

BULIMIA

RECOVERY

QUICKSTART GUIDE

The 5 Keys of Inner Health &
10 Steps to Jumpstart Your
Recovery From Bulimia.

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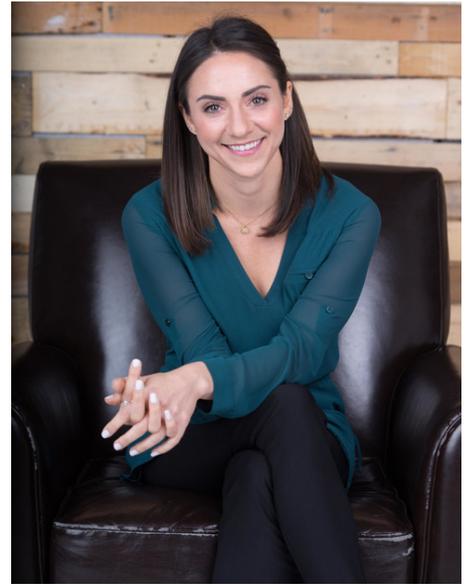
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INTRODUCTION

Hi! My name is Sarah Speers. I'm a licensed mental health therapist, certified energy worker, and life coach. I'm also a recovered bulimic. My whole life I have been dedicated to helping people improve their health and well-being, but the truth and irony is that for over five years of this time I struggled with an eating disorder that controlled my life, destroyed my self image and worth, and inhibited me from experiencing true health and happiness.

I vividly remember looking at myself in the mirror one evening after having binged and purged, barely able to recognize myself and the woman I had become, and vowing to heal myself so that I could help others do the same. I never wanted anyone else to experience the agony and torment that I endured for years, all alone because I was too ashamed to ask for help or let anyone know I had a problem. I fought silently and tirelessly to fully heal myself from bulimia and establish a healthy relationship with food, my body, and myself. I committed the past few years of my life to learning and trying any and all healing modalities, tools, and techniques to uncover the keys and missing links to recover from bulimia. I am proud to tell you that I achieved this. It is possible. This guide is designed to show you how you can get started doing the same.

In the following pages I'll explain the underlying causes of bulimia and the five keys of health that one must address in order to achieve freedom from this eating disorder. I outline ten steps that you can take today to get a jumpstart on your healing, which were instrumental in healing my body, mind, and spirit. Wherever you are in your recovery, I invite you to join me on this recovery journey. Keep an open mind, remain willing to try new things, and simply try your best. Let's get started!

A close-up photograph of a person's hands writing in a notebook. The person is wearing a grey sweater and has dark nail polish. They are holding a silver pen with red accents. The notebook is open on a wooden table. The text "MY STORY" is overlaid in large white letters.

MY STORY

MY STORY

Of how I developed a severe eating disorder, overcame unbearable suffering and pain, reclaimed my personal power, found my purpose and voice, and finally got myself and my life back.

In 2011, I moved from New York to California with the intention of reinventing my life and myself. I spent my first summer in San Diego working as a camp counselor at a weight-loss camp for teens. I thought it would be the ideal time to focus on optimizing my own fitness and health so, after doing some research, I decided to try following a vegan diet and see how I felt at the end of the summer.

I went about removing certain “bad” foods from my diet and established strict rules about what I “should” and “could” eat. The summer camp prescribed a low-fat/no-fat diet, so many of the foods that were on my "eat-list" such as nuts, seeds, and avocados were not provided. The result was that I practically cut-out all protein and fat for three months and ate primarily fruits and vegetables. I was not consuming nearly enough calories or macronutrients, which never crossed my mind at the time. I was also working out with the campers all day long, burning double to triple the amount of calories than was normal.



The result was that I lost about 25 lbs off my already slim frame. At 5'4, I had entered camp weighing about 120 lbs and when I left I weighed about 95 lbs. My intention had never been to lose weight. My intention had always been to be "as healthy as I can be," and weight loss was simply an outcome.

The irony is that in my pursuit of ultimate health I actually caused myself to become the most sick and unhealthy I had ever been, both physically and mentally. This well intentioned “lifestyle change” slowly turned into a series of vicious eating disorders that took over my physical and mental wellbeing.

As I began to shrink, people began to comment on my weight and rumors circled that I had an eating disorder. One friend told me I needed to eat a cheeseburger. I just laughed at him, horrified by the idea. I recall thinking that everyone else had the problem because they weren't disciplined enough to avoid eating toxic "food-like" substances. Didn't they know what that did to their bodies? Gradually, I began experiencing pride about my weight thinking that I had achieved what was so unachievable by most. I had achieved the "perfect" thin supermodel body.

The Event That Catapulted My Eating Disorder

At the culmination of summer camp, I decided that I was going to stay in San Diego. My move had been prompted by a desire to escape the north east winters and have a new beginning somewhere sunny and warm. I had packed my entire life in my car and drove across country. The last night at camp I transferred my stuff from the temporary dorm room where I had been staying back into my car so I could move into my sublease apartment. I arrived to my new place late and it was dark outside, so I decided I would leave everything in the car until morning. When I walked outside the next day, I found myself looking at an empty space where my car had been. I searched the entire neighborhood thinking I had forgotten where I parked it. After hours of searching the truth sunk in- my car had been stolen with literally everything I owned.

Suddenly, over night, I was alone in San Diego with just myself and the clothes on my back. I had no car, no job, no friends, and no belongings. Without realizing it at the time, this was the catastrophic event that caused my obsessive and compulsive eating habits to turn into a full blown eating disorder. Everything in my life felt out of control, so I fervently tried to control my eating and food. Yet, at the same time, my body was so nutritionally starved that it began to send strong signals to eat *often* and to eat a *lot*. Before I knew it, I was binge eating. Then, in a panicked effort to "undo" the "harm" done by "eating bad" I would attempt to restrict my calories the next day by either doing a juice cleanse or fasting. This only exacerbated my body's signals to binge, sending me into a binge-restrict cycle that I could not control.

The First Purge

Initially, my disordered eating started out as orthorexia and anorexia, as I was underweight, fearful of gaining weight and obsessed about eating the perfect healthy diet. Once the binging started it wasn't long before purging followed. I remember being out to eat at a Mexican restaurant and having devoured an entire basket of chips and salsa, followed by three enchiladas, rice, and beans. I felt sick to my stomach.

I was so stuffed that it felt like the food had filled my entire stomach and esophagus and was sitting at the top of my throat. I don't think I could have fit another morsel of food if I tried. I felt so sick that I headed to the bathroom where I effortlessly threw up the food. It felt like such a necessary release, and I felt much better afterwards. At the time I thought nothing of it other than thinking I had been "sick to my stomach" from what I ate.

As my binge-restrict pattern persisted, so did the behavior to "undo" my binges by throwing up my food whenever I felt uncomfortably full. At first it only happened from time to time, probably once or twice a month, but very quickly it began to happen daily, until I suddenly found myself purging multiple times per day.

My Downward Spiral

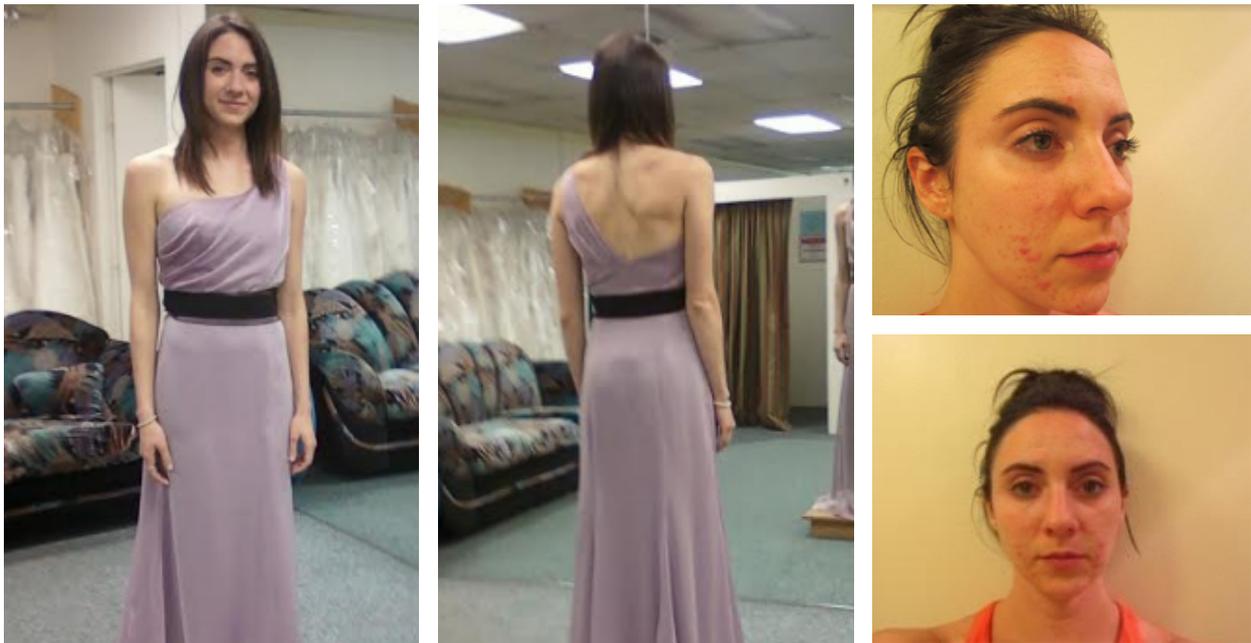
The development of my severe bulimia felt like it happened overnight. One summer I was fit, healthy, and happy, and only a few months later I was terribly malnourished, underweight, bingeing nightly and purging nearly everything I ate. It happened so quickly, that at first I didn't even realize anything was wrong or that I had a problem. I was in denial. I was in such a strong survival mode, trying to find a new car, a job, a place to live, make friends, etc. that my eating habits weren't perceived to be problematic. My eating disorder had become my survival mechanism.

