, it just never seems like enough. my biggest advice in this situation is to set up some healthy guidelines for yourself to follow when it comes to this person(s). maybe you don't need to hang out with them so much. maybe you need to be with them in a public setting so things are easier. maybe you need to just take a break for a while and focus on you.
5. at this point, your health is so important that not letting any type of stress effect you is what you need to be focusing on. obviously you can't get away from all types of stress, but the more the better. and when i say "focus on you," that doesn't

***Hi Audra,
Your advice has helped me so so much! I had totally forgotten about my love for film and music until our consultation so I've picked my camera back up after a year and I feel so much better! My relationship with food is certainly improving and I'm excited to see any improvements. Since I've been eating more, I no longer have trouble concentrating and I can remember things a lot easier! It's amazing! haha. - Jessica***

mean become self-absorbed and make your whole life about you, not caring about anyone else. i mean realize that your health is very important right now and minimizing as much stress as you can (while adding in as much fun as you can) is important. “focusing on you” isn’t a free pass to be the queen for the next few months. it means living in such a way that your whole life is changing, which both benefits you and others, even those people who cause you stress. this isn’t one of those type of things where you just say, “ugh, forget her. i’m never talking to her again. i’m tired of living my life for Susie, so i’m just going to focus on me!” no, that’s quite the opposite of what i’m saying. rather your mentality should be, “i know that Susie causes me stress, but i want to be in a healthy place right now. in the meantime, i’m going to focus on lowering ALL the stress in my life (not just the stress Susie gives me), and i’m going to focus on healing my body and mind at the same time. I really hope that things with Susie work out and when i see her i’m going to be nice and kind no matter what.” :) this is what i’m talking about.

70. i keep chewing and spitting, how do i stop?

chewing and spitting is just another form of disordered eating. it’s a way for you to taste the food without actually ingesting it. however, what you don’t understand is that every time you do this, you’re just increasing your desire for that food even more. you’re tasting the food you’ve been craving without actually getting the nutritional or caloric benefits from that food. by not getting the calories from the food, your body is left wanting more and more of that food (because it tasted good, yet it was like a tease because you never got the whole point of the food in the first place, its calories!) so all you’re doing to yourself when you chew and spit is making things worse in the long run. you are, in essence, tricking your body into thinking you’re eating but because your mind is catching on that you’re tasting food but your gut isn’t having anything to digest, you’re just further messing up your mind/gut connection. this is a big no-no. you’d be much better off just eating the food and letting your body register that you received some calories. likewise, this is such a waste of money. you’re not even eating the food, it’s going straight to the trash. so it’s just like throwing money down the drain. finally, how do you stop? you literally just STOP. like so many other things in this book that i’ve talked about, so much of this is in your control. YOU have to

be the one to make yourself stop doing this stuff. i can't do it for you, your parents can't, family, friends, etc. can't - nobody can but you.

71. how do i stop body-checking?

just like i said in the question above, you have to just STOP. hopefully you're seeing the trend here: **YOU HAVE TO BE THE ONE TO MAKE YOURSELF STOP.** there's no secret to it. there's no tricks or ways around it. it's just a matter of catching yourself in the act and saying "NO! i'm not going to do this!" and you keep doing this over and over and over again, never letting yourself slip up. if you keep at it long enough, soon enough you won't be doing it at all. it will be weird for you to walk past a mirror and lift up your shirt, or go to a bathroom and stare at yourself for 20 minutes, or grab

different areas of your body to feel the fat, or measure your arms or looking at your legs or whatever it is that you're doing. you have to consciously make yourself stop. some great ideas that some girls i have worked with in the past have done is cover up all their mirror with big pieces of paper that have quotes written on them or "you are beautiful" written really big on it, etc. do whatever you gotta do. but at the end of the day you gotta make yourself stop.

***Thank you so much Audra!
I also just wanted to let you know that
your videos are beyond helpful! You
always know exactly how I'm feeling and
although to others it may sound crazy... I
followed your guidelines 100% and finally
got my period back after 1.5 years. I
watch your videos consistently and you
never cease to amaze me with your
knowledge and facts. - Ashley***

72. how do i stop counting calories and/or macros?

i answered this question above to a degree, but for those of you that are **SERIOUS** about stopping because it's ruining your life (again, you don't *have* to stop, this is your decision based on how it's affecting your life), here's some tips. again, just stop. but with this, taking the proactive measures to make it happen is going to be monumental. delete your apps on your phone, throw away your food journal, throw away your measuring cups and food scale, stop looking at nutritional labels (cut them off the box if you have to or take

the food out of the box and put it in a new container), don't get on restaurant websites and read the calorie info, don't create recipes and count up all the calories, etc.) start going out to eat more, start letting other people cook for you, and basically just let go of all the control and crazy thoughts you have about this. again this is all stuff you have to consciously do yourself, nobody is going to do it for you. also, going out to eat a lot more often or eating buffet-style/casserole dish-style/family-style meals are great for this because you don't have a perfectly prepared individualized portion that is weighed, counted, and measured all for yourself. instead, you're eating till satiated, not based off what a calorie app is telling you to eat. lastly, don't get in the habit of judging those people that you know that actually do count calories and/or macros - some people do this and they actually really like it, it's not restrictive or crazy or obsessive for them at all, and it's not affecting their life negatively. however, **YOU ARE NOT THEM**. so stop worrying about what they're doing and focus on what you're doing. it's not like if you're this super awesome "intuitive eater" that you're automatically better than everyone else and they all have eating issues. haha no, that's not how it works. remember, what works for someone else might not work for you, and vice versa. and, what works for you now, might not work for you later, just like what doesn't work for you now, could possibly work for you later. it's all about balance and you have to find that balance for yourself.

73. what if i've never even started my period and i should have by now?

first off, i would definitely be working with your doctor on this. and again, tell them **EVERYTHING** and be 100% honest and transparent about your past. for most people in this situation (again, most, not all) have come from some type of restrictive disorder, haven't been eating enough calories, exercised too much, or were malnourished as a child. if this is you, doing everything in this book (eating more, resting, de-stressing, sleeping, and having fun) are going to be helpful for you. however, there are some instances when people can have other underlying issues that prevent them from starting their periods. this is why you want to keep up with your doctor on this. in addition, if you've ever had any of the things listed above, i would work on healing your body and mind as soon as possible. there are rare conditions of having tumors that can block your ovaries and brain from communicating

and delay your period so you want to be sure to rule out everything just to be sure! talk with your doctor!

74. school is SO stressful!! what do i do?

this might be one of the most common FAQ's i get on a daily basis. so many of you today are literally stressed to the max because of school. most of the people who deal with this are type-A, perfectionistic, OCD, black and white, disciplined, determined, and super-focused people. the problem with this is that it spills over into other areas of your life (or all areas in your life!). this can include your relationships, your diet, your exercise routine, your job, etc. and you are so consumed in being perfect and being "the best" that you don't even get the chance to enjoy the ride. so, when it comes to school here's the thing: nobody is going to ask or care about your grades when you get out - literally, nobody! nobody cares! yes, you might need a certain grade to pass, but literally getting yourself so wrapped up and losing your mind over this is crazy. do the best you can, sure, but realize that whether you're in middle school, high school, college, university, grad school, or med school, the same principle applies: you need to find balance and you need to go have some fun (ESPECIALLY IF YOU'RE NOT GETTING A PERIOD!) the pressures and stress that come from school can be so detrimental to not just your period, but also your every day life - friends, family, work, sleep, health, etc. so you have to change some things up. take frequent breaks. tell yourself you can only study for x amount of hours and then the books get closed and you go have some fun. put your phone, computer, etc. away when studying, study hard for that amount of time and focus on that subject, and then get back to other things.

most girls complain about studying and the pressure of school but they forget that half of their time studying is spent scrolling through Instagram or watching their friends' snapchats. so put your phone away, commit to a specific time and place, and when the time is up, get up, leave, and go have fun. you've got to find balance with this. and

I am feeling that I am getting less obsessed about food and exercise (which I am super happy about) and I did not know how much of a difference it makes!
- Kerri

even more important, realizing that you're not perfect and you never will be perfect in any area of your life is so freeing. let it go. let go of perfection and control. there's no point. it just drives you crazy. where has it gotten you to this point? no where except stressed out, unhappy, anxious, and without a period, right? so what's a little fun, downtime, de-stressing, and letting go of control going to hurt? nothing, it's only going to help!

75. i'm already at a healthy weight (or overweight), so i can't have disordered eating or be like an "anorexic!"

yes, you can. weight isn't all there is when it comes to disordered eating at end of the day. i know tons of girls who are super tiny and slim but they do not have disordered eating habits. whereas i know tons of other girls that are severely overweight but have very serious disordered eating habits. weight isn't the issue so much as your thoughts and actions when it comes to food. and yes, you can be obese and be starving yourself. obviously, if you are underweight you need to gain some weight (that would help your issues a lot!), just like if you were overweight, losing weight would be a good thing. but at the end of the day, just because you weigh x doesn't really say much about your connection to food.

76. why do i hate having sex now? i want my sex drive back!

the reason why your sex drive goes away is because all of your hormones have been down-regulated. your metabolism has been lowered, your thyroid hormones have been lowered, your sex and reproductive hormones have been lowered, everything has been lowered! the simple/practical reason why this happens is because it's like this: imagine there's a girl on a deserted island, ok. she stays there for a few months or even years and over time she starts losing weight because she's not eating as much as she normally was. not to mention, now she's exercising a moving a lot more because she's building a house, walking around looking for food, and running from crazy jungle animals. so, after a while, because of this huge energy deficit of not eating enough food and exercising a ton, her body senses this and it starts lowering all her hormones for survival purposes. not only that, but it specifically lowers her reproductive hormones because her body knows that the current situation she's in (living without enough food and burning too

I just wanted to tell you a BIG thank you ! I've been flowing you on Instagram and YouTube for 6 months now, and your account is just awesome - every thing you say help me. I didn't get my period for 18 months (because I turned vegan and exercised a lot). My sister showed me your account, so I started listening to your advices and then I followed them: no more strong exercise, eating what I was craving for when I was hungry, feeling no culpability and most of all: trusting myself - this was the hardest part to be honest.

