

Section 1

Tanya's Story

Chapter 1

A Personal Trainer's Addiction to Sugar

My Beginning Years

I think we're all like suitcases.

We each have a different exterior. Maybe we're sleek and shiny, or perhaps we've been on several long and difficult journeys and look a little worn and dented. But you can't tell what's inside the suitcase just by judging its outside. For me, my suitcase hid a lot of garbage—shame, anger, disappointment, discouragement, and disgust. But you would never know by looking at the exterior.

My first word was cookie. Little did I know how much impact that word would have in my life.

My mother was what you might call a hippie. She did yoga, she juiced for us, made homemade yogurt; in fact, everything was homemade and infused with love. We ate

prunes, and as she always likes to tell me, she made us the best breakfast of oats, mashed bananas, homemade yogurt, and a touch of honey. I can still taste it to this day! I had a very good, healthy, love-filled start to my life. My mother provided me with a strong foundation, that is until one day when my nana came to visit.

My nana, my mum's mum, lived in England, so we didn't see her all the time. My mother was about to give birth to my sister, so Nana came to look after me. She first introduced me to candy from the fancy see-through globe-like machines that littered the grocery stores and malls. Nana would say to me, do you want a surprise? Who wouldn't? Of course I did, and at the age of thirteen months I was hooked.

I wanted the surprise. It was special. It was a treat. Nana told my mum that it was okay for her to spoil her grandchildren. However, my mother, a little disappointed because my diet had been so clean with whole food, was not impressed by the temper tantrums that would arise when we walked by those fancy globe-like machines and she would not buy me the surprise like Nana had. By then, my nana had left, but something had started.

Surprises were everywhere: cookies at the grocery store, lollipops at the bank, and even sweets at the gas station when people used to pump your gas and offer treats to kids. All day long, I had a drip of sugar in my veins as we went from place to place.

My mother continued to keep our house clean of processed foods and made our meals from scratch, but by

then the sugar seed had been planted. Of course, it was all innocent. No one made me out to be hooked to sugar. But as we know, sugar is terribly addictive ... more on that later.

I had a balanced diet in my younger years, although I was definitely laying the foundation for poor gut health as I got older. By the age of two, I was hospitalized with pneumonia, and from that point on, had my share of antibiotics to help with bronchial infections and bouts of pneumonia that would last well into my mid-thirties.

Granted, it didn't help that I grew up in a house where both parents smoked; however, no one ever asked about my diet or suggested altering what I ate. No one ever talked to me about sugar and how it might impact my health. And sadly, no one talked to my mum about it either.

Financial Freedom

You're probably thinking, what does financial freedom have to do with my story? Well, on a positive note, for decades I have thanked my father for teaching me how to manage and save my money.³ I was about nine when he started giving my sister and me twenty dollars per month. It was money that we had to learn to manage, so I couldn't spend it all because I had to put 10 percent in savings, 30 percent in clothing, etc.

There was also a certain amount I could spend solely on what I wanted. This was perhaps the downside of having my own money, and freedom to do what I wanted with it. Who knows why I chose to spend it on Nerds,

Astro Pops, Blow Pops, Big Red Gum, Mackintosh Caramels, Charleston Chews, Candy Necklaces, Gob Stoppers, Hubba Bubba, Bubilicious, Pop Rocks, Fun Dip, Ring Pops, Rock Candy, Rolos, Smarties, Twix, Mint Aero Bars ... seriously, I could keep going! I can remember it so vividly. This would continue for years, but it wasn't a problem because other kids were doing it. Was I doing it more? Did I start to have to have it? Was I becoming addicted? Who thinks about these things when you are only nine years old? I didn't. I am just grateful that my mum always provided me with healthy dinners and snacks; at least I was getting some basic nutrition! She knew I spent money on candy (maybe not how much), but it was my money and aside from this, I was saving and budgeting properly.

Now, I know some of you might be thinking that I was perhaps deprived of sweets at home and that's why I went out and bought them. But that is not the case. We had cookies, homemade apple pies and crumbles, custard, rice pudding, and we'd often go to Kawartha Dairy for ice cream. My mum provided balance. My candy-buying never was because I ever felt I was being deprived.

My Teenage Years

Reflecting back, my earliest memory of trying to lose weight was taking fibre pills so I would stop eating excessively. As I recall though, I don't think I ate any less; I just obsessed about my weight even more. I didn't have one

ounce of knowledge about how to lose weight effectively. Then, throw in being about thirteen years old with raging hormones, and all the teenage questions for which I had with no answers. Where could I turn, especially when my parents were lost in their own world of a bad marriage?

