

Whole **FOOD PLANT** **BASED EATING**



THE ULTIMATE MANUAL TO WHOLESOME LIVING AND NATURAL CHRONIC
DISEASE MANAGEMENT; FEEL SUBSTANTIAL RESULTS WITHIN 15 DAYS

HUGHIE PARKS

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BOOK DESCRIPTION

Winston Churchill once said that in each person's life, there comes a time when they are asked to do an extraordinary thing that is unique to them and their talents. He lamented that it would be a terrible waste if that opportunity finds them unprepared.

Humanity is currently facing a collective reckoning of sorts. For many of us, this has been the most challenging period of our lives so far. We have had to deal with changes in every aspect of our world. For those of us battling chronic illnesses, the struggle has increased manifold. Yet, at this moment, we

can either continue to feel overwhelmed and scared of what the moment demands of us, or we can seize this opportunity to make our future what we haven't yet dared to imagine.

It is rightly said that when the going gets tough, the tough get going. This book is an urgent, impassioned plea from one fighter to another, from this writer to the reader, to buckle up and change their life. What seems impossible now will seem possible soon. What is beyond the limits of your imagination will be your reality in a couple of weeks. If you have looked at other people and thought to yourself, that cannot be my life, or if you believe you are doomed by fate, genetics, or your patterns, this is your time to shine. I ask you to adopt a whole food, plant-based lifestyle and feel substantial results within 15 days. Not only that, I promise you that these changes will not be fleeting but will turn you towards a path of wholesome living for the rest of your life.

I firmly believe that you have everything you need to change your lifestyle and improve

your health. I am not an outsider, nor do I preach from a position of privilege. I have experienced the lows you have, and the highs that I could not believe were possible. I have been riddled with diseases, fear, and addiction. I have experienced rock bottom before realizing that the only way left to go is up.

Food is my passion, and so is health. But my greatest desire is to impact people's lives and guide them on the path to self-fulfillment and transformation. Having seen what is possible, I am eager to give back to others. This book is a heartfelt attempt at that. I am espousing neither magic nor miracles but scientifically tested results that will change your life forever. Not only that, but that change will start now.

If you are thinking, "Why now?" I ask you, "Why not?" Why not give yourself a fighting chance to have the life you deserve? Why not start the journey of a lifetime with this one step? Grab this book and your opportunity at a whole new life.

INTRODUCTION

In her famous book, *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf wrote, "One cannot think well, love well, sleep well if one has not dined well." Food for thought, indeed. We turn to food for so much: strength and sustenance, calm and comfort, familial love and nostalgia, and escape and indulgence. Food is potent; this much we know. And like anything with power, food can be used as an instrument of harm as well as good. Food can poison us, and food can heal us. We have always known this innately, but we have only recently started to acknowledge just how profound the connection between food and

life truly is. Why is this important? Because we now know to pick up our prescription in the kitchen rather than from the pharmacy.

As a nation, the United States knows a thing or two about prescriptions. Yet, today, we find ourselves riddled with diseases like cancer, heart disease, and diabetes, to name a few. In addition, overweight and obese children are becoming obese adults and falling prey to a slew of lifestyle disorders. Add to that autoimmune disorders, inflammatory diseases, chronic illnesses, and health conditions caused by advancing age; we are looking at an epidemic of dangerous proportions. And this is before the Coronavirus pandemic hit us in 2020.

The pandemic has been a strange time in our lives in so many ways. Although there has never been a greater fear of death and disease around us, there has also never been a better time for a collective reckoning. For the first time in a long time, we have come face-to-face with both the dangers of low immunity and poor health in terms of our ability to

combat diseases and how healthy eating can bring us joy and hope. Having been stuck at home without our usual recourse to fast food, we have before us the option of changing how we consume food, and in the process, changing our lives.



FOOD: MEDICINE AND MAGIC

If saying that food can be transformative sounds dramatic, it is anything but. The effects of having good food can look and feel magical but are also scientific. This book talks of adopting a whole food, plant-based (WFPB) diet and promises results in as little as 15 days. Does that sound like a tall claim? It shouldn't, and here's why. While it takes time for the ill effects of a highly processed, high-fat, and meat-based diet to show up, it takes shockingly little time for the reversal effects on our body. Since Nature itself is highly potent, these effects take time, and anything that vibrates with its frequency can swiftly cultivate restoration.

Before we go deep into the health benefits of a WFPB diet, let us try and understand the lives of those riddled with chronic health conditions and lifestyle diseases. And who better to start with than yours truly?

The Story of My Life

Who am I? I am Hughie Parks. I grew up in Ohio, the middle one of three siblings. I have worked in the food industry for over 11 years as an experienced cook, and I have spent more than five of those years in a health-conscious restaurant. But I am not among the preach but don't practice crowd. Why? Because I have been where you are, dear reader.

Before I realized the gifts of WFPB living, I spent years intoxicating my mind and body in a "carpe diem" fashion. I knew, like everybody knows, what that kind of lifestyle does to a person. Still, I couldn't care less at the time, even though I have an extensive family history of chronic illness and diseases like obesity, high blood pressure, rheumatoid arthritis, fatigue, suicidal depression, cardiovascular disease, and Alzheimer's to name a few. Like many others, I had a rude awakening, and one day I realized that I had to make a change for my sake and my loved ones.

Having adopted a flexitarian lifestyle with a

determination to go entirely plant-based, I have seen the benefits of the same in keeping off unwanted weight and preventing many chronic diseases. A plant-based diet of whole foods has saved my life, transformed it, and elongated it all at once. My transformation has given me the passion for bringing about similar changes in the lives of others and helping them live healthier, fuller, and happier lives. This book is a step in that direction, a passion project brought about by the desire to see more people wake up to the immense possibilities that life has to offer them.

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES

Who have I written this book for? Those who want to lower their blood pressure, combat or prevent type 1 or type 2 diabetes, drop unwanted pounds, decrease or eliminate the number of medications they are on for chronic illnesses, reduce bloating, dehydration, and inflammation, and increase the longevity of their lives. Is all of this

possible through a whole food, plant-based diet? Yes, it is. The primary reason for this is that it is not simply a diet or a fad but a lifestyle.

Those who live with chronic diseases and pain know that living itself can become a curse. It can happen at any age, and we increasingly see younger people being adversely affected by type 2 diabetes, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), inflammation, and chronic pain. Expensive healthcare is a significant factor in the treatment and management of these diseases. But in the end, even if one can afford healthcare, it means a reliance on pills and doctors for life. It affects physical health, but the adverse effects on mental health remain in need of discussion. The exhaustion of dealing with our body as it becomes our own worst enemy takes a toll that is difficult to measure, much less deal with. What then is our hope? A WFPB lifestyle.

Let us read the story of Millie, a social and spunky great-grandmother who was

diagnosed with congestive heart failure at age 60. When her doctor gave her only a few months to live, Millie adopted a WFPB lifestyle. Soon after starting the diet, she saw visible changes in her body and mind, and slowly but surely, she changed her life. She went from having a heart function of 10 percent to normal heart function in her 80s. If that sounds like a miracle, it may be; however, there is a science to back this up. It wasn't just her life that was saved, though. Her life took on a new meaning as she went from being bed-ridden to swimming and exercising in her community center with others her age, along with having a vibrant and fulfilling social life and enjoying time with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Her transformation was so powerful that her daughter started the Mamasezz blog and movement along with her mother to help others have a second chance at life.

Millie's story is one of the millions. Some people have astounded their doctors and have been able to stop taking medication for

autoimmune diseases. Others have managed their cancer treatment, people who have reversed diabetes and other chronic illnesses, and people who have just found new ways of looking at life. The fact remains that improving health through a WFPB lifestyle is not temporary or one-off, nor is it restricted to a particular condition. Frequently, people see results fairly quickly, but more importantly, they see those results last their lifetimes. They do not feel restricted by their food choices; in fact, they enjoy their meals. They no longer see them as the enemy. The lifestyle change is a change in mindset, making them want to wake up each day to see what life has in store for them. Now, is that not worth making a spirited attempt at, even if you are a bit nervous in the beginning? Another benefit of this lifestyle is that it does not have to be followed only by those experiencing health issues. If the whole family and even children adopt this way of living, it significantly improves their quality of life. Not only that, as the entire family grows healthier and happier, it fosters better relationships and fuller family life.

THE JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME

This book takes knowledge from scientific research, information from real-life case studies, and stories from people affected by adopting this lifestyle to present to its readers the opportunity to change their lives. It maps the journey of making the switch, highlights the elements to be paid attention to, the personal choices that are important to make, and steps to be taken to ensure that there is a lifelong impact on the readers.

We are all in it together, and together we can see how adopting a WFPB lifestyle heals not only our bodies but our very relationship to food and life. So let us learn what it means to indeed “eat to live.”

WFPB : A LIFESTYLE, NOT A DIET

In recent times, WFPB eating has become all the rage among doctors, nutritionists, health and wellness experts, and the general public. Therefore, it might be tempting to think of it as a fad and expect the craze to die down in time or for it to remain a favorite with a few groups.

The truth is that WFPB eating is hardly a diet, let alone a fad diet. It is a whole way of living that impacts us from the inside out. If this raises eyebrows, it shouldn't because scientific studies are backing this claim. Having said that, let me play the devil's

advocate. Let me tell you about this lifestyle through the most common questions and concerns you might have regarding it.

What Is It?

This lifestyle has two essential parts to it: the whole foods part and the plant-based part. Strictly speaking, plant-based refers to an absence of animal products; this includes meat, poultry, eggs, fish, honey, and dairy. The whole foods part contains whole grains, legumes, fruits, vegetables, and a small amount of nuts and seeds.

This lifestyle suggests that you keep the consumption of processed food to a minimum. For example, avoiding no-brainers such as fast food and fried food like cheeseburgers, doughnuts, French fries, chips, nuggets, et al. Not only that, you should also exclude highly processed grains like white rice, white pasta, processed gluten-free products, and non-whole meal flour. Instead, include whole grains such as brown rice, quinoa, and barley in your diet.

COMMON MYTHS AND CONCERNS

Myth: This sounds like yet another list of eating this, not that.

Fact: No. The lifestyle that I am espousing goes beyond an essential list of foods to avoid or add. A critical factor in successfully adopting the lifestyle is the development of your health ethos, a state where you actively question why you are consuming something. Simply put, it means that being a whole plant-based food is not enough for something to be healthy. What you eat needs to be promoting good health, which is why, for example, one should avoid coconut products because they are high in saturated fats.

Not only that but a WFPB lifestyle is defined more by what you include in your diet rather than what you exclude. It follows the mantra, “Nothing good removed, nothing bad added.” Your body knows what is suitable for it, and by following a WFPB lifestyle, it wakes up to the wholesomeness it deserves. If it sounds too simple, that’s because it is.

Concern: You say it is based on scientific research. However, controversies are bound to arise, and scientific research changes far too often to be entirely credible.

Fact: That might be so, but by far the most uncontroversial knowledge in nutritional science has been this: a leading cause of lifestyle diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and heart disease is the presence of highly processed foods and animal products in diets. Studies have also shown that healthy plant-based diets can prevent and improve, and in some cases, even reverse lifestyle diseases. A low-fat WFPB diet is the only one so far that has been able to show a reversal in coronary heart disease conclusively. These studies did not include exercise and thus proved that the positive impact was solely on the diet itself. Let that sink in. The power, indeed, lies in the food.

Concern: I have been researching myself, and it looks like certain studies around vegan diets have found instances of diabetes, cancer, and heart disease in the population.

Does this mean that plant-based diets are not effective against these diseases?

Fact: Your concern brings home my earlier point that being plant-based is not enough if it is high in saturated fats, sugar, and salt. The truth is that many vegan diets tend to be closer to the Western Diet than a reflection of authentic plant-based communities. This is because the diet can be plant-based but still low in dietary fiber and contain added sugar, salt, and oil. A proper WFPB diet will have zero amounts of these, which makes it genuinely healthy.

Concern: You claim that sustained adoption of a WFPB diet in our lives can help us reduce our dependence on and even eliminate the need for certain medications. How can a diet be compared to pharmaceutical drugs in terms of potency? What am I missing?

Fact: Studies have shown that a low-fat WFPB lifestyle reverses chronic illnesses and lifestyle diseases. The question is how. While pharmaceutical drugs are designed to inhibit a single chemical reaction, a WFPB lifestyle

works more holistically. It allows many nutrients to work together on a multitude of bodily functions simultaneously, thus leading to improved health. It is easy to see why this is so powerful in the long run.

How does a WFPB diet achieve this? Majorly through the presence of magical elements called phytonutrients. “Phyto” stands for “plant.” Hence, phytonutrients are nutrients that are found solely in plants. What makes them so powerful is the fact that they are biologically active nutrients that enhance normal physiological functions, therefore being highly effective in:

- reducing inflammation and oxidative damage
- reducing cholesterol and improving circulation
- creating healthy gut function
- enhancing and balancing the immune system
- regulating gene expression

A wide variety of phytonutrients in your diet

will help prevent cell damage throughout your body. Being such powerful antioxidants makes them helpful in promoting healthy aging. They can act as antibacterial or antiviral agents and reduce the risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's disease.

These are only some of the many benefits of phytonutrients. No wonder then that those who adopt a WFPB lifestyle report a reduction in joint pain, reduced need for insulin doses, as well as a general improvement of health in a relatively short period.

Which foods are rich in phytonutrients?

- Bulb vegetables like onions, garlic, shallots, chives, and leeks
- Red, orange, and yellow fruit and vegetables like tomatoes, carrots, peppers, squash, sweet potatoes, peaches, mangoes, melons, citrus fruits, and berries
- Dark green leafy vegetables, including

everyday greens like spinach, broccoli, and romaine lettuce as well as the “exotic” leafy greens such as bok choy, kale, Swiss chard, and beet greens

- Whole grain products such as brown rice, wild rice, quinoa, barley, and wheat berries
- Nuts and seeds like walnuts, almonds, sunflower, sesame, and flax seeds
- Legumes such as dried beans, peas, lentils, soybeans, and soy products
- Tea and coffee such as black tea, green tea, and other herbal teas

Phytonutrients are responsible for the vibrant colors found in fruits and vegetables, each of which represent different phytonutrients that bestow numerous health benefits, such as:

- **Red:** The red color found in beets and tomatoes protects you against cancer, improves brain function, and lowers your chances of having high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and clogged blood arteries.

- **Orange and yellow:** This color present in carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, and oranges, helps in maintaining skin, eye, and heart health, boosting the immune system, and building strong bones.
- **Green:** Leafy and cruciferous greens are a boon to your health in many ways, especially in preventing cancer and bad cholesterol. Broccoli and spinach are especially helpful in protecting our eyes from degeneration. Apart from maintaining gut health and immunity, leafy greens are a must for pregnant women, as they help in preventing birth defects.
- **Blue and purple:** Vegetables like eggplant and purple cabbage protect the body against heart disease, stroke, and cancer. Not only that but they are also crucial for healthy aging and preservation of memory. They are also known to keep the urinary tract healthy.
- **White:** Onions and cauliflower are some white vegetables, helping in lowering your bad cholesterol levels

and blood pressure. They are also instrumental in fighting cancer and building immunity.

When in doubt, fill your plate with a rainbow of colors.

Myth: I am sure I will need protein supplements if I am to avoid eating meat.

Fact: While we will be dealing with this in detail in a later chapter, the short answer is that you can quickly meet your daily protein needs by having a varied WFPB diet every day. Almost all unprocessed food contains a small number of proteins, and there are several whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds with high amounts of protein.

Protein supplements are isolated and concentrated means of providing the body with protein. Having them in large amounts displaces the nutrients that are otherwise received from having a WFPB diet. For example, when we have avocado, nuts, or lentils for our daily protein intake, we get our amino acids and other essential minerals,

vitamins, and fiber requirements. However, protein supplements do not give us the other nutrients and thus, do not provide the holistic health benefits that whole foods do. Therefore, a well-balanced WFPB diet is a way to go.

Myth: I will be constantly hungry or out of choices if I follow this lifestyle.

Fact: This could not be further from the truth. There is no place for undereating or hunger pangs in a well-balanced WFPB diet. The key to success for a WFPB diet lies in having adequate to large portions of complex carbohydrates or starches. This is what makes you full and keeps the hunger pangs away for longer while also providing you with the right amount of calories and preventing overeating.

It would be best if you aimed to fill at least half your plate with foods like whole grains, legumes, and root vegetables, and the rest with salads and vegetables. There is a wide variety to choose from, so any concerns of having restricted choices is a myth. There is room for flexibility and creativity while

preparing your meals, and you certainly do not have to scrimp on flavor. We will elaborate on satiation versus satiety in a later chapter and how this diet helps you effectively manage weight without starving yourself.

Concern: Am I going to consume enough nutrients?

