

# **BODY-BASED DIET:**

## **Restore a Right Relationship with Food & Your Body**

By

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## Introduction

In this "diet" book, I am not going to tell you what to eat or how to eat. This is not a diet book in the conventional sense. That is not the kind of diet I am drawn to write about. In fact, it gives me the heebie-jeebies to even consider stepping into the diet wars of today and even yesterday. Do you remember the grapefruit diet? I do. As a kid, I wondered how a grapefruit could have so much power to grab my mother's attention in the way that it did. The food conversation has become frightening, confusing, emotional, full of conflict — endless experts arguing over what is right and wrong. When there is that much noise, it becomes hard to hear your own body at all.

So my body, my fingers instead long to type words that are a bit of a whisper underneath all that loud fixation. We are such studious birds, watching and picking at our carbs and macros from above, while never quite getting into right relationship with it all. So I want to explore words that might help us discover a different kind of diet — one of love, worth, sexuality, capacity, mystery, attachment, boundaries, slowing down, suspending meaning and embodied health. Words that support the release of emotional burdens and toxic loads placed on the body and on food. In other words, the things the body actually thrives on.

I feel sorry for bodies and for food. But perhaps that is my projection. Or maybe it's not. Food and our bodies have truly gotten neglected in our hyperfixation and over-attention. In all the noise, something quieter has been left alone in the dark for a very long time.

I wrote this book for you — the one who may or may not have your diet on point. I'm relieved you are reaching for this book. Can we stay in that moment for just a second — your hand extended, my book in it. Because I think the meeting point between reaching and holding is everything.

Are you familiar with Harry Harlow's wire monkey experiment? In the 1950s, Harlow separated infant monkeys from their mothers and gave them two surrogates. One was made of wire and held a bottle of milk. The other was made of soft cloth but offered no food. Guess which surrogate, the infants choose? The infants chose the cloth mother over and over again. Not the wire monkey with milk. Can you sense that instinct within you as well? They reached and clung to the cloth monkey for comfort and warmth. They did not reach for food first.

This study has me question our collective actions. Why are we reaching for so many diets, supplements, foods as a society — this oral fixation of sorts at the cultural level — while remaining completely unaware of the deeper, non-food dietary needs of the body?

So this book is for your body. The whole of it. Including the parts that no diet has ever reached. Love before milk. Warmth before nourishment. Scholars such as Donald Winnicott suggests that creativity even comes before food. So, the infant monkey wasn't confused or broken. They were perfectly, heartbreakingly clear about what they needed most. And most importantly, they knew that milk and love were not the same.

I think about this experiment often. When I'm sitting down to a meal myself or when I'm with a client who is desperate for answers. Because so many of us spend years reaching for food, or for answers — one diet or another. Could that be us projecting the cloth monkey onto food and diets, reaching and clinging. Remaining faithful, never questioning. Taking what is offered, what is available, what at least has something. While the deeper hunger goes unnoticed and unmet.

This faithful loop of reaching for what the milk cannot give. I know that place. I couldn't write this deeply without knowing it well, of replacing love for diets or food. And I am not someone who is weak or broken or lacks willpower. Instead, the body will always reach for love first. And when love is hard or cold or absent, when culture conditions us to believe that the priority is food and diets, these things begin to take the place of the original needs of the body. Over and over. In an endless, exhausting loop.

But there is a way out. There is a somewhere in you that flies under the radar of most conversations about food and body. It is influencing everything — what you reach for, what you avoid, what you call hunger, what you call control. We don't talk about it. Instead we admire the discipline. We build billion dollar industries around it. We give it awards and before-and-after photographs and its own section in every bookstore. And the body keeps reaching for what the discipline cannot give.

I know what deadness feels like in a body. It has taken me a long time to know what aliveness feels like. Deadness — which the food and diet industry promises to fix, but cannot — feels stark, dried up, suffocating. The opposite of luscious. There is no Instagram filter for prune-like

deadness. And I know what it is to project onto food everything that deadness withheld — juice, warmth, response, aliveness. To make food luscious because something else was not. Only to then end my healthy, and alive meal with profound and unexplainable grief and sadness.

So, this book is a bit of a coded conversation. While the title suggests, *Body-Based Diet*, it's not the kind of diet our culture — the one that earns billions off food and diet-related content — wants written. But it is a conversation that needs mention, written for two readers, who don't know they are in the same story.

