

RawReform: How to go raw for weight loss An Introduction for Overeaters



Before

Learn how to lose weight quickly, healthily and naturally from someone who lost more than 150lbs with a raw food lifestyle



After

By Angela Stokes

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INTRODUCTION

This book is about HOW to transition to a raw food lifestyle for overweight or obese overeaters. It contains suggestions on how to reclaim a naturally healthy state of being *for yourself*. It is written by someone who lived for many years as a morbidly obese overeater, unhappily experiencing the consequences of this condition – from social exclusion, low self-worth, depression, a false sense of self and denial, to a compromised immune system, constant ill-health and a lonely state of despair. After adopting a ‘raw lifestyle’ of eating mainly raw foods and trying to live in a more natural way, my life has been completely revolutionised and I am reclaiming my health daily on physical, emotional and spiritual levels. It is my aim, with this book, to provide a clear and concise guide on how to transition to raw for other overeaters, drawing on the wealth of knowledge and experience I have gained on my own raw journey.

I do not claim to be a ‘raw guru’ or expert, I am simply a living example of the wonderful transformative results one can expect from taking this path back towards health and I want to share my experience. I do not consider this a faddy diet option – for me, this is a real and loving lifestyle choice, getting back to an abundance of fresh, raw, living food, the way humans ate before cooked and processed foods started to dominate in our diets. There are today literally thousands of diet plans, slimming aids, shots, pills, ‘miracle weight loss cures’ and so on available to overweight and obese overeaters – all claiming to secure weight loss and health gain for the user. Very few of these methods actually provide the desired results and many people find that even if they have managed to lose some weight in such a way, they soon regain it (and often extra), ending up in a ‘yo-yo’ dieting situation. In contrast, what this book contains is a genuinely effective, healthy alternative, based in part on the successful methods of Overeaters Anonymous (OA), a fellowship of people who share the compulsion to overeat and the desire for recovery. I believe the ideas outlined in this book form the most holistic and natural path available for abstinence from unhealthy overeating patterns. There are no gimmicks here, just a practical, live-able system of nutritional healing. What’s more, this path does not chain you to endless diet club sessions and expenditures, nor is it funded by any multi-national pharmaceutical company offering to slim you down with expensive chemicals - there is no big business behind this - it is just simple and natural.

I wish to stress at this point also that my suggestions combine the notion of abstinence from overeating with the choice of a raw food lifestyle, *free from extremism*. The aim here is simply towards better health for the current compulsive overeater, not towards any ‘raw-ligion’ or extreme raw food ‘perfectionism’ and this book contains no demand that you must become 100% raw, now or ever, or indeed do anything that does not feel comfortable to you. I believe it is essential to take things at your own pace, one day at a time, in a way that is manageable for you. In this way, you can hope to avoid stressing yourself into binge-eating or feelings of hopelessness or failure. However, to really experience a rewarding transformation on this path, I suggest you will need to adjust your food intake to start with to somewhere between at least 50-80% raw food. This is very much about a new beginning, real changes and real hopes for a more natural and healthy future. I am living proof that this can work.

I have tried to include information here about all the practical things *I* would have liked to have known back at the start of my own journey, so that others can benefit from my trials, mistakes and research. So, if you are an overweight or obese overeater who wants to reclaim your health, I believe that by reading this material, you are taking a very positive step forward on the path to your healing. I hope that you find plenty here to help you on your way. Good luck.

‘I am not a teacher, but an awakener’ - Robert Frost.

Update Disclaimer

The ideas and work presented in this e-book represent my current views on how best to go raw for weight loss and abstinence from overeating. This is an evolving process and while I would hope for this e-book to be seen as a complete and important piece of work in its own right, there may well also be updates in the future. Details of any updates will be posted to the website www.rawreform.com, so stay in touch...

ACKNOWLEDGING AND ACCEPTING

I feel the first stage for overweight and obese overeaters of learning HOW to go raw involves the essential factor of acknowledging and accepting our current condition. We can only really hope to start changing our self-destructive patterns if we know what those patterns are and are willing to work on them. This begins with acknowledging that our relationship with food is not very healthy – we are living with an eating disorder known as compulsive overeating – which many people find initially difficult to understand or accept.

com·pul·sion *n.*

‘An irresistible impulse to act, regardless of the rationality of the motivation’

(Definition from www.dictionary.com)

Compulsive behaviour is not logical – it is something we do in spite of ourselves, our ‘willpower’ or any ‘good intentions’ we may have. For compulsive overeaters, this applies not only to what and how much we eat, but also the ways in which we try to control our food, for example, eating in secret or when we are not hungry, bingeing then purging or alternating between overeating and starvation on crash diets.

Addiction: ‘any process used to avoid or take away intolerable reality’

Pia Mellody

Compulsive overeating is an addiction and just like other addicts, overeaters can display every symptom of addiction – obsession, compulsion, denial, increasing tolerance to their drug, withdrawal syndromes and cravings. Unlike many other addicts, the compulsive overeater usually has their addiction triggered at a very young age, with the introduction of certain types of highly refined starchy, sugary and fatty foods. This is therefore a deeply ingrained addictive pattern for many, with strong emotional associations of comfort and security.

The body and mind of the overeater react differently to foods than the body and mind of a normal eater. We tend to see life in terms of the next opportunity to eat and our thoughts are dominated by food; secret snacks, broken promises to ‘never eat like that again’ and the inability to ‘just have one’ all characterise the compulsive overeater’s behaviour. We may provide many different excuses for

overeating – because we’re happy, or sad, to reward or comfort ourselves, because something is offered for free or because we just can’t bear to see leftovers go to waste. Whatever the reasons we may give, the outcome is the same - we are eating foods for reasons other than physical necessity, leading to sorrow, weight gain and continued suffering. Food and mood are intimately linked for overeaters – a fact that seems to be grossly overlooked by most mainstream health workers, whose standard advice of ‘just eat less and exercise more’ fails to acknowledge or aid with any deeper issues of attachment to food experienced by overeaters. Unfortunately, overeating is rarely taken seriously as an addiction and instead, people are re-directed to diet clubs, obesity surgeons and health spas. Many overeaters develop morbid obesity and other serious health problems as a physical result of overloading our bodies daily with excessive amounts of food. It is important to understand and accept that, in this way, our problems come from our overeating and not the other way around. The excess weight is a symptom of the addiction, not the problem in itself. Undiagnosed food addicts are often willing to try *anything* to lose weight, spending huge amounts of money, time and energy attempting to control what is seen as merely our ‘weight problem’. We simply do not receive the message that the excess weight is a symptom of a compulsive addiction, which is itself a symptom of a bigger spiritual malady and that genuine help *is* available.

Addiction is addiction – only the substances used differ – alcohol, cigarettes, gambling, food, drugs and so on. The key factor underlying all addictive, compulsive behaviour is the loss of connection to the true self – being in a state where you feel pain and emptiness and try to use some substance or behaviour as a kind of crutch to cope with life. If we can acknowledge and accept that our relationship with food is not healthy in this way - that we are using food as an escape route to cope with ‘difficult’, repressed feelings and a sense of not feeling fulfilled or whole – then we are on the way to being able to start changing our patterns and reaching out for better health.

ABSTINENCE

Becoming abstinent from your addiction is the next vital stage to beginning recovery – we need to let go of unhealthy use of the substance of choice - but what does this really mean for overeaters? How can an overeater really experience ‘abstinence’ if that entails being abstinent from food – our source of nourishment? This is indeed the conundrum of the overeater; the situation is not as black and white as for, say, the alcoholic, where 100% abstinence from alcohol is an essential part of recovery. We cannot

be 100% abstinent from food, so abstinence for overeaters is very much a personal affair – each individual knows honestly what is or isn't a trigger food for them to binge and can identify which irrational behaviours concerning food need to be addressed. In this way, each individual can compile their own eating plan based on avoiding those behaviours and triggers (typically, starchy, sweet, highly refined foods such as flour and sugar), to help them refrain from overeating. By learning to eat according to our physical needs rather than emotional reasons, we stop seeking comfort in food, gain freedom from the addictive patterns we have learnt to hold ourselves down with and start to see our real selves emerge instead. We learn to eat less and enjoy living more. This is not a temporary solution or a diet that we go 'on' with the view to coming 'off' again at some point – this is a new way of life. So, before we can do anything else in recovery, we have to put the food down - we have to get abstinent.

The raw lifestyle can be highly beneficial for obese overeaters as a way of becoming abstinent. One of the primary effects a diet rich in raw foods has is fast, dramatic and (if the lifestyle is sustained) permanent weight loss. The body goes through an incredible transformation as toxins, including fats, that have accumulated over a great number of years are finally cleared out in a massive detoxing process. The body always works towards health, so when it suddenly begins to receive a wealth of enzyme and nutrient rich food with which to clean and cure itself, it naturally seizes the opportunity to become much healthier, very quickly. In this way, obese overeaters choosing this form of abstinence can expect rapid, healing weight loss and very healthy physical recovery. This is probably the fastest, most natural and simple path to sustained weight loss available.

ACTION

When is it best to begin?

