

Natural Stress Management

By Kal Sellers, MH

As we enter the New Year, now, more than ever, some of us need more tools to deal with stress in our lives. Some of us need to break out of old patterns and do something better for ourselves than we have done before. Today, the world is a little more toxic, a little crazier, and a little sicker than it was last year or for many years before. More than ever, we see that real health is only found through personal decisions, real steps forward, and healthier living.

Recently, I realized that one of the biggest sources of healthy function in body and mind is a healthy social life with friends and favorable associates. Yet, social gatherings can be very stressful. I have found that there are tools that can be used to break old patterns of stress around social interaction and I want to share a few of them with you. My goal is to help you transition to a new year and a new you with class, so take a breath, relax, and enjoy this article and the tools offered here right now.

First, in order to understand how stress takes advantage of you, you need to know what happens in your body and brain when something stimulates a stress reaction in you. When this occurs, the "Limbic System," which is a part of your brain, starts associating every thought and emotion your brain processes with various parts of your body. Some of this is predictable; some of it is random. Regardless of where the association goes to, that part of the body starts to tense up and lose normal blood flow.

Next, the normal blood flow is simultaneously interrupted in other places because of this diversion or obstruction. This, in turn, causes physiological stress on visceral organs, which are impacted by this turn of events. This tends to feed back to the brain and push the whole body out of its relaxed healthy state, into a state called the "sympathetic mode."

From this point, a feedback loop begins where the body restimulates the mind, which is reminded of the

original stressor, which then restimulates the body. This process goes on and on until the familiar items that are involved in this loop are interrupted. Sometimes, it is the changing of surroundings that does it. Other times, it can be a change within the body that interrupts the loop. This change in the body can be illness or wellness. That is up to you!

So here are a few tools to help you. Some of them require a little time and some changes, but others are instant tools you can use right now.

- Do some liver cleansing. When your liver is really struggling to manage stressors and changes in circulation, you are at a climax. This is when the most good will be done by cleansing! When it is healthy, the liver can manage even strong stressors in life and body pretty well. It can process out the chemicals that allowed you to think and feel the way you did; it can manage the systems that are stressed in the body by the association found in the Limbic System as mentioned above. There are many great cleansing formulas on the market, many of which are available at Life Grocery. Meanwhile, consider doing a serious liver/gallbladder stone flush. You can get the details for free from my website on the newsletters page. Just look up www.kalsschool.com.
- Do some general cleansing. When digestion shuts down due to stress response, why not go fill up on all the foods you would have sensibly avoided at other times? Eat more pie, rich foods, meat and fast food, and then get some good chocolate, and wine to top it off with, and then . . . wait, that is not what we should do. If the digestion is shut off, we need to give it a break! Drink some cleansing teas (I like Yogi Tea Detox Tea for a very mild cleanse), go to the juice bar at Café Life and get some fresh juices,

especially wheatgrass juice. Go get a colonic or do one at home, do some yoga or chi gong, and get your body cleaning out. The good news about this is that your body will never get sick if it is effectively cleansing! So do a master cleanse, dry skin brush, eat raw, meditate more, and eat less. Try out a new program that will change your life for the better right now!

- Finally, go ahead and connect with a group of friendly people who want to support their fellow humans in being better and helping make the world a better, healthier place. Recently, I started a group called "Healing Gifts" on Facebook and set up a discussion forum where different subjects can be discussed and comments posted. Through that group, participants can interact with other like-minded people with the most sincere of intentions. There are many such groups. Take some health classes or herbal healing classes. Go to the classes at Life Grocery and meet and talk with new people. Talk to each other and get some healthy associations going with people who lift you up! Go to a raw food retreat, take a yoga class, or do something that will involve you with other healthy people. This will change your life forever!

I know these tools will help you change your life. They will help you make this time—right now—the best time of your life!

Kal Sellers, MH maintains www.KalsSchool.com and a practice that includes massage, rolfing, and herbal medicine/cleansing. Kal also holds free Be Your Own Doctor teleclasses each month. You can contact him at 706-473-4375.

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Do Whatever Works For You

By Don Bennett, DAS

A common piece of advice when experimenting with different healthy lifestyle practices is to “do whatever works for you.” There is a definite risk when following this advice and it revolves around the definition of the word “works.” If you’re not knowledgeable with respect to what you’re experiencing when making significant changes in one of your lifestyle habits, you may draw the wrong conclusions. For instance: How you feel is not always a good indicator of what is really working for you. If you switch from a “Standard American Diet” to a healthy human diet overnight, you may feel worse before you feel better (I’ll explain why in a moment). If you don’t realize that this is normal, you may go back to what you were previously eating to see what happens, and when you feel better—which you most certainly will—you may misinterpret this and mistakenly conclude that a plant-based diet doesn’t “work” for you, and that, for example, eating a lot of protein does.

To understand the above scenario, it’s necessary to understand the concept of detoxification. If you’re in an unhealthy state of health (and you can be without knowing it), it’s unlikely you got into this condition overnight; it probably took decades. So when you decide to get healthy, it isn’t going to happen overnight; it’ll take time (so obviously the time to start improving your health is now). For every four years of unhealthy living habits, it can take one year to reverse the negative effects. And as I said, you may feel worse before feeling better. So to avoid drawing the wrong conclusions, it’s a good idea to have a working knowledge of what’s happening as you improve your health.

A long time ago, there were very few toxic substances you could take into your body. Those that were toxic would be immediately evident; if a plant tasted bitter, odds were that it was probably poisonous, and the bitterness was a signal not to eat it . . . so you wouldn’t. In this way, you were protected from consuming toxic things. But today, that natural taste bud protective mechanism doesn’t do us much good; processed foods that taste delicious can contain plenty of toxins. Even if something tastes “yuk,” many people still consume it because it’s socially acceptable, their peers do it, and there’s *something* you like about it. To me, beer and hot spicy food do not taste yummy, so I don’t consume them, but I did at one time . . . my peers did, and I liked the effect, so I did too. But that was very disrespectful of my body, and not respecting your body is a big mistake if good health is important to you.

When toxic and irritating substances enter the body, the body tries to keep these things from harming its cells. If the body doesn’t have enough vitality to expel these

substances as they come in, it has only two choices: leave them in the system where they can go around damaging things, or put them someplace where they’ll do the least amount of harm. Naturally it tries to store them, and the place where they can do the least damage is in the fat cells. When someone who is losing weight feels sick, it is often because those toxins that were stored in their fat cells are now becoming systemic (their storage containers are shrinking) and the body is now having to deal with them.

If you’ve been exposing your body to toxic substances every day for decades, and then you stop doing this, your body is finally able to rid itself of the stored toxins and begin the task of repairing any damage caused by them. The process of expelling stored toxins is called detoxification (detox), and it is never pleasant. And since you feel terrible, some people mistake detoxification as a sign that their body did better when it was given non-human food because when they go back to eating those things, they feel better.