Well, this works. my periods were back yesterday !! I know the battle is not over, but it's the beginning and this happened thanks to your good advices. Thank you so much ! You literally change my habits, my way to see myself and others, my life!
-Clem

PS: I watched your video about holidays (vacations) when I was waiting for my plane, and for the first time since a long time, I went to holidays in a foreign country with no stress, and just feeling graceful for the local food I had 😊 thank you.

many calories) isn't a good environment to bring a baby into. bringing a baby into the equation of a deserted island with no food and crazy jungle animals isn't great for survival and reproduction and her body knows that. so, what does it do? it stops her from having her period and it stops her from ovulating (because when you ovulate is the best time for when you can get pregnant). likewise, it makes her stop wanting sex because if she wants sex then she's going to have sex and if she has sex then she's going to maybe get pregnant and if she gets pregnant then the possibility of that baby living is slim to none on this crazy island of no food and lots of exercise. now, think about yourself. you are the woman on this island. that's what your body thinks is happening. you've essentially, voluntarily, put yourself on this deserted island, limited your calorie intake, and

started exercising and burning more calories, just like the island lady. your period has stopped, ovulation has stopped, and now the last thing you want to think, talk, or worry about is sex. your body thinks you're on that island and it's keeping you from bringing a baby in the world. because yes, sex is for reproduction (though it is pleasurable!), but the design of it is to reproduce. so if your body is keeping those desires away then the chance of having a baby is low! this means that no baby is born into a crazy environment where it probably won't make it. this is the design of the survival technique. so, when you look at it this way, what needs to happen? you need to be saved

from the island. you need someone to come pick you up, take you home, give you a nice, warm bath, feed you some good meals, let your body rest, let your mind rest from all the stress and anxiety you went through, get lots of sleep, be around your family and friends, laugh again and be happy, and let your body recover 100%. this is basically what this book is about - a handbook for getting off the crazy island of no food and too much exercise. so what happens when you get home, rest, eat, relax, destress, sleep, laugh, and enjoy life again, away from all the craziness in your life? you start wanting to have sex again. your period comes back, you start ovulating again, and now you want sex. why? because you're not in survival mode anymore. now your body realizes that it's a good environment to have a baby so encouraging you to have sex is what your reproductive hormones are going to do. it will take some time, but eventually, you will get it back as long as you completely take yourself off that island. don't go back and visit the island. don't try to live half-way on the island during the week and then come home on the weekends. stay away from the island. it's a very dangerous place. the thing is, having a sex drive is extremely important and is a huge sign of healthy hormonal function. whether or not you choose have sex is up to you, but you definitely want to have the drive for health purposes!

77. do you do ongoing one-on-one coaching?

yes, as i explained above you can email me for more info (thisgirlaudra@gmail.com) on this or you can also book a consultation through my website here: www.thisgirlaudra.com.

78. will you please do “what i eat in a day” videos so i can get a better idea of what good meal/portions look like?

i do have a few “what i eat in a day” videos on my Youtube channel that you can check out (“This Girl Audra” on youtube). however, the portions in these videos (and the meals, too) aren't showing you exactly what YOU should eat, but rather what i eat at this point in my life. i'm a big believer in everyone figuring out what works best for them - so don't try to copy me - eat what you like, the amounts you need, and don't try to do what someone else does, focus on you!

79. what do i do when people make comments about me gaining weight, not exercising, or eating more food?

this is bound to happen sooner than later, and that's ok. no problem. the two big things about this is your reaction and your perception of yourself. as for your reaction, however you respond is going to tell more about you and your perception of yourself than anything else. when someone comments on your weight changing, you have a few options: 1. ignore them and just smile 2. say something like, "yeah, i'm actually **WANTING** to gain weight right now. i'm working on my health and i've needed to gain some weight for a while now!" with a big smile on your face and then change the subject. some people will be confused by this, but that's their problem haha. why people are so concerned with your weight isn't your issue, it's theirs. depending on who the person is, obviously you could go into more detail if you wanted and let them know what's going on, but if not, then don't feel pressured into telling your whole life story. just change the conversation and move on. if they ask about you not exercising, you simply respond by saying, "yeah, i love exercising, but i'm taking a break for a while. my body needs a good rest." this implies that exercise is healthy (which it definitely is!), but also that sometimes it can be taken too far and resting is important, too. likewise, it shows that it's not like you'll *never* exercise again, but rather that you're just taking a break for now. and if they comment on you eating more food, you can kindly respond, "yeah, i'm really craving a lot of food lately! i'm actually trying to eat more. i love food!" then change the subject and move on. again, it's up to you how much detail you want to go into depending the person, so you make that decision. but just giving these one line answers and then changing the subject with a smile on your face will answer their question and let them know it's no secret you're trying/wanting/needing to gain weight, taking a break from exercise, or eating more food. and at the end of the day, who cares? it's your life, not theirs. you do you and don't worry about them. if

I followed your advice (stopped exercising, ate a lot for 2 months) from your videos and ended up getting my period back a couple weeks ago! And you best believe I celebrated! Thank you so much, and I'm really enjoying your orthorexia (video) series right now. I definitely used to suffer with that. But I'm getting freer and freer each day! - Sarah

you keep trying to please everyone you'll spend your whole life unhappy and living for everyone else but focusing on your own health. people are definitely going to make comments (at least once), so this is something you'll have to get used to. find some good responses and then just move on with it. don't put too much after-thought into it, it's pointless and isn't even anything to worry about. focus on HEALTH!

80. if i can't use birth control for contraception, what can i use?

there's plenty of other ways to prevent pregnancy instead of using birth control. obviously, abstinence is the first choice. likewise, another great and easy way of contraception is called "The Fertility Awareness Method." this is basically when you don't use any type of formal contraception, but instead track your body temperature and cervical mucus to tell what part of your cycle you are in. i will caution you on this because until you get your body to a normal, natural period, your basal body temperature and cervical mucus can be all over the place and not follow the correct order of a normal cycle. so i would wait on doing this until you get a normal, 28-day cycle and get used to charting your cervical mucus and temps. with this method, all you do is basically chart your temps and cervical mucus to see when you're ovulating so you know when to (or when not to) have sex. you can do your own research on this decide if it might be something good for you. another option is using condoms. there's other options you can look into, but at the end of the day, i recommend staying away anything that alters your hormones or cycle in any way at all. if it's a synthetic pill or a patch or injection or cream or anything like that that's going to cause you to skip periods, go for a long time without one, etc. then i personally would steer away from that. remember, you want a normal natural period!

81. should i use tampons or pads when i do actually start my period?

i would reconsider using tampons and pads, unless they are an organic, no chemicals or scents added type of product. "toxic shock syndrome" is a really scary thing! i personally like using these or using the "Diva Cup." it is a small cup that you insert in your vagina and it holds all the blood until you're ready to take it out. it is reusable and easy to use. you don't spend a tons of money on it and it's not harmful at all.

82. so you're telling me i have to gain a ton of weight?

no, i'm not saying you have to gain a ton of weight. i'm not saying you have to gain any weight. i'm saying your body might need to gain some weight. i'm saying that you need to let your body heal. and however much weight you gain is up to your body. it's not up to me or you or anyone else. and it's all dependent upon how severe the damage was on your metabolism and body altogether. obviously, the worst the damage, the more weight gain. however, some girls might only gain 5 lbs, others 10 lbs, others 30+ lbs. who knows? and apart of this is the fact that you need to LISTEN TO YOUR BODY. a lot of girls see their recovery as a full on force-feeding session of just sitting in their kitchen with food all around them eating all day long. but that's not necessarily what i'm suggesting. what i'm suggesting is facing the foods you've been restricting, eat more calories and carbs, let your body rest, de-stress your life, sleep more, and live your life in the meantime. get out and have some fun. this isn't just about food. this is about life. every area of your life needs healing. the food and weight part is just a part of that. so many girls see recovery as just about the food, but this is totally wrong. if all you focus on is food and weight, you're missing the WHOLE point. you have to think about it like a pie. there's different pieces to the pie: food, rest, sleep, de-stress, and fun. food is just one piece of the pie - you can't just sit around and eat all day, gain an ton of weight and wonder why all your problems are still lingering. sure, maybe you get your period back from doing this, but did it fix the other areas of your life that need addressing? no. that's why you have to give equal attention to every single area of the healing process. eat good food, yes, but not at the expense of not sleeping enough, not resting enough, not de-stressing, and not getting out and having fun. they all go hand in hand. a lot of people say that you'll need to gain a ton of weight and that's all that matters, but i don't necessarily agree with this. and again remember, what is a ton of weight for one girl might not be a ton of weight for another. three pounds to one girl might not seem like anything, but might be a complete nightmare to the next. just like twenty pounds to one girl might sound like a ton, but might just just what the next girl needs. this is why i say DON'T WEIGH YOURSELF, don't focus on the food and weight, and get out and live your life, focusing on the other pieces of the pie. will you gain weight? yes, you most likely will. but don't let that be the only thing that you focus on. will go through extreme hunger? yes, you probably will. but don't let even that

control your life. eat and move on. bring some snacks along, get out of the house and make the most out of your day. even in this healing process you've got to start focusing on living a normal life. you have to focus on every piece of the pie. don't just say, "ok, I'm starting this thing tomorrow - i'm going to eat a ton of food and back off the exercise!" but then you don't de-stress your life, sleep better, and go have fun. have you really changed that much? no, you haven't. you've just changed a few things. you might get your period back by resting and eating more, but the other pieces of the pie are equally important for LASTING results and success. so, i say all that to say, don't focus on the weight gain and just eating tons of food all the time. make it NATURAL and as normal as possible. from the first day decide to get your life in order (not just get your period back, but actually change your life), start living as if you are normal in all areas of your life. start living as if you are happy - go out and have fun. start de-stressing - take out all the stress in your life. start sleeping better - get in bed and sleep-in in the morning. stop exercising and start eating more. do all of this from DAY ONE and do it as if you were a normal person. the quicker you can get into a normal routine with a normal attitude about life, the quicker you'll be normal and you'll beat all these issues! yes, this will take time, but the point i'm trying to make is how you have to start living as if you are moving forward and moving on with your life. don't stay stagnant, make the change. this is up to you. it's not all about weight gain, it's about healing every area of your life. that's what matters.

