

FROM CRAPPY TO HAPPY

**THE NAKED TRUTH
ABOUT LIVING WITH CELIAC DISEASE**

GlutenDude



From Crappy to Happy: The Naked Truth About Living with Celiac Disease

Gluten Dude

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A Word from My Lawyer (Just kidding. I don't have a lawyer but please read anyway.)

I'm not a doctor. I've never played one on TV. Heck...I've never even stayed at a Howard Johnson's. My point? For ANY and ALL medical questions and issues, find yourself a good doctor. Yes, they can be few and far between but keep searching until you find one that will LISTEN to you. You don't want to get medical advice from a blogger, just like I wouldn't ask my doctor questions about running my blog.

To recap:

Got medical questions = doctor

Got questions about LIVING with celiac disease = I'm your guy

Introduction

Hi. My name is Gluten Dude. What's yours? (Isn't that what you're supposed to do in an introduction?)

I run a very popular blog over at GlutenDude.com. I've been at it since 2011 after my celiac diagnosis several years earlier.

Before we kick things into gear, I'm sure you have some questions. Like who I am (*a work in progress*), why I wrote this book (*to help YOU*), what you can get out of reading it (*peace, love and understanding*), and most importantly, how it will help you kick celiac's butt. And kick it you will.

That's what the opening chapters are all about.

Enjoy.

Who the Heck is Gluten Dude?

Who am I? Darn good question. Been asking myself the same question since the day I was born.

As it relates to this book and my mission, I'm someone who's been gluten-free since 2007 due to a diagnosis of celiac disease, where the doc said my numbers were "off the charts". I'm someone who can steer you in the right direction when it comes to going gluten-free. And I'm someone who will always give you the naked truth about living with celiac disease. I didn't find freedom, a better life or any of that other crap when I got diagnosed. With all due respect to Hunter S. Thompson, I found fear and loathing of an unknown world. But if I can share my wisdom, tell my stories and make the transition easier on you, I've done my job.



Yep...that's me

As it relates to my celiac, I was actually one of the luckier ones. My symptoms were not as bad as many in the celiac community. I did not grow up feeling "sick" like so many others did. Although looking back, I now see a lot of health issues over the course of my life that I am convinced are celiac related. But for the most part, I was pretty normal (though my parents may seriously beg to differ!)

My main symptoms started about a year before my diagnosis and consisted mostly of constant stomach pains. Every night, I'd lie in bed complaining that my stomach hurt. And every night, Mrs. Dude would implore me to go to the doctor. And every night, I'd say "Oh...I'm fine." But after about a year of this, and losing 15 pounds on an already pretty slim frame, I decided to go to a recommended GI in Princeton, NJ.



That's also me...the week of my celiac diagnosis...dressed as Britney Spears.

Being the organized soul that I am, I kept a food journal for a week before my appointment. What did it consist of? A bagel here and there; a few bowls of pasta; a few beers. I thought I was being pretty healthy. The doctor took one look at my journal and my symptoms and asked me if I had ever heard of celiac disease. I had not. He said that I need to get tested ASAP.

The blood work came back first and he said they were the highest numbers he'd ever seen (I wish they said that about my SAT scores!!). He told me this as I was on the table about to get my endoscopy. So before I was put under, I pretty much knew. When I awoke, he said the villi in my intestine were pretty much gone and I indeed had celiac disease...quite badly.

And so my journey began. And what a journey it's been (and will continue to be). They say that life is not about what happens to you, but how you react to what happens to you. That, to me, is the key to adjusting to this insidious disease. You can let it beat you or you can fight it back.

This book is all about taking the fight to celiac. And winning the battle.

A Word From Jennifer Esposito: My Friend & Fellow Celiac

Dude note: I swear I didn't pay her to write this.

Being diagnosed with celiac disease after 20+ years of unexplained illness was actually a very happy day for me. I FINALLY had answers. What I didn't know is that the journey to healing had just begun. I may have had a diagnosis, but answers? Not so much. It seemed the medical community didn't really know what to say to someone like me who was having so many seemingly "unrelated" symptoms even after their prescription of choice, eating gluten-free. That is when I turned to the only people who spoke my language, the celiac community. I felt as though I had been dropped on Mars and finally found people that felt as lost as I was. We had the same pain, the same fears, the same struggle and mostly the same journey.



