

## FOREWORD

# BEFORE WE BEGIN

Perhaps you're picking up this book because you sense something isn't quite right. You may have tried perfect routines, strict rules, or the promise of a "new you," only to find they leave you feeling more depleted than nourished.

This guide isn't about imposing discipline for its own sake or doing everything right from Monday to Friday and feeling like you've failed by Sunday. It isn't about turning your life into a never-ending self-improvement project. It's not here to fix you. It's here to help you notice what already works and return to something steady.

Over time, one thing became very clear to me: skin, health, energy, mood, digestion and sleep don't live in separate compartments. They are one system, always connected, always responding. You can't fix one part in isolation and expect the rest to magically fall into place. The tricky part is that you often don't notice how far out of balance things have drifted.

You adapt and normalize feeling tired, wired, a bit inflamed and assume that's just what adult life feels like. I did too for a long time. It wasn't until I stepped out of that place that I realized something important: life doesn't have to feel this hard.

Before all of this, my days looked very different. I lived in a city and worked in the media. Being "off" was more theory than reality. News cycles, notifications and comment sections lit up my phone from morning until night. Weekdays blurred into weekends.

Holidays and ordinary days alike were dominated by the glow of a screen: Christmas Eve, weddings, Sundays, it didn't matter. The phone was always there, lighting up, asking for attention.

At the time, I didn't question it. It felt normal, responsible, even ambitious. I cared deeply about being informed and engaged with the world and I still do. Yet somewhere along the way, the constant input started to shape more than just my workdays. It spilled into my nights, my focus, my nervous system. My sleep grew light, my body felt tight and my skin became reactive. Calm felt harder to reach.

For a long time, I tried to manage the situation the way many of us do: pushing through, adjusting habits here and there, optimizing and coping. Nothing really changed. Eventually, it became clear that what I needed wasn't another fix; it was space.

I needed a different pace and room to actually notice what was going on. That decision didn't come from collapse or escape. I didn't suddenly become "slow." I made a conscious choice to step out of a life that was constantly on and into one that allowed natural rhythms to exist again. I left my job and moved to a small farm in Norway. The move wasn't about withdrawing from the world; it was about reconnecting with my body, my days and my attention.

Moving didn't hand me instant solutions. Instead, it gave me something quieter and far more valuable: the ability to notice. I began to see patterns and feel how deeply daily rhythms, environment and small, repeated choices shape our health. These realizations weren't abstract; they were grounded in daily life. Around the same time, something else was unfolding quietly. What started as a wish to help people care for their skin, to make it look

and feel better, grew into something much larger.

As Frøya reached more people and I started writing longer, more personal emails about skin, health and everyday life, something unexpected happened. People wrote back. They shared their stories, their struggles and their small wins. Many weren't really writing about skin at all. They were writing about how they felt in their bodies and in their lives. Over time, those emails turned into something like modern pen pals. Again and again, people asked the same question: could you write this down somewhere, all of it, in one place? This book is my answer to that.

Along the way, I also came to understand something both ancient and deeply biological. We are drawn to healthy looking skin because it signals something true: that a healthy being is underneath. Our ancestors understood this intuitively long before modern science confirmed it. Skin is not decoration; it's communication. It reflects what's happening inside the body, in the gut, the nervous system, the hormones and the immune response. This is where Frøya fits in.

We have poured our hearts, our knowledge and years of work into creating what I genuinely believe are exceptional products. They are built with care, integrity and deep respect for both skin biology and traditional wisdom. But they were never meant to stand alone. Even the very best skincare can only do so much if the system underneath is under constant strain. This book doesn't depend on what you buy. It depends on what you practice, what you repeat and how you choose to care for yourself in daily life. It exists for everything that happens beyond the jar on your bathroom counter.

Nothing operates in isolation. What you eat affects how you sleep. How you sleep affects your stress levels. Stress affects your hormones. Hormones affect your skin. Light, darkness, rhythm,

movement and relationships all play a role. Yet most advice treats these things as if they're unrelated, buy a cream for your skin, a supplement for your gut, a productivity hack for your mind and call it a day. It doesn't work like that.

What eventually changed things for me wasn't intensity; it was perspective and consistency. Small, honest choices, repeated over time. This book grew out of lived experience, research, trial and error and thousands of conversations with women who weren't looking for extremes but for something that actually made life feel better, calmer, steadier and more manageable.

To be clear, the point of this book isn't that you need to quit your job and move to a farm in Norway, unless you truly want to, in which case, welcome. Many of the things that changed everything for me are small, practical and available no matter where you live, how you work, or what season of life you're in.

This guide isn't meant to be followed perfectly; it's meant to be used. It works best when you're willing to participate, not just read. Take what fits and leave the rest. Nothing here requires perfection. In fact, perfection usually gets in the way. What matters far more is consistency, showing up in small, honest ways, again and again. Not someday, not all at once, but here, in real life. That's how real change happens: through daily practice, not pressure. That's the Frøya way.

## One Last Thing Before We Begin

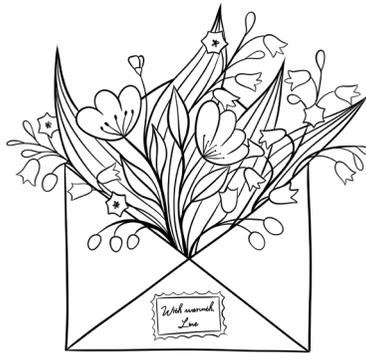
I hope you read this as an invitation, not an assignment. You don't need to do everything or do it perfectly. It's more than enough

to do a little more of what genuinely makes you feel good. Read with an open mind and let your body be the most important expert. Notice what resonates, what feels relieving and what feels supportive.

That's where you start. Trust that awareness more than any external rule or routine. I'm writing this as Line, from the farm, from everyday life, from struggle and science, from lived experience and with a deep love for everything we are building together through Frøya. Welcome to this journey. I can't wait to hear what you recognize yourself in the most.

