

Twenty Rules for Fasting

an excerpt from
The Philosophy of Fasting

by Edward Earle Purinton

Introduction
and annotations
by
Chet Day

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ISBN 1-885194-02-1

Electronically printed in the United States of America

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Introduction

I first discovered Edward Earle Purinton's fascinating *The Philosophy of Fasting – A Message for Sufferers and Sinners* (1906) in December of 1992. At the time, I set out on a five-day fast and did a lot of reading about the subject when the outpouring of toxins from my body denied me rest or sleep.

Although much of *The Philosophy of Fasting* seems written by a very religious man, Purinton tells us in his introduction, "Don't be needlessly apprehensive at the start—this isn't a missionary tract." And he adds in his prologue that he wrote the book as "a plea for human sincerity and a treatise on human wholeness."

Purinton tells us of his many childhood illnesses: "Born a weakling, I was a semi-invalid and chronic sufferer during most of my boyhood and youth. Some fifteen forms of constitutional disease took turns troubling me; until family, friends and physicians began to despair of the outcome. At one time I was taking six kinds of medicine, weighed 110 pounds instead of 150, spent most of the time beside the fire, or on the couch, and threatened to become useless to myself and everybody else."

Not helped by the physicians of his day, Purinton eventually worked to regain his health through physical culture, dietetics, hydrotherapy, dynamic breathing, movement methods active and passive, sun, air and earth cure, and other modes of naturopathy. These methods helped, but he didn't truly find what he wanted until he took what he calls his "Thirty-Day Fast." After that fast, the one which changed his life mentally, physically, and spiritually, he writes,

"Physically, I was healthier than for ten years before. Mentally, I got a grip on myself that nothing had ever given and that nothing now can ever shake. Spiritually, I saw the heavens opened and the ultimate truths of the Infinite revealed in glorious array beyond the span of the sunrise or the gleam of the farthest star.

"You can do the same. Or more. All you need is supreme faith in yourself, exact knowledge of the method, and steadfast purpose, to

realize the highest prophecy stored for you in the archives of the Almighty. I will give you the knowledge, Omnipotence will give you the faith, so all you must supply is the purpose. Which comes of itself—with a vision of the possibilities.

“Fasting is not a panacea.

“Only Nature grants panaceas. And she makes hers fresh for each case. Nor does she employ human dispensaries.

“But Fasting, *rightly conducted and completed*, is nearest a panacea for all mortal ills of any drugless remedy I know, whether physiological, metaphysical, or inspirational. Fasting, resting, airing, bathing, breathing, exercising and hoping—these seven simple measures, if *sanelly* proportioned and administered, will cure any case of acute disease. And almost any case of chronic.”

Highly esoteric in places and, in my opinion, at least a quarter mad in others, *The Philosophy of Fasting* nonetheless remains one of my favorite books on the subject of going without food. Until I publish my annotated reprint of the entire book, I hope you’ll enjoy this excerpt, Edward Earle Purinton’s “Twenty Rules for Fasting.”¹

Chet Day
March, 1998

¹You’ll note that several of Purinton’s rules go contrary to accepted practices. The intrinsic value of at least some of these rules lies more in terms of historical interest than in terms of practical help for the modern faster. I’ve added annotations in some instances to avoid confusion for the neophyte, but, for everyone, before water fasting for any length of time, you should at least read Dr. Herbert Shelton’s books on the subject to assure a safe and constructive experience. At a bare minimum, you should read his *The Science and Fine Art of Fasting*. I also recommend *Fasting Can Save Your Life*.

Rule 1***Don't.***

Spell it out so as to remember it better: D-O-N-apostrophe T, Don't.

What? Thirteen long chapters commending the Fast with an unction unequalled—then one little word upsetting it all? Final proof, surely, that the author is unbalanced as well as unbridled.

Thank you, thank you. Some more, please. I'm getting so used to misjudgments that they taste kind of good—like olives after you've stroked away the preliminary pucker. Understand I don't consider olives wholesome. Yet they might keep one from starving.

If I wanted to be mean, I could get back at you for calling me crazy. I could say that these Rules referred to *Sane Fasting*, and that the prohibition merely implied doubt as to your eligibility. But I'll be generous and not even hint it—although it were true.

Seriously, there is reason in this hortatory² paradox. Because in all probability you will have been unduly influenced by my interpretation of the Fast, and not sufficiently dominated by your own attitude toward it. Let us speak very frankly. During the past six years I have met in one way or another thousands of human beings that called themselves “advanced”—in Nature Cure, Physical Culture, New Thought, Oriental Philosophy, Divine Science or otherwise. Out of that number I know *less than a score* whom I deem *ready for the Conquest Fast*.³ Insofar of course as any short-sighted mortal can judge for another. No devotee, defender, or apostle is ever quite balanced. Enthusiasm has to run in a rut. But unless you have *enough ruts* to turn it in, you're sure to wear the one so deep you can't see out.

Do you believe in being all god, *or* all man, *or* all animal, as the impulse moves? And do you know how to be? Do you dare to be? Then, and then only, are you prepared to appreciate and experience *Sane Fasting*. When brain, heart, body and soul each knows its place and is wise enough to keep to it. If irrespective of anything I have said, your own Higher Self tells you to take the extreme Fast, then do it. And triumph everlastingly. But never suffer your lesser self to be persuaded by any species of plausible diction or vicarious enthusiasm.⁴

²Giving advice; advisory.

³In using the term *Conquest Fast*, Purinton actually refers to what fasters traditionally think of as “fasting to completion.” Or, in other words, fasting until the tongue clears and until true hunger (not to be confused with mere appetite) returns. See Chapter 23, “The Length of the Fast” in Dr. Shelton's definitive book, *The Science and Fine Art of Fasting* for full details on precisely how to recognize the true end of the fast to completion.

We might apply the simile of a relay journey to the destination reached by the Conquest Fast. There are three stations, *Self-Healing*, *Self-Empowering*, *Self-Illumining*. With the boulevard of *Self-Enjoying* connecting them. The first station, *Self-Healing*, is but a little way off. You can reach it by various means. You may don the sweater of Physical Culture—and spring for it. You may hire the hose-cart of Hydropathy—and joggle to it. You may mount the fleshless old gray mule of Osteopathy—and creep toward it. You may recline on the stuffed stretcher of Christian Science—and be carried thither. Any way to get there. All depends on how you're built, what's the matter with you—and how much you'll spend on drayage. All these vehicles will get you there—sometime. Then *leave you there*—every time. Can't any of them take you to the second station, *Self-Empowering*. And the third stage, *Self-Illumining*, is out of their reckoning altogether.

