

# Life in the bookstore

Your body's crying out for a rest, but there's no break in your schedule. The answer? A detox plan specially designed for the working woman. Solly Brompton swaps business lunches for power-packed fresh fruit and veg

The year was scarcely half finished, but by August I felt desperate for a rest. Work was stressful and my eight-year-old daughter exhausting. She would make a good substitute for the Duracell bunny: she just goes on and on. I needed something to kick-start me back into life.

So when Carmel Allen, the beauty director of *Red*, suggested a detox, I jumped at it. However, like thousands of women, I needed a quick fix to set me back on track, but not one so intense that I couldn't continue my working life. Happily, Carmel had the perfect solution: Balance, a complementary health clinic in London's Chelsea. The owner, Jane Waterman, is a great believer in fitting health into a daily routine; her staff would devise a tailor-made detox plan for me, while I could take advantage of the added extras at the clinic – ranging from colonic irrigation to lymphatic-drainage massage – if I wished. Most importantly, I could call the staff for advice and support at any time.

I booked myself in for a consultation with Amanda, the resident nutritionist, to be checked for vitamin and mineral imbalances and food intolerances. I passed the dietary interrogation with flying colours, but felt I had to admit that I often drink more alcohol than the recommended 14 to 21 units a week. And that I smoke like a woman possessed. I expected to be told off, but Amanda merely said she was sure I was aware that both alcohol and nicotine are energy sappers and that it was up to me to decide how best to deal with them. Then she linked me up to a computer and using an object rather like a blunt ballpoint pen, pressed the end into acupuncture points on my fingers. We went through a list of at least a hundred foodstuffs, a gentle prod calculating how my body reacted to each. It

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turns out that I am a medical miracle – I have not one food intolerance. What I did have, though, was a severe mineral and vitamin imbalance, mostly connected to stress.

Amanda recommended a seven-day detox. It looked easy enough. Every morning, on rising, you drink a cup of hot water and lemon, with a teaspoonful of honey if you prefer. Day one, you eat normally, but include a large bowl of fruit with organic yoghurt for breakfast. For lunch, you must add a large mixed salad to your usual meal and for dinner, a good helping of steamed vegetables. Alcohol is forbidden, as are tea, coffee, sugar and salt. I began the

## Get your own tailor-made detox

BALANCE offers a free consultation to assess clients' individual needs. In addition, the following treatments and support services are available:

- BEST (at £125, for identifying food intolerances).
- COLONIC HYGIENE/ETC. (A cleansing and detoxifying treatment that removes waste attached to the colon wall).
- MINERAL LYMPHONIC (chiropractic). £65. A gentle massage that encourages stimulation of the

detox on a weekend, deciding it was better to break myself in gently. It went well enough. On Saturday night I even found myself gazing benignly at my glass of mineral water at dinner.

Day two is where the fun begins. As well as tea, coffee, alcohol, sugar and salt, you cut out all meat, wheat and dairy (except organic yoghurt). Fish is allowed. Breakfast is fruit and yoghurt, and at lunch and dinner you must eat a large raw salad, a big bowl of steamed vegetables or vegetable soup. To that you can add fish or grains: rice, corn, millet, buckwheat or rice. But they must be wholesome and all the vegetables should be organic. For lunch I ate brown rice with steamed vegetables and for supper, a piece of poached fish with a large helping of broccoli.

It was on day three that the toxins kicked in. Or, perhaps, kicked out would be a better phrase. I discovered I am completely addicted to tea. Trying to get going in the morning without my usual two cups of builder's brew was, frankly, unenvying. The endless cups of tea with which my day is usually punctuated lost their resonance when they were transformed into camomile or mint tea bags floating sadly in hot water.

Water is essential. You must drink six to eight large glasses a day, and cleansing herbal drinks are recommended. Nettle, dandelion coffee, yarrow tea, hot water with lemon juice, or vegetable juices are all helpful in flushing out toxins. Oh, and so is a brick tub with a body brush every morning. Then there are the mineral and vitamin supplements. Vitamin C is good for speeding up the expulsion of toxins and milk thistle cleanses the liver. I also took psyllium husk to help clean out the colon. And this does not include the handful of pills I was swallowing three times a day for all my various mineral and vitamin imbalances. I swear I could hear myself rattle.

I got through day three (the first day at work) well enough, save

lymphatic system. It's a very effective way of detoxing the body and stimulating vital immune defences.

- FOLLOW-UP (optional) (usually six weeks after initial consultation). £65
- A holistic therapist is available at all times to call for support and assistance.

Balance: 290 Kings Road, London W16 3JZ (020) 7363 0333. *Chick Bower* (Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm; Saturday and Sunday, 10am-5pm).

EXCLUSIVE: *RED* OFFER: SAVE £20 ON A FOOD INTOLERANCE TEST! As a special offer to *Red* readers, Balance is offering a one-hour-a-half-hour BEST test at a reduced price of £95. The test gauges the body's response to more than 140 foods, and identifies vitamin and mineral deficiencies. From this, your practitioners will devise a health programme individually tailored to aid weight loss and detoxification. To book, call (020) 7363 0333, quoting *Red*.

for a thumping headache over my right eye. That, no doubt, was my head screaming for its usual fix of tea. It was then I realised I had arranged my detox over a week in which I had four parties to attend for work. At the first, I stood clutching a glass of water, while all around me people drank liberal quantities of champagne and ate canapés. I lasted for half an hour, by which time I was so hungry, I virtually sprinted home for my bowl of rice and vegetables.

On the fourth day, I woke up with a fierce headache. And as for my eyes, far from being a clear and limpid blue, they streamed with tears. "That's the toxins," Carmel said, knowingly. "To cheer myself up, I bought a large bunch of grapes. 'Did you wash those?' Carmel asked. I admitted I hadn't. Life's too short to wash a grape. Turns out that, of all the fruits in all the world, grapes have the highest concentration of pesticides. That evening, another party. I sat in a corner, a dejected creature with streaming eyes.

By the end of the fifth day, I was too tired to feel anything other than astonishment at what a few teabags and glasses of wine can do to a body. Lunch during this week was usually a large helping of mixed salad from the local wholefood cafe. That day, it was a long and tedious business affair, only rescued by a large portion of fresh fish and quantities of vegetables (both steamed). It's amazing how snooty waters can get when you reduce all rich sauces and butter. Another night, another party, another glass of mineral water.

Day six dawned – and no headache. My eyes were clear but my skin hadn't seen so much action since I was a teenager. It's the toxins coming out, I said, before anyone else could say it first. Despite the outbreak of adolescent acne, I felt better than I had in months. I had also lost five pounds. By day seven, I felt wonderful. So wonderful that when I met up with my closest friend for dinner, I threw all caution to the wind and ordered a bottle of champagne. According to the rules, I should have reintroduced it 'carefully'. Likewise, sugar, coffee and tea should be brought back into your diet on consecutive days because these items are all drugs and do not need to be consumed daily. Well, hell, I guess I'm a drug addict. Nothing has ever tasted better than that bottle of cold champagne.

Incredibly, I didn't have a hangover in the morning. Better still, the effects of the detox lasted for weeks. So did the new habits I acquired. I still drink eight glasses of water a day, automatically order vegetables steamed, have at least two suppers a week that consist of only rice and vegetables, and drink a maximum of four cups of tea a day. And while I wouldn't say that a detox while you're working is a deeply enjoyable experience, the results are infinitely worth it. ■