

A close-up photograph of two raspberries on a white surface. The raspberry in the foreground is in sharp focus, showing the texture of its many small drupelets. The second raspberry is in the background, slightly out of focus. The lighting is bright, creating soft shadows and highlights on the fruit's surface.

diary
-of a-
cleanse

Thoughts on Food, Emotions and Healing

JANET PEARSON

Diary of a Cleanse: Thoughts on Food, Emotions and Healing

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Diary of a Cleanse

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DAY 1

After putting my start date off over and over again, I'm ready to head into this journey today. I had planned to begin a few weeks ago, but it seems there is always one more reason to put it off...the strawberries aren't quite ready yet; there is a potluck party to go to; I'm going through an emotionally challenging time and I really need one more piece of toast.

But today is the day that I'm ready to say "yes" to myself and my health. Today is the day I'm ready to put my courage and self-discipline back into place and march bravely forth into the unknown. Well, it's not really the unknown for me because this is my sixth time doing a deep cleanse, but one thing I have learned is that there are new elements and emotions that arise each time, new things to learn about myself and my habits, and new discoveries to make about how lousy and how great I can feel.

So why am I subjecting my body and soul to this experience? Well, first of all, I love how doing these cleanses continues to change my relationship with food. It's been a process that has occurred over the past three years. Certainly I didn't just suddenly change my eating habits one day. But now, it is less and less of a change to go from how I eat on a day-to-day basis to how I eat when I am cleansing.

I remember that first cleanse three years ago and how completely confusing it was and how overwhelmed I was trying to figure out what it was that my partner and I could eat. With just a list of alkaline and acidic forming foods to go by, and a handful of "cleansing" recipes, I was really challenged to feed us anything beyond fruit smoothies and salads.

This time I'm not so concerned as I have been able, over the past three years, to vastly expand my repertoire of cleansing appropriate dishes. With

the deliciousness of sprouted garlicky hummus, sprouted malt biscuits and seedy carob brownies, cleansing time seems more like a feast than a famine.

Cleansing mid-summer is such a treat as well as the gardens are brimming with an exciting assortment of greens (both green and red!), flowers, peas, strawberries, cherries, cucumbers, tomatoes and zucchinis. Preparing food seems almost unnecessary—I can just walk around the farm and graze away. I've even managed to set up little corners of the garden to contain “mouthful mixes” that include a couple kinds of lettuce, some violas or other edible flowers, some chives or green onions and maybe a sprig of parsley or lemon balm, sorrel or mint to be the “dressing”.

I have found that it's much more difficult to cut back on the amount of food I'm eating when I'm buying grocery store food that has pretty much lost all of its vitality by the time it reaches my plate. My body still wants more and more to satisfy its needs, not only for nutrition but for life force. Eating a handful of salad that has been harvested only seconds earlier provides me with a flood of real food and sun energy and only a handful is required to meet the needs of my body and lead to the feeling of satisfaction.

Think of having just finished a huge Thanksgiving turkey dinner. It seems there is always someone poking around in the fridge an hour later, looking for something to eat. Unbelievable! But it's because the body has received no real nourishment from the generally over-cooked meal and is still looking to satisfy its needs.

Of course there is the emotional aspect of why we eat as well, and undoubtedly during a cleansing time this plays a significant part in the choices I make and don't make. And I suppose that's why it has become easier each time I cleanse to let go of my emotional attachment to eating specific foods.

I'm very excited this cleanse as well as I have prepared my own bowel tonic instead of using a kit from the store. Two days ago I took a barefoot walk all around our farm and gathered the herbs and roots I need to loosen the stored toxins in my body, help flush them out and nourish myself through this ordeal. I now have everything I need growing on my farm, except the Cascara Sagrada and Turkish Rhubarb, which I do have growing but they're not old enough yet to harvest. I decocted my gatherings and added honey from our own bees to make a magical, truly local, powerful elixir to support my body through this process. Just as the power of eating freshly harvested plants is undisputable, I believe that the herbs growing within a one mile radius of where I live will have a thousand fold affect on my being. There is magic in the fact that no one else's hands have even touched these plants but mine on their way into my body. It makes the whole experience so much more real. I am honoured to live in a place where I am naturally surrounded by the fresh plants I desire and am able to cultivate the others, rather than taking dried herbs of unknown age and quality from all around the world.

I believe that as my diet gets more and more back to a natural state, in tune with the cycles and rhythms of nature, cleansing will just happen naturally. It will be more of a maintenance program than these 2-3 times per year overhauls.

I didn't end up actually eating much today, mainly because I also started my moontime and that usually forces me into fasting for a day anyways. So I started with a cup of Indian Spice tea with honey and coconut cream that my daughter so lovingly brought to me in bed. A little later I had a handful of lettuce and flowers and a bunch of freshly picked strawberries, still warm from the sun.

As soon as I had eaten the strawberries I realized that I had pretty much just gulped them down without really taking the time to savour and enjoy

them. I believe that is going to be one of the themes of this cleanse for me—to really slow down and be in the moment when I’m eating. So often I’m just snacking while I’m cooking or eating on the run. By not paying attention to the actual act of eating, it is so easy to end up overeating. The desire for the taste keeps us shoveling more in, while one mouthful properly savoured can give an equal satisfaction.

After cherries for dinner, I did it again with a halva ball that I’d finished eating before I even knew it. Unfortunately (or fortunately), I couldn’t even eat another one because it had been the last one. Now I’m left with the taste at the back of my throat, but no real memory of having eaten it.

I’ll have to make some more and try again tomorrow!

DAY 2

I started my day today with a bowl of freshly picked cherries and a cup of chai rooibos tea. I made a point of eating the cherries out in the sunshine, chewing them well and really trying to connect with “cherry” and savour it. I’m beginning to understand how doing these cleanses isn’t just about cleansing accumulated toxins and waste out of my body, it’s about changing my whole relationship with my body and what I eat—how I eat, too.

I wasn’t very hungry still this morning, but by lunch time I was starting to feel that familiar crashing feeling. It’s probably a big part of the reason why a lot of people don’t want to cleanse. It can be really difficult to operate on a day-to-day basis when you’re feeling bitchy and like you’re going to pass out. But I managed to finish my work and get back up to the house. The extreme heat of the summer day wasn’t helping either. “Great,” I thought. “Only day two and I’m already feeling challenged.”

I was really wanting to do the majority of this cleanse with just freshly picked food, but the added aspect of that is that it takes time and energy to

harvest, and when I'm crashing, going out into the heat and rooting around for strawberries doesn't seem very appealing.

So I grabbed one of the last sprouted sunflower seed brownies off the counter and chewed away. It satisfied my immediate need to eat.

The irony is that it isn't hunger that leads to the feeling of headache, nausea, etc. It's that as soon as your body doesn't have to work to digest food anymore, it can start to go into cleansing mode. Usually we feel better as soon as we eat something because it immediately stops the cleansing and puts the body back into digestion mode.

The brownie stopped the cleansing reaction and crash and put me back into a place where I could then prepare some lunch for the rest of my family.

Later in the afternoon I ate a whole bunch of fresh strawberries. I could taste the sunshine in them. What a treat to be able to just eat strawberries until I'd had my fill. One of the farm's workers had just picked about 15 pounds of berries, and I had the pleasure of just eating and eating. It's feeling really good to just eat one food at a time right now rather than mixing foods together.

I think we confuse our bodies an awful lot by eating such complicated meals. I'm guilty of this quite a bit. Loving food so much, I tend to want to include a bit of this and a bit of that into each meal. But the variety of enzymes that are required to process all of those different foods at the same time makes it difficult for the digestive system to deal with complicated meals.

I stuffed myself with delicious, juicy red strawberries. It was interesting because later in the afternoon I reached for the last of the brownies without thinking about it too much, but after one bite I realized that my body didn't want it at all; it was only my mind, my conditioning that I "should" eat

something or that I “want” to eat something that led me to it. I put it aside after one bite.

I sat down with my family and guests for dinner tonight and ate sauerkraut and a nice big salad with lentil, red clover and mung bean sprouts. A lot of people think that you can’t get enough protein just eating vegetables and fruit, but when you add sprouts into the picture you really open up a new level of nutrition. Plus, they are magical foods that are alive until the very moment that you pop them into your mouth and start to chew.

Sprouting is pretty much essential for this month long cleanse as it turns otherwise acid-forming foods into alkaline ones. All of the legumes hugely benefit from being sprouted, as do many nuts and seeds like almonds and sunflower seeds.

I went to bed feeling really well tonight. I haven’t really experienced any cleansing reaction yet. I’m not hungry and it’s satisfying to my higher self to be embarking on this journey.

DAY 3

Once again this morning I got off to a slow start with eating. I had my morning chai tea, but didn’t really feel like much else.

Even just by extending the period that we don’t eat a few extra hours in the morning by putting off breakfast, we are able to give our digestive systems a break and an opportunity to clean house a bit before we begin eating for the day. The body can’t digest and clean at the same time, so cutting back on the amount of food eaten and the types of foods eaten makes a big difference towards the amount of gunk you can cleanse out of your system.

