

THE SCIENCE OF LIVING
HAPPY, THIN,
AND FREE



BRIGHT LINE Eating

SUSAN PEIRCE
THOMPSON, PH.D.

Bright Line Eating: The Science of Living Happy, Thin Free

Susan Peirce Thompson

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In this book, Susan Peirce Thompson, Ph.D. shares the groundbreaking weight-loss solution based on her highly acclaimed Bright Line Eating Boot Camps. Rooted in cutting-edge neuroscience, psychology, and biology, *Bright Line Eating* explains why people who are desperate to lose weight fail again and again: it's because the brain blocks weight loss.

Bright Line Eating (BLE) is a simple approach designed to reverse that process. By working with four “Bright Lines”—clear, unambiguous, boundaries—Susan Peirce Thompson shows us how to heal our brain and shift it into a mode where it is ready to shed pounds, release cravings, and stop sabotaging our weight loss goals.

Best of all, it is a program that understands that willpower *cannot* be relied on, and sets us up to be successful anyway.

Through the lens of Susan's own moving story, and those of her Bright Lifers, you'll discover firsthand why traditional diet and exercise plans have failed in the past. You'll also learn about the role addictive susceptibility plays in your personal weight-loss journey, where cravings come from, how to rewire your brain so they disappear, and more. Susan guides you through the phases of Bright Line Eating—from weight loss to maintenance and beyond—and offers a dynamic food plan that will work for anyone, whether you're vegan, gluten-free, paleo, or none of the above.

Bright Line Eating frees us from the obesity cycle and introduces a radical plan for sustainable weight loss. It's a game changer in a game that desperately needs changing.

Bright Line Eating: The Science of Living Happy, Thin Free Details

Date : Published March 21st 2017 by Hay House, Inc.

ISBN : 9781401952532

Author : Susan Peirce Thompson

Format : Hardcover 320 pages

Genre : Health, Nonfiction, Self Help, Food and Drink, Food, Nutrition



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From Reader Review Bright Line Eating: The Science of Living Happy, Thin Free for online ebook

Paula says

When the author speaks about the science, she is brilliant. She definitely shows what is unhealthy about refined sugar. However, much of this book departs from the science into the author's private experience with food addiction, and the habits and thinking that helped her overcome it. Her personal story adds a great deal to the book, but her private solutions do not. She tries equating flour, even whole grain flours, with sugar. She fails to make her case. Unfortunately, she give us no science. Her comparison of flour and cocaine--showing that both look similar and are somehow therefore similarly addictive--is ludicrous. She talks about how her husband threatened to leave her because she was so obsessive about her diet, and all of the strange behaviors she adopted to help her give up sugar and flour. She says that obsessiveness will not be required, and yet her program is exactly that. Asking people to give up not only all sugar, but all flour is already a lot to ask. To then insist that they also need to get up early in the morning to engage in rituals like reading diet books, and meditating for half an hour at a stretch. Then spending time each night before bedtime planning out the next days food in excruciating detail and contacting a friend to commit to eating nothing but that, then to spend another half hour writing in a journal--come on! While I believe in journaling, and meditation has enough science to convince me that it is health promoting, I don't believe that this much time and thought are required to lose weight. This is just all in keeping with the author's obsessive-compulsive personality. For those who share this personality, this book may be for you. For the rest of us, this program will be asking too much.

Didi says

Fairly restrictive diet, however I have picked up some helpful hints to eat more healthy. I'd love to banish sugar completely from diet,except for fruit of course, but I know how hard that is...

Carol says

I've been doing Bright Line Eating since June 24 2016, and I've lost nearly 50 pounds. I'm a slow loser, but the program is amazing. What is most amazing is that my brain has set down new fiber tracts and no longer craves sugar and flour products. Who knew clean healthily prepared food tasted so good? I am confident that following this program will see all my excess weight gone (20 more pounds), and that I will be able to maintain my right-sized body for the rest of my life.

