



BRIDGETT TULLOH

VEGAN

IMPOSSIBLE

THE WHYS, HOWS, AND WHAT TO DOS OF
A HEALTHY EATING LIFESTYLE

Vegan ~~Im~~Possible –
The Whys, Hows & What to dos of a
Healthy Eating Lifestyle

By Bridgett Tulloh

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While this book is intended to be informational, there are a multitude of studies that provide concrete health data on this diet, in addition to the sources referenced here.

Please be advised that there are accounts of meat and dairy farming practices that may be difficult for the consumer to read. While no actual images of cruelty

are depicted, the reader should be prepared to read about inhumane practices within the industry.

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About the Author:

Bridgett Tulloh attended the Duke University Professional Health Coach Training in 2013. She earned her Masters degree in Education at North Carolina State University, and her Bachelor's degree in Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Bridgett spent 10 years working with children with special needs in education and the community. These days, in addition to being a full-time mom, she is currently working as a

writer, and is beginning a career as a Wellness Coach. You can view her article writing here:
<http://btulloh098.hubpages.com/>.

Preface

I've written this book in hopes of giving a beginner's guide to a vegan lifestyle. While this book is intended to be informational, it is based on my opinion and particular references that I have included throughout the book. Much data is available to the public regarding the validity of a meat and dairy-free lifestyle. I have read and explored veganism for about 3 years (at the time of this publication). And though I have previously practiced a 100% vegan diet, I am sympathetic to those who struggle to commit to this lifestyle.

During my pregnancy, I veered from this course, and had difficulty regaining my momentum after my son's birth. It seemed nearly impossible at the time. For now, we are a mostly vegan family, and it seems possible again.

My son has never eaten meat, and has had very limited amounts of dairy. We make no claims to be 'perfect eaters' and, like everyone, endeavor to do our best each day. No one makes perfect choices all the time; though, if you are committed to what you believe is right, you will often find yourself back on the path with time.

There has been some discussion that perhaps vegans promote themselves as taking a moral high ground, and in some way, place themselves on a dietary and lifestyle pedestal. Many people consider a vegan way of life to involve abstaining from all purchases (shoes, leather chairs, etc.) that were connected to an animal. In this way, the term ‘plant-based’ diet has emerged as similar to a vegan diet, but without the moralistic philosophy behind it.

The emphasis with plant-based diets tends to be solely health focused, rather than with the promotion of ethical

causes. However, it should be noted that many people use the terms “vegan” and “plant-based diets” interchangeably, and in a few instances, it will be referenced in this way throughout the book.

Again, please know that for every consideration proposed and discussed regarding veganism in this book, there are a multitude of opinions, studies and arguments on both sides, nutritionally. This book is intended to be helpful in establishing, what I believe, are extremely healthy ways of eating and living.

I hope that through making these healthy changes in your life, you will find enjoyment and better quality of life. You may be surprised by what you learn.

Introduction: Veganism Defined

If you're like me, you've heard of the term '*vegan*' for many years. You may have thought it sounded like an extreme lifestyle choice. Vegetarian? Okay, sure. I could do that. But, vegan? What about cheese, milk, yogurt? Could I live without those favorites? And aren't those foods healthy for me anyway?

Well, as it turns out, those foods actually *aren't* healthy for you after all. We've been duped, you could say. The industries that promote dairy and animal products are not necessarily looking out

for our best interests.

Be your own health advocate and get the real facts. So, what is veganism, *exactly*?

A vegan diet simply means that you choose not to eat any animals or animal products.

It's really that simple. Rest assured, you will find loads of healthy and tasty alternatives that will help you experience this way of life, without feeling deprived. And when you begin to eat the vegan way, you can truly

expect to look and feel better.

In the following chapters, I'll tell you why abstaining from animal foods and products is healthier than the traditional American diet, and you'll learn some unfavorable and unkind basics of the meat and dairy industry. I'll also detail some of the specific benefits you will experience by going vegan, including benefits for your health, your spirit and your sense of economy. We'll talk about how to incorporate these changes into your lifestyle, and I'll even give you a true glimpse of what everyday life is really like as a vegan. Lastly, we'll take a look at some recipes to get you started, and some resources for further reading

inspiration.

A Personal Story:

I began my vegan journey after a close friend made the choice. She had read “The Kind Diet,” by Alicia Silverstone and found herself adopting the lifestyle soon thereafter. She did so quietly, and without any real fanfare about it. She simply made the changes and let others take note.

I asked her one day, as we were enjoying our authentic Vietnamese food in a Durham, NC restaurant (I had the pork, she had the lotus root soup and tofu platter), about her reasoning. I had not read the book yet and was curious about the thinking behind being vegan. I

wondered things aloud like,

“Aren’t we designed to eat meat? Didn’t our bodies evolve to be meat eaters? Don’t you miss cheese and ice cream and sour cream and milk chocolate and yogurt?”

And, although I’m not quite sure, I probably even asked her, the infamous vegan question...

“Where do you get your protein?!”

The fact is, I liked her answers. This conversation took place a few years ago, but a few things still stick with me.

One was this: When I asked her about

our body's need for meat through our human evolution, here is (paraphrasing, of course) what she had to say... "Yes, our ancestors (roughly our human history for the last 200,000 years or so), did eat animals as part of their diet. But I like to think that when they did so, it was in moderation, without it being primary in their diet. I also like to think that when they took an animal's life for their own sustenance, that they did it purely for survival, that they had respect for the animal, and that they expressed great gratitude and reverence for its life."

It's certainly a lot different than how we treat and consume animals today. I think about what she said, and I contrast this

image of our ancestors hunting for wild boar and fish, with the modern day, all too familiar images, of microwaveable frozen sausage links, double- and triple-stacked burgers and mystery meat hot dogs. Yes, I'd say there is quite a difference.

This book will shed some much needed light on the way in which our society eats and manufactures food. You may have heard these facts and sentiments echoed in other articles and books. Fortunately, this information is becoming available and more mainstream. It's encouraging that more and more people are moving towards a plant-based diet.

However, if this subject is new to you, you may be very surprised to learn some unpleasant truths about meat and dairy.

Chapter 1:

The Case for Going Vegan: Dairy Untruths

Calf's milk

As it turns out, milk does NOT do a body good. That calcium you were taught to believe you needed for strong bones and teeth is just not doing its job in the form of milk. Yes, I know it has been ingrained in us that dairy is good for you. Calcium, yes. But, dairy? Oh no, my friend. Just wait and see what knowledge awaits you. You'll just have to take some time to re-train your brain.

Let's think about it from the most basic of frameworks – that of nature. Milk is produced from a mother cow, meant for her baby cow after birth. The baby calf is separated from her mother usually at 2-3 days old. The mother cow is repeatedly made pregnant, usually by artificial insemination, and is hooked to milking machines for the vast majority of her pitiful life, just so that she will continue to produce milk.

But, you know, even in nature baby calves don't continue to drink milk once they are grown. That milk is specially designed by nature to help a baby calf

grow into a mature cow, just like our human milk is designed for human infants' special developmental needs.

How odd is it that we decide to take that baby calf's milk for our own? If you asked a 10 year old, who had never had dairy before, to go and pull on a cow's udders and drink what came out, he would think you were mad. (I'm thinking that somewhere along the way, the human spirit of marketing must have gotten involved for this idea to fly so well!)

Milk aches

No, in truth, cow's milk is a foreign

substance to our bodies. In fact, it's so foreign that many people have a wide range of affecting conditions that result whenever they ingest dairy in any form, typically referred to as a lactose-intolerance or sensitivity.

Discomforts ranging from nausea, cramps, bloating, gas, runny nose, thick-coated tongue, chronic sinus infections, poor digestion and constipation can make that bowl of ice cream seem like a punishment rather than a treat.

Who experiences these ailments, and why is it that dairy doesn't seem to bother many people?

Well, the fact is, dairy actually does bother a rather large number of people after all.

Have you noticed the increased number of products and marketing for people with lactose-intolerances? Companies actually found a way to take lactose out of milk, just so that you would keep buying milk!

According to statistics from the Ohio State Medical University¹, 30 – 50 million Americans experience some degree of lactose intolerance. They also cite that as many as 75% of all African-American, Jewish, Native American and

Mexican-American adults are also lactose intolerant, with 90% of Asian-Americans being lactose intolerant as well. It seems that people with European ethnic backgrounds are the least likely to experience this condition.

One reputable theory about these intolerances relates to our human history over time and across the world. Cultures who have very lengthy histories relying on the use of animals and animal products (such as Northern European countries) tend to have adapted, and are better able to digest these products. Cultures that have eschewed these foods

(such as Japan), did not develop that necessary digestive processes.

Cultures that are currently able to eat and assimilate dairy best were, historically speaking, carrying genes that were an aberration from the norm. Their ability to digest dairy helped them to survive during tougher survival periods¹⁹.

