

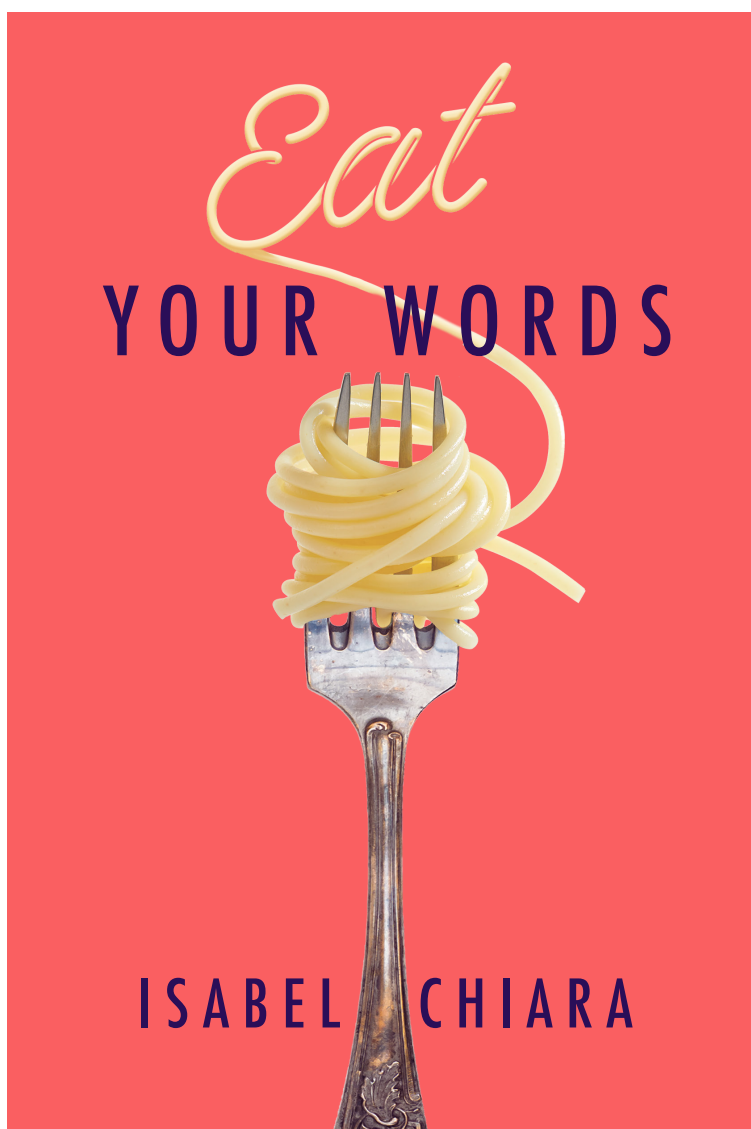
# EXPLORE YOUR WORDS

## *A supplemental deeper dive into Isabel Chiara's Eat Your Words*

This material is welcomed content for all Eat Your Word's readers, whether members of a book club or independent enthusiasts interested in exploring some of the central themes found in my book, *Eat Your Words*. I'm truly excited to invite you into the contemplative underbelly of the book, where I've selected a handful of chapters from the total twenty-five to support our deepened sojourn through the pages. In providing this material, other than providing you with a sense of my personal writing process, my hope is that you might gain new insights about yourself. Chapter by chapter, through excerpts and questions presented throughout this Reader's Supplement, we'll go with our main character, Giana Giovanni, through the process of unpacking our learned relationship to self-nourishment. Also, to add, some of these questions are quite "intimate" and invite a good deal of self-query and personal reflection. My suggestion is that if your book club is a little less prone to cozying-up in a fireside *tell-all*, it might be best to pick which questions to review collectively and which to look at on your own turf, in your own time. Additionally, because the following material includes questions that touch into food addiction and other tender topics, please take self-caution. It can be hard to know when we're approaching areas that might be too much to go into, so do your best to listen to your body's cues! Remember, there's no wrong way to answer a question or contemplate possibilities. And lastly, if some of this material doesn't ring true for you, then let it go! We have that choice as readers to "take what works and leave the rest", and I definitely encourage you to simply notice what you resonate with, and get what you can from this content! Thank you to

every reader here, I'm extremely lucky to have your company on this journey of learning to continually come home to the wisdom of the feeling-filled body.

