Functional
FAT LOSS
ACADEMY

FASTER FAT LOSS:

Metabolic and Hormonal Harmony

BY KARA GOSS, MS, RDN, LDN, CPT

MY 4-PHASE PROCESS TO IMPROVE YOUR METABOLIC AND HORMONAL HEALTH TO ACHIEVE THE BODY OF YOUR DREAMS



START HERE TO GET

the Most Out of This Guide:

Click below to watch an important video from me before diving in!

WATCH THE VIDEO!

Section 1: INTRO

I'm Kara Goss, **a Functional Registered Dietitian, Certified Personal Trainer, Online Health and Fitness Coach, and the owner of the Functional Fat Loss Academy (known to our clients as FFLA!)** Since 2018, I've been working with women to optimize their metabolism, hormones, and gut health so they can finally lose fat, regain their health, and feel like themselves again. I've seen way too many women eating 1,200 calories per day, being told their labs are "normal" even when they feel off, and falling victim to the "all or nothing" mindset when it comes to food and fitness.

Personally, from a young age, I started trying to lose weight and "improve my health" through all of the **wrong methods.** I tried every fad diet in the book and was working out twice per day, only to end up right back where I started in the first place. I was constantly spinning my wheels. Little did I know, I was putting my body in an even worse place for fat loss and metabolic health throughout all of those restrictive attempts.

I've likely stood in your shoes at one point or another. I've struggled with weight loss, binge eating, my relationship with food and my body, post-birth control syndrome, hormonal issues, and more. **I know so deeply what it feels like to be frustrated with your health and body.**







Truth be told, it wasn't until I started fueling my body properly, digging into the **root cause factors** that impacted my metabolic health, and actually had a strategic plan that I started to see progress.

The reality of achieving fat loss and optimal health is that you don't need another diet like Keto, Whole 30, Beachbody, etc... you actually need to ditch the diets and **build a solid foundation** *first*.

EXPECTATION SETTING

Within this guide, we're going to touch on some complex topics, and it may feel overwhelming at times, but please know that I'm not just going to leave you here in the dust afterward. After you go through this guide, you will have the opportunity to get a **free assessment on your metabolic, hormonal, and gut health** -- as well as next steps to achieve your specific goals. But first, it's time to build the foundation for your health through this guide!

Let's

DIVE IN

I'm going to teach you my tried and true, **4-phase process** to improve your metabolic and hormonal health to achieve faster fat loss.

- **Phase 1: Assess**
  This is where we will identify the behaviors and habits that got you to the poor place you're currently at, and where you'll realize that there is a better way, without all the fad diets.

- **Phase 2: Restore**
  Next, we focus on building foundations through nutrition, exercise, and lifestyle to optimize your metabolic and hormonal health.

- **Phase 3: Transform**
  Next, with metabolic health in a solid place, we can start reducing calories to achieve fat loss.

- **Phase 4: Sustain**
  You've optimized metabolic health and massively improved your physique, now it's time to maintain those results in a sustainable way!

Section 2:

MY 4-PHASE PROCESS FOR METABOLIC AND HORMONAL HARMONY

PHASE 1: Assess

How are you supposed to know what to change if you aren't aware of your current "poor" habits? This phase is where we will begin to **identify the behaviors and habits that are contributing to where you're currently at** (and where you want to get out of). We will also identify what our main goals are for the future.

This phase includes assessing items like:

- Nutrition status (calorie intake, diet quality, macronutrient breakdown)
- Training status (frequency and type of training, step count, etc)
- Stress levels
- Sleep quality
- Relationship with food
- Biofeedback (hunger, menstrual cycle regularity, energy, strength, etc)
- Hormone + gut health status (through functional testing as needed)

The important thing to understand about the Assessment Phase, is that you need to have a **periodized approach** when planning for your fat loss goals. We cannot diet forever, as the body will experience physiological adaptations known as **metabolic adaptation.**

When we chronically diet or unintentionally undereat for extended periods of time, the body becomes very efficient at burning less calories per pound, and our metabolism starts to downregulate and adapt to our dieting attempts / loss of body fat. This is known as metabolic adaptation. Metabolic adaptation isn't a "bad" thing, it's actually a completely normal process that means your metabolism is doing its job to keep you alive. The issue occurs when we don't stop dieting.

