

# An Interview with Ron Weiss, M.D.

by Mark Huberman

**Ron Weiss, M.D.** is a physician and farmer. He is the founder of Ethos Health, a farm-based healthcare system that connects human health to the natural world and promotes mindful, healthy ways of living. At the center of this system is Ethos Farm, a 280-year-old working farm in Long Valley, New Jersey, which grows produce using regenerative methods. These “living medicines” are used as part of an evidence-based diet of whole plant foods to reverse and prevent chronic disease. Dr. Weiss is a diplomate of both the American Board of Internal Medicine and the American Board of Lifestyle Medicine. He is also Assistant Professor of Clinical Medicine at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. On most days, if he’s not planting, you can find him practicing and teaching lifestyle medicine in an old wooden farmhouse right in the middle of the growing fields. Visit [Ethoshealth.org](http://Ethoshealth.org) for more information.



**Mark Huberman:** I am always interested in the personal and professional journeys of whole-food, plant-based physicians like you. Were you raised as a vegetarian or vegan, or did some personal health crisis cause you to start down this road?

**Dr. Ron Weiss:** I was not raised as a vegan or vegetarian, and fortunately never suffered a serious health crisis. However, I consider myself very blessed that even in my childhood, our family was not eating the standard American diet. In fact, we ate rather omnivorously, and our meals were always loaded with lots of vegetables and fruits. Salads were first, and they were mandatory; they were always enormous. They consisted of dark green romaine lettuce, not iceberg, along with escarole and other dark greens, purple cabbage, carrots, onions, and more. The next service was a large dish of cooked vegetables and then a starch, like a baked potato or a sweet potato. Only after all that would my mother serve us a chicken breast or a piece of fish, like scrod. And that’s the way I ate until I left home.

**From very early on, it seems like you developed a liking for a**

**lot of whole natural foods.**

Absolutely, especially that large salad!

**It sounds like your meals followed Dr. Joel Fuhrman’s maxim that your salad should be your main course.**

Yes, and it was!

**Were there any events growing up that raised questions about eating meat or dairy?**

There actually were two milestones that I think helped shape my thinking very early on. I remember that in the late 1960s or early 1970s there was a warning about canned tuna having mercury in it, and so our family never had another can of tuna. And about the same time, there was a warning issued about nitrosamines in cold cuts, and we never had those again.



*Dr. Weiss during his interview with Mark Huberman*

**Did you have any mind-awakening experiences in medical school?**

There actually was one that was pretty unexpected and amazing. When I was a first-year medical student, I volunteered for a study to check vitamin levels in the blood. The researchers told us, of course, not to take any supplements,

and so I didn't. They took my blood, and a few days later they called me in to the lab and started to scold me. They said, "We told you not to take any supplements," and I said, "But I've never taken a vitamin." They said, "That's impossible because your carotenoids are completely off the chart, and they are not measurable." They also reported that my vitamin C was very, very high; it's like I was an outlier. We weren't being taught much nutrition in medical school, so I began to wonder if maybe it had something to do with all these plants I was eating. That was really the first inkling that consuming plants could be very beneficial for health. After graduating from medical school, I went into my residency, and then my diet really declined because I was working crazy hours and just eating garbage.



*Dr. Weiss as a young med student with his father*

### **After completing your residency, did you go right into practice?**

No, I didn't. Within a year of graduating from my residency, I was actually enrolled at USC film school, where I was seeking a Master of Fine Arts in film production. But then my father was diagnosed with end-stage pancreatic cancer, so I left school and came home to take care of him.

### **Why were you thinking of going into film if you already had a medical degree?**

Since I was only a few years old, my training had always been in music. In fact, I was taught to read music before I could read English, so in many respects, music was my first language. As a child, I took lessons on piano, violin, clarinet, and cello. I went on to major in piano performance, with a dual major in botany at Rutgers. I actually decided to go to film school because I had an unrequited dream of writing orchestral scores for films.

### **So, you truly are "a man for all seasons"!**

Hopefully, mostly sunny!

### **During your talk in Akron, you spoke about how your father's contracting pancreatic cancer served as the intersection for you of conventional and lifestyle medicine. Please tell me more about that.**

I went to the public library to start reading everything I could on the condition, since Sloan Kettering didn't seem

to have anything of value. About that time, alternative medicine was all the rage, and Dr. Andrew Weil was an important figure. In the library I found a book of testimonies from people who had adopted a macrobiotic diet. One of those people was a man who had stage IV pancreatic cancer and who had cured himself. He claimed that he was a disciple of Michio Kushi. I brought the book home to my father and I read it to him. He said, "Okay, I will do this," and we took him to see Michio Kushi in Boston.