With warmth,

Line



PART I

# THE PRINCIPLES



## CHAPTER 1

# THE FIVE PRINCIPLES



Before we talk about routines, rituals, or systems, we need to agree on something simpler.

Everything in this book rests on a few principles.

Not rules.

Not commandments.

Not a rigid program you have to follow perfectly.

Principles.

The kind you can carry with you. Return to. Adjust as life shifts.

I didn't invent them. They aren't built on one trend or one headline study. They're patterns humans have lived by for as long as humans have had bodies, long before artificial light, ultra-processed food, endless stimulation and schedules that ignore seasons.

For most of history, these principles weren't discussed. They were just living.

Bodies responded to light and darkness.

To hunger and fullness.

To activity and rest.

They adapted. They thrived and when something was off, they signaled it clearly.

Over time, we've grown very good at overriding those signals.

What I've done here is not revolutionary. I've simply paid attention again. I've looked at what consistently holds up, in research, yes, but also in real life. In my own body. In the Nordic way of living that shaped me. In what still makes quite common sense when you strip everything back.

These principles came slowly. Through trial and error. Through periods when my body was clearly not thriving. Through the uncomfortable but honest work of noticing what helped and what didn't.

They are shaped by science.

They are shaped by lived experience and they are shaped by something older than both: patterns that don't expire.

If you understand these five principles, you won't need to memorize everything that follows. You'll be able to make your own decisions about food, skincare, sleep, movement and stress without constantly asking yourself, "Am I doing this right?"

Think of them as a compass. Not because they dictate your path, but because they help you orient yourself when modern life pulls you off course.

And if some of this doesn't land with you, that's okay. Take what feels grounded and leave the rest. This isn't about agreement. It's about recognition.



## Principle One: Relearning to Listen to Your Body

We live in a culture that treats the body as something that constantly needs to be managed. Something to fix, discipline, optimize, or push through when it becomes inconvenient. You can see it everywhere once you notice it. If we're tired, the solution is more coffee. If our skin reacts, we add another product. If digestion feels off, we start searching for the fastest possible solution. Underneath all of this sits a quiet assumption that the body itself is the problem, that it has somehow become unreliable and now needs to be corrected.

I've started to see it differently over the years. Very often, the body is not the problem at all. It's communicating.

Physician Gabor Maté has spent decades observing how symptoms appear long before something more serious develops. What he has seen repeatedly is that what we often call a “problem” is actually the body’s earliest attempt to signal strain. It rarely starts dramatically. It shows up as small things first. Skin that suddenly becomes reactive. Digestion that feels a little unpredictable. Sleep that becomes lighter. A body that holds tension more easily than it used to. These things are easy to dismiss. They don’t feel serious enough to deserve attention and many of us have learned to interpret them as personal failures. As if the body reacting means we somehow didn’t try hard enough.

But that’s not what they are. Their feedback.

The tricky part is that feedback only helps if we are willing to notice it and attention is a skill most of us have slowly lost.

For most of human history, listening to the body wasn’t something people had to learn through books or wellness practices. It happened naturally. When energy dropped, people slowed down. When something didn’t sit well, they noticed. There was simply less noise surrounding those signals. Fewer distractions. Fewer systems are pushing people to override what they feel.

Modern life is built differently. It rewards override.

Keep going. Ignore it. Deal with it later.

The body, however, doesn’t really participate in that agreement. It keeps sending signals anyway. Sometimes quietly, sometimes less politely.

Learning to listen again doesn’t mean becoming hyper-aware of every sensation or turning health into another project to perfect. It’s much simpler than that. It means allowing yourself to pause

long enough to notice patterns. To become curious instead of immediately trying to shut the signal down. Instead of asking, “How do I make this stop?” you begin asking something slightly different.

What is this trying to tell me?

That question changes things more than most people expect. The moment you stop treating your body like an opponent that needs to be controlled, something softens. The whole relationship shifts. You stop trying to win against yourself and start cooperating with the system that has quietly been keeping you alive this entire time.

That shift, from control to listening, is where everything in this book begins.

## **Principle Two: Nothing Works in Isolation**

One of the biggest misunderstandings in modern health advice is the idea that we can fix one part of the body at a time.

Skin as a separate project.

Digestion as its own department.

Sleep as something we “hack.”

But the body doesn’t divide itself that way.

Gut researcher Tim Spector often points out that we make things harder than they need to be when we isolate one variable and ignore the context around it. Food without stress. Skin without sleep. Digestion without lifestyle. The body simply doesn’t operate in compartments.

What you eat influences how you sleep.

Sleep shapes how you handle stress.

Stress changes digestion.

Digestion affects inflammation and inflammation often shows up on the skin.

Once you truly understand this, quick fixes lose some of their appeal.

It becomes harder to believe that one cream, one supplement, or one eliminated ingredient can compensate for a system that is quietly overwhelmed. At the same time, something reassuring happens: you realize that small supportive changes don't act alone either.

When you sleep a little better, digestion often improves.

When stress lowers slightly, skin becomes more stable.

When meals are more regular, cravings soften.

The system reinforces itself in both directions. Modern life isn't designed around your biology. That isn't your fault. But how you choose to meet it still belongs to you, not as pressure, but as a possibility and when you understand the system, that possibility becomes practical.

That's why we never look at skin in isolation in this book. Skin is rarely the villain. It's usually the messenger. It reflects what is happening inside the system as a whole.

And when you start seeing the body as a connected system rather than a collection of problems, your approach naturally becomes calmer. More patient. More practical.

This is not complicated. It's simply how biology works.

## **Principle Three: Support Works Better Than Force**

Most of us were taught that change requires pressure.

More discipline.

More restrictions.

More rules.

There's almost a quiet pride in being hard on yourself, as if exhaustion were a badge of honor.

And yes, pressure can create short-term results. A strict routine might work for a while. A rigid reset can feel motivating. But if you look honestly at your own life, you'll probably see the same pattern I did: what is built on force rarely lasts.