Jim Strasma says

The key learning for me in this book was that when whole grain is ground into flour, and when whole fruits are blended into a smoothie, their glycogen index rises - a lot, turning them from health foods into foods as bad or worse for me as sugar. A second important learning was that it is important to intermittently fast, defined as going at least 4 hours between meals during the day, and at least 12 hours overnight.

I'd already almost completely eliminated sugar from my diet, but was still slowly gaining back weight I'd so carefully lost back in 2004-2009, until I also eliminated all sugar substitutes (suggested by this book, but I'd already recently done the same before reading it), and then eliminated all flour and all fruit juices, and committed to only 3 meals a day, 4+ hours apart, with a 12 hour fast overnight.

Now I'm losing the excess weight easily again. But as a "sugarholic" (a 10 on the author's scale), I will have to continue this eating plan the rest of my life, just as if I'd been an alcoholic.

The author also has lots of other ideas, that may or may not be important or proven. For now, what I'm applying is working, so I'll add in more ideas if and when they are needed.

Katy says

Compelling data on the addictive nature of food, but a no sugar no flour diet does not fit my lifestyle nor will it ever.

Sanz says

This book has quite literally changed my life and has led to food freedom, something I've never experienced before.

Happyreader says

If you feel that donuts and cupcakes are calling your name, this may be the book to help you resist their siren song. Developed and written by a behaviorist and former addict (crack, crystal meth, and food), this is the food version of going cold turkey. Bright lines are the lines you do not cross, reducing the willpower-sapping decisions you need to make each day and instilling life-long habits of healthy food boundaries. No added sugar and no flour since she states these foods act like drugs. Similar to cocaine and heroin, neither of which are addictive if eaten in their whole food state, sugar (including artificial sweeteners, dried fruit, and fruit juices) and flour (of any grain) cause your dopamine receptors to demand more, setting off an addictive cycle that makes eating normal portions difficult. These foods also increase insulin secretion, leading to leptin resistance reducing leptin's ability to turn off hunger. Alcohol is also prohibited since it too obviously acts like a drug, has calories, and leads to poor decision making and other issues. Other bright lines include only eating three meals 4-6 hours apart with no snacks and sticking to precise portions weighed with a food scale. The portions for the weight loss portion of the plan are breakfast: 1 protein, 1 breakfast grain, 1 fruit; lunch: 1 protein, 6 oz vegetable, 1 fruit, 1 fat; and dinner: 1 protein, 6 oz vegetables, 8 oz salad, and 1 fat. Food is liberalized, on a somewhat complicated schedule, once you approach your goal weight.

What some people may love is that exercise is prohibited during the weight loss phase of the program. Rationales for the exercise prohibition include the need to exercise sapping your willpower reserve, some people using exercise as an excuse to eat more, and evidence showing that exercise isn't especially effective for weight loss. The focus of this program is to get your eating under control without distractions. Exercise does return once you reach goal weight for its many health benefits and evidence supporting its weight maintenance power.

I can't speak to whether this plan works in the long term. Every diet book claims to have a lifetime weight loss solution. It may be worth a try for those who really have disordered eating, although I can imagine some would argue that this plan's strict guidelines could backfire. And it seems to in the beginning for the author. One time, after a year or two of success with the program, she finds herself fantasizing about cake in front of a bakery, tempting her to go back the next day to actually buy a cake, which then sets off a three-month binge resulting in her ballooning from a size 6 to a size 24. Plus the program seems to require a great deal of emotional support, just like an AA program. The author repeatedly states that eventually the habits will be ingrained and you'll automatically follow the program but the need for support appears to be on-going. Just as with other plans, I could see people moving on and letting themselves slide. At the same time, there is something to be said for establishing firm boundaries. As the author repeatedly notes, the more you do what you commit to doing, the more integrity you build within yourself. Plus, it's surprising when you do give up something completely, like for those who give up animal foods or gluten, you find it easier to say no since there are no exceptions.

