

CHAPTER 13: “DEAR BARBI,” FACT OR FICTION?

(Plus Answering Personal Questions)

“Dear Barbi, is this fact or fiction?”

Protein diets are the best because they are the most popular, right?

FICTION: Protein diets, like others, have been around for years and go in and out of style, like all other gimmick diets. One size does not fit all. Therefore, it is dangerous to say the protein diet is best for everyone. If they are so popular, then why are we getting fatter as a nation? Because protein diets, like all diets, eventually stop working!

A diet of 1,200 calories (or less) per day is best in order to lose weight, right?

FICTION: A calorie is not a calorie! What works in the laboratory doesn't work with us, because we are dictated by hormones, unlike Petri dishes. For instance, carrots can be low in calories and fat but have a high glycemic index (poor blood sugar effect). It is recommended that you are supposed to have ten calories per pound of body weight, but that's relative as well. Muscle weighs more than fat. Low calories only create a sluggish metabolism and a fat efficient body. It's the quality of the calorie, not the amount that counts.

Overweight individuals just need willpower and discipline to get thin, right?

FICTION: Extremely overweight individuals are battling excess or deficient hormones and brain chemicals that “normal” eaters don't usually encounter. For instance, the hormone leptin, which is responsible for making us full, is dormant in overweight people. They also have an excess of ghrelin, a hormone responsible for making us hungry and making fat, even if you don't eat. Furthermore, they lack in PYY336, the hormone that fulfills us, and serotonin, the brain chemical that helps curb appetite and is triggered by tryptophan, which is abundantly found in carbs and sweets. Compulsive overeating is called a disease because willpower has nothing to do with it. Eating disorders stem from mental disorders, which are illnesses or diseases. There is hope for recovery, however, when overweight

individuals learn certain foods either help or hurt these hormones and brain chemicals plus work on confronting their issues, or what they are eating over.

Overweight people usually have low metabolisms, true?

FICTION: False! On the contrary, eating a lot of calories actually *raises* the metabolism. It is the yo-yo dieting that creates a sluggish metabolism. People are fatter not just because of poor choices but because they DIET! This trains the body to hold onto all food as storage rather than burning it, because it is the body's natural survival instinct.

All fruits, particularly citrus are acidic in the body, true?

FICTION: Organic acids within the fruits stay acid until they hit the bloodstream. They combine with other acids, leaving the mineral salts (alkalis from the fruit) in the blood. The blood's pH is balanced from these alkalis.

Using caffeine supplements before a workout is harmless because it gives a “boost” without any fat or calories, right?

FICTION: Regardless of the stimulant's food content, all drugs (including cigarettes, diet aids, and some herbs) usually cause a hypoglycemic reaction, further causing water retention, lack of energy, eventual hunger, and moodiness. Stimulants usually cause excess cortisol to be released or adrenal exhaustion. This all makes it impossible for the body to achieve the fat-burning/muscle-building process. The temporary lift is followed by the crash. Stimulants also cause a buildup of dirty tissue, making the body flabby (cellulite). We are dictated by hormones, not fat or calories. Empty calorie substances can sometimes cause harm. Though trainers claim stimulants cause thermogenesis (fat burned by body heat), they can also create a plateau (set point) that will backfire.

In order for anorexics to get well they just need to gain weight, right?

FICTION: False; that is their very problem: weight obsession. Weight loss is only the symptom of their disease. Eating disorders stem from depression, OCD, anxiety, etc., and manifest in some self-destructive behavior. These diseases are based on control and fear and can easily be transmitted into body obsession, especially because they are shame-based. (People think they *are* the problem, not that they *have* a problem.) Recovery should include a healthy food plan without focusing on the meal intake or the weight gain. Anorexics use “control” rather than confronting their inside issues. Again, don't use outside appearance for an inside job. Weight gain is the byproduct of a good recovery program.

Rich people are thin because they have access to fat farms, good chefs, and private trainers, right?

FICTION: Most thin people are thin, rich or not, because they make better choices. However, some wealthy celebrities, whom we usually look up to, think that money can buy anything and seek further methods to attain a super-fit body, like through HGH and liposuction. Nevertheless, shortcuts eventually backfire, rich or not.