Enter Gluten Dude.

I was asked to speak at a gluten-free brand event about a year into my new celiac life. I was so happy to start speaking about all I learned and so wanted to help others struggling. I quickly realized that there was this slow rumbling that I could feel that was about to explode about "gluten-free" products, which meant lots of money for brands ready to offer these items.

With my very short time slotted on stage, 2 minutes I believe, the event suddenly became about gluten-free bread and NOT about the disease at all. I remember sitting with the gentleman in charge of THE brand and said, “I think you need to rethink your ingredients”. I talked his ear off for about 45 minutes as to why. He just stared and nodded. He was frightened for sure.

You see at this point I knew that eating gluten-free was not enough and that we needed nutritious food to eat and be safe! But again I felt as though I was wandering alone through the forest with my ideas for health at this event that was geared towards making money.

Until — this nice, somewhat cautious, almost arrogant guy walked up to me and introduced himself as Gluten Dude. He told me that he had a blog and that he was moved by my story and wished he could have heard more of it. He went on to say that sadly many of these events aren't really about our disease and how to make a better healthier piece of bread, but rather more about making money.

Looking at me, almost judging my reaction, I remember thinking to myself, wow good for him!! He was the first person I had met at this point in my journey that was on the same page as I was. He took celiac disease seriously as I did and knew the frustration it brought when others made it about something else than what it was, a disease.

He was also now looking at ME almost judgmentally, almost as if to say, “So what's your agenda?”

(Dude note: I really need to work on making a better first impression.)

He wasn't impressed by some “celebrity” talking about celiac, but more importantly what was my real goal now. Would I help or make things a lot worse for the community? He almost was standing at the gates, seeing if I was allowed in. He was actually protecting you folks, the celiac community, from more bullshit. I loved every minute of it. He then asked if he could

interview me for his blog and I happily agreed. That day I went home and researched him and read his entire blog. I loved his attitude. I also saw that he pulled no punches with his interviews and I was ready.

To make this very long story a bit shorter, I braved his interview and on his next outing to NYC we set to meet up. We sat, also with his wonderful wife Deb, aka Mrs Dude, and spoke for hours!!!! We spoke of our hard journeys, our fears, what we conquered and what we still had to overcome.

We spoke of food and the issue with the boxed chemicals we were offered and what we could do to help. I liked these people; **really liked them.**

Simply put, he was a human being being human in wanting to help another who was struggling, because he had been there. That's it. No agenda, no big game plan, no scheme to make millions. Just wanted to help.

And he has.

The thousands who read his blog and also myself. He has helped me in more ways than I can write here and I am so happy that I was diagnosed with this crazy thing called celiac that day. If I hadn't been, I would have never met one of the greatest, greatest people, I'm so happy to call my dear friend in my life.

(Dude note: No I'm not crying...I'm just eating an onion sandwich, I swear.)

Why I Wrote This Book

Why am I writing a book at this time? What do I hope to get out of it? Who is it for? Lotsa questions...I get it. So let's get some answers; self-interview Dude style.

So you're writing a book. Why now?

Short answer? I want people to learn from the ups and downs and ins and outs of my celiac journey, which basically is what this book is.

Longer answer? I started my GlutenDude.com blog in October 2011. Since then I have written over 650 articles and the site has generated over 35,000 comments. I've written about a huge variety of topics, all regarding living with celiac disease. That's tons of material that needs to be seen by those in the celiac community who are looking for **honest guidance** (I don't sugarcoat things...at all).

The problem is that a lot of that material gets lost in the mix and may never be seen unless someone reads the blog from start to finish, and let's face it, ain't no one has the time for that. And there is some seriously helpful / entertaining / important / educational / emotional articles that can benefit a lot of my fellow celiacs so they know what to expect and how to manage all aspects of their disease.

Although I have a pretty large social media and blog following, I know there are thousands upon thousands of fellow celiacs who have never heard of me or read my articles. So I am taking the best of the bunch and throwing in some new commentary as well. The bottom line is that I want to reach the

biggest audience possible to make as much money, I mean to help as many people, as possible.

How would you say your blog, and hence this book, is different from other celiac-related blogs and books?

Can we take a potty break?