Then one night the truth finally hit me like a ton of bricks. It was a Friday evening and I was feeling sad and alone because I had nothing to do and no one to call to go out with. So instead I went out and got a pizza and pint of ice cream. I scarfed down the pizza, forcing down each bite, overcome with complete self-loathing. Then I washed it down with ice cream, which I had found made throwing up food easier and a more tolerable taste. Often throwing up happened automatically for me. I didn't have to use my fingers. I simply would lean over the toilet and my natural gag reflexes would kick in sending the food I had stuffed down right back up.

This night, however, I encountered some difficulty. I hadn't chewed the pizza crust thoroughly and I felt a large bolus of food lodged in my throat unable to come out. Rather than swallow it down, I persisted in desperation to get it out. I tried so hard to the point that I nearly choked. I laid down on the bathroom tile sobbing. The hard reality set in. "Holy shit, Sarah." I thought. "This is not normal. You're going to kill yourself throwing up your food. Someone is going to walk in and find you dead by the toilet." The idea scared me, and I was flooded with shame. Feeling completely hopeless, I sat up and threw up the rest of the food.

As I became more and more nutritionally starved, and the purging increased to multiple times per day, I began to experience a series of physical and mental health issues. My hair began to fall out and become brittle and dry. It had lost its straight shine and luster and instead looked dull and kinked. My skin broke out in terrible acne, much of it cystic and painful. My skin looked pale and yellow. I didn't have a period. I didn't have a sex drive, or a desire to do anything social. I was fatigued, depressed, and hopeless. At times I hoped that I just wouldn't wake up so that this torment could be over. It was the only time in my life I had suicidal ideations.

Looking in the mirror horrified me. I didn't recognize the girl I saw, and it pained me. This wasn't me. What had happened to the healthy, happy, bubbly, social, outgoing, pretty girl I had been for my entire life?! I hated myself. I had no one to blame for my deteriorating health and appearance but myself. No one had done this to me. I hadn't caught a cold or been diagnosed with cancer. This was 100% a result of my own choices. I had lost my spark, my health and myself, and it was all my doing.



For years I battled anorexia, orthorexia, bulimia, binge-eating and depression. I now understand that this was due to a number of factors, in addition to the dietary changes I had made and a desire to remain thin after having lost weight. Eating disorders are never just about food and weight, but rather a combination of underlying issues that manifest symptomatically as eating and weight issues. I now know from my years of research and experience that the contributing factors include biological, neurological, social, emotional, energetic and environmental components.

The Underlying Causes

Reflecting back, I now see that there were a number of factors that resulted in my eating disorder:

- I experienced a loss of connection and identity from uprooting myself from my family and friends and relocating to a new place where I was completely alone.
- I had a genetic predisposition to eating disorders, which made me more vulnerable to develop one (or in my case many).
- I had a difficult time acknowledging my painful emotions and expressing them in a healthy manner. Rather, than releasing these feelings I covered them up with more and more food.
- I rewired my brain, unknowingly over time, so that my problematic eating behaviors eventually became deeply ingrained automatic behaviors that were triggered by any and everything. The belief that I had control over my behaviors was an illusion; rather my brain was controlling me.
- Food became my friend, my pastime, my punishment and my escape. It was a personal prison of daily torment and hell that I had constructed for myself and could not seem to find a way out.
- My body's energy system was completely out of balance, contributing in the manifestation of physical and mental symptoms.

The "I'm-Not-Good-Enough" Disease

After camp, I happened to get a job working as a personal trainer. What struck me was that the majority of my female clients – women of all ages, races, shapes, and sizes – were all dissatisfied to varying degrees with their bodies. Each battled with eating and weight issues in some capacity. Even those who were “skinny” and “attractive” by society’s standards were not immune from this disease of “self-loathing”.

I was equally surprised when my female peers and friends, whose bodies and beauty I hopelessly compare myself to, would share their insecurities and thoughts of self-criticism and dissatisfaction. After years of this, I realized that the “I’m-not-good-enough” mentality is a plague infecting the masses. No one seemed to be immune.

My clients were coming to me wanting to lose weight, improve their fitness, develop healthy eating habits and establish a good relationship with food and their body (the same as me). Yet the more I trained clients, the more helpless I felt because neither they nor I seemed to be making progress.

Two Life-Changing Epiphanies

Then I had two major epiphanies that ultimately changed my life...

First, I realized that exercise alone was not enough to help women achieve their goals. You can exercise until you're blue in the face, but if you do not address the internal and external factors that are affecting your physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health and that are driving your problematic eating behaviors then no real progress will be made.

Yes, exercise can have an incredibly positive impact on one's mind and body; but fitness alone is not a magic pill to cure all problems. Squats can't improve your relationship with your family, friends, or co-workers. Bicep curls won't improve the negative self-talk in your head or ruminating thoughts you have about life's worries. Crunches won't cultivate inner peace and acceptance, and they certainly won't curb cravings when the "I can't cope!" alarm goes off in your head.



Second, and more importantly, I realized - How could I help my clients if I couldn't help myself?!

This may seem like a no brainer to some, but for years my eating disorder had clouded my ability to see this truth. I operated on a "Do-what-I-say, not-what-I-do" mentality. I felt like a hypocrite, living in denial for years. Finally, I decided that if I was to help my clients transform their lives by transforming their mental and physical health, then I had to start with myself.

And so I did...I committed once and for all to overcome my eating disorder and learn to love myself, so that I could help others do the same.

The Big Career Switch

Working as a personal trainer, my clients would always comment how I was like their therapist. The only problem was that I wasn't trained as a therapist. I felt inadequate to effectively help them make the changes on a psychological level that were needed for them to truly experience the health and happiness they desired.

Convinced that the key to wellness depended on making improvements to one's mind and body, and coupled with my determination to help others overcome their self loathing and eating/body issues (along with myself), I decided to pursue an advanced degree in mental health. I attended graduate school at The University of San Diego (USD) where I obtained a master's in Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT).

Contrary to what many assume and what the title may imply, this does not mean I work only with couples having marital issues. "Marriage and family therapists are mental health professionals trained in psychotherapy and family systems" (American Association for Marriage and Family Therapists). What separates MFT's from other mental health professionals is that we focus on working within systems (i.e. family, community, etc.) and looking at how relationships affect a person's overall mental health. From the moment of birth, we are influenced by our interactions with others, which shape our core beliefs, self identity, and behaviors.

I completed my MFT practicum at the Center for Healthy Eating and Activity Research (CHEAR) located at the University of California at San Diego (UCSD) where I provided counseling to individuals, children, teens, and families dealing with eating and weight issues. After I graduated from USD, I was hired full-time to create and run an intensive outpatient program for binge-eating disorders for adults and adolescents. I spent a year in this role, tirelessly working to try and help the program participants to gain control over their eating, weight, and mental health.

However, the truth was that I was still struggling to achieve total recovery. By the time I had completed my masters and was working full-time, my bulimia symptoms had improve significantly. Yet, despite all of my knowledge, training, and effort, I was still experiencing episodes fluctuating from a few times per month to a few times per week. Sometimes I'd go months without an episode, and then one would pop up again. I was frustrated. Neither myself nor my patients were showing progress that lasted long-term. I knew we could do better, and I was determined to figure out how, using myself as the tester.

My Road To Recovery

It wasn't an easy road to recovery; there were plenty of bumps along the way. I battled for 5 years to achieve recovery and feel like I was back to "Sarah" again. Through my healing journey, I realized that the road out of my living hell was one that required making physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual changes.

For me, the road to recovery meant...

- Taking a road towards self-love and acceptance.
- Looking at what I was really hungry for - which was connection, purpose and love!
- Learning to observe and change my negative, judgmental, and critical thoughts.
- Being able to acknowledge and cope effectively with my feelings. EFT is the best method I have found to "feel and free" them.
- Establishing health eating habits to ensure I met my body's nutritional requirements to function and feel my best.
- Removing toxic people and situations from my life, and surrounding myself with a positive support network.
- Turning to a higher power for strength, support and courage.
- Starting a daily meditation and gratitude practice.
- Engaging in a number of daily health and self care practices that made me feel good: i.e.) staying hydrated, getting good sleep, managing stress, staying active, meditating, having fun, socializing, etc.
- Correcting the energy imbalances in my body by uncovering and releasing trapped emotions stemming from repressed feelings - mainly anger and sadness- about numerous childhood, adolescent, and adult experiences.
- Learning how to protect my energy so that I wouldn't absorb other's energy, especially during therapy sessions.
- Piecing back together my soul, and filling my "soul holes" with love and light.