Why? Because the detox process stops! (Some people call the detox process “withdrawal,” but that’s an inaccurate term.)

Another scenario is when, in our efforts to improve our health, we transition from an unhealthy diet and lifestyle to a healthier one. We experience improvement so we assume that this new way of living “works” for us and is now the way we should live, when in actuality the short-term improvements were mainly due to what we *stopped* doing. And the green juices and wheatgrass and the other new things that we started doing were simply healthier than what we had been doing. Although we’re seeing improvement in the short term, these things will not serve us and allow us to thrive in the long term. And indeed, it may still allow serious disease to occur even though it may be a little farther down the road.

So be very careful when deciding what works for you. We don’t have access to a time machine where, if what we thought was “working” for us turned out not to work, we could go back in time and try something else. The knowledge of what is likely to *still* be working for you 30 years from now, not merely in the short term, is crucial if maximum health creation, illness avoidance, and a robust quality of life for your *whole* life is your goal.

Don Bennett is a Disease Avoidance Specialist, author, lecturer, and teaches Health Creation & Disease Avoidance. Don’s book, How to Have the BEST Odds of Avoiding Degenerative Disease is available in our book department. For some enlightening health information, visit health101.org.

Nutritional Yeast

By Dr. Kimberly Strickland, ND

Nutritional yeast is both a supplement and a condiment that gives food a nutty or cheesy flavor. Its yellowish color comes from the concentration of B vitamins, specifically the B vitamin riboflavin. It is fermented on mixtures of beet and sugar cane molasses. Once the fermentation process is finished, the yeast is washed, pasteurized, and dried at high temperatures rendering it inactive (it has no fermenting or leavening power). The necessary vitamins are added to the yeast at this time. If stored in a cool dark place, nutritional yeast should last for about a year.

Sometimes brewer’s yeast and nutritional yeast are confused. Brewer’s yeast is the same by-product, but it is from the beer making process and is grown on hops, grain, and malt rather than molasses. The taste of this yeast is bitter.

Nutritional yeast can be an excellent source of B vitamins, especially B-12. In the bulk section at Life Grocery, there are two kinds of nutritional yeast; one is regular and one is for vegan support (this one contains B-12 while the regular one does not). As a vegan, I often heard that I needed to eat red meat or get B-12 shots because there was no other way to get B-12.

Check the facts before listening to others.

Sometimes life can get stressful and nutritional yeast is terrific to keep stress at bay since it’s packed with B vitamins. It contains 18 amino acids and 15 minerals. It also contains the trace mineral chromium, also known as the glucose tolerance factor, that helps to regulate blood sugar levels. Nutritional yeast is a low-fat, low-sodium, kosher, non-GMO food that contains no added sugars or preservatives. It DOES NOT contain active yeast or gluten. It is generally considered acceptable in moderate amounts for those following a diet designed to manage *Candida albicans*. However, for those who are allergic to yeast, it is advisable to avoid this product. Although some living food recipes call for nutritional yeast, it is not a living product.

Nutritional yeast is my secret ingredient for several of my family’s favorite meals and snacks. We sprinkle it on popcorn with a little salt and vegan margarine. It tastes great on a salad, on pasta, and in smoothies; it is a wonderful thickener for sauces and soups. I make a macaroni and “cheeze” from scratch, using nutritional yeast, which my boys prefer to any other they have

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Nutrition from “A” to “Z”

Dr. Joe Esposito, DC, BS, DCCN, DABCO, DAAPM

“O” is for onions. Onions are great. They’re loaded with antioxidants and have been shown to help lower blood pressure. They help prevent and fight cancer. They’re antibiotic, which means they fight bacteria. They’re antiviral, which means they help to fight viruses. They’re low in calories and high in fiber.

There are several different things you can do with onions. You can chop them up and put them in your salad and eat them raw or cook them and put them in various dishes. However, they are best raw because once you cook them, they lose some of their nutritional value. If you’re concerned about getting onion breath, you can eat some parsley. Parsley helps to neutralize the onion breath. It’s also loaded with vitamin C. It’s a natural diuretic, so it helps to flush out your system. By incorporating onions and parsley into your diet, you’re getting a lot of health benefits.

“P” is for peas. Peas are a lot of fun. There are all kinds of things you can do with peas. You can put them in soups and salads or mash them up and serve them as

a paté. They can be roasted and salted and eaten as snacks. They can be coated with wasabi and eaten as a spicy snack. Wasabi, known as “Japanese horseradish,” is used as a spice and has an extremely strong flavor (it is very hot!). Wasabi is great if you have a stuffy nose or sinus problems. It really helps to open up your nasal passages. Wasabi also helps to stimulate your digestive system. Incorporate peas and wasabi into your foods in order to bring more variety and health to your diet.

“Q” is for quinoa. Quinoa is a grain. Not only is it an excellent protein source, quinoa contains a balanced set of essential amino acids. That means it’s a complete protein. It’s an excellent source of fiber, magnesium, phosphorus, and iron. Quinoa is easy to digest. It has a mild, slightly nutty flavor, and is a great substitute for rice or couscous. It has a light, fluffy texture when cooked and makes a great pilaf. You can add vegetables and seasonings to it or try adding almonds, berries, and honey. Honey is an antiviral, antibiotic, and antifungal. Raw honey is the most nutritious, so don’t heat it.

Processing honey removes all of its health benefits. If you have a sensitivity to gluten, I recommend using quinoa because it’s gluten free. Pretty much everyone has at least some sensitivity to gluten, so by adding quinoa to your diet, you’re eating something that has several health benefits and is safe for your system.

This article will be continued in the next edition of The Life Line.

Dr. Joe Esposito is a chiropractor, the author of “Eating Right For The Health Of It!,” the syndicated radio show host of HEALTH TALK ATLANTA and the director of Health Plus Wellness Center. He is committed to making healthy living commonplace. If you would like more information or would like to speak to him personally, please call 770-427-7387. You can also check out Dr. Joe’s website www.DrJoeEsposito.com. Mention Life Grocery when you call, and get an exam, consultation, x-rays, and doctor’s report of findings for only \$50!

Do You Want Results or Effects?

By Brian Murray, M. Ed.

The next time you go to exercise, think about what you really want to gain in return for your time and effort. Do you want results or effects?

The term *result* means a long-term change in muscular strength, firmness, shape, bone strength, leanness, and overall improvement of physical capability. The term *effect* means the immediate change in the body’s homeostasis because of movement, such as increased heart rate, labored breathing, sweating, and light muscle fatigue. Effects and results are both consequences, but an effect is an immediate consequence, while a result is a consequence that occurs after several days or weeks. In other words, results require patience. This may be why yours have been lacking.

Effects are fleeting. When you stop exercising the effects usually subside within several minutes. Results are more long lasting. Once you gain them it takes a much longer time to lose them. This makes sense. If your body is going to expend energy to coordinate the building of new tissues over the course of several weeks, it isn’t going to turn around and tear it all down overnight.