No.

Fine. Like I said, I started my blog in October of 2011. Previous to my launch, I followed a lot of other gluten-free bloggers and I just felt there was a space that needed to be filled. There were, and still are, many talented bloggers in the celiac community. But the majority of them focus on the gluten-free diet aspect of the disease via product reviews, recipes, etc. I wanted to talk about the DISEASE and more specifically the realities of LIVING WITH THE DISEASE. Also, many of the blogs I read talked about how their lives drastically improved as soon as they gave up gluten. That certainly did not apply to my situation and I've heard from many celiacs over the years who have told me that it didn't apply to them as well.

So I wanted to be a voice that said *"Hey, you know what...celiac really sucks...here's all the crap we have to deal with...let's share our stories...find some sanity...get healthy...and make the journey together."*

So many celiacs in our community are lost. They get their diagnosis and the only instructions they receive from their doctor is: Don't eat gluten (thanks Doc). So we walk out of the doctor's office a bit terrified of our new life in front of us, but feeling a bit relieved that *"Hey...all we need to do is give up gluten and we'll be fine."*

But damn...here I am, 8 years after my diagnosis, and all I can say is that's just not the way it is. There is SO MUCH more to our disease than simply living gluten-free.

So you think you're filling a true need within the celiac community?

Absolutely. I would not write the book if I didn't. I realized that we need something that covers all of the emotional, social and physical aspects of living with celiac disease. We need something so that those newly diagnosed with celiac disease or those struggling with their disease have a go-to resource on how to best cope with their new life. We need something that is straight-up honest about our disease, with a lot of snark thrown in for good measure. We need something that tells celiacs *"hey...if you want to heal quickly...DO NOT make the same mistakes I made."* We need...we need...we need...

THE NAKED TRUTH ABOUT LIVING WITH CELIAC DISEASE

Ok...I got it. So it's basically a handbook, or an instruction manual if you will, on living with celiac disease?

Exactly. This is essentially my journey through the ups and downs of this pain-in-the-ass disease. Look at it almost as a diary of my fun life with celiac disease. I'll provide specific guidance for those newly diagnosed and who are pretty much scared sh*tless...cause we've all been there. I'll talk about the pitfalls and how-to's of eating outside the comfort of your own home...and which spots to avoid even though they claim to be "gluten-free". I'll talk about how having the right attitude is an absolute necessity when dealing with celiac. I'll delve into how celiac can affect your relationships and how to navigate the sticky situations. And yeah...I'll even throw some celebrity juice in there, cause lord knows for the most part, they have not helped our cause.

How is your book formatted?

I struggled with how to organize the book. There is A LOT of content on my blog. I only wanted to bring the most pertinent information over. On top of that, my journey, especially when it comes to eating, has really changed over the years. As I put this book together, I realized in the beginning how much my blog was about my frustration with my disease,

mostly because I was eating “gluten-free” and not eating “right”. And yes...I’ve learned there is a huge difference.

So on top of focusing on how we should eat so we can heal, I thought it would be interesting to break each section down by topics (eating right, eating out, relationships, the right attitude, etc.) and for the most part listed by date as well. And where I want to add some current notes to an older article, I will mark them with “2017 Gluten Dude”.

And one last item: My articles are really only a part of my blog. What makes my blog really shine are the comments on each post left by the community. As I mentioned above, over 35,000 comments so far. Even though the comments are so incredibly valuable and helpful (and pretty dang entertaining at times), I didn’t want to add the comments to this book, so at the end of each article (where applicable), I will add a link to the original blog post so people can read the comments if they so desire. And I seriously suggest it. This way, whoever is reading this book will have the opportunity to learn from thousands of other celiacs and not just me. It’s a true team effort in the Gluten Dude community.

Oops...one more question. How long is it?

You have somewhere to go?

No...just curious.

The print version is 258 pages.

Anything else we need to know?

Nope. Just sit back, get cozy, grab a gluten-free drink and we’ll take this crazy ride together. Trust me...you don’t want to go it alone.

You like me! You really, really like me!!

