



MADE FOR MORE

Small steps. Big shifts. Built with discipline.

LORA DOUGHERTY

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*To my clients—
You are the reason this book exists. Thank you for
allowing me to walk alongside you. To every
person who's ever had the thought, "There has to
be more"—you were right. There is more—more
discipline, more freedom, more life.*

Foreword

I've had the privilege of watching Lora's journey unfold—not from the sidelines, but from right beside her. I've seen the quiet work, the early mornings, the private battles, and the triumphs no one else saw. And it's given me a front-row seat to something extraordinary: a woman becoming everything she was created to be.

When I met Lora, she was already magnetic, intelligent, compassionate, strong—but beneath it all, I could sense the ache of someone still wrestling to feel truly at home in her own skin. It wasn't just about physical health. It was emotional. Spiritual. She wasn't just seeking wellness, she was seeking peace. And rather than settle for a life that looked good from the outside, she went inward. She did the hard, honest work of transformation. Not all at once. Not for applause. But day by day, with a relentless commitment to truth and grace.

What makes Lora so impactful isn't just her knowledge, it's her integrity. She lives the life she invites others into. She doesn't stand above anyone; she walks beside them. Through setbacks, relapses, shame, and redemption. She's shown women, countless women, that healing is not only possible... it's holy work. That they don't have to shrink to be worthy. That they don't have to choose between caring for others and caring for themselves.

And at the center of it all is her faith. Lora's spirit isn't just strong, it's anchored. Her light isn't performative, it's rooted in something eternal. It's my belief that this is what makes her so uniquely impactful: her deep connection to God radiates through her words, her presence, and her unwavering belief in people. She doesn't just offer strategies—she offers hope. Not the kind of hope that comes with a hashtag, but the kind that holds you up when you're not sure you can go one more step.

I've seen her impact lives, not just through a coaching session or a nutrition plan, but through the way she sees people. Through her ability to speak life into places that have been silent for far too long. Friends. Family. Strangers. Clients. They walk away changed.

And the reason I can say all this with conviction is because I'm not just a witness to her impact—I'm a product of it.

She has transformed every facet of my life for the better. She's challenged me to grow, to soften, to rise. She's called out a version of me I didn't know existed, and then believed in it with a faith that never wavered. I have never in my life experienced belief like the belief she has placed in me.

She has shown me what it looks like to lead with love. To pursue health with humility. And to trust that our greatest influence comes not from perfection, but from presence.

What you're holding in your hands isn't just a book—it's the blueprint she never had, but now offers freely to you. It's filled with hard-won truths and battle-tested strategies. But more than that, it's infused with the spirit of a woman whose life is her greatest testimony.

If you allow it, these pages will begin to work on you, not just to help you look different, but to help you live different. And you'll understand what I already know: that Lora is a rare kind of light. And if you've found your way here, it's no accident.

You're in good hands.

—Tim

Her husband. Her number one fan. A man forever changed by the woman behind these words.

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Real Transformations

Lifelong health isn't a dream—it's a reality for those who take the right steps. These journeys are proof that change is possible.

"Lora's motivation and plan worked for me. Her motivation to move each day and eat clean literally changed my life."

Oreshya Peterson

"I've lost 50 pounds, have so much more energy, and my life is more structured in ways that help my family be healthier."

Katie Ranieri

"In 7 months, I've shed over 40 lbs and, more importantly, have radically changed my eating and overall health habits."

Michael Catalino

"Investing in Lora was hands down one of the most priceless things I've ever done."

Megan Woerner

"My name is Katje. I'm 62 years young and I lost 28 lbs in 3 months on Lora's well-designed program."

Katje Ewsuk

"I have been completely free from my sugar addiction and the daily cravings for it."

Susan O'Dell

"I've been working with Lora for about 4 months now, and I can truly say it's been life-changing."

Jessica Vullo

"I cannot say enough good things about Lora. You will never regret this decision."

Christy Goodwin

"If you are looking for a Nutritionist to guide you into transforming yourself from the inside out—Lora is for you!"

Linda Principe



The Stories I Never Shared

For years, I kept certain stories locked away, convinced they were too personal—too raw—to share with anyone. I told myself they weren't necessary, that they had no place in my work, and that revealing them would only make me look weak. But time has a way of shifting perspective. Time, along with the lessons I've learned, has changed my mind.

Now, I see these stories differently. Not as moments to be ashamed of, but as essential pieces of who I am. They are the foundation of the person, nutritionist, and coach I've become. And more than that, I see now that they don't just belong to me. They belong to anyone who has ever felt stuck, anyone who has struggled to change, and everyone who has doubted their ability to do better.

When I first started my practice, I kept my personal experiences separate from my work. I believed that being a professional meant focusing only on facts, science, and strategies—never my own struggles. I convinced myself that as a nutritionist, I couldn't admit to having tried different approaches in the past. I was supposed to be the expert. Even thinking about sharing those words with my clients in the beginning made me cringe inside. In my mind, admitting I had struggled too somehow diminished my credibility.

But that was my distorted way of thinking.

Over time, I realized something crucial: the years I spent pursuing this, the things I've tried, and the challenges I've faced don't make me less of an expert. They give me an edge. Not only do I have professional experience working with others, but I have personal experience. I've been there myself. I know what it feels like to be frustrated, to feel like nothing is working, to want to give up. And that experience allows me to connect with my clients on a much deeper level.

Of course, there's fear in opening up. Sharing your lowest moments, your missteps, and your failures isn't easy. But at this point in my life, I've come to accept something important, I can't rewrite the past. I can't change it or pretend struggles never happened. I can't manipulate them to be different than they actually are. What I can do is use them—to teach, to inspire, and to remind others that they are never alone in their journey.

So, this book is my way of finally sharing what I once thought I never would. The truth, unfiltered. The lessons, hard-earned. The journey, still ongoing.

I am genuinely grateful for everything that has led me here. And now, I'm ready to share it with you.



More Than Just Food: How Childhood Habits Shape Our Relationship with Eating

Some of my earliest memories with food date back to when I was 9 years old.

Growing up in a big Italian family with three older siblings, food was everywhere—all the time. It wasn't always the healthiest food, either. Meals were more than just meals; they were a way of connecting, celebrating, and bringing everyone together. I've always had a deep, intense love for my family, and naturally, I developed a deep love for food too.

I remember doing Weight Watchers with my mom and some of my siblings, using a homemade points tracker. At that age, I didn't fully understand what I was doing—it just felt like something I was drawn to because my mom was doing it. It was more like a game, an activity we did as a family. I looked up to her so much, she was everything to me. I wanted to eat like her, dress like her, and be like her in every way, so joining her in Weight Watchers felt very natural.

While I don't recall many specifics about the program itself, what I do remember—vividly—was struggling with my body image from a young age. I always felt bigger and taller than the other girls my age—and I was. I was overweight as a child, and I remember feeling really insecure. I remember feeling so ugly. Looking at pictures of myself, I didn't like what I saw. I often wondered why I looked different and why I couldn't be smaller like the other girls. At some point, I made a painful assumption: because I was bigger, I wasn't as good—I was less than. It wasn't just about my size; I believed my weight made me unworthy in some way. I saw thinner girls and assumed they had something I didn't—that they were better, more lovable, and more deserving.

I internalized the idea that my body was a problem that needed to be fixed. When I did that, I thought, then I would be happy.

Food wasn't just something I ate—it was tied to my emotions, my relationships, and my experiences growing up. Some foods bring back memories so clearly, almost as if they were time-stamped in my mind. One childhood memory I have is sitting in the back of my mom's car, driving around with my siblings, excitedly eating a giant, fried chicken sandwich from McDonald's—paired with french fries and a vanilla milkshake. I can still remember the taste and the feeling of pure happiness that came with it.

But food was also something I started to turn to in private. My earliest memories of bingeing on sugar trace back to that time. I remember sneaking into the kitchen, spooning hot cocoa mix straight from the canister into my mouth, and rushing back to the living room to watch TV, hoping my mom wouldn't catch me. I remember pouring white sugar over my Rice Krispies cereal, finishing a bowl, and then going back for a second, then a third. Sugar had a powerful hold on me, even then.

Looking back, I can see how food became deeply woven into my emotions—whether it was comfort, joy, or even insecurity. I had absolutely no idea at the time, but the patterns I formed as a child would follow me into adulthood. The way I used food, the way I viewed my body, and the habits I carried with me—none of it was random. It all started when I was 9 years old.

Life Lesson:

Our relationship with food begins long before we realize it. The way we eat, the emotions we attach to food, and the habits we develop as children stay with us. Whether food was a source of comfort, a way to connect with loved ones, or something we turned to in secret, those early experiences shape how we interact with food as adults. The good news is once we recognize these patterns, we have the power to change them.

Practical Strategies:

1. Identify Emotional Eating Triggers

Think back to your childhood—did you eat when you were sad? Celebrate with food? Use it for comfort? Start noticing if those same patterns show up in your adult life. Triggers can be biological, emotional, or even situational. Write down the patterns you have or the triggers you experience. Awareness is the first step to change. You can't change what you don't acknowledge.

2. Redefine Food as Nourishment, Not Comfort

Avoid using food as a reward or a coping mechanism. Food is fuel for your body—meant to nourish and support you, not control you. Eating to soothe yourself may provide temporary relief, but it only reinforces unhealthy patterns and keeps you stuck in cycles of guilt and frustration. It doesn't solve anything, and only takes you farther away from developing a real solution to life's challenges.

3. Break the Sugar Struggle with Mindful Eating

If sugar has been a lifelong challenge for you, start practicing mindfulness. Mindfulness is a trendy word, but at its core, it just means slowing down and being intentional with your thoughts and actions. Before reaching for something sweet, pause and ask yourself: *Am I truly hungry, or am I just craving comfort? What will actually provide me with comfort in this moment?* These small moments of awareness can help break automatic habits. This isn't about perfection—it's about practice. This took me years to master. The more you pause and reflect, the more you retrain your brain and slowly break the pattern.



Ignoring the Signs: How I Learned to Listen to My Body

Sports were always a big part of my family as a kid, so I was relatively active from a young age. I played lacrosse, and I was good at it, which boosted my confidence among my peers. But by the time I reached high school, I wasn't exactly taking care of my body. I was reckless with what I was eating and putting into it—alcohol, weed, junk food—whatever I wanted. Smoking and drinking made me even hungrier, and I wasn't mindful at all about my food choices. I would come home late, after a night of drinking and smoking, only to eat anything and everything I could get my hands on.

I remember going to Starbucks every day after school and ordering a frozen, chocolate chip coffee drink, completely unaware of how all the sugar and calories were affecting me. Looking back, I wonder how much more regulated my mood would have been if I was fueling differently as a teen. Nutrition wasn't something I thought about then. As long as I was still playing sports, I figured I was fine. I didn't connect the dots between what I was consuming and how my body was feeling.

At some point, I started to develop stomach pain. It wasn't overwhelming, so I ignored it. I assumed it was normal—just something that happened. But my mom wasn't convinced. She pushed me to keep searching for answers, and eventually, I had an endoscopy that revealed what was really going on. My digestive system was inflamed, the tissue of my digestive system was damaged. The doctors gave me some basic recommendations: stay away from gluten and manage my stress levels. That advice should have been a turning point, but at the time, I didn't take it seriously. I wasn't diagnosed with a disease, so I figured it wasn't a big deal. I made a few healthier choices, but overall, I kept eating the way I always had.

It wasn't until a year later, when I was a freshman in college, that changed. I remember crunching in a ball of pain on the floor of my dorm room bathroom, on the phone with my mom. I became really sick and she came and picked me up. This time, I couldn't ignore what my body was telling me. It forced me to start paying attention to what I was eating, how I was feeling, and the connection between the two. That experience finally made me take what I was eating seriously, and it opened my eyes to something bigger: the way food affects the way we feel and function. It wasn't just about avoiding stomach pain, it was about understanding my body so I could feel good. My mindset shifted from optional to necessary.

Life Lesson:

Your body is always communicating with you, but it's up to you to listen. The small signals—fatigue, bloating, discomfort—are often warning signs of something bigger. Ignoring them doesn't make them go away; it just delays the inevitable. True health starts with awareness, and when you start paying attention to what your body is telling you, you can take control of how you feel.

Practical Strategies:

1. Tune Into How Your Body Feels

Start tracking how certain foods make you feel. Do you feel bloated after eating bread? Sluggish after sugar? Energized after a balanced meal? The more aware you become, the easier it is to make choices that serve you. You need this data about your body. It's different for everyone, so don't just take your friends' word for it. Go through the process yourself and find out what you need.

2. Don't Wait Until You're Sick to Make a Change

If something feels off—whether it's stomach pain, fatigue, brain fog or even stubborn weight gain—don't ignore it. Seek answers, experiment with your intake, and be proactive about your health before it forces you to pay attention.

3. Elimination, Not Assumption

If you suspect a certain food is causing issues, try eliminating it for a few weeks and see how you feel. This is an incredibly simple and effective strategy that doesn't require any lab testing or procedures. Don't wait for a diagnosis to start making adjustments that could improve your well-being.



Rooted in Faith: How Belief Transformed My Identity

Growing up, I wasn't raised with a deep foundation in Christianity. By the time my parents had their second child, they were in the process of leaving a religious organization they had gradually realized was no longer the right place for them. They had been involved since they were 18 years old and stayed for 10 years. They felt it was time to go, and I'm glad they made that choice. Because of that, I think they may have hesitated to immediately jump into faith with their children. Maybe there were insecurities, fears, or unanswered questions they were still grappling with, I'm not exactly sure. To this day, I'm still learning more about that part of our family's journey.

Even though we weren't raised with a strong Christian philosophy, I now realize that my parents' values at that time—goodness, connection, love, kindness, hard work, and integrity—were shaping our family in ways that mirrored true faith. Their actions spoke louder than words, and through them, I learned the importance of treating others with respect, giving generously, and striving to do what was right. While we may not have been sitting in church every Sunday, those values laid a foundation that would later help me understand what faith truly meant.