Keep in mind that food in our country is currently far more plentiful than our ancestors enjoyed. It may be that in times of crisis, we needed to partake of sustenance in ways we typically would not have, in order to survive. This may

be how we began to drink another animal's milk to begin with.

It is theorized that the people who can enjoy dairy without any unpleasant (noticeable) side effects, are perhaps carrying a gene mutation that developed over time and was passed down through generations¹⁸.

Healthy?

What about the health benefits of dairy products? Isn't there value in drinking milk? Don't we need our calcium and Vitamin D? Well, we've been told for many years that dairy consumption is an excellent source of calcium. Vigorous

(and expensive) ad campaigns from the Dairy Council have effectively branded their milk moustaches and hourglass figure images.

This is despite the fact that dairy is actually associated with weight gain, diabetes, inflammation and numerous other health conditions. There are studies citing everything from asthma and autoimmune diseases being linked, due to excessive inflammation, to dairy!

These incredible life-altering conditions and illnesses are in addition to the well-documented links of weight gain and

irritable bowel syndrome with dairy⁶.

That hourglass figure ad you may remember? It was indicted for poor research, and consequently, the ads were discontinued. Yet, the image remains in our minds.

A tall glass of milk is often an ideal image of a healthy food for many people. Wholesome. Goodness. Quality. Right now, well-meaning parents wanting to do the right thing for their family, buy their children gallons of milk, and even put milk in baby bottles and sippy cups, all in an effort to

provide what they are told is a healthy food choice.

Yogurt snacks that come in squeezable tubes, and stringy cheese snacks are toted in lunch bags every day. We have been taught over the years to believe that milk provides necessary calcium for healthy teeth and bones. How could we do without dairy?

Women drink and eat dairy daily to help with what they are told will prevent osteoporosis and bone fractures.

But, does milk really do a body good?

Our bones

In our country, we have one of the highest intakes of dairy and yet one of the highest rates of osteoporosis.

Here are a few reasons why that “wholesome” glass of milk doesn’t get necessary calcium to your bones:

Animal products are considered highly acidic, rather than alkaline, to your body. Acidic foods, such as soda, processed foods, meat, eggs and dairy,

leach calcium from your bones to aid in their digestion.

The phosphorous in cow's milk actually prevents assimilation of the calcium into your body¹⁰.

Your body's digestion of animal proteins (meat, seafood, eggs and dairy) requires a release of calcium from your bones¹¹.

The Physician's Committee for Responsible Medicine states, "Dairy products do contain calcium, but it is accompanied by animal proteins, lactose

sugar, animal growth factors, occasional drugs and contaminants, and a substantial amount of fat and cholesterol in all but the de-fatted versions.”

Cow's milk is just not a natural balance of nutrients for our human bodies.

And no matter how much calcium you think you are consuming by drinking that tall glass of milk, your body is losing calcium simply by trying to assimilate the imperfect human food of a cow's milk⁴. The acidity produced in your body by eating meat, dairy (not to mention processed foods, fast foods, etc.) is further inducing poor health in

your body! Our bodies have a delicate pH balance that needs to tend towards an alkaline state. Otherwise, we get sick.

You can reverse health problems

The movie, “Forks over Knives,” highlights nutritional studies, and interviews two leaders in nutrition and medicine, who have been on the forefront of this knowledge for years. Nutritional scientist, T. Colin Campbell and surgeon, Dr. Caldwell B. Esselstyn, Jr. (whose son recently wrote, “The Engine 2 Diet”) their families and their patients, have lived in very healthy physical states by following plant-based or vegan diets, and are now in their

80's.

Their patients have seen reversals of chronic health conditions, documented by multiple physicians. Many are off of most, if not all of their previous medications. I would encourage you to see the film if you would like further inspiration for a dairy and meat-free lifestyle.

Worldwide, the meat and dairy-rich diet we are accustomed to here in America, is just not standard practice. However, as the Western diet (and fast food) begins to creep into the cultural life of other countries, the health problems are

also on the rise.

Authentic Japanese food, for example, is virtually dairy-free. Their citizens have enjoyed approximately half of the incidences of osteoporosis and hip fractures compared to the U.S.

Other findings have concluded that incidences of a number of cancers (prostate, breast, etc.) are also significantly lower when dairy is either eliminated, or comprises less than 5% of the population's diet^{4,5}.

Dairy sludge

Other unpleasantities of dairy products include its associations with allergies, ranging from the mild (red eyes) to the severe (hives), and general tendencies to ‘sludge’ up the body. Let me explain sludge.

80% of milk is casein, a mucous forming proteinproducer⁸

As if that doesn't sound gross enough, let me further explain. When you eat dairy, your body struggles to digest and assimilate cow's milk. At some level, whether without your knowledge, or if you're in full-fledged allergy mode, your body is recognizing milk as foreign, and

therefore releases histamines. These histamines are what you feel when you have any other allergic reaction (from pollen, cat dander, etc.)

Meat and dairy are both high in histamine levels⁷. This means that your body becomes inflamed.

Inflammation is a core component of many illnesses, from joint pain to heart disease and more. Not a good state to be in.

In an effort to digest and self-cleanse from dairy, your body begins to emanate mucous, clog skin pores, and even manufacture bad breath, all in an effort to work this dairy through the body.

This is the dairy sludge. Mucous even lines your digestive tract as well... So, if you've not been 'regular' you may now know at least part of the reason why.

Ditch the dairy

When you think about dairy sludging up or clogging up your body in this way, it's easy to see how taking it out of your diet will make you feel literally, lighter, and more energetic. Give yourself a week dairy-free. Better yet, try for a whole month. For many people, they will notice their digestion improving, their sinuses clearing up or their energy level lifting.

If you slip up and do eat dairy during this trial period, your body will go through all of the same inflammatory responses again. You will need to start anew, and truly eliminate dairy for a period in order to experience the fullest benefits.

Having said that, any reduction in dairy is bound to benefit your body overall, and even less than 5% total dietary intake is associated with significant decreases in a multitude of illnesses. As an added bonus, reducing your dairy intake will also help to prevent the suffering of animals, discussed in

[Chapter 4.](#)

In [Chapter 6](#), I'll detail some dairy alternatives, and introduce a way to approach learning about these foods and incorporating them into your diet. Some people find that they don't miss dairy after a while. Others feel they need and enjoy alternatives to milk, cheese, mayonnaise or yogurt as part of their daily diet.

Here's an interesting side note about eliminating dairy from your diet that I have found to be true. If you go for a period of time without any dairy (for me it was about 3 months), and then you

decide to ‘splurge’ and eat something with dairy in it (for me it was ice cream), you may find the taste very objectionable.

I truly believe that your taste preferences can be adjusted over a period of time, so that your body gets used to what you generally feed it.

For me, when I decided to have that luscious-looking chocolate ice cream, the first few bites were pretty tasty. But after a few minutes, I found that I had a very intense and unpleasant taste in my mouth. The milk flavor was so strong, that I couldn’t even finish my small cup.

I came home and proceeded to brush my teeth and even my tongue in an attempt to rid myself of the taste! If you're not used to it, dairy can have an incredibly potent and unpleasant taste. So, if you think you'll miss dairy too much, remember this. Your tastes will literally change. You will find you simply no longer desire foods like cheese and ice cream.

And even though your friends may be enjoying that creamy triple scoop, and you may feel temporarily deprived, when opting for the sorbet (most are dairy-free, just ask), you will most likely

feel better. Your body (and the animals) will thank you, both in the short-term and the long-term.

Chapter 2:

The Case for Going Vegan- Part 2: Meet Your Meat

Are we designed to eat meat?

When I first considered going vegan, the questions that arose in my mind, were, “How can being vegan be natural? Didn’t we evolve to be meat-eaters, and aren’t we designed that way?” Upon looking into the matter, I found the answers to be both yes, and no.

Our bite

Let's first take a look at our teeth. Looking at other animals, those with teeth similar to ours tend to be vegetarian. An over-simplification would be to compare a horse to a lion. Our teeth tend to resemble that of the vegetation-chomping animal, the horse, while the lion's are especially sharp, designed for tearing flesh.

It should be said that there is much debate about the issue of what our bodies are designed to do. One side of the argument may say that we didn't need sharp teeth in our evolution because we evolved to use tools, rather than our teeth. Also, that we learned to use fire, and did not need to 'tear flesh' or eat

raw animals, such as a lion would. The people in this camp tend to argue that we are designed to eat meat after all.

The other side may say that our front teeth and our back molars are designed for the chewing action and biting off of vegetation. The people in this camp tend to argue that meat eating was an evolutionary aberration, and not the standard course of our livelihood.

I now lean towards the vegetation side of things, fully believing that different subsets along our human evolutionary path had to adapt to eat what was available during times of scarcity.

However, I personally doubt a diet high in meat was feasible, sustainable and ideal to health and vitality. Our teeth may or may not tell the story, depending on who you ask.

