

## Chapter 7

# The Lifestyle of a Healthy Vegetarian

“Nothing will benefit human health and increase chances for survival of life on Earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet.”

— *Albert Einstein, Theoretical Physicist*

In the past three chapters, we discussed the value of the vegetarian diet from a physical perspective. In this chapter and the next, we turn to investigate the mental, emotional and spiritual qualities and benefits related to the vegetarian *lifestyle*, of which the diet is one part.

I spoke at the outset of the book that health is much more than just a physical matter, even though how we feel physically day to day can make a huge difference in the quality of our life. However, the way we think about situations in life and life itself, the manner in which we process emotions common to the human experience, and our approach to resolving what happens in life and our reason for being here—so to speak—are all connected to health. So are the practices that we initiate and maintain in the healthy vegetarian lifestyle, which I will discuss in this chapter. Healthy practices lead to good health; so, the vegetarian lifestyle is an active lifestyle rather than a passive one. I know that this seems obvious, but it bears repeating since

so many of us make promises to ourselves that we don't keep, or do something to sabotage any success we may be having. In Chapter 8, perhaps the most important chapter of this book, I will talk about what is needed to make and sustain change and, therefore, success in life. Entering into any new venture, including the vegetarian diet, or expanding the horizons of one's current one would not be complete without this discussion. So, I urge you to take your time with the next two chapters.

All of this, by the way, is for supporting you on your journey of healing, which comes through understanding and compassionate action. When we don't face those aspects in us that are or may be interfering with our success, we will hold ourselves back and end up being unhappy. On the other hand, when we can embrace our weaknesses, in addition to our gifts, shining a light of unconditional love and acceptance upon them, we will be naturally want to be healthier, and it becomes easier to follow through on what we set out to do.

As you will soon see, adopting the vegetarian diet is only one small aspect of living the vegetarian life. The very exciting news, however, is that by doing both *simultaneously* you improve your chances of staying on track.

We begin our discussion of the history of plant-based living by visiting both Eastern and Western traditions. As I mentioned above, understanding is the first step in addressing any situation; so, if we want to become healthy vegetarians, it would be helpful to understand the religious, social and psychological aspects that influence our choices.

## **How Vegetarianism Becomes a Lifestyle**

### **Religion, Religious Beliefs, and Vegetarianism**

Many people are vegetarians because they adhere to a particular religion, which practices vegetarianism. This is a very powerful environment for developing and sustaining a vegetarian lifestyle because these members are deeply entrenched in a belief system that prohibits causing intentional animal suffering. Religious values run deeply with a person, and form a cornerstone of a person's essential ideological makeup. Indeed, religious people get their primary values from their religions. Thus, if vegetarianism is one of the values of your religion, so be it. You're a vegetarian.

In my etymology of the word Ayurveda, you may have recognized the word veda, which not only means life but refers to Indian sacred texts. The links between religion, medicine and food are not accidental for, as I remarked earlier, diet has always had a place in the teachings of the world's great religions. Particular doctrines and guidelines vary, of course, but within each discipline there are specific notions taught about food. Religion has always recognized that one's spiritual awareness is affected by one's physical state; it is difficult to be pure of spirit while inhabiting a polluted body. Many religious doctrines such as Buddhism and Hinduism, and even Christianity, conveyed that a person stained his or her body by eating meat. We'll start with Western traditions since they give us the best look at why America is where it is related to the vegetarian diet.

### *Western Traditions*

Western religions, with a few exceptions, have not and do not promote vegetarianism. Those historical figures that did tended to be the great thinkers—the doctors like Hippocrates and the philosophers like Pythagoras, Heraclitus and Plato, as well as Epicurus, the Aristotelian biologist Theophrastus, Ovid, Seneca, the poet Virgil, and Plutarch. Then, there was Plotinus, the most influential of the Neoplatonists, whose metaphysics influenced greatly the theological doctor of the Church, St. Augustine of Hippo, who believed that humans were required by divine decree to treat animals with compassion because they also suffered and felt pain and pleasure. These prophets, rather than clergy, were the ones who redirected the violence of the day toward a peaceful city state or kingdom kindness, where respect was due to all members of society, which extended to the kind treatment of animals and a preference towards a vegetarian diet over the slaughter of animals for their meat. As a side note, perhaps the most thorough early treatise in defense of vegetarianism is *On Abstinence from Killing Animals*, by another Neoplatonist philosopher, Porphyry of Tyre, in the third century of the Christian era.

Following Emperor Constantine's conversion experience to the religion of Jesus at the Battle of Milvian Bridge in AD 312, Christianity became the religion of the empire and expanded precipitously across Europe. The Pythagorean, Orphic, late Platonic, and Epicurean mysteries, which had constantly reminded humanity about its deep connection with Nature, were severed and replaced with the objective to

*renounce the pull of the earth* and strive solely for a heavenly future in the afterlife. Many advocates of vegetarianism today blame the Judeo-Christian traditions for permitting violence against animals and encouraging meat as a major source of sustenance.

Interestingly, western societies at that time, including both Greek and Roman, were largely plant-based, but out of *necessity*—pure economics; most could not afford meat. Those nobility topping the hierarchy—former warriors with a learned routine of pillaging and violence—were the meat-eaters. Over time, the people of the church and mercantile classes rose in status. But that wasn't always the case. Early Christian monasteries in Europe insisted that monks refrain from animal flesh. To a great extent this expression of vegetarianism was found in the stories and legends about ascetic saints known as the Desert Fathers in the Egyptian desert, St. Anthony the Great and St. Pachomius, the founder of cenobite or community-based monasticism, being two of the most famous of early Christian mystics and vegetarians. The tales of courageous warrior monks' escapades, struggling against phantoms and demons in the desert, and seemingly transcending the limitations of the human body, became widely popular across Christianized Europe. Once heard, countless young men were inspired to leave home and join the monastic ranks seeking an everlasting life through solitude, austerities and simple meatless diets. The earlier Greek and Roman philosophers of a vegetarian lifestyle were not role models; rather, vegetarianism found its exemplar in the Biblical image of John the Baptist, who survived solely on the fruits of the land.

The monasteries would not remain simple rural refuges for prayer and contemplation. As the Middle Ages progressed, they became enormously wealthy and possessors of huge tracts of land that could encompass villages and employ hundreds of serfs and peasants. Abbots and monks also became increasingly powerful in village politics, and the practice of abstaining from meat for ethical and spiritual reasons died out. Instead this class of “monk lords” transformed into new privileged elite, a form of nobility whose lives were more in common with a banker, corporate CEO or politician today. In 1339, even the Pope had to surrender further papal attempts to enforce vegetarianism in the monasteries. There were several attempts to revive spiritually-based vegetarianism but these were marginal. St. Francis of Assisi, Catherine of Sienna, and Angela Merici are several examples of vegetarians and spiritual reformers who attempted to return the faithful to living by the virtues of simplicity and service to others.

Vegetarianism as an ethical and spiritual principle would only appear again during the Italian Renaissance. This time it was not regarded as an austere means to reach paradise, but from the rediscovery and resurrection of the Greek and Roman classical authors after the Church had consigned them to the darker regions of a forgotten oblivion. Pythagoras, Plato, Plotinus and Paracelsus again provided light to European civilization, along with the lost writings advocating the virtues of vegetarianism. Among some of the better known vegetarians during this period were Leonardo da Vinci, the astronomer and humanist Marsilio Ficino, and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola who began the Hermetic Renaissance of natural philosophy. These and many other Renaissance philosophers, humanists and scientists who revived the virtues of vegetarianism would set the course for the later paradigm shift in thought that became known as the Enlightenment and ushered in our modern industrial age. Since then, there have been a smattering of advocates, but nothing like what is rising today in secular factions of the US.

The purpose of this illustration, in part, is to set forward the contrast of Western to Eastern religions and cultures and their connection to the environment and health, which is the central theme of the next several sections. I spoke briefly at the beginning of the book about the intimate connection between man and nature fostered by Eastern religions that promote vegetarianism. This is a sharp contrast to the western reality I have just described. Bron Taylor, Editor-in-Chief of the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, a widely acclaimed tome that critically explores the relationships among human beings, their environments, and the religious dimensions of life, noted<sup>1</sup> in support:

In environmental studies it has commonly been assumed that there exists a fundamental connection between a society's management of natural resources and its perception of nature. With the publication of "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" (1967) [Professor] Lynn White was among the first to focus more narrowly on the relationship between the state of the environment and religion, postulating a direct linkage between the two. He blamed mainstream Christianity—in particular Judeo-Christian cosmology of man's mastery of nature—for the environmental ills facing the world today.

Indeed, with the exception of peasants, who had direct and daily contact with nature which they linked intimately to their survival, most Westerners have lost their cyclic view of life and of living in harmony with nature. But there are two Western religions worth mentioning here that stand to break the curse.

### Christianity: Seventh-Day Adventists

While many later Christian and Jewish denominations forgot the importance of green eating, others stayed the course and have made vegetarianism central to their belief systems. In the US, one of the more significant of these is the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a Christian denomination that, since its formal establishment in 1863, has preached the benefits of whole vegetarian foods. This faith, sharing the belief mentioned above, holds that a strong, pure body is essential to the spiritual aspirant. What one eats is as important as how one prays because both are ways of communicating with the divine.

The church grew out of the Millerites, a sect that began in the 1840s in the US, nurtured by the belief that Christ would return to earth in October 1844. When this didn't happen, many dropped out, but a younger group, including Ellen C. White, renamed the church, and introduced a number of novel practices, such as celebrating the Sabbath on Saturday and adopting a vegetarian diet. White felt, "Vegetables, fruits and grains should compose our diet... The eating of flesh is unnatural. Many die of disease caused wholly by meat-eating; yet, the world does not seem to be the wiser. The moral evils of a flesh diet are not less marked than are the physical ills. Flesh food is injurious to health and whatever affects the body has a corresponding effect on the mind and soul."<sup>2</sup>

It should be noted that green eating is not mandatory for church members but about half of the current church membership is orthodox insofar as they are strict vegetarians, meaning no animal products, and only vegetarian meals are served in Church-run hospitals and colleges. In fact, because green eating is not widespread in the US, the Seventh-day Adventists have been very useful to scientists studying the value of this eating style since they can investigate the church's large membership of approximately 1.1 million to determine what health effects arise from adopting

life-long green eating.<sup>3</sup> The results are encouraging to say the least. Researchers have conducted a number of mortality studies and found strong evidence that church members are significantly healthier than America's non-vegetarian norm. Adventists have substantially lower incidence of common degenerative ailments like heart and respiratory disease and substantially lower cancer rates as well.<sup>4</sup>

### Judaism: Hebraic Tradition

While orthodox Jews follow kosher food regulations, which were laid out in the Bible, these do not preclude the eating of meat. They do emphasize that the preparation, consumption, and even storage of food are of utmost spiritual concern. Meat and dairy products must be neither eaten nor cooked together. Likewise, meat and dairy dishes and cooking utensils are kept separate. Animals and poultry must be carefully inspected before and after slaughter, and if found imperfect, they are rejected. Slaughter follows strict guidelines, and afterwards, the blood is thoroughly drained. Food selection and handling are treated seriously, and there are moral and ethical overtones to the strict dietary awareness of all who follow the Judaic tradition.<sup>5</sup>

Included in these regulations are ones that direct butchers to treat animals with compassion, even though they are to be killed for food. Among the rules is one that instructs that an animal should never be allowed to be thirsty for the sake of reducing its food intake, and another that tells an owner never to shout at an animal. Linked to this compassion for animals is the religion's belief that the body is the host of the spirit, and that food is not merely a fuel but a contributor to the body's spiritual essence.<sup>6</sup>

Many Jews, nonetheless, go one better on the level of compassion required of the conventional Jew by becoming vegetarians. Psychology professor Dr. Louis A. Berman notes that in the Talmudic writings, Jews are taught that, "danger to life nullifies all religious obligations." He feels that this principle is one of the cornerstones of a longstanding Jewish preference for vegetarianism. Join the already noted compassion for animal life to a belief some hold that eating meat can endanger health, and you have a thoughtful basis for Jewish vegetarianism.

### *Eastern Traditions*

Indeed, for more than 7000 years the East has had an intimate connection with nature. They were not impacted by the Dark Ages—marked by great cultural and religious strife—as Western and Eastern Europe were, nor by Christian beliefs of dominance over nature. Their cultures were largely undisturbed, that is, until the 17th-18th century when they underwent colonization at the hands of the Europeans, and were subjugated to growing crops demanded by the West, such as tea, spices, and other commodities. As such, those in the East would have continued to eat in correspondence with their religious beliefs, and what was historically popular, including a rich heritage of growing, cultivating, and fermenting foods long before there was any concept of fermentation in the West. By this time, Easterners had already been using fermented foods for more than a thousand years, and were living long lives; in fact, they were among the longest life spans on earth.