Fact: A WFPB diet gives you more than enough nutrients. In fact, by eliminating or minimizing the use of oil, salt, and refined sugar, you are maximizing the number of nutrients within the same calorie intake. Some examples of where each nutrient is found in abundance are:

- Calcium in green vegetables, oranges, tahini, calcium-fortified soy milk, and tofu
- Iodine in nori or dulse seaweed, prunes, and cranberries
- Vitamin D through exposure to the sun, some UV-light grown mushrooms, and supplements

- Iron in oats, spinach, lentils, chickpeas, dried figs, and tahini
- Omega-3 in flax seeds, chia seeds, hemp seeds, and walnuts
- Zinc in pumpkin seeds, almonds, chickpeas, lentils, whole grains, and tofu

The only exception is Vitamin B12, which is made by bacteria and is naturally found in animal feed. Plant-based diets recommend taking supplements or certain fortified foods such as nutritional yeast and plant milk to make up for any deficiency.

Myth: A major lifestyle overhaul like this sounds expensive.

Fact: According to a study published in 2015 in the Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition, meat-eaters could save \$750 a year simply by switching to plant-based meals. The study compared the weekly plans set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture with plant-based meal plans. The results showed that for the same amount of calories, the

plant-based plan cost less. Not only that, but for the same amount of calories, the plant-based meal could also accommodate about 25 more servings of vegetables, 14 more servings of whole grains, and eight more servings of fruit.

That sounds like value for money in more ways than one. We already know of the enormous costs that lifestyle diseases rack up through doctor visits, drugs, and even surgeries in some cases. A plant-based diet is not just easier on your pocket now but also in the future.

Concern: I have only ever followed a typical western diet. Will I be able to make the switch and, more importantly, sustain it?

Fact: As mentioned earlier, many people have entirely overhauled their lives by adopting the WFPB lifestyle. You need only to take the first few steps, and soon you will begin reaping the benefits. You will feel your mood and energy levels improve almost instantly, witness higher levels of athleticism, benefit from the improved gut and

reproductive health, observe the resolution of acne and better skin tone, to name only a few of the visible effects. In addition, your friends and family may comment on your improved glow and confidence, and your doctor might remark on your drastically improved test results. That is more than enough reason to keep at it.

Much more importantly, adopting a WFPB lifestyle will lead to personal empowerment like no other, where you might feel in control of your health and happiness for the first time in a long time. Let us meet Dave, whose story might give us the confidence to take the leap.

A MONTH-LONG EXPERIMENT AND A NEW LIFESTYLE

When Meg Donahue, Millie's daughter and the co-founder of Mamasezz, started the company, she couldn't think of anyone better suited than Dave to join her team. Dave had been a friend, colleague, and pillar of the community she had lived in for years. What

he wasn't, however, was someone who would take to a whole food, plant-based diet easily, or at all. Dave had seen at close quarters what a WFPB diet had done for Meg's mother and her entire family. But he was a man who loved to hunt, barbecue, and eat meat. In other words, he was the last person you would expect to give all of that up for an entirely new way of eating.

So Meg was surprised when Dave expressed an interest in trying out the new diet. He was the kind of man who could power through flu, injuries, bitterly cold conditions, you name it. But as he grew older, he could not do the same for his health problems, including the epileptic seizures that often left him debilitated for days on end. Meg had never forced the lifestyle on him. It was probably his curiosity that had gotten the better of him, Meg thought. However, Dave was a man used to giving 100% effort to whatever he tried, and this was no different.

Within a month of starting the diet, Dave lost about 35 pounds. In his own words, the

weight just “melted off.” Not only that, but he also reported having more energy and better sleep. No one was more surprised than he was. Dave even admitted that he had started the journey expecting nothing but constant hunger pangs.

The weight loss, however, was not the most significant benefit of this change for him. Slowly, his epileptic seizures and symptoms began to go away. When he checked in with his doctor, the doctor was pleasantly surprised. Together, they weaned Dave off his numerous medicines for epilepsy. Today, he runs marathons and is at his fittest in his fifties. What started as an experiment became a whole new lifestyle that restored his health.

If he could do it, indeed you can too.

PLANT-BASED EATING PATTERNS

Plant-based eating is not a new phenomenon. There are cultures and societies around the world that have embraced it for centuries. Late western societies and those heavily reliant on meat in their cuisines have started waking up to the benefits of a WFPB lifestyle. However, no two people have the same dietary needs or health conditions. Everyone needs to figure out for themselves what suits their body best. In this chapter, we will go through some popular plant-based diets, what they entail, and their benefits. In the end, each of these diets aims to help us manage our weight and

get fitter, improve our quality of life, and hopefully live longer.

VEGETARIAN DIET

A vegetarian diet generally emphasizes plants, though it does not always exclude animal-based products. Many people adopt vegetarianism for personal or religious reasons and many for ethical ones. In general, going plant-based is also good for the environment, so some people take it up as an environmentally and socially conscious decision as much as a health-based decision. There are different forms of vegetarian diets based on what is restricted.

For example, a Lacto-ovo-vegetarian diet eliminates meat, fish, and poultry but allows eggs and dairy. A Lacto-vegetarian diet goes a step further and removes eggs while allowing dairy. An Ovo-vegetarian diet, on the other hand, will enable eggs and excludes dairy products. Finally, a pescatarian diet says no to meat and poultry but allows fish

and sometimes eggs and dairy.

The WFPB diet has proven to enhance weight loss when compared to a non-vegetarian diet. Some research suggests that it might also be linked to a lower risk of cancer and might help in stabilizing blood sugar levels. For example, one study proved that switching from a non-vegetarian to a vegetarian diet could reduce the risk of diabetes by 53% over a duration of five years. Another vegetarian diet study showed lower levels of triglycerides, total cholesterol, bad cholesterol, and blood pressure, thus promoting heart health.

In general, vegetarianism is linked to an intake of more essential nutrients than a non-vegetarian one. However, there are certain deficiencies that you must look out for. These include vitamins B12 and D, zinc, iron, and omega-3 fatty acids. The key to avoiding any nutritional deficiencies is making sure you have a well-balanced diet with enough fruit, vegetables, proteins, healthy fats, whole grains, and fortified foods. This might also

include taking supplements where necessary. At the same time, as with every other diet, keeping it low-fat, low-calorie but nutrient-dense is essential to get the maximum benefits out of it.

VEGAN DIET

Donald Watson took it upon himself to coin the term “vegan” as late as 1944. It distinguished itself from the vegetarian movement by going a step further and vowing to prevent animal cruelty in any form—all animal cruelty, including the avoidance of food and clothing derived from animals. Many people make the switch for health, environmental, and ethical reasons. In general, fruits, vegetables, legumes and lentils, grains such as bread, rice, pasta, vegetable oils, and dairy alternatives such as soy milk, almond milk, and coconut milk are considered part of a vegan diet. On the other hand, meat products like beef, pork, lamb, and other red meat are off-limits. Also to be avoided are poultry, fish and seafood, eggs,

milk, and dairy products like butter, cream, cheese, ice cream et al. Since mayonnaise contains eggs and honey is produced from bees, these are also not considered part of the vegan diet.

As with a vegetarian diet, a vegan diet is also considered highly effective for weight loss. At the same time, it might help improve heart health, reduce blood pressure, and minimize cancer risk though more studies might be needed to prove causality. The concern surrounding nutrients pervades this diet, especially regarding calcium and Vitamin D, as those are majorly derived from milk along with vitamin B12. Having supplements, algae and seaweed, fortified foods, and a well-balanced diet is a way to provide the nutrients required.

Over time, many different forms of veganism have evolved and appealed to other groups of people, each espousing certain benefits. The most common ones are:

- **Raw-food vegan diet** — This is based

on raw fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and other plant-based food cooked at temperatures below 118 degrees Fahrenheit or 48 degrees Celsius.

- **80/10/10** — A raw-food vegan diet limiting nuts, avocados and other fat-rich plants while increasing raw fruits and soft greens intake. It is also called the low-fat, raw-food vegan diet or the fruitarian diet.
- **The starch solution** — This is similar to the 80/10/10 diet but replaces fruits with cooked starches like potatoes, rice, and corn.
- **Raw till four** — As the name suggests, it suggests eating raw foods till four in the afternoon, after which a cooked plant-based meal can be had for dinner.
- **Junk-food vegan diet** — This is the diet that resembles the Western diet the most as it lacks severely in whole foods and relies heavily on processed foods, including mock meats and cheese, fries, and vegan desserts. This is the most popular form of the vegan diet used to lure people away from the standard

American diets; it is also the least useful for good health.

Of these, the raw-food vegan diet deserves special mention. While its emphasis on raw or minimally cooked foods does make sense in terms of health benefits, it also has some issues worth considering. The main argument favoring this diet is that cooked foods lose most of their natural nutrients and potency. Therefore, this diet encourages eating raw fruits, vegetables, sprouted legumes and grains that are soaked, not cooked, raw nuts and seeds, almond milk, and raw tofu. At the same time, foods like meat, cheese, pasta, milk, coffee, and processed food like chips and sweets are strictly prohibited.

While it is a relatively clean form of eating, some of the valid concerns by nutritionists and health experts are around its restrictive nature. It is deemed as too extreme by some, leading to people losing too much weight and having severe nutritional deficiencies in some cases. There is also a concern that some vegetables work better when cooked in the

nutrient dispensation. So if you follow this diet, please make sure that you are not under-eating or in any way ignoring good food practices at the cost of your health.

FLEXITARIAN DIET

Dawn Jackson Blatner, a dietician, created this diet to encourage people to try and incorporate more plants in their daily food intake. Since it is not as restrictive as a vegan or, in some cases, a vegetarian diet, it is more appealing for people who want to change their lifestyle without doing a complete overhaul. Its appeal also lies in the fact that it does not have a set recommendation of calories per day or strict rules to follow. Instead, it has guiding principles that are easy to mind, such as:

- Eating more fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains
- Having more plant-based protein than that from animal sources
- Reducing intake of meat and animal

products

- Eating the most natural form of foods and avoiding processed foods as much as possible
- Limiting added sugar and sweets

While eating animal products is allowed, the flexitarian diet suggests choosing free-range eggs, wild-caught fish, and grass-fed meat and dairy as much as possible. The emphasis is on making the diet more inclusive rather than exclusive.

WHOLE FOODS

How are whole foods different from other plant-based diets? The difference lies in the emphasis on consuming foods that are in their natural state. The guiding principle of adopting whole foods in your diet is to look for foods that your grandparents would recognize as food. The foods present in nature without being subjected to excessive processing and foods that do not need labels with many ingredient descriptions are

considered the healthiest and most fulfilling foods for you.

What does this mean, and how do you incorporate these into your diet? A simple way is to learn to swap out foods that come out of the packaging with food that grows naturally and sustainably. For example, having a baked potato with fresh green onions and spices is better than opening a bag of potato chips of the same flavor. In the same way, having fresh fruit and whole grains is a better option than eating highly processed sugary cereals for breakfast.

Why are whole foods necessary as part of our diet? There are many reasons. Firstly, remember phytonutrients, which are biologically active components that give fruits and vegetables vibrant colors and add vitality to our lives? They are exclusively present in plant-based foods. Secondly, nutrients such as vitamin A, E, and C and micronutrients such as magnesium and potassium are present in whole plant-based foods in rich quantities. Thirdly, whole grains

and fruit and vegetables are richer in fiber than processed foods.

Other than these benefits, whole foods by nature do not have additives such as salt, sugar, fats, or other preservatives. These additions do nothing for our health and end up causing severe lifestyle diseases in the long run if consumed in large amounts. One of the significant concerns of processed food is the addition of harmful additives and removing good things such as nutrients. Dietary fiber, iron, and phytonutrients are some of the most commonly removed elements from food when it goes through the processor. Other than that, we will detail in a later chapter how oils, in general, are not our friends.

Salt is another copiously used in processed food and should be kept to a minimum to achieve good health. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, most adults consume at least twice their daily recommended salt limit in their diet. A common misconception is that we might be

eating less salt than is good for us, which is next to impossible in today's times. Processed food contains way too much salt, and the tricky part is that even foods that do not taste very salty might have a lot of salt masked by other additives like sugar. While a bit of salt is essential both for taste and our sodium requirement, too much of it causes hypertension, which causes heart diseases.

It is recommended by WHO that people cut down their daily intake of salt by at least half. They claim that this one step can lead to much progress in dealing with the world's health problems. Even in terms of taste, while initially our taste buds might not be used to less salt because of our over-exposure to it, with time, they adjust and even appreciate being able to taste food in its natural form. Salt from any source is equally unhealthy, and contrary to popular belief, sweating does not make us lose a lot of salt. We should hydrate ourselves, but we do not need to eat salt-rich diets to make up for any supposed loss. At the same time, the body also requires a certain amount of potassium from fresh

fruits and vegetables. Each time we overeat salt, it disrupts our sodium-potassium balance, causing severe potential health issues. Therefore, we should all watch out for salt intake, and reducing processed foods in our diet is a significant step towards minimizing it.

In general, whole, fresh fruits are a fantastic component of a whole food diet and ideally are consumed in a reasonable amount of quantities. Dried fruits are also a whole food, but they tend to be more concentrated, so care should be taken while eating them as they are more useful in the case of different calorie requirements. Small amounts of partially processed foods like plant milk and tofu are considered okay to eat. While choosing beverages, sugary drinks and sugar syrups are not whole foods; our focus should be on herbal teas and lots of water.

When it comes to nuts and seeds, there are a few things to keep in mind. First, while they are also whole foods in their natural, unprocessed form, they can be pretty high in

fat content and low in water content. Therefore, their calorie density can be about five times more than that of basic starchy foods. They can therefore be easy to consume in large quantities. Also, some nuts and seeds may have a very high ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids. Thus, we need to emphasize chia and flax seeds for a heart-healthy diet, as they have a higher proportion of omega-3 acids.

A well-balanced whole food, plant-based diet consists of predominantly whole grains, starchy vegetables, and legumes. As mentioned earlier, you need not restrict fresh fruits and include large quantities of cruciferous and leafy vegetables. In general, you should avoid any food with its fiber removed and sugar, salt, and oil added. Try to consume nuts and seeds in moderation and drink plenty of water.



HEALTH BENEFITS OF A WFPB LIFESTYLE

As I have mentioned before, going the WFPB way entails a change in your lifestyle and thus requires commitment and dedication, not just to make the switch but also to sustain it. The initial period is generally characterized by inertia and a temptation to go back to your old ways. There are many different ways of becoming plant-based, as discussed in the previous chapter. But why should you make an effort to adopt this lifestyle for good?

This chapter will go through the health benefits bestowed on those who embrace a

WFPB lifestyle. We will explore the science behind why it works and the stories of those who have seen the transformative effects of this diet first-hand.

PREVENTION OF CARDIOMETABOLIC DISEASES

A significant cause of concern for healthcare professionals in the US and around the world has been the rapid rise of cardiometabolic diseases in the population. What are cardiometabolic conditions? A group of disorders includes ischemic heart disease, stroke, obesity, and type-2 diabetes; diseases that result from excessive smoking, lack of exercise, overconsumption of alcohol, and following an unhealthy diet. In other words, these are lifestyle diseases that, in most cases, are entirely preventable. For example, according to a recent analysis by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM), dietary factors such as low intake of fruits and vegetables and high sodium and processed meats were associated

with a whopping 45.5% of cardiometabolic deaths in the US. That is almost half the deaths that could be prevented simply by altering the diet of the population.

These diseases represent a substantial economic burden and put a lot of pressure on our healthcare systems. Going plant-based might be the answer we need. Let us look at how these diseases affect our population and how a WFPB diet can save us.

Obesity

Obesity is a major cause of concern in the US, especially with the rising cases of obese teenagers and young adults in the population. Obesity is a significant factor for an increase in overall mortality within all age groups. In addition, it is linked to higher instances of cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and diabetes, to name a few.

The statistics are sobering. According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), 69% of US adults are overweight or obese, as determined by having

a body mass index (BMI) greater than 25 kg/square meter. In addition, people with a BMI greater than 40 are at a higher risk of developing chronic illness and life-threatening complications.

BMI steadily increases with the addition of animal products to the diet. Recent studies made by various institutes have proven that people on a WFPB diet have the lowest BMI. Not only that but sticking to a plant-based diet also ensures that one does not gain weight over time. For every year on a WFPB diet, the risk of obesity decreases by about 7%. These are compelling results for those that want to lead active and healthy lifestyles, especially as they age.

Cardiovascular Diseases

Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are the leading cause of death, both globally and in the US. They are a group of heart and blood vessel disorders that include coronary artery disease (CAD), cerebrovascular disease, and rheumatic heart disease. Most CVD deaths occur in the form of heart attacks and strokes,

and most of these deaths occur prematurely before the age of 70. However, in recent years, the number of people in their 40s and 50s dying from these diseases has steadily increased.

The most common heart disease is CAD, caused by the gradual buildup of fat and cholesterol in the arteries. It narrows and clogs the arteries and prevents blood from reaching the heart. Clogged arteries lead to chest pains or angina, heart attacks, and, often, death. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 18.2 million Americans are reported to have CAD, and someone in the US has a heart attack every 40 seconds. These statistics are terrifying, but there is hope yet.