As the saying goes 'There's no time like the present'. All the information you need to begin is here at your disposal, so if you feel like this is the right thing for you, don't delay – get started immediately. Try not to fool yourself that you have too many other pressures in your life right now to focus on recovery, or that it will be too hard for your spouse and children, or that it will be easier to start next week/month/year and so on. How many times have we sold ourselves ideas like that in the past and in doing so, stayed stuck? This is an opportunity to reach out for a very genuine path of recovery and to change your life for the better, one day at a time. Every day you stay stuck in overeating patterns is another day without recovery and your health and life are very literally at stake. By stopping your

compulsive eating and choosing raw abstinence, you will automatically find that those other ‘pressures’ in your life will suddenly become easier to cope with, you’ll feel better about yourself and will have more energy. You will be giving yourself an extraordinarily beneficial gift, so why delay?

How do you start?

One of the best ways to start is to go back to the beginning and take an honest and courageous look at our eating history. We need to understand clearly our personal relationship with food, from childhood to the present, to be able to begin to formulate a new set of healthy eating habits that are meaningful for us. We can ask ourselves all kind of questions – when did I start overeating? What were the circumstances around me at that time? How did I feel during and after overeating? What was it that I overate? What do I overeat now? When do I overeat now? What foods do I crave? Writing down our answers to these kinds of questions and talking about it with another can often make things about our eating habits much clearer for us. We can use this process to truly come to terms with the idea that our relationship with food is not healthy – rather than using it as fuel for our physical bodies, we are heavily involved with it on emotional levels.

My process of taking a look at my eating history began with writing out my background story for the RawReform website. I found it a very enlightening process, as I had been living in such a bubble of denial for so many years, I’d really never taken much notice of my eating habits. Having everything set out before me on paper was a real eye-opener. I saw that my overeating had started after I began to gain weight as a result of my underactive thyroid – I used excessive food to cover over my feelings of shame at being so big, though of course, this approach ironically just contributed more to my overweight problem. I was in the grip of this vicious circle of dependency from my early teens. I used to binge on packet after packet of processed cheese triangles, crisps (potato chips) and chocolate bars, washed down with litres of fizzy orange drinks. I lived in denial, believing that somehow it didn’t really matter what I ate or how much, as long as I was ‘happy’. Yet in honesty, I really didn’t know what true happiness was back then - I just associated eating huge amounts and feeling full with happiness, satisfaction and safety. This pattern continued and evolved, un-abated, for a decade or so, until the physical and emotional toll of living this way started to be too much and my process of change began.

TASK 1: Examining your past

Commit to spending some time – just half an hour or so at first, if that’s all you feel you can manage – to take an honest and searching look at your personal history and patterns with food, so that you know something about exactly which destructive behaviours you are dealing with when going into abstinence. You can use the questions in the text above as guidelines for your writing.

(N.B. you might like to use a new, clean notebook for the writing tasks in this e-book. Honouring your new lifestyle in this way can feel very nurturing and provides a clear place to keep your notes together.)

What *won't* you be eating?

The next important step is to write a list of your personal ‘trigger’ foods – the things you have a strong preference for, that set off cravings and overeating patterns. These are the foods we ‘can’t’ eat – or rather, need to put down for recovery - and every person’s list will be different. The list may include things we eat in large quantities, the things we start eating and just can’t seem to stop, things we eat to the exclusion of other foods, eat in secret after hoarding and hiding them from others, or turn to in celebration, sorrow or boredom. They tend to be refined foods that are sugary, starchy or fatty, high in calories and low in nutritional value. We need to write our trigger lists very honestly in order to know exactly what it is that we have to ‘put down’ to be able to become abstinent in a way that is meaningful for us. This list can be as specific as you choose, e.g. every different type of chocolate bar that you crave, or you could simply list ‘chocolate’ – whatever feels right to you, in order to be completely clear about your own triggers.

Here is an invented, example trigger list (this has a particularly British bias, so some terms may be unfamiliar for non-British readers, but hopefully the overall idea of what a food list might contain is conveyed):

Chocolate (Curly-Wurllys, Dime bars, king-size Snickers and Boosts)

Sweets (liquorice allsorts, fruit jellies, toffees, marshmallows)

Biscuits (Chocolate Hob-Nobs, bourbons, chocolate digestives)

Cakes (Carrot cake, mum’s homemade cheesecake, chocolate swiss roll)

Ice cream (especially caramel and chocolate flavour)

Cocoa Puffs cereal

Fizzy drinks, especially colas

Crisps – salt and vinegar, cheese puffs, space raiders

Gouda cheese, soft cheese

Baguette bread, white toast

Bacon and fried egg sandwiches

Double cream

Junk food – Pizza, hamburgers, doner kebabs, chips, chicken nuggets, chicken curry, hot dogs.

Roast potatoes

Mayonnaise

Once we have completed a thorough list such as this, we examine it to see if we can identify common, key ingredients contained in the listed foods that trigger our overeating, which aren't found in other foods not listed.

In the list above for example, we can safely assume that the person is a sugar addict, as many items they cite are sugary, such as chocolates, sweets, cakes and cocoa puffs cereal. It is also likely that wheat is a problem food for them, as many items, such as breads, pizza, cakes, biscuits and so on, all contain wheat. These are the two most commonly occurring problem foods for all overeaters and as such are definitely best avoided. This person also seems to have problems with fatty, fried and processed foods, especially fatty meats found in junk foods. This overeater has now not only identified a full list of specific things they need to 'put down', but they also know that they must avoid *all* things that contain sugar, wheat and fatty, fried produce if they want to break up their overeating patterns. This also includes things not on the list, that the overeater does not even necessarily like, but which contain the trigger ingredients – triggering the addiction with a taste of something you're not fond of is simply a path back to the trigger foods you did enjoy. The most common approach to dealing with trigger foods is therefore to *completely* eliminate all products that contain trigger ingredients, such as sugar and wheat in this example, but some people also elect to exclude just those foods where triggers are listed in the first four ingredients. (This is because ingredients are listed on packets in descending order by volume, so the first ingredients comprise the largest amount of a product.)

Another crucial piece of guidance about what *not* to eat when embarking on this lifestyle is to avoid large amounts of any sugars at all, including syrups, fresh and dried fruits. Many people begin to eat a lot of very sweet dried fruits such as dates and figs for example when getting into raw and this can be difficult for your body in terms of both blood sugar levels and also intestinal flora health. Eating large

amounts of fruits daily can leave you feeling spaced out on sugars and will fuel the growth of ‘unfriendly’ flora such as candida in your intestines, leading to many health problems – just because something is raw, it doesn’t mean it is good to eat it daily. This is a very common pitfall among people going raw and is especially important for overeaters to be aware of, as we tend to have poor intestinal health, which can quickly become aggravated by a diet high in concentrated sugars. We need to aim for a much more balanced and grounded intake of foods, including an abundance of green vegetables and plenty of foods rich in essential fats (e.g. nuts, seeds, avocados), to nourish and sustain the body.

When I went raw, I had never even acknowledged my compulsive overeating, much less chosen to do recovery work on it – I just went blindly into a kind of self-styled raw abstinence, without any support or understanding of my patterns. Later I was surprised and dismayed when I started to ‘pick up’ the old junk foods I thought I’d kissed goodbye to forever, like chocolates, cakes and ice cream. I didn’t understand how this could be happening. Now I can look back and see clearly what was happening – with no understanding of my overeating condition and having done no foundation work, such as that suggested here, to provide a solid base for recovery, I’d been relying on my shaky willpower alone to stay raw and away from harmful foods. Overeating is a strong, progressive addiction and when I took the first bite again of the sugary processed foods that are so central for me to food addiction, things easily and quickly spiralled out of control. It is only through learning about and acknowledging my addiction that I have been able to create a raw lifestyle for myself that actually works to keep me abstinent, one day at a time.

TASK 2: Trigger List

Write out your own personal trigger list, right now – don’t procrastinate this important step. It will only take a few minutes and then you will have a good overview of your own eating habits. You will see clearly who your ‘enemies’ are - all the foods that you use to stay hooked into overeating. These are the things that you need to put down. This list will be a valuable tool over the weeks and months to come – refer back to it when necessary to remind yourself which foods you cannot handle, if you feel your boundaries are becoming blurred.

How do you know how much to eat and when?

A plan of eating is an individual guide to nourishing foods in appropriate portions, which we can use to learn to deal with food in a calm, balanced and rational way. Drawing on what we have learnt about our

patterns so far, we create a simple personal plan of what, when and how much to eat, then follow that plan, one meal at a time, one day at a time. From the personal history and trigger list we have already created, we know which behaviours, foods and key ingredients we need to exclude completely from our plan of eating. Then we consider on a day-to-day basis how we are going to structure our eating plan. We eat exactly what we state on our food plan for the day - nothing more and nothing less. We stop trying to rely on our shaky willpower and resolutions – ‘I’ll just have one...’ - to make good decisions and develop instead a sensible plan, in advance. We learn to focus on eating to fulfill our physical needs rather than our emotions.

The issue of how much we need to eat and when depends on the individual in question, as obviously our individual calorific requirements are all different, depending on age, height, gender, activity level and so on. We need to learn about average portion sizes and as we have unclear boundaries around food, it is highly beneficial to enlist the help of another recovering overeater, especially in the beginning, to help us set up guidelines for our food plan of how much we are going to eat and when. (See also the box below containing a rough guide to appropriate portions.) There can be a fine line between adhering to a plan and being a rigid perfectionist, so it’s very important in the beginning to get things clear for ourselves – after that we just improve with practice.