For example, in a study from the University of Maryland, both men and women were subjected to strength training of the frontal thigh muscles for nine weeks followed by no strength training of the same muscles for 31 weeks. The researchers assessed muscle quality, which was defined as the maximum amount of force the muscles could produce per unit of muscle mass. The muscle quality assessment took place at baseline, after nine weeks of strength training, and after 31 weeks of detraining.

All subjects exhibited significantly increased strength and muscle volume after the nine-week training period. So what would you expect to see after 31 weeks of no strength training for the thigh muscles? Would their results have vanished completely? No. Even after 31 weeks of no strengthening exercise, the muscle quality of the thighs was still significantly elevated above baseline measurements.

Please sear the following deeply into your brain. *Just because you are experiencing exercise effects doesn’t mean you are going to get results from your exercise.* Unfortunately, this is most likely why you

continue to walk and jog with little to show for it—you are in love with the effects and most likely believe that the effects translate into results. Sweating equals fat loss, right? A little muscle fatigue equals more shapely muscles, right? Wrong.

So what do you want? Do you want a few temporary physiological changes that will be gone in a few minutes so you can start all over again tomorrow, or do you want your body to experience a permanent change that will make you look and feel twenty years younger all the time?

References:

Ivey, FM et al. Effects of Strength Training and Detraining on Muscle Quality: Age and Gender Comparisons. *J Gerontol A Biol Sci Med Sci*, 2000 March, vol 55(3):B152-157.

Brian Murray is an exercise physiologist, weight loss consultant, and creator of mbody™, a six-week fat loss plan that will change your life. For more info please visit www.mbodytransformation.com.

Nutritional Yeast

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tried. Our absolute favorite is my special tofu. Look for nutritional yeast in the bulk section at Life Grocery the next time you’re there. Happy eating!

Nutrients per one heaping tablespoon of nutritional yeast (VSF): Calories 60; Total Fat 1 gram; Carbohydrate 7 grams; Fiber 4 grams; Protein 8 grams; Sodium 5 milligrams; Vitamin B1 (thiamin) 640% Daily Value (DV); Vitamin B2 (riboflavin) 560% DV; Vitamin B3 (niacin) 280% DV; Vitamin B6 480% DV; Folic Acid 60% DV; Vitamin B12 130% DV (vegan support); Selenium 30% DV; Zinc 20% DV

Yummy Tofu

1 block of tofu
olive oil
2-4T Bragg’s Amino Acids
¾ - 1 c nutritional yeast

- Cube a block of tofu into small bite size pieces.
- Fry in a generous amount of olive oil until brown and crisp on all sides, yet not burned.
- Pour the Bragg’s directly into the pan, stirring

gently to coat the tofu.

- Add nutritional yeast, stirring gently to coat the tofu.
- Serve over a bed of rice with steamed veggies.
- Add Bragg’s and nutritional yeast on top when you serve.

Macaroni and Cheeze

From Vegan Vittles by Joanne Stepaniak

2 ½ c dry elbow macaroni, cooked and drained
2 T olive oil
½ c whole wheat pastry flour (or gluten free flour)
½ t dry mustard
pinch of cayenne pepper (optional)
1¾ c non-dairy milk, heated
½ c nutritional yeast
1 t salt
ground black pepper, to taste
1 T fresh, finely chopped parsley or
1 t dried parsley flakes
½ c packed fresh breadcrumbs

- Preheat oven to 375° F. Spray a casserole dish with nonstick cooking spray.
- While the pasta is cooking, place olive oil in a

2-qt saucepan and cook over medium-high heat. Stir in flour, mustard, and cayenne, if using. Cook for 1 minute.

- Gradually stir in heated milk, a little at a time, whisking constantly. Take 5-7 minutes to add all of the milk. Cook until consistency of thick cream.
- Remove from heat and stir in nutritional yeast, salt, pepper, and parsley. Pour sauce over pasta.
- Transfer to prepared casserole dish and sprinkle the breadcrumbs on top. Bake for 20-25 minutes. Let stand 5 minutes before serving.

Resources:

www.efn.org/~sundance/NutritionalYeast.html
www.bestnaturalfoods.com/nutritional_yeast.html

Kim Strickland earned a Doctorate degree in Natural Health from Clayton College of Health. She is a stay-at-home mother homeschooling her two children. She owns Inspired Living, LLC, a business whose purpose is to inspire people to live their best lives. She facilitates workshops to help people realize their dreams.

Fructose—Friend or Foe?

By Dr. Susan Esposito

Previously fructose (a simple sugar known as a monosaccharide) had been touted as a superior replacement for table sugar (sucrose, which is half glucose and half fructose), due to its lower glycemic index (it doesn't cause such a tremendous spike in blood sugar upon digestion). Also, it's all natural, so it doesn't have all the negative side effects that are associated with artificial sweeteners. However, the American Diabetes Association and many nutritional experts have changed their minds about the benefits of adding fructose to your diet.

The amount of fructose found in most vegetables and fruits is not problematic. Fruits and vegetables have relatively small, "normal" amounts of fructose that most bodies can handle quite efficiently. Natural fructose represents 5%-10% of the weight of any fruit. In fact, there is evidence that eaten in small quantities, it may help your body in the natural processing of glucose. However, consuming too much fructose at once seems to overwhelm the body's capacity to process it. Historically, human diets included only very small amounts of fructose. Today, it is estimated that about 10% of the modern diet comes from fructose.

The problem comes with all the added sugar in our modern diet, the volume of which has grown rapidly in recent decades. Fructose works the same in the body, whether it comes from corn syrup, cane sugar, beet sugar, strawberries, onions, or tomatoes. Only the amounts are different. For example, a cup of chopped tomatoes has 2.5 grams of fructose, a can of regular (non-diet) soda supplies 23 grams, and a super-size soda has about 62 grams.

High fructose corn syrup has become incredibly inexpensive and abundant, partially due to corn subsidies in the United States. Its use in processed foods stems from a discovery in 1971 that synthesized a 55% fructose and 45% glucose syrup from maize, creating an ingredient cheaper and six times sweeter than cane sugar. So, the main problem that exists with consuming fructose is due to its ubiquitous presence in the processed foods on which we as a society are gorging ourselves.

Most of the carbohydrates we eat are made up of chains of glucose. When glucose enters the bloodstream, our pancreas releases insulin to help regulate it and store these sugars in our cells for later use as energy. Fructose, on the other hand, is processed in the liver. The major problem with this occurs when too much fructose enters the liver; the liver can't process it all fast enough for the body to use as sugar. Instead, it starts making fats from

the fructose and sending them off into the bloodstream as triglycerides.

We really don't want this to happen because high blood triglycerides are a risk factor for heart disease. Another problem is that fructose ends up circumventing the normal appetite signaling system, so appetite-regulating hormones aren't triggered and you're left feeling unsatisfied. This is probably part of the reason why excess fructose consumption is associated with weight gain.