A little shout out in the title to Sally Field when winning the Oscar. If you don't know what that means, it just confirms the fact that I'm old. Anyway, I thought I'd throw in a few testimonials from my fellow celiacs. I don't do this to stroke my own ego (well...not really anyway). I do it so you can see that my blog and the GD community (and hence this book) has helped so many and can help you too. That's what I'm here for. (And by the way, that may be a total misuse of the word "hence". But I thought it made me sound mature, which is most likely a lost cause at this point.)

"Like John Lennon coaxing Prudence from her room, Gluten Dude asks other celiacs to come out and play. With acerbic wit, candor and a touch of rebellion, he's sharing his journey and he's enticing the celiac community to do the same."

"If you would have told me 18 months ago how blessed I would be by stumbling onto Gluten Dude's blog one frustrated day – I would have laughed and said "no way." Now, I sit here reading all these names I have grown attached to and think "HOW WOULD I DO IT WITHOUT THEM?" Their stories resonate with me and I don't feel like the odd woman out."

"I know I can't wallow and feel sorry for myself forever but I literally bawled my eyes out reading your blog because someone finally was being honest and understood and wrote the truth. So thank you so much!"

“Thank you – you beautiful soul – for providing the only place on the planet where I can sit in tears and say...damn this disease. It is the only place where with not an ounce of self pity, we can just say FUCK THIS.”

“Thank you, thank you, thank you. I can’t say it enough. Your knowledge and honesty is like a life raft in an unknown and terrifying ocean.”

“You have made me laugh and cry and everything in between and I’m only two weeks into your blog!!!”

“The blogs, comments and links from you and others in this community have given me much of my life back. Thank you!”

“I applaud you, Gluten Dude, for giving us Celiacs a place where we can chat, complain, celebrate and laugh at our all too real struggles.”

“You just made me weep in the frozen food aisle of the grocery store while I wait for yet another prescription for our ever-sickly children! Thank you Dude!!!! You rock!”

“I had to let you know how much help your blog has been in getting my husband to understand better what it is like to have Celiac. For the first time in 14 years I found a place where I feel “normal”. Thanks GD.”

“I want to thank you for being so honest and supporting a gluten-free community that uses their knowledge and power for the good of the community. You are fighting the good fight sir and I appreciate you more than my words can really say.”

“Thanks for the balanced approach, whether it is funny, sad, angry, silly or loving. We have all been through the emotional roller coaster. I look forward to hearing the real voices of the folks who comment here. You bring out the best in all of us! Thanks Dude!”

“I don’t subscribe to your blog so that you can lie to me or convince me to try different products. I subscribe because your humanity shines through my computer screen and I think you are just like the rest of us.....and on any given day that changes.”

“You are like tonic to the gut, bubbling with humorous dialogue to cure the sad soul of any celiac needing attention. I am lifted from my moody mornings into hope for our future in a healthy community as I read your lines and the comments they generate.”

“Thank you for always giving us information, sharing your experiences, and generally helping us all feel that we aren’t crazy!!! I appreciate you, Dude!!! Keep up the good work.”

“You make me smile, you make me cry, and you make me mad. But, most of all, you make me grateful that I don’t have to figure this all out on my own.”

“This blog just stopped me from going over the edge. Thank you!”

“This place feels to me the same way walking into the back door of my childhood home does...acceptance and understanding from my people!”

“Your take on things is amazingly refreshing. I learn more from you than from the dozens (hundreds?) of other gluten-free blogs on a regular basis. You done good, Dude!”

“I Googled “fuck celiac” and found my way to your blog. Thanks for blazing the trail. My life is better for your efforts.”

“Gluten Dude, you really have impacted our two year ride with Celiac Disease. You reflect such a realistic view on this disease.....while no one else understands, you and the people who gather here, make me feel just a little bit less crazy! THANK YOU!!!”

“Your latest post is why my son wants to be Gluten Dude when he grows up.”

“I came across your Blog today and you had me in tears!!!! Tears of recognition that other people go through these frustrations, tears of laughter through understanding and tears of pain as I go through all of your contributors rants and rages!!! THANK YOU!”

“Keep rockin’ Gluten Dude. You are changing the world for us.”

Rejected Book Titles

Before I decided on the final title of this book, I reached out to my awesome Facebook community and asked for some suggestions. I got 280 responses. Gotta love it. Here are some of my favorites.

