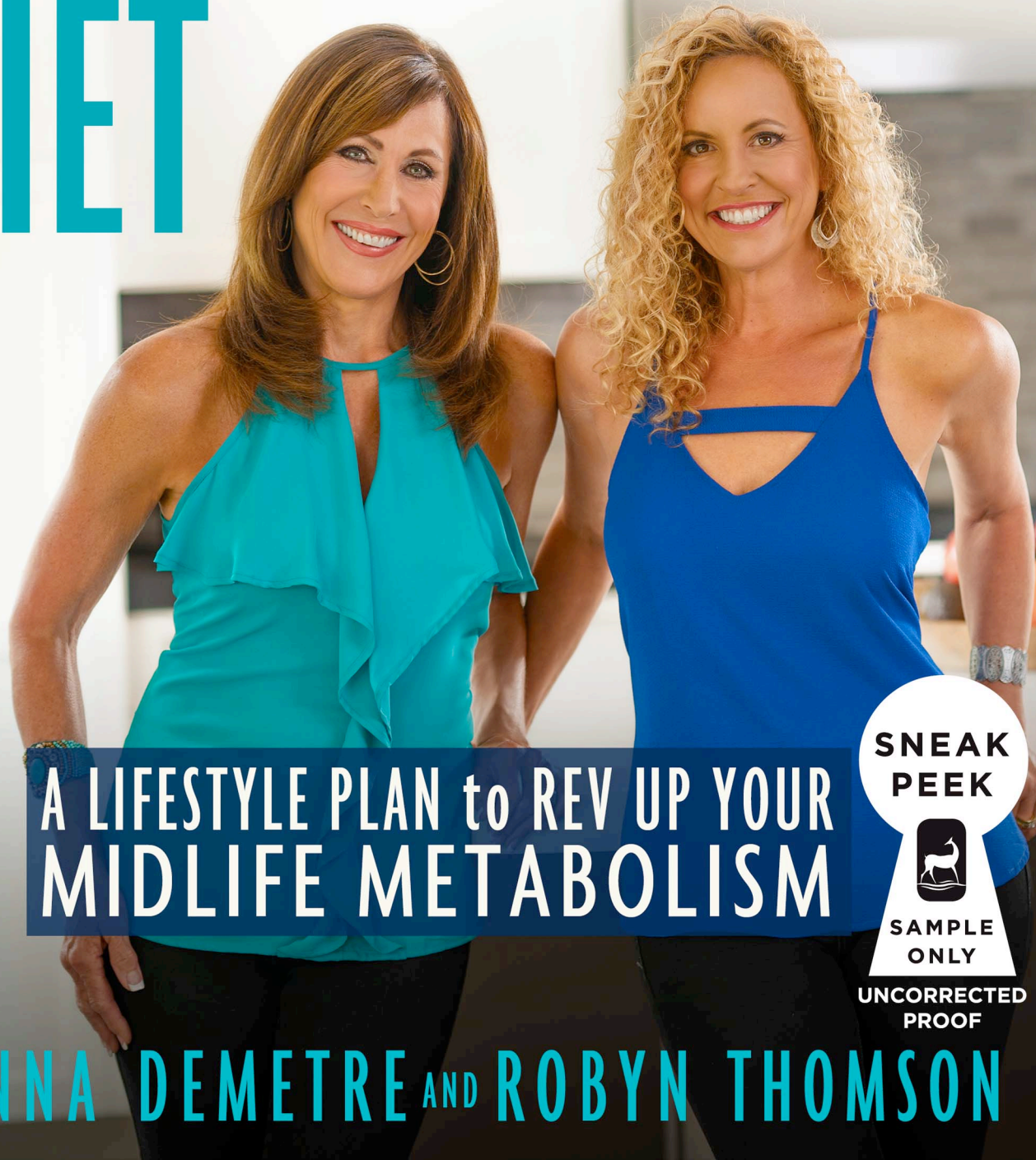


EAT LIVE THRIVE DIET



A LIFESTYLE PLAN to REV UP YOUR
MIDLIFE METABOLISM

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DANNA DEMETRE AND ROBYN THOMSON

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Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

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This book is dedicated to every woman who has believed the lie that her best body, health, and life are in the past. We're here to shout from the rooftops that your best years can be ahead of you when you put the Eat, Live, Thrive Diet and Lifestyle Plan into action!

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Introduction



We have a friend named Sarah. She recently had an epiphany, and she doesn't like it. "Oh my gosh. I've got a muffin top. I have no energy, and my body feels ten years older than I really am." Sarah sighed. "I've become my mother!"

Have you ever felt like that? As though your best years are behind you and you'll never feel even close to how vibrant you did in years past?

Well, we're here to tell you, "Stop thinking that way!"

It's true that for many women weight gain and lack of energy make them feel old. Their skin lacks the youthful glow and smoothness it once had. And if that weren't enough, dealing with perimenopause and postmenopause is not a cakewalk either.

Are you like Sarah, forty-five or older, with numerous diets under your belt, so to speak? And you still can't shed that extra layer of fat around your waist or thighs? We admit that it does get harder to lose weight and keep it off as we age. But it is not impossible!

We know because we've personally been in the trenches as you have. Maybe we haven't experienced exactly the same things, but we do understand "the struggle"!