You may recall in the previous section on Western Traditions, I quoted Bron Taylor, Editor-in-Chief of the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* regarding the link between Judeo-Christianity and the loss of connection to nature. Taylor continues his overview but cautions about oversimplifying an extremely complex matter:

Asian and indigenous concepts of nature are not less complex than their Western counterparts, and it is therefore dangerous to generalize. Nonetheless, whether looking at indigenous traditions or Asian religious creeds, scholars of such worldviews have almost invariably stressed that they are what Christianity allegedly is far removed from, namely, being *ecocentric* and monistic, promoting a sense of harmony between human beings and nature. Christianity in contrast is portrayed as anthropocentric and dualistic, promoting a relation of dominating nature rather than one that is harmonious. By focusing on how these traditions are different from Western ones, the non-Western religions meet the demand for new ecological paradigms that unite man and the environment as parts of one another.<sup>7</sup>

Swami B.V. Tripurari, an American author, poet, and guru, echoes these sentiments in his book, *Ancient Wisdom for Modern Ignorance*, by stating, “Our present environmental crisis is in essence a spiritual crisis.”<sup>8</sup> According to HinduWisdom.info,



Hinduism “has always been an environmentally sensitive philosophy. No religion, perhaps, lays as much emphasis on environmental ethics as Hinduism. Well-known works of eastern literature such as *The Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Puranas* and *Smriti* contain the earliest messages for preservation of environment and ecological balance. Nature, or Earth, has never been considered a hostile element to be conquered or dominated. In fact, man is forbidden from exploiting nature. He is taught to live in harmony with nature and recognize that divinity prevails in all elements, including plants and animals.”<sup>9</sup>

We’ve seen already that the belief in reincarnation—that one may be born again in the form of a human child, but also a wolf cub, puppy, or other animal—is widespread in Eastern religions and provides a strong, mystical backing for their vegetarianism. Westerners tend to classify this idea as quaint or outlandish, never stopping to consider that some of their own religious beliefs might seem on the quaint side to those not raised in them. For instance, Christians believe their founder rose from the dead, flew through the sky and turned water into wine, never thinking anyone would see this as outlandish.

The point here is to look at the *ramifications* of the belief, not its credibility, and we have seen that a faith in reincarnation has had the most compassionate repercussions. Those that cherish this belief find the division between human and non-human animal life arbitrary; they also recognize the value of treating fellow humans with dignity and compassion for similar reasons. Of course, they acknowledge that one has to make distinctions among various categories of living beings, such as man, animal, fish, and insects, and what we’ve found over history is that humans have different relationships with animals they have domesticated. Yet, as they see it, at a deeper level, every being possesses a soul. There is a basic continuum, with each being (soul) taking on various attributes at different times, in different embodiments. One of the basic axioms of Hinduism and Jainism is that the soul does not die but simply leaves the body, moving from host to host.<sup>10</sup> With this belief, the two religions hold that the intentional killing of animals is a grave transgression against the spiritual law that binds the universe since it is destroying the embodiment of a soul. Such killing shows a culpable disregard for the oneness of all beings, misled by their apparent and transitory separateness.

To reiterate, let's disregard what might seem quaint in this idea and hone to its deeper message, which is not very different from the concerns of universal love and kindness to fellow creatures preached in Judaism and Christianity. The inner depth of this sensibility is well presented in *Vegetarianism and Occultism* by C.W. Leadbeater. In this poignant work, Leadbeater, a former clergyman turned spiritualist discusses the reverence for life that explains the preference for vegetarianism among Eastern religions: "The man who ranges himself on the side of evolution realizes the wickedness of destroying life; for he knows that, just as he is here in this physical body in order that he may learn the lessons of this plane, so is the animal occupying his body for the same reason, and through it he may gain experience at his lower stage. He knows that the life behind the animal is Divine Life, that all life in the world is Divine; the animals therefore are truly our brothers."<sup>11</sup>

Today, as our world becomes increasingly global and Westernized, religious traditions are fading, as are their influences over food choice. The choice to become vegetarian in the East today is largely related to economic necessity or activism, whether for human or animal rights, or environmental concern.

In India, about 78% of the nation is Hindu,<sup>12</sup> just over 30% are vegetarian;<sup>13</sup> diets in India are largely predicated on geography and socio-economic status, and are still largely plant-based due to widespread poverty. Although vegetarianism has never been a requirement for Hindus, as Indians become more mobile, and the world becomes increasingly westernized, younger generations of Hindus who were raised in strictly vegetarian homes are now forsaking their traditions and consuming meat.

While modern Hindus eat more meat than ever before, most know that vegetarianism promotes spiritual life; in fact, it is expected that religious leaders such as Brahmins, swamis and others are strict vegetarians. However, despite Hindu beliefs that cows are sacred—and the fact that their slaughter is banned in most of the country—India is the world's fifth-largest consumer and second-largest exporter of beef.<sup>14</sup> It is also host, sadly, to some of the most barbaric and cruel treatment of animals known to humankind today—an ironic reality due to the fact that in most parts of the country it is illegal to kill cattle.

I will not go into the gruesome details of this now; however, I bring this up in support of the discussion I am forwarding in these two chapters related to the importance of adopting the vegetarian *lifestyle* as opposed to just the vegetarian

diet—which in and of itself is a tremendous accomplishment in this day and age. Adopting the vegetarian diet, alone, would be a terrific start. However, without giving equal attention to growing into sustainable practices that support basic quality and equality of life for all beings while preserving the Earth's natural resources, we will not be successful in what we are aiming to accomplish, which is, essentially, the elevation of human consciousness to a level where we could improve our chances of perpetuating as a species, barring, of course, any unforeseen interstellar catastrophe.

## Buddhism

Some may take aim at my previous remarks about the substantiality of Eastern Religions—that, no matter how influential they have been in the past, they probably no longer have much weight, at least in countries in the Far East that have been modernizing. However, any more than a casual look shows that vegetarianism still has its place in China and in westernized Japan; however, it is a much smaller presence than its 1500-year Buddhist heritage might suggest. While China is host to nearly 50 million vegetarians and growing, in 2012 the nation consumed a full quarter of the global meat supply, and the practice of raising dogs for food is still prevalent in China. Every year in June, the southern Chinese city of Yulin celebrates the summer solstice with a dog-eating festival, where it is estimated that around 10,000 dogs are killed.<sup>15</sup>

Yet, vegetarianism in China is somewhat of a popular movement, mostly because of ecologically conscious young people who are choosing veganism out of concern for health, humaneness and the environment, plus to stay thin and attractive. Putting this into perspective, however, that is less than 4% of China's population. Until recently, vegetarianism is owed partly to general food shortages in some areas, or food prices, since vegetables are less expensive than meat in these countries.

A plant-based diet has also persisted as a result of extremely dense populations and limited arable acreage, due to pollution as well as ongoing drought conditions in certain parts of the nation. However, observers would go on to point out that fish and pork are popular, and that a growing number of people can afford them. And, China's government is helping with this: in February 2014, China's main regulatory body, the State Council, announced a new policy away from grain production toward

meat, vegetable and fruit production. For the first time, the country produced less grain than consumer demand.<sup>16</sup> This suggests that the majority of today's Chinese are vegetarians of necessity or out of environmental concern rather than religious doctrine.

Japan is not that much different, outside of Buddhist temples and communities. The traditional Japanese diet is non-dairy vegetarian, sometimes poultry and eggs, and fish of all types, including eel and squid. But meat and dairy emerged later on the scene as the country succumbed to Western influences. While you might think there would be a lot of vegetarians in Japan, or people who care about animal welfare, this is not the case. According to the premier vegetarian magazine *Veggie* in Japan, the number is around 5% of the population and, according to an article in the *Japan Times*, most go to vegetarian restaurants because of health reasons rather than ethical or religious reasons.<sup>17</sup> In fact, a small contingency of vegetarians are now rallying restaurants in Japan to offer meatless fare.<sup>18</sup> One of the group's founders stated: "We don't want to increase the number of vegetarian restaurants; we want vegetarian food to be served in normal restaurants. This hardly exists at present. People think vegetarians are strange and only eat salad."

In spite of the culture's reluctance to embrace a meat-free diet, over the past decade there has been a rise in popularity in vegetarian and vegan foods alongside a boom in macrobiotic food, which has led to the opening of about 500 vegetarian and macrobiotic (which also serve meat) cafés and restaurants.<sup>19</sup> Still, while some underpinnings of Buddhism remain, and peasants in the Chinese countryside exist more so on an austere vegetarian diet, both of these cultures have largely "Westernized" their diets, and consume meat as their economic status allows, even though religious edicts promote a reluctance to sustain life by killing fellow creatures, for the same reasons noted in the previous section.

### *Buddhism and Macrobiotics*

Japan is a very interesting case study with respect to vegetarianism because it is there that the macrobiotic diet was popularized by George Ohsawa. Ohsawa was severely ill as a teenager when he first came across the work of the late 19th-early 20th century Japanese army doctor, Sagen Ishizuka, who prescribed for his patients a

traditional Japanese diet of whole, unrefined, natural foods eaten in season. Ishizuka also strongly emphasized the proper balancing of dualistic dietary yin-yang elements, especially sodium and potassium, in eating. Ohsawa's application of the diet cured him, and he went on to name it "Macrobiotics," and to develop and promote it, writing some 300 books on the subject.

The yin and yang principles were not originated by Ohsawa, but flow through many older philosophical systems such as those of the pre-Socratic Greek or Chinese Chan (Zen) Buddhism.

This last doctrine has given most attention to how these opposed yin and yang principles function in everyday life, particularly in health. Zen Buddhism holds there should be a fine balance between the sides of the opposition, which, if maintained, creates physical and spiritual harmony. These yin and yang forces do not only function in the energetics of the body, but are thought to apply in the whole universe, which is governed by these principles. Yin is the passive element, responsible for such qualities as silence, stillness, cold, and darkness. Foods with yin qualities promote relaxation and restful expansion. Yang is the active element, responsible for sound, motion, heat, and light. Foods with yang qualities promote activity.<sup>20</sup>

Extreme (energetic) yang foods are eggs, meat, poultry, and salt. Extreme (restful) yin foods include sugar, chocolate, honey, saccharine, alcohol, refined flour, tropical fruits, and chemicals such as most food additives and drugs.<sup>21</sup> Both of these extreme classes of foods, being so powerful, when consumed will tend to unbalance the body system; so, according to Ohsawa, we should try to stay away from them. We should instead look for foods in the middle of the spectrum. Ohsawa feels that grains, especially rice, are the most balanced and health-promoting of foods.

Like the doctrine of transmigration, the yin-yang system teaches that both energies are found in human, animal, plant, and inorganic substances equally, thus affirming a cosmic unity, and obligating us (humans) to foster it not disturb it.

## Hinduism

As Christianity originally developed out of Judaism, so Buddhism grew out of Hinduism. And that is not the only progeny of this world religion that has been a tremendous positive force. Yoga, another offshoot, combines meditative movement

and postures (both seated and standing), and breathing techniques with a vegetarian regimen. As vegetarianism was first embraced by Americans for its health effects and only later acknowledged for its ethical and environmental components, similarly yoga first became known to the West for the value of its movement component. But today many people in our part of the world embrace it also for its spiritual teachings and insights, which are rooted in the Hindu/Buddhist theory of reincarnation as well as the practice of *ahimsa*, which is Sanskrit for “not to injure.” The essence of *ahimsa*, therefore, is nonviolence toward all living beings and things, including planet Earth. As such, it implies the same relationship to vegetarianism as discussed in the previous sections on Hinduism and Buddhism. The yogi, like other believers in the transmigration of souls, presumes that all living beings go through a series of rebirths, taking on many forms. It is not surprising, then, that meat eating and all other violent behavior, is said to bring on negative karma, and is therefore strictly forbidden for true practitioners.<sup>22</sup> A traditional vegetarian yogic diet may emphasize fruits or vegetables or fermented dairy products, but any of its configurations shun meat, which is felt to be toxic, both physically and spiritually. Informed modern day practitioners recognize the appalling and heartbreaking plight of dairy cows—organically raised or otherwise—today and refrain from consuming dairy products altogether.

Another Indian religious practice with close ties to Hinduism, which has gathered a significant following in the US is the New Vrindaban International Society for Krishna Consciousness. While the group has ties to the teachings of Lord Chaitanya dating back five centuries, it was founded in 1966 by his Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

A key practice for Krishna devotees is to seek religious revelation and ecstasy by chanting the Maha mantra. One cannot just begin chanting, though. They must first prepare oneself by living a “clean” life, adhering to four rules of conduct: no gambling, no intoxication, no extramarital sex, and no meat eating. The last rule is similar to that of Zen Buddhism in the adoption of vegetarianism but also in its classification of food types. While the Buddhist splits between yin and yang dishes, the Krishna disciples contrast the deleterious meat foods to *prasadam* or “mercy”

foods—the fruits, grains, and vegetables that possess special purifying and spiritually stimulating qualities, especially when ceremoniously blessed.<sup>23</sup>

A third Hinduism-related group, the Rajneesh Foundation, based in Maharashtra, India, also embraces vegetarianism. Its founder, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, teaches, same as the Krishna doctrine, that physical purification must precede spiritual evolution. The first step in this process is to refrain from eating anything dead, as it deadens character. Also, Rajneesh explains, eating something that has come to us through violence only instills in us a violent and aggressive nature. The vegetarian is believed to be more graceful, and more at ease with his environment and fellow creatures because his diet consists of foods that are whole and alive.