What also happens here, is important hormones that regulate our metabolism, internal health, and body weight start to downregulate (thyroid hormones, leptin, sex hormones). We can also see cortisol begin to increase.

This can lead to a reduction in daily calories burned, decreased ability to lose fat / “plateaus”, lower energy levels, decreased ability to feel satisfied with meals, more difficulty gaining muscle, and dieting to extreme extents can cause issues with our thyroid, cortisol levels, menstrual cycle, and more.

So, how do we fix this? We enter into a **reverse diet.** Most of you will likely need to enter into a reverse diet and maintenance phase before going into a fat loss phase. This is the one component that most women skip when it comes to reaching their fat loss goals.

But, this can take time... usually more time than people want it to. This is why so many people fall into the trap of quick fixes and unsustainable diets, then regain the weight after. If you take the time to periodize your nutrition, and diet smart and sustainably, you won’t have to waste even more time trying to undo the issues that can be caused by chronic, restrictive dieting.



YOUR NEXT ACTION STEP:

Use an app (such as MyFitnessPal) to consistently track your nutrition intake for at least one week, but don't make any changes to your usual intake during this time. Simply track everything you consume in a day and be as accurate as possible.

After a week, figure out your average amount of calories consumed. If you're consistently eating from 1,000-1,800 calories, you likely need a reverse diet. If you're consuming 1,900-2,000 calories and above, you may be able to enter into a fat loss phase sooner.

CLIENT SPOTLIGHT: Rebecca

When Rebecca came to FFLA, she felt overwhelmed with trying to lose weight on her own for years, she was sick of jumping from diet to diet, and she had a poor relationship with food. After assessing the biggest areas we needed to focus on to improve her metabolic and hormonal health, she is down 60 lbs and continuing to lose!



PHASE 2: *Restore*

This phase is where we start to build that solid **caloric, metabolic, and hormonal foundation** so that we can go into a successful Transformation (or fat loss) Phase.

There are a few key components to this phase:

REVERSE DIETING / MAINTENANCE

Reverse dieting is exactly what it sounds like, the opposite of dieting! This is where we strategically and gradually raise calories up to a new, optimal maintenance level so that we can create small, positive shifts in hormones and metabolism. The key factor here is that you must spend enough time eating more, and be patient. You cannot jump right back into a calorie deficit once you've reached your maintenance calorie level.

Eventually, after spending enough time consistently eating at caloric maintenance (optimally, at least 3-6 months) and focusing on improving internal health, you'll be in a better place to diet successfully again.

YOUR NEXT ACTION STEP:

If you need to reverse diet, start by increasing calories up by 100-200 above where your average calorie intake was and stay there for 2-3 weeks. From there, based on your body's biofeedback, weight, and body composition, you will usually increase calories by 50-200 every so often. Sometimes this looks like 2 weeks, sometimes it looks like 6 weeks, it genuinely just depends on how you are progressing. Typically we focus on increasing calories mainly by increasing carbs and fats, because once we have protein in a solid place, we will keep our intake steady. Aim to consume 1.4 - 2.2 g/kg of bodyweight in protein daily. You will continue repeating this process until you hit caloric maintenance.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

We reverse diet slowly and strategically to minimize excess body fat gain, but that does not mean that you won't gain some weight during this process. **REMEMBER, the goal of reverse dieting is not fat loss, but to get the body to a more optimal place to be able to lose body fat.** Some people may gain a bit in a reverse diet, some people's weight may stay the same, and some may even lose. All of these are normal responses and individual to you. Either way, this is a very necessary process for many.

Nailing Your 5 PILLARS

These are the 5 pillars that we utilize inside of FFLA to improve hormonal, gut, and metabolic health.