In hindsight, I can say that my eating habit was just an escape from what was happening in my head. I may have been pudgy and soft, but I have never been that overweight. In my thirteen-year-old mind, I mentally felt fat, but didn't make the connection between what I was seeing in my head and what I really looked like.

When I was sixteen, my parents separated. This resulted in my mum moving back to her homeland, England, to be with her family. My sister and I were sent to private school for a year of transition, so we could sort out our place in the world. This is where I think the notion of numbing myself with food really took off, on a subconscious level anyway. While at private school, I submerged myself in my studies and dealt with my new life. It was painful to say the least, being so far away from my mother. My father was dealing with making his own new life, my sister was coping in her own way, and to top it all off, I had been removed from all of my friends. So what? I'm not the first teenager who's been sent off to school and been a child of divorce. Get over it. Well, you can tell yourself that on one level, but deep down I couldn't deal with the pain rationally and, for me, it reared its ugly head in the form of eating, or shall I say, bingeing and punishment.

I remember, on numerous occasions, whether eating an entire pie and tub of ice cream or a whole tray of cookies, I was oblivious to anyone watching me. It was only years later that my sister and I would talk about this. It was a faint memory for me because, for anyone who is a binger, you become transported to somewhere else. It is also something you just don't want to remember or admit to!

Due to the fact that I was an honours student, I had earned the right to study in my room instead of with all the others in the main hall at private school. In retrospect, it would have been better to be in the hall because, when I had finished my studies, I could do what I wanted which usually meant baking cookies. I would bake the cookies, which was a very soothing process, but then I would eat all of them. I would play the game that it doesn't count if it's cookie dough, it doesn't count if you're standing up, or if it's not on a plate. It only counts when the cookies are on a plate and you are sitting down. And if you did eat them, but still weren't fully conscious to taste them, you could get some more. And then suddenly, where the "bleep" did all the cookies go? Did someone eat them when I wasn't watching? But no one else was in the room! Argh, I actually ate all of them. How can you eat a batch of cookies and not even taste them? And then do you know what I would do? Throw them up! What a complete waste of my time. I don't even remember how I got into this habit. But, I did. I would go to the bathroom and stick my finger down my throat. Gagging.

Cursing at myself for being such an idiot. Finally, a stream of cookie would flail into the toilet. Flush. I'd look at myself in the mirror through red, watery eyes. I would say the most demeaning things to this person. But, the saddest part is, I would either go and bake another batch and eat some more and do it again, or it would happen the next night. There are times when it was hard to throw up in the toilet, so I would stand in the shower with hot water falling on my back, bending over and sticking my finger down my throat. Chewed food leaving my body and collecting at the drain was akin to the feelings of complete and utter helplessness which were swelling inside of me. I wanted the demons out of me. I wanted peace. Funny enough, even when you throw them up, they still remain. Feelings, unfortunately, cannot project out of you and into a toilet or down the shower drain. What a shame.

Talk about a time-waster—prepare the cookies, eat them, and then throw up—why bother? Bulimia. Self-punishment is what I know I was practicing now, but not back then. I was just trying not to gain any weight.

For some strange reason, I learned that when you throw up the acid from the bile can rot your teeth and can rot the lining of your throat, and apparently that was enough to make me stop. So I did. There may have been a few times after this over a six-month period, that I would indulge in this behaviour, although it was very few and far between. It has definitely not had a place in my life in the last thirty years. I knew I had to learn to deal

with what I put in my mouth and not jeopardize my health.

If I wasn't going to discard the extra food from my body, how was I to stay thin and not get fat? How would I deal with my loneliness? How would I deal with my unexplained feelings? What was I going to do to punish myself? I started chewing gum. I would chew about twenty packs of Hubba Bubba (do you remember that gum?) a week, and I would tape the wrappers on the wall to remind myself of what I was doing. I can't get fat chewing gum. I also probably starved myself, and I think I ate only grapefruit for about a week. I did a lot of silly things that were useless. I started working out (that was not useless); it was the cycle that followed. Eat food, then work it off, eat more food, etc., and this continued for many years!

In my thirties, I read *A New Earth, Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*, by Eckhart Tolle and it was a wakeup call that gave me some peace. According to Eckhart, people who suffer from bulimia need to get in touch with their bodies instead of being controlled by their minds. Oh, how I wish I'd had the insight then. But that's part of growing up and travelling on the journey. However, when I read it in my thirties it made so much sense that I wanted to cry.

