

F.A.D

F*ck All Diets

A snack-sized insight into why dieting will NEVER work.

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CHAPTER ONE



Introduction

Welcome

We all have a right to know the truth.

My name is Belinda Martinella and I am a Nationally Accredited Clinical Nutritionist, mother, wife and real life human. Firstly I am so happy that you're here – welcome.

I work with so many women and men in my clinic who struggle with all things weight and dieting. This book is for both women and men.

F.A.D – F*ck All Diets is filled with the things that I *need* you to know when it comes to weight loss, weight management and dieting. It contains the facts (and science doesn't lie), it contains words of wisdom, a few attempts at humour (sorry in advance) and even my own little dieting-ditty at the end.

Know the facts, tell your friends, then tell the world.

Let's boycott dieting FOREVER. Let's stop wasting so much time, energy and money on 'diet stuff' that just doesn't work (spoiler alert: dieting will NEVER work).

Shall we? Let's do it!

Welcome to the beginning of your new non-dieting health journey.

I want to begin with a little word-play. Here we go.....Weight. Weight gain. Weight loss. Diet. Dieting.

What happens to you physically when you read all of those words? Dread. Hunger. Determination. Horror. The vision of a brownie. Disappointment. Distress. Hope?

Sit with that feeling for a few seconds. Then breathe, and relax – this is NOT a 'diet' book, but rather a book about your body, how it works and why certain things (e.g. cravings, lack of 'willpower', bingeing) actually happen.

Once you read this book, I hope it plants a seed that grows into a glorious 'I'll never diet again' tree. Once you know all of these facts, you'll find it hard to go back to dieting, deprivation or sabotage with a clear conscience.

Brew the kettle, find a comfy chair and get ready to shift your focus from weight loss, to health (oh and happiness – so very important).

A Few Things You Need to Know

If you follow me on social media (@thetravellingnutritionistaus) or you've had a chance to listen to my podcast (*Need To Know Nutrition*), you'll know how much I love a strong, educational foundation – you can never unlearn something after all.

So, let's get the definition of 'diet' and a few interesting facts sorted before we dive in.

Diet

1. The kinds of food that a person, animal or community habitually eats.
2. A special course of food to which a person restricts themselves, either to lose weight or for medical reasons. *"I'm going on a diet"*.

Facts

- By the time a woman is 45 she would have tried 61 diets.
- An average woman spends 31 years of her life dieting.
- Nearly two thirds of Australians- both men and women- are overweight or obese (strange considering a large number of us are currently dieting.....hmmm.....)

(Both women and men are affected by dieting and weight issues however, when it comes to the stats/facts women are over-represented on all accounts).



CHAPTER TWO

What's Happening To My Body

An Insight Into What Happens When We Go On A Diet.

Disclaimer: there are multiple thousand-page text books that discuss in great detail, the human body and all of the wonderful things that it can do. In this book however I want to share with you the very interesting process that happens to our bodies when are on a diet.

I want you to imagine that there is a food shortage. No, not a toilet-paper shortage (thanks Covid!). A food shortage. Seriously. We are running out of food, you have access to a teeny-tiny amount of food, but who knows how long it'll last? Close your eyes and imagine this for a few seconds.

What happened?

There is no question that everything in your life would be about food. You would look for food, limit and ration the food you already have, then eat a lot of food as soon as you find it.

There would be surges of adrenaline (also known as the 'fight or flight' hormone) during this restriction which gives you the energy you need to function, but your metabolism (the chemical process your body uses to convert food into energy) would cleverly slowdown to utilise and save the nutrients that you *are* eating. Being forced to eat less, you may lose weight but your metabolism would slow down even more to make sure you don't lose too much weight too fast because (bottom line) you'll die.

Let's stay on this food-shortage journey for just a little longer.

So, you've been eating less and rationing food for a while when suddenly, you find more than a handful of food which magically (well, perhaps less magically and more obviously) dominates your 'will power' and you eat the entire plate/bowl/block/bag. This is where you devour or binge on any and all foods that you find. Stop half way through? Don't be ridiculous! This is about survival, storing nutrients and making sure that you don't die.