The first is the one who thinks her relationship with food is fine — controlled, clean, handled. She is not desperate. She looks, from the outside, like she has it together. She doesn't think she needs this book. She may be right that there is nothing to find in the direction I am pointing. But what she will find, if she goes there, is a world that has been left alone for a very long time. Stark. Dried up. Void of nourishment. An extremely neglected world. The most neglected world. The one that has no Instagram filter.

The second reader is the one who thinks she needs fixing. She is identified with being the broken one — too much, too hungry, too out of control. She has been told, in a thousand ways, to get her shit together. She doesn't know she has been carrying something that was never only hers. She also thinks there may be nothing to find in the direction I am pointing — because the emptiness inside has always felt like her fault, her failure, her deficit.

Both readers are right that what I am offering is not comfortable. Both are right that the territory is unfamiliar. Both may find, in different ways, that what lives in that neglected world disturbs them.

What if fifty percent of the diet conversation is right — and the other fifty percent of the dialectic has never been given its voice? This book is that other fifty percent. It will not tell you what to eat.

What if we go together, into the places you may think are a waste of time. The places that seem boring at first, like there is nothing to discover. Somewhere beyond the stimuli and Instagram posts of perfect bodies.

There may not be anything to discover. But there may also be something — not the aliveness you've been chasing from the outside, but something quieter. Something that has been waiting to be set in motion within you.

A hunger you didn't know you had. A body you didn't know was waiting. And a reach for something more real.

My fingers are reaching toward yours. Will you meet me there — in the space between — rather than reach again for what has never quite been enough?

## About the Author



Over decades of personal, academic and professional study, what has emerged for Majia is both a model for restoring one’s relationship with food and body to its rightful place, and a body based diet that fits for her and her unique needs.

It took years of unraveling — decoupling herself from cultural messaging, along with decoupling attachment needs, sexual needs, worth, creativity, and identity from food and body. Learning,

slowly, that the body was never designed to be the source of status, lovability, or aliveness. That food was never meant to carry what she and society had asked it to carry.

She is a doctor of Somatic and Archetypal Psychology, a practitioner of somatic and nervous system approaches, and the creator of the Body-Based Diet model.

She wrote this book because her fingers wanted to have a voice and a reach. A lingering expression and contact with the forbidden. One that restores relationships into their rightful places. One that embodies juiciness — the real kind, the kind that doesn't end a good meal in grief — something she now knows from the inside.

She wrote it so you might find your way there too.

## Chapter 1: The Body's Native Language and Diet

My left index finger is moving across the F key on the keyboard. Slowly. Feeling the bump.

That bump is a threshold. A portal into a world that has nothing — absolutely nothing — to do with food or diet. A world I have not been allowed to enter. A world that, if entered, might crack something open that has been sealed for a very long time.

I am afraid. And I am sad.

Because what my hands really want to reach for has never been food. It has been you. Contact. A human whose heart beats. Someone who looks back. Someone who wants to play peek a boo. Someone who reaches toward me the way I have been reaching my whole life.

But you are so confident in your study of food and diets. And I have felt, at times, like I am talking to a wall. A non-relational wall. Sufficient unto itself. Needing nothing I have to offer.

And so I close my mouth and its asking for love. And I reach for food instead. Maybe it's enough. Or so I want to convince myself of that.

I am asking my finger now to slow down that reach, to linger there in the encounter. To let an experience move me. To stay with the bump on the F key. To feel the gateway rather than rush past it. And as I slow down, sadness comes. A world of nothing. Of no contact. Of being forced to inhabit a world that makes no sense to me, that asks me to want what I do not want, to share what I cannot share.

My mouth is closed. It's not speaking. But my fingers are. They know the way.

They are speaking of a world of restoration of what is real and alive that lives beyond food. A world of contact, softness, looking, smiles, protection, play, nurture, relationship. The diet of the body. The things that, when they are absent, denied, shamed or exploited, can send us reaching for the next closest thing.

This is the world this diet book is trying to enter. Together, you and I.

It's a world beyond right or wrong, as Rumi offers. A world beyond what you should or should not eat, or how your body should or should not look. A world beyond measurements, meaning and matter. It's a world that sits in the in-between spaces. It may be hard to hold directly, because of its uncertainty and soft edges. But it invites a deeper, richer encounter to emerge. Like a peek-a-boo game, this is the body's native language and diet.