

THE
S **FACTOR**
DIET

The Happiest Way
to Lose Weight

L O W R I
T U R N E R



DUNCAN BAIRD PUBLISHERS
LONDON

The S Factor Diet

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First published in the United Kingdom and Ireland
in 2013 by
Duncan Baird Publishers Ltd
Sixth Floor, Castle House
75–76 Wells Street
London W1T 3QH

Conceived, created and designed by
Duncan Baird Publishers

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Managing Editor: Grace Cheetham
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Managing Designer: Manisha Patel
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Production: Uzma Taj
Commissioned Photography: Toby Scott
Food Stylist: Jayne Cross
Prop Stylist: Lucy Harvey

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data:
A CIP record for this book is available from the
British Library

ISBN: 978-1-84899-038-8

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

For my children, Griffin, Merlin and Ariel

Typeset in Frutiger
Colour reproduction by XY Digital UK
Printed in Malaysia by Imago

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Notes on the recipes

Unless otherwise stated:
Use medium fruit and vegetables
Use fresh ingredients, including herbs and chillies
Do not mix metric and imperial measurements
1 tsp = 5ml 1 tbsp = 15ml 1 cup = 250ml

Author's acknowledgments

Many thanks to my children, Griffin, Merlin and Ariel, for tasting some of the recipes, admittedly with some degree of suspicion (Merlin: "Does it have vegetables in it?"), as well as for just being a constant source of interest and fun. Also thanks to Toby, Gail, Jayne and Lucy for making the recipes look so good, and to Grace and Krissy for their advice and editing flair.

Note to the reader

Hormones and neurotransmitters are both types of chemical messengers which activate systems in our body such as fat burning and fat storage. Hormones are released by endocrine glands, while neurotransmitters are released by nerves. The leptin hormone and adrenal hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline, can impact on our weight, as can the neurotransmitters serotonin and dopamine – you will read about all of them in this book. For simplicity, I have used the term "S Factor hormones" to refer to this group of hormones and neurotransmitters.

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Introduction

So what do I know about diets? Well, I used to go on a lot of them. I also used to fall off a lot of them. Throughout my teens, twenties and early thirties my life was divided into three categories: on a diet, falling off a diet and eating everything in sight because I was about to go on a diet.

What made it worse was that people treated me differently according to how fat I was. When I was slim, men liked me, chatted me up and asked me out. When I was fat, either I was invisible, or teenage boys made rude comments in the street. The flipside was that as a skinny minnie, women were deeply suspicious. Only when I regained the weight did I get to rejoin the sisterhood.

But hang on, aren't we the same people however much padding we have? The world doesn't seem to think so.

Most diet books appear to have been written by people who have never been fat. They say that looks don't matter. I spent so many years being fat, thin and anywhere in between, I can say that looks do matter – to you and to everyone else who feels they have a right to an opinion. I can still vividly remember the embarrassment of sitting on a tube train as a teen and trying to prevent the side of my size 18 legs touching the person next to me. What I wanted to know back then was if other people could eat normally and stay the same size, why couldn't I?

Fast-forward a few years (and three babies later) and I am now a stable size 10. No more keeping black trousers in three sizes; no more beginning every day vowing to stick to a diet before buckling at 6pm and eating an entire tray of Mars Bar ice creams; and no more feeling guilty, angry and depressed about food.

I won't claim to be a food saint. I have my "off" days, but I don't obsess about it any more. I feel happy and healthy. I watch what I eat because I know what my personal potholes are. I feed my brain and my body the right food because I know how much better I feel when I do. I will also admit to a large dose of vanity – I want to be able to fit into my clothes.

So, what's changed? They say knowledge is a powerful thing and for me, it has been a revelation. When I was trying to get pregnant for the first time 13 years ago, I was diagnosed with polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS). PCOS is a blood sugar disorder that can cause excessive weight gain. I wasn't given any advice, only fertility drugs that made me inflate like the Michelin Man. This was disastrous when I was a TV presenter and had to have a camera pointed at me from unflattering angles. However, it was the first part of the puzzle. . . .