The body responds differently to support than it does to pressure.

Neuroscientist Stephen Porges' work on the nervous system shows that repair and regulation only happen when the body senses safety. Not when it's being pushed harder. Not when it's shamed into submission. But when the internal and external environment signal that it can finally exhale.

Safety lowers stress hormones.

Lower stress hormones improve digestion.

Better digestion supports sleep.

Stable sleep strengthens the skin barrier and hormone balance.

This isn't softness. It's physiology.

When the body feels safe, it shifts out of defense mode and into repair mode. That shift changes everything.

Throughout this book, you'll notice a subtle but important redirection. We move away from asking, "What should I cut out now?" and toward asking, "What would support my body in this season?"

That single change in question often makes things feel lighter immediately.

Instead of battling yourself, you begin cooperating. Instead of forcing improvement, you create the conditions for it and when the body feels supported rather than controlled, it becomes far more willing to work with you.

In the Nordics, there's a quiet practicality in this approach. You don't fight winter. You adapt to it. You don't shame the body for needing rest. You give it what it needs and move on.

Support is not indulgence. It is strategy.

And it lasts.

## **Principle Four: Consistency Beats Intensity**

You don't need extreme routines. You need routines that you can actually repeat.

There is a quiet but important difference between making one slightly better choice today than you did yesterday and trying to overhaul your entire life in one dramatic leap. The first approach builds trust. It compounds. The second one usually burns out the

moment real life shows up.

We've all seen the intense versions: 30-day challenges, cold plunges, "new year, new me," radical detoxes, complicated routines that only work when you have perfect sleep, perfect motivation and zero stress. They can feel excited for a week. Sometimes they even work for a month. Then something happens, a busy period, travel, a sick child, a hard week and the whole structure collapses. Not because you are weak, but because the plan was never designed for a human life.

Motivation is unreliable. Patterns are not.

What most people miss is that when change is built on listening instead of forcing, it often feels surprisingly simple. You start paying attention to what genuinely makes your body feel calmer, steadier and more supported and the process begins to guide itself. You don't need willpower for every decision. You need a few supportive defaults you return to, again and again.

The body adapts to what happens often, not to what happens impressively. The practices in this book are simple. That's their strength and it's also why they're easy to skip. No one applauds you for choosing water over a second coffee, or for stepping outside for five minutes of light. But those quiet choices are the ones that compound.

It's the ordinary choices that matter most: a slightly better breakfast, going to bed ten minutes earlier, moving your body a little instead of not at all, being a bit kinder to yourself today than you were yesterday. None of it looks heroic. But it also doesn't feel punishing. That's the point.

Consistency survives real life and real life is where change actually

happens.

## Principle Five: Your Life Comes First

A routine is not successful if it only works on ideal days.

Your job matters. Your family matters. Your capacity matters. The season you're in matters. The phase of life you're moving through matters. If a routine requires perfect conditions to succeed, it will eventually collapse under the weight of your actual life.

This guide is designed to adapt to you, not the other way around.

Later, we will build a version of these principles that fits your real days, not your fantasy days. If something doesn't fit, we adjust. If life gets heavier, the system becomes simpler. If a season changes, your rhythm changes with it.

That flexibility isn't a weakness. It's the whole point.

Because the goal here is not to create a lifestyle you have to maintain with effort, the goal is to create support that you can return to, even when you're tired, busy, stressed, or in the middle of everything.

## CHAPTER 1 – THE FIVE PRINCIPLES

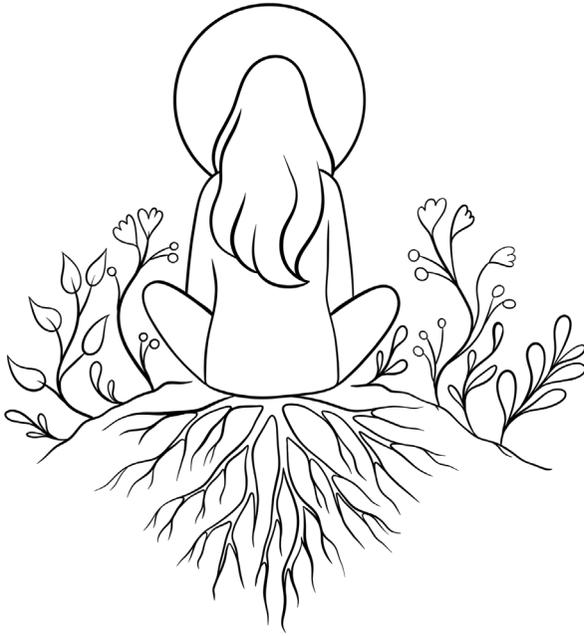
1. Which of the five principles felt most familiar to you? Why?
2. Where in your life do you tend to force instead of support?
3. What is one small, repeatable change you could make this week that feels realistic?
4. When was the last time you truly listened to your body instead of overriding it? What did you notice?
5. What would it look like to let your life shape your routine, instead of the other way around?

*Take a moment to write your reflections in a journal, notebook, or notes app - somewhere you can return to them.*

PART II

# THE FOUNDATION

Returning to the Real



## CHAPTER 2:

# BACK TO THE ROOTS



It's surprisingly easy to drift away from yourself when life never slows down. For years, I lived inside a pace that felt normal simply because everyone around me was moving the same way. News updates ran all day. Screens stayed lit long after sunset. Deadlines replaced daylight as the marker of time. Meals were quick, convenient and forgettable. Coffee stood in for rest. Sleep grew shorter each year without me fully noticing.

At first, my body adjusted quietly. Then it began to push back.

My stomach tightened more often. My skin became dry and reactive. My heart felt as if it was always half a step ahead of the moment. I slept through the night, but I rarely woke up rested. I was technically inside my body, but I wasn't really inhabiting it.