83. i got my period back! i beat my eating disorder! i am healed!

not so fast! don't get me wrong, getting your period back is AWESOME and you definitely should go celebrate, BUT getting your period back means nothing in terms of your disordered eating habits or your how much your body has healed. getting your period back is just the first sign that your body is *trying* to get moving in the right direction. yes, this is awesome, but this just the FIRST STEP. sadly, too many girls take this attitude that getting a period means they are healed and their eating disorder is gone, so then they start exercising again, not taking care of their bodies and go back to old ways and next thing you know their period is gone again. then they wonder why it's missing and the cycle starts all over again. when it comes to your period, yes it's a great sign, but remember, the disordered eating thing is something you

have to work on for A LONG TIME. it doesn't just go away in a few weeks or months. it is something you have to consciously be aware of and fight. the extent at which you do this and the extent at which you get out of the house, stop isolating yourself, stop being obsessed with diet and fitness, and all the other stuff i talk about in this book, the quicker your disordered eating habits will go away. but the longer you keep those things around, period or not, you're going to still struggle. so no, getting your period doesn't mean you've beat your eating disorder, it just means your hormones are starting to move around and try to work again. be careful with this type of logic, it can be very harmful in the long run!

84. how will i know when i'm "fully healed?"

physically, the ways of knowing when you're "fully" healed (speaking from a bone, fertility, hormonal, weight etc. standpoint) are extremely complex. obviously, getting your period back is a great sign, getting pregnant and carrying a baby full-term is a great sign, having a dexa bone scan and seeing that your bones are slowly but surely healing is a good sign, etc. but with these things i wouldn't get so

caught up in "when will i know?!" from a physical perspective. basically, get your period back and live your life. i wouldn't be spending a lot of time and money and thought into wondering if you're fully healed. that stress will just make things worse! likewise,

when it comes to being fully healed from a mental/psychological perspective, you'll know this when you know longer care. yes, literally, you just don't care. you're at peace with your body. you aren't obsessed with food and fitness. you live your life and have fun and food no longer controls you in any way at all. you don't freak out when you're invited to a party and wonder what you'll eat, if you should go, bring your food, or lie and make up an excuse why you can't go. instead, when you get invited your first thought won't be, "oh gosh, what are they going to have to eat?!" but rather, "awesome! this will be so much fun! i can't wait to hang out with everyone and meet new

Hi Audra, I had a consultation with you a while ago and I've had my period twice now since over half a year without it. I really can't thank you enough! :)))) - Isobel

people. what a great idea, this is going to be a great night!” that’s what you think. food doesn’t even enter the picture. and if it does enter the picture, it’s not a panic attack type of thing. instead, it’s more like, “oh we’re having pizza? cool, i love pizza!” and then you move on with your life. basically, your life is no longer consumed in food, diet, exercise, and “health.” you’re out living your life. if you planned on exercising that day and you go to the gym only to find out they are closed, you don’t have a panic attack and think your life is over. instead, you’re like, “no worries, i’ll catch it tomorrow, no big deal.” and move on. do you see the difference here? your mindset has totally changed from “diet, diet diet, fitness, fitness, fitness, abs, abs, abs, weight, weight, weight” to “i’m just living my life and food and exercise are just a part of that.”

85. i heard that periods are actually toxic and bad for our bodies and you don’t actually have to have one to get pregnant and be healthy...

if you search and dig long enough you will come across a few of these accounts of women claiming that periods are toxic and that there are some tribal communities of people where they women don’t have a full-blown period. likewise, they claim that wild animals barely bleed because their diet is so pure and they live in their natural habitat, whereas we humans aren’t eating our perfect food and aren’t living the way we should be, like in the wild. i have a few things to say about this: first, 99.9% of healthy post-pubescent women are menstruating and ovulating. and not only is this happening now but this has been happening for thousands and thousands of years. so, just because there might be some random tribe in the jungle that doesn’t what we would consider a period doesn’t really mean much. in my opinion, i’m going to err on the side of going with the 99.9% of the rest of the women in the world and the rest of world history saying that it is natural and normal and needed for a woman to have a menstrual cycle. second, as already explained in this book, not having a period and not having correct hormonal function (especially when there is caloric deprivation involved) is just setting you up for a long road of bone issues. third, most of the people that make this argument are extreme raw faddists who believe that anything outside of raw fruit and vegetables is toxic and will cause disease and dying. though i know this type of thought has good intentions, it can be very dangerous, especially when hormones, bone health, and fertility are involved.

do some more reading on “female athlete triad” to see the devastating effects of not having a period long term. finally, yes, i’m sure there are exceptions of women getting pregnant, yet going for years without having a period. this can happen, but these are the exceptions, not the rule. and that’s just it. my biggest thing about this is being very careful that you don’t let yourself be influenced by an extremely small minority of people saying that periods are toxic and you need to make your diet even more restrictive to make it to where you don’t get a period. this is literally just asking for an eating disorder, infertility, and abnormal bone health. be very careful with this! all the modern-day research and studies show that women **NEED** to be menstruating, **ESPECIALLY** if there is a history of disordered eating, over-exercise, and intense food restrictions involved.

86. what is “seed cycling,” and does it work?

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) 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. 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, seeing that you probably don't have any type of cycle (since you're reading this book), then it is said to 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/>. 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! i will just leave some links you can visit if you're interested in implementing this. there's a lot of q&a's that go a long with this that you can research yourself, but i definitely think it's worth giving a shot! if anything, you'll be eating highly nutritious seeds and be thinking it's going to work, which is always a good thing!

<http://www.dr-kristy.com/hormone-balancing-with-seed-cycling-part-2/>
<http://dramyneuzil.com/seed-cycling-for-hormone-balance-gentle-ways-to-restore-normal/>

87. what does the moon have to do with our menstrual cycles?

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 moons 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, and 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, there connection of the light, bodily exposure to the light, production of melatonin at night and 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! 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! i encourage you do some more research on this and look into yourself if you're interested. it's an interesting topic, indeed!

You have really made me realize that how your body looks and food is just a part of life, and not something that you live by. You have taught me a beautiful lesson to just have faith and enjoy life and treat your body well because it will treat you well as well!! - Stephani

88. can i eat foods that contain soy?

if you like soy, go for it. if not, don't worry about it. i wouldn't focus too much on soy products now, instead focus on more carbs and fats.

89. what if i'm vegan and i'm craving non-vegan foods?

i think you need to eat whatever you want! whether you follow a vegan, vegetarian, paleo, junk food, standard american diet, that's up to you.

90. can you reverse the damage done to your bones?

yes, you can. but it will take a while and it will take persistence and patience. lots of food, rest, sleep, and de-stressing. remember, there's so much more that goes into your bone health than just healing it with food. the food you'll be eating and the rest you'll be getting will cause your body to conserve those calories. these calories don't just go to "gaining fat," which is what every seems to think. but instead, they go to healing your ENTIRE body, especially your bones. your body needs energy and the right materials to rebuild bones, and that energy comes from calories. likewise, getting your mind right with food (remember Cognitive Dietary Restraint?) will help your hormones as they relate to your bone health. de-stressing lowers your cortisol levels which impact bone health. finally, once you do get your normal period back, doing certain exercises (which i'll talk more about in my next e-book) will be helpful - yoga, light rebounding (on a mini-trampoline), resistance training, etc. in the meantime, i would focus on just getting your life in order, physical and mental healthy included. this will do more for your bones than anything!

91. if i were to "eat whatever i want," i'd just eat junk food all day!

obviously, there is SOME degree of will power for all of us. i could easily just go into the kitchen right now and eat everything in there "just because," but there is some type of willpower to say, "nah, that's probably not a good idea." my biggest tip for this is eat more throughout the day, don't skip meals, eat balanced meals, and most importantly, stop letting your whole life be consumed in the foods

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." 1 Peter 5:6-7

you're eating. go eat some good food and move on with your life. don't try to complicate it too much.

92. what is the healthiest diet? i'm so confused! i just want to be as healthy as i can!

oh gosh, this is the problem! STOP SEARCHING FOR THE HOLY GRAIL OF HEALTH. you are literally driving yourself crazy. your mind is constantly caught up in all this crazy stuff and it's **STRESSING YOU OUT**. Stress is literally the absolute **WORST** thing for your body. stressing over what diet is best is 100 times worse for your body than eating a cookie. go back and read thru the Orthorexia chapter, and realize that everyone's idea of health is totally different. for one person, eating lots of carbs is bad, for the next it's fats, the next it's sugar, etc. stop getting caught up in all this and just eat food! and remember this, there are plenty of people eating "unhealthy" foods and living to be 120 years old. was it their diet that did that for them? no, they most likely were extremely carefree people, didn't get stressed out, loved life, slept well, etc. **THERE IS MORE TO LIFE AND HEALTH THAN YOUR DIET AND EXERCISE ROUTINE**. just like on the same token there's plenty of people dying early in life despite their "perfect diet and exercise routine" because they are so focused and stressed over doing everything right. this is **NO** way to live. again remember, "extremes are easy, balance takes practice." stop looking for the foundation of youth because all the stress you're putting on yourself is aging you more than anything else!

93. all the things i read say that i need to be exercising to get my period and that it helps with de-stressing. what do i do?

lol, if you've been following this advice and you're not getting your period, don't you think you might want to make some changes and try something new? "the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting the same results." :)

94. do i have to be vegan or vegetarian? my parents won't let me...

no, you don't have to be anything. you need to decide what works best for you physically and mentally. everybody is different and some people love

being vegan/vegetarian and others don't. i would talk to your parents about what you're thinking and you guys work something out for what's best for you.