Data from clinical studies show that for every one percent reduction in low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, there is a one percent decrease in the probability of a major cardiac event, like a heart attack or stroke. At the same time, lifestyle changes, especially those related to diet, are responsible for a 30-

40% reduction in LDL levels in those at high risk for cardiovascular diseases. In addition, switching saturated fats for polyunsaturated fats lowers the incidence of cardiovascular disease by about 30%.

When we think specifically of a WFPB diet, many factors make it a heart-healthy one. Firstly, the WFPB diet is already way ahead of the standard American diet in that it eliminates meat and dairy products from its menu. Dietary cholesterol is found in eggs, meat, and dairy products; plant-based food is cholesterol-free. Secondly, meat and egg yolks contribute to unhealthy gut molecules, leading to a rise in trimethylamine n-oxide (TMAO) levels. This indicates how likely someone can get heart disease, as shown by organ scarring, clogged arteries, and blood clotting. Within four weeks of starting a WFPB diet, one can see a return to normal TMAO levels in high-risk patients. This is a revolutionary finding in itself.

If that is not enough, a now-famous study by Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn examined the effects

of a low-fat, WFPB diet on patients with severe, progressive CAD. The results were astounding. All the participants who complied with the diet prevented their heart disease from progressing further. Furthermore, 70% of the participants also showed a reversal in their condition. Till now, no other diet has been able to establish a reversal in CAD. We now know that a WFPB diet prevents heart diseases and actively reverses and repairs already existing damage to the heart.

Blood Pressure

In the US, hypertension, defined as having a blood pressure of 140/90 and above, is associated with many causes of death, including heart diseases, stroke, and diabetes. Usually, hypertension has no symptoms and is therefore known as a silent killer. The primary cause of hypertension is the increased intake of sodium from processed meats and foods and a decreased rate of potassium. WFPB diets have higher fiber and potassium through fruits and vegetables and

lower fat content through avoidance of processed food. Studies have shown a direct correlation between low-fat, WFPB diets and lower blood pressure in the population. As mentioned earlier, avoiding salty, processed food is a highly effective way of managing one's blood pressure.

Diabetes

Diabetes is a chronic health condition in which our body either doesn't make enough insulin or cannot use the insulin it produces. Since insulin is an indicator for the cells to let the sugar in our bloodstream be used as energy, not making or using it properly leads to excessive sugar staying in our bloodstream. This causes severe health problems over time, including vision loss, heart disease, and kidney disease. The three main types of diabetes are:

Type 1 diabetes, in which the body stops making insulin. This affects about 5-10% of people with diabetes. Currently, there is no prevention of this type, and those affected need to take insulin daily to survive.

Type 2 diabetes, in which the body cannot use the insulin it produces appropriately, therefore cannot keep blood sugar levels regular. About 90-95% of those affected by diabetes have this type. Usually, there are no visible symptoms while it develops, making it even more dangerous. The good news is that this type can be prevented by weight loss and management through diet and exercise.

Gestational diabetes develops in pregnant women who have not experienced having diabetes. It subsides after childbirth but increases the likelihood of having type 2 diabetes later in life. It also leads to a greater chance of the child becoming obese early in their life and thus being at a higher risk for contracting this disease.

According to the CDC:

- Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the US.
- It is the leading cause of kidney failure, lower-limb amputations, and adult blindness.

- 34.2 million US adults have diabetes and about 20% of them are unaware of the same.
- 88 million US adults (more than a third of the population) have prediabetes and about 84% of them don't know about it. Prediabetes is a condition in which one's blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes.
- The number of adults diagnosed with diabetes has more than doubled in the last 20 years.

The statistics are scary, but there are concrete ways to prevent type 2 diabetes by following a WFPB diet. By eliminating sugary drinks and foods and highly processed meat and other products, we can achieve better glycemic control and even reverse type 2 diabetes over time.

Some naturally low-glycemic foods – those that don't cause abnormal spikes in blood sugar levels – are whole grains and fruits such as apples, pears, and plums—also,

beans, legumes, and vegetables such as carrots, cauliflower, and zucchini. Certain starchy vegetables like yams and sweet potatoes fall under this category as well.

The findings of a 2019 study conducted by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health indicates that individuals who followed a strict, low-fat, WFPB diet exhibited a 23% lower risk of type 2 diabetes than those who didn't.

ANTI-INFLAMMATORY BENEFITS

Inflammation is a bodily response that helps protect it against infections, repair tissues and heal injuries. It manifests in the body in redness, swelling, pain, and an increase in local temperature. Inflammation can either be acute or chronic. Acute inflammation is characterized by rapid onset and resolution, for example, in a sprained ankle or strep throat. Chronic inflammation, on the other hand, can develop over a long time and persist even longer. If it stays in the body for

too long, it can cause damage to the body in the form of scarring of tissues, chronic pain, and autoimmune diseases, to name a few. Chronic inflammation can also be one of the underlying causes of many diseases like heart disease and cancer.

As mentioned earlier, inflammation can cause bacteria and viruses, injury to tissues, and toxic pollutants. The question that then arises is whether WFPB diets help combat inflammation, and if so, how? Studies show that a WFPB diet works in two ways. On the one hand, it fights inflammation in the body. On the other hand, it prevents inflammation. How do they do this? Remember phytonutrients? They are abundant in a well-balanced WFPB diet and are anti-inflammatory. Nuts and seeds, which contain higher amounts of omega-3 fatty acids, also help combat inflammation in the body.

More importantly, having whole grains, fruits, and vegetables daily helps prevent inflammation, mainly because these foods do not contain inflammatory triggers like fat

present in meat and dairy products. Not only that, but meat products are also generally filled with toxic pollutants and bacteria, both of which trigger an inflammatory response in the body. Plant-based foods are primarily free of them and thus help immensely ensure that we do not suffer from the ill effects of chronic inflammation.

Arthritis

Arthritis is not a single disease, but many diseases that result in painful and swollen joints. It affects about 25% of adults in the US. The two main types of arthritis that most people are afflicted by are:

- **Osteoarthritis** — This develops gradually, causing wear-and-tear in the protective cartilage cushioning the ends of the bones. It worsens over time and manifests as joint pain in the hands, neck, lower back, knees, or hips. As people age, most of them develop some stage of osteoarthritis, even if they are not aware of it. Since the repair process

slows down with age, it becomes more difficult for the joint pain and swelling to reduce with time.

- **Rheumatoid Arthritis** — This chronic inflammatory disorder is autoimmune and occurs when the body mistakenly attacks its tissues. It affects the lining of the joints, causing a painful swelling resulting in bone erosion and joint deformity. It affects more than the joints and can cause damage to the skin, eyes, lungs, heart, and blood vessels. It is marked by periods of increased disease activity, known as flares, alternating with periods when the pain fades or disappears.

In both instances, certain factors play a role in intensifying the progress of the disease. These are age, gender, genetics, and obesity. In fact, with osteoarthritis, excess weight on the joints can be a significant trigger for the disease. Therefore, regulating one's weight and maintaining an active lifestyle certainly helps in managing this debilitating condition.

Some foods that trigger inflammation are refined carbohydrates such as white bread and pastries, French fries, other fried foods, red meat and processed meat, margarine, lard, soda, and other sugary drinks.

In contrast to this, foods that are high in antioxidants are considered the best for reducing inflammation. These include turmeric, berries, grapefruit, flax and chia seeds, nuts, and cruciferous vegetables. In addition, WFPB foods rich in vitamin C, vitamin E, carotenoids, selenium, and bioflavonoids are very helpful in healing joint pain and damage.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WFPB LIFESTYLE

The medical community is only now waking up to the link between diet and mental health. Although we have still not understood the causes and factors behind the mental health epidemic we are facing as a generation, the awareness regarding exercise, diet, and

overall lifestyle management in helping us manage certain debilitating conditions is greater. The medical community's response to most diseases, whether neurodegenerative like Alzheimer's or chronic diseases like depression, has traditionally been medication. Sometimes even without understanding the effects of the same on the individual. These battles are generally lifelong, but the question is: can a WFPB diet help prevent or regulate mental conditions?

Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's disease is a neurodegenerative disease that results in a breakdown of neuronal communication. Brain cells have trouble communicating, leading to difficulty in storing and processing information. It is currently the sixth-leading cause of death in the US. About 10 percent of individuals 65 years or older have Alzheimer's, and the number is expected to double by 2050. To date, there is no known prevention or cure for this disease. A few medications that are administered to patients only serve to slow

down its progression.

Of late, there have been studies trying to understand the effect of diet and lifestyle in preventing the onset of cognitive decline. Research shows that saturated and trans fats found in meat products, processed and fried food and dairy products increase the risk of Alzheimer's, while a WFPB diet is crucial to protecting brain health. Polyphenol-rich blueberries, spices such as saffron or turmeric, and foods rich in vitamin E, such as walnuts, seeds, leafy greens, and whole grains, are especially beneficial. These foods are rich in antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids, which play a massive role in reducing inflammation in the brain cells. Taking vitamin B12 supplements and getting iron from plant-based foods like lentils and chickpeas rather than from supplements also helps protect the brain in the long run.

Suicidal Depression

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), millions of people in the US live with depression. Over 17 million adults

on average experience a major depressive episode per year. For some, depression leads to suicidal ideation as well. While the most common medical treatment for depression is a prescription of antidepressants, it is not a panacea by any means. Many people are either reluctant to try them and prefer counseling to medication. Not only that, but they are also not suitable for everybody and do not benefit everyone the same way. In order to achieve maximum benefits, there should be a more holistic approach to understanding and treating depression.

While exercise, therapy, and meditation certainly help manage depression, a relatively overlooked aspect of the treatment is the effect of a well-balanced, WFPB diet on mental health. A recent study conducted by PCRM demonstrates that a WFPB diet combats not only depression but also anxiety, fatigue, and other markers of poor mental health.

How does a WFPB lifestyle accomplish this? To understand this, we must understand what

causes depression. Depression is related to high levels of inflammation and low levels of serotonin in the body. Serotonin is the hormone that is crucial to mood stabilization and feelings of well-being and happiness. It also enables the brain cells to communicate better and regulates sleeping, eating, and digestion. Thus, it impacts many brain functions, and controlling it is key to mental and physical well-being.

A low-fat, WFPB diet contains foods that naturally lower inflammation in the body. At the same time, consuming many vegetables increases the number of B vitamins, which are known to impact our mood. This impact is why many people report higher energy levels, better sleep patterns, and higher productivity within weeks of adopting this lifestyle.

TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE FROM THE
INSIDE OUT

All the scientific research is promising, to say

the least. But what does it mean for you, dear reader? What does your path to a happier and healthier life look like? Is it long and confusing, complex, and unsure? Or is it easy and intuitive? The fact is, you will notice your body and mind change on a cellular level almost instantaneously once you adopt this lifestyle. And the longer you stick to it, the better your life will be. Of course, you will struggle to recognize the version of yourself before embarking on this journey. But isn't that the point? Let's see some of the changes you will notice within a month of starting this diet.

On a WFPB diet, your body will very quickly learn how to make healthy amounts of insulin, and you might see a reduction in your regular insulin dose within days.

Another almost instantaneous change in your body is related to constipation and gut problems. The fruits and vegetables will produce healthy fiber in good quantity and alter your gut bacteria to improve your digestive health considerably. Even more

chronic issues, like irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and acid reflux, will improve substantially in a relatively short amount of time.

Having a clearer gut and lesser inflammation will inevitably lead to lesser acne, cleaner pores, and reduced dullness in the face. In addition, your face and body will have a natural glow never seen before.

Your tastebuds, which have so far been addicted to fatty and greasy foods high in salt and sugar content, will undoubtedly go through a significant transition. Surprisingly, the longer you stick to a WFPB diet, the more you will come to enjoy the natural flavor of these foods.

Once you start powering your body with the goodness of whole grains and nutrient-dense vegetables and fruits, you will stop relying on quick-burning fatty foods, simple carbohydrates, and caffeine to get through your day. Instead, you will notice an increase in your energy levels and sleep better during the night. All this will lead to improved mood

and productivity levels, helping you make the most of your days.

According to PCRM, an average person on a low-fat, WFPB diet loses as much as one pound per week. Of course, this can be more depending on your lifestyle. Weight loss is almost instantaneous and has a direct impact on nearly every other aspect of your health. The key, as always, is filling your plate with low-calorie, nutrient-dense choices.

In the documentary, *The Game Changers*, we see firefighters reporting a significant drop in cholesterol after merely a week. This is not a one-off event; instead, studies conducted by PCRM say people are reducing their cholesterol levels by 100 mg/dl in some cases, which is powerful enough to keep them from taking statin altogether. Statins are the most common cholesterol medications given to people at a higher risk of a heart attack due to their high cholesterol levels. In contrast, they are highly effective and safe for most people. However, some complain of side effects like muscle pain, digestive problems,

and mental fuzziness. Also, less frequently, liver damage. Even for people who do not have any side effects from statins, it is a better alternative to naturally reduce their cholesterol levels and not rely on medication to prevent heart attacks.

Along with decreased cholesterol levels, a low-fat, WFPB diet leads to blood pressure normalizing for mere weeks. Not only that, having a diet devoid of egg and meat products leads to a return of normal TMAO levels within four weeks. This reduction significantly reduces your chances of suffering from cardiovascular diseases.

Last but not least, you will notice a significant improvement in your overall brain function, leading to higher clarity, better mood, and improved cognition.

It goes without saying that before making any major decisions regarding your medication or health, you must always consult your trusted doctor. Chances are, they will also be noticing these positive changes in your body in no time. Let's read three stories about

people whose health and life changed miraculously after adopting a WFPB diet.

WAKING UP TO A WHOLE NEW LIFE

Daniel Caracciolo had always been an overweight kid and grew up to be a fat adult. As he transitioned from being a bullied kid to a husband and a father, one thing remained constant: his belief that he would always be overweight and ridiculed for it. Not only this, but he had also developed breathing difficulties during sleep and was soon diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. He was at the point of considering bariatric surgery.

Seeing him struggle, his mother introduced him to a WFPB diet. After that, he joined online groups and read about other people's journeys, passively observing their success. Nevertheless, he could not find the motivation within himself to make the change. That is until he experienced a diabetic coma episode and forcibly had to

change his lifestyle.

Until today, less than three years later, he has dropped over 160 pounds, reversed type 2 diabetes and sleep apnea, is training for a triathlon, and is working on his own WFPB catering business.

From having resigned himself to his frightening health conditions to genuinely taking control of his life, Daniel's story is an inspiration for anyone who thinks their future is set in stone and out of their hands.

LEARNING TO LISTEN TO THE GUT

Andrea Bernal Diaz had never known a time when she was not suffering from heartburn, stomach pain, or other digestive issues. She belonged to a family that suffered from similar problems, especially her mother, and believed that she would never overcome her genetic destiny. Yet, at the same time, to reduce her discomfort, she had tried different diets and was always trying to switch to healthier alternatives.

This meant that Andrea went from having a diet primarily based on processed foods and soda to one that was healthier in her opinion; less red meat, more poultry, little to no fried or junk food, and what she considered more nutritious varieties of cheese. After she was diagnosed with gastritis and later gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), she tried to eat even healthier, increasing her intake of plant-based foods, drinking more water, and giving up on caffeine. However, she still suffered and almost resigned herself to the pain and discomfort of her sufferings. Doctors put Andrea on different kinds of medication but to no avail. Any relief she felt was temporary, but the feeling of helplessness was permanent.

Things changed when on a Fulbright Scholarship to the US. Andrea discovered many WFPB practitioners and researchers through the documentary *Forks Over Knives*. So she decided to embark on her WFPB journey. At first, she threw out all the meat and dairy products in her refrigerator and replaced them with vegan food. Ridding meat

and dairy from her diet revealed almost instantaneous results in eliminating heartburn, stomach pain, and constipation. In addition, her gut was slowly but surely healing.

Further research showed Andrea that she was making a common mistake while she was on the right track. She was equating vegan food to healthy food. She realized that to be genuinely healthy and enjoy her gut's long-term health benefits, oil, fat, and fake meats were items next on the list of elimination. She switched to a whole food, plant-based diet, having no room for processed food in her lifestyle. Within a couple of months, she dropped 20 pounds and felt a boost of energy. She weaned herself off medication and even convinced her brother and mother to switch to a WFPB diet. They saw results immediately as well.

Six years after starting the WFPB diet, Andrea has no symptoms of gastritis or GERD. She has healthy cholesterol and B-12 levels in her body. Also, she has served as an

Assistant Producer on the What the Health documentary, has received certification in WFPB nutrition from various organizations, and is looking to help more people who suffer from these diseases by making the information available.

Not only did Andrea cure herself of conditions that she previously thought she could not escape from, but she is now also actively involved in helping others envision a new life for themselves. Andrea seems to finally be listening to her gut in the truest sense.