When I finally slowed down, not because I wanted a picturesque lifestyle, but because I couldn't continue the way I was, something became clear. My body wasn't asking for more products, stricter routines, or better willpower. It wasn't looking for a new system to master. It was asking for something far more basic.

It was asking for what it already knew.

I call this “back to the roots.” Not because we should romanticize the past or attempt to recreate a different century, but because biology hasn’t changed just because our calendars have. The body still operates on the same foundations it always has. In the Nordics, many of those foundations were never philosophical. They were practical. Light and darkness shaped the day. Food came from what was available. Movement was part of survival. Rest followed work. Not because it was trendy, but because it was necessary.

That kind of common sense did not disappear because it stopped being true. It faded because modern life stopped demanding it. Convenience replaced rhythm. Constant stimulation replaced silence. Artificial light replaced the sky.

And here is what I learned slowly: the body does not change because you understand something intellectually. It changes because you repeat something consistently. Insight may start the shift, but repetition is what teaches the body to trust again.

In a society built on comfort and availability, we no longer have to listen closely. Food is always there. Light is always on. Entertainment never stops. Synthetic scent, artificial flavor, chemical formulations we can’t pronounce, they are woven into daily life in ways our biology never rehearsed for. But the body still runs on older wiring. When we override it for too long, it raises the volume.

The world may have changed dramatically. Our biology has not. In the Nordics, this was never a theory. It was simply how life worked. You rose with light because there was light. You rested because winter demanded it. You ate what was available because that was the only option.

We are still wired for light and darkness. For real food. For movement that resembles living rather than training. For nature that does not ask us to perform. None of this is mystical. It is measurable. Most of it is simply common sense we stopped practicing. Farmers didn't need a podcast to know this and modern research increasingly confirms what used to be obvious.

## The body is rhythm, because life is

One of the simplest and most overlooked ways to support health is to support rhythm. That may sound underwhelming in a culture that prefers breakthroughs and optimization. But science is remarkably steady on this point: when circadian rhythm is disrupted, the consequences ripple outward.

Late-night screen light. Irregular meals. Little daylight. Constant stimulation. These are not dramatic in isolation. But repeated daily, they confuse the body's internal clock. When rhythm drifts, inflammation tends to rise. Sleep becomes lighter. Hormones fall slightly out of sync. The skin barrier weakens. Digestion grows more sensitive. The body never fully settles into repair mode.

Something as simple as morning daylight can shift that pattern.

Ten minutes outside. Or standing by a window with natural light on your face before you look at your phone. It sounds almost too ordinary to matter and yet studies show that early daylight exposure helps regulate cortisol patterns, improves sleep quality later that night and reduces afternoon cravings. That familiar 2 p.m. urge for sugar or another coffee is often less about discipline and more about a disrupted rhythm.

Circadian researcher Satchin Panda has shown repeatedly that when light exposure, meals and rest lose consistency, the body drifts toward inflammation, even when everything else appears “fine” on paper. The system doesn’t fail because it lacks effort. It struggles because its timing signals have become blurred.

I remember a winter morning not long after moving to the farm. I stood outside in a wool sweater, still half awake, the air sharp and quiet. Ten minutes of cold daylight did more to clear my head than the coffee waiting inside. It wasn’t dramatic. It was simple. But it was consistent.

That was when it settled for me. My body already understood rhythm. I had simply been overriding it for too long.

Back to the roots is not about doing more. It is about removing some of the noise so the body can follow signals it has trusted for thousands of years.

And often, those signals are surprisingly ordinary.



## Nature's effect is measurable, not magical

For a long time, I believed I went for walks simply to “clear my head.” That was the language I used. But over time, I began to understand that nature does more than clear mental clutter. It regulates.

The effect is not mystical. It is physiological.

Research consistently shows that spending 20–30 minutes in natural surroundings lowers cortisol levels in measurable ways. Not theatrically. Just steadily. Exposure to trees, natural light variation, fresh air and open landscapes reduces markers of stress and inflammation. Even the scent compounds released by trees have been shown to influence immune function.

There is also something surprisingly powerful about walking without distraction. When researchers study what they call an “awe walk”, walking without a phone, without audio, without a specific goal, they find improvements in creative problem-solving and emotional regulation. The brain shifts into a different mode. It softens. It connects dots more easily. It becomes less reactive.

You do not need a mountain range. A park. A shoreline. A quiet street with trees. Even consistent exposure to daylight and open air has an effect.

When I began taking walks without turning them into productivity time, I noticed the change almost immediately. My thoughts slowed down. My shoulders dropped. Decisions felt less urgent. It was not dramatic. It was steady. It felt like turning down the volume on background noise I had stopped noticing.

In the Nordics, this was never framed as self-care. It was simply

life. You went outside because that was where life happened. You walked because movement was built into the day. You experienced seasonal shifts because there was no alternative. Nature was not something you scheduled. It was something you lived within.

That rhythm still works. It always did.

Nature does not need to impress us. It just needs us to show up consistently enough for the body to recalibrate.

## Food that looks like food

The same common sense applies to what we eat.

For most of human history, food was recognizable. It was grown, gathered, hunted, or caught. It had shape and texture. It spoiled. It required preparation. It came from somewhere visible.

Today, much of what we consume is engineered. It is designed for convenience, shelf life and repeat purchase. That does not make it evil. It makes it industrial. The same is true for much of what we put on our skin and breathe in daily.

The body, however, still expects familiarity.

When food becomes heavily altered, broken down into refined powders, syrups, emulsifiers, stabilizers and artificial flavor compounds, digestion becomes more complicated. The immune system works harder. The gut microbiome shifts. The skin often reflects the strain. Not because the body is weak, but because it is specific.

When I began removing the ingredients I could not pronounce, nothing extreme, nothing rigid, I noticed something predictable.

My digestion became more stable. My skin felt calmer. My energy stopped swinging as dramatically. What surprised me most was that my cravings began to change. I was not forcing discipline. I was responding to feedback.

