Plant-based Diets & the Social Dimension of Wellness

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Wellness

Emotional
Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships.

Environmental
Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being.

Intellectual
Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills.

Physical
Recognizing the need for physical activity, diet, sleep, and nutrition.

Occupational
Personal satisfaction and enrichment derived from one’s work.

Financial
Satisfaction with current and future financial situations.

Social
Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system.

Spiritual
Expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life.

20-year vegan journey

- 25 years Standard American Diet (SAD)
- 6 years Vegetarian
- 20 years Vegan
Structural Influences on Food Choice:

- Education
- Belief Systems
- Economics
- Marketing
- Agriculture/Agribusiness
- Political/Governmental

Food Choice
Marketing

Various fast food logos, including McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, El Pollo Loco, Arby's, In-N-Out Burger, Checkers, Bojangles, Pizza Hut, Sonic, Taco Bell, Subway, and Hardee's.
Super.
That's how milk makes you feel. The calcium helps bones grow strong, so even if you're not from Krypton™ you can have bones of steel.

got milk?®
Emotional

- Food and hedonic and eudemonic well-being
  - Pleasure seeking through food; food as addiction
  - How to foster eudemonic well-being through diet without sacrificing hedonic pleasure
    - Learning to cook
    - Happycow.com
    - Vegan potlucks
  - Disgust
Carnism

- The psychology of carnism
  - Cognitive consonance/dissonance
  - Psychic numbing
Compassion:
a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering.

dictionary.reference.com

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkRfHIdGYIc
Luiz won’t eat octopus

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJNntUXyWvw
Absent Referent
Dr. Carol Adams

• Behind every meal of meat is an absence: the death of the animal whose place the meat takes.

• The "absent referent" is that which separates the meat eater from the animal and the animal from the end product.

• The function of the absent referent is to keep our "meat" separated from any idea that she or he was once an animal, to keep something from being seen as having been someone.

Absent Referent

This meal spared an animal.

This meal tastes good.

Animal is present even when absent

Animal is absent even when present
Occupational
Physically, psychologically, and spiritually damaging work
Describe [the slaughterhouse] for me. People really don't know what it's like in there.

Bill Haw (CEO of Kansas City's National Farms which operates one of the largest cattle outfits in the country):

“Well, the slaughterhouse is not a pretty thing. I mean, it's a necessary process. It's a highly efficient process. But it's not now, nor never will be, a very pretty thing. Animals come there to die, to be eviscerated, to be decapitated, to be de-hided -- and all of those are violent, bloody, and difficult things to watch. So your first and foremost impression of at least the initial stages of the packing house are a very violent, very dehumanizing sort of thing.”

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/meat/interviews/haw.html

Slaughterhouse in Argentina
Former farmers/slaughterhouse employees - now vegan -
Financial

- Cost of meat: Mariposa jails go vegetarian: Save $100,000

- Direct health care costs attributable to meat consumption (Estimate in billions):
  - Hypertension: 2.8 - 8.5
  - Heart disease: +9.5
  - Cancer: +0 - 16.5
  - Diabetes: +14 -17.1
  - Gallbladder disease: +0.2 - 2.4
  - Foodborne illness: +0.2 - 5.5
  - Obesity: +1.9

- Total direct medical costs attributable to meat consumption estimated at +28.6 - 61.4 billion (1992)

A Week Of Cheap Eating

• Dry Foods:  
  Brown rice & potatoes  
  Navy & black beans  
  Lentils  
  Split green peas  
  Walnuts & pine nuts  

Frozen Foods:  
  Corn & Broccoli  
  Green Beans  
  Squash (any variety)  

• Fresh Foods, In Season  
  Apples  
  Carrots, tomatoes, zucchini  
  Cabbage, kale, spinach  
  Squash, any variety  
  Onions & garlic  

• Beverages:  
  Water  
  Herb tea  
  Cider, in season  
  Grape juice, or other  
  100% juice of any kind (optional)

http://www.doctoryourself.com/eatwellcheap.html (modified)
Social

The positive and negative social impacts of plant-based diets

“What Pushed Me over the Edge Was a Deer Hunter”: Being Vegan in North America

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Abstract
Thirty-two vegans were interviewed in order to examine the reasons for becoming vegan, the sustaining motivation to persist, the interpersonal and intrapersonal impact of the diet and associated practices, and the vegans’ assessment of omnivores’ eating practices. Interviews were analyzed using a model that diagrams the process of becoming vegan provided by McDonald (2000). Participants reported strained professional and personal relationships as a result of their diet and beliefs. Vegan diets were associated with an increase in physical, eudaemonic, and spiritual well-being.
Social Strategies for living among meat eaters:
  • “Show them, don’t tell them”
  • Plan ahead
  • Avoid meal-time conversations about food

Diversity:
  • Diets as another form of diversity
  • Sensitivity
  • Inclusion
  • Acceptance -----> Support/encouragement
Discussion

• Discussion of experiences and concerns related to the social dimensions of wellness and food

• What has been your experience when you’ve eaten with vegetarians, vegans, and omnivores?