95. i'm feeling PMS symptoms half-way thru my cycle. is this normal? am i about to get my period?

what you're (most likely) feeling right now is ovulation. ovulation happens about 2 weeks or 13-16 days (depending on the length of your cycle) into your menstrual cycle. this is when your body is releasing eggs and upping your chance of getting pregnant. because of this, your hormones are doing a lot of changing around at this time. so, what happens is you might experience water retention, bloating, cramps, diarrhea/constipation, increased sex drive, headaches, increased hunger, etc., basically all the same stuff you might experience when getting your period. however, a big difference is that you'll notice a slight drop in bbt (if you're tracking that) and also an egg-white consistency cervical mucus (this is the stuff that comes out of your vagina :) it will be kinda stretchy and clear, not cloudy, thick, runny, etc. if you're getting your period and you notice all of this happens half-way thru your cycle then it's probably ovulation. if you're concerned, then i encourage you to go see your doctor and consult with them.

96. i am stuck in a binge/purge cycle. how can i stop?

YOU HAVE TO STOP. that's the first and foremost thing to do. literally, stop. there is absolutely NOTHING beneficial that you get from purging (be it from exercise, throwing up, laxatives, or whatever you're doing). it's not healthy, sustainable, or going to help you reach your goals in any way at all. if anything, it's making your condition worse and seriously taking you further and further away from your goals (weight loss, weight gain, living a productive life, not letting food control you, getting over your food issues, etc.) so, first things first, NO MORE. you have to make yourself stop. and here are some other tips:

1. whenever you get this urge to throw up, go exercise, take laxatives or do whatever you do, you have to fight this temptation and remove yourself

from the situation. if you're alone, call a friend or family member and go be with them. be around people. don't let yourself get alone.

2. let someone know what you're dealing with so they can help hold you accountable. if this is a deep, dark secret of yours, you need to come clean with someone and ask them to help you with this. call them whiny feel tempted, go over to their house, have them grab your keys so you can't go workout, lock the bathroom doors, do whatever they have to do. you need this.
3. stop with all the routines. most of the time you probably have this whole thought out process of how you're going to do the purging. so, the minute you start even finding yourself thinking this way, make yourself stop. be in control of your thoughts and focus on productive, wholesome things, not plotting your next binge and purge. so, no more planning. your life shouldn't revolve around your binge/purge routine. so stop going to buy all these foods you're planning on binging on and then binging and then purging.
4. don't look at it as "yay i'm 30 days binge free!" why? because this automatically sets up this mentality that if you mess up then you're a failure and you just wasted 30 days. **DON'T LOOK AT IT LIKE THIS.** instead take it one day at a time. don't count the days, don't write it on your calendar. just focus on today. if you focus on the present and your victories today, then you will continue to do that every single day and every single day will be a victory. you don't want to have the mentality of failure. yes, the longer you go without purging in any form or fashion, the quicker you'll get better. but having the mentality of taking it one day at a time is much better on your psyche.
5. do some research on the consequences of purging (excessive exercise, laxatives, vomiting, etc) and look at picture of it. when you see the devastating effects this can have on you, you'll rethink what you're doing. sometimes you can get so far-removed from what you're actually doing, it becomes your normal, and you don't see how it's affecting you on a mental and physical levels. so just by seeing the physical effects can really make you rethink it.

6. realize that by doing this you're totally stressing your body (and mind!) out. all the eating then purging then restricting then eating then purging and going thru that whole cycle over and over again is seriously stressing out your body. remember, your body wants peace and consistency. not these crazy extremes. by doing this it's making you hold on to weight longer, gain more weight than needed, keep weight off when you really do need to gain, and keeping your period away because this whole process is so stressful.
7. let's say you do end up bingeing, what do you do? keep the food in!! no matter if you're bloated, sick, hurting, etc. **KEEP IT IN.** let it digest. and do not restrict in any way the next day. no skipping breakfast, fasting, doing a cleanse, etc. this just restarts the cycle all over again. so you have to keep it in to let your body know that you're eating enough and being fed. because honestly that's all it wants is food - and that's why you keep bingeing on huge amounts of food. your body is being restricted and now you're just craving calories and food like crazy. so you have to eat and keep it in so you can prove to your body that you're actually taking care of it and it's being fed.
8. so let's say you have decided to quit purging and you're serious this time! now, you have to start eating **MORE.** yes, more. why? because you're most likely not eating enough at all throughout the day, causing you to go binge, then purge it all. so, you've got to start eating a lot more during the day. don't save up all your food for a huge (planned) binge. instead, start your day off with a big breakfast, eat lunch, and eat dinner, with some snacks mixed in between. the key is to keep your body satisfied. that's all it's wanting. also, if you're recovering and experiencing extreme hunger, you will have to deal with that, but even then, eating a good balance of foods will help a lot!
9. don't let this control you anymore. set yourself free! it's a debilitating disease and it's not helping your quality of life in any way. make it stop, girl. you can do this.

97. will i lose my period on a vegan or vegetarian diet?

truth is, you can lose your period on ANY diet. however, i would argue it is far easier to lose it on these two diets for a few reasons.

1. when you switch to a vegan or vegetarian diet, you can severely lower your calorie intake without even realizing it. you're eating so many more vegetables and fruits and other filling plant-foods that you inadvertently end up losing a lot of weight because your calorie have been drastically reduced. because of this, you end up losing your period (your calories got too low and/or you lost too much weight too fast).
2. some forms of a vegan or vegetarian diet focus on cutting out a lot of fat. whenever your body sense this and sees it as an extreme, that's just asking for hormonal issues. my advice is that if you're going to be eating a vegan or vegetarian diet, you need to be sure you're eating a wide variety of vegan/vegetarian foods, being sure you're getting a good amount of carbs, proteins, and fats. (again, this is where a lot of people will say, "but Susie can do the XYZ vegan/vegetarian diet and get her period! i want to do that!!" well, guess what? you're not Susie. and what works for Susie doesn't mean that it's going to work for you. so, again (hopefully you can see the trend by now), you need to focus on yourself. let Susie focus on Susie and you focus on you. if you try what Susie is doing and it messes you up, then it's pretty clear that you need to make some changes. don't force something just because someone else is doing something that you think *might* work when your body is throwing out red flags right and left telling you to stop and make a change.
3. some girls see that they miss a period or two at the beginning of going on a different diet because their hormones are trying to get regulated and after a month or so they get it back normally again. this could happen, but i wouldn't bank on it. if you find yourself missing 3+ periods, then you've got an issue. i wouldn't keep just going and going

"I just wanted to tell you that things are starting to get a bit easier. I stopped looking at myself in the mirror. Every time I feel the urge to just stare at my body I just scream "NO! I already KNOW that I have a beautiful body so I don't need to look." - Maha

and thinking, “oh Susie says to just keep going and i’ve been going but here i am a year later wondering where my period is and nothing is changing but i’ve been doing everything Susie has told me to do and what she does in her diet, so i guess i’ll keep going...” NO NO NO!! this is insanity! if you miss 3+ periods you’re considered to have hypothalamic amenorrhea (or stress-induced missing your period - stress from diet, exercise, sleep, other stress, etc.) and that is not healthy or normal.

4. if you find yourself very restrictive or you’re the type of person that jumps around from diet to diet, i would encourage you to just stop, not adopt another diet at this point, and let your body and mind chill out. the stress on both your mind and body of always switching from one diet to the next can be overwhelming for you and if this is you, you really need a good chill out break. don’t get so wrapped up in it right now. fix your mental and physical issues then come back to your diet of choice at a later date when you’re in a better, more mentally and physically stable place.

98. what about all these plans that i read about saying i need to eat x amount of calories to get my period back?

there are plenty of these types of plans/advice out there that say you need to eat tons and tons and tons of calories to get your period back and to heal your body. here’s the thing: you can

do that if you want to. likewise, every single girl is different - some of us weigh more, some less. some need to eat more than others, some of us haven’t had these issues for as long as others, some of us have severe problems with food while others don’t. so we’re all different. and throwing out some arbitrary number for every single girl to hit isn’t a great idea, in my opinion. again. if you want to

“Turns out just looking at your Instagram and you tube videos and your general vibe was enough for me to relax about periods and reevaluate life and priorities and they’ve come! I put it down to you highlighting the importance of them and it’s okay to rest etc and just give in instead of resisting. I think constantly looking at your videos and Instagram made me “get it” and try harder to listen to my body. Thanks a lot and the same goes to you!” Xxxx

give it a try, go for it. maybe having a goal for you to hit would be helpful for you, but that's something you gotta decide. but here's the biggest thing: yes, you're working to get your period back, but even more than that you're working to get better in all areas of your life long-term, right? it's not just about your period. what's the point in getting your period back but still hating your life and restricting your calories? it doesn't make sense. so, you gotta think about the future with this one. start living NOW like you want to be living in 5 years from now. do you want to be shoving billions of calories down your throat just because someone tells you to do that today? no probably not. reason being is because you want to be making good routines and habits now when it comes to food (granted, if you experience extreme hunger and you're eating a ton of food, then that would be an exception for now). your routines and habits up until this point are probably awful. so you want to change those to more positive, healthy, sustainable habits (not talking about "you have to eat 100% organic, healthy, foods all the time, that's what 'healthy' means!") i'm talking about healthy, sustainable habits in the sense of how you view food, view your body, view exercise, etc. building those type of habits that will not only get your period back and gain some healthy weight, but also habits that you can go out to eat, live your life, fix your lunch, and eat some dessert if you want without going crazy over it. this is exactly what i did and i'm so glad i did. from the very beginning i started focusing on healing both my mind and body with the goal of being "normal" both today and in the future. so, by eating tons of different foods (both wholesome and fun foods) i got to the point to where i just saw food as food. so, i focused on the high calorie source foods and ate until satisfied. by doing this, i was sure to get in enough calories because i was focusing mostly on high calorie foods and eating til satisfied. that gave me not only the calories i needed to heal, but also the mentality behind it to face my issues with food, get out and live my life, and not let food control me in any way. however you decide to go about doing it is your thing, but that's how it was for me.