Food that made me feel steady became more appealing. Food that left me wired or bloated gradually lost its appeal. Not because I had perfected anything, but because I was paying attention.



## What research now confirms

In recent years, large-scale studies have examined dietary patterns instead of isolated nutrients. The findings are remarkably

consistent. Diets high in ultra-processed foods are associated with increased risk of gut disruption, chronic inflammation, hormonal imbalance, metabolic strain and long-term disease.

This is not about fear. It is about recognition.

The body evolved in relation to whole ingredients. When food consistently arrives in a form that barely resembles its original structure, digestion and signaling become less efficient. The system shifts into a low-level defensive posture. Over time, that posture becomes the baseline.

When food looks like food, digestion tends to settle. Inflammatory load decreases. Hormonal communication becomes clearer. The body spends less time compensating and more time repairing.

None of this requires perfection. It requires familiarity.

Eating mostly recognizable food is enough to shift the direction. The body does not need extremes. It needs patterns it can understand.

Back to the roots, in practice, often looks surprisingly simple: daylight in the morning, movement that resembles living and food that the body can identify without confusion.

Not inspirational. Just sensible. If you start anywhere, start with morning light.

And sensible, repeated often enough, is powerful.

## **Slow rhythms create resilient humans**

Life has always moved in rhythms. In the Nordics, that rhythm is difficult to ignore. Summers are bright and long. Winters are dark

and slow. Light shifts dramatically over the year. Temperatures move from cold water to hot sauna, from frozen ground to soft soil. Work and rest follow natural cycles, whether we plan them or not. We don't fight winter. We dress for it.

Nothing stays the same for long and that variation quietly trains the body to adapt.

When seasons shape daily life, the body experiences contrast: long days and short days, movement and stillness, warmth and cold. This variation is not dramatic. It is steady and it builds resilience without announcing itself.

Modern life flattens that contrast. The lighting rarely changes. Screens glow the same way in January as they do in July. The pace remains constant. Stimulation does not depend on the season. As a result, many of us live in a strange state of being constantly activated yet subtly depleted. We are surrounded by input, but lacking variation.

Most of us are not lacking calories or input. What is often missing is rhythm, enough variation between light and darkness, movement and stillness, stimulation and rest for the body to keep finding its balance.

That is not a moral failure. It is a structural one. The modern environment was built for efficiency and convenience, not biological balance. But even within that structure, small choices still matter.

When I moved to the countryside, it felt disorienting at first. The quiet was louder than expected. The darkness in winter felt long. The light in summer stretched late into the night. But over time, something subtle happened. My body adjusted more easily

than my mind did. It recognized the rhythm before I consciously appreciated it.

The body does not need perfection. It needs contrast. It needs shifts in light, movement, temperature and pace to maintain flexibility.

## Where I Come From

Where I come from, life was never designed around comfort.

For generations, people lived with long, dark winters. Light disappeared early in the afternoon. Work didn't pause because the weather was inconvenient. You dressed for it. You adapted. You carried wood. You conserved energy. You rested when there was no light, not because it was a wellness strategy, but because it was practical.

Norway is a wealthy country now. Oil changed the economy. We live in warm homes, travel easily and have access to almost anything at any time and yet something older still shapes us.

My own family has a small cabin on a small island by the coast. We have electricity. But no running water. We carry it in. We don't use a lawnmower. We cut the grass with a scythe. It is objectively more work than staying home.

And yet, that is where we go to relax.

It sounds almost absurd when you explain it out loud. After a full workweek, we choose colder air, simpler food, slower mornings and fewer conveniences and somehow, it feels like relief.

No one there is optimizing. No one is biohacking. No one is chasing productivity. You chop wood. You boil water. You sit

quietly. You look at the sky. Dinner tastes better. Sleep is heavier. Conversations stretch longer because there is nothing else to scroll.

We don't romanticize hardship. But we are not afraid of a little resistance either. There is a quiet understanding here that comfort is sweet, but too much of it makes us restless.

That cultural imprint matters more than we realize.

When you grow up with strong seasonal contrast, bright summers that barely darken, winters where daylight is brief and precious, you internalize rhythm. You learn that life expands and contracts. That energy rises and falls. That not every season is for growth.

Modern life tries to flatten that contrast. It offers constant light, constant access and constant stimulation. But the body still responds to variation. It needs a difference to recalibrate.

Perhaps that is why, even in a wealthy country, so many of us still drive hours to live more simply for a weekend. The forest walk. The cold swim. The sauna. The long hike makes dinner taste extraordinary.

Back to the roots, for me, isn't about going backwards. It's about remembering that resilience grows quietly when life includes contrast.

## **What research shows about rhythm and variation**

Recent research increasingly supports what seasonal cultures have practiced without naming it. The body relies on variation to remain resilient. Regular shifts between activation and rest, light and darkness, warmth and coolness help maintain hormonal

balance and stress regulation.

Environments that offer little variation, constant artificial light, continuous stimulation and minimal exposure to natural settings are associated with higher baseline stress levels, disrupted sleep patterns and reduced metabolic flexibility. Over time, the system adapts to a narrower range of signals. It becomes more reactive and less adaptable.

In contrast, exposure to natural rhythms supports flexibility and resilience. Daylight variation helps regulate hormonal cycles. Periods of genuine rest allow repair processes to complete. Changes in temperature and activity stimulate adaptive responses that strengthen resilience.

The body does not require extremes to benefit from this. It requires contrast. A walk outside in daylight. A consistent wind-down routine at night. Occasional cold air on the skin. Even small shifts reintroduce signals the body understands.

Rhythm, not rigidity, is what keeps biological systems adaptable.

## **Back to the roots means inward, not backward**

Going back to the roots does not mean abandoning modern life. It does not require moving to a farm, raising chickens, or heating your home with firewood. It means identifying which elements of older rhythms still support the body and finding ways to include them in your current life.

In practice, this may look simple:

Taking a short walk without your phone.