In general, eating behaviours to definitely steer clear of when making a plan are those which ‘normal’ eaters find abnormal, such as eating something you don’t really want or need just because it is free or someone has made it for you, comfort eating when unhappy, eating at certain times or in certain situations even if you are not hungry, feeling compelled to finish everything on your plate (and everyone else’s), eating until you’re completely stuffed or eating food very fast and finishing long before everyone else. A pre-decided plan of eating will help you avoid many of these behaviours – for example, if, when visiting a friend, you find yourself being offered some of your favourite ice cream, which is definitely on your trigger list and definitely *not* on your food plan, you can remind yourself of the fact that today, that food was not on your plan and politely refuse. A plan brings relief from such day-to-day concerns about food. We make the plan, then simply follow it, one meal at a time and it frees up so much energy that we would normally expend thinking about food.

Many people who go raw report being able to eat as much as they want, whenever they want, as long as it’s raw and still lose weight easily. For overeaters, however, this is not a healthy approach as it keeps us locked into obsessive patterns, filling the body with much more produce than is required to function optimally. It may seem harmless for example to have a strawberry ‘binge’ in summer time, as it’s

‘only’ berries, right? While the physical affects may not be dramatic in the same way as binging on something like ice-cream, the mental, emotional and spiritual affects can be identical. As long as we are eating compulsively, we are in the addiction, whether it’s berries or biscuits and if we remain in such patterns, we can jeopardise our recovery, even if we are eating very high raw. This is overeating behaviour and something to let go of; trying to justify eating excessive amounts of food ‘because it’s raw’, sets us up for trouble with other foods as and when we eat them, as we are still in addictive patterns. On the other hand, there is a big difference between a desire to eat large quantities of something, driven only by compulsion and a genuine call from the body for a certain food for nourishment and it can be confusing at first to understand that difference. Typically, the more raw we eat, the more instinctual our eating becomes, responding to our body’s needs – we may feel a huge pull towards a certain type of food – grapes for example - then later discover that they contain a high quantity of a vitamin that our body required at that time. If our desire to eat large quantities of grapes has come from a genuine need like this, the pull towards that food falls away when the need is satisfied. This does not tend to be the case, however, if we are eating for compulsive reasons, but it may take some time to recognise that difference. Paying close attention to any such patterns in your eating plan and avoiding large quantities of food as a general rule helps us to eat in a more balanced way.

There are various strategies for making a food plan and you will need to decide what works best for you. Some people need to have things very clear for themselves and will weigh every individual item of food to make sure they are eating standard portions. Others use more general rules, such as eating three nutritious meals a day, with no snacks in-between, whereas some may plan snacks. Some may simply plan to not have any junk food, to only eat one plateful of food at each meal and nothing more or to pace out meals so that there are at least four hours between feeds. Some people use the strategy of always trying to leave something behind on the plate, or simply stopping when they feel full. Whatever strategy you try, write your plan out daily, either the night before, or first thing upon rising in the morning and refer to it regularly. Many overeaters find that sharing their plan daily with another overeater helps to strengthen their commitment. Finding what works best for you can take a while in the beginning, so be patient with adjusting to the changes and remember to be honest with yourself and others. Secrecy is a trademark of this condition – foster and share your honesty.

Changes in your plan may occur throughout abstinence - it is not set in stone - and changing things does not necessarily mean a ‘break’ of abstinence, as long as you are not eating compulsively. Alterations to our plans of eating are common and are not something to be overly concerned about, as

long as you are being honest. Changes may be necessary as you undergo weight loss or other alterations in your body, as you identify new triggers that need to be eliminated or simply gain more experience of what works for you. Eating raw also tends to encourage changes, as our eating patterns become ever more intuitive and we respond to the body's genuine requirements, free from the cloudy influence of toxic processed foods.

When I first went into abstinence, I found it strange to use a plan of eating. I had never been on structured diets and wasn't used to so much attention being paid to the details of my consumption – I'd always just eaten whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted, both before and after going raw. I discovered that this attention was necessary though, to learn about what worked for me and I needed to make quite a few adjustments to my food plan during my first week or so of abstinence. I learnt that this was just fine and a very normal part of learning how much I need to eat and when. Now my food plan has levelled out at about three 'meals' a day and four 'snacks' in-between – this may sound excessive to some, but for me, this is what works. I tend to eat 'breakfast' and 'lunch' a few hours apart, with lunch being my biggest meal of the day. I find this plan gives me a big energy boost early in the day, so I can keep going until evening, just topping up with simple snacks during the afternoons. My metabolism is a little slow due to my underactive thyroid condition, so eating the standard three big meals a day for example just doesn't work for me. It is hard for my body to process large amounts of food – instead I need to eat lightly but frequently, to keep my metabolism ticking over, but not overloaded.

Example Food Plan

Here is one example of what the structure of a high-raw daily food plan might look like:

Breakfast: one bowl of raw muesli (apple, banana, seeds, sultanas, almond milk)

Snack: 1 piece of fruit

Lunch: Three nori rolls with sunflower pate, vegetables and ginger

Snacks: Smoothie made with fruit and greens; handful of nuts

Dinner: Big bowl of salad with avocado dressing

Snack: Green juice

Rough guide to appropriate portion sizes, for both raw and non-raw items:

- Gluten-free breakfast cereal: six tablespoons or a medium bowl
- Starches: 4oz/120g steamed starchy veg, jacket potato the size of a fist, 3oz/90g cooked grain
- Cooked gluten-free pasta or noodles: one medium mug-full or six heaped tablespoons - the size of two small fists
- Vegetables: 3oz/90g non-starchy vegetables, glass of fresh veggie juice, a cereal bowl of salad, etc.
- Fruit: half a large grapefruit, a large apple, a cup of berries, 2 satsumas, 150ml glass of fresh juice, one tablespoon dried fruit, etc.
- Nuts/seeds: 30g or two tablespoons - a (non-bulging) handful/two shot glasses
- Fats: half a large avocado, ½ tablespoon of olive oil, handful of olives

Why use a plan of eating?

In recovery, we are learning to face life without seeking comfort in food and a plan of eating which gives us abstinence from compulsive overeating is key to that recovery. With a plan, we find the amount of time we spend thinking about food decreases dramatically – we write it down, share it with another if possible, then forget about it until it is time to eat. Free from obsessing about food, we can devote a much clearer head to working more productively on things inside us that need some changing. When we overeaters are ‘in the food’, eating is our top priority in life and it can feel like everything else is just an inconvenient obstacle – this is a truly crazy-making way to live, directing so much of our energy, time and thought towards food. Any overeater who has, for example, stood in a party pretending to listen to someone while eyeing the buffet table and silently waiting for the opportunity to slip away for yet another feed will understand the relief that abstinence from such insanity can bring. Therefore, despite what our minds may try to tell us, a plan of eating is not a loss of freedom, rather it leads us *to* freedom. With a plan of eating, we can let go of our old behaviour that did not work and try a new approach.

This new approach also involves taking responsibility for our actions concerning food – *we* decide and write down what we are going to consume. It is *us* who chooses which foods to pick up and put into our bodies - nobody else - and with a plan of eating we become accountable. There is no room here for blaming other people or situations for what we eat, or trying to manipulate others – we have our plan written out before us and if we don’t choose to follow that plan, it is our own choice and not due to anybody else.

By following the guidance given here and doing the simple writing tasks, you can form a really solid base for your recovery to refer back to whenever you feel the need. If you start to feel unsure about your abstinence for example or as if you're slipping towards old habits, you can take out your writing and reconnect with your personal truth about your eating habits and trigger foods. Instead of going on some standard diet, or rushing into going raw without any preparation, we do a little foundation work to create focus and awareness of where we are coming from, then get on with our new lifestyle – it is a very grounded approach.

Real recovery work is about *action*, not knowledge – you can read and learn and know lots of things about how to better handle compulsive overeating or eat raw, but without actually putting anything into action, without making and committing to a plan, that knowledge is worth very little.

*I was so resistant about making a plan of eating in the beginning. I thought 'I don't need some tedious daily list of what to eat'. I found the idea of deciding beforehand exactly what I was going to eat that day deeply dull and restrictive. I didn't want to live like that, I wanted freedom of choice – or at least that's the idea my overeating mind was trying to sell me. However, I also didn't want to compulsively overeat anymore and this was the solution I could see, so I tried it; one day at a time I wrote down what I was going to eat that day, shared it with another person and stuck to it. When I walked past stands handing out free samples in supermarkets, I reminded myself that I had not put that free sample of cake on my food list today and walked on; when I was confronted with luxurious buffets of delicious raw foods at pot-luck gatherings, I reminded myself of my commitment to eat just one plate of food and nothing more, and so on. It also helps me to organise my day better, as when I write my list first thing in the morning, I can see if there is something I need to prepare, such as removing something from the freezer for later or packing something up to take with me somewhere. Being prepared like this prevents me from getting into situations where I'm not sure what to eat and make 'bad' decisions, based on shaky willpower. I also came to realise that for me, the plan does not have to be **totally** rigid – for example, as a mid-morning snack, I may write down 'piece of fruit' and then choose when the time comes which specific fruit to have – I don't have to outline every single item and can enjoy this little bit of flexibility. Simply put, for me, a plan of eating works, to keep me abstinent from overeating, one day at a time. I am equally surprised and delighted by this and no longer view my plan as some tedious yardstick I have to live up to, but rather a genuinely beneficial tool of recovery.*

TASK 3: Making a Plan of Eating

Once you have your eating history/patterns written out and your trigger list, begin to compile a daily plan of eating for yourself, one day at a time. Begin today. Using the guidelines for portion sizes, write down exactly what you are going to eat today, share the plan with another person in recovery if possible and then consume only those things you have decided upon, one meal at a time. Try not to concern yourself with dramatic thoughts of doing this ‘forever’ – we are only thinking about today – just for today, try to eat only those things you have listed for yourself. If, by the end of the day you find you have remained true to your plan of eating, then congratulations – you’ve just had your first clean day of abstinence. Then try again tomorrow...and the next day...and the next...

