

## **Launching the GAPS Youth Movement!**

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Welcome to the GAPS Youth Movement! (GYM for short). My name is Julia Dulgerova and I'm the GYM Outreach Coordinator, which is a pretty fancy name but essentially I'm going to be sharing fun GYM information with subscribers through blog/vlog posts and social media! In a time where many young people are struggling with health challenges, mental and physical, the GYM platform will help our youth (young people like yourself, ages 10-28) move from young adolescence to adulthood with a strong foundation of health by simply making better food and lifestyle choices. And as we build this community and more and more of us connect, there will be many opportunities to interact, and there might even be a possibility to form a local GYM group of your own, eventually take a GAPS training course to become a Certified GAPS Coach (CGC) or Practitioner (CGP)! So, the GYM is super awesome and it can be something fun to do to take care of your health, or it could turn into a future career or business. If it sounds like I'm rambling and nothing is making sense, this first blog post will answer some of your burning questions about GYM and GAPS, and then I'll tell you a bit about Dr. Natasha and myself, so here we go!

### **What is the GYM?**

The GYM is a new project that is in its beginning stages of development. The goal of the movement is to create a worldwide network of young people, ages 10 to 28 who connect to learn about and implement the GAPS Lifestyle. You people can get involved by forming a cooking club at school or home, starting a garden program, volunteering at local co-ops and CSA farms, or simply by following along on Instagram, YouTube, and more!

### **What is GAPS?**

GAPS stands for "Gut and Psychology or Physiology Syndrome. GAPS conditions originate in the digestive system. This system is a long tube; what you fill that tube with has a direct effect on its well-being. That is why the diet is the most important and the number one treatment. The protocol includes the GAPS diet, supplementation, detoxification and life-style changes. Once your digestive system starts working properly, you will be amazed how quickly your symptoms, far removed from the gut, start melting away: your joints and muscles stop hurting, hormonal problems go away, your skin clears, your energy comes back, you start sleeping well, your memory and ability to concentrate improve, you find long-lost stamina to accomplish your daily tasks, your constant colds become a thing of the past, your asthma disappears, you realize by the middle of summer that you had no hay fever this year, your headaches go away, your chronic cystitis vanishes, etc., etc. All the symptoms, which you have never connected with the state of your digestive system, on their way out will tell you that you have done the right thing in healing your gut! And the GAPS Diet has the ability to heal us and our gut in a magical way! GAPS was created by Dr. Natasha, so here's a bit about her.

Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride graduated with Honors as a Medical Doctor in 1984 from Bashkir Medical University in Russia. In the following years she gained a Postgraduate MMedSci Degree in Neurology. Dr Campbell-McBride developed her theories on the relationship between neurological disorders and nutrition, and completed a second

Postgraduate Degree in Human Nutrition at Sheffield University, UK. She practiced in the UK as a nutritionist and not as a medical doctor. Having trained thousands of Certified GAPS Practitioners around the world, Dr Natasha decided to close her clinic to focus on writing and teaching. As a nutritionist she has specialized in using a nutritional approach as a treatment, and has become recognized as one of the world's leading experts in treating children and adults with learning disabilities and other mental disorders, as well as children and adults with digestive, immune, and other physiological disorders.

### **How Do I Get Involved in the GYM?**

Dr. Natasha and the GAPS Team invites you to sign up for the GAPS mailing list to receive project updates, but as we develop this community you can get involved by forming a cooking club in your school or at home, starting a garden program, volunteering at local co-ops and CSA farms, or simply by following us on Instagram and YouTube.

### **What Topics Will be Covered?**

We will cover lots of topics, and I am sure that as you share stories of your own and ask questions, more topic ideas will arise. Below is a short list of common symptoms and struggles young people experience. This is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to possible topics we plan to share and discuss on future podcast episodes and social media content, so get excited!

- mental health
- digestive issues
- fatigue
- lack of motivation
- eating disorder
- healthy hair skin and nails
- body weight and image issues
- diet in general
- building muscle... and SO much more!

