

**CLARE CUNNINGHAM**  
**MY LIFE SO FAR ....THE GOOD, THE BAD**  
**AND THE (VERY) UGLY**



**INTRODUCTION**

***"ARE WE HONESTLY ALLOWED TO SHOW THE IMPERFECT SIDES OF OUR LIVES WITHOUT JUDGMENT?"***

***It has been said that God will not give us more than we can bear. Who makes that decision of how much we can bear in our lives?***

Life is a journey and it's not meant to be easy. I couldn't be more grateful for all the bad times, traumas, struggles, and adversities I've endured, because it's given me an understanding of what hardship can be like and made me appreciate life more in the good times. It allows me to connect with people who go through the same issues and help them and vice versa. There's always going to be somebody worse off than you. I know that I am truly blessed and anything I went through was for a reason. I've become a stronger woman for it and learned so much along the way and wouldn't do life over again any differently.

The worst thing that you're going through is the worst thing you are going through. It's pointless trying to compare your journey to another person, and you'll never know how another person FEELS. So please remember to have Grace, mercy, love, and show compassion to others even when they are not doing right by you. This is a tough one but learning to forgive those who have wronged you will truly help you move forward.

Only YOU carry the burden of that hatred and anger towards them, which in turn will only make YOU ill and fill YOUR spirit with hatred. You deserve peace, and that can only be achieved by forgiveness. It's not easy, trust me. But I can say this only because I've forgiven all the abusers, bullies, and manipulators I've dealt with in my life. I've had people do the worst things humanly possible to me, but without them, I would never be where I am today. Nor would it motivate me to write this or the songs I write. I believe in the age-old saying that "hurt people hurt people". It doesn't give people the right to treat you badly but it may give you some comfort in knowing that they most likely came from trauma and are acting out. And perhaps you are (or were) in the crossfire of that. It's a domino effect. And it can stop with YOU! Most people generally don't wake up in the morning to go out to harm others on purpose. Life circumstances, environmental factors, stress, and fear can cause people to do unimaginable things. Everybody has their own story and reasons for why they do what they do and why they say what they say. It's not an excuse, but maybe it gives you that wriggle room to begin to find it in your heart to find compassion for them and have forgiveness. You owe it to yourself.

As a mental health advocate, I can empathize with anybody suffering.

\*An estimated 1 in 4 adults suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. That number has greatly increased since the pandemic, so you are NOT ALONE. After I decided to take my life more seriously and seek help at 27 (I'm now 36 at the time of print) the very first book I ever read on mental health that my therapist suggested, made me realize that there were others just like me and I wasn't crazy or going insane and that there was a way to help myself! That was a good day. I felt like all my symptoms were in black and white and seeing them all written out weirdly gave me such comfort.

Unless you are aware you need help you may not realize you need it. I know I didn't. I always thought the way I acted and the issues I had were "normal". FAR from it. Reality got distorted and living with chronic anxiety was normal, so in a way, I didn't know any different. Please know you are never alone in your struggle. Seek help and TALK. It's never too late and you can heal and be ok.

After years of people telling me I needed to start a podcast or write a book, I decided to write a small mini blog but then after endless writing that just poured out of me, I realized it was becoming more like a memoir! So let's see where it leads me! If you are reading this then first off thank you! I appreciate your time. I hope this brings you some inspiration and gives

you a better understanding of who I am and where I've come from. To understand what's made me into the person I am today, the good and bad parts. Why I act the way I do, and what drives and motivates me in the way I think, in the decisions I've made and continue to make! This is also for anybody who's ever been too scared or ashamed to admit that they are suffering from any mental health issues and who feel their voices are not being heard.

I had to keep quiet a lot growing up, mainly due to how our culture in Ireland was (and still to a degree is), and learned to suppress a lot of my feelings and experiences which later showed up in life. I feel now is the time to truly strip my soul bare and be vulnerable and will go deeper and possibly write a book if this is something that people gravitate towards. This is my first time writing a blog and will only scratch the surface on certain life topics.

I feel it's my duty, as somebody in the public eye, to show this side of me in the hopes of connecting with anybody out there who may have gone through similar situations. It's a purpose I know I'm led to live out and I will do whatever it takes to help as many people as I can before I leave this earth. I want you to get a glimpse into the beautiful but traumatic life I've lived. By no means am I an expert in any field, but through personal experiences, I've learned what's good for ME and what isn't! I can only learn and continue to grow from the mistakes I've made (and will continue to make) and that's all a part of growing stronger and evolving as a human being.

My faith has been the biggest shifting point in my life and I restored my relationship with my Lord-saviour Jesus Christ, at the end of 2020. I truly know that the Holy Spirit that resides within me has been a major component in the shift I've made over these last few years, but it has also helped me in knowing when to slow down and listen to my body. I live by this today: If you go within you will never go without.

You can turn to all the substances the world has to offer (usually becoming addictions) to receive temporary relief - drugs, alcohol, sex, porn, food, gambling, etc, but they will never compensate for the peace inside your soul that you have free access to at any time of any day. And that peace is more of a permanent solution, not a quick fix. I can only go by personal experience again, as I too used to lean on exterior worldly things and substances to take the edge off the pain I was feeling at the time. It didn't work, at least not long term. And you will see I will mention the holy spirit and Jesus throughout this entire piece. Please note that this is nothing to do with religion and I share it because of the miraculous healing I've personally received because of it. I know that not everybody who reads this has a personal relationship with the lord, so please do not let it deter you from anything I say. I too was once an atheist and followed a lifestyle that was the polar opposite of the one I lead today. I never judge. I have no place to do that. It's a big part of my journey and it's why I share it. I will never push any ideas, politics, or religion on anybody. I don't condone such behavior and please never be swayed like that in life. You need to follow where your spirit leads you to. But always have respect and show love to others. The basic principles in life should always be followed no matter what your belief system is.

When you sit with yourself and tap into that peaceful place, I know that nothing else compares to it. All the answers you are looking for are right in there. It's a hard place to go because you will face your demons. But to heal, evolve and move forward you got to get rid

of the 'gunk'. You can't serve from a cup that's already full. And especially full of bad energy. Don't be ashamed.

I was so ashamed to ever admit I had issues because it would unveil and unravel the darker side of me I never wanted people to see or find out about. I wanted to wear a mask and maintain my social status and be a social chameleon and portray an image of perfection, for people who did not know what I felt or what was happening along the way. It's easier to hide behind a smile and then in private self-harm or scream in frustration into a pillow behind closed doors. All of my romantic relationships suffered because I was never honest. I had to be the 'perfect' girlfriend. The 'perfect' friend. But the thing is every single person has demons they fight with. Nobody goes through life without facing hardship and even if you did, then 2020 gave people a taste of what bleakness and despair can look like. When all that you know is gone in an instant. That's scary.

You deserve the best life possible so just start today wherever you are. Small steps. And remember that change can only happen when people start to be more honest with themselves. Let's be the change together. It sounds so cliché but stigmas only exist because we are not addressing these issues openly and honestly with one another. My honesty throughout may leave you feeling uncomfortable or distressed or even angry, but take it for what it is and just know it's been 36 years in the making! We need to stop worrying about other people's feelings and please everyone around us. You may please your entire street or family, but you do a disservice when you're not pleasing your inner being.

You can't escape yourself. It's a 24/7 relationship so it's time to learn to love YOU. And because we are human we won't like everybody we meet and they won't all like us either. That's ok! It's what makes the world go round. Attend to your needs and feed yourself with what makes you happy. In turn, people will get the best version of you. Avoid listening to other people's opinions or following social norms, and just DO YOU!! I can't stress this enough. And on the occasions, if other people are not happy with your life choices, including attire (fill in the blank) that's on them. Leave them be. Let them get upset. It's most likely because it's triggering some trauma within themselves. You don't owe anybody anything. This is not being selfish, it's being self-FULL. Like the airplane analogy - attend to your oxygen mask before attending to others. If you don't, -you run the risk of living your whole life for somebody else and when they leave or die, you're left with a broken shell of a human that never fulfilled their dreams. By all means, take constructive criticism if you know the person or people are giving it from a place of love or concern and not jealousy.

If there's a parent out there reading this I urge you to let your children be FREE to make their own choices. I was so, so blessed my parents supported my decision to become a singer/songwriter/performer. When everybody else told me I needed to get a 'real job' they stood by me and helped me achieve my dream. It's because of them I get to share this beautiful message in the hope of reaching somebody else who's about to embark on a lifestyle that's not a normal 9-5. Unfortunately, a lot of adults squash a child's dream before they've even had the chance to explore it. Imagine if the parents of all the hugely successful people we know and love in this world (either alive or gone) had stopped their children from living out their passion, then we wouldn't have the amazing inventions or the beautiful songs or films, etc that we love and get to enjoy today. SOME-BODY creates the very thing you enjoy including this phone or computer so remember that before you tell a child/teen they need to get a 'real job'.



It's evident that creative people are wired a little 'differently'. Our brains don't think or act like average humans. And because of this, we are usually very misunderstood. I was always called the weird child. I got bullied a lot because of it. It caused so much frustration especially being the only one in my peer group to be that way. As a child, you want to fit in. But how can you, when you stand out like a sore thumb?

Parents are often told by their kids' teachers, or peers, that their child has a mental disorder or some combination of letters, and some even dim them down with medication that destroys the creative brain. Again, I urge parents/adults to use medication as an absolute last resort. So I pray that if my story helps you change or inspires you to be courageous and admit that you've got problems and seek help, my work here has been fulfilled. Sometimes we plant a seed and may not get to see the forest but every little bit helps! And just like me, if you relapse from time to time that's ok too. I have a line in a song that reads 'It's ok not to be ok!' Bad days will come upon you, but with time they won't last as long as the previous ones. Be the person you were born to be and be happy, you're a beautiful soul! God bless x

So here it is - my story.... **The good, The bad and the (very) ugly**

*\* National Institute of Mental Health Disorders, part of the National Institutes of Health*

## **ADDICTIONS**

***What is addiction?***

***When do you call yourself an addict and when do you realize you need help?***

\*Addiction is a (treatable) chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual's life experiences. People with addiction use substances or engage in behaviors that become compulsive and often continue despite harmful consequences.

When most people hear the word addiction they usually concoct an image of a heavy drug user on the streets or an alcoholic who has lost all self-control. However, addictions come in so many forms and are not always very obvious to onlookers or even family members. Especially if a person is a functioning addict. This is why when somebody, like myself, admits to having an addiction to something it's either not believed or taken seriously.

As alluded to before I am not a fan of labels and so addiction typically gets a bad connotation. I do believe that not all addictions are bad though. Especially if they benefit your life in some way, like exercise. It only starts to become an issue when it starts interfering with your life or the lives of others around you and when a person engages in these behaviors in excess and can't stop.

Aside from the obvious addictions such as drugs and alcohol, there are a lot of non-substance addictions including gambling, sex, food, the internet, mobile devices, and shopping. Commonly called behavioral addictions. I would assume that nearly all of us are

subject to being addicted to one or more of these, especially in the technical world we live in today. Smartphone and social media addiction are very prevalent in a lot of society today.

**\*\***The phenomena of social media addiction can be largely attributed to the dopamine-inducing social environments that social networking sites provide. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram produce the same neural circuitry that is caused by gambling and recreational drugs to keep consumers using their products as much as possible. Studies have shown that the constant stream of retweets, likes, and shares from these sites cause the brain's reward area to trigger the same kind of chemical reaction seen with drugs like Cocaine. Neuroscientists have compared social media interaction to a syringe of dopamine being injected straight into the system.

## **PERFECTIONISM**

One of the most prevalent addictions I admit to having is perfectionism.

**\*\*\***Perfectionism, in psychology, is a broad personality trait characterized by a person's concern with striving for flawlessness and perfection and is accompanied by critical self-evaluations and concerns regarding others' evaluations

As long as I can remember, I always had to be perfect and have everything in my life done and made perfectly. This is pathologically very destructive because there's no such thing as 'perfect'. And I was very hard on myself if I felt I wasn't doing things in a way that satisfied my need to show what I believed was perfection. It doesn't help that society generally supports perfectionism. It's a dangerous addiction because perfectionism does not exist so we are striving for something that is unattainable long-term.

I still have traits of it today but I won't beat myself up about it, the way I used to. I won't give in to my anger when things are not going my way.

There were so many times, especially growing up, that I would physically hurt myself or break things around me if I made a mistake on my homework or a task I was doing. It's frightening looking back now at how polluted my self-worth was.

The problem with perfectionism is the appetite of the addiction can increase like other addictions, so a person's need for more of it increases in order to get their 'high'.

My need for achievement grew more and more and the pressure I put on myself to get everything done or achieve all grade A's or be the 'best' at whatever I was doing started to affect me, and people close to me, in a negative way. I was setting unrealistic goals for myself and when I wasn't achieving them or receiving the accolades associated with what I was doing, I felt like a failure. To which I would then punish myself.

My self-esteem was always based on my performance. Everything I did would feed my self-worth and I validated my very existence to how I was performing. So I needed to be always performing at my best. And nothing would compensate for anything less.

I've had to slowly let go that being 'perfect' does not exist. And that the people around me won't think anything less of me if I am not doing everything 100% correctly. Or if I'm having an off day or I am not looking as good as I could, as examples.