♡ Isabel



## CHAPTER 1: *Driving Under the Influence* [Pg. 12]

The start of *Eat Your Words* opens like a bit of a convenient store crime scene, or the height of a bad-romance movie drama. The choice was consciously made to reveal the relationship between the main character, Giana Giovanni, and her *main squeeze*, which, in this case, is food.

1. What kind of dramatic subdued or expressed intensity do you notice about Giana and her passionately consuming connection to food, right out of the gate?
  
2. Giana goes through a diverse array of states while *rummaging* through the market's aisles. At times she is in denial of being there at all; in denial of her appetite and (what feels like) her inevitable eating behavior. Though she's just left her place of work where she is "in charge" (managing) all day, she slips away from being in charge of her own choices on her ride home. "...even though I believe I've convinced myself to abstain from all go-to junk foods, I still wind up, somehow, at my own 5:00 p.m. happy hour [eating]" (page 14). Why do you think someone might make dietary choices that result in feelings of self-betrayal, low self-esteem or even complete self-abandonment? Why might, specifically, women take life stress out on their own body? Where might we have learned to relate to our bodies this way?
  
3. Through her narration, Giana shares how diet experts, self-help gurus and even her friends in the past have recommended she simply "eat in moderation and stop when full." (page 20). Why do you think hearing "simplified advice" from others about how to break seemingly-uncontrollable eating habits doesn't work?

### Self-Reflection:

*Have you, or anyone you've known, successfully been able to make long-term, independently-propelled radical self-transformation? How was this achieved and what was the motivation that ultimately worked?*

## CHAPTER 2: *Mozzarella in the Time of Mussolini* [pg. 31]

Giana offers a window into her mother's (Lia's) childhood, surviving through Italy's political and economic battles in the 1940's. She describes that acknowledging emotions, in her family, remains "rigidly off-limit", but if one must be emotive then "recounting the

past should be done over pasta, and the length of lunch should outlast any wallowing over the past.” (page 36). In this way, Giana shows us why, for her, food and feelings might be interchangeable.

1. Like many girls, Giana was taught that “admiration of the naked body is basically inconceivable. It is only the *dressed* body where one can form any real opinion about one’s figure, only after it is fashioned. Never mind what your naked waist looks like; in fact, don’t regard it at all.” (page 39).

### **Self-Reflection:**

*What were the messages you grew up with around how a girl should regard her own body? Were you taught to admire your body’s abilities and powerful nature or else to fix, hide or control your esthetic expression.*

*Were you influenced to repress your unique physiological “appetite” or natural tendency to interact with the world?*

2. Giana shares that while her mother upheld an air of confidence and beauty, rather than outwardly spending any time focusing on maintaining her waist size or dieting, as an American immigrant she voraciously “fixated on work and moneymaking, bravely surviving. (pg. 39). Intergenerational trauma is an influential factor in the psychological conditions of children, including behaviors that influence mental disposition, like food addiction<sup>1</sup>. How might Lia’s experience having barely survived World War II have been unintentionally passed down to her children?
3. We can begin to note what stories we have personally inherited from our family by considering both our greatest strengths and our personal struggles.

### **Self Reflection:**

*How can we gain fresh perspective on what we might consider as a unique and pervasive challenge in our individual life? Can you locate a personal behavior that might be related to a specific burden someone in your family carried? (Please note, for those not raised by primary parental figures, consider, rather, the influence of your earliest guardians.)*

### CHAPTER 3: *Il Bocconcino, La Bambina* [pg. 58]

**Giana brings us swiftly and steadily through various demarcations in her childhood, specifically those relevant to forming her relationship with her own body, her appetite and self-expression.**

**Giana wants to share the shadow side of her love for her family, to explain how her most innocent, earliest years, as they are for many of us, were challenged by the strong personalities of both of her parents. However, she feels torn as a dutiful daughter and as someone who loves her family dearly to be able to really express her tenderness. “I’m not trying to be... exploitive here; I’m really attempting to fairly reflect on the pieces that informed the mechanisms of my behavior, particularly how the heck I deal with eating, in the hopes of adopting some new healthy habits.” (Pg. 64).**

