

spotlight on members

Spotlight on Members gives us the opportunity to hear about what our members are up to today, as well as how they found their way to the NHA Health Program. If you're interested in sharing your own story, we'd love to hear from you. Please email essays of around 500 words, and one or two photos, to info@healthscience.org.

Valeria Popov Brisbane, CA

I have struggled with my body image and my weight since I was 16 years old. I tried all kinds of diets; most of them were unhealthy, and I didn't even know it.

Most of the diets worked; I was able to lose weight, but I never was able to stay on a diet long-term, so I derailed, gaining my weight back and then some. That part was the most frustrating!

I was overweight, hated my body, was covered with allergies, and was on allergy medication for many years. I could not look at myself in the mirror and could not have sex with my husband without noticing my rolls and my embarrassment.

Shopping, which should be a woman's most enjoyable time, was miserable—forget about getting a two-piece bathing suit for a vacation. I was constantly restricting myself foodwise, feeling shame and guilt when I ate something that I knew would make me gain weight. My confidence was

nonexistent, and jealousy was sitting in the driver's seat of my thoughts.

Fast-forward to my last pregnancy, when I was diagnosed with gestational diabetes and my insulin dose kept growing every week. My doctor could not help me. I took a class in the hospital on how to deal with gestational diabetes, and a couple of nurses taught us what to eat and what to avoid. After that class I was concerned that they were against fruits, since I always thought that fruits were essential during pregnancy.

At that time, I came across some information online about the plant-based lifestyle and how it helps people with diabetes. I was curious and started to dig a bit more. I'd heard people criticize plant-based diets for supposedly

being deficient in calcium and protein, claiming we couldn't get all our essential nutrients from plants—criticism I later discovered was inaccurate. But at this point I was six months into my pregnancy, and I had no other option except insulin shots, so I decided to give it a try.

Was I scared? Yes! I was so brainwashed about the benefits of animal products, yet this new information about a plant-based lifestyle was starting to sink into me, though only with great resistance. But I was sick and tired of pricking my fingers after each meal—to the point where I could not pierce the skin because it got thick and hard from the constant pricking—so I decided to try the plant-based diet for two weeks and see what happened.

What happened was that after one week, my glucose level was normal, and after two weeks, I was off insulin! I was so happy that I didn't need insulin shots, and I was so relieved that my baby and I were safe! I had a healthy

rest of my pregnancy and a fast and easy delivery.

At one month postpartum, I'd gone from 185 pounds to 155 pounds (some of this weight was my baby, but still), and at three months postpartum, I was down to 136 pounds!

After I experienced the benefits of the plant-based lifestyle, I became a believer and active advocate. I started doing research; joining communities wherever I could; meeting and interacting with other plant-based people online, in person, and around the globe; searching out and reading many books and research papers; and finding and following the best doctors.

What I found by piecing together different things that I'd learned and tried out helped me to create a very



simple method that changed the course of my life forever. Not only was I healthier than I had ever been, but using this method, I found that it also affected my weight in a very big way. After making some simple changes, like going oil-, sugar-, salt-, and flour-free, I lost an additional 20 pounds, and it felt amazing. Never in my adult life was I this fit without starving myself.

I felt like I gained a superpower! It was truly empowering to wake up each morning in my new body, step on the scale, and see that I was the same weight or even skinnier than I was yesterday. It was magical!

Now my confidence is through the roof, my energy is sky-high, my mind is clear and vibrant, my food energizes me, I play with my kids wildly, and I have tons of fun! I look at myself in the mirror and can't help but wink. I no longer need to take allergy pills. I've gained lean, strong muscles. I am happy and joyful like never before in my life.

Even more important was realizing that the results—what I looked like and how I felt—were 100% within my power to achieve. I want to acknowledge that what happened was also due to being a part of a strong, like-mind-



Valeria eliminated her diabetes during her pregnancy by eating a plant-based diet.



Valeria with Dr. Alan Goldhamer Valeria with Mark Huberman

ed community that supported me on my way. Groups like the National Health Association are priceless, and if people want results, joining a community is the first thing I recommend.

After gaining so many benefits and so much support from the plant-based community, I decided to give back to people. Now it's my turn to share the information that helped me to optimize

my health and weight loss.

Since then, I created an online summit, "The Supercharged Plant-Based Lifestyle," where I interviewed 30 experts on different topics on healthy living and the power of plants. Mark Huberman was one of them!

I gave away the show for free so that everyone could benefit from its information and from hearing my story. My passion and my vision are to support as many people as I can so that they can also achieve their optimal health and fitness.

I also created the YouTube channel "Supercharged Plant-Based Lifestyle," where I share my story, my experiences

of weight loss, recipes, and weight-loss strategies that helped me to get where I am now.

My message to people who are not yet plant-based is to try it and see what you might discover. I am pretty sure you might find out that you don't have to inject insulin for the rest of your life (unless you have type 1 diabetes); you might find out that you can get off your blood pressure medication within one month; you might find out that losing weight is easier than your previous experiences were; and so much more!



Jon & Dorthée Bergsma

Epe, Netherlands

Mark has asked us to tell you something about ourselves and why we joined the NHA. My wife, Dorothee, and I are living in the Netherlands, and if I'm correct, we're the only NHA members here. We're quite proud of that, but hopefully, that will change! I am a teacher in accounting information systems, and Dorothee is the secretary of a foundation which organizes holidays for children with problematic backgrounds.

Last February, we joined the National Health Association after I watched an interview with Mark, from which I became aware of its existence. Our primary reason for joining was that he mentioned the natural hygienist movement. The teachings of Dr. Shelton and Dr. William Esser and their books were unavailable in hard copy at that moment, but one of the benefits of the



Jon "Outstanding in his field".

NHA is that you can download all their resources for free, including these. An unknown world opened to us! There appeared to be broader movement at the heart of the principles taught by present doctors like Joel Fuhrman, Caldwell Esselstyn, T. Colin Campbell, John McDougall, and Michael Greger.

We changed our diet about five years ago after watching the movie *Forks Over Knives*. Although we did not have any serious health issues at that moment and were quite fit, it all made sense, and I thought, let's give it a try for a month or so. My parents had died rather young and had always followed what I thought to be a healthy diet, but this was apparently not the case. Dorothee had always been against animal abuse, but wasn't vegan, since this was thought to be very hard to organize in a healthy way.

The effects of this change in diet have been very positive. Because of my work as a teacher, I am often in close contact with people, which increases the chance of getting infected with a cold or the flu. To counter this, I always took one or two multivitamin tablets but could not prevent my catching a serious cold at least once or twice a year. Since I changed my diet, this has not happened. Sometimes I get mild symptoms, but drinking some ex-



tra hibiscus tea cures this all in a natural way. In fact, I have not skipped classes for over five years now! I also lost quite some pounds when we decided to stop cooking with olive oil. This way of eating is not difficult to follow and has become a daily routine.

We regret that we and others did not receive this information before; we were misinformed about what is healthy and what is not. Sometimes you can feel a bit alone, which is one reason we happily support the National Health Association. Being a member and reading *Health Science* stimulates you to sustain this way of eating and living. There are various YouTube channels with many supportive videos available, and while they are interesting to watch, we find that *Health Science* puts all this information in a broader perspective and introduces other, new aspects of this healthy lifestyle.