It was by no means an easy journey. I struggled daily. I had ups and downs and lots of relapses along the way. There were many triumphant moments, followed by what felt like one failure after another. Despite making these profound changes, I still found myself struggling. Sometimes the urges of self-sabotage were just too great to overcome.

But when it came to my health and defeating my eating disorder, quitting wasn't an option. I knew there must be other healing modalities that I was missing and I was determined to find the missing keys to recovery.

The Missing Link

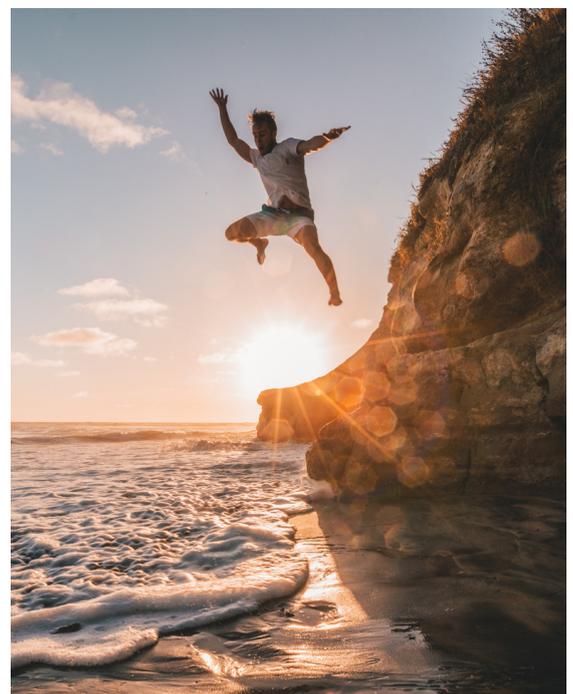
So I kept fighting and searching. ..

Eventually, I discovered one thing that took me on the express lane to recovery -- Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), or "tapping." I vividly recall the first time that I participated in an EFT group. I was feeling very anxious after a day of challenging therapy sessions. On a scale of 0 to 10, I was at a 10 and I couldn't seem to shake it. By the end of the hour, I felt calm, relaxed, lighter and more cheerful. I couldn't detect the anxiety anymore. It was as if it had been lifted or drained out of my body. I couldn't believe it.

In the past the only way my brain knew how to deal with this all-consuming anxiety was to binge and purge. Yet somehow, by tapping on points of my body while focusing on this uncomfortable feeling, I was able to free it. I was astounded. I was perplexed. And I knew I had stumbled upon something important.

The more I learn about our energy systems and emotional bodies, the more I believe they are the key to recovery from any illness. Our bodies are made entirely of energy. Anyone who has looked at an EKG knows this to be true. In fact, everything in our universe is made of energy. Thoughts, feelings, and urges are all energy too.

When we repress our emotions, we trap that energy and it becomes stagnant. No amount of talking about your feelings is going to move it. Tapping, on the other hand, opens up our energy channels to allow our trapped emotions to flow out of the body. While awareness of emotions is an important first step, it is an incomplete process to emotionally heal without addressing the energy factor.



The beautiful thing I discovered was that when I effectively felt and freed the emotional energies from my body, then the emotions I had been trying to stuff down with food were no longer present. Neither was the pain I had been trying to purge away. My brain had learned a more effective way to cope. Suddenly, my need for food to self-soothe became less and less while my feelings of peace, calm and normalcy continued to become more and more.

With the more traditional therapies I had learned, the approach had often been one of learning and applying coping tools and interventions *after* the urge to binge or purge surfaced. This is always tricky, however, because once that switch is flipped in the brain sending you the signal to binge it's extremely difficult to tap into one's rational mind to overrule that signal. What I experience as a result of using tapping and energy work is that I was no longer experiencing the urges, which truly felt like a miracle. Prior to this, I had come to accept that my recovery would be one of me using discipline and willpower to fight temptation and urges at every moment. I never thought it would have been possible to have the urges disappear entirely, but that is exactly what started to happen over time. Suddenly, my recovery transitioned from an exhausting daily battle to simply living without having to put in effort to change.

Energy Work = The Future of Therapy

Since discovering EFT and the remarkable affect it has had on my own healing journey of body, mind and spirit, I have dedicated myself to continue discovering, learning and utilizing energy healing modalities, including Reiki and The Emotion Code.

I use these modalities regularly with myself and am feeling better than ever. I also integrate these techniques into my therapy and coaching sessions and have witnessed remarkable results with clients dealing with a range of issues including anxiety, depression, trauma, addiction, and eating/weight issues. It's incredible to see how quickly progress can be made when one removes the energetic blocks preventing the mind and body from healing itself, and allows the emotions to be felt and freed.

I believe wholeheartedly that energy work is the future of healing. My prediction is that tapping will be something people do as commonly as brushing their teeth. We will be clearing energy imbalances as often as we take vitamins as part of an overall self-care wellness routine. These will be common practices that will (and already are) become an integral part of one's wellness- physically, mentally, and emotionally.

BULIMIA 101



BULIMIA 101

Bulimia is one of the most deadly and harmful mental health conditions, affecting millions of people worldwide. It is characterized by a cycle of binge eating followed by compensatory behaviors, such as self-induced vomiting or excessive exercise, to "undo" the effects of binge eating and attempt to avoid weight gain.

Symptoms

Individuals with bulimia are often normal weight, and therefore you often cannot tell by looking at someone if they have the disorder. However, the following are common symptoms that may suggest you or someone you know may be struggling with it.

- Extreme concerns with body weight and shape.
- Purging after meals (via vomiting, excessive exercise or laxative use).
- Taking frequent trips to the bathroom after eating.
- Partaking in rigid or excessive exercise routines.
- Frequent complaints of constipation and stomach pain.
- Distorted body image.
- Eating in secret or hiding food.
- Following strict food rules.
- Obsessive counting and tracking of food and meals.
- Eating objectively large amounts of food at a time without noticeable weight gain.
- Shows unusual swelling in cheeks or jaw area.
- Fine or thinning hair and brittle nails.
- Extreme mood swings.
- Feeling cold all the time.
- Irregular or complete lack of a period.



If you are struggling with one or more of the above symptoms, then it is a good indication that you have a problematic relationship with food and your body, and that you can benefit from help, starting with the steps outlined in this guide. Be careful not to disregard these behaviors and symptoms as being "no big deal". I minimized my symptoms for years, telling myself my behaviors weren't a problem, and as a result I prolonged my suffering. This denial delayed my recovery and ultimate freedom from the "food and body prison" I was living in. These symptoms are flags that your body, mind and spirit are unwell and needing help and healing. Please take them seriously.



Diagnostic Criteria

The following is the diagnostic criteria for bulimia according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) of Mental Disorders:

- Recurrent episodes of binge eating, characterized by both of the following: 1) Eating in a discrete period of time an amount of food that is definitely larger than most people would eat during a similar period of time and under similar circumstances. 2) A sense of lack of control over eating during the episode.
- Recurrent inappropriate compensatory behavior in order to prevent weight gain, such as self-induced vomiting, misuse of laxatives, diuretics or medications, fasting, or excessive exercise.
- The binge eating and inappropriate compensatory behaviors both occur, on average, at least once a week for three months.
- Self-evaluation is unduly influenced by body shape and weight.
- The disturbance does not occur exclusively during episodes of anorexia nervosa.

If you meet the above criteria then you likely have bulimia. However, even if you don't meet the criteria exactly, that doesn't mean you still don't have an eating disorder. Eating issues aren't always black-and-white, and you may not fit perfectly into the bulimia box. If you endorse even one of the above criteria then it is likely you have a form of disordered eating and can benefit from learning how to improve your relationship with food and yourself.



Health Consequences

Bulimia is a *serious* mental health condition that can have *serious* and life-threatening health complications. Binging and purging can negatively affect all of the organs and systems in the body, especially the esophagus, stomach, and entire digestive system. I had one client who ruptured her stomach while purging and had to be hospitalized for days. She was fed through a tube and experienced pain eating for weeks and months after.

Purging can also cause an imbalance of electrolytes and chemicals in the body that affect the heart and other major organs. Electrolyte imbalance can lead to cardiac arrest, often without warning. This means you may feel fine physically, but internally you could be on the verge of having a heart attack. This is why eating disorders are the most deadly mental health illness.

My Health Scare

I remember experiencing frequent heart palpitations and irregular heart beats after my purge episodes. This always scared me, but I would do my best to ignore it and assure myself it wasn't anything to be concerned about.

Then one day I went to the doctors for lab work to test my hormone levels since I had not had a period in months. That night I received a call from the doctor who left an urgent voice message. He told me that my potassium levels were severely high, at the level of someone who could go into cardiac arrest. He told me to go to an urgent care facility or hospital immediately and to call him to let him know I had done so and was okay. He emphasized how worried he was.

I was startled by his message. Yet I chose not to listen. I knew I had purged the night before the labs, but in that moment I felt fine physically so I assumed that I was fine. It must have been a mistake. I attributed the high potassium levels to my breakfast of two bananas and I chose not to go to the hospital.