1. In families that remain close, it can be distinctly tricky to give voice to our independent self. In doing so, we may threaten the very fabric the family relies on for its shared sense of identity, we may shake the secure foundation of the flock’s grasp on reality. How might gaining the strength to speak about our personal feelings or experiences support our healing path, or even support our entire family’s wellbeing in the long run?
2. How might our various roles within our family influence our formed behavioral patterns? Could we imagine that if Giana did not feel comfortable to express herself within her family dynamic she might stuff her expressions down further with comfort food? Does it make sense that the same foods she placated her young abandoned-feeling self with while her parents were working (processed cakes, chips and sugary treats) would be the same foods she’d seek out as her go-to “band-aids” when suffocating her sensations as an adult or abandoning herself?
3. In reflecting on her childhood, Giana notes, “While I swallowed my emotions in order to toughen up, my father cut his teeth in business.” (Pg. 75) As an adult, Giana both drives her business with the same relentless vigor her father possessed and continues to keep her emotional state on the back-burner. In this way, we can consider that we often take on the behavior of a whole learned dynamic. If we feel we received a kind of quality from a parent as a child and learned to respond in a specific way, we may, as adults, express both of these qualities within contrasting parts of our self. In Giana’s case, the more she drove herself intensely, the more she’d swallow (“bad food” or her “bad emotions”).

**Self-Reflection:**

*What can you share in considering the psychological phenomena of “taking on” both roles of the behavior of a parent (or guardian) and the child’s response? Where do you see this display of relational behavior in others you’ve known or within yourself?*

4. For Giana, “containers” are a surrogate for her own physical body, places she can physically feel held inside of a safe outer layer. Where she can’t feel her own physical form, her car, her pool, her bedroom closet (or even her therapists) can hold the space to *contain* her. Perhaps on a physiological level, we might be able to assume that *containers* are Giana’s substitute for her own self-regulation and physical ability to locate her sense of “self” inside her body. In containers, she can feel calm, find focus and allow her body to be held. On page 78 of *Eat Your Words*, Giana expresses that, in containers, she sought to “find something like relief” as she couldn’t “dare conceive [her] own physical shape as a place [she] might ground the restlessness of [her] spirit.”

**Self-Reflection:**

*What practices do you have in your own life that allow you to take greater sense of felt residency in your body? Where might you notice “disassociative”<sup>2</sup> type of behavior? What do you need now in your experienced reality to feel life fully within your own form? Can you think of a time you gained greater resource to feel the power of your life coursing through your body, empowering, vibrant?*

**CHAPTER 4: School Years: Fair Girls with Cucumber, Crustless Sandwiches [pg. 86]**

**Giana evaluates her learning process in her formative schoolyears during the 1970’s, and reviews her sense of feeling challenged and unable to “think clearly” or focus within traditional academia. She recalls discovering then her first Eating Words and the beginning of a “rebellious” streak of character that began in her childhood years to make its debut.**

1. On page 87 Giana shares “I learned one of my preferred Eating Words mantras then: *I don’t care*”. This is a significant moment in Giana’s story, as she names what she calls an “eating word mantra”. Her “mantras” are phrases that propel her to eat in a way she “consciously” doesn’t want and continue to dominate her choice-making while she’s eating, encouraging her to go against her greatest desires for vibrance and healthy self-esteem. The “eating words” were the basis of inspiration for me to write the book *Eat Your Words*. Consider and discuss what “eating word mantras” might personally mean

for you in your world. If you bring your awareness to moments of making food-related choices, can you isolate specific internal dialogue that cues your appetite behaviors?

2. On page 89, Giana describes herself as a “troublemaker”, expressing her behavior as the result of what happens “we start to flex when there is little we can control as small people”. What lack of control do you sense is pressing in Giana’s life? How might this have impacted her early onset of eating pattern behaviors?