### **Where Can I Find More GYM Content?**

You can find GYM content on here (our blog), our Instagram channel, @gapsyouthmovement, and our YouTube channel, @GAPSYouthMovement. We are starting with these three platforms but as time goes on we may include more and share content in new ways. Plus, nowadays social media apps have multiple functions like YouTube shorts, Instagram reels, regular videos, podcasts, and there's probably other ways that I just don't know about yet. But that's the gist.

Okay, now I'm going to tell you a bit about myself and how I got here, since you're gonna be stuck with me.

As you know, my name is Julia Dulgerova. I'm 17 going onto 18. I live in Pennsylvania USA but I dream of living in Kentucky. My family is from Ukraine and I have two older brothers.

Ever since I was little I loved the idea of homesteading and gardening and it became a big dream of mine. When my family moved from the city to the suburbs during my elementary school years, my dreams slowly started becoming a reality.

I watched lots of homesteading families on YouTube and that really helped me envision my dreams and goals. YouTube was my first visual introduction to homesteading, and me and my mom loved the idea of gardening and growing our own food, so we decided to give it a try!

We started with just planting some tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers. It was awesome and we felt so fulfilled and satisfied, but we wanted to do something more.

Once we established the garden a bit, the next step was to get chickens. So we went to a feed store and bought 13 little baby chicks, of all different breeds and colors.

This was all starting to feel more real! We now had a garden AND chickens! Starting this homestead journey made me so sooo happy! Because I never really felt like I fit in in school (that sounds cliché but it's true), I had friends but never friends that had common hobbies and interests with me like homesteading. Finally I felt like I had a hobby that actually made me happy and that I felt committed to but in a good way. I was and still am a homebody and I LOVE being with my family, so keeping chickens and a garden gave me something to do while being at home with the people I love most.

One thing I can tell you for sure is that if you start homesteading and you start getting animals you CANNOT stop and it becomes a never ending cycle (this is a warning!), but a lot of homesteaders have cows, which I knew we didn't have enough land for, but I also saw that some kept goats. Goats of all sorts like nubians, nigerian dwarfs, etc. I knew that they would fit on our acre just fine and they would be a great source of milk too. I talked to my parents and my mom was onboard right away but my dad was like, "NO!". So, I slowly started to convince him. Like literally I'm not joking, to show my dedication I would walk around the house going BHEEEE like a goat because that's what I thought would convince my dad (I was in middle school so give me some grace). Eventually he agreed, so my goat bleating worked!

I saved up all my money from my 14th birthday and started searching for goats and building supplies like fence posts and housing materials. I found a farmer named Bill who kept a Nigerian dwarf goat and he was amazing. He said he would sell us any baby goats we wanted and we picked 2 but had to wait until they grew up a bit to actually bring them home. Me and my brothers spent the summer putting up a fence and a shelter for the baby goats that would soon be ours!

Meanwhile I was researching everyday about how to keep goats, what they need to eat, common deficiencies they could have, signs of sickness, all the ins and outs, and I kept a hefty binder of information. Soon enough we brought the goats home. We named them Millie and Luna and as they grew up we prepared to breed them since we wanted milk. When they were old enough, we took them to their "boyfriends", if you will, and both of them became pregnant and had one baby each! This was an adventure in and of itself, especially when Millie was giving birth while I was home alone and the baby got stuck and I had to reach in (if you know what I mean) and turn the baby to pull it out! That's a story for a different time though. The goats had babies and then I started milking them for many months.

The problem was, I was in middle school and in one year I would be in high school. I was already waking up at 6:00 am so I would have time to milk before school, and then after school I would also have to milk. I knew that in high school I would have to wake up even earlier and it would be difficult to balance school work, a job, and the goats. So, unfortunately we had to sell Millie and Luna as well as their babies. Thankfully, everyone went to a good family and we are still in contact with the people who bought the goats.

As I continued to go through high school I knew something involving homesteading and a holistic path would be my life's focus. I still garden, keep chickens, and have added some bees to the "farm", and I'm very interested in learning about holistic nutrition and herbalism. That's what I want my life to involve. I didn't know how I would do this though, since those aren't the usual college career paths.