Fortunately, I did not suffer a heart attack. Still, this moment haunted me months later. What if he was right? What if next time I wasn't so lucky? What if the next purge would send my electrolytes so out of balance that I went into cardiac arrest? I knew that if my bulimia persisted it could very well kill me. The idea terrified me. I did not want to die that way. The tragic reality, however, is that many people do. Bulimia is not something to take lightly.



Physical Side Effects

Bulimia can wreak havoc on one's physical body, and the physical consequences extend far beyond damage done to one's organs and digestive system. Here is a list of common physical ailments that one can experience as a result of bingeing and purging:

Heart	Irregular heart beat; heart muscle weakens; lower pulse and blood pressure; increased risk for cardiac arrest/heart failure.
Muscles	Muscles deterioration (malnourished body uses muscle tissue as fuel).
Stomach	Stomach pain and bloating; risk for stomach rupture (life threatening).
Esophagus	Wears down; risk for esophagus rupture (life threatening).
Intestines	Blocked intestines (from solid masses of undigested food); frequent constipation; intestinal perforation.
Pancreas	Pancreatitis (inflammation in the pancreas)
Kidney	Kidney failure (resulting from severe dehydration).
Hormones	Hormone imbalance; irregular menstruation; reduced metabolic rate
Brain	Difficulty concentrating; poor decision making; increased risk for seizures; fainting; dizziness.
Bones	Bone loss; increased risk of osteoporosis.
Skin/Hair/Nails	Dry, yellow skin; dry, brittle hair; hair thinning; hair loss; brittle nails.
Teeth	Discoloration; cavities; enamel erosion; tooth sensitivity
Other	Insulin resistance; increased risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes; Hypothermia; Anemia; decreased immunity.

For a more thorough description of the above health conditions and how bulimia contributes to them, please visit: <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/health-consequences>.

Statistics

The following statistics come from The National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAD) and can be found at <https://anad.org/education-and-awareness>.

- 8 million people in the United States have anorexia, bulimia or a related eating disorder (3% of the total US population).
- 20 million women and 10 million men will suffer from a clinically significant eating disorder at some time in their life.
- 4 out of 100 college-age women have bulimia.
- 1.5% of women and 0.5% of males will struggle with bulimia in their lifetime (That equals 4.7 million females and 1.5 million males).
- Mortality rates: 3.9% of bulimic individuals will die from complications.
- Without treatment, 20% of people with serious eating disorders die.

Recovery Statistics

- Only 6% of individuals with bulimia will seek treatment.
- With treatment 60% of people recover; 20% only make partial recovery; and 20% do not improve even without treatment.
- Bulimia relapse is common, occurring in 30-50% of cases.
- On average, recovery takes 3-5 years of slow progress.



When I saw the above stats I was shocked. I couldn't believe that only 6% of the millions of people suffering from bulimia seek treatment, and among those 6% of people, a whopping 40% experience either partial or no recovery. Furthermore, recovery is a long road, taking years on average. As a mental health professional, this made my soul ache. I know in my heart that we can do better. Hence why I'm committed to helping more people achieve full recovery in a shorter amount of time. It is possible! I outline how to get started in the pages that follow.



THE 5 KEYS OF HEALTH & RECOVERY



THE 5 KEYS OF HEALTH & RECOVERY

Bulimia is a complex eating disorder that is about so much more than food. There are multiple layers that must be addressed to successfully accomplish recovery. A comprehensive, holistic approach is necessary to truly achieve total health of mind, body, and spirit. Keep in mind that everybody's body and experience of bulimia is different, so recovery will look slightly different for everyone. By addressing all 5 keys of health, you can customize a recovery program specific to your situation, unique underlying contributors, and biggest problem spots. Here they are...

1



PHYSICAL

The health choices you make significantly affect how your physical body feels, how it operates, and what messages your brain sends about food and eating. Recovery starts with properly nourishing and taking care of the physical body.

2



MENTAL

What you *think* creates your reality. Recovery requires that you improve your mindset and the thoughts you think about yourself, about food, about your body, and about your eating disorder. Your thoughts directly affect how you feel and act.

3



EMOTIONAL

Emotions are "Energy in motion", and when emotions become trapped or repressed they create imbalances in the body that the brain tries to sooth with bingeing and purging. You have to "feel and free" your emotions to be free of bulimia.

4



ENERGETIC

Your body is made entirely out of energy. Your thoughts and feelings are energy. All disease is caused by energy disruptions in the body. Since you are a vibrational being, when you correct the energy imbalances you enable your body to heal.

5



SPIRITUAL

You are not your body; you are a soul living in a body meant to learn and evolve. Over time your soul can get wounded from painful experiences and traumas. You must repair your soul, realign with your higher self, and realize your true divinity.

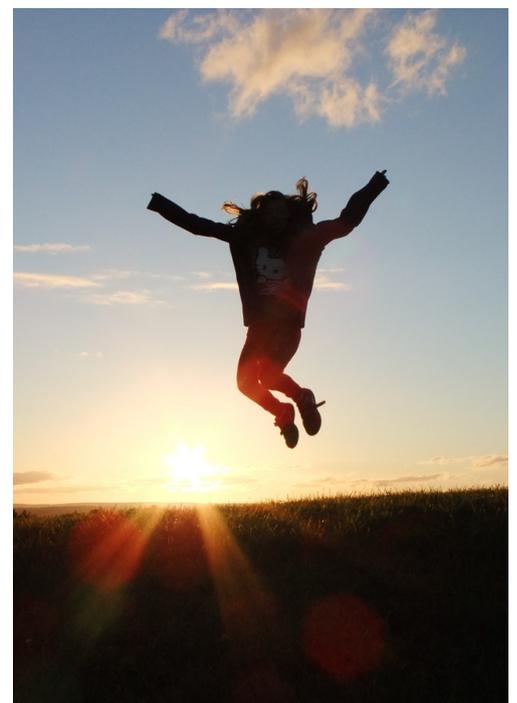
The Reality of Recovery

Recovery can be a long and challenging process, guaranteed to come with lots of ups and downs. Often just when you think you've finally overcome the eating disorder demons in your mind, you have another episode out of the blue and find yourself knocked down again. The process of recovery requires you to pick yourself up and keep trying over and over again, until eventually you go longer and longer periods of time without an episode. It is going to be work; and yet your freedom from the agony of bulimia is worth it.

Eventually, over time, you will have gone weeks without bingeing and purging, and then months, and then years. What is most remarkable is when you realize that the *thought* to binge or purge hasn't even crossed your mind. It doesn't feel like a daily struggle any more. Eating, exercise, and just plain living feels as normal as it can. And you feel like yourself again- empowered, confident, full of self-love and acceptance, and at peace with yourself and your body. This isn't just hopeful wishing, this is possible. You *can* heal. You *can* get better. You *can* recover. If I can do it, so can you.

It takes courage to start your recovery journey, and I am applauding you, hugging you, and loving you through these pages as you continue to fight for yourself, your health, and your happiness. I'm proud of you for making it this far. Now is the time to keep going until you get there, because you will!

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step" Lao Tzu



Where To Start



Right here!

The following 10 steps are your jumpstart guide to help you get started on your road to recovery. I wish someone had told me these things when I was in the depths of my despair, alone and suffering on the bathroom floor. I wish I had known where to start, who to turn to for help, and who to trust to guide me through the recovery journey rather than embarking on it blindly myself.

Keep in mind that these are just the very first steps to get you started. They are the tip of the iceberg in an ongoing and long process; yet they are imperative to your start and success. This is your "get started" action plan. Once you begin, I encourage you to seek professional help- either from a recovery program or eating disorder therapist. There is no shame in asking for help. It takes extreme courage to do so.

I know that despite this, many of you will not seek professional help either because of this shame or because you've had one or more negative experiences with therapy. This was certainly the case for me. I remember finally mustering up the courage to see a therapist, sitting in her office for the first time as her cold stare penetrated me, feeling uncomfortable and judged. I told her about my history with bulimia, and that I had been doing better over the past couple of months. "Then why are you here?" she inquired. I felt so invalidated and embarrassed. I shut down immediately. I did not receive the compassion and empathy that I was seeking and needing.

The problem was that I concluded *all* therapy was unhelpful. This generalization kept me from ever seeking professional help again. I get how difficult it is to find a therapist you can trust and feel safe with. It's a lot like dating- you can have a LOT of first therapy dates before you find "the one". However, once you find "the one" you will wonder how you ever lived without them.

Still, if you're a) reluctant to see a therapist, b) striking out finding the right fit, or c) not finding your therapy to be as beneficial as you had hoped, then I'd encourage you to consider completing my 6 week self-guided bulimia recovery program, *BEEMS of Light*. This online based program, which I explain in detail at the end of this guide, dives into each of the 5 aspects of health and recovery, walking you step-by-step through your recovery. Plus, you can do it from the safety of your home.

10 STEPS TO JUMPSTART YOUR RECOVERY



10 STEPS TO JUMPSTART YOUR RECOVERY

1. Overcome Denial & Admit The Truth

The first step to recovery is to admit you have an eating disorder that is a problem in your life. This requires overcoming any denial you have that purging is an issue, one that could kill you, and that it won't stop on its own. It sounds simple, but this step can be quite difficult because it can shatter the facade/beliefs about yourself that you've carefully constructed over your lifetime.