99. i think i have (or i'm going to get) binge eating disorder!

i will share my opinion based off my experience working with others and research on this topic. if you are concerned about this issues, i highly suggest you do your own thorough research and even self-evaluation before diagnosing yourself with BED. by misdiagnosing yourself with this, you can

actually make your problems worse! so, in my opinion, binge eating disorder is a severe eating disorder that is oftentimes misdiagnosed (by yourself, doctors, or others outside of you like peers and family). yes, there IS such a thing as binge eating disorder and sadly many people suffer from this today. however, i believe it's not near as common as we'd like to think. what you're most likely experiencing is what's called "extreme hunger" (i have a few videos on my youtube channel about this, so check those out). seeing that you've been restricting for so long, your body is just legit HUNGRY. yes, some people DO have it and it's a horrible condition to deal with. so, after more studying and research, people with BED don't just "get it" after a period of dieting, restriction, etc. most of them literally deal with this from childhood. basically, they are overweight or even obese by their teens, are eating noticeably larger amounts of food than their peers even as children, and were placed on restrictive diets at a young age, even against their own will. yes, they would still have the characteristics listed above, but these things are the distinguishing factors. not to mention, most research shows that binge eating disorder isn't something that is just seen in isolation. most of the time it is found as a comorbidity issue that is coupled with things like personality disorders, bipolar disorder, kleptomania, body dysmorphic disorder, substance abuse and other disorders.²¹ so, here's the takeaway i want you to consider: misdiagnosing yourself or getting misdiagnosed with BED can be very detrimental to your health. why? because if you've been restricting in any way for any amount of time, you're going to be hungry. there's no way around it. your body will eventually fight back and demand you to eat. and the reality is, you do need to eat. and even more than eating, you need to stop dieting and exercising like crazy. but here's the scary thing: if you misdiagnose yourself with this and you start reading all these books and blogs about "how to stop binging" and you're using all these mind games and special tactics to keep yourself from eating normal amounts of food, this is **only going to further your problem**. you will just continue to restrict yourself from food. am i saying go binge? no, i'm not. i'm saying eat till satisfied (even if that's a lot at first). and then i'm saying, keep eating normally. no more skipping meals, diets, purging, exercise, etc. your body has to rebalance from a caloric standpoint. the more you keep trying to outsmart your body, the longer this whole process is going to take. this is the

²¹ Westerburg DP, Waitz M (November–December 2013). "Binge-eating disorder". *Osteopathic Family Physician* 5 (6): 230–33. doi:10.1016/j.osfp.2013.06.003.

quintessential reality of a yo-yo dieter. this is why you see, know, or maybe even are a woman yourself who has tried dieting, but ends up in a binge sooner than later, ruining all the weight loss you had achieved, and even gaining even more back. there is a better way! and i talk all about that in my next book (my “keep your period handbook”)! but suffice it so say, you gotta be careful with this. focus on eating good wholesome foods all throughout the day. don’t “diet,” don’t restrict, don’t overexercise, etc. don’t put your body through this anymore. and lastly, if you’re reading this and you LEGIT think you do have BED, then again, like always, i highly recommend you work with a qualified professional regarding this. because yes, there are plenty of people out there dealing with this and it has nothing to do with being on a yo-yo diet. so get to a clinic and figure this thing out!

100. could my exercise routine be causing me to binge?

YES! so many girls don’t realize that exercise has a TON to do with bingeing! remember previously when we talked about more energy + more rest = quicker healing, but more energy + LESS rest = slower healing? well, it’s true. the thing you have to understand is that this is ALL about energy and deficits. your body is in TOO much of a deficit. even though you might be eating a lot of food, but you’re still exercising, and you still find yourself bingeing, the reason is because there’s STILL too much of a deficit and your body is trying to fix that deficit by desperately causing you to binge and consume a ton of food. how to do you fix this? you stop exercising. that way, you’re not burning those calories you’re eating and your body can sooner see that you’re being fed and there’s a chance for that extreme calorie deficit to go away over time. yes, it does take time. it’s not going to be fixed over night. but realize you didn’t get yourself in this predicament over night either. so if you’re still exercising and you find yourself not being able to quit bingeing, i would back off the exercise and let your body rebalance a little bit.

101. my family has so many problems, i just can’t cope. the stress from everything that’s going on is really affecting my progress to heal myself!

first off, you gotta realize that every family has it’s problems. no family is perfect. and i can promise you, if they seem perfect, they really aren’t! maybe it’s one of your siblings that’s causing stress, maybe you don’t get along with

your parents, maybe there's been a loss in your family, maybe one of your parents lost their job, maybe there's been a divorce or there's always a lot of arguing going on, or whatever the case may be, here's the thing: **YOU HAVE TO DISCONNECT FROM THIS.** this doesn't mean that you totally just up and leave and say "see ya!" but you have to realize how this is affecting you, especially right now with all your issues with body image, food, exercise, etc. remember, you want the **LEAST** amount of stress possible. first off, you have to realize that **NONE** of what is going on in your family is your fault. so, because of that, you do not have to carry the burden of whatever the issue is. it's not up to you to fix it. take that responsibility off yourself and free yourself from that job. it's not your job, and you couldn't fix it even if you tried. and sadly, getting even more deeper and deeper involved will only make things worse for you. second, i would encourage you to be open with your family, encourage them, love them, and be there for them when you can, but don't let this consume your life. you have to remember that you have to find a good balance with this. and the best way to do this is to let them know how it is affecting you negatively. most of the time we don't let anyone know how their actions or words are hurting us, we just think they should already know it and stop it. but that's not always the case. people can do things and not even realize what they did hurt us. so, how are they going to know and how are they going to stop? you have to **TELL** them. again, tell them in a loving, respectful, kind way, but be honest and let them know that the arguing, yelling, negativity, or whatever else is going on is really affecting your physical and mental health. most of the time, i won't say all because there's definitely exceptions, but most of the time that person will realize just how hurt you truly are and be more cognizant of your emotions. creating an open line of communication is always best. and likewise, be open to hearing their side of things. maybe you do things that negatively affect them - be open to hearing that and changing your attitude and actions to help them out, too. because remember, **YOU'RE NOT ALWAYS RIGHT** either (none of us are!). lastly, remember, it's a fine line of saying "i'm focusing on my health right now" and also saying "but i love my family and i have to be around them." you have to find that healthy balance of just how much is too much for you to handle. and this is totally up to you. my biggest tip though is talking. sometimes people will respond positively, sometimes not, but it's worth a shot either way! what do you have to lose? be open and honest,

loving and respectful, love them, encourage them, and in the meantime, focus on keeping your mind right, guarded, and on healing your body.

102. shouldn't i avoid gluten, or preservatives, or xyz? it's so unhealthy!

if these things legit mess with your physical health then no worries you don't have to eat them, but i would go back and re-read the chapter on orthorexia just to be sure you're on the right track..

103. i need a more specific approach, this seems too "general..."

because of the nature of this book, the the fact that all girls are different with different backgrounds, and since i don't know your story 100%, i can't tell YOU exactly what i would do if i were you. this is what my in-depth, individualized consultations and coaching are for. in those, i do a more one-on-one approach, take into account your whole story and background and can see what the big picture is. however, this book has EVERYTHING you need to make the right changes in your life by putting the ball in your court, so to speak. you are left up with making the decisions that best suit your needs. not everyone will need to do what i suggest in this book that's totally fine. however, all the general things i point out in this book i believe are extremely relevant and need to be at least considered by every person. some things might not apply to you, but for those things that do apply, i would consider those - what do you have to lose?

"My whole life changed a lot since i decided to eat whatever i wanted, not only i got my period back but also the way i live my life changed, i can now study to have a better job, when before all i could think about was my next meal, and neglected my passions. i am FREE to live, , without thinking when and what i m gonna eat next. That s the best gift ever." - Mari

104. you say to keep everything in balance, so does that mean literally everything? are there some things i should definitely NOT do no matter what?

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. these are the things you would ask yourself, “is this going to benefit me both now and in the future in a healthy, sustainable way?” here’s my list for non-negotiables and things that i would NOT find balance in, rather stay far, far away:

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 alcohol excessively. how is this going to benefit you in any way at all? i would even advise staying away from alcohol altogether at this point, too.
6. low calorie diets: hopefully you’ve learned your lesson on this one. they are pointless, lead to serious issues down the road, and totally mess up your relationship with your body and food.
7. exercising when injured 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. but you on the other hand are starving *voluntarily*. this is messed up. stop.
9. cutting: if you struggle with cutting or other self-harm practices, i encourage you to seek professional help and get things worked out. many who deal with this claim it helps with the “pain,” but it is only making things worse.
10. purging: this would include self-induced vomiting, over-exercise, or excessive use of laxatives, diuretics, skinny teas, enemas, cleanses, etc. stop ridding your body of calories, you need to be conserving them! all

of these things are HIGHLY addictive and aren't helping you reach your goals in life at all.

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 yourself more 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 numb you - they don't give you 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. again, 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.

105. what makes you think you're a doctor, and why should i listen to you?

hahaha... hopefully at this point you get the gist that i don't think i'm a doctor nor a counselor nor a dietician. yes i have certain qualifications, but at the end of the day qualifications, degrees, badges, honors, etc. don't really mean much if what you're promoting *doesn't work*. and that's what sets me apart because what i did and what i propose and ask you to at least consider **ACTUALLY WORKS**. nobody is twisting your arm to mimic what i did and what other girls did to get their period back, get their mind right with food, and lose their addiction to exercise. what you decide to do is totally up to you. but, i will say this: if you think there is something wrong with you, the thing i learned was to get more than just one opinion, whether you agree with them 100% or not. you could at least take a few valuable things from each person, testimony, or piece of research you come across (which is why i'm glad you're reading this book right now!). even if you don't agree with everything or even do everything, i hope you'll at least take home a few ideas to consider. but if doctors have failed you, your gynecologist has failed you, or whoever else has failed you, try something new. so, no, i'm not a doctor, but i have spent years researching this, figuring out what works, and seeing how it works for other girls, as well. just something to consider! but at the end of the day, do what feels best for you :)

"My weight has remained the same, I guess I've hit my maximum weight and I eat whatever I want, whenever I want. I'm still not exercising, at most, I walk, mostly to get out of the office and get some sun on my skin during my lunch breaks. I think I'll give it eight months of consecutive periods until I start to exercise again.