Genetics override diet and exercise programs for your weight outcome, right?

FICTION: Reportedly, genetic factors account for about 40 percent of the influence. Though some are burdened with a family's poor health history, RADICAL life changes *can* override genetics, for the most part. Most studies are done by comparing very ill individuals on "normal" diets to a healthy person on the same diet. I have witnessed individuals with one foot in the grave completely change their lives 180 degrees. They view everything they eat as a health investment, not a perverted entertainment for the mouth. Though food does not work as quickly as medicine, health gurus claim it's their medicinal investment. Usually these are raw dieters who change their ways mentally, physically, and spiritually. If they had depended on genetics, they would have been victims of drugs and surgery.

Good, healthy weight loss is only about one or two pounds per week, true?

FACT: This is true. Any diet that promises more is depending on water loss through ketosis (an unnatural rapid fat burning without burning glucose). This is temporary and can cause kidney damage. Initially, all diets cause water weight loss, before they burn fat. Fast weight off is fast weight back on...plus more. If you are used to eating a lot of junk, your first week or two may result in extra weight loss. However, true and lasting weight loss should never be more than one or two pounds per week, because that is fat.

Aerobic exercise (cardio) is far superior to anaerobic exercise (weight lifting) for weight loss, true?

FICTION: Both are important. Just as a one-nutrient diet is imbalanced, so is a one-type exercise routine. Although aerobic exercise works on the red, lean muscle tissue to achieve the fat-burning/muscle-building process, anaerobic exercises (that focus on white bulky muscle tissue) release CCK (hormone that creates a satiated feeling) and HGH (human growth hormone that also clicks you into the fat-burning/muscle-building process). Muscle mass burns calories even when sedentary and *boosts* the metabolism. You need to shake up your exercise routine just like a diet so your body doesn't learn to compensate. Your muscles need to

recuperate, as well. Therefore, it is best to switch between anaerobic and aerobic exercises, every other day.

There are some overweight people who simply love food without mental issues involved, true?

FICTION: There is no such thing as being extremely overweight because you love food. True, certain out-of-control brain chemicals and hormones will make the addict believe that because of the unbearable cravings. Chocolate actually raises endorphins (hormone that makes you feel high and in love). True hunger does not stem from uncontrollable cravings. Food becomes the food addict's tool to deal with every emotion, including the shame of their disease. The food tool is used as their survival mechanism, which is all they know. True feelings don't manifest until the food addict is detoxified from all sugars (drugs) and other mind-altering foods. Food addicts are in the constant state of intoxication or detoxification, leaving no room for confronting issues. Their "hunger" is for love and acceptance. Filling that void with food only makes them more shame-based, thinking they *are* the problem, not that they *have* one. They don't have any boundaries for hunger or fullness.

An apple keeps the doctor away, right?

FACT: What the actual saying means is that the alkalis (minerals) in the apple neutralize the acids within the body, which stops any leeching of alkalis from the teeth, hair, nails, and bones. Acidity causes hollow bones and cavities. When you eat sugar (acid), it robs the alkalis from your teeth (as well as bones and hair), which causes cavities. This is not the same thing as direct contact of the sugar on the teeth. The high content of pectin in the apple is a natural fiber that helps you evacuate. An apple a day keeps you regular and balanced!

There is no such thing as a cure when speaking about recovery, true?

FACT: Recovery is a process, not an event. Recovery includes changing the brain patterns and life choices that at one time brought you to your drug of choice. There is no logic to their disease; there is an only obsession. You can reason yourself right back into the disease. Obsessions can be confronted or transferred but not controlled. Recovery is contingent on the addict's daily progress, not perfection.

Changing your food plan and attaining recovery is always easier with a buddy or friend, true?

FACT: Discriminate; don't isolate! Environment is stronger than willpower. Having a buddy or a sponsor who is on a recovery path also helps you connect and contribute. You are helping that person as much as he or she is helping you. Solitude is good for introspection, however, in

"DEAR BARBI," FACT OR FICTION?

numbers there is power. Sharing your experience, strength, and hope with a fellow sufferer will allow you to be less self-absorbed, which causes you to ruminate on your disease.

Meat- or nitrogen-based protein diets are far superior to plant protein diets, true?