1. Calorie Quantity + Nutrient Quality

- Consume an optimal amount of calories / the proper ratio of carbs, fats, and protein.
- Consume 1.4 - 2.2 g/kg of bodyweight in protein daily.
- Eat a varied, nutrient-dense diet (80-90% of the diet should come from whole foods).
- Consume at least 25-35 grams of fiber daily (my favorite sources are raspberries, golden kiwis, pears, chia / flaxseeds, chickpeas, carrots, beets, sweet potato, and avocado).
- Consume at minimum, half of your bodyweight in oz of water.
- Consume 4-5+ colors each day from veggies and fruits.
- Address any vitamin or mineral deficiencies (B vitamins, zinc, selenium, iron, magnesium, Vit D, Vit A, Vit C, and Omega-3s).

2. Movement

- Strength train 3-5x / week using a progressive overload training program.
- Utilize cardio as a tool to improve endurance.
- Optimize daily step count (focus on little ways you can increase movement).
- Focus on recovery from training (put a large emphasis on eating enough, taking an optimal amount of rest days, pre- and post-workout nutrition, mobility / stretching, de-loads, etc).

3. Stress, Mindset, and Sleep

- Improve sleep and circadian rhythm (managing light exposure, creating a nighttime routine, shutting down social media before bed, making sure you're in a comfortable sleeping environment, etc). Action Step: Start by creating a small, 5-10 minute morning and nighttime routine that consists of 1-2 things that truly relax you (journaling, reading, taking a walk, deep breathing, meditation, coloring, watching a favorite show, etc).

- Work on improving stressors and total allostatic load (overall mental stressors such as anxiety and worry, reactivity to stressors, relationship with food, toxin and endocrine disruptor exposure, time management, caffeine and alcohol intake, previous trauma, dieting history, social media use, toxic relationships, family burdens, boundaries, etc). Important Note: Living a stress-free life is quite literally impossible, but we CAN make our body more resilient to stress and assess what stressors are creating the most negative impact on our health.

4. Balanced Blood Sugar

- Aim for the majority of your carbohydrate intake to consist of complex carbs and fibrous sources (veggies, fruits, lentils, beans, etc).

- Consume a source of complex carb, healthy fat, lean protein, and fiber (fruit / veggie) at each meal.

- Minimize intake of "naked carbs" around snack time; always pair your carbs with a source of protein, fat, or fiber.

- Eat regularly (every 3-4 hours) and do not skip meals or go long periods of time with no food during the day.

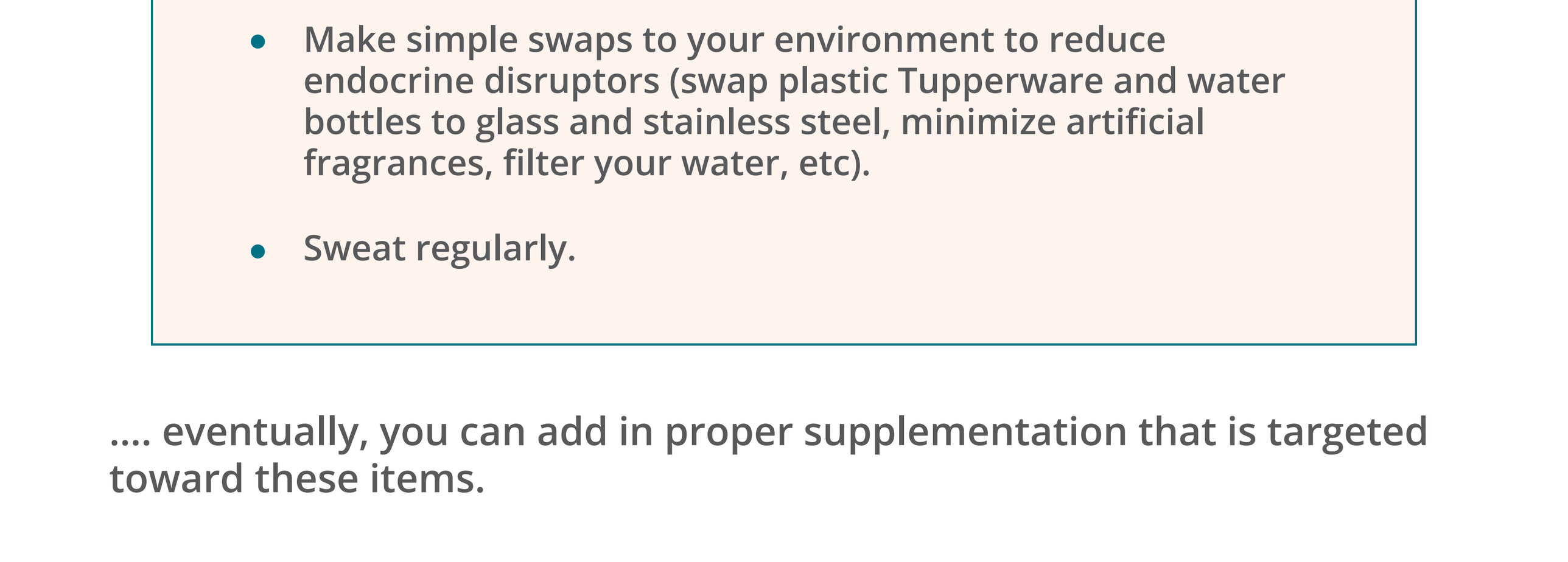
- Focus on Omega-3s from fatty fish, chia / flaxseeds, walnuts, and anti-inflammatory spices such as turmeric, cinnamon, and ginger.