Danna's Story

I still remember the despair I felt years ago that expressed itself in a nightmare. In my dream, I was shoving cookies, doughnuts, potato chips, and candy into my mouth at an alarming speed. I could not stop eating everything in sight. In the middle of my dream, I sat up in bed and yelled, "You. Just. Eat when you're hungry!" And then I flopped back down onto my pillow and started crying.

It didn't take a psychologist to unravel my inner turmoil. I dreamed this because it was my reality. By the time I was twenty years old, I'd been secretly binge eating for more than three years. Some days I ate enough to feed a small country. The reason I was only twenty-five pounds overweight rather than a hundred was because I purged.

By the time I was in my junior year of nursing school, I sometimes binged and purged five times a day. I was a physical and emotional wreck and had no idea how to get well. To top it off, I started to take amphetamines to try to control my urges, but they made me nervous and I couldn't sleep. I cycled for a long time between starvation on pills and bingeing.

No one knew I was bulimic. No one knew my pain. Not even my fiancé. I thought I was alone in my problem. Back in the 1970s, people talked about anorexia but not much about bulimia. I felt as though I was the biggest loser on the planet, and I wanted to die.

Then the panic attacks started.

Initially, they came only occasionally, but soon they were triggered by any stress—even leaving the house. I became a hypochondriac, always thinking the worst. My stomachache was an ulcer; my heart palpitations, a heart defect; my nervousness, low blood sugar. The list went on and on. Over time I became convinced I was either dying or losing my mind.

I got As in all my medical-surgical classes in nursing school as I attempted to diagnose myself. Then I shifted my attention to my mental health and got As in psychology as I became convinced that I was suffering from one or more disorders. Medical doctors, counselors, psychologists—I saw them all. The panic attacks continued so intensely that I lived on high doses of Valium to calm me down enough to get through my classes and complete college.

In retrospect, living in fear and shame for all those years was the worst and best thing that ever happened to me. I know that sounds weird, but let me explain.

As my panic attacks went from uncomfortable, free-floating anxiety to terrorizing moments when I seriously believed I was dying, I was forced to ask myself, *What would happen if I did die?*

I was utterly exhausted from living in constant fear. One night, I was home alone and had the most severe panic attack I'd ever experienced. I was certain something was terribly wrong with me and I was going to die all alone in my bedroom.

Having been a nurse, I realize I was probably hyperventilating so much that I was in danger of passing out—but certainly not of dying. I remember sitting on the edge of my bed and burying my face in my hands, trying to breathe slowly and calm myself. I cried out to a God I believed in but did not truly know. I believed he existed, but I had no idea how to reach him or if he heard my feeble cries.

Well, he did. In that moment he brought a woman to my mind—the one and only woman in my

life I would have called “religious.” I found her phone number in my address book and called her that very moment. In a breathless rant, I told her that I was dying and needed to know if she knew God personally. You have to be rather desperate to do that. I was.

Sweet Tonette assured me that she not only knew God but that God knew *me*. This godly, selfless woman poured into me over the next days and weeks and shared the gospel with me. I found a new, saving faith in Jesus Christ. While he did not heal me instantly of my fear, bulimia, and insecurities, he did begin a healing process in me and I learned the power of a renewed mind. (I’ll share more about that in chapter 3.)

Today in my midsixties, I am leaner than I was in my thirties. I’m often told I look fifteen to twenty years younger than I am. I don’t know about that, but I do know that I *feel* that young and that life is so much richer as my health and vitality continue to soar.

No matter what kind of battle you’re in, there is hope for victory. Perhaps you’ve simply developed some unhealthy habits that need to be exchanged for healthier ones. Or maybe, like me, you feel you’ve lost all control when it comes to food. No matter. Change is possible!

Robyn’s Story

I was chubby as a child and adolescent. I remember being teased about my size and feeling self-conscious and inadequate compared to the other girls at my school. Then one summer in my early teens, I experienced a massive growth spurt and shed all my excess body fat, just like that.

My classmates didn’t even recognize me when I returned to school in the fall. The acceptance based on outward appearance was quite eye opening. I knew that I never wanted to be overweight again.

I stayed lean and was very content with my body into my twenties and thirties. But when I hit my forties, something changed. I started gaining weight, even though I was doing the same things I’d always done.

I realized quickly that I couldn’t eat the same way I had and was determined not to travel full circle and become a chubby menopausal woman. I knew I would need to make some strategic changes quickly, but I had no idea what those changes should be.

To add insult to injury, the quest to drop the excess pounds was even more challenging because I began to experience an unexplainable and insatiable hunger. I would finish a full and normally satisfying meal and then would want to eat a second one before I left the table! Thankfully, I did not give in to my feelings, but the sensation of always being hungry became stronger and more disturbing. And to make it even more unfair, eating made me even hungrier!

I have seen many doctors over the years, including my primary-care physician, two endocrinologists, and my naturopathic physician, who is brilliant and very skilled at getting to the root of many hormonal and metabolic issues. He's truly perplexed that everything we try seems to fail.

All the pros do agree on one thing: this is not an emotional issue but rather a physiological one, particularly that hormonal signals between my stomach and brain may not be getting through. Oh my!

Though I've found many creative ways to manage this "thorn in the flesh," so far there's no complete and lasting solution. It is still something I face every single day, some days more intensely than others.

My challenge with weight gain and relentless hunger sparked a focused motivation to find answers. I've committed the past decade to massive research to find the best diet and supplements to become and stay lean as a woman over forty-five.