In my own sixteen-plus-year-old brain I decided to deal with the weight that I was putting on and just accept it as best as I could, because I wasn't ready to move on. I shoved whatever I could in my mouth. Why? Emptiness. Loneliness. Severely lacking proper nutrition training.

Whatever it was, I didn't care, and I wasn't ready to face it. I was bloated, I felt like crap, I had horrible yeast infections, and I hated everything about me. I had a very lonely year at school.

During grade thirteen, I moved to Toronto and lived with my godparents. Everything was new; the people, my experiences. I remember eating in the bathroom stalls sometimes, because I felt people did not want to be around me. I felt safe when I could eat by myself. I also remember my godfather mentioning that I ate more than he did. All these memories wove into the fabric of my being, making me feel more self-conscious and pathetic ... because I couldn't control my eating. I never felt full—ever—I just kept stuffing food in. At that time, food gave me a false sense of comfort and protection.

At 5' 4½", I weighed about 130 lb., but I had no muscle weight. To me, I looked and felt fat and out of shape. I think it was the weight of my mind and the lack of happiness that weighed the most.

This pattern of compulsive eating and self-sabotage carried on for a few years. I know that after leaving private school I did lose some weight, but I was still eating compulsively. And oh, could I pack it back! Was I proud of eating so much? No! What was I getting out of eating excessively? I was getting a pass. I was avoiding the moment. Numbing the pain. Burying the pain. The problem is, it didn't, and it doesn't go away. It just gets deeper. Eventually I would have to deal with it. But what exactly was the pain? What had I buried so deeply?

At this point, my adolescent suitcase was being filled with things that would later have to come out!

It's Not About the Food

When I went to the University of Western Ontario at age nineteen, I lived at the Saugeen-Maitlain Hall residence and I got the smallest meal plan possible. Again, I was just focusing on the food and lacked the education about nutrients. I didn't know how to deal with stress and my emotions, let alone make sure I didn't put on weight. Isn't it natural to drink and eat a lot at university, or is that my normal? I'm sure that with all the drinking and eating I did, I still gained some freshman pounds. To be honest, I don't remember.

I started to dabble more with exercise. I did some aerobics classes and lifted some weights, so this kept me on a healthy track and kept me from packing on the pounds. I recall how powerful exercise made me feel mentally and what a great stress reliever it was. I also remember not enjoying my economics class; it caused me a lot of stress, frustration, and anxiety. During the aerobics classes I would pretend I was stomping on my economics books and this made me feel fantastic. It was my release! My aha moment. There was something other than food that would provide a great stress relief. This must be when I first got hooked on exercise for its powerful effects—not just as a way to keep the weight off.

Hmmm ... maybe my suitcase could handle the stuff it was carrying around. Or maybe not?

While at Western, I fell in love with a man that I wanted to marry, but it didn't work out. We broke up in my last year at Western, and I was devastated and heartbroken. I lost a ton of weight because I thought if I looked better he would want me back. It didn't work. Honestly, what was I thinking? But that's how ingrained being thin and having a certain image was tied to my life. I thought thin equaled happiness and success. I thought life would be okay if I looked a particular way. At the same time, I thought what a pathetic creature I was for thinking this. Feelings about myself spiraled downward. Thoughts that I'm not good enough, I'm not enough, period, rapidly started to enter into my life again. I was connecting back to the emotional pain of my parents' divorce and was feeling emotionally abandoned again. How easy it is to reach for food and numb the pain. And although I did, I knew I had to exercise to help with the balance of keeping myself sane and in shape (unfortunately still with my nasty shame of being a sugar/food addict—oh the weight I carried).

The Exercise Seed Is Planted

After graduating from Western, I didn't know what to do, so I went to George Brown College for Fitness and Lifestyle Management. I think the amazing effects of exercise were planted while at university, and I wanted to explore why, in fact, it was so powerful. This started the ball rolling. It was a very intense course. It provided me with

more nutrition training than a doctor, and an intricate look at how the body works physiologically. I learned about every muscle, bone, and organ. I was hooked. We learned how to lift weights, how to burn fat, and how to eat properly to live a healthy lifestyle.

I loved this stuff and my body loved it too. I started to lift weights knowing what to focus on. I was finally on the road to understanding nutrition and its effects on the body. I was sculpted and felt fantastic. I felt better mentally. Maybe the hormones of my teenage years had balanced out, but I also now knew the tremendous effects of exercise (and nutrition) on my mental state, not just my physical state.