I was in denial that I had an eating disorder, nonetheless bulimia, for a good year. I strived to uphold the image of being "perfect" to myself and others, so there was no room to have a severe mental health problem, especially in my profession as a personal trainer and health coach. No one knew I had a problem, not even my family. Bulimia was my biggest secret.

The toughest first step was having to admit the truth to myself that I was severely ill with an eating disorder, and that eating disorder had a name- *bulimia*. Something about speaking that truth out loud felt like daggers piercing through my soul, filling me with shame and disbelief. How had this happened to me? How had this become my reality? I felt like I was awake inside a nightmare, unsure of how to get out of it.

The problem was that my denial about the truth of my eating disorder prevented me from seeking the solutions I needed to heal myself and reclaim my health and happiness. My resistance to get help was exacerbated by the lies I was telling myself that "this is the last time" and "I'll never do it again" which led me to think I was fine. I wasn't fine. I was far from it. I was slowly killing myself. Until I was able to call myself out on these lies and admit the truth, I was unable to take the next steps necessary to get better.

Right now I want you to pause and take a few deep breaths. Close your eyes and go within and find the deep seed of truth that you've buried in the pit of your stomach or soul. Then when you're ready, go ahead and speak out loud the truth, whatever that may be for you.

If you're unsure what to say, you can try repeating the following statement:

"I have bulimia, and it's an issue. This doesn't mean I'm broken or bad, it just means that I have disordered eating. I'm still a good person deserving of love and happiness. It just means that I need help. I am ready to put my effort and focus into overcoming this. I am ready to change. I am ready to feel good again. I'm ready to get back to me and to love who I am. I'm ready to feel healthy and happy. And I'm ready to do whatever it takes to get there, and I won't stop until I do."

2. See A Doctor

Make this priority number one. It may seem like another no-brainer, yet I never sought medical attention for my eating disorder, and chances are good that neither have you. Both shame and denial kept me from telling my doctor. I feared her judgment, and feared the news she would tell me even more. What if the damage I did was worse than I realized, or too great to repair? This fear perpetuated my denial because if I denied I had a problem then I could avoid facing the reality of the harm done. In hindsight, I see how unwise this was. Obtaining medical support would have accelerated my recovery process, equipping me with the knowledge necessary to heal my physical body quicker, such as my electrolyte imbalance, digestive issues, slow metabolism, vitamin deficiencies, anemia, hormone imbalance, acne and hair loss.

Given the laundry list of possible harmful health consequences that can result from bulimia, which I outlined earlier, it is imperative that you get screened to know what harm has been done to your body and obtain medical guidance about what steps you can take to help heal your physical body as you simultaneously work on recovery.



3. Resume Consistent Eating Patterns & Macronutrient Intake

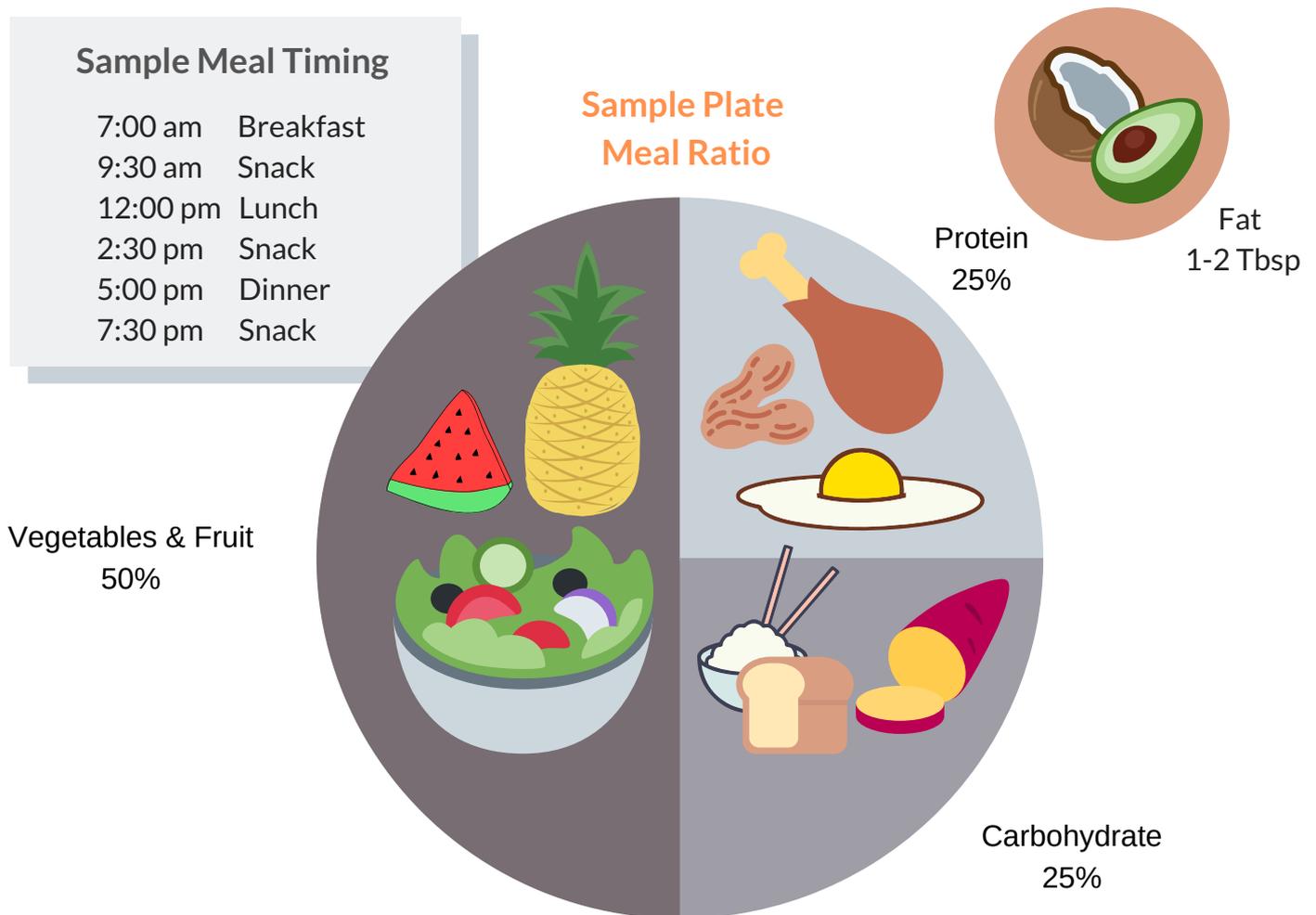
Make this priority number two. In order to stop purging, you have to stop bingeing. This means you have to get off the binge-restrict roller coaster immediately. As long as you are restricting your food intake and not getting enough calories to fuel your body and brain, then your body will respond out of fear for your wellbeing by sending intense signals to eat, resulting in a binge. If the pendulum swings too far to the left (restrict) it will always swing too far to the right (binge), no matter how much willpower you utilize. A binge is inevitable in this scenario. If your animal brain detects scarcity, it will go into survival mode and prompt overeating. To prevent this, you must normalize your eating habits.

The solution is to eat ENOUGH nutrients CONSISTENTLY throughout the day. Doing so will stabilize your blood sugar levels which will reduce the frequency and intensity of food cravings. It will help regulate hunger hormones and your body will know when to anticipate food, adapt to the new eating routine, and transition out of starvation mode. And it will reassure your animal brain that there is no famine and therefore no need for extreme eating.

When it comes to WHAT to eat, the best approach is to return to basics and keep it simple! Aim to eat a serving of nutrient-dense protein, carbohydrates, and fats at every meal. Eat real, whole foods in abundance. Ditch the food rules about what foods are "good" and "bad." If you want a cookie, eat and savor it. Just make sure it's part of a day's worth of nutritious food.

Space your meals about 2-3 hours apart to avoid your body getting too hungry. Remember, if your body gets too hungry it will panic that you aren't going to feed it, which will result in it sending a stronger "EAT!" signal. Your body needs to trust you again that you are going to feed it and actually keep the food, and therefore nutrients, down.

My recommendation is to consume 5-6 smaller meals throughout the day. This is beneficial, not only to stabilize hormone and insulin levels as mentioned, but also because it will reduce the likelihood of you eating to the point of feeling full. The feeling of "full" is often a trigger for purging; thus consuming smaller meals more frequently will minimize this from occurring.



4. Adopt A "Health & Abundance" Mindset

Chances are right now you have a "**Diet & Scarcity**" mindset. This is a mindset that comes from a place of lack, deprivation and fear. The result of feeling deprived is a buildup of inner resentment, which can result in bingeing. You may also experience a great deal of stress trying to adhere perfectly to your strict and rigid food rules. When you "fail" at eating "perfectly" then you beat yourself up and are highly critical. Both this stress and judgment produce uncomfortable internal feelings that propel one to eat to self-sooth.

Starting today, right now, it's time to begin adopting a "**Health & Abundance**" mindset. With this mindset, the focus is not weight, fat loss, or trying to manipulate your body to look a certain way. Rather, your focus is on taking care of your incredible body and giving it the nutrients and self-care it requires to feel it's best.