That's when I found the Nutritional Therapy Association (NTA) in 10th grade. I instantly knew that that's where I would go for schooling but I wasn't sure how I would implement that education into a career. It was something I couldn't figure out and I was a little worried about it. I didn't know how I would share the things I learned. I thought about a YouTube channel or a blog and I thought I would try these after I graduate high school.

I always enjoyed listening to podcasts and they really inspired me, so I thought, yep, that's what I'll do after I graduate but my senior year was approaching and everyone was applying to colleges so basically the pressure was ON. I needed to figure out what I was going to do with my life and I thought "ok, I know I love nutrition and I also love sauerkraut, kombucha, raw milk, and raw butter, as well as grass fed meats and meat stocks", so I came to the conclusion that there had to be a diet that goes along with all this, right?

So I simply Googled it.

And guess what? Yea, it totally exists, and it's called the "GAPS Diet"! Many of the components of the GAPS diet is what I was already doing and it turns out there's a training program for the GAPS diet, so I started researching the program. I learned that in order to go through their program I needed a certain certification, and the Nutritional Therapy Association could give me that. This was perfect since I was already planning to go to the NTA. I decided that I would get my NTA certification to become a Nutritional Therapist and then I would go through the Certified GAPS Practitioner (CGP) Training.

But I wanted to learn more, so I went on the GAPSTraining.com website and emailed one of the staff members named Jennifer (She's one of the kindest people you'll ever meet and now we are on the same work team, which is crazy!).

Meanwhile, I was already working on starting my podcast because I thought, why wait until I graduate to start it, so I might as well start now. I had emailed Jennifer and basically just asked her about her story, how she got into GAPS, and what brought her there. She told me her story, and said GAPS Training would be happy to accept me into a certification program after the NTA no problem. I also shared my podcast with her because she asked what I have been working on. I was absolutely thrilled because I was finally starting to see clarity in my post-high school life.

A few weeks later, I got an email from Jennifer that my work on the podcast had inspired the GAPS training program to start the GAPS Youth Movement and she was asking if I wanted to

be the head of this movement and to take on a GAPS internship too. I was SO excited to have this opportunity! It all felt like such a blessing!

Meanwhile, I was searching for a job to do after school and I simply searched "Herbalists near me" because I wanted to do something in this field. Well, a place called "Barefoot Botanicals" showed up. I called them and asked if I could come help on their farm, even if it's just volunteer work and they agreed! I worked as a field hand for about 2 months, and then they hired me as part of their staff. It has been such a great learning experience working there and I get to be around healing plants and be outside in the fresh air. I couldn't ask for anything more!

And here we are! I'm only a few more months away from graduation (two months to be exact). I have lots of goals and aspirations and I just can't wait to see where it all takes me. I'm excited to move into the next phase of life after high school, and I know there is so much ahead. I want to move to Kentucky and start a homestead or ranch after graduation. First I want to raise animals for me and my family and later sell what we produce online or in a local store. I want lots of kids and a beautiful family, and a small cottage surrounded by a french potager garden and a market style garden. I want to keep a family jersey milking cow, as well as a few goats to remind me of my childhood, and lots of chickens for egg production and meat, and some sheep and pigs.

Basically I want to live in the middle of nowhere on a farm, live off the land, and be happy. I want to teach people how to grow their own food and how to use that food to get the greatest health benefits through GAPS. And of course, how to implement herbal medicine into the mix.

My blessing of a job here at GAPS and working at the herbal farm has been incredible in helping me gain experience and knowledge from so many intelligent people, which is bringing me closer to my dreams every day and I'm forever thankful.

And you know what? You guys have the front row seat on this journey!

Whether you have similar dreams or completely different ideas of eternal happiness, the GYM is a place for all youth!

We only get one body in this lifetime and we must care for it through our diet, mindset, and good lifestyle choices. Everyone is welcome in the GYM, no matter how far along you are in your journey, because our bodies and our minds are important and they seek the support of our diets and lifestyle at all ages. Come and join the GYM! It's never too early or too late to start getting healthy.