

# Holistic Nutrition For Women In Recovery

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This book is not intended to help you detoxify from a highly addictive substance or multiple substances, nor is it meant to take the place of any recovery program you are currently participating in. It is recommended that you seek professional advice and support before deciding to abstain from short or long-term use of highly addictive substances.

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## Meet Hollis

Hi, I'm Hollis, author of this eBook, *Holistic Nutrition for Recovery*, and the founder of Nutrition By Hollis. Like many of you, I know the struggle of addiction and mood disorders. I spent the majority of my teens and early 20's struggling with anxiety and depression, and had a general feeling of being 'stressed out' and 'overwhelmed'.

To cope, I developed eating disorders, adopted various addictions, and hung out for *WAY* too long in a number of toxic relationships. I reclaimed my life from addiction and constant emotional turmoil by creating a life based on principles of holistic nutrition, which I want to share with you in this eBook.

Eating a nutrient-dense whole foods diet and adopting healthy lifestyle practices has granted me freedom from paralyzing anxiety, debilitating depression, overwhelming cravings, and self-sabotaging behaviors.

Nutritional Therapy and holistic nutrition helped me to identify the root physical, emotional, and spiritual causes of what led me to developing addictive behaviors. Factors such as compromised digestion, food allergies, and emotional trauma were at the root of what led to my addictions and I believe these are common denominators that many addicts share.

The chapters of this book are a look into my own personal healing journey. The freedom-tools, or holistic nutrition principles as I often refer to them, are the compilation of what I have learned through my personal experience as an addict, my research in recovery, my journey with healing my emotions, my

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exploration of spirituality, and from my clinical practice as an NTP and Health Coach working one-on-one with clients.

You don't have to simply survive in recovery. You can thrive!

My journey of self-discovery included getting my bachelor of science in biology from Oregon State University, earning my Nutritional Therapy Practitioner (NTP) certification from the Nutritional Therapy Association, becoming a certified IIN Health Coach, earning a certification in the Art of Muscle Testing, and becoming an Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) Master Practitioner.

## **Introduction**

My hope is that you can find inspiration, and empowering knowledge in these pages to either begin, or enhance your recovery. As clearly stated in the disclaimer, this book is not intended to help you detoxify from highly addictive substances or meant to take the place of any recovery program you are currently participating in.

**This book is, however, a powerful tool in helping you recover your life, emotional health, and physical wellbeing before, during, or after any period of addiction.**

Addiction can be substance use and/or abuse, eating disorders, toxic relationships, spending, gambling, or any habit that you've developed that is keeping you "stuck" and preventing you from reaching your highest potential.

Ultimately the goal of my work as a Nutritional Therapy Practitioner (NTP), health coach, and author is to support you on your journey of living the life you know deep down is truly within reach. I start here in this book by showing you the steps I took to get my life back following years of emotional turmoil and a period of heavy drug and alcohol abuse.

I think it is important to note here, that any addiction or self-sabotaging behaviors are merely symptoms of a larger imbalance in the system.

The ***underlying causes of WHY*** you drink, use, develop eating disorders, or repeatedly fall in love with the wrong partners, are the keys that will unlock the door to your own transformational recovery. This will also help you to see the lessons you were meant to learn from going down this road.

Turning your struggles into triumphs will empower you and set you free from all the physical and emotional weight that you have been carrying around.

My hope is that this book will serve as an inspirational guide and give you a few tools to help you recover your health so that you can firmly ground yourself while exploring the deeper meanings behind the reasons you are choosing to punish your body, mind, and soul with addictive behaviors.

Once you go down the road of addictive behavior, especially if your path included substance abuse or eating disorders, it is imperative that you work at getting your body healthy. By restoring nutrient balance and taming your body's addictive chemistry through nutrition and nourishing lifestyle practices, you begin the path toward full recovery. This can be done with minimal physical or emotional discomfort. Just a small commitment to yourself each day is all it takes.

The chapters I cover in this book are a collection of the most influential tools I have gathered throughout my 10+ years of recovery. Don't let this be overwhelming. **You don't have to do everything all at once.** It's progress, not perfection and doing one small thing each day is progress.

In the first chapter I will share with you my philosophy and understanding of addiction. Chapters 2-8 are the "ingredients" for living a lifestyle of holistic nutrition. Feel free to skip around. This is a guidebook, not a novel. Refer back to it as often as you need to for knowledge, ideas, and motivation.

At the end of each chapter I offer you a list of actionable steps. My hope is that you can take away a few twigs of inspiration and use them to start laying the foundation for your own, totally sturdy, radically unique, holistic nutrition treehouse.

Doing 1-3 actionable steps each day is how you gradually transition into living a life of holistic nutrition and create your very own recovery template.

Here is what I suggest you do, in this order, to get the most from this book and my programs.

1. Read this book all the way through to get an idea of what a life of holistic nutrition looks like. If a chapter does not appeal to you, skip it and move on to the next. There is no perfect way to

get from point A to point B in recovery. Any small step is progress. The key is to begin taking action, and you will have more success when you start with the places that are attractive and attainable to you.

2. After reading the book, or at least the chapters that appeal to you, choose one chapter and commit to a daily practice of doing the actionable steps for that chapter. Once you feel like you are standing on solid ground when it comes to that topic, move onto another chapter and do those steps. Before you know it you will be practicing holistic nutrition on auto-pilot – and this is when life starts to get really, really good.
3. Join me in my online support community. This is a private members-only online community where you will have 24/7 access to myself and an incredibly supportive community as you learn to adopt the principles of holistic nutrition into your life.

Ultimately the work is up to you, but please, I beg you to not go about it alone. You may have survived addiction – and I am so glad you did! But recovery is about **WAY MORE** than surviving – it's about **THRIVING!**

Let the knowledge in this book empower you to begin adopting a nutrition and lifestyle plan that supports your recovery versus maintain a diet and lifestyle that entices addictive behavior. The keys to gaining back great physical health, emotional freedom, and spiritual wealth are in these pages.

# Chapter 1:

# Treating Addiction with Holistic Nutrition

Transforming my life that was once governed by panic attacks and obsessive compulsions, into a life focused on holistic nutrition has empowered me to create the life of my dreams. And guess what? I am here to show you that you can build the life of your dreams too!

In this chapter I want to give you a picture of what living a life of holistic nutrition looks like. I'll start by sharing my own definition of how I define 'holistic nutrition'.

**Holistic nutrition:** To nourish yourself in more ways than just eating healthy. To feed your body, mind, emotions, relationships, the Earth, your spirit, and your soul, the nutrients that will sustain you to reach your highest potential.

In my definition of holistic nutrition, the word "nutrient" refers to more than just carbs, protein, fats, and vitamins. Some of the most vital nutrients, include things like:

- getting enough sleep
- taking time to relax
- moving your body
- connecting with others
- spending time in nature
- doing work that you love
- creatively expressing yourself
- living in gratitude

When you begin to adopt the principles of holistic nutrition into your life, as discussed in the next few chapters of this book, you will notice your life begin to shift. Some shifts will be subtle and some may reveal great progress in a short period of time. All of these "nutrients" serve a purpose and contribute to the overall progression of your recovery, but I do believe that starting with proper nutrition lays a strong foundation for you to be able to work on the other components.

**These are the *nutrients* I thrive on today...**

High-quality whole foods. Cooking. Quality sleep. Laughter. Friendship. Being myself. Traveling. Dancing. Human touch. Nature – the ocean, the beach, the mountains, old growth forests. Emotional Freedom Technique. The Emotion Code. Photography. Animal

therapy. Surfing. Running. Yoga. Integrative breathwork. Somatic experiencing. Solsara. Acupuncture. Massage. Meditation. Journaling. Reading. Singing. Humming. Writing. Coaching. Teaching. Learning. Working with others.

# Chapter 2: Nutrition For Addiction

## Nutrient Deficiencies Lead to Addiction

Proper nutrition might possibly be *THE* single most powerful tool you can use to restore balance in your body and overcome addiction. It is my belief that there are two primary factors that pre-dispose people to developing addictive behaviors:

1. Nutrient Deficiencies
2. Emotional Trauma

In recovery both of these factors will require attention, but let's begin with the first one, nutrient deficiencies.

Addressing my nutrient deficiencies and exploring the reasons *WHY* I was nutrient-deficient in the first place, was what laid the solid foundation for me to be able to step into my emotional healing and address the trauma piece.

## The Role Of Digestion

***“All disease begin in the gut.”***  
***Hippocrates, 460-370 BC***

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I saw my first gastroenterologist (GI specialist) and had my first colonoscopy when I was 4 years old. I'll spare you the details of why my parents ended up taking me to a GI specialist, but knowing this information, it's safe to say I came into this world with compromised digestion.

I wasn't diagnosed with any disorder at the time, but looking back on it I can't really remember a time in my life when I wasn't bloated. Of course, it was my norm so I didn't think anything of it. Nobody did. Digestion just wasn't the focus of health back then. I do know that I grew to love loose clothing and I was always self-conscious of my "food baby".

You see, compromised digestion sets the stage for having compromised cognitive function and for developing mood disorders. There is no disputing that today. The research is out. The case studies have been shown. And in my experience, this knowledge and going deep into healing my digestive system was what has finally allowed me to take my recovery from surviving to thriving – physically, mentally, and spiritually.