- Increase resistant starch intake (cooked and cooled potatoes and rice, beans, lentils, overnight oats, etc).

5. Gut + Liver Optimization

- Eat in a parasympathetic state without any distractions and chew food thoroughly to a mashed potato consistency.
- Keep a food journal to address any underlying food intolerances.
- Take walks after meals to improve motility.
- Focus on pre and probiotic-rich foods.
- Ensure that you are having at least one bowel movement daily and if not, address this!
- Minimize alcohol consumption.
- Add in liver-supportive foods such as beets, berries, dark leafy greens, cruciferous veggies, garlic, turmeric, ginger, cilantro, and grapefruit.
- Make simple swaps to your environment to reduce endocrine disruptors (swap plastic Tupperware and water bottles to glass and stainless steel, minimize artificial fragrances, filter your water, etc).
- Sweat regularly.

.... eventually, you can add in proper supplementation that is targeted toward these items.



PRIMARY FUNCTIONAL ISSUES THAT MAY NEED TO BE ADDRESSED IN A RESTORE PHASE:

Hypothyroidism - The thyroid is our master metabolic regulator. Our active thyroid hormone (T3) acts as the "gas" for our metabolism. When we have sluggish thyroid function, this can lead to difficulty losing weight.

Cortisol Dysfunction - High or low cortisol levels can impact sleep, mood, sugar / salt cravings, and our immune system. High cortisol levels can also impact where fat is stored (primarily in the midsection) and water retention (leading to a higher number on the scale).

Blood Sugar Imbalance - You cannot balance hormones without balancing blood sugar. Imbalanced blood sugar can lead to insulin resistance, increased belly fat storage, and inflammation.

