

FUCK
CALORIES

*and Other
Dietary Heresies*



KRISTA SCOTT-DIXON

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An IRREVERENT, FOUL-MOUTHED, yet
surprisingly USEFUL GUIDE to what to
put in your eating hole. GUARANTEED to
OFFEND, SURPRISE, and DELIGHT. *

**Results may vary. Not legal in Lithuania.*

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I'd say "check with your doctor before implementing any of this dietary advice" but well-meaning yet misguided and ill-informed "experts" are half the reason we're in this pickle.

So check with your stomach instead.

OK, I know all you kids out there with your Wikipedias and rock music and long hair and funny pants are all into cutting-and-pasting.

In my day we called that plagiarizing. Except we had books, which made it much easier, because the prof couldn't easily Google our idiocy. Ha ha ha!

Anyway.

Don't be a douche and rip my shit off.

I see you reaching for that CTRL-C. Don't.

However, please feel free to *share* this free book with family, friends, co-workers, Facebook acquaintances you may or may not have slept with, strangers at the bus stop, etc.

Just like in kindergarten, sharing is fun.

If you're truly lazy, just read this bit.

Don't know what the fuck to eat any more?
You're not alone.

Fuck calories.

Everything you think you know about how to eat
is probably bullshit.

Don't think about your food.

How you eat is a lot more important than what
you eat.

Eat slowly. S-l-o-w-l-y.

Don't watch TV while you eat. Don't eat at your
desk. Don't eat while driving.

If you're a big person, use a big plate. If you're a
small person, use a small plate.

Eat real food.

Read labels.

Buy the best quality food you can afford.

Get creative. Learn. Strategize.

What you eat isn't necessarily what you get.

Help food do its job.

Get dirty.

Fuck vitamins.

Orange juice is not real food.

"Fortified" means "We took good stuff out so we
have to put it back in."

Some food doesn't want to be eaten.

Eat the rainbow.

Eat smelly.

Go ahead, put real cream in your coffee.

And while you're at it, have an avocado too.

You should cut the fat off your steak. But not for
the reason you think.

Dump sugar.

Sugar is sugar is sugar.

Vegetable oils are not real food.

Skip breakfast.

Unless you like to binge at night.

Seek nourishment. Seek sustenance.

It's ~~the economy~~ your relationships, stupid.

Nobody is coming to save you.

Stop learning and knowing. Start doing.

Tell yourself your food story.

Then, rewrite that food story.

Fuck "willpower".

You can't "fix" your body because your body is not
broken.

You don't need me... or any other "expert".

You are only accountable to you.

Ask yourself one tough question.

Have compassion.

Get bigger, not smaller.

As you live, so you eat.

Don't know what the fuck to eat any more? You're not alone.

When did eating get so damn complicated and stressful?

Why did we hand over responsibility and the chef's hat to large corporations and "experts"?

When did food start to suck?

Hey, where did our bellybuttons go?

Doesn't matter. Here's what we're gonna do about it.

Start by saying *fuck calories*.

Yeah.

Fuck calories.

Do you want to count that shit for all eternity?

Be *calorie-aware* – in other words, know what foods are energy-dense (e.g. nuts, Brie, deep-fried Coke) and which foods aren't (e.g. spinach, shrimp, zucchini). But not *calorie-paranoid*.

Calories are just a measure of potential energy – how brightly the flame burns if we light the food on fire. (Which, when it comes to junk food, is probably a better idea than eating it.)

Your body is more than just a mechanical furnace.

Dozens of factors affect the energy you can get from food – the soil it's grown in, the processing, the way your body handles it, the health of your intestinal bacteria...

The calorie count on the food package itself may be off by as much as several hundred calories.

Dozens of other factors affect the energy you put out: your hormones, your daily activity, your age, your health, your bone density...

So you can never know for sure what's coming in or going out.

Focusing solely on calories also encourages you to tell yourself lies such as *I didn't have breakfast so it's OK to eat this cake* or *This piece of sugared wax is only 100 calories so it's good to eat*.

Don't turn eating into accountancy. And don't try to defraud or embezzle your own body.

Cross calorie-counting off your to-do list. Now isn't that a relief?

Everything you think you know about how to eat is probably bullshit.

Unless you come from a culture and region that still eats like your great-great-great-great-great-great-great grandparents did, you probably never learned the traditional knowledge that kept them healthy.

Where do you get your information now?

...the media?

Most editors are scientifically illiterate and love sensationalism. *Broccoli Cures Cancer* is much more exciting than *A Single Compound, When Isolated from Immature Brassica oleracea During The Late Summer, Slightly Inhibits The Growth Of Tumour Cells In Vitro*. You can't blame them, really.

...published research?

Oh, you mean studies on fruit flies? Studies published to promote Professor So-and-So's tenure file? Studies funded by Big Food, Big Pharma, or Big Agribusiness? Studies looking at one single nutrient in isolation – perhaps in a petri dish, not in an actual human's tummy? Studies showing “lab significance” not “real world significance”, like, with real effects on real people and stuff? Studies with numbers and methods so dodgy they make illegal mahjongg games look like forensic accounting?¹

...your family, buddies, or coworkers?

Tell me, are they the picture of health and wellness?

You see? Bullshit.

But this isn't bad news. It's good – in fact, *great* – news.

It means **you can clear the slate and start again**. Fresh. Now, you're going to hire a different “expert” – one who's got millions of years of experience.

No, it's not your brain. In fact...