Our digestion

Next, let's take a look at our digestion as we think about whether we were designed to be meat-eaters. Enzymes produced by our mouths, our stomach, pancreas and even bile from our gallbladder all go to work to digest our food. There is common agreement from the medical community that meat can over-extend our ability to manufacture sufficient enzymes for digestion.

Small portions of meat do not typically have a great indigestion effect for most people. However, larger portions of meat consumed within a relatively small timeframe can lead to indigestion by virtue of the over-taxing of those enzyme-producing organs. Do this repeatedly, day after day, year after year, and you can see how this process can disrupt our body's health.

What about our colons? When looking at the anatomy of other animals, those with shorter colons tend to be meat-eaters, and those with longer colons tend to be herbivores. Roughly speaking, an

herbivore's colon is about 12 times the length of the human body, while a carnivore's is about 3 times that length. We humans fall into the herbivore category.

There is common knowledge that most meat is high in fat and low in fiber, and therefore, meat can do a number on your digestion. Some people refer to the feeling after a meat-rich meal as hearty, and having a feeling of fullness. Vegetarians may call it an unpleasant heaviness.

We all know that fiber is recommended in your diet to help “move things along”.

You'll find conflicting theories on what is actually going on with your colon when it comes to digesting meat. However, rest assured that breaking down muscle mass in your stomach is no small feat and requires a great deal of bodily energy.

Digestion energy

Vegetarians digest their food approximately a full 24 hours faster than meat-eaters⁹. One thing that most people have never considered (as I know that was not fully aware of it until recently) is just how much energy your body must spend on digestion.

I'm sure you've had those meals that left you feeling extremely tired and sleepy afterwards. A simple Google search yields tons of people questioning why they are so tired after a meal.

A lack of energy is a primary complaint from people who just don't seem to feel good. And a lack of energy can prevent you from fully enjoying the activities of your life.

Have you ever had a meal that left you feeling energetic and light? Did you even know that was possible? Our body spends more energy on digestion than any other single function. A meal that is

taxing to the stomach and intestines will leave you feeling taxed!

I fully believe, foods like fruits and vegetables get a super highway pass, particularly with juicing and smoothies. These plant foods are easily broken down and assimilated into the body. The nutrients are available almost immediately. And when you blend or juice fruits and vegetables, you are further aiding your body's digestive process, requiring less digestive energy. So, naturally, it follows that you will feel more energetic!

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Our ancestors

Overall, considering the information I've found regarding our human history and what we were 'designed to eat,' here is the answer that I came to accept, after much learning and reading:

Yes, our ancestors did eat meat. However, the proportion of meat to fruits, plants and nuts was extremely low, as a generality. When we ate meat, historically speaking, meat was simply not that plentiful. Having animal meat to eat meant a lot of effort and work. It was used sparingly, and comprised a small portion of the overall diet. I like to think that with these circumstances, when an animal was killed for these meals, there was respect for that animal's life.

Keep in mind, that animal had (until recent years of domestication, and more recently, meat factories and slaughterhouses) lived in nature for the duration of its life. There were no years of suffering involved in order to produce the type of mass quantities, we, as a society, are accustomed to eating today. There were no growth hormones, no mass feeding of grains, no artificial insemination, no crowding of animals in inhumane conditions...

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Meat today

Today, we can go down the street and

buy a great big bucket of fried chicken, extremely cheap. We can get sausage biscuits, quarter pound hamburgers, hot dogs, steaks and the like, on any whim, in any amount, and at varying prices (usually cheap).

Our bodies simply were not designed to eat this way. The volume of meat we consume in this country is staggering. Even a hundred years ago, even fifty years ago, meat comprised a much smaller proportion of our daily diets. Today, many people eat substantial quantities of meat, 3 times a day.

As a culture, most of us don't even feel

that we have a complete meal assembled without meat at the center of the table.

This ever-present expectation of meat served in generous portions throughout our day is one of the reasons that the meat industry has grown so immense, and factory-like.

Factories replace nature

Here's where it starts to get uncomfortable. It is difficult to talk about the virtues of going vegan without talking about the animals. We would all like to avert our eyes, but for the sake of considering veganism, let us peer into the inner-workings of where our meat

actually comes from.

Factory farming - Cows are crammed into tight spaces with one another and forced to stand in their own manure. Images online are in stark contrast to the 'happy cow' commercials you may have seen. They are fed an unnatural diet of corn to fatten them up, and fast. They are likely to get sick on this diet, so they are given antibiotics. Farmers have also stuffed chickens so close together in cages that the animals can spend their entire lives unable to lift one of their wings. Their beaks are often cut off so that they will not peck each other to death to escape their inhumane living conditions.

This cruelty is all aimed to keep costs down and keep up supply. There are assembly lines for quick slaughter and butchering of animal bodies so that they can be packaged efficiently and cheaply.

What about organic, hormone-free, free-range and grass-fed?

You may consider that buying meat that is raised organically or hormone-free is somehow a less cruel industry. Unfortunately, that is not the case. You may also think that free-range and grass-fed means cruelty-free. Again, that is unfortunately not the case.

Organic simply means that the animals are fed an organic feed. It means nothing regarding their living conditions and treatment. Animals in this category are still typically subjected to standard factory horrors, including painful mutilations (de-beaking, castration, etc.) without painkillers.

Dairy cows still have their baby calves taken from them extremely early. Mother cows have been known to escape from some farms and travel miles in search of their baby calf. As a new mother, I see these stories in a whole new light: the separation of a new mother from her new and nursing babe.

I recently learned of one of the more ‘humane’ practices at smaller farms, of weaning baby calves by inserting a spiked ring into their noses. When the baby calf goes to nurse, the mother cow will kick the baby calf away because of the pain of the spikes on her udder. Wow.

What does hormone-free mean? No hormones. While you won’t be ingesting hormone-laden meat and milk, it does not mean the animals were treated well.

What does grass-fed beef mean? In some cases, grass-fed cattle are treated more humanely. You have to do your

research if you find a local farm. But, the environmental toll (discussed in [Chapter 6](#)), and the health toll, remains.

What about free-range chickens and eggs? It certainly sounds more appealing. If animals are given room to move and access to sunlight, it surely must be cruelty-free, right? This label simply means that at some point during the day, the animals may be let outside. It also means they are not forced into cages, but the conditions continue to remain far less than ideal.

United Poultry Concerns put it this way: (Free-range eggs basically means

this) *"Typically, 2,000 or more hens - each hen having only 1 to 2 square feet of floor space - are confined in a shed without access to the outdoors during their lives. If the hens can go outside, the exit usually is very small allowing only the closest hens to get out. The yard may be nothing but a mud yard saturated with droppings and intestinal coccidia and other parasites."* There are online videos of these farms, if you're up for it.

The egg industry is probably one of the most surprising to me. I was thinking that it was one of the industries that was likely to be least cruel. Here's the shocking truth about eggs though. About

half of all chicks are males. Males do not grow up to lay eggs. Therefore, male chicks are of no use to the egg industry. The solution to this economic industry problem is to simply kill all of the male chicks as soon as possible (to cut costs as much as possible). The methods for killing them, called chick culling, involve smothering in giant chick-filled plastic bags, being tossed into a high speed grinder, cervical dislocation or electrocution.

Hard to accept

If you've never heard any of these facts before, it may take a while for you to pick your jaw up off the floor. It is

simply hard to accept that people do this to animals.

I have been around children who have cradled baby chicks in their hands. They are absolutely smitten with these animals. Who wants to tell them what egg farmers do to baby chicks (in the millions)? This is one of the reasons I have opted to keep my son as close to vegan as possible. I never want to explain to him that we support that activity.

If you are so inclined on including eggs in your diet, find a person who keeps chickens, almost as pets. I have a friend

who lives out in the country, and has named the hens she raises. Seek these people out, if you are intent on eating eggs. Otherwise, put the egg industry on your list of reasons to go vegan.

With all of these things to consider, the design of our bodies, the way our ancestors most likely ate, our current meat industry, the dairy industry, I have firmly come to the conclusion that **the way we eat in America today, is just about the *least* natural thing we could do.**

Our health is telling the tale, with ever-increasing illnesses, cancers and chronic

conditions.

Meat-rich diets = sickness (sooner or later)

Meaty diets are also associated with colon cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol to name a few. Not to mention, vegetarians typically have longer life expectancies than their meat-eating friends, and I'm willing to bet they feel better during their years as well².

These health associations may seem hard to face up to at first. After all, it's hard to change lifelong habits. And with the production of animal farming so far

removed from the public sight and consciousness, it is hard to conceive of the realities. Yet, the information is there for those that would but look.

And here you are here reading this book after all! So, I hope that with the knowledge of how eating meat and dairy can affect your health poorly, and how the meat and dairy industry are treating animals so cruelly, you are ready to jump into a vegan lifestyle with vigor. Let's talk about all of the wonderful things that will come of your decision to explore vegan possibilities.

