

## My Work in Progress

*"Don't be ashamed of your story, it will inspire others."*

When I came to Ashly (for the second time) I was tired. I felt like I had been riding on a big yo-yo for the past 3-4 years. Some people would call it a rollercoaster ride, but I would definitely say yo-yo. When I was whirling up I was happy, a great student, losing weight but I was usually obsessed with counting calories-beating myself up if I went over that day. Then, when I was falling down I was sad, had a hard time concentrating and didn't give a second thought to anything I ate-I indulged my every craving at any time. Throughout this yo-yo ride I gained about 80 pounds, was diagnosed with depression, became an emotional and binge-eater. In one of Ashly's first sessions with me she asked me what I wanted out of my work with her. I can remember the answer springing from my mouth; I want to not be obsessed with "good" and "bad" food, with working out, with my body. I want to be healthy, and mostly, to be free.

Before I worked with her I felt controlled by my cravings. Everyone has them I know, but I could not seem to resist mine. I've heard the term feeding frenzy comes from how a shark acts when they taste blood of something they just ate. Their eyes literally glaze over and they lose their minds consuming everything in their path until they are satisfied. That is how I felt my relationship with food was. I would go get that bean burrito and a quesadilla from Taco Bell for dinner because I was late coming home from studying, and as soon as I tasted the first bite I was set off. I would then travel to Burger King for two of their double cheeseburgers and fries, then to Jack in the Box for two of their tacos and finally end my binge at Braum's with a double dip brownie fudge sundae. When I was finished I was sick. I was physically nauseous and emotionally disgusted at myself for what I had done. I just *knew* if I had more self-control then I could lose the weight and resist the binging. The more weight that I gained the more self-conscious I became. I knew that friends and family must talk about me, possibly commenting on how it was sad I had gained so much weight. I was afraid that strangers saw me and assumed I didn't care about my health or how I treated my body. The worse I felt about myself the more I turned to food to make me feel better, and the vicious cycle continued.

The first thing I learned with Ashly's BioBalance is that diets DO NOT work! Ashly helped me eliminate the mindset that foods were "good" and "bad". She reminded me that food has no moral value and cannot determine who I am as a person. ALL food is nourishing in some way. Now I know that the apple I ate this morning, it was full of fiber to lower my cholesterol, help my digestive tract and prevent huge swings in my blood sugar. Now I know that brownie that I ate last night was full of gooey chocolate chips and lots of sugar that tasted SO good and made me forget for a second that two of the four kids I took care of last night at work are dying of cancer. Both foods were nourishing; the apple for my physical health and the brownie for my emotions. Ashly just showed me that I had to be

aware of what was driving me towards the brownie, because that drive was usually something deep inside me looking for much more than some sugar and chocolate chips.

It would take a much longer testimony to truly share all the things I discovered with Ashly, so I will just mention a few. I learned that I had been self-conscious even when I was younger and more fit. I never cared for the attention and the cat-calls. I was seeking to keep myself pure and any kind of forwardness from men made me so uncomfortable that I began to resent my body for putting me in those situations. Also I re-counted to her a big heartbreak that I had in high school, this boy was so young and mistakenly hurt my feelings, but it made a lasting scar. I did NOT want to ever feel like that again. I wanted to make sure the next guy I entrusted my heart with knew the real me and really cared about me. The weight became an easy way to “scare of” some of the guys that would typically be attracted to my figure over my personality, after all I thought not that many people could like “chubby girl”. But boy was I wrong! It was true I had a bit smaller pond to fish in, but there were still the attention and cat-calls. I assumed if a guy liked me at the size I was, it must be because he really liked who I was and wasn’t using me. I still had my heart broken a few times and found myself still cursing my body for attracting those guys to me. Ashly worked with me to learn to embrace my femininity. I had to really dig deep to remember times that I felt womanly, proud, and comfortable in my skin. She facilitated other exercises that reminded me that my womanly figure was a gift, that God had created me just how I was designed. God entrusted me with this amazing body to mobilize my beautiful soul. I let go of the belief that it was my job to prevent men from lusting, and let go of the belief that my weight would protect me from the creeps out there, or people who would hurt my heart. I had to love my body and appreciate its beauty! I began to see my confidence soar, and surprisingly, nothing on the outside had changed. I began to truly love my body from the tip of my freckled-nose, past my love handles and stretch marks, and all the way to my hot pink-toes. It was now time to learn to honor my body with my actions.

A large portion of our work was in relation to my bingeing and emotional eating. I can’t give away all of Ashly’s secrets, but I will share with you my favorite. I had to decide before I ate any meal, which version of myself was sitting down at the table to eat. Was it a queen looking to nourish and sustain her body with healthy food? Was it a 5-year old little girl throwing a temper-tantrum and demanding a cookie? Or was it a ravenous wolf (or in my case shark) looking to destroy everything in its path. I had many other “versions” of myself that sat down to eat and I was able to find their motivation. The three biggest were guilt, sadness and anxiety. I turned to food when I felt guilty about the things I had done in my past, when I was brought down by my depression, and when I had anxiety about the future. I was able to acknowledge these feeling and really be in the moment. I had ignored sadness for so long, I had just shut it up with food that it truly wrecked me when I skipped the chocolate cake and opted to sit in my bed and just cry. But when I finally dried my eyes and pulled my head from under the covers, I felt clean and

free. I learned that all my emotions I tried to stuff inside just wanted to be acknowledged. Its like they were walking up to the door of my heart, knocking and knocking. The more I kept that door locked and tried to keep it closed, the more strong they would grow until they pushed their way in. And when they did they overwhelmed me and the only way I knew how to quiet them was with food. But now that I love and accept myself for who I am in Christ I try not to lock the door shut. If I feel the sadness or anxiety and I try and invite them in. Is it uncomfortable? Yes. Is it painful? Of course. Is it worth it? Absolutely.

One time Ashly asked me to write a letter to my body. I found myself thanking it for its resilience. I am so grateful for the fact that even though I fed it with garbage, let it grow sedentary, and resented it for the majority of my life that it was still working flawlessly. I had no health issue related to my weight and it still carried me through life in spite of all the abuse I had thrown at it. To this day I am grateful that I still have time to reverse the effects that my weight could have on my health. I remember all the work that I have done with Ashly daily. It isn't easy, and I don't think it will ever be, it's a continual process. However, throughout our time together she continually pointed me towards God, and He gives me strength to keep going! I am still a work in progress. Just this week I ignored the effects that a patient at work was having on me an ended up turning to food for comfort. The only thing I ask of myself is to be better today than I was yesterday. I have found movement that I LOVE. I work out with my personal trainer 2-3 times a week and he has brought out a side of me that I have not seen since high school. I feel competitive and strong, I feel like an athlete. I have found a way to eat that has me experimenting in the kitchen with recipes and wanting to meal-prep for the week so that I am prepared to eat the best things for my body. I can finally, finally say that I have stepped off the yo-yo. My feet are on solid ground and I am walking the path towards health, no longer controlled by food and with the best feeling of freedom!