There is growing evidence that excess fructose consumption may also facilitate insulin resistance, and eventually type 2 diabetes. However, some of this effect may be from chemicals in soda that react with the high fructose corn syrup. These effects will be particularly devastating for children, for they are deemed more likely to consume these products containing high levels of sweeteners over greater periods of time. A recent report from England claims that by the year 2015, in England, one out of every 10 children will be obese.

The following are summaries of two recent studies that I found on the negative effects of high levels of fructose in the diet:

- Previous studies of the potentially adverse impact of fructose have focused on rats, but the first experiment involving humans has now revealed serious health concerns. Over 10 weeks, 16 volunteers on a strictly controlled diet, including high levels of fructose, produced new fat cells around their heart, liver, and other digestive organs. They also showed signs of food-processing abnormalities linked to diabetes and heart disease. Another group of volunteers on the same diet, but with glucose sugar replacing fructose, did not have these problems. People in both groups put on a similar amount of weight. However, researchers at the University of California who conducted the trial said the levels of weight gain among the fructose consumers would be greater over the long term.
- In animals, fructose-rich diets increase the production of fat and promote resistance to the energy-regulating hormone insulin. New research suggests that memory suffers as well, at least in rats. Neuroscientist Marise B. Parent, of Georgia State University, and her colleagues fed 11 adolescent rats a diet

in which fructose supplied 60 percent of the calories. For 10 other rats, cornstarch took the place of the sweetener. The scientists trained the rats to find a submerged platform in a pool, with the help of surrounding cues. Two days after the training ended, Parent's group removed the pool's platform and recorded where the rats—now adults—swam. Whereas the control group spent most of its time around the platform's old location, the fructose-fed rats visited this area significantly less often. "They can learn" the platform's location, Parent notes, "but they just can't remember it for long periods." (Another research group has shown in hamsters that insulin resistance can affect the hippocampus, a part of the brain critical for learning and remembering facts and events.)

So, my recommendation is to stick to eating organic fruits and vegetables and leave the high fructose corn syrupy soft drinks and other fructose containing processed foods alone or at least to a bare minimum.

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http://www.thenutritionreporter.com/fructose_dangers.html
<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=forget-the-fructose>
<http://sweetsurprise.com>

Dr. Susan Esposito is a nutritional adviser, chiropractor, and vegan mother of three children. If you have a question for Dr. Susan, you may e-mail her at susanesposito@gmail.com. Please remember that not all questions can be answered in this newsletter.

Don't Trust Me

By Michael Scimecca

I'm evil, a chronic sinner, and a world-class liar. I have bad intentions, ulterior motives, and wounds that go way beyond this world. I'm skeptical, critical, and incredibly judgmental. So for crying out loud, don't trust me.

I may appear noble or sound as if I actually know something. I may talk with hatred in my voice or speak with a deep and pervasive peace. Regardless of my presentation, whether it be passionate, self-righteous, or condescending, for God sake, don't trust me.

I could have a host of degrees and letters after my name. I may hold an esteemed position within an organization or government. I might be an author of numerous books and speak on a slew of topics. I may be revered, feared, loved, or loathed, but independent of any accolades the world may bestow on me, do not trust me, not for one second.

I have the ability to pull the wool over everybody's eyes, and you would never know it. If I end up on TV and appear to be successful, I have accomplished nothing. My insidious desire for more inspires me to lie to myself chronically that I have become a great danger to myself. Sadly, I actually believe most of the stories I tell about me and my purpose for being here on Earth, so don't trust me.

Obviously, I could go on like this for a seemingly great amount of time. If you're still reading, however, you may be curious. Where is this rant leading? Certainly, he's going somewhere with this article. Hopefully, he's not using this space to make himself feel better for all of his past transgressions. Is he? Hmmmm.

If I were writing for inner-healing purposes, I would probably never stop. The truth is I am trying to make a point. Don't trust me, especially when I am telling you what "the truth is." Don't trust me, not because I am not trust-worthy. I believe myself to be quite trustworthy. The world, however, needs each of us to show up fully and be fully present. Trust blinds us.

We all have calls to answer. One of our main persistent calls is to continue to develop our common sense. When we trust others, especially authorities, we often do so at the expense of our common sense. Trust has us close our eyes more often, which diminishes our ability to do our own "independent case studies." When we trust for the sake of trust, our experiences hold less value. They end up providing us with limited benefits, rather than giving us the wisdom we so desperately require to live completely, honestly, and happily. Quite simply, when we trust blindly, we sacrifice the wisdom we would otherwise gain from living with eyes wide open.

If you don't trust me, what should you do? Oh, I have many recommendations! Watch carefully. Look closely. Choose wisely. Do anything you can to stimulate your own creative and problem-solving abilities. Incorporate

your values if you choose. Pass on the parts of your culture that you have come to learn are wise, and improve on those "social morays" that you know definitely need improving. Heck, I have a ton of suggestions. Engage in open conversations. Practice listening to the point of real learning. When you develop the remarkable gift of true understanding, you will possess the power to become a great thought leader. You can then more effectively be part of the solution (or part of the problem, if you choose).

Here's another suggestion: Be part of the solution. Develop yourself as a trustworthy individual, but don't trust me or anyone else. And if you're really brave, use the level of common sense you currently have to develop a greater level of common sense. Can I help you? I believe I can, but don't trust me. If you choose to do nothing, however, to make productive, positive changes in your life, it's no big deal. Really! Trust me.

Michael A. Scimecca is a chiropractor and life coach. He helps many people enjoy greater levels of health and well-being. As a chiropractor, he works with individuals and families to help their bodies function optimally, without the use of surgery or drugs. As a life coach, he excels in helping children and couples learn the life skills necessary to be successful in relationships and in life. His office is in Roswell, GA. Call him at 770-912-9197 or visit www.scimecca.com.

Get Energized with Raw and Living Foods

By Brenda Cobb

Nutrition is the foundation of good health and fitness. Supercharge your body with organic raw and living foods and watch your health and fitness level soar. A busy life requires lots of energy. When you're active and on the go you might not be eating the most nutritious food. Poor nutrition can lead to low energy and disease. Raw and living food is the best medicine and finest food straight from Mother Nature. It's quick and easy, with no cooking necessary. Just eat an apple or a stalk of celery.

Many times, people think they are eating healthy when they're really not. Eating cooked food and little, if any, raw and living food will slow the body down and make it acidic. Cooked food is difficult to digest and assimilate. It sits in the body for a long time and leads to constipation, fermentation, and sluggishness. Cooking food kills all the enzymes and destroys valuable vitamins and minerals, the very components the body needs to be energized and healthy.