We've all been there at one time or another right?

Now, despite what you may think (or what we are lead to believe), devouring this food is a good thing.

Wait, bingeing is a good thing? Just hear me out.

It is your body's job to help you store nutrients for energy – who knows how long it's going to be before your next meal! This session of indulgence (when you find more than a handful of food and can't seem to stop eating) will certainly give you some much needed 'get-up-and-go' energy, but your metabolism will remain in a low functioning state knowing that this feast will soon come to an end.

Let's say that you inhaled a bowl of pasta, 1/2 block of chocolate and washed it down with a few glasses of wine - almost without realising! Regardless of how much food you ate in one session, you're still in a famine. Your body will continue to search for food and your metabolism will remain slow to make sure you stay alive. How do you stay alive when food is scarce? That's easy: keep eating as much as you can, when you can (aka binge).

In order for the human body to survive, the human body will crave food (to the *extreme*) to make sure that it stays fuelled for the next survival challenge.

I hope by now this food-shortage scenario is putting things into perspective. If it's not, then let me put it simply:

The 'food shortage' in the above scenario is a diet, the 'limiting and rationing food' is you on the diet, the 'session of indulgence' is the binge-session(s) that will inevitably happen (that has NOTHING to do with willpower, and EVERYTHING to do with survival).

Other things that happen during this food shortage (or when you're on a diet) is: your hormones don't work properly, your sex drive drops (no one wants to bring children into a world where there is minimal/no food!!!), you become irritable, short-tempered and grouchy. Your body is in major 'conserve energy' mode, so your metabolism remains low and your energy mainly comes from spikes in your stress hormones.

Now, let's pretend that you are currently on a diet (who's pretending?), and have now decided that it's not working.

Regardless of when you stopped dieting, your body is still in a famine. This means that whenever you find food you will eat.....a lot. This will continue if your body is deprived of food. But of course! Don't forget that there has been a major food shortage and you were hungry for 6 weeks, 8 months, 5 years (or however long you've been on a diet/dieting for).

Your body is beyond clever and is not convinced that there won't be another food famine tomorrow, next week, next year (or on Monday which is the most famous of all days to start a diet)....so you're going to be wanting to eat a lot of food for a while.

You will gain some weight when you decide to stop dieting (is that dread I'm sensing?) But this is a *good* thing. Your body will be able to repair, nourish and rebuild itself (and attempt to protect you for any future famines).

'But I am actually eating a lot on this diet'. This is certainly a very common remark I hear in clinic when people are attempting to defend their particular diet.

Let me ask you this: are you fixated on food? Are you always thinking about your next snack or meal? Are you super excited about your first cheat-meal, or what you'll be eating when your 12 week shred is finally over? Are you restricting/depriving yourself of foods or food groups? Even if you think you're eating enough - but are still battling between dieting and bingeing - then your body is in crisis.

Only restricting yourself a little? You're not fooling anyone.





CHAPTER THREE



We Need To Eat

I Know, It Sounds SO Obvious!

Your body is built for survival.

Your body is a ridiculously intelligent organism, far more intelligent than the \$72 billion dollar weight loss and diet industry pretend to be (they don't care about you, all they care about is money....don't even get me started!).

When we restrict our bodies in an attempt to control our weight, our (super smart, highly intelligent) body will compensate by fixating on food, holding onto weight and slowing down our metabolism. If you've ever been on a diet, or if you're on a diet right now, you'll know exactly what I'm talking about.

Survival. Staying alive. Is there anything more important? Not to your body there isn't.

Food is something that gives us nutrients. Nutrients provide our bodies with energy so we can move, grow, breathe, digest food, stay warm, repair and rejuvenate as well as keep our immune systems healthy (just to name a few reasons why we need to eat).

Do you often wonder what you could do with all of your free time if you weren't constantly thinking about food/your weight?

'Ahuh' Moment: If you're obsessed with food, it's not because you have a food addiction - it's because you're hungry.