Kushi put my dad on a very severe macrobiotic diet. There were no fruits, no nightshade vegetables, just a lot of dark leafy greens, cruciferous vegetables, legumes, brown rice, seaweed, and a few root vegetables. Amazingly, my father's health was transformed very quickly. He got off all of his pain meds, his elimination returned to normal, and within a

week he went back to his job as an attorney. Two weeks later he went to the gym, and four weeks later he started running.

*"When you see something happen and you don't understand why, you should think about it and try to develop a hypothesis as to why and then investigate it."*

### **How much time had he been given to live?**

One to three months. The doctors told him to get his affairs in order. At the three-month mark, we got a CAT scan and there was a 33% reduction in all of his main tumor masses. Six months later we got another scan that revealed a 50% reduction. A year later we took him back to the chief of the department of solid tumors at Sloan Kettering, and when he saw my father, he couldn't understand why he was still alive. Sadly, as soon as my father started talking about his diet of seaweed,

kelp, and brown rice, this doctor completely lost interest, changed the topic, and that was it.

### **To him, was your dad just lucky?**

Of course. It's the typical reaction we still get today from conventional physicians. No matter what happens when someone's diabetes goes away, their angina vanishes, or their glaucoma goes away, the doctors just shrug their shoulders and say, "We don't know why that happened, but let's just keep going." I find that so bizarre, because doctors are scientists, and I think that the bedrock of science is the power of observation. That's where the best ideas and hypotheses come from. When you see something happen and you don't understand why, you should think about it

and try to develop a hypothesis as to why and then investigate it.

**When you saw this profound outcome from your father, did you think the macrobiotic diet must be the answer to many or all of our health ills?**

Well, I knew it was the food, but you have to remember, I had been indoctrinated with the usual academic medical education, without any kind of nutritional science or evidence-based information. And at that time there really wasn't a lot available. We didn't have Dr. Colin Campbell, Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn, or Dr. Joel Fuhrman. Maybe there was a Herbert Shelton, but I didn't know anything about him. The only things I could find in the lay literature were the writings of Andrew Weil and Michio Kushi, but there still was no scientific evidence behind it.

From that point on, I took a keen interest in advising my patients to eat a plant-heavy diet. However, at that time, it still wasn't clear to me that either I or my patients should cut out animal foods; I just did not get that clear message. And since I personally never had any illnesses, I didn't see the need to go all the way vegetarian or vegan, and so I continued to include some fish in my diet.

**What completed the picture for you? Was there a book you read or a lecture you heard from a plant-based physician?**

There were two things, and they occurred about the same time. One was that I had gotten caught up in the sushi craze. I had never had sushi before, but I tried it and I liked it. I was eating the finest sushi twice a week until I read an article in the *New York Times* where investigators took samples of tuna from 100 of the best restaurants in New York and tested them. Over 90% of them exceeded the EPA guidelines for mercury. So, I decided to check my own mercury level, and it was outside of the normal range. That freaked me out, and I decided to stop eating fish.

After abstaining from fish for about nine months, I checked my mercury level again, and it was low normal. So, that was the end of fish for me. Right about the same time, *The China Study* had come out, and I was amazed at all the evidence Dr. Campbell had collected. First, I got



*Dr. Ron Weiss with Dr. Joel Fuhrman at Ethos Farm.*

*“I had been indoctrinated with the usual academic medical education, without any kind of nutritional science or evidence-based information.”*

web of Dr. Weiss!

**What about when they come to you with weight problems?**

If they were overweight, they would leave with a prescription to see *Forks Over Knives* and read *The China Study*.

**The Natural Hygiene Movement—from which NHA founders like Drs. Herbert Shelton, Gerald Benesh, and William Esser drew inspiration—held a revolutionary view of disease that recognized modern medicine’s misguided focus on suppressing the symptoms of disease rather than identifying and removing their underlying causes. Does that now resonate with you?**

This realization by Doctor Shelton and the others actually began to ring true to me in my second year of medical school. I specifically remember the day the professor walked into the lecture hall and announced that as we were about to go into our third year, we would be leaving the anatomy books. He said, “You’re going to see patients now, and I have something to tell you. All the basic science you learned about pharmacology and physiology, it’s good, but you’re not going to be able to cure patients of many things. You’re going to see patients with a lot of chronic diseases, and for all intents and purposes, other than a very few times, you will only be managing those diseases; you will not reverse them and you will not cure them.”