I had a chewy lunch of raw veggie/flax crackers with avocado, garlic and nutritional yeast on them. After having a couple I was still hungry, so I

went back for more. I'm getting back into the "meal" thing. My original idea of doing mono-diets for the summer (ie. only cherries for a week, then only cucumbers for a week, etc.) doesn't seem to be happening. I just love food too much, and as I'm remembering all of the yummy cleansing things I can eat, I'm getting too excited to just stick to one thing for too long.

I don't know if nutritional yeast is alkaline forming or not. I couldn't find it on any of the lists, but I know from experience that when I have cut it out during other cleanses, I was really craving it. I guess maybe by cutting out whole grains as well I'm lowering my intake of B-vitamins and the yeast provides that. Besides, I'm not using any added salt (it slows the cleansing process down), so condiments like nutritional yeast and tamari and miso help me to stay sane. I did three weeks last summer when I ate only what was growing on our farm, and I really, really noticed the salt missing from my diet. I've decided to keep nutritional yeast in my diet this time. Ultimately it has to be about what works for me—but I'm doing my best to make these decisions based on my physical feelings and not my emotional cravings.

I made a delicious tomato soup for dinner to share with my friends. They all raved about how good it was. It's so wonderful to be able to share really good food with people, knowing that I'm helping to nourish their bodies as well as satisfy their taste buds. Not *everything* that is good for you has to taste bad!

I did a yoga class tonight and felt really strong and clean inside. I felt very connected to my inner source of light. People get so bogged down by all of the denatured, dead food they eat. I like to imagine how alive and powerful human beings would be if we all went back to eating clean, fresh, vibrant foods and nurtured our souls.

I go to sleep tonight feeling proud of myself for taking this on and eager to move towards new heights of spirituality and a deeper connection with nature.

DAY 4

Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink!

The state of the world's water sources is a really depressing subject. Whereas drinking water is intended to hydrate our bodies and flush toxins out, it has become a toxifying experience in itself. If it isn't chlorine and fluoride in city water, it is chemicals leached from plastic bottles. What is sold as clean, pure drinking water is a far cry from such a thing.

Today, as most days now, I walked up to where our creek runs into the water box to fill up a jug with water. I'm attempting to drink the water before it sits in any plastic or tanks anywhere. Besides, it feels really good to take ten minutes out of my day to walk up the hill, spend a few moments in the trees and spearmint and meditate with the sound of flowing water. All of my favourite places in my life have been next to creeks or waterfalls where the sound and energy of the water can wash through me, cleansing me on an energetic level.

I also take the time to reflect on what's happening in the lives of myself and my family and come up with a "word" to infuse into the water as it pours into the glass jar.

Dr. Emoto has done great experiments showing how just putting a word on a jar of water can totally change the crystal pattern that the water creates when it is frozen and then photographed. Chlorine water has no crystal pattern, as do many city waters. However, just by writing the word "love" or "peace" on the jar, you can totally change the crystal structure of the water.

I even went one step further today and took the jar of water up to our Spirit Room and placed it in the singing crystal bowl to structure it on a molecular level. I've always thought that having to drink eight cups of water a day seemed a bit excessive. I'm now thinking that the reason it seems our bodies need so much water is because it isn't pure, structured water that we are drinking. We actually need a certain amount of water just to process the amount of water that we're drinking!

The same thing goes with food, actually. We eat way more food than our bodies are designed to handle because it is dead, denatured, nutritionally deprived food. We eat and eat, beyond emotional reasons, because our bodies are still looking for some nutrition they can actually use. We then need more calories to run our digestive systems to move food through that isn't really nourishing us in the first place!

When I pick a piece of parsley or other green and eat it within seconds, standing there on the same ground that it has grown on, I can feel the nutrition coursing into my body. And beyond the vitamins and minerals, the life force of the plant nourishes my whole being. I don't know if scientists can measure what our bodies "need" in the way of plant life force, and what is supplied by the plants, but I can feel it and my pendulum shows that plants lose their life force vitality within a couple of hours after being picked.

I ate a huge salad for dinner and my leftover soup from last night. I have done this cleanse before only eating raw foods, and I have done one only eating fruits and vegetables grown on our farm, but I'm doing a bit more of a mix of this and that this time. I put some organic carrots and red pepper from the grocery store on my salad because I wanted to make a colourful salad. As I was eating it I realized that I didn't really need the additions beyond the greens. The carrots and red pepper didn't resonate with me the same way that the fresh greens did. So by moving back and forth between

genres of eating, I am able to become more aware of how my body reacts to different foods.

This can be very enlightening, particularly in your first cleanse. I had a friend phone me a few months ago who was on day 3 of her first cleanse. She said, “Janet, I’m looking through my cupboards and realizing that there is nothing here that I’m allowed to eat!” What an eye-opener it was for her about what her day-to-day diet had become. The first few cleanses it can be a struggle to figure out what to eat at all, and a red pepper from the grocery store is a god-send when your cupboards are full of prepared foods. By the fifth or sixth time, you will be so much more in tune with your body and your eating habits that you can be really refining what you consume based on how your body and your being react to different foods. You can actually have a real relationship with food!

DAY 5

Well, after all that going on about the red pepper yesterday, I thoroughly enjoyed a mango this morning. The sweet juiciness satisfied everything in me that needed satisfying at that point. Maybe it was because it was by itself with no other food to distract me from its perfection. The red pepper seemed like an addition. I just put it on the salad because it was there in my fridge and needed eating. It could have come or gone, whereas the mango was the meal. Part of changing my eating habits has definitely been taking a closer look at what constitutes a “meal” in my belief system. This is going to be different for everyone, I imagine, depending on where and how they grew up. For some people the meal won’t be finished until everything on their plate has been eaten (how many times have I completely overeaten so that I didn’t waste food!). Perhaps it’s only a meal if you’re sitting at a table eating off of a plate, or if it falls at 7:00am, 12:00pm or 5 o’clock

dinnertime. My morning meal was a mango that I just kept coming back for more of because no one else was eating it, until it was all gone.

My daughter came in at lunch time to fry herself an egg. I love fried eggs—especially the crispy parts that stick to the pan. So I couldn't help but stick my fingers in there and grab a little taste to chew on. This is called cheating. I'm pretty good at it now. One of the most difficult challenges for me through my series of cleanses has been that I have to keep preparing food for the rest of my family to eat at the same time. The first time I did a 30 day cleanse I was *very* diligent about not cheating. I understood how necessary it was to completely avoid temptation and stick to only the foods that were on my "alkalizing" list. I think I licked my fingers a couple of times that cleanse, but as much as I was struggling to come up with some ideas for something tasty to eat, I really stuck with it.

My last cleanse I was not so stringent about it at all. I'm comfortable enough in my new eating habits that I know I can take one little nibble of chocolate in a month without breaking down and instantly consuming the whole bar. I can appreciate these "cheating" foods in my life without needing them on a physical or emotional level. So, while I'm confessing, I'll also say that I had a nibble of my daughter's piece of chocolate this afternoon as well!

I remember my first cleanse, taking my kids to the bakery for a cookie. I sat there watching them eat their white flour, white sugar "treats", thinking to myself that I really didn't want to bring them to the bakery any more. I reached out and took one little crumb of cookie onto my fingertip and put it in my mouth--literally just one little crumb. Suddenly there was an explosion inside of my mouth. The sweetness was almost overwhelming. I couldn't even fathom what it would have felt like to have taken a whole bite. And yet, I'd just sat there and let my kids eat an entire cookie each.

Apparently it takes 21 days to grow new taste buds, so it is possible to change your tastes. And it doesn't mean that you don't enjoy the food any more, but, I find, that I am satisfied with a much smaller amount. When I do eat chocolate now, I eat one square of 70% dark organic, fair-trade chocolate. I take my time to savour and appreciate it, and all of my needs and desires associated with chocolate are then satisfied.

So, I'm not ready to live on fruit and veggies alone right now. I believe that would put me into too quick of a cleanse right now and I still need to be able to function through my 12+ hour work days. They say necessity is the mother of all invention, so I put on my thinking cap to see what I could come up with. I'm also going to be going to a music festival in a couple of days, so I need something that will power me, is easy to pack-and-go and doesn't require refrigeration.

Our first cleanse I found the recipe for sprouted, malted wheat biscuits. I remember eating a lot of them in our process of coming off of a fairly heavily grain influenced diet. I probably wouldn't have offered these biscuits around at a party, and my kids were pretty hesitant to eat them, but my partner and I were more than delighted to have something with some substance to it to chew on (two years later now my whole family loves these biscuits, which just goes to show how people's taste buds can change).

I'm at a point now where instead of searching through my "cleansing" and "raw food" cookbooks, I'm familiar enough with a new set of ingredients and processes that I can experiment a bit.

I started the food processor with some date pieces and raisins. They work well for being sticky and holding other stuff together. But the food processor was having a bit of trouble with them, so I dug through the fridge and found some leftover strawberry puree from when I made popsicles for the girls. I added the puree, but then it was pretty mushy so I added some

ground flax and sesame seeds and some shredded coconut. Finally, some carob powder was just what was needed to get it doughy enough that I could roll it into sticky balls. I put them into the dehydrator at 105 degrees for about 6 hours and presto, the stickiness was gone; they were nice little snacks that I could just carry in my hand, there was no refrigeration required and they tasted as close to a strawberry chocolate truffle as I was going to get while cleansing.