FICTION: Plant protein has fiber and other nutrients. Meat only has protein. Furthermore, meat is loaded with antibiotics, hormones, and chemicals, making it harder on our kidneys, liver, and digestive tract. Remember, our body has a priority system; first it digests; then it eliminates; and only after that does it heal (rest) and burn fat. Some meat can take up to ten hours to digest, leaving your intestines fermenting with toxins that open your immune system to diseases and parasites. Nature made the best diet for humans: organic plants. When an animal is slaughtered (stressed with fear), it excretes dangerous hormones and chemicals that we ingest. Try this: Compare a person who solely lives on an extreme meat protein diet to someone who lives off of raw food only. Which one is free of illnesses, fatigue, and wrinkles? You make the decision.

It's better to be fit and overweight rather than thin and sedentary, right?

FACT: I've found this to be true. I have heard that when overweight individuals who were physically active were compared to thin people who were sedentary, the active overweight individuals were healthier than the thin people who were inactive. However, some experts claim that people who are ten pounds or more overweight, also put a *strain* on every organ, muscle, and bone. I don't advise using this theory to condone extra weight. Use this theory to inspire your exercise routine, regardless of your size.

Drinking water is important when dieting, true?

FACT: This is true for several reasons. One is that, when you enter into ketosis or weight loss, you lose a lot of water. Your kidneys are already working overtime because many diets, like the protein diet, cause a diuretic effect. Water itself can have a diuretic effect. It's very good to drink lots of water to prevent water retention. Usually, by the time you are thirsty, you're already dehydrated. Use lemon for dehydration. The sodium in lemon retains the water because of the sodium (electrolytes). Water without sodium (or other minerals that can act like electrolytes) can further dehydration. It is said to drink eight eight-ounce glasses of water per day because our bodies are composed of approximately 70 percent water. However, you want to be careful not to get "water logged." Drink two hours after a meal and one half hour before a meal. When your diet is full of fresh fruit and vegetables, you don't need to drink as much water. If you have unusual thirst, there is something wrong. This will happen after a binge (sugar) or too much protein.

Moderate exposure to sunshine or a light tan is very healthy?

FACT: Only in moderation. Deep tans are not healthy. Sunshine is a must, not only for the vitamin D. Sunshine is a catalyst for other vitamins and minerals. It also penetrates the pineal gland through the eyes, helping relieve depression and release serotonin. It also helps with anemia. Though skin cancer is serious, there are more health problems in people who refrain from the sun than people who are always outdoors. Compare surfers to people who sit at computer day in and day out. A slight tan, just about 5-20 minutes a day, actually raises the melanin just enough to act as a natural sunscreen. There are those who claim most skin cancers are the result of toxins *baking* on the skin—poisons within corrupting poisons on the outside. They also believe a toxin-free diet and a *little* sunshine is the answer to superior health, not refraining from Mother Nature’s vitamin enhancer. Also, try using natural sunscreens that are chemical free.

A food addict is much like being a drug addict, true?

FACT: The food addict goes through the same issues of control and fear. Whether the tool is food, a drug, or alcohol, the behavior is compulsive—dictated by obsession. The weight is only the symptom. The brain chemicals react in the same way. For instance, dopamine (induces a euphoric feeling) and endorphins (which is a hormone that binds to opiate receptors) are depleted or sometimes over-released when we experience pleasure over and over. In anticipation, the memory of such an experience also causes the release of dopamine, which further causes cravings. Overindulgences in this pleasure deplete dopamine. This process then creates a need to acquire the food (drug of choice) not for the pleasure anymore, but to refrain from crashing. Food addicts can be depleted of other vital hormones as well. Many of them are low in norepinephrine, the flight-or-fight hormone. This makes their crashing worse and creates a need for a pick-up. Food addicts experience the same blackouts, highs, and hangovers of the drug addict. Other brain chemicals are depleted as well, like serotonin which is a neurotransmitter that makes you “feel full”), when we overindulge. The addict’s only memory is the habit of recouping these missing feel-good chemicals is by using their drug of choice. The addiction is born when the need supersedes the pleasure. An addict is an addict no matter what survival mechanism he or she chooses for an easier, softer way. Addicts can’t live with or without their drug. Their drug is used to escape, cope, and medicate themselves from feeling their feelings. They will lie, cheat, and steal for their addition, food or otherwise.