**Did you think that was odd?**

I was very disheartened when I heard that, because I was no different than most medical students, who, when asked the proverbial question in their medical school interviews “Why do you want to go to medical school?”, they would answer like a Miss America contestant: “Because I

really angry, but then I began to put two and two together to understand why my father’s tumor had shrunk. After reading that book, I became whole-food, plant-based.

**Did you change your medical practice as well?**

From that point on, no person ever escaped my clutches. To this day, it doesn't matter what patients come to see me for; they all fall into the spider

want to cure people and heal the world.” I think that most prospective doctors apply to medical school because that’s what they have the idea of doing. They want to heal people, they don’t want to become a chronic disease manager.

I remember specifically being crestfallen when I heard that I would not be healing people. And from that point on, from the end of my second year of medical school until my experience with my father about four years later, I didn’t exactly understand what I was doing or where or within what construct I was working. And for the first time with my father’s disease, I began to delve heavily into alternative medicine.

I became a disciple of Andrew Weil, and I followed his approach for a couple of years. However, I didn’t find it extremely efficacious, and I found that by just telling people to eat better was more effective. When I finally saw the evidence presented by Dr. Campbell, I became angry that I’d never known this before. No one ever taught it to me or exposed me to this information. It was then that I truly began to understand that most chronic diseases were not only preventable, but also reversible.

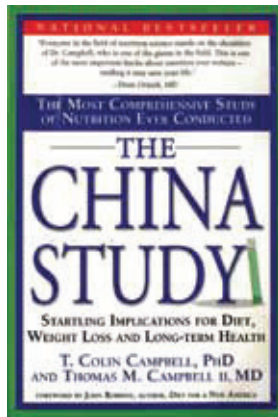
**As you look back on the time with your father and the emergence of “alternative” medicine, as opposed to the “lifestyle” medicine of today, did you think that a lot of the therapies were simply a variation of the mentality of finding a magic pill or potion to cure diseases?**

I think a lot of those practices, which borrow from long-standing cultural practices, including Ayurvedic medicine and Chinese medicine, don’t seem to have a lot of rigorous scientific evidence behind them, and I have never found them to be very effective. Because I’m a pragmatist, as a doctor, I like to do what works.

**But isn’t part of the attraction of all these remedies that people like a quick fix? “Give me this medication or herbal remedy, and my problems will be quickly cured.”**

Sure, and that’s why drugs are popular, because they’re easy. It’s very hard to eat fruits and vegetables all day instead of just taking a vitamin, an herbal remedy, or a blood pressure pill.

**I often like to point with a lot of pride that the unique thing about *Health Science* magazine is that it is such a contrast to the other health magazines you pick up for free in any health food store, where 90% of the content is extolling the**



**latest “miracle” diet pill or “natural remedy,” like CBD oil, that will resolve all our ills, increase our sexual potency, and extend our memory.**

The attraction of most “natural remedies” is that they are extremely accessible to everyone and they do not require a personal transformation, which often requires discipline and hard work.

**Let’s shift gears. Why do you think it is that when cardiologists are inserting stents and bypassing the clogged arteries in so many of their patients, they don’t ever wonder or want to investigate the cause of all that clogging? Do they just think it was the patients’ bad luck? Why are they not able to make the dietary connection?**

When I was in school, a major component of coronary disease education was that family history presented a significant risk factor, and I think that cardiologists continue to think that today. At the same time, I think most of the cardiologists believe that eating meat and saturated fat is unhealthy for your arteries. But I’m not sure if they really understand that eating even small amounts of it can give you atherosclerotic plaques that are life-threatening.

Along those lines, the average cardiologist probably believes that as long as you eat a Mediterranean-like diet, where you’re eating a lot of plants, vegetables, and small portions of meat, you are on a good diet to prevent coronary disease from developing. Unfortunately, they don’t understand that you aren’t. They don’t understand that the addition of oil, especially olive oil, is so detrimental. The reason cardiologists can’t accept that the extraordinary value for heart health is a whole-food, plant-based diet is because they themselves are unwilling to adopt this type of diet.

