



# Health SCIENCE<sup>®</sup>

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FALL 2023 | \$8.95

**INTERVIEW WITH  
ALONA PULDE, MD, &  
MATTHEW LEDERMAN, MD**

**CNS: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN  
PERSONAL HEALTH AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING**

LeAnne Campbell

**DOES A PLANT-BASED DIET OR  
EXERCISE REDUCE PROSTATE  
CANCER RECURRENCE OR  
PROGRESSION?**

Dana Simpler, MD

**LIFE-CHANGING LESSONS  
FROM TRUENORTH  
HEALTH CENTER**

Michelle Cen



# Welcome to the Fall 2023 Issue of *Health Science* magazine!

Fall is one of my favorite seasons, with farm markets overflowing with an abundance of fruits and vegetables and trees showing off the majesty of their colorful fall foliage. It's full of marvelous sensory delights for us all!

We begin this issue with our feature Interview with **Drs. Alona Pulde and Matthew Lederman**, an amazing couple with interesting personal and professional stories who have made pioneering contributions to the emerging world of lifestyle medicine. Their unique approaches will surely inspire you to purchase their new book, *Wellness to Wonderful!*

It's said that apples don't fall far from trees, and that is truly the case in T. Colin Campbell's family, with so many who share his passion for educating the world on the benefits of plant-based living. Here, we are excited to offer a thoughtful article by his daughter, **LeAnne Campbell, PhD**, and her colleagues (and Dr. Campbell's grandsons), Steven Disla and Nelson Huber-Disla, on the work being done at the Center for Nutritional Studies, entitled "**Bridging the Gap Between Personal Health and Environmental Well-Being.**"

Prostate cancer is a formidable disease that we know afflicts many, even those who follow a plant-based lifestyle. **Dr. Dana Simpler** reviews the latest research on the subject in her article, "**Does a Plant-Based Diet or Exercise Reduce Prostate Cancer Recurrence or Progression?**," revealing actionable steps that may improve its treatment and outcomes.

As most of our readers know, the world-class care of Dr. Alan Goldhamer's TrueNorth Health Center has profoundly improved the lives of thousands of patients. What you may not know is the powerful impact the Center has also had on the physicians and health-care providers who have interned or worked there. Here, we are pleased to present the heartfelt experience of **Michelle Cen** in her article, "**Life-Changing Lessons from TrueNorth Health Center.**"

One of the most inspiring moments at this summer's 2023 NHA Conference was a terrific testimonial delivered by **Dr. Akil Taher**. It was so well received that we asked Dr. Tahir to expand on his remarks so we could share them with all of our members in this issue's deeply personal **Physician Spotlight**.

In the **Recipes Department**, we are pleased to present some wonderful SOS-free recipes from **Caryn Dugan**, who partners with the NHA's good friend, Dr. James Loomis, on the popular YouTube series, "The Doc and Chef." As a lifelong avocado fan, I can't wait to try her Next-Level Avocado Toast!

The sold-out **2023 NHA Conference** that took place this past June marked the 75th anniversary of the NHA, and it exceeded nearly everyone's expectations—from the tasty Vitamix reception to the perfect weather for the morning hikes and exercise programs to the fabulous line-up of speakers and, of course, to the bountiful, delicious, SOS-free meal buffets. We are thrilled to share with you several pages of pictorial highlights of this milestone event. Remember—you can still purchase the replays of all the wonderful presentations on the NHA website for only \$67!

This issue's **Member Spotlight** by **Janet Anspach Rickey** is sure to motivate you, as is the inspirational before-and-after **Testimonial** by **Jonathan Fah**, two new NHA members we know you will enjoy meeting.

Finally, the Fall issue marks the beginning of our annual "Keep *Health Science* a Print Publication" fundraising appeal. As you know, *Health Science* has a proud history of being 100% advertising-free, and we are only able to maintain its consistent high quality with your continued financial support. Thanks to all those that have already made an annual gift!



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## DESIGN & PRODUCTION

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## COPY EDITOR

Janice Ziegler

## FALL 2023 CONTRIBUTORS

LeAnne Campbell, PhD  
Michelle Cen  
Steven Disla  
Caryn Dugan  
Jonathan Fah  
Nelson Huber-Disla  
Mark Huberman  
Wanda Huberman  
Janet Anspach Rickey  
Dana Simpler, MD  
Akil Taher, MD

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P.O. Box 477, Youngstown, OH 44501

Phone: 330.953.1002

Fax: 330.953.1030

info@healthscience.org  
healthscience.org

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## INTERVIEW WITH ALONA PULDE, MD, & MATTHEW LEDERMAN, MD

Mark Huberman interviews Drs. Alona Pulde and Matt Lederman, who share the background on how they became well known in the whole-food, plant-based movement and their unique new approach and book that takes us from *Wellness to Wonderful*.

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## CNS: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN PERSONAL HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING

LeAnne Campbell, PhD, Steven Disla, and Nelson Huber-Disla discuss how the Center for Nutrition Studies is putting the concept of wholism into practice and its collaboration with others to regenerate land, educate people, and model the connection between nutrition and environmentalism.

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## DOES A PLANT-BASED DIET OR EXERCISE REDUCE PROSTATE CANCER RECURRENCE OR PROGRESSION?

Dana Simpler, MD, reviews recent research focused on men who have already been diagnosed with prostate cancer to learn which diet and lifestyle steps make a difference in treatment and which don't.

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## LIFE-CHANGING LESSONS FROM TRUENORTH HEALTH CENTER

Patient-turned-employee Michelle Cen shares her unique perspective on her time at TrueNorth, revealing how it has changed her health and taught her the tools to live vibrantly.

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## PHYSICIAN SPOTLIGHT

For six decades, Akil Taher, MD, lived an unhealthy lifestyle, until that he learned he needed open heart surgery. Then, faced with a life-or-death crisis, he decided to make changes—and, oh boy, did he!

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Hi Mark and Wanda,  
I'm always amazed that each issue of the NHA magazine keeps getting better and better. The cover of the Summer issue is outstanding. Mark's interview with Dr. Aggarwal was excellent. He really has a talent for asking the right questions that elicit an informative, down to earth response!

**Jay Cohen**  
Canfield, Ohio

Dear Wanda and Mark,  
I just saw a Facebook post describing the conference, and it used every adjective that I wanted to include in my note to you! It was an extraordinary event, and Jack and I feel privileged that we were able to attend to hear firsthand the healthiest way in the world to live, for our health and for the welfare of the animals and our planet.

We have benefited from your virtual option when we were unable to attend, but there is nothing better than to actually be present, sitting in the large conference room with several hundred people in all stages of their journey, to appreciate the impact of the accumulated experience, knowledge, wisdom, and enthusiasm of each and every presenter. We have learned so much, and our education continues.

The food was delicious, all thanks to your hours of planning and working hard with your staff. We also enjoyed the excursion to Vitamix. It was no surprise to see how many hands were raised when we were asked how many own a Vitamix!

From our SAD days 12 years ago, we have come a long way in our personal journey. We started late, but this proves that it never is too late. We will look forward to the Fall issue of *Health Science* to see more photos from this year's super-special conference. Thank you again for all of your work. Jack and I feel so fortunate to be members of such an extraordinary, worthwhile organization.

**Karen Forster**  
Fairfax, VA



Hi Mark & Wanda,  
The 2023 NHA Conference is now over, and as I pack to return to Florida to visit my family, I am already reminiscing about the amazing community, informative lectures, and caring people I had the privilege to meet and experience this weekend. I am so happy that I came this year and hope to return again someday. And as if all the good food, amazing people, and fascinating lectures were not enough, we had live music, too, with Dr. Sabatino on harmonica, Robyn Denning on vocals and guitar, and Mark Epstein on sax. What a great conference!!

**Sia Hurst**  
Attica, Greece

Dear Mark and Wanda,  
I want to sincerely thank you and all the doctors, the NHA staff, and the volunteers for hosting, presenting, coordinating, and assisting in the exceptional 75th Anniversary NHA Conference. It was a magnificent event. I attended last year remotely and this year in person. All of your hard work has been greatly appreciated.

What a wonderful organization! I only see this movement growing in interest by people all over the world. We need this kind of support and education. I could go on and on! The bottom line is, I am sincerely grateful for all you do and for everyone who participated. Thank you!

**Angie Corsini**  
Parma, OH



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### OUR MISSION

The mission of the National Health Association is to educate and empower individuals to understand that health results from healthful living. We recognize the integration of all aspects of health: personal, environmental, and social.

We communicate the benefits of an exclusively whole-plant-food diet that is minimally processed and without added salt, oil, and sugar, plus exercise and rest, a healthy environment, psychological well-being, and, when indicated, the use of professionally supervised water-only fasting. We take a leadership role in advocating health freedom issues.

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# Interview with Drs. Alona Pulde & Matt Lederman

by Mark Huberman

**ALONA PULDE, MD**, is a board-certified practitioner of acupuncture and Oriental medicine and a family medicine physician. She is particularly passionate about women's health and supporting clients with nutrition.

**DR. MATTHEW LEDERMAN, MD** is a board-certified internal medicine physician and CNVC certified trainer of nonviolent communication. His passions are mind-body health treatment and providing second medical opinions for patients with persistent chronic disease.

Together, they combine conventional Western medicine, Chinese medicine, lifestyle medicine, nonviolent communication, polyvagal theory, and trauma-informed, somatic principles and pain reprocessing to create their groundbreaking health paradigm.

They have been successful corporate leaders, starred in the life-changing documentary *Forks Over Knives*, lectured for eCornell, served as adjunct medical school professors and corporate medical advisors, and are coauthors of the *New York Times* bestseller, *Forks Over Knives Plan*; *Forks Over Knives Family*; *Keep It Simple, Keep It Whole*; and *The Whole Foods Diet*, and *The Whole Foods Cookbook*, coauthored with John Mackey, cofounder and past CEO of Whole Foods Market.

Their most recent book is *Wellness to Wonderful*, interweaving medical science, psychology, spirituality, and life wisdom to help people achieve lasting health, vibrancy, peace, and joy. Dr. Pulde and Dr. Lederman recently cofounded their new venture, WeHeal, which is the culmination of decades of learning and practical experience organized into an easily accessible program that does everything just short of guaranteeing lasting health, joy, and satisfaction in your life.

**MH** Whenever I interview lifestyle medicine physicians like the two of you, I often find that it was a personal health crisis that caused you to look in a different direction for answers. Was that the case with either of you?

**ML** It wasn't a health crisis for either of us. For me, it was initially a crisis of meaning and purpose since it just didn't seem that conventional medicine was working for me. I didn't feel like I was helping people get better or making their lives better, which is why I got into medicine in the first place. I was doing my residency in internal medicine at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center in Aurora, Colorado, and it got so frustrating that I almost got out of medicine completely. But luckily, I stumbled across a book that got me interested in experimenting on myself. I don't recall the name, but I think it was a natural hygiene book where the author was saying, "You are going to feel great if you do this," and the "this" was eating rice and beans. At the time, I was on the Atkins diet, thinking I was healthy. If I read something that sounded great but I didn't want to do, I somehow had to try it to prove

it wrong. So I ate rice and beans for a week just to see what would happen, and I felt really great. That surprised me.

**MH** Did you know anything about vegetarianism or veganism before that?

**ML** Absolutely nothing. I just tried it because they said I would feel really good. I had been dealing with heartburn, reflux, and irritable bowel—all the gastrointestinal stuff—and a little bit of fatigue. All my friends were doing the Atkins approach, so I did that, too, and I thought I was pretty healthy.

But I tried the rice and beans, and I felt fantastic. I still didn't want to be vegan, though, probably because I thought meat was such an important part of the diet. I also thought to myself, *I'm not going to eat rice and beans all day for the rest of my life*, so I tried to prove it wouldn't work because it wouldn't provide enough protein or calcium. When I looked into that, I learned that being vegan did provide enough of those. I still didn't want to eat that way because I was sure it wasn't going to taste good, so that even if I felt healthy, I would be miserable.



So I got a vegan cookbook and tried to make vegan French toast. It took me five hours between finding the ingredients in the store and cooking the recipe. I didn't cook that much before this; I would just buy a lot of frozen meals. But the French toast tasted delicious, and I couldn't find any holes in the vegan diet. I'm the type of guy that if something makes sense, I'm going to do it. And it got easier and easier, and as I learned more and more, I felt great. When I learned that the plant-based diet can also reverse diseases, I said to myself, let's do this for my patients. That's when I got excited, because not only did I feel good, but I could now do something for my patients that I couldn't do before.

**MH** How about you, Alona? Did you suffer a health crisis or have any veganism or vegetarianism in your background?

**AP** No health crisis, and my upbringing was not vegan, but rather more of the Mediterranean diet.

**MH** So, if the diet was Mediterranean, did that result from a particular ethnicity?

**AP** It did. My last name, "Pulde," is Lithuanian, and my first name, "Alona," is Israeli. I was born in Israel and was raised on a largely Mediterranean diet, and I had no significant health problems. However, the health event that began to change the course of my personal and professional life took place during my second year of medical school, when my father died suddenly of a heart attack at the young age of 55.

**MH** Was he obese or did he exhibit any of the other typical signs of ill-health?

**AP** Not really. He had a little bit of a pooch, but he was very active and worked a physical job. He had high cholesterol and was on a statin. I thought he was eating a healthy diet since he ate a lot of fruits and vegetables and avoided red meat, consuming mostly

chicken and fish. And of course, we had olive oil, because everyone considered that to be healthy. So, I found myself asking, "If he was doing everything right, how did this happen?" I was really devastated, and my background in both Chinese and Western medicine didn't offer any answers. Amazingly, around the time of this trauma I met Matt, who found himself at the same career crossroads. Each of us came to the same conclusion that conventional medicine is really all about managing patients, and the approach is always the same: more pills and more procedures. That conflicted with the goal we each had in coming into medicine, which was to heal.

**MH** So, was Matt the one that opened your eyes to lifestyle medicine?

**AP** Yes. When I met Matt, he was, fortunately, already familiar with Drs. Fuhrman, McDougall, Esselstyn, Campbell, and others, and he introduced me to their amazing writings.

**ML** Actually, before I met Alona, I had reached out for guidance from Drs. McDougall and Fuhrman. I still have my emails telling them, "Hey, I'm not happy as a conventional doctor and want to work with you guys, since I love what you're doing." Dr. Fuhrman was actually looking to hire someone, so I flew out to New Jersey to spend a week with him. The problem was that just before flying out to see him, I had met Alona, and I knew there was something special there. So, while I loved the work Dr. Fuhrman was doing, I told him, "You know, there's someone in Los Angeles that I can't leave, and I can't take the job because I am staying with Alona." And that was a good decision!

**MH** I should say so! So, tell me about the beginnings of your medical practice.

**AP** Matt and I started our own little concierge practice in late 2006 or early 2007, focused on nutrition and lifestyle medicine. It was then that we also wrote our very first pamphlet book, *Keep It Simple, Keep It Whole*. It was meant to be for our patients and serve as a jump start for implementing a whole-food, plant-based diet.

**MH** In terms of lifestyle medicine, what you were doing was pretty novel back then. I don't believe there were a lot of physicians willing to provide nutritional guidance to a patient then, let alone go shopping with them, since most insurance plans don't pay doctors to talk to people but rather to write a prescription or do a procedure. How did you make a living doing this?



**ML** Well, people had to be proactive instead of reactive. They had to see what we saw, which was that you need to invest in your health so that you don't have to pay for your disease. Fortunately for us, even in those early days, enough folks saw the return on investment.

**MH** But it was all private pay, right?

**ML** It was all private pay, but, again, they were the type of person who was willing to invest in their health.

**MH** Right. So, tell me, did *Forks Over Knives* come before *Whole Foods*?

**ML** Yes, it did.

**MH** When I look at the groundbreaking documentary, *Forks Over Knives*, I see Caldwell Esselstyn, T. Colin Campbell—I mean, they are legendary guys, and here are these two young docs no one ever heard of. How did the producer, Brian Wendel, find you and make you and your unique, small practice the focal point of this new approach to the practice of medicine?

