

[On Caffeine]

Thoughts from those who have ventured into a world without caffeine

Having long-suspected that coffee was doing more harm than good, I flipped my finger to ole' Joe as soon as university finals ended (so long, old pal. perhaps we will meet again someday)

No decaf, no green tea- I went from 2 cups of meth-strength Peet's per day to 0 cups of coffee and many, many glasses of water.

The first week, after the miserable first two days, was actually quite enjoyable. I felt more peaceful, more connected to my true being.

Among many other benefits (better skin, better sleep, thinking before talking) I have noticed I am more relaxed around people. Any nervous energy/ anxiety seemed to dissipate. I always thought caffeine boosted my confidence and helped with social anxiety; what I've found is that this is precisely the opposite.

"I cut the caffeine completely and guys, I will never go back. I have no paranoia, my limiting beliefs have ceased to surface, I am utterly flexible in my physical body, my thinking is stronger vertically as well as horizontally, and, as a writer, I feel my writing has improved dramatically.

I cannot list the amount of difference on my overall life within the last 6 months. I feel like I'm inundated with abilities I've been working on all my life, and finally they're coming together with motivation and creative thinking. I feel like I'm constantly embracing all corners of my intelligence." HOW TO BE LIMITLESS.

I quit coffee and tea permanently on 6th January 2006 ... around 16 months ago.

I also quit chocolate some months ago also and it is the best, and the hardest thing I have ever done in my life. I didn't really feel like I had conquered caffeine until about 2 months without it - the physical withdrawal was severe and I missed it for about 2 months but now I don't miss it at all. TWO MONTHS.

I would never go back to it again.

CLEARER THINKING
FEELING FULLY RESTED IN THE MORNING
No energy lows through the day - always ON

The benefits are enormous:

Clearer thinking

Getting up in the morning feeling fully rested - even with around 6-7 hours sleep

No energy lows AT ALL throughout the day

Less acidity in my body so a much better and level mood

Much much more

Quit caffeine - do it and stop mentally avoiding it. It will absolutely not be easy but it is really worth it. The first 1½ weeks are the worst and it gets easier every day from there. I do not think about it at all now. **The first 1.5 weeks are the worst.**

"

MOOD & SLEEP.

Caffeine is a powerful appetite suppressant.

experience and knowledge through iteration.

Each time I went back to drinking coffee, I noticed just a little bit more how it was negatively affecting my mood, my sleep, my energy levels – even on just one or two cups a day. In August, however, the caffeine straight-up kicked me in the crotch with its nasty effects.

These are the things I noticed after only two weeks away, and returning back to just two small cups of coffee a day:

- Caffeine gives me crazy pants. Literally. I get anxious. It makes me irritable. I pick fights, I snap at people, my fuse is abnormally short. In general, I'm an unpleasant person to be around sometime around cup one-and-a-half. Sorry, Dallas.
- I become maniacal about my work. I would mindlessly, slowly sip my two cups while typing up blog posts or responding to emails and find myself in this unhealthy place where I'd refuse to break for the gym, to answer a personal phone call or even to pee (for real) because I was firmly entrenched in "work mode".
- I didn't eat a full meal until noon. Ever. Caffeine is a powerful appetite suppressant, and despite our rule to eat *before* our first cup of coffee, I just wasn't hungry. Though I'd force myself to eat something, two hard-boiled eggs was hardly enough to see me through until lunch. caffeine made me tired, restless, short tempered

BECAUSE it killed my metabolism.