I've also learned the importance of trusting God in the journey. He gives me the strength not cave in to the lies my body tells me about being hungry. By his grace, and a strong foundation of personal discipline, I've stayed my ideal size through most of my "hunger games." On the rare occasions when my weight has crept up, I've taken drastic action, such as fasting for thirty-six hours to break the cycle.

I must choose my goal over immediate gratification hour by hour. It's a skill I've developed over time, and I've surprised myself by how strong I can be with God's help. He does his part, but I must also do mine! The alternative—giving in to my hunger—would result in obesity.

I use many of the nonfood techniques we teach in our Eat, Live, Thrive Diet as tools to help me choose well. If I can do it—with relentless hunger—you can do it too.

I know and believe this completely. It is our job to help you believe it as well!

I won't pretend that my hunger issue hasn't been hard. Do I get discouraged? Sure, I do. Do I get frustrated? Daily. Sometimes I'm so weary trying to find a solution that I wonder, *Why can't I just be satisfied?* On occasion, I succumb to my strong desire to eat, even though I know that my body does not need more food. Usually I eat foods that are healthful, but other times, not so much. I may be a nutrition expert and weight-loss coach, but I'm also human!

I share all this because I want you to know that you don't need to be a victim of your "feelings." Danna and I had very different challenges. Hers was mental and emotional; mine was physical. We both needed to make an important decision about how we would respond to our respective challenges. Would we give up, or would we be proactive?

We chose action, and you can too!

Everyone Has a Story

You have a story too, and it is important. It gives you perspective and motivates you to give yourself grace for being human. But your history (the past) does not need to be an excuse for staying stuck (in the present)! We are certain that you can rewrite your story in a way that brings you a sense of victory and freedom, and we want to help you do that.

After reading our stories, you can tell that we both have a strong faith in God. Perhaps you share our Christian faith; perhaps you don't. Although we do share teaching that applies to not only the body and mind but the spiritual dimension as well, most of the principles mentioned are universal truths that can be applied and produce great results regardless of religious belief.

This Book Is for You!

We're honored that you've chosen to go on this journey with us to discover how to eat, live, and thrive no matter your age. The Eat, Live, Thrive Diet and Lifestyle Plan is for all women, with extra help for women over forty-five because of the unique challenges that emerge as we age. However, we invite any woman to participate.

We wish we'd known some of these strategies much earlier in our lives. Practicing them will help you stay "ageless" into midlife and beyond. We like the word *ageless* over *mature* because it reflects both an attitude and lifestyle that defy time. We're excited for you to take this journey with us so you can celebrate life fully in the years ahead.

Whatever you believe, whatever you've experienced, wherever you are in your life journey, we want you to know that you can benefit from the Eat, Live, Thrive (ELT) strategy and tips we share to help you rev up your midlife metabolism, lighten the scale, and turn back the clock.

Now let's get introduced to the Eat, Live, Thrive Diet and Lifestyle Plan!

PART 1



PREPARATION

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Yes, You Can Eat, Live, and Thrive!

How This Diet and Lifestyle Plan Works

1

Eat: To nourish your body and embrace your God-given sense of taste.

Live: To fully experience the abundant life.

Thrive: To flourish in body, soul, and spirit.

We are all so different. If Danna burns more calories than she eats, she sheds fat and her weight goes down. Not so for Robyn. Like many (perhaps most) women over forty-five, she is highly sensitive to grains. But unlike many women, Robyn is not insulin resistant, so she can eat a normal amount of carbohydrates and still lose weight. She just can't include many grains or legumes because her body hates them and revolts by triggering digestive symptoms, water retention, mental foginess, and weight gain.

In contrast to both of us, our friend Janice can barely look at a starchy carbohydrate without gaining weight. She is highly insulin resistant. More on that to come, but it means that her muscle cells don't allow insulin to transport carbohydrates (converted into glucose) to be stored (as glycogen) for future energy. Because survival requires that glucose not accumulate in the blood, it gets diverted to Janice's fat cells, which happily convert it to more fat. Even when she eats what she considers normal amounts of grains and other starches, such as potatoes, Janice gains weight.

Counting calories does not work for Janice. Fortunately, the Eat, Live, Thrive Diet does.

Like the three of us, you are unique. So, what are *your* dietary

God has provided us with a sophisticated healing system. Focus on the building blocks of what he has provided, such as sound nutrition, exercise, sleep, attitude, and prayer.

—Dr. Mark Stengler, ND

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stumbling blocks? Those can be difficult to figure out on your own. The ELT Diet can help you discover the foods holding you back from reaching your goals.

The Reality of Weight Gain After Forty-Five

Women over forty-five are often faced with these issues when it comes to weight loss:

- a lower carbohydrate threshold, which declines steadily with age
- insulin resistance, which increases over time and promotes diabetes
- unknown food sensitivities
- hormonal imbalance
- slower metabolism due to muscle atrophy

After the age of thirty, as women, we lose the ability to utilize and burn carbohydrates as well as we did when we were younger. The decline is slow and insidious and can go unnoticed into our forties and perhaps fifties, but it is happening. Foods that we once could eat are now causing undue inflammation in our bodies and disrupting our digestion, joint health, and metabolism.

All the while, as we are edging toward menopause—or in the midst of it or past it—our hormones are being greatly influenced by many of the grains and processed foods we eat, making it more difficult to maintain any level of hormone balance even if we are using the latest and greatest bioidentical hormones and supplements.

That's the reality. What can we do about it?

