

# Breaking Free from Binge Eating

How Britt McMartin overcame an eating disorder, and thyroid and fertility issues for good /// BY KAT JAMES

Five years ago, Britt McMartin, age 44, an interior designer from Chicago, dusted off an unread book and uncovered a truth that would lead to her own physical and emotional freedom. We sat down to talk with McMartin about her remarkable journey.

**Looking at you today, it's hard to believe that you ever struggled with weight or health issues. Could you share some of the emotional and physical spirals that led to your turnaround?**

My struggle started in high school. I felt a strong need to be “perfect,” so as my body started to change, I started restricting my food intake, which seriously backfired. Those periods of starving myself always ended by eating increasingly ridiculous amounts of food. Then I’d be so disgusted with myself that I’d try to “make up for” what I’d just eaten by skipping breakfast and lunch the next day. Then inevitably, I’d binge again the next night. My moods became as extreme as my eating. My body became shameful to me, and I started to isolate myself and hide when photos were taken.

I was strapped into this vicious roller-coaster for the next few decades, with only occasional periods of extended, “successful” starving. By college, I’d gained even more weight, and my mood swings and depression were even worse. I pretended to be happy around others so as not to be a downer, but I was miserable pretty much all the time.

Eventually, I started to notice health problems, like my racing, uneven heart-beat. I tried to make emotional sense of what I was doing to myself, and even

confided to someone that I had an eating disorder. You know what they said? “Well, you’re not very good at it.”

Part of me agreed, as I could only sustain short periods of willpower before the bingeing started again. None of the diet books that I read helped because I couldn’t stick with any kind of calorie or fat restriction. I had no idea that my issues had a totally different cause than what I’d been focusing on.

**When did you realize this? What was the turning point?**

After college, I got married. I had trouble conceiving, and had multiple miscarriages. After making the rounds of Chicago’s best fertility doctors, I became that over-medicated patient the doctors couldn’t figure out. I was given drug after drug, and even saw my hair start to fall out. Not one of those doctors mentioned nutrition. Then one day, while going through some old, unread books, I dusted off a copy of your book, *The Truth About Beauty*. Amazingly, I found myself reading my own story in your story. You’d been on the very same roller coaster I was on. And you escaped—permanently.

I learned that even though the emotional part of our self-destruction is very real, it’s the biochemical aspect of the roller-coaster that really takes over and traps you. I also learned that my focus on avoiding calories, cholesterol, and



“I feel like I’m in my 20s again!” says McMartin, shown before (inset) and after, visiting a castle near Bush Nook Guesthouse in Cumbria, UK.

fat was literally making me infertile and crazy (especially around food).

I began to apply your principles to my diet—cutting down on carbs while adding more fat and cholesterol—and things quickly started to change. Before long, my doctors saw a return in my fertility. They were amazed.

What’s more, my cravings became less severe and my mood began to stabilize. I noticed I was bingeing on less food, and I stopped skipping meals. I saw my weight going down, although, strangely, I wasn’t thinking about the scale as much.

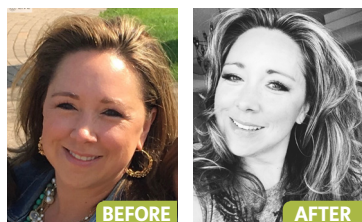
Finally, I became pregnant and had a healthy baby girl.

In 2014, I decided to attend your online and on-site retreats to fully master a long-term application of the approach. The program focuses on proper functioning of the hormone leptin,

which is already in our bodies but rarely works properly—especially in people with weight or food issues. [Editor’s note: Learn more about leptin by reading “Transforming Our View of Fat” at [betternutrition.com](http://betternutrition.com)].