*\*American Society of Addiction Medicine*

*\*\* Addiction Centre*

*\*\*\* American Psychological Association*

## **TANNING**

When I was doing a small bit of research on the topic of addictions for this I was pleasantly surprised to see that tanning fell under one of the less common addictions. Makes sense now to me because the ultraviolet (UV) spectrum of sunlight releases endorphins. And clearly, I am a fan of endorphins.

It brought me back to childhood when I was obsessed with the sun. I still am, only now I wear sunscreen. But even the fear of skin cancer wouldn't stop me as a child from basking in the sun or using tanning beds just to get my high or tan.

When the sun is out I am in it. It makes me feel so alive. I've had minor sunstroke more times than I can count. I'm a completely different person in the summer. I come to life. Even today, I won't book sessions or shows during the day because that would hinder me from being in them. I will also drive with zero AC and just have my windows rolled down so I can feel it on my skin. When it's warm enough, exercising outdoors is a double high for me. Even in the winter every morning unless it's pouring rain I trampoline outside to get the sunlight on my skin and eyes which does have its health benefits.

In Ireland, growing up, the summers were not exactly fantastic but we would always go on family vacations to Spain and I would be on my sunbed from the second the sun came out until it went down. Mom would always apply sunscreen on us but I would wrestle with her, sometimes go in a crying fit, and would wash it straight off because I wouldn't get a tan if I had it on.

I would also skip family excursions just so I could lay in the sun and get a tan. I deeply regret this now as I lost out on so much valuable time with my family, all to get a tan that would disappear as fast as it came. Skin cancer didn't scare me one bit. Nothing would deter me from getting a tan.

It was dangerous because the only way I would tan is if I got burned. I would get an extremely bad sunburn to the point of blistering. And I would be in so much agony I couldn't sleep properly. And then I would continue to burn my skin and expose it to the sun, on top of my already burnt skin, causing second-degree burns at times.

My obsession became so bad that when we would get back off vacation I needed to maintain my tanned skin and so I would ask to go with my mom into town when she would do her weekly shop and I would go off in secret into the local tanning salons and do as many 20 minute sessions as I could. Typically I could get around 3 sessions in. Looking back I realize this was an issue. And very dangerous. I'm not sure how I don't look like a leather suitcase at this point in my life.

It didn't stop there though. I wanted to be able to 'tan' at home and thought that by putting cooking oil on my face and putting my face in the oven I could get a tan. You guessed it. That didn't work! I can laugh now at the stupidity of this but at the time I was desperate and it wasn't funny. All I was left with was a red face and very greasy hair, which I got bullied for in school. Badly.

On one particular vacation, I went on during a high school break, the weather wasn't great, so I didn't get very burned and returned with no tan. I couldn't show my face in school if I didn't have a tan. How embarrassing I thought. So I decided to reach for a bottle and create a 'natural' glow. To my horror, I woke up the next morning looking like an oompa loompa (Charlie and the chocolate factory) and I was mocked and ridiculed by my peers. And they kept singing the oompa loompa song. I had to fight back the tears. So I lied and told them it was natural. No one believed me and I felt like such a fraud. I'm not sure why I needed their approval or why I felt I looked better with a tan. Perhaps I felt I looked healthier and more attractive. All the pretty girls had tans. I wanted so desperately to feel pretty and be attractive and wanted.

Thankfully because I pretty much loathed my face growing up, especially if any freckles appeared from being in the sun, I would cover my face from the sun and would lie with a towel over my face barely not able to breathe just so I wouldn't get any. I typically would burn from the neck down. If I ended up getting any freckles, I scolded myself and I went straight to the local chemist to buy a very expensive cream called 'Fade Out cream' to aid in the removal of freckles. I thought they made me look even uglier than I was, and I would go into fits of hysteria when looking in the mirror and seeing the ugliness that stared back at me. I despised my image.

I still have a small complex with my physical appearance today but thankfully I have learned to let go of all of it and have a much healthier relationship with the sun. I wear sunscreen and allow the sun on my face and would never touch a sunbed. And I do not put my head in any ovens!!

As soon as I was of age to earn money I would blow every single penny on shopping. Clothes, hair products, and skin products. You name it. Once I was spending I was happy. Half of the items I would buy I wouldn't even need but I got such a thrill from spending. With the world of online shopping coming into existence I even emptied my entire bank account to one company because I had so many returns that I didn't get to send back I ended up bankrupt temporarily.

Today, I still get a small rush from walking into a store and buying something new but I rarely do this now and I only buy essentials. I also love when I am buying for other people. Perhaps it makes me feel like I am doing something good if it's for other people and I feel less guilty.

## **WEIGHING MYSELF**

At one point I was addicted to weighing myself. I was never heavy or concerned over my weight but seeing the numbers go up or down slightly became an obsession. Of course, I felt

better if they weren't rising but because I am so competitive I had to weigh myself daily sometimes more than once, so I could compete with the day before.

Today I don't own a set of scales and never know what I weigh unless I have to see a doctor and step on the scales. Only this week I had to do it and I was a little surprised at the number I saw. For an instant, I felt ashamed and thought I'd be lower but I quickly put the thought away and didn't allow it to affect me. It's why I won't ever buy a scale for my home. It's not healthy for me to compete against myself.

## **CHEWING GUM**

Chewing gum has been a huge addiction in my life and today I still hold this one. I'm never without gum. It starts once I've had my first drink of the day and continues until I go to bed. This includes when I work out, perform or record. Due to the negative effects and the terrible ingredients in gum, especially sugar or artificial sweeteners, it has very adverse effects on the body. And as an IBS sufferer, this does not help my case.

And I don't just chew a piece here and there. I pop in two, chew for 5 minutes or less and then replace them. I typically chew anywhere between 55 and 75 pieces a day.

Before I knew how bad the ingredients were, it took me collapsing with severe abdominal cramps a few years ago to switch to a healthier gum to continue with my habit without the same negative results.

I researched and found a healthier version from a Swiss company called 'pür' for which I have a double subscription on Amazon. It's not in all the stores here. I have it in every bag I own in case I run out. One time they ran low on stock and I couldn't buy it and I thought the world might end. So dramatic! That's when I knew my habit wasn't healthy. The benefit of gum for me is that it keeps me from overeating though. Sounds almost comical that one habit stops me from another but I would rather be chewing gum than stuffing my face.

The main problem with addiction is that when you may overcome an addiction you often transfer one compulsive behavior for another. You might have eliminated the initial behavior, but something else comes along to replace it. I can relate to this. Hence why I believe I've had so many addictions in my life. Unless we get to the root cause of why we have these addictions we will continue in these vicious cycles.

## **EXERCISE**

Exercise for me is definitely an escape. There's a healthy balance between doing a good thing and then for it to become an obsession. To an outsider it would definitely appear like I have an addiction to exercise. I like to look at it as a way for me to expel energy and to feel strong. It's a lifestyle and because it's healthy it's often overlooked as a bad addiction.

I obtain all the major tell tale signs that I am addicted to exercising. These include forcing myself to exercise even if I don't feel well. Although I am definitely better at not doing

this presently. Every time I exercise, I go as fast or as hard as I can. I experience severe stress and anxiety if I miss a workout or I don't get as much as I would like.

I speak more in depth about my fitness journey and why it's a huge part of my life further down.

## **TATTOOS AND PIERCINGS**

I have a lot of body art! It's not something I'll be ever getting more of and in a way, it's a part of my journey so I don't ever regret it. I have come to a few conclusions as to why I got so addicted. The pain factor became a rush. It took away from the pain I was feeling in other areas of my life. It made me feel alive and knowing that I could endure hours under the needle, often two days in a row, made me feel oddly empowered. I also believe I wanted to distract people from my inner self so that if I had a very bold exterior it would keep people from getting past it and into my interior.

I started getting tattooed when I was around 18. After my sister wanted us to get matching Chinese symbols (they were popular back then!) it started my journey. Hearing the needles and being in the chair and feeling the needles pierce my skin made me feel so alive.

I started getting piercings at a very young age which included facial piercings, bellybutton, and ears. Despite the pain or the pain during healing, I got a rush when my skin would be pierced, similar to the way I felt in later years about tattoos.

## **ADDERALL**

Adderall is used to treat ADHD and narcolepsy. It contains a combination of amphetamine and dextroamphetamine. These are central nervous system stimulants that affect chemicals in the brain and nerves that contribute to hyperactivity and impulse control.

It's a very commonly prescribed drug along with others of its nature such as Ritalin and Vyvanse to name but a few. It can be habit-forming and this medicine is a drug of abuse as a lot of people buy it from the black market or from friends or family who have a prescription for it.

That's how I first got introduced. After years of people telling me I should try it as I have ADHD, I was slightly curious. I'd never been to a doctor regarding my symptoms and wasn't planning a visit soon. So a friend of mine gave me half of their daily dose so I could try it and see.

I remember taking it and going straight out on a run. At the time I was doing a lot of running and I had a lot more energy than normal. My skin was tingling and I felt pretty great. I could see why people got addicted. The thing is I'm already so high-strung that I knew this wasn't a drug I'd ever need to be on! And knowing how my personality is I was afraid of getting addicted so I stayed clear of it.

That was until I, unfortunately, got acquainted with a person in 2020, who took advantage of any curiosity I'd had in the past and force-fed extremely high doses to me against my



wishes. Due to reasons beyond what I can talk openly about right now, this person caused a severe amount of trauma in my life. I cannot share this period of my life publicly but it wasn't a great period in my life it did eventually lead me to my faith so for that I am extremely grateful.

When this person was removed from my life, the aftereffects of a lot of drugs that I had been mostly forcefully fed were still in my system and I then realised I was depending on Adderall to feel awake or feel motivated enough to get by my daily routine. I was still functioning just fine but now felt very dependent.

I made an appointment with my doctor, explained the situation (mostly), and that I'd like to be prescribed the pills to see if we're going to help me combat my (undiagnosed) ADHD and see under a controlled environment if it was something I should be on. I had to go through a psych evaluation which brought up a lot of my old traumas and I realised just how bad I was and how I had lost a grip on my life. To the outside world, nobody but my closest knew that I wasn't doing too great. I was a candidate and it was also suggested that on top of this, I was to see a therapist.

Looking back I should never have decided to get a diagnosis - because deep down I knew I would be prescribed it and the therapist I saw was fine until she started using more of an energy healing-based method on me and it didn't feel good to me anymore. It just brought back the trauma I'd just been through in 2020, so I was at a complete loss. But as I have openly said I found faith at the end of that year and when I say my faith walk was, and still is, a journey I can only yet again thank my Lord-Savior for being the one to eventually get me off everything. I was headed down a very slippery slope.

I also now question did I ever have ADHD or if it was a combination of just my natural personality/lifestyle combined with a stronghold over me. I say this because the medication made me so jittery and my anxiety went through the roof. I asked my doctor if this was normal and he said not so we switched to a different brand then I asked him to lower the doses until it was becoming more apparent that I could not be on this medication any longer. So how did I finally give up this extremely addictive drug? As with other areas in my life, the only relief and real help were from the help of Jesus. I went off it cold turkey and never felt better. And I've never looked back. I'm sharing this not to tell anybody to ever stop medication the way I did. Please always consult your doctor and do it under supervision.

It's why I especially advocate more on the side of going within to receive the peace and answers you need. Medication can certainly be a placeholder until you are ready, but when your spirit can be completely free from anything that alters it you can truly get back to the source.

Nowadays a lot of people who know me well and have seen my transition tell me there's a peace around me that they've never seen in me before. That is my testimony. I also feel it. I feel so much more at ease. And instead of a pill to fuel my day, I am getting my energy from the Lord. It's quite incredible. Please note this doesn't mean I don't get stressed, tired, or anxious from time to time but it's how I now manage it and it never lasts very long.

## **FOOD**

Food addiction is probably one of the least talked about and it certainly isn't taken as seriously as some of the others, at least from my point of view. The biggest problem with being addicted to food, unlike other addictions, you can't avoid it. We need food to survive. Hence making it one that's hard to overcome and avoid.

It makes sense that we can become addicted to food because Consuming "highly palatable foods and especially foods containing sugar or sweeteners, triggers the pleasure centers of the brain and releases those "feel-good" chemicals such as dopamine and serotonin. The same chemicals that a lot of other addictions can give you. At least temporarily.

## **MY BATTLE WITH BINGE EATING**

A lot of people are surprised or even laugh and tell me I'm lying when I tell them I have/had issues with binge eating. My body figure does not look like I overconsume food. Quite the opposite. People think I don't eat enough. I promise you that's not the case! There have been times when I've eaten so much food to the point of not being able to breathe very well or even collapsing to the floor with cramps. I continue to eat despite being full. It's a feeling of never feeling satisfied until I'm so full I feel sick.

A combination of fasting in my adult years and growing up in a culture where you were not allowed to leave the table until you'd finished your plate, I ended up with an unhealthy relationship with food. Food for me is a void filler for loneliness, a comforter in times of stress, and gives me a feeling of fullness and happiness I can't quite achieve in other areas of my life. It sounds very easy to say 'But just don't eat it'. It's like telling the alcoholic 'But just don't drink'.