¹ Note: For a fun read on this subject, check out John P. A. Ioannidis, Why most published research findings are false. PLoS Medicine, August 2005.

Don't think about your food.

Don't trust your brain. It lies.

Your brain is easily fooled by shiny things.

Like yummy scents. Bright colours. Delectable tastes.

Food chemists and manufacturers know this. That's why cotton candy isn't gray like dryer lint. That's why Cinnabon smells so damn good.

(Unfortunately, food companies haven't figured out how to make Taco Bell look decent, but you can't really fault them – it's like trying to make a kid's Play-Doh and mud sandwich look tasty.)

Your brain also likes to think it's in charge. So it tries to overthink things.

OK, I just worked out so that means I should have high-glycemic carbohydrates and according to this formula the gram quantity should be 43.6 times my lean body mass in pounds... but wait, I skipped the cooldown so I'll subtract 12% off the total... accounting for wind speed...

Please, brain, shut up. Let the grownups talk.

Your brain thinks it's smart. But it's kinda dumb, sometimes. Especially when it comes to food.

Trust your body instead. It never bullshits you.

If you're not eating properly, your body will let you know. It's like the honest friend that tells you when you've tucked your skirt into your underwear.

Stop reading now and do a quick scan from head to toe. What are you feeling, physically?

What is your face doing? What is your big toe doing? And when it comes to eating... what is your stomach doing? Practice knowing these things.

After you eat, how does your body feel?

Numb and zoned out? Heavy and sloshy?
Buzzed and squirrely? Irritable and restless?
Sneezy? Headache? Heartburny?
Light and springy? Full of zest and mojo?

There's your clue.

Don't *think about* your food. *Feel* your food. **Let your body be the expert.**

How you eat is a lot more important than *what* you eat.

We've gotten really hung up on *what* we eat. (And nutritionists are largely to blame.)

How much protein? How much fat? Are eggs "bad"? Should I have oatmeal for breakfast?

Fuck it. If you're eating like a crazed animal, an obsessive-compulsive nutcase, or a zombie, it doesn't matter whether you eat seaweed or pork rinds.

Yes, food quality is very important. (Keep reading. I'll get to that.)

But *how* you eat trumps *what* you eat.

Where do you eat? In your car? Sitting down at a table? In restaurants?

With whom do you eat? Alone? With others? With others who reinforce unhealthy habits?

How fast do you eat? Eating slowly is *the* best thing you can do for both waistline and wellness.

What do you notice when you eat? Do you pay attention to your food – the taste, the texture, the smell, how it makes you feel? Are you tuned in to your stomach signals? How full are you, right now? Do that body scan from the previous page.

How do you choose what to eat? Grab 'n' go? Careful selection? What everyone else is eating? Do you ask questions about where your food came from, who grew it, and how it got to you?

Why do you eat? Because you're actually, physically hungry? Because you're sad, angry, bored, or anxious?

Focus on the *how*, and the *what* often takes care of itself. Here is the *how* you are looking for:

Choose your food thoughtfully, focusing on food quality.

Eat sitting down, relaxed and without distractions.

Eat with others as often as possible – sharing a meaningful connection, not enabling bad habits.

Pay attention to your food. Treat it with respect and care.

Pay attention to your body, especially how your stomach feels, but also whatever else your body is doing.

Eat mindfully and *slowly*, with awareness.

Eat slowly. S-l-o-w-l-y.

Yeah, I know I already said this. I'll say it again:

Eat slowly.

If you get nothing out of this book, get this point.

Think you're eating slowly? Slow down some more.

Chew. Chew some more. Swallow. Notice flavours. And textures.

Pause before your next bite.

Doritos taste like shit when you slow down. But fresh berries still taste delicious.

Set a timer. If you're not hitting at *least* 15 minutes per meal, you need to slow the fuck down.

Damn it, I slaved over a hot stove to make this. The least you can do is taste it.

Oh hey, guess what, slow eating lets you pay attention to what your *body* – not your brain, not your emotions, not your “busy schedule” – wants.

Don't watch TV while you eat. Don't eat at your desk. Don't eat while driving.

For godsake, *pay attention* to what you're shoving in your mouth.

Almost no human – besides an emergency room doctor or a soldier in a war zone – is so busy or important that they can't give their full attention to what they eat for 15-20 minutes.

If you're a big person, use a big plate. If you're a small person, use a small plate.

Thanks to my friend and colleague Dr. John Berardi for this gem. God, I wish he'd told me this 20 years ago. That would have saved me 50 pounds.

How blindingly simple is this concept? Holy shit!

Again, in case you missed this complex equation:

Big person? Big plate.

Small person? Small plate.

Also:

Want to be a smaller person? Small plate.

Want to be a bigger person? Big plate.

We might protest that we're smarter than this. We're not. (Remember? Brain dumb. Brain fibs.)

We eat (or don't) based on structural cues. Like plate size. Yes, it matters.

Oh, and if you regularly eat off one of them platters you get in American restaurants, you'd better be 7 feet tall.

Eat real food.

Can you tell what a particular food used to be? If so, great. That's probably real food. Eat it.

(Examples: an apple, a whole fish, an onion.)

If you don't know, then it isn't real food. (Or you might need to brush up on butchery and your vegetable recognition skills. Hint: chicken is more than just tits 'n' ass.)

Ask yourself how many steps that food took to get to you.

If it comes in a bag, box, or plastic package, it probably isn't real food.