I've been monitoring the changes in my body. How I look, how I feel. I feel like my hair is getting thicker!! I used to have very thin hair around my face & crown. I hated pulling my hair back because it looked like I had a receding hairline. Now I barely see that. Also my skin is so up & down. Some days it's glowing, other days I have spots. It actually seems really thin on my face but that could just be age! :). I went on the pill for a number of reasons, birth control, cystic acne, eczema, psoriasis & dermatitis. Since getting off the pill I've noticed I only get a small itch, sometimes. This is huge! I've lived with eczema for 20 years of my life. I relied heavily on the pill to help me control it & it's actually better now that I'm off the pill!!! My acne isn't cystic anymore, they're just little spots that pop up here and there and they're gone in a couple of days. It's largely because of these things that I feared going off the pill. Little did I know my body was going to manage all of this just fine without it!

I think I'm just happier! I'm getting to know myself. I'm learning how to track my period. It's crazy how I never knew my cycle & what my body was doing and when. It's given me the opportunity to really get to know myself and appreciate my body. It fascinates and excites me. Thanks for your help and your continued encouragement. I wrote about how you helped me on my blog so that other girls can get advice from you!" - Candy xx

I 06. i don't have any problems. i'm perfectly healthy! it's good for me to work out, burn calories, eat my "perfect diet" and be super thin. i'm healthy!

this is what i like to call DENIAL. sadly, there's plenty of people like this out there in the health and fitness industry and they aren't only blind to their own issues, but they are even inadvertently negatively affecting others around them (and this could be you). most of the time this happens because they have built up an image they have to uphold (be it in real life, at their local gym, with their friends/family, on social media, etc.) and for them to show any type of "weakness" (they would consider it a

weakness, but it's not, it's just something that needs to be addressed), would totally ruin their reputation and everything they stand for. the biggest issue with this is the fact that, if this is you, you are finding your IDENTITY in the way that people perceive you, your looks, and your diet/fitness routine. the reality is, all of these things will fade with time, especially if you continue down this long road of unhealthy, yes unhealthy, choices. the pride that goes into this type of attitude can not only hurt you in the long-run, but can also hurt those around you, especially those you might be influencing to follow in the same path as yourself. most of the time there's a lot of pride and arrogance that comes with this type of thinking - it's a type of, "i know better than you. i'm fine. you're the unhealthy one. i'm healthier than you. i'm fitter, skinnier, leaner, more athletic than you. i eat better than you, my diet is better, you don't understand nutrition, etc." and yes, though they may know a lot about nutrition and/or fitness, that is their downfall. these type of people hardly ever admit they're wrong about a certain topic, it's their way or the high way, and if you disagree with them then you're doomed to a fate of disaster and destruction (which interestingly enough, is exactly where they're headed if they don't make some changes fast!). so, don't let this be you. if you're still in this mindset of thinking you're just fine, there's nothing wrong with you, and you have all the answers, i would be very careful. likewise, there's a lot of people in this mindset that maybe know, deep down, that there's an issue going on, but they are afraid to admit their wrongs, their misinformation, or their faults, because they're afraid of the backlash they might experience from their peers or social media. they're afraid if they say, "well, you know what, the xyz diet doesn't really work" or "that amount of exercise really *isn't* healthy" then they'll be shunned, kicked out of the group, ostracized, and ruined. my whole thing with this is, WHO CARES?? don't let the opinion from other people rule and dictate or your life, or literally you'll end up only hurting yourself and wake up one day realizing that YOU were the fool in the end. a clear indicator of this is not just your physical and mental health, but also if there has been any well-intentioned people in your life who have expressed their concern or worry over you or your situation. have you had close friends, family members, teachers, coaches, spouses, people at the gym, etc. comment about how you might be taking things a little too far, are too thin, workout too much, don't eat enough, etc? if so, take that to heart. consider what they're saying to you. even if you don't like it or agree, listen to it and process it and ask yourself, "are they at least a

little bit right about my situation? should i make some changes?” and the best thing about this is realizing your faults, realizing where you’ve taken things to the extremes, admitting to it to yourself and others, if needed, and changing your course of action. IT’S OK TO BE WRONG and admitting that you’re wrong is not only a big step in the right direction, but also your own character development. if you’re afraid that admitting your issues to yourself, family, friends, social media, etc. is going to ruin you as a person, that’s the furthest thing from the truth. honestly, people will RESPECT you for that. you’re human, we all make mistakes. don’t let denial get the best of you. make some changes. admit your faults. listen to those that love you. and change your life for the better. none of us have all the answers or are always right, and for those of us who think we do, we’re really just fooling ourselves. it’s all smoke and mirrors at the end of the day. don’t let this happen to you.

107. what would you say is the MOST important thing in all of this?

if i had to sum it all up, here would be my top things to do:

1. love yourself. right now. right in this moment. regardless of wha you look like, what you weigh, whatever, just love yourself and accept yourself - you’re beautiful and have a purpose in life. stop seeing yourself through your own eyes and what you think others see you as. be confident in who you are and be thankful for your life.
2. let go of control. stop trying to be a perfectionist and a control freak.
3. chill out. stop the anxiety, the racing thoughts, the freak outs, the worrying, the doubting. STOP. put a smile on your face and live for today.
4. get out of the house and go live your life. stop isolating yourself and keeping yourself from actually enjoying life. get off social media and get out and laugh, smile, act goofy, go out with friends, go out to eat, play games, do the things you love. LIVE YOUR LIFE.
5. eat more of the foods you love and face your fear foods. stop restricting yourself and worrying about every little food.

“Hey Audra!!! Guess what!? I GOT MY PERIOD YESTERDAY!!! The morning of Halloween I got my FULL first period in almost 4 years. Literally the second I saw I got my period back I started bawling and said a prayer to thank God. All the signs were there that it was coming but it was hard to believe that it was since I haven’t had a full period since I was 15 years old. I got cramps and everything, and I was actually happy about it! haha Not only will I be able to have children with my spouse in the future, but I finally have my life back again!! I haven’t been as happy as I am not in YEARS. I’ve rediscovered a side of me that I haven’t seen in a long time that I thought was long gone forever. I’m in tears just typing this, Audra. I am so so so happy and grateful.

I’m back to eating regular amounts again as well! I usually only eat 3 regular-sized meals a day, but have snacks on occasion if I get hungry in between meals. Usually my body does fine with three regular sized meals a day though! I get hungry every 4-5 hours usually. I tried eating small meals throughout the day, but I found that when I did that I got obsessed with food once again because I was always thinking about it and the next time I would be eating it. Mentally 3 meals works better for me I think. I also haven’t been desiring as much “junk food” and my body is craving healthier foods more. I allow myself dessert after dinner every few nights when I’m craving it, but not eating scoop after scoop of ice cream anymore. :) I’m looking forward to getting back into jogging, fun aerobic classes at the gym, dance, yoga, etc. but don’t plan on starting exercise until I get 3 consecutive periods, like you recommend.

Ahhh!! I can’t even begin to express how grateful I am for you. You have not only changed my life, but have SAVED my life. Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart.” - Janesa

AUDRA

6.let your body rest and treat it with a lot of TLC. lots of warm baths, get some massages, do some stretching, go buy some new clothes, sleep deeper and longer. be grateful for your body and treat it right.

7.forgive yourself and forget your past. you are not identified or rated on your past. who cares? forget that, focus on today, and live in the moment. the past is past. it’s over. stop letting it control you, define you, and affect you. focus on today.

8.de-stress your life in as many ways as possible. relationships, jobs, exercise, food, school, sleep, whatever. get as much stress out of your life as you possibly can.

9.stop worrying about and being obsessed with Susie is doing. you aren’t Susie, you are you. so focus on you and let Susie focus on Susie.

10.last, but certainly not least, remember this: DON’T STRESS!!! in any area of your life!!

my letter to you

this letter is to you. this is to sum up everything to give you the motivation, courage, tools you need to move forward and face the issues going on in your life. yes, this has a lot to do with food and exercise, but hopefully as you've seen throughout this book, it is far more than just that. this is about YOU and about your whole life. it's about how you let food, exercise, your weight, your image of your body, and your thoughts about health affect you. we've already come to realize that eating healthy and being active is part of a healthy lifestyle, but the issue is that you've taken it too far in one way or another and things have gotten out of hand and now you need to scale back and let your body heal. and that's ok! there is hope! so first and foremost you have to get this defeatist, depressed attitude and frame of mind out of your head. remember, you have to be positive. and that is the biggest thing about this whole journey. it's all about your mind, your thoughts, and how you're going to take control of this situation and make some big changes. and as i've explained before, there's no way to put the cart before the horse. you can't have your cake and eat it too, so to speak. you have to deal with the issues that are there, especially the metabolic and mental issues. they don't just go away. it has to be addressed. sure, you can ignore it for a while, but if you don't heal it, it will just come back worse in the future. so why not fix it now? why not say, "alright, this is it, i'm finally going to do this once and for all. not just to get my period back, but to get my whole life in order. i want that balance, that freedom, that happiness. i want my life back!" and here's the thing: by looking at it from the perspective of "is there an easier way?", you're totally missing the point. it's not that there's an easier way, it's that this is the BEST way. this is a time to change YOUR LIFE. this isn't just about your looks, your weight, your exercise routine, etc. it's about your health, your happiness and your future. and here's the thing: this is TOTALLY YOUR DECISION. nobody is making you do anything. you can read this book and disagree with every thing in it and that is totally fine. you can read it and agree with every thing in it, but not actually do anything i suggest. and that's totally fine, too. no problem! but here is my question: what are your priorities? that's what you need to focus on: priorities. and there's really no wrong answer here. for some people when i ask, "what is your priority?" their answer is that they want to be lean, thin, not stop exercising, never