- Celiac Disease: The Good, The Bad, The Poopy
- Celiac Blows
- Celiac Disease: Understanding the Misunderstood Condition
- Celiac Disease: Shootin' the Sh*t
- Celiacs Can Eat More Than Just Celeriac
- Celiac Disease: Managing Life In and Out of the Bathroom
- Celiac: The Nitty, Gritty, and Sh*tty
- Eat, Pray, Hurl – An Honest Account of Living with Coeliac
- Celiac Disease: Truth, Lies and Gluten
- Celiac Disease: The In's & Out's (LITERALLY)
- From Plate to Toilet: A Celiac's Handbook
- Celiac Disease: Do You Have the Guts?
- The Ryes that Bind
- Celiac – It's Not Just a Pain in the Ass
- From Crappy to Happy: Learning to Deal with Your New Celiac Diagnosis

- Gluten Dude's Celiac Disease Survival Guide
- No...I Can't Just Eat a Salad!
- Pucker Up, Celiac Disease: Everything You Were Afraid To Ask and More?
- Gluten Wars: Return of the Villi
- Hold the Croutons!!
- Celiac. What the Bleep do I do Now?
- Celiac Disease: Fork Gluten
- Defloured (*Dude note: I used this one as one of the chapter titles*)
- Celiac Disease, No it isn't the Cool Trend
- Grab a Stool, Let's Talk Celiac

Yeah...they're a creative bunch!

Advice for the Newly Diagnosed (and Those Still Struggling)

The goal of this book is not only to educate and entertain, but to empower; to give those newly diagnosed the strength, confidence and knowledge they need to get busy living. To that end, I asked my celiac community the following question:

What advice would you give to the newly diagnosed? Not necessarily what foods to avoid because anybody can look that up. But what have YOU learned from living with celiac disease that you wish you knew when you were first diagnosed?

Dude note: If you read nothing else in this book...you just wasted \$10. Just kidding. If you read nothing else in this book, please read this section, as it will help you avoid the rookie mistakes we all make and it will make the transition to your new life with celiac a hell of a lot easier.

Here is some of the spot-on advice they offered:

- From day one, your illness will be trivialized. From the doctors who diagnose you, who can make it seem that going gluten-free is the easiest thing in the world, to anyone you speak to who tell you “there are so many gluten-free things on menus now, there’s never been a better time to do it” (like it was a choice), to the waiters that roll their eyes at you. Rise above it.

- It is surprising and alarming how many food professionals have absolutely no idea what they are putting into their food.
- Some symptoms will lift immediately. For me, the migraines (which I didn't realize were related until after they stopped), the extreme bloating and pain ceased very quickly. Others will take a while. Be gentle. Know that your body will take a while to recover and that is OK.
- A lot of people go "Gluten Free" for weight and diet reasons. You very well could gain weight. I personally have been severely underweight for a long time. I gained 7.5 kilograms (16.5 pounds) when I stopped eating gluten. Roughly 15% of my body weight. Even though I was now eating a lot less, my body had not been absorbing what I had been eating. Weight gain was a very unexpected side effect!
- There will be a break down of some or many of your relationships. This illness can be debilitating and socially ostracizing. Either you will tire of the people who tell you how they eat gluten-free for "health reasons" and its SOOOO easy, or they will tire of you, because you are now a "burden" at social engagements.
- You will spend a lot of time apologizing for your illness. Over time you will stop doing this, but particularly in the beginning you will feel like a burden. Sometimes its easier not to eat than it is to "cause a fuss." If any one makes you feel like this – it's easier to remove them from your life than it was to remove gluten so feel free to do that.
- Research has indicated that there are significantly higher levels of depression and anxiety among those with Celiac Disease, in particular young adults. Celiac disease is 24 hours a day, with no end in sight. Most days it is OK, and you get used to it, but you cannot switch it off, you are constantly in a state of high alert, because anything that you put in your mouth can make you sick. More knowledge and awareness and

comfort will lessen this, but it will never go away. Do not let it consume you.

