

**Slow**  
**By: Ryan**

On a daily basis, I eat a lot of bread, a lot of cheese, a lot of lettuce, a lot of ranch, cookies, and a small pond's worth of Diet Coke before noon. My body is reeling with toxins. The toxins in my body are growing at exponential rates, getting more and more excited with each sip of aspartame. I have toxins. I want them gone.

A long, long time ago, Stanley Burroughs (not a doctor, not a real anyone) decided that the best way to clean out one's body was to go on a fast. One would fast by taking nothing in to their body save a laxative tea, quarts of salt water, and a mixture of syrup, cayenne pepper, and lemon juice. Stanley Burroughs (I repeat, who is not a real doctor) claims that this will get everything out of your body that is not supposed to be there, and leave the faster with more and more energy as the ten day fast period goes by. He called his work of genius (Horrible health hazard? Too soon to tell...) the Master Cleanse. As I am also not a doctor, I really respect someone who makes bold claims about something of which they probably have no real reason to do so.

I decided that the time had come to remove things from myself. I was ready to take out all of my sloppy insides and make room for a happier body cavity. I decided I was going to do a fast. And Burroughs was going to help.

After reading about the Master Cleanse on line for a week, I knew that it was time and that no longer would I be eating food for lunch and drinking Diet Coke at my every whim. Instead I would watch as others eat and call them weak and dirty. My friends, Patrick and Kyle said they were too very excited about doing the Master Cleanse.

Kyle was a vegetarian for quite a while...until I bought him a Philly CheeseSteak about a year ago from Hooter's. I feel that too many of my friends are vegetarians and I am bored with having to accommodate their needs every time we go out to eat. Kyle said he would eat meat if I bought it. I did. Kyle now spends his time eating meat dipped in meat juice, with another side of meat. While I'm glad we're not looking for tofu diners at all hours of the day, it is disgusting. He has toxins. He wants them gone.

Patrick is a vegetarian and probably will never eat anything animal produced ever again. As such, he meets his needs with such healthy things as frosting, guacamole, and 3-veggie-burgers-in-one-sitting. I believe I mentioned making a meal out of frosting. Sometimes people equate vegetarian with healthy. It is not so. He has toxins. He wants them gone.

As Patrick, Kyle, and I told our friends about our fast we were met with extreme skepticism. "You won't do it." "You love Diet Coke." "Kyle will cheat." It is all true – I love Diet Coke, and if anyone was going to cheat and lie about it, it would be Kyle. But, together we took a pact because we would not stand to fail and be the mockery of everyone. Walking into our team room defeated and eating would be worse than dying of starvation. I love my friends, but they love nothing more than being right. We would not let them get us down. We were excited. We knew it would be hard, but imagine all of our energy. We need to do this. Where will we get laxative tea?

Did you all know there is a gourmet food store on Veterans by the Rocky Mountain delicious food place? A place of which I am no longer interested as they are serving food – blah food. I need you not. The aisles are packed from floor to ceiling with what I would estimate to be a trillion options. It's like Sam's Club and Whole Foods got

together and said, “This is what the people want.” We gazed at the hundreds of teas that we could pick from and then we remembered that our options were not as limitless as we had desired. We longed for the chocolate, and reached after the interesting beverages, and Kyle couldn’t get his paws off lamb chops. And our fast wasn’t until tomorrow – so we all got everything we wanted. We topped our orders off with, “And three boxes of laxative tea, please.”

We made dozens of trips across town getting everything we need: syrup, the book, blah blah blah, not food. We were so excited. We knew that we would need a last meal and Kyle made his out of lamb chops – go big or go home, I suppose? Patrick and I had pizza. With each trip from store to store we got more and more excited. “Think of all the money we will save; So much energy; Shannon says we’re going to start peeing highlighter yellow.” Our friend Shannon did the fast. She quit half way through with less than glowing reviews.

“It made me mean, and it’s not healthy, and also, you will pee high lighter yellow and poop all the time and it is the worst thing. Don’t do it...it’ll be the dumbest thing you’ve ever done.”

I scoff at her. I’ll do what I want. I want to clean my body out, so I’ll do it. I don’t need anyone’s approval...

I’ve yet to mention the fact that my mom is a registered nutritionist, and whenever I say anything about food she is very quick to say things along the lines of, “Uh, excuse me, I think I got my Master’s in this.” I decided I would tell my mom that I was doing “something” but I couldn’t tell her exactly what for three days because then I would be in the heart of the fast and she couldn’t stop me or convince me.

“Ryan, you have to tell me. I’m your Mom. Plus, I don’t want you to die.”

My mom is always saying just the right things. Unfortunately, she raises a valid point. I haven’t even thought about getting sick yet. However, let’s say I pass out and have to be taken to the hospital. My mom won’t be shocked because she will have known that I tried “something.” I told her I was doing something, and I’m twenty years old, so really, I can do whatever I want with my body and I want to do “something.”

My mom interpreted something to mean the worst: skydiving and crack-cocaine and running a prostitute ring out of my dorm room all at the same time – she had no idea that I was just not eating. That’s fine. Comparatively, not eating rather than running that prostitute ring would make me look like the best son in the world. In other words, if I go to the hospital for not eating, she will be thanking her lucky stars that it is not because I am addicted to crack. Win-win.

