

I used to have an "it's all bosh" reaction to popular health ideas. But through long, hard experience I found this was too harsh, and that some alternative-medicine concepts were right on target and gave actual help when mainstream doctors didn't.

Starting when I was a teenager, I noticed some foods made me anxious, irritable, tired. They seemed to be carbohydrates, and the foods that really did it to me badly tended to be ones with a higher glycemic index (which measures how fast the food puts glucose into your bloodstream). When I was about 35 I started to notice that some foods, like apples, caused actual hunger pangs after eating them!

I'd seen books in the library about "How to Find Your Hidden Food Allergies", talking about the psychological consequences of certain foods, among other things, and I thought basically that it was made-up, fanciful ideas, without any grounding.

I was sick about six weeks a year, all that time. I was working, but on all of my jobs, I only worked part time. I was sick too much to work full time.

In 1997 or so I saw a (very mainstream) allergist, who did some skin tests. He told me based on my allergy to yeast, I might have food problems (developing allergies to your intestinal flora is connected with food problems).

So I tried an elimination diet from a library book. (it was NOT gluten-free!) It showed me nothing. I had no reactions to allergenic foods when I ate them after the elimination diet.

In 2002, after a very bad breakup I came down sick. I would stare at the walls a lot, my mind in a puddle. My knees and elbows were hurting. The tendons in my forearms got so sore I couldn't pick up a cast iron frying pan in one hand. I kept on coming down with sicknesses with lower abdominal pain, which the doctors tentatively diagnosed as pelvic infections.

I was also using 6 cups of milk /day, which I later came to recognize as a danger sign, being a super-fan of certain foods ... I vaguely felt worse after my milky meals.

So I did a 1-week elimination diet. This one was gluten free. When I did food challenges, meaning trying a particular species of food (like wheat) after the elimination diet, I got quite sick. About 1-2 hours after eating, a groggy stupor would come over me and I would have to lie down. The following day, my joints would hurt and I'd be very irritable, paranoid and prone to rages. Over about 4 days the stupor would fade.

But it wasn't only gluten grains that made me sick like this. Anything in the grain family did, I tried wheat, rye, barley, oats, rice, millet and corn that I remember. And milk, apples and oranges.

When I quit eating those foods, it dramatically changed things for me psychologically. I became much less reactive, more emotionally stable, much less anxious. My vision calmed down from something that had a lot of my mind in it, to just vision.

My joint pains also ended and my forearm tendons went back to normal. I can curl 50 pounds now, not just frying pans, without pain. And my abdomen stopped hurting.

This knocked-out stupor is a typical reaction of celiacs to eating gluten; but many gastroenterologists just tell celiacs to stop eating gluten grains and think they should be fine on a

gluten-free diet. Many celiacs do have problems with other foods, but if they were diagnosed by a mainstream doctor, they often haven't been told this. They just notice after a while on a gluten-free diet that, say, foods with corn in them are making them sick, and they guess that corn is a problem - without knowing to do an elimination diet and food challenge with corn to make sure.

Alternative medicine practitioners, however, have long known about wheat and milk as possible problems. Many of them for many years have advised some of their patients to try quitting wheat and milk for a couple weeks to see if it helps. If I had trusted alternative medicine, I would have tried eliminating these foods much earlier. And possibly, I would have noticed differences. But maybe not, because the alternative medicine people are pretty ad hoc about their recommendations. They tell people to avoid wheat, so they switch to rye or barley ... which also have gluten but, perhaps, don't cause an obvious reaction. Like the elimination diet I tried out of a library book that wasn't even gluten free. I have heard from lots of people who vaguely feel they might have a problem with wheat, but they aren't aware that celiac disease is serious and not uncommon, and that they need to eliminate gluten *\*entirely\** if they have it.

In the case of celiac disease, alternative medicine and the mainstream really are complementary to each other.

A lot of mainstream allergists do suggest that people do elimination diets. Allergists gather information on what clinically seems to work, which isn't necessarily well-researched, and pass it on to their patients.