My suitcase now had a stunning and sleek exterior, but was there something still lurking inside?

Whisper to a SCREAM!

After George Brown College, I started working at a financial institution. I had to sit all day. I was going crazy. I would work out every day from two to three in the afternoon. Otherwise I would have really gone crazy.

At this point, I started studying for my Personal Training (PT) exams because I knew I couldn't sit for a living. I was already an accredited Aerobics Instructor, CPR/First Aid Instructor, and Standard Fitness Appraiser. I started teaching aerobics during lunch hours at the Adelaide Club in Toronto. Soon I had clients I was providing per-

sonal training to, before and after my conventional day job.

Eventually though, my suitcase started bulging; I could barely keep it closed. What I really wanted was to be able to teach full-time, but I was afraid. Afraid to be self-employed. Afraid of the potential lack of security. My sit-down job was secure. I had paid vacations, and a steady salary. It's what I thought a job was supposed to be like. You dressed in a fancy outfit and looked like you were important. I was very conflicted with my thoughts, yet soon my mind and body would provide for the next chapter of my life.

After about two years in the financial world I had a nervous breakdown. I was hauled off in an ambulance and was told to take a few days off. I had suffered a major panic attack; it felt as if I'd had a heart attack. A few days later I returned to work, and within a few more days I was hauled off again in an ambulance. I never returned to that job.

I took some time off on short-term disability. I stuffed myself with Bugles, among other highly addictive carbohydrates. And it wasn't just a handful. My habit of numbing the pain with food was back. My body was just starting to scream. How closely was I listening? If I went out in public I got hives, my heart would start to pound, and my body would start to burn. I went for some help, was prescribed drugs that I never took, and searched for another answer. My life was clouded with anxiety, depression, loneliness, and a lack of an emotional direction and

support. I had no one to turn to. Exercise was my saviour. It helped to keep me sane. This was a very lonely year that could have led me down a very different path; however, somewhere during my life, I had learned that ultimately the choice was mine as to which direction I could take.

I chose to leap! I leaped out of the corporate world of a secure pay cheque and benefits, into a world of unknowns. How much money would I make? Would I be able to pay my rent? How many clients would I need? How many classes could I teach? On the other hand, I was so excited. I was passionate and on a new adventure. I'd had enough of my own pity party and started to read a lot about the power of the mind. You are what you think about most of the time. I had created this life of self-pity; I had become a victim of my life. It was time to change my story because, frankly, I'd had enough. Thoughts manifest into action and eventual reality, and my thoughts needed a new direction.

This part of my life really helped me to better understand some of my clients who felt stuck, because they were also stuck in habitual mental patterns and having their own pity parties.

I poured myself into my work and LOVED it! I worked with clients from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. (another addiction?). I was teaching classes when I wasn't training. I was so sculpted because I was constantly moving, running with clients, and teaching classes. I had energy to spare.

My suitcase was freshly polished on the outside and looking GOOD!

But something happened.

Sometime in my mid-twenties I found myself stuck in a bad relationship, not enjoying my job, working to pay the bills of living on my own, and turning to sugar and food to try and cope with everything that was going on. Somewhere along the line of growing up, I missed the classes on how to deal with emotions and these feelings of being unsettled. I missed how to deal with anxiety and depression. I missed that it's okay to be upset and how to deal with it. I remember one day calling my dad and saying, "where's my house, my children, my husband, my white picket fence?" And he said, "Welcome to the Real World." Ouch. All those years in school and life and I was ill-prepared for what I was facing.

I had a lot of dark, difficult days at this time of my life. I lived in Toronto at Bay and Bloor on the twelfth floor of an apartment building and there were times I wondered what it would be like if I just ended it all? Took the leap. Who would really care if I was gone? Well that was a silly question because I knew people cared about me, but I didn't know how much I cared about myself. I just felt so dark and lost and felt like I didn't have any answers.

I reached out to a couple of my friends and told them that I felt like ending it all, but they weren't equipped to help me in any way. They just told me I'd be okay; I'd get through this. But what I really needed was more concrete answers. I was also seeing a therapist and I remember saying that I wanted to kill somebody. I had so much anger and rage inside of me that needed to be released and I

knew that exercise was helping because I had made the connection to exercise and well-being years ago. The therapist said she knew I would never harm anyone because I was open and talked about my feelings. This was not a case where someone would actually follow through on their threat. During these times there was no mention of specific coping skills or changing my diet or changing how I looked at things. Or how it would be beneficial to change my thoughts. When I went to therapy sessions it was always about talking about the past and, frankly, I was tired of talking about the past. I wanted answers now and I wanted a different future.