What sort of transfer then is the Conquest Fast? It's the mightiest motor car ever occupied by man. No other vehicle is comparable to it; in adjustment, readiness, responsiveness, celerity; *cost* and *danger*. A go-cart is not conspicuously speedy, but it is reassuringly safe. The automobile record has been lowered to something less than forty seconds—but a *forty second record means a forty second risk*. You must be your own chauffeur. And the best in the business at that. You must know just where you're going, what road to follow, when you're likely to arrive—and how to turn out for passersby. You must know both the powers and limitations of your human machine. You must feel conscious control over it, measureless superiority to it. You must keep your hand on the lever, your eye on the road, and your heart on the journey's end. If you're able for it, variously able, then by all means choose this auto-motor carriage, the Conquest Fast. But—count the cost first. And don't say I promised you anything for less than the price. No one knows the price of Truth better than I; no one has paid such a price; no one would be less willing to urge the purchase on a single human soul.

⁴In other words, *know in your heart that you have to fast to completion before doing it*. I see a Conquest Fast sometime in my future, but I won't attempt it if I don't know for sure that my entire mind/body/spirit wants to do it.

Rule 2

Analyze beforehand the errors of Popular Fasters.

This is assuming you dare blithesomely disregard Rule One. The which I devoutly hope.

The persistent cloud on the horizon of Truth is the confusion of principle with personality. Somebody of the name of Dewey, or Macfadden, or Just, or Eddy,⁵ or Purinton, propounds a beautiful theory concerning life that may or may not be practicable. Instead of studying the *theory for ourselves*, we study the *application of the theorizer*. Which of course never fits our case. That's where all the bewilderment comes in—bewilderment dietetic, gymnastic, philosophic, therapeutic, and religious. What helps me may help you—but not in the same way it helped me.⁶ And the thing for you to do is take the truth of my principle, apart from the inevitable error of my personality. Because the automobile is a splendid vehicle is no reason for entrusting it to a raw chauffeur.

To cite details.

Not, understand, in any belittling spirit, but generously as we can. To discriminate yet not incriminate is a test for both Love and Wisdom. If so be it possible, let us be both loving and wise. If not—let us be only loving.⁷ Rather exalt Truth because we love it than disparage error because we fear it. Not blame for others—only balance for ourselves; this should be the aim of our analysis.

The first error of the Fasting Specialist is in assuming his remedy a panacea of universal proportions. Let me say right here that the only panacea for human ills is *Understanding*; and the few rare souls that can administer this do not call themselves physicians or appraise their service in terms of money-reward. In any rational diagnosis, *temperament* is the clearest indication of both cause and cure. *Phrenology* should precede, if not supersede *Pharmacy*.⁸ I would never advise an extreme *mental* temperament to take the Conquest Fast—there must be enough of the *vital* to store energy, with enough of the *motive* to spend it. Balance is indispensable, equilibrium

⁵Prominent writers on the subject of health at the turn of the last century.

⁶I think all of us who seek health pass through this stage of bewilderment when we've read and listened to so many points of view that sometimes we don't know what to believe. I at least felt this way until I started my study and practice of Sheltonian Natural Hygiene. Then I *knew* I'd found the answer to most of my health questions.

⁷Throughout *The Philosophy of Fasting*, Purinton emphasizes the necessity of loving in life. In modern terms we see the same point made in health book after health book: that people who don't (or can't or haven't learned how to) love can't attain the same level of health of those who do.

⁸Actually, in our times and from a Sheltonian point of view, we'd place phrenology and pharmacy in the same leaky boat.

must be maintained. Hall Caine, for instance, would probably lose by the prolonged Fast; Alfred Henry Lewis, on the other hand, would probably gain. John D. Rockefeller is not adapted for it—he's too pious to be either vital or spiritual. Theodore Roosevelt should be a splendid subject—it would take an enforced recess to make his strenuosity subside to a comforting state of calm.

Lack of faith precludes or postpones the Conquest Fast; lack of flesh, if very pronounced; lack of vitality, in case the individual recovers it with difficulty; lack of the proper inner preparations or outer conditions; all deficiency, in short, must be considered *before* the Conquest Fast is begun. *After*, let limitations be forgot, in the larger light of dawning possibilities.

Another common error; and this is wholly physiological. Fasting is at best but a weakly negative process of cure. Its complement is *Elimination*. The waste channels of the body—bowels, kidneys, lungs and pores, should be kept peculiarly active till the latent impurities released through the Fast are brought to the surface and swept away. The mere stopping of the mechanism of digestion causes stagnation along the entire tract. So that extra precaution is required to offset this inertia. Here's a case in point. A certain hygienic healer of national reputation advised a patient to try a two-weeks' Fast. The patient acquiesced, and forthwith stopped eating. That's all—just stopped eating. Then for *nine days* the bowels failed to move. Meanwhile the man was in agony, the effect of the Fast was mostly lost, and the rightness or wrongness of the remedy could not be established in the minds of those who witnessed the perverted application. Simply because the aforesaid healer forbade all artificial stimulus to elimination—he didn't believe in massage, he thought enemas were weakening, and he deemed cathartics the Devil's ammunition. The folly of his course *seemed* to prove the folly of his theory.⁹ And so people judged.

A third common error is the failure to refer *crises* to individual *instinct*. When the time comes for decision, when the need arises for action, then must your own soul direct you—no voice from without is competent to do more than interfere. My experience cannot be yours, yours cannot be mine. The Conquest Fast always awakens a host of dormant instincts and repressed desires. Just how, no mortal can foretell. And it will be literally dangerous for you to pattern your Fast after the record of mine. Previous facts won't suffice, authentic data may not tally, reasonable

⁹Dr. Shelton repeatedly calls the use of the enema in fasting an enervating and unnecessary procedure. In my reading of Hygienic literature by his predecessors and of other health-related books, however, Shelton holds the minority view on this subject. I've tried fasts of one to seven days with and without the enema, and at this point in my search for health the jury sits in deadlock on the subject. I will devote an entire issue of my newsletter to this question of the enema—but I still have more research to do before feeling confident of having an answer that comforts me.

expectations are likely to speed way with the wind. You are not in the hands of nature, without your vision turned toward God. Trust both—no matter what scientific absurdities men have hitherto alleged. What cares the sun whether astronomers be peering through the peep-holes of their spy-glass? It still shines. What cares your soul whether scientists measure it or measure it not? It is still your soul. Does it not dominate forever the crude computations of these human infants not yet instructed in the multiplication tables of divine dynamics?