Rajneesh describes the difference between eating and abstaining from meat poetically: “Vegetarianism is a form of purification. When you eat animals, you become heavy and gravitate towards earth. A light vegetarian diet, in contrast, gives more grace and power. Rather than gravitate, you levitate towards the sky. Like a person who is going to climb a mountain, the lighter the load, the easier the ascent. Why carry more than you have to?”<sup>24</sup>

### Islam: Sufiism

Taking a look at the Middle East, we might consider the Islamic Sufi sect. This group practices vegetarianism for a reason that might seem the utmost antithetical to ideas held in the industrialized West—that of voluntary simplicity and eschewal of materialism. The name of the group itself, originating from the undyed wool garments called “sufi” that adherents traditionally wore, symbolizes their orientation. These clothes were uncomfortable and hence demonstrated a disregard for the comforts of the flesh, a disdain that was believed to be pleasing to Allah. Modern Western Sufis are not the ascetics like their forbearers, nor do they follow all the traditional rituals. However, some still do practice the famous whirling dancing of the “dervishes”—Sufis who seek to elevate their level of consciousness beyond the physical realm through ecstatic dancing. Further, most still adhere to vegetarianism, another cherished element of simple, close-to-the-earth living. Their meatless diet, similar to that of the yogi, helps them approach unity with God and the natural world.<sup>25</sup>

*Secular: The Vegan Society*

Finally, let me bring up The Vegan Society, founded in England in 1944. While it calls itself a purely secular organization, its emphasis on nonviolence and reverence for life gives it a strongly spiritual cast. Members of the Vegan society do not eat any animal products and try to limit their diet to the most wholesome, alive, energy-filled foods. They emphasize unaltered, unprocessed, whole foods, such as raw vegetables and fruits, nuts, seeds, and grains, while eschewing alcohol, tea, coffee, soda, processed foods, and the use of tobacco.<sup>26</sup> This regimen stems, not from a desire to get right with God, but from a desire to promote harmony with nature and other humans.

All the aforementioned religions believe that to live in a world without connection is suicidal. But this is the world of the meat eater who believes they have NO connection to the animal's suffering, the slaughterhouses, the waste of the world's land, water and energy resources, and the starvation in poorer parts of the world when they bite into a beef steak or a chicken leg. This perception of disconnection, and separation, is incorrect, and is the real meaning of the word "sin" in the Bible. Sadly, we humans have come to think only of the word sin in moral context when its true meaning points to something far more profound and vastly consequential. It is the separation from life itself, and why I say it is suicidal. The individuals who are not aware of this connection, that they, indeed, are a part of the grand matrix, are unwittingly lying to themselves all the while committing acts of destruction, which pollute and destroy their world, and the world at large.

When we believe that our actions are not connected to all of life, it becomes possible for us to perform all sorts of life-depleting behaviors, including the unnecessary killing of animals for food.

The world religions we have been examining recognized this error long ago, and see that the mindless slaughter of innocent animals to fill an imaginary dietary need loosens the spiritual bonding of the earth's living beings. The violence, the bloodshed, and the suffering create a negative psychic wave that begins in the animal factories and slaughterhouses and ripples throughout the world through those who choose to partake of their flesh.

Amid this spiritual malaise, religions and humanitarian groups have tried to promote the vegetarian way of life as the healthful antidote required by individuals



and society alike. For if the human body is a temple housing our spiritual core, how can the core remain pure if the housing is polluted? True, whole grains give us substance, sprouts and juices offer us energy, and vegetables provide the variety and vitality essential to good health. But even more, a wholesome vegetarian diet is the underpinning of the harmonious relationship of body, mind, and spirit. Where the meat eater rips away at these connections and lives in denial, the vegetarian finds and sustains such connections, intent on reweaving the bonds between all living beings and nature itself in the light of truth.

Even before scientific evidence was available, many vegetarians would base their arguments in favor of going green on anthropology, that is, by looking at the health of people in other, primarily vegetarian societies. As we've examined, religion is one determiner of vegetarianism, while cultural norms and economic status are another.

Recent scientific literature has looked into the older history of such civilizations as the Hindu and Japanese, where for thousands of years, neither meat nor dairy products were consumed. According to meat-eaters, these cultures should have disappeared as people died from lack of protein, but instead they flourished. Some historians even claim that the healthiest civilizations are those in which the people lead essentially vegetarian lifestyles, eating little or no meat.

In fact, rather than making an eater more robust than a vegetarian, there is much evidence that eating meat makes a person weaker. Dr. John McDougall, whose vegetarian diet we will further discuss below, cites evidence from non-industrialized countries with lower protein consumption indicating that their populations suffer fewer broken bones caused by brittleness.

### *Vegetarians Around the World*

I just finished presenting world religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism that put a great emphasis on the value of vegetarianism, which, if not strictly mandated for their followers, is nonetheless considered the higher path. I brought up the topic of the general health of populations that put little or no stress on meat or dairy. My emphasis then was on the interface between religious belief, eating patterns, and overall health.

In that discussion, I hardly exhausted what I have to say about vegetarian-tending peoples and health. Although before I proceed, let me add another caveat, which is that in assessing people's health, we have to acknowledge that many factors are involved—such as genetic influence, activity and exercise levels, access to basic health and dental care, food and other resources, general stress levels, sanitation and hygiene, the physical environment, as well as community infrastructure and support that, along with diet, influence health. That said; let's look at some cases where vegetarianism is associated with positive health outcomes.

The Hunza people of northern Pakistan are often cited for their excellent health. A 1963 *Lancet* article described the life-promoting regimen of these mostly vegetarian people who live at altitudes of 2,000-8,000 feet, deep in the valley of Kaghan, Gilgit, Hunza and other mountainous areas of northwest Pakistan. Consuming the simplest possible diets of wheat, corn, potatoes, onions, nuts and fruits, and some yogurt and milk, they trudge up and down the rough mountain paths for anything up to fifty miles a day. They have existed thus for perhaps many thousands of years to ages of 130, and even 145, free of obesity and cavities, and sure to enjoy long, healthy lives.<sup>27</sup>

Another population that includes a good many people who eat a plant-based diet is found in Mainland China. I earlier noted that this was a kind of *involuntary vegetarianism*, since “some observers feel that this is partly owing to general food shortages... the result of extremely dense populations and limited arable acreage.” According to William H. Adolph, professor of biochemistry at Yenching University in Beijing, vegetarianism was hardly one the population would have volunteered for. He wrote this in a 1938 *Scientific American* article:

For centuries China has unconsciously been working out a vast food experiment from which the Western World can learn practical lessons. [This experiment] ... involved not merely a few... human subjects sheltered in the artificial comforts of the nutrition laboratory, but it boasted several millions of Chinese peasants as experimental subjects... not over a few weeks but over a score or more of centuries.<sup>28</sup>

While not an experiment we'd want to replicate in total, in that low food rations, even of rice, for peasants were often imposed by rapacious landlords that in

poor crop years could lead to starvation, the results are eye-opening. The conclusion is that when vegetarian food supplies were adequate, health was maintained. Even now it is estimated that Chinese peasants get 95% of their protein from vegetable sources and hundreds of millions of them have maintained good health on such a diet. The mainstay of the peasant diet is rice, and meat and dairy products are seldom counted in as part of meals. Both of these Western staples are prohibitively expensive and the large scale raising of livestock too wasteful of energy and natural resources to be countenanced.<sup>29</sup> This diet explains why the Chinese expression for eating, in Cantonese “sik fan,” means, translated literally “eat rice.”

We’ve spoken extensively about what it takes to heal our bodies using fortifying plant-based foods, but what about healing our mind and spirit too—our whole person. This is what we will talk about now, because any discussion on healing devoid of these topics will fall short in achieving the end desire—a fully integrated human being.

### **The Conscious Path: Healing Minds and Hearts**

Which came first...? It has been suggested that many people become vegetarian because of the way they see and think about the world, in other words, they are sensitive to the plight of all living beings, including Mother Earth, and choose vegetarianism. Then, there are those who begin on the vegetarian path by assimilating the diet, perhaps for health reasons, and then become more sensitized to their needs and the need of others and the environment *because* of the food.

So far, we have spoken only about the healing of the body that occurs because of vegetarianism, but there are also implications to our mind, emotions, and spirit when we adopt a non-violent lifestyle.

### **Other Aspects of a Healthy Vegetarian Lifestyle**

There are many practices associated with the vegetarian lifestyle worth noting. Essentially, it is a lifestyle rooted in actions toward what is natural, and not just to humans, but also to what is natural in the world at large. Some of these practices

are inherent to Eastern religions, so reading from that genre will facilitate a more-in-depth understanding. Many of these aspects may be obvious in terms of their role in health, but they bear repeating given the mounting challenges we face in our nation related to lifestyle diseases.

## Rest & Sleep

Rest and sleep are different, but let me speak about sleep first. Sleep is necessary for repair and rejuvenation, and those with chronic insomnia must find a solution in order to maintain their quality of life. Most people don't know that chronic insomnia predisposes people to an early death. Therefore, from the perspective of having a healthy and long life, restoring good sleeping patterns is essential.

Sleep is a smooth condition made up of a series of changes that take place during the sleeping phase. Each phase has its own unique brain wave patterns. Of special interest is the rapid eye movement (REM) period, the stage when dreams occur. REM periods are, in turn, subdivided into approximately 5 periods. The deepest levels of sleep occur during the third and fourth phases. As we grow older, the length of sleep during these phases diminishes.

Insomnia can be explained as difficulty either initiating or maintaining sleep—or both. It affects millions of people and is often hard to treat. Those with insomnia feel as though they have not had sufficient sleep upon awakening, which usually results in fatigue, irritability, and decreased concentration, just to name a few symptoms. Additionally, studies indicate that stimulants such as caffeine and nicotine contribute to insomnia by making it harder for the brain to achieve the state of relaxation needed for sleep. The amount of time it takes the body to break down 50% of a dose of caffeine is between three and seven hours; larger amounts and/or repeated doses of caffeine lead to slowed caffeine clearance, causing caffeine's effects to last even longer.<sup>30</sup> As a result, caffeine consumption can impair sleep for many hours. Keep in mind that elderly people may need less sleep than younger adults, who should be sleeping, on average, between 6 to 8 hours per day. This is a typical change connected to age and should not be considered a sleep disorder in a healthy person.

Rest on the other hand is related to allowing the body to experience relaxation while in the waking state. The body needs regular rest intervals throughout the day,

about every 90 minutes according to performance specialist Terry Lyles, Ph.D., author of the soon to be released book *Cracking the Stress Code: Eliminate Harmful Stress and Achieve Life Mastery in 4 Simple Steps*. Dr. Lyles says, “We often regard physical energy as a scarce resource that we must carefully guard and conserve. In reality, physical energy is an abundant resource that our bodies manufacture constantly through food, hydration, and work/rest cycles throughout the day and sufficient sleep. The critical issue is in how we expend our energy and in the energy manufacture/expenditure balance that we maintain. That balance determines the level and consistency of our daily performance.” Speaking to the science of physiology, Dr. Lyles goes on to say: “Blood sugar and glucose levels are regulated in three-hour modules and must be balanced by regular food intake and recovery breaks. Otherwise our energy levels will diminish.”<sup>31</sup> He also notes that mental performance is the highest just after a break. All you need is a few minutes to disengage, walk around the block or the office, stand up and do some stretches, and you will markedly increase your wellbeing and performance levels. Dr. Lyles has researched sleep as it correlates to performance in professional athletes and highly recommends that no phones, televisions, computers, clocks, or other electronic devices be in your bedroom when sleeping; they disrupt natural sleeping patterns. If you have to get up to go to the bathroom or for any reason, do not look at a clock as it will immediately take you out of a sleep state into a cognitive state, thereby disrupting the sleep pattern altogether.

## Pure Water

You can go many weeks without food, but only a few days without water. Of all the components necessary for life, water is second only to oxygen in importance. It is present in all tissues, including teeth, fat, bone, and muscle. It is the medium of all body fluids, such as blood, digestive juices, lymph, urine, and perspiration. It is a lubricant for the saliva, the mucous membranes, and the fluid that bathes the joints. And it regulates body temperature. Water also prevents dehydration, flushes out toxins and wastes, supplies the body with oxygen and nutrients, and aids muscle cells in producing energy.

The average body contains 40 to 50 quarts of water, with 40% of that water inside cells. Lean people have a higher percentage of body water than heavier people

do, men have a higher percentage than women, and children have a higher percentage than adults. Water is our life's blood. Indeed, 83% of our blood is water. With a loss of 5% of body water, skin shrinks and muscles become weak. The loss of less than a fifth of body water is fatal. On average, the adult body consists of between 55 to 75% water. Approximately two-thirds of a person's weight is water. Each day you must replace between 2 to 3 quarts of water in your body.

*How much water do you need?*

Although water occurs naturally in most vegetarian foods, it must be consciously included in our daily diets. Include 8 glasses, 8 to 10 ounces each, every day. To rehydrate after exercise, drink one glass of water every 20 minutes for the first hour, then one glass for several hours afterward. Your body will determine how much it needs; it will absorb water at a particular rate and eliminate whatever is excess. Eating a high-protein diet results in the body eliminating water. If you are not a vegetarian, it's especially crucial to keep careful track of water. Caffeine drinks like Red Bull<sup>®</sup>, coffee and iced tea also act as diuretics, resulting in dehydration.

Lastly, drinking during meals, in a sense, can "drown" your enzymes, reducing your digestive strength. When foods are dry, it is better to allow extra salivation prior to swallowing, to moisten them, rather than washing them down with liquids. Drink before meals and then wait up to 2 hours after. Eating green and succulent vegetables with a meal also will help provide natural water or lubricate dry foods.

## Organic Foods

The organic food industry is one of the fastest growing industries in the country. It has grown about 20% a year for the past 7 years. Dr. Elson Haas, a practicing integrative medicine physician and director of the Preventive Medical Center of Marin in San Rafael, California, tells about the many benefits of organic food. In several studies, he says, organic foods are shown to have higher levels of nutrients, vitamins, and minerals. For example, flavonoids, which are plant by-products effective in preventing cancer, heart disease, and a whole host of other diseases, are found in higher levels in organic produce. Flavonoids work by protecting cells from free radical damage.