I received a free eBook of this title pre-publication from NetGalley. Two downsides of this version is that the pre-pub eBook didn't always translate the food charts well (still not sure of the appropriate portion sizes for the plant-based proteins) and the websites listed for additional resources were incorrect. I imagine both of these problems will be corrected in the final book. It also would have been nice if the book included sample menus, both for omnivores and plant-based eaters, to translate the portion sizes into actual meals. Perhaps sample menus are in the resources?

Overall, some interesting ideas about eliminating trigger foods, portion control, and limiting eating opportunities. How invested someone would be in this plan would depend on how committed they are to the process and if they could live without sugar, flour, and alcohol in their lives.

Abchap says

I got a little confused about this book.

It starts with the standard disclaimer about the content not being medical advise and in the event you use the information in the book you do it at your own risk blah blah... ok

Then the author spend a whole chapter self reflecting on her life and how she went from being a heavy drug addict(i mean acid, exctasy, crystal meth, cocaine, crack...) to becoming a PhD.

OK, I can deal with a little background even if it seems a little stretched (I wasn't there so I can only applaud and not judge).

The other chapters use the author PhD credentials to send us into four wonderful chapters on the brain functions and how it relates to addiction then making the jump into food addiction.

From the get go I got the impression that avoiding sugar and flour will free me from obesity. Well, there is more, I also need to limit my meals to 3 squares meals a day (why three and not two or five ?), not graze in between those meals AND drastically limit the amount of food during those three meals.

Anyone following these restriction would definitively loose weight but would they really be happy and free ? that can be debated!

I mean some people are happy counting points and do well with the system, some people are happy with six meals a day and do well with it, some graze the right food all day and do well with that too !

And just when I am ready to adopt the belief that both sugar and flour ought to be eliminated few things happen

- 1- A chapter on children diet which allows children to have flour because they exercise enough to eliminate it ! why cant adult do the same ? but what about the addiction part ?
- 2- The author recall a time when she went to Australia, and went from a size 4 to 24 in 3 months !! that is 10 sizes, so roughly over 100 pounds in 3 months ??
- 3- She warns about over fattening meals which will detract from the weight loss..... so no sugar, no flour, food size restricted and now fat content too ?
- 4- As tools to help control one food ‘ obsession’ she advise prayer to God and meditation ! really ? right out of the food addiction 12 steps book !
- 5- exercise ? no exercise while loosing weight and NO mention of any afterwards.
- 6- travelling with a food scale and packing food, pages and pages on how to calculate timezone proper spaced meals... on and on about the packing

I personally did not enjoy the multiple testimonies in the book. Most felt extreme to me, like the people were so unhealthy one wonders how they survived long enough to see the light and follow the program who saved them. With BP in crazy crazy ranges to blood work so bad they should have been hospitalized, to years of extreme malnutrition

So I went from reading a fascinating book on brain cognitive functions to a so-so diet book all the while not relating to extreme people testimonies!

Many, many, let me say MANY many books have been written on diverse extreme diets, some more sensible than other, the vast majority written by doctors (either MD or PhD) I simply fail to see what this one is adding to the mix. I am in NO way arguing about the science nor about the potential benefits of going off of sugar and flour as they are most probably unhealthy for us the same way heavy washed&processed meat is bad for us, the same way extreme consumption of processed milk or soy is bad for us.

I have simply failed to see how getting “extremely” structured following a “very” regimented and limited diet will make anyone Happy or Free.

the support offered outside of the book and the BLE community is most probably a plus but I dont to see how much more of a plus they offer compared to others meetings ?

That being said, as readers are always eager to find new miracle recipes for the perfect diet I am sure that the book will be successful just based on its title of ‘living happy thin and free’.

Jennifer says

Weight loss doesn't begin in the gut, or the mouth, the kitchen or the gym. Weight loss begins in the brain. Understanding how our brain is wired, how we respond to stimuli, and how we operate in a willpower deficit will begin to open your eyes to how you make decisions in all areas of your life.

