

THE BIG IDEAS

Reduce Stress

To increase vitality.

Biological Age

What's yours?

Slow Leaks

Pop the tire, please!

Coffee & Credit

Quit borrowing energy.

High Net-Gain

The nutrition we want.

A New Food Pyramid

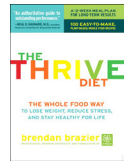
The Thrive Diet Pyramid.

Enzymes Rock

Seriously. They do.

Alkalinity Is Good

Acidity? Not so much.



The Thrive Diet

The Whole Food Way to Lose Weight, Reduce Stress, and Stay Healthy for Life

BY BRENDAN BRAZIER · DA CAPO LIFELONG BOOKS © 2007 · 309 PAGES

“The cornerstone of the Thrive Diet is high net-gain foods. It’s that simple. By eating more high net-gain foods, your energy will rise, body fat will decrease, mental clarity will be enhanced, and cravings for refined foods will fade.”

~ Brendan Brazier from *The Thrive Diet*

We all want to Thrive in our lives, don’t we? It’s kinda hard to live at our highest potential if we’re having a hard time getting out of bed, eh?

Over the last decade, I’ve worked hard to make sure I’m as energized as I can be. That’s why I was thrilled when I first met [Brendan Brazier](#) (we actually met at John Mackey, the CEO of Whole Foods’ ranch). Brendan’s a professional Ironman triathlete and is one of only a few professional athletes in the *world* whose diet is *100 percent plant-based*.

Yep. *Ironman*.

And no meat. No dairy. No refined foods. Nothing but plants.

I’ll repeat: Brendan only eats plant-based foods and he’s a professional athlete in what must be THE most grueling sport out there. (For those curious souls, an Ironman consists of a 2.4 mile swim followed by a 112 mile bike ride and wrapped up with a 26.2 mile marathon. The best athletes in the world do it in under 9 hours. Brendan’s among that group.)

“He does *THAT* and he only eats plants, you say?!?”

Yep.

“But where does he get his protein?!?”

From plants. Tragically, plants don’t have quite the same marketing spend as the meat and dairy industries so you don’t hear quite as much about their nutritional value but we’ll take a look at how to best THRIVE on the food nature intended us to eat in this Note on Brendan’s great book, [The Thrive Diet](#).

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Brendan’s a big fan of “Reducing Stress to Increase Vitality” (that’s Chapter 1), so let’s start there!

REDUCE STRESS TO INCREASE VITALITY

Stress.

We’re all familiar with it and it seems to be multiplying on a day-to-day basis.

But have you thought about just how much our poor eating habits might be contributing to our stress load?!?

Yepperz. It takes a HUGE toll.

“Nutritional stress is the term used to describe the body’s response to food that is void of nutrition

“The Thrive Diet will potentially eliminate up to 40 percent of the total stress on the average North American’s body.”

~ Brendan Brazier

"Complementary stress can build physical strength and improve motivation."

~ Brendan Brazier

and/or foods that require a large amount of energy to digest and assimilate—refined, unnatural ones. Nutritional stress has the same damaging physiological effects as other kinds of stress."

Before we dive into the details of nutritional stress (which forms the heart of the book's mojo), let's take a quick peak at stress as a whole.

Brendan points out the fact that there are different forms of stress: "Complementary, production, and uncomplementary."

- "Complementary stress" includes stuff like exercise—where the stress you put on your body is a GOOD thing, aiding your body in strengthening itself and growing. According to Brendan, this is about 10% of our stress load.
- "Production stress" is a part of living a productive life where we're going out, setting goals, showing up, and giving ourselves to the world. This is about 30% of our stress load.
- "Uncomplementary stress" is the term Brendan uses to describe "anxiety that produces no benefit." This is about 60% of our stress load.

Now, obviously, we want to make sure we're investing in the "complementary stress" category, ensuring that we're growing and strengthening ourselves actively through exercise.

And, of course, production stress is just a part of being alive.

So, we want to make sure we understand the "uncomplementary stress" as much as possible so we can make sure that 60% isn't kicking our butt and keeping us in bed, eh?!? :)

Within uncomplementary stress, Brendan establishes a few categories: Nutritional (70%), psychological (20%) and environmental (10%) stresses.

I'm going to pull a big chunk from Brendan's book because he articulates the cause and effect of nutritional stress so perfectly:

"Nutritional stress, for the average North American, is by far the greatest source of uncomplementary stress, accounting for approximately 70 percent of it. *Nutritional stress* is a relatively new term. It is simply defined as stress created by food because of its unhealthy properties. This definition is far-reaching, encompassing most food many of us consider staples. And while this definition is accurate, it is not complete—nutritional stress is much more than just unhealthy food. Not eating the right foods can cause nutritional stress: Not eating enough natural, unprocessed foods rich in vitamins, minerals, enzymes, high-quality protein, fiber, essential fatty acids, antioxidants, and good bacteria (probiotics) is a major source of stress on our bodies. Without these nutritional building blocks, the body lacks the components it needs to regenerate completely and effectively. The result is a weaker, less resilient body, and, of course, more stress."

AMEN.