Secondly, I had a hyperactive son and doctors suggested I change his diet. I then divorced (for the first time, ahem. . .) and the stress made me comfort eat. I also developed rosacea – a skin condition that you can recognise by a butterfly shaped redness across your nose and cheeks. I bought loads of creams but nothing helped. The clues were there – change what you eat, Lowri.

Still, I didn't really want to become a health freak. I thought those people were boring, and besides, as a working single mum I was too busy and exhausted. My job was to go on TV and be cheerful and THIN. I was propping myself up on nicotine, caffeine and sugar, but my body was burning out, even if I was ignoring it.

My rock bottom finally came when I developed a rash on the inside of my hands that was so bad I couldn't drive. The doctor put me on hydrocortisone, but also asked me if I had an allergy to dairy foods. I thought back to a year before when another doctor had suggested that a combination of stress and eating a lot of ice cream might be a contributing factor to my rosacea. The bottom line was that my diet was making me ill.

So I started to research how food could make me look and feel better. As I changed my eating habits, my weight began to stabilize and I felt more energetic and positive. Most importantly, I began to feel in control of my eating. To those who have never had an issue with food this may seem minor. However, for someone who would start with one biscuit, then finish the packet and throw away the wrapper to hide the evidence, it was the "Eureka!" moment. Gone was the girl who chain-smoked and had a fridge under her desk full of champagne and drawer in her desk permanently stocked with chocolate. I was now a health food convert.

In 2005, I began to study nutrition with a view to changing my career. To be honest, I thought it would be pretty easy. Instead, there was a solid year of studying the science of anatomy and physiology. The more I learnt, the more I began to understand why so many of us struggle with food. I learnt how unstable blood sugar levels lead to unstable moods and this in turn leads to cravings, bingeing and weight gain. Still, with my history of weight warfare, I of all people know that most of us find it hard to stick to diets.

I opened the doors to my first weight loss clients in 2009 and it was all going swimmingly. OK, there was the occasional client who didn't seem to be able to stick to

their diet but I told myself that "8 out of 10 ain't bad". Still, it got me thinking. I did a bit more research and started experimenting (in a nice way) with my clients. I soon realized I had missed something blindingly obvious: overeating is a form of self-medication and not just in a metaphorical sense.

I now believe that overeating can be a physiological attempt to correct imbalances in what I call the S Factor hormones – natural chemicals we are all supposed to produce in abundance, but which some of us don't. Scientists now know that certain foods stimulate the production of particular hormones (leptin and adrenal hormones such as cortisol) and neurotransmitters (serotonin and dopamine). These S Factor hormones control how hungry you feel and how satisfied you are after eating. Craving unhealthy foods is the body's ill-advised attempt to boost these hormones and control blood sugar levels. So by designing my diets I was trying to persuade clients to eat salad when their brains were screaming "CHOCOLATE!" I was suggesting they might enjoy an apple when their brains were bellowing, "I WANT A BIG BOWL OF PASTA NOW!" Frankly, it's a wonder they didn't throttle me.

From a lot of complicated science, my simple message is this: you can lose weight if you get your S Factor hormones working properly.

How do you do that? Well, that's what this book is all about. Fill in a series of questionnaires to establish your unique needs. Then you can customize a food plan of delicious meals to suit you. And, I haven't just pulled this stuff out of thin air – I've perfected the S Factor diet after working with real weight loss clients. I know it works and I know it can work for you. Read on and learn the science behind the diet.



The S Factor Diet

Diets don't work, right? Old-fashioned ones certainly don't. They make us feel depressed, lethargic and, when our weight shoots back up again afterwards, fat! Only a former serial dieter (like me) can ever really know that crushing feeling of failure when you've fallen off another diet after a moment of biscuit madness or an hour-long fridge raid.