Social settings still make me nervous because despite the amount of control and willpower I have over every other area in my life this is the one place I fall short. I don't expect anybody to fully understand this but it's a REAL issue. It's been so bad over the years that even after I would have to put the remainder of a 9 serving bag of chips or something similar in the trash to stop me, I'd go back into the trash and continue to consume it. Leading me to need to pour something disgusting over it to stop me. If you're chuckling right now I'm glad it's giving you a laugh (!) but I promise this has never been a laughing matter for me. I would feel so ashamed and then sit and cry and then punish myself by doing extra hours of working out at the gym the next day to compensate for a longer fast. And the vicious cycle would continue.

More recently, if I buy a bag of chips that has 9 servings I will consume it all but I'll consume it from a place of love and not hate, and just forget about it and know that I won't allow myself to go down the disgusting rabbit hole! Because if we do not consume food with love we will cause our cortisol levels to rise and then our bodies will typically not digest it very well and store it as fat.

This is why as a child I could pack so much food away and never gain weight. I didn't count or think about calories (and still don't) loved eating. It wasn't until my later years it started becoming a problem. My other issue is HOW I eat. Even today it's rare for me to sit down and eat a meal. I usually eat while I prepare my food or in my car but I'm trying to be better



at this these days! Being present with food, eating slowly, and savoring it helps from overeating!

I've had numerous counselors but nothing helped until I managed to get an appointment with a nutritional counselor who specializes in eating disorders. The first question he asked me was what my relationship status was and knowing that loneliness can cause you to turn to food for comfort, I explained I was single and had been for a while. After our session, he felt there wasn't anything much he was going to be able to do for me because I was very well educated in this field and knew the issues I had and why I had them, so out of sympathy I think he scheduled another meeting for one month instead of a week. But then I received a phone call from the clinic that evening asking me to come back as soon as possible. He had called the clinic because when I was pulling out of the parking lot I nearly crashed into him while stuffing my face with food and he realised how bad my condition was. I didn't even realise I'd nearly crashed into him. Because I had to take the hour with him foodless, I was ready for my next food intake.

We saw each other bi-weekly after that for a few months and concentrated on a lot of physiotherapies and he said he was learning a few things from me. I was very grateful! I didn't exactly 'heal'. My binge eating continued but then I decided to try cycling off fasting to see if it worked. It was so tough. My body was so acclimated and accustomed to not having food for long periods, that breaking the cycle was so uncomfortable initially and I was feeling a sense of guilt like I was letting myself down. I would habitually still be clock watching trying to wean away from that lifestyle. It helped temporarily and for the first time in years, my menstrual cycle came back. A step in the right direction.

I admittedly preferred how I felt while in the fasted state though. I felt mentally clearer and loved exercising on an empty stomach! I had a lot more energy this way. Today, however, I'm back on fasting but have a much better and healthier approach to it and I can proudly say I don't binge anymore (and if I do it's not as horrific) or at least not to the level I used to. Social gatherings don't make me as nervous as they once did and it helps if I have a 'cut-off' time for eating, meaning I'm less likely to keep filling my plate up.

Again, a major component in this transition was coming back to faith. It taught me to realise that my body is a temple that I need to respect it and that there is always food available. I no longer have to stuff my face when my 'feeding window' opens up. I did years of research and listened to a lot of podcasts dealing with topics on the subject, so it happened naturally when I allowed myself some grace and mercy and knowing too that it's probably much more than just a mental issue, but more a stronghold over me and just staying focused on my journey to wellness and praying about it. I'm so proud of myself and honestly, it's been one of the toughest things, and still can be, to navigate. If you have a similar experience please share your stories publicly as I feel there is still a big stigma that still surrounds food and it's not taken as seriously as other mental health issues or addictions, which is sad and I feel it's so misunderstood. So if I've sparked anything from what I've said then I hope you can share your story too.

## 2020

Not a single soul on the planet will ever forget 2020! The pandemic shut the whole world down and divided people into categories and for some, it brought a brand new perspective on things, they grew and found themselves and came out for the better. For others, it was the lowest of lows where they lost not only loved ones but everything that they spent their whole lives working for. I like to believe that I tipped the scale on both sides, but more so on the side of growth.

When I moved to Nashville, as an artist, it was normal to be in writing rooms, numerous times a week working on my craft with other songwriters, and writing songs. Numerous studio sessions and out every night singing. I reached a point where I was overdoing it and my creativity was diminishing especially as I was only writing for the sake of writing and not because it was coming from my heart.

2020 was a big year and I was booked for some major festivals and events. My career was on the rise and I felt this was going to be 'THE YEAR'! And then boom. Just like that everything was cancelled and life as I knew it was about to change. I was lying on my bed about one month into the first lockdown and suddenly felt very emotional and started crying. With no family, friends, or life partner I was in complete isolation. I'd never experienced anything quite like it so wasn't sure how to deal with the situation.

This is where my song 'I swear' was born. As clear as day I heard a voice say grab a pen and paper and then it came in an indescribable flow! In under ten minutes, the song was complete (including the music) and I made my way to my piano. I laid exactly what you hear as the track today. Untouched. It was my fastest creation to date. I felt like I became a vessel for a message that the Lord had given me. It was powerful. The song is for mental health awareness with suicide prevention as the main motive for it. However, I've had a lot of people going through different hardships saying they resonated with it so I'm glad it's been helping people through some dark times. This was the beginning of a new chapter where I was being shown that I didn't need other people around me to help in the creative process. I was never too confident in my writing but when I put my ego and negative voices aside and let creation flow it was magical. I've had so many more of these experiences since. I no longer write for the sake of it and when I feel led it flows very fast and I usually have a full song within 20 minutes. It still blows my mind each time!

'I Swear' is available worldwide and it's been the one song people have gravitated to the most. It's one of my most requested songs at festivals and it has also helped me through some of my darkest days, realising that I too need the lyrics at times!

Download/stream 'I swear' :

<https://hypedit.com/cwewgk>

2020 was a pivotal year as I came back to Christ after turning my back on my faith for most of my early teens and into my thirties. Growing up in a catholic household, we were religious, but it was more of a duty to go to church and study religion in school rather than a deep need or want to. After witnessing much hypocrisy in the church, I decided to leave my faith and went down every road imaginable that was not godly.

## The Occult

### *What is The Occult?*

***The occult, is a category of esoteric supernatural beliefs and practices which generally fall outside the scope of religion and science. It encompasses phenomena involving otherworldly agency, such as magic and mysticism and their varied spells. It can also refer to supernatural ideas like extra-sensory perception and parapsychology. Astrology, alchemy, and natural magic fall under the term too.***

I delved heavily into the occult from my early teens and was very deep into witchcraft. At the time I didn't realize that it was a phenomenon and because it was my reality I just assumed everybody knew about it or practiced it. I loved astrology, crystals, palm readings, and going to physics to get all the answers to the questions I so desperately sought out in order to gain some control over my life. This was a rabbit hole that I went so far into and took quite a while to let go of.

I experimented with all types of 'healing' journeys which included ingesting certain types of substances believing it was going to 'fix' me. Typically these journeys are led by spiritual leaders and are performed in an environment that's safe and controlled. For the most part that was the case. These are not addictive types of drugs and thankfully I never got into anything past what I could handle. It's a very common practice that a lot of people experiment with and can work well for a lot of people. But it's also a world full of schemers, claiming they will 'fix' you and they make a lot of money from it on the back end of your pain and suffering. I'm not denying the effects of this lifestyle is a benefit for people, and a lot find comfort in it. But when you involve yourself in these practices you open up a channel for the enemy and I learned that the very hard way.

I paid for energy healers to coach and guide me and have reiki sessions and energy healing practices either online or in person. Some every week, some monthly. I indulged in tarot and angel card readings, used many physics services, had numerous crystals in my home and performed healing rituals with them, and threw myself at anything this world had to offer. I wasn't even aware that certain yoga poses were inviting the enemy in. Practicing yoga can embrace, or at minimum flirt with, a spiritual practice that threatens to transform a spiritual life into a "post-Christian, spiritually polyglot". I was practicing seven days a week, and as soon as I learned about this, about 6 months ago, I went cold turkey and never practiced again. Initially, I was concerned as to how I was going to stretch but I bought a Pilates ring and use bars and my own body for stretching now. I instantaneously felt better.

If you're reading this and it's your world or your profession, I'm not condoning it, but it's certainly a world I've had to say a hard goodbye to.

And if you're reading this and you've tried to lure me back into this occult world (there's been many - some maybe not aware they are doing so) you're at a dead-end road. It's a closed chapter for me.

## **Mushrooms**

My first journey with mushrooms was extremely traumatic. Mainly because the spiritual leader had no idea it was my first trip and had given me a 30g gummy first and then a dose of mushrooms that only an experienced partaker would receive. Needless to say, I ended up wandering off on my own down the neighborhood which none of the group noticed.

Thankfully nothing happened to me and somehow I made my way back. When the leader saw me, I explained how unwell I felt and that I could barely cope with all the sensory overload I was having or the 'imaginary people' that were in my peripheral vision. She decided it was best I sleep it off and put me down in one of the bedrooms and I had the most intense experience of my life. I didn't sleep a wink. I was on overdrive and very scared because it was unbearable and I can't explain the way I was hearing the music or talking from the group in the kitchen area. I could feel it in every single area of my head. I honestly thought it would never end. About 5/6 hours later it did and I came to.

Despite how awful it was I didn't let it deter me from trying it again and so it began a journey of monthly/bi-monthly trips which of course were not nearly as traumatic as my first time.

## **A MISFORTUNATE RELATIONSHIP**

By 2020 I was fully immersed in this world and so it was no surprise I got sucked into a very misfortunate situation and relationship with one such 'healer'. A man who wears many hats depending on the victim he lures into his existence, claiming to be a shaman. He is also a very talented musician so we had that common ground also. This man used my vulnerability to go on a power trip ultimately putting me through one of the most horrific experiences of my life.

The man is a mass manipulator who runs numerous gangs that include drugs and money scams. Oddly enough when this person came into my existence I didn't like their spirit or even their physical appearance and so that's how I know they used manipulation and even hypnosis to lure me in. Before I knew it I was spending most days with this person and thought I was falling in love. The saddest part of it all was that I'd been single for almost 7 years and was so guarded and he manipulated me into 'letting my walls down' and threatened to leave me if I didn't trust him. The irony.

What followed was a very traumatic 6 months, despite not seeing it at the time. I thought he was reading my mind and was in awe at how much he 'knew' about me. We had so much in common I felt like he was the male version of me. He would even say phrases my dad would say and have a lot in common with my father including his career path and hobbies. He had awards all over his house only to learn later that these were all fake. Little did I know he had tapped my cell phone and computer, so could read every message and had access to all my information, and knew my whereabouts at all times. He had eyes on me at all times, including certain friends of his who were keeping a watchful eye on me. That type of invasion is scary and very sickening.

This person is well known to the police and unfortunately has continued to make bail and escape long periods behind bars due to corruption in the legal system somewhere.

He would play mind games with me and even put me into hypnotic states and perform exorcisms on me which were some of the scariest experiences I've ever encountered. He was also drugging me secretly at the same time, presumably through the food he would give me. He claimed to have taken his shaman license and even had a fake email stating he had passed some course not too long ago. I had no reason not to believe him at the time but looking back I feel like such a fool.

I would rather not go into every detail of what I endured and there are parts of this story I have to omit because it's just too traumatic or too long-winded to go into detail so it's a brief overview of the main dealings. I've seen things I now cannot unsee, especially in one such 'healing' episode which lasted longer than 15 hours. I was told I had taken LSD (and in other sessions to follow) but I'll never fully know. I was completely misled and misguided but ultimately it was what brought me back to faith and so for that, I was able to be thankful after I escaped.

I can assure you, I am one of many women who has fallen victim to the wrath of this horrible man over the past 20 years. Even his children - or the ones I knew about at least (He had a whole secret family he never told me about) were victims of his abuse. I witnessed his capabilities but never wanted to intervene as it was not my place to do so and I was scared. He complimented me on how amazing I was at not interfering unlike some of his exes. However, he slipped up eventually and in 2021 there was an article online about him attempting to murder his kids. I instantly started crying and felt all the painful memories come back. The article is public knowledge and the trial is continuing to this day. I was asked to testify against him with regard to it but I explain more in detail a little further on. And if you are wondering how this man isn't behind bars you're not alone. He has managed to escape any real jail time in the past 20 years and despite the insane number of times he has been arrested he still walks amongst us free. I pray one day that changes.

He played the victim role perfectly leading me to believe all these former women abused HIM and even attacked him. On one of his 6 or 7 phones that he owned (which did make me curious initially), he showed me a picture of him all beat up and claimed one of his exes did it. And the broken window in his house was apparently from another ex. I told him I didn't condone violence and would never use violence in an argument and also would not accept any violence in a relationship.

He had no weapons in the house but claimed to own a gun. I did think it strange that there were no kitchen items including sharp knives or scissors in the house. If I had to cut some food up that required a sharp knife he would lend me the penknife he kept in his pocket. When I questioned him on this he said that in the past his ex-girlfriends had tried using them on him and he felt 'unsafe' so removed all such items from the house. The truth was that these poor females had tried defending themselves when he got angry and so he couldn't have any such items to hand in order for them to do so. I learned that he landed a few of them in the hospital and even interfered with 911 calls. That turned my stomach because I know from being with him how he can flip a switch.