Chapter 3:

Health Benefits: Your Body

Life-saving effects

Rest assured, the health benefits to your body of going meat and dairy-free are plentiful. The research for just one of these health improvements can easily take the space of one entire book. Countless medical studies have cited the profound health improvements from a vegan lifestyle.

Here are some of the most significant, and potentially life-saving effects

from making the switch to a vegan (or plant-based) diet:

- Reduced risk of heart disease
- Elimination of all dietary cholesterol
- Reduced risk of Type 2 diabetes (possibly cured)
- Lower blood pressure
- Reduced chances of colon cancer
- Lower rates of breast cancer
- Reduced joint pain
- Improved digestion

- Weight loss
- Improved energy
- Healthy skin
- Healthier hair and nails
- Improved or eliminated allergies
- A longer life expectancy--- which you'll be able to enjoy now that you've improved your chronic conditions and have begun to feel healthy!

Heart disease

Cardiovascular disease (think heart attacks, open heart surgery, angioplasty,

by-pass surgery, stroke) is the number one cause of death in this country. Almost unbelievably, it is largely preventable. Actually, most chronic diseases are preventable, through lifestyle and dietary changes.

You can reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease by as much as 80% through lifestyle and diet changes alone. Vegan eating is possible, and can be a very effective strategy for reclaiming your heart health.

One study found that when compared to people who ate meat at least once a week, vegetarians had a 38% reduced

rate of an early death from heart disease. Vegan death rates from heart disease, strokes and cancer were substantially lower than those of regular meat-eaters¹².

Shockingly, for as many as 50% of people who have heart disease, the first symptom of the disease is death from a heart attack. It doesn't have to be this way.

Optimum health

When you choose to become vegan, you are removing unhealthy animal products that can have detrimental effects. However, it is entirely possible to

become what is deemed a 'junk food vegan or vegetarian'. There are so many processed products and snacks on the market today that it is easy to fall into that trap. Potato chips maybe vegan, but that certainly doesn't mean they're healthy. The same goes for frozen meals and sugary 'vegan' desserts.

Sure, these readily available vegan meals can aid with the transition, and fill in for those nights when you are spent and in need of a quick meal. But they are not the cornerstone of a healthy diet, vegan or not. Try to use these foods in moderation. While they do help make a vegan diet possible, and practical, they should be relied on lightly.

For optimum health, you must swap out your meat and dairy foods for actual plant foods! However, in my humble opinion, for the health of your spirit, you must indulge in something besides health food once in a while! (Perhaps, try a vegan cupcake!)

Generally speaking, when you adopt a vegan or plant-based diet, you are not *only removing* animal foods and products from your diet, you are *replacing* those foods with healthier alternatives. You must be doing so, by virtue of taking out meat and dairy. What is left? Vegetables, grains, fruit,

nuts and beans!

The increase in plant-based foods will support your health in ways you have not even considered! Let's take a look at the benefits you'll reap from these excellent food choices.

Eat your greens

Dark, leafy greens include kale, arugula, spinach, dark lettuces and more, and are full of calcium, folate, iron, fiber, beta-carotene and Vitamins A, C and K. That nutritional profile supports everything from building overall immunity, to maintaining eye health (helping to prevent macular degeneration), to

promoting cardiovascular health and countless other benefits.

Greens also have chlorophyll, which gives loads of energy and vitality - a feeling that some people refer to as 'brightness'. Whether raw, steamed or cooked, there is no doubt that green vegetables play a significant role in the prevention of countless diseases and illnesses.

When you eat foods like this, your body actually gains energy, instead of losing energy. Remember, the digestive workload of breaking down meats and dairy is taxing. Eating should increase

your energy, refueling your body.

Wouldn't you rather feel elevated from your meal, rather than drained and in sore need of a nap?

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Calcium

There is some debate as to whether the U.S. actually inflates their daily recommendations for calcium intake (currently 1000 mg a day), because it is based on a standard American diet, which is meat and dairy heavy. We now know that those foods, much like soda and processed foods, take calcium from the bones during digestion.

Omitting those foods from your diet will help you retain more calcium, and will therefore lower the amount of calcium needed through diet each day. It is worth some thought and further research by the powers that be.

Additionally, countries that have a smaller calcium intake do not necessarily have higher rates of osteoporosis or bone fractures, and oftentimes have significantly lower rates of these ailments. So, there's more to the story of bone health than simply drinking milk, or taking a calcium supplement.

What we do know is that there are many readily available healthy plant sources where you can obtain substantial calcium for your diet. Where can you find your calcium if you're not drinking milk and eating dairy products? Here's a quick list of some surprising foods.

For comparison, 2% cow's milk, 1 cup
= 260 mg of calcium

Ricemilk, 1 cup, enriched = 300 mg of
calcium

Orange Juice, 1 cup, calcium-fortified =
350 mg of calcium

Sesame seeds, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup = 300 mg of
calcium

Tofu, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup = 258 mg of calcium

Soybeans, 1 cup = 175 mg of calcium

Butternut squash = 84 mg of calcium

Barley, 1 cup = 57 mg of calcium

In addition to a myriad of vegetables, grains and beans, there are some more interesting sources available as well.

The seaweed, wakame, which you may be familiar with if you've ever eaten miso soup in a Japanese restaurant, is an iron-rich food, and has about 10 times as much calcium as a glass of milk. Wakame may seem unconventional, but it is readily available, easy to prepare

and relatively inexpensive (less than \$5 for a bag that will last you two months) at your local Asian food store. Whole Foods also carries many seaweed items, though the price is typically higher there. As an added bonus, seaweeds are known anti-carcinogenics, and act as intense cancer fighters.

Nuts, such as almonds and brazil nuts, are additional foods that most people haven't considered as being calcium-rich. You could also try milk substitutes, such as almond milk or soy milk.

Other foods you might not have

considered include kale, which has more calcium per calorie than milk (90 grams per serving), blackstrap molasses, flax seeds, papaya and even celery! So many foods contain calcium, that if you are eating a variety of healthy meals, it should not even be a concern to you. The key is healthy variety.

By virtue of eliminating meat and dairy, your body is no longer pulling precious calcium from your bones to aid in digestion.

What about that soda? Yes, the acidity of soft drinks (and other junk food) also pulls calcium from your bones. You

should avoid those for optimum health. Salt also increases calcium loss, so watch out for those prepared foods.

In addition to a healthy diet, exercise is highly recommended, and is crucial to building bone health and avoiding osteoporosis and hip fractures.

It's no secret that active and fit people, particularly those who incorporate some type of weight-bearing activities, have healthier bones than those who are sedentary.

Exercise can be more important than calcium supplements, and is certainly a

better strategy than drinking milk.

When it comes to bone health, food is crucial, but not the entire calcium picture.

The Protein Dilemma

Vegans are seemingly, constantly, on the defensive about the big protein question.

“How do you get your protein?” the omnivore observer will ask.

Take a look at this brute.



This gorilla is approximately 350 pounds of brawn and muscle. You would think he ate tons of animal protein. Yet, what does this commanding physique need to thrive? Yes, you guessed it! Plants! Gorillas live largely on plants, roots and fruits. (They do eat a small portion of insects and grubs, however.)

Other animals that thrive on a plant-

based diet include buffalo, horses, rams, bulls and pandas. Yet, they are all endowed with a strength and a might perfectly suited to their natural physique. You simply don't have to eat animals in order to build muscle or to be healthy.

Vegan Athletes

There is an enlightened trend among sports professionals, and even those at home who are seeking personal fitness goals, to go vegan. Athletes are, in fact, going vegan quite publicly. And while they may draw some attention or even controversy, these individuals have their own best interests at heart, with peak

performance on their minds.

Athletes in every arena are exploring the power of plant foods. Many have come to the realization that they can also alleviate the suffering of animals by changing their dietary habits. Football players, boxers, and even body builders have changed their lifestyles, and are sticking with it.

Examples include the football player Arian Foster, boxer Tim Bradley, bodybuilder Alexander Dargatz and hockey player Georges Laraque.

There are also an increasing number of

resources available to athletes interested in pursuing a vegan or plant-based lifestyle. Books such as, “Thrive: The Vegan Nutrition Guide to Optimal Performance in Sports and Life,” by Brendan Brazier, lend credibility and respect to the subject, along with nutritional knowledge and support in transitioning.

If you just start looking, you will probably start to see vegan ways of living everywhere you look. It is *possible*.

The protein on a vegan plate

You can find vegan protein in numerous

ways, including beans, grains, tofu, tempeh, seitan, milk substitute drinks, and even vegetables! Yes, surprisingly, vegetables do contain a good bit of protein. In fact, it is actually very rare for anyone in this country to have a protein deficiency, vegetarians and vegans included.