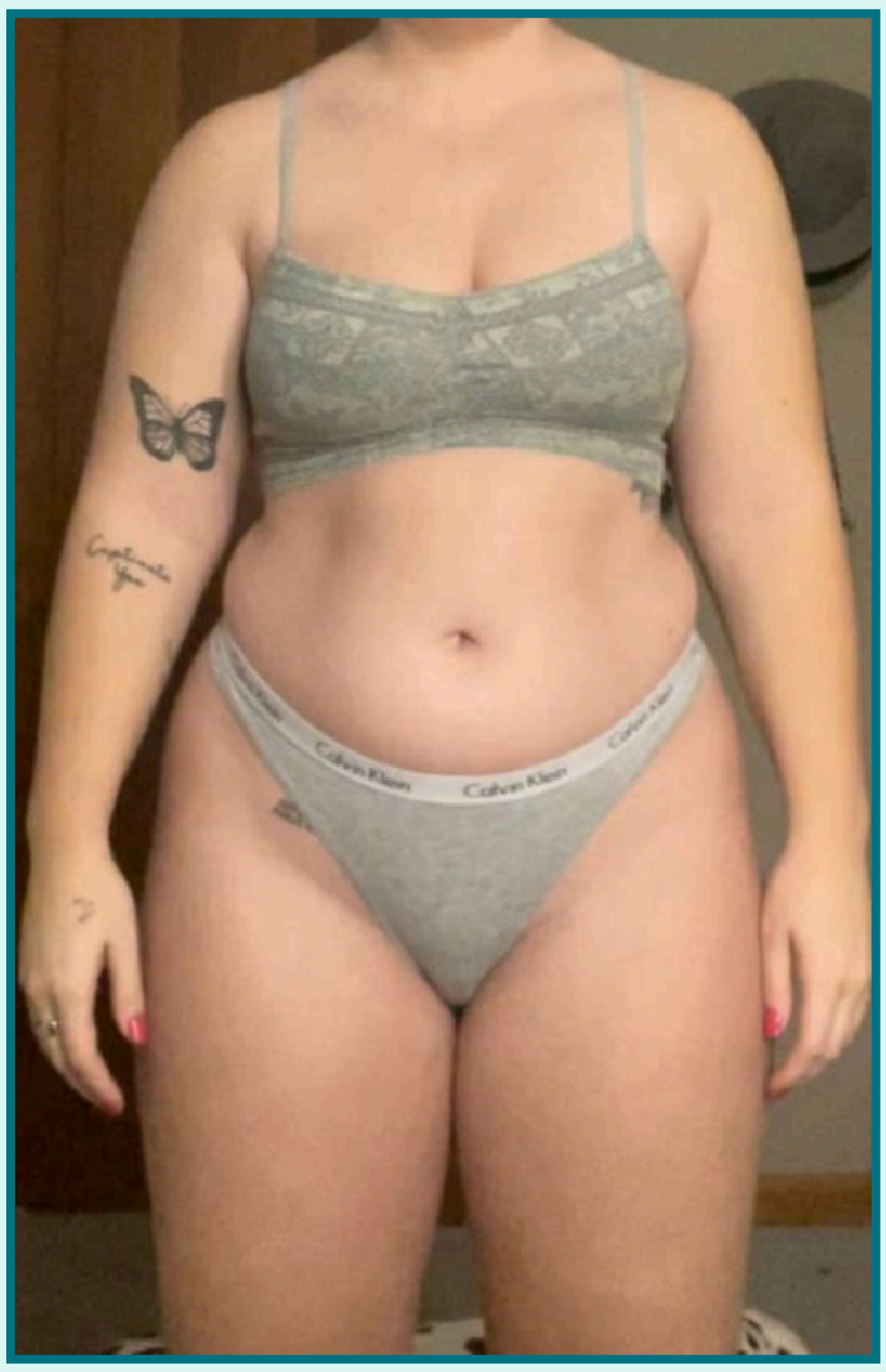
Sex Hormone Imbalance - This includes imbalances in hormones such as estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone. Any of these can lead to symptoms such as irregular periods, acne, headaches, hair loss, fatigue, and unwanted weight gain around the midsection.

GI Health - Poor GI health can lead to issues such as chronic bloating, constipation / diarrhea, brain fog, and can also influence many of the above hormonal imbalances, especially estrogen dominance and hypothyroidism.



CLIENT SPOTLIGHT: Aubrey

Aubrey came to FFLA struggling with Post-Birth Control Syndrome, weight loss resistance, insulin resistance, and a poor relationship with food. After going through a restoration phase to improve hormonal and metabolic health, this is the kind of progress we've been able to make: a near 40-lb weight loss, regulated periods, lower insulin levels, and a huge shift in her mindset / the way she cares for her body!





PHASE 3: *Transform*

The Transformation Phase is when we start really focusing on fat loss and **enter into a calorie deficit** (otherwise known as a fat loss phase). Now, don't be fooled -- you will start transforming in many positive ways during the Restoration Phase. But, this phase is where we will really start targeting fat loss.

Your fat loss phase needs to be approached strategically. This means that we need to have a general timeline of how long we're going to stay in a fat loss phase (remember, we can't diet forever!) Most fat loss phases will last around 5-8 months, depending on progress, biofeedback, and consistency. In most cases, we like to go with a minimum effective dose method when it comes to fat loss. This means that we're not going to just slash 500 calories away and add on a ton of cardio if we don't need to.

YOUR NEXT ACTION STEP:

Start by making gradual decreases to your caloric intake (usually 200-400 at a time) and increases to your exercise output (usually 1-2k steps at a time or one formal cardio session). When you hit a plateau, assess if you've truly been consistent with all of your variables first or if you may need a diet break / refeed before making any further adjustments.