(Examples: M&Ms, a corn dog, Froot Loops, aerosol cheese.)

Read labels.

If you're gonna insist on buying food in bags, boxes, or plastic packages, at least read the label.

Anything with more than 2-3 ingredients is probably not real food.

Anything with long chemical names is probably not real food.

Anything promoted by a mascot is probably not real food.

Anything with its own commercial is probably not real food.

Anything that contains something ending in "ose" (such as glucose, fructose, sucrose, or cellulose) is probably not real food.

Just because you buy it in a health food store, or because the package is marked "natural", "organic", "good for you", or "gently nurtured into being by hippie Care Bears", doesn't mean it can't be crap.

Read. The. Label.

With extreme prejudice.

Buy the best quality food you can afford.

I don't mean buy caviar. I don't mean shop at snooty, overpriced, upscale "gourmet" grocery stores.

I mean spend that extra 50 cents or a dollar per pound to get real, decent food.

I mean learn to cook from scratch so your hard-earned food money can go to high-quality ingredients, not the profits of Big Food. And so you know – like your creative and resourceful Depression-era ancestors – how to make the proverbial stone soup taste like five-star Michelin cuisine.

I mean get in your grocery store manager's face and ask him or her why the store is buying cheap pesticide-riddled apples from China when you live in Vermont and it's September.

I mean take an hour on Saturday and hit the farmer's market. Spend a little more on something that's fresh and local. You'll support your community and small family farmers while you're at it. (Then they too can have money to spend on food.)

No matter how big or small your food budget is, make sure you get your money's worth.

Don't treat food as an extraneous expense. Food makes your body go. That's worth more than cable TV, velour sweat pants with "JUICY" written on the ass, or anything on eBay.

Food is an *investment*, not a *cost*.

But don't mistake *volume* for *value*. A discount case of soda is still shit, even though it's cheap shit.

Opt for *quality* over *quantity*.

Compared to the rest of the world, we North Americans spend the lowest proportion of our disposable income on food – about 10%.

That means the other 90% is going to other stuff. Stuff you may not actually *need*.

If you're concerned about food money, try keeping a spending diary for a week. See where your money really goes.

Can you allocate a few extra dollars here and there to upgrading?

Get creative. Learn. Strategize.

Yeah, I said don't over-think your food. But you can use your brain for good, not evil.

Thinky brain is real smart at figuring stuff out. Throw a problem at it and ask it for a solution.

If you want to eat well on a budget, get out your pencil and paper and ask thinky brain to help you shuffle some money around.

Or figure out where to find sales. Or how to cook a whole chicken, because that's much cheaper than a skinless chicken breast. Or buy fruits and veggies in season. Or find the phone number of a friend with whom you can split a bulk grassfed meat purchase.

See? I used my thinky brain for all of 45 seconds to type that. (My thinky brain took typing in Grade 9, back when it was "typing" and not "keyboarding".) Just imagine what you could thinky-brain-storm if you had 3 whole minutes.

If you find yourself stuck in bad habits, ask thinky brain to come up with substitutions or alternatives. Thinky brain loves planning. (But make sure thinky brain also comes up with a way to execute your Plan B, or you'll get stuck in an endless loop of *coulda-shoulda-woulda*.)

Start small. *Very* small. As small as possible. Thinky brain gets over-excited and has delusions of grandeur.

Tell thinky brain to calm down, get over itself, and come up with *one VERY small task* to do *today*.

Use thinky brain to *plan* and *do* smart stuff *only*. As soon as you see thinky brain's hand moving to the calorie counting calculator or the Big Book O' Bullshit Rationalizations For Bad Behaviour, slap it.

Then hand off the observation, analysis, and judgement to your body.

What you *eat* isn't necessarily what you *get*.

Just because a food *contains* Substance X doesn't mean you'll *absorb* or *use* Substance X.

For example, grass has vitamin A. But unless you're a cow, all you'll get from eating grass is a stomach ache.

Nutritionists are up our ass about drinking milk. Gotta have that calcium! By that logic, ice cream is a smart choice.

Yeah, dairy *contains* calcium. But when it comes to how our body *actually absorbs and uses calcium*, dairy is a FAIL.

Calcium WIN? Cooked kale.

More calcium WIN? Real-food sources of magnesium and other minerals. Bone broth. Getting out in the sun. Plenty of protein. Proper rest and recovery. Dietary fat to keep your sex hormones happy. Lifting weights, running, and jumping. Lots of veggies and fruits – these help keep the body alkaline so that it's not sucking minerals off your skeleton to buffer acidity. Feeding your intestinal bacteria.

All these things help your body use calcium – and all your other nutrients – properly.

Just providing calcium without providing a signal to use it is like dropping off a load of lumber and expecting a house to magically appear. And over-consuming one nutrient puts other ones out of balance.

If you're worried about bone density:

- eat lots of colourful veggies (I mean LOTS), especially leafy greens;
- eat plenty of protein (yes, bones are largely protein, not simply skeleton-shaped rocks);
- avoid sugar;
- eat a variety of minerals (not just calcium) from real foods;
- eat plenty of naturally occurring saturated fats;
- give your bones something to do – load them! run! jump! punch!

Help food do its job.

Eat a wide range of foods. Nutrients work synergistically – aka in teams. They reinforce each other and play well together.

Eat real foods. Industrial food chemicals (such as preservatives, artificial sweeteners, and artificial colours) harm intestinal health and digestion. And real foods are super-nutrient delivery packages.