DAY 6

That old familiar crashing feeling started to come back to me today. It's the one when your digestive system has completed its necessary duties for the time being and your body can now focus on cleansing out a bunch of the stuff that's floating around or stuck in the corners.

It's like when you eat a meal. You can't start washing the dishes when the food is still on your plate. You have to finish the eating process and then start the clean-up. Unfortunately, that clean-up in our own bodies can be not-so-pleasant. Of course, the easiest way to make the feeling go away is to just eat something. And usually we actually interpret that feeling to mean that we're hungry, but there are other ways to work through it as well.

Drinking lots and lots of water is number one, of course. Helping to wash the toxins out is going to help you feel better in the long run, but you may still have to go through feeling lousy for awhile. That's why cleansing can be challenging if you still have to be active in your life. Experiencing a cleansing reaction while you're trying to deal with a testy customer or work construction on the 30th floor of a high-rise can be pretty intense. If you have the opportunity to drink lots of water and lay down for a bit doing some deep breathing, that can really help move some stuff out.

Or, you can do like I did and decide to slow the whole process down a bit. This is why I like to take 30 days to do a cleanse, so that I can slowly

ease into the fasting stage, gently preparing my body and slowly releasing stored up toxins without putting too much pressure on my kidneys to eliminate. I definitely did have stronger cleansing reactions my first few cleanses. I remember spending entire days feeling like I was going to throw-up. I drank lots of peppermint tea to try to ease my stomach and I did an enema to help clean out my lower bowel and help with the elimination, but chose not to try and slow it down by eating heavier foods. A baked potato can be a gift from the gods when suddenly things are moving too quickly—if you can make it through the hour it will take to bake it! Things like the sprouted wheat biscuits can really help out too. Sometimes it really is just a feeling of energy needed, and we would help ourselves to a spoonful of honey. I think it worked really well because it's so full of minerals. Minerals are what the body is looking for at that time to help neutralize the acids that are being released from your tissues and joints, looking for a way out of your body.

The first few cleanses I did I really followed the “schedule” of when to eat, when to take the herbs and when to drink the psyllium and clay shakes. I even carried a watch around with an alarm that would go off every 1 ½ hours to tell me it was time to do the next thing. Gradually I've moved away from that schedule, and my cleanses are more intuitive now. I found it quite stressful to follow these schedules, but I really appreciated having them available when I was first learning the process.

I guess the important thing is to do what works best for you. If you're feeling lousy and want to eat a baked potato, then by all means do. If you're on your day off and really want to try to go deep into the cleansing, drink a bunch of water, have a good dry brushing and an enema and work your way through it. Maybe you won't even get around to actually fasting on your first cleanse. Perhaps just eating alkaline foods and cutting down to

two meals a day for a few weeks is going to be more than enough for where you're at right now.

The most important thing is to honour ourselves and foster awareness of our choices. Guilt and shame are very high up on the list of acid forming emotions, and love is the strongest healing force. Honour your Self. Congratulate yourself for taking steps that others shy away from. Love yourself for who you are AT THIS MOMENT, seeing that you are on the path to higher levels of health and enlightenment.

DAY 7

Today was a most interesting and exciting day. One of my daughters and I (the other two are away with their Dad), packed up our strawberries, cherries, salad, sprouted crackers and avocado and strawberry bliss truffles (who said cleansing has to taste bad?) and headed across the lake to the Star Belly Jam music festival.

This is my day in the summer to treat myself. This is my “day off” from mid-spring until after harvest time. I headed into the day feeling clean, excited, and full of energy, looking forward to listening to lots of really good music and doing lots of dancing.

I don't get to spend as much time dancing as I would like to since having kids and living on a farm, so when the opportunity arises, I'm all for it. I started my adventure today by having a color reading done by a friend of mine. It's basically like a Tarot reading, only you choose from little bottles with various color combinations in them instead of from a deck of cards.

I like to do things like this when I'm cleansing because I find that I'm much clearer—mentally, emotionally and spiritually—and the information I need really comes to me. I think the more you can couple spiritual practice, be it yoga, tai chi, meditation, divination or quiet walks in nature, with the cleansing process, the deeper your results will be on both sides.

My color reading was very inspiring, insightful and encouraging. It was suggested that I need to dive into the dark depths of the volcano and peel away more of the onion layers of illusion. She said that this is not a light task.

I like the image of the layers of the onion peeling off because it goes with what I was talking about yesterday about going at your own pace with the knowledge that you are on the path. Changing the way I eat has truly been a journey for me over the past three years, and until I had changed one thing, I couldn't even have known that the next thing was waiting there to be addressed. Peeling away one layer reveals the next that is hidden beneath, out of reach of our awareness. There is no quick fix for healing and cleansing our bodies anymore than there is a short-cut to enlightenment.

One of the benefits of cleansing is that it definitely puts you more in tune with your intuitive self and your powers of manifestation. I remember years ago having a friend who was doing an extended juice fast. He said he was amazed at how quickly things were manifesting for him—sometimes within a matter of hours.

So within an hour or two of being shown that it is time for me to dive into the volcano, I ran into a woman that I know, but don't know well, and she invited me to join a small group this week to go on a shamanic drumming journey into the Cody Caves just down the highway from here. "It's going to be a small group," she said, "and I hadn't even thought about inviting you until I saw you walk up, but I think it would be really great to have you there."

Wow. Three cheers for the power of manifestation. Here's my invitation into the volcano...

I spent the rest of the afternoon and evening treating myself to a 40 minute massage and then dancing, dancing, dancing. This is also a very

effective way of loosening stuff up in your body for removal and it totally gets your lymphatic system pumping. The lymphatic system is highly undervalued in our bodies. Many people don't even know that we have one, but it plays a vital role in our immunity and removing toxins from our bodies. Unfortunately, unlike our blood circulatory system, the lymphatic system doesn't have its own pump, so we have to be active in our bodies to keep it moving. Bouncing on a trampoline can be great for this, or bouncing on the grass under the stars to inspirational music coming from talented musicians works well too. Who'd have thought that cleansing could be so much fun?

DAY 8

Here's an unfortunate part of the cleansing process...

Once you begin to loosen stuff up, it wants to come out somehow. One way for this to happen is through the bowels and the urinary tract, but the skin is also a huge channel for things to both enter and leave our bodies. It is actually the body's biggest organ.

What's unfortunate is that quite often things choose to leave our bodies through the skin on our face.

I worked with a woman once who was trying to cleanse in order to help clear up the acne on her face. She was dismayed when she discovered that it was actually getting worse before it got better.

After I finished my first cleanse, because stuff gets loosened up that doesn't necessarily get all cleaned out before you start eating again, I had the hugest pimple of my life, right on my chin. In fact, you could hardly call it a pimple—it was more the size of a sore. It oozed and grew and I, of course, was horrified, but eventually it went away.

So I have my second small pimple forming on my face, which is unusual for me, so I decided it would be SPA night tonight. Besides, none of the rest of my family is here for the next two days, so what better reason to relax and pamper myself.

I started with a facial steam. I boiled a pot of water and added a mixture of dried herbs including rose petals, mint, chamomile and parsley. With a towel over my head, I breathed deep until the heat was gone, letting my pores open and my face sweat out what was in there.

In the bathroom, I stripped down and gave myself a good dry brushing. I have a nice wooden brush with natural, soft bristles that I use to brush my skin with vigour. I always start at my feet and brush upwards towards my heart in as many places as I can reach. Dry brushing is an excellent way to clean out your pores so they can effectively eliminate and to stimulate your lymphatic system.

Next I got into a hot bath. I added about 6 cups of Epsom salts (I have a large bathtub) with the essential oils of rosemary, juniper, lemon and mandarin. The salts act to draw toxins out through your skin while the hot water has opened up your pores.

Settled into the bath, I smeared a mixture of yogurt, ground oats, kaolin clay and ground rose and lavender petals onto my face and laid back to relax and let my skin get deeply cleaned and nourished. I lay there quite some time, listening to music and playing in the water, slowing down my breathing until I felt like I was going to fall asleep.

I washed the mask off of my face and then rinsed my face with clean water. After I'd gotten out of the tub, I sprayed my face with a toner made of aloe juice, rose water, glycerin and a couple of essential oils. I use this toner on a daily basis anyways. Finally, I would have applied the face cream that I make with herb infused almond oil, coconut oil and aloe vera,

but I couldn't find it so I just applied pure coconut oil. I looked pretty greasy at the time, but it absorbs really nicely and by the time I had done a bit of yoga and meditated I was feeling clean and smooth.

The pimples are still there, of course, but hopefully I helped to prevent any new ones from having to force themselves out!

I believe, too, that this relaxing, nourishing and nurturing of ourselves is really important when cleansing. It's important to do whatever it is that is special to you and helps you to really feel like you're taking care of yourself for a little while. By deepening our relationship with food to honour and appreciate ourselves, we are really acknowledging the gift that is our body.

We are temples through which spirit—our higher selves—can communicate and interact with the world. The cleaner and more highly tuned that temple is, the deeper the spiritual experience. No one would race in the Indy 500 with a car that needed an oil change and new spark plugs. Let's tune ourselves up, brothers and sisters, so that love and joy can simply radiate from our being!