One of my earliest memories is flipping through a Bible at home, though it wasn't until I was about fifteen that we truly began exploring faith as a family, visiting various churches together. Yet, for some reason, I identified as a Christian. I wore a cross necklace as a symbol of what I felt was part of my identity. I would say I was Christian without fully understanding what it meant. It was more of a label than a deeply rooted belief at that stage of my life.

That all changed when I went to college.

Freshman year was a season of transformation. Growing up in a big family, it was easy to get lost in the mix. I was always focused on everybody else—what they were doing, what was happening around me—so much so that I never really took the time to explore and understand myself. College gave me the space to do that, and one of the biggest areas I started exploring was my faith.

I remember opening my Bible, not out of obligation, but out of curiosity. I had questions. Who is Jesus? What did He do? Is He real? What proof is there? That curiosity led me down a path of exploration. At first, I wasn't convinced. I was simply seeking. But the more I read, the more I questioned, and the more I learned, something shifted within me.

My perspective on life began to change—subtly, yet drastically. I started viewing behaviors that once seemed normal through a different lens. Heavy drinking, drug use and reckless decisions no longer felt like things to brush off. Instead, they saddened me. I began to ask: *What does God think about this? What does He want for me?*

Looking back, my relationship with God has shaped me in ways I didn't even realize at the time. When I became a believer, I saw myself differently. My body was valuable. My mind was valuable. My time was valuable. I was valuable. Through God's eyes, I saw my worth in a way I never had before. Reading the Bible introduced me to the power of self-control and discipline—why God calls us to it and the benefits it brings. I began to understand the goodness of life and the peace that comes with knowing that no matter how hard life gets, God is always with me. That was so comforting. I was lost and now, I had a guide.

That faith became my foundation. It helped me navigate struggles with food, poor relationships, and self-worth. It gave me a deep sense of peace, even in my toughest moments. Most importantly, it shaped my identity, making me more confident and fearless in the face of life's challenges.

Life Lesson:

Faith transforms how you see yourself. One of the most profound lessons I've learned is that faith changes your self-perception. When you see yourself through God's eyes, you begin to value yourself differently. You no longer accept unhealthy behaviors or allow negativity to define you. Instead, you embrace discipline, self-respect, and a deeper purpose. This one realization struck me to my core.

Practical Strategies:**1. Seek With Curiosity**

If you have questions about faith, don't be afraid to explore them with an open heart and mind. Read scripture, listen to different perspectives, and ask thoughtful questions. Faith isn't about having all the answers—it's about the willingness to seek, learn, and grow. The more you explore, the deeper your understanding will become, leading you to a faith that feels personal and authentic.

2. Find Your Anchors

Faith flourishes when it's nurtured through consistent, grounding practices. Whether it's reading a daily scripture, setting aside time for prayer, or simply sitting in quiet reflection, create habits that strengthen your connection to God. These moments of stillness and intention will help you navigate life's challenges, reminding you of your worth, purpose, and the unwavering love that surrounds you.

3. Reframe Your Self-Worth

When negative thoughts creep in, challenge them. Replace self-doubt with affirmations of your God-given value. To this day, I am still practicing this and some seasons are easier than others!



Structure Equals Freedom: How Routine Grounded My Health

Freshman year was a turning point for my health. While many of my peers were gaining the infamous “freshman 15,” I actually lost about 20 pounds. And the best part was it felt almost effortless.

I was an unusual freshman. By that point, I was over the partying scene. After my reckless high school years, I had no desire to spend my nights drinking or doing drugs, which meant I wasn’t doing much socializing either. Instead, I focused on my studies, my health, and creating structure in my life. Without realizing it, I developed a routine that not only helped me physically but also gave me a sense of control and balance—one that still benefits me to this day.

My days followed a strict pattern. Every morning, I’d wake up and go straight to the gym. After my workout, I’d head to the dining hall and eat the same breakfast every day. Then I’d go to class, head to work, have dinner, and return to my dorm to relax. There wasn’t much variety, but I didn’t mind—I thrived in the consistency. I loved the routine, it gave me a sense of stability while I experienced a tidal wave of emotions that year.

One of the biggest differences between college and home was my food environment. Growing up in a big family, food was always available. I could eat anything, anytime, with no real structure. But in college, I had set meal times. I would go to the dining hall in the morning and again at night. For lunch, I’d grab something simple on campus on my way to work, but that was it—three meals a day.

This shift helped me understand portion control in a way I never had before. At home, food was always there, and I rarely thought about whether I was actually hungry—I just ate. But in college, for the first time, I truly experienced hunger.

It was a completely new feeling for me. Instead of mindlessly eating all day, I learned to fuel my body with intention and respect. There was a time to eat and a time to do other things. This was the beginning of my discipline. I became so much more intentional.

Looking back, I realize that structure was the key to my success. My routine was simple, easy, and didn't involve endless options. What seemed like a rigid routine to other people was actually the thing that gave me freedom—the freedom to feel good and to establish habits that would stick with me for years to come.

Life Lesson:

Structure isn't restrictive or boring, it's empowering. When you create intentional routines around food and movement, you don't have to rely on willpower to get things done. It takes time, but a consistent structure removes the guesswork, making healthy choices feel easier and more natural. With enough repetitions, you can create an entirely new kind of autopilot, one that works for you not against you.

Practical Strategies:

1. Build a Simple, Repeatable Routine

Find a daily rhythm that works for you—whether it's consistent meal times, a regular workout schedule, or a morning routine. Those three have been life changing for me personally. The more predictable your habits, the easier they are to maintain. Be a creature of habit.

2. Set Meal Times

If food is always around and you have no schedule, it's easy to eat out of boredom or availability rather than hunger. Create a structured eating schedule to help you tune into real hunger instead of mindless snacking. It's simple, there are times when you eat, and time's when you don't eat.

3. See Hunger as Natural, Not an Emergency

Here's a crazy thought—It's OK to be a little hungry sometimes. Might even be good for you! Experiencing hunger isn't a bad thing—it's just your body communicating with you. Learn to recognize when you're truly hungry versus when you're eating out of habit, stress, or convenience. Hunger also isn't an emergency; it comes and goes like a wave. It's okay to sit with it for a while, observe it, and allow yourself to understand it rather than immediately reacting to it. Learning to tolerate hunger, rather than fearing or avoiding it, can help you build a healthier, more mindful relationship with food.



Breaking a Cycle: Rewriting Unhealthy Patterns

In college, I started to become more aware of my eating behaviors. For the first time, I wasn't just eating because food was in front of me—I was paying attention to what, when, and why I was eating. But even with this growing awareness, old habits followed me.

I remember keeping chocolate protein bars, peanut butter, and pretzels in my dorm room. At the time, I considered them healthy options, but I often found myself bingeing on them—eating far beyond what my body actually needed until I felt sick. I would get back to my dorm room after a stressful morning and devour one protein bar after another, mindlessly. When I finally stopped, it was as if I were slowly emerging from a fog. *What had I done?* It wasn't hunger driving me, it was something else. I was stressed about my body and my social life. I didn't have a ton of friends and I didn't feel like I was fitting in anywhere. I was lonely and I missed my family. I would mention these binges to my peers, but compared to their diet of vodka and fast food, they only reassured me that I was doing “just fine.”

Bingeing wasn't new to me. It had been with me my whole life, woven into my relationship with food since childhood. In some ways, it felt automatic—like my body knew exactly what to do when difficult emotions showed up. That was my previous autopilot with food. It wasn't about the food; it was about numbing what I was feeling, distracting myself, and filling a void.

I started recognizing this pattern in my life. Instead of mindlessly eating, I began questioning my behaviors and investigating the solutions to them. *What is it about this food that makes me want more? Was I actually hungry, or was I just anxious?* And most importantly, *how do I fix this?*

Those questions were the first step towards change for me. I knew if I kept acting this way with food there would be consequences, and I didn't want that.

Some nights, I really wanted to eat my emotions away. Eventually that became impossible after my realization that the pretzels had to be removed altogether. Instead of eating, I wrote in my journal and tried to organize what was going on in my mind. At times it felt like immediate relief when the words hit the paper because I gained an inch more clarity. I started reading every morning, searching for truths that gave me strength. I listened to inspiring podcasts and worship music, filling my mind with voices that reminded me I was capable of change.

It didn't happen overnight, but slowly, I started to rewire my habits. I wasn't perfect, but for the first time, I wasn't running on pure autopilot. I was making conscious choices, and that brought me peace.

Life Lesson:

Bingeing isn't just about food—it's about emotion. If you've struggled with mindless eating, the answer isn't just changing what you eat (even though that is also extremely helpful), but understanding *why* you eat. The moment you recognize your patterns, you take back control.

Practical Strategies:

1. Create a Supportive Food Environment

Be intentional about what you keep in your home. If certain foods trigger bingeing, consider replacing them with a better alternative or completely removing them to create an optimal space for you to thrive. Having the food around doesn't mean you are doomed to fail, but never underestimate the power of hyperpalatable, stimulating, convenient junk foods. Caving to them doesn't make you weak, it makes you human.

2. Slow Yourself Down

When you feel the urge to snack, take a deep breath and ask yourself: *Am I actually hungry?* Maybe even say it out loud. If you're not, try addressing the real need—maybe you need to rest, destress, or move. The key is to slow yourself down. If you feel things starting to spiral, a great way to slow yourself down is to set a timer on your phone, 5 or 10 minutes and just tell yourself you're not going to eat until the timer is done. This works incredibly well. It could be that you just need a big hug to slow you down. I've been there. The hug works.

3. Find Better Solutions To Your Emotions

Bingeing often fills an emotional gap, it numbs you for a moment, taking your mind away from your emotions. Experiment with healthier coping mechanisms like journaling, reading, calling a friend, taking a walk, or meditating to break this automatic response and cycle. My favorite has become a short meditation, I set the timer on my phone, 5 minutes.



From Running to Resilience: How Strength Training Transformed My Body

At 19, my drive to exercise was at an all time high. I was still relatively new to the gym scene and had some insecurities there, but exercise was a non negotiable at this point—I had to see what my body was capable of. My first major accomplishment was running six miles. I was hooked. Running became my go-to workout, and I felt strong, energized, and unstoppable.

But looking back, my approach to health at that time wasn't actually healthy. I started working behind the juice bar at Breathe Yoga, and I was introduced to a whole new world filled with acai bowls, juices, and energy bars. All of that was sugar overload, that I disguised as healthy for me. I was running a lot and living off juice cleanses, convinced they were the key to feeling light, lean, and in control. I liked the feeling juice cleanses gave me—it was immediate. My stomach felt empty, I felt "clean" and energized. Living off of fresh pressed juice for eight days will surely give you that feeling. I convinced myself I was doing something good for my body, but the reality was I would always rebound and binge afterwards. The moment the cleanse was over, I'd overeat, feel sluggish, and then start the cycle all over again. It wasn't a long-term solution—it was a temporary fix that left me feeling depleted and discouraged rather than successful.

Then, I started to experience terrible back pain. At first, I ignored it, thinking it would go away on its own. When it didn't, I tried everything—massages, chiropractic adjustments—but nothing seemed to help. I felt frustrated and stuck. I wanted to keep running, but my body was telling me something wasn't right.

I decided to work with a personal trainer, and things began to shift a little bit more.

He helped me realize that my pain wasn't just about my back—it was about my whole body. Weaknesses in other areas were putting stress and strain on my back, and the solution wasn't more adjustments or running; it was strength. He introduced me to strength training, showing me that by building up the muscles around my back, I could actually alleviate the pain—and he was right. I loved what I was learning at the gym and instantly became hooked.

That was the start of my strength training journey.

My trainer also was the first person to challenge my beliefs about food. He told me to stop doing juice cleanses and start eating more protein and healthy fats. He wanted me to focus on fueling my body instead of depriving it. He told me to eat an avocado everyday with breakfast, which at the time was a crazy concept to me. I was very skeptical because I had associated health with running and drinking juices. But I slowly started to trust the process, and began a new journey with my nutrition and exercise.

Over the next couple of years, my experience at the gym evolved. I was highly self-motivated to learn everything I could about strength training and was eager to get to the gym every day to try what I had researched the night before. I'd spend two or three hours there and it became like a second home to me.

One of the things I loved most was knowing that I was a beginner but clearly seeing the path to mastery. I recognized my progress, and I believed I was capable of so much more. That vision of myself fueled me every day. As I became more confident with weight training, I started noticing real changes in my body. I was getting stronger, feeling better than ever, and truly beginning to understand the connection between strength and health.

Life Lesson:

Strength is the foundation of lasting health. The older I get, the more I realize the importance of strength training, and I'm so grateful I started young. Running gave me endurance, but strength training gave me stability, resilience, and true confidence in my body. When I started prioritizing strength, I didn't just relieve my pain—I unlocked a new level of physical and mental capability. Strength isn't just about lifting weights; it's about equipping your body to move, perform, and sustain itself for life. You can start at any age, it's never too late.

Practical Strategies:

1. Ditch the Quick Fixes

Juice cleanses, crash diets, and excessive cardio might give immediate results, but they aren't sustainable. Instead, focus on long-term, realistic habits that nourish, strengthen and support your body.

2. Strength Training Is For Everyone

No matter your fitness background, adding strength training to your routine can improve performance, prevent injury, and transform your body. Start small and focus on moving slowly with proper form.

3. Visualize Your Progress Daily

Each day, take a moment to picture the stronger, healthier version of yourself that you're becoming. Envision how you'll move, feel, and carry yourself with confidence. Pair this with action—whether it's showing up to your workout, choosing a healthy meal, or pushing yourself just a little further. When you can clearly see the path ahead, it becomes easier to stay committed and believe in your own potential.



Finding My People: How Community Transformed My Passion into a Career

It was around that time—while I was still at Brockport—that a nutritionist visited my dorm room to talk to us about food. I remember sitting there, listening to her speak, and suddenly, something clicked. Until that moment, it had never even occurred to me that nutrition could be my career.

I had been interested in health, food, and working out for what felt like my whole life, but I had always viewed them as personal passions, not something I could build a future around. But as she spoke, I realized—this is it. This is what I should be doing. Not only did I love it, but it felt deeply relevant to my life. I had spent years exploring how to fuel my body, experimenting with different diets and exercise routines, and seeing firsthand how nutrition impacted my well-being. It just made sense.