Now you can say "never again" to those awful negative feelings. The S Factor diet tackles the cause of overeating and cravings (hormonal imbalances), not just the effect (the dreaded muffin top). It's specifically designed to make you feel good about yourself, so you can forget the "diet blues" and feel motivated to eat well and exercise.



The S Factor Diet

Scientists now know that certain foods have a direct effect on the way we think and feel. The S Factor diet goes one step further. It is a diet designed to lift your mood, reduce your appetite and burn fat. Let's start with a few questions:

- Do you want to lose weight?
- Do you have a wardrobe full of clothes you can't fit into?
- Are you an emotional or comfort eater?
- Do you start diets and fall off them?
- Do you have a gym membership you never use?
- Do you crave chocolate, pasta or ice cream (especially at night)?
- Do you go out shopping for clothes, go into the changing room and when nothing fits end up buying a pair of shoes, handbag or a lipstick instead?

If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions, the S Factor diet is for you. It's been designed to help you lose weight by getting all your S Factor hormones working properly. These natural chemicals control how hungry you feel and how satisfied you are after eating. They can boost your mood, give you more energy and bump up your motivation. Most importantly, they can help you burn fat.

When You're Happy You Eat Less

Certainly it's possible to lose weight when you feel depressed. I was once dumped by a boyfriend in the middle of a busy high street. (He thought I wouldn't make a scene in public – how wrong he was!) Anyway, I was so devastated that I lived pretty much on Chardonnay for a month. I lost loads of weight and

people said I looked fabulous (I felt terrible). But, in the main, it's when we are happy that we eat less. We take the time to look after ourselves. When we are happy, we don't need to tranquilize ourselves with big bowls of pasta or huge slices of cake. Our appetite is reduced and our motivation to get up and do things is increased.

You Can Eat Yourself Happy

The S Factor diet is based on the scientifically proven link between certain hormones and the foods we eat. These amazing substances are produced naturally and in abundance by our own bodies. All we have to do is give our bodies the raw material to make them – just like putting petrol in a car. Once you are fuelled with the right amounts of these special hormones, you will have a reduced appetite, fewer cravings and more motivation to exercise. You may also burn fat more effectively, sleep better, your skin and hair could improve and PMS and other conditions such as PCOS and endometriosis may also be eased.

Sounds brilliant, so why haven't you heard about this before? Mainly, it's because the science is so new. The discoveries about leptin, one of the S Factor hormones I will talk about in this book, are literally being made as I write. In-depth studies on serotonin and dopamine, two other important S Factor hormones, have only really been possible since new brain imaging techniques were developed. These discoveries have shown that we all manufacture more S Factor hormones in the gut rather than in the brain. Therefore, there is a reciprocal connection between how we feel and what we eat – it's a two-way street.

The Science Bit

OK, now pay attention and no slouching at the back. I was not a big fan of chemistry at school, but the science of weight loss, now, that's a lot more interesting, isn't it?

If you have had a long battle with food, it is too easy to dismiss this lack of self-control as you being either weak-willed or crazy. I want you to understand that it is your physiology that has been driving this behaviour so that a) you can forgive yourself, and b) you can regain control over your eating. When you can do both, you will be able to lose weight and keep it off.

All together now, "Je ne regrette rien." Well, after two divorces I have quite a lot of, if not quite regrets, things I would quite like to sweep under a very large carpet. But, that's another story and another book. This one's about shrinking those thighs.

The S Factor Hormones

So what are these natural chemicals I like to call the "S Factor hormones" and how can they help you lose weight?

There are many hormones and neurotransmitters that impact on our weight. Some are produced by glands in our bodies, some by fat cells, some in the lining of the gut and some by chewing or stretching the stomach. Scientists are discovering new ones all the time. Each one promises to be the answer to weight loss. However, the truth is that hormones work together in complex ratios and rhythms. If one becomes depleted or dominant, it affects the others. This can cause weight gain.

This is why the S Factor diet is primarily a diet that balances hormones. The aim is to get all your S Factor hormones working well so they support each other and help you to lose weight.