DAY 9

Hmmm...I'm having a hard time coming up with a theme for today. It just seemed like a pretty normal day. I ate some fruit. I ate a big salad loaded with sprouts. I had a couple of yummy sprouted buckwheat crackers with sprouted sunflower seed butter on top...

Sprouts, sprouts, sprouts. I guess it's pretty essential to get into creative sprouting if you're going to cleanse. Otherwise, it's pretty hard to come up with very much variety in what you're eating. When we first started cleansing three years ago, I thought sprouts meant alfalfa and mung bean sprouts. I had no idea that as a vegetarian for all those years I had been acidifying my body by eating unsprouted legumes. All those supposedly

“healthy” beans and rice were actually depleting my body of minerals and enzymes in an attempt to keep my alkalinity balanced.

I also learned that sprouts can then be cooked. You can make hummus out of sprouted chickpeas. We have delicious burritos with yams and sprouted black beans. My spicy, sprouted bean chili goes really nicely with cornbread, and sprouted pea soup is one of my kids’ favourites.

We also load our salads up with sprouted mung beans, lentils, red clover seeds, sunflower seeds and pumpkin seeds. Sprouted sunflower seeds and buckwheat groats can be dehydrated and ground up to make a flour for baking and sprouted pumpkin seeds and almonds can be soaked in tamari and dehydrated to make a salty, crunchy snack.

Grains can be made into a variety of sprouted delicacies. I make a delicious loaf of sprouted rye sourdough, the sprouted malted wheat biscuits are delicious with raisins and cinnamon added and you can even make fermented drinks like rejuvelac with sprouted wheat. Sprouted seeds can also be used to ferment and make mock cheese, yogurt and sour cream.

I had no idea about any of this when I did my first cleanse, so the discovery of the sprouted malted biscuits was a god-send. But necessity lead me on the path to discover how easy sprouting is—it can be done in any kitchen for almost no cost and it really opens up the door to health through making food more alkaline, opening up the nutrition available from the food and adding the essential “spark of life”.

All seeds, nuts and grains have enzyme inhibitors built in that protect them from germination until the conditions are right and protect them from being consumed by little bugs that actually use secreted enzymes to eat things. If we consume these without neutralizing the enzyme inhibitors first, then our digestive enzymes are also useless on them and they go through our body without being properly digested.

It's really amazing how much money people spend on food that their body isn't even really benefiting from. What's even more amazing is that none of this information is common knowledge anymore. People who eat sprouts are considered some kind of health freaks. And yet, to neutralize the enzyme inhibitors, seeds and nuts just need to be soaked for 6-12 hours first. If you look at traditional diets, and I highly recommend Sally Falon's book, "Nourishing Traditions", everyone knew this and their meals were prepared accordingly.

For some reason we have become so far removed from this ancient knowledge of how to eat. We are literally killing ourselves by eating denatured food. We call it all edible, but only because it kills us so slowly over a number of years instead of causing an immediate reaction that is measurable by science.

If you are reading this then it means you are interested in learning the truth. Please don't stop trying new ways of preparing foods, learning more about real nutrition and feed yourself well. Clean the toxins and built-up crud out of your body and learn how amazing it can feel to really be in tune with your body—to honour the temple that your spirit flows through.

DAY 10

I had to drive an hour to our closest major shopping center today to buy groceries and other supplies, so of course I had to take some food with me to eat while I was there. I did buy a raspberry banana smoothie at the café where I took my daughter to have lunch, but even that was cheating because it was made with pasteurized apple juice which is acid forming. Ah, well...

I was eating one of my sprouted buckwheat crackers with sprouted sunflower seed butter on top as I walked through the co-op organic grocery store and a fellow stopped to ask me what I was eating. When I told him he said, "Did you get that here?"

“Oh, no,” I had to reply. “This is my food I brought with me. You can’t buy anything like this.”

Eating this way definitely involves more time spent in the kitchen. I’m a cook by trade, so it seemed like a natural progression for me, when I stopped working in restaurants, to put the energy into my own kitchen to learn more about how to nourish my family. And really, it’s not so much that a lot of this food preparation takes a lot of time, it’s more that it takes quite a bit of organization. There aren’t really any quick fixes (except fruit, of course). Sometimes you have to start three or four days ahead of time to make a particular dish.

I am able to prepare big pots of sprouted chickpeas, black beans, and peas and then store them in the freezer for future use and the grains can be sprouted in big batches and dehydrated for future grinding into flour. Big pots of soup and chili can be prepared and frozen and crunchy almonds and pumpkins seeds can be made and stored in the fridge for some time.

Tonight before bed I put big jars of spelt and soft wheat berries to soak. I will dehydrate the spelt in a couple of days to make a loaf of sourdough bread and the wheat will be partly used fresh to make the malted biscuits and some will be sprouted and then have water added back to it for soaking to make a fermented drink called rejuvelac. I put dried apricots soaking to make fermented apricot jam and a big bowl of raw almonds soaking to dehydrate tomorrow with tamari. It is a good thing that I have a big kitchen with lots of counter space because as well as all these jars and bowls I have a big sprouting rack for the red clover, mung beans, lentils, etc., a super-powered blender, grain mill for stone-grinding fresh flour and a food processor.

There are also about 8 gallon jars with various vinegars and fruit meads brewing and usually at least one bowl of sourdough bubbling away.

But really, the jam takes about 5 minutes to make. The rejuvelac is another 5 minutes. The sourdough bread does not have to be kneaded so it is a total of maybe 20 minutes. The almonds are another 5 minutes total. The biscuits will require about 15 minutes because I have to food process them and form them into little balls and then wash the food processor, of course. So in less than one hour I will have a plethora of food of unbelievable quality—food that I just would not be able to buy in the grocery store.

DAY 11

I woke up this morning feeling pretty well, but within an hour was moving into the realm of grumpy, grumpy. This, apparently, was the traditional day of “Why am I doing this?” and “I am so ready to quit!” My daughter was having fried eggs and toast for breakfast. This is my comfort food and definitely what I was craving. Forget cleansing. Forget ultimate spirituality through nutrition. I just want to eat eggs and toast. Besides, they’re our own organically grown and weed fed with love eggs and it would be my fabulous sprouted sourdough rye bread. It’s not like I’d be headed off to Denny’s for kife.

Instead I took my cleansing tonic and savoured a mug of chai tea, made really sweet. My daughter only ate half of her eggs and toast and left the other half sitting on the counter to tempt me. I pulled out all of my will-power and determination and resisted. Then, to really help myself feel better, I gave myself an enema.

Yes, that’s right folks. One of the pure pleasures of cleansing comes from the cleaning out of the lower colon. It’s hardly a pleasurable experience, but it really does leave you feeling amazing afterwards. It’s like giving your car an oil change—you just know that you’ve done something really good for yourself.

So I heated up a big pot of purified water and pulled out my trusty enema bag. I'll tell you, the first time I was preparing for this experience I was very nervous--fear of the unknown in a really big way. My partner and I had bought his and hers enema bags and then hemmed and hawed about who was going to go first. I volunteered and we set the bag up together, thinking about the best way and place to do it. But when the moment came for the pants to drop, I asked for my privacy. I figured I needed to go on this journey by myself.

It's actually a very easy procedure and isn't that big of a deal. Once I was done and able to rave to my partner about all of the goop that came out of me, he was less nervous to take his own turn. Eventually, after doing them everyday for some time, twice some days, it became just another part of our daily cleansing routine.

Still, after a month we were definitely feeling ready to cease this part of our daily routine. Having an enema can be a good thing to do when you're feeling like quitting your cleanse because it shows you some actual results. It can be difficult to believe that what you're doing to your emotions and body is really worth anything. But when you see the gunk that comes out of you during an enema, it really helps give the inspiration to go on bravely.

By afternoon I was feeling much more inspired again and was able to really treat myself for dinner. There was a whole bowl full of cherry tomatoes ready in the greenhouse and I dressed them with olive oil, green onions, garlic and black pepper. They were so delicious in their simplicity. Store bought tomatoes don't ever compare to the taste of fresh ones from the vine. That's why I timed this cleanse with when the tomatoes are ready—they, too, give me the courage to keep going.

We were going to go down to the beach for dinner, but then the rain started pouring, so instead my daughter and I decided to have movie night

and a TV dinner. This is a rare treat for us as we don't usually watch any TV. I think it had probably been over 3 years since I'd sat with my daughter to watch a movie. They usually just get to watch them when there's a babysitter.

Instead of cheating with toast and eggs, I ended up cheating with a small bowl of popcorn with coconut oil and nutritional yeast on it. It was worth cheating to have this moment with my daughter.

Food is such a big part of how we celebrate in life. Unfortunately, it seems that we've gotten away from celebrating on a community level with really good food and moved to celebrating that we made it through another day with a pint of ice cream in front of the TV. Instead of being filled with appreciation and gratitude for the occasional delicacies in life, we have the impression that we "deserve" to eat garbage. Junk food—people actually call it by this name and relish it. I've become dismayed at what we call a treat for our girls—chemical laden ice cream, cookies made with fats that are toxic to our bodies and antibiotic and hormone laden cheese.