Also there is the taste factor; organic foods are more flavorful. By eating organic, we are preventing potential health problems that may be caused by pesticides and other toxic chemicals. Doctor Haas continues:

I think also by supporting organics we are basically supporting an industry and saying we don't want so many chemicals in our food, we don't want so many chemicals in our environment. We are helping independent farmers, we are protecting the soil, we are protecting the water quality, and we are protecting the animals. We are protecting our future.<sup>32</sup>

Eating organically grown food is the best way to reduce the amount of toxins entering the body. Remember, these toxins are not limited to pesticides, but also include heavy metals like mercury and lead, as well as solvents like benzene and toluene. Heavy metals cause damage to the nervous system, play a role in multiple sclerosis, and are associated with lower IQ. Solvents have been shown to harm white blood cells, thereby weakening the immune system.

Because organic foods contain a significantly lower amount of pesticides and chemicals than conventional produce, eating organic foods automatically decreases inflammation in our body and therefore our risk of disease.

One note here: while it is commonly believed that “organic” automatically means “pesticide-free” or “chemical-free,” this is not true. However, organic farmers are obligated to use pesticides that are derived from natural sources rather than synthetically manufactured compounds. They also employ creative mechanical and cultural tools to help control pests without chemicals, such as insect traps, careful crop selection, and biological controls like predator insects and beneficial microorganisms.

While organic products can cost a little more, it is often useful to participate in co-op buying, as well as other group buying clubs to reduce costs. It is also helpful, whenever possible, to buy directly from organic farmers, which can result in a lower price altogether, but at a minimum, fresher food. Lastly, in weighing the pros and cons of utilizing organics, we must consider the costs of ill-health that could occur from a lifetime of exposure to the dangerous synthetic chemical toxins in conventional produce. All in all, organic foods are far healthier than conventional produce. Choose them as often as possible to increase your chances of preventing disease.

Below is a list of the most highly sprayed fruits and vegetables. In these cases, it is absolutely essential to purchase organic if you wish to limit your exposure to poisonous chemicals.

- |                 |                        |                          |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Apples       | 5. Spinach             | 9. Potatoes              |
| 2. Celery       | 6. Imported nectarines | 10. Domestic blueberries |
| 3. Strawberries | 7. Imported grapes     | 11. Lettuce              |
| 4. Peaches      | 8. Sweet bell peppers  | 12. Kale/collard greens  |

### Fasting Periods

If you want to live a longer and healthier life, one proven way to do it is to consume fewer calories. Counting calories is not as important as thoughtfully choosing the kinds and amounts of food you eat. As I covered in Chapter 5, the typical American diet needs to be adjusted to include more complex carbohydrates, fewer proteins, and less fat. Begin your new eating plan by eliminating the three whites from your diet: white sugar, white flour, and salt. Then eliminate processed foods including most canned, frozen, or prepared convenience foods. Read labels and do not eat anything you can't pronounce.

The best eating plan is to eat more frequently—smaller meals, every 4 to 6 hours, so that both hunger and satiety can be experienced. Do eat breakfast, just keep down fat and sugar consumption. More people who skip breakfast are overweight than underweight. Get in touch with your eating drives. Eat your biggest meal at lunch, veggie-loaded entrees or salads with all the 'fixins,' including beans, legumes and/or nuts are great for lunch. Beware of salad dressings; most are high in fat, sugar, and calories; homemade dressings made with olive oil, (or even without oil) are best. Dinner should be light; a soup or small salad is plenty. Eat enough breakfast and lunch to take away the strong hunger drive, but not enough to feel full. If you are hungry before the next meal, have a snack. Eat only in response to hunger, not for entertainment, or comfort.

Consider taking one day a week to fast on juices or juices with protein powder. Fasting allows your digestive system to rest and promotes increased metabolism.



## Limit or Exclude Alcohol and Drugs

Whether wine, whiskey or beer, marijuana, tranquilizers, antidepressants, or caffeine, these are all drugs and, therefore, detrimental to the body; they also take us away from our nature. In many cases they are used to keep you from feeling the pain of your life, including excessive tiredness or listlessness. By the way, the same goes for eating an entire box of chocolates or cookies in one sitting, which is essentially a form of drug (caffeine, sugar) abuse. We talked above about moderation and restraint, which is crucial here. Someone once said a true measure of one's character is their discipline.

Take note of your addictive tendencies: what do you do when you are feeling nervous, scared, or stressed? Answering honestly is the first step in developing healthful behaviors. We all know that compensatory behaviors provide only temporary relief and don't directly deal with the underlying issues in our lives that many of us are avoiding.

Beer, wine, and other alcoholic beverages can cause fatigue and dehydration through their diuretic actions. Plus, they are not good for your heart, including red wine, which has enjoyed this beneficial status for some time because of it contains a polyphenol named resveratrol—thought to help prevent damage to blood vessels, reduce low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol (the “bad” cholesterol), and prevent blood clots.<sup>33</sup> However, a study published in July of 2014 in the *BMJ* (formerly the *British Medical Journal*) found that people who drank less alcohol (regardless of type) tended to have better cardiovascular health in the long run than cohorts who drank even moderately. The study, which was a collaborative effort by researchers at a number of notable institutions and co-authored by Perelman School of Medicine's (University of Pennsylvania) Michael Holmes, included a review of more than 50 studies as well as DNA study of the “alcohol dehydrogenase 1B” gene. Specifically, subjects showed a 10% reduced risk of coronary heart disease, in addition to lower blood pressure *and* lower BMI (Body Mass Index). Holmes stated, “The biggest takeaway is that people who drink less alcohol have lower risk of heart disease. In other words, if you want to reduce risk of heart disease, drink less to zero alcohol.”<sup>34</sup>

Highly caffeinated drinks like coffee not only act as stimulants which can result in anxiety, insomnia, tremulousness, and palpitations, as well as bone loss and possibly increased risk of fractures but also act as diuretics, resulting in dehydration. So, if you are consuming caffeine at all, you need to increase water consumption.

## Exercise

Lean body mass increases when intramuscular fat is replaced with muscle. Muscles have special enzymes that burn calories during exercise. The more muscle we have, the more enzymes we have that burn calories. As the amount of muscle increases, the amount of fat decreases, and the capacity for burning more calories is further enhanced. So when muscles move, they burn calories and increase lean body mass. It's a new cycle, but this time it's not vicious! Although there probably are genetic tendencies that predetermine set points, it is still possible for most people to "reset" their fat thermostats. The key to reprogramming lies in understanding and acting on the relationship between the kind and amount of exercise you do (your energy output) and the kind and amount of food you eat (your energy input). The trick lies in changing from a fat cycle to a fit cycle.

Running and other aerobic exercises can help us enter the fit cycle. Aerobic exercises use large muscles in a repetitive rhythmic pattern. During aerobic exercise, the body is fueled primarily by free fatty acids and secondarily by glycogen. While exercising, you do not use many calories. For example, you would have to walk 11 1/2 miles to burn up 3,500 calories or 1 pound. Weight loss is the effect of a cumulative process in which calories are being used on a more regular and frequent basis. This cumulative use of calories produces ongoing changes in the body's chemistry, lowering the set point, increasing the lean muscle mass with its fat-burning enzymes, and increasing the metabolism so the body burns calories at a higher rate. For hours following the exercise period, the body continues to burn calories at a higher rate. The effects of exercise on the body last long after the exercise period has ended. This will be true as long as you continue to do aerobic exercise at least 3 to 4 days a week.

Remember, duration is more important than distance or intensity. Your individual exercise program will start the same way whether your goal is overall fitness or weight management. If you step on the scale after a few weeks of exercising, you may notice an increase in pounds. Don't be dismayed. That is a good sign. It means you are increasing muscle in relation to intramuscular fat (muscle weighs more than fat). Interpret the increase as getting better and stronger, not heavier. Then throw away the scale. Pounds do not measure fitness.

On a similar note, weight itself should not be taken as the primary indicator of health. What is important is the percentage of lean muscle tissue and the percentage of fat to total body mass. Ideally, most men should be approximately 15% body fat, most women no more than 18 to 20%. However, studies indicate that most men are between 22 and 24% body fat and most women between 26 and 34%.

Both aerobic exercise and anaerobic exercise are important—not only for weight management, but also for overall good health. Doing the same exact exercises all the time, however, develops certain muscles to the exclusion of others. Runners, for example, typically have very healthy internal body systems and well-developed legs, but they lack proportional upper-body strength. Combining different forms of exercise such as walking, swimming, bicycling, rowing, jumping on the mini trampoline (rebounder) or playing tennis or racquetball can help achieve a good balance of muscle activity throughout the body. Anaerobic exercise like weight training and yoga builds strength, power, endurance, or the skill of specific muscles or muscle groups, and are excellent complements to aerobic exercises.

For maximum benefit, aerobic exercise should occur three or four times a week for at least 20 minutes, with 30 to 45 minutes being ideal. Start slowly, increasing the amount of time and intensity by about 10% every 2 weeks. Use good quality equipment, including proper foot gear. All sports require both pre- and post-game stretching. Anaerobic exercises, weight training in particular, actually break down muscle. For this reason, you need to allow a full 48 hours between weight-training sessions for the muscles to repair and heal.

Prior to starting any serious exercise or conditioning program, most people should have a complete physical exam. Some people need a stress test. During a cardiovascular stress test, your heart and blood pressure are monitored as you walk or run on a treadmill. The workload is increased at regular intervals. The results can indicate hidden or small conditions that could lead to trouble. Stress tests are done in various centers, hospitals, and some cardiologists' offices. If you are under 35 years of age, not overweight, and have no family history of heart disease, you probably do not need a stress test. A routine physical examination will do.

What time of day is best for exercise? Most people are more flexible and looser (also more fatigued after a day's work) at about 6:00 p.m. So exercising in late

afternoon takes advantage of the flexibility, pumps up energy to revitalize a tired body, and reduces the tensions of the day. Exercising in early morning, on the other hand, takes advantage of a well-rested and fresh state of mind. Each person needs to be in tune with his or her own body, following the monthly rhythms that seem to affect intellect, mood, and physical energy levels. Do it when it feels good. The right time for exercise is any time you manage to find in your busy schedule.

It is important to start your routine and proceed very slowly. If any unusual signs manifest themselves, stop right away and check them out immediately with your doctor. If you feel exhausted, reduce the intensity and duration of any exercise by 50%. Your body is talking to you. Listen to it. That's good preventive sports medicine.

Relaxation, warm-ups and cool-down exercise should be used with all types of exercise: physical activity, aerobic, anaerobic, and all those in between. They maintain flexibility in muscles, tendons, ligaments, and joints, and help to prevent injury. Too much, too fast, and too soon are the most common reasons for sport injuries. Do not overdo. Less is better—at the beginning—at least until your body adapts.

There are many valuable books on exercise today. Simply consult your local bookstore, or check with personal trainers at a local fitness club for recommendations.

## Balance

Health is a balance of our emotional, physical, and spiritual conditions. At the cellular level, life is a constant struggle for balance. Even when you ingest what is harmful, your cells will always defend you. They never stop and say, "*Why should we defend this guy? He doesn't care about us. He's abusing us.*" No. All of the hundred trillion cells in our body are operating on our behalf. Each of them has a separate consciousness that works in unity with the others. We overeat, and what do the cells do? They could put all that extra weight onto the nose, but they don't. In a miracle of balance, the body puts a little weight here and a little weight there. Why? To keep our center of gravity in balance so we won't fall over.

Balance is one of the keys to life. We need to look at every part of our lives to see which parts are out of balance. These will be our problem areas. When you spend

more than you make, you're financially out of balance. In a relationship, if you take more than you give, you're emotionally out of balance. If you are worried and stressed a lot of the time, you are out of balance, and not able to focus on what you do have and be present to your life. When you devote more time toward work than play, or cannot exercise because "you're too busy," you cause an imbalance. If you sit at home and do not participate in causes that matter to you, meet people in your community and support community activities, or talk to or meet your neighbors, you are out of balance. All imbalances cause stress, which leads to distress that then leads to hormonal and blood sugar imbalances, which can then lead to local inflammatory conditions and pains. All of this can lead to neurological damage and premature aging, disease and in some cases an early demise. Better to balance the time in your day now *before* you are under the threat of a surgeon's knife. This way you can grow, progress, and achieve with your friends, family, and community while becoming a living inspirational example of what is possible. When you're working with too much effort, it's almost always because you're out of balance. When you're in balance, everything flows. Your mind flows. Your body flows. Your spirit flows, and you don't even have to think about being nice.

Here are a few areas to look at in terms of creating balance:

**Clutter:** We need to learn to stop over-cluttering our lives, whether with people, work, engagements (electronic and otherwise), stuff, whatever it might be. Clutter is a drain on energy and attention and prevents us from investing time and energy into more satisfying and fulfilling endeavors such as nurturing relationships. (See the next section on Voluntary Simplicity for more discussion on this issue.)

**Time:** Be realistic about the time you have and make sure you are choosing wisely. Balance comes from the correct appropriation of time to the things that you have determined are necessary for your health and well-being. Give up multi-tasking; it doesn't work. The important thing to remember is to only focus on one item at a time. If you are trying to do more, you are diverting your attention from mastering either, and attending to the details consciously. Furthermore, I am constantly working on many projects but I never lose my

sense that I am my most important project. Every day I make sure that I have what I need to maintain my balance. I come first in my life because if I am not at my optimal state of physical, spiritual, and mental health, I am not of maximum benefit to others.

**Make Your Self-Care, Healthcare Your Primary Ritual:** Once you discover the foundational practices that support your health and wellbeing, specifically, design your life around those. As I noted above, when you take care of yourself, you can be of benefit to others.

Lastly, we can also fool ourselves that moderation is balance; that's what most people think of as balance. But think of being okay with a moderate amount of sarcasm, or negativity, or racism, or sexism. Do we ever say, "*You can be racist one day a week, you can lie to me occasionally, and sometimes you can betray me?*" No we do not! In these instances, having balance relies on our eliminating life-depleting behavior altogether.