I used to drink loads of coffee and diet coke because I felt tired all the time. After having stopped drinking both 14 months ago, I realized that it had been the caffeine making me tired. And jumpy, restless and short tempered. Nowadays, I have become extremely sensitive to caffeine and can instantly feel it if I happen to inadvertently get some into my system. It's insidious stuff... -Marie, whole9life.com

I have been off caffeine now for 6 months. At first, it was amazing. An amazing sense of peacefulness. I suffer from anxiety and found instantly that coming off caffeine got rid of most anxiety problems. I also sleep so much better without caffeine. -Andrew

Hello – I am three weeks off of caffeine and already, I feel it is one of the best, and most confusing things I've done for myself in a while. I suffer from depression and chronic pain and fatigue and I finally decided I have to do the thing I thought I could never do – give up the caffeine. It was hell at first but things got better. I am now sleeping more soundly and notice my skin looks like I took three years off of it. I feel calmer and less bothered by little things that used to agitate me to no end. Best of all is that I am not having that awful "crushing fatigue" I used to have. However, the fatigue is still there and at times I just feel like my brain shuts down. I am still having bouts of mild/moderate depression. I practice yoga and meditation and that is very helpful. AWFUL CRUSHING FATIGUE.

But I do feel like something is missing – almost like an emptiness overcomes me and I don't know what to do with myself. I am not used to feeling calm and yet having a bit more energy. - Cat

stress
appetite
crazy
irritated
anxious

Hello. CREATIVE - LOGICAL - PRACTICAL

I'm almost two years off caffeine now. The first year was tough – I felt like I was getting Alzheimer's.

In the second year I finally got my brain back – yayy. Much more creative, much more logical and practical in thought.

Caffeine is truly evil, if nothing else but for the fact it takes so long to remove from the system.

I was speaking to a Hare Krishna a few days ago, and he conveyed to me that in order to be a guru you have to be off drugs (including caffeine) for a whole year before you are eligible. Well, I can see that now.

These things do take time, but is well worth it, if not for your physical health, then for your spiritual health and knowing that you're not a slave to *anything* including chemicals.

I do not feel a wave of fatigue in the late afternoon/early evening. I'd normally have a cup of coffee to overcome that feeling, which, in turn, would cause me to stay up too late. Now I simply don't have that anymore. -Hannah

Maybe it's just us that react like this to caffeine? No, probably, everyone does, but they "think they like it," and never get out of it. Understanding what it feels like to not be stressed out, anxious, and crazy, is really what helps.

I'm a meditator, and I'd always wonder why the calm only lasted 30 minutes to an hour after meditation, and then the neurological effects (the stress proofing, greater control over the rest of the brain from the prefrontal cortex, etc) wouldn't last. It was the caffeine!

ALSO – even a cup a day does this strange thing to my brain where it makes me feel disconnected from my emotions. Like, it's totally "harder" to connect with happiness and take pleasure in small things. This is definitely a neurological thing, and it isn't good. -Ryan Critchett

I've been off all caffeine for 5 weeks now. My immediate withdrawals included three days of headaches and another five days of excruciating lower back, hip, and thigh cramps/pain. I work in mental health and a substance abuse counselor/co worker told me that the lower body cramps I described were very similar to withdrawal symptoms experienced by heavy recreational drug users. WOW. This was not my first time quitting caffeine, but I intend not to return to using it again. Ever.

Thanks for all the informative posts. When I took myself off an antidepressant I'd been on for 11 years, it was a solid 2 years before I felt my brain could function properly on it's own. I suspect caffeine will be a similar story. But I'm ready for the permanent change! -Beth

I am more relaxed, my sleep has improved and I don't miss those caffeine crashes each afternoon! I drink a lot of water each day and turn to fresh fruit and nuts for energy. It feels great to be in control of my own body!

If you are struggling like I did for the first while, please know that this all gets better and it is so completely worth it in the end. **-Sandra Mader**

Hello, Going on my first month with no caffeine after a long term dysfunctional love affair with the stuff. I just feel an amazing sense of peace and more energy. **-Duran**

From my experience, the benefits don't really start to roll in until you've been "clean" for a month or so, and things continued to improve for me (especially sleep-wise) through the fourth month. It's a long-term process for sure, but one that I never, ever regret going through. -

Melissa, Whole9Life

WHOLE TERM PROCESS

I'm a recovered alcoholic of 20 years sober and recently quit caffeine due to anxiety I experienced late in the day. One reason I quite is because I was feeling it was getting in the way of my 12 step spiritual progress.

I am feeling lethargic and unmotivated but more serene. I'm going to stick with it and hope over time my motivation will return. Quitting is mainly for peace of mind, serenity and also because it made me urinate much more frequently. Need to do it for health and spiritual health.