**ML** As I mentioned earlier, John McDougall was an early mentor of ours with whom we wanted to work professionally. At the time he didn't have a job for us, but he offered us the opportunity to hang out with him whenever we could. So, Alona and I would go to his immersion programs, where he would generously allow us to see patients

with him so we could learn. He taught us to read between the lines of medical studies and to watch out for all the misinformation in the conventional guidelines. At one point, Brian Wendel reached out to Dr. McDougall asking him if he knew any medical doctors in Los Angeles who treated patients with a nutritional focus that he could feature in a documentary he was producing. Dr. McDougall strongly recommended Alona and I, and the rest is history.

**MH** Did you have any idea that the documentary would be as popular and impactful as it turned out to be?

**AP** Not at all. Of course, it was amazing for us to be part of it. We were also in awe when we met Dr. Campbell and Dr. Esselstyn, since they were such extraordinary individuals. But if you think about it, back in 2010, being vegan or proposing plant-based nutrition was considered so off the beaten track that we had no idea that the movie would be so well-received.

**ML** We really liked Brian. He aligned so closely with how we looked at health and Western medicine and diet. We all believed in simplifying medical care and not making it this complicated algorithm. Like Brian, Alona and I were convinced that it was not that hard to get the healthy diet correct; we just resonated with him on so many levels.

**AP** I want to add that we knew at the time that we were making a powerful documentary, and it really spoke to me personally. My thought was, "Who wouldn't see this and change the way they eat?" But, at the same time, we couldn't help but wonder: "Are people going to listen? Are they going to be moved to make a change?"

**ML** We saw the power of diet and lifestyle in our own lives and in the lives of our patients, and that's sort of where we lived.

**MH** As you may know, I've been part of this progressive health movement my whole life, and when *Forks Over Knives* came out, it was even transformative for me. In my view, that single documentary put plant-based living on the national radar like nothing had ever done before. When it hit Netflix, I believe it quickly became one of the most-watched documentaries of all time. And I gather that the spotlight that was shown on the two of you had to have been a boon for your small concierge practice.

**ML** Well, it certainly would have been, but ironically, by the time the movie came out, we had already agreed to work with John Mackey and Whole Foods, so we were not building up our practice or our brand or whatever you want to call it. We were actually heading in a different direction entirely.

**MH** How did you make the connection with John Mackey?

**ML** You want the real truth?

**MH** Since I am a retired family court judge, I want "Nothing but the truth!"

**AP** It's actually a little embarrassing.

**ML** We were working at one of the McDougall weekend programs, and John Mackey and a couple of his executives were in attendance. I saw him walking after one of the talks and followed him as he was heading to the bathroom, but I couldn't catch him in time. So, I followed him into the bathroom and said "Hey, I heard that you're really interested in this stuff. I wanted to give you our book, and I think you'll like it." He took the book, and the next morning he sought us out and said, "Hey, I read half your book last night and saw where you wrote that one of your dreams is to open centers that treat patients this way." He said, "That's my dream, too, so let's talk at lunch." We did talk at lunch, and shortly thereafter started working with him to open up centers.

**MH** As I recall, those centers were initially inside the Whole Foods Markets themselves, right?

**ML** They were. We started with Wellness Clubs at a few Whole Foods Markets as a pilot and switched over to a medical-center model that had health coaches and more.

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The never-ending commercials for pills and procedures have those disclaimers that say, "This is not a typical result." For us, it has always been so much fun to say, "You know what? On this program, this is a typical result, something that you can experience."

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**MH** If I also recall correctly, John Mackey had a number of high-powered people teaching at these immersions, including Joel Fuhrman, Rip Esselstyn, and Jeff Novick. Were you doing the same thing they were?

**AP** No. Those folks were launching the awareness of the program—getting people educated about how to eat and the nutrition and lifestyle philosophy, then experiencing it themselves. We ran the medical side of it in medical centers outside the stores, since the Wellness Clubs couldn't offer medical care. The pilot center was in Glendale, California, and then we opened one in Austin, Texas. We were really proud of the fact that we were able to reduce patient healthcare spending by about 20%, depending on how you measured it.

**MH** Who was the target audience for this program? Was it just an employee benefit or was it also available for the general public?

**ML** It was only for employees, but Alona and I wanted to eventually open it up for the public.

**MH** Do I assume that the centers were limited to Texas and California, since those were the states in which the two of you were licensed?

**ML** Right. We were licensed where we were seeing patients, and we were also overseeing doctors that we hired. Alona was overseeing the health coaches, the content training, and the immersion programs. We were actually not doing much direct patient care, but we were helping other doctors learn how to treat patients this way.

**MH** As I am sure you are aware, Whole Foods is now owned by Amazon. Do you know if they still offer this great employee benefit, or has it gone by the wayside?

**ML** My understanding is that it is still offered and that the program is being overseen by the people that Alona and I had trained.

**AP** I believe the program has kind of evolved from the brick-and-mortar centers that we helped develop to a broader, umbrella health plan where the company is affiliated with physicians who align with the philosophy.

**MH** Did you ever track the success of the patients you cared for, or is your assessment simply anecdotal?

**ML** We have tracked the success of the patients through a variety of markers including their healthcare spending and the frequency of their use of the Centers. We actually had a data analytics team that was helping us, because we felt the data was really important to show the value and benefit of this type of care.

**AP** The data aside, it was always fun and rewarding to see our patients getting better, one by one!

**MH** Your observation reminds me of what I so often hear from Drs. Fuhrman, Goldhamer, and Sabatino—that the difference in the care they provide, as opposed to most physicians, is that they actually see their patients get well from the many conditions they suffer, rather than just being maintained for the rest of their lives on their heart or diabetes medications.

**AP** I have always been fascinated by the never-ending commercials for pills and procedures that have those disclaimers that say, "This is not a typical result." For us, it has always been so much fun to say, "You know what? On this program, this is a typical result, something that you can experience." Matt and I have always found that so gratifying.

**MH** What prompted you to leave your work with Whole Foods?

**ML** We put 10 good years into the program and wanted to expand it in a way that added other pieces that were not offered. But with a big corporation like Amazon, there were legal and HR issues we had to face, let alone lots of upper-level managers, and that proved challenging. And then there was the ever-present challenge of trying to convince some of the skeptical employees that the program had value.

There was also a lot of, "How do you help everybody?" At some point we said to ourselves, "You know what? Let's build out the program even more, the way we want, in a setting where we don't need to get any type of permission or approval." We wanted a program where we could work with the people who really want to be proactive and make the needed changes in their lives. Finally, we also found it challenging to be flying around the country constantly and being away from our kids. At the end of the day, we said to ourselves that it was time to move on and do what we wanted to do.

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They found that the empathy of the doctor—the connection between the doctor and the patient—affected the physical health of the patient. That's how powerful connection can be.

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**MH** One of the things that impressed me about the book is your literal who's who of endorsements from nearly all the leading voices of our health movement. They are quite detailed and complimentary. That has to be quite an honor!

**AP** We were really humbled and equally honored and fortunate to have met so many of these amazing people who have taught us so much.

**MH** Another aspect of the book I really enjoyed is its breezy style, which made it an easy, fun read. You have a way of easily drawing your readers in with your initial chapters being only two to three pages long. It's fun. You also share a lot of personal experiences and stories that I think a lot of people will relate to. Did you intend to be so personal and vulnerable about your own journey?

**ML** We did; that was really one of the keys to our approach. For us, the concept of connection, not only with ourselves but with other people, was a high priority, and being able to share that in a vulnerable way was important. One of our guiding principles is that if we're going to ask other people to be open and honest with us, we want to show up similarly and be vulnerable ourselves. So, we also take the leap.

**MH** Why did you begin each chapter with a quote?

**AP** It's just a way to inspire. And making it easy and fun to read was a priority for us, too, because there's a lot of material in the book, and it was so important to present it in a way that it doesn't feel cumbersome, doesn't feel like something that is too lofty a goal.

**MH** Perhaps the most surprising thing I found when I delved into your book was the title of your introduction, "Why Diet Isn't the Whole Picture." It suggests that diet may not be such a priority, but then you go out of your way to say how important diet is. Why did you do that?

**AP** The reason is that focusing on nutrition, specifically honing and optimizing nutrition, has been our passion for our entire career. But we have also come to realize that while nutrition is a huge factor in our overall well-being, at the same time it's not the *only* factor. Our efforts to succeed in making nutrition changes can be significantly hindered by things like lack of sleep, disconnection, not getting movement in the day, or not playing. So, we thought this was a really important point to make.

**ML** Right. We are concerned about the many people out there who say that diet's the only thing that really matters, since that is an oversimplification, just as it is with the fitness fanatics who say that if you just exercise, everything else is going to fall into place. The same is true with the mind-body zealots who say it's all about mind and body connection and that everything else in life will be better if you can just get connected. For us, life and health are not single silos. There are lots of other things that also affect physical health, and you need to be aware of more than just the nutrition component.

**ML** We find that when people are detached from their family and friends or have no purpose or meaning in their lives, or whose work is miserable, they're disconnected. And when you're not connected within yourself, whether it's inner trauma that isn't healed or you just don't know what you need in life, it's very hard to want to take care of yourself and eat better, especially when so many super-stimulating foods are readily available.

Now, if you lived in the Blue Zones and there was no McDonald's, even if you were disconnected, the normal, healthier diet would be all you could eat. But here and now, when you have choices to make and

the path of least resistance leads you to these terribly unhealthy foods and unhealthy habits in general, you have to be really self-aware, genuinely connected, and have a lot of energy and inspiration to stay on the path, especially when a lot of people around you are pulling you off that path.

**MH** I was fascinated by the flow of your book and would like to go through your thought process and progression. It seems like you devoted the first six chapters to a framing of your philosophy, which you begin by posing the provocative question, "Is your life wonderful?" Is it your goal to begin by asking everyone to start by taking stock of where they are in life?

**ML** It is. Our definition of optimum health is framed by asking the question, "Can you walk around saying life is wonderful?" And by that, we don't mean that you have to be happy all the time. Life can be wonderful even when you're sad, so long as you are connected and allowing sadness to flow through you versus resisting it and suffering alone. To us, life can be wonderful with a range of emotions, and we want people to shoot for that. We don't want people to just get to a mediocre baseline; that is what happens in conventional medicine. If your baseline is miserable, who wants to stop there? Our goal is for life to be wonderful, not mediocre. Of course, a lot of people would say, "Why are you asking that? That's too good to be true." But we don't believe that to be the case. We think that having life be wonderful is actually very possible.

**MH** You call Chapter 2 "Getting Out of Survival Mode," which kind of reminded me of my favorite Simon and Garfunkel lyric, "Slow down, you move too fast, you've got to make the morning last." Is that what you were getting at, telling people to get out of "survival mode" and get into "living mode"?

**AP** Exactly. So many of us just go through our day in this survival/automatic state where we're just checking off boxes, but never really connecting. We should be asking ourselves, "Why am I doing these things? Does it bring me meaning and purpose? Does it make me feel happy?"

**ML** When we talk about threats and survival mode, it doesn't mean we think someone's going to try and hurt you. Threat is not just about being physically hurt. Threat can be walking around with the pressure of "I have to do this, and I have to do that, and if I don't get this done, something is going to happen."



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So, anytime you're thinking about what you have to do, we prefer that you look at it as a choice rather than an imperative. It's a matter of reframing: if you start to shift your language and thought process, you shift your physiological state from threat towards safety, because now you have choice. Now you have power. You have autonomy, and you're not a victim.

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Life and health are not single silos. There are lots of other things that also affect physical health, and you need to be aware of more than just the nutrition component.

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**MH** So, if I am understanding you correctly, you are saying that here's a whole physiological consequence to all of this.

**ML** Exactly, and that's what we're trying to get across in our book.

**AP** The consequences of ignoring living in this state of threat/survival mode can be grave. Failing to recognize this reality contributes to creating a pathway leading to chronic diseases, such as heart disease,

diabetes, and many other metabolic and autoimmune conditions.

**ML** This even applies to doctors. Did you know there was a study that looked at high-empathy doctors compared to low-empathy doctors? What they found was that the empathy of the doctor affected the physical health of their patient. In other words, the connection between the doctor and the patient affected the physical health of the patient. That's how powerful connection can be. In one study, they looked at 21,000 diabetics, and if they had a high-empathy doctor, the patients had 41% lower odds of developing acute metabolic complications.

There was another study involving about 1,000 patients that compared those with high-empathy doctors versus those with low-empathy doctors, and again they found that the patients with the high-empathy doctors were 25% more likely to have low LDLs and 29% had better hemoglobin A1(c) levels. They also tested for pain reports and found that when patients had a doctor with whom they had high a level of trust, the patient experienced less pain from the same stimulus than did those who had a low level of trust.

**MH** What that tells me is that we have to get your medical colleagues to start reading this book to gain a greater understanding of the importance of being more empathetic with their patients.

**ML** That's true. And by the way, other studies have shown a similar positive impact on the microbiome. I mean, it just goes on and on, and it's so powerful how much connection affects our physical health. That's what we're really trying to get across in this chapter.

**MH** You call Chapter 3 "The Disconnection Epidemic." It made me think about how divided we've become as a society, politically and socially. Are you making the point that this disconnection also has health consequences that we need to recognize?

**AP** Absolutely.

**ML** No matter what side you're on, if you label people, you are creating polarization—and that applies whether you are "pro-this" or "pro-that," whether you are a Trump supporter or a never-Trumper, or whether you are pro-vaccine or an anti-vaxxer.

Anytime you label people, that language and that intention starts to create division, and that significantly affects connection. The resulting disconnection affects not only your health, but the health of all the people that you're labeling and judging. We have a lot of work to do ahead of us here.

**MH** Your title for Chapter 4 is "Why Doctors Are Teaching Connection," which suggests that more of your fellow physicians are already adherents of this practice. To whom are you referring?

**ML** We are talking just about us and the importance of teaching this concept.

**AP** Yes. We're introducing the concept. Our goal is to marry the concepts of nutrition, lifestyle, and connection medicine, and we hope to educate our fellow physicians about their importance so they can then educate their patients.

**ML** We see the situation as similar to where medicine was in the knowledge of nutrition 20 years ago. It took a long time to get both physicians and patients to believe that a plant-based diet could affect their physical health. Now, the new concept we are introducing is connection, and we believe we are a little bit ahead of the curve in this area. We are convinced that if we are able to show people that connection affects your physical health and then show them how to connect, we can have a positive impact.

**MH** In Chapter 5, "The Essence of WeHeal," you introduce your model. "WeHeal" is an interesting term. What do you mean by that? Do you mean healing by physicians like the two of you, or do you mean healing ourselves?

**AP** Both. It serves a dual purpose. And that resonates with the message in the book, too. There is a healing that happens with interdependence—connecting to our outside world, connecting to our family, our friends, our work, our spirituality, and our natural world. But there's also a healing that happens when we connect to ourselves, and they have to go together.

**ML** Mark, I'm curious. When we talk about connecting to ourselves, sometimes that doesn't land for people. What is your reaction?

**MH** I have some difficulty putting my arms around it, but I think you are talking about the importance of each of us first looking inward and finding meaning and comfort in our own lives. I assume you also mean that if we're pretty in touch with ourselves, then we're going to be able to interact better with the rest of the world.

**AP** Absolutely. And a big part of that is being authentic and vulnerable with ourselves.

**MH** That's probably hard for a lot of people to do, right?

**AP** Yes. It is hard to do, and it involves a type of muscle that we haven't strengthened. A part of that is trust and safety, because many of us have been taught to suppress and repress to belong, to be accepted by others. We never connect to the reasons behind that, as we talked about before. We're just putting out fires as the symptoms show up.