Eat slowly. You'll feel satisfied with less, enjoy mealtime more, and your GI tract can digest food properly. Chew properly while you're at it. You think your stomach wants a whole chicken wing to deal with?

Eat fat. You can't absorb fat-soluble vitamins without it.

Eat helpful bacteria. Fermented foods like sauerkraut and kimchi have bacteria that help us digest things properly. (See the next point.)

Get dirty.

It's a Lysol and antibiotic world out there now. And we have the resistant bacteria to prove it.

Clean hands are a smart idea. Removing cow poop and pesticides from food with careful washing – also a solid plan.

But don't go overboard. Good bacteria are, well, good.

We have trillions of little critters in our tummies and they work hard to keep us healthy. We need them to help digest things. We need them for our immune system. We need them – believe it or not – to keep us sane.

Without them, we'd have to live in a bubble.

You don't need to disinfect your food. Arguably, you shouldn't.

Just wash your hands with basic soap (let the surfactant and scrubbing shoo the bacteria away – you don't have to napalm everything) and refrigerate and cook things properly.

Eat some good bacteria on purpose.

Have some sauerkraut, kimchi, or anything else fermented. Veggie bacteria are better than dairy bacteria, but real, plain yogurt (not the sweetened crap that's basically ice cream in a cup) will do in a pinch.

If you hate all things fermented, have a good multi-spectrum probiotic instead. And know you are breaking your *baba's* heart.

Occasionally, eat something from your garden without washing it. Our bodies like a spot of soil bacteria now and again.

As my *baba* says, "A little dirt never hurt anyone."

She's made it to 85 and still grows her own food, undoubtedly eating plenty of soil along the way. So she must be doing something right.

Fuck vitamins.

Nature laughs at your puny human attempts to replicate its wonders in a pill. It's put more beneficial chemicals in a single orange than you'd find in the average lab.

If you've got scurvy or rickets, and you're living on a rock in the middle of the ocean, OK, have a vitamin pill.

The rest of you: **Eat real food.** (Remember?)

Orange juice is not real food.

It's a product of wartime military rations. That's right – food that soldiers eat out of freeze-dried packets.

Orange juice is a product of food industry propaganda. It's not “fresh-squeezed” by some grinning, overall-wearing farmer. It's crapped out of a machine and a chemistry lab.

Eat the whole goddamned orange.

“Fortified” means “We took good stuff out so we have to put it back in.”

Except what we put back in is rarely as good as what was there in the first place.

Grind up a vitamin pill and mix it into some sawdust. Congratulations. You just “fortified” that sawdust. Pour some milk over it, and you’ve got breakfast cereal.

You think I’m kidding? Hell, wood pulp is probably better for you than most cereals.

In fact, look for “cellulose” on the label of your favourite foods. That’s mashed-up trees, and it’s in your Eggo waffles, Fiber One cereal, breads and bagels, and pretty much anything from McDonald’s. Even your Jimmy Dean frozen breakfasts.

If you own a wood chipper, you could start your own cereal business.

Some food doesn't want to be eaten.

Nature is cruel. Life feeds on life. It's the reality we all accept to be part of this ecosystem. (If you want to opt out, I recommend Breatharianism, but it won't get you very far.)

Up till recently, we were cat food. We just got smart about using pointy sticks and smashy rocks.

But it's only a matter of time before our alien overlords get around to toasting us like popcorn. Or your toy poodle dines on your leg like the devolved wolf it is after you fall down the stairs.

(Actually, bacteria are eating your dead cells right now, the greedy little bastards.)

Don't be fooled by trees that seem to love being hugged: Plants are mean motherfuckers. They don't want you to eat them. Or take their babies.

Since plants never got around to evolving feet for running away, they'll blast you with chemicals instead.

Some chemicals, we can tolerate. In fact, some chemicals are great for us. Like many plant pigments – the things that make fruits and vegetables colourful. (See the next point.)

Other chemicals, we can't. In particular, plants don't want you to digest their seeds. They need that shit to reproduce. So like a mother bear defending her cubs, plants will make sure their seeds either poison you or pass through you undigested.

Grains are seeds – and their chemist mommies have ensured your body will be sorry you ate them.

Grains, especially wheat, spread their ill-will far and wide, starting with tearing you a third (fourth, and six thousandth) asshole *inside your intestines*, and then running amok into the rest of your body.

Finding yourself farty, bloated, pooparrific, burpish, itchy, snuffly, headachey, zitty, achey, creaky, puffy, forgetful, and/or cranky?

Take *all* grains – yes, that means bread, pasta, rice, muffins, bagels, cake, oatmeal, cereals, corn, and any other sneaky little monkeys like gluten in your processed food – out of your diet for a month and see whether you get better.

You're welcome.

Eat the rainbow.

Plants don't want their babies to be eaten. Nor do they want bugs to nibble them, the sun to scorch them, fungi to infect them, or bees to ignore them.

Luckily, plants' paranoia and survival instincts can also help you.

The pigments and chemicals that plants have evolved to protect themselves are usually very nutritious. With the exception of grass babies (aka grains), what makes plants colourful and tough generally makes you healthy.

When you're eating plants, eat the rainbow. For instance:

Red: red peppers, red tomatoes, pink grapefruit, watermelon, strawberries, etc.

Orange-yellow: oranges, squash, orange sweet potatoes, carrots, apricots, etc.

Green: leafy greens, broccoli, green beans, etc.