He knew I liked to take group boxing classes and claimed he had a black belt so told me instead of wasting my time and money he would coach me instead. And he did. But not to make me stronger, but instead to show me how strong and powerful he was and even put me in positions that he claimed would kill me if he wanted to. He would joke about it, but I

didn't find it funny. Another red flag. He was also very clever as he would take me out on the street in his neighborhood and we would train on the street or sidewalks in-between cars driving up and down so that the neighbors could all see us. A great tactic if he were to fight me perhaps they would just think we were training. Who knows.

He was a class-A narcissist and had the tendencies and mannerisms of a psychopath and sociopath. He knew music was my entire life and that it came before everything else. This wasn't going to work for him though so he had made a plan to use his 'contacts' in the industry to get us a record deal as a duo and started to weave out all my musical friends and even had me lessen up my gigs so I could focus on the pathway he was carving out for us. He made me stop co-writing with friends so I could solely concentrate on our project and ultimately leave me with no choice of staying with him as I'd have had no friends or writers left in town. Clever. He was also awaiting my lease to be up in my current rental so I could move in full-time with him. Another master plan was to keep me right where he needed me.

Music is the most enjoyable thing in my life. It gives me a sense of purpose and it's the one thing that has always made me so happy. However, he wanted to destroy this for me and because he was an accomplished player he had knowledge of the industry and used this to his advantage. It was another way he could be in control.

We actually shared some common friends in the industry and so because none of them said anything to me about him one night after being in a venue together I didn't have a reason to believe anything negative about him. I called a few of the girls whom I trusted and knew he had written music with and asked their opinion on him early on and I was told it never worked out or that they just stopped working with him. One of them completely stopped talking to me once I mentioned his name. Another red flag.

Not long after I had escaped him, one of my really good male musician friends and co-writers was back in town and I was delighted to see him as knew he had moved out of state. We were playing on the same bill and when catching up I explained a little bit about what I had just gone through. I saw tears in my friends' eyes. When I told him who it was that's when my friend started crying. He pleaded with me that I was to have nothing to do with him to which I explained that I was free of him. My ex and a gang were the reason my friend left the state. He made his life a misery and destroyed his career. For legal reasons I can't explain further but it made me feel so sick knowing that it could also have been me too.

I've always had an odd sense of timing. Most producers find it endearing and we often laugh at how good I am at being out of time. I am very much in tune with my own natural rhythm. So having a small complex about this already, he used this to his advantage and to my detriment. My first time writing to him was all I need to experience to realize this was not going to be a fun part of life anymore. It was horrific. He locked us into his 'studio' in the house upstairs and forced me to keep banging my head in a perfect 4/4 timing until I was in time. It went on for hours. And when we would record if I was slightly off-key or got a lyric wrong he would go ballistic on me, screaming and cursing at me. I knew deep down this was not healthy and was a huge red flag but because I thought he knew best and how much I wanted him to respect me as a musician I allowed him to take charge and treat me like this. It brought back some trauma from my Thundermother days and then I started to believe it was me who was the problem and that maybe I wasn't as good as people said I was. How sad.

In true narcissistic fashion though, he would often reward me with amazing compliments one minute and then berate me the next. I lived for the good times and the compliments. I wanted to be the best duo partner. I started to get nervous when we would rehearse or record for fear I would make a mistake and music started becoming a chore. He would forcefully keep me up all night and into the early hours of the morning until he was satisfied with my performance and if I asked to stop due to being exhausted, he would just feed me Adderall to keep me awake. There were times I would pretend to take it and then store it in my bag by the bed as I didn't want to be wide awake as the sun was coming up and knew I would need to go to sleep where I was living at the time after I got home in the day.

He made me feel like I was completely worthless. Both in music and on my physical appearance, saying I was not at all his type and that he had dated way hotter and more talented females. My self-esteem has never exactly been fantastic in regard to either of these areas in my life so I started to believe him. How foolish I was. In hindsight, looking back it was all just manipulation so he could remain in power.

After a few months, he secured us our first show. We ended up playing a private event for one of his friend's birthday parties about an hour from Nashville that summer. I've never been nervous getting on stage but I was terrified stepping on stage that night. And when I get nervous that's when I start making mistakes. We did ok I thought and I was happy with how it went. He wasn't though. We were chatting with most of the audience who were attending and I was doing what I always do and just chatting to everybody and being kind and giving out business cards. Nothing but business for me. When we got back to the car he sped off and that's when he started hurling abuse at me telling me I had not done a good job and that I was flirting with every male there, basally calling me a whore and that he didn't understand why any man would even speak to me because I wasn't that attractive. I just remember crying and I couldn't stop. I knew this had gone too far but I was so deeply invested in us and this new music endeavor that I felt so scared that it would all disappear.

That night after we returned home really late I just wanted to get in my car and go home but I had to endure a 'cleansing' from him which involved being thrown into a bathtub half full of cold water and being showered with some alcoholic rub that he'd bought from a spiritual store along with sage and other such cleansing oils to get rid of the badness in me and any ideas I had of the males I had just been in contact with. I'd had a few of these baths prior but this one was a long one. I pleaded with him to stop and that I had no intention of ever looking at another man. That's not who I am or what I stand for and because I am in the music industry I can't help if males are going to approach me to tell me I had a good show or ask me questions about my career. It reminded me of when I would be complimented in Thundermother and how I got shouted at or abused if audience members complimented me or gave me 'attention' over the leader. That's why I started to really despise getting compliments. Compliments meant punishment for me. So I still have a complex about receiving them today.

I thankfully had a family member who was aware of what was going on with my ex, after seeing the change in me pretty early on. Thankfully because of Snapchat they along with one of my dear friends who were also concerned, knew something wasn't quite right. They would see how I was dropping off for long periods of time and noticed a change in my

personality. They started doing their own research months back, something I wasn't aware of, but decided to hold off telling some of their findings as they were afraid that I would turn on them as I was claiming to be in love and they didn't want to make me angry and turn on them. They cared and needed to thread lightly. Thank god for them.

My family member in question ended up hiring a PI to investigate my ex with the information I had given about him early on, and that's when they knew I was with a dangerous man and not a man who was claiming to be whom he said he was. It was horrifying what was learned. The PI warned them to get me away from him instantly. That day, my family member txt me to say they needed to talk with me right away but to take the call in private. I went outside as soon as I saw the text which was about 5-10 minutes after it was sent but before I could text back my ex showed up suddenly as he was out at the time. Of course, I had no idea he had me tapped so he dashed home as he had to avoid me making that phone call. He lured me back inside so I txt my family member and said I'd call in a while.

By the grace of God, the one and only weekend my ex had company in the house, it allowed me to step outside for a few moments a few hours later so I called my family member, and immediately they told me what they had found out and not realizing that I was being listened to, my ex had heard the whole conversation. I only knew because as I was hanging up I saw he'd been connected to the call via his daughter's Bluetooth headphones. I never felt as sick to my stomach as I did at that moment. Not only had I learned that I was dating a complete psycho but I knew I had to find a way of getting all my belongings and getting out of his house asap with a logical excuse. How was I going to do that? I was so scared and my heart was beating out of my chest. I thought I might throw up. I was also very angry to know I was being strung along. When I came back into the house I looked him in the eye and told him I knew he had heard the conversation I'd just had. He denied it. I was starting to raise my voice and he tried to stop me because he didn't want his company to think we were fighting. I started grabbing some of my belongings which were all over the house and told him that I needed some space and needed to go get my friend from the airport. He grabbed me and brought me into the bathroom and went crazy. Denying anything. I knew I had to play it cool and make a clear escape. Again only for we had company I truly believe there's no way I could have gotten out of that house alive or without injury. I couldn't respond to my family member too often, but I started recording the phone conversations we were having and sending them as I sincerely thought my life was in danger. That's when my family member decided to get legal advice and to have the police on standby if my response time was becoming less frequent. The whole ordeal lasted a few hours and when he knew he was losing he forced me upstairs and wouldn't let me out of the bedroom he was getting desperate and was begging me not to leave and even put on a whole waterworks show for me. I had to remain calm and he begged to perform magic on me in order for me to stay. As I was trying to leave I was taking my stuff and found under my pillow what looked like a dead animal or human parts - they were solid in texture and he claimed it was candle wax but it was some weird voodoo stuff and he had books on how to put spells on lovers and had a voodoo doll and potions amongst an array of other items including a lot of witchcraft books, so who knows. It creeped me out so much. It's weird looking back because I thought I was in love but almost instantaneously once I digested the information I had just acquired I felt nothing for him. Like a light switch went off in my heart or brain and all I felt was pure horror.

I managed to escape back downstairs after I started threatening I would start screaming if he didn't let me out and said my goodbye's to his company while remaining in a relaxed state of



mind. He warned me not to make a scene and I was terrified of what he would do if I did. I played nice so I could get away. I was packing my car and on one of my trips back in he had gone into my car and taken out one of my suitcases. Most likely with the hopes I'd have to return. Not a chance. That was a later job for my lawyer. As I managed to summons up the courage to go I drove off so fast and was hysterical - I started having a panic attack on the highway - how I didn't get into an accident is unbelievable. It all feels like a blur right now. I called my family member who informed me the police were en route and that I was to get to a safe place and they were organizing a flight for me the following morning out of state so I could get away. I never made the flight as I ended up in the emergency room. I took myself to the nearest urgent care and when they learned about my situation through screams and tears they said I needed to go to the hospital and arranged for me to be met. But I had to buy a burner phone en route as I knew then I had been tapped. And he was texting and calling non stop begging me to come back but got extremely angry because the police showed up.

I'm so grateful the hospital staff didn't stick me in a mental institution as I was coming down from all the poison he'd put in my body. I must have come across like a crazy person with the stories I was telling them and sitting there with two phones. I even had to have a police escort me out of the premises as I was discharged because I was convinced he would be waiting for me outside.

While in the hospital, I had to have a medical procedure performed also due to his abuse, which was traumatic at the time but thankfully I was under the care of extremely understanding and caring staff. In one of the worst times of my life and having a fear that I've never felt before I knew I had done the right thing by leaving. But he wasn't going to just let me go that easy.

After I got out of the situation it didn't end though. I was receiving threats and was followed and on numerous occasions, he showed up at my shows to let me know he was still around. Even where I lived at the time too. That's when I decided to get a clean break and move house and get a hold of my life once and for all. It was a long process.

I'd not had a panic attack in years apart from the small one I had as I drove away from his house the night I escaped, but the first time I saw him after I was free from him, he showed up to a show where I was setting up and I instantaneously started to feel one come on. I was so embarrassed because people were watching me so I had to run upstairs to the bathroom. Luckily the staff was amazing and so I was able to provide his picture to security so he couldn't enter the premises. It was advised that I didn't take out a protection order against him in case it made him angry, plus I figured he'd break it anyway. And he also had people who do his work for him too as I'm not just dealing with one person, there's a gang of them, so to speak.

This continued for many months until he found his next victim.

I received counseling online but didn't find much help from it as the therapist told me I should be a therapist and cried during my horrific life journey. My GP, hospital, and police were all fantastic throughout the aftermath, and took it seriously, despite me not being able to get justice over what he'd done.

I've completely forgiven him now and had to learn to make peace with everything as the trauma would have eventually eaten away at me if I didn't. I feel like this man endured a lot

of abuse in his own life growing up. To gain power and control he has spent the last 20 years abusing and manipulating women and some have not been as fortunate as me to get away without bearing a child by him or ending up seriously injured.

Almost two years had passed and my life was back on track then I got subpoenaed to testify against him regarding the open case with his children. Of course, it brought it all back up again. I had my best friend and her husband visiting from the UK and it was meant to be a fun few days but turned into a situation that was quite stressful and I ended up getting sick from the stress.

I chose to pray about what I needed to do because testifying would mean seeing his face again and putting my life back in danger and he's not the type of man you want to get angry at. It was so hard because every single part of me wanted to testify but after I prayed about it I got my answer to leave it alone. So I did. After a 2 hour conversation with the defense attorney, I'd learned of so many other cases since mine. That hurt. All I ever wanted to do was get him behind bars so he couldn't continue hurting women. He still walks free today but I know that eventually he will get what's coming to him and I can now live my life in peace. And honestly, I'd never have come back to faith without having come through the whole situation. And that's such a beautiful, positive outcome to a bad situation.

I started rebuilding my life over again. I was taught a very valuable lesson in always listening to your gut (the first time around) and if you feel something is off then it probably is.

Our intuition is our compass. In short, intuition is "nonconscious emotional information" from your brain or body. Intuition is when you make decisions devoid of analytical reasoning and replace them with emotional information or insight based on experience or other factors.

There are two types of thinking - analytical reasoning and intuitive thinking. Most people use a combination of both as they are complementary.

We've all experienced that 'gut feeling' when something doesn't feel right, or the opposite when something feels very right. I urge you to pay close attention to it. I've mastered this for the most part now and it has gotten me out of some really bad decision-making and scenarios to date.