**MH** Let's talk about your nine pillars, the first of which you call "Self," which again sounds like it's about that inward assessment.

**ML** For us, it's primary in importance. Ask yourself, how did you know if you were a good kid? Your parents probably praised

you and said, "Great job." How did you know if you were a good student? Probably because your teachers were giving you good grades, right? Or, how did you know if you were a good worker? Probably because you received praise from your boss or a bonus for your performance.

So, everything that you were taught to seek was based on external validation and extrinsic factors. But when that is the case, then you are not learning how to cultivate the ability to discern for yourself what you want, what brings you value and joy and satisfaction. That is likely because you're so busy trying to meet whatever is expected of you. So, we have created a new paradigm that will direct you to look inside yourself and say, "Hey, what does Mark want right now? What am I feeling right now? And that will hopefully give a clue into what you're needing or wanting right now. The next step is then learning how to take action so that you can meet your needs in a way that's also connected with your partner or your children or your coworkers or friends. That's the challenge.

**MH** It sounds like this is the direction you've gone with your life and your family.

**ML** We definitely have, and just like our plant-based diet, our focus on connecting has helped us at home and at work and with our patients.

**MH** Speaking of the diet, "Nutrition" is your second pillar, and since nutrition is primarily what the National Health Association has been about, I couldn't help but notice that on page 73 you have a chart that lists health-promoting foods to include in our diets versus non-health-promoting foods to be avoided. While the health-promoting foods listed were ones that virtually everyone in our health movement would agree with, I noticed that your list of non-health-promoting foods includes what you call "food-like substances," such as soy protein, pea protein, oil, and sugar.

That brought two questions to mind. The first concerns the soy and pea proteins. As you are undoubtedly aware, plant-based protein powders sourced from peas, soy, and others have become all the rage with people wanting to get that extra fortification via a health smoothie, particularly when you can get a brand that is organic and with no added sugar or preservatives. Does this suggest that you are of the T. Colin Campbell school of thinking that we should consume our foods in their whole natural states and avoid these isolated substances?



PHOTO CREDIT: DAVID RICE

**ML** You are correct. For us, any time someone extracts a macronutrient (carbohydrates, proteins, or fats) from a whole food, they're creating a product that our body was not designed to metabolize. What we've learned over the years is that consuming these isolated ingredients wreaks havoc, usually supporting disease instead of promoting health. Isolated proteins, whether they are from a pea or from a soybean or from dairy, are not health-promoting.

**MH** So, eat the peas and soybeans, not their powders?

**ML** Yes. And if you extract the carbohydrates from corn or beets or another plant, then you have sugar, right? Take out the fat, and you have oils, right? To be clear, however, we're not anti-fat. We just urge you to eat the whole avocado and the whole olive.

**MH** Is the often-celebrated extra virgin olive oil an exception to that rule?

**ML** Choose as many extras as you want, it's still not going to be helpful.

**AP** It's still 100% extracted.

**MH** The second question regards another item I noticed in your list of non-health-promoting things to be avoided. It included oil and sugar, but you didn't list salt. Was that a conscious decision on your part? Do you really take the position that added salt is okay?

**ML** I am not sure why it was not included in the list of items to be avoided, but our general rule about salt is the same as it is for oil and sugar, namely that there is nothing health-promoting about it. At the same time, if people tell us, "The only way I'm going to eat a plant-based diet is if I add a little bit of salt," we're going to say, "Then add a little bit of salt." But our hope is that your palate will refine over time, and you won't need to continue using it. Our fundamental point about the use of salt, oil, and sugar is to use as little as you can to stay on this diet, but work to ultimately avoid them completely.

**AP** Now that we are talking about it, I am sure that in the next edition of our book, we will have to add salt to that list on non-health-promoting items to be avoided.

**MH** Glad to hear it! Let's turn to the third pillar, "Activity." Is there a reason that you chose that word over the term "exercise," which most people probably use?

**AP** We chose that word because activity is a need, while exercise is a strategy. Structured, regimented exercise is one strategy for

meeting our need for activity or movement. But there are a lot of different ways to meet that need that may not be considered formal exercise. We can play in the park, pick up a soccer game, go play basketball, run around and play tag with our kids, dance in the living room. There are so many different ways to incorporate movement and activity. And when we get stuck on the idea that we have to exercise in this specific way and for this specific hour on these days, what happens is that we shift to focusing on getting just that hour of activity, and the rest of our life stays sedentary. When we bring in activity and movement as a part of our lifestyle, it becomes something that we incorporate throughout our day.

**MH** This segues nicely into your next pillar, which you call "Play." How is that different from Activity?

**AP** Activity is just one way to play. Jokes are also a way to play, as are board games. Different people respond positively to different ways to play. But play is really important because, in that state, we shut off the mobilized fight-or-flight state.

**ML** You can't play and be anxious at the same time.

**MH** Pillar five is "Sleep." Doesn't everyone understand the importance of sleep? What is your unique angle on this area?

**ML** We agree that most people realize how important sleep is, but what we've seen is that most people find that they need more time in their days, and as a result, they sacrifice their sleep to get it.

**AP** Lack of adequate sleep is one of the huge hindrances to good health. When we don't get enough sleep, we have trouble maintaining a healthy diet. We actually crave more unhealthy foods, often as much as 30% more junk foods. It actually impacts our ability to stay on any kind of nutrition program. When we're tired, we are also more irritable, and we don't want to get the movement we need. So, lack of adequate sleep really impacts so many of the other pillars.

**MH** After you talk about your first five pillars, you shift gears in Chapter 12 and focus back on connection, which you call the missing key to optimal health. Is this a variation on the concept of active listening?

**ML** Active listening is part of the process of creating connection with somebody else. Active listening, for us, involves listening to try and connect to whatever's going on in the other person, to learn why they're

sharing, and then, also being able to check inside yourself and ask yourself how you are impacted by what they're sharing. The next move is determining how to share that back with the other person.

**AP** Compassionate communication is a way to connect authentically to ourselves, and in that vulnerability, you learn the skill set to express that authenticity in a way that can be heard and received by whoever you're working to connect with.

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**MH** Another of your pillars is "Work." As we all know, many people don't have a choice over the work they do or the job they have. How are people able to make their work be not just a necessity but somehow something that is meaningful?

**ML** We certainly recognize that there are people with limited financial resources who are just trying to survive and are doing whatever they can. However, a lot of the people that we work with do have enough resources to be able to make a choice, yet they don't. And when they don't connect to their choice, again, it takes them down a path that is really painful.

**AP** I also think that work has many umbrellas. There's the traditional form of work that we do for our financial security, and then there is work that we do for meaning and purpose. We teach people that there are ways, even if the actual job that you do on a daily basis does not bring you meaning and purpose, to implement meaning and purpose into those jobs and into your lives. There's volunteering, social connections, and a whole slew of things where we can find that meaning and purpose outside of the job itself.

**MH** It strikes me that the overarching goal of your books seems to be getting people to



think about their lives differently—to think about what they're doing, why they're doing it, why they're eating and what they're eating, how they're interacting with their friends, how they find meaning in their lives. Almost every chapter of your book is aimed at getting people to be introspective. Am I right?

**ML** Yes, you are.

**AP** Our goal is to get people to become active participants in their lives. That's how you get to a state of living that's wonderful.

**MH** Pillar eight addresses "Spirituality." I gather you're not talking about being involved in a particular church or particular religion but rather personal spirituality.

**AP** It could be part of being a church and choosing religion as a strategy for meeting spiritual needs, but it could be much different than that. Part of it involves the notion of interdependence, that there is something bigger, however we define it, that is beyond just you and me.

**ML** So many of us are self-centered and self-focused. For me, spirituality is that interdependence where meeting the needs of other people meets my needs.

If you have children like we do, the closest we get to expanding the sense of self beyond just ourselves is with our children. When you give something to your daughter, it's like you gave it to yourself; it's almost like part of you. That is an expansion of the sense of self beyond just you. How cool would it be if you could experience that with friends or with neighbors or with people in your community or with people in other countries? So, to me, spirituality is that interdependence and getting to that state where we realize that there's something bigger than the self.

**MH** Which brings me to your last pillar, "Natural World." This is the pillar to which

I personally related the most. I don't find myself to be overly religious in terms of daily or weekly prayer, but I find my spirituality when I'm spending time tending to my organic garden or hiking in the woods or wandering along a beautiful beach. I find that to be incredibly enriching. I gather you are here to say not to underestimate the impact that getting out into nature can have on your health, mentally, emotionally, and physically.

**AP** Absolutely.

**ML** There is data that clearly shows that being in natural surroundings affects both your health and recovery, and it's so very important. When you see that beautiful tomato grow from a tiny seed into this delicious, beautiful fruit, there's a connection to something beyond your understanding that contributes to your well-being.

**MH** One of the things that has been so terrific about our last three NHA conferences is that we begin our weekend by taking four buses of our attendees for guided morning hikes to the amazingly beautiful Cuyahoga Valley National Park near Cleveland. It has proven to be a great way to kick off the conference. Making it possible for our attendees to spend time in the natural world has been a favorite activity each year; it's very centering for attendees as we start our weekend.

**ML** That is such a great thing you have done! Keep in mind that it not only makes you feel good, but it also has profound effects on your physical health. When you are out there in the garden or on a hike, whether you realize it or not, you are creating that connection with the natural world. It stimulates a physiological shift in your body. My guess is that you feel less stressed when you're outdoors. There's something that draws you to your garden or to that park. That's your body saying, "Hey, I'm in an anti-inflammatory, pro-connection, safe, low-threat state now." And you feel that; you're drawn to it. That's what's exciting. And now there's data showing why that happened, but you just felt it instinctively.

**MH** The final sections of your book are a call to action, entitled "Let's Make Life Wonderful!" and "It Can Be Different! Let Us Help You!" Tell me what the two of you offer in your WeHeal practice.

**ML** We work with people individually. We're putting a master class together for the fall where we're really helping people understand and implement nutrition, lifestyle, and

connection medicine. We also offer recipes and do cooking demos.

**AP** We offer a variety of different funnels that people can find themselves in. There's individual support with me and Matt, and we have a nutrition/lifestyle coach and a trauma recovery coach. We also have classes that we're offering in nutrition and lifestyle and on how to make life wonderful, kind of going through the pillars.

**MH** Can people book a consultation with you directly?

**ML** Yes, they can, and we will work with them directly and online at WeHeal.health.

**MH** Before leaving the discussion of your book, I have to say that the most enjoyable and relatable aspect of it was Appendix A, where you list activities to reduce stress. I am already implementing them into my daily routine, including "Place your hand on your heart" and "Smile for 20 seconds." These are great strategies to shake up your daily routine to get on the road to making life wonderful.

**ML** If you do some things over and over again when times are good, then when times are bad, you've developed this muscle memory, these neural pathways that trigger, and you get a flood of wonderful right there. If you were to wait for when there's a problem, it's a lot harder.

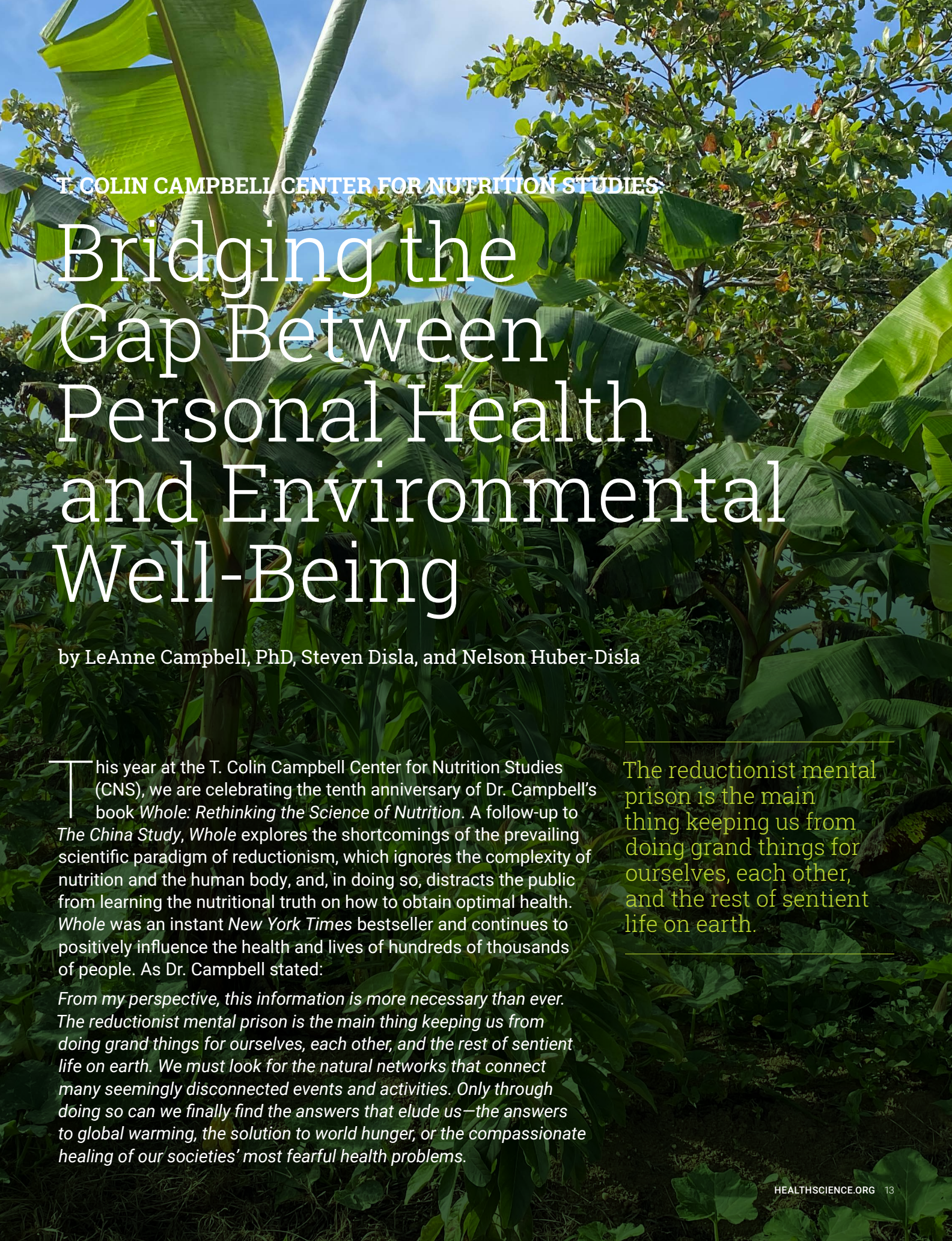
**MH** What is your hope for the future?

**ML** We're hoping that nonviolent communication, an approach we describe in great detail in the book, becomes more prominent in lifestyle medicine practice. When the doctors we taught during our years working for Whole Foods used nonviolent communication, patients told them things that they'd known for years, but they hadn't previously opened up about. That proved really helpful to the doctors in fashioning the patients' health programs. The doctors also found amazing enjoyment and satisfaction with the connection of the visit, and it was all really, really impactful.

**MH** Once again, as young as the two of you are, when I look back at what you have accomplished, I'm amazed at what pioneers you have been in ushering in the world of lifestyle medicine as an increasingly respected part of modern medical practice. That really is to your great credit.