Now, if half those words didn't make sense to you, worry not.

Although we won't be able to go into detail on all of them in this quick Note, [Brendan](#) has an exhaustive Appendix where he defines everything and also packs the book with what you want in your body, why, and HOW (through the recipes) to get your Thrive Diet thriving. (And, if you're familiar with all that stuff, you'll also be giddy to get the book because [Brendan](#) makes some powerful, subtle distinctions that can help you take your Thriving game to the next level.)

For now, let's check back in to the idea of nutritional stress.

First, note the fact that Brendan states that nutritional stress accounts for 70 (!!) percent of uncomplementary stress. That's 3.5 times the impact of psychological stress and 7 times the impact of environmental.

"Once diet is improved, production stress can be embraced, and productivity will therefore be enhanced."

~ Brendan Brazier

"Improved diet is the number one way to reduce overall stress."

~ Brendan Brazier

That's a lot.

And the primary cause of it is "the overconsumption of refined food."

From the fast food place to the "heat and serve" stuff filling our kitchen, most of our food is refined, denatured, and no longer a complete food source.

Look at white bread as possibly the best example: The wheat has been stripped of its germ (where all the fiber and minerals can be found), leaving a food source that is so devoid of nutritional value it can hardly even be called food.

Brendan goes into the details on the compromised health that results from the overconsumption of refined foods—from accelerated aging to chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia.

Bottom line is simple: Refined foods don't have a place in the Thrive Diet.

(So, you may want to go ahead and start cleaning out your kitchen if you're serious about Thriving. :)

BIOLOGICAL AGE

"Have you ever noticed that those who exercise regularly look younger than those who don't? Although we have no control over our chronological age, our biological age is within our control. Biological age refers to the time that has passed since body cells last regenerated. When exercised, the body must regenerate its cells more rapidly than when idle. Depending on activity level, six to eight months from now our bodies will have regenerated nearly 100 percent of their tissue at the cellular level. This new tissue will literally be made up of what we eat between now and then."

That. Is. Hot. (And worth a re-read.)

So, how old are you?

I'm talking *biological* age, here!

Are you exercising regularly?

Remember: The more you push the faster your body will be regenerating itself. In six to eight months our body will nearly COMPLETELY regenerate itself!!

How cool is *that*?!?

And, what are you EATING?

As Brendan points out, your new tissue "will literally be made up of what we eat between now and then."

* nudges you *

May I suggest you adopt a Thrive Diet? :)

And, avoid:

SLOW LEAKS

Brendan tells a great story about how sometimes it takes something significant for people to change. He compares mild dissatisfaction in our lives (his example is at work although it carries over to relationship, our health, and everything!) to a slow-leaking tire. You barely notice it and don't really do anything about it—refilling it with a bit of air when needed and then back to normal...

But imagine if the tire just popped! You'd get it fixed immediately, wouldn't you?

As Brendan says: "Many people put up with things that are unpleasant but tolerable, rather than

"As a general rule, the less that has been done to your food, the better its return will be."

~ Brendan Brazier

changing them; their situation needs to become unbearable before they take action. So, in effect, an unbearable job is better than one that is simply dissatisfying, since it will be the catalyst for change."

Same goes with our health.

Are you only "mildly disappointed" with your current health?

Saying to yourself: "It's just a few extra pounds (or a few dozen!), I'm a little bit tired, I could look a little better and feel a little better, but I'm OK."

--> Insert slow leaking tire sound here <--

Well, WAKE UP!

Are you waiting for the heart attack to get yourself in shape? The stroke to debilitate you? Diabetes to set in?

Pop your own tire and get fired up about optimizing your life NOW, pretty please. :)

...

Oh, and this goes for your relationship with your significant other/kids/colleagues, your job, your health, etc.

THRIVE!

Now, please. (Ahem. :)

Moving on to:

"The most complete, balanced form of one-step nutrition is sprouted foods."

~ Brendan Brazier

COFFEE & CREDIT

"I consider coffee drinking an uncomplementary stress. I view it as a form of credit, similar to shopping with a credit card. You get energy now that you don't actually have, but you pay for it later—when the 'bill,' or fatigue, hits. (Simply drinking more coffee to put off the inevitable is like paying off one credit card with another: It will catch up with you sooner or later.) You'll most likely pay a high interest rate as well, needing more time to recover than if that energy had not been borrowed in the first place. This is the beginning of a vicious cycle."

Can I get another "Amen!" (Thank you.)

Wow. That sums it up.

Are YOU borrowing your energy from coffee, high sugar drinks or snacks?

Guess what? It's gonna catch up to you (if it hasn't already). We can't live on credit forever. We've gotta invest wisely and build a strong capital base nutritionally.

The best way to do it? Again: Eat a diet rich in plant-based foods. And take a short-cut to getting there by picking up this book!

Alright.

That's a pretty good theoretical foundation, let's step into "Understanding the Thrive Diet" (Chapter 2).

First lesson:

HIGH NET-GAIN NUTRITION IS KEY

"The first and most general guideline of the Thrive Diet is to make high net-gain foods a cornerstone of your diet. The *net-gain* of food is the term I use to describe the energy and usable sustenance that our body is left with once the food has been digested and assimilated."