ESCAPING A LIFE SENTENCE

It is painful enough to live with a chronic illness. But what is even more frustrating is dealing with an autoimmune disease that comes out of nowhere and upends your life completely. This happened to Jitka Burger, who suddenly found her left ear swelling up painfully and becoming extremely sensitive. After several futile doctor visits, she was

finally diagnosed with a rare autoimmune condition called relapsing polychondritis (RP). It is a debilitating disease that causes excruciating inflammatory episodes throughout the body and can even become life-threatening, mainly if it affects the respiratory system.

Jitka's doctor proclaimed that the cause of RP was yet unknown, and thus there was no cure for the disease. The doctor could put her on medication that would help with the pain and other symptoms. If the drugs stopped working, they would have to put her on more potent medicines. While the medication helped with the pain and swelling, it also came with substantial side effects that impacted her mood and made her feel depressed. The prospect of being on strong medication all her life was not appealing.

Since her doctor could not provide her with answers, Jitka started searching for answers on her own. Finally, she came across someone who had the same condition and was managing it without drugs. On further

research, Jitka came across a WFPB diet that had shown promise in combating autoimmune diseases and inflammation. Since she was out of options, she saw no harm in giving it a try.

Although her doctor was dismissive of her claim, Jitka went ahead with the trial. The results surprised both of them. Not only did her symptoms disappear, but they have also not yet recurred in the seven years since she started her WFPB diet. Her miraculous recovery prompted her family, including her husband, to adopt this lifestyle and see changes in their cholesterol levels and overall health.

Today, Jitka has started her WFPB nutrition practice, helping others in their quest for a better life, free of drugs and fear.

Stories like these are proof that we do not have to accept our current situation as our fate and that the power to change our entire lives starts with a tiny but significant step. So let's now focus on the different aspects of making this change possible, one healthy step

at a time.

PROTEIN, WITHOUT EATING CHICKEN?

Now that you have seen the benefits of adopting a WFPB diet let's address some of the concerns that you might have before making the switch. We have briefly discussed some of these topics in the second chapter but will be taking a deeper dive in the following few chapters.

One of the major concerns that many people have before making the switch is their protein intake. Most people worry that they will not fulfill their daily protein requirements while on a WFPB diet. But, before we find out if this is indeed true, let's understand why

protein is so vital for the body and how much of it should be consumed to stay healthy.

WHY IS PROTEIN NECESSARY?

Proteins are known as the building blocks of the body. They provide the body with nitrogen and amino acids, which are responsible for the cells' repair, growth, and maintenance. Amino acids are classified as essential and non-essential. Out of the 20 amino acids, there are 11 non-essential ones, which the body itself can make. You must obtain the rest through your diet.

By having all the amino acids, the body can build our organs, tendons, hormones, and muscles. This is why proteins are linked to body structure, skin, and hair to have a healthy physical appearance.

Some of the ways in which proteins are important for our overall health are:

- Satiety. Protein helps in keeping us full longer, and thus, keeps us from

consuming too many calories, aiding in weight loss.

- Building muscles. Adequate amounts of protein are crucial in building muscle mass, especially on a calorie-restricted diet.
- Energy expenditure. Proteins help aid our bodies' natural energy much more than any other macronutrients, and thus, are essential for our daily activities.

HOW MUCH PROTEIN DOES AN ADULT NEED?

We know that adequate protein intake is indispensable to our health, but how much is sufficient? According to the Dietary Reference Intake (DRI) report for macronutrients, a healthy, sedentary adult should consume about 0.8 g of protein daily for each kilogram of body weight. This roughly translates to about 56 grams for the average sedentary male and 46 grams for the average female.

There are two things of note here. Firstly, these are the requirements for a sedentary human being, which means that, for those who exercise regularly or involve themselves in high-intensity activities that burn calories, the amount of protein they can consume healthily per day increases. As mentioned earlier, protein-rich foods generally tend to leave one fuller than carbohydrates and fats, and thus, can be helpful in weight loss.

At the same time, as with everything else, moderation is key. It is still important to make sure you eat a well-balanced diet and get your daily requirement of all macronutrients. The body can convert only a certain percentage of what you eat to energy. Too much protein can also lead to weight gain. We will understand this in greater detail later in the chapter. When converted to numbers, it means that a person trying to gain muscle mass should aim to consume about 1.2-1.7 g of protein per kilogram of body weight.

Secondly, these recommendations are the

minimum daily requirements for adults. We already know that proteins have a lot of benefits for the body and also provide calories necessary for our daily functions. So it seems natural to ask, “How many of our calories can come from proteins?” The general guidelines state that about 10-35% of our daily calorie intake should come from proteins. 10-35% does not seem like a lot, which brings us to the next question.

HOW MUCH PROTEIN IS TOO MUCH?

The first part of the answer responds to some of the concerns around the overconsumption of protein. For example, while many people believe that too much protein can lead to kidney disease, studies have shown that this is a concern only for those predisposed to kidney ailments. Therefore, if you already have issues with your kidneys, you might want to be careful how much protein you consume. But what about those who do not face these issues? Well, the problem stems

from the fact that protein cannot store in the body as itself. Therefore, if there is too much protein consumption, the body converts it into energy and fat. Not only that, but the body also needs its daily quota of healthy fats and carbohydrates. Therefore, it makes more sense to have a limited amount of protein each day.

We address the questions that mainly deal with plant-based protein sources and whether WFPB diets are doing justice to our daily protein needs. The short answer is yes, a WFPB diet fulfills our daily requirements, and then some. So let's look at the studies behind these findings and surprise ourselves with the insights.

PROTEINS ON A WFPB DIET

Studies have been conducted to determine whether plant-based proteins can successfully replace animal-based proteins in our diets in recent years. This particular concern relates to the fact that animal proteins are higher in

essential amino acids, whereas plant proteins have more non-essential amino acids in them. The results of the studies, however, put all doubts to rest. Some of these findings are:

- All participants have been able to fulfill their daily protein requirements and those of the individual amino acids. Meaning that even on a plant-based protein diet, people do not miss out on any essential amino acid, and in fact, frequently exceed their recommended daily quota of the same. Thus, animal proteins might provide us with more essential amino acids than we need, but plant proteins certainly do not provide us with less. The primary sources of these amino acids are legumes, whole grains, and vegetables.
- A plant-based protein diet is more than sufficient to provide us with each amino acid. For example, two servings of oatmeal, made from about 100 g of oats, can provide 102% of our daily requirement of the amino acid tyrosine.

All of our daily amino acid (essential and non-essential) requirements are met without special food combinations.

- While all amino acids must be present in the proteins we consume, the composition influences insulin activity and glucagon, which directly affects body composition and insulin resistance. What does this mean? Now we look at the quantity and quality of amino acids and how that affects our overall health.
- There are three branched-chain amino acids (BCAAs): leucine, valine, and isoleucine. These have been the basis for a multi-million-dollar industry of protein supplements, with claims that these supplements alone can help stimulate muscle protein synthesis, thus reducing fatigue and soreness after intense physical activities. We all know gym enthusiasts that swear by these supplements. But are they indispensable? Studies show that if people regularly have adequate protein, they do not need these additional

supplements. The BCAAs themselves are present in higher quantities in animal proteins. They are known to increase insulin resistance, which means that they directly impact blood sugar levels and should not be consumed in excessive amounts.

- Additionally, plant proteins are lower in sulfur-containing amino acids, thus, causing a reduction in blood pressure, blood lipids, and body weight.
- A decrease in the intake of animal proteins, in general, reduces the fat mass in the body.
- Studies have also shown that low protein diets, especially plant-based ones, are linked to longer lifespans.

What does all this mean for you? Well, for one, a limited protein intake helps increase your lifespan. Not only that, but plant-based protein sources also lead to significant improvements in body composition, body weight, and insulin resistance. These reductions cause a decline in obesity as well

as an incidence of cardiovascular diseases. Therefore, not only do plant-based proteins make up for the absence of animal proteins in our diet, but they are also much better for our overall health.

IS IT SUSTAINABLE?

This is one of the last questions in the heads of people planning to switch their lifestyles. Of course, it is all well and good to say that plant-based proteins are beneficial. But can people sustain this diet throughout their lifetimes? More importantly, can people from diverse backgrounds and lifestyles incorporate this diet and stick to it?

Studies show that this is possible. The attrition rate of these studies has been considerably low, showing that people can stick to these diets without any difficulty. However, one might argue that these are time-bound studies and might not indicate the lifelong impact of plant-based protein diets on people. Let's meet Fiona Oakes and

understand the limits of what is achievable on a WFPB diet.

GRIT AND GREENS

Fiona Oakes is a British distance runner who holds four world records for marathon running. In addition, she has competed in and won some of the toughest endurance running challenges in the world. In 2013, Fiona won both the Antarctic Ice Marathon and the North Pole Marathon. Not only this, but she is also a volunteer firefighter and runs a sanctuary for around 500 animals. If this is not inspiring enough, there is something to consider: this is done without a kneecap, losing it to a tumor at 17 years of age. Whatsmore she has followed a plant-based diet ever since she was six years of age.

For Fiona, going off dairy and meat was a choice rooted in her love for animals, and so is her running. Despite winning numerous championships, she is not in it for the money or the runner's high. Instead, she aims to

create awareness around plant-based eating and prove that one can do anything on a diet like hers. She believes that if people see her test the limits of her body in some of the most challenging races in the world and emerge victoriously, it would convince them that a meat and dairy-free diet is not restrictive in any way.

Even today, Fiona has a busy day that starts at 3:30 am and consists of training and working in the sanctuary for long hours. Her meals consist of fresh produce from her farm and includes seasonal fruits and vegetables, whole grains, pulses, nuts, seeds, and lots of nutritional yeast. She enjoys her meal, and it keeps her fit and able to meet the demands of her extraordinary schedule.

The star of a feature-length documentary, *Running for Good*, Fiona's life has been about busting myths and challenging long-held beliefs. Not only has she pushed her limits consistently, but through her achievements, she has also made it possible for others to question their firmly held beliefs

regarding food and fuel. One cannot help but be inspired by her life and consider taking a leap, knowing they will land firmly on their feet.

PROTEIN-RICH, PLANT-BASED FOODS

Some of the most protein-rich, plant-based foods can add both flavor and health to our plates. Let's see how much protein is contained in a cup of these foods:

- Edamame — 18.5 g
- Lentils — 18 g
- Pinto beans — 15.5 g
- Chickpeas — 14.5 g
- Mung beans — 14.1 g
- Fava beans — 13 g
- Lima beans — 11.5 g
- Peas — 8.6 g
- Quinoa — 8.1 g
- Wild rice — 6.5 g
- Pistachios — 6 g
- Almonds — 6 g

- Brussels sprouts — 5.6 g
- Spinach — 5.2 g
- Artichokes — 4.8 g
- Chia seeds — 4.7 g
- Sweet corn — 4.7 g
- Avocado — 4.6 g
- Asparagus — 4.3 g
- Broccoli — 4.3 g
- Mushrooms — 4 g
- Kale — 3.5 g
- Potato — 3 g

This is by no means an exhaustive list but it does tell us something about the variety of choices we have in designing a plant-protein-based menu. It contains a mix of whole grains, pulses, nuts and seeds, starchy vegetables, and cruciferous and dark leafy greens. An added advantage to consuming these foods is that they are rich in nutrients, especially in vitamins. For example, while mushrooms are rich in vitamin B and vitamin D if grown under UV light, chia seeds are rich in omega-3 fatty acids. Dark leafy greens are rich in vitamin A and folate. At the same

time, one medium potato can provide us with considerable quantities of vitamin C and vitamin K, especially if eaten with its skin intact. They are also versatile in the forms they take, becoming a part of many dishes and working well on their own. While we are on the subject, let's look more closely at how a WFPB diet works in providing us with the micronutrients essential for a healthy life.

NUTRIENTS: THE PATH TO HOLISTIC HEALTH

A well-balanced diet will ensure that you get your daily dose of vitamins and minerals, those micronutrients that are key to overall good health and vitality. Apart from the vitamins, it is best to have adequate calcium and vitamin D for healthy bones, zinc for a healthy immune system, enough iron for energy and immunity, and enough vitamin B12 to produce and maintain red blood cells and prevent anemia. Let's look at the food groups that are especially rich in different nutrients and which ones boost our WFPB

lifestyle.

Cruciferous Vegetables

Cruciferous vegetables are the stars of a WFPB diet. This group belongs to the mustard family and derives its name from the Latin word “Cruciferae.” Cruciferae translates to “cross-bearing” as a reference to how the petals of these vegetables resemble a cross. This family of health saviors consists of broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, kale, bok choy, arugula, Brussels sprouts, collards, watercress, and radishes. Although they might have different shapes, sizes, and colors, they have a lot of nutritional benefits in common such as:

- Most of them are rich in folate and vitamin K. This is especially true of dark green, leafy vegetables. While vitamin K protects bones from osteoporosis and inflammation, folate is a B vitamin that promotes heart health, prevents specific congenital disabilities, and helps in DNA

replication and repair, thus protecting the body against the development of different forms of cancer.

- Dark green cruciferous vegetables are also abundant in vitamins A and C. Salad greens, kale, and spinach are rich in vitamins A, C, E, and K, while bok choy, mustard, and broccoli provide an abundance of B vitamins.
- They are also high in carotenoids, which protect the cells and prevent cancer development in the early stages. Remember phytonutrients? Cruciferous vegetables have loads of these, helping in the prevention of inflammation and cancer.
- Dark leafy greens contain high levels of fiber, iron, magnesium, potassium, and calcium. That is a whole lot of micronutrients.
- Since they contain minimal carbohydrates, sodium, or cholesterol and are very low in calories, they can help you feel full without overeating. Isn't that the ultimate dream?

Root Vegetables

These are edible plants that grow underground and can be termed as fruits of the earth. This group consists of beets, carrots, daikon radishes, garlic, onions, shallots, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and burdock root, to name a few. While these are not as nutrient-dense as cruciferous vegetables, most of them also contain nitrates, vitamins A and C, and carotenoids, thus helping build immunity, improve eye health, and reduce blood pressure. In addition, most of them have one or more phytonutrients present in them.

Starchy and Non-Starchy Vegetables

Starch is a type of carbohydrate your body breaks down into glucose. While starchy vegetables are rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants and should be a part of your diet, they should be limited to about one-fourth of the plate. Limiting these starchy vegetables is necessary because being higher in carbohydrates can cause blood sugar levels to spike. They are also higher in calories and

lower in fiber than non-starchy vegetables, which means they can leave you feeling less full with the same number of calories. Non-starchy vegetables, on the other hand, should fill up to half of your plate.

Some examples of starchy vegetables are beets, acorn squash, butternut squash, white potatoes, sweet potatoes, green peas, corn, carrots, and turnips. As you can see, most root vegetables are starchy by nature. Non-starchy vegetables, on the other hand, include eggplant, asparagus, arugula, red peppers, tomatoes, purple cabbage, cabbage, celery, black olives, and Brussels sprouts. Dark leafy greens and cruciferous vegetables dominate this category.

Some starchy vegetables contain resistant starch, starch molecules that forgo digestion. Resistant starch isn't digested in your small intestine, and thus, does not spike your blood sugar. In fact, being digested in the large intestine improves your gut health and makes you feel fuller after eating the vegetables. It also helps lower your cholesterol, improve

glycemic control, prevent constipation, and lower your chances of having colon cancer. Some foods which contain resistant starch in reasonable amounts are beans, peas, and lentils.

One method to create more resistant starch in your vegetables is cooking the vegetables the day before you eat them and then storing them in the refrigerator overnight. Then, when you heat them the next day, the amount of resistant starch formed will remain unchanged. This will help you get more nutrition and goodness from your starchy vegetables.

Citrus Fruits

Remember the splash of colors that we want to include on our plates? Citrus fruits have a major role in contributing to it. These flavorful, brightly colored fruits are native to Asia's tropical and subtropical regions and the Malay Archipelago. There are many varieties of citrus fruits today. Still, it is interesting to note that all of them have been created due to crossing three original types: the mandarin

orange, pomelo, and citron.

Some of the popular members of this family include sweet oranges, mandarins, limes, grapefruit, and lemons. Not only are these fruits a joy to eat, but they also have fantastic health benefits. Some of them are:

- They are excellent sources of vitamin C, which works wonders for the skin and the immune system.
- They are usually rich in B vitamins and minerals such as potassium, phosphorus, magnesium, and copper.
- They are packed with fiber, which means they are suitable for your gut health, and in turn, aid in weight loss and maintenance. Not only this, citrus fruits, especially oranges, contain a higher ratio of soluble to insoluble fiber, which helps lower cholesterol levels in the body.
- They are low in calories and have enough fiber and water in them to make you feel full without overeating.
- They are rich in phytonutrients,

especially flavonoids, which can help prevent inflammation. These phytonutrients reduce the risk of various cancers and protect your brain against neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

- By raising the level of citrate in your urine, citrus fruits might help prevent kidney stone formation in your body.
- The flavonoids present in these fruits are antioxidants that improve heart health.
- The combination of soluble fiber and flavonoids helps lower harmful cholesterol levels and raise good cholesterol levels in the body.