Broccoli, as an example, is a surprising source of plant protein, containing 4 grams per cup! What about kale? One 10 oz. package of frozen kale (80 calories) has 8 grams of protein! (Fresh kale is preferred due to its strong anti-inflammation protection though.) And Romaine lettuce contains 17% protein, containing all eight amino acids (which

makes it a complete protein source in and of itself.)³

Beans, peas and legumes are all protein winners as well. Beans typically have about 12 to 14 grams of protein per serving. Lentils have about 18 grams per serving. Half a cup of tofu has about 10 grams of protein. Seitan and tempeh have a whopping 21 grams per cup!

Peanut butter has about 8 grams of protein per 2 tablespoons. Soy milk has about 7 grams of protein per cup, compared with about 8 grams for cow's milk.

Again, a healthy plant-based variety of foods can be more than sufficient for your protein needs.

Chapter 4:

Ethical Benefits

Meat is an animal

Have you heard it said, “Meat is murder”? It took me a long time to absorb that simple message.

Sure, I always *said* I loved animals! Don't most people? I had owned dogs, petted cats, rode horses, saved mid-road turtles and even fawned over the occasional bunny I'd come across. Pets. These were pets in my mind, and they deserved love and attention.

When I decided to go vegan, I had a mindset of health, not ethics. I knew that going meat-free and dairy-free was most beneficial to my body, but I did not give a great deal of thought to the cows, pigs, chickens and other animals that were benefiting from my abstention.

A life is a life

At some point though, it dawned on me that I didn't really want to be eating an animal after all. A cow's life is just as valuable as my dog's life. They were both animals, so why did we favor one to be eaten and not the other? I've never had the opportunity to pet a cow, but

judging from this photo, I'd guess they'd like a soft scratch behind the ears.



Do we think that some animals don't suffer or feel pain? Do we think that animals were put on this earth to feed us? Is their misery worth the pleasure of our palate? Do we just protect the cute ones? Or do we think that it is a question of intelligence? Did you know then that pigs are actually intelligent?

Amazing studies have shown that pigs understand mirror tests. There are even cute youtube videos show pigs doing typical dog tricks. Intelligence-wise, they are about 4th on the scale from primates, dolphins and elephants and some say, about as smart as a 3 year old child¹³. So, the intelligence argument is a poor one at best.

Animals experience pain, and every life has a right to thrive, and to simply be left alone.

Animals shouldn't suffer at our hands

When I stop and pose these questions, it becomes more and more clear to me, that all animals have rights to simply live, and to live free of suffering. There are laws in every state against animal cruelty, with specific exemptions for those animals that are meant for consumption.

If I were to treat an animal at home, the way they are treated in a factory farm, I would most likely be landed in jail!

The fact is, we are all generally extremely shielded from the processes of creating meat.

Again, there are loads of books, documentaries and online articles and photos available for anyone with the nerve to view or read them. But it's not for the faint of heart.

And while it's true that some people do buy a whole chicken at the grocery store to cook, most meat is consumed in pre-packaged parts, or served breaded and fried, very far removed from the place the animal was farmed.

Chicken tenders

We even grind up chicken 'parts' to create little breaded smiley faces to serve to our children. Or we serve

chicken ‘fingers’. Talk about being removed from real food! Many children don’t have even a basic understanding of what real food is! What are we teaching them about what we value?

Doesn’t that box of chicken nuggets seem a lot less tasty when you consider that animal lived for years in inhumane conditions, just so that we could have a tasty nugget complete with dipping sauce? Yet, as a country, we down these ‘nuggets’ so frequently, it’s a cultural staple.

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I’m no saint

Yes, I ate the chicken nuggets too. Anything fried seems to taste good to our palate. And, again, being fed this kind of food from toddlerhood on up, this is what we became accustomed to. I included myself in that group of nugget-eaters for many, many years.

No, I think the conclusion we must draw, is that we, as a culture, have chosen to eat animals in mass quantities because *we realize not what we do.*

Speaking personally, when I would order a hamburger, I surely was not thinking of the poor, sweet cow, and how it spent its life hoarded up quite

miserably til its dying day, just so I could have a tasty burger.

It is not impossible to be vegan, but it does require some soul-searching when it comes to understanding what ‘we’ do to animals in order to use their bodies for sustenance.

I don't intend to be a preacher either

Though some friends from online communities may disagree when they view my nutritional articles and posts, for the most part in my life, I have chosen not to chastise people I know and love with facts on animal cruelty. I take care to abstain from eating meat without

looking down my nose at my dinner guests. I find this is not helpful.

When I share information with people about these issues, it comes from a genuine place of care and love. I am sometimes over-excited about what I learn about nutrition, and I am often appalled by what I read and learn. When I share information, it comes from a framework of, “I just learned this (fill in the blank). Did you know this? Can you believe it??”

Fortunately, the increasing number of films that show the true images of meat and dairy farms and factories, are

bringing awareness to the shocking conditions we subject animals to. Films such as “Earthlings” and “Food, Inc” have led many people to become vegan overnight. (Warning: The films have been called ‘brutal’ and ‘extremely difficult to watch’.)

Most people are simply unaware of what truly goes on in the meat industry, and they simultaneously suffer from a well-driven-home belief that they actually need meat to be healthy.

These are kind-hearted people, who

truly have no idea about factory practices. Most of us would rather not know, or forget that we found out, even!

If you're going to die anyway, does it matter how you lived?

Short answer: yes. I myself used to believe that we needed to eat meat for protein and that how an animal lived was largely irrelevant, because they were going to be slaughtered anyway. Sound crude? I think many people believe these fallacies. Because the industry is seemingly so far removed from us, it is easy to ignore what we don't see.

Perhaps we cringe a bit when a hog farm truck passes us on the highway. The pigs crammed into tight quarters, the whole vehicle smelling to high heavens. Ever pass a pig farm while driving on the highway? How could we ever think that these animals were appealing as a food source? But, we go to a nice restaurant, and we see a menu item of bacon-wrapped scallops and don't connect the two!

The industry

The meat industry has become so large and unkempt that it's beyond gross and inhumane. Yes, it's a far cry from the idealized images we've seen in ads or

on TV, where contented, and much loved cows graze happily in a sunny, grassy field.

There's a saying that if the walls of slaughterhouses were made of glass, we'd all be vegetarians.

We would all like to think that there is a happy little farm where all of the pigs and chickens and cows bask in the sun and meander all the livelong day. And every animal has to die, so why not benefit from their life by utilizing their meat to fuel our bodies?

Well, as we have covered 1) it doesn't fuel our bodies very efficiently 2) it actually harms our bodies and 3) these animals lead effectively miserable lives up until their last moments.

And surely you'd agree that were it up to us as individuals to kill and clean our own animals, we would no doubt eat significantly less, if any.

Meat for survival

Should Armageddon arrive and you feel the distinct need to kill a pig, by knife, gun or bare hands, purely for survival, I'm sure the experience of the warm blood, separating the muscle from the

bone would be a soul-changing experience. Without getting into a long or contentious hunting discussion, the hunters I have known in the past, while meat-eaters, used their kill for food and seemed to have a respect for the animal's life and profound love of nature. The practice of hunting for sport, is not, however, in my opinion, a worthy spiritual pursuit.

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Animal energy

Some people believe they not only acquire nutrition from food, but energy as well. Many vegans or vegetarians feel that the pure energy they get from

plant foods is drastically different from the energy they received from a dead animal.

Many people claim to feel lighter in body and spirit.

If you believe that years of suffering can produce bodily changes, then it's easy to see how the meat of a cruelly treated animal will taste bad to the palate, and soul. This may tie in with how some people claim that cows raised in green pastures, with access to grass, clean water, room to move freely and who are raised drug-free, seem to 'taste better'.

Any way you look at it though, giving up meat saves an animal's life. That kind of thinking can easily lift your spirit.

Your planet

Methane from farms = Greenhouse gases

Those *lovely* farms on which these animals are raised produce another negative side effect too. This time, not to our bodies... but to our planet.

A little known fact is that livestock farms produce more greenhouse emissions than ALL of the cars and trucks on the road the world over¹⁵.

And wonder then, why is that not common knowledge? How is that bit of information not on the worldwide news every other day?

The same government that regulates our car emissions is subsidizing the biggest greenhouse gas producers on the planet! It seems to me that the government is largely propping up the meat and dairy industry by doling out big money for the products, and using the meat and dairy for federal assistance programs and school lunches.

I also recently discovered that a shocking 30% of all of the earth's land

mass is now occupied by livestock, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. And unfortunately, that number is set to increase with the current meat-eating trend¹⁴.

There are additional staggering environmental facts that may just blow your mind.

Did you know that livestock accounts for 70% of all agricultural land? 90% of soybean crops are used to feed animals. 80% of corn crops are used to feed animals. As many as 800 million people could be fed from the grains we grow in

the US just to feed the livestock. It requires about 1580 gallons of water to produce just one pound of beef. It only takes 102 gallons of water to produce a pound of wheat.

If everyone went vegetarian for a day, the U.S. would save 3 million acres of land, 33 tons of antibiotics and 70 million gallons of gas. It would also prevent 4.5 million tons of animal excrement and almost 7 tons of ammonia emissions¹⁶. Unpleasant, but impressive figures.