**AP** Thanks so much for your kind words—and for your support of what folks like us do.

**ML** Amen to that! 🌱



T. COLIN CAMPBELL CENTER FOR NUTRITION STUDIES

# Bridging the Gap Between Personal Health and Environmental Well-Being

by LeAnne Campbell, PhD, Steven Disla, and Nelson Huber-Disla

This year at the T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutrition Studies (CNS), we are celebrating the tenth anniversary of Dr. Campbell's book *Whole: Rethinking the Science of Nutrition*. A follow-up to *The China Study*, *Whole* explores the shortcomings of the prevailing scientific paradigm of reductionism, which ignores the complexity of nutrition and the human body, and, in doing so, distracts the public from learning the nutritional truth on how to obtain optimal health. *Whole* was an instant *New York Times* bestseller and continues to positively influence the health and lives of hundreds of thousands of people. As Dr. Campbell stated:

*From my perspective, this information is more necessary than ever. The reductionist mental prison is the main thing keeping us from doing grand things for ourselves, each other, and the rest of sentient life on earth. We must look for the natural networks that connect many seemingly disconnected events and activities. Only through doing so can we finally find the answers that elude us—the answers to global warming, the solution to world hunger, or the compassionate healing of our societies' most fearful health problems.*

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The reductionist mental prison is the main thing keeping us from doing grand things for ourselves, each other, and the rest of sentient life on earth.

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This is what we are doing at CNS: we are bringing together the components of how food impacts the health of our bodies, our communities, and our planet. A whole-food, plant-based (WFPB) lifestyle has the extraordinary ability to prevent and treat a wide range of chronic diseases; combined with a regenerative food system, it can also help heal our ecosystems.

The original goal of CNS, founded in 1996, was to bring the potentially life-altering information from Dr. Campbell's premier research, which was shared in his Cornell course titled "Vegetarian Nutrition," to an online platform to be shared with the general public so that more people could learn about the critical connections established through his publicly funded research and hundreds of peer-reviewed papers. To this end, CNS partnered with eCornell to provide an online certificate program sharing his research and hosting nutrition experts from around the world. Over 22,000 graduates have since passed through this program. As an organization, we are excited to expand into new frontiers, following in the footsteps of Dr. Campbell's illustrious career.

It is no longer tenable to think of personal health as distinct from the health or disease of societies and the biosphere. We must acknowledge the impacts of societal hierarchies and resulting chronic stress and recognize that our health is intimately tied to the well-being of the ecosystems we exist within and depend on.

## Putting Wholism Into Practice

To overcome the disconnect between nutrition science and other important areas pertaining to the environment, CNS is partnering with two nonprofit organizations—RAICES (Regenerative Agriculture Inspiring Communities of Health) and Global Roots—to create plant-based food hubs that work to regenerate degraded landscapes and educate people around the world about the importance of WFPB nutrition for both personal and environmental health.

Global Roots is a nonprofit based in the United States that works with organizations worldwide to regenerate landscapes through plant-based food hubs. These innovative projects create nutritious foods in abundance while working to rebuild soils, repair watersheds, and create spaces for wildlife to return and thrive. Importantly, these food hubs are for people, not for

livestock, meaning they much more efficiently produce the most nutritious foods without unduly removing wildlife habitat or destroying the environment. These areas can leave ample room for wildlife while remaining more productive than livestock-based systems, effectively reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing carbon sequestration in soils and forests.

Global Roots achieves this by focusing on regenerative land management practices through a systems perspective while providing practical experience and expertise on creating regenerative food systems, such as soil regeneration, watershed rehabilitation, agroforestry development, or collective food hub creation. We are excited to see how the Global Roots network grows moving forward, the different models of communal ownership that emerge, and how these food hubs organize.

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## Overconsumption of animal products is a primary driver of seven out of the top ten causes of mortality worldwide.

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The signature project of Global Roots is in the Dominican Republic at the RAICES Institute. RAICES Global is a nonprofit organization located in a semi-mountainous region of the country that is working on regenerating deforested, degraded, and overgrazed land with agroforestry systems. The project aims to restore health to the local watershed while creating a source of nutritious plant-based foods and increasing forest cover. The RAICES Institute can host 25 guests at their education center. Educational tours will be hosted for educators, students, and the general public. These tours will explore the connections between nutrition, the food system, and the environment to ultimately create and model similar regenerative projects worldwide.

The Whole Communities online network hosted within CNS will help facilitate the collaborations that result from the educational tours held at the RAICES Institute. This online network will provide a collaborative space for returning participants to share strategies, successes, and failures from their own context.

## Failed Reductionist Approaches

Leading organizations have repeatedly failed to make the critical connections between nutrition and environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation. If left unaddressed, this could be one of the most dangerous disconnects of our time. For instance, organizations like the United Nations recognize the role of animal agriculture in driving climate change and biodiversity loss, yet they simultaneously promote the production and consumption of animal products.<sup>1,2</sup> Alongside academic institutions, these organizations continue to explore methods for improving the sustainability of livestock production, overlooking the solution best suited for personal and ecological health: moving away from diets high in animal protein.

The concerted effort to make livestock production more sustainable draws attention away from more impactful, rapid changes. Although ranchers and livestock producers have diligently worked to lower their carbon footprint through holistic grazing practices—demonstrating that we can reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions by 66%—the tradeoffs of such holistic grazing systems need to be acknowledged.<sup>3</sup> Notably, regenerative systems require 2.5 times more land than conventional grazing systems, meaning if we were to transition livestock production to more regenerative grazing systems, we could significantly reduce emissions, but it would require more land than is on Earth to supply current consumption of animal products.

The increasing land requirements associated with livestock-based agriculture are already leading to deforestation worldwide, and raising livestock already disproportionately accounts for agricultural land use. Agricultural land occupies roughly 50% of all habitable land on Earth, and 77% of that land is used for livestock production despite providing only 18% of the global calorie supply.<sup>4</sup> This calamitous inefficiency in how we utilize land resources has led to the unnecessary destruction of wildlife habitat, driving the planet's sixth mass extinction event.

Part of the reason this inefficiency gets swept under the rug is because of our society's incorrect overvaluation of animal protein, which also produces a huge burden on our health care systems and



increases needless death and suffering. Overconsumption of animal products is a primary driver of seven out of the top ten causes of mortality worldwide. If environmentalists knew more about the connections between consuming animals and the most prevalent chronic diseases, it would be easier to recognize the absurdity of how land is used today.

Rather than trying to lower the emissions for animal products, we should focus on lessening the amount of land required to feed the human population while allowing for more concerted rewilding efforts on inefficiently used land. The benefits of regenerative grazing practices are minute compared to the benefits of reforestation and rewilding. We could return 37 million square kilometers to their natural habitats while still easily supplying growing populations with their nutritional needs. That's an area larger than China, Australia, the European Union, and the continental United States combined! Not only would this completely reduce emissions (compared to a 66% reduction from regenerative grazing practices), but it would also have the added benefits of carbon sequestration from the rewilding and reforestation efforts. These two efforts combined would equate to at least a 30% reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions and would prevent the ongoing global ecological collapse.<sup>5</sup>

## Conclusion

Because we are failing to address the interconnections between the foods we eat and personal, communal, and ecological health outcomes—because of our reductionist mental prison—we are inefficiently utilizing the Earth's resources on extinction-event scales to provide foods

that are killing us and drastically reducing our quality of life. In short, we are killing the planet to produce food to kill ourselves.

As an institution, CNS can model new wholistic realities that account for the critical connections between nutrition and environmentalism. As long as CNS has existed, we have emphasized the connections between nutrition and personal health. Moving forward, we will continue exploring these connections through partnerships with Global Roots and RAICES Institute but also make additional critical connections between nutrition and ecological health. In doing so, we will lead in exploring how nutrition connects with personal and planetary health. We will demonstrate the rapid health effects nutrition can have on the body and, when understood correctly, the planet.

## We are killing the planet to produce food to kill ourselves.

Through these partnerships, we will apply the lessons from *Whole* and more honestly reflect the interconnectedness of the world we live in. The long-term vision for this project is to create a network of communally owned plant-based food hubs to explicitly tie the merit of plant-based diets to personal, communal, and environmental health. Through this network, we will continue to share nutritional education while increasing opportunities to see these ideas in action. 🌱

For a list of references for this article, please email [jziegler@HealthScience.org](mailto:jziegler@HealthScience.org).



**LEANNE CAMPBELL** is the CEO for the Center for Nutrition Studies. She has a PhD in education and over 30 years of experience designing and directing education initiatives, specifically leadership programs, professional development workshops, conferences, and curriculum development. She currently lives in the mountains of La Cumbre, Dominican Republic, and in Carrboro, NC. She is the president and founder of RAICES Global which is in the Dominican Republic.



**STEVEN DISLA** is the Regenerative Food Systems Education Coordinator for the Center for Nutrition Studies and helped create the latest certificate program, which focuses on the nexus between food, the environment, and

governmental and economic policy. He is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Asheville with degrees in mass communication and international studies. Currently he is working on developing a permaculture farm in Carrboro, North Carolina.



**NELSON HUBER-DISLA** was a contributing author for *The Future of Nutrition* (2020). He is the staff writer and editor for the T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutrition Studies (CNS). He is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with degrees in English and Asian studies and a concentration in creative writing. He currently lives in Carrboro, North Carolina, is an amateur long-distance runner, and enjoys amazing plant-based meals.

# Does a Plant-Based Diet or Exercise Reduce Prostate Cancer Recurrence or Progression?

## What Does the Science Say?

by Dana S. Simpler, MD

Many large population studies have shown that a plant-based diet reduces the risks of developing cancer and heart disease. These include the Nurses Health Study, the Health Professionals Follow-up Study and the Adventist Health Study, to name some of the larger and often-quoted databases. But what about once you have cancer? How powerful are lifestyle choices on preventing recurrences or progression of cancer? This is where the human data gets thin. In this article, I will explore the results of an ongoing prostate cancer registry called CaPSURE that monitors diet and exercise among 15,000 men with biopsy-proven prostate cancer, a lifestyle intervention study with prostate cancer patients published in 2005, and other relevant human studies.



One of the difficulties in evaluating diet in population studies is that there are healthy plant-based foods, such as whole foods, and not-so-healthy foods, like ultra-processed grains. To help remedy this research problem, in 2017 the National Institutes of Health (NIH) developed a study based on three categories of plant-based diets.<sup>1</sup> First, an overall plant-based diet index (PDI) was created that gave positive scores to plant foods and reverse scores to animal foods, regardless of food quality. They then divided the PDI into healthful PDI (hPDI) and unhealthful PDI (uPDI). The hPDI gave positive scores to healthy plant foods (whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts/legumes, oils, tea/coffee) and negative scores to less healthy plant foods (juices/sweetened beverages, refined grains, potatoes/fries, sweets) and animal foods. This particular study was exploring these differences in diet on the effects on coronary heart disease (CHD). The conclusion was that adhering to an overall plant-based diet reduced CHD by a modest 8%. But when they divided the results into those for the healthful PDI vs. the unhealthful PDI, the data looked quite different. Those adhering to a diet of hPDI foods had 25% less CHD than the average person in this 200,000-person aggregate of the Nurses' Health Study and the Health Professionals Follow-Up Study. Those whose diets fell more in the uPDI category actually had a 32% *increase* in CHD.

This NIH study is very helpful because it created an index that other researchers can use going forward, so we will be able to compare similar diets from study to study. Although one can argue that giving a positive score to oil or a negative score to all forms of potatoes may not make sense, this is still far better than simply lumping all plant-based foods together. The CaPSURE researchers use these indices, as we will explore later in this article.

In 2005, Dr. Dean Ornish published an article titled *Intensive Lifestyle Changes May Affect the Progression of Prostate Cancer*.<sup>2</sup> This was a one-year intervention study where 93 men with early prostate cancer were divided into two groups: a comprehensive lifestyle-change group and a usual-care group. The lifestyle-change group volunteers were supplied with a vegan diet supplemented with soy, 3-gram fish oil capsules, 400 IU vitamin E, 200 mcg of selenium, 2,000 mg of vitamin C, 30 minutes of walking per day, and stress management techniques (yoga, deep

breathing, meditation). The usual-care group (control group) was monitored for disease progression but not given any diet, supplement, exercise, or stress management intervention. The results were impressive and have been widely reported in many plant-based publications. The volunteers were in a "watchful waiting" medical plan where treatment for their prostate cancer had not been started, and they were being monitored for evidence that the disease was progressing or staying in check naturally. The lifestyle-intervention group (44 volunteers) had a 4% reduction in PSA, which is the prostate specific antigen blood marker used to monitor progression of prostate cancer, and they still had had no cancer treatments started. The control group (49 volunteers) overall had a 6% increase in PSA, and four of them had undergone conventional treatment with radical prostatectomy, androgen deprivation therapy, or radiation treatment due to PSA increases. The control group also had two people withdraw as a personal choice to take treatment without evidence of progression. A second part of this study used blood serum from the intervention group and the control group to see what would happen to prostate cancer cells growing in a petri dish. Again, the results were impressive. The serum from the lifestyle-intervention group reduced prostate cancer cell growth by 70%, while the control group serum only reduced cancer cell growth by 9%.

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Overall, this was a landmark study because it is very difficult to evaluate the effects of lifestyle choices in cancer patients since they are usually also taking some kind of conventional cancer treatment. This study was designed to ensure a good comparison, since all volunteers were in the watchful-waiting medical plan. However, since a number of lifestyle interventions were used, it is hard to say how powerful one

intervention was versus another. Was it the exercise or the diet or the stress management or the supplements that produced such impressive results? Did any of these interventions work synergistically? Were any of the interventions actually harmful but instead balanced out by the helpful interventions? The CaPSURE data and a few other later studies help to answer some of these questions.

Let's start with the supplements. This was one of the drawbacks to the Dean Ornish study in which supplements were provided to all of the intervention group with no control group created that did not get supplements but still got the vegan diet, exercise, and stress management. This is understandable because with the study size, it was not statistically possible to divide the intervention group further. The supplements used in the Ornish study were based on the data on supplement benefits in 2005. However, since then, some vitamins and other supplements have actually been shown to promote cancer or other harms. The SELECT study<sup>3</sup>, published in 2011, specifically tested the effects of vitamin E (vit E) and selenium supplementation on prostate cancer occurrence. Their hypothesis was that vit E and/or selenium supplementation would reduce prostate cancer occurrence. Surprisingly to the researchers, the opposite was true. Selenium did not affect prostate cancer occurrence, and even more surprising, vit E increased prostate cancer occurrence. This is an important lesson because it happens quite frequently that a few small studies will show a benefit to an intervention, but later larger studies either fail to prove benefit or actually show harm. This is why it is important to be thoughtful and cautious with supplements.

Regular exercise has been shown to be beneficial for a number of health conditions, including cancer. The CaPSURE database looks at the effects of exercise, along with other lifestyle choices, on prostate cancer. CaPSURE is a longitudinal (patients monitored over time), observational study of approximately 15,000 men with all stages of biopsy-proven prostate cancer. It is funded and coordinated by the University of California San Francisco (UCSF). Since 1995, patients have enrolled at 43 community urology practices, academic medical centers, and VA hospitals throughout the United States. All patients are undergoing a variety of treatments as recommended



Men who consumed the highest amounts of plant foods and lowest amount of animal foods had 52% less progression and 53% less recurrence of prostate cancer.

by their medical teams. Patient outcomes, benefits, and complications are recorded at regular intervals to allow researchers access to the study's large amount of data. Over 200 peer-reviewed articles have been published with this data, some of which have focused on lifestyle choices, including diet, exercise, and some supplements.