Our family is slowly changing this—treats are becoming fresh peas off of the vine, cherries off the tree still warm from the sun and a chunk of raw, organic cheese. Not that we don't ever go to the bakery or out to dinner anymore, but the treat is more about our family spending some time together and celebrating the beauty of life.

DAY 12

Today was my day to go trance drumming in the caves. I was very excited and amazed at how the timing of it worked out so perfectly with me having already been cleansing for 12 days. After my morning cup of chai, I decided to fast for the rest of the day. I did nibble on a few berries as I passed by the bush because I couldn't resist their deliciousness, but I figure they hardly count as food into my system. They seem more like a natural

extension of my surroundings. Eating them kind of seems like breathing the air or drinking the water, or even getting mud on my toes.

I drank lots of water and luckily decided to bring some tamari almonds and some grapes along in case I was feeling like I needed them afterwards. As it was, I was more than grateful to have them waiting in the van for me when we were done.

I didn't realize it was a 10 km. drive up over the mountain to the base camp for the cave. Our group had decided to carpool and I ended up sitting in the back seat which doesn't work so well for me on a good day. By the time we reached the cabin, I was having to do some very concentrated breathing to ward off the motion sickness. Having an empty stomach definitely didn't help with the situation.

After walking almost another kilometer up the mountain, we stood at the mouth of the cave. At this point I was very glad for my empty stomach as I could really feel that my body was focused on the task at hand—not on digestion. By the time we had settled down into the darkness of the cave and were experiencing the rhythm of the drum, my body felt like a highly tuned machine, deeply connected to the centre of the earth below and the cosmos above. The energy of the universe was shooting right through me. My body was a receiver tuned to the frequency of this universal life-force energy. I could feel the drum vibrating all through me.

It's hard to say what sort of experience I would have had if I hadn't been cleansing and fasting, but I do know that the more I lighten up my diet, especially taking out grains, the clearer I feel and the more easily I am able to find the place of "oneness" where I truly feel that I am a part of what's going on. It's a feeling of finding my way back home. Of course, changing my diet alone is not responsible for this heightened awareness. I have spent most of my life studying dance, yoga and tai chi, which has really put me

into my physical body. I also studied theatre at university which has led me on a journey of finely tuning my imagination and mental focus.

I guess where I'd like to go from here with my relationship with food is to really make every moment that I'm eating into a meditative state. I still eat without attention a lot. Being a busy mom running a farm, I'm often just shoving something into my mouth as I'm passing through the kitchen or taking bites between washing the dishes. I would love to be having true communion with the food that I am consuming, to truly welcome each bite personally into my body, to chew and savour it completely.

By the time I got back down the mountain to where my van was waiting, all I could think about was getting some almonds into my mouth. It was approaching 11:00pm and I still had a 25 minute drive home. I knew I would have difficulty with the winding mountain highway if I didn't ground myself somehow with food. I really didn't want to end up in the lake! Besides, that lovely cleansing feeling was really starting to kick in, and I wasn't prepared to fully deal with it at that time. So I ate some almonds as I worked my way home, still digesting what had occurred up there inside the womb of Mother Earth.

DAY 13

I've been reading a great book about sacred plant medicine. I think the timing of this book being lent to me while I'm taking this herbal tonic is perfect.

The book talks about the sacred relationship between the medicine person and the plant, how it is a loving friendship that has been nurtured and developed over many years. That way, when the medicine is brought to the person in need, it is delivered along with this direct connection to the plant and its healing energies. It is not so much about the actual, physical

constituents of the plant as bringing the spirit of the plant to the person as an ally.

I have been finding that this cleanse, because I made my own tonic and I didn't even weigh any of the plants to the proportions I have had good results with previously, that I am doubting the potency of my formula.

Reading this book is encouraging me to really connect in with the plants that I harvested for the tonic every time I consume some. Many medicine people have songs that they have been given that go with each plant, and they then sing the song as they administer the plant. Perhaps I should listen for the song of my tonic and hum it throughout the day to remind myself of the powerful processes that are occurring inside my body right now. I do have the memory of how it felt to be harvesting each of the plants, where they stood or crawled and how they felt in my hand and looked in my basket.

Unfortunately, our herbal apothecary industry has become so far removed from this ideal of either receiving the medicine from a highly trained spiritual leader or harvesting it yourself with intention from your own back yard. It is an every-growing multinational industry providing people with a plethora of herbal choices from all over the world. We buy dandelion tincture from who knows what country when the plant is probably growing beside the back steps. And these plants are harvested without intention of how they are going to be used and without knowledge of who personally they are going to serve.

How many people have cupboards full of natural health products that never really worked for them? Was it because they had no personal connection with the plant or because they didn't really believe that it could work for them?

Our daily life is so far removed from the sacred that it becomes difficult to have a deep level of belief in anything, particularly ourselves and our innate ability to heal.

Our bodies are such complex, vast systems, but because all we ever really have a direct experience with is our skin, many of us have no real idea at all of what goes on inside our bodies. And even after having studied the digestive tract, I would say that I still only have a very basic idea of the magic of how it all works. There are hundreds of thousands of different enzymes in our bodies working to make all of the different processes happen that make us into living, animate creatures. There are countless hormonal reactions occurring all day long, and electrical impulses flashing constantly of which we are completely unaware.

I really like putting myself through these cleanses because it forces me to think about the inside of my body. It forces me to think for a moment before I put things in my mouth. I find that even after I'm finished "the cleanse", I still catch myself thinking "Am I allowed to eat this?" before I put things in my mouth for awhile. I like that hesitation because it means I am bringing consciousness to my habits.

Cleansing the digestive tract is like cleansing a dirty window. You know that there is a nice view on the other side, but you can't see it clearly. Cleaning the window allows you to see that view and fully enjoy it.

I guess the theme today was connection—connecting with the spirit of what you consume, be it plant or animal—connecting with your self and what you really are. I believe people today are feeling lost, looking for reason and inspiration, and I believe that nurturing this connection is what leads to understanding and joy.

DAY 14

I spent the morning today singing and playing my guitar at the market. I felt wonderfully energized and clear. At one point a woman who has a booth selling the best chocolate truffles and goodies came over and offered me a cookie in exchange for my entertainment, but I drew aside my desire for sugar and thanked her for her offer but declined. My kids shared one of her truffles, but I was able to keep that out of my mouth, too.

I was really blessed at the birthday dessert potluck we went to in the evening, though, because there was actually a dessert there that it was ok for me to eat—a lovely raw cherry pie. It was even made with the cherries from our farm. I was also totally impressed with all of the birthday cake choices—there was wheat cake with dairy icing, wheat cake with non-dairy icing and non-wheat cake with non-dairy icing. There was also dairy and non-dairy ice cream to choose from. I thought how amazing it is that we are part of a community where all of these food choices exist.

I really see how changing our food choices is a matter of awareness. It wasn't so many years ago that I was unaware about how the choices I was making were effecting me. Even now, it seems like I'm constantly learning something new or reading a different person's opinion that puts things into question. I figure my safest bet at this point is to try and stick as much as possible to the foods that no one is doubting, like fruits and vegetables. But even then, I suppose there are different ones that are appropriate for each person, depending on his/her blood type or composition, etc., accordingly.

In the end I guess muscle testing or swinging a pendulum is the best way to go, acknowledging that the foods that are right for you right now may change as well as your body changes. But trying to cut out as much processed food as possible is definitely a safe bet. We don't eat unfermented soy products anymore because there is too much controversy, and I really try to keep it simple with my oil usage, sticking to olive oil, butter and coconut oil.

It's nice to have friends that are also becoming more aware of their choices—that way if my kids go over to play I can trust that they're being fed great food.

A big part of being able to make it through an extended cleanse is having friends and a lifestyle that are supportive. Living in the city and working in an office where everybody goes out for lunch everyday, it may be difficult to hold your ground. People may be critical of what you're doing because they feel challenged about their own eating habits and lifestyle. If you're a social person who spends a lot of time out and about with friends, it may be very difficult to resist temptation. I've found it very challenging to be cleansing and still have to prepare food for the rest of my family. I'm always saying, "If it were just me, I'd eat a lot differently."

DAY 15

To continue on yesterday's wave...

I'm feeling incredibly supported by my community right now. I had a kid's birthday party and a potluck to go to today and both of them offered a wonderful choice of foods. I did deviate a bit from the "recommended foods" list—some of the fruit I ate wasn't organically grown and a few of the dips at the potluck were made with acid-forming nuts—but it was one of the first times that I was truly able to celebrate while eating food that I felt really good about. At the potluck there were raw flax crackers and a wonderful walnut and sun-dried tomato pate and another pate of macadamia nuts and dill.

When I asked the woman who had made these dishes what was in them, I was really impressed that she listed every little ingredient. To me it matters exactly what I'm eating and I was glad to learn that it matters to her, too. Another friend of mine's children have a lot of food allergies, so it's

very important to her to know exactly what is in something that she didn't make herself.

Our attitude towards what we're eating is so important. One of the biggest emotional causes of an acidic body is guilt. I know it's been a real challenge for me as I slowly adjust my diet to not get down on myself for where I'm at. It's crazy how we can take something to eat that's already acid-forming and make it twice as bad for our bodies by berating ourselves for eating it. If we can eat cream puffs with joy and acceptance and a real gratitude and appreciation, then the negative effect on our body will depreciate.