A fourth common error lies in neglecting to provide against the *strain on the soul*. It is no light thing to controvert in the space of a few weeks all the habits of a lifetime and the thought-heritage of a race; you may have seen newspaper reports of people “made insane through Fasting” — through *faulty* Fasting. There must be first an *inner incentive*, second an *outer wisdom*. Forced starving is more fatal than forced stuffing—since both soul and body protest. Fasting is never to be advised as a penance—not even as a prescription. You must *want to fast more than you want to eat*, before you *can* fast with absolute safety.¹⁰

Would you put out to sea in the bark canoe of a man that had never sailed before? Ere you leave the land, you must know the Deep. And until you exert conscious guidance of your own soul, do not expect the Infinite Spirit to buoy you. It may bury you instead—the Sea does both. The psychic surge does both; witness the unsaneness of Spiritist mediums and hypnotic subjects. Not the fault of the Sea—only the deficiency of the sailor or the defect of the vessel.

¹⁰Dr. Shelton (and others) repeatedly stress that *fear* represents one of the few legitimate reasons not to fast.

Rule 3

*Get all available facts
as a foundation; then forget them.*

That's all a fact is ever good for—to serve as a stone in the wall of your sub-cellar. Plant it firmly—then remember the climate is pleasanter upstairs. You should *know* all that man has discovered or proved anent¹¹ Fasting—provided you don't *think* about it when you should be in the tower, watching the sunrise. Read Doctor Dewey, read Mr. Haskell, read Mr. Macfadden, read Mr. Hanish, read Mr. Shaw, read Mr. Purinton;—then smile most benignly on them all, make a cheerful bonfire of their books, and observe complaisantly how the smoke returns to the nothingness whence it came. They really don't know anything about Fasting—they're just experimenting for their own benefit.

Let me caution you moreover as to your chronology. Don't, in the name of all that's merciful, lapse into the pages of any book on Fasting *while* you are undergoing the process.¹² That would be too much like entertaining an invalid with a picture book of skeletons, graveyards and scarecrows. Indeed some people are so enamored of themselves that they have their photographs taken at the end of a Fast—to show how beautiful even their bones are. Let us pass on; children can't play in a boneyard. Yet such gruesome object-lessons are more or less salutary—if anybody looked like that and lived, there's surely hope for me. The experience of others helps us only in getting our courage to the sticking point. They did it—we can do it. They improved—we will improve. They dared to be true to their beliefs, desires and intuitions—we dare be true to ours.

Rule 4

Specify purpose and adapt regime.

Is your chief object *Renovating, Domination, Delectation, or Illumination?* Which do you most want to clarify and fortify: body, brain, sense or soul? Your answer will determine the time, the duration, the method and conditions of your Fast. Discrimination of this kind has hitherto not been made. Naturally confusion, hesitation, mistake and disappointment ensued. For instance,

¹¹In respect to; concerning.

¹²Lots of writers agree and urge people not to read about fasting while fasting. Me? I like to read about fasting when I don't eat. I find it broadens and deepens my appreciation for the experience. But then I also read when I eat, read on planes and buses, and read just about anytime I can.

suppose you wish to strengthen your will power and establish your courage beyond assault. Then decide on a certain duration—ten, twenty, or thirty days, and keep to it if the heavens fall.¹³ Suppose however you seek inspiration primarily. Then fast a day at a time; you cannot set periods and seasons for the Almighty. If your object be merely therapeutic, then a series of short Fasts will usually bring better results than a single long one. Often the adoption of a specific diet will avail more to cure disease than any Fast at all.¹⁴ Especially as few people are free to leave their home or their business for any length of time. If you work you must eat—and some of us feel rather obliged to work—in order that we may eat! Such an endless chain of folly.¹⁵

I have been asked this question: “How can the average wife and mother manage a Conquest Fast, with her husband, her children, her household and her social duties to consider?”

My answer is prompt and concise—“She can’t.”

She’ll be doing well if she gets her husband educated up to the Two-Meal Plan, with no company for dinner. In the matter of eating, there is only one creature on earth more absurd than the society woman. That creature is the businessman. He doesn’t know it—he doesn’t know much of anything really worth knowing. And if you told him, he would proceed to disprove it with a new lot of glib fallacies fresh-fashioned for the occasion. I hope some day to write a book on “Man Irrational.” He’s unquestionably the queerest animal extant—as a species and as a sex. Certainly no ornithologist has yet done him justice.

But in the home where Love rules—and there is no home elsewhere—every member of the family may do as that member pleases. Comings and goings are unrestricted, thoughts and acts pass unchallenged. Moreover when one is quite ready in one’s own soul for the Conquest Fast, the way will always open.¹⁶ It is our fear that limits us—not our faith. Faith leads us on and out

¹³But stop fasting if natural hunger returns! If you don’t resume eating when natural hunger occurs, you will starve and your body will consume tissue that you can not afford to lose. Period.

¹⁴Norman Walker, among others, agrees with this conclusion and warns individuals never to go without food for more than seven days without breaking the fast for three or four days on a raw diet. He then says one can safely resume the fast for another seven days. Although I lack knowledge at this point on how contemporary Hygienic doctors stand on the subject, I’ve read enough to know that opinions vary from practitioner to practitioner. Dr. Shelton and advocates of Sheltonian Hygiene disagree and point to the fast to completion as the best method for the body to heal itself. In March of 1998 as I revise this edition, I’m a lot more comfortable with juice fasting than I am with water fasting, and I believe the juice fast is the most sensible choice for most modern men and women. See my web site at <http://chetday.com> for more details on why I feel this way.

¹⁵Sometimes I feel like muttering “Amen” to this bit of Purintonian silliness!

¹⁶Since I find it difficult at times to fast for any length of time beyond a few days with my wife and children about, I certainly identify with what Purinton says here. You have to want to fast pretty badly to do it amidst the distractions of day-to-day life with others.

and up, so far and so fast as we dare follow.