Remember that not everything that looks good on the outside will necessarily be good for you, but only YOU will know that and feel it. Listen to YOUR inner voice and compass. It's there. Always.

## **SELF- LOVE**



I'd come to realize that perhaps, because of my past, and the different traumas I'd been through, I was always trying to seek validation and worth. Self-love never came easy. In Ireland, as a culture, it was never really socially acceptable to love yourself or receive compliments. You'd be called 'big headed' and put right back in your place if you showed any signs of self-love or ego. And then being berated by the leader of Thundermother and by my ex I had very little self-love left in me.

So I learned to dim down any beauty or self-worth to 'fit in' like a social chameleon. I also pretended to be less clever at school because I was bullied for being academic and for being a 'teacher's pet'. This was both in primary and secondary school. At the time the teachers didn't realize that praising me in front of the class or telling them to be 'more like Clare' made my life hell. I didn't like the attention so I started doing badly and not aiming for higher grades, so I'd not be singled out. I was a rule follower and that's not cool when you're growing up so it was a battle internally that I had to fight daily. I think it's why I've such a complex receiving any compliments or being called out for anything good I do today because I feel that hurt inner child comes back to the surface and feel like people will somehow judge me or not like me for succeeding. It sounds silly when I admit it but it makes sense the older I've gotten.

I hated myself most of my life. I had true disgust for the girl who looked back in the mirror. Being sexually abused on top of the cultural norms I grew up on, didn't help. It wouldn't

matter how many compliments I received, it's what I felt inside that I always knew to be 'true'. That was the enemy working inside of me since childhood. I self-harmed growing up and not only was I bullied but I became a bully too and had serious anger issues. I needed to feel in control. So if there was a situation where I could take charge I did.

When a person loses control in their life they will do whatever it takes to gain it back.

Unfortunately, certain school friends and my siblings fell under the wrath of my anger. My parents are amazing and they got me childhood trauma therapy and I know this for sure kept a lot of it at bay. But it also taught me how to release anger physically so I became very violent and anytime I'd get upset or angry I'd break things. Including all the ornaments I ever owned. They would be tossed out my bedroom window in pure rage.

Looking back, this was so unhealthy and as I got older I learned how to suppress this anger in front of people and would hide my emotions and would never let anybody see me get upset or cry in public because that would show weakness. I couldn't be weak. I had to be strong so that nobody would ever hurt me again. That didn't happen though. I was hurt so many times, emotionally, physically, and mentally by people.

My canvas certainly attracts a lot of interest (mostly positive) daily. I've learned to just deal with the endless amounts of questions or the unwarranted touching of my body by strangers in public. Or the secret videos or photos people take, thinking I don't notice. On more than one occasion, I've had strangers approach me from behind and grab me and twist my arm into positions that are very uncomfortable to get a better look. People are very unaware of how invasive this is to my personal space and because my skin is covered in ink it doesn't give them the right to touch me without my permission. I'm very kind (for the most part) and remind people that my limbs are attached to my body and they are hurting me. I know most people don't mean any harm and they are simply intrigued, but it's alarming the unawareness that some people have.

I've had it with my hair in the past where people would have their fingers in it before they even say hello. I always like to air on the side of kindness but gently make a person aware that it's not ok to come up into my space and get that close without permission. And the times I also feel like I am suddenly in an interview with a stranger when they want to know every single detail of my life. Any surface-level conversation is something I no longer wish to partake in as it drains energy.

I've always had a complex with how I look though. I could receive endless amounts of compliments but it would never change how I internally viewed myself. I was also not very pretty growing up - and always looked at the pretty girls wishing I could have just a slice of their beauty. But beauty truly is skin deep and I've learned to like the person looking back in the mirror. I've owed her that for a long time.

I finally love the person I am growing into. I no longer look into the mirror in disgust. I've had to learn to accept myself and even though it can be uncomfortable I'm getting better each day.

I released a song called 'I love you' on my EP 'MERCY' all about learning to love and accept myself and that the relationship with myself has been the hardest relationship I have ever been through. I would recommend it if you feel it may help you in your journey too :)

Download/stream I love you :

<https://hypeddit.com/lzf945>

## **SEXUAL ABUSE**

I have on occasions, in certain interviews, alluded to some of my past traumas but have never been completely transparent about some of what I have endured. This is mainly because it has taken me until now, and also with the help of so many people in our world, to be more open to finally feel comfortable admitting what's happened to me.

I am a survivor of childhood (and adulthood) sexual abuse.

I believe this is where my road to destruction first began without knowing it at the time. I use the term survivor because I don't want to be seen as a victim. Even if that's the case. I don't ever want to play the victim or be pitied. I wholeheartedly place my hand on my heart and thank my abusers. This wasn't always how I felt though. Forgiveness and acceptance took a LONG time. I asked myself why they would do this. What motivates somebody to hurt another human? I only concluded that they spent years abusing me because they too were under the hand of an abuser and came from an abusive upbringing and so just continued on that domino effect.

For reasons personally and legally, I'm not going to name any of my abusers in any of my cases. They know who they are and have hopefully had to also live with the guilt and shame of knowing what they've done. But I want them all to know that I truly forgive them. I mean that. I've even cried thinking about it at times and almost felt a deep sense of sadness for them. To abuse/hurt another human you can't be in a good place, so I hope they find peace someday. I truly do. Granted, two of them were minors at the time, so I can perhaps empathise with them experimenting with me and being their muse.

I remember so vividly the day I told my mom. We were in the car driving and I started telling her what was happening at my abuser's house. I was under care by a few different families/females at the time but the subjects here were all male. I didn't quite understand why she was crying, but she was wise enough to know that I needed to keep talking and told me I was a good girl and to keep telling her more of the story. And I did. What an awful car ride that was for her. I wonder even today, why did I choose that moment and why not years before or years after? I truly believe it was all in God's timing. Because even though I knew what was happening to me was wrong, my abusers never told me to keep it a secret. It wasn't like I was being forced to keep the events to myself. That was a risk on their part, looking back. I guess every time I got home I returned to my safety net and would forget about it. I wonder if that's why now as an adult I can quickly adapt to a scenario around me or move to a new country and have no problem fitting in or just rolling with where I'm at.

Of course, my abusers denied it. Police had to get involved but unfortunately little proof could convict my abusers - there were three of them and as mentioned two were minors. The police knew it was true. No five-year-old can make up those kinds of stories. This is an issue with the justice system, even today, as I later found out, but I understand that no matter what the outcome ended up being at least I was believed. I can't imagine what women or men who are not believed must go through.

I always felt like I was unclean and unworthy, and felt a great deal of hatred toward my body after what had happened. I was scared I was never going to be wanted by a man especially after he'd learned what my past entailed. Thankfully that didn't end up being the case, but I hated that conversation I had to have when I got into a relationship and I wasn't exactly skilled at telling it because it wasn't something I was talking about very often.

I know many women and men out there reading this have their own stories and you may not feel this way about forgiving your abusers. That's completely ok. In time, you may learn to forgive those who have wronged you - you owe it to yourself. Anger, shame, and guilt will only eat away at you if you let them fester.

I realise there will be family, people, or friends who've known me my whole life who are learning about this for the first time. Please do not take offense at not being informed, or finding out this way. It's my story and my journey and it had to be kept under wraps. Only my parents, teachers, and police knew about it. I also concealed it up until now, partly because I didn't want to have to keep reliving it as I was growing up. I finally feel comfortable telling my story. Please know that I am doing well and there's no need to be concerned about me. I now use what happened to be able to be a voice for others.

I must take this moment to commend my parents for not taking the situation into their own hands after the law couldn't help. My father knew that if he was to do anything to hurt them, he would end up getting in trouble with the law and could potentially end up in jail. So we just had to accept the fact that the abusers 'got away' with what they did. But I know they didn't. I know that they carry that inside their souls and you can't live a peaceful life that way. My parents can live knowing that they did all that they could and I'll forever be grateful to them for that. I received excellent counseling and had amazing resources.

A parent wants the best for their child. To protect and love them. No parent wants to believe that the people they are handing their child over to take care of while they are out providing a living for them, would harm their child. I always felt so guilty for what I put them through in the aftermath including all the bedwetting nightly until I was at least 8 years old. And my anxiety was through the roof because I wanted to protect my younger siblings. But I never wanted them to ever blame themselves for what happened. Nothing my parents could have done would have ever stopped these events from occurring. I don't play the game of 'what ifs' or 'if only'. It was always on the cards for me. It happened for a reason. I also believe because I spoke up when I did, I saved countless more children, including my younger siblings, in the long term.

And I get to be a vessel and a voice now for those, who like me, didn't and couldn't speak up. People who come out on the other side of trauma end up being amazing resources for those who battle with the same thing in their lives. It brings awareness to the situation at hand and also allows others to not feel like they are alone. I owe it to others having come through it.

For years my anger towards my abusers ended up landing on my loved ones. You all know who you are and I'm deeply sorry for that. I'm sorry for becoming a bully and lashing out and physically hurting others, including myself. I vowed that no man or person was ever going to take control of my life again and I became bitter and wanted to create a tough exterior so that they wouldn't even try. Today I have a much calmer spirit, and if for some reason I need to get rid of any frustration I do so by punching a bag and moving my body through physical exertion. Perhaps wanting to be able to defend myself and have a 'tough' exterior is why I dove so far into fitness.

As a child, I self-harmed. I bit myself and had serious anger issues. I also became a bully and I believed I needed to be punished for the abuse. Feeling pain was the only comfort I was getting (temporarily) at the time. As I type this I now can see a direct connection perhaps with why I love to feel pain. It makes me feel alive. I love pushing my body to the extreme and maybe it stems from that.

One day, not long after I'd been removed from the situation, our home doorbell rang, and standing outside was a lady in floods of tears. She had been given our details by the police and had explained her two daughters were also victims of the abusers. How horrific to know that I hadn't been the only one. Immediate guilt hit me, even at such a young age, because I vowed no other child would have to suffer as I did. It amazes me now looking back, how my protective instinct kicked in so quickly. That's something I still have today and it's why I'm so adamant about helping and protecting others. How many more victims were there I wondered? To this day we will never know.

The only 'issue' with my case was that I couldn't speak openly and being from such a small village, it meant it had to remain a secret. Swept under the carpet in a way. I guess I wanted them to be punished for what they did but instead I saw the system let me down and this wouldn't end up being the last time either so it caused me to learn how to have to defend myself and not trust in people so much. I almost expected disappointment and people to let me down. It's probably why I have such an issue with people who don't follow through and don't say what they will do. People who break promises or my trust I can't keep in my life.

Sexual abuse is a lot more common than we know. In both men and women. I've always been amazed at how brave and strong others are at sharing and telling their stories so openly, all the while it has taken me until now. It is never too late to open up and there are lots more resources these days so if you find yourself in a similar position then take the first steps on your road to recovery.

## **STALKERS**

Due to my career and being a public figure, my privacy has come at a price over the years. As extroverted as I am in person, or online, I am also extremely introverted and my personal space and alone time are very important to me. When that gets invaded it can be threatening and I've always had a hard time letting those closest to me in. So when a stranger tries it bugs me.

For the most part, I understand that people are just genuinely interested in an artist's life and because we are in the public eye some people feel like they 'know' the person or they are 'friends' with them because the artist's life is on 'show'. This applies to anybody in any field who has a following. Unfortunately, some take it a little too far and then it becomes harassment. It comes in a lot of forms. Social media has certainly given people an easier way to access their favourite movie stars, musicians, actors, etc, and may not realize that their constant commenting or replying and endless messaging across all platforms becomes a problem and can come across as borderline crazy.

I've also noticed over the years that a lot of very intense fans are on the spectrum and so they are obsessive by nature and if you an artist become one of those obsessions then it becomes a lot to deal with.

This has become 'normal' for me and it's not until I speak with people who are not in the industry how big of an issue it can become. However, I find some solace when I speak with other artists who receive the same amount of attention knowing that I'm not being targeted alone.

While I lived In the UK I had my fair share of dealing with obsessive men (and women too). I lived in London for 3 years where I obtained a BA Hons degree in Music and then moved to Wales to start my professional career in music.

Dealing with it became normal. One middle-aged man had to be escorted off the premises of a bar I played regularly. He'd spent months harassing me and had even torn out my picture from every single flyer the venue had. He always took pictures of me on his handheld camera and one particular night he angled it up my skirt and that was where I had to draw the line. He was laughing and said he did nothing wrong and that he'd sue the venue but thankfully the staff and security kept him at bay. But he'd wait outside in his car for me and it didn't stop him from trying to get back in so I had to be careful with coming and going from that venue.

Not long after I bought my first home after 3 years of living there, I was getting to know the area and so decided to go for a run. I was almost done and on my way back I noticed up ahead a man with his pants around his ankles. It wasn't until I was getting nearer I saw what he was doing. In broad daylight, he was masturbating and coaxing me over. I kept running and informed a mother and child heading in his direction to not go that way. I made sure he wasn't following me back so I could get home safely. When I made it back I decided to call the local police and report it because I didn't want anybody else walking down and seeing such a scene. It's also a good idea to report anything of this nature as it could be a common occurrence. The more people who inform the authorities, the better chances of keeping it on their radar.