Citrus fruits are a blessing for those who want to incorporate more health into their diet. However, you should make sure that you have the whole fruit instead of the juice as much as possible. Rather than increasing your sugar intake, this will ensure that you get the essential nutrients and fill your stomach.

This chapter should give you the confidence

that not only can your daily nutrient needs be met on a WFPB diet but that you will also be better off if you get those nutrients from plant-based sources instead of animal-based ones.

In the next chapter, we shall address the most controversial element of adopting a proper WFPB diet: oil elimination.

CONTROVERSY AROUND OIL ELIMINATION

The controversy around oil elimination is a big one, and understandably so. People who have followed a WFPB diet for some time, and swear by its benefits, balk at the idea of eliminating oil. But, again, the consensus is that it is too restrictive, impractical, and takes the fun out of cooking. Also, certain oils are culturally significant, such as olive oil in Italian and Spanish cuisines, mustard oil in Indian cuisine, et al. Most people have grown up on these oils and the impact they have on their home-cooked food. The resistance to change, therefore, makes sense.

However, a lot of this resistance comes from other notions that are prevalent in the food industry. On the one hand, oils have a reputation for being beneficial for your skin and hair, not to mention your immune system and your brain health. On the other hand, certain oils, such as olive oil, have almost cult status as “healthy oils.” Therefore, people protest, saying that this call for oil elimination is removing good oils from the diet and harming us in the process.

In order to understand what the experts are talking about and why people who make the switch convince themselves that it is an essential element of an actual WFPB diet, we need to address the questions around this topic.

ARE OILS WHOLE FOODS?

Oils are not considered a whole food. Seemingly obvious, but why is it so important in the first place? Let’s go back to our understanding of whole foods. Since whole

foods are foods in which nothing good or healthy is removed, and nothing bad is added, this simple explanation works well to help us remember why we are on this journey.

Oils are not whole foods. They result from whole foods being processed, and thus, it makes more sense to consume the whole foods they come from. So what exactly are the disadvantages of consuming vegetable and margarine oils, even the “healthy” ones? There are three major reasons why you should consider eliminating or at the very least reducing your oil intake.

Reducing Inflammation

Yes, you read that right. If you suffer from chronic inflammation, or even if you want to prevent symptoms of inflammation in the future, processed oils have to go. Hydrogenated oils are a significant cause of inflammatory triggers. Thus, margarine, peanut butter, and other processed oils are a big no-no if you want to reduce inflammation. Even vegetable oils are heavily processed, which means it takes many steps

for the whole food to become the oil. The more steps it takes to process, the more inflammatory the oil is.

Not only that, vegetable oils like canola, grapeseed, and olive oils, tend to be highly sensitive. This high sensitivity means that they undergo significant alteration in composition on exposure to air and light. So again, any major alteration in oil composition makes it a primary candidate for increasing your inflammatory triggers.

Recent studies have presented more concerning findings in the area. These studies show that within three hours of ingesting oil, endothelial function in the body becomes impaired. The endothelium is a membrane that lines the inside of the heart and blood vessels. It is primarily responsible for maintaining blood fluidity, blood clotting, and immune response. When this membrane doesn't function properly, arteries stiffen, their ability to dilate is impaired, and it causes an inflammatory response in the body.

Weight Loss and Maintenance

We have already discussed how a high-fat, plant-based diet is not beneficial and is not even a proper whole foods diet. So let's see how oils fare in this discussion. First, there are the numbers, which are shocking by themselves. Oils, in general, contain 120 calories or 14 g of fat per tablespoon. Even worse, coconut and palm oils have very high amounts of saturated fats, the unhealthiest fats next to trans fats. For example, coconut oil is 90% saturated fat, while lard is 40%.

To get a sense of how calorically dense oils are, let's look at a comparison of the number of calories present in one pound of different food groups:

- Vegetables — 100 calories (per pound)
- Fruit — 300 calories
- Unrefined complex carbohydrates, potatoes, whole grains, and legumes — 400-600 calories
- Avocados — 750 calories
- Refined complex carbohydrates — 1200 calories
- Sugar — 1800 calories

- Chocolate — 2500 calories
- Nuts and seeds — 2800 calories
- Oil — 4000 calories

While one may argue that a pound of anything is too huge a measure to compare these foods adequately, the point regarding the calorie density of oils versus other food products is still valid. We have touched upon calorie-dense versus nutrient-dense foods earlier. These numbers make the difference clearer. In fact, the next most calorically dense food, nuts and seeds, are almost 50% less dense than the oils, many of which derive from them.

The more calorically dense something is, the less room it takes up in your stomach for the same number of calories. Simply put, this means that you need to consume more significant amounts of that food to feel full, hence ingesting more calories to achieve the same effect. Therefore, if you aim to restrict your calorie intake to lose weight, you would be much better off eating vegetables, fruit, and whole grains for the same amount of

calories and feel satiated for longer. Consuming these foods is critical because you do not want to undereat in order to lose weight.

More Nutrients Per Calorie

A helpful way of looking at how healthy our diet can be is to consider the calories in, calories out equation, and nutrients per calorie of food. This is tied to the previous point but goes a bit further. When we look at the nutrient profiles of most oils, the truth is, they don't have much in the way of micronutrients. Some of them have omega-3 fatty acids, which are essential, but nothing else. Knowing this, it becomes even more apparent that nuts and seeds are a better choice than the oils that come from them. Even though they are calorically dense, they contain essential nutrients in larger quantities. Many nuts contain high amounts of omega-3 fatty acids, while walnuts and almonds have other nutrients that help regulate brain function. Avocados are also higher in fiber and healthy fats as compared to avocado oil.

Let's look at some numbers:

- It takes 40 olives to make one tablespoon of olive oil.
- It takes a whole coconut to make one tablespoon of coconut oil.
- It takes three avocados to make one tablespoon of avocado oil.

As you can see, in many ways, the processing is essentially a reductive procedure. This process restricts the number of calories we can consume for the same amount and quality of nutrients we receive from oil instead of the whole food. The steps it takes to make oil rob the whole foods of their essential nutrients. For example:

- About 60% of your daily iron requirements can be fulfilled by 40 olives, whereas one tablespoon of olive oil provides only about 3% of the same.
- Two coconuts can provide approximately 62% of the daily magnesium recommendations, while

one tablespoon of coconut oil has no traces of magnesium.

- Similarly, three avocados are enough to fulfill 80% of your daily potassium needs, while one tablespoon of avocado oil has almost no potassium in it.

This presents a sobering picture. These are what we call “empty calories” – those that have no nutritional value. More shockingly, these calories displace those that are full of fiber, nutrients, and phytonutrients. Thus, if you are already deficient in specific nutrients or need more fiber in your food, as most Americans do, oils are counterproductive in achieving your aims.



OIL ELIMINATION ISN'T HEALTHY FATS ELIMINATION

A common misconception among people is that cutting down on oils is the same as cutting down on healthy fats. However, this is not true. But to understand it clearly, we need to know what healthy fats are and where to get them from in our diet.

Why Does the Body Need Fats?

Fats play a vital role in the overall functioning of your body. Some of these functions include:

- Increasing satiety — Helping you feel full, so that you don't overeat.
- Improving glycemic control — Making sure that your blood sugar doesn't spike after meals.
- Helping in absorption of fat-soluble vitamins — These vitamins are A, D, E, and K.
- Providing protection — By providing padding around our vital organs and

insulating our bodies.

- Providing energy — While carbohydrates and proteins have four calories per gram, fats provide nine calories per gram. They are therefore more calorically dense than any other essential nutrient.

Recommended Daily Fat Intake

Your daily recommended fat intake depends on your dietary and health requirements, but in general, a healthy adult should aim at getting about 30% of their daily calorie needs from fats. Since they are calorically dense, they can fulfill your needs in small doses. At the same time, you should try and look for sources of fats that are nutrient-dense as well.

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Fats

Polyunsaturated fats (omega-3 and omega-6) are necessary fats that help in the body's functioning and should be incorporated in a healthy diet. Some of these fatty acids cannot be naturally produced by the body and thus should be essentially added to your diet.

Linoleic acid (LA) is an omega-6 fat found in seeds, nuts, and corn and can be converted to other omega-6 fatty acids in the body. On the other hand, Alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) is an omega-3 fat that is found in flaxseed, linseed, walnuts, hempseed, and soya beans. The body converts ALA to other essential omega-3 fatty acids, which are crucial for healthy brain function. They also help the body in combating aging, cancer, inflammation, and cognitive decline. In addition, they keep the heart, lungs, blood vessels, and immune system working correctly. Remember that a healthy ratio of omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids in the body includes a higher proportion of omega-3 than omega-6, as discussed earlier.

Monounsaturated fats, including omega-7 and omega-9 fatty acids, are also healthy fats. Still, they are not treated as essential fatty acids since the body can produce them from other unsaturated fats.

What are unhealthy fats? These are saturated and trans fats. While trans fats are

instrumental in increasing your harmful cholesterol levels, saturated fats increase the incidence of cardiovascular diseases in the body. Trans fats are found in processed foods, including baked items and snacks. If the packaging refers to partial hydrogenation of oil, it means the food contains trans fats. They should be avoided altogether. Saturated fats should be consumed as little as possible because they cause obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases. They are primarily found in animal products, and hence, a WFPB diet is, by definition, free of saturated fats.

Sources of Healthy Fats

As mentioned earlier, most of our daily nutritional fat requirements can be met by a WFPB diet including avocados, coconuts, nuts, nut butter, seeds, and seed butter. Nuts like walnuts, and seeds like chia and flax seeds, are healthier and more nutrient-dense options to include in your diet. In addition, whole grains such as brown rice, wheat, and oatmeal also contain small quantities of

healthy fats.

Avocado Oil: to Include or Not?

While we have shown the stats earlier, depicting how avocados are a much better source of healthy fats than avocado oil, we'll try to see some merits of including avocado oil in our diet. It has shown benefits such as:

- providing vitamins and minerals in reasonable quantities
- improving skin quality
- enhancing joint lubrication
- reducing cholesterol absorption
- preventing insulin spikes and stabilizing blood sugar levels

Despite its benefits, avocado oil is calorie-dense, and therefore, should be consumed in moderation. The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends oils with less than four grams of saturated fat per tablespoon, and avocado oil contains two. Therefore, avocado oil is okay to have in small quantities. At the same time, you should look for minimally

processed or refined versions, as they have the highest nutrient retention.

IS OIL ELIMINATION POSSIBLE?

While this chapter makes a compelling case for the elimination, or at the very least, reduction of oil from your diet, making the switch might be a considerable challenge. It seems impossible, more so because of the food industry, to imagine our food without oil. Even before we have tasted it, we expect such food to be flavorless. Not only that, for those that cook for themselves and their families, it can seem like a daunting task. Can we even cook without oil? Is it worth it?

Take heart, dear reader, for not only is it possible to cook food with minimal or no oil, but it is also not a compromise with your taste buds. One thing to remember is that people who are used to the Standard American Diet (SAD) rely on excess oil, salt, and sugar. The taste buds, therefore, need some time to adjust. That being said, once

you get used to a WFPB diet, you will begin to truly enjoy the natural flavors of the foods themselves rather than be addicted to the harmful additives.

As for cooking without oil, there are many chefs worldwide and people who enjoy cooking, who have spent time preparing recipes and methods that do not rely on oil to be delicious. For example, there is a cruise called Holistic Holiday at Sea, which aims at giving people a vacation where they can find health and enjoyment in equal measure. There is an explicit option for ordering off the oil-free menu on this cruise, but there are other options that use a minimal amount.

Many people aboard the cruise try this option for the first time and claim that they would not know the difference if they didn't know. Of course, an oil-heavy menu will not taste the same as an oil-free one. But it will not taste wildly different either. And that is the point: to prove that oil-free cooking is both possible and tasty.

Many people who have gone oil-free claim

that at one point, there was once a time when they could not even remotely imagine a life without oil. Today, they find themselves repulsed by an oil-heavy menu and have difficulty in making their taste buds appreciate what once seemed indispensable.

In the next chapter, we will focus on substitutions and how to make a low-fat, WFPB diet taste good, if not better, with some smart choices.

SPICE UP THE SUBSTITUTIONS

This chapter looks at some of the alternatives available to those who adopt a low-fat, WFPB lifestyle. Contrary to belief, this kind of living is not restrictive, and in fact, opens up a world of possibilities, both in cooking and eating. It also encourages us to get creative and look for different ways to add flavor to our food. Many great recipe books show how to cook a wide variety of foods on a WFPB diet.

Here, we look at some common substitutions and creative ways to make the most out of them. Hopefully, this chapter will give you

the final boost needed to embrace this lifestyle.

SUBSTITUTIONS FOR ANIMAL-BASED PROTEINS

We have discussed proteins extensively in Chapter 4 and some protein-rich plant-based foods to replace the animal-based ones. Let's look at some of the most popular substitutions and how to use them well in a WFPB diet.

Soy-based Substitutions

These include tofu, tempeh, and edamame. Tofu is made from soy in a process very similar to that of making cheese. It is light in flavor and has a soft and spongy texture. A light, spongy texture makes it easier to soak in marinades and sauces, thus becoming flavorful. It can acquire the taste of whatever is cooked with it, which means that it is essentially a blank canvas for you to work on. Silken tofu can be blended or pureed for use in sauces, creams, et al. Tofu with a firmer

texture can be stir-fried or baked after being marinated in spices or seasonings, bringing out their flavor.

Tempeh, on the other hand, is made from pressed soybeans that are lightly fermented. As a result, it is chewier than tofu and has a slightly nutty flavor. In addition, it has a unique taste that can replace the taste of bacon in sandwiches and other foods.

Edamame are green soybean pods that are boiled or steamed and used extensively in Asian cuisines. They are incredibly versatile and can be eaten on their own and included in soups, kinds of pasta, and so on.

Legume-based Substitutions

Legumes are an excellent substitute for meat products. The caveat is that if you are not used to eating a lot of legumes, do not rush in with the substitution. Instead, take it slow and steady. The reason for this is that the high fiber content in these lentils might not be something familiar to your body, which can lead to gas and indigestion in the beginning.

So give your body time to ease into all the goodness heading its way.

Beans

Beans are available in many forms and varieties and are a relatively inexpensive way of making up for the absence of animal proteins in your diet. Not only that, but they are also highly versatile and can be used to make delicious curries, salads, fillings, and so on.

Chickpeas

Chickpeas are chewier, firmer, and crunchier than most other legumes and are used extensively in Mediterranean, Indian, and Middle Eastern cuisines. You can make them into crunchy salad toppings, spicy Indian curries, and hummus, that miracle dip that makes everything much better.

Lentils

Utilizing lentils in spicy Indian dishes like dal can be eaten on their own as a soup or can pair as an accompaniment to rice and Indian

flatbread. They are smoother than beans and pack a lot of punch in small amounts.

Wheat-based Substitutions

These include grains, bread, and seitan. When choosing bread, make sure to choose sprouted-grain bread, as it has more protein than any other variety and is also easier to digest.

Seitan is made from wheat gluten and contains an unusually high amount of protein. As a result, it has a savory taste, closest to bland chicken or portobello mushrooms. On its own, it does not have a robust flavor but can take on stronger flavors from other ingredients, thus making it a versatile component of many dishes.

Amaranth and buckwheat are pseudocereals because they do not grow from the grass as other grains do. However, they are complete protein sources, and many people use them as sprinklings on top of salads and more filling meals.

Nuts, seeds, and quinoa

These substitutions are not only healthy but also tasty and even addictive. For example, quinoa is a seed but has a grain texture and is therefore utilized as one. It can be cooked in many ways, replacing other grains and leading to tasty, hearty dishes of all kinds. In addition, seeds can be used to provide crunch and variety to salads, soups, and other dishes.

By now, we know how healthy nuts are but do you know how addictive they can be? These crunchy delights can be tempting to wolf down in one sitting, be it cashews, almonds, or walnuts. While they should be eaten in moderation, adding them to sweet and savory dishes adds texture, crunch, and flavor. Dry roasting them before adding them to salads, soups, and desserts can give those dishes an extra kick. Cashews, for one, can also be blended into a smooth paste that adds richness and flavor to cuisines where dairy is not suitable. Cashew paste is used extensively in North Indian dishes to provide depth and fullness to savory dishes without adding cream or butter.

Mushrooms and vegetables

There are many different ways to cook mushrooms and vegetables, and you can choose from a variety of delicious dishes to replace animal products. The meaty and earthy flavor of most mushrooms makes them the ideal replacement for those missing these flavors. Mushrooms come in many varieties and elevate dishes either in curries, soups, or even as fillings.

Many vegetables are highly versatile in how you can use them, either in salads, wraps, or even smoothies. For example, cauliflowers can be used in many creative ways – from steaming them to roasting the florets and blending them into a silken puree to pickling them as a crunchy, spicy snack. On the other hand, Brussels sprouts can be roasted and added to both sweet and savory dishes. Kale can be used in salads, as toppings, and even in smoothies. It does not wilt easily. Therefore, it can be stored for days to be used in a variety of ways. Finally, arugula is a green that can be grown very simply in a

garden. It can be blended to be used in a spicy pesto or tossed with salads to provide crunch and flavor to them. The sky's the limit with these vegetables, and you can create very imaginative, delicious meals using these green wonders.