Blue-purple: blueberries and blackberries, eggplant, purple cabbage, etc.

FYI: When it comes to meat, do *not* eat the rainbow. Just sayin'.

Blue chicken in the back of the fridge probably won't make you feel better, although it will help you lose 20 lb of unsightly intestinal contents.

Eat smelly.

Along with eating the rainbow, eat some strong-smelling foods.

Just like the colourful pigments, scent oils protect plants from disease and critters. You reap the taste and health benefits. Yum!

This includes:

- fresh herbs such as basil, parsley, and thyme
- garlic, onions, leeks, chives, etc.
- spices such as cinnamon, turmeric, pepper, and nutmeg

All have compounds that fight disease, aging, inflammation, bacteria, viruses... and even mosquitos!

Word on the street is that garlic also helps the blood flow to your naughty bits. Just sayin'.

If you like cheese, try some artisanal raw milk cheese as a treat. You only need a little, and it really punches things up. Real, bacterially fermented cheese makes fake processed cheese look like coloured wax. (Which, technically, it is.)

Don't forget your fermented stuff. This will put funk in your trunks and make your belly bugs dance the kimchi cha-cha!

Go ahead, put real cream in your coffee.

A daily tablespoon of cream never made anyone fat, and it'll probably cut down your cravings later on.

Read the label first, though. (Like I said.)

You'll be surprised to find that most cream... isn't. It's a bastardized milk-emulsifier hybrid.

And "coffee flavouring"? Frappucinos? Please. Ancient African goat herders did not discover and perfect the wondrous coffee cherry juice so that you could dump a sugar and chemical turd into it.

Find yourself some nice organic 35% butterfat whipping cream – *real* cream, without all the crap – and use a tiny splash of that. Your taste buds will thank you.

And while you're at it, have an avocado too.

Avocados are loaded with beneficial fibre, vitamin E, and good fats. The monounsaturated fat in them increases satiety.

Eat 'em straight up or in a decent guacamole.

Try eating an entire avocado plus a couple of eggs fried in real butter for breakfast. You won't be hungry for the next two days, and you'll grin like a fool from a hazy, hallucinatory sense of well-being.²

² An unfortunate few of you will have trouble digesting avocados, whether because of a relatively common intolerance or the presence of FODMAPs: fermentable oligo-, di- and mono-saccharides, and polyols. Please accept my sincerest sympathies.

You should cut the fat off your steak. But not for the reason you think.

Fat is Nature's storage depot. Whatever an animal is fed will nestle into its fat.

Unless it's grass-fed/pastured meat, your steak (and pork, and chicken) was raised in a factory-style feedlot with grains and medications. That means the animal's fat has all the crap you don't want in your body – including hormones, pesticides, antibiotics, and excess omega-6 fatty acids.

Naturally occurring animal fats are *not* “bad”. They are an important part of our diet. They do *not* make you keel over from heart disease. (That's sugar. See next point.)

Our ancestors ate every part of the animals they killed, even the squishy fatty bits. *Especially* the squishy fatty bits. The squishy fatty bits made our brains big and our hormones happy. Fat make smart. Fat make sexytime.

Fat is only “bad” when it's laden with garbage. Or human-created. Or combined with sugar.

Buy organic, grass-fed/pastured meat, butter, and cream. Buy wild-caught, ideally sustainable fatty fish like salmon and mackerel.

Then enjoy that fat to your heart's content. (Yes, your heart is also quite content with saturated fat.)

If you don't eat animals, go find yourself a coconut instead.

Dump sugar.

Some people will say “there are no bad foods”, because they’re chickenshits or being suckled by Big Food.

I am neither, and thus I disagree. There *are* bad foods.

Sugar is one of them.

Table sugar appeared in Western diets in the late 1700s. High-fructose corn syrup appeared in the mid-20th century.

We have million-year-old bodies. They can’t handle that newfangled crap. They can tolerate it... barely. Until they can’t.

Know how sugar gets sticky or caramelized when you spill it or cook with it? That’s what happens in your body.

85-90% of diabetes cases are type 2 diabetes. Unlike getting hit by a safe falling from a window, Type 2 diabetes is entirely preventable.

Read that again: *85 to 90 percent of diabetics are now suffering something that did not have to happen.* Knowing that fact makes my soul shrivel just a little bit.

Same with heart disease. Or fatty liver disease. Or any of the dozens of other problems that come from too much sugar and its henchmen: too much insulin, too many free-floating triglycerides, and too many inflammatory chemicals.

If you want to be vain about it, sugar causes wrinkles. Dump sugar and embrace your new, foxy cougar self.

Yes, I know sugar is yummy. Cats think antifreeze is yummy too.

You don’t have to get all moralistic, rebellious, and/or self-flagellating about your “sugar addiction”. Just cut down. Recalibrate your taste buds.

Slow eating helps. (Did I mention that already?) Use your thinky brain to help with solutions.

Sugar is sugar is sugar.

Whether it's table sugar, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, agave, molasses, beet sugar, sugar cane, or any other "natural" sweetener...

Almost anything that ends in "ose" is sugar.

Anything called "sugar" (such as coconut sugar or date sugar) is sugar.

Anything called "syrup" (such as maple syrup or brown rice syrup) is sugar.

Any food whose only job is to be sweet is sugar. Or artificial sweetener.

Sorry. I didn't make up the rules of organic chemistry.

Vegetable oils are not real food.