This S Factor diet focuses on four key hormones because they have the greatest effect on mood, appetite and weight. They are:

- S Serotonin: The "Good-Mood" Hormone**
Good levels of serotonin make us feel calm, contented and cravings-free. Low serotonin affects sleep, makes us feel depressed and turns us into chocoholics.
- D Dopamine: The "High-Motivation" Hormone**
Dopamine is a chemical released in our brains in response to a reward or treat. Low dopamine weakens our resolve when the office feeder proffers cupcakes, and makes walking past the chocolate display in the petrol station a nightmare.

- L Leptin: The "I'm-Not-Hungry" Hormone**
Leptin tells our brain when we have enough body fat and then reduces our appetite and speeds up our metabolism to burn off any excess. That's what it's supposed to do, but as you become overweight, it stops working properly, so you feel fat and hungry.
- A Adrenals: The "Stress" Hormones**
This group of hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol, is pumped out by the adrenal glands. The right amount of adrenal hormones gives us energy. Too much and we become tired, wired fridge-raiders.

Serotonin

The “Good-Mood” Hormone

Serotonin is a neurotransmitter we all make in our brains. It helps us feel happy, contented and calm. Sounds fantastic but here’s the real kicker – some of us make more of it than others.

The really bad news, if you have no Y chromosome, is that women make less serotonin than men. You could argue this means we were born to be grumpy. Sorry, guys. And it gets worse. We make even less serotonin in the run up to our periods – cue PMS rage.

The reason for this is that serotonin and oestrogen are linked. When oestrogen drops in the run up to your period, so does serotonin. Chemists among you will spot another potential problem: menopause, or actually peri-menopause. This can start from about age 35 onwards, when our bodies get ready for menopause and our oestrogen production begins to slide. I see quite a few clients who say they’ve never had a problem with chocolate but now, at 39, they can clear a box of truffles in one sitting. Of course, I suggest the S Factor diet.

You Don’t Need Drugs

Doctors already know the power of serotonin. Anti-depressant drugs such as Prozac and Citalopram are known as selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SSRIs). They work to lift depression by prolonging and amplifying the effect serotonin has on the brain. But, SSRIs can have side effects. You can feel groggy and your sex drive can be affected.

The reason serotonin is important for losing weight is because low serotonin not only makes you feel depressed, angry, tearful and so on, it also makes you feel HUNGRY, hence the PMS munchies! But the right level of serotonin helps reduce stress and anxiety and

is a natural appetite suppressant. It also promotes sleep and that’s good news for leptin levels, which you can read about later in this chapter (see page 17).

For dieters, then, serotonin is the all-round, all-natural diet miracle “pill”. It turns down the volume of cravings, melts away emotional eating and basically makes you want to eat less. And the best bit is you can make it yourself for free!

Serotonin is made from the amino acid tryptophan, which you get from the food you eat. The best food sources of tryptophan include:

- Avocados
- Bananas
- Beans
- Chicken
- Eggs
- Fish
- Turkey

However, tryptophan is a small molecule and doesn’t easily enter the brain. Once you have eaten sufficient tryptophan-containing foods, you also need a bit of sugar to stimulate the release of the hormone insulin. This helps tryptophan get into the brain and do its job. This doesn’t mean you stuff yourself with Dairy Milk, but sweet things are not banned on the S Factor diet. Hooray!

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To find out if you may be low in serotonin, turn to the questionnaire on page 20.

Leptin

The “I’m-Not-Hungry” Hormone

Some of the most interesting research into why certain people gain weight and others don’t has focused on hormones produced by our own fat. These include metabolic hormones such as leptin and adiponectin. Leptin is the one we know most about. It tells our brains when we have enough body fat, triggers a drop in appetite and speeds up metabolism – burning up excess body fat in the process. Interestingly, leptin is also important for fertility, which is one reason why seemingly cruel doctors often tell IVF candidates they need to lose weight. They are not just being sizeist!