~Calories in versus Calories out~

This is probably one of my favourite 'myths'. I use the word 'myth' lightly, because although this concept is preposterous for humans, it is built on fact.

Let me explain.

The science of calories in versus calories out works like this (and this is a direct quote from one of our Australian Government Health Websites):

“If you take in more energy than you use, you store the extra as fat. To lose excess fat means you need to take in less energy (fewer kilojoules) or use more through exercise, or preferably both”.

Thank you, Aussie Health Hub.

Now, this seems very straight forward and basic right?

If you eat more than your body needs, your body will store it (you'll put on weight). If you eat less than what your body needs, you'll lose weight.

This equation would most definitely work for us.....*if* we were all robots.

Which we're not. Which is why it doesn't work.

Wait – counting calories worked for you? Or someone you know? For a while? If you (or your 'friend') can maintain your weight loss for 5+ years then congrats, you'll be one of the 4% of Australians that manage to keep their 'diet weight' off!

~We Are Not Robots~

It may be an obvious one, but it needs to be said. You are not a robot, and your body does not work like a machine – in fact we are way more complicated than that.

Although we are all made up of the same 'stuff' (bones, muscles, organs, connective tissue etc.), we are also made up with different genetic and cultural traits, not to mention that everything inside of us (hormones, blood volume, nutrients, glucose etc) are all in different quantities.

For arguments sake, if we were robots the principle of energy balance would work:

- Eat more calories than you expend, gain weight
- Eat less calories than you expend, lose weight.

But we aren't robots – have I said that already? Counting calories is fundamentally flawed, and here are 5 more reasons why it doesn't work (though I'm sure there are about 500....) :

~The 5 Fundamental Flaws of Calorie Counting~

- 1)** *Individuals absorb calories uniquely and variably.* Our gut bacteria can increase or decrease the calories we absorb.
- 2)** *We don't absorb all of the calories we eat.* Some foods pass through undigested and this varies between foods.
- 3)** *Calorie counts aren't accurate.* The calorie counts on food labels, apps and in databases are averages, not precise numbers. The error can be up to 50%.
- 4)** *How you prepare your food actually changes the calorie load.* Cooking your food makes more of the calories available for adsorption and food labels don't always show this. This error can be up to 90%!
- 5)** *The portions we eat are greatly mismeasured.* This makes it easy to consume a lot more calories than you intend to.

So no, calories in versus calories out is not the answer to anyone's weight or health issues.

I also want to make mention that although the Aussie Health Hub talks about calories in versus calories out, it does not endorse weight loss from dieting as quoted below:

“Research shows that dieting for weight loss is NOT effective in the long term and may actually be associated with weight regain”.

So if you're looking for a way to lose weight quickly, then regain even more weight than you lost, dieting and calorie counting is most definitely your answer.

People Who Diet frequently are more likely to:

- Engage in binge eating,
- Purge or misuse laxatives,
- Restrict food intake,
- Over-exercise,
- Become preoccupied with food,
- Develop disordered eating.

~Just A Few More Reasons Why Diets Don't Work~

- Insulin,
- Stress Hormones,
- Thyroid Function,
- Liver Function,
- Gut Bacteria.

Want to know how these 5 things stop a diet in its' tracks? Dr Libby Weaver's book *Accidentally Overweight* dives into these important elements and why the 'calorie equation' (calories in versus calories out) is not the determinant of our body shape and size. You should read this one, it's awesome – check out the recommended reading section at the end of this eBook for more great titles.



CHAPTER FOUR



Your Body Knows What To Do

A Little Trust Goes A Long Way

When was the last time you listened to your body? When was the last time you didn't shoot it down and choose a celery stick over a piece of chocolate, only to then eat an apple, peanut butter on toast.....*then* a piece of chocolate (because that is what you originally wanted after all!)

Your body knows what to do.

After feeding yourself, dropping all restrictions and listening to your body, your metabolism will eventually return to normal and your weight will stabilize.