A good deal depends on the character of our work, whether at home or in the office. If it be very exacting for brain or body, we had best omit, or postpone, or modify the extreme Fast. Though I have known active businessmen to labor incessantly through twenty, thirty, even forty days' abstention from food. Here again the temperament and attitude of mind must direct.

If a word; read these Rules in the light of your own desire. Apply them so far as you deem them sane and opportune;—break them, refute them, transcend them in whatever respect Love and Truth sanction.

Rule 5

Choose Summer or Spring for the Conquest Fast.

There are at least four reasons.

First: fresh fruits and vegetables may be had before and after the Fast. Nothing takes the place of the salts and juices obtained fresh in our garden products; both in preparing the body for active elimination and in helping it recover tone. Either canning or drying vitiates the nourishing elements. So the season when green things grow is by far the best for any change in dietetic regime.

Second: the temperature and atmospheric conditions favor purification. You can perspire freely without special effort—a vital point in the physiology of Fasting. In cool weather recourse must be had to Turkish, vapor or hot-air baths; measures more or less unnatural and unquestionably enervating. Sunbaths, moreover, are as indispensable to restore vitality as to quicken elimination; sunbaths in winter being almost nil.

Third: the accustomed inertia of the season makes idling easier. Spring fever is so much the fashion, summer ennui so altogether proper, that the Fast won't violate our conventional code of morals and manners in the effect it produces on our activities. Not an ounce of energy should be dissipated during the extreme Fast. It is enough to burn out the waste; whatever is good flesh and blood must be conserved to produce more. This means loafing, resting, lazing along and not caring. Evidently a summer program.

Fourth: the gala garb of Nature attracts us to the open. You can't take a Conquest Fast in the house—would you try to swim in a barrel? Expanse is the first possession required by the soul in the process of freeing itself. Out and away from the mortal, on and up into the consciousness of

the Eternal; thus shall the soul advance. Even through the heat of summer you will find the clouds quite cold enough—no need to add the bareness of the earth and the bleakness of the sky in winter. At best the Conquest Fast is a crucial ordeal; let us make the conditions as comfortable as we can without compromise.

Rule 6

Prepare for the long Fast by the experience of a few short ones.

Otherwise you might think you were going to die the second day. Not a pleasing prospect—with twenty or thirty more tomorrows like it coming in a string. Fasts of from one to three days or longer concluded safely may embolden those who haven't the nerve for a month-stretch at first. Say live a week without food, in April or May, if you plan a month's Fast for July or August. This precaution is mostly for timid souls—brave ones will scorn it.¹⁷ I never fasted a day voluntarily until I quit food for a month—couldn't brook any props or palliatives, wanted the very hardest feat in spiritual gymnastics that any soul ever attempted. But the sinews of my soul were strong. I could face hazard with a smile. I had wrested victory from defeat. I knew my powers, I recognized my limitations. So that what would be ominous and perilous for most mortals had become simple and natural for me. The harder the struggle, the greater the triumph. Judge for yourself how strong you are.¹⁸

Rule 7

Plan work congenial but not compulsory.

This on the supposition that you cannot afford to be wholly idle, or that you have not learned to relax utterly. During the Fast, nothing should drive you save the impulsive of your own soul; nothing direct you save the Voice of the Infinite. Work as you want to, play as you want to, read as you want to, dream as you want to. At the start you are likely to have severe headaches: off

¹⁷I don't think of myself as one of the "timid souls," but I do think it makes sense to try some shorter fasts before moving up to the Conquest Fast. Especially if one doesn't have to fast to overcome serious physical problems. Paul Bragg also makes a point of working up to the long fast in his book on the subject, *The Miracle of Fasting*.

¹⁸At the same time, don't start playing ego games with yourself. I know the temptation my ego always throws at me, suggesting that I can do anything if I just put my mind to it. These days when I have this thought I know enough to stand back and take a close, hard look at the temptation at hand. On many occasions, discretion indeed does play the better part of valor.

and on you may be subject to attacks of weakness or faintness; nothing serious, still inconvenient. You may find it harder to sleep through the night, but easier to nap by day.¹⁹ Then there is the pestilence of personality to be considered. Living as common humans do, you may have escaped—on the homeopathic principle of “Like cure like.” But when you have clarified your immortal Self from your earthy tendencies, you notice all at once how insufferably gross the people around you are become. And if your work compels you to mingle with them, you can’t fast long without suffocating. Keep occupied if you will—but let it be happily so. Under no circumstances attempt a Conquest Fast while subject to the rules, orders and suspicions of the average employer. You will lose more than you gain.

Rule 8

Be alone, or among strangers.

The surest way to make a man your enemy is to give him plenty of “friendly advice.” On this assumption, every friend of the man on a Fast becomes his direst foe. If they don’t worry themselves into hysterics for fear you’ll starve to death, they will at least comment on your looks, diagnose your symptoms, ask you to describe your feelings, in short plague clean out of you the very life they are so solicitous to preserve. No optician ever found spectacles to relieve the short-sightedness of Solicitude; it’s congenital and can’t be cured.

Don’t even tell your friends and relatives you expect to fast. Unless perchance you be blessed with that rare gift of the gods—a comrade or a sweetheart who understands.²⁰ The comfort to be had from the counsel and sympathy of this One would be quite legitimate and unspeakably reassuring. Go out camping, hire a houseboat; get lodgings at some distant farmer’s, coming in only at night; best of all, roll up a few accessories in a staunch sleeping bag and hie you to some solitary spot amid the mountains or by the sea shore.

Another reason besides the interference of friends. If you are daily associating with people addicted to the three-meal monotony, you can’t help seeing, smelling, and remembering food. Not a salutary situation for one trying so desperately to forget food. Keep away from the table, the cupboard, the cookbook, and the dinner bell. Not because you might be “tempted to eat”—in

¹⁹I never sleep well until after two A.M. when I fast, but I can nap away during the day like crazy. Go figure.

²⁰I have an understanding and sympathetic wife. Nonetheless, she gets nervous about my occasional fasting and either consciously or unconsciously gives me certain signals that let me know she’d prefer for me to get back to my usual diet of fruit, vegetables, nuts and seeds.

that case, stick right there till you've conquered the errant tendency. But because you are living on a higher plane and must not be irritated by such coarse vibrations as eating sets in motion.