Looking at the sky before looking at a screen.

Choosing food that resembles its original form.

Treating sleep as a priority rather than an afterthought.

Letting nature be part of ordinary days, not just holidays.

These actions are not nostalgic. They are functional.

Back to the roots is not about recreating the past. It is about restoring signals the body recognizes. Light in the morning. Darkness at night. Food that the digestive system can process without confusion. Movement that resembles living rather than performing. Moments of quiet that allow the nervous system to settle.

This is not a step backward. It is a recalibration.

If there is one outcome I hope this chapter offers, it is recognition.

Recognition that the body is not complicated in its needs.

Recognition that much of what restores balance is ordinary.

Recognition that change does not require a dramatic overhaul.

One walk will not transform your system. One early night will not undo years of strain. One balanced meal will not reset everything.

But biology does not change because of single moments. It changes because of patterns. That is how the body recalibrates. That is how trust returns.

We know this not only intuitively, but scientifically. Circadian researcher Satchin Panda has shown that when light exposure, meals and sleep follow a consistent rhythm, measurable shifts occur in metabolic health, inflammatory markers and sleep quality. In several of his studies, participants did not radically change what they ate. They simply ate within a more predictable daily window.

That small adjustment, rhythm instead of randomness, improved insulin sensitivity, supported digestion and stabilized energy levels.

When daylight appears at roughly the same time each morning, cortisol follows a clearer curve. When meals are spaced predictably, digestive enzymes anticipate food. When rest is protected often enough, the body no longer needs to stay in constant alert.

These shifts are subtle. You do not feel them as breakthroughs. You feel them as steadiness and steadiness is underrated.

That is why consistency matters more than intensity. Not because perfection is required, but because predictability reduces strain. Biology prefers rhythm over extremes.

This chapter is not asking you to redesign your life. It is asking you to notice where small anchors can exist.

Perhaps that means stepping outside for morning light before opening your phone. Perhaps it means eating at roughly similar times most days. Perhaps it means allowing one part of your evening to slow down on purpose.

These are not ambitious goals. They are structural ones. On a farm, you fix what you can and release what you cannot. The body responds to the same logic.

Consistency does not come from constant motivation. It comes from deciding that your body is worth small, repeatable care. It comes from understanding that resilience is built quietly, through signals the body can trust.

Everything else in this book builds from this foundation. Not as rules to follow, but as supports you can adapt to real life.

When rhythm becomes steady, effort becomes lighter. Change feels

less like a force and more like alignment.

That is where we begin.

## CHAPTER 2 – BACK TO THE ROOTS

1. Where in your daily life has modern convenience quietly replaced basic rhythm?
2. How consistent is your exposure to natural light, real rest and quiet moments?
3. What is one small way you could support your circadian rhythm this week?
4. When do you feel most regulated and steady and what patterns surround those moments?
5. If you stripped everything back to common sense, what would your body likely ask for right now?

*Take a moment to write your reflections in a journal, notebook, or notes app - somewhere you can return to them.*

## CHAPTER 3:

# ULTRA-PROCESSED FOOD & MY IBS STORY



There is a clear before and after in this story. In truth, there are several.

There was a time when I did what most people do. I ate what was available, what was convenient, what promised to make life smoother. Food that saved time. Food that required little thought. Food that fits into a busy day without asking for attention.

And then came the gradual realization that many of the things designed to make my life easier were slowly making my body less stable, not more supported.

To understand why this matters, we have to begin where these changes always begin: inside the body.

## **Living at war with my own gut**

For years, my body felt like a problem to manage. My digestion in

particular felt unreliable and unpredictable. I moved through the system the way many people with IBS do. Tests. Scans. Specialist appointments. “Maybe try this,” suggests. Long waiting rooms. Procedures that leave you feeling more like a case study than a person. At one point, I knew the hospital parking routine better than I knew my own hunger cues.

The advice often contradicted itself. Remove gluten. Add it back. Cut dairy. Increase dairy. Low-FODMAP. High-FODMAP. Eat lighter. Eat more protein. Reduce stress. Sleep more. Each suggestion came with good intentions and yet none of them felt complete.

Eventually, something became obvious in a way that was both frustrating and freeing: no one else could move into my body and feel what I was feeling. No one else could sense the subtle changes before a flare-up. No one else could notice how a stressful week altered my digestion before I even changed what I was eating.

I was the one living inside it.

I began to notice that the same meal could feel completely different depending on how I had slept, how busy my week had been, or how emotionally settled I felt. A slice of bread on a calm weekend was not the same as a slice of bread during a deadline-heavy week. The food had not changed. The system had.

Slowly, a pattern emerged. My body was not unpredictable. It was specific.

It reacted to context. It responded to load. It signaled clearly when something was off. The unpredictability I thought I was fighting was often a system responding precisely to conditions I had not been paying attention to.

That realization shifted everything. I stopped trying to control my body and began trying to understand it.

## **Why the same food doesn't affect everyone the same way**

This is where research helped clarify what I was already sensing.

Gut researcher Tim Spector has shown repeatedly that two people can eat the exact same meal and experience completely different metabolic responses. Blood sugar, inflammation markers and digestion can vary widely. The difference is not random. It is contextual.

In large twin studies, even individuals with nearly identical genetics have shown strikingly different responses to the same foods. Differences in gut microbiome, sleep patterns, stress load, activity levels and previous dietary history all shape how the body responds in real time. Genetics matter. But context matters just as much and often more.

Food rarely acts alone. The state of the system matters.

Sleep, stress levels, movement and emotional load all shape how the body responds in the moment. A well-rested, calm body processes food differently than a sleep-deprived and overstimulated one. The digestive tract is not a separate machine running independently. It is connected to the brain, the immune system and hormonal signaling at every level.

This explains why a food can feel fine one day and disruptive the next. The body is not inconsistent. It is responsive.