The only problem was that Brockport didn't have a nutrition program. So, I made a big decision—I transferred to RIT, where I could fully pursue my degree in nutrition. I was excited and a little bit scared at the same time. That transition changed things. For the first time, I was surrounded by people who were like me—people who cared about what they ate, loved working out, and were serious about excelling in school. I started working at RIT gym as a fitness attendant, spending my days immersed in an environment where health and fitness weren't just interests; they were a shared passion.

Up until that point, I had been pursuing health and fitness on my own. It was something I cared about, but I wasn't necessarily surrounded by people who shared my mindset. But once I found this community, I felt ignited.

Being around people who were just as dedicated as I was didn't just make the journey easier—it made it fun. It was almost as if I gained an entirely new level of motivation simply by being surrounded by others who were on the same path. Their energy and their passion fueled me to keep pushing forward into more progress, not just in my education, but in my own personal health and goals. They elevated me to better and gave me the confidence to start developing as a leader.

That was the moment I started to really feel my purpose.

Life Lesson:

The people you surround yourself with can change everything. Motivation isn't just something you create within yourself—it's something you absorb from the environment you're in. When you find people who share your passions and values, the journey becomes easier, more enjoyable, and far more sustainable.

Practical Strategies:

1. Find Your Community

Whether it's through a gym, an online group, or a local class, surround yourself with people who inspire and support your goals. Being around like-minded individuals makes healthy living feel natural, not forced.

2. Embrace the Fear and Leap Anyway

Stepping into the unknown is never easy. Your mind will flood with doubts, and your heart will race with uncertainty. But growth never happens in the comfort zone. The moment you take that leap of faith, you prove to yourself that you are capable of more than you ever imagined.

3. Let Passion Lead the Way

If you find something that excites you, lean into it. Your interests and passions are often clues about what you're meant to be doing. Pay attention to what lights you up.



Borrowed Battles: Learning from the Struggles of Others

Growing up, I often found myself in the presence of my mom and her peers as they talked about their challenges with food and weight. I didn't fully understand their struggles at the time, but something about their conversations felt sad to me. They were in their thirties or forties, an age that seemed so far away—and to my young mind, so old. It was disheartening to see them wrestle with the same issues over and over again, as if they were trapped in a cycle they couldn't break. I remember silently making a promise to myself: I will never reach that age and still be struggling with my weight and food the way they are.

Fast forward to today, and I can confidently say that I have come a long way in my own personal health and fitness journey. But the truth is, I still have struggles.

The difference now is that I've learned how to respond to them better. I've built healthier habits, stronger routines, and, most importantly, a better mindset. My struggles no longer define me; instead, they serve as opportunities for growth. In fact, the more I struggle, the better I become. I've learned that setbacks aren't failures—they just mean there's more to learn, more to strengthen, more to shift in how I approach things.

Looking back, I realize how valuable it was to witness my mom and her peers navigate their weight and health challenges. Their experiences became a lesson for me—not just in what I wanted for my own health, but in what I refused to let my future look like. Their struggles weren't wasted; they shaped my awareness, my decisions, and ultimately, my commitment to a different path.

There's a saying: "You're more motivated by losing a dollar than by making a dollar."

In many ways, seeing the struggles of those closest to me shaped my perspective. I wasn't just driven by the desire to be healthy; I was also motivated by the fear of ending up stuck in the same cycle of frustration, guilt, and unhealthy habits. That awareness influenced my decisions when I was younger, and it continues to guide me today. I now realize that avoiding struggle isn't the goal—learning how to move through it, without letting it define me, is.

We all struggle. But we don't have to stay stuck.

Life Lesson:

Many people assume that motivation only comes from dreaming about what we want to achieve. While that's certainly important, sometimes, the strongest motivation comes from recognizing what we *don't* want. Witnessing the long-term consequences of neglecting health—whether in family members, friends, or even ourselves—can be a powerful driver for change. Instead of just envisioning the best version of yourself, consider the alternative: *what happens if you don't make a change?* That perspective shift can be the push you need to commit to a healthier lifestyle.

Practical Strategies:

1. Identify Your “Why” and Your “Why Not”

Write down not only the reasons you want to be healthier but also the consequences of not taking action. Seeing both sides of the equation can create a stronger sense of urgency and commitment.

2. Observe and Learn from Others' Experiences

Pay attention to the habits and struggles of those around you. What patterns do you see? What do you want to emulate, and what do you want to avoid? Use their experiences as insight to shape your own approach to health and wellness.

3. Build Resilience Through Better Responses

Struggles are inevitable, but how you respond to them makes all the difference. Instead of giving in to frustration, recognize challenges as opportunities to grow stronger. Practice re-framing setbacks as learning moments rather than failures.



Stepping Into My Purpose: The Power of Taking the First Leap

During my college years at RIT, I took what felt like a bold step at the time. A step that would shape the trajectory of my confidence in the future. I created a blog—my own little corner of the internet—where I poured out recipes, my thoughts on wellness, fitness, and personal growth. It was my way of sharing what I had learned, hoping to inspire and support others.

I remember the fear that gripped me when I first shared the link on Facebook. So silly, looking back on the fear I had. *What if people judged me? What if no one cared?* But deep down, I knew I had something valuable to offer, and I was determined to push past the fear. To my surprise, the response was overwhelmingly positive. Messages of encouragement and gratitude began to pour in, reinforcing my belief that I was on the right path.

Every day, I would spend all day in classes, then head to a coffee shop or Panera, where I'd spend hours crafting posts about my workouts, my meals, and the mindset required to sustain a healthy lifestyle. I loved the creative process, and more than that, I had a vision—this blog could become a community, a place where people connected with each other and supported one another. I didn't know how to get it there exactly but I loved the idea.

The blog eventually led to my first handful of undergraduate clients. They were students too and reached out, eager to achieve the same results I had. I lacked business or consulting experience but I was confident I could help. I put together meal plans, brought them to the gym with me, and offered encouragement. I gave them the best I could with the knowledge I had at the time.

Looking back, I realize my approach then severely lacked the depth and personalization that true coaching requires. But even so, my clients saw results. Their progress was proof that my knowledge and strategies were effective, even in their simplest form. More importantly, this experience validated something deep within me—I was meant to help people transform their lives.

Life Lesson:

Taking the first step, even when you feel unprepared or afraid, is often the most crucial part of growth. You don't need to have everything figured out before you begin. Confidence is built through action, not just preparation. By stepping forward, imperfectly, you gain clarity, experience, and the momentum to move closer to your purpose. Your dreams don't require permission. They require action. So take the leap—you might just surprise yourself with what you're capable of achieving.

Practical Strategies:

1. Start Before You're Ready

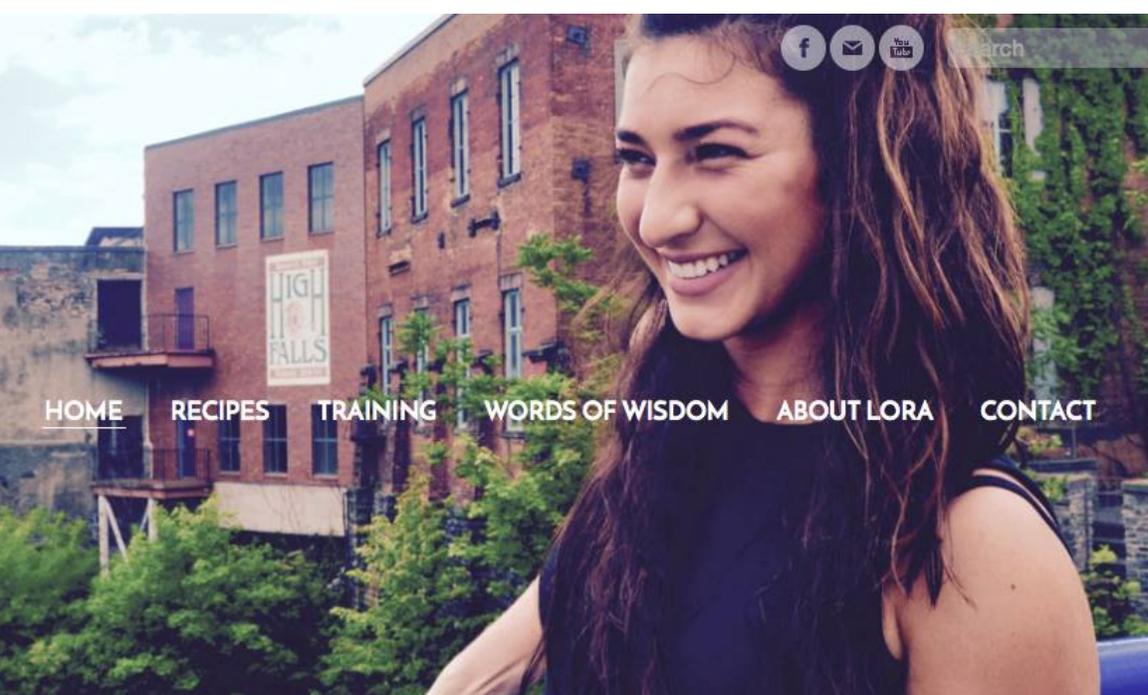
If you have a passion or a calling, don't wait for the perfect moment—it doesn't exist. Take action now, even if it feels small. Growth and confidence come through experience.

2. Embrace Imperfection

You don't need to be an expert to help others. Be transparent about where you are in your journey, and commit to continuous learning. People connect with authenticity more than perfection.

3. Reflect and Improve

After taking action, always evaluate your experience. What worked? What didn't? Use each step as a learning opportunity to refine your approach and improve over time.



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The Sweet Deception: Breaking Free from Sugar's Grip

Sugar has always been a challenge for me. Ever since I was a little girl, it had a firm grip on my habits, emotions, and choices. It wasn't just about enjoying sweets; it was about the comfort, routine, and even the justification I built around it. It was a deep-rooted connection, and even today, I catch myself falling into old patterns—justifying certain choices, craving sugar, or making excuses—only to step back and realize it's that same pull at play.

When I had an endoscopy, the doctors advised me to stay away from gluten. That single recommendation reshaped my perspective on food at the time—specifically, sugar. Suddenly, I was introduced to gluten-free packaged foods and I labeled them as “healthier.” But in reality, these were still processed foods loaded with sugar, only now they fit within the new dietary restrictions I had been given. My friends and family were dedicated to making and providing healthier versions of processed foods like pizza and desserts so I could be included. It was such a kind gesture, but it also reinforced the idea that what was “healthy” for me—based on the doctor's recommendation—was simply gluten-free junk food.

This marked the beginning of my obsession with “healthy” desserts. I really enjoyed making gluten-free treats, but what I failed to see at the time was that I was using them to reinforce the same unhealthy habit loop. I craved sugar, I consumed sugar, and I justified it by telling myself it was “better” because the ingredients were slightly improved. None of the ingredients changed the fact that I was still hooked.

Admittedly, I always overate these so-called healthier alternatives. I told myself it was okay because they were gluten-free.

But deep down, I always knew my reliance on sugar hadn't changed. The form had shifted, but the behavior remained the same. I was just in denial. It wasn't until I started exploring the Whole30 diet, mostly because my coworkers were doing it, that I gained a new perspective. Whole30 required strict elimination of sugar—not just in processed foods, but even in natural “healthy” alternatives. At first, I resisted. How could I give up the desserts that I had convinced myself were “good for me”?

But as I leaned into the challenge, I began to understand why this was exactly what I needed, I saw my behavior from a different angle. These desserts weren't truly healthy—not from a habitual standpoint. I wasn't eating them for nourishment; I was eating them to satisfy a craving. I started paying closer attention to my daily sugar intake and realized how deeply embedded it was in my routine. I used flavored creamer in my coffee every morning. My breakfasts were always super sweet. After dinner, I needed something sweet. Even without traditional desserts, I found ways to consume sugar all day long.

This realization hit me hard: no matter how clean the ingredients, sugar still had control over me. It wasn't just about what I was eating—it was about why I was eating it. I now was re-evaluating decisions I used to feel really good about. This took my awareness to a whole new level.

Life Lesson:

Health isn't just about choosing “better” ingredients—it's about breaking the habits that don't serve you. Just because something is labeled as “healthy” doesn't mean it supports your long-term well-being. True health comes from being honest with yourself about your behaviors and making changes that align with your goals, not your cravings.

Practical Strategies:

1. Take a Hard Look At Your Relationship With Sugar

Pay attention to when and why you crave sugar. Is it stress? Boredom? Emotional comfort? Need a dose of dopamine? Think about distancing yourself from sugar mentally and physically. Don't let sugar and sugar thoughts overpower the energy and attention you put into consuming whole foods.

2. Replace, Don't Restrict

Instead of relying on sweet alternatives, train your taste buds to appreciate natural, whole foods. Swap a sweet breakfast for one packed with protein and healthy fats. Try drinking black coffee instead of coffee loaded with flavored, sugar-filled or sugar-free creamers. It's amazing what changes when hyper-palatable foods aren't hijacking your body's ability to taste and experience real food.

3. Challenge Yourself

For a set period of time, challenge yourself to remove not just obvious sources of sugar but also the "healthier" alternatives that still feed your cravings. Instead of seeking sugar, focus on resetting your taste buds and breaking the habit of reaching for something sweet. Pay attention to how your energy levels, cravings and mood shift throughout the process. Cutting out sugar isn't about deprivation—it's about challenging yourself to go without something you don't need. When you break free from the cycle of sugar dependency, you'll feel like a super human. You won't even recognize yourself.



Reframing Failure: The Roadblock That Led Me to Something Greater

My studies at RIT were anything but easy. The coursework was incredibly demanding, and our professors held us to a very high standard. They wanted us to be the best. There was so much reading and writing that I completely lost interest in reading for pleasure—I was just trying to keep up. I often felt overwhelmed by school, but somehow, I still managed to excel in my studies.