We all wake up each day and make choices. Our choices will either create balance or imbalance, harmony or disharmony, disease or wellness, happiness or sadness, constructive or destructive thoughts. It's all in your power. You can make it happen. Where there's balance, there's harmony. And where there's harmony, there is bliss.

## Voluntary Simplicity

"Voluntary simplicity" has been a way of life in several cultures for centuries. To be successful at this, people need to understand the benefits to be gained by unraveling the clutter from their lives.

The reasons people turn toward voluntary simplicity are several. First, many people are simplifying their lives to save money; they can no longer afford the upper middle class suburban lifestyle that is still put forth as the American ideal. Second, there's the environmental concern, with many advocates of voluntary simplicity feeling that America's high living, throw-away lifestyle puts a huge drain on the planet and is unfair to less developed countries and to future generations. These

people tend to be heavily involved in repairing, recycling and repurposing material goods to lower their carbon footprint while helping other community members. Also, modern American life has become so complex and demanding that people get tense trying to fit everything they're supposed to do into a twenty four hour day. So it makes sense to simplify the demands and cut down on stress. Further, some are drawn to this movement for philosophical and spiritual reasons; for example, they permit themselves frequent quiet time to rejuvenate their inner happiness and peace. This in turn helps them to speak, act, and share in the most harmonious and constructive ways with their children and others.

It is also important to learn how to say no. When have you said "yes" when you really meant "no?" Think of all the times you burdened yourself with extra activities because you were afraid to say "no." Sometimes, you said yes because you were expected to or someone convinced you to. In order to achieve balance and harmony—side effects of a simplified life—you need to remain present to what is most needed, and then have the courage to unapologetically speak about those needs.

Most of us typically work toward making our lives comfortable. Comfort provides a sense of security. But it also prevents us from trying new things. We become afraid to quit our jobs and find new work, change relationships, or even change the way we eat, dress, or comb our hair. Simplifying allows us to actively engage in the growth process, and to take action on those things that are critical to our growth and happiness.

### Slowing Down/Mindfulness/Meditation

Don't rush and distract yourself with things like television while you eat. Take your time and enjoy the taste of the food. Reorganize your day if you need to so that no one tells you that your work is more important than your nourishment.

Instead of enjoying our food, we're usually concerned about the next thing that needs to be done. We keep looking to the future instead of focusing on where we are or what we are doing. This distraction creates imbalance; imbalance affects digestion and energy doesn't really get to where it needs to go. Slow down, create a meal that honors your body, and turn off the cell phone and TV. Put away your magazines and savor the experience of eating.

We need to slow down and re-cultivate healthy relationships. We must learn from the negatives in our lives and create more positives. We need to learn to stop over-cluttering our lives and seeking perfection and to become more nurturing in our relationships.

In terms of our thoughts, science abounds in support of how they affect our biology. If you are worried, stressed, and fearful much of the time, your body's functions, including your immune system, are being compromised. Not only this, but it may determine whether you manifest an illness related to a genetic predisposition. A study conducted by Massachusetts General Hospital and the Genomics Center at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Centers found that the mind can actively turn on and turn off genes. "Now we've found how changing the activity of the mind can alter the way basic genetic instructions are implemented," stated Harvard Medical School professor Herbert Benson, M.D., co-senior author of the report. The study reported significant differences in the expressions of more than 2,200 genes between meditators and non-meditators. Some of these genes included those responsible for inflammation, the handling of free radicals, and programmed cell death, which can keep genetically impaired cells from turning into cancers.<sup>35</sup>

### *Practices for Cultivating Mindfulness*

Reporting on the Herbert Benson study in the previous section, the *Washington Post* noted that researchers involved in the study said, "they've taken a significant stride forward in understanding how relaxation techniques such as meditation, prayer and yoga improve health: by changing patterns of gene activity that affect how the body responds to stress." These mind-body practices as well as others have been used worldwide for millennia to prevent and treat disease and to promote wellness; this study provides the first compelling evidence that they affect gene expression changes in practitioners.<sup>36</sup>

### *Yoga*

While I spoke about yoga in spiritual contexts, I have yet to speak about its benefits to the physical body. Yoga is extremely beneficial in developing mindfulness, which means it also promotes relaxation and health. Slow stretches lubricate joints and increase flexibility while special breathing techniques expel toxins in the joints and



muscles and decrease mental and emotional stress. There is no end to the studies demonstrating the health benefits of yoga. A 2013 Norwegian study showed that yoga practice results in very rapid changes in gene expression that boost immunity at a cellular level.<sup>37</sup> Not only did the researchers believe that the changes occurred while participants were still on the mat, the study showed that changes were significantly greater than in the control group who went on a nature hike while listening to soothing music.

The consistent practice of yoga has also been scientifically shown to reduce migraines, boost sexual performance, improve sleep, and combat food cravings, in part because yoga promotes mindful eating.<sup>38</sup> The Yoga Health Foundation also reports that yoga is proven to help those suffering from: chronic back pain more than therapeutic exercises; depression; diabetes, through improved blood sugar regulation and nerve pulse function; menopause, by reducing hot flashes; asthma, by improving pulmonary function in patients with bronchial asthma symptoms; cancer and heart disease by lowering blood pressure, and decreasing blood sugar; cholesterol and triglycerides while improving coordination and reducing stress; and obesity, through increased awareness of their bodies, making them aware of bad habits such as eating because of stress, boredom, or depression.<sup>39</sup> Yoga has also been shown to promote relaxation and, of course, to reduce stress.

There are many different types of yoga, including therapeutic yoga, and they can vary greatly. It is best to speak to a professional prior to deciding which classes are best for your current level of physical conditioning. Some yoga styles can be an extremely rigorous and inappropriate for beginners, and movements must be done properly to avoid injury. If you are a beginner or suffering from physical challenges, let your instructor know prior to class.

### Create a Healthy Relationship to Stress

Virtually all the authorities agree that if you want to get a handle on health—and heart disease in particular—you have to deal with stress. Stress or distress is a major problem for the American psyche. For a long while we have known that stress is a

contributor to heart disease, but only recently have we begun to understand the physiological basis of the connection.

Richard Friedman, Ph.D., of Harvard Medical School, remarks that when we are confronted with stressful situations, constantly trying to fit square pegs into round holes, and when we find that is not going to work, we turn inward, brood, and look for ways to dissipate stress, frequently by acting inappropriately, such as overeating, drinking, or taking inappropriate drugs or medications, all of which ultimately contributes to the disease process.

Dr. Friedman says there is a link between stress and cardiovascular disease. Whether we are stressed by a fear of physical or psychological danger, the body exhibits a fight-or-flight response as it prepares to deal with an enemy. Very recent research indicates that the body readies itself not to bleed if it is cut or injured, which makes a lot of sense from a biological and evolutionary perspective. However, if the threats are psychological and you have a bad diet, you may be going through stressful incidents as many as 20 or 30 times a day, constantly triggering the fight-or-flight response. Each time this happens, the body prepares not to bleed by making the blood platelets stickier.

This internal clotting takes place every time you get angry, whether on a supermarket line or in a traffic jam. Over time this continual clotting can contribute to plaque buildup in the arteries. Stress also contributes to heart disease by increasing free radical damage to tissues and increasing spasms in the arterial walls. When you are exposed to a biochemical or psychological stress, a host of changes take place in addition to platelet stickiness. The body's ability to fight off viral and bacterial infection is lessened by the weaknesses induced by stress. Stress compromises the immune system's ability to fight off opportunistic diseases.

There is some good news, though, about our ability to fight off the debilitating conditions that lead to a heart attack. Dr. Friedman notes that just as continued stress leads to a weakening of the system, there is an opposite effect, one that has been labeled by his colleague at Harvard, Dr. Herbert Benson, as the "relaxation response." Eliciting this calming response on a daily basis makes it less likely that you will have high blood pressure or arteriosclerotic plaque buildup or a heart attack down the road.

The relaxation response should be combined with other behavior modifications to create a healthier response to stress, and all these techniques should be combined with the best medical care. That is the way to optimize your health.

Dr. Friedman tells us how the relaxation response is induced: use whatever strategy you have available to let go of any muscle tension you may be experiencing. Make sure your muscles are loose and your jaw lets go. After you feel a bit more comfortable, focus your attention on your breathing. If you find yourself having any distracting thoughts, do not let them bother you or take you away from the process. As soon as you have a distracting thought, simply say to yourself, “Oh well,” and return to concentrating on your breathing and to a thought or image that allows you to stay calm, peaceful, and relaxed.

Become aware of the cool air coming in your nostrils and the warm air going out. Keep this up till you are deeply relaxed. Other ways to overcome stress are exercise, deep breathing, visualization, tai chi, yoga, meditation, qi gong, mantras, massage, Reiki, biofeedback, and aromatherapy. An essential oil blend of ylang ylang, lavender or peppermint, and marjoram added to oil and applied during massage helps calm the system and may even lower blood pressure.

## Mindful Consumption & Consumerism

The people in control of the nation and economy want you to spend what you don't have on what you don't need, so they get you to believe you have to maintain an image, and this becomes part of the American Dream. But the part of the American Dream they don't tell you about is the nightmare of the payments that you can't meet and the imbalance in your own life as you devote more time to work and less to family, friends, community, and outside interests. One morning you wake up thinking, “We have everything we're supposed to have. Why are we so dysfunctional?”

Imagine how devastating it would be for the people in power if you stopped buying. They wouldn't like it, but you would have the freedom to do more. If you wanted to go on a long trip with your family, or alone, you could. If you wanted to go to other countries and enjoy different cultures, you could. For some people international travel can initiate an expansion of their horizons, enabling them to

identify as a citizen of the earth instead of just a patriot of a given state, region or country. If you wanted more quiet time for meditation, you could work that into your life. You'd be able to build your life around what is essential to you.

On a global scale, selfishness is manifested as multinational corporations and governments exploiting every inch of the planet. In Africa and Asia, massive poverty exists in part due to corporate intervention. Yet do we see Fortune 500 companies giving even a small portion of their revenues back to provide proper wells for clean drinking water? Do they invest in planting trees where they have devastated the environment through deforestation? Are they building medical facilities so local residents can combat local diseases such as malaria, dysentery, and tuberculosis? In almost all cases, there is little to no effort.

One confusing factor is that the heads of the multinational corporations, who are creating so much pain and devastation worldwide, are usually considered as respected individuals in their local communities. Most are religious people who donate large sums to their churches and synagogues. Almost every one of our politicians in Washington claims some form of religious belief or affiliation, and while they may hold sincere and legitimate belief in their faiths, their actions in the public sphere rarely demonstrate that they are even remotely spiritual or authentically compassionate. True decency involves helping other human beings and attempting to improve the lives of those who have been wronged, not being the wrong doer.

Letting go of the American Dream involves a new mindset. It means that we have to content ourselves without many of the toys we are addicted to. But those toys can be replaced with any number of meaningful activities including community development.

So before you purchase anything, you want to ask yourself the following questions, "Why do I need this? What is the likely outcome of me owning this? Is this a temporary purchase or is it going to be more permanent? Is there a downside to owning this? Does the company from which I am purchasing this have a level of consciousness that I'm willing to support? Do they have a track record of upholding human rights and caring for the environment?" Remember, what we own we have to maintain, and there is time, energy, and effort required towards this.

## Environmentalism

We really do not have an authentic environmental movement in the US today. We have a small number of authentic individuals who are contributing what they can to different social and environment issues like protesting against gas hydro-fracking, nuclear power proliferation, the genetic engineering of our crops, and such. However, there is no central environmental consciousness in America, so much of these efforts go for naught. Some changes can be accomplished, but these are so minute they have very little effect on the whole. A good example of this is the Keystone pipeline, which remains in limbo in large part because of support from activists. However, building for the transport of crude is still going on behind the scenes. We didn't stop the problem; we just diverted attention. An AP report posted on March 16, 2015 notes: "Overall, the network has increased by almost a quarter in the last decade. And the work dwarfs Keystone. About 3.3 million barrels per day of capacity have been added since 2012 alone—five times more oil than the Canada-to-Texas Keystone line could carry if it's ever built."<sup>40</sup>

What do we do about this? In short, unless we are actively engaged in the healthy vegetarian lifestyle and getting off the grid, protests do not hold all that much weight. Using the example above, the question comes down to, "Are you over-using fossil fuels that you are also protesting the expansion of?" The honest answer in most cases is yes. So how do we as individuals handle this reality or hypocrisy from a place of integrity?

In a true environmental movement we need to look at *everything* we are doing and make the necessary choices: Are we purchasing clothing from sweat shops in Bangladesh that exploit women and children? Are we eating animal products and ingesting alcohol? Are we heating our house with electricity rather than solar power? Are we buying produce that has been shipped from California rather than growing our own food, or purchasing locally? Are we collecting and utilizing rain water, or recycling our water? Are we buying the things we need instead of the things we want? Are we taking our money out of national banks and placing them in credit unions or local community banks? Are we creating debt by over-utilizing our credit cards? Are we conscious of our use of plastics, and doing everything we can to recycle, repurpose and, or, reuse what we have? Are we stopping our participation in big politics and

voting people into congress and into the presidency who are willing to take real action?

Yes, it's a lot to consider. But every small step, like bringing a reusable bag to the grocery store, adds up when duplicated by millions of people. We have to step back far enough to see and address the entire problem. We have to stop fractioning and compartmentalizing these issues: we need a complete solution from the Gaia perspective—the interrelationship between all things. Many scientists have been contemplating this interconnectedness, and for some time now. The Gaia Theory was developed in the late 1960s<sup>41</sup> by Dr. James Lovelock, a British Scientist and inventor, and has gained support ever since. The theory asserts that living organisms and their inorganic surroundings have evolved together as a single living, self-regulating system. It suggests that this living system has automatically controls environmental conditions to maintain its own habitability. The Gaia paradigm can help us model human activities after the living systems of our planet and offers lessons for the design of economic, energy, social, and governmental systems.