When the system feels supported, digestion becomes more tolerant. When the system is under pressure, reactions appear faster and more intensely. That does not mean you are fragile. It means your body is adjusting to current conditions.

Understanding this removed a great deal of self-blame. It was no longer about finding the “perfect” diet. It was about recognizing the state of the system as a whole.

National dietary guidelines are built on population averages. They are useful at scale. But your body is not an average. It is a living, responsive system shaped by your genetics, your history, your stress load and your environment. When you understand that, it becomes less surprising that one formula rarely fits everyone. A guideline can inform you, but your body is the one that must live with the outcome.

## The most shame-loaded organ in the body

If you have struggled with gut issues, you know that the hardest part is not always the discomfort itself. Often, it is the embarrassment. The feeling of being inconvenient. The need to leave early. The hesitation before saying yes to plans. The quiet calculation of where bathrooms are located.

Digestive issues carry a kind of shame that other symptoms do not. For a long time, I felt frustrated with my gut, as if it were betraying me. Eventually, I began to think about it differently. Instead of seeing it as a malfunctioning system, I started seeing it as an early-warning system.

Almost like a loyal dog that barks before something escalates.

My first instinct, like most people's, was to silence the barking as quickly as possible.

It signaled when stress was building. It reacted when food felt unfamiliar. It tightened when I overrode my limits. The signals were not punishment. They were information. Silencing the bark didn't remove what it was warning me about. Listening did.

Once I stopped fighting it and began working with it, the dynamic changed. I paid attention earlier. I adjusted sooner. I supported the system instead of silencing it.

That shift, from control to cooperation, was the beginning of real change.

The gut was not the enemy. It was the messenger.

## **From control to observation**

At some point, I stopped policing my body and started observing it.

I removed the rules. I stopped labeling foods as good or bad. Instead, I began looking for patterns. I paid attention without drama and without judgment.

Stressful days almost always made my digestion worse. Home-cooked meals almost always made it better. Canned tomato soup was nearly guaranteed to cause trouble, while homemade tomato soup made from the same core ingredients caused none. Bread was sometimes fine, sometimes not. Highly processed meat rarely went well. Real, simple meat usually did. Apparently, my gut had very strong opinions about industrial shortcuts.

I wasn't moralizing any of it. I was gathering information.

Over time, the pattern became impossible to ignore. My body handled nature far better than it handled industry. The closer the food was to something recognizable, the calmer my system felt. The more manipulated and altered it became, the harder my body seemed to work.

That observation didn't feel ideological. It felt mechanical.

## When the system changed, my body followed

This became even clearer during a long trip my partner and I took to Bali. The climate was different. The food was different. The travel schedule was irregular. If anything, it was the kind of situation where many people would expect digestive issues to flare up.

But the opposite happened.

My digestion was calmer than it had been in years. Not slightly better. Noticeably different. Lighter. More stable. As if my body had been waiting for that exhale. We kept asking ourselves why. The answer, in hindsight, was surprisingly straightforward. It was the first time in a long time that I had truly stepped out of my usual pace. Not a weekend. Not a short break. A real pause. I had almost forgotten what it felt like to live without background urgency.

The food was real. Simple. Recognizable. There was very little ultra-processed food. Meals were built from ingredients that looked like themselves. It wasn't enlightenment. It was breakfast and just as importantly, I had slowed down. I was not moving through my days

with subtle, background tension. The quiet wasn't something I had to manufacture. It was simply there.

Nothing works on its own. You'll see that come up again and again throughout the book.

Food, stress, digestion, sleep and skin are not separate topics. They are parts of the same system. When my baseline became more supportive, not perfect, not rigid, just more aligned, my digestion calmed. My energy stabilized and my skin followed.

The gut–skin connection is almost annoyingly strong. Inflammation in the gut often appears on the skin. Stress in the nervous system often shows up in digestion. But once you understand that these systems speak to each other constantly, it becomes less mysterious and more reassuring.

The body is not chaotic. It is connected and that is good news. Because when one part of the system becomes more supported, the others often follow.

## **What ultra-processed food actually is and why the body struggles with it**

There are endless debates about definitions. Borderline cases. Labels. Public conversations often get stuck in technical arguments: Is this product ultra-processed or merely processed? Does it qualify under one classification system or another? Meanwhile, many people are simply trying to understand why their bodies feel worse than they used to.

The debate can be useful in research. In real life, simplicity is often more helpful. For many people, this complexity creates confusion

rather than clarity.

So let's simplify it in practical terms.

When researchers refer to ultra-processed food, they are not talking about modern tools or basic convenience. They are referring to products that have been altered so extensively that the body struggles to recognize them as food in their original form.

Whole ingredients are broken down into flours, syrups, refined starches and isolated powders. Additives are introduced to stabilize texture, preserve shelf life and intensify flavor. Emulsifiers, stabilizers, artificial flavors, colorings, sweeteners and combinations of fat, sugar and salt that rarely exist together in nature are blended into formulas designed for consistency and longevity.

These mixtures are heated, shaped, compressed and packaged to last for months, sometimes years. That durability is not accidental. It serves distribution, shelf stability and profit margins far more than it serves biological familiarity and our health.

Ultra-processed food is engineered to be easy to eat, easy to enjoy, inexpensive to produce and highly profitable. It is marketed as a service: something that simplifies life and saves time and in many ways, it does.

But it is not designed with biological familiarity in mind.

The human body evolved to digest ingredients that resemble what they once were. Muscle tissue recognizes real protein. The gut microbiome recognizes fiber attached to intact plants. The digestive system understands food structures that break down in predictable ways.

When food is stripped, recombined, flavored and stabilized beyond

recognition, digestion becomes more complicated. The immune system may respond more actively. Inflammation can rise subtly over time. Blood sugar regulation can become less stable. Over time, high reliance on ultra-processed food has been associated with increased risk of metabolic disease, hormonal disruption, fertility challenges, mood instability and cognitive decline. The mechanisms are complex, but the pattern is consistent: when the body works harder to process what it doesn't fully recognize, strain accumulates.