Even if you don't have a pound to lose and you're extremely healthy, the science and data behind this book will be helpful for anyone in your life and fascinating. Entirely based in scietific fact, data and testing, Bright Line Eating doesn't start with weight-loss. It starts with understanding your brain. Susan Thompson is a brilliant and engaging woman who has spent her life reasearching and attempting to understand how each of us undermine our own goals and dreams. Not just in the arena of scales and weight loss, but in every area of our lives.

As I began to grasp the ideas foundational to this way of life, I began to realize the far-reaching implications

of the discoveries that science is making in regards to how our brain works. When we truly grasp our finite amounts of will-power, and how over taxed our decision making systems are in our current culture, I believe that we will make massive strides forward in reaching our potential.

With a background in psychology and neuro-science, Thompson doesn't hold back at all but gives us as many studies and tests as one book can handle, all the while keeping us engaged with realistic and results-oriented application and her engaging and easy-to-relate-to writing style. Without being gimmicky or pushy, Susan shares what has changed her own life, what she struggled with and what eventually led to her freedom.

And freedom is certainly what this is all about. In any area of life it is discipline that brings freedom. If you look at classically trained artists, musicians, authors, chefs, architects, what allows them the freedom to be creative is the very boundaries and rules that they live by. Music that is allowed to follow no pattern, no laws, no rules is disharmonious and chaotic. The same is true for how our bodies run. If we learn to live by the rules that allow them to function at their optimal levels, if we walk the paths laid out for us by those who have gone before, we begin to see vitality, joy, harmony, health, energy and enthusiasm. What often feels like strict rules in the beginning will bring freedom once the practice has led to automaticity. Whether you're playing scales on the piano or weighing food on scales in a kitchen, the key to freedom, the path to happiness, comes from learning and following the basic guidelines. Susan has thoughtfully and completely laid out those guidelines in this book. They are not complicated. That's not to say they're easy. They are not easy at first. However, the reason we are still overweight as a culture is because we keep aiming for the "easy" way. And it's not working. The "easy" way is fat. The difficult way is life. But it's worth it.

This book tells you why nothing has worked before. Then it lays out step-by-step what will work. NO matter who you are. NO matter what your story. And it works. I have been following this for a month and have lost 11 pounds! I'm not to goal weight yet, but I am totally impressed with the science, sincerity and simplicity of Susan's Bright Lines!

Heather says

I love books with science on nutrition and exercise physiology. This one scored points for new, neurological research--including exploring data that the brains of the obese and the anorexic are very similar, self-sabotage neurology, and hormonal effects on the brain. The author presents reasoned strategies and ideas for brain "reprogramming" for lasting healthy success.

That said, I can't ever get past the "revival" tone of this (and many other) self-help style books. The strategies for self-reprogramming make sense and have some embedded flexibility . . . but I'm suspicious of her overall, ultimate solution: weighing regimented meals for the rest of your life. To me, that seems like hanging on to the addicted/eating disorder brain, clinging to control with a vice-like grip. Add the churchy tone of her reprogramming advice, the sales pitch for "boot camps," and the twelve step roots waters down the credibility of the core scientific information. So the science is sound, but the leap from there to the author's method is a rough gap.

Take what you like and ditch the rest.

Cate says

What a relief to have a neuroscientist so clearly explain that I'm not just a weak-willed person because of my weight, despite success in so many other areas of my life. My brain has been hijacked. My ever-worsening battle with my weight is mainly due to the Standard American Diet. I had no idea. The mere thought of giving up my beloved pastries practically had me breaking out in hives, which just proves the point: I'm a 10 on the susceptibility scale. This book beautifully and clearly opened my eyes to the scientific reality of sugar and flour addiction, along with strategies to make a complete life change. I have had so many yo-yos with my weight over the years that I had given up and tried to just accept myself the way I was. Dr. Susan Peirce Thompson has given me hope that I can once again face the mirror and the camera without flinching, shop for sizes that I thought I would never see again, and return to the activities I had relinquished because of joint pain.