The road to developing addictive behaviors was being paved from the time I was a child. Compromised digestion inevitably leads to nutrient deficiencies. This means that your brain and body will crave things like sugar for quick energy because you're not able to extract more sustainable fuel sources like amino acids and fats, from the food you eat.

Without the correct nutrient supply your body will have a difficult time producing and managing mood-governing chemicals like neurotransmitters and hormones. Your immune system will be on high-alert, flared up, and over-stimulated. Your gut and your brain will be inflamed 24/7. Your body will be in a constant state of stress and unable to properly detoxify, and maintain its normal integrity and function.

Over time, your body starts to get tired and normal biological processes will slow down. This stress on the system begins to manifest in various ways that are driven by the dis-ease on multiple levels – physically, mentally, and emotionally. In my case, it manifested in anxiety, depression, eating disorders, emotional codependency, and drug and alcohol addiction.

Compromised digestion does not always manifest in addiction, but I will say, that whenever addictive tendencies have manifested it becomes *extremely* important to consider the health of your digestive system as a part of recovery.

Throw emotional trauma on top of being nutrient-deficient and you get what I consider to be the perfect set of circumstances for developing unhealthy coping mechanisms.

## Restoring Nutrients with Nutritional Therapy

In nutritional therapy having properly functioning gut health is a *foundation* of having good overall health. Digestion being a *foundation* implies that by healing the digestive system, it will have a trickle effect on the entire rest of your body.

There is tremendous evidence for this in Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride's book "*Gut and Psychology Syndrome*" where Dr. Natasha has used a specific gut-healing diet to address various mental and psychological diseases with great success. I use various gut-healing protocols in my practice, including Dr. Natasha's GAPS protocol. I have been through each protocol myself at least once and continue to tweak my own nutritional therapy protocols as my body continues to heal. With each protocol I go a little deeper and continue to find more and more success in treating my anxiety, depression, cravings, and compulsions toward addictive behaviors.

Gut health is a big piece of the puzzle as is nourishing your body in the first place, with high-quality, nutrient-dense foods. Taking steps to supply your body with nutrient-dense foods and ensuring that you are able to digest and assimilate the nutrients from those foods will lead to replenishing your nutrient stores. This will enable your body to heal and repair at the cellular level from all the damage that likely caused and has been made worse by your addiction.

## **Here is a short list of the benefits you will experience with the proper nutritional therapy protocol:**

- Improved quality and duration of sleep
- Improved natural detoxification pathways
- Tissues will be able to repair themselves
- Balanced hormones
- Balanced brain chemistry = balanced moods = less anxiety/depression/emotional highs and lows
- Eliminate physical cravings
- Brighter eyes
- Clear, glowing complexion
- Improved metabolism and healthy weight loss
- Decreased inflammation and puffiness
- Happy feelings!

Nutrient deficiencies result from one or more of the following contributing factors, as I touched on in my story. These factors can lay the groundwork for being pre-disposed to developing addictive behaviors, and are made worse with repeated drug and alcohol exposure, eating disorders, and other mental and psychological addictions. I think it's worth listing them all here to give you an idea of where compromised health stems from, regardless of how it manifests:

1. Predisposition from birth depending on your mother and father's health and your genetic make-up
2. Poor diet comprised of sugar, processed carbohydrates, hydrogenated oils, GMO's, and

- chemical-laden foods
- 3. Digestive disorders
- 4. Hidden food allergies and sensitivities
- 5. Stress of any kind
- 6. Exposure to environmental toxins

Many people who end up developing addictive behaviors are already pre-disposed to them because our bodies are seeking relief from the symptoms we are experiencing as a result of being so nutrient-depleted. When we find something that makes us “feel better”, it doesn’t take long before we find ourselves *depending* on that substance or behavior to operate.

Unfortunately, with substances and addictive behaviors they are temporary fixes that serve to mask the much larger, foundational reason why we become so attracted to them in the first place – which in many cases is a pre-disposition due to nutrient deficiencies. Then of course using drugs, alcohol or developing an eating disorder only adds to the severity of nutrient depletion and chemical imbalance.

Research has shown that the majority of addicts suffer from one or more of the following biochemical, nutritional, and metabolic disorders. And as mentioned above, there is a good chance that these disorders were present even before the addiction was developed.

- Digestive problems such as leaky gut, overgrowth of yeast, and malabsorption
- Depleted or malfunctioning neurotransmitters (brain chemicals necessary for proper function)
- Hypoglycemia (low blood sugar)
- Food allergies or sensitivities to common foods such as corn, wheat, sugar, and dairy
- Nutritional deficiencies of key amino acids, fatty acids, vitamins, and minerals

Each of these disorders can be treated very effectively with proper nutrition. Healing digestion and replenishing the nutrients that have been depleted in the body after a period of drug and alcohol abuse is critical for a successful recovery. Restoring health in your body will lay the foundation to begin restoring mental and emotional health.

## **3 Steps To Create Your Personal Nutrition Plan For Recovery**

### **1. Refined sugar and processed carbohydrates have GOT TO GO...**

Sugar is the number one worst substance that anyone who deals with emotional instability or addictive tendencies can put into their bodies (aside from harmful and toxic chemicals like alcohol and drugs). The bottom line is that you need to get this out of your diet. Unfortunately sugar and processed carbohydrates are what your body craves when it is deprived of nutrients because it’s a quick-acting source of energy. And many people can surely relate to the emotional attachment to sugar as well.

Whether you are actively struggling with your addictive behaviors, or are on the road to recovery, doing a sugar detox will be of great benefit to you. Getting off of sugar is no easy task but I promise you that once you experience the freedom from sugar addiction, you will feel much more empowered and motivated to tackle any other addictive behaviors that are preventing you from getting to where you want to go in your recovery. Quitting sugar will also give your digestive system a chance at restoring healthy function.

I know how difficult it can be to quit sugar. I still struggle with cravings even after all these years of taking care of myself. The bottom line is that sugar is a highly addictive substance and one that many addicts become hooked on when they quit their drug of choice. I began my career as a nutritional therapist giving sugar detox classes and I still give classes regularly in the online support community because it is foundational to the healing process – on all levels.

Getting off sugar is a **big deal** and has profound effects on your health and ability to thrive in recovery.

The picture on the left is a picture of me almost 2 years out of rehab. I am eating Cheetos covered in chocolate sauce – OMG! I couldn't get enough sugar and coffee, I felt totally out of control when it came to food – especially sugar!

It wasn't until I did my first sugar detox and simultaneously began my first gut-healing protocol that things began to shift for me in my recovery. I wholeheartedly believe this was the missing piece in my ability to experience any semblance of emotional freedom. I was feeding this sugar addiction which was contributing to further degradation of my system thus keeping the addictive tendencies strong and active in my physical body.

The picture on the right was taken on a surf trip in 2015 to Mexico. My girlfriends and I were sugar detoxing together the entire trip. I have never felt so nourished and healthy as being on vacation with my girlfriends, eating high-quality nutrient-dense foods from sun-up to sun-down, soaking up the sunshine, surfing as much as our bodies could handle, and sleeping and recovering our energy in between sessions.

The difference between surviving vs. thriving in recovery are markedly different and I wouldn't change that for anything today!

A little more motivation to inspire you to want to quit sugar...

- Sugar and processed carbs are **void of nutrition**. They deplete the body of vital nutrients, contributing to nutrient deficiency.
- Sugar lights up dopamine receptors. Research has shown **sugar to be more addictive than cocaine** because of this dopamine response. Hence, sugar consumption further contributes to any pre-existing neurotransmitter imbalance.
- Spiking blood sugars with sugar and processed carbs generates “**sugar highs**” and “**sugar crashes**”. These unstable states induce many of the same feelings and symptoms that trigger addictive behaviors.
- Consumption of sugar and processed carbohydrates creates a **hypoglycemic state** in the body (aka, low blood sugar). Any fluctuation in blood sugar beyond what our bodies

consider to be our normal level will create a state of dis-ease. This blood sugar roller coaster ride creates cravings, irritability, mood swings, anxiety, fatigue, and mental confusion.

- Repetitive exposure to the sugar roller-coaster, in addition to the wide range of stress we experience on a daily basis can lead to a condition known as **adrenal fatigue**. This is when we begin to have hormone imbalances, extreme fatigue, overwhelming cravings, mental health problems, poor memory, brain fog, lack of focus, feeling tired and wired, and contributes to severe chemical dependency in many cases.

## **2. Adopt a whole foods diet comprised of fresh, organic, and properly sourced foods**

Eating a whole foods diet will provide you with all of the building blocks you need to re-build your body and brain.

Getting serious about this can make all the difference in the world in terms of quality and timeliness of your recovery. Here are the foods that make up a clean, properly-sourced whole foods diet:

- Organic produce
- Wild herbs and spices
- Grass-fed, wild, and pasture-raised meats
- Wild-caught fish
- Raw nuts and seeds
- High-quality oils
- Organic, gluten-free whole grains
- Raw, unpasteurized dairy products like milk, yogurt, and cheese (assuming you are not allergic to dairy)

Avoid gluten, corn and soy products. These are highly allergenic and create inflammation and histamine responses in the body, which can exacerbate cravings. These foods are often highly processed and void of nutrition.