- Check the ingredients of EVERYTHING. Gluten is a filler and hides in the most unexpected places. Some recent places that I have found it – Oral Contraceptive pill, Cold and Flu Tablets, and other medicines. Again – ignorance from medical professionals mean that you can and will still be prescribed tablets that contain gluten. Always always always double check.
- You WILL start to feel better. Your eyes will become clearer, the fog that you felt in your mind will lift, the migraines will end, the pain will end, any nutritional deficiencies you had will even out.
- There is something empowering about knowing that you don't have to take medication, and you can (to a large extent) control this illness.
- While you will lose some relationships, you will gain others. You will gain a new appreciation for people who have a basic respect and thoughtfulness for you, and the little things will become big things.
- There will be some long days, and hard weeks that turn into months, but you will discover a strength you didn't realize you had, and instead of feeling isolated, and isolating yourself, you will search deep into your own soul and the values of those around you, and surround yourself with people who make you feel exactly how you should – that celiac can suck, but it is not your fault, you are not a burden and you are not alone.
- Knowledge is POWER especially with this disease. I was diagnosed 6 years ago and I can say with 100% certainty that it does in fact get easier and better every single day.
- Attitude is everything in this journey and there's no other way to say it.

Keep your chin up, don't apologize for having a disease that is out of your control and find new foods you enjoy that are also healthy for you.

- Stay away from the processed foods as much as possible. Fresh fruits and vegetables, meats, cheeses, wine, etc. are all gluten-free and fantastic! Keep it simple and learn to enjoy whole foods.
- You will link so many different problems to Celiac that arise. Issues that you thought were separate and just how your body works... good chance they're part of the effects of the disease. I thought Celiac was mostly my dermatitis herpetiformis...turns out it's linked with fatigue, nerve and mood issues, insomnia, cramping, bloating, etc.
- It's a learning curve. Take it slowly and build on your knowledge base. You will make mistakes, and they will be painful. You learn from them though and move forward until it's second nature.
- It is so important to be your own advocate. If you think something is wrong, FIGHT for your doctors to hear you. I was almost not diagnosed because of my doctors. If your doctor isn't listening to you, it's time to find a new doctor.
- Life goes on, but gluten stays behind – You are going to feel angry, frustrated, and nervous after finding out you now can't eat some of your favorite foods, and while you may think "life as you knew it is over," you need to change your mindset and focus on what you CAN eat verses what you no longer can. It will make a huge difference.
- It takes TIME – Nothing comes easy or fast, and you'll realize that with this diagnosis. Patience is probably the hardest part because you just want to feel better NOW. Take it one step at a time, and know that things will start to become second-nature to you quicker than you thought!
- If you don't love cooking, learn to love it. Start experimenting with

different ways to prepare foods that are very tasty to you. Also, don't take any food for granted. I made a lot of mistakes along the way eating foods that would normally be gluten-free but were not. Above all, be kind to yourself when you mess up and get sick. It happens to all of us.

- So many different symptoms with this disease, and sometimes, no matter how hard you try to do everything right, in the end, it is your acceptance that maybe you won't have perfect health with this disease which will help you the most.
- My contribution is to give yourself permission to grieve – the loss of your life as you now know it, the uphill battle with friends and family to come (“*No, Grandma, I can't use the same tub of butter*”), the radical changes coming your way (no more picking up Chinese takeout when you're too tired to cook). If you try to repress it at the beginning, you'll wind up standing in the middle of the grocery store, bawling your eyes out because you've just read a label and realized you can't have one of your favorite foods anymore. But it's just as important to move on from grieving – the radical changes coming your way DO include feeling better, knowing who your true friends are, and learning about lots of delicious food you might not ever have looked into (quinoa, anyone?).
- It may feel like your entire life revolves around food and eating safely. It may actually be true. Those with other illnesses/diseases have a heightened awareness about what makes them ill. Paying close attention to what you eat is no different. Think of it as saving your own life...your new mission.
- Advanced planning is part of your life now (as much as food is). Being spontaneous may be difficult but being healthy and having quality of life is so much better. Take a few minutes to pre-plan and everything else will fall into place.