I remember feeling that I was internally lost. It was dark, and I was in the throes of my sugar addiction and I said to myself, "Tanya, you can continue down this path of darkness or you can turn to the light; you have options, you have choices. What are you going to choose?" And that day was pivotal because that day I knew I had a choice. That day was another day I put on my big-girl pants and I grew up. That day I started to think differently. I knew that I could live with myself. I knew I could handle situations better. I knew that I had a bright future. And I also knew that it was okay to feel sadness at times.

Habits Are Hard to Change

During my early years as a full-time personal trainer and aerobics instructor, I still hadn't made the complete con-

nection between a healthy body and mind versus being skinny. Perhaps I shouldn't be so hard on myself. Change doesn't happen overnight. You can't learn everything all at once, but you can listen. That said, I still thought I could do it all on my own and didn't need anyone's eating advice.

"Yeah, whatever ..." This used to be what I would think when people would tell me about nutrition and its effect on the body. I wanted to believe that as long as I worked out hard enough I could stay slim and look the personal trainer part. I remember once eating four Snickers bars and then working out intensely for two hours to wear them off. It was a constant cycle of eating too many calories, unhealthy at that, and then working them off. I guess my belief was calories in – calories out, with little regard to the type of calories. Although I did for the most part have a healthy diet and active lifestyle, I was not eating for optimal health. I wasn't ready to let go of my beliefs about food. Or, I may have even disputed them because I wasn't ready to hear it or to change what I was doing. Until you have an open mind or you are ready to change, it's hard to hear new information. We also have incredibly strong social and emotional ties to food that can make us defend our choices. And our brains are hard-wired for rewards and food is a reward. Many of us, since childhood have been rewarded with food. Does this sound familiar? "If you eat your dinner, you will get dessert," or "You've done such a great job, let's celebrate with ice cream (fill in your treat)."

One day, I was just sick and tired from feeling sluggish and playing the calorie in – calorie out game that I began to realize what I was doing was not the healthiest of choices. And I decided to listen to those that were healthier than I was. I found that my beliefs were starting to shift and I was ready to play a new game. Instead of being high and mighty with my own way, and basically shut off to advice, I started to say, “That’s interesting, I will have to look into that,” or “That sounds interesting, can you tell me more?” Armed with my new attitude of openness, I became more aware of eating consciously. And this started my new adventure of healthy eating, still with many bumps in the road called real life.

I’m not sure how the bumps crept back into my life again, or do I? I was in my mid-twenties, working like a fiend and in a bad relationship. I felt out of control with my emotions and, instead of learning what to do with them, I resorted back to what was easiest (and what my brain was hard-wired to do from childhood) and what I knew—numbing myself with food.

My suitcase hadn’t been opened in a while ... The exterior was looking a little rough.

During my twenties, I recall Oprah saying on one of her shows on weight loss, where she had lost a lot of weight and then put it back on, something to the effect of, whatever stage of health/fatness you choose to be in, enjoy it until you are ready for the next stage.

And so I did.

I enjoyed the extra 10 lb. I had put on (which felt like 40 lb. of mental fat). On second thought, I don't think I *really* enjoyed it, but I wasn't ready to move forward because I didn't know where I was going. This may have been my first lesson in this long journey of getting control over my eating. Accept where I am and enjoy it; well at least try to enjoy it. It's a toughie. Sometimes you need to be still, remove the noise, and feel the moment. Be present. It's in those times that what we are wanting appears.

Ever since I can remember I have listened to the voices in my head. I didn't know how *not* to listen to them. It was very difficult to be in stillness. It caused me anxiety and pain. Keeping busy let me ignore what was really going on. It was much easier to eat, then beat myself up for what I had just eaten, instead of not eating and being still. This was comforting in a bizarre sort of way. I also knew that I really did have to change and learn to be still and quiet my mind.

In my thirties I learned about meditation and stillness. Boring is a state of mind and very different from being still or quiet. Out of stillness, or what some may call boredom, comes creativity. Just because we are sitting still doesn't mean we are bored. It is a skill to sit quietly, have moments of reflection, and dream. To this day, I detest it when someone says to me or my children that they must find this activity, event, situation (whatever it may be), boring.