**Self-Reflection:**

*How important is it to recognize what we can control and what we cannot? How hard is it to put our energy into successfully managing what we can control? What correlation might you make between your sense of personal control and your dietary lifestyle? How might our overwhelm or exhaustion about aspects of control impact how we “give into” reckless eating behaviors or other addictions and “unhealthy habits”?*

## **CHAPTER 5: *The Obsessor and the Escapist* [pg. 98]**

**Giana begins to identify aspects of herself in personification, and, specifically, introduces us to two main characters within herself, the *Obsessor* and the *Escapist*.**

1. Giana’s Obsessor and Escapist “emerged as determined interior guides to fill up the places [she’d] abandoned....” And they stood in for her “sense of self-trust and ability to follow through. They compensated for [her] inability to rest, give [herself] slack, or react moderately.” (pg. 101)

Do you think everyone has inner developed, distinct (and sometimes opposing) character qualities that comprise their psyche, and, if yes, how might one locate these unique aspects of self? What benefit do you think a person might find in getting to know themselves through the mode of personifying “inner-parts”.

**Self-Reflection:** *Grab some writing materials (pen/paper, etc.) and create a little ambiance. Light a candle, put on some gentle music, open a window or sit in nature, listen to your breathing. Reflect on recent moments that felt like a communicative challenge. Try to break down the experience into “micro-scenes”, moment-to-moment. If you could arrange your thinking process into “parts” orchestrating together, what would their roles look like? Are there a few strong leads and some background sidekicks? Write them down, illustrate them, see how they interact with each other. What happens when you personify some of the expressions within your whole identity?*

2. “The Obsessor keeps us *up*. She’s all about excitement and stimulation... racing through life.” (102) The Obsessor is a dominant persona that Giana shows to the world. She helps Giana succeed in her work-life, keep herself tied to a busy schedule and engaged in reality. Yet, the Obsessor also only has one operative “hyper-drive” mode, which yields little opportunity to acknowledge the need for rest, pause or deeply being settled into the moment.

**Self-Reflection:** *Can you consider one or more strong, supportive qualities in your character “wheelhouse” that also comes with costly challenges?*

3. As powerful and driven as Giana’s Obsessor is, it drives until it crashes at the feel of her inner Escapist. Giana shares about the Escapist, “She’ll console us after we’ve been whipped around by the Obsessor’s voraciousness. (105) Consider yourself in the seat of a therapist or advisor. What kind of unique practice could Giana take on to help her Obsessor and Escapist work together to support her wellbeing? How could she gather strength to support the Obsessor and Escapist to form a less volatile pattern of relational behavior that might not end up in Giana’s crashing right into the minimart of powder donuts, for example?

## CHAPTER 8: *Italian Gardening 101: How to Cultivate a Seed* [129]

**By chapter 8, Giana has come into her early teenage years; her curiosity for life is expressed similarly to many adolescents, in rebellious testing of her limits.**

1. On page 131, Giana notes, “I was the kind of girl who needed set limits and only bite-size stimuli or else all havoc would break loose. *Wolfifiers* could not be trusted to follow their wild gut instincts.” How do you think that Giana is relating to her intuition in her earliest years? How might she be responding to her deeper needs of being seen and loved by peers and her parents through “bad behavior”, for example, in the case of her inebriated episode at the school play? Could identifying with so-called “bad behavior” as a communicative outlet be related to her “bad (eating) behavior” she continues to exhibit in her adult years? Could eating “rebelliously” remain her means to “find” or “assert” her identity? Does “bad eating behavior” serve as the substituted, convoluted *voice* of her emotions, a controlled means of “crying out” when her needs are unmet or feels general overwhelm?
2. On page 134, Giana reflects on the accessible “love” language of her family, and how for her first decades, saying “I love you” wasn’t a regular exchanged phrase heard within



their collective dynamic. However, she notes the emotional evolution her family have undergone in the last handful of years. “We Giovannis have gotten a little better at sharing our emotions and extending loving invitations, but we’ve not dared to approach unraveling the impact of our early years. Rather, we are calibrated around our collective wound, the sum of all tumult incurred in our ancestral history.”

**Self-Reflection:** *In your family, or within the network of your closes relationships, how has emotional dialogue evolved? Has the room to express tenderness and sensitivity expanded as you’ve gained more trust in your own feelings? Do you long for greater empathic, heart-to-heart conversation? What things have gone unsaid that you’d like to resolve as you continue your connections into the future?*

## CHAPTER 10: *Dexatrim, Tab and Cigarettes, That’s Amore* [pg. 143]

Chapter 10’s title (like all other chapter titles) is a play on an Italian cultural theme, in this case, the classic song “That’s Amore”. By the name of this title, we see that Giana develops relationships with substances that keep her from feeling or dealing with sensations in her body. Giana apparently lacks the encouragement from her environment to learn to associate with her body as a place to find security and trust in herself, and overrides both her body’s “messages” and outside stressors with the internal thought structure of “I don’t care”. Giana starts a new school, but focuses more on her diet scheme than her grade point average.