The ABCs of the ELT Diet

If you want to be lean and healthy, look younger than the years on your birth certificate, and have energy to embrace life fully, you must nourish your body with real food. Our diet plan will help you not only burn fat and drop pounds but also rev up your energy. It also provides a nutritional foundation to slow down and perhaps even reverse some of the aging process.

Our ELT Diet and Lifestyle Plan is designed to:

Activate your metabolism and promote steady weight loss

Balance your blood sugar and cravings

Cleanse your body of toxins and decrease inflammation

Our eating plan is especially effective for mature (ageless!) women who've experienced continued difficulty losing weight on portion or calorie-controlled diets. It is strategically designed to pro-

mote a robust metabolism, which enhances fat-burning capability no matter one's age. Our participants are amazed at how much they can eat on our diet and still get excellent and steady results.

Step-by-Step Guidance

In the ELT Diet and Lifestyle Plan, we will guide you through three progressive phases, culminating in a realistic *and* enjoyable lifestyle eating plan that will serve you well for the rest of your life.

We'll show you how to use the first two phases to reboot your lifestyle when you veer a bit off track. (Let's be honest—who doesn't? Our strategies help you address that reality so you can keep moving forward.)

We will teach you how to make your body shift from being predominantly a carbohydrate or sugar burner to a metabolically agile burner of all fuels, including fat.

We'll introduce you to the power of intermittent fasting and all its benefits and our kinder and gentler version called the Eat, Live, Thrive Eating Cycle. While short-term fasting is optional, we know from our own personal experiences and from the testimonies of many of our clients that it can be a game changer. And the benefits go far beyond weight loss to include brain health, higher energy, and disease prevention.

And just as important, we'll teach you how to design a lasting lifestyle eating plan that will be your foundation for life. Yes, there's room for a few empty calories. No, you won't follow your ideal plan perfectly every day. But you will discover the best plan for you and know that if you practice it moderately well most days, your body will reward you with great results!

Although our diet was designed specifically for women, it works great for men as well. We've been pleased to learn that many husbands and boyfriends are so impressed with their wives' and girlfriends' weight loss and health improvement that they decided to participate with them on the diet. They love the recipes and healthy substitutions we recommend to replace the foods that are troublesome. But beware: men lose weight faster than women, so don't let that discourage you!

Figuring Out Good and Bad Foods

After years of coaching women, we have seen the greatest breakthroughs when specific troublesome foods are eliminated for a period of time and then reintroduced strategically based on the body's response. Most women have no idea that they have sensitivity to certain foods because they've not identified a direct correlation between the food and its negative effect on their bodies.

It has been documented that more than 20 percent of people in industrialized countries have food intolerances that disrupt their health and contribute to weight-loss challenges.¹ Additionally, it is estimated that approximately 65 percent of adults have some level of lactose intolerance as well.² It is impossible to know how many undocumented sensitivities exist considering the steadily increasing number of individuals struggling with leaky gut and other digestive issues. And quite frankly, most of us are simply consuming too many processed foods and realizing the effects of all the additives and preservatives.

Some women don't remember what it's like to feel great. They have no clue that removing certain foods and adding others can help them look and feel years younger. Just imagine turning back your biological clock by simply eating the right foods for you. It is not only possible but also relatively easy to discover how to do just that using the personalized approach we teach in this book.

An Almost-New Body Every Eight Years

God designed our bodies with perfect blueprints that tell them what to do with the fuel we give them. They know how to build new blood cells, skin, muscle, bone, and so on. In fact, our bodies are constantly regenerating. We slough off dead skin cells hourly and replace them with new ones. We regenerate red blood cells within 120 days. We even build an entirely new skeletal system over time.

Unbelievably, the majority of living cells in your body today will not be present in your body eight years from today!³

Just as you cannot build a brick house out of straw, you cannot build a healthy body out of chocolate chip cookies and potato chips. The quality of the skin, bones, muscles, and cells of your body depend on the quality of the building materials you choose to supply, meal after meal! You truly are (and will be) what you eat.

We hope that fact motivates you to see each food you put in your body for what it is and choose wisely based on what you learn as you experience the ELT Diet.

Beyond Gluten Sensitivity

Many have jumped on the gluten-free bandwagon, and for good reason. It is estimated that much of the Western world is showing signs of being highly sensitive to an overabundance of processed wheat products. These include commercially made breads, pastas, crackers, packaged sauces, salad dressings, and, of course, desserts.

Many of the most well-respected health experts believe there are no significant nutritional ben-

efits found in commercially made products and that everyone would be better served by removing these products from their diets. Patti Milligan, the ELT Diet’s functional nutrition advisor and a registered dietician with a master’s degree in nutritional biochemistry and exercise science, agrees. She believes that the quality of mainstream wheat products in the US is troublesome for everyone—not just those with actual sensitivity to wheat—because conventional wheat is washed in chlorine. Additionally, many packaged wheat products use additives and preservatives that wreak havoc on our bodies.

Unfortunately, the solution is not just to go gluten free. Many people make the shift and end up eating excessive amounts of corn- or rice-based products, which also creates a high carbohydrate load and other challenges for their bodies. Additionally, food sensitivities go far beyond gluten. Many of our clients are flabbergasted to realize that some of the “healthful” foods they’ve been eating are problems for them.

Even when true sensitivity is not an issue, sugar addiction, carbohydrate overload, and toxic buildup (from all the commercially processed foods) can send our bodies on a downward health spiral. The strategic elimination of food culprits and plans to test each to determine our reactions are key factors in discovering the ideal diet suited to our bodies.