- ALWAYS HAVE SAFE FOOD WITH YOU!!! Always. If there's an emergency you need to be able to eat safely.
- Learn how to say "*thanks, but no thanks*" to the well-meaning person who insisted they made you a special gluten-free dish for the potluck. If you know they understand cross-contamination, it's one thing, but for me the risk of getting glutened is so great.
- My advice is prepare for peer pressure. I don't mean stress about it. Just prepare yourself. Plan what you are going to do or say at the next company potluck when a coworker wants you to try his or her dish and even though they say its gluten-free, you watched three other people cross-contaminate the dish with the wrong spoon. Be ready for the next family dinner when Aunt Sally insinuates that a little gluten won't hurt anybody. From interactions to people close to you to complete strangers, have a plan. Write a list of things you can say. Keep your reasons short, polite, and to the point.
- LEARN TO COOK! You just have to. It's not that bad. And yes, you have the time.
- Know that a lot of the time you will feel like it's unfair. It is unfair that there are people who can be carefree and just walk into any restaurant and eat and you can't. But try to remember there are people who have it way worse than you. You can cure your body with just food!
- At the risk of sounding like I am trying to get on Gluten Dude's good side...the first thing I tell anyone newly diagnosed is GO TO THE GLUTEN DUDE website and meet your people!! I have told GD this but this website was a huge blessing and source of strength to me. The people here are amazing and made my life so much better. (*Dude note: I have a good side?*)
- There's a withdrawal. And it sucks. I'm pretty sure it feels just like going

off sugar or caffeine. I felt restless, confused, I ate twice as much as usual for a week and never felt satisfied. Still, cold turkey is the way to go. “Easing” into the gluten-free lifestyle is only delaying the time you will feel better.

- You will find there are a lot of people spreading rumors, selling dubious products and tests, and just plain nonsensical “information” out there. You need to have a good dose of common sense, a basic understanding of anatomy, a basic understanding of cooking, and the ability to look for reliable scientific or medical information. Don’t believe someone with a slick website calling themselves a “gluten-free XYZ” or a “doctor of gluten” or some other made up credential.
- While it isn’t a great thing to have this disease, having it will open your eyes as to what really is and isn’t good for you, as well as teach you to be your own advocate and how to take care of you.
- You’ll learn how to become a good advocate for yourself. It’s hard – it’s not something that comes naturally to many of us! But it’ll get easier, and know that looking out for your health isn’t being unreasonable, overly demanding, or “too needy.”
- Socializing will be trickier for a while, but don’t let your world shrink down out of fear. Sharing food is a central part of a LOT of our social moments, and it’s going to take a while for you, your family and friends to figure out a new way of navigating these times.
- Grocery stores become grief stores. So much of what is sold is completely and forever off limits. Know this, and be ready for the weirdest bouts of grocery store tears. Once when the grocery store was out of my crackers, I wept, openly. This will happen, and its ok. After a while the tear portion of the program will taper off, and the angry section will open its doors. Losing so much food is bound to fire up the emotions. It’s normal and you are totally allowed to express your feelings.

- Traveling by air and finding food either in the airport or on the plane is usually impossible. Carry your own, and more than you'd think is necessary. Supplement with chips, fresh fruits, and nuts, bought at the airport.
- Upon diagnosis, I cried, not because of the loss of all those foods I loved – I cried from sheer relief of finally knowing what my “enemy” was. The enemy had ravaged my body and nearly killed me. Focus on how good it's going to feel to feel good!
- Stand firm in your goal to become healthy. The enemy has been exposed and it is gluten! Now go fight for your health, and stop spending so much energy on the memory of those foods that robbed you of that health!
- And finally, never forget your sense of humor! Gluten Dude is an excellent example to us all. Keep pushing forward, never give up, and laugh at yourself and the tough things in life every chance you get.

And finally, here is MY biggest piece of advice. **Live Your Life.** Do not let celiac hold you back. It's a bump in the road, but it's a bump that is manageable. I promise.

Yes, you've got some serious adjustments to make.

Yes, your body will take some time to heal.

Yes, you will lose a little bit of freedom and spontaneity in your life.

But you know what? You're getting your health back and that's what matters.

There is an unbelievable amount of fear-mongering online. “You can't have

this” and “you should stay away from that”. Some of it is accurate. Some of it is complete BS. Stick with the facts.

Do not live your life afraid to do things simply because of GLUTEN. No matter what people say, it’s NOT everywhere and you CAN lead a normal life (with a few adjustments).

Take precautions. Educate yourself. Use common sense. And if in doubt, do without.

And if you have any questions about something, just ping me. I’ll set you straight.

Ok...let the fun begin! (That means go to the next page.)