We always bless our meal before we consume it. The girls sing a lovely little song that they learned at preschool:

Blessings on the blossom

Blessings on the root

Blessings on the leaf and stem

Blessings on the fruit.

However, I struggled for some time watching people blessing crappy food and acting as if it were all ok. It didn't sit right with me and took me quite some time to be able to express what I saw the imbalance to be. In the end I came up with the word "responsibility".

I figure that if I'm going to buy something and consume it, then I am personally responsible for all effect on the earth that has occurred as a result of that item reaching my mouth. That includes everything from who was working the land to how it was transported to the happiness of everyone working in the store that sold it. What kind of day was the person having that picked that apple? How much infrastructure and fossil fuel was required to transport that apple from Chile or New Zealand to Canada—and that includes the building of roads and the deforestation that occurred to

produce the cardboard box that the apple was packed in. How many animals died? Everyone who touches that apple gives a bit of their energy to it. Was it picked and looked over by others in the grocery store and rejected? That apple can have a huge history and chain of events that were required for it to reach its final destination.

My question is—how powerful of a blessing is required to balance all that is involved with that apple? Are any but the most spiritually aware really focused enough to perform such a blessing, and, even though our conscious mind may be unaware of the complete ramifications of eating that apple, does our unconscious recognize the imbalance that has occurred? Can we be acidifying our bodies on an unconscious, emotional level?

So, all of this is very heavy and rather daunting. I'm discovering how difficult it can be to live responsibly in a world that is no longer organized in a way that requires much personal responsibility. To recognize that it would be incredibly challenging to just suddenly leave no footprint, to not burden ourselves with acid-forming guilt and yet to keep our momentum moving towards returning to a balanced state with nature is our daunting task.

It seems to be about taking baby steps. It's about questioning everything you put in your mouth about where it came from and how it was made and who made it. It's about learning, learning, learning, blessing, blessing, blessing and trying to become as personally connected with your food as possible.

Even through the act of preparation you can begin to feel the connection. I met a woman who said she always sang to her food as she was preparing it. In the summers, try to buy as much produce as you can at local farmer's markets where you are meeting the people who grew the food

face-to-face and you know that it hasn't had to travel far to get to you. Buy as much as possible in bulk in-season and store it for the winter to avoid excess packaging.

The ultimate experience for me is to plant a seed, nurture it as it grows and then harvest the plant's bounty. The blessing just flows freely at that point and the feeling of appreciation and gratitude runs deep. And the more I cleanse and lighten my diet, the more I feel that the blessings—the honouring of the food—emanate from my heart more than originating in my thoughts.

DAY 16

Apparently I still can't control myself around a table full of delicious, nutritious food because I totally overate last night and this morning I was still feeling full and bloated. There's still something about thinking that more is better going on for me. I was probably eating too quickly because of all of the social activity, so instead of savouring a small portion or even just a bite, I kept putting more food into my mouth to satisfy my taste buds' cravings.

So this morning I'm feeling heavy and rather yucky. I'm wondering when I'll start the actual fasting portion of this cleanse. I'm not following the "cleansing schedule" so strictly this time, but I'm pretty much down to one meal a day and 3-4 servings of the herbal tonic and 3 psyllium and clay shakes.

For some reason, though, I'm having difficulty feeling inspired to move into full fasting. It seems that there is just too much delicious food around right now. Still, it's only for seven days—it's not like all that food won't still be around a week from now. I wonder if it's some instinctual thing to want to eat and eat while food is available because in times gone by there

very well may have been times when there wasn't so much food available. It's like storing up internally for later on.

I think I'm also feeling less need for a full deep seven day fast right now. When I first started cleansing I really appreciated how deeply my system was getting cleansed during the full regime, but after doing this for three years, I think I'm finally getting to the point where more of a light housekeeping is all that's required because I've cleaned out a lot of the dark corners and I'm just not making such a mess anymore. My daily diet is clean and light enough that there is a certain amount of internal cleansing going on all the time. My taste buds and desires really have changed—although I'm still working on my emotional attachment.

The day before I began this cleanse I went out for dinner and “treated” myself to pizza. My decision came almost completely from an emotional place and was fuelled by the pleasurable memory of going out and enjoying pizza. Needless to say that I didn't really enjoy the pizza (it wasn't really a good piece of pizza, either!) and it was a good reminder for me that I really have changed as a physical being and that what used to satisfy various different parts of me no longer has the same effect.

It felt really good to recognize this in myself, so even though the pizza didn't feel so good, the overall outcome of the experience was satisfying. I won't say that I'm never going to eat a piece of pizza again—it seems that we all too often have to repeat experiences a number of times before we really “get” it—but I feel that much closer to my goal of “getting it”.

DAY 17

Today was an interesting day—one of those ones that by the end of the day you wish that you'd never even gotten out of bed.

I've watched how my daughter reacts when it's time to go to bed and her little blankie is missing-in-action. It appears that her whole body begins to

melt into a sea of emotion and all she can do is try to catch a wave. Today was one of those days when my comfort-food-blankie was missing from the shelf and I just wanted to sit down with that fried egg sandwich to escape.

This is bound to happen. Luckily I was halfway expecting it, so when my irritability level started to rise, and even just the sound of someone else's voice was triggering me, I realized the importance of backing off and finding some space for myself somewhere.

I remember attending a reading by the couple who wrote "The 100 Mile Diet" and hearing how eating only local foods for a year put a real strain on their relationship. I was not at all surprised to hear this, having my own experiences with cleansing and food-deprivation. I started to think about what it would be like if our world-wide food supply really did suddenly get cut-off and everyone was forced to eat whatever they could come up with locally. I was trying to imagine what it would look like if all that people had to eat was squash day after day. Not only would they be upset and in fear because of the actual situation at hand, but their bodies would be going into cleansing mode, releasing not only a wave of toxins into their system but also emotional residue that had been stored in various parts of the bodies. I think for me that would definitely be the time to head out and find some space for myself.

Fasting and cleansing don't just work on a physical level. The first few times you do one it may seem that way, but each progressive time the cleansing will go deeper and deeper into different levels of your being—and this may bring up some "stuff".

So today I made the time to go for a walk by myself down to the lake and really spend some time just focusing inward and breathing. I kept gently reminding myself that it is a difficult thing that I am doing and that I'm doing a great job. I let visions of cookies, coffee, fried eggs and

chocolate bars go drifting past, knowing that this is not forever and that when I do partake in those items again it will be with a new found appreciation for them and understanding of how they effect my body. I used my breath to wash away the frustration and cried for awhile to release my emotional build-up. Tears are actually incredibly cleansing—releasing many, many toxins from the body. I’m amazed at how crying always feels like throwing up. It really sucks when you’re in the moment of it all, but if you keep going until you get it all out it feels much better in the end.

Then I drank lots of water to help dilute and wash out whatever had been released and was circling in my body. At home, I made some sesame carob halva balls to give myself a “treat”. I’ve really come to recognize the importance of this and have found my few cleansing-supportive recipes that still allow my taste buds to dance and my need for emotional comfort to be addressed.

DAY 18

Today I would like to talk about the benefits of the clay and psyllium shake. I have tried doing cleanses with and without them, and have definitely found that my body and its process feels much more supported when I am using them.

The psyllium, when mixed with water (and you have to drink lots of water with it!), expands and becomes like a scrub brush inside of your intestines. Taking herbs to loosen up whatever has built up inside the intestine walls creates a pretty sticky, gooey environment in there, and without that extra bit of push, not a lot of it can get out. The psyllium really powers through, helping to pull half-loosened chunks off of the walls where they are attached to the many folds and grooves of the intestines.

Bentonite clay has an incredible surface area that is able to absorb up to 40 times its weight, so a small amount of it is able to really help draw toxic

sludge out of the intestines before it is reabsorbed and put back into circulation in the body. It's a bit gritty on the teeth while you're drinking it, but definitely worth the effort. The other added bonus is that drinking a big glass of psyllium and clay definitely has the affect of feeling like you've put something into your stomach, so it can help ward off the hunger pains. I have found the schedule of gradually replacing each meal with another shake (plus probably one or two more each day) works quite well to ease out of having three meals a day. Plus, having lots of bulk pass through you like that can really help to make the cleansing process seem real and effective.

DAY 19

Today was a great food day. I wandered around the farm in the sunshine and really enjoyed all of the tastes, sights, smells and textures of the foods growing. I ate vine-ripened tomatoes fresh off the plant, which is something that not very many people get to do these days. It's hard to find vine-ripened fruits and vegetables, even not fresh off the plant.

Ode to a Tomato

warmed by the sunshine
perfect in her roundness
the redness of her skin
 attracting me
from across the way
we meet and she ends up
cradled in my hand
prepared in her sacrifice
her flesh brings my mouth
 alive
as we meld our two forms

into one
her sweetness dives into my
consciousness
i close my eyes
turn my face to the sun
and we are there together
in the ecstasy
of being the juicy red one

Next I wandered over to another garden and picked some sage, rubbing it between my fingers and deeply inhaling its smoky aroma. I stood there just breathing the sage for some time.