Avoid conventional produce, grain-finished meats, non-organic meats, and farmed fish. Avoid GMO's. Avoid processed carbohydrates and sugar. Avoid other processed food products. Avoid hydrogenated oils.

## **3. Optimize your personal nutrition protocol**

After eliminating sugar and getting really comfortable with your nutrient-rich whole foods diet, the next step is to optimize your personal nutritional therapy protocol. This will include taking the necessary steps to identify any foods you are sensitive to, optimizing your digestion with foods,

intermittent fasting, and supplementation, building a better brain with fats, proteins, and supplementation, and doing seasonal cleanses 1-4 times per year.

This clean eating guide is exactly the one I have followed for years. I have built my body back to health and am constantly experimenting with different nutrition protocols to heal and optimize my digestion, and build a better brain.

Once I eliminated sugar, began healing my gut, identified my food sensitivities, and began targeted supplement therapy to rebuild my neurotransmitter deficiencies, my entire body, mind, and emotional state improved dramatically. It was at this point I finally regained sustainable mood stability and was able to begin effectively addressing the emotional causes behind my addictive tendencies.

## Chapter 3: Detoxification

The words “*detox*” and “*detoxification*” in the addiction and recovery community are most often associated with programs to help people detoxify from actual chemical substances such as alcohol, recreational, and prescription drugs.

I want to clarify my use of the word “*detoxification*” upfront and state clearly that this book, nor my one-on-one work in Nutritional Therapy is meant as a substitute for any form of professional rehabilitation and recovery program. It is out of my scope of work and is not my intention to help people detoxify and withdraw from heavy chemical dependency and/or physical withdrawal symptoms.

If you are someone seeking help for a serious drug or alcohol addiction, I recommend seeking professional help immediately. You can contact my support team at [info@nutritionbyhollis.com](mailto:info@nutritionbyhollis.com) for resources and recommendations.

The purpose of this book and my work as a Nutritional Therapy Practitioner is to educate you about **natural detoxification**. My intention is to educate you about what detoxification means as it relates to my definition of holistic nutrition, and provide actionable steps for you to take *on a daily basis* to support your natural detoxification processes on all levels – physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.

Natural detoxification is a physical cleansing process happening in your body 24/7. The role of detoxification is to clean, repair, and restore the body – from the inside out.

Detoxification treatments are one of the most widely used practices in alternative medicine. They are based on the principles that illnesses can be caused by the accumulation of toxic substances (toxins) in the body. Eliminating existing toxins while avoiding the introduction of new toxic substances into the body are essential parts of the healing process. This includes eliminating physical toxins such as those from the food we eat, the air we breathe, and the cleaning and beauty products we use.

Detoxification can also be used to describe the elimination of toxins in other areas of your life to support emotional, mental, and spiritual wellbeing. This type of detoxification might include resolving such things such as unhealthy relationships and chronic stress of any kind.

Living in a toxic state, whether it be from the food you put into your body, or the stress that you experience on a regular basis, will make you more prone to wanting to participate in addictive behaviors. When you are nutrient deficient you are likely in a highly-toxic state because your body does not have all the substances it needs to properly cleanse your cells, organs, and tissues. When you experience regular stress, your body produces stress hormones which can lead to heavy toxin accumulation over time.

Without healthy detoxification, our bodies simply cannot function properly.

Detoxification is essentially the body's own built-in healing system. And contrary to what you may see in the mass media, detoxification does not require you to take handfuls of supplements or to follow a starvation diet. In fact, the most natural and healthy way to encourage your body to detoxify efficiently is to support your body daily in this natural process.

The steps at the end of each chapter all pertain to living a “cleaner” life by practicing nourishing self-care. Supporting detoxification on a daily basis by adopting the principles touched on in this book is the absolute best way to begin cleaning out your body and your life of the toxic substances that are preventing you from thriving in recovery.

## **3 Ways To Promote Natural Detoxification On A Daily Basis**

There are a lot of components to healthy detoxification, however, without these 3 basic nourishing components your body will have a hard time keeping up on its cleansing responsibilities. It is vitally important to understand the concept that your body is designed to regulate and repair itself - naturally.

Improving your natural detoxification (your built-in healing system) is possible for everyone, and it doesn't have to be rocket science, or cost hundreds of dollars to improve your health and vitality. It starts with daily practices such as these listed below. Start with the basics – avoid toxic exposure to

the best of your ability, nourish your body with clean food, water, and sufficient sleep, and begin incorporating manual detoxification therapies into your life.

## 1. First and foremost, reduce or eliminate toxic exposure.

We unfortunately live in a toxic world. Our bodies are designed to handle a certain amount of toxic exposure, but this day in age, it is easy for our bodies to get overwhelmed. Damaging “toxicity” is reached when we are taking in toxins quicker than we can eliminate them.

Toxins enter our bodies through various entry points: the lungs via the mouth and nose, through our skin, through our digestive tract, etc. At the same time, toxins are also being produced inside our bodies as metabolic waste products that are needing to be eliminated!

The best place to start is by beginning to eliminate some of this external toxic exposure. Some of these are obvious, and some might not be so obvious. Start where you can and continue to add on to this list depending on your individual lifestyle:

- Avoid tap water and water in plastic bottles.
- Avoid conventional produce and meat grown and raised with chemicals, hormones, and antibiotics.
- Avoid processed foods.
- Avoid chemical-laden beauty products and perfume-scented products.
- Avoid harsh chemical cleaning products.
- Avoid plastics – water bottles, foods storage, to-go lids, etc.
- Avoid using microwaves.
- Avoid drug and alcohol exposure.

## 2. Supercharge your body with healthy nutritional fuel: clean food, clean water, sleep.

There are a lot of components to healthy detoxification, however, without these 3 basic nourishing components your body will have a hard time keeping up on its natural cleansing responsibilities. By nourishing your body with the correct food and lifestyle “nutrients” you will be promoting healthy functioning at the cellular level. Your body knows how to balance itself out – you just need to give it the proper ingredients.

When you can get to a place of meeting these three criteria on a daily basis, you will have accomplished the most foundational pieces to begin thriving in recovery.

- **Eat nourishing clean food!** This means eating *real* food. Avoid processed foods, refined sugars, and toxic hydrogenated oils. Consume local organic produce whenever possible

– and lots of it! Eat meat that has been wild harvested and is free of antibiotics and hormones. And stick to whole grains and properly prepared nuts and seeds to get the maximum nutrient benefits from these foods.

- **Stay hydrated!** The minimum daily intake of water is ½ your body weight in ounces/day. Drink clean filtered water and make up for any diuretics you consume like coffee, tea, and alcohol by drinking even more clean water! Your body is 80% water and every biological process depends on its availability.
- **Get enough sleep!** Hardworking bodies need a rest and a tune-up, just as everything else we use regularly, does. Regular downtime is the key to maintaining balance and vitality. Every body needs to rest. Period. Getting 8+ hours of sleep each night is ideal. Your body do the most work in terms of cleansing itself while we are sleeping – so don't skip out on this!

### **3. Perform regular manual detoxification and circulation therapies.**

Adopting a few of the manual detoxification therapies below can have a profound impact on restoring health in the body, therefore restoring health in the mind and spirit as well. These practices have been around for centuries. They are science-tested and ancestor-approved! I recommend doing 1-3 of these daily to support healthy natural detoxification.

These practices are a huge part of my recovery education as part of my classes and one-on-one work. They are cheap, nourishing, and promote healing on multiple levels.

- **Cold Showers**  
Stand under cold water for 30-60 seconds following your normal shower routine or after a bath to improve circulation, brain health, and digestion. This helps re-balance the function of the autonomic nervous system which is often severely imbalanced in those who struggle with addiction.
- **Dry Brushing**  
Brush your skin for 5-10 minutes with a dry brush made of natural bristles just before showering or bathing. It is important to always brush toward your heart with the flow of the lymphatic fluid and only a very gentle amount of pressure is needed.
- **Sweat Therapies**  
This can be achieved by movement and exercise, or by spending time in the sun, a sauna, steam room, or hot bath. The skin is the largest organ. Many toxins enter and exit through your skin and it is extremely beneficial for detoxification to sweat on a regular basis.

- **Epsom Salt Baths**

Soaking your whole body, or even just your feet, in a warm Epsom salt bath promotes deep cleansing and inspires deep relaxation. The heat will allow your organs and fat cells to release stored toxins, and the salt will help draw it out through your pores. At the same time you are getting rid of unwanted debris, your body will be reabsorbing the essential and multifunctional minerals, magnesium and sulfate (2 nutrients severely depleted in those with drug and alcohol addiction).

- **Oil Pulling**

I recommend oil pulling on an empty stomach. Always use organic, cold-pressed coconut oil or raw sesame oil (not roasted).

To perform oil pulling: Put 1-2 tablespoons of oil in your mouth. Swish the oil for 15-20 minutes. Spit the oil into the trash to avoid it clogging up your sink. Rinse your mouth with a concentrated solution of water and sea salt, then brush your teeth.

