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INTRODUCTION

I have attempted the impossible: to sort through reams of nutritional and biological data and incorporate only the most vital information into an inspiring and interesting read. Idealist that I am, my hope is that I write with such inspirational prose that you cannot help but apply every word, resulting in a personal revolution of health. If you are ready for this, then we have a good fit. You should be warned there will be side effects: greater energy, weight loss, mental clarity, reversed aging, disease resistance, emotional stability, and increased life expectancy. You will also be inspired to take charge of your own health and face those nasty food addictions.

This book is going to lead you to simple changes. Acquiring vibrant health is so simple I'm afraid that when you get to the last chapter you will want your money back. But *simple* does not mean easy; for these changes to stick there must be an understanding of why you're making them in the first place. This is where you will get your money's worth.

For many, knowledge will still not be enough to make healthy changes stick. Speaking as one who has wrestled with addiction and compulsive behavior, I can tell you that the ability to establish change is a tricky emotional business. There are bigger roadblocks to health than lack of nutritional knowledge. We all have a pretty good idea of the changes that should be made to improve health, but often daily temptations cause us to backslide. Changes in our diet can bring us face to face with food addiction, compulsive behavior, lack of discipline, even feel-

ings of emptiness and depression. Overcoming these powerful road-blocks is vital to success, and in this book we are going to face them head on.

Let's begin with some great news. Your body is designed for vibrant health. The more I study the destructive nature of our North American lifestyle, the more amazed I am at how healthy we still are. Think of how hard we work at breaking the body down—years of stress, junk food, alcohol, insufficient sleep, a sedentary lifestyle, overeating—and still the body refuses to quit. It takes a concentrated effort to repress the breath of life blazing in every human cell. The good news gets better. Even after years of damage, the body has the ability to detoxify, rejuvenate and heal. Nearly all damage is reversible and even small healthy changes will result in big dividends. It's never too late.

I want to stimulate excitement over the remarkable possibilities you are capable of achieving by making some simple choices. Your body is a living gift from God, as is the cornucopia of life-giving foods that surround us—living food for a living body, created by a living God.

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MICRONUTRIENTS THE LITTLE FOODS

A quick scan of any typical supermarket in North America will showcase in super-sized proportions that, although we are certainly not starving from lack of calories, exploding health care costs reveal a dietary deficiency in the microscopic building blocks necessary to maintain human vitality. The fact that we can overeat and still be grossly deficient in nutrients demonstrates just how effective food processing has become in stripping nature's foods of vital micronutrients. Fast food may taste good, but it is full of empty calories.

Eating is feeding; the question is what are you feeding? If food is used in an attempt to feed emotional emptiness, then our diet will resemble the behavior of a drug addict. The food industry knows we use food like drugs, capitalizing on our addictions by adding loads of harmful salt, fat and sugar, all as physically addictive as heroine. The key to improving health is to stop making food choices according to emotional needs. Although it sounds simple, the application can be tough going.

One thing that helped me along the path was to educate myself about what is healthy. Learning about the hidden treasures in whole foods provided an inspired push to eat better. I found it exciting to see just how much nutrition bang I can get for the calorie buck. How many nutrients can I feed my trillions of cells in a 2,000-calorie day? For the price of a Big Mac, you can buy a sweet cantaloupe, an organic banana,

two pounds of carrots and a handful of raw almonds. That is loads of tasty eating, packed with micronutrients, and containing fewer calories and fat than the Big Mac. Now that's exciting!

Let's take a look at some of the micronutrients, or little foods, your body needs to maintain radiant health. The four classes of micronutrients are fiber, vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals.

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DOING THE CHANGE

You are now equipped with sufficient nutritional data to construct the Perfect Diet. Nothing to it, just buy the correct foods and eat...If only it was that easy! If only all the ills of the North American diet were a mere lack of nutritional knowledge. If only you could read this book, sync your brain like you do your Ipod, and get on with your bright future.

I am constantly amazed at the shelves of diet books that describe why the reader should stop eating harmful foods under the apparent assumption that they can do it. The fact is, most cannot. This explains why North Americans, while continuing to grow nutritionally educated, persist in growing fatter and sicker. Years of trial and error have taught us that changing the bad habits of the North American diet has more to do with reprogramming the will than the brain. And often the will can be stubborn when it comes to change.

If you are wired like me, your enthusiasm toward the next chapter, The Perfect Diet, will be tempered by self-doubt. Most of us are familiar with failed fresh starts. Dealing with the emotions of change is where we need the most help, yet receive the least support. Eating disorders are

about past hurts and bad habits, low self esteem, and escapism from depression, mild to chronic. Dietary change is so much more than what is happening to the body; the big story is how food affects our emotional state. We use food to feel good, especially addictive foods high in fat, salt, sugar and white flour. Junk food is today's legal drug, and just knowing how bad it is for us is not the ticket to freedom. There must also be help on how to face the withdrawals of kicking the North American diet.

Much of the content in this chapter is a summary of my personal journaling over the last 16 years, entry upon entry, motivating myself on to the hard decisions necessary to obtain the goals set before me. The relentless cycle of trying and failing brought me to the understanding that something inborn had to be reprogrammed.

You may be happy to know that the author of this book has an addictive personality, and has dealt with a dysfunctional childhood, crippling insecurity and low self-esteem. These are the grist thrown between the millstones that have produced something useful, not just in my own life but to help others find their way to a place of freedom and gratitude. What was once a curse has become a blessing, for these experiences do not allow me to take the smallest mundane successes for granted. Each mouthful of freedom yields fresh joy of being alive.