After years of reflection, I recognized I was eating to repress feelings of loneliness and abandonment. I couldn't find the balance or the answers that I needed in my life. I was constantly beating myself up for not being perfect, and it was wearing me out. I also didn't have the support I needed, or the know-how to get me out of my head. And I was scared.

When I moved to New York in 1998 with my future husband, instead of visiting museums I would visit bakeries, make pies and cookies, and eat to excess. Why? Looking back, I can say it was for comfort, and that I was obviously having a hard time with change. I can't imagine how unhealthy I would have been if I had not exercised throughout this journey of excessive eating. And the problem with eating, unlike alcohol, drugs, and smoking, is that you can't stop it completely. You still have to eat. You have to think about food and it tempts you at every meal. I would also justify that since I was exercising I could eat all this junk. Today, however, I realize it's not just about being skinny, it's my health that matters. Depriving myself of good health is worse than depriving myself of what is considered normal eating.

In my late thirties, I found this quote by Stanton Peele, PhD, in *7 Tools to Beat Addiction* that reads, "Addiction is a search for immature gratification—it is self-seeking behaviour resembling that of a dependent child."⁴ It was a seed that I planted into my awareness, and I now keep this posted above my desk to remind me that I am a mature adult, and I am safe. It helps to keep me present.

I realized that I needed to release my inner child—the hurts, the pain, the emotional baggage—and grow up. I wasn't a child anymore, yet I didn't have the skills for transformation without addiction being my automatic response.

Perhaps I was ready to open my suitcase now.

Addiction Uncovered

In February of 2007, I read the Twelve Step program for alcoholics, and a shiver ran through me. I am addicted to sugar. Sugar is a drug. I needed to surrender. I needed to feel what I had to feel. Easier said than done. But all this information I was opening myself up to led me to healing myself day after day, albeit it's been a long journey.

In August of 2007, I read an article by Dr. Mercola titled *Is Sugar More Addictive than Cocaine?*⁵ Its findings reported that an astonishing 94 percent of rats who were allowed to choose between sugar water and cocaine, chose sugar.

I was relieved to know that I wasn't crazy. This was a powerful addiction that I was trying to control, and I was fighting against reward signals that were firing in my brain.

I began to recognize that when I started eating sugar I couldn't stop. I noticed that I would have to eat more and more sugar to reach that state of euphoria and peace I was looking for. I realized that I may have been high from the sugar, but peace was nowhere to be found, only more feelings of weakness and self-hatred, and thoughts of how could I be so stupid, and why can't I control this.

Back in my mid-thirties (yes, it's hard to believe this was still an issue), my kids (preschool ages) and I were making gingerbread houses, and they weren't putting the gum balls in a colour pattern that I deemed was pleasing to the eye and I was getting frustrated by this (who's the child?).

In moments like this I would need to calm myself down. I would go to the pantry and eat whatever I saw to soothe myself and numb the pain. And I would keep eating until the emotion I was trying to eliminate became one of anger at myself for losing control.

Eventually, I broke this habit down into parts and came up with a plan. I started to really connect that when I felt a certain way I would respond a certain way. Over the course of time and with intention, I would go into the pantry and just put my hand on the item and breathe. It wasn't about denying myself food; it was about learning to deal with the situation at hand. Food will not fix anything but hunger. Sometimes, I would relapse and give in, feeling like a child again, not wanting to resist temptation. I want what I want, and I want it now! It seems crazy how easy it is to fall back on occasion, but it's never all the way back to the beginning, so I keep reminding myself of that.

Empowerment not Punishment

I had let food, or shall I say the addiction to empty carbs, take my power away. It crippled and consumed me. It

seemed that it was the only thing that comforted me. I turned to food for everything: boredom, frustration, happiness, etc. I would eat when no one could see me. Eat isn't even the right word. I would shove food in my face. More! More! Just numb the pain. Who was I kidding? It was self-punishment. I was in denial to feel what I was feeling. I was still closed off and not ready for the next step. I never felt good after a binge. In fact, I always felt worse.

The question is this: Why was I punishing myself? I decided to change my focus. Instead of putting my attention on the why of this negative behaviour, I chose to start empowering myself. I educated myself about nutrients, cells, and the power of balancing my body, mind, and spirit. I read every book I could find on disease prevention, the brain, and nutrition. I realized that I could pour as much energy into sabotaging myself as I could at re-inventing myself. I decided to choose the latter.

Now my suitcase was wide open, and I was ready and willing to deal with the contents.