Just because someone is extremely skinny does not mean they have an eating disorder, right?

FACT: Weight is only a symptom, not a problem. Some individuals are naturally thin or suffer from hyperthyroidism (over-active thyroid).

"DEAR BARBI," FACT OR FICTION?

However, obvious weight loss is a warning sign that some obsessive-compulsive disorder is beginning, even if it is enhanced by drug use. If someone uses drugs for weight-gain fear, that person is possibly treading the path of two disorders.

Fasting and dieting causes acidosis, right?

FICTION: Acidosis is commonly produced by the fermentation of proteins and carbohydrates due to their lack of minerals. Ketosis, on the other hand, cleans the body of excess fat by having an empty or nearly empty stomach. It does this to give energy. Acidosis is abnormally high acids in the blood and fluids. Sometimes the cleansing process of a fast can create temporary acidosis, in the beginning.

An eating disorder is not really a mental illness (disease); it's just an addiction, right?

FICTION: An addiction eventually develops into a disease, meaning the addiction takes over the body and mind much like a disease. No one chooses to be an addict. Eating disorders stem from some type of mental disorder (OCD, anxiety, depression, etc.). Mental illness is a disease. It has nothing to do with food, diets, weight, or starving. Those are symptoms and tools. Once it has become a disease (mental illness), no amount of willpower can stop it. Brain chemicals, like dopamine, are released upon the very memory of the drug of choice, making the addiction stronger. When the addiction becomes self-destructive and self-preservation is absent, it has become a disease. There are basically two types of mental illnesses: neuroses and psychoses. *Neurotic* is thinking YOU are the problem (shame-based), and you become hypochondriac. *Psychotic* is thinking everyone but you has the problem. Psychotic individuals blame the world because they have a victim mentality. Neuroses can transcend into psychoses. Once it has regressed into psychosis, it is hard for addicts to get or seek help, because they don't think it is their responsibility.

Wine, chocolate, and other taboo treats must be good for you because they contain antioxidants and other helpful substances, right?

FICTION: Everything in you ingest is recognized as a food or a poison. You just need to weigh out the food qualities. An orange has traces of arsenic. Tobacco has vitamin content, like vitamin C. Does that make it healthy? No. Wine and chocolate can enhance addiction as well. For normal people without addictions, wine and chocolate in moderation are fine. However, to make these goodies a daily requirement for antioxidants is only condoning an unhealthy pattern that can lead to addiction. There are better ways of receiving antioxidants without side effects.

Some people are just born unlucky, no matter how much discipline they exert, right?

FICTION: There is no such thing as continuous bad luck. People who usually complain about their bad luck are in denial and won't take responsibility. There are clues to people's circumstances. Perhaps someone may have poor genes or a bad circumstance coincidentally. Regardless, it's all about perception. People with severe handicaps or healthy disadvantages are basically more positive about life than people who appear successful. They are known to excrete "happier" brain chemicals, than successful, "lucky" ones. I look at my disease as a blessing in disguise because my recovery was threefold: mental, physical, and spiritual. I had to work on all of those things to attain true fulfillment, not just food abstinence. Luck is being able to see opportunity when it goes by. Individuals who are negative don't notice positive, OBVIOUS signals, because they have a victim mentality. We can choose to be a victim of our circumstances or we can choose to be positive in spite of our circumstances. The biggest success stories come from individuals who have had to overcome unusual obstacles and then just kept going up!

If something is labeled organic or natural, you can't believe it, right?

FACT: It needs to be labeled CERTIFIED organic. Natural is relative. Poison can be natural. *Natural* is a term used for packaging. It can be misleading or a downright lie.

It's important to eat a large carb meal for energy prior to a workout, right?

FICTION: First off, the meal should be light and "clean" so it doesn't interfere with digestion and hormones. Going without food can cause excess cortisol release or adrenal exhaustion, causing weight loss difficulties and bloating. Eating high carb contents before a workout can also cause a hypoglycemic reaction (bloating, fatigue, hunger). It's best to have one small carb snack or a small balanced meal with protein or fat to block the insulin. Your food is not actually burned off until twenty-four hours later. True energy actually comes from the process called catabolism, which takes time. All foods at first act as a slight stimulant. Your food is then used for anabolism (building tissue).