Nobody knows - so far as I know - what is going on when people have this groggy stupor from foods. Or the milder lowered-consciousness woozy sick feeling I had from later food reactions. Nobody has done an EEG afaik, or looked for abnormalities in blood samples taken from people in that groggy stuporous state, so far as I've heard.

I'd heard about rotation diets from popular books, and also from mainstream allergists. Gastroenterologists don't tell celiacs to rotate their foods. I rotated my foods after I found out about the food intolerances. As I interpreted food rotation, it meant that if I ate a food in a particular genus on one day, I wouldn't eat foods from that same genus again until 4 days later. Foods from the same genus have always cross-reacted for me when I've done food challenges. Also I used the info in Brostoff and Gamlin's book "Food Allergies and Food Intolerance" on cross-reactions in food intolerance, as a guide for rotating foods. So if I didn't have a fish intolerance and were eating fish, if I ate fish on one day I wouldn't eat any kind of fish again until 4 days later, because the allergens in different species of fish are similar and likely to cross-react.

But I wasn't sure that rotating my foods was necessary, so I wasn't very careful about it. But over several years, I found that I developed reactions to *\*all\** foods I didn't rotate, and to none that I did rotate. Apparently I can't afford to not rotate foods, and the alternative medicine people were totally right about rotation diets.

For a long time after my first elimination diet I didn't take traces of food seriously. Because Brostoff and Gamlin's book had stated confidently that people with food intolerance don't react

to traces. There were many foods with traces of corn, like toothpaste sweetened with sorbitol, soy butter with maltodextrins, fructose, etc. that I was eating. I was sick for 5 months in summer 2004, and I started to suspect that traces of corn *\*did\** matter. I did my best to eliminate corn completely, even those tiny traces, for a week. Then I got a grain of corn and sliced it in 16 pieces with a razor blade, and ate one of the pieces, a tiny little bump on my finger.

And I was severely sick for 5 days, not doing anything except getting out of bed now and then to take my dog into the backyard to pee. After I took all traces of corn out of my diet I suddenly found many other food intolerances became symptomatic. I would eat a food, come down feeling very sick with a lot of back pain for 4 days ...

About traces I'd trusted the advice of an authority, and he'd been totally wrong ... Dr. Brostoff is a food intolerance researcher. I've gotten sick many times from traces. Like the time I was feeding the squirrels peanut butter, I didn't wash my hands all that well after, and I nibbled a finger, there was a tiny taste of peanut butter under my fingernail, and I was sick for days, again ... Many, many people with food intolerances would assure me confidently that traces *\*do\** matter. They would even say that the food intolerance reaction is dose-independent. This is somewhat true. Sometimes it feels like I have a trigger in my digestive system, and almost any amount can pull the trigger, and I'll have the reaction. But I *\*have\** found that for very small amounts of food, I don't stay sick as long. I tried a 200 IU vitamin E capsule with soy oil in it, and I got sick. But I only stayed sick for two days, not up to 6 days as happens with meal-sized amounts of food. And really, really tiny amounts of foods I'm intolerant to, don't bother me. An allergist suggested a nasal spray that had dextrose in it. Dextrose is made from corn. But from my rough guess, there's only about a nanogram of corn protein in a spray! I didn't get sick from the nasal spray.

I looked into the research on "hypoglycemia", the anxious, jittery reactions to carbohydrates I had. They were very bad sometimes. I felt once like I'd stuck my finger in a light socket, after eating an orange. There was almost nothing about reactive hypoglycemia in Medline. Some evidence that "hypoglycemics" were making a lot of adrenaline after eating carbs. One study that said they had "beta-adrenergic hypersensitivity". Not being an endocrinologist, I didn't know what that was, but I found out it had something to do with allergies. Which is very intriguing.