I spent four years at RIT earning my degree, maintaining good grades and completing all the extracurricular activities that were required. I even spent a semester studying the Mediterranean diet, which ultimately gave me the opportunity to travel to Croatia and experience their food culture first hand. That trip expanded my understanding of nutrition in ways I never expected. The food was different there—in a good way. I noticed simple things, like how limited the dressing options were at restaurants—just oil and vinegar. The ingredients were simple, the portions were smaller, and dessert? Fruit!

Toward the end of my time at RIT, I also started working my first real job as a nutritionist at Project Lean Nation.

That job changed everything.

I became fully immersed in their culture, and I loved it. I knew there was something special about this company, and I was soaking it up—I couldn't get enough. It was there that I began to realize how many people struggled with the same challenges I had. I started to see the similarities between my journey and theirs, and I learned how to step out of my shell and truly connect with people—something that had initially felt incredibly intimidating.

More than anything, working in that environment forced me to confront my own challenges. Giving advice to members made me reflect on my own behaviors. I couldn't just talk about healthy habits—I had to live them. The pressure I put on myself to improve, and to do so quickly, was overwhelming. At times, it crushed me. As the nutrition expert there, I felt like I was failing myself and my team. Still, even in the hardest moments, I always believed I could work through it—and come out victorious.

Even though I loved working at Project Lean Nation, I didn't think I'd be there long-term. At the time, I believed there was only one "right" path in nutrition: becoming a registered dietitian. I had convinced myself that in order to be legitimate, in order to truly make an impact, I had to become an RD. A belief that was also heavily reinforced by my professors. If you weren't an RD, you were phony, fraudulent even.

I poured everything into making that happen. But despite all my efforts, I didn't match in the dietitian match process. I remember logging in on match day, with my entire family surrounding me, expecting to see my placement, only to read the message: *You have not been matched.*

I was devastated. In that moment, it felt like everything I had worked for had crumbled beneath me. I felt like a complete failure.

But life has a way of redirecting you toward where you're actually meant to be.

In the end, my job at Project Lean Nation turned out to be more valuable than any internship to become an RD I could have pursued. That experience didn't just give me real world knowledge and shape my career—it introduced me to my incredible husband, Tim, and led me to start my own business. What once felt like a failure turned out to be one of the best things that ever happened to me.

My mom always used to say, "What's the worst thing that could happen?" whenever I was afraid to take a risk or worried about failing. At the time, it felt like a simple question, but over the years, I've realized its power.

Every time I've faced uncertainty— transferring colleges, starting my own business, or navigating personal challenges—I've come back to that thought.

Most of the time, the worst case scenario isn't nearly as bad as my fear made it seem. And even when things didn't go as planned, I learned, adapted, and grew.

Looking back, I can see how that mindset has helped me embrace change, take chances, and trust that even failures can lead to something better. I always had an unwavering belief that God's got my back, and nothing could ever take that from me.

Life Lesson:

The path you plan isn't always the path you need. Sometimes, what feels like failure is actually life rerouting you toward something better. Not getting matched as a dietitian felt like a dead end for me, but it was really the beginning of a path that led to deeper purpose, personal growth, and unexpected opportunities. Failure isn't something to fear—it's something to embrace. Every failure is a stepping stone toward success. The more you fail, the more you learn, adapt, and grow. The more you fail, the more you win. True success isn't about avoiding failure; it's about moving from one failure to the next with enthusiasm, knowing that each setback is bringing you closer to your ultimate goal.

Practical Strategies:

1. Reframe Failures as Opportunities

Instead of viewing obstacles as failures, ask yourself: *What could this be teaching me?* Every challenge holds valuable lessons that can shape your next step. When one door closes, take a step back and look for the open window you might not have noticed before.

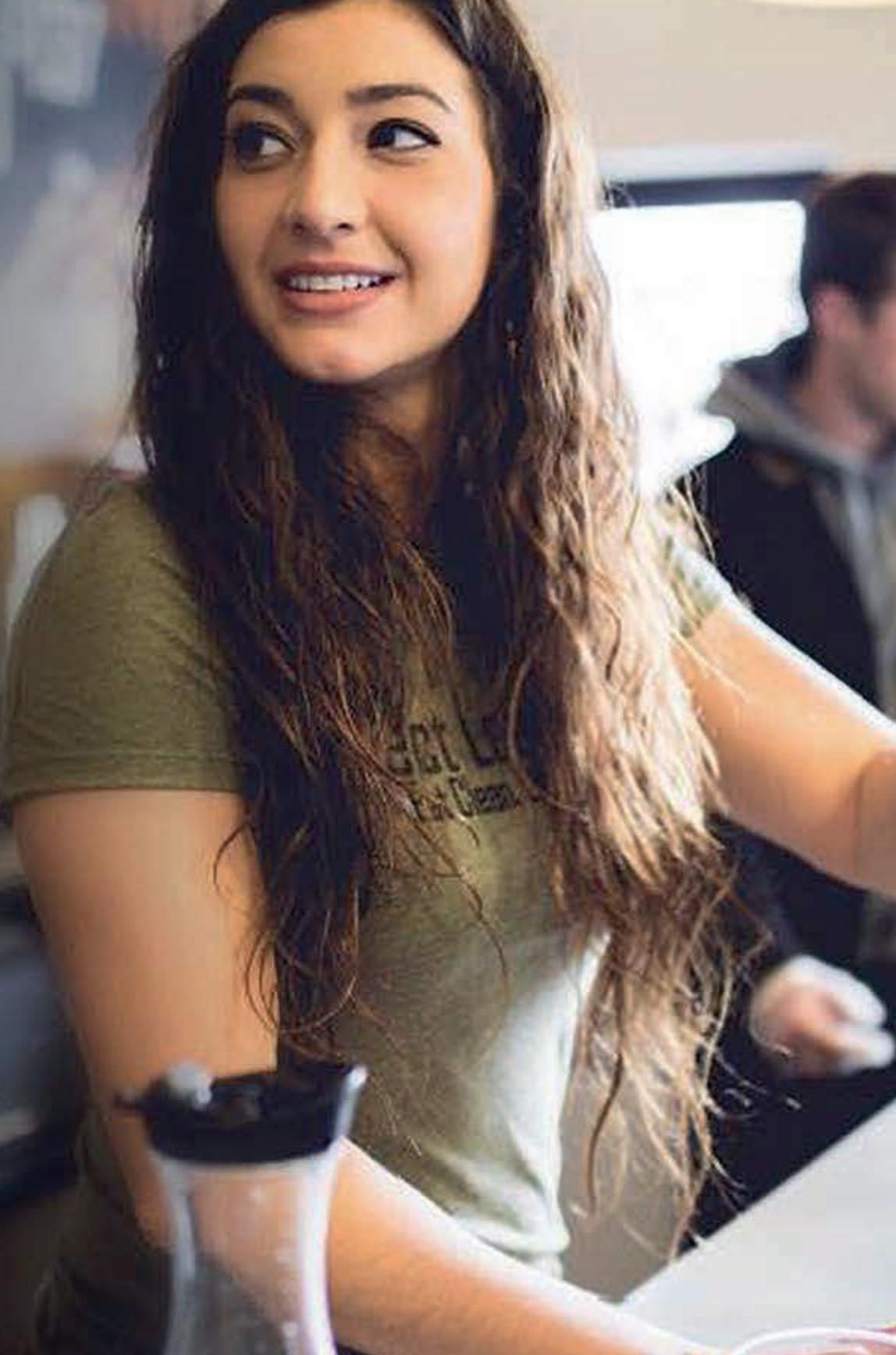
2. Stay Open to Unexpected Paths

The “right” path isn’t always the one you originally envisioned. Be willing to explore opportunities outside of your original plan—you never know what skills, connections, or passions you might discover along the way. So much of the life I live, love and cherish today, is nothing what I expected it to be.

3. Focus on What You Can Control

You can’t always control the outcome, but you can control your response. Instead of dwelling on disappointments, shift your energy toward taking action. Whether it’s gaining new experience, building relationships, or improving your skills, keep moving forward with intention and confidence. There is something better ahead.





Redefining Success: Letting Go of Ego and Embracing Growth

As I continued my work at Project Lean Nation, I started having a lot of realizations about myself. Being in such a concentrated environment for health and weight loss, exposed many of my weaknesses and challenges. It forced me to confront parts of myself that I had previously ignored.

One of the biggest shifts had nothing to do with food and everything to do with how I viewed exercise. My previous gym environment—where I had once thrived—began to feel repulsive to me. It was as if I was shedding my ego in ways I hadn't before.

When I worked at the RIT gym, I was surrounded by people who were mostly interested in competing in bodybuilding shows, and my primary motivation for working out at that point had become to change my body. I was obsessed with my appearance, constantly striving to look a certain way, convinced that if I just achieved the perfect physique, I would finally feel confident, happy, and in control. I remember thinking to myself that once I reached that level of fitness, I would finally be the real me. But boy, was I wrong. And over time, that obsession started to feel unhealthy.

I realized that my motivation wasn't coming from a place of self-care or love—it was coming from insecurity. And the deeper I dove into my faith, the more I saw how misaligned that mindset was with my values. My worth was never supposed to be tied to how I looked, yet I had spent years measuring myself by what I saw in the mirror. My eyes were opened and that realization marked the beginning of a deep mental shift.

I started to look at myself less in the mirror and started heavily investing in self-help strategies. Up until that point, the only books I had read were my Bible and school textbooks. But now, I was actively searching for specific solutions to the challenges that were staring me in the face. I started to understand how my thoughts were shaping my actions, and I became increasingly aware of my negative self-talk. Journaling had always been a part of my life, but during this period, it became a non-negotiable daily practice. Writing continued to help me process my emotions, uncover patterns in my thinking, and start reframing the way I spoke to myself.

But self-awareness can be overwhelming. I was in the thick of it. Once I became fully conscious of what needed to change and where my weaknesses were, it felt crushing. There were moments when the weight of it all became too much, and I found myself slipping back into old behaviors again—binge eating, hiding in clothes and avoiding people, feeling unworthy and placing immense pressure on myself to succeed. This time I couldn't hide in my dorm room though, I was in the real world with real responsibilities. On my worst days I still had to face people and counsel them. Every day, I felt like I was carrying the burden of changing myself, and at times, that pressure was suffocating. I felt like I was failing, but looking back, I was simply practicing becoming the person I was made to be.

Even in the hard moments, I knew I was on the right path.

I wasn't just trying to look better anymore—I was trying to be better. I was letting go of an unhealthy part of myself. I knew I had embarked on a journey on the inside that would ultimately help me live a healthier, more peaceful life. And that kind of transformation doesn't happen overnight.

1 Samuel 16:7 - The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

Life Lesson:

Success isn't about how you look—it's about how you feel and who you become in the process. When you detach your worth from external validation and focus on inner growth, you create a foundation for true confidence, peace, and transformation. For years, I believed that achieving the “perfect” body would finally make me happy and confident, but I learned that no external change could fill an internal void. True fulfillment comes from shifting the focus from appearance to well-being, from insecurity to self-acceptance, and from chasing an ideal to embracing the *journey* of becoming your best self.

Practical Strategies:

1. Shift Your Focus from External to Internal

Ask yourself: *What does success actually mean to me?* I used to think about what success would mean to me when I'm old and wrinkly. If your definition is based on how you look or how others perceive you, it may be time to redefine it. Start setting goals that align with how you want to feel rather than just how you want to look.

2. Use Journaling to Challenge Limiting Beliefs

Your thoughts shape your reality. If you catch yourself thinking, *I'll be happy when I lose weight or I'm not good enough as I am*, take time to unpack those beliefs. Journaling can help you identify where those thoughts come from and rewrite them with a more empowering perspective. Instead of saying, *I'm not enough*, reframe it to, *I am a work in progress, and I am growing every day*.

3. Learn From Setbacks

Transformation isn't a straight path—it's filled with ups and downs. When you slip into old patterns, don't see it as failure. Instead, recognize it as an opportunity to learn more about yourself. Ask: *What triggered this? What can I do differently next time?*



The Power of Movement: How Group Fitness Rewired My Mindset

I always thought group fitness was silly and ineffective—until I tried CrossFit for the first time.

There was something different about it. The music was blasting, the energy in the room was electric, and everyone was struggling through the workout together. I felt something I hadn't felt in a long time—excitement. I loved being coached, I loved learning, and most of all, I loved not having to do it alone.

For so long, I had been figuring things out by myself, constantly researching, creating my own workouts, and teaching myself. That worked incredibly well for me, until it didn't. At this point, I just didn't have the energy to do it alone anymore. My brain was tired. There were bigger, more important matters I had to sort through and I just needed fitness to be easier. Having someone guide me through a workout was refreshing. I didn't have to think—I just had to show up and give my best effort.

I loved CrossFit, but it wasn't the end game for me. Eventually, I started working out at Burn Boot Camp, and that's where I truly embraced the value of group fitness.

It pushed me harder than I ever would have pushed myself on my own. There was again something powerful about being surrounded by people feeling the same struggle and pushing through it together. That sense of connection made the time feel meaningful—like we were all sharing something bigger than just a workout. The little bit of competitiveness in me kicked in, too. I wanted to do better than everyone else. That extra push motivated me to test my limits.

I know there's a fine line for me where competitiveness can become a distraction, but in this environment, it was positive. It helped me break through mental barriers and prove to myself that I was capable of more. Before this, I wasn't challenging myself in the same way, but now I had the opportunity to develop a more well rounded approach to fitness. The workouts were tough, making this a humbling experience as well. I thought I was excelling in the gym, but I realized I had been staying within my comfort zone.

Tim would always tell me that the gym was like church for him—that it was an anchor through some of his hardest seasons. I never really understood that or related to it until later on.

Eventually, my gym routine became so strong that even on my worst days, I would still go. No matter what was going on in my head, for 45 minutes, I could step away from it. Even if just a little. This was a huge victory for me. In the past, I would have allowed my feelings and emotions to get in the way of following through.

I tend to ruminate, overthink, and obsess over things. And I realized that physically moving my body helped me break free from thoughts and mindsets that weren't serving me. There were days when I'd get stuck in my head, replaying the same thoughts over and over, this was toxic behavior. Getting there was still challenging, but the moment I stepped into the gym, things shifted. Being there pulled me out of my head and into my body.