Organic raw greens, fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and sprouts give the body everything it needs to stay active, healthy, and fit. Raw and living foods oxygenate every cell; more oxygen means more energy. If you're working out you'll get better results with optimum nutrition. You'll get more clean burning protein from raw and living foods than from meat. When you eat meat the body produces uric acid. This can affect your muscles and joints leading to aches, pains, arthritis, gout, and a compromised immune system. Raw and living foods bring back the body to alkalinity. An alkaline body is a healthy body.

Energy drinks are the rage now, but if you look at the labels of these commercially prepared products you will see they are full of chemicals, additives, preservatives, caffeine, and a host of other unhealthy ingredients. Skip the commercial energy drinks and make your own raw and living energy drink. Just blend up some raw and living foods into a smoothie to supercharge and nourish you at the cellular level. Get more energy and strength. Feel lighter and cleaner. Maximize your fitness. Create good health. It's all up to you. You are what you eat! Eat the best fresh food on the planet—organic raw and living vegan foods.

For all of the following recipes, put the ingredients in the Vita-Mix or other high speed blender and blend until creamy. The more water you add, the thinner your smoothie. Always use organic ingredients. You can't get much easier than this.

Super Charge Smoothie

2 c kale
1 apple, seeded
1 carrot
1 c sunflower sprouts
1 T dulce flakes
½ avocado
2 stalks celery
3-4 c filtered water

Lean and Green Smoothie

3 c mixed baby greens

2 stalks celery
1 cucumber
1 c broccoli sprouts
1 c parsley
1 clove garlic
1 T fresh ginger
3-4 c filtered water

Colorful Veggie Smoothie

3 c romaine lettuce
1 small carrot
1 small beet
1 medium tomato
1 stalk celery
1 c buckwheat sprouts
1 T fresh lemon juice
3-4 c filtered water

Brenda Cobb is founder of The Living Foods Institute and author of The Living Foods Lifestyle®, 101 Raw and Living Food Recipes, The Living Foods Training Manual, and several other books on raw and living foods and natural healing. A Healthy Lifestyle Raw and Living Food Course with hands-on training in nutrition, emotional healing, and cleansing and detoxification is offered at Living Foods Institute in Atlanta, Georgia. Call 404-524-4488 or visit www.livingfoodsinstitute.com for more information.

The Tool for Determining if a Food is Truly "Natural"

By Traci Sellers

This tool is designed to aid you in filtering out all of the hype-foods on the market today that are marketed as "healthful" or "natural" which may actually prove to be harmful. For example, the chemical sweetener aspartame that was hailed as a "healthy" sweetener when it entered the market is now known to cause neurological failure disorders and brain tumors. If you would prefer not to be the guinea pig for the next new "all natural" food, this filter is the tool for you.

This filter is essential because we are constantly bombarded with new and exciting advertising telling us we need their new, patented, heart-healthy blend of super whatever-it-is, followed by a group of individuals testifying how it cured them of everything from boils and bad breath to ugliness and poverty. It separates us from the "health-hype" and allows us to make truly healthful selections.

The main component of the filter is what I like to refer to as *The Cave Man Factor*. This is where we examine how a food was produced or processed and ask: "Could I reproduce that process in a cave?" I consider any process that could be done by a cave man (or out in nature with no equipment) to be a natural/acceptable practice, because he would not have access to technology that might render a food harmful.

Just as a note, I don't object to a machine doing a job a person *could* do. For example, I can chop things very finely and grind them with a mortar and pestle, or whip together ingredients with a whisk. Using a blender just makes that job easier and faster. It is when a food can *only* be produced with "high-tech" man-made equipment or chemical processing that I figure it's not something nature intended for us to consume and carries the potential of being very hazardous to the body.

For example, the commercial process of "hydrogenating" oils. In a vacuum chamber, the oil is bombarded with hydrogen until it is saturated. Because the process is not governed by a natural process and is forced upon the oil, the saturation is indiscriminating and will plug up the enzyme sites on the fat molecules that allow it to be broken down and used. If we then eat the oil, enzymes have no place to break it apart and the body tends to store it instead. It is stored especially in the liver and gallbladder, and along the venous structure of the body, seriously hampering their function and being nearly impossible to remove. If we stop to consider for a moment, that the hydrogenation process could never hope to be accomplished in a cave, we could avoid the issue entirely.

On the other hand, if I crush a handful of olives between two rocks, the oil runs out. I think a cave man could handle that, and so can my body.

Whenever the food you are selecting is not obviously in its original state, this tool becomes priceless. Because shopping even at the finest health food store is not a failsafe in getting truly healthful food, I encourage you to adopt your own filter. If the foods you select for your plate are mostly in their original state and the remainder passes through the filter as being truly natural, you will be giving your body the ultimate building blocks that will facilitate healing in your body, moving it toward its ideal.

Consume only foods that pass through the natural food filter!

The following recipe is a great way to help you keep your New Year's Health Resolutions by having a terrific way to make all those raw veggies taste terrific! It also passes *The Cave Man Factor*.

Creamy Chive Dip

1½ c Almondaise (See p. 43 of *Traci's Transformational Kitchen Recipe Collection* or watch our video on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IN5rWUJA73k>)
¼ c fresh snipped or 3 T dried chives
2 T nutritional yeast flakes
1 t sea salt
½ t dried dill weed
1½ T raw red wine vinegar
2 t raw agave nectar

- Whisk together all ingredients until well mixed. Great with any raw vegetables or crackers.

*Traci Sellers started learning about healthful eating because her life was threatened. When all that the medical profession had to offer had failed, healthful eating saved her life. She has been studying health and creating recipes that follow healthful eating principles for the last 10 years. She specializes in making healthful alternatives to classic comfort foods. For more information on healthful eating, download the free e-book [Traci's Transformational Health Principles](http://www.bestfoodist.com) at www.bestfoodist.com or purchase your copy at *Life Grocery*. Succeed in 2010 with personal health mentoring online at www.TracisTransformationalKitchen.blogspot.com/2009_11_01_archive.html.*

Reflections, Passing the Torch, and New Beginnings

By Betsy Bearden

The New Year always represents time for reflection, expectations, goals, promises, and recapturing all the really great moments we had throughout the past year. Luckily, it seems the memorable times and “Doh!” times usually balance each other out.

Some of my most memorable and relaxing times of ‘09 were spent on the water, kayaking with my husband, Steven. In fact, they were so relaxing, that my brain seemed to take a hike one particular afternoon. It was a quiet and beautiful, late fall day as we paddled along a quiet cove at Lake Allatoona. We saw a fisherman fishing off the bank and I called out to him and asked if he was catching any fish? He promptly replied, “No, but then I never really do!” As we paddled around the next cove, our general conversation about anything and everything turned to fishing.