Barb says

I've been doing BLE for a year and have come to understand my relationship to food and myself in a much clearer way...this is a sustainable, do-able program that supports a new relationship with food through mind, body and spirit... the book is a great guide and resource... to get the full experience one needs to experience SPT's blogs, the community support and work all of the tools, not just follow the food plan- it's so much more than "just" a food plan!!! This has the potential to significantly change people's relationship to food around the world!

Donna says

This book is hard to rate, but I rounded up instead of down. I liked the author's use of science. This was very 'sciency'. That part was fascinating to read. I liked that. She covered addiction and the effects that it has on hormones and the brain. She also used lots of studies, but even with that said, she said a lot of other things with no sources mentioned, leading me to think if it was just her personal experience with helping others.

Now this was a little on the extreme side.....no snacking.....no sugar.....no sugar substitutes....no flour of any kindever. Ever. Ever. So if you are a grazer, this info. may put you into a cold sweat.

This book brought back memories of when I needed to lose 5 - 15 pounds back in college. I'd cut out snacks and if I had to lose it quick, I also cut out a meal a day. I became acquainted with hunger but it always worked. The author mentions the possible hunger you may experience by following this plan. I had to laugh at that because I've been there. While she doesn't say eliminate a meal a day, the no snacking whatsoever rule brought back memories, but she also has you measuring everything you put into your mouth.

The negative about this was that this book sounded like a big commercial for her website and her facebook page. That is always bothersome for me. However, I found some of the advice practical and I liked the way she explained all the details. So if you struggle with food addiction, this might be the plan for you.

Bianca says

CONTROL.

If I had to sum up Susan's book in one word that would be it: CONTROL. She strikes me as a control freak to the utmost. I don't say that as a negative punch at her, it's just true. Her story was very interesting and this book was like one part memoir, one part science journal analysis and one part diet plan. Not equal parts, but all were covered in the book.

I read this book because I know someone who is/was on her plan and the premise intrigued me. Susan's "bright lines" are boundaries she sets up about food and eating and they are mandatory boundaries not to be crossed at anytime: no sugar (fruit is ok), no flour (no, not even almond or coconut flour - nothing ground up into fine powder), 3 meals a day, controlled portions. If you strip away the emotion and the commentary, she's basically just restricting calories and putting you on a low carb diet. I have no doubts she has seen the results she boasts - if someone really was taking their food scale to restaurants and weighing out their portions or planning out their meals to the ounce and not deviating at all, one single bit then yeah, I would expect them to lose weight.

I think the most ironic thing in the book is Susan's drawn out explanations of will power and it not being a thing and then the whole remainder of the book basically making a person rely on will power to eat this way. If you love the facade of being in control and love micro managing, then this may be the diet for you! If not, try something else. This plan will take a TON of detail and preparation and a lot of time to weigh, measure, pack, etc. Despite her chapter on traveling and eating this plan on the go, I think the reality is that most people won't make these efforts.

The one beef I have with her, that happened early on was when she suggested lying to friends when you're new to the plan and trying to explain why you're avoiding sugar and flour. **She actually suggested people tell their friends/colleagues that you are "allergic to flour/sugar/etc now" and explain your avoidance on a food allergy!?!?** As a #foodallergywarrior and food allergy mom, this made me so upset! I won't get on my soapbox and go on and on, but I just want to say I did **NOT** appreciate the apathetic attitude she has toward food allergies and that single paragraph was responsible for me withdrawing trust in the author.

Pros of the book: The author read it and I enjoyed her voice and how she read the book (tempo, inflections, etc.) and the case studies were also interesting. Obviously she's found what works for her and I'm glad to hear she's no longer suffering from her alcohol and drug (and food!) addictions.

Leanne says

Good book; great system. I've lost 25 pounds in three months, but more importantly, my health is much better: my fibromyalgia outbreaks have stopped, my blood pressure has come down, and I even think my memory is better. I honestly love how I feel when I am off sugar and flour. And THAT is the miracle.