Rumination thrives in stillness, but when I moved, I felt a sense of ease come over me. It was impossible to stay trapped in overthinking when I was enthralled in a workout. The gym wasn't just about getting some exercise in—it was about shifting my focus and getting me away from a negative pattern I was in. It became my reset button.

Beyond that, I got used to pushing myself every morning. I was starting my day with something that I didn't want to do or feel motivated to do. I didn't feel like going but I forced myself to go. And I think that's a valuable skill in life. If you want an easy life, do hard things everyday. If you want a hard life, do easy things everyday.

Life Lesson:

Discipline isn't just about motivation—it's about training yourself to do hard things, even when you don't feel like it. Whether it's in the gym or in life, showing up and pushing through discomfort builds resilience. Moving your body isn't just for physical health; it's a powerful tool to break free from negative thought patterns, reduce overthinking, and reset your mindset. And sometimes, the hardest part is realizing that you don't have to do it alone.

Practical Strategies:

1. Find a Workout Style That Energizes You

Exercise shouldn't feel like a chore all the time. If you struggle with motivation, try different types of movement until you find one that excites you—whether it's group fitness, strength training, or outdoor activities.

2. Use Movement as a Mental Reset

When you're feeling stuck, overwhelmed, or overthinking, move. Whether it's a 10-minute walk, a workout, or stretching, shifting your physical state can help shift your mindset. This works, I promise.

3. Push Yourself Through Something Hard Every Day

Training yourself to tackle discomfort—whether it's waking up early to work out or challenging yourself in another area of life—builds mental strength. The more you prove to yourself that you can do hard things, the more resilient you become.



Building in the Dark: How I Created My Business in My Hardest Season

I built my business during one of the darkest seasons of my life. I was going through severe relationship turmoil with Tim, working part-time as a nanny, and was sorting through a ton of conflict with my family. I had lost my sense of purpose and vision for my future, but I knew one thing for certain—nutrition was still the answer for me. I believed that if I could help just one person, they would go on to share their experience with someone else.

That thought kept me going.

But lingering, doubtful thoughts still showed up at times—ones that said, *you're not good enough* or *you're not qualified*. Three days a week, I worked as a nanny. The other days, I forced myself to get up, go to coffee shops, open my laptop, and take small, consistent steps to build something bigger than myself. The work felt slow at first, but looking back, those little efforts were laying the foundation for the business I have today—one that allows me to make a real impact and help people transform their lives.

My mom was my first client. I think she wanted to work with me because she believed in me—she wanted to prove that I was good at what I did and that I could help people. She followed everything I recommended to a tee and she lost 60 pounds. Then, she referred her friend to me, who became my second client.

I remember when I had a total of 10 clients, I was so excited. I put their names and pictures up on my wall in my tiny, studio apartment—two of them were family members—and I would pray for them every day.

At first, it was my way of staying connected to what I was doing each day, reminding myself that this wasn't just an undeveloped side gig, but real people putting their trust in me. I prayed that they would find strength and discipline, have breakthrough moments of their own, and develop the confidence to change their lives.

Even as my business has grown far beyond that, I still pray for my clients—and for myself—that I can become more of who God needs me to be, because at the heart, what I do isn't just about weight loss—it's about helping people understand that they are capable of change and empowering them to build a healthier, more fulfilling life.

Looking back, I don't know how I managed to build something in such a difficult season of my life. But it's encouraging to realize that even when I wasn't at my full capacity, I was still moving forward, still laying bricks, still creating something that mattered.

Life Lesson:

You don't have to be at your best to make progress. Even in your hardest seasons, you can still build something meaningful. The key is to keep going, even when you feel like you have nothing left to give. Small, consistent actions—taken even in the dark—can lead to something greater than you ever imagined.

Practical Strategies:

1. Start Before You Feel Ready

You don't need to have it all figured out to take the first step. If you wait for the "perfect" time, you'll be waiting forever. Just start, even if it's small. My business has evolved drastically over the years, and it will continue to evolve, never reaching perfection.

2. Take Consistent Action, No Matter How Small

Progress isn't always about big leaps—it's about showing up, day after day, even when it feels slow. One action today builds on the next. Momentum is powerful, even with small steps each day.

3. Trust That Your Work is Planting Seeds

At the moment, it may not feel like you're making a difference. But every small effort is laying a foundation. Keep planting seeds, and trust that they will grow.



THANK YOU GOD FOR THE
CHARACTER DAYS. I KNEW I WOULD
CAN ALL START OFF GOOD
HAD ME LEARN WHAT YOU
MADE ME TO LEARN. HAD ME
THAT WE STAY WE

Writing My Way to Clarity: How Journaling Became My Lifelong Guide

I started journaling heavily when I was 9 years old. I couldn't get enough of it. At first, my journal almost felt like a person. Looking back at my earliest entries, I can see that I treated it like a friend—I would greet it with “hello,” write about my day, and sign off with something like, “I have to go eat dinner, but I'll be back later!” I wrote about everything—the dynamics of my family, my struggles with eating, friendships, and my siblings.

Journaling has been a constant throughout my life, though it has taken different forms in different seasons. I used it as a place to process my experiences and feelings. There were times that I answered structured questions (journaling prompts) and times that I wrote more freely, letting my thoughts spill onto the page without restriction. Mostly, it became a way for me to pray—talking to God through writing, using my journal as a place to express my faith, desires, gratitude, and struggles. No matter the format, I've never put it down.

On some of my hardest days with eating, journaling was my lifeline. When I felt out of control, writing gave me a place to sort through the storm in my mind. It allowed me to take the tangled mess of thoughts and emotions and put them in order, turning them into something I could see and understand. I used it as a way to set and solidify boundaries in my life, making commitments to myself about how I navigated food.

Sugar and peanut butter—no surprise there—were recurring topics in these journal entries.

Even my to-do lists were a form of journaling. Every single day, I wrote them down, thinking I was just organizing my tasks—but looking back, I see that it was more than that. It was my way of creating structure, of giving myself clarity and a sense of control when I felt overwhelmed.

When I eventually started going to therapy, I realized something: I had already been providing myself with some sort of therapy for years, through journaling. I could see the similarities—you talk, someone listens, and they help you organize and rationalize your thoughts while challenging your beliefs. My journal had been my listener, my safe space, the place where I processed my world long before I had the words to explain why I needed it.

Now, journaling is as much a part of my life as eating or breathing.

Every morning, I start my day with reading and writing. It primes me for the day ahead, connects me with my purpose and values, and keeps me grounded. The questions I ask myself through journaling bring awareness to my thoughts and actions, and over the years, that awareness has helped me grow and transform in ways I never could have predicted. I've kept almost all of my journals over the years, except a few that were just too painful to hold on to.

When I look back at what I wrote, I see how God has worked in my life, transformed me, and answered so many of my prayers. I'm so grateful.

Life Lesson:

Clarity comes from reflection. We can't always make sense of our thoughts while they're swirling in our heads, but when we put them into words—whether by speaking or writing—they start to take shape. Journaling is more than just writing; it's a tool for self-awareness, healing, and transformation.

Practical Strategies:

1. Make Journaling a Daily Habit

Even if it's just five minutes, take time each day to check in with yourself. Write about your thoughts, feelings, or even just a simple list of what's on your mind.

2. Use Journaling to Process Your Emotions

When you're struggling with something, write it down. Seeing your thoughts on paper helps you step back and make sense of them in a way that thinking alone often can't.

3. Ask Yourself Thought-Provoking Questions

Instead of just writing about your day, challenge yourself with deeper prompts:

- *What am I avoiding right now?*
- *What do I need to let go of?*
- *Who am I not willing to be anymore?*



From Binge to Balance: Overcoming Emotional Eating with Resilience

One behavior I struggled with deeply in my journey was binge eating. Each episode left me trapped in a cycle of shame, guilt, and frustration. I would binge and then punish myself with excessive exercise to make up for it, hiding in baggy clothes and beating myself up the entire time. Physically, I could see the effects—bloating, puffiness, and discomfort—but the emotional toll was even heavier. I felt like I had betrayed myself, violating the trust I desperately wanted to build with my body.

I remember one vacation at the beach with my family—on the very first day, I ate an entire package of Oreos, icecream, popcorn, and a bag of tortilla chips. I felt so sick and full of violation to myself. It ruined almost the entire trip for me. I remember feeling so sad, only to layer pain on top of pain as I realized how my behavior and my feelings about it stole my ability to be present with my family.

Each time, I wished I could just erase the mistake and start over.

My sole focus was figuring out how to stop bingeing altogether. I wanted a perfect solution, a way to make it never happen again. But then, one day, I stumbled across a post from a CrossFit competitor that completely reframed my thinking. She wrote: It's not about what happens when you binge; it's about what you do afterward.

For some reason, that message clicked in a way nothing else had. I realized I had been putting all my energy into preventing bingeing, but what I really needed to focus on was my response after it happened.

Determined to shift my approach, I began journaling after each binge. I asked myself: *What helps me recover quickly? What made things worse? What's keeping me stuck?* The biggest revelation came when I recognized my habit of extreme food restriction. After a binge, I would often punish myself by not eating for an entire day, thinking it would balance out the damage. But inevitably, I would end up so hungry that I would binge all over again.

Slowly, I began practicing a new response—one rooted in resilience. Instead of restricting, I committed to simply returning to my normal, balanced meals. Even if I wasn't hungry the next morning, I ate a nutritious meal. Even if I felt guilt lingering in my mind, I reminded myself that one moment did not define my progress. Over time, this practice helped me break farther away from the all or nothing mindset that had a hold on me for so long.

Even though I wasn't seeing the instant weight loss I wanted, I was making real progress—progress in my relationship with food, my body, and my ability to trust myself again. And ultimately, it was this mindset shift—learning to respond rather than react—that led me to the healthiest, happiest version of myself.

Life Lesson:

The key to overcoming struggles isn't about achieving a life where they don't exist—it's about how you respond when things don't go as planned. A single binge, a missed workout, or an off day isn't going to stop you from losing weight, building habits or being healthy. What truly matters is your ability to reset and keep moving forward. Progress is built on resilience, not flawless execution. It's not about what you do sometimes, it's about what you do all the time.

Practical Strategies:

1. Reframe the Narrative

Instead of viewing a binge as failure, see it as feedback. Ask yourself: *What triggered this? How can I support myself better next time?* Use the experience as a learning opportunity rather than a reason for self-punishment. Dissect what happened so that you can use what you learn as fuel for next time.

2. Return to Normal Eating Quickly

Avoid the urge to compensate by skipping meals or drastically cutting calories. This only perpetuates the binge-restrict cycle. Instead, focus on getting back to your regular, balanced meals as soon as possible.

3. Practice Self-Compassion

Speak to yourself the way you would to a close friend. Remind yourself that one setback does not undo your progress. You are not failing; you are learning and growing. By choosing resilience over restriction, you build the foundation for long-term success—one decision at a time.



OVERCOMING
SUGAR
CRAVINGS

The Power of Keeping Promises: Why Your Word to Yourself Matters

During one of the more challenging seasons of life—when I was building my business, still trying to lose weight, and working to improve my relationships with my family—I had committed to giving a nutrition presentation. A friend of mine, a personal trainer, had a group of clients, and we had planned a free nutrition seminar that I was going to host.

However, the day before the event, I got into a huge fight with Tim, which completely dismantled me emotionally. I couldn't get out of bed and ended up canceling on my friend. That, in turn, made me feel even worse because she was really upset. This was actually the second time I had canceled on her. To be fair, the first time I had to cancel, I had become very ill the morning of the presentation and had a high fever. But this time, I had no valid excuse—just my emotions. She had given her word to her clients twice, and because of me, she had to cancel twice. I didn't blame her for being upset.

Through this experience, I started to realize that I had developed a small pattern of being flaky when it came to following through with commitments—whether it was making plans with people or handling basic responsibilities. I would leave people hanging or cancel plans simply because I didn't feel good, often making up excuses to justify it.

Then, I was introduced to this concept of 'honoring the promises' I make to myself, and it started to resonate with me. I wasn't doing that very consistently. I began to see that not only was I breaking promises to myself, but I was also breaking promises to others. All because of how I *felt*.

That awareness pushed me to start practicing follow through on a very basic level. Small things like:

- Doing the dishes every night before bed
- Not eating dessert if I decided I'm going without it
- Showing up to workouts when I didn't feel like it
- Completing basic tasks for my business
- Spending time with my family

I made it a priority to follow through on these small commitments, both to myself and to others. If I said I was going to do something, then I was going to do it—no matter how I felt, whether I was having a good day or a bad day, or whether I was struggling emotionally. If I said I was going to be there, I'd be there. This was incredibly difficult at first because, at the time, my ability to manage my emotions was terrible. If one area of my life was in crisis, I felt like everything was in crisis, and I would shut down completely.

But adopting that one belief—that I will keep the promises I make to myself and others—helped me develop a greater level of consistency with my eating habits. I became more disciplined and more committed.

As I improved in this area, I began to notice how often others around me failed to do this. Their behaviors became more obvious and, at times, damaging. I started to see how embracing just this one principle in my life made me happier and more at peace. I was becoming more of the person I wanted to be. It felt good to know that I was a woman of my word.

It felt good to know that I could be relied on by others and that I was building trust and confidence in myself.

Life Lesson:

When we consistently break promises to ourselves and others, we reinforce a pattern of self-betrayal. This creates a severe lack of confidence. On the other hand, when we commit to follow-through, even on small things, we build trust in ourselves and create momentum for bigger changes. Discipline isn't about giant leaps; it's about honoring the little steps every single day.

Practical Strategies:**1. Do One Thing Every Day**

Pick one simple habit to commit to daily, like making your bed or drinking a glass of water first thing in the morning. Prove to yourself that you can follow through.

2. Remove Emotion from the Decision

Decide in advance that your feelings won't dictate your actions. Whether you feel motivated or not, follow through anyway. This is a great tactic for early morning or late night workouts. Or going without the wine at dinner.

3. Hold Yourself Accountable

Use a planner, checklist, or accountability partner to keep track of commitments and ensure you follow through. Seeing your progress line up will build confidence and motivation to keep going.