Call me a gourmet snob but I don't think anything made with solvents, bleaches, or heavy metals should be considered real food.

You can make your own butter, but you can't make your own shelf-stable canola or sunflower seed oil. Think about it.

There's an awful lot of steel canisters, pipey things, hazmat suits, and engineers standing between you and the bottle of cooking oil you're holding.

Your cells know the difference too.

Skip breakfast.

Or any other meal you like.

If you aren't physically hungry, don't eat.

Yeah, yeah, "studies show" that "breakfast is the most important meal of the day".

Ever wonder who funds those studies? The same people who bring you wood pulp waffles.

Ignore the well-meaning dietitians who advise you to graze like a ruminant. Our ancestors did just fine eating one square a day. Or couple of days.

I'm not saying starve yourself. I'm saying *eat only when you are truly physically hungry*.

(Not *psychologically* hungry. Not "wanting a snack". Not "Man, I could totally go for [insert food X] right now." Physically, stomach-growling hungry.)

Unless you like to binge at night.

Then eat a big breakfast and a decent lunch, and skip dinner instead.

May I recommend those colourful veggies, avocados, and pastured bacon?

Seek nourishment. Seek sustenance.

Food should nourish us – truly *nourish* us – in all senses of the word.

Does your food nourish...

...your body?

...your soul?

...your connections with others?

...your activity?

...your life?

Food should also sustain us. *Sustain* implies long-term benefit and growth.

Does your food and eating sustain...

...your spirit?

...your community?

...your heritage and traditions?

...your environment?

It's ~~the economy~~ your relationships, stupid.

For 90% of my female clients, their eating problem is actually a relationship problem.

Guys, I can't stick a percentage on you, but I bet it's not much less, despite your macho exteriors. (I know you have a crunchy shells but chewy centres, you tasty things.)

If you struggle with food and eating, there's a very good chance that you don't just have a food problem. You also have a relationship problem.

Maybe you are grieving a loss.

Maybe you can't ask for what you want.

Maybe you need to say "no" more often. Or "yes" more often.

Maybe you're alone, together.

Maybe you can't find the words to say the things you need to say.

Maybe you want to run away but your feet are stuck, like in a bad dream.

Whether it's your relationship with your partner, family, friends, coworkers, boss, mail carrier, or Starbucks barista – or most importantly, your relationship with *yourself* – your food and eating issues are almost always about your relationships.

Fix the relationships, and you go a long way to fixing the food.

Nobody is coming to save you.

This point comes from a manifesto that my colleague, Scrawny to Brawny coach Paul Valiulis, wrote in the middle of the night while sitting on a beach.

Unlike most crazy thoughts that occur under these conditions (such as *Everything is mustard, man* or *Why don't we live underground in abandoned railway cars like human Habitrails?* or *I wonder if I could build a slingshot out of old underwear and turnips?*), this was a pretty darn good idea.

In Paul's case, he was thinking about human relationships. (Ladies, FYI, no prince on a white horse is on his way. Get your own bank account.)

But it applies to eating too.

There is no special food, no combination of nutrients, no supplement, no "diet" (ugh), no magical ritual, that will ever make you perfectly un-hungry, or fix your life.

Nothing takes away human discomfort and suffering forever. Hunger – whether physical or existential – is unavoidable. Life is glorious imperfection.

I know. For years I searched.

Eventually I realized: It's OK to be hungry, sometimes. It's OK to want stuff and not have it, sometimes. It's OK to be uncomfortable, sometimes. It's OK to be mad, sad, bored, anxious, or just kinda empty, sometimes.

I don't need a food saviour to bail me out of that.

You've been hungry before, right? Peckish? Perhaps even ravenous? Maybe you were somewhere that they didn't have your special fussy pedigreed-dog kibble? And you survived?

Well, that's as bad as it gets.

You already know how to be uncomfortable. Don't run away from it. Turn around and go into the discomfort instead.

Change is itchy. Downright scratchy.

If you want to change your eating, expect a little itchiness.

On the plus side, now you don't have to sit around waiting for the sound of hoofbeats.

Stop learning and knowing. Start doing.

Learning is good. I have the Piled Higher and Deeper and the stacks of unread journal articles to prove it.

But at some point **you gotta get off your ass and do something**. Right now.

Stop reading the blogs. Stop fussing with details. Stop wondering whether X grams of this is better than Y grams of that. Stop arguing on the interwebs. Especially stop reading any nutrition articles in mainstream media. (See “Everything you think you know about how to eat is probably bullshit”, above.)

Give thinky brain a break (if thinky brain could be said to be involved in online arguments, which is debatable... ha, debatable, geddit?). Put your body in charge. Your body loves action.

If you want to improve your eating, stop reading this right now. (Come back to it in three minutes.)

In the next three minutes – yes, these ones coming up – *take action* to make your eating better.

Even if that’s just writing down a shopping list or canceling the pizza order you just made. Even if that’s just a quick body scan and a tummy poke to see whether you’re actually hungry. Even if it’s having a glass of water. Even if it’s spitting out the last, mushy, slimy, chewed-up bite of that marshmallow Peep.

I don’t care what it is. Just do *something*.

Change comes from *doing*.

From harnessing your body’s knowledge and putting it into action. Not just intent. Not just thoughts.

Build a better eating experience through daily practice. Through learning to speak your body’s language, and reading its cues. And through taking action.

Set a reminder on your cell phone or computer. Call it Three-Minute Action.

