

Empowered by the Science Behind a Plant-Centered Lifestyle

*Discouraged by her poor health at an early age,
she took charge and changed her health destiny.*

by Brittany Jaroudi

Before my sixth-grade school year, I was already familiar with medical terms such as cancer and heart disease, since both of my parents had struggled with these illnesses. My mother had battled stage 4 breast cancer and my father had had a massive heart attack that resulted in triple-bypass surgery. I spent many nights worried about my parents' survival and turned to food as a coping mechanism. The weight started to accumulate over the years, and despite being involved with sports, I was generally known as a chub-

by kid. At such a young age, I recall one doctor visit where the pediatrician flagged my cholesterol numbers as a concern to my parents. I personally had no idea what a healthy lifestyle looked like, and neither did my family. Our family dinners consisted of meat, dairy, usually only one vegetable, and processed convenience foods.

My weight would fluctuate up and down throughout my entire life. By age 25, I had reached approximately 185 pounds and had a BMI in the range that is considered morbidly obese. Additionally, I had high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and a C-reactive protein (hs-CRP) level of 16 (normal is below 3)! I knew something had to change dra-



Brittany before and after her switch to a healthy diet and lifestyle.

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research and science of T. Colin Campbell, PhD, and the China Study along with the work and results Dr. Caldwell

B. Esselstyn had documented in his book, *Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease*. In the film, the blood test results of the director, Lee Fulkerson, showed blood pressure, cholesterol, and CRP levels similar to what I initially had before making any dietary changes. I watched him adopt a whole-food, plant-based lifestyle and improve all of his health markers, and I thought, if he can do it, then so can I.

Understanding what a healthy lifestyle looked like and the role it has in our genetic outcome was such an intriguing concept that I knew I needed to learn more

matically in my life or I was headed in the direction of heart disease, diabetes, autoimmune disease, and even possibly cancer. I had directly seen my own family members suffer with these illnesses, as well as several other members of our extended family.

While researching how to lower the inflammation in my body, I came across the benefits of eating plant-based and discovered *Forks Over Knives*. This documentary had been recommended to me since it demonstrated the benefits of eating a plant-based diet. It showed the

about it, since it could provide many of the answers I had been searching for. The research proved that I had influence over my health destiny and that I could naturally fight these illnesses I'd seen plague my family. Everything clicked together, and for the first time, I felt empowered over my health. Watching



Brittany shows off one of the delicious recipes she demos on her YouTube cooking channel, TheJaroudiFamily.com.

ing *Forks Over Knives* on that day four years ago, I made the change to a health-promoting diet. This was hands-down the best decision of my life! From that point forward, I delved into every well-known book on the plant-centered lifestyle to further educate myself and understand the evidence-based science behind it.

Since then, I have regained my health and have lost over 70 pounds. I focused on eating whole foods, getting enough sleep, movement, and social connections. My biomarkers are all well within the healthy range, including my CRP. I find myself saying that I feel like a completely different person now. Our family vacations and hobbies are completely different than before, including mountain climbing, kayaking, hiking, and preparing delicious plant-based foods as opposed to beach vacations that included dining out and lounging. I used to be the person complaining about going up a steep hill and used vacation as an excuse to binge on lots of junk food. Finding out about this lifestyle at an early age is something I will forever be grateful for.


My life passion now is helping as many people as possible enjoy a whole-food, plant-based lifestyle to achieve better health, with the intent to reach a large number of people all over the world. I created our YouTube channel "The Jaroudi Family" and our website (www.thejaroudifamily.com), which focus on simple, easy, and delicious plant-based recipes to help others move towards a diet that is centered around plants. One key goal I have is to help my generation (and younger) see and understand the benefit of adopting a whole-food, plant-based life at an early age, even if they don't currently have any medical issues. Prevention is such a powerful gift. Imagine never having to experience lifestyle illnesses, as well as being able to age

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a nonprofit named "Food for Health" under Plant-Based Pittsburgh that focuses on presenting the science behind a plant-based lifestyle. Our initiative is to provide our city with free educational cooking classes and ongoing support to build a community of health. We have recently started

organizing donations for Pittsburgh food banks as a way to supply the communities most in need with health-promoting, nourishing foods. Giving back to Pittsburgh by helping others get healthy has been such a joy in my life. I am dedicated to helping others see for themselves the amazing impact this lifestyle change can make.

Discovering the NHA has been another huge blessing in my life. I am a proud member of this amazing organization that values and provides the science behind a whole-food, plant-based lifestyle on a global scale. Wanda and Mark are changing the lives of so many through all the work the NHA accomplishes. *Health Science* is the only magazine that combines health-promoting recipes, interesting articles, doctor interviews, and evidence-based nutrition. I am very much proud to be a supporter of the NHA and look forward to a lifetime membership with this organization that has such strong core values.

My advice to those interested in a whole-food, plant-based lifestyle is that it's never too late or too early to start. What you have for dinner tonight makes an impact on your health. Eating more plants will only benefit the health of you and your family. Keep it simple by focusing on whole grains, legumes, vegetables, fruit, and nuts/seeds. We tend to overcomplicate a lifestyle change, but all you need to do is eat plants, rest, move, and spend quality time with others. 

without restriction or ailments! Imagine if your family never has to go through the pain and suffering of an unhealthy lifestyle! My advice is don't wait until your health is in jeopardy before taking action. I only have one regret: I wish I had made the change earlier.

I have also helped create a