SUBSTITUTIONS FOR EGGS

When it comes to replacing eggs, a significant concern for people is the apparent lack of options for baking or even binding and providing structure to other food. However, the truth is that many chefs and home cooks have experimented over time to arrive at recipes that make up for the absence of eggs and lead to more exciting and flavorful results. Some examples of the replacements below are:

- While baking, you can replace one large egg with one tablespoon of ground flax or chia seeds with three tablespoons of warm water. This mixture helps in binding, as well as in

providing moisture to the baked goods. It helps in achieving a moist, dense crumb. You can also use nut butter, potato flakes, cooked oatmeal, and rolled oats as viable substitutes.

- If you want to go gluten-free, you can add one tablespoon of starch and two tablespoons of warm water for each cup of flour for extra binding. If you wish to add extra leavening, add one tablespoon baking soda, along with one tablespoon of vinegar.
- For other egg-based dishes, like quiches and pies, you can replace each egg with two ounces or one-fourth cup of tofu of any kind. Crumbled tofu mixed with vegetables and spices acts as a delicious answer to those scrambled egg cravings.
- Chickpea flour mixed in a 1:1 ratio with water also works well for omelets. The liquid leftover from chickpeas, known as aquafaba, is an excellent substitute for egg whites in dishes like meringue or mousse.
- Instead of mayonnaise, you can use

homemade tofu mayonnaise, pureed avocado with lemon juice, or hummus.

SUBSTITUTIONS FOR SUGAR

Sugar is another ingredient that seems indispensable to so many foods. Especially for those of us with a sweet tooth, it seems unimaginable that we must eat our favorite desserts and dishes without adding sugar.

In 2018, a consensus study conducted among experts in nutrition, medicine, physical activity, and public health concluded that low-calorie sweeteners in diabetes management might contribute to better glycemic control. While there are several artificial sweeteners like Sweet n Low and Splenda, care should be taken while using them.

A recently popular sweetener of choice is the monk fruit sweetener. Monk fruit is a small, round fruit native to southern China. It has been used for centuries in Eastern countries to combat colds and aid in digestion.

Nowadays, its extract, or juice, is used to sweeten foods and beverages. It has zero calories per serving and was approved for use by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2010. It is about 150-200 times sweeter than sugar, and thus, a minimal amount is enough to achieve the sweetness needed in food.

The effects of monk fruit sweeteners on health have not been conclusively established yet as it is a recent addition in the US. However, it has been used for centuries elsewhere and has shown no negative impacts on the populations.

Refined Sugar vs. Whole Foods

By now, we know the ill effects of refined sugar on our health. While reading nutrition labels, you need to look out for sucrose, fructose, high fructose corn syrup, glucose, lactose, maltose dextrose, corn sweetener, cane crystals, molasses, et al, evaporated cane juice, and fruit juice concentrates, to name a few. Even though most of these sugars come from sugar cane or sugar beets, the

refinement process takes away all the natural fiber and other nutrients present in the whole food. This absence of fiber causes a spike in blood sugar levels. Apart from that, refined sugar is inflammatory and addictive as well. Meaning you can forever find yourself on the hamster wheel of ill-health. These are off the table if you want to live a truly healthy lifestyle.

The question then remains: what do we use as a substitute for these? We have talked about artificial sweeteners earlier, but our best bet, as always, is to use the whole foods themselves to sweeten your dishes.

While some schools of thought say that moderate amounts of slightly refined sugars, like real maple syrup, brown rice syrup, and blackstrap molasses are okay to use, you must keep in mind that these do not have the amount of fiber needed for a truly healthy diet. Therefore, you might still need to add ground flax seeds, whole grains, or fruit to the mix to up your fiber intake.

Whole foods, on the other hand, have plenty

of fiber as well as the natural sweetness that can make your desserts and foods taste divine without the evils of refined sugar. What's more, you can get creative with the use of these foods to whip up a whole variety of desserts.

Fruits and Vegetables for Sweetness

- While it takes a bit of experimenting to get the texture right, especially with baked foods, adding fruits and vegetables imparts goodness to the food and lends a natural tenderness and color to them. Refraining from sweeteners also allows the natural flavor of the fruits, vegetables, and other spices to rise to the surface. Some of how these can be used are:
- Adding bananas — Bananas are naturally sweet, add moisture to the baked goods, and act as a fantastic binding agent. Overripe bananas can be mashed or blended in with the dough to get the right consistency and sweetness. Once combined, you can use the

banana mixture to make cakes, cookies, muffins, and pancakes.

- Baking with dates — A date is a popular dry fruit to use for baked goods. They are very sweet and are also versatile. They can be chopped for texture or softened in hot water in a 1:1 ratio to mash into a paste. The date paste can even be stored to be used as a liquid sweetener in the future.
- Other fruits — Apples, applesauce, pureed carrots, beets, and sweet potatoes can also add sweetness and moisture to your baked goods. As with everything else, you need to be careful with the consistency and texture of the food. Remember to use homemade and unsweetened applesauce not accidentally to include refined sugar in your diet.
- Caramelized onions — These can be cooked easily by adding sliced yellow or sweet onions to a skillet, stirring on medium heat until they turn brown, and then deglazing them with water or vegetable broth. In the end, you cook

them for another 20 minutes with occasional stirring over a low flame to bring out the onions' natural sweetness. Add this to grains, veggie burgers, and casseroles.

- Sweetening the sauces — Traditionally, many sauces use some sugar to counter the acidity of other ingredients like tomatoes. They turn out delicious. You can create a similar effect by grating carrots, beets, butternut squash, or sweet potatoes and adding them to sauces, soups, and stews. By adding them in grated form, you will make it easier to melt into the sauce while cooking, thus not affecting the texture. You can try this with other vegetables as well and come up with your own delightfully surprising combinations.
- Roasting sweet potatoes — By roasting whole sweet potatoes, you can bring out their natural flavor without the need for butter. You can eat it by itself, adding cinnamon or date paste for that added kick, or you can use it as a base for healthy cakes and puddings.

- Fruit as natural candy — You can also enjoy fruit all by itself as a sweet treat. Raw, fresh fruits are the best, and you can use them as toppings in oatmeal to give it extra health and sweetness. You can also try poaching fruit once in a while to mix things up. Peaches, nectarines, pears, apples, plums, and apricots are some fruits that can be poached well. Make sure to add just enough liquid for simmering the fruits so they turn out tender but not mushy. Not only that, but you can also freeze fruit to make natural ice cream, especially for kids.
- Sweetening your beverages — Unsweetened tea can be infused with apples, mangoes, berries, and other fruits. Alternatively, you can add dry fruits such as dates or raisins to the tea to impart a natural sweetness to it. Some other WFPB sweeteners that can work wonders are apricot purée, raisin purée, fig purée, balsamic glaze, fruit preserves, and different dry fruits. As addictive as refined sugar may be, your

taste buds take as little as two weeks to get used to life without it.

SUBSTITUTIONS FOR OIL

People's concerns regarding cooking without oil include food sticking to the cookware and flavors of the foods not coming out well. However, to learn to cook without oil, a few things to be kept in mind will make the transition easier.

Invest in the right cookware — There is an initial investment in choosing high-quality cookware, but it pays off in the long run. You need to take care of the cookware while cooking with and washing it so that the coating remains intact for a long time. Some options are enamel-coated cast iron pans and skillets, heavy-bottomed stainless-steel pans, and ceramic titanium pans. Silicone ovenware is an excellent option for roasting vegetables, baking, and preparing oil-free desserts. You can also use parchment paper to line baking sheets and casserole dishes.

Baking without oil — Using applesauce, mashed bananas, and puréed dates or pumpkins can help you make delicious cakes and desserts without adding oil. As always, you may need to experiment a bit to get the consistency right.

Roasting without oil — To roast vegetables well, you can use parchment paper or silicone baking sheets to prevent them sticking to the pan. Even without any added liquid, vegetables can roast well if done slowly and on low heat. You can lightly mist the vegetables with water or broth and then add spices for seasoning before roasting them to get the best results.

Sautéing and stir-frying without oil — You do not need oil to sauté your vegetables perfectly. In fact, using water, vegetable broth, vinegar, or wine gets similar results to oil. The trick is to add the liquid in small amounts at one time and then keep adding it in intervals as needed. Additionally, it helps to keep moving the vegetables gently from time to time to keep them from burning.

The magic of air-frying — An air-fryer is not a must in a WFPB kitchen, but let's admit it, a lot of us love the goodness of crispy and fried foods. Air-frying helps you achieve the same effect as deep-frying without the health issues surrounding oil. You can then welcome back the crunch in your life without guilt.

Salad dressings — Instead of olive oil or other beloved oils used for dressings, you can use kinds of vinegar, lemon juice, and low-sodium soy sauce to add a healthy zing and zest to your salads.

SPICE UP YOUR MEALS

Knowing how to use spices and herbs judiciously can create a massive difference in your WFPB menu. Not only do these spices make up for low amounts of salt, sugar, and oil, but they also enhance the flavors of vegetables, whole grains, and even fruits. While every cuisine and culture in the world has its own trusted list of spices, a few are

highly popular in the WFPB community. Some of these are:

Bay leaf — Bay leaves has a flavor that is slightly minty and peppery by nature. Adding bay leaves to soups, broths, and stews keeps them from feeling too heavy and gives them a subtle flavor. For best results, use fresh bay leaves instead of dried ones. Also, remember to always remove the bay leaf after cooking as the leaf itself should not be consumed.

Nutritional yeast — This seasoning adds a nutty, cheesy flavor that goes well with pasta, dips, and baked potatoes, to name a few. If you remember, it is also one of the few plant-based sources that are high in vitamin B12. Therefore, you can use it liberally, both for health and taste.

Pure vanilla — This flavoring brings out the best in many cakes and desserts.

Chili powder — This is the dried, pulverized form of chili pepper. You can choose from different varieties of chili powder depending on the intensity that you want. Some milder

types help impart color to food, while others are hot and spicy. This spice is liberally used in many Indian cuisines.

Cayenne pepper — This is another seasoning that goes well with many sauces and dips and adds a spicy kick to recipes. It is also known to have many health benefits like aiding in digestion and improving your metabolism.

Cumin — Cumin is a spice native to many cuisines, especially Indian and the Mediterranean. It is known to have health benefits, especially for gut health regulation. It is used for tempering spices and adding them to dals, soups, grains, and vegetables. Its warm, earthy flavor acts as a base for many dishes.

Turmeric — This belongs to the ginger family and originates in India. It has an orangish-yellow color that is very strong and can turn the food that color when cooking. It is earthy and bitter, almost musky in flavor with a peppery spice. Even small amounts go a long way in adding flavor to food,

especially in vegetables and lentil preparations.

Tarragon — Tarragon has a licorice-like flavor that can easily dominate other flavors in large amounts. It pairs well with spinach, potatoes, mushrooms, and onions, among others.

Peppercorn mixture — You can blend whole white, black, green, and pink peppercorns to add a spicy kick to your meals.

Paprika and smoked paprika — Made from dried fruits of the chili pepper family, this is a spice heavily used in Hungarian cuisine and adapted in many others.

Garlic powder and onion powder — While fresh whole onions and garlic is the best option, both for health and flavor, the powdered forms help replace salt. They also mix well with the soups and stews if you do not want the original texture in your dishes.

Italian seasoning — This trendy mixture consists of oregano, basil, rosemary, and

thyme. It can be blended beforehand and added to pasta, sauces, and stews.

Allspice — Contrary to popular belief, allspice is not a spice blend but a single spice made from the unripe berries of indigenous trees found in Central and South America. It has a flavor that combines the taste of nutmeg, ginger, cinnamon, black pepper, and cloves. Some of the most delicate allspice is cultivated in Jamaica, where it is exported worldwide. Not only does it have a warm and sweetly pungent taste, but it is also rich in vitamins and minerals such as potassium, magnesium, iron, copper, manganese, selenium, and vitamins A and C. It is therefore highly beneficial in treating stomach ailments and reducing inflammation in the body. Although it has originated in Jamaican cuisine, it is used in European, Mexican, and Middle Eastern cuisines, especially in savory dishes. In the US and UK, it enhances the flavor of desserts and sometimes in chili-based preparations.

Other than these, there are many other spices

like cardamom, cinnamon, fennel seeds, coriander seeds, and saffron used heavily in Middle Eastern and Indian cuisines. Many herbs are used to complement the natural sweetness of fruits and are, therefore, used to give flavor to healthy desserts.

Reasonably priced fresh herbs are also instrumental in lending color, freshness, and flavor to salads, soups, and stews. These include basil, dill, cilantro, mint, parsley, chives, rosemary, and thyme. You can grow them in your garden under the right conditions and use dried versions of these if you want to store them for a longer time.

As you can see, you may feel overwhelmed by the options to replace the unhealthy substances in your food. But, with more experience, you will only get better at using healthier and tastier alternatives that make your food flavorful.



REGULATING HUNGER CUES

Weight loss is a goal for many people who are making changes to their diets and lifestyles. Although, even for those whose primary goals do not include weight loss, it is either an essential step in getting rid of lifestyle diseases or a happy by-product of making better food choices. In this chapter, we will try to understand the significant challenges people face on their weight-loss journeys.

One of the compelling issues with the eating habits of many people today is overeating a ton of processed food regularly. Regularly

eating highly processed foods affects both the quality and quantity of our diets, leading to unhealthy weight gain. However, there are certain things to keep in mind if we want to achieve weight loss and maintain a healthy weight over the years.

HUNGER CUES

As healthy adults, intuitive eating is ideal. Eating whenever and however we like is a foreign concept in this case. Instead, we are tuned in to when our body needs food and how much. Tuning in to our needs is the idea behind people confidently proclaiming, "Listen to your body." They are not wrong. A healthy body should be able to talk to you in a sense and communicate its needs. So, why do most of us end up confused about this? Also, why is it important?

Everyone's body is unique, but there are some common ways in which our bodies signal hunger. They could vary from an inability to concentrate and too much focus on food to

headaches and stomach discomfort. So whether you find yourself getting irrationally angry or your stomach makes a loud grumble in public, chances are your body is desperately trying to tell you to eat. Why does it have to get desperate, though? Why can we not understand our body before it loses control? And what happens if we constantly ignore these signals?

Quite simply, your body stops sending them to you, or these signals get jumbled up, which means that we find ourselves hungry at random times and overindulge at those times. Since we do not know whether we are full, hungry, or somewhere in between, we eat whenever we want, without regard for quality or quantity. I'm looking at you, midnight snackers.

Those people who find themselves frequently on the weight-loss journey know something about restriction as well. Many diets are restrictive by nature, and people who follow them tend to put their bodies through a lot of deprivation. They confuse healthy eating with

under eating and end up feeling hungry all the time—under eating messes up the body's natural signals. After a while of being ignored, the body stops sending these signals at all.

As with every other natural rhythm of the body, it is our responsibility to bring these signals back. There are some ways in which we can achieve this:

- Stop overcrowding the brain with signals. This might seem counterintuitive, but to let the body recognize its natural patterns, you need to stop overloading it from the outside. Think of it as reducing a sensory overload, wherein you reduce the stress on your senses to help them sensitize easier to new stimuli. For example, having too many colors on a website leads to sensory overload instead of keeping things clean and minimalistic, with just one or two well-matched colors. In the same way, to help the body reset its natural circadian

rhythms, you should try sleeping without an alarm clock. While this sounds disastrous at first, the body quickly adapts and starts to recognize its biological clock. After some time, you will find yourself waking up without any need for an alarm clock. Hunger cues are no different. In today's app-riddled world, you can find yourself needing to track everything consistently. But to restore the balance of your body, you need to get rid of artificial means of signaling.

- Provide your body with consistent energy. Once your palate has been cleansed, so to speak, you will begin to notice your body's signals more clearly. But the most immediate effect, especially if you have been on restrictive diets for a long time, is that you'll realize you need to feed your body well. A starved body is not the same as a healthy one, and a body that feels full and satisfied does not need to rely on mindless snacking to get through the day. You will now learn to

fulfill your body's energy requirements throughout the day which you will know more about in the satiation vs. satiety section of the chapter. Full, well-balanced meals that are nutrient-dense will ensure that you do not get sudden hunger pangs and end up eating something unhealthy. It is even more critical when spending your day outside your home, where you have considerably lesser control over your food choices. If you end up feeling hungry suddenly, you might settle for something easily accessible without thinking of its impact on your body. Hunger is primal, after all. It will not wait for your rational mind to kick in and will only demand instant satisfaction.