Modeling seems to be a good career choice, true?

FICTION: Modeling is body-obsessed and is the worst choice for anyone with an eating disorder or someone comes from a dysfunctional family. Many times I see food addicts, for instance, use shopping as a reward after they have completed their diet. Modeling, shopping, or any "outside," body obsessed escapes or rewards only breeds the self-absorbed

"DEAR BARBI," FACT OR FICTION?

disease. When I see, for instance, athletes choose to model in order to celebrate their bodies or actresses who want to further their career, that's fine. But to use modeling as a goal (or as a scare-tactic, as we did to lose weight) is unhealthy. It's never good enough or fulfilling.

I am prone to be an alcoholic if someone in my family is, right?

FACT: There is a 50 percent chance of having a predisposition for two reasons: genetic and learned behavior. Genetically, a child of an alcoholic might have certain brain chemicals that are missing or unbalanced (serotonin, dopamine, and endorphins), which draws them to other chemicals (or foods) that supply them with these feel-good feelings. They might have an inherited hormonal imbalance as well. Learned behavior is both traditional eating habits and self-medicating (survival mechanism). If your family eats poorly, then that will also pass along the same imbalances that trigger an addictive personality. If you are surrounded by role models who live in denial and deal with everything by self-medicating, it will impact you greatly. The good news is that we don't need to be dictated by tradition, bad habits, and denial. We have a choice, though for some it will be harder. Fighting your battle will also improve other parts of your life, that would normally be unnoticed or unimportant.

Sugar (included in most ingredients) is claimed to be a DRUG, true?

FACT: Sugar has all the qualities of a drug. It acts as a temporary stimulant at first, eventually causing a crash when it's excreted. Excess sugar causes the same withdrawal symptoms and cravings as a drug and can cause a hypoglycemic reaction. Manufacturers use corn syrup and other cheap sugars as ingredients. These are actually worse for the blood sugar. However, sugar is used in all products because of its addictive nature. It's in toothpaste, cigarettes, and even athletes' drinks that are supposed to be filled with vitamins and minerals. Sugar actually leeches most of the nutritional value that your food may give you. American companies put sugar in the very products that are supposed to combat sugar-related diseases. For instance, candidiasis is a fungus in the lower intestine that is triggered, caused, or encouraged by sugar. Acidophilus is one of the main combat supplements that fights candidiasis. Yet most acidophilus products contain sugar! All manufacturers agree that we can't live with or without it as a drug, so they include it.

It's hard to communicate with the opposite sex because of our differences, true?

FACT: Yes, biologically and evolutionary we are different in almost every aspect, so why complain or try to change another person? Women think with their whole brains, taking longer to make a decision. They guide

their intellect (left side of the brain) with their intuition (right side). Men think simply and logically (left side). Women tend to overanalyze and over-emotionalize, while men minimize their feelings (and others'). Men also want to solve their problems alone in their bear caves and then be done with it. Women may want to openly discuss something without getting to a point. This could be construed as “nagging.” Women have the hormone oxytocin (cuddle hormone) that helps maintain loyalty. Unfortunately men have the four-year itch (not seven), which makes it easier for them to stray because of their testosterone (hunter). They are attracted to women physically (young and symmetrical for breeding), while women are attracted to the protector” and provider (security). Men, dominated by testosterone, are stimulated in the brain by sex and alcohol (and protein meals) in the same area of the brain where women are stimulated by food (serotonin). Women would rather eat sweets (bountiful in tryptophan, which triggers serotonin). It is ridiculous to compare or compete with your opposite-sex mate. The best relationships accept the differences and make a team with each of the good attributes.

To prevent dehydration, water is a good source because it helps balance electrolytes, true?