Coming back to the topic at hand, it does no good to attend to a couple of issues without addressing them all. This is a key reason why I've chosen to write this book. If you just choose a vegetarian diet, for example, but continue to consume resources at the levels customary to Americans, we will not realize the level of change required to reverse the tide. We need a much greater group of individuals to not only embrace the vegetarian diet, but to also embrace all of the practices of a sustainable existence now. In this case, being the change we wish to see does, indeed, require a far broader application than most of us have taken up to this point.

### Moderation & Restraint

The Jains (a separate religious group in India often mistakenly linked to Hinduism) talk about the importance of becoming discriminating in relation to character. They encourage not following anybody blindly but to check things out for one's self, and determine what is best for you. Along the same lines, the teachings stress the importance of not succumbing to peer pressure, and of building and maintaining our own identities, shunning dogmatic thinking about anything. This is an important aspect on the healthy vegetarian path, as a key reason why people revert back to

eating meat after becoming vegetarian is social pressure,<sup>42</sup> including relationships where partners eat meat and limited offerings at restaurants.

Take your time to understand what you are doing and why. This understanding joined with a bit of research and some good communication skills will help you respond well to the questions and criticisms you may receive from others on the path. Be prepared; anticipate questions and push-back because it will likely come, since we humans are very defensive about our positions. When something is presented that is out of the norm, it is likely to bring up discomfort in others that will be directed at you.

In terms of restraint, refrain from defending your position or battling back. You certainly can present some facts to inquisitive people, but to try to convince someone who isn't open doesn't work. Some eager vegetarians on the path can be perceived as, and in fact sometimes do become, righteous and judgmental of others who have not chosen the vegetarian lifestyle; this too is damaging.

Most importantly, be yourself; don't become a stereotype. Be authentic and truthful with yourself about how you want to live your life, and be this way with others in a kind, compassionate way. Most of all, find time to play and have fun; be spontaneous. Moderation also applies to making sure we aren't overworking and missing out on playtime! I offer more support for you in chapter 8 related to discovering your authentic nature, which is an essential aspect of the vegetarian path.

## Spend Time in Nature

I really love nature. The crisp atmosphere is undisturbed by city lights or pollution, and the sky often holds magnificent cloud formations and exquisite sunsets, giving the sensation of immensity and expansion. When people spend time in nature, they are free of the stress and worry of daily life, free from any conversations and distractions, have shared with me that they have a feeling of oneness with the environment around them. They are able to just connect with the consciousness of the moment.

Fortunately, it's an easy issue to address. No fancy equipment or expense is necessary to reconnect with the outdoors. If you can, spend time in the woods, at the beach, or hiking a mountain trail. If that's not possible, because, for instance, you're stuck in the metropolis, then get to a park, trail, river, lake, beach, or urban garden.

Not only does this bolster reconnection, it's soothing. Being in a situation where we're not threatened, intimidated, judged, or feeling pressured to perform, that's when our positive energy manifests. No one makes unreasonable demands, yells at us, or puts us on holds endlessly.

That's why nature brings us such peace and joy. We love being around all animals, plants and water, the oceans, mountains, lakes, and rivers. We love pastures. Not only in such landscapes are we outside of judgment, we are inside of the balanced ecology of the natural world. As we lose ourselves in nature, we find our own true nature. There is a link between moving in sympathy with the cosmos in a relaxed and uncomplicated way and emotional fulfillment.

### Create Supportive Communities

Equal in importance to self-love through these practices is the love we share with others. Connecting with family, friends, and community gives us a sense of belonging that is invaluable to our well-being. Recently, a link between social bonds and heart health was reported in *Natural Health*. The magazine summarized 30 years of research on the town of Roseto, Pennsylvania, and concluded that the most important risk factor for heart disease is a lack of community and intimate relationships.<sup>43</sup> In this town, people lived in three-generation households with grandparents, parents, and children. There was a lot of interaction among families and much participation in community organizations. The incidence of heart disease was virtually nil even though residents ate high-fat diets and did not go out of their way to exercise. In fact, there was less coronary heart disease in Roseto than in any other population in the United States.

Moreover, like-minded community will be invaluable to you on your journey of health and healing, especially at times when you are in need of encouragement, or in need of accessing people with more experience to shorten your learning curve.

### Use Good Natural Healthcare Practitioners

Did you know that more people are visiting natural health practitioners now in record numbers? A healthy vegetarian should have a physical once per year including a cardiovascular stress test, and a basic SMAC-24 test (Sequential Multiple Analysis



Computer), which is a panel of blood tests that serves as an initial broad medical screening tool. Have your lipid profiles assessed (HDLs and LDLs—high density and low density lipoproteins), as well as your cholesterol, C-reactive protein (CRP) level, homocysteine levels, fibrinogen levels, and your aging hormones like DHEA. This will tell you if your biochemistry is manifesting the health that you are feeding it. These levels should be checked annually.

Ultimately, you are responsible for your own well-being. Having access to proper health care practitioners is an important element in health maintenance. Their educated guidance and treatment can be invaluable in times of uncertainty and crisis, and for prevention and awareness-building. Selecting the right health care professional can be an important decision that will benefit you for the rest of your life.

Let me say a few words about selecting a healthcare professional. A good alternative medical practitioner will perform at least these three basic types of analyses before prescribing any treatment plan: (1) take a detailed medical history, including lifestyle questions, including exercise, stress, and level of happiness in jobs and relationships; (2) perform a physical examination that goes beyond conventional methodologies; and (3) study carefully the results of appropriate laboratory tests taken at the time of the history taking and the physical examination. In addition, you will find that good health practitioners include some or all of the following in their practice:

- as many noninvasive diagnostic techniques as possible;
- an awareness of the potential diagnostic value of even very minor signs and symptoms in the prevention of major dysfunction;
- a preference for noninvasive over invasive techniques (for example, substances will be administered orally rather than intravenously, except when a condition calls for the more direct route);
- a recognition of the importance of strengthening the body's resistive capacities and an interest, wherever possible, in attempting to repair any malfunctioning organ or gland;

- a tendency, whenever possible, to treat the *primary* weak link first if more than one has been discovered (for example, if the stomach is producing insufficient hydrochloric acid, resulting in the malabsorption of calcium, among other substances, the resulting calcium deficiency could lead to osteoarthritis, periodontal disease, or skin problems; by treating the hydrochloric acid insufficiency, the physician would be treating the primary weak link);
- an approach that treats the person as a whole person, not just a collection of ailing parts;
- the demonstrated ability to listen carefully and to skillfully classify any relevant symptoms to arrive at the best possible diagnosis;
- an orientation toward optimal health and sensitivity to dysfunctions that signal an imbalance in the individual;
- familiarity with a combination of approaches to help the person regain balance (for example, in addition to orthodox treatments, the physician's recommendations may include advice about stress reduction and lifestyle changes to reduce or eliminate causative factors in the environment);
- a willingness to refer the individual, when the condition warrants, to other medical practitioners whose specialized knowledge in a given area may be necessary to provide the most valuable restorative program; and
- a demonstrated awareness of the importance of the individual's own attitudes toward health and disease, and a willingness to communicate openly with the individual.

They are a living example of what they preach. In other words they are not obese, or ill-tempered, nor do they look stressed out. A good health practitioner listens thoughtfully and provides sound thoughtful advice.

The key to remember is this: In general, the majority of the modern medical community remains ignorant of the critical role of a whole-foods diet and healthy lifestyle in the creation and maintenance of optimal health. Physicians in training are required to take few courses on nutrition. Once they are in practice, they are barraged by pharmaceutical company reps most often very attractive and highly skilled in

manipulative sales techniques. With convincing messages of powerful drugs claimed to alleviate symptoms, which is “good enough” right now – in the sense that you aren’t actually dying. My colleague Dr. James N. Dillard, M.D., D.C., L.Ac., says it this way, “Medical doctors spend most of their education identifying and treating things that are going to kill us quickly as opposed to the things that are killing us slowly. It simply would be considered ‘bad form’ for a doctor to miss something so obviously life threatening.”<sup>44</sup>

For this reason, your use of medical care professionals should be wise and well-chosen. You need to be an active, committed participant in the process. Do research and ask questions of your doctors, such as, “What, specifically, is being treated? How do you know that that’s the problem? What are some realistic goals in my situation? What is the time frame? Does every individual with this condition get exactly the same tests and treatments? What are my weak links? Are these tests and this treatment relevant to my body and my condition?” Taking an active role in your healthcare is an important aspect of being a healthy vegetarian.

## Nonviolence & Non-Harming

We’ve already discussed the inherent nonviolent nature of the vegetarian lifestyle. It bears repeating for the main purpose of remembering that violence comes in many forms; even though we may not be consuming animals, if we harbor negative or violent thoughts, speak these thoughts, or simply judge others, it is an act of violence.

Practicing vegetarians respect all life. In an essay regarding Jainism and the practice of nonviolence, Mr. F. J. Dalal states:

All life is precious. All living beings have their place and role in the scheme of things. Thus we should protect and preserve life. “Survival of the fittest” might be nature’s way but we should not interfere with nature. We should respect life.” The Jains believe that a religious life is one that causes as little suffering as possible, in doing as much good as possible and in showing love, compassion, truthfulness and purity as often as possible. Mahatma Gandhi summed it up when he said: “There are many causes I would die for. There is not a single cause I would kill for.”<sup>45</sup>

In the gross sense of the word, not physically harming people and other living creatures through dietary choice are obvious acts of the peacemaker. However, another key aspect of the vegetarian practice is not harming others' spirits by judging them and making them wrong for what they do, even when their behaviors are obviously life-depleting. Growing our compassion toward others by fostering an understanding of why people do what they do, while standing firm in and acting upon our truth, we become a force of peace and love in the world. Through this, great change can only continue to occur.

## A Word about Practice

What we do every day in life are our practices. If we want a healthy life, it stands that we must employ healthy practices, and consistently. For the same reasons that dieting is largely ineffective, incorporating healthier ways of living as a stopgap measure is counterproductive. Health for the healthy vegetarian is a way of living. I've reviewed a number of the practices above that are included in the life of a healthy vegetarian. Decide how to incorporate them all into your life. These things will go a long way toward creating the healthy life you are imagining. When we neglect our emotional, intellectual, and creative growth during times of relative stability, we are unconsciously increasing the magnitude of our loss when a crisis appears.

## Spiritualism, Vegetarianism, and Holism

Spiritualism is essentially defined as a system of belief that promotes unity with our divine nature. The National Spiritualist Association of Churches (NSAC) defines spiritualism as a religion and philosophy of life focused on joy, harmony, and a fear-free understanding of the *continuity of life*. It is different than religion because it is based on the idea that we form a *direct relationship* with God, or Source, or whatever you call the mysterious entity from which all life comes, rather than an indirect relationship, such as through a priest, minister, rabbi, guru, etc.<sup>46</sup> From this connection, we obtain guidance through reflection and interaction, and accept responsibility for our actions based on our interaction with that guidance, which

is akin to a deep knowing inside us that defines our essential self, and our moral compass, which I will be speaking about in the next two chapters.

The important thing here is not to get stuck so much on terms but to understand the essence to which I am speaking, which is that each of us determines how we operate in the world and in relation to life itself. From our ideas of what it means to be human, we form a set of beliefs from which we operate on a regular and consistent basis—in essence we create our own operator manual by defining what is valuable about a human being. This translates, essentially, into a *choice* we make in any moment on how to treat ourselves and others.

Let's illustrate this point. If we believe that all humans are essentially "good" at their core, and made "bad" by circumstances or lack of proper nurturing and support, we treat them differently than if we believe that there are "good" and "bad" people. The belief informs not only how we treat people on an aggregate basis, but how we operate in relations personally, as well. In the case of the latter, we will not trust people as readily and therefore will tend to have more fear in our dealings with them. In another circumstance, if we believe that all life forms deserve an equal amount of respect and consideration, we will do things like adopt a vegetarian diet and lifestyle and boycott circuses and other institutions notorious for adding to the suffering of animals, as examples.

In closing this section, I wish to make note that consideration of the whole, indeed, requires us to realize that suffering of one *is* the suffering of another. Nobel Prize winner and civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr. aptly stated that an, "injustice anywhere is an injustice everywhere." A humane ethical life means respect for others. Albert Schweitzer, M.D. (1875-1965), the Alsatian physician theologian philosopher, was a peace activist who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952 for his philosophy of "reverence for life," which he expressed in many ways, but which is especially well reflected in his founding of the Lambaréné Hospital in Gabon, West Central Africa, in 1913. Schweitzer taught that society is "full of folly" that will deceive us about consideration for the lives and happiness of others. Respect for life, resulting from contemplation of one's own will to live, leads us to live to serve other people and every living being. Dr. Schweitzer found many ways, big and small, to put his theory into practice in his daily life. For example, Schweitzer was left-handed,

but he would write with his right hand rather than awaken the cat who loved to sleep on his left arm.

We might think this is a small act, but do we really know? What we might think of as trite might be the grandest expression of reverence and love. There is no need to visit a spiritual advisor in the form of a religious leader to determine the value of our actions, each of us need to reconcile the value based on our personal experience: was my thought or action enhancing the flow of life or depleting it? This is a simple question that can be the mainstay of practice steeped in consciousness and spiritualism. Then, we become the master of our destiny while simultaneously creating it. I will speak more about this in Chapter 8.