Still a third consideration. Complete change of scene is essential to the vantage of a new perspective. No trace of old relationships, no iteration of memory's bidding, no diverting influence should be suffered to interpose between you and the horizon.²¹ Any psychometrist will tell you how completely inanimate objects are invested with the aura of their owners or users. Books, pictures, furniture, what not—all bear a message of good or ill that we must receive whether we will or not. The very air of a leprous house is a curse, the very atmosphere of a place of worship is a benediction. All of which serves to emphasize the necessity for being alone while achieving the Fast.

Rule 9

Keep near Nature.

A smile and a pair of sandals is quite sufficient clothing—you don't really need the sandals. Take all the sunbaths consistent with comfort, and an occasional clay compress (for directions, see Adolph Just's "Return to Nature"). Lie flat on the earth as much as you can. Dabble in the brook, or play in the waves of the sea. Get used to sleeping on the grass; indeed some folks are such strenuous Naturists they dig up the sod and bury themselves over night in the bare soil.²² Sounds kind of clammy, doesn't it? 'Tisn't necessary—except to try. Find how much nourishment Nature provides that isn't called food. The fragrance of the forest and aroma of the wild is sustaining; the breath of the breeze exhilarates; the thrill of the earth-contact vivifies; the glance of the sun both soothes and empowers. Provender for the stomach takes a minor place in the economy of human life, when once provision for the soul has been made independently.

²¹A good point, which emphasizes the value of going to a fasting institution when you embark on the Conquest Fast. In addition, you'd find yourself in professional hands, hands that can help you if you require help during the various healing crises that occur.

²²I get daily sun when I fast, but I keep my short pants on. Though perhaps I wouldn't if I had any privacy at all here around Casá Day.

Rule 10***Avoid combinations******with other systems of Naturopathy.***

The Conquest Fast doesn't harmonize with the Kneipp Water Cure, or the Macfadden School of Physical Culture, or any other regime that demands large expenditure of energy and vitality. These methods may be ever so good—they are not timely.

I know of a man that had chronic rheumatism. He consulted a Fasting specialist;—and stopped eating. Began to feel better, wondered if he couldn't be improving faster. Consulted a Turkish Bath specialist;—and began bathing. Presently he died. Then each specialist declared the other killed the patient. They were both doctors, too, with a national reputation and a big sanitarium to back it. Fasting *alone* might have healed the sufferer—*or* baths alone. Together they took out more vitality than virus, leaving him clean no doubt—a clean corpse. Doubtless a Theosophist would gain some consolation from the thought of how pure his body was when he left it. But to those of us not of the elect it looks like a plain case of malpractice.

Don't turn your ambition toward any “stunts” of physical prowess, after the first week of a long Fast. It's the time to store energy—not to spend it. If you never learned how to let things slide, this is your opportunity supreme. Both materially and spiritually, repose must be reckoned a chief component in the Conquest Fast.²³

Rule 11***The week preceding the Fast,******let your diet be wholly laxative.***

This to correct the invariable tendency to stoppage noticed the first few days of a Fast. Not only should there be no residue of waste matter to be eliminated when the mechanism of digestion has ceased; but the excretory functions should be specially active for the arousing and expelling of the latent impurities dragged from their hiding by the Fast. Fresh fruits and vegetables,

²³All the experts I've read and respect emphasize the value of complete rest during fasting. I've fasted while jogging each day for up to six miles and while getting no exercise whatsoever. These days I'll take a slow walk in the sun for up to thirty minutes if my body seems to want that, but I no longer use my will power to get out there and do some miles to sweat out those old poisons as I did before I'd read as much about fasting as I should have before embarking on various experiments on myself.

with a few nuts and crisp cereals; let these form the mainstay for the week preceding. Care also is advisable in the matter of mastication—see the books by Horace Fletcher for elaboration of this subject. Since intestinal stagnation is due mostly to unchewed and therefore undigested particles of food on which the bowel juices cannot act. Lessening the variety at each meal may be advantageous—he who eats too fast and he who eats too much being one and the same person.

Rule 12

Think of something besides Fasting.

That is, if you have to think at all. It's better to stop thinking altogether.²⁴ Dream instead. If you can't dream, at least you can doze. Anything to make that obstreperous brain of yours be still, until your soul has spoken. Now, if ever, may you vault the earthly limitations of the human mind, to roam where you will through the sunlit chambers of the Limitless. Indeed to think of eating is to invite nausea. Since the very concept of food is distasteful so long as an atom of impurity remains in the body. We are usually so bound in the thrall of habit-hunger as not to notice whether we enjoy the meal. Once stop all this, and forthwith the unassimilated particles from years of rash eating are transformed into gas or liquid, to cloud the brain, coat the tongue, clog the blood and chafe the palate. We won't be hungry till the situation clears. And we haven't any business to think about food except when we are hungry.

Let me commend first and foremost the ministry of Music. Nothing takes us so quickly out of our earth-environment, nothing puts us so fully en rapport with the rhapsodies of angels. Sing as you never sang before.²⁵ Play whatever instrument comes easiest and expresses most. Listen outside the church door for the Organ Voluntary (I don't prescribe the Anthem or the Hymns). If there be melody in a baby's prattle, or harmony in a woman's murmur—let this move you. Above all, may your senses be attuned to the celestial symphony of sea and hills, sun and stars, all resonant with the choral chime of Nature's host.

Then there are books of special import. Works of Poetry, Invention, Discovery, and Philosophy head the list. Emerson, Whitman, Browning, Thoreau, Goethe, Wordsworth; take some of these

²⁴Also known as "The Zen of Fasting" here at Casá Day where I fast and occasionally try not to think! I find it much easier to not eat than to not think. The mind? A wild horse indeed.

²⁵Shades of Luigi Cornaro, author of the wonderful and enlightening *Discourses on the Sober Life*. Living to the age of 102, Cornaro throughout his discourses speaks of how often he raises his voice in song because he feels so good! Download my annotated reprint for free at <http://chetday.com>

with you into retirement. Elbert Hubbard's "Little Journeys" would be not inopportune; perhaps also literature of direct tonic value might appeal; say Thomson J. Hudson's "Law of Mental Medicine," or Herbert A. Parkyn's "Auto-Suggestion," or Annie Payson Call's "Power through Repose," or Ralph Waldo Trine's "In Tune with the Infinite." Whatever book can enlarge your horizon, refine your sympathies; strengthen your faith and inspire your soul—this is the book to read while you fast.