Will you be hungry?

If you have been used to eating two or three plates of food per meal rather than one, you may find the changes difficult at first and you may experience hunger between meals. Understand that this is a natural process while your stomach is adapting to smaller portions – the stomach is a muscular organ that expands and shrinks in line with the quantities of food it receives and so will slowly deflate to its normal size when you cease over-filling it. As your stomach becomes accustomed to smaller amounts, you will gradually come to feel just as full on one plate as you used to on two or three. It is important to realise that hunger is a normal bodily signal, not something to be feared – it is good to feel natural hunger prior to eating – it means that you are ready for food. With abstinence, we become willing to eat according to *need* and not *greed*. Yet as overeaters, one of our biggest fears is hunger – food has been our lifeline for stuffing down our problems all these years and the thought of experiencing hunger, however natural, tends to be grim to us. If you are making the move from a standard western diet to high-raw, in the beginning you will probably need more food than you will further into raw foodism, as your nutrient assimilation will not yet be so good. Perhaps this will mean that you begin with eating four high-raw meals a day with one snack of dried fruits in between or something similar. This will possibly change later – there is no doctrine about what, when or how much you eat for recovery, it all just depends on your own honesty about what is enough or too much for you, listening to your body’s requirements.

If you feel the desire to eat outside of your planned meals, you may wonder how you can know whether it is your body requiring nutrition or your mind trying to talk you into overeating. Examine such situations with care – are you genuinely hungry? When did you last eat? What is it that you desire to

eat now? Often you will find that waiting an hour or so is a good way to tell which voice was ‘speaking’ to you – if your hunger has dissipated, you can assume it was your overeating condition speaking. If the hunger has intensified, however, you are most probably genuinely hungry and may need to take some action – when is your next planned meal? Can you wait until then? If not, you may need to ‘break’ your abstinence in a small way by adding in an item such as an extra piece of fruit and to possibly re-consider the content or structure of your food plan, to ensure you are eating enough and at the right times for you. In the beginning, learning to make such adjustments to your food plan is a necessary part of the process to create a plan that works, especially when making a big switch in eating style, as from standard western cuisine to a raw lifestyle.

During my first week or so of abstinence with my plan of eating, I often made plans for the day which turned out to be inadequate and I would find myself on the phone to a fellow overeater by early evening, feeling desperately hungry. We always talked things through and made the necessary adjustments until I had a plan that ensured I was getting enough food, spaced out at intervals my body could handle, so that I did not end up uncomfortably hungry - though genuine hunger is now definitely something I appreciate feeling prior to eating.

Do you have to be vegetarian or vegan?

“Nothing will benefit human health and increase chances of survival for life on earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet.” Albert Einstein

I wish to make it clear that to experience successful weight loss and relief from overeating habits by eating a high raw diet, you do not *HAVE* to be vegetarian or vegan. It is, however, highly recommended that you at least cut down on your intake of animal products and take an honest look in your trigger list at the kinds of animal products (if any) that you cannot handle – usually fatty, salty, processed foods like sausages and hamburgers and sweetened items like ice cream and cream cakes. Important research supporting the case for a diet free from animal products comes from Dr T. Campbell, author of ‘The China Study’ – also referred to as ‘The most comprehensive study of nutrition ever conducted’, spanning 35 years of research and data from over 60 countries. Dr. Campbell shows that people who eat the most animal-based food get the most chronic disease – even relatively small intakes are associated with adverse effects. He concludes that people who eat just plant-based foods are the

healthiest and tend to avoid chronic disease. This is real nutritional healing.

There are of course also *raw* animal products available – sushi is well-known and liked by some, dried fish is popular in some places and some people love the taste of raw meats. Others consume raw eggs for the protein or find sources of good quality, unpasteurised raw dairy, sheep or goat-milk products from local farmers. These are all possible options to try, if you feel the need or desire. In the colder, northern countries and regions, it can be beneficial for people to eat oily fish a couple of times a week, especially in winter, whereas in warmer environments, this is not really necessary and a vegan diet tends to be sufficient. If you do eat fish, try to buy it fresh and ensure it is wild, rather than farm-reared.

The reasons for going vegetarian or vegan however, are many and various. Physiologically, humans aren't really made to be meat-eaters - we don't have canine teeth for ripping flesh, we have grinding teeth for nuts and leaves and our intestines aren't short like a meat-eating animal's - they are very long, so when we eat meat, it takes a long time to digest and can putrefy and stick in the colon. I find the mass-marketing of dairy products a very strange affair – the idea that for good health one species needs to consume the fluid produced to suckle the young of another species represents, to me, a very distorted view on health. Though dairy is sold to us as an ‘essential’ source of calcium and other nutrients, it has been shown that consumption of dairy actually contributes to conditions such as osteoarthritis, as the kind of calcium it contains cannot be broken down by humans and the body is forced to leach calcium from other sources, like bone marrow, to process the dairy products. The protein ‘casein’, a major component of dairy produce, has also been shown in ‘The China Study’ to be a primary factor in the promotion of cancer in humans, whereas plant-based proteins do not promote cancer, even when ingested in large quantities.

Furthermore, dairy and meat products are heavy, dense foods, containing concentrated amounts of proteins and fats, produced from all the plant-based matter that the animal processes. Meat and dairy contain significant amounts of saturated fats – the kinds of fats which your body does not require to function and that lead to problems such as digestive disorders, blocked arteries, heart disease and high blood pressure. Vegetarians and vegans have much less risk of heart disease, are less likely to develop cancer and most find they automatically lose some excess weight. Vegans also avoid animal-produce related diseases like BSE, salmonella and food poisoning. Modern intensive farming methods, which emphasise the use of antibiotics, growth hormones and pesticide dips, are leading to more and more safety concerns about meat-eating. Going vegan supports animal welfare - animals are often farmed in

appalling conditions - by not using animal products, you don't support that industry. It's also an environmentally sound choice: animal farming is resource intensive - 25% of the earth's surface is used for cattle grazing, causing big environmental problems like desertification. A vegan requires only 1/8th of the land a meat-eater needs to produce an adequate food supply. Veganism is also often considered a more spiritual path, as you begin to feel more in tune with nature.

I'm basically vegan – the only animal product I have eaten while raw is some occasional fish, during the winter months in Iceland. Other animal products that I used to consume regularly however have no appeal to me now and I don't find it difficult to avoid them. The thought of eggs for instance has repulsed me since someone described them as 'chickens' periods' to me some years ago and although I used to love milk and cheese, I now find them equally repulsive when I consider cow's milk is designed to nourish a calf, not a human. I lost interest in meat long ago - in fact I was always picky about it and the less it resembled a piece of animal, the better. As for raw animal products, these things really don't appeal to me, especially when I consider the possible health risks like contaminated bovine sources or salmonella. I would never have eaten animal products raw even when I did eat meat, eggs and dairy, but some people love these foods and seem to do well on them, combined with a high percentage of plant-based raw foods.

How raw do you need to be to begin?

Once you have identified the trigger foods you cannot touch and have eliminated them from your diet, you stand on the threshold of making a new and highly positive change to your eating pattern: instead of choosing to eliminate the trigger foods and upping other 'standard' foods that you do not find as problematic, now is the time to make a conscious decision to move over to a high percentage of fresh, raw foods in your diet. To use the example food list we saw above, if this particular overeater were to go into a standard kind of abstinence, they would cut out all these trigger foods and then perhaps decide to have for instance porridge instead of cocoa puffs, lean pork steak instead of a hamburger and skimmed milk instead of double cream. This is already likely to be a great improvement for the overeater both in terms of reducing the amount of fats, sugars and other toxins they consume and also by helping them to not overeat by avoiding their trigger foods. With a high-raw form of abstinence, the overeater would take these healthy adjustments a step further by including much more fresh, live, raw food into their new eating plan. For example, they may choose to replace the cocoa puffs with a fresh fruit salad, the hamburger with a homemade raw nut burger and the double cream with almond milk.

To a newcomer this may sound like far too much, too soon and indeed it may be too much for some to dive headfirst into being very high raw – there may be new skills to learn such as preparing your own nut milk, new equipment to obtain, such as a blender and new foods to acquaint yourself with. If you feel this way, you are advised to begin raw abstinence at 50% raw and to simply build up your raw intake from there at your own pace, as you become more familiar with this way of life. From starting with just 50% raw (by weight, not volume), you should begin to notice the difference to the way you feel and look – remember that this is about long-term, realistic changes to your eating habits and health, not about finding a magic solution or being ‘perfect’ at being raw, so take things at a pace that’s comfortable for you. If, on the other hand, you feel inspired about raw eating and are ready to jump in to a higher percentage raw abstinence, then feel free to take that path, but be aware that making a huge and dramatic change from a very unhealthy way of eating to a very high raw diet can be extremely demanding on your body in terms of detoxification and you may experience a ‘healing crisis’ if you push things too far, too fast. Remember that your body stores many toxins in fatty tissue, so the faster the fat is broken down, the faster the toxins are released into your system and too many toxins released too quickly can cause a lot of discomfort. Going 100% raw has many health benefits, including a clearer system, increased assimilation and greater energy and if you are certain that this is what you want to do, then give it a try, but just remember to be realistic and that we are looking for long-term effective lifestyle changes here, not attempts at quick, dramatic fixes.