Ultra-processed food is also designed to be easy to chew, easy to swallow and highly rewarding to the brain. Because fiber structure is often broken down and combinations of fat, salt and refined carbohydrates rarely exist together in nature, satiety signals can become delayed or blunted. We eat faster. We eat more and we often feel hungry again sooner.

Over time, this pattern makes it easier to consume more energy than the body needs, not because of weakness or lack of discipline, but because the internal signals that regulate appetite become harder to interpret. Many researchers now point to ultra-processed food as a significant driver in rising rates of overweight and metabolic disease, precisely because it disrupts the body's natural feedback systems.

Many people notice this instinctively. A plate of real food tends to hold you longer. A packaged snack often invites a second serving.

This is not about perfection or fear. It is about recognition.

When food looks like food, the system tends to relax. When it resembles a laboratory formula more than something grown or raised, the system often becomes more reactive. That does not mean every processed meal causes harm. It means that, in a landscape

crowded with noise, choosing familiarity more often than not is a reasonable anchor.

And once I saw that pattern in my own body, I could no longer unsee it.

## **We are different and that's the point**

Some people can eat almost anything and feel fine. Others notice immediately when something shifts. A slightly heavier meal, a week of stress, one evening of poor sleep and the body responds.

That difference doesn't mean you are weak. It doesn't mean you are fragile or complicated. It means you are human.

We don't all have the same baseline. We don't all carry the same stress load. We don't share identical genetics, histories, or baseline stress loads. The body you live in has its own language, its own rhythms, its own preferences. Learning that language can feel frustrating at first. But over time, it becomes something else entirely.

It becomes clear.

What works for you now may not work five years from now. What feels supportive in winter may feel heavy in summer. That isn't an inconsistency. It's an adaptation. The body adjusts to seasons, stress, age and life stages. It always has.

This chapter isn't a set of rules. It's a way of paying attention, adjusting as you go, and noticing patterns without turning them into something rigid. Of working with your biology instead of trying to dominate it.

Season by season. Phase by phase.

## Where I come from, food was practical

Where I come from, food was not a debate. It was geography.

We are a coastal people. Fishermen. Farmers. Hunters. For most of our history, we ate what the land and sea allowed. Cod and mackerel. Root vegetables that survived cold soil. Slow-cooked stews. Fermented cabbage. Sour milk. Butter. Hard cheese. Dried fish hanging in the open air. Simple bread. Berries when they were in season.

Nothing about it was engineered or optimized. It was simply what worked.

In the Nordics, many of us tolerate dairy well, not because we are superior, but because for generations it was part of survival. Over time, biology adapts. In other cultures, dairy was never central and the body reflects that history. The same is true for grains, legumes, spices and preparation methods across the world.

Food is not just nutrients. It is ancestry.

When I think about what my own system handles well, it often mirrors that lineage: simple proteins, fish, root vegetables, fermented foods and dairy in forms my body recognizes. Not because a diet told me to. But because history did.

That doesn't mean we must eat like our great-grandparents. It means we benefit from understanding where we come from.

Biology has memory.

## Two simple filters I return to

I don't follow strict dietary rules. I use two quiet questions instead.

Does this look like something nature could have made?

And how long have humans like me been eating this?

Neither question demands perfection. They simply invite awareness.

If the answer is unclear, I don't panic. I don't calculate. I don't moralize. I just recognize that sometimes I am asking my body to work a little harder and that's allowed.

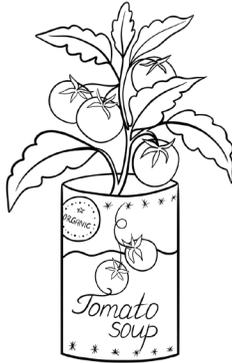
I still choose social meals where I don't control every ingredient. I still eat birthday cake. I still sit at long dinners where the joy of being together matters more than the ingredient list. Because relationships are part of health, too.

The difference is that I know what carries me.

Support most of the time beats perfection every time. A supportive baseline is what creates resilience. It is what allows for flexibility.

It is what turns a way of eating into a life you can actually live, instead of a temporary plan you endure.

That's the shift.



## Practice: using the system in real life

You don't need to change your entire diet. You don't need a reset.  
You don't need discipline.

You need information.

Start with one small experiment.

On even your busiest day, add one recognizable food. Something that looks like itself. Eat it without multitasking. Not in front of a screen. Not while answering messages. Just eat it. Then notice how you feel over the next few hours. Your digestion. Your energy. Your mood.

When life allows a little more room, cook one simple meal at home. Nothing elaborate. Eat slowly. Pay attention to how your body feels

that day and the next morning.

No detox. No elimination plan. Just observation.

If this feels almost too simple, that's intentional. The body does not respond best to dramatic overhauls. It responds to repeated signals of safety and familiarity.

If you recognize yourself in this chapter, you are not broken. Your body is responding exactly as it should.

The modern world is not designed around your biology. Ultra-processed food, constant stimulation and chronic stress are features of the system we live in. But that doesn't mean you are powerless.

You don't control the system. But you do control how you meet it.

One choice, repeated often, shifts direction.

This isn't about perfection. It's about deciding what you support most of the time. Lower the bar. Make one supportive choice today. Not as a statement about who you are, but as a quiet adjustment that your body will recognize.

And food is only one part of what the body processes.

What touches it matters too.

## CHAPTER 3 – ULTRA-PROCESSED FOOD & MY IBS STORY

6. What patterns have you noticed between stress, food and how your body reacts?
7. Are there foods your body consistently handles well and others that create friction?
8. How often do you eat without distraction and actually observe how you feel afterward?
9. If you used the two filters (“Does this look like food?” and “How long have humans eaten this?”), What would shift?
10. What is one small experiment you could run this week to learn more about your own patterns?

*Take a moment to write your reflections in a journal, notebook, or notes app - somewhere you can return to them.*