Rule 13

Devote the first three days to special elimination.

That is, stimulate bowels, kidneys, lung and pores to do double service. Fully half the benefit of the extreme Fast is lost if impurities be allowed to remain in the body in excess of the body's capacity to expel them. Vapor baths are therefore in order (you can buy a good cabinet for \$5)²⁶; enemas; deep breathing exercises; abdominal massage; copious water drinking—hot unsweetened lemonade is most efficacious; friction baths; perhaps a single stomach lavage; even a dose of liver pills in case the colon flushing falls short of the stoppage.

I should say in general a vapor bath would be advisable the first and third day; an enema daily for a week; a thorough friction bath every morning; an abdominal or general massage each afternoon; a long walk in the evening with all the exhilaration you can get out of deep, slow, rhythmic, peaceful breathing. Drink at least two quarts of water during the day, preferably a half-glass at a time. Acid fruit juice cannot be surpassed as an aid to elimination—about a half a glass for the twenty-four hours, well diluted with perhaps three times its bulk of water. Orange juice is best, with lemon juice and grape juice close seconds. Nor is pineapple, cherry, or lime forbidden. If you are fasting principally for *Illumination*, you can't be haunted with the memory or irritated by the taste of even fruit juice. But for clarifying of brain and body, a little of this may be taken through most of the Fast—one kind only, in order not to indulge the palate. There is a trifle nourishment in grape juice, hence the orange seems better suited to the needs of the FASTER. Lemon is too stringent for steady use.

After I had received the vision I sought through the Fast, I began taking fruit juice in small quantities. It quieted the stomach, soothed the nerves, cleared the tongue and the brain, especially acted as a laxative. For with me a most unusual experience ensued—the bowels moved freely,

²⁶You can barely buy a good bunch of bananas here in North Carolina for five bucks these days!

once during the third week of the Fast, once during the fourth. Due unquestionably to the influence of the fruit juice.

Indeed for a short Fast, any under ten days, I would suggest the moderate use of the orange, lemon, or grape—carefully rejecting all the pulp. Such recourse allays fermentation, dispels noxious gases, assists elimination, hastens purification, and lessens the mental strain of rupturing suddenly the eating-habit fastened on the race. The juice of three oranges a day should be sufficient.²⁷

Rule 14

Use water plentifully but gently.

You may walk in the dew with Father Kneipp—you may not follow him to the extremes of the “Blitzguss.” A Priessnitz Compress daily, a Just or Kuhne Bath, a tepid shower—some such measure as this, in preference to the cold plunge or douche. No shock should be permitted, no vitality wasted.

As to the amount of water taken internally, opinions differ. Instinct, here as always, may be assumed the only safe guide. In general we may say however, that the one occasion when instinct might be forced is in the matter of water drinking during a Fast. Cultivate a desire for it. Drink not less than a glass an hour on the average, unless you feel discomfort or repulsion therefrom. Of course if you have suffered from dilated stomach or impaired kidneys, the amount may well be lessened. Mountain spring water is the best. But it must be pure and it must be soft. Otherwise let the variety be distilled and aerated. Bottled spring water may be substituted if you are sure of its analysis.²⁸

Rule 15

Let treatment be passive rather than active.

This on the assumption that you’re still in the “treatment” stage, or that the therapeutic purpose is uppermost. During the extreme Fast is the only time I would suggest any such dependence on people or things outside oneself. But then it is entirely to be commended. If you know a good mental or magnetic healer, let him exercise his rights without let or hindrance—even

²⁷Some folks would urge you to take with a grain of salt much of what Purinton says in Rule 13 because it goes contrary to Sheltonian Hygiene. Again, read Dr. Shelton’s books on fasting carefully before venturing on your own Conquest Fast.

²⁸Good grief, in these days of polluted water, drink distilled water or good filtered water only. When I fast, I listen to my body and drink distilled water when thirsty.

though he employ such crude measures as passes, manipulations, suggestions, vibrations, or “affirmations.” Massage is clearly indicated, especially spinal and abdominal. Get all the sleep you can, by night and day both. A specialist in health-hypnotics or post-hypnotic suggestion might be employed to advantage, in assuring slumber and also quietude for the waking hours. Even so unscientific a practitioner as a Christian Science devotee could be called in to help establish faith and prepare the way for soul certitude. But don’t tell the Christian Science sister you’re fasting—she doesn’t believe in that. Jesus fasted, Jesus used hydrotherapy, psychology, “malicious animal magnetism,” and other natural influences in his marvels of healing. Jesus was a Naturist no less than a mystic. Yet the vital side of the Nazarene has been repudiated by the Christian Scientists; that’s why they call themselves “Christian”—they want to be but can’t.

Vigorous action required by games, gymnastics and the like should be limited to the first few days of the Conquest Fast. After that, leisurely walking is in order, together with gentle *stretching* movements and *breathing* exercises. A Fast of only a week or so would not be sufficiently devitalizing to preclude muscular effort throughout. In general, nothing that takes initiative, whether of body, brain or soul, should be planned for the period of the Fast. Omnipotence is working—let the mortal retire.

Rule 16

Focus on local troubles.

We call them “troubles”—until we make them triumphs. Any disorder, physical or mental, may be reached with thrice the despatch and efficacy during an extreme Fast. The system has been cleared of both irritating impurities and conflicting vibrations, all the vital forces are ready to respond to a given appeal at a given point, Nature’s inherent tendency toward recuperation exhibits a peculiar urgency and a gratifying swiftness.

If, for instance, the liver seems torpid constitutionally, now is the time to wake it up. With hot fomentations, cold douches and compresses, earth-packs, strong massage, deep breathing together with bending and twisting movements, mental treatments, and whatever else may serve a similar purpose.

Nervous dyspepsia, heart disease, bronchial ailments, mental derangements, and various other inharmonies seem specially to respond to the right healing influences exerted during a Fast. Nature unaided will cure everything in time, if we only give her a chance.²⁹ But it sort of assures

us to think we're helping along, besides relieving the unusual strain of mental vacuity. No—brains aren't too empty as it is! They're stuffed, hopelessly stuffed with facts they can't digest, assimilate and work over into life. If brains were oftener vacant, minds would be sooner filled.

Rule 17

Learn to laugh at symptoms.