Try to start with baby steps. Our focus is very much on what is attainable for us as obese overeaters to reclaim better health and lose weight, not creating perfectionistic ideals that we cannot sustain. Ultimately, the most important message here is to EAT MORE RAW – it doesn’t matter if you begin at 50, 60 or 70%, as long as you are eating more raw than you used to, and more raw foods than dead, cooked foods (or at least equal amounts of each). The more raw foods you ingest compared to cooked, the more opportunity you are giving your body to sweep out the cooked toxins and regain health. The choice is yours, but the minimum level I would suggest starting at is 50% raw.

At the beginning of my raw journey, I threw myself head-first into 100% raw in my typical extreme style and after a week of severe detox symptoms – a definite case of healing crisis - I realised that perhaps for me and my morbidly obese body, this was a little too fast. My body was jam-packed full of a lifetime of toxins and the sudden leap from a standard western junk-food diet to 100% raw overnight was too much for me. Instead, I cut back to about 70% raw and stayed at roughly that level throughout my first year of dramatic weight loss, during which time I lost about 7½ stone (105lbs/47kg).

What equipment are you going to need?

Going into raw abstinence can seem like a big step if you feel you need to get lots of new kitchen equipment, some of which, like a ‘Saladeco spiral slicer’ you may have never even heard of before. Don’t panic. Remember that this is ultimately all about simplifying – you do not have to have a kitchen bursting with shiny new toys to be able to eat raw healthily. At the same time, many people are not thrilled by the idea of eating plain salads for every meal, so having a few appliances to make more exciting meals can help you to make an easier transition from cooked to raw. Below is an ‘ideal’ list of what a well-equipped raw food kitchen could contain – you may not currently own any of these things, some you may never want and others you may never afford. Keep in mind that you probably didn’t acquire all the standard equipment in your ‘cooked’ kitchen, like the steamer, microwave, sandwich toaster and bread-maker overnight and that this is no different. You are preparing for a new lifestyle, not a fad, so take things slowly if you need to – start with cheaper items if you can’t afford big appliances now and don’t fret if it takes time to complete your raw kitchen.

I still don’t have a lot of things on this list and for the first couple of years I had scant access to even basics like a food processor, yet I ate high raw and lost weight easily and healthily.

Accessories

Vegetable peeler
Apple corer
Cutting board
Spatula
Salad spinner
Peppermill
Scrubbing brush for fresh produce
Melon baller/ice cream scoop
Colander
Strainer
Grater
Mandoline (for thinly slicing vegetables)
Zester (for citrus fruits)
Garlic press
Good set of sharp knives
Citrus juicer
Sprouting lids

Appliances

Food processor – for cutting, chopping, making pates, soups, desserts and so on. Approx. cost for Magimix: £150, \$300.
Blender – for smoothies, creams, sauces, soups. Simple models from £30, \$60. A high-powered blender, e.g. Vitamix will cost approx. £400, \$800.
Dehydrator – for crackers, fruit bars, cookies, veggie crisps etc. A good model like an Excaliber will cost about £250, \$500.
Juicer - for fruits/veg, wheatgrass, citrus, etc. Simple model approx. £40, \$80. More professional model (e.g. Matstone) will cost from £150, \$300 upwards.
Hand Blender – for quick blending of soups/sauces etc. Approx. £20, \$40.

Mason jars

Timer

Thermometer

Bamboo rolling mat for nori

Automatic sprouter – for growing your own sprouts, wheatgrass and greens.

Approx. £45-60, \$90-120.

Nut/coffee grinder – for grinding spices, seeds, nuts. Approx. £10, \$20.

Saladeco/spiral slicer – for creating pasta/noodles from fresh vegetables.

Approx. £25, £50.

Water purifier – from around £15, \$30 for simple jug models to hundreds of £/\$ for a complete reverse osmosis system.

‘Cucina’ blender– a cleverly designed blender with a divided filter chamber, which keeps the ‘pulp’ separate from the liquid when making nut milks for example. Approx. £30, \$60.

In my opinion, the food processor and blender are the most important appliances to begin a raw kitchen and as the blender tends to be the most versatile and commonly used piece of raw kitchen equipment, many people start out with that and build up from there. I have tended to list prices for high-quality products above, though much cheaper versions of all these appliances are of course available. As with anything, you pay for what you get with these items and in the long-term, it really will pay off to invest in the best quality equipment you can afford. In the meantime though, it is good to know that there are alternative ways to produce interesting foods, even if you don’t have all the above equipment. For example, if you want to grind down flax seeds and don’t have a special nut/coffee grinder, just use the food processor. You can sprout many things without the need for an automatic sprouter – just use glass jars with some muslin/cheesecloth held over the mouth. You can use a standard vegetable peeler to make ribbons of courgette and so on, if you don’t have a spiral slicer. Best of all, you can easily dehydrate foods without a ‘real’ dehydrator, either by leaving things on hot radiators around the home, in or ontop of a normal oven set at a low temperature, in your airing cupboard or by making your own wonderful homemade dehydrator.

(See www.k-clements.fsnet.co.uk/dehydrator.html for information on how to make your own simple dehydrator for a fraction of the price of shop-bought models.)

Which raw foods do you need?

This is naturally going to depend on the types of foods available to you, your personal taste and your budget, but the following is a rough guide to the kinds of basic raw foods you might want to have at hand, listed in no particular order: (N.B. I have grouped foods such as tomatoes, peppers and avocados under ‘vegetables’ - though they are botanically fruits, I consider them more vegetable-like.)

| Vegetables | Fruits | Seeds/beans/grain | Nuts | Herbs/spices | Oils/sauces |
|-------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|-------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Lettuces | Orange | Pumpkin Seeds | Almonds | Sea/herb salt | Cold pressed |
| Salad greens | Grapefruit | Sunflower Seeds | Walnuts | Chilli | extra virgin |
| Spinach | Pineapple | Hemp Seeds | Pecans | powder | olive oil |
| Onion (white, yellow, red) | Pear | Flax Seeds | Brazils | Cayenne | Tamari |
| Chives | Banana | Sesame Seeds | Macadamias | pepper | (wheat-free) |
| Green beans | Mango | Poppy seeds | Cashews | Ginger | Nama Shoyu |
| Peas | Papaya | Alfalfa seeds | Chestnuts | Garlic | Sesame Oil |
| Corn | Lemon | Cress seeds | Pistachios | Cinnamon | Sunflower |
| Radish | Lime | Mustard seeds | Hazelnuts | Vanilla | Oil |
| Celery | Apple | Aduki beans | Coconut | Paprika | Almond Oil |
| Chicory | Durian | Chickpeas | Pine nuts | Pepper | Flax Seed |
| Carrots | Grape | Lentils | | (black, white) | Oil |
| Mushrooms | Plum | Mung Beans | | Cilantro | Tahini |
| Broccoli | Peach | Quinoa | | Fenugreek | Hazelnut |
| Cabbage | Nectarine | Buckwheat | | Celery seed | Butter |
| Cauliflower | Quince | Amaranth | | Parsley | Almond |
| Asparagus | Watermelon | Brown rice | | Coriander | Butter |
| Artichoke | Star fruit | Wild rice | | Cumin | Cashew |
| Seaweeds | Tangerine | Wheat grain | | Basil | Butter |
| Peppers | Guava | (for wheatgrass | | Rosemary | Apple Cider |
| (green, red, yellow) | Kiwi | juice) | | Thyme | Vinegar |
| Fennel | Lychee | | | Oregano | Honey |
| Avocado | Dates | | | Nutmeg | Agave syrup |
| Tomatoes | Raisins | | | Dill | |
| Sun-dried | Prunes | | | Turmeric | |
| Tomatoes | Figs | | | Mint | |
| Olives (green and black) | Cherries | | | Nutritional | |
| Cucumber | Apricot | | | yeast | |
| Sweet Potato | Pomegranate | | | | |
| | Passion fruit | | | | |
| | Cherimoya | | | | |
| | Jack fruit | | | | |

| | |
|---------------|------------|
| Parsnip | Honeydew |
| Beetroot | melon |
| (US:Beets) | Cantaloupe |
| Courgette | Strawberry |
| (US:Zucchini) | Blueberry |
| Aubergine | Blackberry |
| (US:Eggplant) | Raspberry |
| | Persimmon |

Clearly, this list is by no means comprehensive, but it gives a good idea of raw basics, onto which other more exotic items, such as raw cacao beans, goji berries, dried elderberries or brazil nut oil could later be added if desired. You're also not likely to want to rush out and purchase everything on this list for your weekly shopping – there's far too much of it for a start – in the beginning, just concentrate on what you know and like and take it from there, adding in things you're not so familiar with as you feel ready. Try perhaps introducing one or two new items each week, so you don't feel overwhelmed and have time to experiment with each new ingredient. Variety is important in order to maintain interest in your food plan, so be sure to try out new things.

It should hopefully go without saying that it's better to buy organic produce rather than standard fare whenever possible - it may be a bit more expensive, but the health benefits are worth it, both for you and the environment. Buying organic safeguards you and the environment from laboratory-made fertilizers, growth substances, antibiotics, pesticides and all genetic engineering. Organic produce is also far superior in flavour and offers higher nutritional value than conventionally grown produce, which can be very deficient in vitamin and mineral content. If you can't get organic, thoroughly wash or peel fruits and vegetables before use.