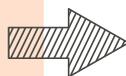
From now on, aim to have your food choices come from a place of joy rather than a place of fear. Rather than focus on the amount of calories it has, look at the amount of nutrients it has that your body can utilize for fuel, repair, and optimal functioning.

When I was in the thick of my eating disorder, I labeled all carbs and fat as bad. I was terrified to eat them for fear I'd get fat, so I established firm rules about what I could and could not eat. However, my body was starving for both. This would lead me to binge on cookies, ice cream, and pizza- foods loaded with carbs and fats. Eating these foods in large quantities would cause my blood sugar to spike and then I'd feel lethargic, foggy-brained, and moody. I didn't feel good after eating these foods. And I felt even worse if eating those foods was followed by a purge.

Now, I freely let myself eat an abundance of good sources of carbs and fats because when I eat these foods I feel energized, healthy, and happy. I notice my body feels better and I look healthy (not gaunt, pale, and sickly). I eat these foods for my health, not to manipulate my weight and body. It is such a beautiful thing to be free of the scarcity diet mindset.

Diet Mindset:

Focused on strict food rules about all the things you CAN'T eat. Food choices are driven by fear of gaining weight or desperation to lose weight. Aiming to be perfect. Extremely hard on self. Depriving self of foods you enjoy or life. Not giving yourself enough fuel or nutrients to feel good. Self-abuse and judgment.



Health Mindset:

Focused on all the abundance of real and nutritious foods you CAN eat. Giving yourself permission to eat foods you like, and enough of them, without guilt or shame. Getting rid of strict food rules. Honoring your body's needs. Focused on fueling and moving your body in ways that truly feel good. Self love and care.

5. Stop Drinking & Smoking ASAP

Any time I drank alcohol, I binged and purged. This happened without fail. The same has been true for many of the clients I work with, that when they are drunk or high they have episodes. Of course it makes sense that this would be the case. Alcohol affects the functioning of your prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain that controls reasoning and judgment. When you are drunk, your brain becomes impaired and you lose the ability to consciously choose not to binge.

Likewise, smoking marijuana is also a sure way to make you more vulnerable to having an episode. It's common for people to get the "munchies" while high. This is because the endocannabinoids found in weed interact with the receptors in your body and release hormones that make you feel hungry, even if you aren't.

Thus, you need to stop drinking and smoking as soon as possible.

You may be reading this and thinking to yourself, "That's a big extreme. I don't want to miss out on fun and socializing with friends. I can smoke and drink a little and I'll be fine." I used to tell myself the same thing. I would always try to convince myself that I could go out and have a drink or two and be capable of making smart choices, but time and time again this proved untrue. Even after one drink, my inhibitions were lower and my eating disorder urges came swooping in like an army overtaking a palace whose watch guards had fallen asleep. You've probably experienced the same.

If you're serious about recovering from bulimia, then you need to quit drinking and smoking, at least for now. Once you have achieved and maintained recovery then you can consider slowly reintroducing the substances. Until that point, you need to aim for abstinence. It's not worth the risk to chance it. Your health and happiness are too important.

When you go out, order a non-alcoholic drink so you can still appear to be drinking. Ask for a seltzer or soda water with some fruit slices. Many establishments offer mocktails as well, or you can simply ask the bartender to make you one. If you feel like you have to drink or smoke to let loose, relax, and have a good time then this is the ideal time to work on challenging yourself to become comfortable in social situations and learn to have fun as yourself. You might have to face a bit of discomfort as you go through this process, but eventually it will become quite natural to you.

I reached the point where I found I actually could have more fun sober and loved waking up without hangovers and headaches. The more I felt good, the more I wanted to continue to feel good. This continues to be the case. Even now that I'm recovered, I find that if and when I have an alcoholic beverage I feel so bad afterwards that it reinforces my decision not to drink. Life is so much more enjoyable when you feel clear-headed, energized, enlivened, and healthy!

6. No More Body Checking & Weighing

That's right. Stop weighing yourself. Stop pinching your fat. Stop looking in the mirror and overanalyzing your body, picking it apart. Your weight and body do not equate to your worth, yet when you hyper-focus on these things your brain can't help but come to believe they are what matter most when it comes to defining you. Body checking and weighing is a bad habit, right along with bingeing and purging, and the two go hand-in-hand which means quitting bingeing and purging requires quitting body checking too.

Every single morning I used to wake up, get out of bed, walk into my bathroom, lift up my pajama top and look at my stomach. I'd evaluate how flat, skinny and toned it looked. My critique would set the mood and tone for my day. Usually my reaction was to cringe my face in dissatisfaction and disgust as I pinched my fat and berated myself for not doing better. In those first waking moments, I'd become flooded with self-hate, self-disgust, and extreme guilt and shame. Then I'd immediately start plotting what I was going to do that day to lose the weight quickly. I'd tell myself to fast in the morning, record every calorie, and get in an extra workout. I'd strategize the meal plan I was going to follow to be "good" and vow to eliminate sugar and fats. And that was how I started my day, every day, for years.

This morning routine was such an automatic habit to me that it never dawned on me that it was a problem. It's just what I did, no second thoughts about it. Eventually I realized that this wasn't just happening in the mornings, *anytime* I walked into a bathroom or in front of a mirror my immediate instinct was to lift my shirt and check my stomach. My body checking had become a compulsive and automatic habit. The problem was twofold: first, this habit reinforced my body dissatisfaction and my conviction that I needed to control my eating and exercise better. Second, it would make me feel badly about myself, and my brain's way to help me sooth my experience of negative emotions was to signal me to eat, so often the panic that followed my body checking was exactly the thing that sent me frantically to the bakery on my way to work.

Replace Body Checking With Body Gratitude

Moving forward, replace your body checking and weighing habits with that of body gratitude. Instead of criticizing your body for all the things you perceive as wrong with it (which is usually it's weight, shape, and fat), start acknowledging all the things that are right with your body. Your body is an incredible machine and vessel that performs millions of miraculous functions every second of every day to keep you alive and healthy. Give deep and profound gratitude to these things: your heartbeat, eyesight, hair growth, digestion, legs that carry you, hands that hold, voice that sings, brain that comprehends language, etc. The list is endless!

7. Understand Your Brain & The Function Of The Purge

There is a function behind every bad habit that serves to reinforce the behavior. Even though I knew bulimia was "wrong" and something I shouldn't do, it was serving a purpose too great for me to willingly give it up overnight. The function of the binge/purge (covered on the next page) was so reinforcing that over time and much repetition the behavior became an automatic habit. It was something my brain cued me to do in response to a number of triggers- certain foods, certain emotions, certain places, and certain situations- and without even thinking about it my body went into autopilot mode and performed bingeing and purging.

I remember a number of times when I would be driving to get food and simultaneously telling myself I didn't need to do this. It felt like a force outside of myself was in control. Part of me desperately wanted to stop purging for good, and the other part of me desperately wanted to keep engaging in the behavior. I couldn't understand why this was. Now I know it was a battle between different parts of my brain- one voice was coming from the Reptilian brain and the other from the Neocortex.

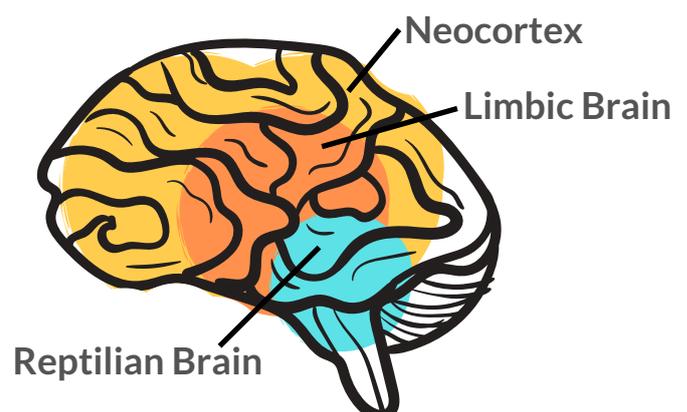
Intro To The Brain

The "Reptilian" (or animal) brain sends the signal to eat, because it's primary function is survival. When this part of the brain detects scarcity of food it perceives this as a threat to survival and responds by initiating greater signals to eat. In our society we are surrounded by food, so the threat of famine is not real; however, the Reptilian brain doesn't know this. Often we create artificial scarcity through dieting and restricting calories and food intake. To the reptilian brain, this is the same as being in a famine.

The neocortex is the "Human" brain which is the rational and thinking brain. This is the most recently evolved part of the brain, and what separates us from chimpanzees. The neocortex allows us to observe the the physical sensations and urges of the body and the thoughts produced by the mind and decide what to act on and believe. This is where your ability to exercise conscious choice resides.

When it comes to stopping bingeing and purging, it seemed like an obvious choice- simply stop! Yet I was blind to change until I understood the function of the purging and understood what part of my brain this urge was coming from.

Moving forward, when you have an urge to binge or purge you can become mindful of it and remind yourself this is the Reptilian brain talking to you. However, you can empower yourself by using your Neocortex and control center to decide not to *act* on the urges. You can simply observe them and let them pass, knowing you have the power to choose.



What's The Function?

Do you know the function of your bulimia? It's important that you can answer this question and understand the purpose of your binge/purge behavior in order to be able to change it.

