



## enLIGHTened: How I Lost 40 Pounds with a Yoga Mat, Fresh Pineapples, and a Beagle Pointer

*Jessica Berger Gross*

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## **enLIGHTened: How I Lost 40 Pounds with a Yoga Mat, Fresh Pineapples, and a Beagle Pointer**

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Meet your new best yoga-and-healthy-eating friend in this smart, accessible, and funny memoir of dieting and discovery.

For years, Jessica struggled with fluctuating weight and bouts of unhappiness. Like many of us, she found comfort in food and craved cigarettes and self-confidence. Then one day Jessica took her first yoga class in Katmandu. She lost 40 pounds and changed her life forever.

In *enLIGHTened*, Jessica shares the core principles of yoga philosophy—not the poses and postures, but the ancient system of ideas that lies behind them, drawn from a 2000-year-old text called the *Yoga Sutras*. The inspiration for this memoir-driven diet and health book is studied by devout yoga students and teachers, and offers answers to eating smartly, living right, and losing weight.

Jessica goes beyond yoga's merge into mainstream—beyond trendy diets, unsustainable exercise routines, and the quest for the perfect figure. Using spiritual philosophy, and personal stories everyone can relate to, she sets the reader on a journey to self-acceptance, personal peace, and long-term health.

## **enLIGHTened: How I Lost 40 Pounds with a Yoga Mat, Fresh Pineapples, and a Beagle Pointer Details**

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Author : Jessica Berger Gross

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## From Reader Review enLIGHTened: How I Lost 40 Pounds with a Yoga Mat, Fresh Pineapples, and a Beagle Pointer for online ebook

### Taylor Kundel-Gower says

There are some hard truths in here about moderation, excuses, self-discipline, and animal consumption. There are also some glimmers of hope: getting healthier is as simple as taking walks or starting a yoga and meditation practice at home.

Ultimately, there is some good advice in this book, but I would not call it profound and I would definitely say that much of it was a little bougie for me.

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### Barb says

Offering much advice on how to lose weight, Jessica Berger Gross also spends a lot of time preaching up yoga and vegetarianism. She calls us, as a society, on many of our excuses for not losing weight. I got very hung up on her lack of contact with her family. I found it very difficult to take her advice for a 'healthy' life seriously because she made the decision to stop all contact with her parents. I cannot reconcile this decision with all the teachings from yoga, but especially the "Undisturbed calmness of mind is attained by cultivating friendliness toward the happy, compassion for the unhappy, delight in the virtuous, and indifference toward the wicked." (p21) Cutting her parents out of her life allows her to avoid the unhappy and the wicked, not cultivate either compassion or indifference. Instead she is avoiding and causing harm to those who raised her. While her life may be easier, I'm sure that theirs is not. I hope that the majority of readers take the advice about healthy portions and exercise but do not follow this misleading example of dropping the people who raised you.

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### Kim says

#### Dragged On

The yoga, quotes at the beginning of the chapters, tips on sensible eating (not the vegetarianism rants), gauging fullness, and getting to the root of why you are overeating were the best parts of the book. The rest of it kind of dragged on and I kept losing interest. I will not read this book again.

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### Jennifer says

Fast read. I found this through my yogis on Instagram network. But ultimately disappointing. The author uses the yoga sutras as the structure for her book, bringing in recommended yoga poses for every chapter. I liked this approach.

But I couldn't reconcile the fact that she cut out her parents from her life entirely despite advocating for "coming to terms with your past through forgiveness." I didn't love the (insidious, but present) fat-shaming,

equating yogi with thinness. She is dismissive of the body acceptance movement, saying that she's a better feminist now that she's thin. She even has a chapter about limiting exposure to other fat people. (I can see this happening to me even in yoga classes; the number of times that someone hasn't wanted to set up their mat next to me makes me wonder if my fatness is catching.) The tone felt dripping with privilege. I don't disagree with the heart of her thesis - moderation, discipline, and putting in the work. But when I finished, I felt sad. For the author, for myself, for the generation of women who equate healthiness entirely with a number on a scale? I'm not sure.

I'm still searching for a yoga memoir that connects with me; I'm open to all recommendations, if anyone has thoughts.

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### **Leah says**

Easy read. Good tips.

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### **Anne Marie says**

Things I took away:

1. When eating- 1/2 full of food, 1/4 full of water, 1/4 air for space
  2. Have a healthy staple meal you can make anytime
  3. When you are digging in the fridge, think about what you might really need (a short walk outside, play with the dog, deep breathing, stretching...)
  4. "Global livestock production is responsible for about 1/5 of all greenhouse gases- more than transportation...Another way to put it is that eating a typical family-of-four steak dinner is the rough equivalent, energy-wise, of driving around in a SUV for three hours while leaving the lights on at home."  
Food Matters by Mark Bittman
  5. If your body is a temple, would you really want to leave Doritos at the altar?
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### **Jennifer says**

I was hoping this would be more of a yoga memoir, like Poser by Claire Dederer. Skip this one and read the latter.

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### **Anita Smith says**

I really enjoyed this for the most part. I read it in just over the course of one day. As someone who is just starting out in the yoga world and is loving it more and more with each Downward Dog pose, I could definitely identify with the author. I've been through a rough couple of years myself and in many ways, yoga has helped me more than anything, even therapy. I really liked the author's writing style and how she incorporated old Sanskrit philosophies and yoga teachings into everyday life in today's fast-paced, busy times. Loved the parts about mindful eating and trying to eat as healthy as possible. I'm a total health nut and this was right up my alley. :-)

And I really enjoyed the section on emotional healing and showing

compassion and kindness towards others, even those we feel have hurt us and wronged us, and having an open mind and an open heart.

