

The Long Road to a Whole-Food, Plant-Based, SOS-Free Diet

SMALL INITIAL CHANGES GROW INTO AN ALL-IN COMMITMENT

by Tim Brown

I was born into a typical American family in March of 1952. My father was a World War II vet and was starting a dental practice, and my mother took care of the household duties. My parents adhered to the standard American diet (SAD) of meat, cheese, and milk. There was also cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption going on in the household. When my father was 56 years old and I was 25, he suffered from chest pains, and it was determined that he had double blockages in his arteries and that bypass surgery was necessary. I went to the Cleveland Clinic the day of the surgery to be with my mom. After we received word that the surgery went well, I followed mom to her house to be with her for the night.

Not long after arriving home, we received a call from the Clinic informing us that my father's heart had stopped during recovery and they had to rush him back into surgery. The thought began running through my head that my mom was going to be a widow with no one to take care of her. Well, my father was subsequently revived and did all right, but I was inspired to research the incident to see if it could have been prevented. I came across a book named *The Save Your Life Diet*, written by David Reuben, MD. The book compared the typical diet of U.S. citizens with the diet of Africans, explaining that the Africans' diet consisted of a lot of raw, natural foods containing high amounts of fiber and noting that the African population suffered little from heart disease, cancer, and other diseases common in the U.S.

I then started adding apples, carrots, bananas, salads, and other fruits and vegetables to my daily SAD diet. This small change proved to make a substantial difference. In 1986, when I was 36 years

old, I was driving to work on a cold, wintry February morning. A driver coming in the opposite direction lost control of his vehicle and struck me head-on, causing my head to slam into the windshield. The doctors determined that I needed to have brain surgery to remove an inflamed cyst attached to my cerebellum. After the surgery, I had subsequent drainage of cerebral fluid from my skull, and the open incision had to be restitched in the emergency room. It was there that I contracted a MRSA infection throughout my cerebral and spinal fluids. Because of this, my speech became garbled, and the doctor, in order to rule out a stroke, ordered that a catheterization be performed. A few weeks later, while in recovery from the meningitis, the doctor informed me that the catheterization showed that my arteries were as clear as a 16-year-old's. This reinforced that the healthy foods I'd been eating were playing a major role in my health.

It was in 1988 that I came across the book *Fit for Life* by Harvey and Marilyn Diamond, which introduced me to Natural Hygiene. The underlying basis of Natural Hygiene is that the body is self-cleaning, self-healing, and self-maintaining. It made so much sense to me that I eliminated all animal products from my diet, becoming the only vegan among my family and friends. This book inspired me to hold strong, saying "No, thank you," to the turkey on Thanksgiving and sticking to the green beans and stuffing. I got a lot of questions, such as the usual "Where do you get enough protein?", and those continue to this day, three decades later.

This diet has allowed me to stay off of all medications. My blood pressure usually is around 110/65. My pulse is around 64. Today I was on the treadmill, riding a



stationary bicycle, and swimming in the pool as part of training for local five-mile run at our church this spring.

In the summer of 2018, I reconnected with my high school girlfriend. Kathy and I were married in 2019, and we support each other in this venture. In the 32 years I've eaten this way, I do not recall anyone else showing any interest in transitioning to a vegan diet; Kathy showed immediate interest and joined in wholeheartedly, losing 45 pounds as a result. She loves cooking from cookbooks written by Dr. Esselstyn, Dr. Fuhrman, and many others. We both attended the National Health Association conference in the summer of 2021 and are transitioning to a whole-food, plant-based diet without salt, oil, or sugar. We usually start with our first meal of the day at noon, a large 50/50 spinach/spring mix salad with kale and arugula. We generally add celery, carrots, broccoli, flaxseeds, an orange, grapes, or blueberries, among many other delicious items, to keep our salads fun and interesting. The dressing we commonly use is balsamic vinegar. We may snack a little in the afternoon with some fruit and/or nuts, and dinner is often vegetable soup or beans, rice, and veggies.

Until the 2021 NHA conference, Kathy and I mostly adhered to this diet because of our health. Since the conference, our concerns have grown to encompass the lives of the poor, tortured, butchered animals and the life of this planet. Now, we feel a deep sorrow whenever we see someone with an animal on their plate. This situation is compelling. The time is now to end the suffering of people, the animals, and the planet, and the National Health Association is a great avenue for getting the word out. 🌱