Also at the silly folk who note symptoms. While we're speaking of people, let me call your attention to the absurd appearance of them that have to eat. Feeding one's face is a grotesque operation at best. But when humans actually make it the basis for all sociability, hospitality, fellowship and good cheer—the performance is so ridiculous as to be pathetic. Poke barrels of fun at the family while they bow their knee to the cook. Observe how closely their gastronomic gyration resembles the munching of their simian brethren. Over the meal's digestibility assume an air of dubiety and a prophecy of colic that'll make them wish stomachs were never invented. Let them see you're It—while they? They are a sort of raw hash, half-remnant, half-rudiment. Remnant of what a good animal might have been, rudiment of what a passable man may become in time. It's so common, so vulgar, so insufferably plebeian to have to eat; you belong to a superior race of beings that eat only when they choose to. Just now you don't choose—and it's such fun to lord it over the minion Knights of the Knife-and-fork.

But we started to say something about symptoms. That reminds us of doctors—dim pallid memory. A doctor thinks it his duty to give so many drugs because he takes so many symptoms—on the principle, I suppose, that fair exchange of foul deeds is no robbery. A doctor's absurdity is equalled only by his solemnity—and his whiskers, these being the limit of both. There is nothing in the long catalogue of drug school fallacies so unscientific as an isolated symptom. It tells nothing and foretells less. It's the single flicker of a moving picture machine that started a generation back and must run till a generation hence. If you want Truth, don't bother with symptoms. Watch principles and examine causes—actions and results can look out for themselves.

Here's a case in point. Lots of people say that fresh fruit “disagrees” with them. It doesn't. They “disagree” with themselves. Their stomachs are so full of undigested food that the acid of the fruit stirs up a ferment from the midst of the decay. The morbid matter must be got out

²⁹So, please, give God's laws of nature a chance and don't bother with the therapies and manipulations that drain nerve energy rather than conserving it.

somehow—the fruit says anyhow. But the stupid eater answers “No, let the stuff stay so long as I don’t know it’s there.” Then the doctor takes his hush money to keep the ferment silenced—and it’s “cut out fruit.” Dope the symptom to cure the disease; that’s the highly rational theory of the highly scientific drug dispenser.

Now during the long Fast you’ll lose a lot of weight—probably an average of a pound a day. Never mind—it’s a good riddance of bad rubbish. You’ll get it all back at the close of the Fast, with an increase of perhaps a pound and a half a day; and this time it will be pure blood, firm flesh, sound sinew. You may feel unaccountably weak, strangely insecure. No need to worry—it’s mostly imagination. Physiologically there should be no real loss of strength till *brain, nerve and muscle* actually waste away; which never occurs while an ounce of flesh remains to be oxygenized. Often a sensation akin to weakness accompanies the passage of impurities from the body—brain, blood, bowels, lungs, kidneys, pores, all are serving as special sewer-functions at the beginning of a Fast. And since the waste matter in process of decay always leaves first, the initial part of the Fast is naturally the most uncomfortable. As a matter of fact, *the worse you feel, the better you are*. Rather, the better becoming—you wouldn’t *feel* bad now if you hadn’t *been* bad for a long time before. This is what Naturopaths call the “crisis,” the expulsion to the surface and appearance thereon of all the foulness lurking deep in the system perhaps for half a lifetime.³⁰ So that the more miserable you feel, the more certain is your need for a Fast. The quickest way to make a Freethinker believe in Hell is to put him on a long Fast; he’ll be there the first week. But the third or fourth week he’ll arrive at Heaven—so he won’t hold a grudge against you. There’s no place in Heaven to hide a grudge—too much sunshine everywhere. Suggestion to theologues: the “bottomless pit” is the pit of the stomach—span that and you’re saved.

Flabby and anemic women in particular will find themselves “all gone,” perhaps haunted by a choice array of fears, dreads and phantoms. Don’t be alarmed—it’s only the ghosts of those sickly Charlotte Russes making their departure. Maybe some Sally Lunn’s are buried there too. Might as well dig up the whole cemetery while you’re about it—so flowers can grow there next spring. Remember all the while that the Fast is not to blame; rather the folly that preceded and

³⁰If you plan to fast, plan to deal with healing crises because they will rear their heads as sure as tomorrow’s sunrise. I’ve experienced some unpleasant hours and days while fasting and expect to experience some more until I eventually clear out the detritus of some forty-plus years of wrong living and wrong eating. To date, I’ve yet to experience any of the major sort of crises that I’ve read about—but I’ve had my share of nasty headaches and plenty of all-around muscle and joint pains and sleepless nights when I just hurt too much to drift off. But I find the price well worth paying when the fast ends—because then I feel so much better than I did previous to the fast that the times of pain seem irrelevant.

necessitated the Fast. And be glad you're getting some sense at last, even if it does cost a pain or two.

Your pulse may drop twenty degrees—one I knew went from 86 to 68 in four days. Sudden attacks of dizziness, vertigo, and the like may annoy you, especially on rising quickly. Headaches of a variegated assortment may follow themselves in motley caravan. A hundred and one unsuspected conditions may develop sooner or later. Again I say—"Laugh at symptoms—pooh pooh them out of business." You are more momentous than your feels-ifs. And so long as you know you are right—to Halifax with the bogie mob. I'd say "to Hell," but I'm very careful about offending "members of the cloth." How that describes them—tailor's dummies of Theology.

Rule 18

Wait and trust for results.

The finest things are always the most impalpable. A man feels pain, a child feels pleasure, but only a mother feels the ecstasy of anguish. For only a mother is attuned to both earth and heaven.

It takes eons of evolution to unfold a mother-soul. And you can't expect to feel all the glories of being after a few days or week of soul-stirring. *Not during the Fast* do you notice great improvement—rather when the Fast is over and forgotten. But I assure you there will ensue such a degree of rejuvenation as will atone for every moment of suffering, every particle of discomfort. Especially on the higher planes of perception.

I spent a few weeks in the country last summer, profiting by the lessons learned through Fasting. While living in the open, scarce a single direct inspiration came to me. But in the month following my return to town, I wrote a *hundred and twenty-five new poems*. Consciousness gathers somewhat as a cloud—slowly, silently, imperceptibly. But when it breaks, then the world knows you have been on the summit of aspiration, breathing in the mists.

Rule 19

Break the Fast with a morsel and a prayer.