Therefore, if you have cut calories and still not lost weight, reduced all fat and gotten fatter, exercised your tail off and the fat hasn’t budged, watched the fat around your middle increase over the past decade, gained and lost and gained and lost, *then it’s time to turn your attention to the type and quality of foods you eat regularly.* Also, it is very likely you’re exceeding your carbohydrate threshold and converting those calories quickly to stored fat.

Insulin Resistance and Beyond

Excessive carbohydrate intake and insufficient carbohydrate metabolism (in other words, insulin resistance) is at the root of many women’s weight issues. Patti Milligan believes the average woman consumes about 300 to 350 grams of total carbohydrate per day. That amounts to almost 1,400 calories in carbohydrates alone, which is about 82 percent of a woman’s total caloric needs for one day.⁴

Insulin resistance (IR), also known as metabolic syndrome, can range from minimal to extreme. It is a progressive disease if not treated with proper diet modifications. It has become synonymous

In the Western world, we eat the quantity of carbohydrates as if we’re training for a marathon, but we never run the marathon!

—Patti Milligan

with prediabetes. IR puts you at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes, and it triples your risk for heart disease. Losing weight becomes almost impossible unless you change your diet consistently.

Your body must maintain a very narrow blood-sugar (glucose) range at all times. Blood-sugar spikes occur when you consume more carbohydrates than necessary to meet *immediate* energy requirements. When this happens, the excess glucose produced must be promptly transported and stored elsewhere. That is the job of insulin. It converts that excess into either glycogen (an energy source stored in the muscles or liver) or fat. Fat becomes the primary storage if glycogen stores are full and/or you are insulin resistant.

IR is caused when muscle, liver, and fat cells do not respond effectively to insulin. Research reveals that this problem increases as we age and is closely related to lifestyle habits. The most important of these habits is the quality of our nutrition. That means we can have control over this ever-increasing metabolic syndrome by changing our diets.

At least 50 percent of Americans have some form of insulin resistance, according to Dr. Robert Lustig, professor of pediatric endocrinology at the University of California, San Francisco.⁵ That percentage is even higher in adults older than forty-five. “In contrast to popular false beliefs, weight loss and health should not be a constant battle uphill through calorie restriction, which simply doesn’t work,” says Dr. Andreas Eenfeldt in an article on his blog. He then goes on to quote Dr. Lustig:

Following current dietary advice is counterintuitive to achieving a healthy weight.

The reason is the myth of energy balance. If you believe this, then you believe that obesity is a physics problem; too much energy in, too little energy out. Energy balance assumes that all calories are equal, no matter where they come from. Rather, obesity is about energy deposition into fat tissue. Obesity is a biochemistry problem, and where those nutrients came

An individual is considered to have insulin resistance (IR) if he or she has three or more of the following markers:

- blood pressure \geq 130/85 mm Hg or use of medication for hypertension
- fasting glucose \geq 100 mg/dL or use of medication for high blood glucose
- HDL cholesterol \leq 50 mg/dL
- triglycerides \geq 150 mg/dL
- waist circumference \geq 35 inches

from determine where they go in the body. It's called nutritional biochemistry and it shows that all calories are not created equal.⁶

Even for women who are not truly insulin resistant, excessive carbohydrates can create a roller-coaster effect as blood sugar levels peak and then fall throughout the day. Thus, cravings increase, energy decreases, and immunity declines.

Milligan also alerts us to the important role that a sedentary lifestyle plays in insulin resistance. Just increasing movement to three ten-minute spurts of intentional activity within your day can improve the sensitivity of insulin to your cells significantly because it stokes your metabolic furnace. In chapter 12, we'll share the importance of leading an active lifestyle and tips to easily improve your fitness.

Now let's take a look at an overview of the three key phases of the ELT Diet and Lifestyle Plan.

Making the Program Work for You

You Can Choose to Succeed!

2

Small steps taken *consistently* add up in a big way over time!

—DANNA

Here's the bad news: about 30 percent of our health and vitality is out of our control due to our genetics and gender. You may have genetic predispositions to certain diseases or metabolic challenges. As a woman, you have various hormone shifts through the years that you cannot avoid.

But here's the good news: 70 percent is in your control!

That 70 percent is called your *lifestyle*, and it makes a much bigger impact on your future than you may think.

How you choose to eat, exercise, sleep, relax, and deal with stress adds up in big ways. Don't rely on "good genes" to get you by long term. You can have the best genes on the planet, but if you don't take good care of yourself, you will age more quickly than necessary and succumb to many diseases that are quite preventable.

Of all your lifestyle choices, what you eat will have the most bearing. You can exercise regularly and sleep like a teenager, but over the long haul, it is the food you eat that will most influence your health and well-being. As Dr. Josh Axe puts it so succinctly, "food is medicine!"¹

In contrast, much of what we eat may be edible and provide our bodies energy, but it does not nurture health. In fact, much of what we ingest is causing our bodies significant "dis-ease."

Eat, Live, Thrive to the Rescue

We need to address this epidemic directly, and that's why we've created the Eat, Live, Thrive Diet and Lifestyle Plan. And we start with the *short-term* elimination of all processed foods, grains, and

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sugar. Doing this will immediately give your body a full respite from the stress and strain of your current diet.