They asked if I was ok and that they could send an officer to me or offer me counseling but I was completely fine. It didn't affect me and perhaps something like that should but I didn't think it was too serious.

A few nights after that encounter I was just out of the shower and I wrapped myself up in a towel and headed downstairs. It was a little before midnight and I thought I heard a noise outside but ignored it. I then picked up one of my cats and was just snuggling with it and saw something in the reflection in the mirror outside. I then realized there was an intruder. With my heart racing, I saw what was happening. There was a male masturbating up against the window. I felt sick to my stomach as I stood there helpless in my towel and I had no idea how



long he'd been there. I screamed and he darted off. I immediately called the police and they said that in all the years they'd been working in the area they'd never had a phone call like this. And then because only days prior I'd had to call them about the man at the lake they were concluding that the two were related and as I was being targeted. That was unsettling to hear. And not much I could do. It's never nice to be subject to any crime but when it's on your property it's a little harder because the following night and for a long while after that I was scared. As a first-time homeowner, it's meant to be a fun experience and mine was tainted

I thought I'd seen and dealt with it all until I joined 'Thundermother' in 2013. When the announcement went online that I'd joined, my private life was over despite living in a different country at the time. What started as messages online soon became gifts being sent in the mail, including one more from a felon in jail who saw me in a magazine and took a liking to me, and managed to find my address. He wasn't the only one. Gifts would arrive at my home in Ireland and I didn't like the fact that my parent's location was known and my family started receiving messages online too from different fans. For the most part, it was all pretty innocent but it made me retract comments I'd made in the past about stars having to have security being unnecessary. It's not. They require it. When your life is at risk you need to take the appropriate measures to protect yourself and your loved ones!

The worst case of this I endured was when I was in Sweden. A certain young male took a liking to me when I joined Thundermother and it wasn't long before I started to recognize his name all over my platforms. Then came the endless creepy messages and a lot were pages and pages of cryptic weird messages clearly showing he had mental issues. He would then start showing up at all my private shows when I wasn't on the road with the girls. It got serious when he followed me to different countries. I played in other Nordic countries such as Denmark and one particular night as I was setting up in a venue he was just sitting there shaking with a beer in his hand and staring at me. This happened with most shows that followed.

Not long after this he showed up at a solo Swedish show and proceeded to grab my arm and said he needed to talk with me. I told him to stop harassing me and he just sat and stared at me. Unfortunately, unlike the US, in Sweden, it takes a LOT to get somebody arrested or even get a protection order. I found out the hard way. I started taking screenshots of his messages and was keeping them as evidence so I didn't want to block him. I didn't reply to anything and never encouraged any of it and as his only friend on Facebook he only had it to be in contact with me.

Then the inevitable happened - it was 2 days before Christmas and I got a very strange private message at around 3 am. It was very long but at the end, it said 'it's now or never Clare. I'm outside. I want to say goodbye. Some family members upon seeing the screenshot told me to contact the police straight away but I still didn't think it was that serious or that he was outside. We learned at a later date he was. The next-door neighbors saw him on their camera and had heard him knocking on their basement door but thought it was just somebody who was lost so they didn't answer.

The very next night I was in my living room (to which my bedroom was attached) and had my bedroom door open, despite how cold it was outside. I had my window open a tiny crack as I had floor heating and wanted to let some air in before I went to sleep.

It was around 3 am and I was on my laptop doing some admin work when I heard a noise coming from my bedroom window. I could see right into my room from where I was sitting on my couch as the door was open and because I didn't see anything I thought I misheard. Then it continued and I realized there was possibly somebody at my window. My heart was racing and because of the layout of the house the only way out was my side door and I would have been seen or heard. My instinct took me right off my couch and I headed straight for my bedroom. It wasn't until I got inside I saw a hand with fingerless gloves trying to open the window. Because it was open the intruder already had his arm in. I screamed and started shaking. Then I saw his face and recognized him straight away despite it being pitch dark and the fact he had on a black hoodie with the hood up. My stalker. 2 years of continual harassment finally came to this. I somehow managed to go into fight mode and shouted at him that this was not ok and that he needed to leave straight away and that I was calling the cops if he didn't go. He retracted his hand so calmly and slowly. He just kept staring at me while I was doing all I could to keep my composure. Was I scared? I was certainly shaken and my entire body was pumping with adrenaline. I was scared that his obsession with me would somehow cause him to do something stupid because he wasn't mentally well. As he stared at me without saying anything or moving, I shouted at him again to leave. He started backing away slowly but he didn't turn around. Like something out of a horror movie, he started backing away slowly but didn't turn around and made his way down the pathway up to my bedroom from the road backward. It felt like an eternity before he was out of sight. That's when I started shaking uncontrollably and crying. I was in shock and as the adrenaline started pumping through my body I was finding it hard to breathe. I grabbed my phone and called the police. Nobody answered. I thought I dialed the wrong number because I was shaking. I called again. No answer. I thought I was going crazy so I tried again and the third time an officer picked up. My Swedish was ok but thankfully in Sweden their English is good so I explained what had happened. They asked if he was still on the property and I told them he was gone. I was able to provide his name and his address because about a month prior he had ordered some of my CDs from my label at the time. That's when I realized he lived a 7 hour's car ride away.

The police came to my house to take a statement and that's when I told them everything he had done over the last few years. Thankfully because I never blocked him I was able to provide all the Facebook messages he'd been sending for 2 years and could see as I was his only friend and he had a picture of a graveyard for his profile picture that he was using as a way of communicating with me. I told them about him following me and even grabbing me that time at one of my shows.

I fully expected them to go and find him to have him arrested. How wrong I was. I was told because he didn't hurt me when trying to break into my home and the fact that I never told him to stop messaging me that I in a way had encouraged him. I'm sorry, WHAT? They could only arrest him if he hurt me. So basically when it was too late. I'm not sure if I was in more shock from the lack of remorse or help from the police or my stalker finding where I lived and trying to break in. Needless to say, I didn't sleep much that night, or for many nights after that. I couldn't believe the justice system.

They had my statement on file and said if he reached out to let them know. He did. I had to take their advice and tell him to stop contacting me. He continued for a while and even showed up at another show. My health took a battering because of the stress. I felt so alone and scared but I refused to live in fear and him having power over me like this.

That's when coincidentally I started noticing a car driving by every second/third night at around 3 am. Usually between 3 am and 4.30 am. I was in my routine of working on my

laptop at this hour as I held musician hours at the time. The car would slow down as it approached my house and would stop and stay parked with the engine and lights still on. The first time it happened I thought it might be a neighbor working nights so I poked my head out of the curtain and then whoever it was sped off. This was the start of my invasion of privacy again. Surely it couldn't be my stalker because he lived 7 hours away? The same routine every other night would mean I was being watched. The only way they would leave was as soon as I'd poke my head out from behind the curtain. Some nights I'd try to ignore it but they would just stay parked if I didn't look out. Whoever it was wanted to just see my face. I decided to call the police to start reporting it each time. I kept a diary of the dates and times. There was a rotation of 3 different cars and it was happening every other night, sometimes more regularly. Same pattern and routine. I was living in complete fear at this stage and one night upon calling the police to make a report as I needed to build a case in case something was to happen to me, the female police officer just chuckled and said 'Oh you again'. I was in shock. Here I was, a female living alone with a stalker on my hands and a possible other stalker or accomplice, and she found it funny. That's when I realised I wasn't being taken seriously and had nobody I could lean on for support. Even the therapist I was assigned to said there was nothing they could suggest.

While all of this was going on I wasn't allowed to defend myself. In Sweden, it's against the law to carry a weapon. Even pepper spray was illegal. Then one night as I was walking back from the train station to my house I felt a car slow down behind me and they pulled over and a guy got out. I was never so scared in my life as I thought this was going to be the end and I was going to be kidnapped or hurt. I turned around and he ran behind his car so I wouldn't see him. I ran around the corner all the way home and just fell on the floor crying and called the police. Nothing they could do again. The car decided to pull up outside my house and turned its engine off as he sat outside. I knew the only way I could get rid of him was to show my face. With no help from the police, I had to do it so yes leave.

Living in fear and being traumatized like this was not possible anymore and I knew something had to change! I knew the only solution was to leave the country because wherever I was going to move they were going to follow me.

## **OCD/ADHD/COMPULSIVE PLANNING**

For as long as I can remember I've had a serious case of OCD and perfectionism. I would drive my parents insane when I was growing up because I wouldn't leave the house unless my underwear matches my socks as just one example! Down to the polka dots needing to match. I would need to have all my clothes laid out the night before and have everything prepared for the school day or work day ahead. I think logically this was a way for me to feel in control. Today, I still require all my gym bags and clothes, and food to be prepared and ready to go the night before. Typically if I am traveling I start making lists and packing a suitcase a week out. But I'm ok with this to a degree. I like to feel prepared and don't like to do much in the morning other than my sauna, trampoline, and shower. I sleep better at night

knowing I've prepared everything. It's one of my rituals. I've lots of rituals and it can become stressful if I don't get all my 'tasks' done or everything on my to-do list crossed off. But over time I learned that it's impossible to get everything done. Especially when each new day presents itself with more things that you don't account for. I like to usually get anything that is time sensitive or has a deadline done and then everything else can be done at a slower pace. Because I run my brand, I am kept busy with a LOT of work. And there's no start or finish time.

I'm very type A when it comes to planning out my day and my timings and if something comes along that changes my routine, it can cause me some stress. Or if somebody tells me to meet them at a certain time but then decides at the last minute to either want to meet early or later this doesn't usually work with my schedule. Flexibility is something I'd like to get better at but when people tell me I need to be more flexible it irritates me because if I just decided every day I wasn't going to plan anything or have a schedule then I'd end up never getting anything done so it's a priority for me to have things lined up and most times people end up canceling or rescheduling anyway. I'm much better now at not overpacking my day or overworking myself. My day always begins with my mental health and well-being with movement, which keeps me grounded.

Some people have said the way I operate would stress them out. I physically write out all my timings including when I need to wake up, when I need to be in and out of my sauna, what time I need to be on and off my trampoline, shower, etc. I love this meticulous way of planning. It calms me and keeps me efficient, otherwise, I've nothing to focus on. I love having to be tied to a time because it keeps me mentally focused and on a schedule. And I'm very good at adhering to it. If I don't have a particular place to be then I won't stick to this method and end up wasting time by going slower and then I get angry at myself because I've 'wasted time'.

I'm learning to be better at not being stressed in getting to a destination and allowing extra time to get places, to account for traffic or just something small that might pop up.

As children growing up in our household, we were always doing tasks and didn't have much downtime or relaxation time but didn't require it either in a way, and it may have caused me to just get used to this way of living. I would still feel guilty years later if I sat down and took a break because I always felt I needed to be working or doing something or looking busy. I've never wanted an exterior of laziness. Also as humans, I believe we like distractions from life's issues or people in our lives. Some people keep busy so they can escape their problems or their partners etc. It's typical to see couples who are having marital issues spend more time at their workplace or spend more time with their peers so they don't have to face their spouse or avoid arguing. This is unhealthy though because that's just putting off the issues that need addressing. I did it in one particular relationship I was in. I kept us so busy that I didn't have to face the fact that I was very unhappy. It was nothing to do with him but everything to do with me.

Procrastination - another form of putting tasks off - is something I'm guilty of. Doing everything but the task at hand. And then stressing to get it done at the last minute. However, I always get what I need to do, done in time so it's something I have managed to work around. We all have our little ways and it's learning what's healthy stress and what's bad.

I check every single box for somebody who suffers from ADHD and spectrum autism. I have never paid much attention to it but the older I got the more it affected my life and then I also wondered how I could be the way I am and have the career I have. I'm aware that most creative people are somewhat wired differently and it's what makes us so creative so I've never wanted to dim that part of my brain with medication. But I suffered in silence over all my internal struggles for a long time. I can't be around a lot of noise either and learned that I'm very affected by sensory overload which is ironic as my career is typically around loud environments making it a little harder and more stressful to be around it. I also cannot stand tight clothing or anything on my face. I don't like wearing sunglasses and when we had to wear masks I severely disliked it and it made me agitated. There are pros to also living with it because I can get a lot done and I have an insatiable amount of energy that I've learned to conceal how I live internally.

Thankfully I came from a holistic upbringing so medications were only used in severe cases. We didn't go to the doctor much and if we had something wrong with us we tried curing it first the natural way. Don't get me wrong there were times in life when I needed urgent medical care and I am super grateful for doctors in these situations. I'll never condone taking medicine, but I do believe pharmaceutical companies drive their products for profit and once you're in the system it can become a downward spiral. Needing pills to counter the side effects of another pill etc. Thankfully because of European laws, I was kept away from a lot of prescribed medicines, especially amphetamines as they don't give them out quite as readily as they do here in the USA!