I am ecstatic about food. I am delighted by it. It is no longer something I eat because it is given to me (and you better finish your plate!) or eat for the mere reason of being hungry or bored. I am in love with food because of all of its potential. I am amazed that with one tomato in my hand, if I planted those seeds and grew them out, I could turn one tomato into hundreds and those hundreds into thousands and on and on. I guess that's part of the magic of consuming raw food—that experience of consuming such raw potential and feeding our bodies with that fire.

DAY 20

Today I connected with another really great reason that we eat—celebration. It was Lughnasad—the mid-summer celebration equally between the summer solstice and the fall equinox. In honour of the early harvest of the summer, I decided to prepare a feast made from the foods growing on our farm.

I love being in the kitchen with a basket full of fresh foods, great music playing and a good reason to prepare a feast to share with my friends and

family. I derive great pleasure from walking around the yard harvesting—being in awe at what has come from the seeds I dared to plant, and then taking all of those colors, textures and flavours and mixing them together to create dishes that stop you in your tracks.

I love to sit down with a great group of people and savour our delicacies, celebrating the abundance and beauty of life.

My biggest challenge with heading into a full week of fasting remains that I love eating and food preparation so much. I don't have too much difficulty with "hunger" anymore, I'm not at a loss of what-to-do when I'm not eating and I'm not bothered by temptation. But I miss holding my knife and transforming.

Lucky for me, I'm in a situation that while fasting I still get to sit around the table with my family and celebrate abundance. The first few times I fasted on my own in the family context, I found it pretty challenging to still have to prepare food for them while I wasn't eating, but it doesn't bother me so much anymore. Now I'm glad to know that I'm feeding my children healthy food and that they are witnessing the level I am willing to go to ensure that my body is functioning effectively. They are really understanding and feeling grateful for the food they are given to eat (most of the time!) as they hear stories of what Mom and Dad were forced to eat when they were kids. We lay all of our foods out on the table and the children are given a certain amount of choice in what they consume (I have to watch the little one, though. She would live on oats and toast if I would let her get away with it).

I remember being in the produce section of the grocery store and one of my daughters asking if we could buy an eggplant. A woman standing nearby was amazed—not only that my daughter knew what an eggplant was, but that she was requesting one. It was an inspiring moment for me as

I felt that we were really on the right track and that my actions and dedication now will filter down through the generations as my children are armed with knowledge and understanding of what it really means to eat in a healthy way.

So tonight we showed our gratitude for abundance by celebrating. We feasted and built a fire outside to honour food and our connection to it. We savoured, laughed and held hands. It was really important to me that our celebration wasn't about something else and it just happened to mindlessly include food, but that the celebration truly was about the food and how fortunate we are that it is available in our lives.

DAY 21

The last solid thing I ate was a piece of my sacred Lughnasad bread—for the next seven days I will partake only in liquid nourishment. This is another transition. It is a crossing over the bridge into a new realm. It is one that requires the utmost attention and patience—and compassion. It is an amazing opportunity to have yourself be opened wide. Our emotional lives are completely tied in with our physical bodies. Memories are stored in our very cells. Be prepared to have all sorts of things rise to the surface, looking for a way out. Accept that you are finished holding on to them—they are no longer serving you. Accept that most of the things that we think matter, don't. Release them with your breath as it is one of your body's main eliminative processes.

Now is the time to really honour yourself and to congratulate yourself continually for your courage. Now is the time to accept light and healing into your body, mind and spirit.

Now is the time to resist temptation. It will be there, taunting you, especially if you still have to prepare food for others. The first fast that I ever did, I was working in the organic, co-op grocery store. It was brutal.

All day long I stood at the check-out till and pushed through food for people. I still remember the smell of the coffee passing by me.

Today I was tempted so many times to just have a little morsel of something—the last remaining tidbits on a plate as I cleaned up after dinner. Again, enemas are one of the best things to keep you going at this point. They really make the cleansing seem like a physical reality—one you can see and smell! When you stop putting food in, then you know that what's coming out is either the clay and psyllium that has picked up and absorbed a lot along the way, or it is old stuff that has been stuck in your intestines and is ready to be released. By the third or fourth day of fasting you really know that you're getting down to the gunk. Food will happen again soon enough, and you will find that you have a whole new appreciation for it.

I really felt the necessity for me to connect with the herbs that are in my tonic now. Fasting is traditionally a spiritual act. Health wise, I really don't think it was so important for people to fast and cleanse to rid them selves of disease because up until a few hundred years ago, people were just naturally much more in tune with nature and their diet. By eating in season, your body is naturally going through a continual cleansing and rejuvenating process. By not eating chemical laden foods, pasteurized dairy, way too much meat, unsoaked grains and irradiated vegetables, our ancestors' bodies didn't need cleansing the way we do. Living in high-paced, chemically toxic environments leads us to needing to step back and remove ourselves from the daily onslaught now and again—to rest, renew and rejuvenate.

Fasting is a spiritual practice. It is a way to take you away from the preoccupation with your physical body and move you into the realm of spirit. It frees up your body's energy to receive and communicate on a higher level. It's important when you're fasting to just take time to be. Lay

still and follow your breath. Lie out in the sun and absorb its healing light. Remind yourself that you, too, are made of light. In actuality, there is no physical substance to your body. Only light. You are a reflection of your mind. Your body is created by your mind, so take this time to be in peace and harmony. Start today to rebuild yourself with beauty and love. Your manifestation powers are magnificent.

Listen to the voices in your head and the thoughts that pop up. Thank them and let them blow away on the wind. This is cleansing your mind, which in turn will cleanse your body.

Just as you separate yourself from food at this time, separate yourself from other people and their garbage. Of course it would be a luxury, and perhaps too much of a mental challenge as well to actually physically separate ourselves from others, but you can do it by taking down your defenses and choosing not to engage. Simply watch others move through time and space in their bodies. Choose not to “get into” anything with other people that can wait. Observe them and how they react to you. Watch them and see how they change as your mind and body clear. Don’t take on anyone else’s stuff for this week. Just really try to get down to the essence of what is you.

You are not the food you eat, you are not the thoughts that you have. You are the spirit that creates. Allow that spirit to speak and listen attentively.

Well, that was a pretty good pep talk that just flowed through me from the sunshine—let’s see if I can live up to it in the week to come.

DAY 22

Today I was really feeling the need to chew already. So I decided I would do things a bit differently this time and incorporate some pumpkin seeds into my fast. Apparently intestinal parasites really don’t like pumpkin

seeds, so I figured if I ate about a cup of them when I hadn't eaten anything else for a few days then it would be a good opportunity to really help push them out. Besides, the psyllium and clay with then do the job of helping to push them out as well.

I don't really have a lot to say about today. I just didn't eat. It made that many less choices to have to make throughout the day. I do still have to remember to sit down once and awhile with a cup of tea or a mineral miso broth or else I'll just end up working non-stop all day. I'm realizing that stopping to eat is sometimes the only thing that makes me sit down during the day.

I still sat at the dinner table with my family though, even though my dinner consisted of a mug of warm miso broth. They're used to my crazy ways by now...

DAY 23

People are hearing that I'm fasting now and asking me what I'm drinking. There are a number of different ways of doing a fast, and I find that people are curious. When I first started cleansing, the idea of doing a straight water fast was inconceivable, but now I'm beginning to understand how it works. When we do our first few cleanses, our bodies are pretty toxic to very toxic, depending on our lifestyle, food choices and environment. To go straight to water at that point is very hard on our bodies, especially if we have low mineral stores, because the detoxification is going to be very rapid and the minerals are needed to neutralize the acidic waste that is coming out.

The first three times I did the week of fasting, I drank a lot of wheatgrass juice and vegetable juice (mainly carrot, apple, beet, celery, garlic and ginger). This kept my body going with a strong supply of minerals.

This time around I'm noticing that my choices of drinks are becoming much lighter. I'm still having one chai tea in the morning, made with spices that are excellent aids to the digestion and rooibos tea that is caffeine-free and chock full of minerals. I have been adding some honey and coconut cream to keep my sweet tooth satisfied and add a bit of good oil to it. I find that by drinking this first thing in the morning, my taste buds are satisfied and it helps to ground my energy for the day.

I can envision being at a place where my taste buds no longer require satisfying, which is where you would have to be to do a full water fast, but I'm not there yet. Besides, my lifestyle while cleansing is still very hectic with a family of five and a farm to manage, and I need that grounding. My urge is very much to retreat and spend the week on my own, meditating and doing yoga, but that isn't going to happen right now. So we all have to honour where we're at. I like to make a big pot of chai at once so that it lasts me for 4-5 days. That's where I'm at right now.

(Pause to take a sip of tea...)

Later in the morning I like to have a cup of fresh orange/grapefruit juice. These juices are very cleansing with a high vibration. They go into the body quickly and I find I really feel a wave of cleanliness rush over. I guess it's something about drinking that California sunshine. I also like this juice because my little stainless steel orange juicer is much easier to wash than the vegetable juicer machine and it is overall quick and easy to prepare. Like I said, I used to have to put the time and effort into making vegetable juices because I really felt like my body needed it, but as my whole being gets cleaner and lighter, the amount of time that goes into food "preparation" goes down.