Whenever you hear that beep, do your three-minute thing. Then high five yourself.

YEAH BUDDY!!

Tell yourself your food story.

When you consult a nutritionist, often the first thing they want you to do is write down a food journal with lots of numbers and measurements, like this:

Monday, 8 am: 1 cup bran flakes with 17 raisins, 1/2 cup 1% fat milk, 1.5 cups apple juice, 8 oz. coffee with 1 tbsp cream.

Fuck it. Who the hell thinks about food like that? Nutritionists, that's who. This is what happens when you let thinky brain drive the bus.

Can you even imagine what "1 cup bran flakes with 17 raisins and 1/2 cup milk" looks like? Of course you can't. Most normal people make stories out of food, or pictures. (Or, occasionally, songs, such as the classic Raffi track *Peanut Butter Sandwich Made With Jam* ["One for me, and one for David M..."], hopefully followed by Raffi's other hit *Brush Your Teeth*.)

When you eat food you eat stories. You're telling yourself a food story right now. It goes something like this.

Bran flakes. I love this blue cereal bowl. [singing] "2 scoops of raisins in a packet of Kellogg's Raisin Bran!" How much is 2 scoops? I wonder. Ugh, 1% milk tastes so watery. But it's good for me. Right? I'm afraid if I don't cut down on fat I'll get fat. Krista says eat slowly. Wow, when I do that, the bran flakes taste like little chips of papier-mâché in my mouth. They make piñatas out of that. I am eating a piñata. With no candy in it.

And so forth.

It's good to keep a record of your eating, especially when you're trying to change or improve it. A record keeps you honest. Humans are top-notch self-bullshitters. It's just how we're wired.

But **you never need to measure like this**. Ever. Fuck calories. Seriously – fuck 'em.

Let's try this a different (and more fun) way. Get a camera or your cellphone, and a stack of post-it notes. For each meal, take two pictures.

The first picture is the meal itself. On a post-it note, write down what you're feeling and thinking before you eat. Stick the note next to the plate, bowl, platter, or washed-out hubcap and snap a photo.

The second picture is the meal when you're done. Same deal with the post-it note. Write down what you're feeling *now*. Snap it.

At the end of every day, look through your pictures. What is your food story? What does it tell you?

Then, rewrite that food story.

If you want to change your food, tell yourself a new food story. You're the author of your life, after all.

Find a picture of the food you'd like to eat. The food that would make your body, mind and spirit feel good – lean, light, energized, full of exuberant mojo and the sweetness of self-care.

Think about the story that food tells. What kind of person eats that? How does s/he feel when she eats it? Who does s/he become? What life does s/he live?

Is that the life you truly, deeply want? Is that the person you truly, deeply want to be?

If so, start chasing that life, and that identity. Start writing that story.

Put that picture next to your own food pictures. How could you get to that “destination” from where you are?

Would you need to think differently? (Probably.)

Would you need to act differently? (Very likely.)

Would you need to plan a bit? (Usually.)

Well, that's a fun game! (Certainly more fun than measuring cups of bran flakes.)

Don't get freaked out if that destination feels too far away. All you have to do is take one teeny tiny step towards it.

You have the rest of your life to finish the journey. And you get to have some food adventures along the way! Whee!

Ask yourself: **What's *ONE* very small thing I could do to get closer to that new food story?**

Then do that one very small thing. Today. Now.

Tomorrow, do another very small thing.

Keep snapping those photos and writing those notes. You never know... one day it could be a movie.

Fuck “willpower”.

If you struggle to “do the right thing” when it comes to food, you’re not a sloth; your rational brain is just over-booked. Your self-control is busy preventing you from stabbing your boss, shoplifting, and running red lights.

Thus, “willpower” won’t help you much when it comes to eating. It’s an overdrawn bank account.

Use stronger stuff: scheduling, structure, social support, space, systems, and strategies.

Schedule time to shop and prepare good food. Then it’ll be available when you need and want it. (If you need an extra hour, try dumping Facebook, celebrity blogs, and *Say Yes To The Dress* on TeeVee.)

Structure your life so that it’s easy to eat healthy, and hard to eat poorly. Make it fun, simple, and affirming to eat nutritiously. (For instance, learn to cook so you enjoy making delicious yet nutritious meals – and can do it easily.) Make it inconvenient, difficult, and painful to eat crap.

Social support is a good way to do this. Hang out with other healthy eaters and cut down on codependent or toxic people. Choose activities that help you get moving, and connect meaningfully with other people. (Getting wasted and going dancing doesn’t count, though.)

Organize your **space** to keep the crap out and the healthy stuff in. Get rid of the junk in your cupboards and fridge.

You think your “willpower” is strong enough to keep you out of the potato chips after a tough day of not stabbing your boss? Hah! Make sure the chips *aren’t* there, make sure some tasty crunchy veggies *are* there, and then you don’t have to use your over-booked thinky brain to make that decision.

Keep your friends close, your enemies closer, and the junk food as far away as possible.

Use **systems** like a regular shopping appointment, meal prep times, buying prewashed veggies, a collection of easy-prep go-to meals, or whatever else you need in order to streamline healthy eating. Make it efficient and effective.

Strategize and think ahead. Put your systems in place *well before* you have to make *any* tough decisions. Figure out dinner around breakfast or lunch time... not at 7:15 p.m. when you arrive home ravenous, ready to snort frozen pizza.

Then, the decision is made for you.

Your self-control can return to making sure you wear pants.