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Using the CaPSURE data, researchers were able to look at the effects of exercise on disease progression or recurrence in men with diagnosed prostate cancer. One study,

published in 2011 from the CaPSURE data, looked at the effects of vigorous exercise in 1,455 men after diagnosis of localized prostate cancer.<sup>4</sup> They looked at vigorous exercise, nonvigorous exercise, walking duration, and pace. Walking accounted for about half of all activity. They found that men who walked briskly for three hours a week or more had a 57% lower rate of cancer progression compared to men who walked at an easy pace for less than three hours a week. They also concluded that pace of walking was more important than duration. This supports the data that vigorous exercise can help reduce prostate cancer progression. Another study using CaPSURE data, published in 2014, was able to show that men who exercised vigorously three or more hours per week had increased DNA repair pathways, suggesting vigorous exercise may reduce prostate cancer progression through repair of cancerous DNA.<sup>5</sup> This effect was only seen with vigorous exercise, which was again defined as brisk walking or higher intensity exercise. What has the CaPSURE data shown about

diet and prostate cancer? In 2010, a study was published looking at meat, fish, poultry, and egg consumption and risk of prostate cancer progression.<sup>6</sup> Researchers studied 1,294 men with prostate cancer over a two-year period and looked for evidence of prostate cancer progression, metastasis, or death. Interestingly, they did not find any connection with disease progression with consumption of processed or unprocessed red meat, fish, or total poultry (with and without skin). They did, however, find a two-fold increase in cancer progression in men consuming eggs and poultry with skin on. They even found a four-fold increase in recurrence risk in a subgroup of men who were already determined at diagnosis to have high risk for recurrence and whose consumption of poultry was high. This data does seem to partially contradict the Ornish study as well as a more recent CaPSURE study that I will review later. But it is important to look at data from an overall perspective. In medicine there are often conflicting findings from individual studies. To determine what is most accurate,

researchers look for a preponderance of evidence, meaning that the data overall shows more positive or more negative effects for a particular treatment.

The next CaPSURE data nutrition study was published in 2012 and looked specifically at vegetable and fruit intake after diagnosis and risk of prostate cancer progression.<sup>7</sup> This five-year study looked at 1,560 men with nonmetastatic prostate cancer and their intake of fruit and of total vegetables (specifically cruciferous vegetables, tomato sauce, and legumes). They found that the men with the highest consumption of cruciferous vegetables (e.g., kale, collards, cauliflower, broccoli, arugula, bok choy, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts) had a 59% decreased risk of prostate cancer progression. They did not find a statistically significant difference for fruits or other vegetable groups. In this study, the researchers did not use the hPDI/PDI to distinguish more healthful vs. less healthful plant-based diets because those indices were not designed until 2017, which may have affected their results. It is also curious that they did not find a statistical benefit for tomato consumption, as it is frequently reported as beneficial for fighting prostate cancer; the UCSF Department of Urology website currently recommends two servings of cooked tomatoes a week to prevent recurrence/progression after prostate cancer diagnosis.

In February 2023, a group of researchers used the CaPSURE data and did indeed use hPDI/PDI to look at outcomes.<sup>8</sup> They followed 2,038 men diagnosed with localized prostate cancer for up to seven years and examined the associations between their plant-food consumption and their risk of cancer progression or recurrence. Men who consumed the highest amounts of plant foods and lowest amount of animal foods had 52% less progression and 53% less recurrence of prostate cancer. Men over 65 years old whose diets had the highest hPDI (healthy plant-based diet index) had a 59% lower rate of recurrence. In addition, men whose diets had the highest PDI (overall plant-based diet index) and who exercised vigorously for more than three hours a week had a 56% lower rate of progression and 59% lower rate of recurrence. This data is very interesting: it shows that following a plant-based diet overall is an effective way to prevent prostate cancer progression or recurrence, but it also shows that eating a healthy

plant-based diet is even more powerful when exercise augments the diet's health benefits. The study also showed that men who followed a plant-based diet more strictly had significantly less progression or recurrence.

In conclusion, we have reviewed some very compelling research that shows clear evidence that men with nonmetastatic prostate cancer can reduce its chance of progression or recurrence by 52–59% (or perhaps more) by adhering to a healthy plant-based diet and engaging in vigorous exercise for three hours or more per week.

It is important that the CaPSURE data analysis supports the Ornish intervention study, because the more the data can be replicated, the more reliable the conclusions are. In fact, the Ornish study indicates that the anticancer effect of lifestyle interventions may even be higher than 52–59%, but the patients were only followed for one year and the effect of stress management was not independently evaluated. It would be great to see this study replicated and carried out longer. Cruciferous vegetables in particular appear to have strong anticancer effects on prostate cancer. It is also encouraging to see large cancer databases including food questionnaires in their data collection, allowing interested researchers access to data connecting diet and disease. It is important that indices like the hPDI, uPDI, and PDI be used in future studies so that

they can be more easily replicated and compared. It would be valuable to have more large observational databases like CaPSURE designed for all cancer types to answer the many questions about cancer-specific health benefits from diet, exercise, and other lifestyle interventions. Lastly, it is imperative for all cancer patients to continue to maintain an ongoing relationship with a medical team to monitor whether their lifestyle interventions are working for their particular cancer and to allow conventional treatment if and when needed. 🌱

For a list of references for this article, please email [jziegler@HealthScience.org](mailto:jziegler@HealthScience.org).



**DR. DANA S. SIMPLER** is a board-certified internist with over 25 years' experience in primary care/internal medicine. Dr. Simpler has a Masters' degree in physiology from Georgetown University and completed her medical degree at University of

Maryland. She has always had an interest in using nutrition and exercise to help her patients get well with little or no medication. In 2011, Dr. Simpler became part of a growing number of medical practitioners who are using plant-based nutrition to prevent and reverse many common medical conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, and cancer. In addition to her private practice, Dr. Simpler sponsors community health conferences and corporate wellness programs, including the CHIP program, CHIPHealth.com.

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# Life-Changing Lessons from TrueNorth Health Center

An insider's view of the iconic facility and its work

by Michelle Cen



A woman walks in blind and walks out with eyesight. People arrive in wheelchairs, with walkers and canes, and they depart on their own two feet. Ivonne Vielman's stage 3 lymphoma reverses. Dave Welch's prostate cancer tumor shrinks by 72%. Kathy Taylor loses over 200 pounds across stays. A woman's hair grows back after years of baldness caused by alopecia. Peoples' moles fall off and scars heal.

They enter with bags of medications. They leave lighter in body, luggage, and spirit. No more asthma, allergies, arthritis, and pain. These are all healing stories I've witnessed in patients at the TrueNorth Health Center. TrueNorth specializes in water-only fasting and promotes a whole-plant-food (WPF) diet free of salt, oil, and sugar (SOS). Patients overcome heart disease, diabetes, autoimmune conditions, and more.

In TrueNorth's almost 40 years of operation, each of the 25,000 patients who has walked in has walked out. That's a feat considering the complex cases treated. There's a reason TrueNorth is known as "The Last Resort"!

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### My Healing Story

I work at TrueNorth now, having first arrived as an outpatient in 2018. In January 2022, I did an inpatient fast.

Christina Gore's miracle story motivated me to fast at TrueNorth. She resolved a 16-year headache through water fasting. Like her, I had spent years trying everything to resolve my 24/7 chronic pain that began in 2015 when I was 16. It's called "accommodative spasm" of the eye's inner ciliary muscles. It was severe enough that I was advised to drop out of high school, and starting college felt impossible. I could barely sleep or think. I became anxious and depressed due to being disabled so young and living in unrelenting pain.

The fast didn't magically heal me. It was only seven days, after all. Yet I still enjoyed many benefits and call it one of the most profound experiences of my life. On day four of the fast, I experienced the greatest



PHOTO BY CHRIS MACASKILL

mental clarity and peace I've ever felt. It's a calm tranquility experienced by many other fasters. For the first time in my life, my mind was a quiet oasis, not a raging storm. I no longer craved constant stimulation in the form of information. Even listening to music was too stimulating.

I finally knew what it was like to rest. To be a human being rather than a human doing.

I hadn't realized how much better I could feel. I had already been eating WPF, SOS-free years before the fast, but the fast gave me the mental and physical cleanse I needed to have more vibrance.

Indeed, before arriving at TrueNorth, my life already revolved around promoting the WPF, SOS-free lifestyle. Ever since spotting *How Not to Die* on my friend's bookshelf as a Stanford freshman, I couldn't stop talking about the power of plants. I conducted research for a national health initiative on promoting plant-based food choices. I worked at Gentle World's branch in Hawaii, a vegan educational organization where Dr. Michael Klaper practiced for years. I created my own independent study class investigating WPF, SOS-free nutrition through a preventive, community-based healthcare lens.

Yet I lived a life out of balance. I am what Dr. Doug Lisle would affectionately call a "hyper-conscientious nutcase."

"You have a brain on fire." That was the first sentence Dr. Anthony Streutker, my attending physician at TrueNorth, said after reviewing my case. "You need to slow down. Breathe." He explained how one famous doctor had come to TrueNorth as a patient. This man had high blood pressure despite his healthy

lifestyle. They discovered this doctor's blood pressure spiked when he conducted research as a consequence of how laser-focused and intense he became during it. And me? I was intense about everything.

The fast gave my body a chance to repair. My stubborn rashes disappeared. My skin glowed. My digestion normalized. And while my eye pain remains, it did lessen during that peaceful fasting time, and I realized more its noxious link to stress. Lying in that bed, grateful to be alive, in awe of the wonderful care, void of food, and feeling as pure as distilled water, I resolved to no longer pursue a meaningful life at the cost of my health. In fact, I wanted my career to be promoting health.

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I work at TrueNorth now because it aligns with all my values. I'm grateful to work with such kind, brilliant colleagues. Sometimes, patients ask me: Am I always happy? Why am I always smiling? I say I'm not happy all the time, but I am most of the time. It's hard to not feel happy at TrueNorth, where patients actually get well.

## From Surviving to Thriving

At TrueNorth, patients are royalty. The staff cooks them gourmet, organic, farm-fresh food, does their laundry, and cleans their rooms. Medical care is just a call away. Many don't want to return home! We keep costs affordable so patients can stay as long as they need to get well. One patient told me she'd taken from her retirement fund to heal here because otherwise, she'd not have a retirement to enjoy. Many patients call TrueNorth a sanctuary and safe space. The dining hall is a mecca of story sharing. Our society sometimes has more of a sick-care than a health-care system, and each personal tale reinforces this, including my own. I'm lucky to enjoy a private space where people share the truths about iatrogenic harms.

I've also learned from Dr. Alan Goldhamer that the word "cure" is not used in the natural hygiene movement. I find this perspective shift so empowering. Dr. Goldhamer says, "Patients are not cured, but effectively managed with fasting and healthful living. There is no cure. The body is the only thing that can heal. All we can do is create an environment that supports the body healing itself."

By following this philosophy, TrueNorth helps people overcome more than food addictions. People overcome addictions to smoking, alcohol, caffeine, and more. They fast from technology, work, and other burdens that knock life out of balance. Many arrive during a time of life transition and experience epiphanies during their fasts, as I had. The patients humble me. We are all fighting for our lives in some way. We aren't just trying to survive; we are trying to thrive.

## Taste Bud Reset

Is it possible to be that happy on "boring" food? Yes. For example, one time I had lunch with a new arrival who was savoring a raw salad with no dressing. He beamed so widely you'd think he was diving into a chocolate mousse. My lunch included TrueNorth's famous lasagna. Its smell alone was mouthwatering, and people race into the dining hall to devour it. I asked him if he wanted a taste, but he said no. The salad had already delighted him. For the past few days, he'd been enjoying the pre-fasting raw fruit and vegetable diet. Even without a fast, the taste buds can reset when one abstains from addictive, processed food.

A fast can accelerate the palate reset. After a fast, steamed zucchini tastes like a decadent



Alan Goldhamer, DC, founder of TrueNorth Health Center

dessert. Normal food, unadulterated by processed chemicals, tastes delicious, as it should. One patient, a USDA meat inspector who examines beef for a living, told me she'd never be able to eat our food. Over time, by just drinking juice and eating the clean food, she acclimated to the fare. Adding our SOS-free seasonings helped!

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## Living Slow

The patients remind me of what it means to be human. They are so creative, engaging in mindful activities as they fast. I enjoy their musical performances, like the show put on by a blind pianist and professional singer. I admire their paintings, which are often of the flowers around TrueNorth. I revel in their zest for life, such as that overflowing from the 90+-year-old Olympian who told me to never stop moving. That doesn't mean rushing around; even an Olympian, to be long-lived, has to live in a way that isn't stressed and frantic.

While TrueNorth is a fasting center, it teaches us the value of living slow. I've learned that speed, impatience, and a reliance on convenience cause us to succumb to modern-day illnesses. I now chew more and hurry less. Just as we should savor our food, we should savor the moment.

"We didn't have instant messaging back in the day. We had to write letters to each other," one patient told me when talking about dating her husband. "It worked out fine. We've been married over 40 years." Since hearing that, I remember that it's okay, and even healthy, to not check my messages constantly. I don't need to respond right away. And I need to put my own health first if I am to give others my fullest love.

## Embracing Change

Change is healthy. As we age, we may feel like we're in a rut because we fall into routine. One patient described how he sometimes asks his elderly mother what she's doing for the day. She'll say that she has nothing to look forward to. She'll complain "Each day is the same." He tells his mother this: "Don't look back. Always look forward. And always try new things."

The healthiest patients seem like the most positive ones. They enjoy novelty and learning. It keeps their bodies agile and brains nimble. Don't let the days blur together. What's something new you can learn or experience today?

## Finding Community

TrueNorth's best-kept secret benefit is community. Having a supportive community is one of the keys to staying on a healthy lifestyle. Many at TrueNorth are return patients who happily share their wisdom with newcomers. TrueNorth is a rare place where people from all walks of life and around the world share so honestly and openly about their lives. Patients are doctors, authors, artists, filmmakers, and more. I see patients become friends for life. People have even gotten married after meeting at TrueNorth!

## Staying on the Healthy Path

Through the use of fasting and proper diet, TrueNorth sheds light on the path to optimal health. But how do we stay on this path? How do we keep our compasses aligned to the right direction, the "true north"? We must make lifestyle changes that honor the pillars of health: diet, sleep, and exercise.



Chef Ramses Bravo in the TrueNorth Health Center kitchen with Michelle Cen

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Continuing to educate ourselves is key. I recommend reading the book *Can Fasting Save Your Life?*, which will come out in 2024. It's by Dr. Alan Goldhamer and Dr. Toshia Meyers, Director of TrueNorth Health Foundation Research. This book reveals the latest science and research on water-only fasting. Also consider visiting [healthpromoting.com](http://healthpromoting.com) to learn more about TrueNorth's outpatient services, which include telehealth coaching. That can remotely provide the accountability and guidance needed to obtain your optimal health.

### Finding My Purpose

I focus on public education and outreach. I lecture at TrueNorth and try new ways, such as building support groups, to make it easier for people to stay healthy. I devote my life to promoting this lifestyle. It's not just a job that I work at TrueNorth, it's a calling that influences all my personal activities.

Besides making resources on my website, [MichelleCen.com](http://MichelleCen.com), and my YouTube channel,

I collaborate with others like Chris MacAskill of the “Plant Chompers” YouTube channel. We've interviewed patients and doctors at TrueNorth. I love interviewing people; it's my greatest honor to help someone share their story. I also love sharing quotes. Here are some, and I'm always happy to hear your favorites:

“If you don't schedule a rest, your body will take one for you. And it probably won't be at a convenient time.”

“If you don't make time for your wellness now, you'll be forced to make time for your illness later.”

“Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.” – Hippocrates

### The Hope that Fasting Brings

One patient shuffled into TrueNorth with her head down, saying she was a hopeless case. As we got our food in the dining hall, I told her she could heal, for sure. One bite of asparagus, one healthy choice, at a time. During her fast, pains that had plagued her for decades disappeared. She began to walk with her head held higher, her steps more sure. She started spending more time outdoors chatting with others than sulking indoors alone.

She told me that in her decades-long battle against addictions, she'd almost taken her own life. Now, she had new hope. When she said this, I remembered the story of Dr. Henry S. Tanner. It was 1880, well before fasting was a known remedy. Dr.

Tanner had many illnesses that he wanted to heal through fasting—or else die trying. He was so depressed that he was fine with either outcome. On day 10 of his fast he unexpectedly was able to move better. He enjoyed newfound freedom from his heart inflammation, cardiac rheumatism, and other ailments. To everyone's surprise, he was healthier after his 40-day fast than before it. Dr. Tanner continued his career with a new will to live, and a new mission: to prove that fasting can save people's lives.

To live well, we need more than just physical health. We need a reason to take care of ourselves. What's yours?