When you start keeping small promises, it becomes easier to stay committed to bigger goals. The way we do one thing is the way we do everything—so make every promise count.



Beyond Quick Fixes: The Power of Real Nutrition

At one point in my journey, I decided to see a functional medicine doctor. I was still working toward my peak fitness level and further weight loss, but I felt like there were roadblocks I didn't understand. No matter how clean I ate or how disciplined I was, I wasn't seeing the progress I expected. I started to wonder if something was wrong with me or if my body was broken.

I wanted answers, so I decided to dig deeper with a doctor. The experience was informative—I learned more about my blood work and identified certain health markers that needed improvement. But when it came to what I was actually looking for, I didn't get the answers I wanted. What I left with was a long list of supplements. And while they may have helped improve my blood work, they didn't help me with what I was truly seeking—weight loss and a deeper understanding of what was holding me back.

This wasn't the first time I had fallen into the supplement trap. Before that, I had already been prone to fixating on hacks—cleanses, herbal teas, fat burners, genetic testing, anything that promised to speed up the process. One time, I drank so much and so many variations of tea, I nearly threw up. I was still searching for that one thing that would finally get me where I wanted to be. The more I relied on external solutions, the more discouraged I became when they didn't work.

This is hard to admit, but I even convinced myself that I was so stressed out, my body just *wouldn't* let me lose weight. I carried that limiting belief for a long time, feeling helpless, wondering why I was doing everything right and still not seeing the results I wanted. After this experience, I slowly came back to what I already knew deep down. I was disappointed, however, I had more clarity.

It reinforced my confidence in what I had always known to be true: nutrition is the foundation of everything. It's not about quick fixes, magic pills, or miracle supplements—it's about changing what and how you eat, that's where the true transformation happens.

Life Lesson:

There is no shortcut to sustainable health. We can spend years searching for the “one thing” that will finally work, but the truth is, real transformation comes from consistency with the basics—whole, nourishing foods, mindful habits, and patience with the process.

Practical Strategies:

1. Master the Basics Before Seeking Extras

Instead of looking for advanced strategies or trendy solutions, make sure you've mastered the fundamentals. The biggest transformations happen when you do the basics well, day after day. Supplements can be helpful, but they should support a solid foundation—not replace it. Without a healthy gut to absorb the vitamins and minerals, your supplements, and your money, may be going to waste.

2. Challenge Limiting Beliefs About Your Body

If you believe something is blocking your progress, ask yourself: *Is this true, or is it something I've convinced myself of?* Often, the real issue isn't a physical barrier—it's a mental one. Your body is a highly complex system and is capable of more than you believe.

3. Be Patient with Your Body's Timeline

Health and weight loss don't follow a set schedule. Instead of expecting instant results, focus on the daily actions that create long-term change. Trust that your body will respond in its own time when given the right care and consistency.



The Truth About Calories: The Missing Piece in My Fitness Journey

One of my biggest physical accomplishments later in life was running eighteen miles—a journey I completed with Tim. It was a wild experience, especially considering the most I had ever run prior to that was six miles. I'll never forget the feeling of completing that run, pushing myself to the limit, and realizing what my body was capable of. I was so proud of myself.

At the time, I was really into tracking my Fitbit data. I was running a lot, and burning a ton more calories each week than typical. After eighteen miles, I burned close to two-thousand calories during that one run alone. The numbers were unbelievable. I was consistently running six to eight miles twice a week and over ten miles every weekend while building up to eighteen, but despite all of that, I still wasn't in the best shape of my life.

That didn't make sense to me.

Looking at my Fitbit stats, I had a realization: burning calories is incredibly hard, but eating them is unbelievably easy. I thought about one of my favorite sweet treats—a white cream-filled donut—packing around 400-450 calories. Then, I considered how much effort I put into exercise and felt a wave of frustration and disappointment. Even with all the effort I've put into exercise over the years, I still wasn't at my ideal body weight—and deep down, I knew why. My workouts were only part of the equation; it was my nutrition that needed to change. During this time, a series of small moments led to a major breakthrough. One of them happened over dinner with a friend who was very lean and, surprisingly, didn't work out at all. As we sat together, I noticed how she ate—not what she ate, but how much.

She didn't order the cleanest option on the menu; she even had a glass of wine and dessert. But what stood out to me was her portion control. She ate slowly, with a high level of discipline, and stopped well before finishing everything on her plate. That moment reinforced something I had already suspected: I was simply eating too much.

Not unhealthy foods— just too much food in general. That's what was keeping me from losing the last 10-20 pounds I so desperately wanted to get rid of. I was eating whole, healthy foods, but the truth was, I had no real awareness of how much I was actually consuming each day. I had no hard data, I was just guessing.

So, I decided to track my calories in an app—and that was pivotal for me.

It was one of the biggest missing pieces of the puzzle. Tracking my food intake forced me to be brutally honest with myself. It showed me that I didn't have to starve myself to lose weight or cut out all carbohydrates but I did have to be more intentional about my portions. What was holding me back wasn't my food choices—it was that I was *slightly* overeating every single day. That small surplus was making a big difference. That small surplus, in addition to sloppy portions, alcohol, and food choices on the weekends, was preventing me from getting to my ultimate goal. Ironically, the one thing I had convinced myself I didn't need or have time for—tracking my intake—turned out to be the most crucial to my progress.

I started tracking my food every day, and my weight steadily declined. This immediately debunked my belief that "I'm too stressed out, so my body is holding on to weight."

I remember going on a boat with loved ones, surrounded by chips, alcohol, and candy galore. I drank one White Claw and ate some Sour Patch Kids. I caved into peer pressure.

I didn't feel great about my choices, but I logged every bite and the drink in my tracking app. Even after that, I still had calories left in my day for a hearty dinner, so I went home and ate, with only a little guilt. The next morning, I stepped on the scale—and it was down again. Even with the White Claw and the candy. I couldn't believe it. That moment was a huge turning point. It showed me that progress wasn't about eating perfectly clean; it was about consistency with calories. Tracking in the app didn't just help me stay accountable—it kept me from spiraling into the all or nothing mindset that had held me back for so long.

Life Lesson:

You can exercise harder than ever, burn thousands of calories, and still struggle with weight loss if you're not mindful of how much you're eating. Weight loss isn't just about what you eat—it's about how much you eat. The small, daily surpluses we don't think about can be the very thing keeping us from reaching our goals.

Practical Strategies:

1. Track Your Food for Awareness, Not Restriction

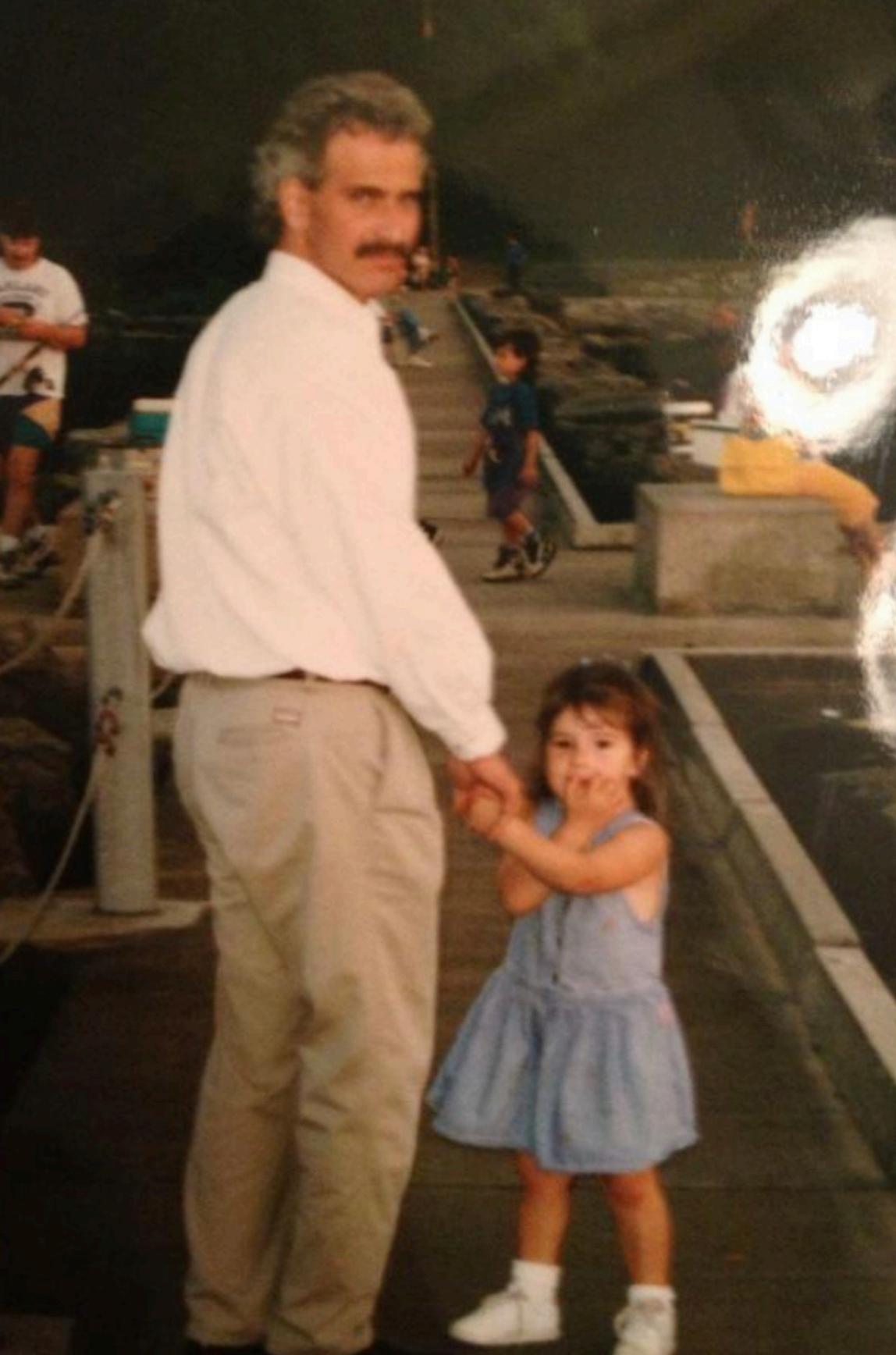
You don't have to count calories forever, but tracking for a short period can help you understand your portion sizes, eating patterns, and where you might be over-consuming. It's a tool, not the complete solution.

2. Focus on Portions, Not Just Clean Eating

Healthy foods are still calories. Even nutrient-dense foods like avocados, nuts, and vegetables can add up quickly if you're not mindful of portions. Unfortunately, you can't just eat as many whole foods as you want. Trust me, I tried for years, it doesn't work.

3. Stop Blaming Exercise

Exercise is important, but it's not the primary driver of weight loss. A lack of exercise doesn't lead to a lack of weight loss. If you're not losing weight, do a deep dive into your nutrition. Make that your focus.



Going Against the Grain: Choosing a Different Path

Looking at my life now, I realize I live differently from many people around me. Habits and choices that are widely accepted, normalized, or even expected—I simply don't participate in them. Not because I feel superior or restricted, but because I've learned what aligns with my values, my goals, and the way I want to feel every day. It is not a burden, or a worry, to live the way I want to live when in the presence of others. I'm just doing what feels right, and it works for me.

This began at a young age for me, when I started saying no—partially because of my gut issues and wanting to make healthier food choices. In social settings, I was often the odd one out, skipping certain foods because I wasn't supposed to have them. At the time, it felt somewhat isolating. But looking back, I see that experience helped me develop something invaluable: the ability to go against the grain and make choices that were right for me, even when they were different from what everyone else was doing.

Now, I see how difficult it is for those around me to do things differently—to say no to social pressure, to make mindful choices in group settings, to prioritize their health when others aren't. I help my clients see their decisions as empowering and influential, rather than limiting. I want them to embrace doing things differently and being the odd one out.

It wasn't about making one huge shift overnight—it was a gradual process. Over time, I began making small choices that set me apart: skipping certain foods at social events, waking up early to work out while my friends slept in, and viewing food through a different lens.

One of the biggest shifts I had to make was in how I viewed sugar. There was a season where I wanted to believe that those “healthy desserts”—sweets made with better ingredients—weren’t as bad for me. And nutritionally speaking, a cookie made with dates, dark chocolate, and almonds is, from an ingredient standpoint, better than an Oreo. But from a habitual standpoint, it was just as problematic. It still triggered my cravings, and portion control became a challenge. I had to take a step back, objectively evaluate what was happening, and let go of habits I didn’t initially think I needed to change—like my love for baking.

The changes extended beyond food. I started going to bed earlier so I could wake up feeling rested and make it to the gym. I adjusted my social life, moving away from late nights and excessive drinking. These weren’t choices that the people around me were making, but for me, it was a worthwhile trade-off. In exchange, I became the healthiest version of myself.

I also believe that along the way, I was planting seeds for others to make better choices too—whether it was my family, loved ones, or even strangers.

Years later, my dad told me he wanted to work with me on his health and become a client. I took him through all the same steps I would with anyone else. As we spoke on our first call, he said something along the lines of, “I’m sorry this took me so long.”

I didn’t have any strong negative feelings about that. I was thrilled, so excited for my Dad to experience everything I had. I know you can’t force someone to take on this kind of work—it has to be pursued voluntarily, with a genuine desire for change.

But in that moment, I remembered the prayers I had whispered to God over the years for my dad: *Keep him healthy. Keep him safe. Help him live a long, fulfilling life.*

Life Lesson:

Going against the grain is uncomfortable, but it's often necessary for real transformation. The path to better health isn't about doing what everyone else is doing—it's about making choices that align with your goals, even when they feel inconvenient or isolating. Over time, those small choices become your lifestyle and people around you will adjust.

Practical Strategies:**1. Learn to Say No Without Guilt**

If social settings make it hard to stick to your goals, remind yourself that your choices don't require validation from others. It's okay to decline food or activities that don't align with your health. No guilt.

2. Lead by Example Without Forcing Change on Others

One of the most powerful things you can do is embody the change you want to see without pressuring those around you. True influence doesn't come from convincing or pushing—it comes from showing what's possible through your own actions. Be the change, don't just talk about it.