Around lunch time I've been having a miso mineral broth drink. I make mineral broth by simmering vegetable cuttings of assorted types (generally

some onion peels, garlic, carrots, broccoli ends, kale and other dark greens. Potato skins are good too). To the mineral broth, in the blender, I then add as much garlic and ginger as I can handle and a scoop of miso. Once blended, I warm it up slightly, but you don't want to heat it up too much or you'll kill all of the great enzymes that are in the miso.

Two cleanses ago I drank a lot of this broth. Probably twice a day. It was satisfying my salty tooth and it was only early spring time so it was helping to keep me warm inside. The garlic is really good against intestinal parasites and the ginger really helps to stimulate the circulatory system and get the blood moving around the body to clean things out. Again, this drink is full of minerals to help neutralize the toxins. Because the mineral broth is cooked and has no enzyme action left of its own, adding the miso helps to bring it back to life.

Yesterday I bought a big watermelon and juiced some of that. Watermelon, too, is highly cleansing. I've heard of people doing a watermelon mono-diet for days on end. Again, I think this would work great if your body wasn't too toxic and you had a strong mineral reserve, but otherwise it just sounds like a recipe for feeling really awful and discouraged about cleansing. We have to ease into these processes, honouring ourselves, not the directions on the package.

I'm also adding in some lemon juice with maple syrup and cayenne this time. This is part of the "Master Cleanse" which I've never done before, but so far I'm enjoying the spiciness of the drink. It is a very high vibration drink, very light, and if approached exclusively too quickly could lead to similar results as the watermelon fast. It is possible to really hurt yourself by releasing more toxins in your body than your elimination organs can handle. There is no point in acting like the martyr and pushing through on a cleanse that is obviously too advanced for you. If you're feeling really awful, you either need to slow down or really up the pace of your water

drinking, enemas/colonics, sauna/sweating, epsom salt baths and deep breathing. If you are feeling it in a particular place (like your liver or kidneys) a series of castor oil packs can also be very beneficial to draw stuff straight out rather than it having to go all through your system to the exit. If you are really feeling lousy, though, and it doesn't pass in a few hours, you may want to seek out the advice of your doctor.

I've also had some almond milk that I made myself, although I really just feel that this is satisfying my need for variety more than anything else.

I've been drinking rejuvelac and kvass and I've just been introduced to kimchi as well. These drinks are all made through fermentation. Rejuvelac is fermented wheat sprouts, the kvass I'm doing is fermented beets (lots of minerals!), and the kimchi is fermented kale, ginger, garlic and cayenne. There are endless ways of making kimchi, it seems. I came across a recipe for a fruit one that I'm interested to try out.

These fermented drinks have lots of good bacterial culture action going on, and are helpful for repopulating your lower intestine with beneficial bacterial flora. There will always be good and bad bacteria in your intestinal tract, but keeping the balance is highly important. It is too easy for the good ones to be wiped out or greatly reduced. Most of the food people eat these days (basically not enough fermented foods and fresh greens) do not act as replenishers.

So, that's basically what I'm consuming these days, besides the pumpkin seeds. I'm also taking my cleansing tonic 4-5 times per day and at least two of the clay and psyllium shakes. When I was new to cleansing I did 4-5 shakes per day to really help speed up the elimination, but I'm feeling less need to do as many this time around.

DAY 24

I had a slight feeling of hunger today, but I was able to turn down ice cream when it was offered to me. It feels strange to be in such a different place than everyone else around me. It's kind of like being in a foreign country—watching everyone and knowing that their lives are completely different from yours. I often think about the people that call themselves breatharians, saying that they don't consume any food anymore and live off of prana energy gathered through their breath. I wonder about this concept that we don't even actually need to eat food. I mean, considering that we are all made of light, it seems plausible. Is it really the ultimate scam to have convinced human beings that we require food to exist?

I am convinced, however, that we don't need anywhere near as much food as we eat. That has become obvious from my experiments with myself. I was amazed a few fasts ago to see how my body lost a whole bunch of weight in the first two weeks while I was still eating but eating less. Then when I started fasting I was nervous because I was already so thin. But in seven days of fasting, I didn't lose any more weight at all. I think my body had found its happy place to be for the time and I was no longer expending a bunch of energy on digestion, so I just didn't need to burn as many calories.

I'm always happy with how I feel, physically, during the fasting phase as compared with earlier on in the process. I think by now, the majority of stuff that was on the surface and ready to work its way out of me has done so and my body is really able to focus more on healing on deeper levels. I feel clean and light. Sadly, we can't really know how good we can feel until we go to these lengths. We can go through our entire lives thinking that we're feeling pretty good when we're really only at a level 2 out of 10. Even now, I know that I can go so much further. Maybe I'm only at a level 3...

DAY 25

I'm still not missing food so much, although the tomatoes are looking pretty sweet. I feel like I'm not spending so much time thinking these days—no great thoughts of what to write about. I'm definitely moving into a more physical state of being where my body is floating around. So, instead of forcing myself to try and come up with something informative or inspiring to say, I'm just going to honour that today is a being day, not a thinking day.

DAY 26

All right—today I'm grumpy and ready to be done. I'm feeling tired, skinny, weak and unmotivated. I'm recalling this feeling from other times I cleansed—this feeling of definitely being ready to be done. I don't really care much about cleansing at all anymore. I've used up all my inspiration and will power. I've been through the feeling good and the feeling bad. I'm definitely feeling very light and like I really don't have to eat much, but I'm ready to be done.

DAY 27

Today I went to another potluck lunch and had to sip my miso broth while everyone ate. Fortunately this was easy to do because the quality of food wasn't really up to my standard, and I wouldn't have wanted to eat most of it anyways. It was a lot of white pasta and white sugar dessert.

I'm feeling light in a spiritual sense though. I was doing some meditation/healing work and almost felt like I was floating right up off of the floor. It was a pretty magical feeling and I hope I can hold on to some of it as I start eating again.

I decided to break my fast tonight by eating ½ pound of black mission figs. I was going to do a whole pound, like I'd read in a book about fasting,

but after eating the first half pound bag I realized that I couldn't eat any more.

So that's it. I'm eating again, headed out of this journey. I really have to remind myself to head out of it gently as I know that my tendency is to jump out of it with full gusto. My partner ended his first fast by sitting down and eating a big bowl of nuts. He just couldn't stop himself from eating more and he paid for that for days afterwards. The figs are very fibrous, so we'll see how that affects me tomorrow.

DAY 28

I fully broke the fast today, having two nectarines for breakfast.

I was able to nibble at bits of this and that again as I was cooking, and that felt really great. I made a bunch of raw treats so that I'll have quality food to rebuild myself with now. I'm doing my best to make wise food choices, not overeat and chew really well. For dinner I had a very small amount of some ferments (sauerkraut and pickles) and some vegetable soup.

Breaking the fast will be different for everyone, depending on your state of mind and how efficiently your body gets back into digesting. It's taken quite the break by now, so it's really important to ease back in and eat things that will go through easily. Take it slow, keeping in touch with your body and how it's reacting. Keeping up with the psyllium shakes and cleansing herbs for a few days is beneficial, too.

I'm having the feeling that this cleanse will never really be over. My eating habits have changed enough now that my body will be continually cleansing a bit here and there to keep me in a state of health.

It's been a great journey and I am now looking at the world through a new set of eyes. I am inspired to carry on clarifying how my body wants to

be nourished and I am glad to have been able to record this journey to share with you.

The thought of doing a cleanse can be very scary, mainly because we don't necessarily know where we're headed. Even after doing as many cleanses as I have, I still hesitate to jump into it. On the surface it can seem that you're just cleansing your physical body, but we aren't so separated into different categories. Going through a process like this definitely affects your emotions, thoughts and spirit as well.

And, I'm really looking forward to see what the next month brings for me as I adjust back out of this into eating freely again. It's nice for me to go from a strict regime to freedom as it really makes it clear that my choices are my own choices. I also know that the effects of what I have gone through are still in a process of full manifestation.

I have increased my vibratory level, and that puts me into a different playing field on my spiritual path. I have peeled off a few layers of the onion, and now I will be in a fresh, new place of discovery to see how I fit into a new realm.

Thank you to all of the plants, the sunshine, rain and wind that assisted me on this journey. Thank you to all those who have dedicated their lives to helping people to heal through cleansing and have been a literary inspiration to me. Thanks to you for reading and blessings on your journey—one step at a time.

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JANET PEARSON is a Master Herbalist who studied with Dominion College in Burnaby, BC. She wrote her masters thesis on Herbs for Intestinal Cleansing and then became a Certified Colon Hydrotherapist and a Certified Iridologist.

Having lived on an organic farm for seven years, Janet had the opportunity to grow and harvest herbs for use in teas, tonics, tinctures and other preparations. She has continued to explore and experiment with ways to make our diets as nourishing as possible while keeping our bodies clean and functioning at their optimum level.

Keenly interested in whole, healing and cleansing foods, Janet is dedicated to educating people about their choices. She is passionate about helping people to feel good in their body, mind and spirit. Janet believes we each hold the power to heal ourselves and that by using food and herbs as medicine, we are empowering ourselves and finding our own individual way of being.

For more information, visit Janet's *Nourish Cleansing* website at **<http://www.nourishcleansing.com>**.