I interviewed 99-year-old nutrition professor Dr. John Scharffenberg in a viral video on the Plant Chompers YouTube channel. In it, I asked the wise doctor what motivates him daily. He said, “When I get up in the morning, I'm so excited. I want to see who the Lord is going to bring to me that I can help!” He brims with purpose and joy, the kind that I see TrueNorth brings patients.

What's your life purpose? What's your vision for the world? What makes your soul sing? What makes you stand taller and run farther? Chase it and make it real.

For me, TrueNorth gave me vision and showed me the way. From the shadows it shone a light. Learning about natural hygiene and lifestyle medicine has given my life of pain a purpose. Metaphorically—and sometimes even literally—fasting and following this lifestyle can heal the blind. 🌱



**MICHELLE CEN**, has a BA in Science, Technology, and Society from Stanford University and is completing a master's degree in clinical counseling. She loves being a health coach and lecturer at TrueNorth Health Center. She is also a certified peer counselor, has developed cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)-informed programs, and is on the board of directors of a mental health organization. She has edited multiple books on mental health.

Michelle has appeared on Chef AJ LIVE!, Plant Chompers, Vegan Linked, and more. When not promoting a plant-based lifestyle, Michelle enjoys spending time in nature and practicing acrobatics—sometimes at the same time! Michelle also loves interviewing people about their health stories. Let her know if you'd like to be interviewed. Sign up for her newsletter and find out more about her on [MichelleCen.com](http://MichelleCen.com), YouTube, and Instagram.

# Open Heart: The Journey Back from the Brink of a Joyless Existence to Living a Passionate, Purposeful Life

by Akil Taher, MD

I moved to the United States in my mid-40s, and I believed that I had a lot of catching up to do. I worked hard, long hours paying very little attention to my health, family, and friends. While I observed professional responsibility, I experienced significant turmoil in my personal life.

Until the age of 61, I created my own unhealthy lifestyle. I spent the better part of my adult life enjoying rich, unhealthy food and drink without worrying about the health consequences like heart disease. Like many, I believed that it wouldn't happen to me.

Like a moth to a flame, I was drawn to meat, dairy, eggs, oils, sugar, and processed foods, and, like an addict, I needed these foods to get my daily high. In fact, I was labeled as a "see-food" eater, eating everything in sight.

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When I wasn't working or eating, I lounged on the couch for hours. The only exercise I did was for my eye muscles, looking at joggers run in the park, or for my hand muscles, holding the remote to change TV channels. In addition to facing unfavorable genetics, my family history was riddled with health challenges. My brother tragically passed away from a stroke at 52, while both my sister and mother succumbed to heart disease at age 61. Above all, I had a type-A personality. I needed control; it was either

my way or the highway. All this led to a considerable amount of stress that I could not handle. I also recently discovered that I have a very high LP(a) level, a lipoprotein that can cause premature heart disease.

So, it was no surprise that heart disease came knocking at the young age of 56. Honestly, I was terrified. I had 98 to 99% blockages in two of my arteries, and my plaques were so thick that they had to use a diamond-tipped drill to shave them off. Midway through the process, I suffered a cardiac arrest, and the doctors had to administer an electric shock to get my heart beating again.

To be fair, the young cardiologist was brilliant. He saved my life. Sadly, however, he died of a massive heart attack two years later while exercising on his treadmill. He was in his 40s. I knew heart disease was the leading cause of death, but witnessing someone die so young was truly shocking.

After having angioplasty and stents, I came home frightened. For the first time in my life, I felt that I had no control over anything, and I reacted defensively. I thought, *I am a physician; I know all this, and I can handle it on my own*—until I was hit with depression. Not everyone knows this, but oftentimes an intense health event may be followed by periods of extreme loneliness, isolation, and dejection. Gradually I started withdrawing from life.

The next five years were devastating. I was sad and lonely, with bouts of uncontrollable sobbing. I would sit for long hours gazing vacantly into the distance. For no apparent reason I would get into a rage and start throwing things around, using anger as a cover-up for the deep despair I felt. I suffered from nightmares and night sweats, so my sleep was short, and I developed chronic fatigue. I was mentally and emotionally stressed, and this resulted in a series of other health problems.



Sinus infections, bronchitis, and pneumonia made their regular visits. Chronic constipation troubled me. Fissures and hemorrhoids added to my discomfort. And because I had severe diverticulitis, I was admitted twice for colon perforations, which led to this: at one point, my friend, a surgeon, was standing in the operating room saying, "Akil, if I don't operate on you right now, you may not survive."

It took me five years of living this way, including thoughts of suicide, before I was back in the hospital. This time it was for open-heart surgery, as my stents had failed.

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"Mark my words: if all goes well, I am going to run a half-marathon within a year of the surgery." That is what I said to the nurses as I was being wheeled in for surgery. Even today, I don't know what prompted me to say that. Perhaps I had a subconscious realization that I had two choices: either I could continue this painfully slow, miserable life journey filled with a sense of anger and grief or I could make a conscious decision to really live my life, with purpose and passion. I decided to choose the latter.

My recovery was remarkable. I was on the treadmill on the third day. Even with the excruciating chest pain, I was happier in physical pain than in the emotional agony of the five prior years. There was a sense of clarity within, and I knew for a fact that I wanted to live my life fully and joyfully in every sense possible. I also knew that some dramatic choices were in order.

I had to ditch the general prescription that is given to most older heart patients. To keep the promise I had made to the nurses in the ICU, I set my sights on running for the first time in my life. I started walking regularly. That turned into a jog, then running. To me, running was an experience of meditation in motion.

I started eating better and incorporated yoga, meditation, and SKY breathing into my daily practice. Eight months after my heart surgery, I ran my first half-marathon in Nashville, Tennessee. It took me four grueling hours, but my bruised heart did not fail me. It physically and figuratively carried me across the finish line.

There was no looking back after that. Within a year, I embarked on a trekking expedition to Mount Kailash, circumventing at a towering 19,000+ feet. Beyond that I accomplished several marathons, conquered a hundred-mile bike ride, and, at the age of 66, triumphed over Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest free-standing mountain in the world. Additionally, my adventures led me to indulge in thrilling experiences such as hang gliding in Brazil and bungee jumping in New Zealand, among other remarkable feats.

But despite the fact I was on that treadmill the third day and was engaging in regular exercise, meditation, and yoga, I found myself still getting illnesses, leaving me wondering about the underlying cause.

So, I got to work. I began researching how the body can be healed without solely relying on medication or invasive surgery. I read books on lifestyle medicine written by experts, researchers, and medical doctors like T. Colin Campbell, PhD; Dean Ornish, MD; Caldwell Esselstyn, MD; Dr. Nandita Shah; Neal Barnard, MD; and Michael Gregor, MD, to name a few. Add to that a great number of journalistic articles. I was a sponge for information—science-backed, evidence-based information.

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We can make small daily choices that can have a huge, positive impact on our health. What I realized is that the food is even more important than the exercise. So, here is my recommendation: move to a plant-based diet.

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The more I read, the more I realized there was something here. That's when I discovered the American College of Lifestyle Medicine's Six Pillars of Lifestyle Medicine, with nutrition as the cornerstone and complemented by adequate sleep, regular exercise, stress management, strong social support, and the avoidance of abusive substances.

Beginning the day I adopted those six pillars, my mental, physical, and emotional health has improved tremendously. I was never overweight if you go by BMI, but I carried the fat I had in my belly, the visceral fat which is directly related to heart disease. Since adopting the whole-food, plant-based diet, the visceral fat has reduced, and I no longer have any sinus problems, bronchitis, pneumonia, constipation, or hemorrhoids. The infamous diverticulitis with perforations in the colon is on the back burner now; I never did have the surgery. I have felt alive, happy, and joyful, and I have a strong sense of purpose and passion.

Today I am certain that we can make small daily choices that can have a huge, positive impact on our health. What I realized after my own surgery is that the food is even more important than the exercise. So, here is my recommendation: move to a plant-based diet. This means replacing processed sugar, dairy, meat, and eggs with whole foods like fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds, whole grains, legumes, and beans.

This has been the biggest lesson and takeaway from my experiences of the last 15 years, which I wrote about in my book *Open Heart*. There are many resources on a plant-based diet and how it may be the best option for human beings and the planet. A plant-based diet is what brought me

back from the brink of a joyless existence and delivered me to living a passionate, purposeful life, and I am eager to share this simple, yet life-changing, secret with the world, including you.

As an author and speaker, I stay focused on spreading the message of living a heart-healthy lifestyle, backed by evidenced-based studies and driven by personal experience as a recovered heart disease patient myself.

As a resurgent physician, I leverage medical science and lifestyle medicine to treat the underlying cause of disease and not just the consequences. And as a septuagenarian athlete and a plant-based proponent, I have benefited tremendously by adopting a whole-food, plant-based diet. It has fostered within me a deeper connection with nature, prompted more compassion for animal rights, and showed me the harmful effects of animal farming, so that I can do my part to help heal the planet.

And, hey, if I could change at the age of 61 after heart bypass surgery, going from a type-A couch potato to this healthy 75-year-old, then you can change for your health, too.

I would be remiss if I didn't add that I have been blessed to have the support of my beautiful wife of 50 years, Nasifa, and my two children and grandson. They make life worth living to the fullest.

For more from Dr. Taher, register for his free monthly talks on chronic diseases at The Doctor's Corner with Akil Taher, MD (<http://bit.ly/dr-akils-corner>). 🌱



**AKIL TAHER, MD**, is a practicing medical doctor, an author, eternal optimist, explorer, adventurer, and a strong advocate for a whole-food, plant-based, vegan lifestyle. He is a

septuagenarian athlete who, after surviving heart bypass surgery, has educated thousands to understand a way out of the pain of chronic illness and disease. He believes that what you eat is the most important pillar of the six pillars of lifestyle medicine and shares the myriad benefits of living a WFPB lifestyle through his incredible story. Dr. Taher's book, *Open Heart: The Transformational Journey of a Doctor Who, After Bypass Surgery at 61, Ran Marathons and Climbed Mountains*, is a riveting, life-changing read. It's available on Amazon, Kindle, and now on Audible (narrated by the author). All proceeds from the book sales go to charity. Get a copy at: <https://amzn.to/3sy299g>

## Instant Pot Groats

Step aside, rolled oats! There's a new breakfast powerhouse in town! This little oat kernel contains all its phytonutrients to help you power through your day with no crashing and no hunger for hours. Think you already know oats? Try this recipe, and you'll never go back to the rolled version!

**Makes 8 one-cup servings**

**INGREDIENTS:**

2 cups organic groats

3 cups water

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

½ teaspoon ground ginger

¼ teaspoon ground turmeric

**Add-ins:** chopped pecans, walnuts, apple, berries, banana, pumpkin puree, microgreens, flax meal, chia seeds, hemp seeds, or steamed and chopped dark leafy greens.



1. Rinse the groats thoroughly under cold water to remove any dust or impurities. This will also help to prevent the groats from sticking to the bottom of the pot.
2. Add the groats, water, cinnamon, ginger, and turmeric to your Instant Pot. Make sure the valve is closed and set it for full pressure for 5 minutes. When the pressure cooking is complete, allow it to remain on warm for 90 minutes.
3. Remove lid and fluff with a fork. Transfer to a baking sheet and allow to cool, then place in a sealed container. The groats can be kept in the fridge to eat all week or in the freezer for three months.
4. To prepare, add one cup groats to a sauce pan or a bowl with about ¼ cup plant-based milk. Warm on stovetop, or microwave for 30 seconds. Top with your desired add-ins.

## Next-Level Avocado Toast

Indulge in this delightful and wholesome breakfast of whole-grain toast topped with a vibrant medley of flavors, including creamy avocado, fresh tomatoes, and basil. The balsamic reduction and lovely edible flowers take it to the next level of flavor and beauty!

**Serves 4**

**INGREDIENTS:**

4 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, reduced as instructed below

4 pieces of organic, whole-grain, SOS-free bread such as Ezekiel 4:9, toasted

2 ripe avocados

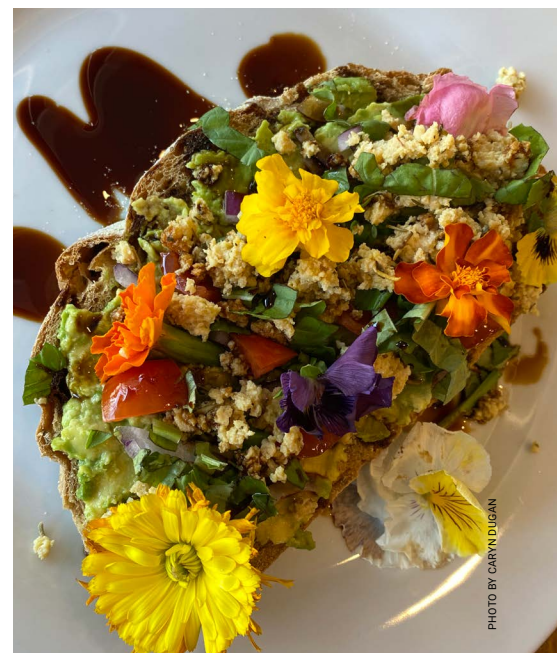
8–10 cherry tomatoes, cut into quarters

¼ red onion, minced

a small bunch of fresh basil, julienned  
edible flowers for garnish, optional (see Chef's Notes)

1. Prepare the reduced balsamic. Pour the vinegar into a sauce pan and over low-medium heat, allow it to reduce just a smidge so that it almost becomes the consistency of a light syrup—not too thick. This will concentrate the flavor a bit, but not be as strong as a balsamic glaze.
2. Cut open the avocados and squeeze onto the toast, one-half avocado per slice of bread. Spread the avocado, sprinkle on the tomatoes and red onion, and drizzle with the reduced balsamic.
3. Add the basil. If adding flowers, arrange them where they will fit and be pretty. So simple and delicious! Enjoy!

**Chef's Note:** Edible flowers include pansies, calendula, honeysuckle, borage, chamomile, daylily, squash blossoms, and mint. See <https://www.gardeners.com/how-to/edible-flowers/8078.html> for more information.



# Eggplant Manicotti with Tofu Ricotta and Cashew Bechamél

There is nothing more satisfying than eating a big plate of manicotti and never feeling that pasta bloat. The fresh basil, beautifully sweet tomatoes, and creamy bechamél sauce makes this holiday dinner party-worthy. You'll win anyone over with this dish!