The Eat, Live, Thrive Plan includes three phases:

1. The Elimination Phase
2. The Discovery Phase
3. The Lifestyle Phase

At the end of each diet-phase chapter, we include a synopsis with specific success steps you can take to keep each phase very simple. We also provide worksheets to help you reach your daily goals. Studies show that using some form of log or journaling promotes lasting weight-loss success. You can download these worksheets at EatLiveThriveDiet.com. Simply register with your email address to obtain unlimited access.

1. The Elimination Phase

The program begins with the temporary elimination of several key foods known to promote insulin resistance and cause allergies, sensitivities, and inflammation. By removing these foods from their diet for at least fourteen days, most women lose weight without calorie counting or portion control. They enjoy eating to satisfaction from the list of approved foods at each level.

This stage in the diet can be followed safely for longer than fourteen days—actually for as long as you like—and it is the phase in which you will notice the most weight loss. We'll discuss this more in chapter 7.

We understand that life can be busy and complicated. We also recognize that there are emotional and logistic challenges that may hamper your ability to participate at the highest level. Therefore, we've provided three different options for the Elimination Phase to suit your current needs. We'll describe them later. But one note: if you don't start at Level 3 (the highest), we recommend that you do move toward that level at some point so you experience the most dramatic benefits possible.

And don't worry—there's a place for some starches and treats in your long-term diet. How many? That's what we will discover together. It depends on your unique carbohydrate threshold, food sensitivities, activity level, stress load, and resting metabolic rate.

We'll help you breeze through this phase without a lot of cravings because the diet will help balance your blood sugar and our recipes are designed to keep you satisfied. You'll find them near the back of the book in part 5, starting on page 000. They've received rave reviews from our clients who continue to use them on a regular basis. And a bonus is that most family members love them as well.

Of course, you can also use your own recipes if all the ingredients are on the approved food list of the diet level you choose.

2. *The Discovery Phase*

The next phase, the Discovery Phase, is an adventure because it is an opportunity for you to discover why you experienced weight loss and health benefits during the Elimination Phase. The Discovery Phase is essential for your long-term success because you can lock in the results you achieved in Phase 1.

By reintroducing each eliminated food—one at a time—you will be able to determine which specific foods are troublesome for you. Some may cause immediate weight gain, inflammation, digestive upset, or other symptoms. Others may not produce any negative symptoms until you've had a few servings, so you may be able to eat them moderately on occasion.

You will also discover if eating more grains or carbohydrates in general causes you to quickly gain back the weight you lost. This can be the case if you have a lowered carbohydrate threshold or full-blown insulin resistance. The only way to know for sure is to eliminate, reintroduce, and carefully monitor your reaction. You'll learn more about this in chapter 8.

The Discovery Phase will very likely reveal some of the missing links to reaching your health and weight-loss goals once and for all. If life gets in the way and you cannot complete the full Discovery Phase by testing all the potentially troublesome foods, test what you can for this first cycle. Then when life is more manageable, restart the process with a minimum seven days of elimination and test the remaining foods.

We recommend taking three days to test each food. If you have a negative reaction, you need to wait to test the next food until all symptoms are gone. The entire Discovery Phase can potentially take a month or more, depending on your reactions and the number of foods you've chosen to eliminate.

You may go through Phases 1 and 2 of the diet several times and discover something new each time. Remember: this is a journey of discovery that you can repeat and perfect as you gain new understanding about your body.

3. *The Lifestyle Phase*

Once you know the foods that trip you up, you can begin to design an ideal long-term eating plan that accommodates your specific needs and preferences. In chapter 9, we make the process for the Lifestyle Phase super easy.

We've included thought-provoking questions to help you pinpoint your goals and greatest challenges. You'll have specific guidelines and two approaches to choose from: "Keep It Simple" or "By the Numbers."

Make the Program Work for You

One of our mottos is Progress, Not Perfection. Change takes time. Following the diet phases "perfectly" may be ideal but is also unrealistic. When you can make several consistent changes most days, the occasional slipup will not set you back too much. Over time it will get easier and easier to make healthier choices, and a leaner, more youthful, and more energetic body will be a great motivator.

Learning how to design your own modifications and find creative ways to use the diet phases to suit your lifestyle will benefit you long term. We'll give you lots of examples of how to do that in the Lifestyle Phase. But before we dig into the specifics of the diet and its three phases, we want to address a very important topic: habits. Knowing *what* to do is not enough. Knowing *how* to get yourself to follow through and do it is essential. Yet few diets address this issue. In the next two chapters, we'll do just that.

From simple attitude adjustments to a major "mind renewal" overhaul, we'll share scientific facts about your brain and psychology, biblical principles, and practical tips both of us have used for decades to adopt and sustain healthy lifestyles. These practices work for us, and they can work for you as well!

You Are What You Think

Starting Your Diet in Your Brain

3

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

—ROMANS 7:15

Do these words from the apostle Paul resonate with you? Do you wonder why it is so hard to make yourself do the things you know are good for you? You are not alone.

We all struggle with the “battle of the flesh,” and many of us succumb easily when it comes to food or other forms of immediate gratification. It’s like there is an urge that cries out, “I want it. I need it. I’ve got to have it. Now!”

Making healthier choices is easier said than done. Mustering an extra dose of willpower or motivation is not enough. We need to get to the core of the issue, which quite often is rooted in unhealthy thinking and bad habits. Our underlying perspective is more powerful than most of us realize.