want to gain weight, want to keep eating the restrictive way they do, and not get a period for whatever reason. they just don't want to change. and that's totally fine! nobody's saying you can't do that! but all i'm saying is realize the consequences that are going to come from that decision. no period = no fertility, no children, bone issues, and other issues connected to hormones. you'll continue to have issues with food, exercise, body image, and how you see yourself. you'll continue to be obsessed with numbers, food, diets, exercise, and essentially miss out on the fun things in life. and that's totally fine. if you want to keep exercising like crazy, being obsessed with your weight and how you look, then that is totally fine, just realize there will be consequences and all of that won't just go away. that's not how it works. remember, all of these things are conscious decisions followed by proactive actions. on the other hand, if you decide, "you know what? i'm tired of being obsessed with my weight and what i see in the mirror. i'm tired of being a slave to exercise and my diet. i'm tired of not getting a period and wondering if i'll ever be able to have kids and have healthy bones. enough's enough!" then you will take the necessary steps to change that. what are the consequences of this? sure you might gain some weight, but is that really the worst thing that could happen to you? getting your period back will allow you to get pregnant, have a family, heal your bones, get back to your favorite, true passions in life, stop being obsessed with your weight and appearance, and learn to live your life again. so, again, either way is fine. you just need to know what you're going to be in for depending on the decision you make. and there's no wrong decision! this is your life and your choices to make, nobody else's. there's plenty of women that have chosen the former way and said, "my priority is my body, my food, my exercise, and that's all i care about. i don't care about my bones, period, children, or getting away from all the diet and fitness stuff. this is my life. keeping my 6-pack and continuing to run 10 miles a day is what i want out of life, even if that means it ruins relationships, the chance of having children, my job, my other hobbies, or anything else. this is what i want." and that's totally fine. you can do that. but, i firmly believe that if you were 100% honest with yourself, you would know deep-down that this isn't what you REALLY want. this is what the voices in your head are telling you that you want. you do want freedom and happiness, you do want to let go of control and just be "normal." you want to be able to go out on a date or over to your family's house and not freak out about the food. you want to stop bringing your food everywhere and feeling guilty

if you miss a workout. you want to go back to the way you were and the way you lived and ate before it got all crazy. the truth is, i honestly think, we all want this. we want to be happy and healthy and free. we don't want the anxiety and stress of diet and fitness to continue controlling our lives. so the decision is yours. you have your own priorities. perhaps yours differ from mine or another girl and that's fine, just realize each way has their own consequences and results. and here's the super cool thing: you CAN get back to being healthy, active, strong, fit, etc. AND have your period and have healthy bones and a healthy relationship with food after you decide to heal yourself. you just have to do the healing first. and doesn't that sound like so much more of a sensible approach? instead of saying, "no, i'm not doing this, i want to keep my lean body and deal with not having a period," why not just say, "ok, i'm going to heal both my mind and body, get everything fixed up, then come back to this fitness and health thing with a totally different mindset and perspective. i'm going to get in a the right place mentally and let my body heal 100% before revisiting this. and when i come back to working out or "healthy" food, i'll have such a better perspective on it all. not to mention, i'll have my period back and i'll actually be healthy!" doesn't this sound more logical? so why not go ahead and heal yourself now? why wait? and the thing is time is going to pass regardless. no matter what you decide to do, the time is going to go by and whatever way you choose, that's what your future is going to be. so stop thinking about just the RIGHT now. start focusing on the future - next month, next year, 5, 10, 25 years from now. think about that. so, what are your priorities? that's what you've got to figure out. so remember, the first part is just about you getting past the food and exercise issues that will help you get your period back. but it doesn't stop there. life keeps going, right? and that's what i want to help you do. fix this now and let's get you to move on with life. let's get you past the food, exercise, body image, and period issues that are holding you back from enjoying life, get you out into the real world so you can experience what living is really about, and finally, when the time is right and if you want, introduce you to a way of eating healthy and being active in a way that is sustainable, balanced, and beneficial to both your mind and body for the rest of your life (this is what my next books will focus on). and most importantly, i want you to know that i genuinely care and that's why i wrote this book for you.

xx, Audra

Recipes

Obviously, as you can tell from my “Get Your Period Handbook,” a big part of this whole thing is *eating more calories*. For some people that’s a no-brainer, but for a lot of us, we don’t even know where to start. Some of us don’t even know what a calorie is. Some of us are afraid to eat certain foods. Some of us don’t know how to incorporate more calories into our diet. And a lot of us are confused on the fact that just by eating more foods means we’re automatically eating more calories (which isn’t necessarily true!!) You might be eating a large volume of food (i.e. broccoli, cauliflower, and salads), but that doesn’t mean you’re eating a lot of calories. So, remember, the goal right now in your health journey is to eat more *calories*. The recipes I’ve provided are a good mixture of whole foods and some fun stuff thrown in, too. If you want to change some ingredients up, go for it! I want you to customize your foods for YOU. The goal isn’t to eat like I eat, or your friends eat, or like “Susie” eats, but what YOU want to eat. These recipes are just some ideas to get your started, but I really want you to focus on what you like and crave, not what someone else tells you to eat.

I want to share with you some fun, tasty, easy-to-fix, delicious meals and snacks you can have any time of the day that will help you get in the calories you need to get your body working correctly again. I’ve made these recipes as simple and straight-forward as possible so that anybody at any age can make them, even if you need a little help from your parents. Most of the ingredients are extremely easy to find in a super market, and for those that might be a little bit more difficult to locate, feel free to substitute with whatever you think might taste good in its place!

There are no rules as to when you can eat these foods. If you want pizza for breakfast, go for it. If you want cereal for dessert, have at it. There are NO rules. Likewise, if you can’t finish all that is cooked or prepared, no problem. Don’t stuff yourself just because the food is there (unless you’re actually still hungry!) Just save the food and finish it later. Also, you’ll see that a lot of the recipes don’t have certain measurements. This is because I want you to get to the point to where you’re not relying on measuring cups and food scales all the time to tell you what a serving size is. A serving size is what your body needs to feel satisfied on, not what some nutrition label tells you. Some recipes do have measurements just for simplicity sake, the consistency of the dish, or for baking purposes. But again, I recommend you chill out on the measuring cups, spoons, food scales, counting

calories/macros, etc. as much as you possibly can. These things can be useful in certain situations, but I would challenge you to take a step back from them, see what life is like without them, and chill out for now, especially if you are really reliant on them.

As I explained earlier, no, you will not be necessarily “living off” these foods for the rest of your life. Yes, if you want to continue eating them after you get your period back and recover from your disordered eating habits that is totally fine. But, the goal is to eat a ton of calories now, get your weight stabilized, and over time let your diet naturally and effortlessly change to a more balanced approach of whole plant foods with some fun foods thrown in.

I hope you like the recipes and please share the with your family and friends! Also, be sure to tag me in your creations on Instagram so I can give you some credit for trying my dish! You can tag me on @thisgirlaudra and use the hashtag #getyourperiod.

acai bowl

what you need:

2 packets of frozen acai (if you can't find these use 1-2 cups frozen blueberries)
2 frozen bananas (ripe, with spots)
1 fresh banana (ripe, with spots)
2 large dates
handful of berries
coconut sugar (as much as you like)
granola or rolled oats
nuts and seeds



1. blend the frozen acai, frozen bananas, dates, berries and coconut sugar together in a food processor. add a little bit of water to get the consistency you like.
2. top it with granola, nuts, seeds, and other fresh fruit you love!

TIP: freezing lots of bananas is a great and easy way to enjoy smoothies, banana “nice cream” and other snacks/desserts whenever you want. just be sure the bananas are “spotty” and ripe before peeling and freezing them. eating unripe bananas, especially in large quantities, can cause some digestive upset due to the amount of starch. by letting them ripen, the starch naturally turns to sugar and is easy on digestion!

pb&j pancakes

what you need:

1 cup flour (i use whole wheat pastry flour)
3/4 cup +/- milk (your preference)
1/2 tsp vanilla extract
pinch of cinnamon
2 tbsp sugar or maple syrup
1/4 tsp baking powder
pinch of salt
peanut butter & jelly
maple syrup & fresh fruit
coconut oil (for greasing the pan)



1. head skillet to med/high heat. add a dab of coconut oil and spread it to cover the pan.
2. stir the flour, cinnamon, baking powder, coconut sugar, and salt together in medium bowl. mix the vanilla extract and milk together in separate bowl. slowly add the milk mixture to the flour, stirring constantly. you want the batter to be thick, but still somewhat pourable.
3. pour batter into the skillet in circles and let it cook until bubbles appear and the sides are done. flip and cook the rest. *you may need to add a little extra coconut oil depending on the type of skillet you're using.
4. layer the pancakes with jelly and fruit. pour the maple syrup and peanut butter on top.

TIP: for a more “syrupy” peanut butter, thin it out with some maple syrup or water. put the peanut butter in a small bowl, add in the maple syrup, stirring constantly. you’ll eventually get a more liquified, runny peanut butter :)

ooey-gooey porridge

what you need:

1/2 cup - 1 cup oats

1 cup milk (your preference)

chia seeds or hemp seeds... or both

2 dates, chopped

tahini

maple syrup

blackstrap molasses (organic, unsulphured)



1. cook the oats with your milk of choice in a medium saucepan.
2. when the mixture starts to thicken, add in the chia/hempseeds, dates, stirring to combine.
3. remove from heat and add in however much tahini, maple syrup, molasses that you want.

easy banana bread

what you need:

4 large ripe bananas

1 cup flour

1/2 cup rolled or quick-cooking oats + 1/4 cup separate

1/4 cup maple syrup or coconut sugar + 1 tbsp separate

1/2 tsp baking soda

1 1/2 tsp baking powder

pinch of salt

1+ tsp cinnamon (add more depending on your taste!)

1/2 cup walnuts (optional)

1. preheat oven to 375 F.
2. in a large mixing bowl, mash the bananas with the maple syrup or sugar until smooth.
3. in a separate bowl, mix all the dry ingredients.
4. add the wet to the dry and stir until well-combined.
5. pour batter into parchment paper-lined bread pans (2 for smaller loaves and less cooking time or 1 for a larger loaf, but longer cooking time).
6. sprinkle the top with the separated oats and maple syrup/sugar
7. bake for 35-40 min or until toothpick comes out clean from the middle.
8. let it cool for about 5 minutes before removing from the pan.

open-face pizzas

what you need:

4 slices of bread (or more, if you want!)