## Serves 6

### MARINARA INGREDIENTS:

- 1 28-ounce can of no-salt-added, whole, peeled tomatoes
- 1 14-ounce can diced, no-salt-added tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 Medjool date or 2 deglet noor dates, pitted (or date paste)
- ½ tablespoon dried oregano

### CASHEW BÉCHAMEL INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup raw cashews
- ½ yellow onion, diced
- 1¾ cup salt-free vegetable stock
- 1 garlic clove
- 2 tablespoons nutritional yeast
- ½ tablespoon onion granules
- pinch of fresh ground nutmeg
- pinch of ground white pepper

### EGGPLANT NOODLE INGREDIENTS:

- 4 Japanese or Chinese eggplants

### SPINACH TOFU RICOTTA INGREDIENTS:

- 1 12-ounce block of the firmest tofu you can find, very well-drained
- 2 tablespoons tahini
- 2½ tablespoons nutritional yeast
- 1 shallot, minced
- ¼ teaspoon finely grated nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon lemon zest
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon salt substitute, such as Benson's Table Tasty
- ½ teaspoon fresh ground pepper
- 1 8-ounce pack frozen, chopped spinach, defrosted and drained well
- 1 handful of fresh basil leaves, torn

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. **To make the marinara:** Add the tomatoes, balsamic vinegar, dates, and oregano to a food processor or blender. Blend, and adjust balsamic and dates to taste. Transfer to a large sauce pan and allow to simmer 30–40 minutes to concentrate the flavor and thicken the sauce.
3. **To make the cashew béchamel:** Place the cashews in a blender. Preheat a large skillet. Add the onion to the pan, reduce the heat to medium, and continually stir the onions, adding a splash of water if the onions begin to stick. Once browned, add the onions to the blender with the cashews along with the vegetable broth, garlic cloves, nutritional yeast, onion granules, nutmeg, and white pepper. Blend until creamy. Transfer to a bowl or container and set aside.
4. **To make the eggplant noodles:** Cut off the top and bottom of each eggplant and slice them vertically in 1/8-inch strips. Place the slices on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. When the oven is ready, bake for 15 minutes, then flip and bake another 7–10 minutes or until they begin to brown just a little. You don't want them to crisp up as you will not be able to roll them. Set aside and allow to cool.
5. **To make the ricotta:** In a medium bowl, crumble the tofu with your hands. Add in the tahini, nutritional yeast, and shallots; mix well. Add garlic, nutmeg, lemon juice, and zest. Mix again and season to taste. Fold in the chopped spinach and basil, and mix again until well combined. Mixture should hold together well in your hands, indicating the tofu and spinach were drained well. Chill in fridge until ready to be used.
6. **Assembly:** Spread some of the marinara in a 9"x13" baking dish. Lay out a slice of the baked eggplant with the small end closest to you. Scoop some of the ricotta on that end and roll. Place the roll-up, seam side down, in the baking dish. Repeat. Spoon the remaining marinara over the rolls.
7. Bake, uncovered, for 20 minutes or until it starts to bubble. Allow to cool for a few minutes to firm up a little. Turn the oven to broil.
8. Pour the béchamel on top and broil for 3–4 minutes, until it begins to slightly brown. Garnish with fresh basil.



PHOTO BY CARYN DUGAN

# Coconut-Ginger Vegetable Soup

This comforting soup offers complex layers of flavors, yet still remains a simple recipe to batch cook and eat all week. This is the best of mid-week cooking, delivering a gourmet flavor!

**Generously serves 6–8**

## INGREDIENTS:

1 large yellow onion, thinly sliced  
1 shallot, thinly sliced  
1 pound Brussels sprouts, quartered  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
½ teaspoon red pepper flakes  
2 heaping tablespoons fresh minced ginger  
1 pound turnips, peeled and diced  
2 carrots, sliced into ¼" rounds  
8 cups salt-free vegetable broth  
1½ cups cauliflower, chopped into small florets  
1 15-oz can no-salt-added chickpeas, drained  
Zest of half a lime  
1 cup unsweetened, unflavored nondairy milk  
2 teaspoons coconut extract  
Juice of one and a half limes  
Fresh cilantro, red pepper flakes, or a salt-free hot sauce for garnish (optional)

1. Heat a stock pot over high heat. When heated, add the onion and shallot and reduce the heat to medium-high. Continually stir for 3–4 minutes, adding a teaspoon of water at a time if the onions begin to stick. Once browned, add in the Brussels sprouts, making sure to sear the cut edges. Cook for 3–4 minutes. Add in the garlic and cook for about a minute; don't let it burn.
2. Toss in the red pepper flakes and ginger and mix well. Add the turnip, carrots, and vegetable broth. Cover and bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 3 minutes, covered.
3. Add the cauliflower and cook for about 5 minutes. Add the chickpeas and lime zest.
4. Simmer with the lid ajar to let steam escape until the turnip is tender, about another 5 minutes.
5. Add nondairy milk, coconut extract, and lime juice. Adjust seasonings.
6. Heat through and serve with cilantro, extra red pepper flakes, or Sriracha, if desired.



# Caryn's White Bean and Butternut Squash Alfredo Sauce

This is a staple Alfredo-type sauce for our family. Poured over some noodles or drizzled over a sweet potato topped with lightly steamed broccoli, no matter how it's used, it will be gobbled up in a blink! Kids aren't eating their veggies? Now they are!

**Makes 3 cups**

## INGREDIENTS:

1 butternut squash  
½ cup cashews, soaked for 2 hours  
1½ cups salt-free vegetable broth  
1 cup cooked cannellini beans (if using canned beans, choose no-salt-added)  
½ tablespoon salt substitute, or to taste  
3 tablespoons nutritional yeast  
Juice of one-half lemon

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Peel and cut a butternut squash into similar-sized chunks. Line a baking tray with parchment paper and bake the squash for 50 minutes. Measure out one cup of squash to use in recipe.
3. Drain and rinse the cashews. Add them to a blender with the broth and blend until very smooth.
4. Add the squash, beans, salt substitute, nutritional yeast, and lemon juice to the blended cashews. Blend again until creamy. Use immediately.



# Roasted Turmeric Cauliflower with Tahini Drizzle

Two nutrition dynamos in one! Cauliflower, a cruciferous vegetable known for its many health benefits, is paired with turmeric, renowned for its powerful anti-inflammatory properties, which adds not only a vibrant yellow hue but also a rich depth of flavor.

**Serves 4 as a side dish,  
2 as an entrée**

## INGREDIENTS:

1½ pounds of cauliflower florets  
1 tablespoon ground turmeric  
2 teaspoons curry powder  
½ teaspoon garam masala  
¼ teaspoon pepper  
1–2 tablespoons lime juice  
Lime wedges for garnish, optional  
Tahini Drizzle (recipe at right)  
Cilantro for garnish, optional

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Rinse the cauliflower florets so the spices can easily adhere. Place the florets in a large bowl, sprinkle the spices over them, and work the spices into each one.
3. Spread the cauliflower out in a single layer on baking sheet and bake for 30–35 minutes, stirring halfway through cooking. They are done when the cauliflower is fork-tender and just starting to brown on the edges.
4. Arrange cauliflower on serving plates. Pour Tahini Drizzle on top and sprinkle with lime juice.
5. Garnish with cilantro and lime wedges, if desired.

## Tahini Drizzle

This remarkable concoction is a harmonious fusion of flavors, carefully crafted to add an irresistible finishing touch to any dish.

**Makes 1½ cups**

## INGREDIENTS:

¼ cup tahini  
Juice of 1 lemon, about 2 tablespoons  
3 pitted dates  
1 pinch crushed red pepper  
1 teaspoon garlic powder  
1½ cups water  
Salt-free seasonings to taste  
1. Add all ingredients into a blender and blend until creamy.  
2. Store in fridge in a sealed container. Drizzle will last two weeks.



# Chocolate Chip Cookies —for Santa, maybe?

Hey, I get that the big guy, is, uh, the BIG guy – but he still needs to make it down the chimney and have enough energy to visit us all! Here's a cookie he and his waistline will love—and it's healthy enough to start off your day, too!

## Makes about 16 cookies

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 overripe banana
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup unsweetened applesauce
- 4 Medjool dates (or 8–10 deglet noor dates), pitted
- 2 teaspoons vanilla powder (or 3 teaspoons vanilla extract)
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup oat flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon baking soda
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 cups whole rolled oats
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped walnuts
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup unsweetened, 100% cacao chips, such as Pascha®

1. Preheat oven to 350°F, and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Smash the banana and roughly chop the dates. Add the banana, applesauce, dates, and vanilla to a blender and blend until fairly smooth.
3. Add the flour, baking soda, and cinnamon to a large bowl. Whisk to combine.
4. Add the blended mixture to the bowl and stir to combine.
5. Add the oats, walnuts, and cacao chips, and mix everything together until moistened through.
6. Using a spoon or a quarter-cup scoop, scoop a well-rounded amount of dough onto the baking sheet. Flatten slightly.
7. Bake until slightly browned, about 12–14 minutes. Cookies will firm up as they cool.



PHOTO BY JANICE ZIEGLER

PHOTO BY JESSICA AHLBORN



**CARYN DUGAN** adopted a plant-based diet in response to tragedy: in 2008, cancer took her father at an early age and, ten weeks later, tried to take her. In response to her diagnosis, she searched for an answer and found one in the growing body of literature supporting a whole-food, plant-based diet to bolster our natural immune system.

In her 15 years advocating for more plants on plates, Caryn, known as the STL Veg Girl, has spearheaded many successful plant-based events in St. Louis. Most recently, she opened the nation's first plant-based nutrition and culinary education center, the Center for Plant-Based Living, near St. Louis, MO. The Center also serves as the studio where she and her medical director, Dr. Jim Loomis, film episodes of the popular YouTube series, *The Doc and Chef*. Find more at [CPBL-STL.com](http://CPBL-STL.com).

Some recipes adapted to conform to NHA guidelines.

# 2023 NHA Conference Highlights

Welcome to several pages of pictorial highlights of the milestone **2023 NHA Conference and 75th Anniversary Celebration** held last June! It surpassed nearly everyone's high expectations, from the tasty Vitamix reception to the perfect weather for the morning hikes and exercise programs to the fabulous line-up of speakers and, of course, to the bountiful, delicious, SOS-free meal buffets. Want more of this kind of education and entertainment in your life? Register now for the 2024 conference, and remember, you can still purchase the 2023 replays of all the wonderful presentations on the NHA website for only \$67! 🌱



A stellar 75<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary  
event!

PATTY JACKSON





The hike at Cuyahoga Valley National Park was stunning—and great exercise, too!

JANICE ZIEGLER



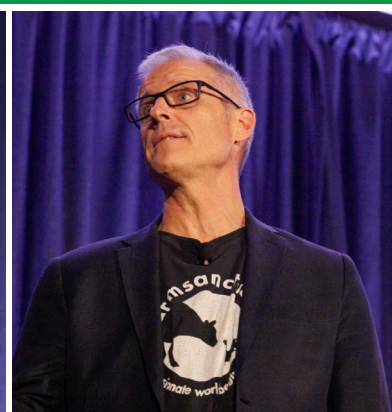
The entire weekend was jam-packed!

CYD NOTTER



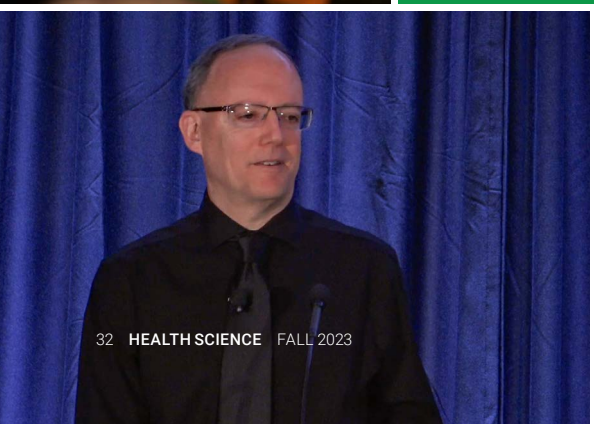
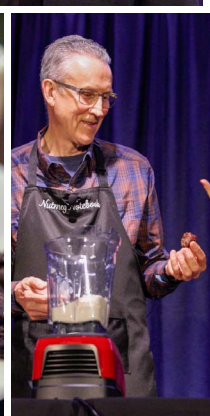
We will definitely be attending next year, as well!

DEBBIE DARNELL



It was fantastic!

PRISCILLA DASSE



We need this kind of support and education.

ANGIE CORSINI





Good food, amazing people, fascinating lectures—and live music, too!

SIA HURST



The kids' program was wonderful!

KATHARINE EVANS



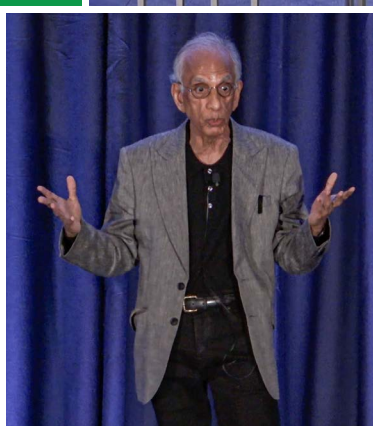
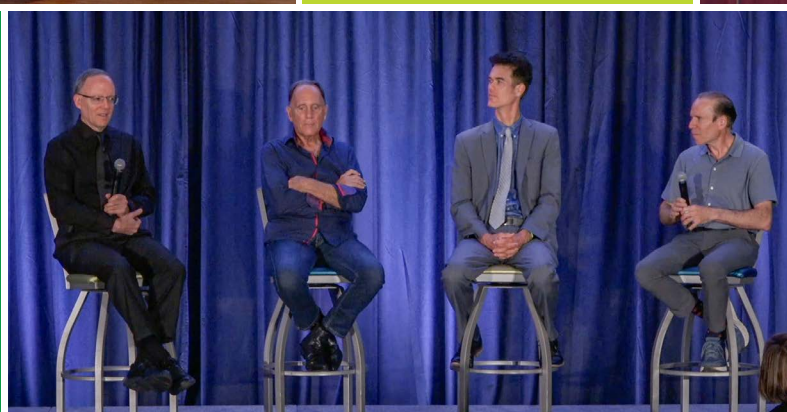
The food—just WOW!

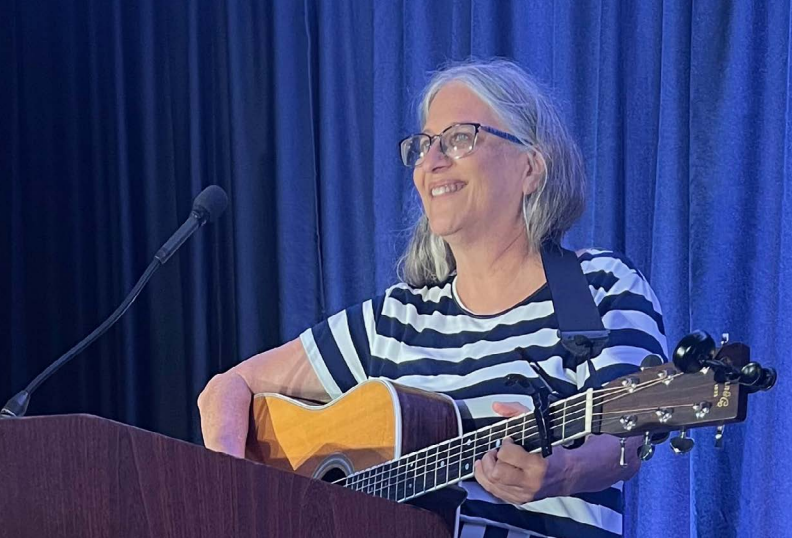
PATTY JACKSON



An extraordinary event. We learned so much!

KAREN FORSTER





# Ode to Dr. Fuhrman

by Margie Roswell

SUNG TO THE TUNE OF "AMERICAN PIE" BY DON MCLEAN

A long, long time ago ...

I can still remember how the Cool Whip used to make me smile.  
And I knew that if I had my chance, all my flavors I'd enhance,  
My dinner guests were happy for a while ...

But Dr. Fuhrman made me shiver.  
To NHA he said "come hither."  
Bad news on the doorstep  
For processed foods and more crap.

And I can't remember if I cried  
When I read his book—  
uncovered lies  
But something touched me deep inside  
The day I nutrified!

I don't miss American Pie  
I drove my heavy from the bevy of the medical lies  
It was the good old boys thinkin' that made me awry  
I was fat, sick, and I nearly died  
Fat, sick, and I nearly died.

And do you skip the olive oil?  
Do you grow sprouts in earthy soil  
If the good book tells you so?  
Do you believe in nori rolls?  
Do you put beans in lots of bowls?  
And can you teach me how to eat real slow?

Well, alcohol increases risk  
So, go drink some tomato bisque  
And raise that lutein high  
Carotenoid score fly!  
Grow microgreens in jar or box  
Make sauerkraut in earthen crocks  
And friends admire our detox  
The day we nutrify.

With sulphur glucosinolates  
You'll chew that kale, yes, masticate  
For isothiocyanate  
The day we nutrify.

I don't miss American Pie.  
I drove my heavy from the bevy of the medical lie.  
It was the good old boys thinkin' that made me awry  
I was fat sick, and I nearly died ...  
But now Dr. Fuhrman's my guide!