I remember a dear friend of mine—an amazing pulmonologist and a very kind gentleman who took care of my father-in-law—who had passed away from sudden death at the age of 63 while swimming in Cancún. Prior to his death, I recall talking to him about the value of a plant-based diet for his patients, and his saying, “Ronald...I know, I know, but who would eat like that?” And to me this was code for “I am not going to eat like that, so I am not going to give this option to my patients.”

**Do you think this is the same for other specialists, like kidney doctors who work on a daily basis with diabetics, who account for the epidemic of people on dialysis? Do they not see the dietary connection or is it the same**

*“When I finally saw the evidence presented by Dr. Campbell, I became angry that I’d never known this before. No one ever taught it to me or exposed me to this information.”*

## phenomena as above?

I do think the primary factor is that they cannot eat like this themselves. They will not, and they do not want to. And if they don't want to, then it is very difficult to adopt that as a philosophy to treat patients. Telling someone to do something that you're not willing to do would make you a hypocrite, and who wants to be a hypocrite?

**Dr. John McDougall would say that there is also an economic factor, since it is not in the financial interests of physicians to guide patients to a better diet and lifestyle. Doctors get paid to prescribe drugs and perform procedures.**

Maybe for doctors who do a lot of procedures, but I don't think that's a prime motivating factor for most. Look at primary care doctors, of which I am one. We have no procedures to do, and the same is true for endocrinologists and rheumatologists.

**Do you think Drs. Alan Goldhamer and Doug Lisle are correct when they say that the challenge for so many people is that they just can't escape the "pleasure trap" of the standard American diet?**

I do think it's primarily that. So many of the foods are like drugs, and they hook you like alcohol and heroin, making it so hard to stop.

**Within the pantheon of lifestyle physicians in the whole-food, plant-based health movement, you are known as being the "Farm Doctor." How did this connection between the farm and medicine arise?**

I have always loved growing plants. I was the gardener at home and took care of the garden when no one else was interested. You could say my life revolved around it, and for me it was like "The Secret Life of Plants" that Stevie Wonder wrote about. I loved plants and wanted to be a farmer, but like a lot of kids, I figured my love for farming would likely have to take a back seat because I was being directed by my parents to premed so I could make a living.

I did go to medical school and became a doctor, but in the back of my mind, I never relinquished the desire to farm. And then, when I reached midlife, I started to think about it again. And being an environmentalist and a naturalist, I started responding to the drumbeat of environmental decline, and it started to become overwhelming. When



*Ethos Farm utilizes certified organic farming methods and hopes to be "certified regenerative" soon.*

*"The goal was to change the way food was grown and change the way medicine was practiced, and that is where we came up with this farm-based healthcare system."*

my children were born, it made me start to think not just about myself for the first time, but now I was focused on their lives.

One day I snapped and decided that I had to change the way I was living and working. I got rid of my medical practice, sold everything, and bought an old farm, with the goal of changing the way I practice medicine. The goal was to change the way food was grown and change the way medicine was practiced, and that is where we came up with this farm-based healthcare system.

## Tell me about the farm itself.

The farm is a national historic landmark. It's an almost 300-year-old working farm and is one of the larger ones in the state of New Jersey, which historically was home to lots of smaller farms called "truck farms." It's in a special valley

which was famous for growing grains for its first 200 years. Because it was covered with prairie grass, it had wide-open spaces. It was conventionally farmed for decades, and until the 1980s it was one of the largest dairy farms in the state. And then it became a GMO soybean and corn farm for the last 30 or 40 years. Then we got it, and we've been transforming the farm piece by piece and utilizing certified organic farming methods. Hopefully,

we will soon be certified regenerative.

**You seem to place high value on organics; why? I don't hear that from many of your colleagues.**

That's unfortunately true. I'm not sure I would use the term "organics," but I know what you mean. It's complete lunacy to me, and always has been, that we pour poisons on our food and eat it. If you purchase a can or bottle of insecticide or fungicide that has a skull and cross bones on it, you are warned that if you get it on your skin or you spray it in your eyes or your mouth, you will have to go to the emergency room. Why on earth would anyone want to eat food treated with poisonous chemicals? It makes no sense.

And the more unfortunate thing is that these chemicals have accumulated in our environment to the point where we cannot escape them. They're in our rain, they are in our soil, and they are in our air. And at the rate we are going,

we don't have that much time left—maybe 40 to 50 years. You and I will probably be able to make it, but our children and grandchildren will not be so lucky. I think they're going to be struggling terribly with the outcome of how we farm in the 21st century. We've got to change the way we farm—we've got to!