Do you trust your appetite? Do you trust yourself? Most people think that if given the chance, they'd eat 3 blocks of chocolate, 2 pizzas, a bag of roasted cashew nuts etc etc...basically eat themselves into oblivion.

I am here to tell you that you won't. You can't. Don't believe me? Perhaps go back and read the first few chapters again.

It is not about trusting yourself – your body is only doing what it needs to do to survive.

The real question is, are you willing to do what you *need* to do to help your body break free from starvation and come back to health?

~Set Point Weight~

Why aren't we dieting pro's by now? There are so many experts telling us to eat this, avoid that, drink this, try this diet because it worked for me etc.

Body weight is regulated by your brain. This means that if your weight changes too much too quickly, your brain and your body actually start fighting back and push you towards what it thinks is the correct weight for you. You may not prefer the same weight as your brain prefers (you might not be reading this eBook or dieting if you did), but this is one of the main reasons why dieting does not work.

Let's talk about body fat specifically.

Your brain measures the level of body fat using leptin (a hormone that is released into the bloodstream by the fat cells. Leptin communicates with your brain – well, your hypothalamus if you want to get technical).

Everyone has a certain level of body fat that their body favours and your brain will defend this amount (again, even if it's not your desired amount). As you begin to lose weight, the amount of leptin in the bloodstream will decrease and this is what tells your brain to fight and bring the fat back! Yes, it's basically doing the exact opposite of what you want it to do. Try as we might, but it's very hard to beat out biology.

Welcome to the stage 'starvation response'. This reaction is one we've all had at some stage or another. Starvation response makes *any* food- no matter how long it's been sitting out for, or how many children have had their fingers in it- look delicious.

Your body and brain make cravings impossible to ignore. This is why there is no such thing as 'will power' - you will never win a battle of survival against your brain and your body.

Dieting is stressful and it actually increases stress hormones in your body, which are also linked to weight gain.

Dieting encourages you to suppress and ignore your hunger, which in the long-term can make it harder to listen to your body when it comes to natural hunger cues.

~Cravings~

Ah cravings, another one of my favourite topics. In true Belinda style: the definition of craving is 'a *powerful* desire for something'.

For as long as I can remember, cravings have been labelled as bad.

Cravings – quick, get rid of them, suppress them, do anything you can to stop them from ruining your life!

In actual fact, cravings are vital for survival. Think about all of those times you were on a diet but all you wanted to eat was pizza, or chocolate. This was not your body 'failing' you, this was your body's attempt at healing you.

I know what you're thinking: how can pizza and chocolate heal me? Is this a dream come true? I'm going to let Caroline Doona (author of 'The F*ck It Diet') take this one:

"Carbohydrate and fat-rich foods are often what your body craves because calories are what will heal your metabolism the fastest. The dense and easily available energy is what will save you from a famine state".

Side note: if we didn't diet, we would follow our cravings and hunger cues without question.

Resistance, deprivation and restriction makes the body scream louder (all dieters know this first hand!)

~Food. It's Just Food~

There is no good or bad food. There's just food. The sooner you realise this, the better off you'll be.

Take food off its pedestal. Better still, take restricted 'treat' foods off the pedestal. You can eat what you want when you want.

There. I said it. You're free.

So what if it's 10am and you feel like a brownie? Do it. What's stopping you?

Rules. Beliefs. Fear.

Who's rules? Perhaps you can hear your Mum saying 'it's 10am, you should have a piece of fruit'. Perhaps you believe that eating a brownie will 'undo all of your hard work', cause you to write this day off and encourage a binge session. Perhaps you're scared of your old pal 'guilt' who is waiting eagerly in the wings.

Take a breath and remember that it's just a brownie. (Another quick side note: the guilt of eating a brownie weighs more than the brownie itself!)

Food is just food. Some days you might want a muffin. Other days you might want a salad. If there's no such thing as treats, then there's no reason to scoff 3 pieces of cake at your best friend's birthday party.

You'll be surprised how often your body will tell you what it wants.

Remember that your body is a highly advanced organism - it knows what it needs to survive.

