

Why and How to Fast

The Buddha did it, and attained enlightenment. Jesus did it, then overcame Satan in the wilderness. Muhammad did it to help him receive revelations from Allah. Gandhi used fasting as a political weapon to help him defeat the British and bring freedom to the second most populous nation on earth. The list goes on.

Unfortunately, none of us are likely to have this level of success when we fast. But that doesn't mean that fasting and cleansing can't have a positive impact on your life. From achieving that New Year's resolution of dropping those extra pounds, to bringing you greater mental clarity, confidence and spiritual depth, fasting is a perfect way to help yourself live more consciously.

On a physical level fasting and cleansing is a good idea because it gives your digestive system a break. In the same way you give your muscles a chance to relax and rebuild after a strenuous workout, giving your GI track a break lets it catch up and reset itself in a way that's hard to achieve when you are putting food through it three-plus times a day. Periodic fasting is also a tried and true weight loss technique.

Consciously deciding to ignore your body's impulse to eat when you are hungry can also help to foster a level of mental clarity and self-confidence. By choosing not to eat, or to only consume certain foods, we can become both more in tune with our own bodies and at the same time learn to separate out what we truly do need, from what we simply want.

Fasting and cleansing is central to nearly all religions as a way of coming closer to the divine. The belief is that the process of going without earthly pleasures improves prayer and meditation by allowing us to focus with greater clarity on the divine.

But though fasting can bring amazing benefits to your life, it is important that you fast and cleanse safely.

It's important to start slow. Don't start with a five-day, no food fast; the shock to your system could do more harm than good. Instead, work up to your goal.

Let's say you want to do a 10-day juice and raw food cleanse. Start with just a day or two. Then maybe a week later try moving up to three or four days of organic veggies and fresh juice. If that goes well, then give the 10-day cleanse a shot.

The detoxifying is only half achieved by regulating what, if anything, you are taking into your body during your cleanse. The other, equally important half, is making sure that all the bad stuff is coming out. So make sure that you are drinking lots of fluids and urinating at least once every few hours.

Keeping your bowel movements regular is just as important. This can be a bit of a challenge though, since your metabolism tends to slow down when you stop eating. But unless you keep things moving down there, there is a good chance that your

colon will reabsorb many of the toxins you are trying to get rid of. Drinking salt water or taking several spoonfuls of olive oil can help to keep your bowel movements regular. Different herbs like Oregon Grape and Cascara Sagrada can also help the body to eliminate and clear toxins.

There are several other herbs that help with detoxifying specific organs and areas of the body, such as the liver and blood, during cleanses. The types and methods of using such herbs vary from person to person, so come into Moonflower Market and talk with our supplement specialist, or consult your naturopath, about which of these herbs is best for your situation.

And with spring right around the corner, there is no better time to give fasting a shot! To give your body the tools that it needs to flush out all those guilty pleasures you had over the holidays. And while you're giving your digestive track a chance to rest, why not try a little prayer or meditation? Who knows, all those spiritual leaders can't be wrong, right?

For more information on types of cleanses and fasts, their benefits, and products that help the process, just come in to Moonflower Market and ask one of our friendly staff!

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