### What do you think it will take to wake the world up before it's too late?

I hope the two pressures that will force us to change before it is too late are the extermination of the diversity of species and climate change, because these are both consequences of conventional farming.

### Has it been your experience or observation that patients who adopt a whole-food, plant-based diet and consume more organic and fewer conventional fruits and vegetables tend to do better?

Well, just to be clear, I think that it is always advisable to buy certified organic produce as opposed to conventional produce. But in addition, the best policy is to eat produce that is not just certified organic, but is grown in a living soil without chemicals and with natural methods. Just because it's certified organic does not mean that you're going to have nutrient-dense produce. There's no guarantee of that. We tell our patients that if they do not have a farm like ours nearby, then they should go to their local farmers market and ask the farmers about their growing methods. And if they use conscientious methods, they should buy that produce. That's the first thing I would say.

The second thing is that a diet of whole plants is so powerful that even if you are eating nonorganic fruits and vegetables, you are still likely to reverse your diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, and obesity. However, we do know, and there are studies that have shown this, that when people eat conventional produce, dangerous pesticides are measurable in their urine. We know that these pesticides cause disease, and we are finally beginning to find out exactly how and why. I was just looking at studies the other day that showed a strong association between many of these pesti-



Dr. Weiss conducts tours at his farm, explaining his Hundred-Acre Carbon Sequestration Project. Previously, the land was a dairy farm and a GMO soybean and corn farm.

cides—including Pyrethrum, which is a USDA-certified organic pesticide—and an increased risk in newborns for the development of autism. It just goes to show you, it's probably not a good idea to apply biocides or killing agents to our food and then consume it. Rachel Carson knew that 60 years ago, but not enough of us were listening.

### Do you think that people should follow the Environmental Working

### Group's recommendations to avoid the "Dirty Dozen," their list of the most pesticide-laden foods?

I sure do. In our house, ever since our kids were born, we'd never buy any conventional produce, grains, or beans. Everything we buy is certified organic. If it's not, we don't bring it home, because we don't want their little bodies infiltrated by this stuff. However, restaurants are more challenging since there are very few that offer certified organic food; so, you have to be careful. I personally would not eat

strawberries that are not organic. I would not eat peaches or cherries that were not organic. We go out of our way not to eat those things because they have very high burdens.

### What is your view of hydroponics?

The conscientious farming world, of which I consider myself a part, is very upset about hydroponics, because our federal government is now acknowledging them as eligible for organic certification. That is outra-

geous, since these plants have nothing to do with soil. As a botanist who has studied plants for many years, I believe that the only way a plant can grow itself in a healthy manner is to have very complex relationships with soil microorganisms. And they are not present in water, which is how hydroponics are grown.

### Is the problem the nutritional deficiency or toxicity?

How can you get nutrient-dense produce from stuff grown in water? We do know that when produce is grown in soils that are bereft of high levels of microbiome, they produce substandard food. So, why wouldn't the same thing be true of water-grown plants?

*"It's complete lunacy to me, and always has been, that we pour poisons on our food and eat it... Why on earth would anyone want to eat food treated with poisonous chemicals? It makes no sense."*

**Since you spend a lot of time on the farm, what are your thoughts on the growing marketing of grass-fed beef, free-range chickens, and organic eggs? Are these net pluses or net minuses?**

There's a lot of confusion in the public about this, because people think that these foods are generally healthy. But they aren't. Even organic meats and animal foods have huge amounts of environmental contaminants in them. If you want to avoid ingesting these poisons into your body, you shouldn't eat them. As far as the animal foods themselves, the proteins of the animals concentrate in our flesh and are toxic to human beings, causing human diseases. We know that. I tell my patients not to eat organic animal products because of that inherent hazard to health. I don't think that it's a reasonable model to raise animals in this way and on a large scale to satisfy the voracious appetite of Americans for beef, or of the world, for that matter. It's just not sustainable for our planet, and that is why I always tell my patients to eat whole plant foods.

**What about the Impossible Burger? Is this an impossible idea?**

It's impossible to live a healthy life if you're eating them. You're basically eating processed crap. You're eating coconut oil and processed pea powder with a lot of additives. In my talk at the Akron Civic Theater, I showed a slide of the fat content of the different kinds of dietary fats. And of those fats, coconut is one of the worst, having even more saturated fat than lard. So, just as I would advise my patients not to eat a large burger, I would advise them not to eat an Impossible Burger.

