

"I could never do it. That's what I first thought."

Elli Kaur
college student at Keeido University

19 year old Elli is one of the thousands of probands who participated in the new campaign *Balance for the world* eight months ago. **DAILY TAG #** accompanied her medical journey from the first group session until her recovery. The young teen is back home now and continues to stay active in her daily life. She agreed to share the story of her experience with us.

photo: Balance for the world



Surgeons work on their first participant for the campaign *Balance for the world*
photo: Balance for the world

It was this February when *Balance for the world* paid a visit to Elli's college. She describes it as the shaky beginning of a new chapter in her life.

"I was just coming back from a workout when I saw these big images of a weird device next to pictures of starving children and extremely obese people." Elli says, that at first, she thought they were promoting a new way of dieting and normally she would just walk past these kinds of advertisements. However, on this day her curiosity got the better of her.

"I stopped and asked the people there what this was all about. They introduced themselves as *Balance for the world*. A group of environmentalists and doctors working in collaboration. I found this a bit strange, but things became clearer once they began their explanation". Looking back, she is surprised that she stayed so calm when they told her about their idea to implant a device in people's stomach to restrict their daily food consumption. They proceeded to give her a very detailed description about the medical process and asked if she would be willing to be a participant in the state funded project.

Balance for the world has set themselves a goal to even out food distribution all over the world. Their message: Achieving sustainability by placing restrictions on food consumption. One of the biggest contributors to the global carbon footprint is the food industry, which generates significantly more than one third of all man-made greenhouse gas emissions. By following the approach of *all for all* they hope to achieve the prevention of "earth overshoot day" faster than competing strategies would do. Regulating people's consumption of food could reduce the demand for food products and the reliance on imported food, leading to a reduction in emissions and thus a healthier earth. A spokesperson from the project emphasizes the importance of health and the need to have regular check-ups so that dangers, such as mental health issues or eating disorders can be prevented.



photo: Balance for the world

tags since 2011

The device works by creating a feeling of being full and satisfied once the body's ideal daily intake of calories has been reached. The number of calories required is determined through the evaluation of a range of data and variables, including the individual's metabolism, lifestyle and the amount of energy they use during the day.

Despite their best efforts, Elli was not very convinced on that day on the campus. "From the very beginning they were transparent about the whole process and not once did I feel pressured to be a part of it. But my initial reaction was, that I could never do. That's what I first thought." *Balance for the world* encouraged her to contact them if she changed her mind. The young teen was sure that she wouldn't. „I just thought; it's my body, you know? I am healthy and young and have my whole life ahead of me. Why would I ever do something so horrendous to my own body? Why would anyone do that to themselves?" It would take another few weeks until she would contact the campaign. The trigger came through her friend Kathy.

Like Elli, she had been contemplating the idea of participating. Meanwhile the campaign gained huge media coverage, dividing people's attention and opinions about their method of attaining a more sustainable life. "One evening, Kathy and I sat down, and we started to talk about this whole thing. I told her that I was not sure I would ever be able to do it, and she asked me, "why not?". After telling her my points she said that I was selfish and that it was a small sacrifice to make for the greater good." Elli laughs. „I am not going to lie. I was furious with her. But from that moment on something in me changed. I started to ask myself if I am truly the selfish person that she made me out to be." The young teen started to read more about the project and got slowly intrigued by the numbers and scientific research she came across.

"I began to realise that maybe this is the right way to save our planet. It is fast, effective and I feel like it's also such a humane thing to do, you know? Why shouldn't I sacrifice my comfortable life for the greater good? I had always contemplated how priv-

"The beginning was hard..."

ileged my upbringing was and I thought if that little thing inside me could help secure people around the world better access to food and prevent food waste on a global scale...what's so bad about that? After I signed up for the program and my final surgery two weeks ago, I noticed some changes in my body. I've never felt so fit in my life. My BMI dropped from a 25.4 to a perfect 23.2. Of course, I sometimes miss the old days of food cravings. But let's be honest here. Those moments were not good for my body anyway." Elli smiles so brightly, you wouldn't guess that she came fresh from the hospital a few weeks ago. After a moment of laughter, she becomes serious again.

"The beginning was hard. Once I make up my mind, I see things clearly, but finding people with the same mindset was nearly impossible." She begins to describe how the first session of the project were held in groups, where other participants could freely talk about why they opted for the surgery and how this decision has affected their social life. "It was so liberating to hear about other people's struggles with their loved ones. When I first proposed the surgery to my parents, they were completely shocked. I don't think my mum will ever forgive me for violating my body like that [as she puts it]. But my father is slowly coming to terms with it." Elli describes the whole process until her final surgery as

slow and mindful. Many participants were deemed unfit for the pilot phase and were told to look after their health first before undergoing the surgery.

"That's the great thing about *Balance for the world*. They always prioritise your health and wellbeing. I witnessed many people's frustration at not being able to participate in the project due to their physical and mental health. It made me realise how great it feels to be a part of a sustainable movement."

Does she think that everybody should have this device implanted in their bodies?

„Of course, for this to work, a large part of the world's population would need to participate. However, I realise the fear of a radically different model of food consumption is a big hurdle to overcome. Some may call it perversion. But I do believe that once people's initial doubts are quelled [with statistics and visible change], they will be more prone to undergo this procedure. In the end, it's just another medical implant, like a pacemaker. It's not the first time we've put something like this into our bodies, but it's the first device with the potential to save our planet."

Thank you for your time, Elli! If you are interested in the campaign or in further information, please contact the editorial office of **DAILY TAG #** or write directly to *Balance of the world*.

#sustainability #campaign
#surgery #foodindustry
#consumption



Participants discuss and share their stories over lunch / photo: *Balance for the world*