1. On page 146, Giana notes, “...controlling my body with Dexatrim was an artificial way to affirm self-authority. It was the first relationship in which I could model effective self-assertiveness.” As a girl more fully steps into her young womanhood, she embraces a new cycle of change, hormonally and physically, coupled often with a different kind of attention from the outside world as well as new, unique personal needs also emerge. In your own cultural reality, how do you think today’s “initiation” for young girls embracing the life-shift into their womanhood has evolved in the last decades? How has it stayed similar?

**Self-Reflection:** *Are there any places you attempt to create “sameness” or “control” over you own body’s functions as a way that might compensate for places that you may feel less capable to assert yourself or, even, unable to change/control?*

## CHAPTER 11: *In the Garden of Adam and GG* [pg. 148]

In Chapter 11, Giana continues on her agenda to “diet” her way into a perfect, emotionally resilient life and simultaneously opens the doors of a new development, her first significant partner. In her mind, she emblazons the combination of having a “good enough” external body with the acquisition of and ability to enter a relationship. Giana gets closer to

considering her own future of enrolling in a University and contemplates life after high school.

1. “In the beginning, I didn’t think much of him.” Giana shares. “He was classically handsome, built, tall, funny, and smart, and he asked me out on my first actual date—like, a respectful one, the kind set in advance and with a plan. Since I’d only cultivated an eye for skimpy, *shrimpy*, scrumpy boys, of course I didn’t really register my friendly date with Adam as anything worth remembering.” (Pg. 148)

**Self-Reflection:** *How do you think your chosen partnerships or intimate connections in the past represented your own sense of self-worth? Do you think we choose partnerships that make us feel only as “good” as we believe we are esteemed to feel? How do we evolve our dynamic of choosing healthiest mates? How might accepting our intimate partners be parallel to our ability to accept ourselves?*

2. “The amazing thing about a woman with a medium build is that when she starves herself, and her body mass index drops into whatever is considered to be the danger zone, it can be hard to see.” (Pg. 149) While Giana might not look “emaciated” in appearance, she is still, largely, learning to starve herself in her high-school years. There is a real danger, at any weight, for someone to abstain from getting vital nutrients.<sup>3</sup>

**Self-Reflection:** *In your own life, how have you regarded nutrition? Are there certain food groups you’ve avoided or determined as irreversibly “bad” for your system? Do you gauge the “health” of your body by the “weight” of your body? How does it feel to consider actually eating whatever you want and at whatever amount—as a path to actually listen to the body? Do you believe your body has the intelligence to give you the right clues in realms of what macronutrients will best serve you? How might we cast our sense of not being “enough” onto not trusting the intelligence of the body?*

3. Giana makes a reference on page 150 in relationship to her choice of removing carbs from her diet, as suggested by her “Scarsdale diet” guru. She shares, “...all the pear-shaped ladies in my family were getting fat on fettuccini. I needed to stay away from anything carb heavy, and everything creamy.” How much do you think that we express our shame of heritage as women through attempting to alter the very qualities that allow us to appear as a diverse and unique expression, and embrace our roots?

**Self-Reflection:** *If your own cultural heritage is known to you, what parts do you connect with—and what parts might you feel less attracted to? Are there any cultural qualities, generalizations or histories you hold particular judgement about in relationship to the culture from which your family-of-origin comes? If yes, how has this affected your own self-acceptance? How might you be able to further embrace aspects of your heritage that you do resonate with? And—are there comfort foods or behaviors that allow you to*

*connect to your ancestry? How important do you think it is for a person to make peace with their DNA's history?*

4. On page 160, Giana experiences her first strong, intuitive “inner-voice” moment of hearing a “YES”. While visiting college campuses, she is directed to go to Boston University, and explore the possibility of her future enrollment there. Attempting to understand her own voice of intuition she inquires, “..did it come from inside of myself or outside? I couldn’t tell, but from wherever it originated, this *yes* was thoroughly encouraging, and served to determine my next step.”