**But isn't there a compelling argument that it would be better for the planet if we weaned ourselves off beef and moved toward imitation meat?**

I get it, and I could take that argument. If we just continue eating hamburgers, by 2026 our planet will go off a cliff due to the carbon dioxide concentration. A chain of irreversible melting of our ice caps and permafrost in the polar region will also be triggered. And from that point, of course, civilization is doomed.

I would say, if you can replace all those meat hamburgers with Impossible Burgers, I'll take that, because it's better



*Dr. Weiss with his wife, Deborah; son Jascha; and daughter, Rosie.*

*“Just as I would advise my patients not to eat a large burger, I would advise them not to eat an Impossible Burger.”*

Impossible Burger and Beyond Burger make all kinds of predictions, including that they hope to replace all meat within two years from now. They're already in Burger King, so who knows!

**I gather you are very concerned about the fate of our planet?**

I'm depressed about it, enough so that I bought my farm about eight years ago because I just didn't see any future for my children. By the time they reach middle age, I don't know what they'll have left. I don't tell them that, but I work harder every day to try and do what I can to turn things around.

**Tell me about your medicine-based practice on the farm. What kind of conditions do you see most quickly and powerfully respond to the adoption of a plant-based diet?**

Weight loss, diabetes, hypertension, coronary artery disease, glaucoma, eczema, acne, GERD, and most of the autoimmune diseases in most people. When it comes to osteoarthritis, we can't reverse the destruction, but 95% of the time the plant-based diet removes the pain associated with it. So, you see, I think it's pretty much all the chronic diseases. Cancer, however, is a difficult one.

**Why is cancer different?**

Most people I see with cancer have stage IV or late-stage cancers. I guess, out of their desperation, they try to seek me out, but it's tough for them to turn it around. But it doesn't mean that there is no hope; my father was a classic

to have a planet left with sick people on it than no planet and no people at all. But it's a tough choice. Things like Impossible Burgers are not really good for human health, but I guess on a wholesale level, if you could replace all animal flesh with these impossible artificial meat and chicken substitutes, yes, it would be helpful for our planetary problems.

**It sounds like we are a long way from that day, don't you think?**

There is an outfit called Memphis Meats, which is now culturing and cloning meat in a laboratory. It's real meat, but I don't have the inside track on it or any other similar companies. The makers of

example. And that doesn't mean that cancer patients can't benefit.

**It sounds like you're saying there's a big difference, though, between early-stage cancers and late-stage cancers?**

I would say so. And the earlier the better, like when it is the size of a tip of a ballpoint pen, before it takes off.

**In my many years in our health movement, if there is one fascination people seem to have, it is with olive oil. What is the magical attraction of this oil? Even when people seem convinced that all the other oils are bad and need to be avoided, they still defend olive oil.**

It seems to be very "ethereal"; it's expensive, it's delicious, it's beautiful to look at (with that golden-greenish color), and it comes with those special words, "extra virgin." And it doesn't really help when the *New England Journal of Medicine* publishes the PRE-DIMED study, broadening the benefits of olive oil. That was a few years ago when the headlines read that if you ate a Mediterranean diet containing a good dose of olive oil every day, you could reduce your risk of heart attacks by a third. This has now seeped into our consciousness.

**But is it just nonsense?**

It's total nonsense. Olive oil makes your arteries go into spasm within an hour or so after eating it. And there are huge amounts of unnecessary calories in any oil, including olive oil. With the weight problems our country has, the last thing we need is more calories.

**What about added salt in the diet? I know that virtually all of your fellow plant-based physicians agree that we should completely avoid all oils and added sugar, but some don't think that completely avoiding a little added salt is all that important. Do you agree that salt is just as bad as sugar and oil and should be avoided as well?**

Absolutely, and there should be no controversy about it. Salt undeniably causes high blood pressure, and there is a strong suspicion that it may also increase your risk for cancer and possibly even osteoporosis. We physicians are in the business of preventing diseases and reversing them,



*Dr. Weiss with some of his heroes and friends, including Dr. Michael Klaper, Anthony Masiello, Dr. Scott Stoll, and Dr. Joel Fuhrman.*

**nonsense?**

I think so. It's another alternative practice that appears to have no scientific basis. From what I know, perhaps it may have some kind of benefit for certain childhood seizure disorders, but I'm not aware of any rigorous scientific evidence that shows it can be beneficial for other conditions.