Typically, the purge serves one of three functions. I call them *The Three P's*, which are outlined below. Once you know which categories you identify with, then you can experiment with new ways to experience the same outcome in a more healthy and adaptive way.

The Three P's



PAIN

Food can be a way to self-medicate one's innermost hurts, pains, and negative feelings such as anger, shame, guilt, and sadness. Binging stuffs down these feelings so that one can avoid having to face or feel the pain, at least momentarily. This results in a build up of painful emotions inside, and purging can serve as a physical way to release this pain.

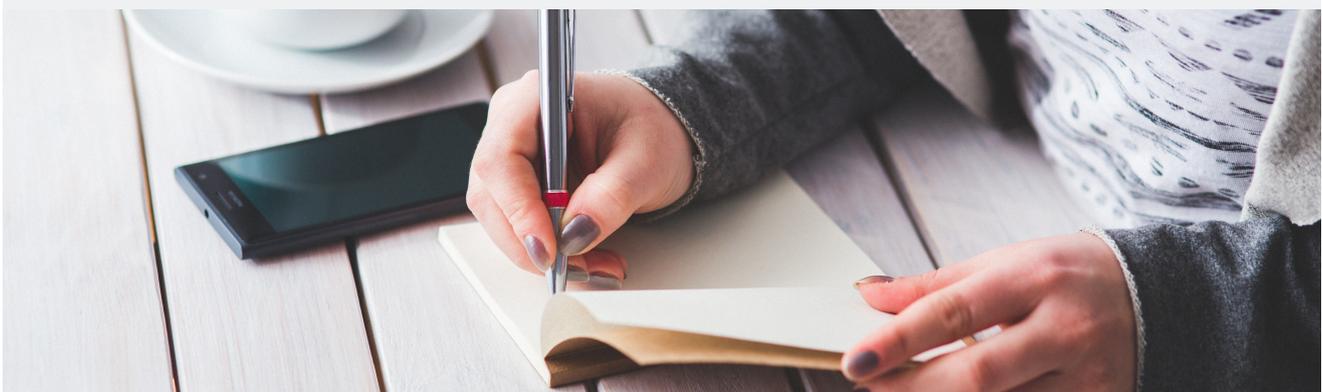
Are you bingeing and purging to manage your pain?

How To Respond To Pain

STEP 1: Simply observe what you're feeling in a curious, nonjudgmental manner. Ask yourself: *What am I feeling? Where do I feel it in my body? What is the underlying reason for this feeling?*

STEP 2: Allow yourself to feel and free the emotion in a more effective way. Try one or more of the following:

- Deep breathing/breathwork
- Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)
- Meditation
- Sing, dance, or draw
- Journal
- Cry, yell, or scream (in a pillow)
- Punch pillows or the air
- Shake your body to release



PLEASURE

Eating foods that taste good is pleasurable. When sugar, fat, and salt hit one's taste buds the reward center of the brain lights up causing the release of the feel good hormones. Often times, food is someone's only source of pleasure. Depending on the level of satisfaction you have with yourself, your career and your relationships, you too may be bingeing to feel an intense burst of pleasure during an otherwise unfulfilling day. This burst of pleasure is short-lived, however, as the feelings of guilt and shame quickly set in about what and how much you ate. This is then leads to the second experience of pleasure via purging, which can produce an experience of an extremely satisfying release.

Are you bingeing and purging for pleasure?

How To Create True Pleasure

Find alternative activities that you can do that are enjoyable, fun, or pleasurable for you. What are some things that spark joy in your soul? Do *those* things. Here are some ideas:

- Take a bath
- Take a class
- Join a sports club/team
- Go to a comedy show
- Join a reading club
- Attend a concert
- Go to the theater/movies
- Visit a museum
- Get creative
- Spend time with friends
- Hike/spend time in nature
- Read, write, or create



PUNISHMENT

When you suffer from self-hatred and extreme self-loathing, as I did, then you can often feel compelled to abuse yourself as a form of punishment for not being good enough or perfect. I had such high expectations of myself, especially about how I should eat and look, that when I did not meet the expectations I thought I was bad and therefore deserved to suffer.

Are you purging to punish yourself?

Stop Punishing Yourself; Start Forgiving Yourself

I don't care how many reasons you can give me as to why you deserve to suffer. I am going to disagree with you wholeheartedly. I don't care what you've done in the past. No matter how bad you think you are, the truth is you are human and no one is perfect. So give yourself a damn break. Sure, pain is inevitable, but suffering is 100% optional. You don't deserve to suffer anymore. You have suffered enough. Start working on self forgiveness instead. Forgive yourself for your perceived flaws and wrong doings. Forgive and then live.

8. Address Your Emotional Wounds

Let's face it. We all have had one or more experiences over our lifetime that has wounded us deeply. Some of us have experienced horrible acts of abuse and violence. Others have experienced neglect, abandonment, and rejection. Maybe you've been bullied. Maybe you've had heartache. Maybe you have witnessed a terrible accident or endured endless arguments with parents, friends, or other family members. It doesn't matter how "big" or "small" you perceive it to be, it can affect you just the same.

We each have our own story, and your unique journey has brought you to this point. Your unique journey has a number of elements that factor into your compulsive habit of bingeing and purging. To really get at the emotional root that is driving this behavior as an automatic coping mechanism, you need to reflect back on your life and get real with yourself about what wounds you have that are still active and in need of healing.

Sometimes the answers are obvious. Other times, they aren't. This is because we either a) repress the experience and emotions from our conscious awareness because it was too painful, or b) tell ourselves that "we're over it" and it's in the past and not an issue anymore. Maybe that's true. But what if it's not? No amount of ignoring a situation will make it go away. I'm amazed at how many times I've had a grown adult sitting in my office crying about pain they still have from childhood, not feeling loved or cared for by their parents. They are shocked to realize that these wounds were affecting them 30 or more years later. Wounds do not go away over time. You have to actively work to heal them.

Imagine that you walked into a rose bush and got pricked by a bunch of thorns deep in your skin. You notice the pain all over your body but tell yourself, "It will go away with time." The problem is that you failed to remove the thorns from your body. With time, your body begins to grow thicker skin to deal with the wounds as best as it can. Yet, you notice that people continue to bump into you, hitting the thorns and causing the pain to sear across your body. Until you go in and actually remove the thorns, (the initial cause of the injury and pain), then you will always be vulnerable to have these wounds re-triggered, re-opened, and re-experienced. You need to identify what wounds you are carrying around with you. What soul-holes do you have that need to be filled?



Personal Peace Exercise

Write a list of all of the memories you have of experiences that were painful, traumatic, or upsetting to you, for whatever reason. Start with early childhood, as far back as you can go. You may come up with hundreds of memories, and that's okay. Next, rate the intensity of each memory on a scale of 0-10 when you think about it now. Begin with the memories that have the highest rating and work your way down. Aim to forgive the situation and each person involved, including yourself. Or try a strategy on page 27 in the box *How To Respond To Pain*.

9. Find A Safe Support System

That's right. You can't do this alone. Well, you can try, but it will be a whole lot easier if you recruit the right people to support you through the ups and downs of recovery.

I was full of so much shame about my bulimia that I hid it from everyone. I chose to suffer alone. I took on the massive task of figuring out recovery entirely on my own. In hindsight, I see this resulted in me taking the longer and more painful road. It also prolonged my recovery because I did not have the tools and resources to help.

Friends



I didn't want my friends to know because I was worried that they'd start to monitor me anytime we went out to eat. Part of me also didn't want them to know because I wasn't ready to give up my binge/purge habits. I wanted to be able to have the freedom to purge if I needed to. If my friends were aware then they'd start to pick up on things and confront me about my continued bulimic episodes.

With that said, I eventually started to open up to some friends. And I was amazed at how much love and support I received from them. No judgment. Just compassion and care. They didn't view me any differently. They listened. They loved. They helped me feel supported and less alone. And they encouraged me to seek additional support and help from my family and professionals.

Who is at least ONE person in your life who you trust who you can talk to about your current struggle with bulimia? Maybe it's a friend, family member, or co-worker. It doesn't matter *who*. It just matters that you share with at least one person so you are not entirely alone in this. Contact them today. Either talk with them on the phone or schedule a time to get together. Speak your truth to them and allow yourself to receive their love and care.

Family

I had vowed to never tell my parents, especially my mom about my eating disorder. She had suffered from bulimia as well in her 20's, and I knew one of her greatest fears was that my sister or I would develop bulimia. I had always assured her that would *never* happen, and yet here I was- bulimic! I was certain she would blame herself. I wanted to protect her from this devastation, so I kept it to myself.

Finally, after 5 years, I told my mom. I was so nervous to tell her, and yet I knew I had to. To my amazement, she received the news relatively well. She didn't sob like I had imagined she would. She didn't blame herself. She listened. She inquired. And she gave me compassion. Her biggest pain was knowing that I had been suffering alone all these years, but she got it. As I sat talking with her, she felt like a dear friend. We were able to share our experiences and bond over them. It brought us closer and melted my shame.



My father and sister were equally as supportive. The more people I told, the more my fears of judgment were abolished. It turns out the only person judging me was *me*.