“No one ever seems to catch any fish at Lake Allatoona,” Steven said. And from there, the subject led to tadpoles. He proceeded to tell me about one of his childhood memories of tadpoles taking over the community swimming pool while it was closed down for off-season. Come spring, they had to be removed, and the pool cleaned before it could open back up for summer. I sat for a moment and tried to figure out why no one ever caught fish at Allatoona, because I had just seen hundreds of tadpoles as we were putting in at the dock. But before I could catch the words coming out of my mouth, I asked, “Don’t tadpoles turn into fish?” *Doh!* He laughed and then reminded me that they do, in fact, turn into frogs. I *used* to know that! No redemption here, so I will just move on.

My mother will celebrate her 86th birthday this June. She remains independent, lives alone, and drives herself to the store, beauty parlor, and to church on Sundays. How very Mayberry, I know. She has led a predominantly vegetarian lifestyle over the past thirty-something years by eliminating all red meat, poultry, and most dairy products. As a result of this (and great genes, obviously), she has remained prescription drug free and does not even have a primary-care physician.

However, during the months of September through November, Mama became very ill. She contracted

Hepatitis A, and subsequently broke out with shingles, as her immune system had become compromised from the Hepatitis virus. She was attacked by two major viruses at the same time! She is okay now, but is left with that nightmare of a memory. It is scary to think that anyone, at anytime can become infected with Hepatitis A from food (food handlers that don’t wash their hands), bodily fluids from carriers of the virus, and unclean kitchen or bathroom surfaces. There is no treatment for the virus; it just has to run its course. I never had a clue about it; this is something we should all be made more aware of!

Thanksgiving was fast approaching, and since Mama was about 90% improved, but still recovering, I told her that I was going to do all the cooking. No thunder or lightning occurred as those words came from my mouth, so it should be smooth sailing from there, right? You may remember that I have been banned from bringing pumpkin pie anymore. Just because I forgot to add sugar to the recipe one year, and had to poke holes in the eight pies I had made, and fill them with molasses, is that a reason to treat me like a pumpkin pie pariah? A few years later, I made one out of eight pumpkin pies with tofu in place of eggs. Gosh, someone call in the Militia! Just a few *minor* infractions, wouldn’t you say? I mean . . . anyone familiar with my background, at all, knows that tofu and I are like peas and carrots.

Everyone always pitches in each year and brings his or her own specialty dishes. Well, our dear Matriarch has several specialty dishes that no one else has ever been *allowed* to make—cornbread dressing, green beans and red potatoes, rice pudding, and sweet tea. She reluctantly passed the torch of the dressing and green beans on to me, but Mama assured me she could make the four gallons of sweet tea and rice pudding, but I would remain on standby. I assured her I would make everything taste just exactly as she had made it herself. Still no lightning or thunder, thank you!

T-minus 24 hours and counting—I baked the cornbread as the yellow corn meal box stated: corn meal, flour (I didn’t have any all-purpose, so I substituted bread flour and added eggs, baking powder, buttermilk, vegetable oil and sugar. What’s the difference, right? When the

cornbread was cooked and cooled, I crumbled it up, added chopped celery, onions, salt, pepper, and vegetable broth. Perfect! Next, I proceeded to snap the green beans, and put the red potatoes on to cook. It just didn’t look like I had enough green beans, but I happened to have a bag of frozen “French-style” green beans in the freezer that I added. No one will ever notice that some of the green beans are longer and skinnier than the others, right?

T-minus thirty minutes and counting, we are setting the table for Thanksgiving dinner. My sister-in-law, Linda, said, “I hope you made the dressing as good as Mom makes it. I have been looking forward to this all year.” *No pressure.*

T-minus three minutes into dinner someone asked, “Why are the green beans all different sizes? Who made these green beans?” T-minus four minutes into dinner and counting: “Why does this dressing taste so *sweet*?” *The sugar!* I should not have added the sugar to the corn bread recipe. Doh! Hmmmm...could it be that sugar seems to be my nemesis?

T-minus twenty-minutes into Thanksgiving dinner and counting, the announcement was made that “We have pumpkin pie, and no, Betsy did not make it!” Seems my wonderful mother-in-law, Betty, has now been passed the torch of pumpkin pie duty, and there is no way anyone can top her expertise on this one! Trust me.

It all worked out in the end. Ah, such is life. Speaking of Life, if it was up to me, I would just choose to go to Life Grocery where I could pick up organic green beans, red potatoes, and head back to the freezer section for my favorite holiday feast: Tofurkey! Or even better, head over to Café Life where you can get just about anything veggie or vegan that your heart desires!

Betsy Bearden is a certified and published writer, and the author of a self-published cookbook, [Normal People Eat Tofu, Too](#). She has worked as a volunteer chef, and cooking class instructor, and as reporter for [The Paulding Neighbor Newspaper](#). You can reach her at betsybearden@bellsouth.net or visit her website at www.creativewrites.net.

Are You All Dried Out?

By Linda Townsend

We are now in the middle of our winter season and with it comes a common health issue: xerosis, the fancy medical term for dry skin. Grandma would have probably called it “winter itch.” Regardless of your skin type, during the winter, the drier air contributes to xerosis by drawing moisture right out of the skin cells.

There are several ideas on how to treat and combat this problem; some are quite costly and elaborate, but you may find the simplest things can make a big difference. I have personally dealt with this problem for decades of my life because I have a tendency towards dry skin all the time, but about four years ago I finally said “*enough!*”

Maintain Indoor Humidity Levels

The air outside is drier most of winter and the furnace heating the air in your home dries it out even more. A good humidifier is necessary to maintain the humidity in your home at 40 to 50 percent, the range considered ideal for your body. My humidifier is set just over 50 percent to allow the added moisture to circulate more evenly throughout my home. Basically, it is a matter of what makes you comfortable and tell-tale signs of a good range is the lack of static electricity (those unexpected shocks) and no condensation on the inside of windows.

There are other advantages for your house as well: Wood dries out too, so wall paneling, wood trim, and hardwood flooring can shrink and cause joints to open. Cracks can appear in drywall and plaster. Joints in wood furniture can loosen. Wooden instruments like pianos and guitars tend to go out of tune. A good humidifier can do

much more for your home environment than just provide sinus relief.

What Goes In, Must Come Out

Skin has been described this way by Mitsuhiro Denda PhD, of the Shiseido Research Center in Yokohama, Japan: “The primary job of the skin barrier is to keep water-rich internal organs from drying out by preventing water loss in dry environments.” Better to have dry skin than dehydrated organs! Therefore, the whole body needs ample hydration, but drinking generous amounts of water alone is not sufficient to keep the skin itself moisturized.

Dry skin is also a sign of fatty acid deficiency. Fatty acids are necessary for our oil-producing glands, our natural moisturizers. According to Thomas Cowan, MD, a physician and board member of the Weston A. Price Foundation, people with dry skin should be eating good fats including butter, coconut oil, olive oil, and small amounts of flax oil.