So, even if a 100% vegan diet is not for you, take heart at the difference you can

make by switching out just a few of your meals each week for plant-based food. You may find that once you take that first step, the next step is within easier reach.

And little by little, you may just find that being vegan is not as difficult to incorporate into your life as you thought. Being vegan is not impossible.

Chapter 5:

Economic Benefits

Save your money

“Good” meat ain’t cheap. And why should it be? It’s an animal. Okay, so maybe that 99-cent cheeseburger was cheap. Remember, subsidies and mass production can produce a magically cheap, illusory effect. But, guess what! If the government is paying the meat and dairy farmers, and you are paying the government, by way of your tax dollars, then it really isn’t all that cheap after all!

I personally think meat should be much

more expensive than it is. It is, after all, a living being that has to be conceived, birthed, nurtured, fed and raised for years, maintained, injected with antibiotics and/or growth hormones, slaughtered, shipped, sliced and diced, packaged, and transported to your friendly grocery's freezer. Whew.

It's amazing that meat is as cheap as it is
with all of that effort!

Mass-scale farming drives down the costs, I suppose. And the drugs (a.k.a. growth hormones and antibiotics) used to farm the animals surely help their profits with meatier, 'healthier' animals

to serve you.

Many die-hard vegans will tell you that to eat any animal, in any form, is simply cruel because it minimally involves a loss of life.

However, many equally kind people, even those intent on living healthy lifestyle, will hold fast to their belief that we are designed to eat meat and need it to thrive.

For those people, I would simply ask, that you please divert your meat dollars over towards a local, humane farm. While there is an increasing prevalence

of humane farming, it may be still be a rare find in your community. You may want to check out www.ethicalfarms.org, which hopes to find a middle road in the debate, if you are not ready to become vegan just yet.

Again though, when you invest in buying quality meat from quality farms, you are paying a premium price. **Why not just sidestep the whole meat industry and put some extra change back in your wallet?** Beans and grains will go much further on the family budget.

Beans vs. steak

Let's talk about food costs. (Taking

aside the earlier point about government subsidies giving the illusion of cheap meat and dairy.) Instinctively, most people will say that eating healthier is more expensive. In some sense, that can be true. Junk food is often cheaper, and is served in greater quantities than say for instance, organic fruit. But let's look specifically at meat and dairy for a moment.

The average grocery store uncooked ribeye steak averages about 8.99 a pound. Whole beef tenderloin, \$11.99/lb. Cubed steak, about \$4.50/lb. Filet mignon can be upwards of \$15.00/lb. Chicken thighs, about \$3.00/lb. Pork chops, \$5.00/lb. a

pound. Lean ground beef, about \$4.00/lb. Sirloin steak, \$7.00/lb. However, to be fair, the more 'packaged' (processed) you are willing to accept in your meat selections, the greater bargains you may find. For instance, hot dogs, potted meat and canned ham are relatively cheap animal foods. Then again, when was the last time anyone argue that hot dogs were healthy for you? What about dairy costs? A gallon of milk is about \$4.00 these days. If you go with organic, you increase your costs there. And, cheddar cheese for example, is about \$5.50/lb.

Compare all of that to a main entrée vegan substitution. Beans, any variety,

costs roughly about \$1.00 a pound. Brown rice, grains, they are about the same. You cannot beat the price of these wholesome, nutritious plant foods.

The costs of fresh fruits and vegetables can be off-putting to some. Granted, some items are more expensive than others. Bananas are fairly inexpensive, and loose kale (instead of bagged) is fairly cheap as well. But apples often go for an average of \$2.50 a pound here, and there aren't many in a pound. But, if you start looking, you can find less expensive options. For example, I find that a 5 pound bag of organic apples from our grocery store is actually a pretty good bargain at about \$5 a bag.

Of course, it is always less expensive to buy local and to eat what is in season. In summertime in my area, I can get local organic strawberries much cheaper and much fresher than from the grocery store out of season. Eating fresh, organic strawberries is such a treat. Places like this are worth seeking out.

Perhaps where you live you have different options. In Washington, their cherries are amazing. In NY, or the NC mountains, apple orchards reign. Find out what assets are in your area.

During the winter seasons, frozen

produce can help offset the costs of fresh vegetables and fruit.

Growing your own food, or planting a fruit tree can be another economic winner.

We planted a fig tree (among others) and it has provided hundreds of figs each year for 3 years in a row. Figs are one of the more expensive grocery store fruit treats, so having my own tree has been heavenly for me! Similarly, we grow rosemary and other herbs, and have a grape vine and apple tree in our yard. Our yard is not very large (about .20 acres), and yet we manage to find space for these treasures. It can be worth the

costs of planting, and is something to consider.

Eating out

What about costs at your typical restaurant?

The vegetarian/vegan option is always a few to several dollars less.

I pay about \$1.50 less for my burrito meal, when I eat vegan now. I pay about \$5 less when I choose the black bean burgers over the chicken entrée. This seems to apply across almost any eating out experience. Sandwiches are less

expensive without the deli meat. Pasta is less expensive without the meatballs.

When I was growing up, I tended to avoid meat even then. A favorite meal my mother would make for me was one of nothing but vegetables. I loved the broccoli, cauliflower, potatoes, brussel sprouts... Maybe I was a strange kid! Once ordering French fries as my only food item at McDonald's, my dad joked, "You're a pretty cheap date!" He was right! While the addition of a side salad should be strongly encouraged if you decide to go vegan at McDonald's, you can definitely be a cheap date!

Skipping meat and dairy can be much more affordable than you think. Start thinking about the money you save when you eat plant foods and how it can be a boon to your wallet. Notice the grocery store choices, restaurant and fast food choices and compare for yourself.

Healthcare \$

In our country, we spend an astronomical amount of money on health care. That might be worth it, if what we were doing actually worked.

Instead, our population's average life expectancy ranks alongside that of Cuba¹⁷.

(In case you were wondering, Cuba spends very, very little on healthcare as a country.)

Our poor health is costing a fortune. When we consider that as much as 75% of chronic conditions are preventable, it makes you wonder what is going wrong. Diet plays a large role in that. By taking responsibility for your own health, you are cutting medical costs significantly.

In fact, corporations, physicians' offices and insurance companies are starting to become wise to the cost-effectiveness of preventive health care. They are hiring Wellness Coaches to assist patients in setting up and following personalized

health plans. Many patients have struggled for years to get high cholesterol numbers down, or high blood pressure readings to normal. While life-saving medication definitely helps control many chronic health issues, patient responsibility and success increases with the help of a Health or Wellness Coach.

When given a supportive environment, a plan and accountability, medical costs go down, and health improves. This is measured in terms of quality of life assessments, and even number of sick day absences at work. It is cheaper to be healthy than to be sick. The costs go beyond buying a bottle of Nyquil for that

nasty bug you got from having a stressed body, i.e. lowered immunity.

Poor health choices lead to poor health.

We have all been there. If you're like me, you've had those days where you'll buy tons of produce and fruit at the grocery store, and then stop at fast food on the way home!

None of us make excellent choices all of the time, and we all deserve some forgiveness for indulgences. But, let it be just that, an indulgence. Because **repeatedly making poor dietary and lifestyle choices seriously impacts your health.**

Chronic medical conditions cost a fortune. From the E. R. visits, to the prescriptions, there are also the very poignant costs of having a less fulfilling life, because you simply cannot do the things you used to enjoy. With the medical advances of today, chances are good that you will, in fact, live to a ripe old age. So, do you want to be 80 and still doing things you enjoy, or 80, debilitated, and spending loads of money on healthcare? Or are you already spending a fortune on health care? Do you feel healthy now?

The choices you make now form the

habits that will carry you towards one path or the other.

No one can predict future health with perfect certainty. We are mortal after all. Chances are, you have all heard a story an avid runner who succumbed to heart disease. Sometimes things don't line up the way we anticipate, even with the best of circumstances. But those cases are rarities.

By and large, your health is a direct outcome of your diet and lifestyle choices.

Save your nest egg for enjoying yourself,

not for a medical crisis that could have been avoided.

Staying healthy is less expensive than being sick, both in the short-term and long-term. Add to that the daily benefit of spending less money per meal, and you've got yourself a worthy economic benefit.

Chapter 6:

How to Incorporate Changes into Your Life

Two choices

The way I see it, you've got two choices if you'd like to move forward with a vegan diet. You can go full steam ahead or you can tread lightly. They each have their benefits, and you can choose what works best for you.

One thing I do know is that extremes tend to cause stress. So, if you feel

that cleaning out your entire pantry, refrigerator and freezer of all meat and dairy in one afternoon is a bit stressful for you, then don't!

You are on your own timetable, and you should be proud that you are exploring vegan possibilities.