I can focus my thoughts better and am much more at ease with the world when off the coffee, it really brought out and intolerant and angry side of me as well. It's a drug and is a lie. No wonder Starbucks does so well. It's a drug. **-Steve, caffeineinformer.com**

I've been a daily coffee drinker for the past three years (1-2 cups per day, black)

I recently started to question my habit and took a two month break. Once I made it through withdrawals, the results were incredible. I felt a connection to my inner being that I haven't felt in a long, long time I truly believe that caffeine has a numbing effect on our core being, our true emotion.

peaceful, sleep and look much better.

Without coffee I am more peaceful, far less irritable, sleep much better, look much better (better skin) and have better focus.

As someone who has suffered from severe depression, I can confirm that coffee does have anti-depressant properties, but they are short-lived. In retrospect my caffeine use triggered a sort of 'manic' lifestyle. I became overly talkative but thoughts were less controlled and less clear, and by midnight I was apathetic and craving sugar. This was from merely one cup a day (usually).

I kid you not, those two months without caffeine were the best two months I've had in years. I felt truly at peace, truly happy, opposed to the chemical-induced elation produced by a morning Joe.

Unfortunately one cruel night/morning sent me spiraling back into daily coffee drinking. I was up all night writing a paper, and I bought a coffee to stay awake for my 9 am class. **That was all it took to re-start the addictive cycle.**

DEEP happiness and peace DIES when you consume coffee.

Over the next three weeks I continued to drink coffee, and in short time the deep happiness/peacefulness was gone. That isn't to say life was bad; it wasn't. But I truly believe that caffeine numbs us from what lies within. And for someone with a blessed, exciting life, being numb is the last thing I want.

Caffeine, surprisingly, is one hell of a drug. And one I plan to avoid entirely.

- After a full month, I was sleeping so much better. This was a tough battle – the first month, my system was all kinds of confused, and my sleep patterns were all over the charts. I had trouble falling asleep at first, and then I'd fall asleep okay but wake up at 1 AM, 2 AM, 3 AM as my hormonal balance continued to shift. After a solid month without caffeine, I started to fall asleep easy, sleep straight through the night and wake up refreshed without an alarm. (I thought I was doing this already. Comparatively, my sleep quality sucked compared to where it is now.)
- After two months, I started to wake up hungry. Not ravenous, but genuinely, normally, happily hungry. Good lord, I haven't woken up hungry since 1994. This is an amazing phenomenon in which my body is actually sending me valid signals (hunger) when it's actually supposed to (after fasting overnight). Amazing... but only after only eight full weeks of being caffeine-free. (Interestingly, feeding yourself a healthy meal within an hour of waking is very helpful in recovering from adrenal fatigue – certainly, waking up hungry makes that a whole lot easier.)
- After three months, my emotional volatility in a certain one week period each month has greatly dissipated. This is the most surprising change – I had no idea my caffeine consumption was connected to such a serious case of “hormone poisoning” during that week. Makes sense in hindsight, but I'm grateful that I no longer ride the hormonal roller coaster every 28 days. (I'm not the only one happy about that.)
- 4 MONTHS • After four months, I noticed my general awareness of stress – and its negative effects – has dramatically improved. For those who know me well, I've always thrived on being in a constant state of stress. Work, training, day-to-day activities were all conducted at a maniacal pace, not because they had to be. I just thought I liked it that way. Now, after several months of sleeping well, eating more, and generally allowing my adrenals to recover, I can feel that stress-state creeping on... and I no longer like it. Now, it just feels, well... stressed. (Because in most day-to-day life situations – say it with me – “Stress is bad, m'kay?”) While I'm not great at nipping it the bud every time it pops up, and it's usually work stuff that sets me off the fastest, I'm much better at recognizing it early and taking measures to ensure my periods of stress are less frequent, and shorter in duration. Progress. And you're welcome, adrenals.

SEVERAL MONTHS

Allow adrenals to recover.

Sleep Well.

Eat Well.