**You selected a unique name for your farm, "Ethos." Why did you choose that name?**

"Ethos" means a set of principles or a guiding philosophy is maintained by a community, organization, or person. In the early 1990s, the community in which our farm sits actually purchased the development rights for about \$12 million to protect this beautiful and historic farmland from housing, strip malls, and other types of development. Later on, the state of New Jersey and the county of Morris reimbursed them the money. But this was the first time in the nation that a town had ever done that to help save fine farm land. That is the primary reason we named it Ethos Farm.

**What kind of projects do you do at the farm?**

The most important thing we do is try to aid the planet's survival. Our Ethos Farm Project is fiscally sponsored by PlantPure Communities, which is the nonprofit that was founded by Nelson Campbell. The project consists of three areas. The first is our Young Farmers Incubator Program. We take a young farmer onto our farm, give them land, housing, and education and mentorship from our farm manager. We teach them how to grow, using not just organic but regenerative and restorative soil methods. This is important because of the polluted world in which we live and because the population of farmers in the U.S. is aging.

and I can't in good conscience tell people to add disease-causing ingredients to the beautiful regenerative vegetables they are eating. It would be inconsistent.

**The most recent phenomenon is CBD oil products—the new "completely natural" miracle product for everything that ails you. Do you think this is just another hyped bit of**





*Ethos Farm Day includes speakers, free lectures, and delicious plant-based potluck lunches.*

The average age is now about 60, and there are very few young farmers coming up who know how to grow healthy food. You have to remember that a lot of the knowledge that was within the farming community has been lost in the last hundred years with the adoption of chemical-based agriculture.

The second area is our Hundred-Acre Carbon Sequestration Project. Since buying the farm eight years ago, little by little we've been turning the land over using nonchemical methods and restoring it. The last hundred acres of our 342-acre farm comes off lease from a conventional farmer in December of this year, and starting in the spring of 2020 we will restore that hundred acres with the native prairie grasses that originally covered our valley before European settlement. They are the same grasses that once covered the prairies of the American Great Plains. And while we're doing that, we're teaming up with Rodale Institute and Rutgers University to study what the effects of doing that are on carbon sequestration. We estimate that it should be quite powerful in sequestering carbon deep down in the soil. We'll be studying that over the next 10 years.

The third arm is our Ethos Farm Days program. That is where, once a month from May through October, we bring in a world-class speaker. We open up the farm to the public, give them a regenerative farm tour, and teach them what it is and what is necessary to grow healthy food for a healthy planet. We present a lifestyle medicine panel as well, where we bring in a patient who has overcome tremendous difficulties and succeeded. The audience asks questions of the patient and our panel. It's very exciting. And then we finish the event off with a fabulous plant-based potluck lunch. Hundreds of people attend each event, and they really have a great time. Our last one for this year will be October 5<sup>th</sup>, featuring T. Colin Campbell.

### How can people learn more about these events?

They can go to our website, [Ethoshealth.org](http://Ethoshealth.org) and register on the Events page. We also have a beautiful free newsletter that I would encourage your readers to sign up for. It offers seasonal news from the farm, articles about disease reversal, patient testimonials, and great plant-based recipes that are SOS-free.



*Dr. Weiss leads a regenerative farm tour, educating and inspiring participants.*

### It sounds like you are really doing what you love.

I am. Ethos Farm has brought great meaning to my life. As a doctor, I have always helped people, but perhaps I wasn't helping them as much as I could or always in the best way. I feel that I am now. I have gained that deep connection to the natural world that I've always dreamed about since I was a child.

Up until the farm, my practice of medicine was in a hospital with gray walls or in an office on a busy street. Now I can clearly see and convince my patients to find their natural connections, because they're right outside the window. It's easier to inspire a patient when they come to our farm. They see that they're on the right road by eating good plants that are grown with the health of our world in mind.

**You will be interested to know that one of the earliest taglines of our organization was "Living in Harmony with Nature," and we have been championing that for nearly all of our 70+ years.**

Well, you guys were really ahead of the curve. I'm just hoping to catch up!

**It's been wonderful talking to you! You have quite a story and I'm sure you're just getting started in your journey with what you're trying to accomplish with Ethos Farm.**

From your lips to God's ears! 