In fact, the power of our thoughts influences us in so many ways we cannot begin to fathom, even changing our body chemistry!

Mind over Milkshake

Alia Crum, a clinical psychologist and assistant professor at Stanford University, wanted to know if a nutritional label could physically alter what happens to a person eating that food. She’d spent her early years as a student studying the placebo effect (i.e., how a sugar pill can physically alter a body if the person taking the pill believes it will).

UNCORRECTED PROOF

SNEAK PEEK  **SAMPLE ONLY**

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In 2011 Crum devised an interesting new experiment using food. First, she concocted a large recipe of French vanilla milkshake and divided it into two batches. One batch was labeled as a low-calorie drink called “Sensishake.” The label reflected that the drink had no fat or added sugar and was only 140 calories. The other batch was called “Indulgence.” Its label indicated that the shake contained a high amount of sugar and fat to account for the whopping 620 calories. The reality: both shakes were a moderate 300 calories.

Our beliefs matter in virtually every domain, in everything we do. How much is a mystery, but I don't think we've given enough credit to the role of our beliefs in determining our physiology, our reality. We have this very simple metabolic science: calories in, calories out. People don't want to think that our beliefs have influence, too. But they do!

—Alia Crum, clinical psychologist

The people in the study had their ghrelin levels measured before and after they drank their version of the shake. Ghrelin is what many health pros call the hunger hormone. When levels of ghrelin rise in the stomach, this tells the brain that it is hungry and that it's time to find food. Metabolism also slows down in case the need for food is not met right away.

After a substantial meal, ghrelin levels will drop, signaling to your brain that you've had enough to eat, and your metabolism increases, allowing you to burn the new

calories from the meal. If a meal or snack is small, the levels don't drop very much and the metabolism remains less robust.

Most scientists have assumed that ghrelin levels fluctuate in direct relation to the actual nutrients the ghrelin encounters in the stomach. That is not what Crum discovered in her milkshake study. This is what she reported:

The ghrelin levels dropped about three times more when people were consuming the indulgent shake (or thought they were consuming the indulgent shake), compared to the people who drank the sensible shake (or thought that's what they were drinking).¹

Wow! The ghrelin levels dropped more just because the participants *thought* they were consuming an indulgent shake. Just imagine what could happen for you if you rewired your thinking to consider healthful choices as “indulgent”!

This eye-opening illustration should motivate us all to cultivate healthy mental habits for a lifetime.

The Freeways of the Mind

Our brains were designed by our Creator to respond in specific ways. And the brain—just like the heart, liver, and kidneys—is designed to perform certain vital functions. It's helpful to understand how God made this magnificent glob of gray matter and see why it does what it does. We can better appreciate the complexity of our feelings and behaviors when we understand the brain's physiology.

With recent advances in medical technology, researchers have come to better understand that the human brain has an almost unlimited capacity to store information. Before we are born, we begin to develop billions of neural pathways. These are complex, microscopic circuits where our thoughts and experiences create an explosion of electrical activity. And it is where all our mental data is stored.

Some of these pathways can become physically strong and dominant because the thought or experience is frequently repeated. They become like superhighways in our minds, overriding many of the weaker pathways or less dominant thoughts.

The size of our neural pathways can physically change. Old dominant pathways can shrink and become less influential when they are neglected or overridden with new messages. And smaller, weaker pathways can physically grow and become like superhighways. How? They change through repetition. You've heard the saying that practice makes perfect. More accurately, the statement should be that practice makes permanent. How perfect will depend on the quality of what is being practiced.

Stewardship of Our Minds

Like computers, our brains do not place judgment on their data. They just store information, true or false, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. Ultimately, we come to believe the strongest messages—those messages that have played the loudest and most frequently throughout our lives. But what if that information is wrong? Well, just imagine what would happen if someone replaced the data that is stored in the NASA computers with wrong information. The result would be disastrous. The same is true with our minds.

This is what author Bob George refers to in his book *Classic Christianity*: "People are in bondage to their erroneous beliefs and it moves them into emotional and physical bondage."²

From Bible scholars to the most popular modern-day motivational speakers, those who have

studied human behavior know that *how we think* drives our choices and behavior. Though our brains function as storage centers for information, God has also given us the ability to think, reason, and apply knowledge.

God has, in effect, given us stewardship of our minds.

From our simplest habits to our most destructive behaviors, our actions are the direct results of our mental programming. Both psychologists and biblical scholars agree that it is almost impossible for individuals to behave inconsistently with what they believe about themselves. Your mind will naturally go in the direction of your most prevalent thoughts.

If this is true—and it is—there is no permanent way to change our behavior without first changing our minds. That’s why diets alone tend to fail. All the change is external. And when the diet is over, 95 percent of people revert to old programmed behaviors.

It’s essential to change the program!

If you don’t like who you are, don’t just change your behavior—change your thoughts. It may feel awkward at first, as if you’re lying to yourself, but your brain doesn’t know the difference. At a point, it will respond to that dominant message as if it were true.

Listen to yourself when you look in the mirror each morning. What words do you express as you resolve to lose that excess weight? How do you describe your body, your fitness, your energy, your self-control? If you keep telling yourself that you are fat and you hate exercise, you’ll continue to believe it. Those beliefs will sabotage your efforts.

Most of us have heard that it takes twenty-one days to change a habit. Unfortunately, that is wishful thinking. New studies reveal that at twenty-one days, our brain just *begins* to make small changes within our neuron pathways. We need to practice our new habits much longer for them to become permanent. Some experts say that real and lasting change takes a minimum of 80 to 280 days!