Who is someone in your family you trust and are ready to tell your truth? Now is the time. Maybe it's your spouse, parent, grandparent, or cousin. Tell that person closest to you and allow yourself to receive their love, concern and support.

Professionals

Having the support of your friends and family is huge, but often they don't know what to do to help you and "fix" your problem. They want to see you better but do not have the tools, knowledge, training, or resources to help you do so. That's where a mental health professional or healer comes in. They are trained and *do* know tools and ways to help you heal and recover.

I had attempted therapy a few times with a few different therapists, and never went back. I did not feel comfortable with them, did not feel heard and understood, and did not believe that the person could actually help me. The cost of therapy kept me from continuing to search for the right therapist. I felt like it was wasted energy, effort, time, and money. I was discouraged and disheartened. I assured myself that I could figure it out on my own.



This is not to say that all therapy is unhelpful or a waste. It is simply a matter of finding the **RIGHT** person or program. Every therapist is different with their own specialty, personality, and style. Find what works for you, and don't give up until you do. As a current licensed therapist, I believe wholeheartedly in the immense healing power of therapy. I've seen it! And I've had the honor to facilitate and witness the transformations that can take place, and over quick periods of time.

10. Practice Self-Compassion & Acceptance

This is perhaps the most important of all of the steps. It is absolutely essential that you learn how to love and accept yourself, just as you are, right now in this moment, perceived flaws and all. You need to start treating yourself the way you would treat a loved one if she told you she was suffering with an eating disorder.

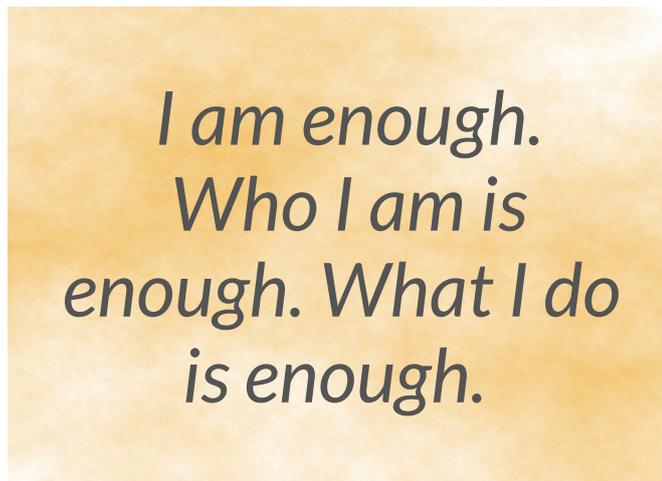
Imagine your best friend. If she came to you and said, "I have an eating disorder" would you tell her that she's stupid and a failure and that you hate her for being imperfect? Would you tell her that her body is disgusting and she needs to lose weight? Absolutely not. You would respond with compassion, love, and care. Why is it so hard to show ourselves this same amount of compassion?

Our negative self-talk is often deeply ingrained. We've thought the same negative thoughts about ourselves so much that they become automatic and feel like the truth. It's not true. It's just a habit of thinking, which means it can be changed. Keep in mind that you've likely thought these negative thoughts repeatedly over a number of years, so undoing them will take time and a commitment to make the effort to change your self talk.

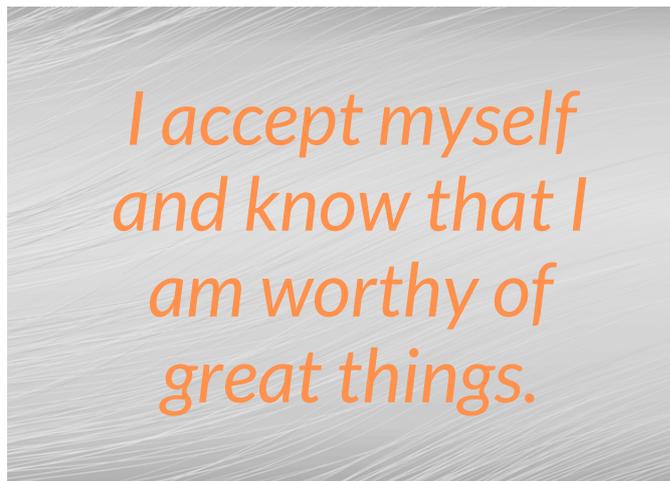
From now on, every time you notice yourself thinking critically about yourself, I want you to stop and tell yourself exactly what you would tell your best friend. *That* is how you need to start to talk to yourself. Become your own best friend and supporter.

Rather than hate yourself for having bulimia and struggling with food and your body, understand that this is a disease and it's not your fault. When your body sends you a signal to binge and/or purge, it's your body's efforts to help you deal with your inner hurt and pain. It's your brain's way to try and help you feel better. It's just that your brain is going about it in an ineffective way. Thank your body and brain for wanting you to feel better.

Yelling at yourself for being in pain only creates more pain. Rather, respond with compassion. Give yourself a big hug and tell yourself it will be alright. That you are enough. In those moments of despair try repeating one of the following affirmations or come up with your own.



*I am enough.
Who I am is
enough. What I do
is enough.*



*I accept myself
and know that I
am worthy of
great things.*

A still life photograph featuring a white, textured, egg-shaped vase filled with a branch of greenery. The vase sits on a white marble table. To the left, a white lamp with a copper-colored base is partially visible. In the foreground, two gold rings and a piece of white, porous, shell-like object are scattered on the table. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Regardless of where you are on your path to recovery, I hope this guide has been useful to help inspire you, provide valuable insight and information, and offer beneficial tools and exercises you can complete to continue to progress on your journey to eliminate bingeing and purging.

As I emphasized throughout the manual, this is meant as a supplement to other more comprehensive treatment options. Below I outline additional support and higher levels of care that I recommend pursuing. The option that is best for you will depend on the severity of your symptoms and the course of treatment that you've already tried. You may find that you benefit from a combination of these options.

Residential or Intensive Day Treatment Programs

These programs are designed for individuals with severe symptoms of bulimia. If you are bingeing and purging multiple times per day or week, then you may be a good candidate for an intensive program that will include day-long programs, therapy, and meals.

Eating Disorder HOPE is a great resource to search for the best treatment programs by state. <https://www.eatingdisorderhope.com/treatment-centers>

Individual Therapy

There is an abundance of qualified therapists, psychologists, coaches and healers who specialize in the treatment of eating disorders, food, and body issues.

Psychology Today is one of the best, most trusted sources to find licensed therapists, psychiatrists, and support groups in your area. Specify the search criteria to include an eating disorder specialty. Search at <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists>



Online Self-Guided Program:

I've created the most comprehensive online self-guided bulimia recovery program, called *BEEMS of Light*. The word "BEEMS" stands for the 5 keys of health that are addressed in this holistic program: 1. Body 2. Emotions 3. Energy 4. Mind and 5. Soul. The program covers six weeks and provides the essential foundation of recovery. Each week is dedicated to a specific pillar of health for which you will receive access to educational videos, a new skill tutorial, specific activity worksheets, tapping scripts, a guided meditation, goal setting worksheets, and journal prompts. It is much more in-depth than this guide, literally walking you step-by-step through the recovery process. This is a great option for those individuals who have a number of barriers to treatment, including financial, time, feasibility, access, and location.

LEARN MORE AND GET STARTED

Learn more about the *BEEMS of Light* program and whether it is a good fit for you at www.sarahspeers.com, where you'll be able to read a detailed overview of the course. You can purchase the course and have access to it right away, so you don't have to wait to get started. I even offer a money back guarantee, because I am that confident that if you put in the work and make the commitment to yourself and the program that you will absolutely begin to notice improvements in your symptoms.

I created this program from years of extensive research, application, and training. I created this program for those women who, like me, feel alone in their struggle with no idea where to turn. For those whose shame is so great that it keeps them suffering silently. For those who want help but cannot afford it, find time for it, or logistically make it work with other treatments. For those who are desperate for a solution, but don't know where to start and what to do.

I want to give you hope that there is a solution out there, and that you've found it. There is no other program out there like this. I know because I've worked with the top eating disorder programs in the world. At the very least, this program will accelerate your recovery because rather than stumble blindly trying to move forward it outlines everything you need to know to achieve recovery. Knowledge is the first step. Application is the second. Persistency is third. With this program, you get to work on recovery at your own pace from the comfort and privacy of your own home. Yes, it will require work. No, it won't necessarily be easy. But it IS possible to get better, and sooner rather than later.



You've Go This!

At this point you have the information and tools to get you started on your recovery journey. What you do with them and where you go from here is up to you. I thank you for letting me be a part of your journey and I encourage you to reach out if you have any questions. Let me know how I can best support you moving forward!

Lastly, and most importantly, I wish with every cell of my being that you know you are worthy, you are beautiful, and you are enough, exactly as you are in this exact moment.

With love and light,

Sarah Speers



A cozy living room scene featuring a white sofa with a shaggy white fur throw and several pillows. An acoustic guitar is leaning against the sofa on the left. In the foreground, a round, woven wicker ottoman holds a stack of books, including one with a red cover and another titled 'VAN GOGH'. A small wooden stool with a laptop on it sits on a white shaggy rug. A potted plant is visible on the right side of the frame. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

STAY CONNECTED!

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