I always have some foods from each of the above columns available. To me, greens like lettuces, rocket and spinach have become the central part of my everyday meals (not including breakfast) in the same way that meat used to be the key ingredient for me when I was younger. I used to feel that if a meal didn't contain meat, it wasn't really a whole meal – now I feel that way about salad ingredients and always have some to hand. I feel a strong desire for greens and their magical alkalising properties. I try to buy fruits in season – the difference between freshly picked, ripe seasonal fruits and the unripe, shelf-tired, out of season fare commonly found in supermarkets can be vast.

I find that my general attitude towards food is so vastly different now than before being raw – now I experience a sense of wonder and abundance about all the different types of food there are to enjoy,

whereas I used to have such a limited view of what ‘counted’ as food. It has been an interesting process for me: when I was a meat-eater, I thought salads were ridiculous and couldn’t understand what vegetarians actually ate or why, then when I became veggie myself, I looked back and wondered why I had been eating meat anyway...then as a vegetarian I looked at vegans and couldn’t understand what they were doing – ‘how can they live without cheese? What do they actually eat?’ After becoming a raw vegan myself, I then looked back and felt like I had done myself a great favour removing such things from my diet. Each time, before I crossed over the next boundary, the view from where I was standing didn’t look very enticing, but every time I shifted my patterns, I ended up feeling better for it and as if my options, rather than narrowing, were opening up to reveal new abundance.

Where do you get these foods?

Think local – for your fresh produce, supporting local organic fruit/veg box schemes, buying at farmers markets, greengrocers or even better, producing your own home-grown foods are all good choices in terms of the environment, as less transport of produce is involved. For other items, health food shops and also many supermarkets nowadays stock natural, organic whole-foods and you can also arrange delivery from raw-food specialists, such as Nature’s First Law in North America or Raw Living in the UK. Asian supermarkets are often a great place to find things like uncooked black nori seaweed sheets, fresh herbs and spices and exotic fruits like durian. You may find that whereas you previously bought all your weekly food under one giant supermarket roof, you now choose to visit a few different places to pick up what you want.

What are you going to consume?

For overeaters, this is of course always the ‘big’ question. Other RawReform e-books will explore the answer to this in greater detail, with recipes, meal suggestions and guidance on raw nutrition – here we will cover the basics. The short answer is that the *exact* things eaten will be different for each person, as our bodies are all different and we all have different requirements, triggers and tastes. My key suggestion however, with regard to the content of your food plan is to consume mostly (green) vegetables and foods rich in essential fats (e.g. nuts, seeds, avocados, olives) and keep your intake of sweet foods low, to stay in a good balance. Just because something is raw – like dates for example - it doesn’t automatically mean it is good for you to eat lots of them daily. This is a common pitfall many people make when starting raw – a diet based on many sweet foods causes imbalance.

I highly recommend including at least one green drink into your plan every day – this could take the form of a freshly made green vegetable juice, a green smoothie (see Recipes below) or simply some green powder such as spirulina/green superfood mixture combined with water. Greens alkalise the body, which is a key element for good health – acid bodies foster disease, so by taking in greens daily, you can assist your healing process enormously. A good tip for beginners to help the body move to an alkaline state is to make up a bottle of green powder mixed with water to sip throughout the day – this is ideal when travelling and also a great stepping stone towards making your own green juices.

Obese people tend to have quite compromised digestive systems, resulting in poor assimilation of nutrients. We can ease this situation greatly by consuming ‘pre-digested’ foods, such as grated salads, juices and blended soups, smoothies and sauces. By breaking down the structure of the foods like this before they enter the body, we make the nutrients more accessible for easy assimilation and digestion. Remember too that your stomach does not have teeth, so eat slowly and chew well to get the most out of foods. Using a high quality source of lactobacteria, such as sauerkraut, rejuvelac or acidophilus supplements to support the intestines will also aid your digestive process. Furthermore, soaking all nuts, seeds and dried fruit before use will help your assimilation greatly compared to eating them dry, as the soaking re-awakens the enzymes and replenishes the water-content.

Water, incidentally, is another key factor to consider; it makes up two-thirds of the human body and as we lose about 1.5 litres of it a day, it’s very important that we replace fluids regularly, from high quality sources. It is important to drink a lot of pure water, especially when detoxing, to help flush the toxins out. Have at least 8 glasses a day, or roughly ½ oz./30ml for every pound/kilo of body weight. (For example, if you weigh 150lbs/68kg, you’ll need about 75oz./2¼l of water a day.) Freshly squeezed juices, herbal teas and coconut water are all great sources of liquid nourishment too, but try to avoid stimulants such as caffeine and alcohol, as they rob the body of valuable minerals.

Be very cautious of ‘bad’ food combining – mixing together many foods and flavours puts a real strain on your digestion as different types of foods digest in different ways and at different speeds. Therefore, the more simple your combinations, the cleaner and easier your digestion will be. This tends to be important for overeaters to come to terms with, as our compulsion to eat irrationally often results in us filling our stomachs with a wide variety of different foods in succession, causing digestive disharmony. The key point to remember for raw foodists is to eat fruits separate from all other foods (with the exception of less acid items such as apples and bananas). Fruits digest very quickly on an empty stomach (about 20 mins roughly), but if eaten with or after other foods, they will compete for digestion

and produce fermentation problems. Combinations such as nuts with fresh fruit for example are very hard on the digestion.

See the Recipe section below for a collection of practical, tasty recipes to get you started with a solid foundation in raw food preparation.

When I first went raw, I made many 'combo-abombos' - i.e. abominable combinations of foods that result from throwing unsuitable mixtures of foods into the blender at once, with far from delectable results. Such creations can play havoc with your digestive health - it is thus from experience that I recommend being careful with your food combining and also to learn a few good, reliable recipes from which to build up your repertoire, such as those in the Recipe section below.

What about transition foods?

For those who are choosing a high, but not 100% raw diet, it is important to try to find some healthier, new-to-you alternatives to old problem foods. For example: oatcakes, cottage cheese, rice/corn cakes, rice/corn noodles, rice/corn pasta, rice pancakes, sprouted wheat bread, pumpernickel, spelt bread, rye bread, miso soup, tortilla chips, tortilla wraps, crisp breads, all kinds of gluten-free products, sugar-free jams, home-popped popcorn, steamed vegetables, boiled whole grains, shop-bought hummus, halva and stuffed vine leaves and so on. I found in the beginning for example that using something like a rice pancake to hold a mass of vegetables was such a simple way for me to cram lots of nutrients into something I found tasty. In this way, I managed to vastly increase my vegetable intake, whilst replacing something I would have previously chosen, such as thick white sandwich bread with a lighter, healthier alternative. I would not eat rice pancakes now, but at the beginning, this transition pattern served me very well; recovery is a process, so take things at a pace you can handle. At the same time, try to be aware of your eating patterns though – if you discover that you are frequently eating the same transition food, it may indicate that it is a binge food for you and is better avoided – many people report this phenomenon for example with rice cakes.

If you want to start out at 50% raw, there are a number of ways you can arrange your eating plan. One suggestion is to divide your meals completely into raw or not raw - e.g. have a totally raw breakfast and lunch, then an un-raw dinner. Alternatively, you can aim for a mixture of raw and non-raw foods at each meal, which tends to be a much healthier approach in terms of your digestion, as the raw foods will help to clear the non-raw items through your system more efficiently throughout the day. Remember that we measure the daily 50% by weight, not volume, so filling half a plate with very light

lettuce leaves and the other half with a heavy Indian curry and rice, for example, would not be considered a 50% raw meal.

What do you do with all the old cooked/processed trigger foods in your kitchen?

This is going to depend on your circumstances. Whatever you do, don't fall into the trap of thinking it's best to finish these foods off first before you start raw abstinence – that is your overeating mind talking to you. If you honestly want to go into abstinence, you need to put down these foods NOW – not tomorrow or next week when the trigger foods might be finished - NOW. By continuing to eat these triggers, you are just helping yourself to stay stuck in overeating patterns. If you have acknowledged yourself as an overeater and are still hesitating about really putting down the food, consider this: if you had realised it was cancer you had rather than an overeating disorder, would you still be hesitating about seeking treatment? This is a serious condition and it requires action.

If you live alone, it's a great idea to just get rid of the trigger foods in your house – give them to someone else who may want them, donate them to a homeless shelter or whatever seems right to you. This does not necessarily mean of course that you are not going to encounter these foods in other locations where they may tempt you – we do not throw them out just to avoid temptation, it just makes little sense to keep them around if you are no longer going to use them. It is much safer to keep our houses free from trigger foods if possible, so if you live with others, seek cooperation about keeping the house trigger-free and well-stocked with raw food. If however you live with others who are not joining you in raw abstinence and who wish to continue to eat these foods, it is not likely to be a very popular move if you throw these foods away. You will have to live alongside the triggers, which may seem daunting, but it need not be - with your daily food plan to remind you exactly what you are and are not going to eat that day, understanding friends to call for support and inspiring resources to refer to such as books and websites, you have a solid foundation on which to build your abstinence.

When I first went into raw abstinence, I was so utterly focused with all my willpower on eating raw and losing weight, that I barely noticed my old trigger foods like chocolate, crisps or pizza, even though I was living in a house with people eating those things. I later realised that I'd simply moved my obsessive behaviour about food from my cooked triggers to raw produce and still had no understanding that I had an unhealthy, compulsive relationship with food. That is precisely why I found myself some months later stuffing myself with chocolate cake and wondering why – I had never acknowledged my overeating condition, much less accepted it or begun to work on the underlying

issues. Now that I have found true abstinence and feel so aligned with a raw way of life, my old trigger foods do not get a hold on me like that anymore, even if they appear in my own kitchen – I do not need to put effort into avoiding old triggers like biscuits these days, as they simply don't interest me anymore and are so far away from the spectrum of foods that I now choose.