3. Follow the Right People

If the people you're hanging with don't have the health, energy, or habits you aspire to, then don't follow their choices. Look at their routines—is that what you want? If not, recognize that doing what they do will likely lead to the same results. Transformation often requires stepping away from the norm and creating your own path.



The Honest Mirror: How Tough Conversations Spark Growth

Some of the most uncomfortable pieces of feedback I've received in my life have also been the most impactful in changing me. Most of that feedback has come from Tim, who has been courageous enough—and loved me enough—to be honest with me so that I could grow. Whether it was business, family, relationships, or food, he always called me out on my excuses in a kind but direct way.

What made this difficult was that it was sometimes terrifying and deeply uncomfortable—so uncomfortable that at one point I started sweating, got up and walked away from him. I remember one particular time, early on in our relationship, in efforts to give me some helpful feedback, he asked me a simple question: *What do you eat?* No one had ever asked me that before. As I went through my meals, I felt so full of anxiety that I actually started sweating. (Side note: Tim is extremely fit, which only added to the pressure.) That was the moment I realized there was some serious room for improvement.

Why was I so nervous to share what I ate? Maybe it was because I wasn't used to discussing it—it just felt so personal. Or maybe, deep down, I already knew I was struggling with overeating, making poor food choices, or falling into old habits. Being confronted with that reality was difficult. Even though that moment was hard, I grew a lot from it. His feedback gave me insight. Over the years, I've learned that having hard conversations is essential—not just for personal growth, but for building stronger relationships, setting boundaries, and creating real change. Avoiding these discussions might feel easier in the moment, but it only leads to misunderstandings, resentment, or stagnation. Nothing changes if you avoid the conversations.

Since then, we've had much more intense, growth-filled discussions. I've come to realize that this is where transformation happens. I've learned not to be afraid of conflict because that's where opportunity lies. Whether it's opening up about a challenge I've faced, standing up for myself, or sharing something that feels awkward, these moments push me to be more honest, intentional, and resilient. They challenge me to step outside my comfort zone and face reality head-on, rather than letting fear or discomfort dictate my choices. In order for me to live as my most authentic self, I can't avoid them. I've learned to embrace the discomfort and lean into it. I remind myself that this is what I need. This is what I want.

Through experience, I've also learned that tough conversations don't have to be confrontational. Approaching them with empathy and an open mind makes all the difference. I've learned through many tough conversations with Tim that delivery is key to getting a better outcome. It's not just about what you say—it's about how you say it and your intention behind saying it. The same message can be received completely differently depending on the tone, timing, and approach.

Ultimately, feedback is hard to receive and hard to give—but it's necessary for growth. And the tough but honest feedback I've received from Tim has helped me do just that: grow into a healthier, smarter, more efficient, and less distracted person.

Thank you, Tim.

Life Lesson:

Honest feedback, even when uncomfortable, is a catalyst for growth. It forces us to confront realities we may not want to face, but in doing so, it empowers us to make better choices and improve ourselves. Instead of avoiding these tough conversations, we should embrace them as opportunities to learn and evolve.

Practical Strategies:**1. Seek Honest Feedback Regularly**

Ask a trusted friend, mentor, or partner for their perspective on areas where you can improve. Make it a habit to check in with yourself and others. Brace yourself to have feelings about what you receive, but let it wash over you and stay open minded.

2. Detach Emotion from Constructive Criticism

Instead of reacting defensively, try to view feedback objectively. Ask yourself: *What can I learn from this?* Growth isn't always comfortable, but it's always worth it.

3. Communicate with Clarity and Kindness

Whether you're receiving or giving feedback, approach the conversation with the intention of growth and understanding. The way feedback is delivered can make all the difference. Tim and I used to schedule weekly relationship meetings where we shared our reflections and feedback in a structured way. It was a set time and place for us to do this with a shared intention of improving.



The Power of Reset: How Fasting Changed My Perspective on Hunger and Habits

Fasting was a concept I was introduced to early in life. Reading about fasting in the Bible was my first exposure to it, but later in life, I encountered it from a health standpoint. My curiosity grew beyond juice fasting or cleansing, so I started researching and reading books. I quickly realized there were many different ways to fast—some gentle, some extreme—but one thing was clear: fasting, in some form, was highly beneficial for most people.

Tim also believed in fasting, and one summer, he suggested we try a three-day fast. At first, the idea seemed completely unreasonable—I thought I might pass out if I didn't eat for three days! Up until that point, I had been fasting moderately every day for at least 14 to 16 hours overnight, and I genuinely enjoyed it. It wasn't about eating fewer calories or losing weight; it was about the structure and benefits. I loved not having to eat and think about food immediately after waking up. It gave me clarity in the morning, made my workouts feel better, and provided a mental break from eating that felt surprisingly freeing. But going three full days with only water? That sounded intense. I honestly didn't know if I was capable. I wanted to believe that I was, but I was skeptical.

Tim had a couple of friends who had done it and raved about the experience, so we decided to go for it. By the end of day two, I found it pretty challenging. I don't think I would have stuck with it if Tim hadn't been doing it with me. However, when I woke up on day three, I was amazed—I felt like I could keep going. In fact, I could see myself fasting for longer.

I had made it over the hump, and despite 48 hours without a single calorie, I felt lean, my inflammation had gone down, and surprisingly, my energy was high. I was waking up early, feeling sharp, and functioning better than I expected—even without caffeine. This was really eye-opening. You'd think with no food, you'd feel tired, sluggish or exhausted but it was the complete opposite. It really made me think.

As we approached the 72-hour mark, my hunger returned, but I believe this was more due to anticipation of eating than actual physical need. I loved how my body felt, but I knew it was time to break the fast. Looking back, we could have been much more strategic about how we did that. I remember scrambling a little bit and feeling anxious to get the food and eat it. When we broke the fast, we ate salads and burritos from CoreLife Eatery. I wasn't really satisfied with the meal, which felt stressful. Then, I found myself immediately making an impulsive decision—grabbing a bag of Reese's Pieces from a gas station—and justified it in my mind because I hadn't eaten for three days.

I think a tiny part of me that still had hoped this would be the breakthrough that pushed me to a new level of health and fitness. Even though it wasn't the magic solution, I was so glad I did it. I challenged myself and followed through. Most importantly, the experience reshaped my perspective on hunger. It was like putting a magnifying glass on my thoughts about food—I had believed I was "starving" so often, yet here I was, thriving for three days with no food. Clearly, my body was capable of much more than I had given it credit for.

Beyond the physical benefits, fasting this way also further heightened my awareness of emotional and boredom eating. When food is completely off the table, you have no choice but to sit with your emotions instead of distracting yourself with eating—not even healthy snacks, not even vegetables.

That commitment to the fast brought incredible clarity to my habits and patterns. It reminded me that this principle could be applied to fasting from anything, not just food—whether it’s social media, people, places, technology, or any other behavior. Fasting teaches you about the role these things play in your life and helps you reset your relationship with them.

Life Lesson:

You’re stronger than you think. Fasting shattered my own limiting beliefs about what I thought I needed to function. So often, we tell ourselves we “can’t” do something when really, we just haven’t pushed past the discomfort. Whether it’s fasting, a workout, or any challenge, our limits are often self-imposed—and breaking them is how we grow.

Practical Strategies:

- 1. Recognize the Difference Between Discomfort and True Need**
Just because something feels difficult doesn’t mean you need to stop. Learn to distinguish between real physical need (like true hunger or exhaustion) and conditioned responses (like boredom, cravings, or self-doubt). When you feel resistance, ask yourself: *Do I truly need this, or am I just avoiding discomfort?*
- 2. Use ‘Impossible’ as Motivation**
The things you once thought were impossible often become your biggest accomplishments. Instead of avoiding challenges, use them as a test of what you’re truly capable of. The next time you hear yourself say, “I could never do that,” turn it into a challenge. What if you could? What would it take? Pushing past that mental barrier will make you stronger in ways you never expected.
- 3. Embrace the Power of Completion**
Set a goal, no matter how small, and commit to finishing it. Whether it’s sticking to a 12-hour fast, completing a workout, or reading a book you started, following through reinforces your belief in your own discipline.



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WITH DR. DANIEL J. SIEGEL
AND DR. MARTHA M. MANNING

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
JESSICA W. HARRIS

Rewiring My Mind: How My Thoughts Transformed My Habits

Throughout the years of working on my health and fitness, I noticed something surprising—the more aware I became, the more I seemed to struggle. When I was younger, I made simple changes that felt easy, even though they required effort. But as I became more dialed in, my behaviors stood out to me even more when they were off track.

For example, I became painfully aware of my emotional eating, binge eating, and turning to food as a coping mechanism—to numb emotions I didn't want to feel. That was incredibly challenging because, in the moment, I knew exactly what was happening, yet I felt powerless to stop it. It was entirely emotionally driven.

As I faced different challenges in my life, I started to recognize how my emotions were getting in the way—how my reactions were controlling my choices. I knew I needed to act differently, but it felt impossible to change. What do I do with all of these strong, paralyzing emotions? This wasn't my expertise, so I bought some books and began searching for the answer that would help me connect the dots between what I was thinking and what I was doing.

I read *Master Your Emotions* by Thibaut Meurisse, and that book changed my life—not just in the area of eating but in all areas of my life, particularly my relationships. I realized I had control over what I felt, which, ironically, was something Tim had told me before.

Proverbs 23:7 - For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.

At the time, I didn't understand it. When we would argue, I'd say things like, "You're making me sad.", "You're making me upset.", "You're making me feel bad." And he would respond, "I'm not making you feel anything!" That statement frustrated me back then, but after reading the book, it finally made sense.

The biggest realization was that my thoughts influenced my feelings, which in turn shaped my actions and my experience of life. During my arguments with Tim, I learned that something was directly between what he said—and my response: a story I was telling myself. He was a villain. He doesn't care about me. He doesn't prioritize me. Those were my stories during our arguments.

But what if I told myself a different story?

What if he was just navigating a hard season, really cared for me, struggling with his own beliefs and fully invested in our relationship? I realized that this applied not only to Tim but to everything I struggle with. I needed to pay more attention to the stories I was telling myself that were shaping my feelings and experiences in life. I started to understand that if I could think better thoughts and adopt healthier beliefs—about myself, my body, my relationships, and my challenges—then I would feel better and be more emotionally stable. This was what was holding me back from being my healthiest, most productive self. It was my mind.

He was right. He wasn't *making* me feel anything.

It was my choice what I was thinking, believing and ultimately how I was feeling. And that's something nobody can take away from you—your ability to choose what you believe and how you feel.

That's when I decided to reprogram my mind. I created daily statements that I read every morning—affirmations about my body, my life, my relationships, and my challenges. I called it my morning sheet, and reading it each day implanted new beliefs in my mind. I was slowly reprogramming my mind, but at first, I felt a lot of resistance. Reading statements off a sheet of paper felt unnatural—even a little ridiculous. I couldn't help but question if it would actually work.

But as I kept going, I started to notice subtle shifts. The more I repeated those words, the more they started to feel true. It wasn't just about saying them—it was about rewiring the way I thought about myself, my choices, and what I was capable of. What once felt forced eventually became second nature, and over time, those statements turned into beliefs that shaped my actions. I later learned that writing, reading, and speaking those statements is a science-backed practice. This wasn't just woo-woo, fairy dust stuff—it actually works.

I remember one specific moment at the gym when I decided to take my new skill for a test drive. The workout was brutal, and normally, my inner dialogue would have been, *This is so hard. I can't do this. Stop.* But instead, I tried something different. I told myself, *I have control over what I feel. I can do this. Don't stop.* That ended up being one of the best workouts of my life.

Since then, I've gone through different seasons of programming my mind with new beliefs—slowly but surely acknowledging that what I think and believe directly influences what I do and how I eat.

Life Lesson:

Your thoughts have power. What you believe shapes how you feel, which then determines how you act. If you want to change your habits, you have to start with your mindset first. Mindset isn't just a perspective—it's a belief system that influences every decision you make. If you believe you're capable, disciplined, and worthy of change, your actions will reflect that. But if you hold onto limiting beliefs, they will continue to shape your reality. True transformation starts in your mind long before it shows up in your daily habits.

Practical Strategies:**1. Practice Thought Awareness**

Think about your thoughts. Before reacting emotionally, stop and ask yourself: *What am I thinking right now?* Identifying thoughts before they turn into actions can help you regain control.

2. Use Daily Affirmations

Create a list of empowering statements about your health, body, and mindset. Read them every morning to reinforce positive beliefs. I read mine and say them out loud for a couple minutes.

3. Re-frame Challenges Positively

When faced with difficulty, shift your inner dialogue. Instead of saying, *I can't do this*, tell yourself, *This is hard, but I am capable*. Question every word that comes out, and every thought it's rooted in. By mastering your thoughts, you take back control—not just of your eating habits, but of your entire life.



Self-Compassion: The Grace I Didn't Know I Needed

At one point in my journey, I decided to hire a coach—something I had been thinking of doing for both personal and professional reasons. I'd spent my entire life working toward becoming my best self, and for the most part, I'd been my own guide.

Personally, I was curious about what it would feel like to have structured support and accountability, similar to what I provide for my clients. Tim helps hold me accountable and I am always thinking about ways to hold myself accountable, but I was curious about working with someone who could provide an external layer of support and challenge me in new ways. So when the opportunity arose, I jumped in. From a professional standpoint, I also saw it as a learning experience. I wanted to observe how other businesses handled follow-ups and support so that I could gain insight on how to improve my own services. It was a chance to grow both personally and professionally, and I was excited about the process.

But almost immediately after starting, I was experiencing what I felt were setbacks. My weekends were sloppier and less intentional than I had planned, I got a little lazy with tracking, and I had moments where I overate, despite knowing better. I felt myself dreading check-ins, bracing myself for my coach to be disappointed in me.

But here's what surprised me—she never was. Not once.

Every time I checked in, no matter what had happened that week, she met me with kindness. She was encouraging, understanding, and practical.

She helped me work through my struggles rather than punishing me for them. She held me accountable, but she never got mad. She never made me feel like a failure. And over time, I realized something: the person who had been the hardest on me wasn't her. It was me.