1/2 small can tomato paste (or a whole can)

any topping you like, chopped up

(onions, bell peppers, olives,

banana peppers, corn, tomatoes,

mushrooms, broccoli, artichokes, are some of my favs)

pinch of fennel seed (if you like the taste of sausage)

pinch of basil

pinch of oregano



1. turn the oven on “broil” and place the pieces of bread directly on the oven racks to toast. keep an eye on them because they will cook fast! flip them over to toast the other side.
2. mix together the tomato paste with some water to get the consistency you want.
3. add in spices to the tomato paste and spread the paste over the toasted bread.
4. top with all your favorite toppings and put back under neither the broiler to brown a little bit more.

sweet potato- banana mash

what you need:

1-2+ sweet potatoes

1 banana

cinnamon (to taste)

optional: peanut butter, blackstrap
molasses, maple syrup, coconut
sugar, salt, etc.



1. cook the sweet potatoes however you like (bake, in the crockpot, or microwaved).
2. cut open the potato and mash the banana up with it.
3. sprinkle on the cinnamon and mash it up some more.
4. add any other toppings you like! get creative! :)

TIP: save time cooking potatoes by cooking them in bulk with your crockpot. set the crock pot to low, wrap the potatoes individually in foil, and stack them inside the crock pot. let it cook for 8 hrs. or, set the temperature to high and cook for 4. store the potatoes in the fridge to snack on throughout the week or have a quick way to make this dish!

*the “sweet potato-banana mash” is my claim to fame dish, so if you try this use the hashtag #sweetpotatobananamash on instagram so i can see your creation!

soft-baked chocolate chip cookies

what you need:

1 1/4 cup flour (i use whole wheat pastry)
1/4 cup sugar (use more if you want)
1 egg or 1 chia/flax egg
1 tsp baking powder
1/4 tsp baking soda
1/8 tsp salt
1/2 cup + 2 tbsp applesauce
1 tbsp vanilla extract
3/4+ cup water
1/2 cup chocolate chips



1. preheat oven to 375 F.
2. mix the dry ingredients together in one bowl (except chocolate chips) and the wet ingredients together in another bowl.
3. pour the wet into the dry and mix thoroughly. add water as needed. you want the batter to be like “regular” cookie dough.
4. stir in chocolate chips.
5. spoon batter onto parchment paper-lined baking sheet.
6. bake for ~5 min for gooey cookies or ~10 min for cake-like cookies.

TIP: this is also a great recipe for making pancakes, too! if you happen to want pancakes but don't have the oil for frying them, use this recipe and have baked pancakes instead. just line a baking sheet with parchment paper and cook them in the oven :)

pb&j rice

what you need:

a lot of cooked white rice
(basmati is really good with this!)
your favorite peanut butter
your favorite jelly

1. in a medium bowl, add the jelly to the rice and stir until it's well-combined.
2. add the peanut butter on top and either stir it all in or take a little bit of the peanut butter with each bite. simple as that :)

TIP: try this recipe out with different types of grains. It tastes great with oatmeal, buckwheat, quinoa, and even cornmeal/grits. Try different stuff and see what you like!



3 ingredient tortillas

what you need:

1 cup flour + more to roll in

1 cup+/- water

pinch of salt



1. heat medium/large skillet to med/high heat.
2. add the salt to the flour in a large mixing bowl.
3. slowly add in water, stirring constantly. you want the dough to be pliable and not sticky. it should easily pull away from the bowl.
4. sprinkle some flour on a table surface and form the dough into a large ball. separate the dough into 4 equal parts.
5. roll each part into a circle-tortilla shape, being sure to add flour to the rolling surface as needed.
6. sprinkel a little bit of flour into your skillet and lay the tortilla out evenly. let it cook until tiny bubbles appear. flip and cook the rest.

TIP: you can easily double or triple this recipe and make plenty of tortillas to freeze for later. be sure to let them cool first before putting them in a air-tight container in the freezer.

chunky monkey ice cream

what you need:

2-3 frozen bananas

1-2 tbsp cocoa powder or
carob powder (depending on
taste)

1/2 tsp vanilla extract

1 tbsp coconut sugar

additional toppings (especially nuts and seeds)



1. place the bananas in a food processor and blend until smooth. (you may have to stop every few seconds to scrape the sides of the bowl to keep the mixture churning).
2. add a little water (NOT a lot!) to help with the consistency.
3. add the cocoa powder, vanilla, and coconut sugar. keep blending.
4. top with nuts or other toppings.

TIP: you can make a simple chocolate or carob syrup by mixing the powder with water and coconut sugar and pouring it on top :)

easy homemade bread



what you need:

- 2 cups warm/hot water (between 120-130 F)
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- 1 1/2 tsp rapid rise yeast
- 1 1/2 cup flour
- 1 1/2 cup bread flour (or you can use 3 cups of just flour)
- 1/2 tsp salt

1. preheat oven to 100 F and line two bread pans with parchment paper.
2. in a small bowl, mix together the water, maple syrup, and yeast with a non-metallic spoon. let it sit for 10 min until yeast begins to foam.
3. in a large GLASS bowl (or oven-safe bowl) add the flour and salt.
4. once the yeast is foamy, add the liquid mixture to the flour and stir rapidly. continue to add a little flour if needed so dough pulls away easily from the sides of the bowl. you do not want it to be extremely sticky.
5. scrape the bottom and sides of the bowl and dust it with flour to keep the dough from sticking. put the dough in the oven for 1-1.5 hrs to rise until doubled in size.
6. once doubled, remove the dough from the oven, push down the middle and lightly knead. separate dough into two equal pieces. place the dough evenly in the parchment paper-lined pans and put the pans back into the oven for another 45 min to raise again.
7. once risen, turn the temperature up to 350 F and bake for 45 min to 1 hour. let cool for 30+ min before cutting into pieces.

un-fried fries

what you need:

3-5 medium-large potatoes
(use any potato you like!)
spices (garlic powder, onion powder, curry powder, rosemary, chili powder, pepper, salt, etc.)



1. preheat oven to 450 F.
2. slice up the potatoes into the size of fries.
3. place the fries on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet or spray a baking sheet with cooking spray and sprinkle with spices.
4. bake for 35 minutes or until browned.

TIP: for SUPER crunchy fries, cut the potatoes really thin. for more thick, fluffy fries, cut them thicker like potato wedges.

loaded rice cakes

what you need:

rice cakes

peanut butter

jelly

blackstrap molasses

chocolate chips



1. smother the rice cakes in peanut butter.
2. top with jelly
3. add all the goodies on top.

TIP: this is a quick and easy snack that can be GREAT for getting in calories! you can also experiment with savory flavors like hummus and veggies or other sweet ones like banana, dates, and coconut sugar :)

blueberry muffins

what you need:

1 1/2 cups flour
1/2 cup coconut sugar
1.5 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 tsp vanilla extract
pinch of cinnamon
3/4 cup almond milk
1/4 cup applesauce
1 cup blueberries (frozen or fresh)



1. preheat oven to 350 F.
2. mix all the dry ingredients together then stir in the wet.
3. fold in the blueberries.
4. pour batter into paper or silpat muffin cups and place in a muffin pan. sprinkle tops of each muffin with extra coconut sugar.
5. bake for 30-35 minutes.

pasta w/ 1 minute sauce

what you need:

your favorite type of pasta (flour, corn, quinoa, rice, etc)

1 can tomato paste

1 can diced tomatoes, drained
dried basil

dried oregano

dried rosemary

dried parsley

nutritional yeast



1. boil the pasta in water until it's soft and fluffy.
2. mix the tomato paste with water until you get the consistency you want. add the diced tomatoes and spices to taste.
3. drain and rinse the pasta, pour the sauce on top, and sprinkle the nutritional yeast on top.

TIP: how do you tell when your pasta is done? take a small piece and throw it against the wall - if it sticks, it's done. if it doesn't, it's not :)

sweet & tangy dipping sauce



what you need:

1 tbsp maple syrup
1 tbsp dijon mustard or yellow mustard
water
1 tbsp tahini
pinch of rosemary

1. stir the maple syrup, tahini, and dijon mustard together in a small bowl.
2. add a little water to get the consistency you want. add in the rosemary.
3. spread on bread for a condiment, use for dipping fries into, etc.

TIP: though there's nothing "wrong" with buying store-bought sauces, it can sometimes be fun to create your own stuff at home. however, don't be *scared* of store-bought things. if these are some of your fear foods, then i really encourage you to face those fears and get the sauces from the store!

diy nut butters

what you need:

1-2 cups of your favorite nut (almonds, hazelnuts, pecans, peanuts, etc.)

1. place the nuts in a high-powered food processor.
2. grind the nuts up for as long as you can before the processing blade stops grinding them. use a spoon to push down the nuts on the sides of the bowl.
3. keep blending and scraping the sides of the bowl.
4. over a few minutes (depending on the speed and quality of your food processor) you will begin to see the nut butter forming.
5. keep blending to reach the consistency that you like.

TIP: try toasting the nuts before adding them to the food processor. toast at 375 F on a baking sheet, then let them cool before adding them to the processor. also, you can experiment by adding in carob or cocoa powder, cinnamon, coconut sugar, vanilla, or even spicy or savory spices like cayenne pepper, rosemary, etc.



stuffed peanut butter- banana french toast



what you need:

4 slices of high calorie bread

1 banana, sliced in coins

3/4 cup milke (your preference)

1/2 tsp vanilla extract

1/4 tsp cinnamon

maple syrup

peanut butter (thin this out with water, stirring constantly in a small bowl)

coconut oil (if needed)

1. heat a large skillet over medium/high eat. add a little coconut oil if needed.
2. in a small bowl, add the milk, vanilla, and cinnamon.
3. soak the bread in the milk until it gets really soggy.
4. lay the bread in the skillet until the bottom is browned, flip. cook the rest the same way.
5. layer the french toast with the bananas and peanut butter.
6. top with more peanut butter and maple syrup.