Soaps vs. Detergents

Many detergents today are sold as soaps, but there is a difference. Any good skin cleansing product grabs onto dirt, loosening its attachment to the skin, so that it is rinsed away with water. The method of how soap does this can make a big difference in the condition of the skin. Detergents are notorious for stripping away natural skin oils, even the ones that labeled “moisturizing.” Handmade soaps usually have an excess of fat and a thin layer of natural glycerin is left, so thin it does not feel greasy, but does wonderful things for the skin.

Glycerin is a humectant, a substance that absorbs or helps another substance, such as the skin, retain moisture. In other words, the after effects of using a handmade soap is that the glycerin does not just help in retaining extra moisture provided by the bathing water, but it also attracts moisture from the air afterward. The result is like washing and then putting on lotion, but it is all done in one sudsy step in your shower or bathtub.

When All Else Fails

Four years ago I stopped having winter itch and cracking lips. No more rough elbows or peeling skin on my feet. I did it just by making these changes, but I must also admit I still need a little extra help, like when I have been outside for a long time or after washing my hands with a detergent. It is a good idea to carry a small amount of lotion to use as needed on the spot, but if you are using lotion over large portions of your body most of the time like I was, you might want to consider making some changes favoring smooth, soft skin with less work and better results.

What a time to contrast this dry, barren, chilly season by having skin with the glowing, radiant vitality of summer!

Reference:

Denda, M (2000) Skin Barrier Function as a Self-Organizing System, *Forma*, 15:227-232 <http://www.scipress.org/journals/forma/pdf/1503/15030227.pdf>.

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Clean AND Green is BEST for Your Health

By Jesse Andersen

Everybody likes a clean home, right? Me too. I love having sparkling bathrooms and a crisp, fresh kitchen, along with shiny end tables. But what exactly are we relying on for that oh-so-fresh, oh-so-sparkly cleanliness? Without much thought, many of us pull out the bottled chemicals from our locked cupboards, (locked so our children or grandchildren can't get them), then proceed to spray, pour, and wipe with the volatile cocktail mix of hazardous substances that make our home seem "oh so clean," and yet, may be doing us so much more harm than good.

Please keep in mind, I'm not writing this article to give you ONE MORE THING to add to your list of things to worry about. Quite the contrary, I'm writing this article to share with you that there is another option; a better option.

You don't even need to make it a big research project. I've already done some research here for you. You don't even need to lose sleep over it tonight, because the solution, you'll be glad to hear, is simple.

Five and ten years ago, there were a few experts quietly placing articles in magazines, like *Mother Earth News* and *Vegetarian Times*, about the hazards of the chemicals we use in our living space day in and day out. But over these last few years, dozens of experts have been screaming from the rooftops, the articles have been getting louder and louder, with more and more data and studies to back up the findings. The internet gives us a worldwide view of thousands of reliable articles and studies of which I'll share three with you. Let's take a look, shall we?

Brian Halweil, of the Worldwatch Institute, tells us that "according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the air inside the typical home is on average 2-5 times more polluted than the air just outside, and in extreme cases 100 times more contaminated, largely because of household cleaners and pesticides." Also, "in a 2002 U.S. Geological Survey study of contaminants in U.S. stream water, 69 percent of streams sampled contained persistent detergent metabolites, and 66 percent contained disinfectants."

Why should those statistics matter?

From the CBC Marketplace report on Household Cleaners, Gregg Evans spoke to Dr. Virginia Salares, who specializes in indoor air quality. He asked her what is in some of the products being marketed to young families. One product they looked at—Lysol Anti-bacterial Action Spray—lists ethanol 79 percent. Not just any ethanol, Salares says, it's denatured ethanol.

Salares put together a book full of data sheets that list the hazards of specific chemicals in the workplace. Here's what she discovered about denatured ethanol: it "may cause irritation of the eyes and mucous membranes, may cause central nervous system depression if inhaled or ingested." They also found alkyl dimethyl benzyl ammonium chloride, in the Lysol—a pesticide. And in glass cleaners? "Some of them have what are called glycol ethers. There is concern over these products for workers (or home owners) who have been exposed occupationally. They have been seeing reproductive effects."

The CBC Marketplace report continues with information about carcinogenic chemicals—chemicals that may often cause cancer.

Hundreds of chemicals, possibly even thousands of them, are capable of causing cancer to occur in test animals and in humans alike. Cancer seldom eventuates from one acute exposure, but may after prolonged low level exposure or exposure over shorter periods to higher levels.

There are many well known and documented examples of chemicals that actually cause cancer in humans. For example, the fumes of the metals cadmium, nickel, and chromium may often cause lung cancer. Sarcomas are known to be caused by vinyl chloride,

while the exposure to arsenic substantially increases the risk of skin and lung cancer. Chemically induced changes in bone marrow by toxic chemicals such as benzene and cyclophosphamide and other toxic chemicals may often result in leukemia.

The sad fact of the matter is that cancer induced by chemicals takes many years to establish and may not become apparent until long after the chronic low level exposure has stopped, as may be the case with an infant crawling on surfaces which have been cleaned with toxic chemicals used by an unaware mother.

"People assume that if it's on the shelf, it's been tested, it's safe. And you can't make that assumption all the time. You can't. Not with the regulatory framework we have in place," Kathy Cooper of the Canadian Environmental Law Association, told CBC Marketplace.

Natural News staff writer, E. Huff, tells of a report conducted by the Environmental Working Group (EWG) where they found that in 13 different California school districts, maintenance crews are using cleaning supplies that emit more than 450 different toxins into the air, many of which trigger asthma and lead to cancer.

The districts were chosen carefully and included ones from different regions of all different sizes. While some have begun implementing new cleaning protocols and pilot programs for testing safer cleaning supplies, data reveals that many toxic substances are still being used.

Formaldehyde, styrene, and four other toxic substances were found in school cleaning supplies that all contribute to asthma. These and nine others also found in the cleaners are known to cause cancer. The use of these products is likely correlated to the 28 percent increase in childhood cancer between 1974 and 1998.

Whoa! And folks, I'm just touching the very tip of the iceberg. But let's move on to the "simple solutions" part.

Again, the internet provides tons of resources and lists to keep things simple in helping us to re-arrange the way we clean things around our homes. Here are two to get you started: First, www.EnvironmentalHomeCenter.com is an online source for green building supplies, including people-friendly cleaning supplies, non-toxic paint, natural carpets, sustainable wood products, and energy-efficient insulation. Second, www.TheGreenGuide.com provides consumers with practical, everyday household and market level actions that can yield system wide environmental, health, as well as social change.

And finally, the "simplest, simple solution" is right in your own back yard. (What did Dorothy teach us from the Wizard of Oz?) Your favorite, local, and friendly Life Grocery carries the leading seller of green cleaning products in North America: Seventh Generation.