I've never had an issue with drugs but I've tried and tested most due to my curious sense of nature. I've always done it safely and in a very controlled environment. Most of what I've tried I did because I believed it would 'heal' me and went on many 'spiritual journeys'. I'm not going to go into detail on any specific cases but unfortunately, I also had a few bad experiences and some were not necessarily my fault, more the person who was leading the 'healing'. There are now things I've seen and experienced that I can never take back and was deeply traumatized by some of my journeys. (MAY HAVE REPEATED THIS)

It's why I stay away from anything that can alter the state of my consciousness, including alcohol. Biblically now I do follow keeping a sober and vigilant spirit. It's not necessary that everybody needs to follow this and for a time I'd have the occasional drink but I now must keep myself completely sober.

## **MY FITNESS JOURNEY**

I decided to share the other main love in my life other than music - FITNESS. As a mental health advocate, I believe the two are very closely correlated and movement has proven to be an amazing tool in combating mental illness. I figured it was time to explain my journey more in-depth for those of you who would like to see why I live the way I live and hopefully, it sparks something in you or gives you some hope and inspiration



Quick disclaimer: Please always consult your physician if you are planning on coming off medication (or starting any) or trying a more holistic approach the way I did. You must do this correctly and safely! Remember that anything I share here is from my own experience and I am not a professional in any medical field! Nor do I claim to tell you what I do is correct. There IS such a thing as overtraining, burnout, and exhaustion and I've been subject to them all, and even today, although I'm getting better at listening to my body, I still do and it can be dangerous so please don't try to copy what I do as it's not always the best way! Listen to YOUR body! Major fatigue which hospitalises you is no fun! My training schedule is not like another and no two body types are the same so remember that fitness should ideally be coupled with a healthy well-balanced whole food nutritious diet. And when I say diet I'm referring to your intake of food. I do not agree with dieting (certainly not long term) or doing 'cleanses' and will never promote any such things on here. Slow and steady wins the race but each to their own so not condoning it, I just don't support it.



Before you read any further I'd also like you to know that I've NEVER indulged in sports to get a fit-looking body or for aesthetic reasons. Anybody who knows me well, knows I prefer loose clothing and unless it's for a fitness shoot, nobody knows I hide a 6 pack underneath. I also choose not to wear crop tops or tight clothing, especially after I've eaten, due to the severe bloating I suffer from having acute IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome)



## IBS

### What is IBS?

\*Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a group of symptoms that affect your digestive system. It's a common but uncomfortable gastrointestinal disorder. People with IBS get excessive gas, abdominal pain, and cramps.



I've suffered from IBS since I was a young child and have tried and tested everything to treat it, including OTC medication, prescribed medication, holistic approaches, you name it. I even went on a low FODMAP diet eliminating all the trigger foods but no luck. Because stress is a major factor in the cause of it, the damage done is usually irreversible. Emotional stress can also be a trigger. It's the gut's response to life's stressors. And I can attest to any time I'm feeling more stressed my stomach instantly bloats.

My bloating is so severe that it presses on my diaphragm and can make it very hard to breathe. I bloat after anything I digest including water, so I can never wear tight clothing or crop tops. I have mastered the art of sucking in my stomach so that people don't stop me and ask me when my baby is due. This has happened and it's embarrassing for both parties involved.

If there was one thing I could change about my body it would be this. It affects me daily and more annoyingly nobody realises the pain it can cause or the embarrassment of living with it. I have learned to accept it at this stage and it's another reason I love to fast because I'm not bloated, or as severely bloated as I am after eating.

This picture is an example of what my stomach looks like after just one meal. The doctors are always astounded by how severe I bloat and how hard my stomach gets. I know I am not alone with this condition and would love some-day if they find a quick cure.



Where needed, I take extra supplementation. There's no pill that you can purchase to lose weight and you're wasting your money by buying into such garbage! And a quick note on the 'diet' front - the main reason they don't work as soon as you're off them is that they are not long-term solutions - you'll lose weight initially but it's typically water weight and so choosing a lifestyle change is way more beneficial to your overall health and well being.

What I will be sharing with you is extreme dedication to my lifestyle and a passion that's beyond even my comprehension. I'm not 'normal' and I'm fully aware that my routine is on par with professional athletes. You do not have to live this way to achieve results! So please don't be disheartened or think you've to do even a fraction of what I do to see or feel results.

Due to the sexual abuse, I've experienced in my life, I've never liked unsolicited male attention. Part of my job of being a singer and performer means I also receive unwanted attention and even though I shouldn't have to 'hide' my body, I typically don't like drawing extra attention to it as I'm not looking for anything other than respect for my music.

At the gym I mean business. As much as I'd love to look like I stepped out of a Lululemon advert, I don't! I'm there to sweat and move. So for me, I need loose-fitting gym attire! Plus I'm not there to make an impression. I'm focused on exercising and not on what's going on around me. Some people have said (before getting to know me) that looked mean or felt I was ignoring them. Not the case. Because I am so hyper-focused I've no idea the signal it sends out! So if you ever see me looking angry, I'm not, I'm most likely just in my zone!

We all know that sex sells but I've never (and will never) used my body as a way of climbing up any social ladder or to get a good deal in music (or in life)

A person's money or possessions don't attract me to them. I've had extremely wealthy, very well-known men, especially in the music business, try to offer me lucrative deals or think that their money or status would somehow sway me to sign a crappy deal or work for hire, but it didn't. It never has and never will. I find it disgusting. I've proven that time and time again and quite clearly if I did follow that path, I'd certainly not be out here as an independent artist working my butt off (no pun intended) and doing the job of 8-10 people! I will never lay down my morals or my dignity for a quick shot at fame. I've got to where I am today through sheer hard work and talent and I'm not going to throw it all away for somebody offering me a pipe dream in return for sexual favor or their entertainment. Not after what I've been through.

As somebody who suffered chronic anxiety most of her life, bouts of depression, and even had suicidal thoughts, I was extremely fortunate after I decided to finally seek help after 27 years, that the doctor I saw (in Wales, UK, where I was living at the time) gave me two options. He said he could prescribe me pills, or that I could go to the gym. Explaining the benefits of movement and its direct correlation in combating mental health issues, I chose the latter. Easy decision for me as I grew up holistically and don't like being on any substances that alter my state of consciousness or that are not natural. So I took myself off to the nearest fitness outlet and signed up at the local gym that evening. That's where my real research on movement and the mind /body connection started. My journey to mental health awareness had truly begun.

At this time I also decided to get professional help and completed a 10-week CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy) course. My therapist was highly impressed at the speed at which I 'recovered' because when I put my mind to something I do it. I'm a doer, not a talker. There's

no magic wand to help fix your problems. It involved a lot of at home-work and I was determined to get my life back on track.

It truly turned my entire life around and it's why I am so passionate to share these benefits with anybody who is looking for an alternative method to medication. But you have to WANT to get better. Nobody can do it for you and it involves going to places within you that you may not want to but the benefits are HUGE!

Please note that just because I was 'healed' didn't mean I'd never face demons again. Believe me, I did. And still do. But now I have the coping mechanism to combat them before it gets too much to handle. Plus now I bring it to the Lord instead. I also call in his energy every morning and get graceful sleep mercies which give me an indescribable amount of extra energy!

Thankfully I had so many outlets growing up. Sports and extracurricular activities were a huge part of my life.

I played GAA football (the equivalent of American football) both on the women's and men's teams, camogie (the equivalent of hockey) basketball, and Irish dancing to name but a few. When I started high school I had no intention of becoming a runner, but fate had it that in our first PE class, we had to do a timed run and I excelled. So I made the cross-country team. I didn't want to be on a running team so I kindly declined but I am so grateful to Mr. Brady, my running coach, for seeing something in me and for pushing me to try it out. I honestly can say that it was a turning point in my life. Because I could fall into being led by others despite my strong outward appearance, I escaped the daily illegal activities most of my peers would be up to during lunch hour. I wasn't a cool kid and certainly got bullied for it. But because athletics took such a huge space in my life it kept me on the straight and narrow! I was very fortunate to be on a top-running team. We were in the top three in Ireland so we competed a lot and it was then that I saw my extreme need to win and compete.

Looking back, it may have looked healthy but I got obsessed. Nothing was going to get in my way and I became addicted. I saw results so it made me want to beat anyone I could in a 3,000-5,000 cross-country race or on the track. I joined a local running team too and started to come ahead of my peers who had been running for years. It felt good. I felt worthy like I finally meant something. I contributed in some way. Like a junkie getting their fix, mine was just in the form of adrenaline from exercising but also winning. If I didn't win or didn't do as well as I knew I could, I would punish myself. This started an unhealthy cycle, that if I'm being honest, is something I still work on today. If I can't get my daily 'fix' of dopamine and that adrenaline and feel exhausted then I don't feel like I've done enough. But I've learned to see this as a healthy lifestyle way of living because it makes me feel amazing.

Most people need an accountability partner or somebody who will give them motivation. Thankfully, I've never required this and I don't say this to brag. Anything but. I've always been my motivator - It's so hard to explain and that's why as individuals we are who we are because of the circumstances or the journeys we've been through. I'm also very aware that the Lord instills into each of us our unique genetic code and mine just so happens to be energy. A LOT of energy. An insatiable amount of power and drive that I can only compare to top-level athletes, fighters, and entrepreneurs. I've learned to accept this and no longer make excuses to those around me for why I am the way I am. I'd be extremely rich if I got a dollar every time somebody told me to 'slow down', 'take a break', 'stop' 'calm down', 'be quiet' etc. I'm not opposed to taking constructive criticism but I've realised that the people around you who are telling you these things often don't have their own s\*\*t together and

need you to be down on their level to feel worthy and justify their lack of motivation. If they are lazy they want YOU to be lazy so they can feel better about themselves. So next time somebody is trying to diminish you just kindly smile and keep doing you, because if they were concentrating on their own lives and were happy within themselves they may not feel the need to tell you what to do with yours. Just an observation.

People always feel they know what's best for them. They don't! YOU know what's best for you. You have an inner compass inside of you that lets you know so listen to it.

## **BURNOUT / RHAPDOSIS**

In 2022 I had my next round of burnout. And not just once. The training was increasing and my workload on top of being an independent artist was starting to take its toll. I ended up in urgent care because I was urinating blood. Admittedly I've had this before but ignored it. This is a serious condition called Rhabdomyolysis. Common amongst cross-fitters and endurance athletes. In short, it's a breakdown of muscle tissue that releases a damaging protein into the blood, causing you to urinate blood.

This muscle tissue breakdown results in the release of a protein (myoglobin) into the blood. Myoglobin can damage the kidneys and lead to kidney failure. Urgent medical care is required. It can cause serious irreversible damage. There's no cure apart from rest and in severe cases an IV drip to replace fluids and electrolytes.

I'm so blessed that my doctor here in the states travelled with musicians and athletes during his early practicing days and was the first doctor whom I felt truly understood.

The first time I noticed I had Rhabdo he informed me about replacing electrolytes and proteins faster after training than I was doing. Because I love to fast I was causing my body more harm by not getting the essential supplements after training. He potentially saved me from long-term damage. Today, however, if I notice the early signs of it, I can catch it quicker. It's been a learning curve.

I certainly never want to experience having blood drawn from an artery again like I did when I was hospitalized in Sweden with stress and fatigue. I went into shock and it was not pretty. I share this information with you, not for sympathy or to scare you but in the hopes that my mistakes may help somebody else. Although I'm very aware of what NOT to do I sometimes feel I go through it to be taught a lesson.

## **PANIC ATTACKS**

Here's where I've messed up when I also haven't listened to my body. Being obsessed with getting my 'fix' means that I've suffered from burnout and fatigue so many times! Exercise is a stressor, so any added stress in your life will end up taking its toll on your body and if you're not careful

it can be detrimental and even life-threatening. My first real experience with this happened in Madrid, Spain, while on tour with my then-band 'Thundermother'. We were on a 3-week headlining tour across Europe. There was a lack of sleep naturally and a lot of stress internally going on with the band and my mental health was starting to decline but I wasn't honest about that at the time. Unfortunately with my allergies and dietary needs (explained

further down) I wasn't getting enough fuel. No matter how tired I was, as soon as our bus would park at the venue, I was out training instead of resting. I brought weights, and exercise bands and would go off on a 6-mile run when we'd reach our venue or hotel. Then I'd jump on stage for 1.5 hours that night, burning whatever reserves I had left in my tank.

On our very last night of that particular tour, we were sound-checking and I felt sick walking down the stairs into the venue to soundcheck. I headed over to the nearest couch and started screaming uncontrollably. It was so scary. I couldn't stop. I started crying, and then I couldn't breathe. I was gasping for air and sweating percussively and now the entire room of staff was running over to see what the commotion was. It was so embarrassing. I don't like attention when I'm not performing so I didn't want anybody making a fuss. But that's when my body went into an uncontrollable fit. I was having a full-blown seizure and honestly thought I was about to die. It wouldn't stop. My heart was beating so fast I thought it was going to come through my chest. I was sweating more than I would in a sauna. My whole body was uncontrolled and I never experienced anything like it. It was exhausting because every muscle in my body was contracting at a rapid rate. The room had to be evacuated and an ambulance was called. I was put on an oxygen machine and monitored until it eventually subsided. 45 minutes later.

At first, they thought it might be some virus but we learned I was suffering from a full-on panic attack.

Most people who have seizures wet themselves. I needed to use the bathroom so badly but my body had just run the equivalent of 15 miles (the ambulance crew had hooked up my heart to a monitor) and I was so exhausted that I had to urinate into a champagne bucket! It was demoralizing because at the time I was such a perfectionist.