- **Abdominal Massage**

Rubbing your abdomen in a clockwise circular motion is nourishing to your digestive and reproductive organs. Use raw sesame, olive, or coconut oil for added nutritional benefits.

Always go with the flow of your digestion, and start gently or learn different techniques by asking your health care professional or a licensed massage therapist. Regular abdominal massage will also promote emotional detoxification as many people – especially women – store deep emotional traumas in this center region of the body.

- **Castor Oil Pack**

Castor oils packs are amazing for detoxification. Castor oil itself is a powerful agent when used externally. It helps pull toxins out of the lymphatic system and the liver through the skin. You will find castor oil in many natural face cleansers because of its detoxification properties.

Doing a castor oil pack at night can really help digestion, and is another tool to aid in elimination of toxins stored deep in your body. This is especially helpful if you have slower digestion or if you become constipated easily. It is also be really comforting and relaxing right before bed.

To do a castor oil pack, you will need high-quality cold-pressed castor oil and a flannel sheet. You should be able to find castor oil pack kits at Whole Foods or in any local natural products store. Soak the flannel sheet in castor oil and place it over your abdomen. Cover it with a piece of plastic (you can cut a shopping bag in half and use that). Then place a hot pad or warm water bottle over the pack for at least an hour while you relax in a comfy position on your back. You can fall asleep with the pack on or leave it on for as long as you want. Just be cautious the oil doesn't get on your clothes or sheets because it stains.

- **Enemas/Colonics**

Enemas are an extremely cost-effective and powerful way to clean the colon of toxins. You can also use certain nutrients, such as coffee or apple cider vinegar, to stimulate the release of toxins from your liver and gallbladder for deeper cleansing.

If you prefer to have a colonic done for you, find an experienced colon hydro-therapist in your area. This is a great way to do some deeper emotional cleansing when working with a colon hydro-therapist over time.

The two basic at-home enemas I use are the Cleansing Enema and Retention Enema.

**The Cleansing Enema is retained for a short period of time (5-10 minutes) until your natural peristaltic movement eliminates both the water and the loose fecal material. It is primarily used to gently flush out the colon using concentrated enema bag solutions.**

**Examples of cleansing enemas:**

#### **Apple Cider Vinegar**

Helps with viral conditions and clears mucus from the body. These are great if you suffer from nasal congestion or asthma. You do not want to do this type of enema if you are prone to fungal or yeast infections.

#### **Burdock Root Tea**

Helps to eliminate calcium deposits and purify the blood.

#### **Catnip Tea**

Relieves constipation and congestion and aids in bringing down a high fever.

#### **Lemon Water**

Cleanses the colon of fecal matter and balances pH.

**The Retention Enema is held in the body for longer, 15-20 minutes, and is meant to detoxify on a deeper level as well as replenish certain nutrients via absorption into the body through the soft tissues of the colon. The enema solutions are generally less concentrated in this type of enema.**

**Examples of Retention Enemas**

#### **Coffee**

A coffee solution made with unroasted organic coffee beans of 1 tbsp. / 6 c. filtered water. This stimulates both the liver and the gallbladder to release toxins (15 minutes only). Do not do this at night as it can be stimulating for some people.

#### **Minerals**

This one helps rebuild the energy of the adrenals and the thyroid. Seek out a professional healthcare practitioner for tips on doing enemas with mineral solutions.

#### **Probiotics**

I don't recommend doing this type of enema without consulting a health care professional first, but it is definitely worth mentioning as they can be particularly effective for those struggling with mood disorders, digestive problems, and immune deficiency.

#### **Red Raspberry Leaf Tea**

This is particularly great for women. It helps to replenish iron and provides other nutrition for a healthy reproductive system.

# Chapter 4:

# Sync Your Natural Rhythms

Biologically, our bodies are governed by an abundance of natural rhythms. Some examples are sleep, hunger, digestion, and hormone production. All of these processes are in place to keep us in “the flow”. They are designed to be steady and gradual. They are supposed to happen with ease – at about the same time every single day, month, or year of life – naturally.

When you fall out of “the flow”, you start experiencing the signs of this such as being tired all the time, or eating too much because you don’t get the sensation of feeling full. These are clues that you are falling out of sync with our natural rhythms and that you need to start taking care of yourself, and nourishing your natural rhythms so that you can get back in “the flow”!

Holistic nutrition embraces respecting and nourishing the natural rhythms of your body, lifestyle, changing environment, and age. By doing this you honor the unseen forces that govern your world and those of everyone around you. You remain in “the flow”!

When you abuse your body, you inevitably disrupt your natural rhythms. When you become trapped by an addiction, you begin to lose touch with your body, and with the world around you. You begin to control these natural rhythms versus supporting them with your loving attention.

There are pills to control sleep cycles. There are pills to enhance focus and concentration. There are pills to numb hunger signals. There are ‘happy’ pills. There are pregnancy pills. There are pregnancy prevention pills. It’s a crazy world we live in with as many pills as there are to *control* the way our bodies operate!

The self-medicating phenomena has been a heavy-hitter to our natural rhythms. Even if you're not actually popping pills, if you are entertaining an addictive behavior, you are using it as a means of control, thus avoiding the natural flow.

The longer you spend controlling the things that are meant to be governed by natural environmental and biological cues, the more damage you end up doing to your body, the environment, and to those around you.

In my healing journey these rhythms are something I have addressed with diligent attention in the following areas – sleep, digestion, menstruation, and adjusting to the seasons by doing seasonal cleanses.

**By acknowledging and respecting the natural rhythms of your body and your environment you begin to regain your health and you start to sync up with the world around you. You jump back in “the flow”.**

Being in “the flow” feels effortless. Things come easily to you. The world is a mystery and completely transparent at the same time. You are riding the waves of life and it simply feels amazing! I encourage you to reflect for a second on these natural rhythms of your body, life, and environment and take action to begin nourishing them back to health.

## **3 Steps to Help Sync Your Natural Rhythms and Jump Back Into “The Flow”**

### **1. Stay hydrated.**

This is OH. SO. IMPORTANT.

Two thirds of your body is made up of H<sub>2</sub>O. Here's how that breaks down in the body...

- The blood that flows through your body and delivers nutrients is 82% water
- The muscles that hold your bones and move your body are 75% water
- Lungs that pump oxygen crucial to your survival are 90% water
- Bones that protect your organs are 25% water
- Your brain is a whopping 76% water

Keeping your bodies' biological processes flowing with the clean water it requires to function gives you a thriving chance at receiving the signals from our body and the environment helping us stay connected to the natural rhythms.

Water is required for efficient detoxification – washing away toxins, impurities, and negative emotions.

Hydration improves biochemical signaling – which serves to regulate sensations like hunger, fullness, happiness, and joy. It is common to mistake feeling hungry for actually being thirsty.

Water ensures that nutrients are delivered throughout the body and that digestion flows optimally.

Drink ½ your body weight in ounces of filtered water daily to stay adequately hydrated.

## 2. Sync Your Bod' With Sleep

Getting adequate sleep is a powerful tool to help you sync up with the natural rhythms. Primal cultures went to bed when the sun went down and got up when the sun rose. This is the way we are meant to be doing it too! Everyone knows that sleep is necessary for survival, yet so few people are making sleep a priority.

Sleep is important for: every. single. thing. you. do. Heck, sleep is even important for all the times we aren't "doing".

We require a minimum of 7 hours/night, but let's be honest here, who doesn't feel way better with a full 8-10 hours under their belt?!

**Here are a few of the benefits you'll get from optimizing your sleep-cycles...**

- Improved cognitive function
- Weight loss
- Stabilize moods, lower anxiety, alleviate depression
- Feel balanced and experience an overall sense of wellbeing
- Feel relaxed, calm, and present
- Overcome cravings for alcohol, sugar, and other addictions
- Improved immune function
- Balanced hormones, improved fertility, alleviate PMS and menopausal symptoms
- Your body naturally regenerates and heals quickly
- Reduced risk of disease, cancer, and physical injury
- Complexion is brighter, and skin appears more youthful
- More confidence, positivity, and better decision-making

Putting all your effort into mastering sleep will be one of the best things you can do to help you get back in "the flow"!

## 3. Eat On A Schedule

This is going to look a little different for everyone in terms of quantity and exact time, but it can be really nourishing for your bodies' natural rhythms to be receiving energy at the same time each day – especially if you are trying to heal a physical ailment.

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Adopting an eating routine will promote good digestion, and improve hormone production and signaling.

I recommend eating a breakfast of mostly protein and healthy fats within two hours of waking up. Lunch should be your biggest meal of the day because digestion is strongest midday. And eat dinner between 5-7 PM, eating your last bite of food before 7PM.

# Chapter 5:

## Find Movement That Fits

Movement is required for a healthy life. When you are stagnant, things get stuck – emotions, thoughts, toxins, you name it. The body stores everything. When things get stuck they create tension in the body. If this tension does not get released it manifests in aches, pains, anxiety, depression, constipation, and even disease.

To stay healthy and clean, you need to be doing some act of movement just about every day to keep that energy flowing and prevent it from getting backed up and causing dis-ease.