**Self-Reflection:** *What might your intuitive guidance sound like? Does it have a range of expression? Is there a felt sense in your body moving you innately toward or away a possibility? How do you differentiate the felt sense between apprehension and intuition?*

## **CHAPTER 12: *A Crash Course in Basic Italian: The Many Ways to Say Arrivederci* [pg. 166]**

**Giana prepares to leave for college, and grapples with saying “Goodbye” to her life living under the same roof as her sister.**

1. On page 166, Giana recognizes her relationship with her sister as “more complex than we could comprehend or acknowledge. In doing our best to survive as the single unit *GG-Frankie*, we banded together for the benefit of collective strength. Often, children specifically who endure challenging childhoods form a unique partnership that nearly mirrors many of the dynamics found between their own parents. These dynamics can last throughout a lifetime.

**Self-Reflection:** *If you have siblings, what has been the lifelong relationship development like between you? How has it evolved or shifted over time? What is easy to express and share and what remains more difficult? What ideas about yourself or your identity/personality have you garnered from the quality of connection between you and your siblings? What part of yourself do you believe they can less easily see? How easy has it been for you to bring these parts of yourself out into your actualized life on your own?(If you don’t have siblings, consider your longest friendships and the relationship dynamics therein.)*

2. On page 168-169, Giana expresses that, as challenging as it was to leave Adam, her boyfriend, it was far more difficult to confront separating from her sister, and considering a change in this daily kind of familiarity between herself and Frankie. “In all honesty, physically separating from Adam seemed a far simpler uncoupling than detaching from Frankie.”

**Self-Reflection:** *In earlier stories of women in literature, the loving connection between women, whether between siblings or girlfriends, was less recognized. Today, we see more stories where the warm, rich and intricate relating between women is portrayed. How have you found that relationships between women might nurture parts of our soul and spirit in ways varying from the classic connection of woman and man? How might all individuals benefit from more strong stories featuring powerful relationships between girls and women?*

## **CHAPTER 15: *Giana Giovanni Means Business* [pg. 209]**

**Chapter 13 and 14 led us through Giana's first "real" breakup with a boyfriend, the ending of her romance with Adam and return to college for Sophomore year. By chapter 15, Giana declares the college major of Business and considers her future after graduating, encouraged by her mother to return to Connecticut to support her family's business.**

1. In considering returning to her family's business post college, Giana weighs the similarities and differences between her own interests and her family's. On page 211, she recognizes that, like her father, she "loved managing, overseeing operations, living in a hot state of high intensity, i.e., the inside of a restaurant kitchen. However, unlike her father, she concerned with the idea that running a kitchen might not be the sole expression of her "most passionate offering to the world." Do you know people who have worked exclusively within their own family's enterprise? What do you think the benefit and limitations of continuing in the path of a family business might be? Do you think that Giana's lifelong struggle with food and dietary choice could be a way she maintained a kind of means to "connect to herself" or have an inner-narrative and identity of her own?

**Self Reflection:** *Have you ever felt immersed in a family or social dynamic? How might we relate to our own body as a means to literally "make time for ourselves"?*

## **CHAPTER 20: *The Big Fettuccine Alfredos* [pg. 265]**

**In chapters 16-18 Giana has both established her roots as a strong lead in her family's restaurant world, and also ventured out to find her own spirit. Discovering master teachers who inspire the development of her own intuition, we move through Giana's twenties and closer toward her current years. Chapter 19 brings us to Giana's heritage homeland, Italy, where she finally hears the call to discover her sense of "spirit" within her own body, to recognize the physicality of her life, and to begin to take care of the very vessel that carries her through her seasons.**

1. In the opening of Chapter 20, Giana begins to confront something she'd never braved to consider, her Father's long-term health. Gino's "head of the family" endless warrior-like spirit rendered him nearly invincible in Giana's eyes, and yet, he falls into an extended coma for months, pulling out at the last moments on the wings of a prayer, true to his determined nature.

On page 167, we read that, post-enduring a lengthy coma, Giana's father expresses love for his family for the first time-- in language. Giana notes, [he] "told me, *I love you, Giana*. It was under his breath, but I am pretty sure I heard it.