Okay, so we cap our pizza off with laxative tea. This tea is soaking in my black mug and I delay drinking it because I don’t like tea; thus, I’m guessing that I won’t like tea that is to have a laxative effect on me. It is hot and tastes like black licorice. Not the usual Diet Coke I would use to cap off a night. With that first sip we have signed on to our fast, and there is no looking back. Fortunately, Kyle and Patrick can’t stop looking three blocks ahead. They think the tea is delicious. Delicious? I gag at the idea. I’ve got a long ten days ahead of me.

We go to bed determined to triumph tomorrow.

I want to take this break where I went to sleep to note how much a person could do in ten days: 1) Eat 30 meals. 2) Go on a lengthy vacation. 3) Spend almost \$240 on food. 4) Take up a new hobby. 5) Eat. At all.

At 9:00 am my alarm goes off and I go in to the kitchen. I mix together my quart of water with 1/10 of a teaspoon of salt. Oh, God, this is disgusting. The first sip leaves me wanting pancakes more than I've ever wanted them in my entire life. I wake Patrick and Kyle up to tell them how awful this. I look at my phone. By 9:15, my mother has called me five times just to make sure I got up this morning. I'm not hungry yet, and I'm feeling successful.

...Not as successful as Patrick. He loves the saltwater. He thinks it's "refreshing" and I must have done it wrong if I think it sucks because his tastes pretty regular. Here's an idea: I didn't do it wrong; you're a freak. I've been awake for one-half hour of the eight I've been fasting. I'm already mean. This does not bode well.

As I stand in the shower, I am forced to reevaluate my situation. Am I strong enough to do this? What will happen if I don't? More importantly, what will happen if I do finish? Nothing. I get out of the shower and make my first mixture of lemon juice, water, syrup, and cayenne pepper. With the first sip my mouth is intrigued. It tastes like Indian food water. If I think of this as Saag Paneer version liquid, I will make it through the sip. After sip number two, my analogy is disgusting.

I go to class and do not eat. I am not actually thinking of eating. It is amazing how much time people spend eating. I have free time and I don't know what to do with it. I think about starting to read a book and only read when I could be eating and see how long it takes me to finish. I don't do this because, well, what a dorky thing for me to do.

Opening up my cell phone, I see that I have a missed call (I keep my phone on silent because I don't like answering my phone because I don't like the chance of getting bad news). My mother has called again.

“Oh, good, you’re alive. What are you doing?”

I explain to her the idea of the Master Cleanse.

“Oh, God, Ryan, that is so dangerous. Uh, excuse me, I think I have a Masters Degree in this.”

My mom pleads that I stop this, as the odds of me passing out are much greater than me being healthy at the end. I think about quitting the fast, but I decide not to. It means more to me than this. I have never completed anything like this before. I don’t want to do it anymore by 3:00 on day one, but I have to keep going. I’m bored with it. I’ve gotten everything out of it. One more sip of Saag Paneer and I will vomit.

Kyle and Patrick are handling the fast well. I, for some reason, cannot get the hang of it. They talk of feeling full and energized. I look deeper than their stomachs though and see how they view everything around them. Everyone is stressed; I realize this. Why do they seem to “stomach” this so much easier? My attitude towards this fast is paralleling everything I know. I just want to give it all up and start over. If I could forget everything I know and wake up a different person tomorrow morning and feel refreshed, I just might do it.

My friendships lately have been strange. I feel like I am failing each one of my friends on a completely different level. My grades are completely out of control; I have a lot of speech stuff to do. As I sit in this chaos I know that this Cleanse is the only thing that is in my control. Looking around my bedroom, there are many different things plaguing me. The computer screen flickers with those 3D Pipes and the screensaver shows that I do not have enough work done, as the computer lies there, idly. The stack of books to be read is towering over the finished books as a reminder that time is being

wasted each time I avoid schoolwork, or even reading for fun. I look to my pictures only to see that they are fading and it can only be symbolic of my friendships. Avoiding the reality of these situations, I hide behind my work. I am mean. I blame so many things on my body. This is the chance for me to turn things around. If I can get one thing under wraps for ten days, everything else should be a breeze. My fish bowl sits empty, dry, dirty as that fish died long ago and whether it is my fault or Meijer's is yet to be determined. I sit empty. I feel like I have dropped the ball on so many things lately. I am dry; I feel like I have soaked up everything I could, taking each little bit for granted, and now I am left with nothing. I am dirty; I want to take my insides and pour metaphorical bleach all over them. This Cleanse is supposed to clean and soak me with everything that I hope it will.

Hanging out with Patrick and Kyle later that night, we decide that we are not hungry, but rather, we are bored. We break the pact because we know Kyle was bound to cheat, and we tell Patrick he cannot blame us for giving up early. This is an equal emancipation. We decide to disband from the fast and go to Denny's.

With food back in my body I begin to understand everything a little bit better. I took my eating time and decided to sit and think and poke at my brain. It got me nowhere good. This fast taught me nothing about eating right or having good energy. It did teach me, however, how important a healthy mindset. With each sip of saltwater I put another brick on the wall separating me from fasting success.

My mom is ecstatic that we dropped the fast. She's glad I won't be dying anytime soon. Our friends did not care that we quit. They "knew" we couldn't do it anyway.

I'm feeling more in control of things now that I am not thinking about how out of control I am. This fast was supposed to be my savior. As I sit typing this, with Diet Coke near by, I wonder where I'd be had I kept the fast going. Would I feel full?