You can't "fix" your body because *your body is not broken.*

Your body works just fine. Otherwise you wouldn't be alive.

In fact, your body works magnificently. You're lucky your body is so damn clever.

If you don't like the output your body is giving you, fix the input. That means everything: your food, your thoughts, your feelings, and your life.

Your body is smarter than you. It has millions of years of experience handling your shit. Let it do its job.

And if it's telling you it needs help, or that you're doing something stupid, listen.

Your body can't talk, so you have to learn its language. Pain is a language. Food and eating is a language. Anxiety, fear, and distress is a language. Disease is a language.

Listen to what your body is saying.

Always assume your body is looking out for you, even if its actions seem misguided. There's a reason it does or says what it does. Figure out the logic and you'll know what to do with yourself.

Make friends with your body.

All it wants is to keep you alive, and to be loved.

You don't need me... or any other "expert".

You don't need any of us to tell you what to eat.

If I asked you to give me a list of 10 ways to eat healthy, you could generate it just fine, even before you read this book.

Your list would probably look something like this:

1. Eat fresh vegetables and fruits.
2. Eat real food, not processed crap.
3. Read labels carefully. Better yet, don't buy food that comes in a package.
4. Don't gorge.
5. Drink water instead of Kool-Aid.

Hell, I didn't even need 10 points.

What you need is an honest, compassionate, trusting, thoughtful relationship with *yourself*. With *your* body.

You know what bullshit you're doing.

You don't need me to tell you.

You are only accountable to *you*.

And your body.

Make your body the ultimate authority.

If your body is unhappy, get real with yourself. Do what is in your power to fix it.

You report *only* to *you*. Not me. Not your mother. Not an “expert”. You. Your body.

Your body will always be honest with you. Return the favour.

Ask yourself one tough question.

My colleague Dr. John Berardi likes to whip out this brilliantly simple, inconvenient-truth question on unsuspecting people:

How’s that workin’ for ya?

In other words: What does the evidence of your own experience show you to be true? Are your choices and behaviours actually taking you where you want to go?

I heard that you should never eat after 6 pm. *How’s that workin’ for ya?*

I’m only eating raw food. *How’s that workin’ for ya?*

I just downloaded this new pedometer-calorie-counter app that combines my target heart rate with my DNA. *How’s that workin’ for ya?*

The only correct answer to this question is: “Great.” (“Awesome” is OK too.)

If your answer is anything else, you need to make some adjustments.

Have compassion.

Your body is doing its very best.

Compassion doesn't mean "anything goes". It doesn't mean tell yourself lies about how everything is fine.

But it doesn't mean be a pinchy-face hardass either. Unfortunately for many medieval penitents, self-criticism and self-flagellation is not the path to enlightenment.

If self-loathing actually worked, we'd all be millionaires and musical prodigies.

Junk that self-criticism shit along with the sugar.

Compassion means be honest. Clear-eyed. And yet kind.

Compassion's Latin root – *com + pati* – means "suffering together". Compassion is an active desire to alleviate pain, by trying to share experiences.

You and your body, you're a team.

You're walking this road together.

Why not hold hands?

Get bigger, not smaller.

Fuck the details. You don't just eat "carbs" or "protein" or "antioxidants".

Fuck the calories. Right on.

You eat *food*. In a context.

The world of food is bigger than this. *You* are bigger than this.

Start with thinking about details as you learn. Focus briefly on the nuances. Read labels. Be a little picky, for a while, as you experiment.

But do not *end* there.

Move towards **self-love** and asking how you can live that bigness through your food choices.

Move towards **food quality**.

Move towards **connections**. Between "you" and your body. (In fact there is no division. *You are* your body.)

Between you and your food. Between you and your loved ones as you share meals.

Between you and your identity, values, and needs – as you continue to define who *you* are and what you need and want, and ask for this in an honest way.

Between you and your family traditions and history. You and your community. You and the human hands that grow, pick, and process your food. You and your land.

Think *through* and *beyond* "nutrients" to the bigger picture – to you as a bigger person (metaphorically, of course, unless you're trying to get swole) in a bigger universe.

Use this practice of detail focus only to get real with your body, and then let the practice go. That is a juicy, wonderful, raw journey.

Honesty, compassion, connectedness, and self-love is a delicious brew.

As you live, so you eat.

So here's the final thought. It's the secret to everything.

Your relationship with food and eating is your relationship with life.

If you rush your food, you probably rush through life.

If you eat furtively and shamefully, you probably carry other secrets.

If your food is a release, you're probably over-burdened and over-responsible elsewhere.

If you fear deprivation, you probably need more abundance.

All of this is negotiable. You can change this.

Start with some questions.

Who are you and what are you about?

What is important – *truly* important – to you, right now?

How do you live your life?

How do you *want* to live your life? (Ignore, for now, whether that's "possible".)

Feel and observe your body cues as you think about these questions. Play the hotter-colder game.

Go *away* from the values, people, and things that make your face squinch up, your jaw clench, your ribcage shrink, your shoulders migrate to your ears, and/or your stomach turn into a black hole.

Go *towards* the values, people, and things that make your cheeks droop into a stoned-out smile, your body feel light and floaty, your skin feel tingly and warm, and your feet dance a little jig.

When you dig up the thoughts and ideas that make your body feel deeply joyful, go towards that feeling.

If you live joyfully, you eat joyfully.

Once you have your body-generated, joy-based marching orders...

...take action.