The crux of a long Fast is the breaking of it. Returning to the world seems even harder than leaving it. For a week or so in transition you must be half animal with the animal's unerring instinct, half mystic with the mystic's unwavering ideal, not at all man with the man's hesitancy,

temptation and defeat. You will be very empty indeed when you begin to eat again—but by that time you should have learned to enjoy being empty. The stomach won't call for a third the food the rest of you seems to demand. Because the stomach has grown weak from enforced inaction, the digestive juices have lent themselves in other directions, the entire machinery of assimilation is too quiet to disturb by any shock of sudden imposition.

A single article is enough for the first meal, two will suffice for the second, three for the third, fourth, fifth and sixth. Eat whatever you crave most, spend at least an hour in masticating, enjoying and idealizing. Then wait six hours before you taste food again. Among the best Fast-breaking selections let me offer these: *Popcorn, Toasted Triscuit, Lust's Whole Wheat Zwieback, an apple, two or three dried peaches or prunes, a small saucer of whole wheat boiled and baked in its own juice, a piece of crusty cornbread, or a cup of thick pea soup.* Something in short that requires mastication and furnishes sufficient fibre to act on the intestinal walls.³¹ I broke my Fast on a saucer of toasted wheat. It took 700 chews to liquefy the first spoonful, and nearly 40 minutes to complete the dish. A really hungry mortal can't bolt his food—it's a physiological impossibility. And he doesn't need half so much to satisfy him, because he digests and uses all that enters the stomach. Most people's digestion is so torpid they can't get good from more than a small fraction of what they eat; hence the unbalanced aspect of their diet, in both choice and amount. This explains the dullness and depression so often felt after meals—just the protest of an overworked and enfeebled stomach calling for more than its share of blood to perform what should be a job instead of a perfunctory duty.

You will not need or desire more than half the habitual rations consumed before the Fast—provided of course you follow instinct absolutely in the choice, amount, duration and mental attitude respecting food and meal-time. I said “with a morsel and a prayer.” By that I don't mean you should “say a blessing.” Rather, feel a consecration. Your horizon-view should have clarified some great purpose for your living, some beautiful ideal for your attaining.³² Keep this in mind while you partake of the material nourishment that enables your soul to express its message on

³¹You *must* read Dr. Shelton's books on fasting before you attempt to break a fast. I've yet to read a single modern authority on fasting who would advocate breaking the fast on some of the substances Purinton recommends here. At a bare minimum, you should read Dr. Shelton's Chapter 30, “Breaking the Fast,” in *The Science and Fine Art of Fasting* before attempting to break your own first fast. I always break my fasts on oranges and/or orange juice or on grapes. I think I'd probably croak if I tried to break a fast on something like popcorn or toasted Triscuits.

earth. Vision a halo over every morsel. See your heart's sublimest hope realizing through the power from the food. Eat with the job of an animal, love with the consciousness of a god.

Rule 20

Expect ensuing change in life.

Even a week's Fast has opened a new perspective to the individual who took it. You observe a distinct vantage, in realms of body, mind, heart and soul. Things don't look as they used to. The real seems real where before it appeared vague. The false, the unnatural, the superfluous and the unlovely all retire into the shadow of oblivion where they belong. Henceforth you are yourself and the world is nothing. You know naught but that Truth beckons and Love empowers. You have severed the old bonds, formed before you knew yourself or dared be true. You have passed through a new birth,³³ you are living in the Heaven of Sincerity. You may find the world does not recognize you but treats you as an alien. Old friends may desert you—new friends shall cherish you. Habits, customs, desires, ambitions, thoughts, feelings, lovings—all are subject to change under the transforming power of the Conquest Fast.

But the Eternal does not waver, nor the Infinite diminish. You can well afford to emerge from the haze of humanity, wherein men saw you dimly and grasped for you feebly; —out—on—up—into the splendor of Divinity, whence men flee your glory and leave you alone with God.

³²My experience with fasting confirms Purinton's insight here. After a fast of at least five days, I come off it feeling light, pure, and remarkably clear-headed. And as long as I continue to eat abstemiously and Hygienically these physical and mental sensations remain. As soon as I over-eat at a meal, however, within hours I can feel the veil of over-indulgence starting to shade the aforementioned clarity of mind

³³Without waxing too esoteric, from my reading the consensus of those who have fasted to completion do indeed feel reborn physically, mentally, and spiritually. And this commonality of experience certainly makes me want to try the Conquest Fast. May we all discover a new person within the tissues of the old, a person pure and clear and ready to assume our natural birthright: a long, healthy, happy, and productive life!

Chet Day's Living to the Max Program

(Latest version always available at <http://chetday.com/hbprogram.html>)

Diet Keys to Health, Happiness, and a Long Life

- Eat a predominantly plant-based diet with lots of uncooked fruit, vegetables, nuts, and seeds each day
- Try to have at least 16 ounces each day of freshly extracted vegetable juice (no more than 20% carrot juice)
- Eat whole foods and "clean" animal foods like deep-water fish, organic butter and eggs, etc.
- Consume no white flour and no white sugar
- Avoid all hydrogenated oils and foods that contain them
- Do not drink alcoholic beverages or soft drinks
- Eat NO junk food

Life Factor Keys to Health, Happiness, and a Long Life

- Exercise forty-five minutes to one hour six days a week
- Pray or mediate at least twenty minutes every day
- Try to get at least 15 minutes of sun on your body every day
- Drink distilled, filtered, or high quality bottled water
- Breathe clean air and sleep with a window open
- Sleep as much as your body needs and nap when tired
- Keep your stress level reasonable
- Have loving relationships with family, friends, and strangers

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If you want to lose weight, regain the energy of your youth, and find peace of mind, you need to visit <http://www.chetday.com/21day.html> to learn about my home study program:

Twenty-One Days to Health and Beyond

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Other Aids to Health, Happiness, and a Long Life

Although I believe and you can build superior health through wholly natural means, I also know some people can speed the process along by using a few human-made products. These products are especially important if you are cheating or fudging on the overall program or if you have some kind of chronic health challenge.

I'm constantly experimenting with various supplements and presently use and recommend the following:

- A "super green food" two or three times a day
- Plant-based digestive enzymes with every cooked meal
- Occasional use of a psyllium-based colon cleanser to facilitate elimination

There are a lot of inferior products on the market, so be careful with your purchases. If you're interested in the brands I currently use and recommend in my personal program, contact me at products@chetday.com or visit <http://www.chetday.com/healthaids.html>