Small steps

If you'd like to start making changes in your diet, but feel overwhelmed by the prospect of completing cutting out all meat and dairy products in two seconds flat, you are not alone. We become accustomed to our lifestyles, our grocery lists, our recipes and our comfort foods.

Fortunately, with the increased awareness of the health benefits of a plant-based diet (as well as increased consumer demand), more and more companies are producing tasty vegan alternatives.

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New products

The next time you're at the grocery store, venture over to a new section or product. Check out the tofu. Not sure what to do with tofu? Check out the pie recipe at the end of the book or search online for endless varieties of dishes. Next, try out some almond or rice milk.

The delicious, dark chocolate almond milk is my husband's favorite!

Start noticing ingredients in products you already buy. You may be surprised to find that some are vegan, and don't even advertise the fact (frozen waffles, for example). On the other hand, you may find that a product you thought to be vegan actually has some dairy or meat listed as an ingredient (eggs in some breads, for example).

Here's a list of suggestions for gradually replacing your refrigerator or pantry's old foods for new ones:

1. Explore grains.

There are so many different grains to choose from, it is unbelievable. If you think of eating grains, as in, “I eat whole-wheat bread,” then you will be amazed when you start looking at the selection of grains.

You can stick with grain products, such as bread, cereal, waffles, pasta and more, but you can get a tremendous health boost if you begin cooking genuine whole grains.

Here are some of the basic ones to try out: millet, quinoa, amaranth, couscous, rice (long-grain, wild, short, white,

brown, and more).

Whole Foods has great bulk foods sections where you can buy just the amount you want. Also, grains are extremely affordable. A pound of organic quinoa costs roughly 1.99 a pound. Conventional (non-organic) is even less expensive.

2. Explore beans.

Like with grains, there are loads of varieties of beans. Use them in a main course recipe, or eat them as a side dish. They are great protein-replacers.

Here are a few basic beans and some you may not be familiar with: black, pinto, navy, kidney, adzuki, soybeans, and more.

3. Dairy substitutes.

Dairy is pervasive and so covers a wide range of products, from cheese to yogurt, milk to ice cream, and more. Many vegans seek out these alternative products and enjoy them, while others generally don't find a need to replace every dairy product they once used.

For instance, Daiya cheese is one of the better vegan cheeses on the market due to its melt-ability and taste. However,

recipes that call for cheese can often be made with that ingredient omitted. Keep in mind, the more processed products you buy, the greater the expense, and the lesser the health benefit.

4. Try tofu.

I think maybe you either love tofu or hate it. I thought maybe I was on the ‘hate it’ side of things until I starting putting the silken version into making creamy pies. Mmm! You can also dice it up and bake it, stir-fry it, or just about anything.

Tofu comes in different textures. Silken is used for creaminess in pie fillings, or as part of a ‘cheese’ mixture, such as in

a vegan lasagna (recipe below). Firm is used more for baking or sautéing.

5. Meat substitutes.

There are a number of other products on the market today that many people enjoy as a meat replacement. Seitan, Tempeh and TVP (textured vegetable protein), all provide generous protein and give a meaty texture to your dish. There are also packaged products with vegan burgers or vegan breakfast items.

You can slice, bread and bake or sauté the seitan or tempeh. TVP is more of a crumble, and so, often takes the place of ground beef in a recipe.

5. Add produce.

You should buy produce like it's going out of style. There is hands-down nothing better for your body than fresh fruits and vegetables. If you are able, visit the store every 2-3 days to keep fresh ingredients on-hand. Buy organic and local when you can.

-

Here's a week-by-week small steps suggestion guide:

Week 1

Commit to adding produce to your diet

Explore grains

Week 2

Continue adding produce

Choose one grain you enjoyed from last week, and add it to 1-3 meals this week

Explore beans

Week 3

Continue adding produce. Take note of what it is season (typically in-season fruits and vegetables are less expensive)

Continue cooking with your new favorite grain

Consider adding a second grain into your diet

Choose one bean you enjoyed from last week, and add it to 1-3 meals this week

Week 4

Continue with your produce purchases, noting what is in season and freshest this week.

Use your bean and grain recipes, adding a new one into the rotation if you like

Dairy substitutes – Try a new milk product this week

Week 5

Continue with your produce purchases, noting which items are organic. There is a great discrepancy in organic produce prices, so shop around.

Use your bean and grain recipes, adding another new one and trying a new recipe for them

Dairy substitutes – Try another milk product, or opt for a vegan cheese, vegan mayonnaise or vegan ice cream

Try tofu

In 5 short weeks, you will have gotten your mind into the true possibility of being vegan. No longer will you think, “I don’t know what to eat on a vegan

diet!”

If you are someone who continues to hold the image that you need a main meat course, and feel that vegetables and grains are just side dishes, then perhaps you should try some new recipes aimed at giving you that main dish feel. Casseroles are excellent for this. Pasta is as well. And don't forget to go a little outside of your comfort zone.

When my family first tried out being vegan, my husband suggested we try some ethnic dishes at home. At first, the idea of making Thai food or Indian food seemed daunting to me. But the Thai

spread, including Vegan Pad Thai, Tom Kha soup with coconut milk, Thai apple salad, Butternut squash in yellow curry sauce, with fresh papaya on the side, left no doubt. Being vegan can be delicious! The Pad Thai was our ‘main dish’ of the meal.

Eating out

Many restaurants feature a vegan dish. They may not advertise it as such, but if you look at the vegetarian options, you will often find one that is dairy-free also. Feel free to ask your server. If they are not certain, they will check with the cook. Sometimes, the dairy component (cheese atop a salad, sour

cream drizzled on the top) can be left off.

Don't want to be *one of those* customers? Actually, it is of great benefit that you do ask your server, and, in turn, the cook, about the vegan options. Why? Because it lets them know that there is a demand for this type of food from their customer base.

If we all begin asking for vegan options, there will most certainly be more entrees provided at restaurants in the future.

As it is, you may be surprised at how

easily you can eat out and remain vegan. Granted, it's easier at some locales than others. Again, we find that ethnic restaurants are often free of dairy, and provide many meat-free entrees. Try Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Indian or Greek restaurants, to name a few. You will not feel the least bit deprived when eating at these restaurants because there are so many naturally vegan choices.

If you go to a restaurant where it is more challenging to find a vegan entrée (I tend to find this with American or Italian cuisines), here are some suggestions that have worked for me.

1 . Soup and salad. You can make a nice meal out of soup and salad. A warm veggie soup, paired with the freshness of a raw salad will certainly leave you feeling vibrant after dinner, rather than lethargic and in need of a nap! When you have bread with your meal, feel free to ask for a saucer of olive oil, rather than butter. I haven't found one restaurant yet to look at me funny when I ask for this. In fact, the other dinner guests usually enjoy it too.

2. Piece-meal. You can piece together quite a lovely meal based on the menu options that are apart from the main entrees. An appetizer, plus 2-3 side dishes makes for a lovely vegetable

plate. I have often done this and enjoyed it. Occasionally, I will opt for a side of French fries just for a treat. (Though they're not the greatest health choice, they are vegan!)

3 . **Call ahead.** If it's a high-end restaurant, the chef will often not mind if you call ahead and request a vegan dinner be prepared.

4. **Choose your restaurant.** If you live in an area where there are plentiful and modern restaurants, such as in a big city, you will definitely have the option to go to a vegan restaurant. Don't think you have one? You may be surprised. In my

area, a new vegetarian restaurant just opened downtown, and I'm sure it will be very easy to find several vegan options there.

5 . Go ethnic. As I mentioned before, ethnic cuisines are typically light on the cheese and offer vegetarian options. If you like Indian food, try the vegetable curry or chana masala (chickpeas). If you enjoy Greek food, try the greek salad (minus the feta cheese), stuffed grape leaves and falafel. Japanese, Chinese and Thai are also excellent choices.

Chapter 7:

Life as a Vegan

While you may be revved up about becoming vegan, your friends and family may not be as quick to jump onboard. To help turn your vegan inspiration from impossible to possible, I find that the best way to win hearts and minds is to proceed with a quiet dignity.

Hammering away at your loved ones about the evils of meat and dairy is more likely to annoy and alienate them than to turn them towards healthier eating habits.

Remember, you are opening up to the possibilities of veganism. Every bit of change you put into place has a positive effect.

Interestingly, had it not been for the ever-present roasted turkey, I could claim that I once served an entirely vegan Thanksgiving meal to my extended family, without one person being the wiser. In fact, everyone was very complimentary on the dishes. Recipes are surprisingly adaptable. You can add vegan butter in place of real butter. You can often substitute rice milk, soy milk or almond milk in place of cow's milk as well.

If you are the chief cook in your family, you may begin by introducing 1 or 2 vegan dishes with each meal, or 1-2 vegan meals a week. Try winning them over with their palates by stepping up your cooking game, and making sure the meals you serve are especially tasty. Brown rice and broccoli may be super healthy, and a great side dish, but it's not going to highlight the joys of veganism at the dinner table.