If you stop dieting you might be pleasantly astonished at how often you actually want to eat salad, fruit and vegetables (and not because it's the only thing that you're actually allowed to eat).

~I Need To Diet, Otherwise I'll Just Get Fat~

No. You. Don't. And. No. You. Wont.

We have been taught and are still constantly bombarded with information that tells us 'eating too much is wrong', 'feeling full is wrong' – well, I'm here to tell you that eating and feeling satisfied is WONDERFUL and far from wrong.

We now know (and repetition works like a charm) that dieting/food restriction reduces the rate of our metabolism and then we become fixated on food in order to survive.

All of that energy wasted on thinking and fantasising about food – ARGH!

Here's the other thing I need you to know: in order for your body to fully heal you need to feed yourself.

How long have you been on a diet? How long have you been yo-yo dieting? This is not going to happen overnight. Depending on your diet history, this could take a few months, or even a few years. It would be crazy to think that your body could heal itself in 7 days if you've been dieting for 2 years. So yes, it's going to take time. Will you put on weight? Probably. Yes.

This is what your body needs to heal – no one wants to be in crisis.

Woah. Putting on weight. How does this statement: 'you will probably put on weight' make you feel?

Happy? Petrified? Liberated? Already planning your next calorie-restricted diet?

Before you freak out any more, let me explain just a little more (and attempt to put your mind at ease).

If you have controlled your eating for a long time, you will most likely panic when you see how hungry you actually are.

You need a lot of food on a daily basis. You'll need even more when nourishing and repairing yourself after dieting.

You may panic at the amount. But it's ok. It is completely normal to heal your body with large amounts of food.

You will not be eating like this forever.

Healing takes time (and this varies for everyone) but your metabolism and your weight will stabilise. You can help this by letting go of restriction and deprivation, trusting the healing process and coming to terms with the fact that in order to fully heal, you may have to put on some weight (health is a feeling not a number on a scale or a clothes size anyway!)

If this really scares you, don't worry – you're not alone.

Reach out and ask for help.

Be sure to see the 'On To New Beginnings' chapter for support.



CHAPTER FIVE



What Do You Really Want?

It's Time To Think. Honestly.

I'm not a Nutritional Psychologist (yet – I'm on my way there though!) but I do know this: you have to love yourself as you are right now, to give yourself what you want.

What do you really want out of a diet?

- To be skinnier?
- Happier?
- To look incredible in active wear?
- To fit into the dress you bought 2 sizes smaller as weight-loss motivation?
- To meet the man/woman/person of your dreams?

What will you give yourself if you make it to your goal weight: a new wardrobe? A new haircut? A new pair of shoes? A new car? A holiday?

Being skinnier won't make you happier and if you think it will then you are setting yourself up for disappointment.

If you aren't happy right now, you need to ask yourself why. All of your issues won't magically disappear when you lose 10 kgs. You may find temporary happiness, but your life is still your life.

So what is it that you *really* want?

You need to buy yourself that new wardrobe now, regardless of your current weight (because you're amazing and brilliant – you deserve it!)

Weight loss won't change the way you feel about yourself. Weight loss won't change the way you feel about your job, or your life.

Feeling better on the inside, loving yourself and being kind to your body is the key – not external 'beauty' whatever that may mean to you.

So, I ask you again, what is it that you really want?

Answering this should be the #1 priority on the 'healthier you' list.

~Being Overweight Runs In My Family~

Well, here I am to stop that one in its tracks with one word: *epigenetics*.

Epigenetics is an incredible area of biology that looks at how external modifications to DNA (e.g. the environment) can turn genes 'on' or 'off'.

Let's break it down without getting lost in the amazing world of science.

Genes are the essential functional and physical units of heredity (what you inherit from your parents and their parents and their parents etc). Genes carry the information that determines your traits.

Genes are made up of DNA.

DNA is the molecule that contains the genetic code that determines all of the information about how a living thing will look and act. Your DNA is unique to you - you receive 50% of your DNA from each of your parents.

Let's say that you have a family history of high cholesterol. You may have inherited a gene that makes you more susceptible to high cholesterol. But that's it. Susceptible - NOT 100% guaranteed.