Leptin production follows a circadian rhythm, that is, it rises and falls over a 24-hour cycle. Peak production of leptin is at night, so if you work night shifts, travel through different time zones or have a young baby who keeps you awake in the wee hours, you may develop leptin problems and gain weight.

There are two problems with leptin that could be causing you to gain weight: leptin depletion, in which your fat cells can’t produce leptin, and more commonly, leptin resistance, in which you produce a high level of leptin but it doesn’t have the normal effect of telling you that you’re full. In both cases, your brain thinks you’re starving, so it increases your appetite and slows down your metabolism – when actually your jeans are getting tighter and tighter.

Conquer Your Appetite

The clearest indication that you may have an issue with leptin is feeling constantly hungry. Gaining fat round your middle is also a symptom. However, the symptoms of leptin depletion and resistance can also mirror those for polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS). These symptoms include spots and/or excess hair along your jaw line,

disrupted periods and poor blood sugar control – which you can spot if you feel dizzy or irritable when you don’t eat regularly. Also, look out for skin tags (benign growths) and something called Acanthosis Nigricans (AN). I had a client who showed me a sort of dark staining on her skin under her armpits. This was classic AN. It can also appear around your neck or in skin folds.

It’s a nightmare chicken and egg situation, where you need to lose weight to tackle leptin problems, but leptin problems make it difficult to lose weight. The answer? The S Factor diet, of course!

No specific foods help us make leptin. However, foods rich in resistant starch, such as oats, can help those with leptin issues, as resistant starch speeds up your metabolism and reduces your appetite. You can also utilize other appetite-controlling hormones, such as ghrelin. Ghrelin levels increase before meals and go down again after meals. One way to reduce ghrelin is to stretch the stomach by eating high-volume foods (those with high water and high fibre content). The best foods to stabilize leptin include:

- Beans
- Eggs and lean protein
- Green bananas
- Nuts and seeds
- Oats
- Oily fish

.....
To find out if you have a leptin issue, turn to the questionnaire on page 21.

Dopamine

The “High-Motivation” Hormone

Dopamine has a variety of functions in the body, playing a role in processes ranging from behaviour and cognition to heart rate and blood pressure. In terms of your weight, dopamine is essential as it can boost motivation, focus and impulse control. It’s also important for controlling “anticipatory pleasure” – or in other words, wanting something. Low levels of dopamine are associated with cravings. Good levels of dopamine help you stick to your diet, get you up and off to the gym and help you to plan and track your eating.

Dopamine production can be stimulated by drugs such as caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, cocaine and amphetamines, or even by falling in love. Sugary, fatty foods also hit the dopamine pathway in our brains. Less well-known is that adrenaline-fuelled activities such as extreme sports (bungee jumping “springs” to mind) can also push up dopamine levels. Those weird people who break records by repeatedly riding roller coasters may be subconsciously trying to balance their dopamine.

Beat the Sugar Rush

Riding the big dipper doesn’t sound too bad. However, chronic spiking of dopamine levels can result in you needing more and more of it to feel good. This can disrupt your eating habits as you end up eating more and more sugary, fatty foods to satisfy your cravings.

Low levels of dopamine may be responsible for compulsive behaviour and/or addictions (see page 15). Many of my clients had a history of club drugs in their teens, or an extreme work life in their twenties and now can’t stick to a diet. An American study published in 2010 in the respected *Journal of Obesity* confirmed a direct link between low dopamine levels and overeating.

Low dopamine is also associated with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). We know this is under-reported in adults and I often see clients who I think display traits of the disorder, including a lack of attention span and restlessness. They may also have a history of failed diets.

The key to good dopamine levels is prevention rather than cure. That is, you want to avoid over-stimulation of the dopamine pathway in the brain. If you already have an issue with dopamine, the best course of action is a combination of reducing stimulants such as tea, coffee and sugar, and eating foods that contain the raw material needed to produce dopamine.