Since it's something you will be doing on a daily basis – why not make it fun?! It is important to find movement that works for you. Some people do better with gentle, centering exercises, while others require more vigorous movement. Exercise, much like eating, starts to become intuitive the more you practice it. This is one of the huge benefits of nourishing yourself holistically – you begin to develop an intuitive ear for what your body is communicating with you.

I can usually tell when I need to stay still and spend time on my yoga mat, and I can feel when I need to go run it out on the beach. And, when I can't get a clear read on my body, I just pick something, and do it. I do it because if I don't, my body, emotions, brain, relationships, and spirit start to suffer.

Trust me, I've been "stuck" in those stagnant places enough times to know that my body NEEDS movement, whether I "feel" like doing it or not. And let me just say, that dancing like a total spaz in your

living room to George Michael, or taking the dog on a 10-minute walk outside, or even spending just 5 minutes on your yoga matt can suffice for adequate movement.

## 3 Tips To Help You Find Movement That Fits

### 1. Do what you did when you were a kid

What did you do as a kid, teenager, or in college to stay active? Did you dance? Bike? Hike? Run around the yard in the sprinklers? Jump on a trampoline? Whatever you did as a kid when you were playing and having fun – do more of that! It's can be that simple, and that fun!

This might sound cheesy and most people will skim over this section. But I encourage you to **STOP & SMELL THE ROSES HERE!!** Fill in the blank area below with some examples of things you loved doing as a kid, or when you were younger, or when you were thinner, or more mobile. Doing these activities can be extremely nourishing for your entire body, mind, and soul!

For example, two of my favorite activities when I was young were swimming, and playing in the dirt. We had a community swimming pool in my hometown and I lived there during the summers! We also had a lot of ditch banks to explore in the area where I grew up and I have dozens of pictures of me and my friends covered head to toe in mud!

Now, while I don't soak myself from head to toe on a daily basis, I do get dirty, often! I love planting flowers and vegetables. I love the sand and mud between my toes so I walk barefoot on the beach or play in the rain on warmer days. I do this because it's fun, and I get to move my body and be connected intimately with the Earth, just like when I was a kid.

And as far as swimming goes, I still love anything to do with the water. I took up surfing in my mid-20's. I can't think of a more enjoyable activity than being in a body of water on a hot summer day. And there are a couple swimming pool I will visit when the ocean is too wild or I just feel like getting wet.

I challenge you to honor your inner child, and untamed adult, and find movement that makes you happy, especially if it involves child-like or unconventional behavior!

### 2. Consider your personality type

If you are a quiet person who loves to read and learn new things, why not download some podcasts or books on iTunes and mix in your love of learning while you walk, jog, or run?

Are you someone who likes to be around people or has more motivation in a class setting? Ask a friend to be your workout buddy or sign up for a class or club sport. The accountability of having a workout buddy is unsurpassable.

Do you do better with structure? Put movement on your calendar and follow your schedule.

Are you someone who flies by the seat of your pants? Well then, make a commitment to exercise first thing in the morning, before your mind runs bonkers on you and by the afternoon you consistently come up with another excuse why you don't have time to exercise.

### 3. Listen to your body

Movement is a lot like food. Once you understand how different types of movement nourish your body in different ways, you can put together a menu of activities to keep yourself in balance.

When I am feeling scatter-brained and overwhelmed, I go for a walk or run. It's a repetitive movement that grounds me.

When I am feeling angry, or on edge, the best way for me to process those emotions is to *feel* them and not move too much or try and run away from them. I get on my mat, I bring myself back into my body. I breathe through the feelings. (Kundalini Yoga can be really helpful to work through intense emotions).

When I get "writers block" and need some extra inspiration, I do something outdoors – like go on a hike, walk the beach, or go surf.

Harness your inner bad-ass and get out there and move. Remember, a little goes a long way – especially if you do it every day.

# Chapter 6: Nourishing Relationships

Relationships fit under a category that I refer to as “primary food”. Primary foods are essential areas in our lives that need to be examined and worked on to live a truly full and balanced life. I consider primary foods important foundational pillars in holistic nutrition, just behind nourishing yourself properly with whole foods.

These “primary foods” include relationships, movement (discussed in Chapter 4), career (or your life’s work/purpose), and spirituality (which I cover in the last chapter).

**Relationships feed our hunger for connection, touch, play, inspiration, seeing through someone else’s eyes, romance, intimacy, and love. These are all essential forms of nourishment for us as human beings.**

You will have a variety of relationships over the course of your lifetime. The one that you will continue to develop and evolve throughout your life is the one with yourself. This is the single most important relationship you will ever have.

If you just gagged a bit after reading that comment, or if you immediately lost interest or had the reaction of feeling completely overwhelmed and defeated, I want you to know that I can totally relate to that. It took me years of rolling my eyes at this whole “you need to improve the relationship with yourself” thing before I actually started to “get it”.

The reason it took me so long to start to “get it” was because I had so much disdain for the person I was, that I couldn’t fathom being kind to myself. It was hard for me to see the “good” in me when I was a walking disaster.

I believe this underlying pattern of self-loathing and having such a toxic relationship with yourself is one of the biggest traps for addicts. It not only drives you to addiction, but it also keeps you stuck there. Isolation becomes a comfortable place when you are carrying around the heavy burden of self-loathing, guilt, and shame.

When I think back, I still remember how isolated I felt, how I alone I felt, and how sad that was. I had no idea that I was starving myself of this essential ingredient – healthy relationships – that has proven to be a non-negotiable nutrient for me today.

As addicts, it becomes harder and harder to look at yourself in the mirror and think anything positive. As a result of the toxicity being created in your energy field by the negative way you feel about yourself, you will unfortunately attract people into your life who can be just as toxic. The good news is, once you begin to take small steps toward loving yourself, the energy and vibrations you create with these actions begins to shift. The more you love yourself, the more you will begin attracting healthier people into your life. These people will be your support system and tribe as you create a beautiful life for yourself in recovery.

Surrounding yourself with a community who understands you, who will not judge you, and who will accept you exactly the way you are is essential to thrive in recovery. The people in your life provide support when you need it. These relationships also provide you the opportunity to be in a supportive role, and giving is as just important as receiving in relationships.

Relationships are our best teachers. They are reflections of ourselves and of our lives. They give us prompts for what needs to be worked on inside ourselves. They are no doubt challenging and frustrating at times, but the opportunity for growth and love they provide is unsurpassable.

When you begin to nurture the relationship with yourself and the people in your life, the healing inevitably transfers over to your body, mind, and spirit.

“We all have a need to give and receive love. Love is food for the soul. Love nourishes our body, mind, and spirit. Being well connected with others – husbands, wives, boyfriends, girlfriends, parents, children, friends, family, co-workers – is an essential part of life. We can feel a sense of comfort, safety, and connection when we are free to express our hopes and dreams, fear and anger, joy and struggles with others.”

~Joshua Rosenthal

## 3 Ways To Cultivate Nourishing Relationships

### 1. Practice self-care on a daily basis

Like I said in the beginning of this chapter, the relationship you have with yourself will be the single most important relationship you will ever have. The best way to cultivate a nourishing relationships with yourself is by taking care of that precious soul that is you. These acts of self-care do not have to be grand endeavors. They can be as simple as looking yourself in the mirror and saying something sweet, or can be as BIG as taking yourself on a trip somewhere amazing!

The point is to begin to cultivate daily nourishment practices that become routine over time. And depending on how long you have spent being hard on yourself, it may take a little while to notice the shifts in the way you think and feel about yourself. I promise you though, if you can make an effort to do even just one thing each day to show affection toward yourself, your life will begin to shift in miraculous ways!

Treating yourself with love and respect by *practicing and doing* just one simple act each day will grow into a huge shift over time. Trust this process and know that even if it doesn't feel like it's working, it is!

- Nourish your body with clean, whole foods. High-quality food equals a high-quality you.
- Write in your journal a minimum of 3 things you like about yourself.

- Look at yourself in the mirror and say something kind to yourself out loud, for example: “I love you”, “you are beautiful”, “I completely love and accept you just the way you are”, “you are a total bas-ass”, etc...
- Practice daily movement – a short walk in nature or around the block, a yoga class, or something more intense like a long hike, or spin class.
- Treat yourself to regular massages, acupuncture, and other relaxing and rejuvenating body-love treatments.
- Take regular cleansing baths. Make this a weekly, or even a daily ritual!
- Get adequate sleep.
- Take yourself on regular outings and treat yourself to something special.
- Spend time listening to music you love.
- Give yourself tactile love by massaging your body with nourishing natural oils and spice it up to inspire your moods by adding essential oils.

Remember, it's the small acts that count. Practice one or more of these loving acts on a daily basis. You will be growing compassion, forgiveness, and deep love for the soul that is you. These actions and feelings will begin to replace the built-up negativity toward yourself. This will create emotional freedom from your negative thought patterns and open the doors to begin attracting positive nourishing relationships with others.

## 2. Evaluate your relationships with others

Your relationships have much to teach you. It is important to take inventory from time to time and think about whether the people in your life are helping you, or on some level, might be hurting you. It is very common to hang out in certain relationships because they are comfortable. This is a great thing when those people are supportive of your own personal growth. But when those relationships begin to hinder your evolution, it might be time to let them go, or at least give them a break for a little while.