FICTION: Water by itself acts as a diuretic. It contains inorganic materials (minerals) rather than having a source from organic tissues. It's the minerals (like sodium, potassium, phosphorus, etc.) in fresh fruits and vegetables that help prevent dehydration in the body, with the help of electrolytes. The body makes electrolytes (needed for water balance) with the help of the minerals, which are only derived from fresh fruits and vegetables (organic tissues). Electrolytes are of various ions, like potassium, sodium, chloride, etc., required by cells to balance the electric charge and flow of water molecules in the body. Lemon is magical. It can help with edema when you are bloated and with dehydration when you need electrolytes. A squeeze of orange helps the molecular structure of tap water. Sugar and manmade salt, on the other hand, purely dehydrate you and leech minerals. Always stick with nature's nutrients rather than turning to something that contains other additives. Nature's clones usually backfire.

Although both my triglycerides and cholesterol are fairly high, only the cholesterol is life-threatening, right?

FACT: Triglycerides and cholesterol are lipids (fats). Although triglycerides are 95 percent of your body fat and usually your diet (protein), cholesterol is only small percentage. Triglycerides are food fats and represent most of your body's fat, like the fat stored in the muscles and breasts. Cholesterol is vital to the brain and nerve cells and all other cell membranes, nerve fibers, bio salts, and sex hormones. It is found in animal-based foods and can be found in the body. It can harden around the arteries

"DEAR BARBI," FACT OR FICTION?

and cause fatal heart problems when in excess. Usually high triglycerides go hand in hand with high cholesterol, but only high cholesterol is fatal. It is a good indicator of a person's chance of suffering from cardiovascular disease and also indicates a diet high in animal protein. Raw dieters never encounter this problem.

Meditation and positive affirmation helps weight loss and recovery, true?

FACT: It's like quantum physics. The body is moving energy and the power of our mind dictates every function in our bodies. Deep breathing, meditation, and positive thinking all enhance our body's hormones and brain chemicals. A mother can actually poison her child while breast feeding if she is extremely upset. During stress, excess cortisol is released, which eventually exhausts your adrenal glands. This makes weight loss difficult. Meditation has been proven to lower blood pressure and help enhance our immune systems.

The color orange helps increase appetite, right?

FACT: Certain colors have subtle connections to our emotions and feelings. Warm colors like orange have been known to induce hunger. Blue helps reduce appetite. Green is calming. Red heightens emotions. That's why hospitals have a green ambience and restaurants are usually surrounded by orange decor.

Juice fasting is the best way of losing weight, right?

FICTION: Juice fasting is good to clean out, detox, or heal—NOT to lose weight, for several reasons. People who battle weight should not look to juicing as a weight loss diet. They miss the whole point. It's almost more dangerous to "clean out" and then go back to poor eating habits. It is better to learn to eat properly and gradually move into a raw or clean diet. Trying a short juice fast to cleanse the body before your diet is fine. Long-term juicing (or low-calorie diets missing other nutrients) makes the body fat efficient. Juice is the oxidation (breakdown) of a whole, perfect food (fruit or vegetable). The pulp is a natural insulin inhibitor, which is better for weight loss. Juicing is magical for the very ill or exhausted and usually should be supervised when done long term.

Lifting weights creates bulky and stocky women, right?

FICTION: It is physically impossible to build a muscle and gain weight at the same time. When muscle builds, fat burns. Body builders eat massive calories that build bulky tissue. Less weight with more reps can tone a body without making it look bigger.

Everyone needs at least eight hours of sleep, right?

FICTION: The average working adult gets approximately six to seven hours of sleep, which is not enough. A mind that works well needs at least seven and a half to eight hours of sleep a night. A sick or exhausted body needs more, and you can't "make up" your sleep. That means most of us are *enervating* (drawing from nerve energy) ourselves. Rest is the key to all health, mental and physical. However, I have observed that too much sleep is not good for someone. It is a sign of depression or a highly toxic body. A simple twenty-minute nap between the hours of 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM will help remedy this. Resting for one hour (sometimes meditation) is equal to about one half hour of sleep. There's a correlation between obese children and sleep deprivation. The human growth hormone, which is released during sleep, keeps the body in the fat-burning/muscle-building stage. Usually people who are slim and eat small, healthy meals don't need so much sleep. Raw-food dieters only need about four to six hours of sleep a night. Mental activity is far more tiresome on the body than physical exertion.