Dopamine is made from tyrosine. The best food sources of tyrosine include:

- Almonds
- Bananas
- Fish
- Soy
- Watermelon

.....
 To find out if you have a dopamine issue, turn to the questionnaire on page 22.

Adrenals

The “Stress” Hormones

The adrenals are a pair of glands that sit on top of your kidneys. They pump out hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol in response to stress. This is important for your weight because too many of these hormones, in particular cortisol, cause you to store fat – especially in the dreaded muffin-top area.

Adrenal hormones can be stimulated by two types of stress: reactive and chronic. Reactive stress is caused by a particular event. For example, when you attempt to cross the road and a car comes screeching around the corner. Your heart pounds, your palms become sweaty and you may even feel slightly shaky. You may also shout something unmentionable at the driver because you experience a surge of aggression. Chronic stress is the low-level kind and sources can include bullying at work, a bad relationship, a long history of low self-esteem, being a worrier or being anxious about life in general. When you experience low-level anxiety, you feel fidgety and irritable, perhaps tired and slightly tearful. Your sleep may be disrupted. Most of all, you feel HUNGRY.

Keep Calm and Carry On

The stress/hunger connection is caused by over-activity in the deep limbic area of the brain – the area where emotional stress is processed. You may crave foods like chocolate that increase serotonin to compensate.

The adrenals are also responsible for salt balance in the body. When you are under stress, you may not only overeat, you may also crave salty, high-calorie foods such as peanuts or crisps. Plus, and here’s the flabby tummy double whammy – stress also makes you store more of the food you eat as body fat. Sorry....

It starts well enough. You have two types of fat: white and brown. White fat manufactures certain hormones such as leptin. Brown fat contains B3 receptors which are stimulated by adrenaline. Brown fat in turn stimulates something called thermogenesis (the burning of calories to produce body heat). So, a bit of stress may help you lose weight.

However, chronic stress has been associated with a severely high level of cortisol and increased fat storage. This unbalances blood sugar and leads to higher levels of adrenaline. More adrenaline means more cortisol and more fat storage and round and round it goes as you quietly inflate. But the story doesn’t end there. Once you gain weight, fat cells called adipokines act on the adrenals to produce yet more cortisol. This causes you to gain more weight, leading to more adipokines. Arrrrh!

The good news is that eating the right foods can help. First you need to keep your blood sugar stable to prevent overproduction of adrenaline and cortisol. Eating protein at every meal and minimizing carbs, especially sugar, is an excellent start. Your adrenals also require a wide variety of minerals, found in nuts, seeds and essential fats. Antioxidants and magnesium from colourful and dark-green veggies, and vitamin C in dark berries are also great. The best foods to nourish the adrenals include:

- Dark berries
- Dark-green and brightly coloured vegetables
- Nuts and seeds
- Oily fish
- Sea vegetables like nori seaweed

.....
To find out if stress is causing you to gain weight, turn to the questionnaire on page 23.

The S Factor 14-Day Diet

Rather than offering one standard meal plan, the S Factor diet is tailored to work for you. Your questionnaire results (see pages 20–23) should have revealed the right S Factor hormone plan for you. Whichever plan you follow, you could drop up to a dress size in two weeks.

Each plan is split into two stages. Phase 1 is the fast fat attack stage, while Phase 2 focuses on steadier weight loss and establishing your improved eating routine. If you have more than a dress size to lose, you can stick with Phase 2 until you reach your goal weight. If you're happy to lose weight slowly, go straight to Phase 2. Ready? Steady? Let's go!





"I set myself the challenge of creating a delicious loaf that was high in protein, but low in carbs."



Sunflower Seed Breakfast Loaf

MAKES: 5 servings

PREPARATION TIME: 10 minutes

COOKING TIME: 40 minutes

I love bread, but it can be a slippery slope to a sugar binge. One slice is never enough. This cottage cheese, soya flour and egg white loaf (honestly, it tastes good) is now one of my favourite recipes. Slice and freeze it to help with portion control.