How are you going to stay abstinent for a long time?

Being abstinent from foods we cannot handle is the foundation of recovery and needs to come before all else, but in the beginning, the thought of a *lifetime* of no more chocolate, crisps or sweets may seem just too awful to bear. We may secretly tell ourselves we'll just be abstinent until the weight has gone, then it will be ok to have some chocolate again, or that we'll be abstinent except for once a week or any number of other 'gimmicks' that our addicted mind will suggest to keep us hooked to the toxins. None of these gimmicks will work for us – how many times have we honestly intended to have 'only one bit' and finished the whole packet? However, telling ourselves grimly that we're 'in this for life' is not likely to inspire us greatly either. We can take the pressure off by only thinking about today – 'just for today' – we can do something for 24 hours that may seem impossible to imagine doing for a lifetime. The past is gone and the future is not yet here – the only thing we have is the present moment – today – and today we can choose to be abstinent. Choosing abstinence from foods that pollute our bodies and minds is an amazing gift to ourselves – we are opening out into a new world of abundant, radiant living foods instead and when we discover that by going into *raw* abstinence we can even eat healthy raw *chocolate* daily if we choose, abstinence doesn't seem like such a chore. It is also good to remember that it is far easier to *stay* abstinent than it is to get abstinent again after a relapse. With good support and recovery work, you can do things that before would have seemed impossible and discover that you actually no longer want trigger foods or behaviours in your life. After a while you may be amazed at how all the days that you take just one at a time suddenly and miraculously turn into weeks, months or years – you may wonder for example how on earth you have managed to go 2 weeks, 3 months or 7 years without a single bite of ice cream, but the answer is simple – we take just one day at a time.

When I first went raw, I'd more or less never been on any kind of diet or eating plan, so I had nothing to compare my sudden dramatic change of eating against – I was just enthralled by the idea of raw and convinced that I was in this for life. No more refined sugar, bread or cakes for me. If I found I was tempted by some sweets or chocolate, for example, I would tell myself 'no, not anymore – not in this lifetime – maybe in the next life you can have some again, but not now...'. I had sullenly sentenced

myself to a lifetime without the things I craved, but in the long run, this didn't work out and after slipping back into compulsive overeating of exactly the things I'd been convinced I wouldn't touch again, I was so relieved to learn that there is another way. When I take just one day at a time, I do not have to threaten myself with life-long commitments and expectations and my abstinence is much easier.

How do you find support?

Perhaps you are wondering what kind of support you're going to get from the 'normal' cooked eaters around you for your raw abstinence. Or perhaps you are thinking that going into raw abstinence sounds like the proverbial 'piece of cake' and you'll easily manage it alone. Neither approach is likely to work out well. As overeaters we cannot always rely well on our own judgement as to whether we are eating the right thing or the right quantities. Basically, we are not likely to be able to do this well on our own. This is a very isolating condition – in the past we have hidden our true selves, our emotions and indeed even our food from others and it may seem very challenging now to open up to other people and let them into our recovery, yet this is an important part of our healing process. Looking to just anyone for support, however, is also not likely to help us into sound recovery. The contact that is really beneficial for us is with others who are on the same path – other overeaters recovering from food addiction, preferably on a raw path. The wonderful thing about being in contact with other overeaters in recovery is that they know *exactly* what you are talking about – they have been there too, share this condition and can offer lots of guidance. The RawReform forum is the place to find like-minded people for support and sharing about natural weight loss – visit www.rawreform.com and discover some beautiful connections. Outside the RawReform forum, you may not meet many other overeaters who are involved specifically in *raw* abstinence for recovery, but they will certainly understand and respect your personal choices. The fellowship 'Overeaters Anonymous', for example, is another obvious place to turn for support (see Resources section, below, for contact details). Aside from making personal contact with other overeaters, you will also find that reading self-help literature for overeaters can be a great source of comfort and support, both in book form and online.

In terms of raw foodism there are also a wealth of support opportunities available to you – from local pot-luck meetings to internet chat forums to books, websites and magazines. You do not have to be alone with this – reach out for the support of others who understand and can give you guidance.

When I first went raw, I did it completely alone, which is hardly surprising looking back, as I was always so isolated and secretive about everything to do with my weight and health, I certainly would

*not have wanted to involve others. So I basically had no support – I knew no other raw fooders and didn't even realise that I myself was an overeater, let alone anyone else. I was alone, trying to control an uncontrollable condition with no knowledge and no support, just my shaky willpower. When I started to overeat toxic foods again, despite my efforts, I finally came to realise the importance of reaching out for the support of others who understand my condition, though that didn't mean I found it easy in the beginning. After years of secretive, prideful hiding in my private bubble, it took a **lot** for me to reach out and ask others for support, but every time I did, I was welcomed with experience and understanding. In terms of raw foodism, going to raw pot-lucks and contacting raw friends by email and phone are important support tools to me these days. I now know that I don't have to be alone.*

How is this going to affect your body?

Along with weight loss, going raw can have many dramatic effects on the body, not least of which are the detox symptoms we inevitably experience when starting to eat this way. Being prepared for these symptoms in advance can help you to cope more easily as they appear and to feel undeterred by them. Keep in mind that detoxing is an entirely normal and expected part of raw weight loss, as the body clears out old toxins trapped in fat deposits and the colon and heals itself. Expect things such as diarrhea, flu-like symptoms, fever, tiredness, skin rashes and so on and keep in mind that *it will pass*. The most difficult symptoms tend to subside after the first week or so, whereas detoxing as a process will continue for many months, if not years. If this sounds off-putting, consider how long it took your body to get into the condition it is in now and all the toxins you are holding inside you – an average person has 5-10lbs/2½-5kg of toxic mucoid plaque and debris in their colon and obese people can expect that figure to be much higher.

You can control the rate of detox by adjusting the percentage of raw foods in your plan – the more raw, the faster the detox, so lower your raw intake to take things more slowly if you feel like your body is releasing too many toxins at once. Also be aware that as old toxins are released and re-enter the blood stream, you will very likely experience related cravings. For example, you may have a sudden strong desire to eat chocolate as old sugar deposits are cleared from your system. Again, this too will pass. Being aware of this pattern and prepared for sudden cravings can aid your recovery enormously.

When I first went raw, my detox symptoms were very severe, as I moved from a stodgy standard western diet and a massively unhealthy, obese body to 100% raw overnight. I was very out of touch with my own body and tried to just push through the pain and ignore the difficulties as much as I could.

After a week however I realised the process was much too fast for me and I moved back to about 70-80% raw foods for the next couple of years or so, which worked well for me. The majority of my detoxing occurred in my first raw year, but it is still very much an ongoing process, as the body clears out the debris of the past and rebuilds the physical structure anew with living, vibrant material. I am amazed at some of the things my body has thrown out during detox and consider this cleansing a real benefit of losing weight on raw.

How are you going to stay focused?

Try not to put yourself off going or staying raw by thinking of the big changes – be gentle with yourself and take things at a manageable pace, rather than trying to push reform in many areas at once. A relaxed approach will help you to handle any difficulties that arise more easily, so get lots of rest and try to be forgiving and kind with yourself if you feel your focus has slipped from abstinence. Whatever the reason for a slip, there is no reason to panic or blame yourself – you can get back into abstinence at any moment – what’s happened has happened and there’s no changing that, but you can affect what happens next by getting back to your food plan, as soon as possible. If you make a mistake and go off your plan, it doesn’t mean you *are* a mistake; recovery is about progress, not perfectionism. If you happen to break your abstinence with something that is particularly unhealthy for your body, like junk food, try to ensure that when you get back on track, the next meal you eat is as high raw as possible, to provide extra help to sweep out the toxins.

If you are going out somewhere for the day (or longer) where you suspect access to raw foods will be limited, make sure you take that into good consideration in your plan of eating for that period. Mainstream restaurants, travelling and especially airplane meals are all areas for concern. Be prepared – do not try to ‘wing it’, imagining supplies of the foods you need will materialise as required. This is a perfect set-up for slips in abstinence – for example, if you hear yourself saying something like ‘well, there’s nothing else available, I’ll just *have* to eat these chips instead...’ be very concerned. If you are committed to your recovery, try not to get yourself into such situations - be prepared. It is equally advisable, especially in the beginning of recovery, to avoid situations, places and people we anticipate it will be difficult for us to be around with our new-found raw abstinence. We need to protect and nurture our recovery and keeping away from potentially difficult situations is very beneficial – if in doubt, don’t go. Also be watchful when it comes to food labels on packaging – check items regularly to ensure that you are not consuming things that may trigger you into overeating – it is not uncommon for

ingredients to change, so vigilance can help us to protect our recovery.

If you feel you are really struggling to not overeat, do *anything*, any action other than eating – for example, call another overeater, write about your feelings, re-read this e-book or some other inspiring literature and so on. Create a ‘tool-box’ of other things you can do besides overeating or sitting around thinking about food. You may find you rediscover hobbies that you used to love, but have not enjoyed recently due to obesity – such as kite-flying, rock-pooling or playing badminton. Remind yourself that however hard your situation may seem now, it is *so* much harder to regain abstinence than to maintain it, so don’t take that first compulsive bite.