I recommend doing a little inventory of your relationships to check in with yourself and ensure that you have a good support system. If you end up doing this inventory and realize you need a whole new set of friends – that's totally OKAY! Sometimes you do need to let go of people to become the person you are meant to become. And sometimes, simply voicing your genuine and honest opinion in a relationship and asking to get your needs met will catapult that relationship to the level of making both of you stronger, more empowered and supportive of your truth and of yourselves.

I have learned in my years of being on the path of self-discovery, that learning to let go of friendships is a normal part of our evolution and growth. It doesn't make it easy, but the **lesson** is what that person was put into your life for.

Being honest, open, and really, really vulnerable can be scary but this is how you honor yourself and cultivate the kinds of relationships that will promote true supported healing in your life.

Here are a few questions to consider when evaluating your relationships:

- Does this person push me to be more accepting of myself?
- Is this person present with me when we are together?
- Does this person call me out when I am wrong?
- Does this person let me complain and play victim and sympathize with me no matter what, or do they voice their honest opinion even if it's not what I want to hear?
- Is this person willing to be there for me – in good times *and* in the hard times?
- Does the energy each of us put into this relationship seem equal?

I encourage you to also ask these same questions about yourself in your relationships.

If you find yourself being distracted and uninterested with what your friend is saying when you are together, ask yourself why?

Are there ways in which you could show up better in your relationships? Or is the dynamic presenting itself because the connection between you is not as strong as it used to be?

I spent a lot of time avoiding relationships and connection, but I am very aware at this stage in my recovery that I need supportive relationships to help me continue to grow. It still takes effort on my part to put myself out there and let someone see me for all of me. Vulnerability is challenging, but I know that it is something I need to practice if I want to keep my energy flowing, my heart full, and my path less isolated.

This quote by Pema Chodron reminds me to be kind to myself, and to be brave and to do my best to show up in my relationships. We need other people, and they need us. Always pushing to grow the depth and quality of your relationships will ensure your deepening recovery.

“The only reason we don't open our hearts and minds to other people is that they trigger confusion in us that we don't feel brave enough or sane enough to deal with. To the degree that we look clearly and compassionately at ourselves, we feel confident and fearless about looking into someone else's eyes.”

~Pema Chodron

### **3. Find community that fully supports and understands you at your core.**

Having a community, a tribe that fully understands and accepts you for where you are and where you've been is a great way to open your heart to the lessons of the Universe. This can be your core group of friends. This might be your family. This may be a specific recovery support community.

Having one or more communities where you can turn to and feel seen, heard, and “a part of”, is an essential nutrient in a life of holistic nutrition. These communities that you choose will grow and evolve as you grow and evolve.

In the first few years of my recovery after going to rehab, I attended Alcoholics Anonymous meetings regularly. I found community and connection and the support that I needed. Everyone understood what I was going through. I could be myself and not feel ashamed. It was a helpful community that kept me sane and sober.

Over the years my support communities have changed up simply because I keep finding new things to work on. I now have a solid personal support system of a few friends I can call on and who call on me regularly to hash out life’s perplexing lessons.

One of the most influential communities I am a part of is with a group called Solsara. This community has helped me break through layers of self-limiting beliefs and is helping me to navigate the path to emotional freedom on a very intense and deep level, by simply practicing being present with myself and others. This is an excerpt taken directly from their website:

**“Through the practice of [Solsara](#) we begin to perceive and release the protective habits, attachments, and limiting beliefs that have kept us stuck, separate, lonely, and suffering. As we open, we learn to listen to the subtle voices of our bodies and hearts, allowing them to inform our thinking and actions. We become present. We rediscover our freedom. We naturally and open-heartedly interact with other people and the world in a way that cultivates connection, trust, understanding, and love.”**

Regardless of which communities you identify and connect with, the important part is to show up and practice being witnessed and really make an effort to attentively witness others. Be conscious of those connections, no matter what feelings come up in the moment. The most important thing is to place yourself in communities where you feel welcome and know that it’s safe to be yourself.

## Chapter 7:

# Emotional Healing

“When you are willing to feel it, you can heal it.”

~Unknown

Learning to understand, express, and *feel* your emotions in healthy ways, and beginning to unravel and heal your emotional traumas will be an ongoing commitment in your ability to grow and thrive in recovery.

Honoring the wisdom of your Emotional Body is one of the most important *nutrients* in holistic nutrition.

Emotions are natural. They are a part of the human experience. And, they must be understood, *felt*, and accepted as a part of *your* human experience to get the absolute most out of life. If you are reading this, then I know you are in this to prosper and flourish, not to simply exist.

It is my belief that many humans, addicts and non-addicts alike, end up suffering a great deal due to an inability to express emotions in healthy ways. Feeling the whole spectrum of emotions can be unpleasant at times, and is in fact what drives many people to seek out relief-giving addictive behaviors. But the reality is that emotions are a normal part of the human experience. It is when you run away from, or mask these intense emotions versus *feel* them, that you end up with pent up energy. This pent up energy eventually needs to be felt and/or expressed.

Let's take it back to when you were a baby... Feeling and expressing emotions is natural and fluid for babies. In fact, babies are great examples of what healthy emotional expression looks like. They cry when their needs are not getting met. They laugh and coo when they receive comfort and love. All of this happens in the moment, in real-time. They don't wait for you to ask you if they're hungry, they let you know right away, in the moment that they *feel* hunger, and they immediately express that sensation in order to get their needs met.

Healthy emotional expression is a learned behavior. We were born expressing exactly how we felt, when we felt it. Then over time we are taught to behave differently in response to our emotions. Maybe you were taught to repress your tears, so you forced yourself to stop crying when you felt sad. Or maybe you learned that being angry was inappropriate, so you began to swallow that lump in your throat instead of speak your truth.

It is all too common for people to either not be taught how to express their emotions, or to learn unhealthy ways of expressing emotions. And it is in getting familiar with your emotions, getting comfortable with *feeling* them, and learning healthy ways to express them that we get to learn from our experiences, good and bad, and become emotionally healthy adults.

Being emotionally healthy has a HUGE impact on your physical, mental, and spiritual well-being and how you are able to operate in life and navigate yourself in this world. Unfortunately, as children, you

didn't have much of a choice when it came to the adults and the environment you were in when you began learning about emotional expression.

Today however, as an adult, you do have a choice. Like I said before, healthy emotional expression is a learned behavior. Sometimes we have to unlearn what we were taught as children, or unwire a reactive mechanism that was imprinted on you through a traumatic experience, and then re-learn a new way of "dealing" in order to handle situations differently.

People who develop addictive behaviors often do so because they are emotionally wired to react in unhealthy ways as a result of their inability to express their emotions in healthy ways. They are constantly experiencing them, but don't know what to do with them.

Over-exposure to unpleasant emotions leads one to seek relief from the uncomfortable sensations. Once a pleasant sensation is felt and relief is achieved, one will seek out that same behavior over and over again. You can see here that the development of addictive behavior can easily be a product of unhealthy emotional expression.

Learning new ways of expressing your emotions and getting comfortable with simply *feeling* and *being* with them allows you to grow and transform as a result without having to turn to an addictive behavior for relief. It takes willingness, courage, and patience, but I promise you that it is so worth it.

## To break this chapter down:

I want to offer you my definition and understanding of what emotions actually are in the body. It can be empowering to know that emotions are simply energy and that you can learn to move this energy in order to promote healthy emotional responses.

I will discuss in more detail what healthy emotional expression is in terms of moving energy in the body. Then I touch on emotional trauma and how it can cause people to choose addictive behaviors.

At the end of this chapter I offer you my favorite daily practices for healthy emotional expression that anyone can practice to promote emotional healing.

## Understanding Emotions As *Energy*

Emotions are really the ***experience of energy*** moving through the body.

The Latin derivative for the word emotion, 'emotere', literally means ***energy in motion***.

In itself, *emotional energy* is neutral. It is when you get a “feeling” or experience any kind of sensation in your body, that you learn to label a specific emotion as positive or negative. These emotions get labeled as fear, joy, anger, sadness, etc.

The experience of emotion is natural. In fact, our emotions are in many ways an adaptation for survival – such as a baby crying out for food. Emotions also give color and meaning to life. What depth would life have if you weren’t allowed to feel love, or never experienced laughter?

It is your learned relationship with these feelings however, that cause you to develop unhealthy emotional patterning. We learn to divert the normal emotions – or energy in motion – in ways that don’t allow the energy to fully move through us. Therefore, the energy gets diverted and often stuck in our physical bodies.

This is powerful knowledge to have in my opinion, because what this means is that you are not a product of your emotions, no matter how many years you’ve been depressed, or anxious, or addicted.

You have the ability to learn how to work with this moving energy. And once you learn to work with it, you can begin to move and release this pent up energy. And the result of that is freedom from uncomfortable emotions - *natural* freedom!

We can begin to inspire movement of deeply stagnant energy, which inspires positive chemical release in the body, thus creating the ability to essentially re-wire our emotional bodies on a very physical level. This can all be enabled by living by the principles of holistic nutrition and trusting that our bodies will reward us by producing positive emotional responses.