• How do you think adopting a plant-based diet would impact you in the social dimension of wellness?
“For vegans, a meal is much more than a meal; each meal is a symbolic and practical step on an experiential journey that lessens suffering and brings one closer to all living beings.” – Hirschler (2011)

“A common theme in nearly every interview was the psychological comfort associated with the synchronization of values and actions, and being vegan allowed them to be proactive in this realm.” – Hirschler (2011)

Ethics in the first person

Review of animal rights activism as a functional religion

The moral footprint of animal products

Krzysztof Saja

• Eating chicken can be 163 times morally worse than eating beef.

• Drinking milk can be 58 times morally better than eating eggs.

• Eating some types of fish can be 501 times worse than eating beef.
The argument

- It is morally wrong to kill sentient animals without important justification.
- Breeding animals for food (meat, eggs, milk) causes them to be brought into existence and to be killed.
- Bringing an animal into the world is not morally better than not bringing an animal into the world.
- It is \( N \) times morally worse to kill \( n \) times more sentient animals (if everything else remains the same).
- The death of every farmed animal is equally bad.
- Eating chicken in aggregate kills 163 times more animals than eating beef.
Ahimsa

- Ahimsa: In Hindu, Buddhist, and Jainist philosophy, the law of reverence for, and nonviolence to every form of life.

- Dynamic harmlessness

- The practice of compassion is central to every one of the major world religions – but sometimes you would never know it. – Karen Armstrong: [http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/nov/14/religion](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/nov/14/religion)

- **Genesis 1:29-30**: And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.
Physical

• Cardiovascular disease, cancer, dementia and diet
• Heartattackproof.com
• Sexual Health
  • The CVD/ED relationship
Health Implications of a Vegetarian Diet: A Review

- 190 references
• Overweight & obesity
  • Vegans lowest
  • Plant-based: lower in fat, higher fiber, lower energy density

• CVD
  • 5 studies
  • L-O vegetarians 34% reduced risk
  • Vegans 26% reduced risk
  • Mediterranean diet (plant-based, low meat)
Hypertension

Compared with non-vegetarians:

- Vegans 75% less likely to be treated for hypertension
- Lacto-ovo vegetarians 65% less likely
- Pesco-vegetarians 38% less likely
- Semi-vegetarians 23% less likely

Adventist Health Study-2 (2009)
Diabetes

• “Vegetarian and vegan diets offer significant benefits for the prevention and management of diabetes.” (p. 259)

• Adventist Health Study-2 (2009);

• 60,000+ men and women

• Diabetes prevalence:
  • Non-vegetarians: 7.6%
  • Semi-vegetarians 6.1%
  • Pesco-vegetarians: 4.8%
  • Lacto-ovo vegetarians: 3.2%
  • Vegans: 2.9%
• 100 vegans

• Reported reason for diet choice
  • Health: 47%
  • Animal welfare: 40%
  • Religious/other motives: 9%

• Chronic disease diagnoses reported:
  • Health: 27%
  • Animal welfare: 11%
  • Religious/other motive categories: 15%
Bud Burdick

When a Model of Health Develops Cancer

Christopher Hirschler: Professor of Health Studies

Before July, 2012 twenty seven year old Bud Burdick was enjoying his first year in New York City even as he met some challenges. His blog, “Bud in the Big Apple”, chronicled his adventures with posts such as, From Hernia to Rugged Maniac: My Quest to Become the Best Bud I Can Be.

Recently, Bud, the former capoeira club president, and I, the former advisor, had planned to get together. Then, on July 26th, I saw this posting, “Well Facebook friends, it appears life has thrown a really large curve ball in my direction. I will not be on here for a while.” Concerned, I contacted Bud and received this reply: “Chris, I have been diagnosed with leukemia. I will be in the hospital for 30 days for treatment. Crazy turn of events. I was diagnosed Thursday morning and had to go right in for treatment.”
Dioxin in human breast milk

• Dioxin persists in the environment for decades and “tend to bioaccumulate as one moves up the food chain” (Harrison, 2001, p.39).