The one major point of contention for me: Jessica, dear, while I applaud your healthy eating and wanting everything to be as free-range and organic as possible for you and your family, I do feel the need to let you know that if you do eat fish, you are not a vegetarian. You are a flexitarian. Nothing wrong with that. I'm one myself. I don't eat red meat but would never stop eating chicken, fish, and turkey. That being said, please don't call yourself a vegetarian when you eat salmon. Please don't speak about the cruelty of animals and all the hormones and pesticides and then act like there's nothing at all wrong with eating our little friends in the ocean. They're still animals too. It drove me up a wall when she preached about polluting your body with the evil horrors of meat and then talked about how much she loved a good fresh piece of salmon. Other than that, I thought everything that she said about moderation and mindful eating was spot-on. I don't necessarily think you need to go completely organic and free-range and co-op unless it aligns with your beliefs and your fiscal budget. If you choose to, great; if not, I wouldn't stress about it. A lot of people lived long, healthy lives long before Organic Yellow Mustard and Organic Gummy Bears hit the market. The only organic product I use is organic ketchup, b/c it tastes so much better than the HCFS-laden stuff. You can really taste the difference there. I got my roommate and sister addicted. Oh, and Peanut Butter Puffins cereal, but only b/c they taste so damn good- not b/c they're organic. I'd eat them even if they weren't. Other than that, nah, I'm more impacted by the dollar sign than anything else. And no complaints from my doctor yet. ;-)

So the minor contradictory food preaching aside, all in all, I really enjoyed this book. I'd pick up a used copy at a book sale, but not pay full price for it (especially since I've already read it, but also b/c I'm cheap like that- this was from the library). If you're just getting into yoga, are looking to find peace of mind and get physically and emotionally healthy and strong, or both, you'll like this book.

I'm all about this stuff these days, and I felt she got the message across without getting too preachy or over-the-top about it. And I liked her overall message that it was NOT a diet book, yoga isn't about losing weight. It's about getting your body and mind completely in sync with each other. Physical wellness is meaningless without emotional wellness, and vice versa. Is it hard to balance? Hell yeah. For most people, myself included, sure. But is it worth it? Hell yeah. For all of us. :-)

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## Michelle says

This was much better than I thought it would be. The reviews on Amazon weren't always kind. I think the problem is when people who aren't into yoga read a book written by someone passionate about yoga, they don't "get" it, and they trash a book. That said, I love yoga, and I could understand this author's journey and how yoga changed her life.

If you like yoga, you will probably like this book. This is a memoir, not a "chick lit" fiction book. It takes courage to write a memoir and tell the not-so-pretty details of one's life.

Yes, the author writes about how yoga helped her to lose weight, but it's so much more than that. This is about how yoga changed her life, from her mind to her body, to her relationships and more.

The only part I didn't like is the author's insistence that vegetarianism or veganism is the ONLY way EVERYONE should eat. I don't like anyone insisting that there's only ONE way of 1) practicing a philosophy or religion or 2) eating. I love yoga, but that doesn't mean that I think everyone should be doing it. To me, it seems very "unyoga like" to insist that vegetarianism is the way EVERYONE should eat.

It's not great, but it's a nice read for those who like yoga or are interested in reading how yoga changed one person's life.

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### **Amanda says**

Glad I only paid \$.99 for it on Amazon's Kindle. It just failed to hold my interest though I did finish it. I think I was expecting something witty & perhaps sarcastic but it just came off as very "I once was lost & now I'm found."

I don't like yoga but can see the health benefits in doing it. I was hoping this book would give me something to help me like yoga more. A different way of viewing it so that it didn't seem so boring & tedious. It didn't.

The writing is not bad & I can see that someone else may benefit from this book though. It just wasn't for me.

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### **Stephanie says**

The author did get a little bit preachy at times, but overall I agreed with her philosophy. I was able to read it in about two sittings and there are some recipes inside I look forward to trying.

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### **Aubrey says**

I usually tend to steer clear of weight-loss memoirs - sometimes they come across as preachy and smug. Most of the time Berger Gross avoided doing so. (There were a couple of times I had to cringe - her commentary about feminism and fat was one.)

I found the yoga philosophy compelling.

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### **Kay says**

This book is good for what it is: a light, fun introduction to yoga philosophy and a healthy lifestyle. The cover art is hideous--I'm sure its cartoonish curves are supposed to attract young women to the tome--but Bobby Clennell's illustrations are great. I've also read Neal Pollack's *Stretch*, another yoga memoir, and while Pollack's is a better introduction to yoga culture, Berger Gross's work is a better introduction to the yogic lifestyle.

Also, as far as diet books go, this one has minimal fat shaming, but I think there is a bit too much emphasis on being "thin." (I can only hope that was the work of some profit-driven editor.) Berger Gross even recommends *Skinny Bitch*. (Eww. Fat shaming galore.) However, she issues a slight barb at Mireille Guiliano, which I enjoyed.

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## **Kristy says**

When her preachiness about the benefits of vegetarianism started to annoy the crap out of even me (the vegetarian), I decided she had reached the point of no return for me ever liking this book. It did encourage me to do yoga, which is great, but I found myself rolling my eyes a lot of the time. When you tell me your "splurge" food is going out for whole wheat pizza with a small amount of low-fat organic cheese (very occasionally), it just makes me want to punch you in the face.

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## **Brindi Michele says**

From the get-go, I felt preached at and patronized. Completely disappointed in the whole feel and message of this book...especially the way it's handled, seemed to put the reader down rather than build them up. Thoroughly annoyed.

But yoga is great and moderation is key. (I agree COMPLETELY, but could explain it to you in a nicer and encouraging way.)

Skip this one.

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