Knowing that I have the power to re-wire my learned responses of feeling sensations like the depression and fear I lived with for years, into experiencing more happiness, joy, and freedom is music to my ears. I rewired my own unhealthy emotional expressions by using the tools I write about in this book!

## Healthy Emotional Expression

Understanding that *emotions are energy* implies that they are fluid and flowing resources meant to be felt and released vs. suppressed and ignored. The latter is the true culprit of where you get yourself into trouble as far as unhealthy emotional expression is concerned.

As you grow up you learn to suppress your emotions versus fully experience them. You essentially stop processing them in real time, thus, diverting energy in its flow. You learn how to mask emotions, or stuff them away as if they don’t exist.

The **energy** from those emotions doesn’t just disappear because we suppress or divert it, it stays in your body and waits for another time to come out. When you don’t express your emotions, they literally get stuck in your body.

When they get stuck, they inevitably manifest in ways that cause you to suffer – physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. As a result of having this diverted, pent up energy, you can easily develop unhealthy habits in an attempt to resolve the uncomfortable feelings of having so much “stuck” energy.

For example, you may “feel tense” and be experiencing a sensation of *contraction*. Or, you may “feel calm” and experience the sensation as *expansion*. In order to successfully express emotion you have to allow your emotional energy to *move* by recognizing the sensations and releasing these states of *contraction*.

The process of expressing your emotional energy involves tuning into your bodies’ sensations.

Tuning into your body is something that is not well-practiced these days. Life is hectic and stressful and easily distracts us from “tuning in”. But, healthy emotional expression happens when you can bring awareness into your sensations. Your sensations will inevitably begin to reveal what is going on beneath the surface and allow any stuck energy to begin to move in your body.

These sensations may include tense, tingly, light, heavy, soft, smooth, hot, cold, rumbling, or pressure just to name a few. They will intelligently and organically guide you into releasing any unresolved stress and bring you into greater balance. As you move from ***contraction to expansion*** you will typically feel lighter, calmer or relieved while opening the door to lasting happiness.

Learning to mobilize energy and experience these sensations is learning how to express emotions. It is as simple, and can be as difficult, as this. You can learn exercises to practice doing this on a daily basis. I will give you my favorite daily practices at the end of this chapter. Healthy emotional expression can be learned, even in the most difficult of cases. It is wise and can be very helpful to have a guide such as a coach or counselor when learning to mobilize or unravel deeper emotional situations such as trauma.

## Understanding Trauma

In the beginning of this book I stated that it is my belief that there are two primary factors that pre-dispose people to developing addictive behaviors:

1. Nutrient deficiencies
2. Emotional trauma

Addressing the trauma piece will facilitate deep emotional healing and can often set you free from addictive behaviors, for good. To fully understand this, you need to understand on a basic level what trauma is.

Trauma is simply a word for an event or a series of events that essentially leaves a blueprint on the nervous system.

Your body remembers everything. Even though you may not be consciously experiencing the actual trauma anymore, your body remembers it and it will continue to respond in the same way as if you were in fact experiencing the trauma. Hence, in post-traumatic-stress-disorders (PTSD) people will continue to re-live the trauma as if it was still happening because the experience of those emotions made a lasting impression on the nervous system that it became the “normal” response to certain stimuli.

This physical response can happen again and again for years until we take action to begin unwinding that reaction that has been etched into our biology, our nervous system. This nervous system reaction happens in response to certain triggers. This reactive nervous system response sends us into one of three commonly referenced states known as “fight, flight, or freeze”.

Each of these states brings about a whole array of emotions, such as anger, fear, depression, or anxiety, along with the experience of constricted sensations. I want to note here that traumas can be *any* event or series of events that essentially shocks your nervous system into behaving a certain way, thus causing a strong and vivid emotional response in your body.

Traumatic events don’t have to be all that dramatic or obvious, although, in many cases they are devastating life events. Here are some examples:

- A dog barking in your face when you were a baby
- Watching a scary movie for the first time when you were a child
- Witnessing a heated fight between two people such as your parents or someone you have emotional attachment to
- Car accidents
- Divorce
- The loss of a loved one

Addressing your traumas is when you begin to explore and resolve the emotional triggers that had and continue to have an impact on the way you act and react in the world. This is emotional healing on a very deep level. It can be emotionally painful and may require professional guidance. But the work is unsurpassable in its possibilities.

Letting go of old traumas has the power to allow you to experience freedom from the emotions that drove you to seek out addictive behaviors for relief. It allows the experience of positive emotions and expansive sensations. It allows you the opportunity to choose the life you want to live without having to depend on certain addictive behaviors to cope.

## **3 Daily Practice That Support Emotional Healing**

### **1. Take Cold Showers**

One of the best things you can do to unwind your traumas and promote emotional healing is to take cold showers! I know that might sound a little off-beat, but cold water therapy literally benefits every single organ, tissue, and organ system in the body. It is one of the oldest forms of therapeutic medicine known to man.

# Cold water therapy benefits the nervous system, circulatory system, digestive system, immune system, and brain function.

It also speeds up recovery and will massively improve your stress response over time. Cold water exposure also induces a natural “high” with all of the body systems being stimulated in such a way. The natural chemical cascade will boost your mood and attitude.

By manually stimulating this chemical cascade over time you are literally re-training your body to produce more “happy” chemicals, creating new, more rational and positive nervous system pathways that your brain is more likely to go down in the future in response to stress. When you frequently experience stress, have been exposed to trauma, or experience mood disorders such as anxiety, depression, or angry outbursts, chances are that your body is “stuck” in this sympathetic nervous system state (aka “fight or flight”).

Healing happens in the body when we are in a parasympathetic state (aka “rest and digest”). Taking cold showers stimulates your parasympathetic nervous system response, not only improving circulation, detoxification, and rebalancing on a physical level, but it also promotes healing on the emotional level.

The kick-over into parasympathetic mode is a healthy reminder to our bodies of the importance of the parasympathetic nervous system pathway – in healing and detoxification in particular. The daily reminder of what it feels like to go into the parasympathetic state begins to re-wire our systems to go here more often versus stay “stuck” in the high-stress sympathetic state.

## Here is a list of benefits you can expect from regular cold water therapies:

- Improve circulation, heart rate, and blood pressure
- Stimulates parasympathetic nervous system response
- Improves mood by increasing production of neurotransmitters
- Decreases tension in the body
- Improves brain function (focus, alertness, cognition and memory)
- Helps alleviate cravings
- Reduces inflammation
- Stimulates lymphatic system and improves immune system function
- Improves metabolism

Make cold showers a part of your everyday routine for faster recovery, enhanced mood and focus, and nourishment for every cell, tissue, organ, and organ system in your body.

## 2. Yoga & Meditation

Yoga and meditation both bring you into your body. As you become present and aware of the energy that is moving through your system, you begin to process your emotions. Just the simple act of sitting still, breathing, and feeling the sensations in your body is creating emotional healing. Remember, emotions are simply energy in motion. In order to release them and *feel* them, you’ve got to allow the energy to *move*.

# A regular yoga and meditation practice is one of the most powerful things you can do for deep emotional healing.

The results have been in on the benefits of yoga and meditation for healing for quite a while now. So then the only real question becomes – why aren't you doing more of it?!

I think I can help answer that... because it can be torture to sit with yourself when your body is so full of emotion and your mind is moving a million miles an hour – that's why! I know, I've been there. In fact, I have many days still when I resist it. Thankfully I have done enough experimenting with and without it to know that regardless of my resistance, the fact is that when I do it, my life is better. Period.

I've gone through many phases of practicing yoga and meditation, then falling off the wagon, then getting back to it, then again somehow letting it go. But this I will tell you for certain: the times of my life when I have had a regular daily practice, have been the times in my life that have been the most sane, even keel, and productive times in my life. I can tell you this only because I can distinctly recall the years and months that I have been practicing regularly when I reflect on the last 10 years of my life. The times when I have a regular yoga practice are momentous and the ones I often talk about in my writing and story-telling. They are time that have been full of personal growth, connection, and wisdom.

It might take some trial and error to find the teachers, and the styles of yoga that fit your preference, but please keep trying until you can find something that works for you. In the long run, sitting with yourself in meditation and practicing some form of yoga really, truly will have profound effects on your health and your ability to thrive in recovery.

## 3. Journaling

To me, and ever since I was a little girl actually, my journal or diary has been a very close friend of mine. It has always served as a way to connect deeply with my essence: my real, authentic self.

Journaling has profound benefits for expressing emotions, and moving stuck and stagnant energy. Through your writing you'll discover that your journal is an all-accepting, nonjudgmental friend. It's great to have a safe place to put your thoughts and feelings.

Journaling gives you access to your subconscious and will help to strengthen your intuition. Journaling is an outlet for processing emotions and the act of doing this regularly increases self-awareness. This internal familiarity becomes a bridge of empathy for not only yourself, but also for those around you.

With regular practice at writing and thus interpreting, experiencing, and being aware of your emotions, you will better intuit and understand what you, and others, are experiencing. This creates compassion and love in many ways and these are emotions that have the power to break through layers of deep emotional trauma.