400g/14oz/scant 1 $\frac{2}{3}$ cups reduced-fat cottage cheese
 2 egg whites
 120g/4 $\frac{1}{4}$ oz/1 cup soya flour, sifted
 2 tsp baking powder
 2 tsp caraway seeds
 a pinch of ground nutmeg
 a pinch of ground cinnamon, plus extra for sprinkling (optional)
 a pinch of fine sea salt
 50g/1 $\frac{3}{4}$ oz/scant $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sunflower seeds, plus 1 tbsp extra for sprinkling
 reduced-fat cream cheese, to serve

- 1** Preheat the oven to 160°C/315°F/Gas 2–3 and line a 450g/1lb loaf tin with baking parchment. Put the cottage cheese in a blender or food processor and process until a creamy paste forms. Transfer to a large bowl.
- 2** Whisk the egg whites in a clean bowl until they form soft peaks, then gently fold them into the cottage cheese, using a metal spoon.
- 3** Add all of the remaining ingredients and 1 tablespoon water and stir until well combined. Pour the dough into the tin and bake for 35–40 minutes until a skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean.
- 4** Turn the loaf out of the tin, transfer to a wire rack and leave to cool completely. Sprinkle with sunflower seeds and cut the loaf into 10 slices. Spread 1 teaspoon of cream cheese over each slice and serve sprinkled with cinnamon, if you like.

The S Factor Diet – Final Thought

Anyone who used to watch *The Jerry Springer Show* will be familiar with the point at the end of the programme when Jerry gave us his homespun “Final Thought”. I wanted to end this book with my own final thought, something that would encourage and inspire you.

I certainly would have liked someone in my corner over the years I spent battling food. Food obsession can be very isolating. The dialogue in your head about what you’ve eaten today, what you shouldn’t have eaten today, and what you’re not going to eat tomorrow can be all-consuming – especially if you keep it a secret from others.

I see lots of intelligent, successful people at my clinic who are in control of every area of their lives, except their eating habits. They keep their food obsession a secret out of embarrassment and shame. They feel powerless. I’ll tell you what I tell them: “You are not powerless”. Your power is just buried under a hormonal tsunami. Get your S Factor hormones working properly and you can regain your balance in every sense.

You’ll have to work at it, but the rewards come surprisingly quickly. Once your S Factor hormones are balanced, it’s amazing how the cravings recede. Take it one meal at a time and just do your best. You don’t have to be perfect. Good enough is good enough.

One problem many of my clients have is other people, as they come under pressure to eat foods that aren’t on their S Factor plan. My answer to this is to be polite, but

firm. There is a useful phrase to remember here: “No” is a complete sentence. You don’t have to explain or justify why you don’t want to eat that slice of pizza or chocolate cake. Just say, “no, thank you” and leave it at that.

The S Factor diet doesn’t come with a magic wand. Completing the programme doesn’t mean you’ll never want chocolate again. Our default settings are stubborn. When I take on too much, I very quickly spin into a vortex of stress – I stop looking after myself and I stop eating properly. Fortunately, I can now pull myself out of these whirlwinds pretty quickly. The good thing about having a bit of a blip is that when you go back to eating properly, you’ll discover all over again how much better you feel on the wagon than off it.

You will inevitably falter from time to time. But, as the saying goes, it’s a marathon not a sprint. If you do have a bad day, get right back on track the day after. The fantastic thing about your weight is that it’s one of the few things in life which will always give you a second chance, third chance, fourth chance. . . . Mess up in your job and you might get sacked, do something terrible to your partner and your relationship might be over. But when you eat a whole packet of biscuits, you can get up the next day with a clean slate and start again. It’s never too late to eat properly, to invest in yourself and to have the body you’d like to have.

Jerry used to sign off by saying, “Take care of yourselves and each other”. I’ll sign off by saying, “Be kind to your body – and yourself”.

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