But the alternative medicine hypoglycemia sites were much more informative. They linked hypoglycemia with allergies and mentioned that sometimes people found their hypoglycemia went away on an elimination diet. Which is what happened to me. I no longer had those adrenaline reactions to foods after eliminating the huge number of food intolerances I found after I was corn-free. It seemed that eating foods I was intolerant to messed up my carbohydrate metabolism with excessive adrenaline, or hypersensitivity to adrenaline. I had those jittery reactions to foods that didn't have an especially high glycemic index, but that I was intolerant to. But never to very low-GI foods like peanuts, that I'm virulently intolerant to.

Anybody who gets jittery reactions to foods should get celiac blood tests and try an elimina-

tion diet, in that order. I don't have any problem with carbohydrates now. I just get somewhat energized, and full :) after eating a lot of carbs.

So there is a weird gap in the medical system with food. I guessed after I found out about this, that gluten might be an underlying cause for many people with food intolerances. They're undiagnosed, brushed off as hypochondriacs by mainstream medicine, they get alienated and angry at doctors. They turn to alternative medicine, get diagnosed, maybe rightly, with food intolerances, without knowing how serious gluten intolerance really is. Or maybe they get diagnosed with CFS or fibromyalgia or Candida. A lot of those vague "alternative" diagnoses might be mostly from hidden food intolerances.

It was my guess that a lot of the alternative medicine industry results from that one, huge problem which is so little understood. Because the body hides the food intolerances to survive, your body is trying to keep you feeling as good as possible. Because the symptoms are often vague, and they differ from one person to another.

Allergists know about "cyclic food allergies", which are a kind of food intolerance that only lasts for a few months. They don't know about the kind I have, which may be a consequence of celiac disease, which last for years. I quit dates, for example. I'd noticed I had hives that started when I started eating date sugar and they went away when I stopped eating date sugar. Also that eating date sugar made me jittery and anxious. So I thought I probably had a date intolerance, but I wasn't sure. After about 2.5 years of no dates, I impulsively ate a date in a store. And I was sick for 6 days.

Mainstream medicine is so sophisticated in some ways. They know a lot, even about rare diseases. And you wonder how they can miss something right under their noses like food intolerance, which isn't a rare problem. At least, you wonder this if you go through what I have. If you haven't, you would likely assume they \*can't\* have missed something like this, and assume it's all hogwash. If you have, it becomes a puzzling piece of reality, and you start to have a more sophisticated view of the world, you understand things aren't all as they're portrayed to be and the mainstream info you're fed is sometimes drastically wrong.

Often, people who are trying to figure out their food intolerances have ideas about them that are almost certainly wrong. Like, that they're getting sick from the ethylene gas that fruits & vegs are treated with. It's made from corn, but it's got to have SO little corn protein in it ... The vapor pressure of a metal in air is not measurable, I think, and the vapor pressure of a macromolecule must be \*so\* much less - about 0, really ...

But I've noticed is that the amalgamated information from the experiences of many different people, maybe as filtered through a person who has some knowledge, has more validity and can often tell you things that medical research hasn't yet elucidated.

Most of the celiacs I've met have had, essentially, horror stories. "I almost died", they say. Long stories about doctors overlooking the possibility of food intolerance, going from doctor to doctor and getting misdiagnosed. Spending thousands of \$\$\$ on tests that show nothing. Decades of almost fruitless therapy for food intolerance-caused problems, with therapists who

never investigated possible medical causes. I'm not sure if therapy is complete BS, but I'm rather skeptical now about the social/psychological world-view, of dealing with social and psychological problems with behavioral advice or by therapizing them.

Celiac disease is terribly underdiagnosed. There was an epidemiological study in 2003 that found celiac disease in 1 in 111 U.S. adults, and it was being diagnosed in 1 in 4,500 adults!

My father raged a lot, he was VERY tense, like a board, as a friend said - and he died of throat cancer. All of these can be caused by celiac disease. After I went through this, I felt I understood his muscle tension. My muscles were very tense before I quit gluten. Celiac disease is mostly genetic, about 70% concordance rate. He probably wasn't a "rageaholic", as the therapists had it, but a celiac.

*Laura*