Like anything else, a daily practice is where you will see the most benefits. Start slow. There is no right or wrong. Literally, all you need to do is write a few sentences each day. Some days you will feel like writing more. And some you might feel you have absolutely nothing to write and you'll have to force

something out. It's all beneficial. As with taking cold showers, and sitting in silent meditation, none of it sounds particularly fun or revolutionary. But the truth is, these small acts done on a daily basis will transform your life.

Trust the process. Have faith that these daily practices are working to create expansion in your life. Be open to letting go of whatever your body is willing to let go of that day, and in that moment. Your emotional health will thank you for the love.

## Chapter 8: Spirituality

In Chapter 6 I explained that there are four categories of life that I refer to as “primary food”. They include relationships, movement, career (aka your life’s work/meaning/purpose), and spirituality. Primary foods are foundational pillars in holistic nutrition. With a diet of nutrient-dense food, and these areas given your attention and love, you can expect to have a fulfilling and prosperous life in recovery!

Spirituality is a broad term with many different perspectives. Spirituality is a universal human experience—something that touches us all – whether we choose to put words to it or not.

What spirituality means to me is having a sense of connection to something bigger than myself, and it typically involves a search for “meaning” – to a certain situation, event, and life in general. For me, a spiritual connection means having a deep sense of aliveness and interconnectedness. This feeling of having a connection to something greater than myself has been the only basis for my spiritual practice/s since I began developing what that looks like for me. And as with my sense of purpose, my personal definition of what spirituality looks like continues to change and adapt with my own experiences, relationships, and endeavors.

Some find that their spiritual life is intricately linked to their association with a church, temple, mosque, or synagogue. Others may pray or find comfort in a personal relationship with God or a higher power. Some seek meaning through their connections to nature or art.

You do not have to follow any particular dogma, but I do think that adopting a few spiritual practices can be very helpful as you learn to navigate your way through life. Recovery is not an easy endeavor and having a spiritual *connection* and a couple of spiritual *practices* to rely upon will enhance and solidify your recovery experience as you continue down your healing path.

**Falling in love with yourself by practicing the radical self-care suggestions as outlined in this book can be your spirituality.**

Practicing the principles laid out in this book is a great starting place for developing a spiritual practice if you don't already have one, or enhancing your current program. It is a common theme for anyone who is suffering to be lacking in self-love. This is especially true for those who have gone down the road of addiction. An underlying theme of self-doubt and disliking oneself on a deep subconscious level is often present for those who suffer from any physical, emotional, and mental illness whether it be addiction or something else. So, when it comes to developing your own spirituality, self-love is an incredible foundation to stand upon.

The bottom line is this: having some form of spiritual practice – regardless of what that looks like – adds depth and meaning to your life. Having a deeper sense of purpose and belonging can be powerful tools for transformation and personal growth. It doesn't matter what belief system, tradition, philosophy, or religion people follow. The important thing is just to have some form of spiritual practices/s that inspire *connection*.

A spiritual practice can be as simple as actively and/or passively loving your children, family, and friends. Practicing gratitude is a powerful spiritual practice, as talked about later in this chapter. Admiring nature is a spiritual practice. Some people prefer to have a more devote structure such as taking time each week to attend church, or practice daily meditation.

Your personal spiritual practices do not have to be complicated. The point is to simply be doing something that actively pursues having a deeper purpose and gives light to the world around you. Just as emotions evoke a deeper sense of purpose, so does having a spiritual practice. As you develop your spirituality, look for things that evoke emotion.

It has been my experience that the more effort I put into **my spiritual practice – which include everything I outlined in this book** – the more fulfillment I get out of life. Having a spiritual practice has opened my senses to recognizing the hundreds of synchronicities happening around me. Everything happens for a reason and with that sense of *knowing*, I can accept, forgive, and grow from every experience that I have.

A spiritual practice provides a framework by which we navigate our way through life. Again, this can be defined and created to fit your preferences and lifestyle. Whatever your spiritual practice looks like, it is an essential nutrient in our lives and nourishes our health in so many ways.

## **3 Practices to Enhance Your Spirituality and Connection To Yourself & The World Around You**

# 1. Express Yourself

Creativity is essential to holistic nutrition. It is 100% absolutely necessary for survival in recovery to let go, have fun, and express yourself from time to time. The act of creative expression feeds your deepest desire to be heard, seen, and appreciated. In this sense it is an avenue for connection.

It is a powerful way to process your emotions, thoughts and perspectives without having to hold them all inside. Creative expression is magical in that it allows you to go into the depths of your mind and step outside the restraints of any “boxes” you may be living in.

Creativity does not have to be amazing. It does not have to be shared with anyone. It is truly just another word for having fun and practicing healthy self-expression.

**Here are some ideas to begin expressing yourself:**

**Sing. Dance. Paint. Cook. Draw. Write. Collage. Craft. Take pictures. Make videos. Build something. Act. Experiment with fashion.**

Creativity can be as simple as journaling your thoughts and emotions. I personally think the act of writing with pen on paper is a beautifully creative expression regardless of the combination of words that come out. We learned it when we were kids and it truly is a beautiful form of art – no matter how legible or illegible your writing is.

Whatever you choose to do to creatively express yourself, the most important part is to have fun while doing it. Step outside your comfort zone. Don't be afraid. Do it for yourself. Do it for your health. Get creative and tap into that magical energy inside you that is yearning to be expressed.

# 2. Live in Gratitude

Gratitude is a magical ingredient that has the power to shift your perspective on so many levels. It allows you to begin to feel forgiveness and dissolve anger. It allows you to experience the present moment in all of its beauty and realness, and forget about all of your suffering. It allows you to accept what is versus dwell on what is not.

**Gratitude is the secret to being happy and fulfilled in life.**

And here's the key to unlocking its power: gratitude is a muscle that must be exercised in order to experience all of its miraculous benefits.

I was at my lowest point of my entire life when I checked myself into rehab. I was experiencing suffering on multiple levels: physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. My counselor gave me the assignment of keeping a gratitude journal. I remember having to look up the definition of gratitude because it had been so long since I had felt grateful for anything and I honestly was second guessing what it actually meant being it that I couldn't seem to *feel* it anymore.

Even though I didn't *feel* grateful, I kept the journal anyway. I wrote down all of the things in my life for which I thought I should be grateful for. And you know what, eventually, that practice began to transform my experience and I began to *feel* truly and deeply grateful. Even though it came and went, this was probably the most powerful tool I was given when I look back on that time in my life. Those small "hits" of *feeling* grateful began to transform my attitude toward myself, my life, and the people in it.

Gratitude is the energy source you can use to dissolve victimization, false drama, blame, anger, resentment, and fear. It is the Mother of all emotions, and will absolutely change your life for the better when you practice it regularly.

A good way to begin *practicing* gratitude is the way I did – by keeping a gratitude journal. I encourage you to write in it frequently, especially in times of darkness. Start by writing three things you are grateful for each day. Obviously, the more you write the stronger your gratitude muscle will be! Do it even if you don't necessarily feel connected to it. You've probably heard "fake it till you make it". Well, do that with your gratitude list. The Universe will pick up on your vibe and I promise you that you will eventually begin to *feel* it.

You can practice gratitude in a multitude of other ways. Practice expressing your gratitude for the people in your life by writing random thank you cards. Perform random acts of kindness, such as buying a coffee for the person behind you in line at the coffee shop. Simply making a list of the things you are grateful for in your head is also very powerful. Stepping it up a notch and acting on those thoughts by writing them down or expressing it into the world has extra-magical power to transform your life and touch those around you.

### **3. Practice the Principles of holistic nutrition**

This book is your guidebook for developing a life of amazing physical health, emotional freedom, and spiritual wealth. You can literally open this book anytime, go to the end of any chapter, pick one of the suggested practices, and consider it your spiritual practice for the day.

The principles of holistic nutrition take time to develop. This is truly a *practice*; a lifestyle. Nobody can begin eating all organic foods, process their emotional wounds, and shift their rhythms into getting 8-9 hours of sleep overnight (pun intended!). Be patient with yourself. Take it one day, and one action step at a time.

Developing your spirituality and living by these principles may require some trial and error as you go about making changes in your lifestyle. For example, you might find that you are someone who can't stick to a healthy nutrition plan unless you have accountability – so it will be important for you to join classes, get a coach, or commit to doing clean eating challenges so that you can succeed.

Another example is finding movement that works for you. Exercise should be enjoyable and not feel like a chore. You may need to dedicate time to finding the activities, classes, trails (if you're an outdoorsy person) that you enjoy.

The process of developing these Holistic Nutrition habits is medicine in and of itself, so don't get down on yourself if you start something and it doesn't end up sticking. There is no shame in trying. You will eventually start to feel better, even if you have to go through the motions for a while. And, you will learn about yourself in the process, either in the moment, or somewhere down the road.

The simple fact that you made it through this book tells me that you are dedicated to your health and your recovery, and the light inside of you is hungry for good health, emotional freedom, and spiritual wealth.

**Please visit my website [www.nutritionbyhollis.com](http://www.nutritionbyhollis.com) to join my online members-only support community and for additional resources to help you create a life you love in recovery. You deserve to be thriving, and that's what I am here to help you do!**