☞ *Personal Questions: "Dear Barbi"*

Q: When did you realize you had an eating disorder?

A: I think it was when we devoured twenty cases of Girl Scout cookies that we were supposed to sell. Denial obviously takes many forms. When we were young, we knew we had a secret, but then again, we thought everyone did, behind closed doors. We eventually had interventions, which let us know our secret had leaked out. When we went to our mother's AA meetings at a very young age, we could identify with the alcoholic; only our drug of choice was food. This was the problem: We thought the cure was a diet, so we transformed our disease from compulsive overeating to bulimia. We thought, if we could hide our symptoms, then everything would be fine. In the beginning of our career, we felt our lives were unmanageable and that we didn't deserve to be in the limelight while we were sick. Subsequently, we took a sabbatical so we could concentrate on recovering while studying health. Recovery is called a process because you don't wake up one morning and say, "I've got an eating disorder." There are just as many levels to an illness as there are to recovery. It was more important to know what an eating disorder was rather than figure out how it started. As soon as we knew it wasn't about eating or weight appearance (symptom), we *graduated* into healthy thinking.

Q: What made you want to come out of the closet with your bulimia?

A: My sister. She took up the whole closet. Actually, we were strongly advised against it but realized that in secrets lie sickness. No one

at the time had come out to talk about overeating or barfing. It seemed fashionable to be a drug addict or an alcoholic back then. We surely knew we wouldn't be embraced for being "pigs". Nor did we want to be remembered for bending over a toilet. However, we knew for our recovery, it was important to share just incase we were able to help ONE person. We wanted people to know the HELL behind the glamour facade.

Q: Was "outing" yourselves a good career move?

A: Sure, if we wanted to be the poster girls for *barfing*. Honestly it was the worst career move, even though our career was just seven and a half minutes of fame each. We weren't credible actresses or great singers. We were just a couple of simple models who happen to get a little fame, (or infamy). What man would want to buy our calendar with the mental picture we were describing to our fans? However, we turned a horrible confession into a fulfilling opportunity. Since our "outing," many other celebrities have come out with their eating disorders as well. We were amazed how many people were touched (let alone surprised) by how prevalent this disease is. Women are by far the majority of our fans now, and they are the ones who request photos of us. That's all worth it!

Q: Did Hollywood hurt or help your eating disorder?

A: Which came first: the chicken or the egg? (I don't know. I ate them both.) My sister came first, which means nothing! I believe people are drawn to extreme career choices out of a dysfunctional validation, (getting approval with unhealthy choices). Hollywood was never a dream of ours, unlike most celebrities. We always wanted to be veterinarians, horse trainers, or athletes—NEVER models. We started modeling at the age of seven, so we didn't have much of a choice. Later, we enjoyed the hours and pay that left us free for horses and sports. However, we abused the Hollywood career choice by using it like a carrot on a stick. We thought if we documented ourselves when we were thin (for about five minutes), on a magazine cover, then no one would know about our disease. To force ourselves to starve we used the scare tactic of realizing thousands of people would judge our appearance. That wore off. We were out of control and almost lost our lives because of some of the diet abuse we endured. It was harder to recover in public as well. Everyone watches you if you fall, fail, or slip. It was humiliating but humbling! Now it seems to be a blessing in disguise, as if this suffering was all worth it.

Q: Did having a twin help or hurt your bulimia?

A: Can you spell *codependent*? Having a twin automatically voted us CODEPENDENT! That's one more sickness on top of the eating disorder. If one of us was fat, we were *both* fat. If one of us was well but not the other, we were both sick. If only one of us wasn't ready to work, neither of

us could work. It was enabling having a binge-and-purge buddy. We had to first learn to be independent, because our bottoms were different from each other. We were so used to controlling each other (one of our main character defects). Letting go was the hardest battle we had to endure. I couldn't "give" recovery to my sister any more than she could give it to me. We are grateful, however, that we can share the recovery path together. We make healthier choices together, although they are independently executed. We give each other the freedom of individual choice, which makes a better team.

Q: When exactly were you recovered?