### What it Means to Live a Conscious Life

Essentially, a conscious life is one lived fully present in the moment, and with deep awareness of one's interconnectedness with everyone and everything. Living consciously also means living spiritually, or with awareness of the continuity of life; it also means paying attention to other people's needs. Consciousness, then, depends on one's understanding that our actions either enhance or diminish life, and that these actions have ripple effects.

Slowing down is an inherent part of a conscious life; we must become aware of everything that we are doing and consider the effects of these actions upon us and others. If we make choices—to lie or steal, for example, or to work excessive hours and be away from our family—we are affecting ourselves and others in life-depleting ways. Similarly, if we are working excessive hours and are away from our family often, that too is life-depleting. Even if we are *aware* of our actions and of the negative effects of them, it does not constitute consciousness in the way that I'm defining it here. Only awareness with *life-giving action* is consciousness.

We must also learn to stop constantly trying to escape the emptiness we feel nagging at our lives. The emptiness isn't real, of course, but we don't even allow ourselves the chance to slow down enough to discover its illusory nature and the truth of our vibrant connection to the world. One of the most common ways to avoid facing an empty sensation is to occupy ourselves with something or immerse

ourselves in our habitual routines. Everything we do to remain busy, including all of our addictions and dysfunctional behaviors, is based upon anxiety and fear of that emptiness, which we would rather avoid or fill than confront. How we busy ourselves depends upon our earlier conditioning, our intellect, and our unique disposition. For example, some people are afraid of exposing their true motives to others so they present façades to cover up their intentions. They might try to fill their emptiness with beauty, surrounding themselves with beautiful possessions or obsessing about their appearance. But there is a fundamental flaw to such strategies; they have an expiration date. Eventually, due to life circumstances, our strategies reach the end of the line, so to speak. We may lose our financial wealth or some of our physical beauty to aging, and then what? For some, the answer is cheating others so they can continue to experience financial wealth, albeit false, or endless amounts of plastic surgery, as in the second case. Do you see the insanity? We are chasing after something that doesn't exist—a sense of comfort and safety in a world of impermanence.

In a conscious life, you surrender busy-ness but also your need to define yourself through your ego with all of its cultural conditioning and let go of your need to focus mostly on yourself. It is a “we” state more than an “I” state. The more you do this, the more you discover yourself aligned with the correctness of the universe, which offers a far more extraordinary connection than anything you could discover when being led by the ego.

So be conscious and be present. Surrender everything that imbalances you and replace it with something that creates an authentic, sustainable life. Love, joy, hopefulness, vulnerability, and a pure belief in your self are qualitative energies of an authentic life. When you connect to those energies you support your growth as well as harmony in your world.

### How a Conscious Life Heals the Mind and the Heart

You can slow yourself down. You can ask yourself, “Why am I doing this? Why am I saying that? Why am I eating that? Why am I having the same phone conversation for the hundredth time? Why am I spilling out my guts when it will change nothing?” You can confess your life and your problems one thousand times over to everybody

who wants to listen, and they'll cry with you; you can put yourself on the journey of finding someone who will suffer with you and who will bear witness to your suffering; but what really changes? Little to nothing. How many people want to share pleasure compared to those who want to share suffering? Isn't it amazing? There are no limits to what you can tell a person when it comes to your suffering, but what you can say about your pleasure is so very circumscribed. We've got it all wrong. Make a point to share your positive energy and pleasure, and see what happens. Experience the healing power of this first-hand.

### *Our Illusions of Identity*

If we work at a certain job and earn a certain amount of money, we can buy a certain type of clothes, usually expensive ones. But do your clothes define you as a better person? No, that's an illusion. We can live in a fancy apartment, we can eat in fancy restaurants, not necessarily better, but perceived as better because they're more expensive and more unique. We might even get wealthy enough to be invited to exclusive places by people considered to be elite, but the idea that they're better is an illusion too.

I counsel all types of people. I counsel some of the wealthiest and most famous people and also some of the poorest people in New York, and I want to tell you something I have noticed. People have a very specific idea of their value. More often than not, their value is based on what they possess, on their reputation, or on what they've achieved. Everywhere you look we're trying to separate people by such illusions, and eventually we get a collective mindset by which people believe in a common illusion together.

If you want to heal your mind, which by the way is a good place to start, it takes courage to step aside and say no to these illusions. After you become aware of the thoughts in your mind, you need to challenge them. One effective way of doing this is with Byron Katie's work. It happens to be called *The Work*. Katie suggests that we ask four questions when we encounter a thought that is creating a life-depleting emotion in us.<sup>47</sup> Here are the questions:

1. Is it true? (Yes or no. If no, move to 3.)
2. Can you absolutely know that it's true? (Yes or no.)



3. How do you react, what happens, when you believe that thought?
4. Who would you be without the thought?

There is hardly a quicker way to determine that most of the thoughts running around in your head are from conditioning and that they are largely uncreative, and unhelpful in terms of health and healing.

### *Healing the Heart*

In terms of healing the heart, this occurs when we find the proper place for our mind. We are heavily trained toward cognition in our society, and as such, the heart gets shoved down. For example, we choose a vegetarian diet for the benefit of the animals, but the moment a friend challenges us, we forego the diet because we become afraid of what our friends may think of us. Why? Because our minds say something along the lines of, “You won’t be accepted by this person or this group for those silly values; don’t be a fool!”

If we are constantly overriding our heart’s wishes with our overbearing mind, we are setting ourselves up for a life of dissatisfaction and unhappiness, based on living an inauthentic life. Our heart is what rouses us into action because it is that part of us that helps us identify our passions as it relates to life and our expression in it. I have seen time and again that the happiest people are those who live their heart’s passions and dreams. They are not always successful with these endeavors, but they are engaged in life in a formidable way compared to those who are living by the dictates of their minds, which are inherently limited because of fear.

### A Word about Emotional Health

As I said earlier in the book, emotional health and well-being promotes greater happiness in life. It also occurs as we meet and exercise our authenticity in the world.

Emotions can be defined as energy in motion. Keep in mind that life is a flow of energy, and emotions are our guideposts. You can block your own energy or you can let the energy flow. Everything in life is about constricting or flowing. Let me give you an example: You look at your bank balance and see that you’ve overspent.

The first thing you do is constrict. You may then start feeling insecure because there's a shortage: you can't buy what you need; you may also think this means you lack abundance, which makes you more apprehensive and may cause you to overreact, or pick a fight with anyone else who may have participated in the overspending: Why did we buy that?! You are in reaction.

Emotions like sadness, fearfulness, discomfort, or anger aren't "bad"; instead, as pointers, they give us clues about what is important to us. If we pay attention to them, we can learn a lot about ourselves, and use that learning to lead more authentic lives. Taking the previous example, if you recognize the extreme discomfort you experience when overdrawing an account, you can put practices into place for avoiding that, thereby honoring your needs for comfort and security in life.

A helpful practice in cultivating the awakened, emotionally-centered life I am talking about is to *slow down*; watch your thoughts and emotions carefully. There is no need to *react (act) out* of emotion, and in fact that often gets us into more trouble; it's far better to take a moment to understand what is going on so that you can mindfully and intentionally *respond to* the situation. Think about what would *really* cause the energy to flow again. The correct answer to this may not come right away; you may have to wait until you've calmed down and are in a centered place. Otherwise, you might make a choice that temporarily assuages the ego or reduces the discomfort you are experiencing, but does nothing, in effect, toward creating a more positive outcome.

Emotional health comes from practicing *responding* rather than *reacting*. It requires a commitment to mindfully and patiently investigate your emotions to discover the jewels hidden beneath them. It also comes from following your bliss, which is what I will talk about next.

## Embracing Our Bliss

I was first exposed to the concept of bliss in Bill Moyers' PBS series, *Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth*. Campbell talked about bliss. That's not a concept that I grew up with, so I began to wonder: What is bliss? What does it mean? What keeps us from our bliss? What manifests bliss? I came to determine that bliss is about having the courage to release immature notions and actions that make us toxic to our self and others.

I began to understand that bliss has more to do with what we must *undo* or *not do* than with what we must do. It's about letting go of fear, for instance, instead of drawing our defense mechanisms out like samurai swords. When we live in fear we tend to bury our head in the sand indefinitely like an ostrich. While taking a brief vacation to regain perspective can be helpful, like fasting from the news every so often. Consistent withdrawal will soon leave you unprepared for the adventure of life as it unfolds. In the same way, when we neglect our emotional, intellectual, and creative growth during times of relative stability, we are unconsciously increasing the magnitude of our loss when a crisis appears. So bliss is not something that is *achieved*, per se, but it is a byproduct of engaging openly and joyfully with life and all that it brings.

Bliss is our natural state, conditioning is not. Your conditioned responses act as a firewall to separate you from bliss. No baby is ever born with a negative attitude, but over time fear, psychoses, neuroses, depression, and anxiety develop that give rise to limitations, biases, and prejudices, which are conditioned responses. Fortunately, anything that is a result of conditioning can be reversed.

In this case, you want to ask yourself: Am I willing to release my conditioned beliefs? Jesuit priest and psychotherapist Anthony de Mello said: "There is only one cause of unhappiness: the false beliefs you have in your head, beliefs so widespread, so commonly held, that it never occurs to you to question them." In truth, we believe many things throughout our lives that may not be true. Sources of false information include our families, teachers, friends, books, the church, the media, and our own misinterpretation of our experiences. However well-meaning, we must recognize that beliefs can be incredibly limiting.

So once you believe something, are you capable of changing your mind and course of action if evidence to the contrary becomes available? And, perhaps, even better, are you capable of moving forward with something that you know is right in your mind, your heart, or your spirit, *even if you haven't seen full evidence yet in your life*. If so, that is following your bliss.

Finally, bliss is not something that you have to work hard to *achieve* sometime down the road. It is available now. If you are willing to practice putting your attention in your body (away from thinking), and tune in to your senses related to the world around you, right now, you have the opportunity to connect to the transcendental

nature of bliss. Just close your eyes and listen to the birds, the traffic, or the hum of an air-conditioner, or feel the warmth of the breeze, or the comfort of the chair beneath you. The experience of bliss matters not, in reality, to *what* you are witnessing but *that* you are witnessing... as a living and breathing being.

## Famous Vegetarians

We end this section with a look at some more well-known vegetarians. The purpose is to provide inspiration to you on the path.

Paradoxically, while critics of vegetarianism often dismiss green eaters as undernourished weaklings who don't have the strength or staying power to live a full life, it turns out some of the greatest thinkers and doers in history, and even in the present, are strict vegetarians. This is an important thing for the vegetarian movement to acknowledge and realize they are a part of.

There is a type of existence that some humans access in their lifetimes; it is not just thinking or just doing, it is *being* or *presence*. The humans who live this way do not live by agenda, but by inspiration; they get a creative impulse and that is their directive in life. This describes the life of notable leaders, inventors, scientists, writers, and founders of great philosophical traditions, for example. Here we can place Socrates and Plato, who taught that vegetarianism was the ideal diet. These people are also the originators of world religions, such as Buddha and Mohammed, who also advised against meat consumption. And there are other geniuses, but among the greatest, I could throw in such embracers of a meatless diet as Leonardo da Vinci, Sir Isaac Newton, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles Darwin, Leo Tolstoy, H.G. Wells, and Upton Sinclair.

Let me just mention the names of the luminaries who have chosen this green path. Later in this section I provide a list of the more popular vegetarians, not because I love lists, but because I think you will be pleasantly surprised, as I was, by several on this list; some of whom you would not think in a million years were vegetarians, including a member of the Rolling Stones. You wouldn't think it because many vegetarians do not parade their beliefs and won't mention their green lifestyle unless asked. Going beyond mentioning their names, though, I want to highlight those who have spoken eloquently of their beliefs.

Let's listen first to Gandhi, the Indian leader and pacifist, who overcame numerous obstacles in fighting for his country's independence. He felt such a strong kinship with animal life that he couldn't bear the thought of using innocent creatures for food. "To my mind," he said, "the life of a lamb is no less precious than that of a human being. I should be unwilling to take the life of a lamb for the sake of the human body."<sup>48</sup>

Albert Schweitzer, theologian, musician, and philanthropist, believed that Western civilization was going downhill because it had lost its reverence for life. True reverence involved vegetarianism. He wrote in describing how he came by his green eating beliefs, "There slowly grew up in me an unshakable conviction that we have no right to inflict suffering and death on another living creature unless there is some unavoidable necessity for it, and that we ought to feel what a horrible thing it is to cause suffering and death out of mere thoughtlessness."<sup>49</sup>

George Bernard Shaw, a caustic wit and one of Ireland's major playwrights, was an avid propagandist for vegetarianism. As against the disparaging comments of the meat eaters, whom, as I said, thought vegetarians tended to be puny, unproductive weaklings, he riposted, "I flatly declare that a man fed on whiskey and dead bodies cannot do the finest work of which he is capable." He added, "I have managed to do my thinking without the stimulus of tea or coffee," and in doing so, he boasted he felt, "seldom less than ten times as well as an ordinary carcass eater."<sup>50</sup>

As to his propaganda for the green cause, I refer you to his very readable and tart-tongued book, *The Vegetarian Diet According to Shaw*. In it, he takes to task not only those who imagine that the equation eating meat = nourishment indicates the only possible route to good nutrition, by saying, "An underfed man is not a man who gets no meat, or gets nothing but meat. He is one who does not get enough to eat, no matter what he eats. The person who is ignorant enough to believe that his nourishment depends on meat is in a horrible dilemma."