Epigenetics has shown that it is our environment that determines whether or not the high-cholesterol gene (in this example) is switched on or not. The same applies for being overweight, diabetes, mental health (etc).

Your external environment refers to things such as diet, stress, exposure to toxins, medicines you ingest etc. So you may be more *susceptible*, because of your family history but it is NOT inevitable that you will have high cholesterol.

Dr Bruce Lipton is the pioneer of epigenetics and so cleverly said:

"We are not the victims of our genes, but the masters of our fates".

There you go. No more playing the victim, only the victor – the master of your health and your life.



CHAPTER SIX



Onto New Beginnings

Where To Now?

I'm so glad you asked.

If you are a chronic dieter, this is only the very beginning.

It's time to stop striving for 'skinny' (or fit, or whatever it is that you *think* you want right now) and start striving for inner health and happiness. Watch your world open up when you stop worrying/obsessing about food and your weight.

Unfollow everyone on social media who makes you feel bad about yourself. Instagram, Facebook – they're just highlight reels so don't get sucked into the damaging self-esteem chaos.

Instead, follow real humans (and no, a woman who eats 8 bananas a day and claims that it made her 'super skinny and healthy' is NOT a real human). Follow *anyone* that adds value to your life.

Or better still, perhaps get off social media and live in the real world instead (the digital world doesn't actually exist after all).

Remember that this is a process and it's going to take time. It's ok to have set backs once you decide to stop dieting forever. Yes, you'll have slip ups ('woops, I accidentally started restricting food again!') but it's absolutely ok because this is a lifelong change – make sure you always bring your awareness back to your body and your health.

Also, know that you are not alone. The anti-diet movement is on the rise and together we can boycott diets for good, love our bodies as they are and actually get our lives back.

Ask for help from whoever you need it from.

Ditch friends that don't serve you. You know the ones - we've all had/have them. Those friends that are way too focused on aesthetics, that need you to constantly pump them up, that you had a lot of things in common with about 5 years ago but now really struggle to remember why you're friends.

Start doing things for yourself for a change.

Choose health. Choose happiness. Choose to live your life.

If you want guided support and professional (researched and real!) health recommendations, a Clinical Nutritionist may be just what you're looking for.

~How To Spot A Diet~

- Promotes very fast weight loss (without professional supervision),
- Focuses on short-term changes to your eating or exercise,
- Focuses on weight loss,
- It uses any or all of the following words: fat blasting, fat melting, metabolism boosting, get shredded & lose weight quickly/easily,
- Disguises itself as a 'lifestyle change' but is impossible to do short-term (let alone for life!)
- An A-list Hollywood celebrity used it and it was 'AMAZING',
- Wants you to do before and after photos/measurements,
- Includes pills, weight loss supplements, meal replacements (shakes, protein bars) and processed 'weight loss' foods,
- Someone is selling it to you!!!!
- States "This is not a pyramid scheme",
- It has rigid rules,
- There are rules that are disguised with the words 'this is not a diet',
- It wants to cut out an entire food group(s) or even individual foods.

~Final Thoughts~

Health.

Healthy at every size.

Normalise normal bodies.

Love your body.

Ah yes, beautiful!



BONUS

**My Story
(99% fat free)**

The 99% Fat-Free Version

***Disclaimer** – this story contains personal information that some readers may find triggering. If you need to reach out please flip to the support section at the end of this eBook.*

I am such a fan of personal stories. I love knowing where a person came from and the experiences that shaped who they are today. For this reason, I wanted to include my short but sweet ‘diet’ story.

I grew up in a house with my mum: group fitness instructor extraordinaire, aerobics champion and all-round super mum. My sister and I (oh, and my brother when he came along) grew up hanging out in the creche - the supervised children’s area- at the gym, so it was inevitable that we were going to make our way into the fitness industry.