Renew Your Mind to Transform Your Body

Getting beneath the surface and discovering scriptural truths about who we are and how God sees us can help us overcome many of the lies we’ve been telling ourselves. Sometimes we know these truths intellectually but still don’t believe them for ourselves.

As a new believer still struggling with panic attacks and bulimia, I (Danna) was excited the first time I read Romans 12:2, which says, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

Wow, that sounded so good! *Transformed*. It’s a powerful word. But how do we do it? In my

journey toward wholeness, I learned that we are transformed by truth. When we see, hear, speak, and believe that truth over and over, it replaces the lies we've been believing.

In the first part of that verse, we are told not to conform to this world. What does that mean? Conforming means complying with a set of customs or standards. God calls us to be different and set apart rather than driven by our culture's values. This can be very hard to do, especially when we are bombarded with ideas and images that tell us how to think and be.

How God Renewed Danna's Mind

As I (Danna) shared in the introduction, my severe panic attacks and bulimia motivated me to begin a relentless journey to find truth. During those years of internal struggle, I doubted I would ever be free of the paralyzing fear and lack of control that permeated my life daily.

Do not underestimate what God may be doing in your own struggles to draw you closer to him and transform you into the woman he wants you to become. This battle of the body is so much more than a physical one, and God can use every aspect of your journey to his glory and your benefit.

In the first few weeks as a new believer, I was ravenous for answers to overcome my fear. I could hardly set down my Bible. One day while reading, I ran across a verse that made me catch my breath.

Winning Thoughts

In the human brain, the most dominant thoughts win. So, what are your dominant thoughts? Are they serving you well? Or have your persistent negative thoughts made you their unknowing servant?

Don't underestimate the power of truth to transform you from the inside out. As a starting point, copy down these statements of affirmation and put them in a place where you will be reminded to review them every day:

- *I am excited to discover a healthier lifestyle and watch my body transform.*
- *I love being active, so I make exercise a part of my daily lifestyle.*
- *I choose to eat for maximum energy and health.*
- *I am changing my unhealthy beliefs and attitudes.*
- *I am becoming transformed by the renewing of my mind.*
- *I can see myself leaner and healthier in the months ahead.*

It was like water in the desert to my thirsty soul. I felt as if it were written just for me. The verse is 2 Timothy 1:7, and it says, “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (NKJV).

Every time I sensed a panic attack brewing, I would say this verse. I personalized it and said, “God has not given *me* a spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind.” I must have repeated those words thirty or forty times *each day* for six months.

At the same time, I began reminding myself of other truths. When I felt anxious, I would tell myself that God was with me and had never let me die or “fall off the edge” before. And even if I did die, at least I knew where I was going! Over the course of the next nine months, my panic episodes became less intense and less frequent. Before the end of a year, they were completely gone. Oh, the power of truth to transform us through the renewing of our minds!

Two things happened in my journey toward transformation. The first was physical. As I repeatedly counteracted the lies I believed about losing my mind, dying, and being out of control with the scripture and statements I’ve mentioned, my neural pathways started to change. My old, destructive, dominant pathways started to shrink, and the new messages created strong new pathways, which grew until they finally propelled me to have healthier feelings and behavior. And although the change was gradual, much like watching our hair grow, it was very real.

I believe the second thing that happened was supernatural. In Hebrews 4:12, it is explained like this: “The word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

Spiritual and Physical Transformation

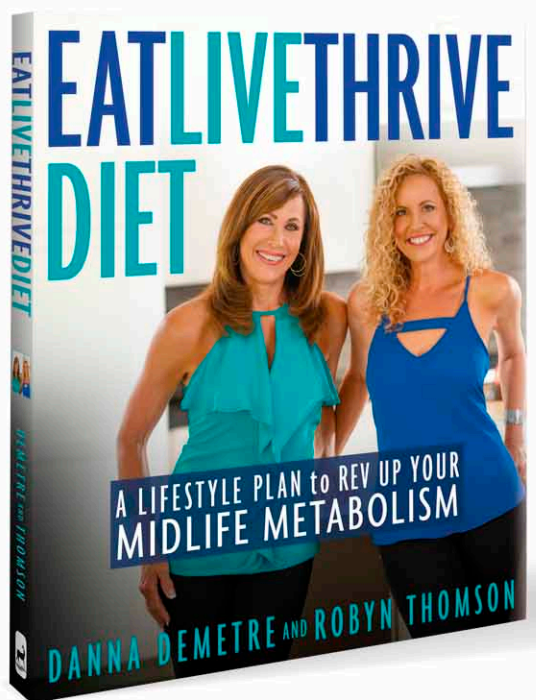
God’s Word, the Bible, is so much more than wisdom and good advice. It is alive! It is active and does surgery on our hearts and minds. The Greek word for “sword” in Hebrews is *machaira*. Biblical scholar Tim Scott, my pastor, told me that it means “a short dagger, like a double-edged surgical knife.” As I pondered this text, I realized that I had turned the truth of God’s Word on myself and allowed it to cut out the lies I believed and replace them with life-changing truth. When I exposed myself to and dwelled upon God’s truth, it miraculously transformed me.

As with the changing of my neural pathways, there was no crash course or shortcuts. I just applied God’s Word consistently to my life day after day, and in his perfect timing, I was transformed.

We promise that you can be transformed too.

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