

## Carson's Story - On My Edge

A teacher once told me that if I wanted to learn, I had to work on my edge. She meant it had to be slightly uncomfortable but not overwhelming. This was a new concept for me. I wanted only to operate in my comfort zone. I thought I could only learn if I felt totally safe and had no physical signs of anxiety, like heart palpitations.

But I always had heart palpitations. Three times a day, 5 times a day, I could depend on anxiety descending on me. There'd I'd be, minding my own business, not worrying about anything nor having bad thoughts and the racing would start. I felt my life was all about avoiding anxiety. My mother was so embarrassed by my fragility, she couldn't even talk about me in English. She would say I was experiencing *crise de nerfs* in her Brooklyn accent.

The panic attacks were just one small part of my problem. I was also allergic to everything, and I mean everything. At some point I finally became convinced that at least part of the problem could be fixed if I understood my body's relationship with food. I had done lots of allergy testing, with mixed results. Doing it the Suppers way, by food journaling, made more sense because it was all about my personal experience, not some laboratory score card. I resisted the process and finally only got on board because the choice was trying something new or medicating for panic attacks.

To make a long story short, I had to increase one kind of anxiety in order to reduce another. I did not want to keep track of what I ate. I did not want to face that I was drinking more than I thought, sneaking chocolate under my own radar screen, or lying to myself about how I used foods to adjust my moods. I did not want the information that stuck its tongue out at me from the pages of my food journal: The things I wanted most were the things that made me race; bread, peanut butter, and cheese.

Ultimately I just had to give up everything with gluten in it. As I stayed with the discomfort of food journaling, more relationships leapt off the pages at me. Day time fatigue was so easy to fix, like magic, once I realized I had to stop eating wheat. I could handle a little sugar, but peanut butter always made my head buzz. Coffee made me sweat, and anything at all after 7:30 messed up my sleep. I could fall asleep, but I couldn't stay asleep. Wine was OK but it had to be with food. And my absolute favorite food, a nutty granola, was like poison.

I am angry at my journal for telling me the truth. I'm also grateful because it told me which of my favorite things I could have in small quantities. Now when I get heart palpitations I know exactly which of my behaviors set me up for it. I'd much rather feel like a cheater than a victim.