My Mum was a gym junkie in the 90’s which meant that it was skim, low-fat, no-fat or it was nothing- no one cottoned on to the ‘we add heaps of sugar to compensate for the lack of fat’ in the 90’s. I never gave this another thought – this was the way we ate and the way I continued to eat into adulthood (until I met my boyfriend, now husband who grew up with his Nan so he was full-fat everything – oh how our worlds collided!) So from an early age I became ‘food aware’.

Knowing that I wanted to share my story, I’ve been trying to think about what really set-off the dieting and body awareness cascade in my young life (I am a lover of psychology and you know what they say about today’s thoughts/beliefs being shaped by past events), then I found it.

I recall a lunch time in primary school – it would have been year 5 so I would have been 10 years old. I was walking with my best friend and 2 of the boys (that we not-so-secretly had crushes on). As we were walking, Ryan (not his real name) leaned over to me and pointed at my best friend Sally (not her real name) and said “Sally has the most amazing legs – look at them, they’re perfect”. Please note that prior to this, my beautiful, naive 10-year-old self had no idea that legs actually looked different, that boys looked at legs, or that mine weren’t also perfect. But from that day on, I had a complex about my legs (damn you Ryan!)

Over the years my leg complex slowly morphed into a whole-body distortion.

Now, I was a very active kid and teen – netball, dancing, gym classes- so I was in no way overweight (besides the pre-puberty puppy fat).

Side note: I had (and still have) nice, strong, muscly legs. I was very aware of eating healthy and I remember restricting foods for fear that it would make me fat. It was nothing too extreme, but there was certainly a mini disordered eating pattern beginning to emerge pre-teen.

At high school, I was dancing 4-5 nights each week plus all day Saturdays. I'd hit the gym while my mum and sister taught fitness classes 2-3 times a week and I also went for regular walks/jogs almost daily. Again, I was far from overweight, in fact I was almost flirting with an exercise addiction – yikes!

I went off to Uni and my first degree was certainly 3 years of the most fun (and also some of the most intense suffering) I have experienced to date. I studied a Bachelor of Arts in Musical Theatre which means I sang, danced and acted my way to becoming a degree qualified individual.

Now, the performance industry is certainly a fickle one (as I know many are) and I am purely speaking from my personal experience. I remember at Uni there were always the fly-by comments from dance teachers like: “in this class I can only see 2 of you that will actually make it as dancers”, or “suck your stomach in, I can see the pizza you ate last night”. Harmless, fly-by comments but when you're surrounded by talented class mates and are already worried about being 'too fat', those harmless comments really begin to weigh heavily (love a good pun).

So what did I do? Every diet you can imagine....Atkins, lemon detox, high protein, no carbs, *only* vegetables, I abused laxatives for a while (eeekkkk not for the faint hearted), I used to run 10kms wrapped in plastic and also tried not eating for a while.....but nothing seemed to work. I even remember (much to my horror now) wishing that I had the 'willpower' to stick to not eating just like the girls with eating disorders – that's how bad I thought I wanted to be skinny! I also remember eating 'so well' during the week, then bingeing and drinking on the weekends but never being able to see that this wasn't at all 'healthy'.

Looking back at that time, I was so fixated on my weight that I blamed my body for all of my failures and the fact that I didn't get cast in major roles (and this ridiculous fixation I fear, certainly helped me miss out on some great opportunities).

In my last year of Uni I went to Melbourne with a few class mates to audition for a casting agent (because the aim at the end of Uni is to have an agent and we had somehow managed to snag ourselves an audition before we'd even graduated! Win!) So, there we were, in Melbourne auditioning for an agent. It was a big audition and we had to dance first. Great, I can dance and I smashed it. I remember walking away feeling so proud. Then we had to sing a song we had prepared and perform a monologue for the acting component. Smashed it again– I felt great.

So how do you think the rest of this story goes?

No doubt you guessed it. Out of 8 of us who attended, 4 got accepted and I missed out. Why? And I quote in the email I received “you are a great singer and lovely dancer Belinda but you're just a bit too thick around the middle”.