- Learn to recognize your hunger scale. In the beginning, your body can barely remember being hungry vs. feeling full. Hunger, as mentioned before, is even more immediate than fullness, and thus, it will be the cue you get first. But neither hunger nor fullness is a discrete

state of the body. Your body operates as a scale, and with time, you will notice more subtle cues, like when you are starting to get hungry but are not out-of-control hungry. It is better to eat deliberately at this point than when you are desperately looking to get your hands on anything to eat. At the same time, you will understand when your body is about 70-80% full, giving you the chance to stop eating at that time, rather than ignoring the cues that lead to overeating.

SATIATION VS. SATIETY

Now that you have a better understanding of how to listen to your body, you should grasp satiation and satiety better. These words are often used interchangeably to know when to stop eating food, but they are different terms. Satiation refers to the end of the desire to eat after a meal. This end of desire can happen at any time after the meal begins. It signals to the brain that the meal is over. This end of

desire is governed by hormones and stretch receptors in the stomach.

On the other hand, satiety refers to the physical feeling of fullness that keeps us from eating any further. The more nutrient-dense your food is, the higher your satiety levels will be—the higher your satiety levels, the lower your inclination to overeat. This is where calorie-dense vs. nutrient-dense foods become even more prominent.

When trying to understand how to keep ourselves from overeating, we need to recognize that we need to feel physically fuller for longer. However, foods with more calories do not necessarily provide that fullness to us. Studies have shown that the volume or bulk of foods that we eat at a time has a massive impact on our feelings of satiety. As mentioned earlier, if a particular food is calorically dense but nutrient-poor, you will require to eat more of it to achieve the same feeling of fullness as you would with more nutrient-dense food. Two things that bulk up food in a healthy manner are

water and fiber. In turn, having fruits and vegetables and whole grains that are rich in fiber reduces our calorie intake while simultaneously making us feel full. On the contrary, food rich in fat and sugar will add calories without adding any bulk to our meals.

That is why processed foods are leading to both overconsumption and malnutrition at the same time. Processed foods and animal products are both calorically dense beyond our weight-regulating capacities. Not only that, the entire process of obtaining these foods includes adding fat, salt, and sugar beyond our daily needs while at the same time eliminating fiber and other minerals. Not only do you end up overeating, but you overeat poorly. You tend to feel hungry sooner and then satisfy that hunger with more processed food.

A WFPB diet will ensure that you stay full for longer, eat well but not overeat, and derive essential nutrients from your food.



ACHIEVING A CALORIE DEFICIT

The last piece of the weight-loss puzzle, connected to the previous two parts, is achieving a calorie deficit in your body. While many nutritionists and health professionals focus on mindful or intuitive eating rather than counting calories, they are all different approaches to achieving the same result.

A calorie deficit, or an energy deficit, occurs when the calories you consume are lesser than the amount you burn or use. A calorie is a measure of energy and your body burns calories through activities. If you have a sedentary lifestyle, the number of calories you burn will be much less than that of an athlete. When you consume more calories than required by your body, the excess calories get stored as fat and lead to obesity. Conversely, if the body does not get the calories it needs from food, it converts the stored fat into calories. This is the concept behind achieving a calorie deficit, and hence, weight loss.

As mentioned earlier, the calorie deficit required by each individual depends on their unique conditions, especially their physical lifestyles. For example, an athlete will need a smaller calorie deficit to lose weight, while a sedentary person will need more. Many calorie calculators help determine the number of calories you burn each day and how much you need to consume to lose or maintain weight. A way to manually calculate a rough number of calories a moderately active person should consume, you multiply your current weight by 15. However, it is optimal for athletes to add 500-1000 because they need more calories throughout the day to get them through their rigorous routines. The goal is to find a deficit of 300-500 calories per day, depending on the level of performing an activity.

Aim to find a range that stimulates steady fat loss while also keeping you full and energetic. Remember that a calorie deficit diet does not mean you have to starve yourself; far from it. In fact, a nutrient-dense diet will make it much easier for you to

achieve a calorie deficit without feeling constantly hungry and lethargic. Many people who adopt the WFPB lifestyle admit to feeling apprehensive about this aspect. However, they are pleasantly surprised when they find themselves eating as much, if not more than what they used to, and still healthily losing weight.

The best results, understandably, come from combining a healthy diet with regular exercise. The more you exercise, the more calories you will burn, and the easier it will be for your body to achieve a calorie deficit without undereating. In the earlier chapter, we have also discussed how to factor both calorie and nutrient intake.

Understanding these aspects will allow you to lose weight and not just hope for the pounds to drop on your journey to your best self.

MAKING AND MAINTAINING THE SWITCH

We have spent the previous chapters trying to understand why investing in a WFPB lifestyle is worthwhile. We have familiarized ourselves with the science behind the results, read stories of people from different walks of life, and heard from various researchers worldwide. All of this has led us to the moment of truth. The only thing left is for us to take that leap finally. But that is easier said than done.

Trust me; I understand your state of mind. As someone who has followed a flexitarian lifestyle for some time and is still making a

complete switch to eating WFPB, I know how difficult it can seem from the other side, even for the most determined of us. As a culture, we are not used to this lifestyle. Not even close. For most people, making a drastic change is considered only when they have run out of options. Being proactive about our health is difficult even in the best of times. And in today's day and age, with uncertainty staring us in the face, finding the motivation to do so might be even more difficult. Even if we acknowledge that something needs to change, making the change is another struggle altogether.

In the following two chapters, I will give you a few practical tips regarding making and maintaining this switch and tips to survive special occasions such as festivals and holiday seasons so that you do not find yourself regressing afterward. I will be there for you as you contemplate this shift and will motivate you on this path, one step at a time. Remember, it might feel daunting and even lonely at times, but it doesn't have to be. We are in this together.

STEP 1: ACKNOWLEDGE THE NEED FOR CHANGE

Acknowledging the need for change might sound obvious, but it is in fact, the most crucial step towards making a change. We live in a culture that is confused at best and obsessed at worst due to the food choices presented to us. Everything that is unhealthy is also more readily available, more advertised, and more celebrated. Experts have been raging about the dangers presented by the food industry, but even they do not know how to escape the mess we are in currently.

Apart from this, we have our lives to lead, careers to pursue, dreams to chase, and families to love and live with. Who has the time to focus on themselves and make a change this huge? Even though most of us struggle with ailments of various kinds, we have learned to accept them as inevitable. That is the scariest bit. When we consciously or unconsciously give up and believe that we cannot do better than our present state, that is when all hope is lost.

Sometimes, we have no choice. A sudden event like a heart attack or a diabetic coma gives us the rude awakening we need. We might also witness a loved one struggling and hurting because of ailments and decide that enough is enough. Our best bet, however, is, to be honest with ourselves about our struggles. This way, we do not need to experience heartbreak to begin our transformation. There is a voice inside us that tries to nudge us in the right direction; when we look in the mirror and do not like who we see when we feel tired after a day out with our families, or even when we feel we are not living our lives to the fullest.

The day you decide that you need to change is the first day of the rest of your life.

STEP 2: TALK TO AN EXPERT

Once you realize the need to change your life from the inside out, you will need the help of experts and professionals. Altering your diet is a lifestyle change, and each person is

unique. Therefore, having an open and honest conversation with your doctor as well as your dietician is essential. Doing so is even more critical, being that you are riddled with lifestyle diseases and are on medications for the same.

Your doctor and dietician can help you with your recommended regime, the number of calories you need to take daily, and the precautions you might need to take. They will also know your body type and requirements in greater detail, what, if any, allergies you suffer from, and what will work best for your overall health. This can help you in designing a lifestyle that maximizes your health and minimizes any potential side effects.

Do not stress about making changes as per your requirements. The best lifestyle change is one that suits you and understands your unique situation. That is one of the only ways one will abundantly sustain plant-based eating in the long run.

STEP 3: CHALLENGE YOUR MINDSET

When you first start switching over your lifestyle, the biggest obstacle you will face is your mindset. Do not be mistaken; any lifestyle change requires a certain level of commitment and willpower. Channeling that willpower is all the more true if you find yourself alone and sometimes at odds with your friends and family as you embark on this journey.

Food, for most of us, is more than sustenance. It is a source of familiarity and comfort. Whenever we go through major upheavals in life, we turn to our constants to see us through those times. Food is one such constant for many of us. It ties us to our habits and patterns and connects us to traditions, love, and laughter, which is why it should not be surprising if this change seems restrictive at first. You might feel like you are making a considerable sacrifice, and in a way, you are. But this is a sacrifice to gain back control over your own life. It might

seem doubly tricky for some to have to go through this change and not be able to rely on the one thing that was always easiest to fall back on.

Changing this mindset is crucial. Understand that you had no control over your food in your previous situation, and consequently, your life. Tap deep within to regain the power to design your own life. Seeking out that ability can only happen if you persevere on this path with determination and focus. If you think about this change in terms of a deficit, an absence, or a restriction, you will find it very hard to keep at it. Alternatively, suppose you understand that a WFPB lifestyle is all about abundance in the way we consume food, in the way we accept the bounty of nature, or in the way we open up our lives to health and happiness. In that case, you find it easier to look forward to another day on this journey.

You also need to find a way to train yourself not to focus on others, their “easier” lives, or their well-meaning but unhelpful advice. You

know your body best, so you have to do whatever it takes to restore it to optimal health.

STEP 4: ONE STEP AT A TIME

We have all heard stories of people who decide one fine day to change their lives and change their diet overnight. Kudos to them, and you, if you are one of them. However, what works best for most people is taking baby steps and easing into the new lifestyle. This also depends on how close you currently are to following a WFPB diet. For example, someone who has been a vegetarian for all their lives might find it easier to adopt a WFPB lifestyle as they do not consume meat products. At the same time, someone who is an Ovo-vegetarian might be much too fond of eggs to be able to let go of them easily. There is no right way to do this. We all have foods that we are fond of and foods we find easier to detach ourselves from.

The key is to listen to your body, as always.

Try to eliminate those foods you eat without much enjoyment as they will be easier to let go of. Slowly, try to remove your guilty pleasures and the foods you are most attached to. Remember that you are not saying goodbye to those foods in most cases but finding healthier alternatives for them. There are many creative ways to simulate the tastes that you have grown fond of without sacrificing your health.

Doing a complete overhaul of your fridge and pantry will essentially help in the "out of sight out of mind" method. But I would recommend not changing everything at once. Shifting everything at one time will put your body in shock, along with the pleasure centers of your brain. Much like any addiction, you should take small but definite steps towards quitting it, rather than quitting cold turkey. You need to give yourself time to adjust to the changes you are incorporating into your life. If you have a family, they need to be on board too with those changes you decide to make.

Another trick that will help you make this change is to remind yourself of everything you are adding to your pantry and your life. These small reminders will help you in feeling less bleak and more optimistic about the next steps. Yes, you may be removing animal products, dairy, along with highly processed and junk foods, but you are also adding fresh and colorful fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and lots of hearty foods to your pantry and fridge. If anything, you have an abundance of options to still choose from.

Primarily, remember to be patient with yourself and know that this transition will become easier with time. Within a month or two of making the switch, you will find yourself subconsciously making better and healthier choices and staying away from problematic ones. Even if you are skeptical, take one small step each day; the body learns quicker than we think. Whenever it gets overwhelming, you can say a short mantra reminding yourself: one moment at a time, one day at a time. Before you know it, your

progression will move along much further on this journey of a lifetime.

STEP 5: KEEP LEARNING

Most people who make the switch do so after coming across articles or stories from researchers and people who have begun this journey before them. They'll discover evidence as well as inspiration in these findings and results that this is not a fad diet or an unsubstantiated claim but a scientific method backed by nutritionists and scientists worldwide. Scientists are researching many aspects of a WFPB lifestyle to understand its impact better and help more people become aware of its benefits.

Since you are reading this book, you are already committed to gaining more knowledge about this topic. Continue your education; read online articles and other books that deal with a WFPB lifestyle. You need to build not only theoretical but also practical knowledge on the subject. This

means that studying your body and the foods you put in it in minute detail is a vital step in making the most of your journey. Talking to your doctor and dietician is one way to gain a deeper insight into your body and its needs. In addition, taking a walk around the grocery store, familiarizing yourself with the produce section, and understanding the processes behind the foods that you consume are effective ways to learn more about this way of life.

Don't be afraid of having doubts. The more you question, the more you will be closer to getting the answers you need for a sustained lifestyle change. Relying on various sources and talking to experts in different fields to better support your choices is never a bad idea. Remember, with more knowledge comes more power and confidence.

STEP 6: PLAN AND PREP YOUR MEALS WEEKLY

Planning your meals is a very effective

method of getting the most out of your new routine. This will allow you to stick to your schedule and also take the pressure off in many ways. However, there are times where it can feel restrictive to have to plan your next week ahead of time consistently. If everything is jotted down and decided beforehand, your brain might think that you're depriving your body of freedom to choose for itself. On the other hand, not pre-planning may make it easier for you to act rebelliously and indulge yourself. The key is to maintain a schedule and discipline yourself about it, but trick your brain into thinking it is liberating.

In many ways, it is freeing; you have the luxury of deciding your menu, choosing fresh produce, and making better budgeting decisions by buying in bulk and storing beforehand. Once you get a general idea of how many calories you need to consume daily and the kind of food groups you want to include in your diet, you can create your menu around it. This keeps food from getting wasted, and keeps you from needing to think

constantly about your next meal. It is imperative, especially when you are starting out. Having to decide each time you eat might lead to feeling overwhelmed and even irritated, and you might end up going back to what seems to be an easier option at the time.

So, experiment with and plan a schedule and menu that serves you best and allows you to feel more empowered about your choices.

STEP 7: FIND YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

Making a lifestyle change can often feel like a lonely struggle, but it does not have to be that way. Today, there is greater awareness among people regarding lifestyle diseases, obesity, and other afflictions. Many people are keen on providing help and support to those who are just beginning their journey. Finding out what works for you is best.

If you are fortunate, you might be able to convince your partner, friend, or family member to undertake this journey with you.

Having someone experiencing the same struggles and triumphs, you will find it much easier to stay motivated. You can go to the gym or on walks together. You can plan your meals or go grocery shopping together as well. In the end, your partner or buddy will help you stay accountable and keep you on track when the going gets tough. Someone who understands your struggles will be more empathetic and uplift you when you are down in the dumps. It is vital to choose someone who does not shame or scare you but makes sure you are staying as positive as possible at all times.

You can also find the support you need through in-person support groups, clinic programs, and local exercise groups. Studies have shown that people who participate in exercise programs alone find it harder to stick to the schedule and show less positive results than those with social support groups. You can join the local chapter of many organizations or opt for smaller groups where instructors offer personalized attention to you and your struggles. Feeling heard and finding

a safe space will make it much easier for you to get through the hard days and make the good days better.

If you do not have access to in-person groups, cannot be a part of them due to time or other constraints, or find it easier to connect with people online, you can join online forums or Facebook groups of like-minded individuals. You will be able to stay associated with them almost constantly, discuss your issues openly, share milestones, and celebrate your progress. At the same time, be mindful that many people on these forums are not doctors or researchers, so take any new advice with a pinch of salt. Listen to everyone but make decisions based on your understanding and after talking to trusted experts or have done some research. Knowing you are supported can make all the difference in your journey, so be sure to find your tribe.

Another exciting aspect of this journey is that you can inspire people already close to you to make the switch. You will naturally face resistance at first, but if you lead by example

and show compassion and empathy, you might find yourself inspiring your friends and family members to join you in your undertaking. Many people who adopt a WFPB diet do so after seeing how it works wonders for someone they love. You can become the beacon of light that shows others the way.

FAITH: THE GLUE THAT BINDS IT ALL

This last bit of advice also seems obvious but is the linchpin that holds everything together. You have started this journey because you believe you deserve a better, happier, and fuller life and are ready to make that happen. For many of you, becoming a better partner, a stronger parent, and a contributor to your community are all critical factors for taking this step. By believing in yourself, you have won half the battle. It would help if you kept your belief intact.

Firstly, don't shame yourself for your current

condition. You do not need self-pity, or worse, self-deprecation, on this journey with you. There are many reasons why health takes a backseat in our lives, and we need to remind ourselves of how far we have already come on this path of self-transformation. You need compassion and love, primarily for yourself, at every step of the way. Be kind to yourself and others.

Secondly, be proud of the decisions you are taking each day to make this journey a success. Don't feel bad for taking care of yourself, sometimes at the expense of your social life. Self-care is challenging to practice, and it includes setting boundaries, being honest with yourself and others, and saying no when needed. If there are people around you that seem unmotivated to change their lives or who tease you for trying to do so, don't let it get to you. Instead, remind yourself why you decided to switch in the first place and why this matters to you. Keeping things in perspective will make it easier to deal with distractions and challenges.

Thirdly, perhaps start journaling. Starting a journal is a powerful and often underrated method of manifesting your desires. You can make a log of your food changes and other aspects of your diet in the journal. More importantly, you can chronicle your challenges as well as your achievements daily. Doing this daily can help keep you motivated and also give more power to your goals. Words have power, and you can harness this power to fuel you on this journey.