My DNA and my A1(c)  
Are happy now, not S. A. D.  
'Cuz H = N over C!  
The day I nutrified.

With a fork, and a knife, and a wooden spoon  
You too, can be super immune,  
So join me in this merry tune,  
the day we nutrify:

I don't miss American Pie.  
I drove my heavy from the bevy of the medical lies  
It was the good old boys thinkin' that made me awry  
I was fat, sick, and I nearly died ...  
But now Dr. Fuhrman's my guide!



It was magnificent!

ANGIE CORSINI



THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS:



# Dedicated Cyclist Finds True Health and Purpose

**New vitality after years of unsuccessful dieting**

by Janet Anspach Rickey

I gave myself a weight problem at the young age of 12—by going on a diet to lose five pounds! I starved myself and lost the five pounds, then immediately overate and gained it back, and more. So, I tried dieting again, but it took a bit longer to lose those ten pounds; then again, I gained that back, and more. When my weight reached 199%, I stopped weighing myself. By then I had tried every diet I could find, and at this point I couldn't lose weight anymore. My body had become a fat-storing machine. I would try Weight Watchers and lose maybe a quarter of a pound one week and then plateau for two weeks. It was very frustrating.

By then I had tried every diet I could find, and at this point I couldn't lose weight anymore. My body had become a fat-storing machine.

At age 30, I finally realized diets don't work, and I stopped dieting, which ironically resulted in no more bingeing. Over the next ten years, I was able to get off 40 pounds, then stalled at an unhappy 150–160 pounds for years. I gave up on trying to get back to the goal of 138 pounds, the weight that Weight Watchers had set for me when I first joined. Early on in my weight loss journey, I reached it twice (for about a minute) before trying to eat the standard American diet in moderation. I became a WW lifetime member and would last maybe a week or two before gaining back more than two pounds. Then off I would go again into bingeing and overeating until it all came back again.

Fast forward to a cycle tour I was on in March of 2020, where two of our group had shifted to vegan. My husband Stephen and

I thought, "Now these two are really off the deep end." Charlie lent us the DVD *Eating You Alive*, which our group watched that June on a bicycle tour in eastern Oregon. We all stopped eating meat right then.

I had gained seven pounds since the March tour by eating lots of salads with full-fat homemade dressing. Then I listened to *How Not to Die* and bought Dr Gregor's cookbook. In June, I decided to "put it to the test" starting July 1. I told my husband I was just going to make things from the cookbook to see if it really worked. I also got bloodwork done and saw that my cholesterol was over 200, my blood pressure was 130/80; my weight was 159, heart rate 74, and A1(c) 5.6.

Magically, the weight started to come off. Stephen wasn't going to join me at first, but after he tasted the first couple of meals, he was taking full helpings and liked the taste so much he joined me. Stephen weighed in at 173, which was more than he had ever weighed. His cholesterol was also high, and his doctor wanted him to start taking statins. I was over the moon when he decided to join me! I soon found Chef AJ and joined her Feel Fabulous Over Forty group. I watch her interviews every day along with other videos by Be Green with Amy, Klocks in the Kitchen, Ann and Jane Esselstyn, and Jonathan Fah, as well as the summits that run all the time.

Since going WFPB, SOS-free in July 2020, I have lost 47 pounds, and Stephen has lost 30. Our cholesterol levels are now in a normal range, and our blood pressures average around 108/70. My heart rate is back down around 44 bpm like it used to be. I weigh 113 pounds, and I feel amazing!

I cycle tour, and in August 2022 did a 30-day tour up through national parks into Canada. I was eating WFPB, SOS-free, and I had wonderful food the whole tour. Next, I spent a month in Australia, eating nothing but plants the whole time and loving it. I started

a YouTube channel to show others how to travel and cook and eat plants no matter where you are.

I am a retired physical therapist and have always been interested in preventive medicine. I love to exercise and ride my bike, lift weights, walk, hike, and just enjoy being active. We remodeled our home all last year, and we stayed plant-exclusive even with no running water or heat for most of the winter!

Save your life, save the animals, and save this sacred planet!

I started a PlantPure Pod which I call Kitsap County Podsters, and I post to a Facebook group I created for it. This year I started having pod potlucks and doing cooking/food-prep demonstrations for my area. I volunteer with the local bike club, and I am the treasurer and ride coordinator which keeps me very busy! We also lead mostly short tours of a few days up to four weeks during the summer months.

Both Stephen and I fasted at TrueNorth for five days with a three-day refeed last November/December. What an amazing experience that was!

I found the NHA through working with Chef AJ, and I joined in 2021. I love the magazine, and I hope to join the conferences and the Holistic Holiday at Sea soon. A group of us are planning to attend the conference in 2024, which is exciting!

I hope to inspire and assist all those who are open to shifting to a WFPB, SOS-free diet and lifestyle. Save your life, save the animals, and save this sacred planet! 🌱



Interview with  
Chef AJ



Be Green  
with Amy



PHOTO: CHRIS MACASKILL

# An Extraordinary Man Takes on an Extraordinary Challenge

Understanding the Pleasure Trap finally opened the door to weight-loss success.

by Jonathan Fah

**M**y name is Jonathan Fah. I am the husband of a wonderful woman and a father of four young children. I always imagined that I would get to witness my children reaching each milestone in their lives alongside my wife as I got older. In reality, that is all it was—imagined. I wasn't likely to see my children reach high school graduation, let alone get married and have children of their own. At 38 years old, I was over 500 pounds. (I definitely never imagined that!) I was a ticking time bomb. Every time I walked up a flight of steps, my heart rate would skyrocket. At any moment I could have suffered from a heart attack or stroke, and no one would have been surprised. Some probably would have questioned how it didn't happen sooner.

*I wasn't likely to see my children reach high school graduation, let alone get married and have children of their own. At 38 years old, I was over 500 pounds. I was a ticking time bomb.*

I struggled with being overweight my entire life. In grade school, I had to wrestle older kids because kids my own age were not within 15% of my weight. By the time I turned 14, I was over 250 pounds. In high school, I was active in sports like football and

wrestling, but weighed in at over 300 pounds by graduation. After high school, the roller coaster of weight loss and regain began.

Over the years, I tried almost every diet I heard about. I read all of the books you were supposed to read. I bought all the gadgets that were designed to make weight loss quick and easy. I went to the doctors and took their "miracle" weight loss drugs. With each attempt, I would experience mild to moderate success, followed by catastrophic failure where I gained all the weight back—plus a few more pounds, for good measure.

In 2014, after over a decade of ups and downs, I gave up. I had fallen for the promises of one last diet and, again, failed. I had seen great success, losing over 100 pounds, but I could not sustain the diet. I felt like I was so close to my goals, but I let them slip away. I felt broken. Why were diets that boasted so many success stories not working for me? Why was I unable to push myself away from the table or drive past the fast food restaurants without stopping? Was I just destined to be fat?

Over the next few years, I didn't concern myself with healthy eating or weight loss. When asked if I would consider dieting again, I would respond, "I already am. Because I am going to die-eating." I was convinced that I had no willpower or self-control. It seemed pointless to try to lose weight, only to gain it all back again. I had given up on the idea that I could lose weight on my own and began to think that surgical intervention would be the only solution. Weight loss surgery, in my mind, was the last resort. I knew that with my health conditions, I would have no trouble



getting approved for the surgery, but it felt extreme. I did not want to go down that road.

In 2018, I started hearing about water fasting. I learned that people were able to go long periods of time without eating and were losing incredible amounts of weight. It felt like an easy option for me, and I quickly started to experiment with fasting. I soon found that I was able to go without food much longer than I thought possible. Eventually, I pushed myself to complete a 30-day water fast and lost an incredible amount of weight very quickly. After the fast, though, I found that I gained the weight back pretty quickly, too. I added water fasting to my lengthy list of diet fails.

For the next two years, my weight continued to increase steadily, from the low 400s until I next stepped on a scale in March of 2020 and learned that for the first time, I had ballooned to over 500 pounds. I was shocked—not shocked enough to do anything about it, though. The world had just gone into lockdown, and I was thinking positive; at least if we ran out of food, I knew that I could live off of my stored fat for a good long while.

Over time, though, the toll of being 500+ pounds started to become too much for me, both physically and emotionally. I had awful



and wellness for three years. I had never sustained a diet for longer than nine months, and sustainability needed to be a key component if I was going to succeed.

Over the years, I had been eating the diet of a 600-pound person, occasionally switching to the diet of a 90-pound person when I was trying to lose weight. I had never learned how to eat like a healthy person. I needed to figure out how a healthy version of myself should eat and then eat that way until I became that person. Approaching my weight loss in this way was going to take time, not only to lose the weight, but time to learn to maintain a consistent, healthy diet. I was not looking for a fast fix; I was looking to put in the work and save my own life.

The second goal of my weight loss challenge was to lose 300 pounds. Doing so would take me from being considered morbidly obese to overweight on the body mass index, a category I'd never really considered reaching before. If I truly wanted to get healthy for my family, a 50- to 100-pound weight loss would not be enough. I needed to go all the way.

The last goal was to create an accountability platform for myself. So often in the past, I would start a diet in my head. I would wake up thinking, "Today's the day," then never tell anyone my plans. I knew if I told someone, I would feel guilty when I failed. The problem with this way of thinking is that I was still failing someone every day—myself. By letting others know your plans, you create a support network that is far stronger than you are alone.

With these goals in mind, I created a Youtube channel called "Fah Dieting." On November 1, 2020, I stepped onto the scale, registering a starting weight of 519.8 pounds. I kicked off my challenge with a water fast. Because of my past experience with fasting, I felt that this would be a great way to jumpstart the challenge by shedding some of the most excessive weight on my body. This time was going to be different; this time I was going to research the best diet to eat when I was done. It wasn't fasting that had failed me in the past, it was my failure to have a plan for eating afterward.

Over the course of the first few weeks, I scoured the internet, watched videos, and explored many diet options. It was during this time that I came across a video on the TrueNorth Health Center. I had been experimenting with water fasting but had not heard of TNHC previously. I learned that

they performed medically supervised water fasts and had been doing so for many years with thousands of patients. So, I decided to look into what diet they recommend to their patients after fasting. That's when I learned about eating a whole-food, plant-based, SOS-free diet. This piqued my interest, because it was so different from anything else I was hearing about. I picked up *The Pleasure Trap*, the book that was written by Dr. Alan Goldhamer, the doctor who runs TNHC, and Dr. Doug Lisle. Little did I know that this would be the key that would unlock the secret to my successful and sustainable weight loss.

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## What I have learned is that I do not have a disorder. The food I ate was disordered.

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I am just a regular person, but I currently find myself doing something extraordinary. I am conquering my obesity. What I have learned is that I do not have a disorder. The food I ate was disordered. Nowhere in nature can you find an XXL Grilled Stuft Beef Burrito. That is 880 calories in the palm of your hand. Everything I consumed was processed and designed by scientists to be exactly what my mind craved. We do not live in the environment that our ancestors did. Our bodies are not adapted to the new food environment. The very physiology that used to keep us alive is now making us fat.

Since starting this challenge, I have reached some huge milestones. The combination of my 40-day extended water fast and my new plant-based diet allowed me to shed my first 100 pounds in 50 days. Within the first year, I was able to lose an additional 100 pounds. At over 1,000 days into my challenge, I am half the man I used to be, weighing in at under 260 pounds.

I still have more weight to lose before I reach my initial goal. By continuing to learn from plant-based doctors, advocates, and resources like the NHA, I'm confident that I will lose the weight. These resources have helped educate me in a way of life that I never considered. By eating this way, I don't have to imagine a future life. I get to LIVE in this one, where I'll actually get to walk down the aisle with my daughters. Where I'll really get to see my son become a father. Where I'll truly get to grow old with my wife. 🌱

swelling in my calves and ankles, and it would hurt to get out of bed in the morning. Walking long distances would wipe me out for days afterward. What hurt the most, though, was the emotional toll the weight had on my life. My kids were getting older, and I wasn't able to be active with them like I wanted. I wasn't helping my wife as much as I should have been to raise our children and to manage household tasks. I was being selfish with my eating habits. I was choosing junk food over being present with my family. I was choosing junk food over our future. It needed to end. I needed to change.

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So, in October of 2020, I started to develop my weight loss challenge. I had three main goals when I started the challenge. The first goal was to focus on my health

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### Meet our Newest Life Members!

When you become a Life Member of the NHA by making a single gift of \$1,000 or by being a Century Club Member for 10 years at \$100 per year, you are making a strong commitment and vital contribution to the long-term success of the NHA. In this issue we are honored to introduce you to our new Life Members!



**Priscilla Dasse**  
Needham, MA



**Lisa Fedorovich**  
Hudson, OH



**Kevin King**  
Burbank, CA



**Lisa Mason**  
Monroe Twp., NJ



**Francis Wilson**  
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**NOT PICTURED:** James Wade, Hamilton, OH

### Meet our Newest Century Club Members!

Century Club Members are another honored group of NHA members who help us sustain our educational mission by paying \$100 per year.



**Susan Barnwell**  
Hilton Head Island, SC



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Keizer, OR  
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Carol Wilson  
San Ramon, CA  
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President Mark Huberman and the Board of the NHA wish to express special thanks to the members who responded so positively to our appeals for support. Donations received after this issue went to print will be acknowledged in the next issue.

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Please consider stepping forward to become one of our next Life or Century Club Members!

Hi Wanda and Mark,

What an absolutely glowing conference you two put together for the 75th! We're still in awe of the lineup of WFPB giants we heard from and their bold and straightforward messages that made us feel such intense gratitude for being "in the know" and committed to this lifestyle. Attending virtually in past years was brilliantly executed, but being there in person was next-level phenomenal! The food...just WOW!! We ate to our hearts' content, guilt-free, and still lost weight. So many opportunities to chat with the speakers in the intimate setting, and so many new and like-minded friends were made. My new mantra: Will travel for vegan friends!

A million thanks for arranging the Vitamix tour and visit with John and Linda Barnard—what a privilege! To learn of the origins and history behind the Vitamix name and how it's always been a whole-foods concept greatly elevated my appreciation for the company. And the 20% discount is so generous! The hike afterwards at Rocky River Nature Center was beautiful and a perfect balance to the day. Congratulations on a stellar 75th anniversary event!!!

**Patty Jackson**  
Cincinnati, OH

Dear Mark & Wanda

My first NHA conference certainly did not disappoint—in fact, just the opposite! The entire weekend was jam-packed with opportunities to move (hike, yoga, exercise), eat great food, sing with NHA's rockin' band, get acquainted with vendors, and learn the latest science from top-notch doctors and experts. Thanks to you all for the hard work you did to pull this off!

**Cyd Notter**  
Wilmington, IL

Dear Wanda and Mark,

Just a quick note to let you know how much we both enjoyed the 75th Conference. We also profoundly appreciate the work you do to support the health and well-being of so many!

**Jason and Deb DeSalvo**  
Oldwick, NJ

Dear Mark and Wanda,

It was great meeting you and attending the 2023 NHA Conference. It was fantastic! Thank you for everything you do and for creating a wonderful platform for education and connection. Much appreciated!

**Priscilla Dasse**  
Needham, MA

Dear Mark,

My husband, Eric Fier, and I really enjoyed this conference. We learned so much! We will definitely be attending next year as well.

**Debbie Darnell**  
Carrollton, OH

Hi Wanda,

It was a pleasure to be at our first in-person conference, and we are looking forward to next year as well! I want to thank you, Wanda, for your hard work and dedication. The world is a better place with you and Mark in it!

**Linda Petersen**  
Saint Paul, MN

Dear Mark:

As usual, I loved your interview with Dr. Aggarwal. After reading it entirely, I was surprised to learn how little we all agree on exactly what a healthy diet is for us, as we all put our own spin on it to suit ourselves, which I guess in itself is not a bad thing to do.

**David C. Eschan**  
Florence, KY



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