Anybody who's ever had one will know exactly the feeling. This unfortunately began my journey with panic attacks and my health was slowly on a decline.

I must note that because I didn't want to let anybody down I declined to go to the hospital and decided to rest up for a few hours so I could do our last show. It was a sold-out show and there were so many fans and people counting on us. I put them before my health, but would later pay the price. I wasn't happy. I was miserable, but I had to put on a brave face and pretend I was ok. I wasn't. I was far from it.

Even though I was suffering from panic attacks, it didn't deter me. I was still training and had a PT whom I saw a few times a week. On top, I was also getting private self-defense classes and a little pad work. I wasn't listening to my body and because panic attacks and exercising seemed to feel the same, my body went into shock a few more times, even mid-training. It was scary. I HAD to make this stop! I tried to get counselling but was told there wasn't much they could do for me and if I wasn't going to take medication then there was nothing they could suggest further. I felt I'd hit a dead end with my music career. I no longer had joy going on stage and with the added stress of having stalkers who were making my life a living hell, I had to make a change.

This is why I am so adamant in believing if you are not happy make the necessary adjustments to remove yourself from the situation causing you to feel this way. It's not worth your health. Granted, I knew I couldn't do this overnight, so I started looking into my next options. The scariest thing I've ever done was leave this safety net and my 'identity' behind in pursuit of my health and happiness.

When wire got out of my plan, people around me were telling me I was crazy for turning my back on the biggest music endeavor of my life but they had no clue what was going on behind the scenes. This rings so true for so many others. Perhaps you're in a relationship or friendship or work situation you don't want to be in, so ask yourself: Are you being fulfilled? Are you happy? If not, start making changes. You can't change somebody else but you can change YOU!!!

## **PSORIASIS**

When I got back home to Sweden where I was living at the time, I went to my doctor and through my tears, I slid down the wall in pure desperation for something that would make it all go away. I never thought I'd come back to this place after 'healing' myself in the UK. The doctor was extremely concerned and told me if I wasn't careful I would die young from stress. My panic attacks were getting worse and this was when I learned I also had a rare form of psoriasis that would cover 85 percent of my body in extreme trauma cases. I share these pictures because I want to show you what stress can do to your body if you allow it.







## **FITNESS PHOTOSHOOT**

From 2013-2017 I lived in Sweden, as the lead singer of 'Thundermother'. We had our first major record deal with Warner Brothers Sweden and we had an amazing photographer Therés. Her brother Robert, also a photographer, had been asking me if I'd like to do a fitness shoot with him. He specialised in them and his work was incredible, so I said yes! I'd never done a fitness shoot before. So I wanted to do it correctly.

I told him if he gave me 5 weeks I'd be 'camera' ready, and would follow a body-building nutritional/training program to prepare myself.





This was mistake number one. Most competitors typically start a diet plan 10-12 weeks prior to competition day. Mistake number two was following an online plan for a 200LB man, not a 5'2" 130 lb small petite female like myself. I went about it in a way that almost took my life, no exaggeration. It's a process that includes loading and depleting, gaining, and cutting. During the hydration part of the diet a few days before the shoot, I nearly drowned. I drank too much water and by the end of the night I was throwing up and my head was pounding so hard that I went to bed thinking I might not wake up the next morning. I was so ill. I was puking up bile and had the most severe heartburn. But I was 4.5 weeks in so there was no way I was giving up. Thankfully, I did wake up the next morning and just kept going. I'm not really sure how my body continued but it did. I was so driven that nothing was going to stop me.

I'm a perfectionist and wanted to look as lean and cut as I could. The bodies of bodybuilders you see on the stage the day of competition are those which have been through an intense amount of strain and can be deadly and fatal. They are super dehydrated and depleted. I'm in awe of anybody who follows this lifestyle because it takes a serious amount of willpower and dedication. It's not a sustainable lifestyle so most competitors can only go for a few years before it takes its toll on the body.

I have the pictures to now look back at what I was able to achieve but now looking back I can pinpoint where a lot of my body image problems stemmed from. Once you get a taste of an elite, chiseled, little to no body fat, fit-looking body, you almost want to maintain it and that's just not possible. at least not long term. It's unhealthy and is only temporary. Think of it this way. You drive a Toyota (I actually do and love it by the way!) and somebody gives you a Lamborghini for a week. But then you have to give it back and get back in your old car. You crave the lambo, you loved how it looked and how it felt, and how it made you feel, but you can't keep it. You dream about it and would do whatever it takes to get it back but you know you're not getting it back. And if you do it would most likely be temporary. You feel like a failure and know what it's like to taste something better. But you're not failing. You're being led to think you are. My body was the Lambo. And I didn't want my 'old' body back. I saw what I was capable of having and it was amazing.



## MY DAILY DIET

I am a huge fan of fasting, now more commonly called time-restricted eating. I like the mental clarity it gives me and I love exercising in a fasted state. There are pros and cons to this lifestyle, and it hasn't always been a success story for me. I would suggest if you're going to try it, to be aware of the negative side effects it can have, especially amongst us females. Our bodies do not cope as well as males, because we are designed by nature to bear a child and so it messes with our hormones and can result in loss of menstrual cycles, which I have suffered from in the past. It can also cause mental health issues, including an obsession with food, and can cause cycles of binge eating which I know all too well and will go into detail about in the blog about my horrific journey with this. I've managed to utilize it better now and on any given day I'm in a fasted state for at least 16 hours.

Upon waking every morning, I have a cup of hot water, lemon juice with green tea leaves, and apple cider vinegar. I take supplements in powder form and pills. I then take a scoop of AG1 in my water to hold me over until I start eating. Usually, I have my first meal around 2pm (give or take) but I always have my homemade smoothie at around 1.30 pm.

I usually wait for 90 minutes upon waking before I take my first cup of coffee - my reasoning is by waiting 90 minutes before that first cup, I allow my natural adenosine system to taper down low enough to prevent an afternoon rebound.

In the sauna, I consume seltzer water, coconut water, Kombucha, and my electrolyte powder so technically I'm not 'fasting' but I'm on liquids only until my first meal of the day.

Once in a while, I like to do a 24-hour water-only fast, especially if I choose to have an active recovery day. I'm better at taking a recovery day once a week now as I never used to and was part of why I was getting burnout and getting ill because my muscles were not getting any recovery.

I bring a lunch box to the gym which I prepare that morning and usually do all the meal prep in advance. My first food of the day after all my liquids is fruit. Usually 2 oranges, grapefruit, and a kiwi. I tried watermelon for a while but my gut hates it!

After that, it's homemade almond butter, mixed raw nuts with raisins, and 100% dark chocolate, my homemade energy ball. A protein bar with no added sugar. Pistachios, Rice cakes, pumpkin seeds, or some form of a snack.

For dinner, I typically have a homemade salad with homemade hummus, sprouted lentils, and sometimes rice. Roasted Veggies with sweet potato. From time to time I make my curries and soups.

I typically eat the same thing every day but vary it from time to time depending on my schedule and if I am travelling. I am allergic to wheat and so have a gluten-free diet. I am plant-based and follow a vegan (except eggs) lifestyle, both nutritionally and environmentally. I am not a fan of labels and understand there's a stigma against them. Plant-based is not for everybody and I have zero problems with diets that include meat, so

please don't think I'm up here on any pedestal, I'm not. When I first transitioned I'll admit I had a different mindset but everybody needs to listen to their own body and eat according to their wants, needs, and desires and I believe that coming back to faith showed me this. There's a lot of guilt and shame surrounding and the diet culture preys on this. For the most part, companies typically do not care for their consumers as long as they are lining their pockets so I typically just try to eat a well-balanced whole-food diet to include any extra supplements I may need with my schedule and training schedule. I did at one point try a raw food diet (No cooked foods) and was also following a low FODMAP diet for my IBS but it was next to impossible to sustain so it didn't last long.

I like to make all my food from scratch and batch-make a lot for convenience. I'll include the ingredients for the main ones but can't give portion sizes as I don't own a weighing scale and from years of making them I just know what works.

I try to stay away from foods with any added sugar and anything more than 5g of sugar per 100g is typically not advised. I get a lot of natural sugar in my diet but I found I was addicted to sweeteners, especially after living in America for years as they are in a lot of foods. So I had to wean off them and still try to find alternatives for a few things that I still intake. I also did some research on seed oils and was alarmed at the amount of packaged foods I was consuming which include palm oil, canola oil, sunflower oil, etc. Reading the back of packets has become a must when I am buying products. It's made a big difference already in my gut despite the constant bloating. And I noticed I was suffering from acne so it's subsided since coming off these oils.

## **MY RECIPES**

Smoothie (no measurements) - Vegan, GF

I use a Nutri-mix blender to blend

I typically batch make 2 weeks' worth and store them in my glass kombucha bottles and freeze them and take them out that morning.

- Base: Unsweetened cocoa milk and water
- Ice cubes
- Organic super greens powder or a scoop of AG1
- Pea protein powder (for added protein if you wish)
- Mixed berries
- Celery
- Avocado
- Raw ginger root
- Cucumber
- Banana
- Dark leafy greens
- Power greens
- Home-made almond butter or store-bought



### Raw energy balls - Vegan, GF

In a bowl mix all of the dry ingredients and then add the peanut butter and honey/maple syrup and then the nondairy milk until a dough forms. Add as much liquid as needed so as to bind all ingredients. If the mixture ends up too sticky then just add more dried ingredients such as oats to thicken it out. Make balls with hands to shape and place on a tray or glass tub-aware and store in the fridge.

Sprinkle with cocoa powder and cocoa flakes to finish.

Feel free to add more ingredients or substitute ingredients.



- 1 1/2 cups of oats
- 1/2 cup of unsweetened shredded coco flakes
- 2-4 tsps of cinnamon
- 2-4 tsps of raw cocoa powder
- 2 tsps of chia seeds
- 2 tsps of flax seeds
- 1/4 cup of non-dairy milk
- 2 chopped bananas
- 1/2 cup of unsweetened nut butter of choice
- 3 or 4 teaspoons of pink Himalayan salt
- 1 tsp of vanilla extract
- Handful of chopped nuts of choice
- dried fruits
- Seeds of choice
- Nutmeg
- Dates
- Dark choc chips



## **MY DAILY EXERCISE REGIME**

My daily exercise routine

(When the time allows depending on the studio, shows, etc)

- 30 minutes infrared sauna upon waking
- Freezing Cold shower
- 20 minutes trampoline with a resistance band around my thighs - I do all my body tapping during this session

- Gym - either a workout class or my own workout which is always a mix of weight training and cardio
- 25/30 minutes of a heavy bag boxing workout
- 20 minutes on the stepper or a mix of stepper and bike followed by a quick core, balance, and stretching routine with my pilates ring and bar hangs
- 1 hour-1.5 hour dry sauna (with sauna vest) in rounds of 20 mins or less, with cold showers in between and steam room
- When it is available I'd finish with a cold plunge but currently, it's just cold showers

At night if the time allows, I like to walk on a treadmill at the gym for 1 hour (slow pace) and this is where I bring my laptop and do all my admin work or catch up on emails, etc

In warmer weather, I walk around the neighborhood

There is also a red light therapy machine at my gym with a vibrating plate so I do that also for 12 minutes.

My night always ends with a minimum of the 30-minute infrared sauna but anything up to 1.5 hours which is the perfect end to a day! I raise my legs for about 5 minutes in bed as I read a book and then it lights out!

I am a creature of habit so when I travel for shows or festivals via car, I take my trampoline, pilates ring, and sauna with me (it's a portable dome) light weights and bands, and typically I scout the area for the closest gym. There are no excuses so I always find a way of making it work and try to keep my routine as close as I can to my routine at home as my body responds best this way. However, it is really beneficial to change things up as you can get better results by not sticking to the same routine continuously.

## **My WORKOUT ROUTINE AND COLD EXPOSURE**

I've put together a few clips of my routines to include my favourite exercises and some videos on how to get cold exposure without actually owning an ice bath.

Always consult your doctor before partaking in any new regime

**Workout :**

<https://youtu.be/-cDfu8JtXY4>

**Cold exposure :**

<https://youtu.be/VjMtCdwVJv4>



My sauna - <https://a.co/d/86utFzn>



My Trampoline - <https://a.co/d/eH4eyAN>





My resistance bands - <https://a.co/d/6Fd084M>



My Sauna vest - <https://a.co/d/0E761AJ>

**CLOSING**



And there it is. A summary of my beautiful, yet somewhat tough life so far. Thank you so much for taking the time to read my story. I do hope it gives you a better insight into who I am and the biggest thing I want people to take away is that no matter what you are going through, you're not alone. We all have a story and we go through adversity and hardship in life so we can help each other out. If I help anybody through what I have shared here then that is true success in my eyes and I know I am living out my purpose.

God bless

xxx

My EP 'MERCY' for mental health awareness is available worldwide

<https://hypeddit.com/s4h3du>

Coming in 2023 will be my next album 'HELPING HAND' so stay tuned.

*Photo Credits : Rich Wysocky ; Robert Björk*

*Proofing : Linda Briggs*