**Self-Reflection:** *Why do you think it might be challenging for family's to express their love for each other in words? Have you personally felt constrained to share your appreciation, or else, have you experienced other's holding back terms of affection? How important do you think it is for families to communicate loving language to each-other? How might the lack of it affect how we exchange niceties to people in our adult lives?*

2. On page 267, Giana nestles into what she calls her "healing home" and, not long after, begins the journey of writing a book (like her author—me—Isabel!) She expresses, "I now understand that embarking on the journey of writing this book was my moment of bravery." Can. you imagine that the "love story" of one's journey toward beginning to recognize their own body and reflect on how they've treated their own wellness and self-nourishment might be a challenging story to share?

**Self-Reflection:** *What might be a personal evolutionary part of your own life story that would be both challenging, and liberating to share? What struggles do you face now or have you faced that might be extremely inspiring or relatable for others to read? Do you feel called to share these parts of yourself as part of your own life path?*

**CHAPTER 23: *Waking from the Food Coma: Cognizance after Carbonara and Campari*** [pg. 291] Chapters 21-23 introduce us to Sofi, Giana's Voice and Writing coach. Sofi challenges Giana to review and express her perspective about parts of her past, parts of her own internal nature and elements of her expression and behavior. Sofi helps Giana begin to learn how to both tell and write about her own story, as part of a therapeutic and powerful rite of passage. In Chapter 23, we meet LiYana, who Sofi brings into Giana's growing evolution for deeper insight about her own female embodiment. Giana begins the process of learning to feel her own body, and listen to all elements of inner-self in order to embrace her whole inner-wisdom.

1. On page 291, Giana admits that "Distraction has been my best method of avoiding taking up residency in my body, and Sofi really wanted LiYana with us in order to have another

strong female voice to advocate on behalf of my choosing feeling over fleeing.” Many of us grapple with the feeling that we’ve too many external responsibilities to really “make room” for the things that supposedly support our sense of wellbeing, whether meditation, engaging in sports, cooking or sleeping solid hours. Why do you think that women, especially, have been acculturated to making their own needs secondary<sup>4</sup>?

**Self-Reflection:** *In your own life, how much does outer-stimulation, whether a phone notification or scheduled responsibilities in your day, overrule your “time with self”? Do you prioritize your “alone time” in order to replete your sense of self so that you can feel both more “self-connected” and “capable” in your life? What happens when you sacrifice time with yourself? Are you getting enough now? What do you love mostly to do just for you?*

2. On page 294 Giana learns that “..when we eat and we cannot access the *rest and digest* part of our nervous system, our digestion has a hard time firing and effectually absorbing nourishment.” Giana notoriously eats standing up, driving in her car, or “on the go”. How might she be keeping herself from feeling “nourished” by refusing to slow down, relax and allow herself to enjoy the taste of food?

**Self-Reflections:** *Do you allow yourself to sit, chew, breathe while eating and feel the reception of nourishment in your system? Is it easier to do this alone or with others? What is your preferred mealtime arrangement? Do you like to cook for others or be served? Do you prefer eating at home or in a restaurant—variation or consistency in both meal plans and eating environment? How important does your kitchen feel to you?*

## **CHAPTER 24: Spoon-Feeding the Italian Senses: Minestrone Soup for the Soul [pg. 299]**

Chapter 24 brings us closer to the endpoint of Giana’s sharing; her braving the process of unpacking the “inner cupboards” of her deeply complex relationship with the basic art of eating and feeding one’s self. She begins to learn tools to allow her to bring aspects of her honed intuitive, visually-rich connection to “the spirit world” into the heart of her own physical sense of center, and gets a clearer picture of how many small steps she’ll have to take in the road ahead.

1. With the help of Sofi and LiYana, Giana begins to consider that “eating, itself, is a meditation, an obvious place to psycho-spiritually *fill one’s cup*. ”

**Self-Reflection:** *In your own life, have you cultivated a time to just simply be with your breath, learn a practice of mindfulness or meditation? If yes, how might eating actually be related to this practice of self-awareness and connection to the moment? How might you create more of a special “awareness” practice when having a snack or meal? How does our intuition relate to our*

*ability to gauge our hunger, rate our fullness, determine what we have an appetite for? Would it make sense that a disconnection from feeling our intuition in our body would lead us to making poor food choices for ourselves?*

2. On page 301, Giana considers, “What might my life’s flow be like if I checked in with myself on a more regular basis—if, rather than punishing myself mentally, I actually engaged my inner self and lovingly checked in the way a mother would attend to her child?” How does this reflection suggest that Giana might be on her way to finding kinder “eating words” when approaching the act of feeding herself?
3. On page 302, Giana realizes, “I’ll feel some sort of dismay or sorrow and maybe let it linger for a second or two, but pretty immediately, I’ll turn it into my ole standby: some form of *anxiety*.”