• Humans are at the top of the food chain and “humans receive most of their exposure through consumption of animal products – meat, fish, chicken, eggs, and dairy products – and from human breast milk” (Harrison, 2001, p.39).

• “Consumption of animal fats account for as much as 95% of the human background exposure to compounds with dioxin-like activity” (Lorber, et al., 2000, p. 534).

• Greg, a 52-year-old physician, understands and accepts that as a vegan he is a minority, but he expressed frustration at people’s tendency to make sweeping generalizations. He called the parents who infamously fed their child an inadequate vegan diet (Planck, 2007) “insane” and expressed resentment that “everyone who eats a vegan diet got tarred with the same brush.” About always being “under scrutiny,” Greg said:

*You’re under this little magnifying glass because you’re different from the mainstream. You know? But it’s just as easy to turn it around and say, “Do you happen to know any meat eaters with diabetes who aren’t thriving?"*
Physical

• Lactose intolerance
  • Only 25% of the world’s adults can fully digest milk
  • 50% of Hispanic Americans, 75% of African Americans, and more than 90% of Asian Americans can’t tolerate a lot of lactose (bloating, nausea, cramps, diarrhea).

• Prostate cancer
  • In “the Health professionals Follow-up Study, men who drank two or more glasses of milk a day were almost twice as likely to develop advanced metastatic (spreading) prostate cancer as those who didn’t drink milk at all.”

• Ovarian cancer
  • “I believe that a positive link between galactose and ovarian cancer shows up too many times to ignore the possibility that it may be harmful.”
Intellectual

• “Where do you get your protein?”
• Knowledge as self-defense
• Economics, agriculture, psychology, health, environment, sociology, etc.
Environmental Impact of animal agriculture

- Foodborne illness & death
- Antibiotic resistance - PBS modern meat
- Climate change
- Water pollution & manure lagoons

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/meat/
1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) get sick

128,000 are hospitalized

3,000 die

Antibiotic resistance:

80 percent of antibacterial drugs (about 29 million pounds) are sold for use in livestock in the United States and the vast majority are used on animals that are not sick.

In 2010, almost 52 percent of retail chicken breasts tested by FDA were contaminated with antibiotic-resistant E. coli.


Examples of How Antibiotic Resistance Spreads

- Animals get antibiotics and develop resistant bacteria in their guts.
- Drug-resistant bacteria can remain on meat from animals. When not handled or cooked properly, the bacteria can spread to humans.
- Fertilizer or water containing animal feces and drug-resistant bacteria is used on food crops.
- Drug-resistant bacteria in the animal feces can remain on crops and be eaten. These bacteria can remain in the human gut.
- George gets antibiotics and develops resistant bacteria in his gut.
- George stays at home and in the general community. Spreads resistant bacteria.
- George gets care at a hospital, nursing home or other inpatient care facility.
- Resistant germs spread directly to other patients or indirectly on unclean hands of healthcare providers.
- Resistant bacteria spread to other patients from surfaces within the healthcare facility.

Which one of these contributes more to Global Warming?

It's not the one that starts a car.

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, animal agriculture contributes to global warming even more than transportation does. Reducing the amount of meat, eggs, and dairy products in your diet is one of the most effective ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Find out more about farm animal welfare, factory farming's environmental impacts, and what you can do to help.

Celebrating Animals | Confronting Cruelty

THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES
humanesociety.org/food
• “If everyone in New York state followed a low-fat vegetarian diet, the state could directly support almost 50 percent more people.”

• Land requirements per person per year:
  
  • Low-fat vegetarian diet: .44 acres
  
  • High-fat diet with a lot of meat: 2.11 acres

World Population
7,170,026,000 (6/2/2014)

United States: 318,156,000
PBS: Modern Meat

Resources
Starter Kits

- http://vegankit.com/
- http://www.vegetariantimes.com/vegetarian-starter-kit/
- http://www.veganhealth.org/
- https://www.facebook.com/MonmouthAreaVegSociety

Thank you!

Please feel free to connect with me:

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Three Ns of Justification

Eating animals is:
1) normal
2) natural
3) necessary

• Would not eating animals cause you to feel (emotionally) better about the food you eat?
• Do you engage in psychic numbing when eating animals?