In one of my favorite books, "The Kind Diet," Alicia Silverstone offers suggestions to either flirt with veganism, go full-vegan, or to go one step further with what she calls a 'superhero' status. "Superheroes," as Alicia has re-coined

the term, eat loads of ridiculously healthy foods including miso soups, gamashio, ume plums and seaweeds such as nori and hijiki.

While I have tried many of the dishes she recommends, and now eat seaweed occasionally, you may want to hold off of introducing everything new, foreign and superhero-like to your friends and family all at once. These are not your everyday foods.

Try to win your family and friends over with simple, healthy, tasty dishes that will leave them asking for more.

There are so many wonderful recipes available today, that there should be no reason to relegate yourself to boring food just because you're vegan. Try to strike a balance between the two extremes. And cut yourself some slack.

Making significant and lasting dietary changes takes time.

Try not to get frustrated if your family grumbles a bit at the changes. Pace yourself with occasional new dishes, and over time, you're sure to make a difference.

Remember, every meal you serve that is

meat and dairy-free is a boost to their health.

You will know that you are providing better nutrition for your loved ones.

Real-Life Quotes:

“I noticed the biggest difference when I cut out dairy. My sinuses became clearer and I could taste my food again. I had felt like my tongue was always coated when I ate dairy, and when that coating was gone, I could taste food again. I began liking things that I didn’t know I liked. Another bonus was that the weight just fell off of me.” - Tara S.

“Eating a whole foods, plant-based diet has enabled me to reduce or eliminate the medicines I take for Rheumatoid Arthritis, allergies and mild depression. I also now have excellent blood

pressure readings. Watching ‘Forks over Knives’ and reading Dr. Fuhrman’s book, ‘Eat to Live’ is what got us started on this journey. It took about a month for my family’s tastes to change, but once they did, we all prefer eating this way.

Dairy, specifically cheese, was the thing I thought would be the most difficult to go without, but that hasn’t proven to be true. We all used to do a lot of sniffing and had more congestion than we realized. We’ve all seen such vast improvements that it’s worth it. The one thing I think we all miss sometimes is melted cheese, and Daiya has a vegan cheese that melts really nicely.” - Sharon Z.

“I always thought I ate healthy until I became a vegan. When I gave up things like so-called ‘healthy’ salmon, full of PCB’s (polychlorinated biphenyls) and fat-free dairy that contains additives and chemical calories, I truly knew how healthy felt. The extra weight came off, I never get a cold or illness, and my energy level is amazing. Even my eyesight has improved.

Living in NYC, most restaurants will accommodate special vegan requests. When traveling, I always bring my own mixture of ground sunflower seeds, pumpkins seeds, chia seeds, flax seeds

and nutritional yeast. I sprinkle this on a big salad with some beans that most restaurants offer, top it off with a little balsamic vinegar and olive oil, and I am protein rich!” – Linda I.

“My path to becoming a vegan was a long journey. It began with a documentary about how we treat livestock. I have a deep sadness about the lack of respect we have developed for animals that wind up on our plate. In a country with a bountiful supply of food, it is not necessary to subject living beings to disrespect, pain and cruelty for the sake of our taste buds. We are fortunate to have everything we need to thrive in a healthy way, without eating

animals. My love for animals has enhanced my life. I eat very well and have a much greater level of physical, emotional and spiritual health on a plant-based diet.” – Lisa G.

“I believe it is our responsibility to take care of our bodies to the best of our knowledge. The most up-to-date information tells us that a plant-based diet is the best for our bodies and the environment. Only when I adhere to a plant-based diet, full of living nutrients, do I feel at my best! – Angie P.

“I stopped eating almost all dairy for a year. Yogurt, cheese, milk... I did not

have one sinus infection, much less a cold. I now have a piece or two of cheese occasionally. I try not to have much in a week. If I do, I experience more sinus drainage and clearing of the throat.” - Chris Y.

“I once met Jack Lalanne, who was 89 years old at the time. I asked him if I could feel his bicep. It was like steel! I asked him how he does it. I was on the road all the time, and found it very difficult to eat healthy. He said, ‘Mike, dying is easy, living is hard. What’s it going to be?’ I live by those words everyday. He’s also known for saying, ‘If a man made it, don’t eat it.’ He’s

right.” – Mike P.

Chapter 8:

Recipes

Breakfast Smoothie

1 ½ cups of frozen fruit (blueberries, strawberries, pineapple, mango, anything!)

1 banana

1 handful of kale

¾ cup of dairy-free milk (soy, almond, rice or coconut)

Put all ingredients in a blender and blend. Enjoy!

Vegan Lasagna



1 package Lasagna noodles

1 bunch Fresh spinach, Chopped

1 16 oz. package Firm tofu, (not silken)

1/4 cup Non-dairy milk, (Soy, Rice, Almond or Oat)

2 Peeled garlic cloves, (or 1 t garlic powder)

2 T Fresh basil, Minced

7-8 cups Pasta sauce

2 T Lemon, (or about 2 T)

1 package Daiya cheese for topping,
(Optional)

A handful Black olives, sliced

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Instructions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Cook lasagna noodles according to package directions or use "no-boil" lasagna noodles. Drain and set aside.

Blend together tofu, milk, garlic or

garlic powder, lemon juice and basil in a food processor until smooth. The tofu "ricotta" should have body, but still be creamy.

Put blended ingredients in a large bowl, and stir in your chopped fresh spinach.

Cover bottom of 9 x 13-inch baking dish with a thin layer of tomato sauce, then a layer of noodles (use about one-third of noodles).

Follow with half the tofu filling. Continue in the same order, using half the remaining tomato sauce and noodles,

and all remaining tofu filling. End with remaining noodles, covered by remaining tomato sauce.

Bake for 40 to 45 minutes, until hot and bubbling.

Tom Kha Thai soup

1 can coconut milk

3 T red curry paste

3 T tamari or shoyu (instead of regular soy sauce)

1 T agave syrup

1 lime, juiced

1 fresh green chili, minced

1 onion, diced

12 mushrooms, sliced

2 carrots, sliced into half moons

2 cups vegetable broth

1 bunch bok choy, roughly shredded

Begin by sautéing the onions and carrots in a large pot. After about 3-4 minutes, add the mushrooms and sauté for a couple of minutes. Add the bok choy and cook for another minute. Add the vegetable broth and coconut milk. Keep heat medium-low so the coconut milk doesn't burn. Add tamari, lime juice, curry paste, agave and chilies. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 5-10 minutes.

Lentil Soup

1 ½ T Olive oil

1 Onion, diced

3 Carrots, diced

2 Celery Stalks, diced

1 inch of Fresh Ginger

1 cloves of Fresh Garlic, minced

2 T Tomato Paste

1 T Cinnamon

7 cups, Vegetable Broth

1 ½ cups, Lentils

1 Russet Potato

Begin by heating the olive oil over medium-high heat in a large pot. Add the onions to sauté, then the carrots and celery. After about 3 minutes, add the fresh ginger and garlic. The ginger will start to become fragrant. After about 4 minutes, add the vegetable broth, tomato paste, lentils and cinnamon. Bring everything to a boil, then reduce to a low simmer. Cook for about 20 minutes, then add the diced potato. Cook for another 20 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender. Serve warm. *You may choose to omit the potato and serve with a side

of brown rice, couscous or a nice crusty bread.

Peanut-butter Chocolate Pie

1 pre-made vegan piecrust

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup of vegan chocolate chips

1 container of silken tofu

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup peanut butter

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup, plus 2 T soy milk

Melt $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of chocolate chips in a double-broiler, or in a stainless steel bowl over a pot of boiling water. When melted, whisk together with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of soy milk. Pour the melty mixture into the pie pan. Place the pie pan in the

refrigerator for the chocolate coating to firm up.

Melt the remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of chocolate chips, and place in a blender with the tofu, peanut butter and 2 T of soy milk. Pour mixture into the pie pan and refrigerator for about an hour.

Chapter 9:

Resources

If you would like to learn more about becoming a Vegan, here is a list of resources you may find helpful:

Books

“The Kind Diet” by Alicia Silverstone

“Eat to Live” by Joel Fuhrman

“Vegan Planet” Recipe book, by Robin Robertson

Films

“Earthlings”

“Forks over Knives”

“Food, Inc.”

“Fat, Sick and Nearly Dead”

Articles

How to Become
Vegan <http://btulloh098.hubpages.com/hub/to-Become-Vegan>

[Cardiovascular Disease and Prevention
http://btulloh098.hubpages.com/hub/Top-Cause-of-Death-Cardiovascular-Disease-and-Prevention](http://btulloh098.hubpages.com/hub/Top-Cause-of-Death-Cardiovascular-Disease-and-Prevention)

What is Wellness Coaching?

<http://btulloh098.hubpages.com/hub/Wellness-Coaching-and-Personal-Health-Plans-Upswing-of-a-Career-Trend>

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<http://www.flickr.com/photos/dwhonan/>

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