To maintain your focus on this way of life and your commitment to it, try to read all you can about this subject that interests you, have plenty of contact with others and strive for openness and honesty with regards to your eating – all this will help you to stay in touch with your recovery in an enriching manner. It is also vital to be clear from the outset that you are undertaking these changes in lifestyle *for yourself*, rather than to try to satisfy anyone else. The impulse for transformation needs to come from within for real recovery to take place. Similarly, keeping your attention on making positive choices about your *own* health, rather than trying to manipulate others around you into changes is also important. It is common for people in recovery to get very enthusiastic about their new way of life and to try to directly influence others, which can generate animosity if people feel you are trying to force changes onto them. If you want to help others, the best thing you can do is simply lead by your own example - focus on your own eating and behaviour and simply be present for others if they come to you. The only person we can really change is ourselves and the more we stay focused on our own recovery, the more health we will have to enjoy and share with all around us, which is a wondrous gift.

AFTERWORD

I hope you feel inspired and motivated about your raw journey after reading this e-book and I wish you the very best of luck. Follow the guidance shared here and you will experience fast, remarkable weight loss and relief from overeating in the most natural and holistic way possible. I sincerely hope you will choose to give this amazing gift of a new lifestyle of abundance and opportunity to yourself. Remember: you are not alone - join the forum at www.rawreform.com to stay connected with others on this path or contact consultations@rawreform.com if you would like to arrange a private consultation about natural weight loss. May all blessings be yours. In peaceful joy, love and serenity, Angela. x

RECIPES

For a more extensive collection of simple, inspiring recipes on which to base your new raw lifestyle, see the RawReform Recipes e-book. Below you will find ten basic, everyday recipes/meal ideas to get you started. It has been suggested that most people tend to use about 7-10 recipes on a regular basis, in rotation, so you could consider the following the foundations of your raw journey and build up from here...

Fresh Muesli

1 finely chopped banana
1 finely chopped apple
1tbsp Chopped soaked almonds or hazelnuts
1tbsp Sunflower seeds
1tbsp Pumpkin seeds
1tbsp Sultanas
1tbsp raw tahini
Almond milk to taste
Sprinkling of cinnamon/ shredded coconut to taste

Mix the ingredients together in a cereal bowl and serve immediately. This is a great power breakfast, which will keep you going for many hours.

Almond Milk

250g almonds, soaked for at least 2 hours in water
750ml fresh water

One of my favourite drinks - it's such a healthy replacement for all other types of milk, especially dairy, and it's so simple to make. Just rinse the soaked nuts, then combine them with fresh water in a blender. Stop when the liquid is white and the almonds seem to have been blended in thoroughly. To separate the milk from the solids, squeeze the mixture through fine cloth, such as muslin or a clean stocking. The milk is delicious on its own, or used over cereal, etc and keeps for a day or two in the fridge. The almond pulp can be re-used in other recipes. Using less water produces a more cream-like consistency.

Green Smoothies

'Green' smoothies are a great way to pack in a load of green vegetables such as spinach, kale, sunflower greens, buckwheat greens, dandelion leaves, celery, parsley or lettuces into your day in a quick and easy, tasty way. If you want to use 'superfoods' such as aloe vera gel, green powders or spirulina for example, green smoothies are also a good place to incorporate these items. Try to aim at a ratio of 60% fruit to 40% greens, with water to thin it down - with the sweet fruit flavour predominating, you should have a good blend. Some nice combinations include:

PPP – pear, parsley, persimmon (creates a beautifully smooth green blend)

Sunflower greens-raspberries-apple

Banana-nut milk-spinach

Mango-blueberry-kale

Apple-plums-celery

Simple Big Salads

Try to vary your salads to keep them interesting - here are some ideas:

- use a few types of lettuce/fresh spinach mixed together as a base.
- try different types of tomato, including sun-dried.
- use yellow bell pepper for an interesting flash of colour.
- finely grate down a mixture of carrot, beetroot and courgette in a food mixer to garnish.
- sprinkle seeds (especially marinated or ground seeds) over your salad for a tasty, nutritious topping, e.g. pumpkin seeds, tamari-marinated sunflower seeds and so on.
- slice in olives or avocado for some healthy fats.
- add pieces of pre-soaked seaweed or seaweed flakes/powder.
- chop nuts in for flavour and fats, e.g. pistachios, brazils.
- add in a handful of nutritious homegrown sprouts. Alfalfa is usually good for beginners.
- chopped fresh herbs can really brighten up the flavour of salads.
- more unusual ingredients such as some chopped fennel, grated ginger or finely sliced chillies can also be used to liven up salads.

Sunflower Pâté

1 cup soaked sunflower seeds
8-10 sundried tomatoes
½ tbsp oil-soaked chopped garlic
Small bunch of basil

Mix all the ingredients together with a hand blender or food processor.

A Note on Garlic and Onions

I, like many people, find completely raw garlic and onions hard to digest and so if I wish to use these foods, I always chop them down and pre-soak them in olive oil prior to use in recipes. I find this makes them easier on my stomach, however it is often recommended to simply avoid these foods altogether as they are considered unbalancing for the body, especially the brain. A great alternative is the Indian spice asfoetida (also known as 'hing'), which can be used in tiny quantities as a replacement for garlic in recipes and does not cause imbalance - in fact it is actually said to strengthen the digestive system.

Pine Nut Pesto

1 cup soaked pine nuts
2 cups fresh basil
½ tbsp oil-soaked chopped garlic
1 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp Nama Shoyu
½ tsp Himalayan/Celtic sea salt/Herbamare
½ cup pure water

Blend all the ingredients together.

Smooth Spinach Soup

2 cups fresh spinach

Flesh of 1 ripe avocado

1 tbsp tahini

1 tbsp oil-soaked chopped garlic and onion

5-6 soaked sundried tomatoes

Pure water to thin

Blend.

Romaine Roll-Ups

4-5 leaves of Romaine per person

Assortment of grated/chopped vegetables

Favourite dips/sauces/spreads

Seeds to sprinkle

Fresh herbs to scatter

The idea is straightforward - separate off big leaves from a head of Romaine lettuce. Use the leaves as if they were tortilla wraps, filling them with the other vegetables and dips, topping with seeds and herbs as desired. You can also use other large lettuce or cabbage leaves for roll-ups.

Carob 'Chocolate' Pudding

Flesh of one avocado

1 banana

½ cup carob powder

'Fake' chocolate puddings are a raw food favourite –this is a very simple but rich and filling recipe that can be adapted by adding in flavourings such as vanilla powder or made even richer with coconut fat or a sweetener such as dates. Leave the mixture to chill in glass bowls and serve with a little nut cream or topped with fresh shredded coconut for example. Thinner versions can be used as sauces to pour over sweet dishes, whereas a version that is thickened with ground flaxseed can be used as a pie filling.

Raw Apple Pie

Base:

2 cups soaked nuts/seeds – e.g. walnuts, pecans, pistachios, almonds, sunflower seeds

1 cup sweetener – e.g. banana, raisins, prunes, dates

Blend the ingredients together and press into a pie dish. Add other flavours like carob, orange juice, coconut or cinnamon as desired. Either dehydrate crust first or simply fill with the following:

Filling:

3 apples, cored and roughly chopped

Cinnamon and nutmeg to taste

Juice of half a freshly squeezed lemon

Small amount of shredded coconut if desired

Blend together the ingredients for the filling and level out on top of the pie crust before refrigerating. The pie can be decorated with whatever you like – coconut flakes, fresh berries, halved grapes, carob powder, pecans, etc. For another variation, try adding carob or cacao powder to the base mixture.

RESOURCES

RawReform: www.rawreform.com Online guidance for natural, raw weight loss – use the forum to connect with other overeaters for support, or contact consultations@rawreform.com to arrange a private consultation with Angela.

SADtoRaw: www.fromsadtotoraw.com Another inspiring personal transformation site.

RawLiving: www.rawliving.co.uk British raw food supplies, run by author Kate Wood.

EatRaw: www.eatraw.com US online super-store for all things raw – huge range.

Overeaters Anonymous: www.oa.org The main site for the Overeaters Anonymous Fellowship. OA World Service Office, PO Box 44020, Rio Rancho, NM 87174-4020 USA. Tel: 1-505-891-2664

Curezone: www.curezone.com Enormous US site with the motto ‘educating, not medicating’ – great resource for all alternative health guidance.

RECOMMENDED READING

Bill B.: *Compulsive Overeater*, Hazelden, 1981

Boutenko, Sergei & Valya: *Eating Without Heating*, Raw Family Publishing, 2003 (Good, simple recipes)

Campbell, T. Colin, Dr.: *The China Study*, Benbella Books, 2005

Charter, Steve: *Eat More Raw*, Permanent Publications, 2004

Critser, Greg: *Fat Land – How Americans Became the Fattest People in the World*, Penguin, 2004

Danowski & Lazaro: *Why Can't I Stop Eating?* Hazelden, 2000

Elizabeth, L.: *Food For Thought*, Hazelden, 1980 (Daily reader book for overeaters)

Holdstock, Sharon: *Shazzie's Detox Delights*, Rawcreation Ltd, 2001 (Good little book for beginners)

Sams, Craig: *The Little Food Book*, Alastair Sawday, 2003

Wood, Kate: *Eat Smart, Eat Raw* Grub Street Pubs, 2002 (Practical, simple, useful recipe book)

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