A: I am? No such thing as a cure or instant recovery. It's a process: one day at a time. Every day the recovery is based on the progress (not perfection) of the program the addict works on. It's not about being thin or abstaining from bingeing. That would be like being a dry drunk. A dry drunk still carries the "ism" (intoxicated with the obsession), without having the drug of choice. The alcohol, binge foods, and fat are only a tools or symptoms of a disease. The disease started long before the compulsive overeating. It usually starts out with obsessive-compulsive disorder and progresses into some addiction. We were excessively clean and neat. We were control freaks and had to have everything perfect. If you only work on the symptoms, then the disease can transform, as ours did from compulsive overeating to bulimia. Recovery started long before we could see any weight loss. Mentally, we surrendered the obsession. That was a relief!

Q: How do you know if someone has an eating disorder?

A: A big clue would be a lock on the refrigerator, like I had. But you can't judge a book by its cover. Instead of looking at the obvious, I'd look for the clues of any disorder: control issues, denial, obsession, ritualistic behavior (OCD) dictated by fear, shame-based thinking or grandiosity. They are usually reckless yet they are afraid of taking healthy risks. They also learn live by instinct rather than intuition. These are all characteristics I identify with. Addicts live by magical thinking. They constantly live in the future or the past, yet they indulge (self-absorbed) for one moment only, rather than living *responsibly* in the NOW.

Q: How do you tell someone that you think he or she needs help?

A: Run! No, seriously, you don't for the most part. You can tell people if they ask. Addicts will only be defensive if they are not ready to hear it. What you do have the right to do is to tell them how their behavior (which is not as secret as they think) is affecting you. You do this by discussing YOUR boundaries while offering them help and nonjudgmental support . There's a fine line between helping or pushing them away. The best advice I can give is to get on their level, instead of being condescending, by sharing

your experience, strength, and hope. I tell people I want to be surrounded by healthy people or people who are seeking progress. I then share my character defects so they can relate to where I'm coming from. Perhaps I won't have the same drug of choice, but I can connect on some level. Most people have some type of addictive behavior. That's why sharing in group therapy works best.

Q: What is your diet and exercise plan like today and what do you still have a problem with?

A: My only problem now is my sister. Honestly, at one time every type of food was a trigger food for bingeing. Nothing seemed safe. At first our *abstinence* was simply NOT eating compulsively, over exercising or purging . We would plan three healthy but hearty meals with only a few hours of exercise, which was a BIG change for us. We couldn't diet or think of ways to condone eating (like laxatives or marathon sports). Gradually we incorporated better health habits. We noticed that, when we surrendered the obsession to be thin and made HEALTH our goal, it was easier. It wasn't about being "good" or "bad." It was about making healthier choices. Therefore, one day at a time, we progressed without looking for the perfection of a life-changing regimen. The insanity was lifted as soon as we let go of focusing on food and the body. We've evolved slowly into, by and large, a RAW diet. Our diet abuse caused many health problems, and this was our way to remedy them: Our exercise routine is never more than two hours a day. However it is hard to give up exercise to rest, no matter how sick or tired we are, which still is a problem we are working on. Things that are trigger foods we have as allowed/disallowed eating, so we don't blow our abstinence. My treats at this point in my recovery are far healthier than what they were in the beginning of my recovery. Sugar, meat, and junk food is never a problem, because it has become so unfamiliar to my sister and me. We don't relate to them, because they are out of our *systems*, physically and mentally. Food replacements helped that habit in the beginning. When we wanted something junky, we would create a healthy alternative that did the job!

Q: Did you think your image hurt women or exploited women?

A: Although I agree that I exploit my sister, I don't think we exploited women anymore than we exploited twins. Actually, if you think about it, it is men who seem to be exploited by images that are manipulated and packaged by women for money: men's money. Modern-day people have choices. Regardless if some of us make poor choices, as we all have, we are still able to choose what we want to buy or what we want to project. I do think, however, we did a disservice to women with eating disorders. My sister and I were so wrapped up in our own insecurities; we couldn't have imagined that we would impact anyone, much less women. However, when

we did realize that our packaged image (through bulimia) affected women negatively, we decided to come out with our eating disorder. Ironically, it is women who now embrace our calendars, posters, and other merchandise, which they say motivates and inspires them. That makes us feel good that something nice came out of this ugly disease. It also gave us a podium for our biggest passion: animal charities!