Self-Reflection: Can you recall times (or places) in your life that might lead to something that feels like anxiety? How might anxiety replace recognizing a felt emotion—like anger, sadness and boredom-- or another emotion from the reported twenty-seven main human emotions<sup>5</sup>?

4. On page 305, Giana takes a giant, practical step for herself, focusing on ways to “take care of [her] own needs while dealing with [her] family dynamic, how [she] might responsibly learn to practice language to clearly communicate with dignity.” How does the language we speak outside of ourselves impact how we speak to ourselves?

**Self-Reflection:** *Consider friendships where you might feel unable to express parts of yourself, unable to speak into the heart of the matter? How do you feel after spending significant time in the company of those friendships? What kind of communication do you crave in community; what makes you feel seen and heard? How might your externalized language have an impact on how you speak to yourself?*

5. On page 309, Giana has a moment of celebrating in her own home; opening the doors to all the different people in her life, and dancing together with holiday spirit. “The DJ started playing “I’m Coming Out” by Diana Ross, and everyone got up and started moving, from my sister to my extended Italian family to my spiritual friends. It seemed we all understood the song’s message on a basic level, we all agreed: how we choose to show up in the world, how we stand inside of ourselves, this is what makes or breaks our destiny.” Giana has insisted that her book isn’t a “solution-based” manual on how to fit into a size 4. However, she has made her way into learning some significant lessons and gaining insight. Do you think a “personal growth journey” can come to a close without

the character “fixing” or “solving” a “problem”? How has our cultural narrative focused more on fixing or resolving than actually understanding and looking at a condition?

**CHAPTER 25: *Metaphysical Nutrients are Richer than Tuscan Truffles over Tagliatelle* [pg. 313]**

**In chapter 25, Giana wraps up her story (for now) and returns us to the place we began in the intro prior to the story’s onset.**

1. On page 314, Giana shares that she is noticing that she is simply “feeling better just being [herself].” How might this sensation be an inroad for her toward making better decisions about how she nourishes all areas of her life?

**Self-Reflection:** *Where do we go to gain greater self-esteem? What personal attributes do you consider have allowed you to grow your own sense of self-esteem?*

2. In this same light, Giana also sees that she is “closer to absorbing [her] largest missing nutrient, *vitamin self-compassion*...the antidote for metaphysical *starvation*.” Where do you find society encouraging girls and women to learn how to have self-compassion, and, more so, how do you define what self-compassion actually is?
3. Perhaps the point of Self-Compassion and how to find it is summed up nicely in this last share of Giana’s, as the book closes, on page 317. Giana expresses, “When we have trauma at any point in our life (which, *let’s get real*, we all do, to one extent or another), we need tools to overcome it. We need some kind of outer encouragement or an inner guidance. We need calm, nourishing places in which to find resources to help us.”

**Self-Reflection:** *Imagine life 10 years from now. What organizations, institutions and cultural conditions might emerge to support us to both feel and heal places we need to repair? How might creating “salve” for our tender places be something that our society learns to value all-the-more, and how might this paradigm shift affect our world-at-large now? What role might you wish to play in the process of creating more gentle, loving space in your own life and within the world you experience?*



**THANK YOU SO MUCH** for your active participation along the reading journey of **Eat Your Words!** Please stay tuned to my offerings both in written word and recorded content at [www.isabel-chiara.com](http://www.isabel-chiara.com)!

**Meanwhile, I wish you all the most nourishing experiences in throughout your life journey!**

\* \* \* \* \*

LINKED REFERENCES from ABOVE

1. Intergenerational Trauma [LINK](#)
2. Disassociating Behavior [LINK](#)
3. Dangerous Restrictive Eating Issues Present at Any Size [LINK](#)
4. Why Women are Multitasking [LINK](#)
5. 27 Human Emotions [LINK](#)