"I am often asked how I am able to gain and maintain strength and lean muscle, and have an abundance of energy for high-performance training, while eating fewer calories than most people. One of the most important factors is that I select food with the net-gain concept in mind rather than by the conventional calorie-counting method."

~ Brendan Brazier

"For enzyme health, it would be ideal for all of us to eat only raw, organic food the day it's harvested, not be exposed to any environmental pollutants, and to live a stress free life. Obviously, this is not realistic. But we can enhance our enzyme intake and production."

~ Brendan Brazier

"The amount of oil Americans consume could be reduced by up to 30 percent if we were eating an energy efficient diet."

~ Brendan Brazier

Net-gain. Cool concept.

So, your body has to invest energy to GET energy from your food. Make sense?

Here's the deal. Let's start with some refined food. First, because it's not really food (and is missing enzymatic properties found in its whole form that would have aided in the assimilation of nutrients), your body has to work HARDER to process refined foods than it does whole foods. Not good.

Ironically, once our bodies have done that work, the actual nutrients it gets are less than what it would have gotten from whole foods as well. Follow that?

Unrefined foods: more work to process + less nutritional value once processed = REALLY BAD "net-gain."

Juxtapose that with whole foods: less work to process + more nutritional value = REALLY GOOD net-gain. Make sense?

So, how about *your* diet? Start doing a little calculation every time you sit down to eat. Look at your net-gains. And, start increasing them!!! :)

How?

According to Brendan, we need to "Eat primarily foods that are—

- raw or cooked at low temperature
- naturally alkaline forming foods to pH balance the body...
- high nutrients the body can use without having to convert them...
- nutrient-dense whole foods
- vitamin- and mineral-rich, from whole food sources
- non-stimulating, to recalibrate the body and eliminate biological debt."

All of which fall into the:

THE THRIVE DIET PYRAMID

"By volume, the diet consists roughly of 45 percent fibrous vegetables; 20 percent fruit; 20 percent legumes, seeds, and pseudograins; 10 percent cold-pressed oils, nuts, and avocado; and 5 percent starchy vegetables and whole grains."

Check out the book for the details of the pyramid—including exhaustive lists of what falls where (and, again, how to make 'em into yummy meals!).

My book is so marked up it's funny. My Goddess and I have used it as our shopping list and I can literally feel my energy build as I integrate more and more ideas from the book into my life. Fun!

ENZYMES ROCK

"Food that has not been heated above about 118 degrees Fahrenheit is considered to be raw. High-temperature cooking and processing of food destroys the enzymes and nutrients that allow the food to be efficiently digested. Therefore, before the body can make use of cooked food, it must produce enzymes to aid in the digestion process. That takes work—an energy draw that creates a nominal amount of stress."

Remember the whole "net-gain" equation? And the fact that a great deal of our uncomplementary stress comes from our nutrition?

Well, we want to avoid making our bodies work harder than necessary to digest our foods.

Sooo, Brendan would suggest we eat more raw foods that are naturally packed with enzymes!!! :)

ALKALINITY IS GOOD

“The balance of acid and alkaline within the body is referred to as pH (meaning ‘potential of hydrogen’), and measured on a scale ranging from pH 1 (the most acidic) to pH 14 (the most alkaline). A neutral or good pH balance is 7.35; maintaining this balance is vital.”

Alkalinity.

We could write a whole book on this subject (and many have been written!). Brendan goes into detail on the importance of maintaining alkalinity and how to maintain it. Know this: Digesting refined foods creates an acidic environment in your body (hello, acid reflux, disease, etc.). Your body MUST maintain it’s homeostatic balance of 7.35. It takes a LOT of work to stay there when you shove every refined food under the sun into your mouth.

That’s not good. Disease likes to play in that environment. Solution? Eat a Thrive Diet.

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Alright. That was a whirlwind tour of some of my favorite Big Ideas from one of my favorite nutrition books. (If you liked this one, btw, I think you’ll also *really* like my Note on Integrative Nutrition!!)

For now, here’s to getting our Thrive on!

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

If you liked this Note,
you’ll probably like...

[Integrative Nutrition](#)

[Strength for Life](#)

[Mastery](#)

About the Author of “The Thrive Diet”

BRENDAN BRAZIER



Brendan Brazier is one of only a few professional athletes in the world whose diet is 100 percent plant-based. He’s a professional Ironman triathlete, bestselling author on performance nutrition, and the creator of an award-winning line of whole food nutritional products called VEGA. He is also a two-time Canadian 50km Ultra Marathon Champion. Nominated in 2006 for the Manning Innovation Award, Canada’s most prestigious award for innovation, Brendan was shortlisted for the formulation of Vega. In 2006, Brendan also was invited to address US Congress on Capitol Hill, where he spoke of the significant social and economic benefits that could be achieved by improving personal health through better diet. In 2007 Brendan was named one of the 25 Fascinating Vegetarians by *VegNews* magazine. Learn more at **BrendanBrazier.com!**

About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + common sense + virtue + mastery + fun. Learn more and optimize your life at brianjohnson.me.