Lastly, remember that it will get easier with time. Remember what I said in the second chapter? The results that you see in a relatively short amount of time and the positive feedback you get from your family members, friends, and community, will help you stay motivated in the long run. But most of all, you will feel as if you are meeting a new version of yourself, and that is all the reward you can ask for.

FIVE WAYS TO SURVIVE THE HOLIDAYS, WFPB STYLE

In a society addicted to highly processed foods, along with foods injected with hormones and pesticides, it is difficult to stick to a lifestyle that emphasizes clean and wholesome eating at any time of the year. Nothing is more challenging, however, than navigating the holiday season. When friends and family meet and celebrate together, it can seem like a huge burden to take specific steps to maintain your lifestyle. You might even feel like a party pooper and find it easier to give in to the demands of this season. Even other celebratory events, like birthdays, weddings, or celebrations at restaurants, can

turn into tricky situations that you don't want to be a part of.

Fortunately, it doesn't have to be this way. In this chapter, we will discuss ways in which we can prepare ourselves for such situations. Hopefully, by the end of it, you will feel more confident about enjoying yourself during the holidays or other celebrations and bonding with your friends and family, all without having to betray the lifestyle you have so carefully designed for yourself.

PLAN AHEAD

As with everything else, it helps to be well-prepared beforehand. If you are going to a party, communicate with the host regarding your preferences respectfully. However, don't expect them to treat you in a particular way or make food especially for you. Having minimal expectations is even more critical during the holiday season as the host is expected to take care of many guests and is usually already under lots of pressure. Try not

to add to the pressure, and instead, reassure them that you will be able to manage on your own. If the host is a close family member or friend who knows about your lifestyle, you can ask to come early and cook something for yourself in their kitchen. Of course, this depends on the level of comfort you share with the host, but in most cases, clear communication goes a long way in making the host feel prepared and respected.

If you are going to a party where you are unsure of what you will be served or feel like there might be limited options for you, it might be a good idea to eat something before you go to the party. Eating beforehand will ensure that even in the worst-case scenario, you will not find yourself feeling hungry and opting to eat something that you wouldn't otherwise.

More often than not, you might find yourself in situations where you are the only person following a WFPB lifestyle. In any case, expect to be in the minority. However, this doesn't mean you need to stress yourself out,

but you should be mentally prepared to face some well-meaning questions as well as some comments and taunts. Remember that most people are your friends and family, and they will more than likely be coming from a place of concern rather than a place of ridicule. Most people are genuinely unaware of lifestyles like yours or have very little and often misguided information about them. Therefore, it helps to do some research on nutritional information, if need be, to answer their questions truthfully and put those doubts to rest. Having solid numbers at hand is usually an excellent way to convince most people of the credibility of your information.

BRING YOUR OWN FOODS AND BEVERAGES

As mentioned earlier, it is unfair to expect your host to go out of their way to accommodate you. However, having said that, if they do make something especially for you, you should show them gratitude for their kind act. Also, even if you can't eat most of

the foods that your host has prepared, you should still show them appreciation for their efforts. Being kind and gracious is the essence of enjoying the holidays.

In that case, bring your own food to the party. It's safe to say, not many guests mind having something extra to go around the dinner table; it can be seen as a nice gesture to bring something hearty to the party. You have many options, for example making one-pot dishes as well as desserts. This will ensure that you have something filling to eat and give others a chance to sample some delicious plant-based dishes.

You do not even need to emphasize that the food you brought is plant-based or low-calorie. Instead, just let the other guests enjoy whatever you decide to make. Chances are, most guests will love them and might even be surprised later if you tell them how you prepared the dishes. Moreover, it is an excellent opportunity to show them that your food is not sad or limiting but fun and flavorsome. In any case, you will be able to

share something of your cooking with people near and dear to you.

You can also prepare beverages, like fresh-pressed juices of watermelons or oranges or fresh herbal tea to bring to the party. If not that, you can stick to water during dinner.

HOST YOUR OWN GET-TOGETHER

Hosting a party for friends and family can get overwhelming; however, do your best not to let this happen. You don't need to advertise your lifestyle, but if you plan on making only plant-based dishes available, you might want to let them know beforehand. Alternatively, you can order dishes from a restaurant, or make a few dishes that are not necessarily WFPB, especially if it will help your non-plant-based friends enjoy themselves at the party. It is a personal call, and whatever you decide, make sure not to feel guilty about it.

If you decide to host a plant-based lunch or dinner, use it as an opportunity to show your guests how varied and flavorful a WFPB

spread can be. Doing this will give you a chance to experiment and switch things up. For example, if you want to serve mashed potatoes, you can add flavor by adding garlic paste, chives, and other fresh herbs to the dish. You can also cook many vegetable-based dishes, including stuffing or a pot pie, by roasting them and infusing them with spices.

You can also make exciting desserts using the tips discussed in the earlier chapters and wow your guests. Also, remember that everything might not turn out as per plan, and there might always be someone dissatisfied. In the end, you can only control so much. Try to relax and not make food the focal point of the gathering. After all, you want to cherish the moments spent with your loved ones and make sure everyone has a good time. Try not to impose rules or the like on your guests but instead make them feel welcome and valued.

PRACTICE SELF-DISCIPLINE

There is a good possibility you will struggle with temptation at any point on this journey, especially in the beginning. With time, your self-control will get better, and it will be easier to say no to anything that you don't want to make a part of your lifestyle. Unfortunately, saying no can become extremely difficult during the holiday season. Not only are you surrounded by your friends and family, but you end up being surrounded by foods that you likely grew up eating and enjoying. Holidays are all about celebrating your culture and traditions, which means there is every chance your fond memories associated with the foods come flooding back. In some cases, it might not even be traditional, home-cooked food that you end up craving, but highly processed food like burgers, chips, and the like.

It seems too easy at these times to cut loose. You might not feel like being strict about it. A little bit of oil might not hurt you if you discipline yourself the rest of the time. The problem, though, is that it might increase your temptation, and you might have to do

extra work to stay away from it, even after the holiday season or the party. Therefore, it is best to avoid temptation. Again, filling your stomach up before you head to the party and bringing your own food will help not let your hunger take the lead.

Apart from that, it would be best if you reminded yourself why you had adopted this lifestyle. It would help if you remembered how your life looked before you made the change and how you have become healthier and happier since making the switch. You can also skim through your journal to understand just how far you have come along this journey. This will help you stay disciplined at all costs.

While you don't need to flaunt your lifestyle in front of the other guests, if asked, you should be confident about the reasons why you choose to live the way you do. You shouldn't feel apologetic for who you are, and if you display assurance, it is likely others will also support your choices.

Having worked so hard to switch over to a

more wholesome way of living, imagine all that progress coming to a halt over one night of indulging in what is not a part of a WFPB diet. Many people who choose the lifestyle claim that if they allow themselves to slip one day, they end up feeling bad about it the day after. By this, I don't mean that you should feel guilty about having made a mistake. Instead, try to envision how you would think after waking up the day after a party and if this would be worth it. Most likely, the result will be that you'll stay away from any significant slip-ups and continue on guilt and stress free.

STAY HUMBLE; STAY TRUE

Above all, keep in mind the true meaning of the holiday season, and don't forget the purpose of the gathering you are hosting or attending. The people around you are usually going to be those you cherish in one way or another. While food tends to be one commonality at such events, the conversations you have with people are

equally, if not more, meaningful. So be sure to keep your focus on the positives, be thankful for having the opportunity of enjoying the company of loved ones, and do your best to create happy memories.

The most important thing is to stay humble in every way possible. While it is admirable that you have committed to and made a change in your life, don't allow yourself to fall into a pit of acting as if you are better or higher up on some pedestal. Always be proud of your progress and accomplishments and answer questions when asked, but don't do it boastfully. Unless you grew up on a WFPB or similar diet, which most people haven't, you are aware of what it feels like to be the other side of the conversation. It is not an easy task to alter a way of eating, let alone an entire lifestyle in today's day and age. There is also a chance you might not have as many supporters as you may hope to have. In turn, that can cause a person to feel alone. Remember that you deserve understanding and compassion, so treat others the same. It is one thing to be proud of what you have built

and educate others about your lifestyle; it is quite another to rub it in others' faces.

You can always opt-out and say no to attending particular gatherings if you feel your way of living may be compromised. Stay true to yourself, your beliefs, and your chosen lifestyle. There is nothing wrong with politely declining an invite if it means you will have a better chance of keeping your lifestyle intact.

If your reasons for the change include ethical concerns and issues around animal cruelty, you should be even more careful not to come off as preachy or morally superior. It may dampen everyone else's mood, and it takes away from the fun of having foods that they still enjoy eating. For example, telling people about the cruelty meted out to birds at Thanksgiving is not a great conversation starter.

Last but not least, be gracious in the face of questions. Since the gathering you are attending is of people close to you, you can expect some teasing and good-natured joking

to go around. Please take it in stride; most people do not mean harm and are only trying to lighten the atmosphere. If well-meaning relatives ask you how you are doing post the change, keep your answers short and personal but always stay firm in your decisions. For example, you can always tell them that it has worked out great for you or that you love the changes in yourself. Emphasize that it is a personal choice and one that you are happy with, especially if your lifestyle change has improved your health or mental clarity. Most people will leave it at that. There might, however, be that one unnecessarily combative person. Please don't take the bait, get offended, and try to remove yourself respectfully but firmly from their presence. You want to spend your time with people who matter to you and who will respect you, so put your energy into ensuring that.

WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

After all is said and done, it is best to understand that the power to change your life

lies with you. And I mean this in more ways than one. Throughout this book, I have tried to emphasize how important it is to know your body and spend time with it, along with your doctor, to understand what works for you. In addition, although a WFPB diet is ideal, you need to be flexible with the kind of diet that works best for you to achieve optimal health and a sustained lifestyle.

Let's meet Jill Edwards, who was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis last year. Even before her diagnosis, she had suffered from chronic pain and fatigue for years. It was only after her inflammation became unmanageable that she decided to see a doctor. The doctor had a hard time diagnosing her, primarily because her markers for inflammation were low. When her doctor suggested that they should consider lifestyle changes before medication, she was surprised to find out that Jill has been on a gluten-free, plant-based diet for some years already. Jill had gone vegan in 2010, WFPB in 2012, and gluten-free in 2018. The doctor understood that this was why her inflammation markers were

unnaturally low. But that still did not explain why she had suffered from tenderness, stiffness in her joints, persistent inflammation, and fatigue all these years.

No one was more demotivated than Jill. After all, she had been doing everything right, and while she had seen the benefits of her lifestyle in other areas of her life, she still felt terrible after waking up each day due to her inflammation. She felt like her genetics doomed her, and nothing could help her.

That was when her doctor suggested that a blanketed WFPB diet might not be working for her. She said that it was a fantastic start, but she needs to explore further. Other than lack of sleep, stress, and hormones, some healthy plant-based food could also trigger her condition. To better understand what they might be, her doctor advised her to start keeping a ten-day food and drink journal through which she tracked everything she ate for ten days along with her pain and fatigue levels.

To her surprise, she was quickly able to see

patterns emerge. Her biggest triggers turned out to be oats and grain flour. She found that oats in any form, whether rolled, steel-cut, or flour, caused instant bloating, followed by joint pain after a few hours. At the same time, she could eat whole foods like corn and brown rice without any issues but having brown rice flour or cornflour would cause her enough pain to immobilize her.

Other triggers for her included nightshade vegetables like bell peppers, eggplant, tomatoes, and white potatoes. Not only food but her consumption patterns also affected her inflammation. For example, intermittent fasting and a 50% raw foods diet made her feel much better than any other way of eating.

Ever since she implemented these changes with her doctor's guidance, Jill has seen considerable improvement in her condition. She was feeling confident for the first time that this modified WFPB diet will delay the progression of her disease in the long run. In her own words, her story is proof that each one of us needs to understand what our body

needs and create our own unique WFPB story to serve those needs.

CONCLUSION

Dear reader, I have introduced you to many stories throughout this book because I genuinely feel that stories inspire us and give us hope in even the most difficult times. However, I have saved the best for last—a couple who saved their lives and rekindled their love through a WFPB lifestyle.

This is the story of Tim and Heather Kaufman. Tim, who had gotten used to his frequent doctor visits, understood that this might be one of his last ones. It would be a miracle if he even survived the year. His blood pressure was so high he was on three

medications to bring it down. His cholesterol and triglycerides were off the charts. He was born with the condition that had left his joints loose and hyper-mobile. The extra weight from being obese was not helping. He had gotten so heavy that his doctor was unable to weigh him in his office. Apart from his prescribed medications, he was also an addict and self-medicated regularly. He was always on canes or crutches of one kind or another and needed leg braces to keep his legs from buckling. His life was spiraling out of control, and he could see no way out. He was hoping against hope that he could live to spend another year with his family.

Though he always knew he was responsible for his condition, he could not find the strength to make the change. Finally, his wife and her visible pain at seeing her husband dying before her prompted him to change. She was already dealing with her mother and father-in-law having cancer, and Tim realized that very soon, she might have to deal with something life-threatening, or even worse, in his case. His first option was to get a gastric

sleeve, which his doctor refused, as he was worried about the stress it would cause his already damaged joints.

When Tim felt that all his options had been exhausted, he took out a notebook and wrote the next day's date on it along with the words, "This is the first day of the rest of your life." After that, he prayed for the strength to change just one thing in his life each day. Beginning with something as simple as, "Get up from the chair twice." Doing this might sound simple, but for an addict who was morbidly obese as well as disabled, this was a considerable achievement. All his goals were straightforward in the beginning, like walking some more steps than the previous day, and he made sure he fulfilled them. All that mattered to him was doing a little better each day. He was taking it one step at a time, sometimes, quite literally.

Little by little, he started to make small changes to his food as well. He read up on and extensively researched videos and

articles about a WFPB diet and started implementing small but significant aspects of it into his life. Cut to today, he has climbed mountains, hiked on the Appalachian Trail, and wait for it, completed an Ironman challenge. He is an ultramarathoner, and his doctor now refers his patients to Tim for advice. Talk about a complete turnaround!

As you can guess, his wife Heather was with him all the way. She, too, had her journey of embracing a WFPB lifestyle some years later when she was diagnosed with a uterine fibroid that led to a total hysterectomy. Having seen the almost miraculous effects of the diet on her husband, she decided to commit fully to making the change herself. As a result, she ended up losing 90 pounds and became a competitive runner herself.

Today, they are both extremely thankful for the second lease of life that a WFPB lifestyle has given them and their marriage. They eat more, weigh less, feel full and energetic at all times, and enjoy various activities together. For both of them, that has been the biggest

blessing of all: being able to enjoy each other's company as two healthy and happy individuals. For Tim, the mantra is simple: "Just do a little more than you did yesterday."

OVER TO YOU

This book resulted from my conviction that every individual has the power to be the change they wish to see in their lives. My own experiences and the experiences of many others have inspired me to believe that tomorrow can be better than today if only we set our minds to it and take action. I have seen the benefits of this lifestyle first-hand and have therefore tried to give you an insight into why I believe that adopting this lifestyle might be one of the best decisions you could ever make in your life.

I began the book by explaining what a WFPB diet stands for and why you should consider it. I have also addressed some common myths and concerns regarding this lifestyle to give you the confidence to give it a try. The

second chapter explores different lifestyles that rely on plant-based eating, giving their pros and cons and ultimately letting you decide which one works best for you. The third chapter delves deep into the research behind the health benefits claimed by this lifestyle. Many lifestyle diseases and how you can overcome them has been explored in detail. In the following few chapters, I have tried to address some of the common worries of people when asked to eliminate certain foods from their diet. The next chapter underlines that you can get both proteins and essential nutrients from a WFPB diet. Besides that, relying on plant-based sources for your protein intake is much better for your health and longevity.

The fifth chapter deals with a particularly controversial topic, namely oil elimination. It aims to relieve any apprehension you may have toward eliminating oil from your diet while giving you the confidence that not only is life without oil possible, but you will also be better off without it. It also creates a distinction between healthy and unhealthy

fats and lists down ways to fulfill your nutritional fat requirements from whole foods. After that, I showed you how you could spice up your substitutions with a bit of creativity and create dishes that are as appealing as the ones you have been used to eating.

The last three chapters are about finally making and maintaining the switch. While the seventh chapter deals with weight loss and management and how listening to your body can help prevent overeating, the eighth chapter is about the steps you can take as an individual to make a WFPB lifestyle a reality for yourself. I have tried to make it easier for you to finally take the leap and land firmly on your feet through various practical tips. Finally, the last chapter discusses the challenges of holidays and other celebrations, especially in a culture that has not yet warmed up to the WFPB lifestyle. Its primary focus is to ensure you enjoy your time with your extended families and friends without undermining all the hard work you do the rest of the year.

In the end, this book is all about you and my faith in you, dear reader. This is your story; you can make it whatever you want it to be. I hope that this book helps you in scripting a story as extraordinary as you are.

If you find this book useful or inspirational in any way, I request you to please leave a review on Amazon so that others might be encouraged to read it and create their own success stories.

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