

A Brand-New Story

by Laura Armitage

**Stone by stone, I am building
a great cathedral**

**Cup by cup, I draw the water
from the well**

**Step by step, I'm headed in the
right direction**

**Day by day, I've got a brand-new
story to tell**

—“STONE BY STONE,” BY MAE ROBERTSON

Finally, in my 70s, I have a brand-new story! My vegan journey started on July 4, 1994, Independence Day. My daughter and I went to The National Institute of Fitness in Utah for two weeks for some healthy eating and exercise. The food was whole-food, plant-based, and very good. The director, Dr. Marc Sorenson, promoted Dr. John McDougall's teachings, even providing McDougall tapes to listen to in my Walkman as I hiked. My main goal was weight loss. At the time, I was in my late 40s, and my only health issue was excess weight. I had been at an average weight for most of my life but started gaining in my late 30s. With each weight-loss diet, I would regain more than I had lost, until eventually, I was obese. I was ready to get rid of my weight issues, but I had much more to learn.

After those two weeks, I continued with the plant-based way of eating. I loved it and felt wonderful and healthy. I was happy that I wasn't harming animals and that I was helping the environment. But, although I had lost some weight in the beginning, my weight continued to go up and down. I started following the McDougall message boards and saw inspiring posts from so many who had lost weight. What was wrong with *me*? I continued to try to eat whole-food, plant-based, but kept craving processed starches, sweets, and diet soda.

Still, my vegan eating paid off: my health, except for the excess pounds, seemed good. I enjoyed being vegan, but I was frustrated about my weight and the continued food cravings.

In 2016, at the age 70 and 22 years after becoming vegan, I found the program that worked for me. It is NEVER too late! I joined Chef AJ and John Pierre's *Ultimate Weight Loss Program*. I learned about caloric density and addiction to processed foods. I needed to leave out all sugar, oil, and salt.



I also learned about eating vegetables for breakfast, which worked well for me. I learned that this lifestyle is not just about weight. I was even encouraged to give away my scale, which I did.

After just two weeks of giving up all processed foods, I was free of all cravings. I finally understood about a calm, stable brain! For most of my life, I assumed that everyone spent a good bit of time and energy looking for their next food “fix” and thought that most people just had more willpower than I did. How wrong I was! No longer craving processed food, sweets, and junk food has changed my life. In addition to the new steady sense of mental tranquility, I was also finally able to reach and maintain a reasonable weight.

These last five years have been wonderful in every way. My priorities have changed, and I'm headed in the right direction. I have always been a loving and giving person, but in the past most of my efforts at self-care had involved unsuccessful attempts to control my weight and eating. As I've gotten healthy eating under control, I've had time to add other important goals to my life. I value and

AFTER



strive for that calm, stable brain; excellent health; protecting our planet; strength and agility; optimal aging; and high energy. I enjoy entering races as a racewalker, and this year I did a virtual Kindness 5K with my younger grandchildren. They loved having official race bibs and getting medals at ages six and seven. My longest race was 10 miles; I came in last for the whole race, but took first place in my age group!

I love simplifying my life, learning about meditation, Qigong, Morning Pages, and Stoicism. Now I help others who are interested in this lifestyle. I have a website, talkingtolaura.com, and I am a whole-food, plant-based lifestyle educator and coach. In December of 2009, I completed the T. Colin Campbell Certificate in Plant-Based Nutrition program, and I am a graduate of the Main Street Vegan Academy (2017) and the Master Coach Program at Main Street Vegan Academy (2018). John Pierre's coaching was so very helpful to me, and he inspired me to help others. I feel that I can offer support to others who struggle with food addiction and who want to see changes in their lives.



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My husband and I have 12 grandchildren, so I hope to be active and healthy for years to come. I also enjoy being an example for the grandchildren of the many rewards of healthy eating and living. They know that my house is not the one to come to for candy and junk food. Christmas stockings here are filled with little toys, and Easter baskets contain things like art supplies. The younger ones love being active with me and helping me cook. My grandchildren also know that I'm always up for a bike ride, a walk, or a swim. I'm proud of myself and my new habits.

My goals are lofty. At age 75, I am doing all that I can to enhance my body, mind, and spirit. I also want to be sure that as I age, I will be in the best possible shape to deal

with any problems that come my way. I'm actually happy that I had a weight issue, because it led me to this way of eating, this health, and even to *Health Science* magazine and the National Health Association! Thank you to the NHA for the amazing work that you do. Thank you to my dear friends Elizabeth Burnett and Mary Canfield for introducing me to the wonderful NHA and to *Health Science*. Not only do I continue to learn from the articles in the magazine, but my mentors and teachers all learn from it as well! I proudly became a Century Club member when I renewed my subscription recently, and I've signed up for the 2021 NHA conference. Yes, day by day, I've got a brand-new story to tell! 🌱