Remember that you'll need to **have realistic expectations** when it comes to your fat loss goals. A normal amount of progress is losing .5-1.5 lbs per week, but this will be slower or quicker for some. Remember that fat loss isn't linear and the scale will not go down each week. What matters the most is trends over the longer period of time and your progress photos! Also, if you have a big weight / fat loss goal, it may take you more than one fat loss phase to reach that goal. This is normal! Also, keep in mind that having more muscle on your frame will improve your body composition, even if the scale is a bit higher than where you want it to be.

The name of the game during a fat loss phase is **consistency and getting comfortable with doing the "boring work"** day in and day out. Wake up, hit your variables, sleep, repeat.





CLIENT SPOTLIGHT: Rachel

Rachel came to FFLA feeling like she was doing all of the “right things” (strength training, eating mindfully, etc), but her weight would not budge. She also dealt with chronic digestive symptoms and wanted to be able to keep up with her son. After going through a transformation phase, Rachel was able to drop 30 lbs, have regular bowel movements, and build more endurance / strength than ever.





PHASE 4: *Maintain*

Maintaining your fat loss results is even more important than creating them.

Who wants to lose 20 lbs just to gain 30 back?! Not me.

The important part about the Maintenance Phase is that after the Transformation Phase, we have to get calories back up to a healthier place. **We can't keep calories low forever.** This is going to require (yes, another) reverse diet.

The reverse diet post-fat loss phase is arguably more important than the fat loss phase itself. Because again, we want to be able to maintain these results while getting calories back to a place where we can have flexibility with our lifestyle and where internal health can thrive.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

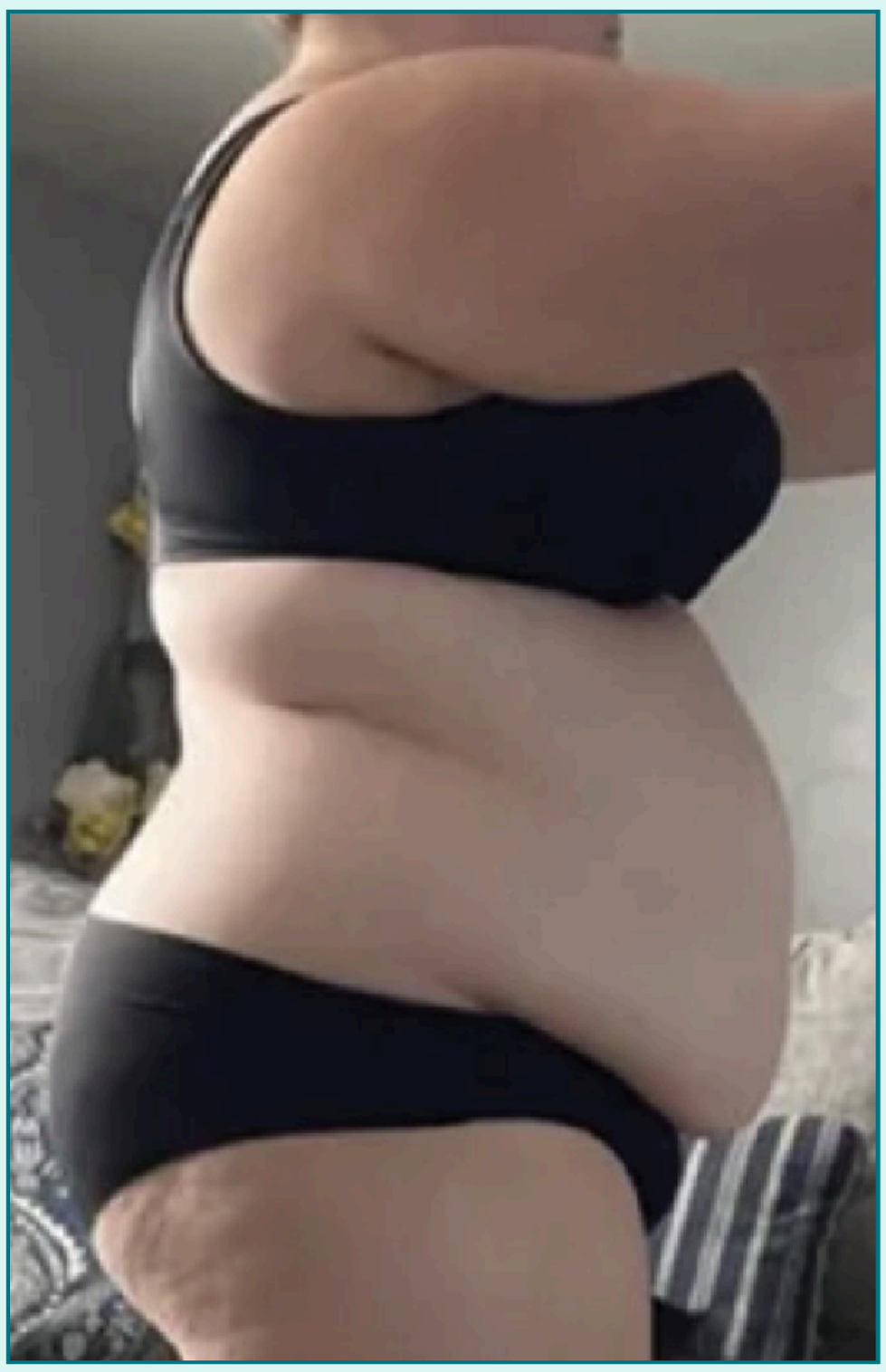
Your maintenance calories after a dieting phase may not be as high as they were prior to the dieting phase (sometimes they will, sometimes they won't). Also, you will gain a little bit of weight back during this phase (due to simply having more food in your body, your glycogen stores being fuller, etc). Say you have a weight loss goal of 70 lbs and you lose 40 lbs in the first fat loss phase. Then, during your reverse diet / maintenance phase afterward, you gain 7-8 lbs back while getting your calories back up to a more livable level. That's totally normal! You're still at a much lower starting point to now lose the rest of the weight. Reaching a big fat loss goal is often taking 3 steps forward and 1 step back until you get to the end goal. THAT'S WHY PLAYING THE LONG GAME IS SO IMPORTANT!