This was a profound realization. My fear of failure, my perfectionist tendencies, and my harsh self-talk had all been working against me. I expected disappointment because I had been so used to disappointing myself. I expected her response to me to be the response I had to myself. But this process confirmed something powerful that I had been aware of but hadn't fully embraced: self-compassion isn't weakness—it's the key to progress. I used to think that being hard on myself would keep me disciplined, but in reality, it only led to frustration, burnout, and cycles of bad behaviors. True growth happens when you can hold yourself accountable while also offering grace. It all came back to the story I was telling myself.

Could I encourage myself *and* hold myself accountable to do better?

When you approach setbacks with understanding instead of shame, you create space to learn, adjust, and keep moving forward. Self-compassion doesn't mean making excuses or giving yourself a pass—it means recognizing that when you aren't perfect, encouraging yourself with kindness will help you change. Punishing yourself with negativity isn't an effective launching point for good behavior.

I started to approach my journey differently. I stopped beating myself up mentally and punishing myself for having bad days. I started reframing my "bad" weeks at our check-ins. I stopped getting discouraged about a number on the scale and acknowledging other areas of progress I was experiencing.

I found incredible victory in the fact that I was diving into my thoughts and behaviors with more reflection than ever. And most importantly, I realized that I didn't have to be harsh to improve. I could hold myself to a high standard while also treating myself with kindness.

Life Lesson:

Many of us believe that being hard on ourselves is the only way to stay disciplined. We think that if we give ourselves even an inch of grace, we'll lose control. But in reality, the opposite is true. Beating yourself up for every mistake doesn't make you more motivated—it makes you more likely to quit. Consistency is only sustainable when we approach our journey with self-compassion. Learning how to treat yourself with kindness, when you fall short, is one of the most powerful things you can do for your health.

Practical Strategies:

1. Reframe Your Inner Dialogue

Pay attention to how you talk to yourself after setbacks. If you wouldn't say it to a friend, don't say it to yourself. Instead of *"I failed,"* try *"I had a tough week, but I'm learning and adjusting."*

2. Separate Self-Worth from Progress

Your value isn't defined by a number on the scale or a perfect streak of workouts. Focus on long-term patterns rather than day-to-day fluctuations. One off day or off-week doesn't undo your progress.

3. Adopt the "Coach Mindset" for Yourself

If you were coaching someone else, how would you respond to their struggles? Apply that same level of patience and encouragement to yourself. Growth happens when we learn from mistakes, not when we punish ourselves for them.

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The Power of Ownership: Taking Extreme Responsibility for My Health

When I started dating Tim, we loved sharing meals together—some healthy, some indulgent. At first, it felt natural and enjoyable, but over time, I noticed a familiar frustration creeping in. I wasn't losing weight, and part of me quietly blamed him. Not outright, but in subtle ways that left me feeling stuck.

Then one day, I took a step back and really examined my habits. I thought about each and every meal I ate and how many total meals I ate each week. I did the math on the meals we didn't eat together. Most of my meals weren't even eaten with Tim—some days I ate every single meal alone. My food choices were mine alone. Yet, I was placing my frustrations elsewhere. And even when we were together, was he really the reason I made less than ideal choices? No. If anything, he was more disciplined than I was.

That's when it hit me: I had been here before.

I thought back to when I first moved out of my parents' house into my own apartment. I had been so excited to finally control my environment—to stock my kitchen with healthy foods, free from the processed snacks I had mindlessly eaten growing up. Back home, I had often wandered into the pantry, reaching for foods that weren't even my favorites—just salty, sweet, and there. I'd overeat, feel guilty, and promise myself I'd do better. So, when I moved out, I thought eliminating temptations would be the key to breaking the habit.

And to some extent, it helped. But not entirely. Even with a pantry full of healthy foods, I still found ways to over-eat. The problem wasn't my environment—it was me.

Now, years later, I was doing the same thing with Tim. Just like it had never been my parents' fault that I overate at home, it wasn't Tim's fault now. It had never been about them. It had always been about me. My health, my choices, my responsibility.

Life Lesson:

Your health is 100% your responsibility. It's easy to believe that our environment or the people around us are responsible for our struggles. But at the end of the day, we are the ones making the choices. Removing temptations can help, but true change happens when we take full ownership of our decisions—no excuses, no blame, just radical responsibility.

Practical Strategies:

1. Ask Yourself Hard Questions

The next time you feel frustrated about your health or weight loss progress, ask yourself: *Am I taking full responsibility for my choices?* If not, what can you do differently?

2. Track Your Solo Habits

Keep a simple food journal for a few days and notice how many of your meals or snacks happen when you're alone. Are those choices aligned with what you want? If not, own it, and change them.

3. Make Decisions with Future You in Mind

Before eating, pause and ask: *Will this choice support the version of me I'm trying to become?* This small mindset shift can make a huge difference in staying accountable to your goals. Taking full responsibility for your health isn't about guilt—it's about empowerment. When you realize that your progress is in your hands, you reclaim your power. And with that power, real change begins.



Always Evolving: Breaking Up With Old Beliefs

It's interesting how our beliefs evolve over time. When we're younger, we accept certain things as truth simply because we've been told so. But as we grow, we begin to question, challenge, and ultimately reshape our understanding of the world. This process isn't just natural—it's necessary.

Looking back, I see how much my views on food and health have changed. I once believed that rice cakes were the key to weight loss, while steak was bad for you. Now, I realize that nutrition isn't as black and white as I once thought. Balance, quality, and context matter far more than just labeling something as "good" or "bad".

I remember the first time someone at the RIT gym told me they weren't eating breakfast until 10 or 11 in the morning. My immediate reaction? *That's crazy!* I had always believed that eating immediately after waking up was the best thing for you. Now, with a deeper understanding of the human body, and personal experience, I see this much differently.

Meditation was another concept I dismissed. My first experiences with it felt ineffective—I didn't understand its purpose, and I certainly didn't feel any benefit.

But years later, something within me told me to give it another try. Initially, I approached it as a time to sit with God, but I quickly realized I was avoiding sitting with myself too. I had been avoiding my thoughts. The stillness made my spiraling thoughts louder, and that discomfort pushed me away. My body physically resisted it at times. Yet, I made the decision to try again, and over time, I realized how valuable it is.

Now, I can't imagine my life without it. Meditation has become another anchor in my life, much like sugar once was—a habit, but one that nourishes me rather than depletes me.

Through meditation, I've learned just how many thoughts I have in a short period of time, how emotionally charged they are, and how often I allow my mind to bounce around without focus. It has taught me a whole new level of awareness, patience, and the ability to sit with my thoughts rather than run from them. I don't always want to do it, but I do it, every day. Some days, it feels like just practice; other days, I have profound realizations, with tears streaming down my face as my eyes stay closed.

Through meditation, I realized how often I would distract myself from my thoughts—reaching for my phone, grabbing a snack, finding something to occupy my hands and mind. Now, I'm processing my emotions instead of suppressing them. I've noticed the physical manifestations of my stress, particularly in my jaw, where anxiety settles. Through meditation, I can feel that tension leave my body.

Something I once saw as unnecessary has now become indispensable. Meditation has transformed from a concept I didn't understand into a practice I can't go without. It makes me wonder what concepts I will take on in the future.

When I was younger, my idea of health was entirely physical—I focused on how my body looked, not how my mind felt. But now, when I envision my healthiest self, it's no longer about my body; it's about my emotional and psychological well being at its highest level.

Life Lesson:

Our beliefs are meant to evolve. What we once dismissed as useless may turn out to be the missing piece in our journey toward better health and self-awareness. Staying open-minded allows us to embrace new tools that can transform our lives.

Practical Strategies:**1. Question Your Long-Held Beliefs**

Challenge what you've always assumed to be true about health, nutrition, and self-care. Research, experiment, and stay open to new perspectives.

2. Give Yourself Permission to Revisit and Retry

Just because something didn't work for you before doesn't mean it never will. Timing, mindset, and experience all play a role in how we receive new practices.

3. Learn to Sit with Discomfort

Instead of distracting yourself when uncomfortable emotions arise, try sitting with them. Journaling, meditation, or simply breathing through the moment can help you process and release stress in a healthier way.

Growth isn't about never being wrong—it's about being willing to change.



Happiness Isn't a Destination: Reaching Your Goal Won't Make You Happy

Health, fitness, and feeling good in my own body have always been a cycle—coming and going, ebbing and flowing throughout my life. There have been times when I've felt strong, confident, and proud of my choices. I've loved how my clothes fit, and I've even felt at peace with the number on the scale. But every time I've reached my leanest, my lowest weight, I've been reminded of one important truth: being skinny doesn't make you happy.

This isn't just about weight or appearance—it applies to everything in life. I've never believed that hitting a certain number on the scale, getting married, or achieving any particular milestone would magically make life perfect. These moments are significant, but they are just that—milestones, not the ultimate destination where happiness suddenly clicks into place, and all problems disappear.

I've never wanted to waste time waiting for some future achievement to give me permission to be happy.

I've always known that true joy isn't something you delay until you reach a goal—it's something you cultivate along the way. And I'm grateful for that mindset because as these milestones unfold—as I do reach the levels of health and fitness I've worked for—I can appreciate them for what they are. But just as I expected, my life remains the same. My love is the same. My family is the same. My God is the same.

I will always set new goals because growth is ongoing and progress is what I strive for. It feels incredible to have the self-discipline to care for my body.

But I also recognize that those things, in themselves, aren't what bring lasting happiness. Happiness is built in the journey—not found in a destination. The journey *is* the destination.

Life Lesson:

Find joy in the journey. Happiness doesn't come from reaching a certain weight, achieving a goal, or hitting a milestone. It comes from the process—the small moments of progress, the commitment to showing up for yourself, and the self-respect that grows along the way. When you stop waiting for a future version of yourself to be happy, you realize that joy has been available to you all along.

Practical Strategies:

1. Stop Delaying Happiness

Instead of waiting until you hit a big milestone to feel proud, recognize and appreciate the little victories along the way. Whether it's making a healthier food choice, staying consistent with workouts, or just feeling more energized, acknowledge your progress. Celebrate progress, not just results.

2. Practice Gratitude Daily

Each day, take a moment to appreciate where you are right now. Write down three things you love about your body, your progress, or your life. Gratitude isn't just about feeling good in the moment—studies show it has profound psychological and physical long-term benefits.

3. Detach Your Self-Worth from Outcomes

Remind yourself that your value isn't tied to a number on the scale, the way you look, or any external validation. Focus on building habits and a lifestyle that make you feel good inside and out, regardless of results.



The Choice That Changes Everything: How One Decision Can Transform Your Life

There wasn't one single moment that changed my life. No overnight breakthrough, no grand revelation, no perfect plan that suddenly made it all click. My transformation wasn't instant—it was a series of small, daily choices. Some were intentional, some were subconscious, but all of them were shaping me into the person I was becoming.

That's one of the reasons I wrote this book. People ask me, "What do you eat?" or "What's your workout routine?"—as if there's a simple answer. My first instinct is to laugh and say, "How much time do you have?" because the truth is, it's been so much over the years. What I thought I'd figure out in a year ended up taking a decade of trial, error, and constant learning.

I spent years searching for the secret to health, discipline, and self-control. I thought if I could just find the right diet, the right exercise plan, or the right mindset hack, I would finally get to where I wanted to be. But what I've learned is that it was never about finding the "one thing." It's not one thing, it's a campaign of brutal honesty, adaptation, and effort. And for me, it started by gaining awareness, removing distractions, and building a life where my habits served me instead of controlled me.

I learned that food is more than just fuel—it's emotional. It carries memories, habits, and patterns that often start long before we even realize it. Recognizing those patterns was my first step in breaking free from mindless eating, binge cycles, and self sabotage.

I learned that being open-minded, willing to take feedback, and resilient is essential for growth. In the past, I resisted change, dismissed advice, and let setbacks define me. But the truth is, growth only happens when we're willing to listen, adapt, and push forward—even when it's uncomfortable. Feedback, whether from mentors, coaches, or even my own experiences, wasn't criticism; it was guidance. The more I embraced it, the more I improved. Resilience isn't about never failing—it's about getting back up, learning the lesson, and moving forward with more wisdom and strength.

I learned that structure isn't restrictive—it's freedom. Creating routines around my meals, workouts, and daily habits wasn't about limiting myself. It was about removing decision fatigue and creating a new kind of autopilot, one that made healthy choices automatic and easy. This structure may have once set me apart from my peers, but now I have built a life I love—one filled with connection and surrounded by like minded people on the same mission. Today, structure isn't a limitation; it's a source of peace and freedom.

I learned that quick fixes always lead to the same dead end. There is no shortcut, trust me, I have tried all of them. No juice cleanse, supplement, or crash diet ever gave me the lasting results I was searching for. Looking back, if I had focused on the right things sooner, I probably would have reached my goals years earlier. The only thing that worked was the most unglamorous, least exciting pursuit: consistency with the basics.

I learned that motivation isn't enough—discipline is what carries you through. Motivation fades. Feelings don't matter. I can't count on *feeling like it* all the time. In fact, sometimes I need to do the exact opposite of what I feel. I have to do what is right and set my feelings aside at times. Discipline makes that easier, it's what keeps you going even when you don't feel like it.

I learned that mindset is everything. The thoughts I allowed to take root in my mind directly shaped my actions. The thoughts I had were about others were stealing from my ability to live the life I wanted to live. When I changed my thoughts, everything else started to fall into place. What you believe about yourself, others, and your experiences in life will ultimately determine your success or failure.

Most of all, I learned that taking full ownership of my choices was necessary and gave me my power back. It wasn't my environment, my past experiences, or my circumstances that determined my success. It was me. The moment I stopped blaming external factors and started taking full responsibility for my health, my habits, and my happiness, I stepped into a level of control I never knew I had.

The truth is, there's no magic formula. No perfect plan. No single answer that works for everyone. But there is one choice that changes everything: the choice to show up for yourself—again and again—no matter how many times you fail, fall short, or feel stuck.

That's the choice I made. And that's the choice you can make, too.

