A Simple Approach Yields a Lifetime of Benefits

by Jan Richards

I grew up on junk food. When I was twenty-five my health completely fell apart. At that time, I was living in Los Angeles working for one of Ronald Reagan's wealthy friends. He used his connections to get me appointments with the "best" doctors in the country. I saw six of those doctors and became sicker and sicker.

A friend recommended doctor number seven who found that I had mononucleosis, hypoglycemia, strep throat, severe migraines, and many other problems. He wanted to hospitalize me. I told him I would take time off from work and follow his instructions, but from my home, not the hospital. He had a dietician prescribe a diet for me. It was a SAD diet, and it didn't help, but it started me on what we Buddhists call a "seeking mind."

I started searching for health information, and it was my good fortune to find a T. C. Fry newsletter in a health food store that told me about what we now call health science. I wish I could say that I immediately stopped eating unhealthy food, but I wasn't able to do that. I started by giving up all the unhealthy foods that were easy to quit eating and slowly eliminated the rest, including most grains, which I could tell were not making me feel well. I also started the habit of reading something about health every day, even if it was only a paragraph. I have done this for over fifty years now.

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After eliminating many unhealthy foods, I realized I also had to figure out what to eat! I don't like to cook, and I'm always busy, so I came up with four simple, flexible meals. I noticed many authors recommended certain foods to eat every day. I picked out five foods that the authors had in common and made those the basics in my meals. I don't get bored because, with add-ins, the meals are almost never the same. I usually only eat between the hours of noon and 6:00 in the evening, and I sometimes do short fasts. I also hardly ever waste food by eating this way.

I messed up a million times, but what I didn't do was quit trying, and I saw benefits from this almost immediately. I overcame hypoglycemia and the other illnesses that had started me on this journey. I was a teacher for thirty years and was exposed to countless different illnesses, but I never became sick. At one time we had an E-coli event at my school. Unfortunately, I had eaten the cafeteria vegetables served that day. I was sick for about an hour, and then I was back to normal. The other exposed people were out of school sick for weeks, and some were hospitalized for weeks.

I had no negative symptoms from menopause. I never got COVID, even though I was in close contact with others who had it. I sleep really well at night. My blood pressure is very healthy, and I do not get any headaches. I no longer have bloodshot eyes or get bladder infections. I feel no arthritis symptoms.

I work hard in the yard, still take kick boxing and karate instruction, and I play street hockey and soccer with my young grandsons. I have fallen on the driveway playing with them countless times, but just get back up and keep playing with no problems. I will be eighty years old this year and take no medicines because I do not need any.

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The hardest part for me has been eating in social situations. My mistakes usually involve sugar. But I have changed a lot. As an example, some friends invited me to what used to be my favorite seafood restaurant. I thought, "What the heck. It's only one meal." I took one bite, and I couldn't eat anymore. It tasted awful to me. I had to give the rest to the others.

I really appreciate how I have benefitted from this whole food, plant-based, salt-, oil-, and sugar-free way of living. I am grateful to Mark Huberman and the National Health Association, Dr. Fuhrman, Dr. Goldhamer, and all the people who have helped me learn how to live this healthy life.