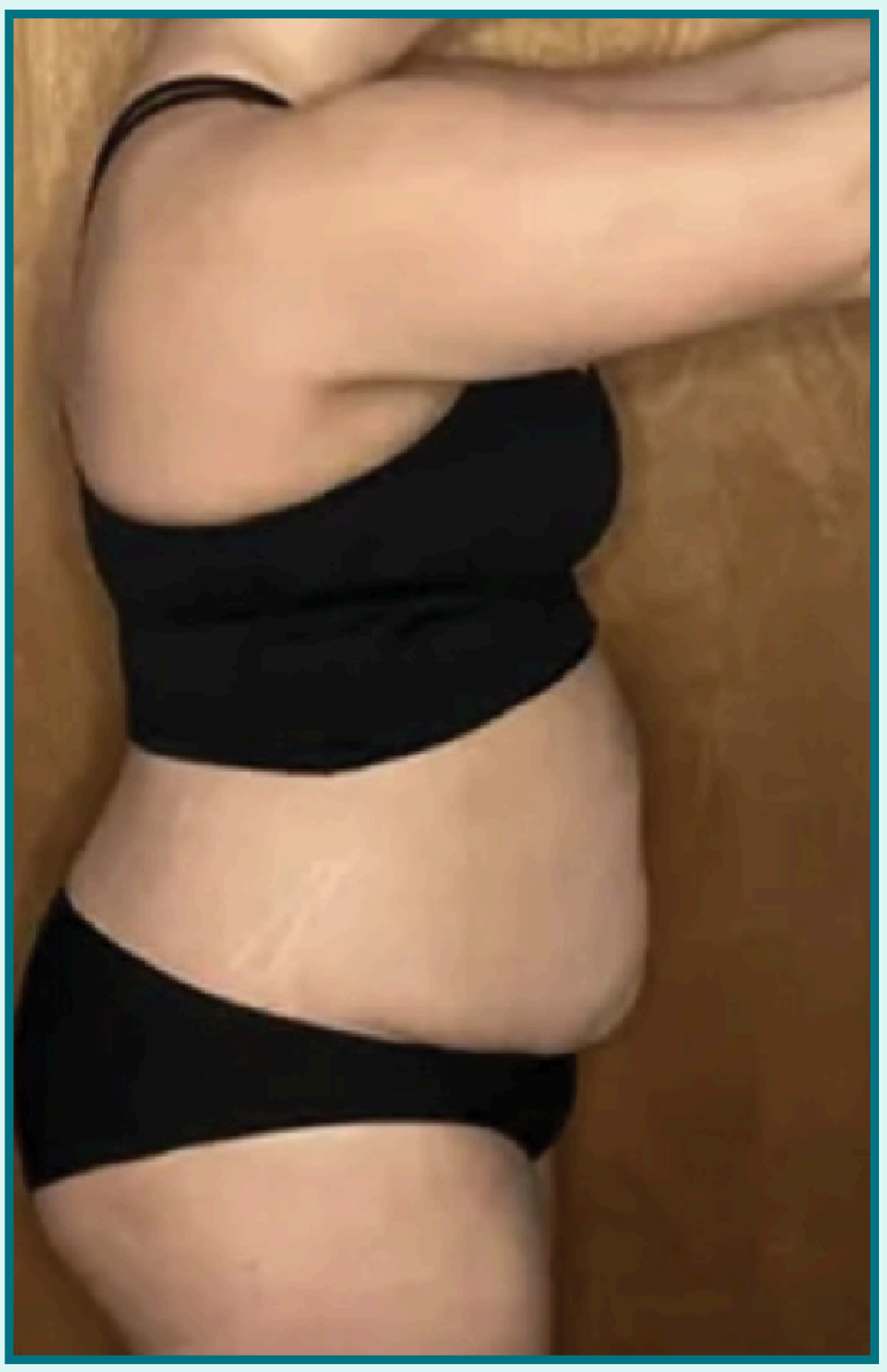
In this phase, you get to maintain the majority of your fat loss progress while having more flexibility for life (vacations, social events, holidays, etc!) And now, you ultimately get to decide where you want to go from here! We also want to ensure that we spend more time in a maintenance phase than we do in a fat loss phase.