**“I became that overmedicated patient the doctors couldn’t figure out.”**

It was a revelation to begin to truly understand the hormonal influences that prevented me from sticking with any diet. And I began to “reawaken” my body’s natural satiety and fat-burning signals. I found the process of learning my own biochemical thresholds by *feel*—and not by *counting* anything—to be fascinating. It removed all of my guilt, shame, failure, and scale obsession. I’d never felt so empowered or in touch with my body’s signals.



“No more dry, rasy skin or hair that won’t grow. I don’t feel like an invisible ‘mom’ anymore,” says McMartin, shown here before and after her transformation.

If my cravings came back, I understood what was happening—and how to stop it. Soon after grasping this—for the first time in 30 years—I realized I’d stopped bingeing completely. In fact, I didn’t even think about food anymore unless I was hungry! My dad actually asked my husband if I’d had gastric bypass surgery. It was almost as if I had, only there were countless health *benefits* rather than *problems* as a result.

By the time I went to your retreat in Scotland last October, it was to celebrate nearly 50 pounds lost, and my new life without an eating disorder. It was an amazing experience to stay in a castle there and to have the photo shoot and makeover (shown on p. 48).

### How else has this way of eating affected your health and your life?

In so many ways! No more post-binge heart palpitations, puffy eyelids, or

post-meal food comas. My energy and productivity are so much greater. I’m far less stressed and overwhelmed. In fact, I’m much more stable and strong under stress. I’m steady and calm, with no dips all day. I can sleep again. I’m off all my depression and anxiety medications. My hair stopped falling out and has grown back thick again—it grew long so fast and thick that some friends asked if I got extensions. Same with my nails. I never clipped them. I just bit them because they peeled. Now I clip them regularly! No more cold hands and feet. All the classic thyroid issues, gone. No more dry, rasy skin. No more allergies to foods or breaking out in hives on my neck and behind my ears anymore. I can touch my toes. No more lower back pain. I no longer have to tell my massage therapist, “It hurts when you touch this, or don’t move my arm this way.” I’m back to skiing, mountain biking, and playing soccer

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**"I found the process of learning my own biochemical thresholds by *feel*—and not by *counting* anything—to be fascinating. It removed all of my guilt, shame, failure, and scale obsession."**

with my kids. Basically, it feels like I'm in my 20s again. People from high school can't believe that I look better now than when they knew me then. And speaking of reunions, I'm no longer nervous at social gatherings. No longer worried about what others think of me. I no longer feel invisible. And I'm proud to be in photos!

### Have there been any bumps in the road?

Absolutely. I felt lousy the second day I "went strict" with the regimen, which is common. But I'd already gotten off coffee and done a suggested candida cleanse,

and had previously started some of the supplements you suggested. So the discomforts of going "all the way" (yeast die-off, adjusting gradually to eating fat, etc.) were minimized, and a small price for the incredible sense of freedom I now feel every day of my life.

There were some "detours" along the way too. I tried to get my family to eat this way before I could really be a good example myself, and that derailed me for months. But I got back on—this time, for myself—and now my foundation is much more solid.

I also had to learn how to stay in my "zone." Eating too much protein, waiting

too long to eat, and especially not eating enough fat can trigger cravings again. My optimal ratios of fat need to be higher than a healthier person's because of my history with binge eating. It's amazing how much difference little things like that can make.

And that's something that's important to understand. It's not a willpower thing, it's about awareness and logistics. Those detours will happen here and there, but they're less and less concerning to me. In fact, they only remind me how I used to feel, and what a gift each day of freedom is.

Visit [betternutrition.com](http://betternutrition.com) to listen to McMartin share her story on The Kat James Show.

*Kat James is an award-winning nutrition author who's been called "a master of self-transformation" by SELF magazine, in response to her self-guided recovery from liver, autoimmune, and eating disorders that nearly took her life. To learn more about her Total Transformation Programs since 2000, visit [informedbeauty.com](http://informedbeauty.com) or call 877-54-TOTAL. The Kat James Show airs Saturdays at 3 p.m. EST on Sirius XM channel 131 (Family Talk).*

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