He also anticipated, by decades, science's findings in the realm of phytochemicals, which are chemicals found in plants that have many health-enhancing and disease-eliminating properties, by praising plants in these words, "Think of the fierce energy concentrated in an acorn! You bury it in the ground, and it explodes into a giant oak. Bury a sheep and nothing happens but decay."<sup>51</sup>

However, since I am an American, I don't want you to think our country has been behind in giving to the world great people who combined a vegetarian lifestyle with strong contributions to society. As you probably know, Henry David Thoreau was a pacifist and early advocate (in the 1830s) of simple living. Famously, when he went to jail because of a refusal to pay his taxes because of his opposition to slavery, his friend Emerson came by and asked him what he was doing in jail. Thoreau then asked Emerson what he was doing *out* of jail (given the slavery issue).

Aside from his principled civil disobedience, Thoreau was a strong spokesperson for vegetarianism. He felt that, "It is a part of the destiny of the human, in its gradual improvement, to leave off eating animals, as surely as the savage tribes have left off eating each other when they came in contact with the more civilized."<sup>52</sup> Like Shaw, Thoreau felt that avoidance of meat improved his work.<sup>53</sup> In his masterwork, *Walden*, he wrote, "I believe that every man who has ever been earnest to preserve his higher or poetic facilities in the best condition has been particularly inclined to abstain from animal food." His abstinence from meat, coffee, and tea was not so much for health reasons as because, as he put it, "They were not agreeable to my imagination."<sup>54</sup>

Another example of Americans who combined retreating from the hustle of the metropolis to retire to the country and a dedication to vegetarianism are the well-known modern-day meat-shunners, Helen and Scott Nearing. They wrote several books in which they recount their experiences with the vegetarian lifestyle, books exuding much joy and reverence for life. And no wonder: both reaped the health benefits of the practice, living long and productive lives (Scott lived to be a hundred, while Helen lived to be 91). Their meals consisted of wonderful concoctions of fresh fruits, whole grains, vegetable soups, nut butters, and molasses.

Their story is more than a tale of amazing longevity, however. Nearing was a professor of economics at the University of Pennsylvania. His pacifist and socialist views got him fired in 1915. Pacifism didn't go over big during World War I. After years of fighting for justice and peace, in the 1930s he and his new wife left busy city life and settled in the peaceful atmosphere of Maine, where they worked hard together to become monetarily independent, self-sufficient and "rich," rich on their terms, which meant—"rich in fresh air, fresh water and sunshine." Growing most of what they ate, the Nearing's enjoyed a freedom that those dependent on commercially packaged meats and other foods could never imagine: the freedom of "being master

of your own destiny.”<sup>55</sup> And not only did they inspire others by their writings, but in the 1960s when many young people joined the “back to the land” movement, moving away from cities and homesteading on farms, there were many of them who made pilgrimages to the Nearing house, not only for encouragement but to get practical advice on growing food.

To turn to more recent examples, let me mention Oscar-winner Cloris Leachman. She is one of those people who doesn't make a secret of her vegetarianism, but stands up for it, basing her belief in green eating on both political and health reasons. She turned to vegetarianism after reading about what's wrong with meat, and is outspoken about the US political and economic system that foists meat on unwitting consumers without clueing them in to its noxious effects. She points out that the meat industry has a very powerful lobby in Washington whose tentacles reach even into our schools, where you'll rarely hear about the value of vegetarianism. Moreover, people have been led to feel that a steak on the table is a symbol of prosperity and success. Why? “Because they have been indoctrinated to believe this by the meat industry.”

Leachman isn't all politics, though. One of the reasons she eats only wholesome, low-fat, natural foods is to avoid the problem of controlling weight through calorie counting, which usually leads to nothing but frustration and failure. She puts this very poetically, saying, “I'm interested in an approach to eating that is a way of life, where the road just unfolds before you and leads you into good feelings and uplifting experiences.”<sup>56</sup>

Many actors share Leachman's penchant for vegetarianism, though not necessarily her political sensibility. Other vegetarian actors include Dennis Weaver, a veteran vegetarian of over 20 years, James Coburn, Paul Newman, Cicely Tyson, Gloria Swanson, and Susan St. James. Musicians who have taken the green path are, among others, Bob Dylan, George Harrison, Paul McCartney, Ravi Shankar, John Denver, the now slim Chubby Checker, Gladys Knight, and the members of the B-52's.<sup>57</sup>

Let me just add, since the theme of this book is to intertwine all the elements of the vegetarian lifestyle into one package, that many vegetarians do just that, create a way of living in which all the components of a healthy regimen, including exercise, good eating and detoxification, combine into a synergistic unit. Susan Smith Jones,

a health writer, lecturer, and physical education instructor, is a good example of someone who has consciously crafted such a well-rounded life. She incorporates vegetarianism into a holistic lifestyle that includes a ten-mile morning run and an hour of meditation every day. She believes that, “The tangibility and reality of a full life is not only what you know, but how you apply it to every day... We are not victims of circumstance or fortuity, but rather architects of our lives, ourselves, and our feelings.” To those who imagine that a well-thought-out regimen of healthful living is too time consuming, Susan simply says, “If we don’t take time for health, in whatever capacity that might be, we must take time for sickness.”<sup>58</sup>

Here is a list of well-known vegetarians, both old and new, filled with names, some of which you will expect, such as Buddha, and others that will probably leave you a bit surprised. Here it is:

Adam Ant	Berkeley Breathed	Charles Darwin
Al Gore	Bill Clinton	Charlie Watts
Alanis Morissette	Bill Ford	Charlotte Bronte
Albert Einstein	Bill Maher	Chelsea Clinton
Albert Schweitzer	Billie Jean King	Cher
Alec Baldwin	Billy Idol	Chevy Chase
Alice Walker	Bo Derek	Chris Evert
Alicia Silverstone	Bob Barker	Chris Martin
Ally Sheedy	Bob Marley	Christie Brinkley
Alyssa Milano	Brad Pitt	Claudia Schiffer
Andy Kaufman	Brigitte Bardot	Corey Feldman
Anna Paquin	Brooke Shields	Dan Castellana
Annie Lennox	Bryan Adams	Danny De Vito
Anthony Hopkins	Buddha	Danny Garcia
Anthony Perkins	Candace Bergen	Daryl Hannah
Anthony Robbins	Captain and Tennille	David Bowie
Barbara Walters	Carl Lewis	David Carradine
Belinda Carlisle	Carrie Underwood	David Duchovny
Benjamin Franklin	Casey Affleck	Dr. Dean Ornish
Benjamin Spock	Casey Kasem, DJ	Debbie Arnold



Demi Moore	Hillary Swank	Lenny Kravitz
Dennis J. Kucinich	Ian McKellen	Leo Tolstoy
Dennis Rodman	Isaac Bashevis Singer	Leonardo Da Vinci
Dizzy Gillespie	Jack LaLaine	Linda Blair
Doris Day	James Taylor	Lindsay Wagner
Doug Henning	Janeane Garofalo	Lisa Bonet
Dr Albert Schweizer	Jean Jacques Rousseau	Lisa Marie Presley
Dr. Benjamin Spock	Jeff Beck	Little Richard
Dr. Dre	Jennie Garth	Liv Tyler
Dustin Hoffman	Jerry Garcia	Loretta Swit
Dweezil Zappa	Jerry Seinfeld	Dr. Lorraine Day
Ed Begley, Jr.	Jiddu Krishnamurti	Louisa May Alcott
Ellen Burstyn	Joan Armatrading	Lynda Carter
Ellen Degeneres	Joan Baez	Mahatma Gandhi
Elvira	Joaquin Phoenix	Margaret Cho
Elvis Costello	John Cleese	Mariel Hemmingway
Emanuel Swedenborg	Jorja Fox	Marilu Henner
Emilio Estevez	Josh Hartnett	Mark Twain
Eric Stoltz	Joss Stone	Marlo Thomas
Erykah Badu	Jude Law	Martha Plimpton
Evelyn Glennie	Julia Stiles	Martin Luther
Forrest Whitaker	Julian Lennon	Martina Navratilova
Frances Moore Lappé	Julianna Marguiles	Mary Shelley
Franz Kafka	Kate Bush	Mary Tyler Moore
George Spitz	Kate Moss	Meatloaf
Grace Slick	Kevin Eubanks	Mel C of the Spice Girls
Gwyneth Paltrow	Kim Basinger	Melissa Etheridge
H.G. Wells	Kirk Cameron	Meredith Baxter
Hans Christian Andersen	Kristen Bell	Michael Bolton
Harriet Beecher Stowe	Larry Hagman	Michael Eisner
Heather Mills	LaToya Jackson	Mick Jagger
Henry Heimlich M.D.	Laurie Anderson	Milo Ventimiglia

Milton Berle	Richard Pryor	Tiffani-Amber Thiessen
Moby	Ricki Lake	Tippi Hedren
Moon Zappa	Ricky Martin	Tobey Maguire
Naomi Watts	Ringo Starr	Todd Oldham
Nastassja Kinski	River Phoenix	Tolstoy
Natalie Portman	Robert Kennedy, Jr.	Tom Petty
Nikola Tesla	Rodin	Tracy Chapman
Noah Wyle	Ru Paul	Upton Sinclair
Norman Cousins	Rue McClanahan	Uri Geller
Olivia Newton John	Russell Simmons	Vanessa Williams
Orlando Jones	Sara Gilbert	Vanna White
Ovid	Sarah McLachlan	Vaslav Nijinsky
Ozzy Osborne	Seal	Victoria Beckham
Pamela Anderson	Seneca	Vince Vaughn
Patti Davis	Shania Twain	Vincent Van Gogh
Paula Abdul	Shaun Cassidy	Voltaire
Penélope Cruz	Sinead O'Connor	Whitney Houston
Persia White	Sir Isaac Newton	Whoopie Goldberg
Peter Bogdanovich	Smokey Robinson	William Blake
Peter Gabriel	Sophie Ward	William Shakespeare
Peter Sellers	Surya Bonali	William Shatner
Peter Singer	Stella McCartney	William Wordsworth
Phylicia Rashad	Steve Perry	Woody Harrelson
Piers Anthony	Steven Jobs	Yasmin Le Bon
Plutarch	Steven Seagal	Yehudi Menuhin
Prince	Stevie Nicks	Ziggy Marley
Pythagoras	Stevie Wonder	Zoroaster
Rain Phoenix	Sting	
Ralph Nader	Susan B. Anthony	
Ralph Waldo Emerson	Susan Richardson	
Reese Witherspoon	Suzanne Vega	
Rhea Perlman	Ted Danson	
Richard Gere	Thomas Edison	

In touching on prejudices that exist against green eating, I brought up the stereotype that vegetarians, who, it is claimed, don't consume the red meat they need for strength, are all weaklings. The best argument against that canard is the host of world-class athletes who walk or, often run, the vegetarian path.

For some, vegetarianism was not their original choice as a way of eating – they grew up believing that top performance required them to “pump” iron into their bodies with massive amounts of red meat – but it was something they arrived at after considerable thought and experience. Among this group, who eventually became firm advocates of vegetarianism are “green” body builders, such as the legendary Gilman Low, who in 1903 set nine world records for strength and endurance; Roy Hilligan, the first vegetarian “Mr. America,” and more contemporary competitors, including Ron Gleason, a contender in the 1972 Olympics.<sup>59</sup> Vegan bodybuilder Jim Morris won London Mr. Universe Tall class and placed 2nd overall in 1977.

Other star athletes have also been vegetarians. John Marino set a transcontinental bicycling record in August 1978, riding—after three years of training—from Los Angeles to New York in just 13 days, 1 hour and 20 minutes! Marino maintains that his vegetarian diet was the primary factor in his record-breaking ride.

Describing his training, he had this to say, “The first step is detoxification of the body. Unnatural foods, chemicals, drugs, alcohol, artificial flavorings, and preservatives bring on a toxic buildup in the body, which can lead to disease, lethargy and, in extreme cases, death. Our bodies are designed to consume organic foods in the natural state.”<sup>60</sup> Another athlete who renounced meat is Norwegian skier Arden Haugen, elected to the Skiing Hall of Fame after winning four national and three world skiing championships. He maintained that giving up meat in favor of a diet of whole grain cereals and breads, vegetables, fruits, and soy milk, cleared his skin, increased his stamina, and made breathing easier.<sup>61</sup>

And there are many more vegan star athletes: Triathlete Madi Serpico was named Off-Road Triathlete of the year in 2010; Dave Scott 4 time Iron Man world Champion, David Smith (para rower & cyclist) helped his team to a gold medal at the 2009 World Rowing Championships; Maureen (Mo) Bruno-Roy is a cyclocross cyclist and was the overall winner of the USA National Cyclocross Calendar in 2009; vegan bodybuilder Billy Simmonds won Mr. Natural Universe in 2009; David Meyer,

vegan martial artist, has competed for years at the top of the martial art of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu; over the years he has won numerous international titles at the top level including two World Championship Gold medals, four American National Golds, an American Open Gold and two Pan American Golds; Austin Aries, an American Pro Wrestler, has competed with the nation's best and won numerous World Titles; Keith Holmes was the World WBC Middleweight boxing champion for two periods in the 1990s; and Cam Awesome, outstanding Super Heavyweight amateur boxer, has been American National Champion eleven times, and ranked 4th globally.<sup>62</sup>

I have spent this time drawing your attention to renowned women and men, not because I want to indulge in celebrity worship, but for two other purposes. For one, I wanted to dispel the myth that vegetarians are underachievers. People who believe that couldn't be more wrong, as I think I have shown. Second, I've tried to underline that these famous people did not take up vegetarianism blindly (in the way people adopt a meat-eating diet), but usually gave thought to their health and the planet's health in making this choice.