WHAT? I was a healthy size 10-12. Was I super skinny? No (well, clearly not). Was I super tall? No. 170cm. Was I thick around the middle? Shit. I thought not but apparently I was in her opinion.....so from here on in, it was my 'thickness' that stopped me from achieving *everything*.

Fast-forward to 2008, I landed a few lovely touring contracts and also knew that I needed a steady income if I wanted to survive as an adult living in a big city (ah, Melbourne life). So I decided to study to become a personal trainer. I still went to auditions and was continuously turned away. It's rare that you get feedback on why you're turned away but nobody needed to tell me – I was too thick. Simple as that (or so the story in my head continued to tell me).

I stopped auditioning after a few years and continued my work as a personal trainer. I worked with so many amazing people who all seemed to have one thing in common: an obsession with their weight and dieting. There may have been so much more going on with their health background, but inevitably everyone turns to weight and aesthetics as a cure.

This is what inspired me to study the science of Nutrition – no, not a 6 week ‘eat this, don’t eat that’ nutrition course but an actual science degree. I wanted to learn about the human body, how it works and why a vast majority of us seem to have issues with weight (and a fixation on dieting).

Now I know.

And I want to share it with everyone.

Diets don’t work (but you already know that!)

Restriction and deprivation breeds obsession.

Punishment, whether it be in the form of exercise, food constraints or denying yourself the things you want – it just doesn’t work.

Listening to your body, eating for health and ditching ‘perfection’ and ‘skinniness’ *does* work. Try it. Be free.

I now have a daughter and a son of my own and I am trying to make sure that they both grow up confident, strong and happy in the amazing, incredible bodies that they have. I hope that one day they are *both* (because this affects males too) educated and assertive enough to NEVER diet. If someone even floated the word ‘diet’ near them, I hope they’d laugh and say ‘f*ck off’ (hmmm, the vision of my innocent little babes using such profanities is a little unnerving so perhaps they can say ‘Pffftttt, no thank you!’)

I remember having a conversation with my Dad back when I was a little 10-year-old who was annoyed about my ‘imperfect’ legs. It went something like this:

Me: *‘Dad, I hate my legs, they’re so fat’*

Dad: *‘Do your legs work?’*

Me: *‘What? Well, yes they work but that’s not what I’m saying’*

Dad: *‘Then your legs are pretty great aren’t they’*

Thanks Dad, they sure are.

~Further Readings~

If you enjoyed this eBook and have a craving – pun always intended - for more, then here are a few of my favourite books about how the body works (and why dieting never will!)

Accidentally Overweight – Dr Libby Weaver

*The F*uck It Diet* – Caroline Dooner

Rushing Women's Syndrome – Dr Libby Weaver

The Biology of Belief – Dr Bruce Lipton

The Hungry Brain – Stephan J Guyenet

~What is an Eating Disorder?~

An eating disorder is NOT a lifestyle choice, a diet gone wrong or a cry for attention. An eating disorder is a serious mental illness that causes unhealthy eating habits to develop.

If you or a loved one need support, be sure to reach out – no one has to fight this battle alone.

www.eatingdisorders.org.au

www.butterfly.org.au

~Thank You~

- ❖ To my gorgeous husband who has always been my number 1 fan.
- ❖ To my 2 little babes who are forever teaching me valuable life-lessons.
- ❖ To my entire family - especially my Mum, Dad, Step-Dad and Step-Mum for all of your love and support.
- ❖ To my clients (past, present & future) for always being courageous.
- ❖ To my lovely, honest and incredible friend LJ for always doing me fantastic favours.
- ❖ To you for reading this book & choosing to put your health first.

~References~

All available upon request.



Belinda Martinella
The Travelling Nutritionist Australia

~Support~

If you're looking for nutritional advice and support, Belinda Martinella is your gal. Belinda has been in the health and fitness industry for the past 10 years and offers 1:1 nutritional consultations as well as group and family sessions to begin/assist with your health journey. Sessions can be held face-to-face (in the fully restored, vintage mobile clinic) or online. Belinda is also a highly skilled public speaker with the ability to captivate, educate and motivate her audiences. Choose from her many community presentations and invite her to your next event.

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