CLIENT SPOTLIGHT: Sara

When Sara first joined FFLA, she had been undereating and restricting for years, struggling with PCOS symptoms, and was sick of the same old “eat less, move more” advice from her doctors. Sara has been through multiple restoration and transformation phases, and has now built the skills to maintain her weight loss results!





Section 3:

YOUR HORMONAL AND METABOLIC ASSESSMENT PHEW! YOU MADE IT!

Like I said in the beginning of this guide, I know that this is a lot of information for you to take in all at once. It's also important to note that everyone is different and will need a slightly adjusted approach to reaching their fat loss goals and improving metabolic health based on their needs.

Instead of having you guess and hope that how you're going about this is correct, I'd love to do it for you, for free.

This way you'll know EXACTLY what YOU need to be doing for your lifestyle to lose body fat easily and optimize your metabolic and hormonal health.

So, I'm offering you a completely free **Metabolic and Hormonal Health Assessment**. Here's how to know if this is for you:

Move forward with this free assessment if:

- You struggle to lose fat and feel like your metabolism is "broken."
- You have hormonal imbalances or symptoms that are negatively impacting your quality of life.
- You have an "all or nothing" mindset when it comes to food and fitness.
- You're constantly losing and regaining the same 20 lbs year after year.
- Your doctor has told you that all of your blood work is "normal", but you still don't feel like yourself.
- You struggle with issues such as hypothyroidism, PCOS, insulin resistance, constipation, bloating, cortisol dysregulation.
- You're always fatigued, have terrible periods, headaches, can't sleep, and are experiencing hair loss, etc.

Fill Out Your Free

METABOLIC AND HORMONAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT BELOW!

CLICK HERE: LET'S GET TO THE ROOT!

Once you complete this assessment, I will personally review your metabolic and hormonal health status and reach out via text within 48 business hours to discuss your next best steps in reaching your goals!

Thank you so much for being here, chat soon!

