

Living and Sharing a Raw, Vegan Lifestyle

A wise grandmother's example inspires a dedication to whole foods.

by Karen Ranzi, MA

When I was growing up in Livingston, New Jersey, my paternal grandmother, Celia Horowitz, who lived with my family most of the time, followed a plant-based diet for her health. As a young child, I discounted my grandmother's lifestyle as "silly" and "different," never expecting to become passionate about it one day. I grew up in the 1950s and '60s when processed food began. My favorite foods were hot dogs, potato chips, and Oreos. Today, I attribute my passion for a vegan life and plant-based eating to my grandmother's, and then my father's, inspiration and powerful examples.

Grandma Celia was sick with asthma and emphysema in 1921. The doctors told her she wouldn't have long to live. After reading the book, *The Mucusless Diet Healing System*, published in 1918, Celia transitioned from a meat-based diet to a plant-based diet. Celia ate mostly uncooked, natural, fresh plant foods during the day and steamed vegetables and salad in the early evening. She healed herself from the asthma and emphysema in less than one year and wrote about her experiences.

I recall the many arguments about food and medicine between my mother and grandmother. My mother was resistant to making changes to her animal-based diet, and my grandmother was furious that she would raise her children on animal flesh and packaged foods.

Grandma Celia would talk with me privately, telling me how important it is to eat fruit and vegetables, and how we as humans are not meant to eat animals or anything that came from them. She and my father had a respect for animals and nature that no one else seemed to have. They felt strongly about our relationships with the other creatures sharing this world, and this love has always remained strong in my heart.

Because I watched my father and grandmother showing respect toward all creatures by not eating anything that came from animals and carrying every insect outside in a tissue, I became an ethical vegetarian at age 17. However, I hadn't yet truly learned the harm of dairy and egg farming. Later, in 1989, when I understood those cruelties, I went vegan. I believe that taking in the flesh or using any part of an animal takes the soul of that creature into your body and creates negative karma.

Back in the early 1990s when I was a young mother, I first heard of *Health Science* magazine and the National Health Association. I wrote my family's story of healing for an issue of the magazine in the 1990s. I was so happy to see this organization promoting whole plant foods for all ages—real, unprocessed food!

I raised two children, at first on a vegan diet and later on a raw vegan diet. Initially, my husband, Harvey, was not in favor of the transition to a plant-based diet, but over the years he became supportive as he learned the moral and health benefits for humans, animals, and the planet.

In 1994, exactly 30 years ago, I switched to a raw vegan lifestyle. The impetus was my infant son, who suffered from asthma and ear infections. I learned that packaged and processed foods are unhealthy and that we need the nutrient-dense vitamins, minerals, and amino acids of an abundance of fresh plant foods. Nutrients such as vitamin C, folate, and B vitamins are missing in processed, packaged foods and cannot be added back efficiently in a synthetic form. Raw plant foods also have a high water content, which is important because the human body is up to 60% water, with major organs ranging from 73–83%.

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The whole, raw, vegan foods (fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and sprouts) facilitated the healing of my son's asthma and ear infections in months and also greatly improved my health. The severe hormonal cystic acne that had plagued me since adolescence—for which I took prednisone (a glucocorticoid prodrug), regularly received hydrocortisone shots in my face and back, and took a dangerous drug called Accutane—disappeared in just three months following the dietary change to a whole-food, plant-based diet.

Initially, the elimination of dairy products showed the biggest improvement, and then the raw plant food, especially whole fruit and large leafy green salads, healed even the scarring. My longtime digestive problem of IBS (irritable bowel syndrome) also vanished in a period of just months.

If we eat lots of fresh plants, which are full of water and fiber, we crowd out the food that doesn't serve us, including meat and all animal products. I've seen clearly in myself, my family, and my clients that if we eat food from plant sources, we can prevent and reverse many of the problems that develop from eating the saturated fat and zero-fiber animal products.

As a speech and language pathologist for 43 years, working with the autistic population



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for 20 of those years, I saw clearly that when a family was willing to make the transition to a whole-food, plant-based, high-raw diet, autism symptoms began to turn around. I have seen success stories of transformation for children and adults of all ages with autism.

I don't try to force change on anyone. I'm not dogmatic about helping others make changes toward plant-based nutrition. I focus only on adding delicious fruits and vegetables to their diets via simple, uncomplicated recipes, especially getting in those important leafy green vegetables which have a lot of minerals and high-quality protein. I show others how to do it in fun and easy ways.

One woman with severe inflammation came to me through Instagram last year. She wanted to go more plant-based, but wasn't ready to make the entire turnaround. I wanted first to help her see results in order to see the benefits of whole plant foods—to be able to walk without holding onto the walls, as her ankles were very swollen; to relax other joints to relieve the inflammation there; to reduce her weight; to improve her sleep and brain fog; and to begin to heal her prediabetic diagnosis.

This woman was willing to gradually transition to plant foods five days a week during the weekdays, eating meat at only one or two meals with her husband on the weekend. I believe if I had not been flexible, if I had worked on convincing the woman to go fully plant-based, that her goals could have backfired.

The transition to five days a week of a plant-based diet brought tremendous healing to this woman's joints, a significant weight loss of 30 pounds in two months, easier walking as her ankles were no longer inflamed, improved sleep, increased mental clarity, and much gratitude for a plant-based diet, which hadn't been in place before. Previously, there was animal food on the menu three times a day, seven days a week. My help with her transition to plant foods for this time period brought this nursery school principal a desire to go further with whole-food, plant-based nutrition for health and well-being.

In June 2023, I participated as an exhibitor at the National Health Association (NHA) conference in Ohio. I felt more comfortable there than at any of the vegan festivals where I've presented. One time I was speaking at a vegetarian food festival about the harm of acrylamide in highly cooked and salted foods, and directly next to me was a man selling French fries and other highly processed and salted items. Attending the NHA conference with its emphasis on whole plant foods with no oil, no salt, and no sugar was such a joy!

It was also wonderful to interview the organizers of the NHA conference, Wanda and Mark Huberman, for my YouTube channel and to find out that Mark had been raw vegan the first 32 years of his life.

My mission is to amplify the voice of the plant-based movement and to increase the effectiveness of the movement for people's

health, the safety of the animals, and the benefit of the environment and the planet. I've had a lifetime vision to empower a healthy, compassionate world through a whole-food, plant-based, high-raw lifestyle, accelerating a shift towards mindful eating.

As a raw food chef, I love preparing delicious, low-fat, raw vegan dishes for adults and children, and I have loved leading different retreats: a raw food and yoga retreat in Costa Rica (for my eighth year), women's health retreats, and a raw food and wild foraging retreat in Colorado.

I have also authored several books, ebooks, and a mini-course to further these goals. My 100-hour vegan coach certification course and Mastering Hormonal Balance private coaching can be seen at FeelFabulouswithFood.com, and my work focusing on raising healthy vegan children can be seen at superhealthychildren.com.

WORKS BY KAREN RANZI:

Creating Healthy Children Through Attachment Parenting and Raw Foods;
Raw Vegan Recipe Fun for Families:
115 Easy Recipes and Health Tips for Energetic Living; Heal and Prevent Autism: Natural Solutions That Work; Bye, Bye Acne: Clearing Over 25 Years of Cystic Acne in 3 Months; Ready, Set, Raw: Raw Food Fast, but Not Fast Food; The Hormone Boost Plan: Raw Plant Foods Weight Loss, Hormonal, and Gut Health; The Happy Healthy Menopause Lifestyle (mini-course) 🌱