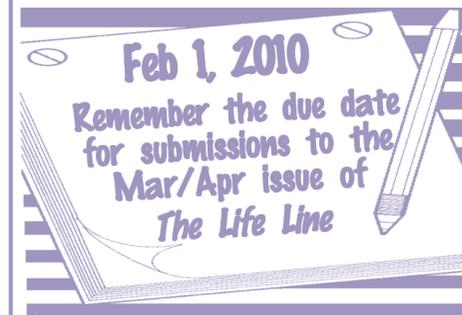
From disinfectants, to laundry detergent to household cleaners, baby care and feminine care products, you'll find the full line of Seventh Generation supplies conveniently located right here, nearby.

Just so you know, I don't make any money from promoting Seventh Generation products, but I think their products are so wonderful that I've just got to tell you a little bit about them.

For over 20 years, Seventh Generation has been committed to becoming the world's most trusted brand of authentic, safe, and environmentally responsible products for a healthy home. The company derives its name from the Great Law of the Iroquois that states, "In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations." Every time you use a Seventh Generation product, not only are you choosing a healthier lifestyle and reducing the possibility of chemically induced illness, but you're saving natural resources, reducing pollution, keeping toxic chemicals out of the environment, and making the world a safer place for this and the next seven generations.

Of course, Life Grocery carries many other great, conscious choices for our cleaning needs . . . but the

To receive emails that includes store events, store sales, Café Life specials, action alerts, and special event reminders send an email to:
joinmylife@lifegrocery.com



one that I chose to research was Seventh Generation, and I like what I see!

So now you are informed. I know, some of you may have already been informed. Well, for you, I hope I have caused you to pause and remember for just a minute. Now, I already know what your thinking, do these products cost more? I'm always thinking about that too. Like all things that are "better" for you and the planet, it will cost you a little more to purchase the best of the best products. For me, the realization is this: either we pay now or we pay much more later; maybe much, much more. I'm very grateful and thankful that we have better options available to us. Better for us and better for the planet.

Karen Calabrese, one of the most popular and innovative leaders in the holistic health industry, said, "If you don't take care of this body, where are you going to live?" It could be similarly said, "If we don't take care of this planet, where are we going to live?" Beautiful, thoughtful advice.

References:

Brian Halweil, Worldwatch Institute; Vision for a Sustainable World; Good Stuff? - Cleaning Products; <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/1484>
CBC Marketplace: Household Cleaners by Wendy Mesley, Gaelyne Leslie, Louisa Jaslow; <http://www.cbc.ca/consumers/market/files/home/cleaners/index2.html>
NaturalNews.com; School Cleaning Supplies Emit Toxic Fumes into Classroom Air by E. Huff; http://www.naturalnews.com/027848_cleaning_supplies_schools.html
Seventh Generation, Inc.; www.seventhgeneration.com

Jesse is the Director of the Raw Food Resource Center and teaches several classes at Life Grocery, including the very popular "Raw Food Nutrition for Health & Weight Loss." She also presents a free one-hour lecture weekly at Life Grocery every Thursday night at 6:30pm. For more information on her classes, or if you would like Jesse to email you her "BEFORE and AFTER" weight loss photos, email her at RawFoodResourceCenter@gmail.com.

Reflections of My Gluten Free Life

By Nisla C. Whetstone, L.M.T., Gluten Free Lifestyle Coach and Amateur Chef

I've now been officially gluten free for over 6 years now, and while it's hard to believe it's been almost 7 years, it seems like second nature to me now. I wanted to share with you all just a little bit of what I've learned during this time. First of all, I can live without wheat in my life. I can remember saying "But I just can't live without WHEAT!" Oh so not true. I couldn't live WITH wheat, I just had to get it through my thick head that wheat/gluten was poison to my body and treat it as such. Secondly, it does get easier with time. In the beginning I was just as depressed, angry, bitter, afraid as most people are when they first find out they have either Celiac Disease or Gluten Intolerance, or have to give up wheat/gluten for other reasons. I really thought that my life was over. I thought for sure I'd never be able to eat good tasting food ever again. Again, not true. I've discovered so many delicious foods out there and have become much more excited about sharing my finds with others. In the beginning I wouldn't have served my feeble food experiments to the dog, they were that bad!

Another thing that I've learned is that the holidays are not about food. Sure a lot of our family traditions revolve around holiday parties and meals, and things like baking cookies and gingerbread houses, so many of which can be adapted to be gluten free. Instead, the holidays are about spending time with friends and family and making precious memories. My number one rule is "don't panic." I have just learned to plan ahead and not go hungry. Make recipes that everyone can enjoy and create new traditions.

My daughter is also on this gluten free diet with me so this brings me to the third thing I've learned. Children are way more adaptable to this diet than we give them credit for being. Once my daughter learned just how much better she felt off of gluten, and how terrible it makes her feel if she accidentally gets a hold of some hidden sneaky glutens, she was way more willing to be compliant on the diet and to actually take responsibility for her own food choices. This is important. With children you have to let them have a sense of control over their food. You can help them make smarter healthier choices, but let them have some say in what they can eat. Eventually they will be out with friends or other family without you there to make the menu choices for them, and you need to be able to trust that they will know what to order or choose. Teach them to read labels as soon as they are old enough to read.

Speaking of reading labels, the fourth thing I'd like to share with you is this: ALWAYS read labels. Even if you have bought the same product many times before and it's always been gluten free before, even if you've previously verified a product as safe through contacting the manufacturer, always re read the labels. Ingredients change, formulations change, suppliers change, and the ingredient statement on the package SHOULD be the most accurate source of information as to what is in that product. I don't know how many times I've picked up a box of whatever product I've been getting for a while and tossed it in my basket only to stop and think "I need to double check the label" only to find that, yes, the company has added wheat to the formula in some form or another and now my favorite cereal is no longer safe. This is why I prefer to shop at Life Grocery, with its great gluten free section and many products that are actually labeled gluten free!

The last little tidbit of information I want to share with you today is this: just because a food is verified gluten free, it does not mean that you aren't going to react to it. Many of us have multiple food intolerances show up the longer we are on the gluten free diet. So, just because you ate something that made you sick, it doesn't mean it was necessarily gluten. You could have developed an intolerance to dairy, corn, soy, legumes, or any number of things. Only you can truly determine

what other intolerances you may have. Whenever I start reacting to foods and I know I've been strict about my gluten free diet, I have to go back to the basics and eliminate all suspect foods and then add one thing back at a time and keep a journal of any reactions. Ultimately, you become your own food detective. Good luck and never give up hope! The most important thing to remember is to focus on what you can have, not on what you can't. On that note, I want to share several of my favorite foods.

Tofu or Chicken Rice Casserole

2 c water
1 c Basmati rice
½ c Imagine Creamy Portobello Mushroom Soup
1 c baked tofu, cubed or sautéed chicken breast, shredded
1 clove garlic, minced
¼ t black pepper
¼ t salt
2 T butter or olive oil

- Bring water to a boil, add rice and stir.
- Reduce heat and cover. Simmer for 20 minutes.
- Add the rest of the ingredients and mix well.
- Place in casserole dish and bake at 350° F for 10 minutes.

Tofu or Chicken Broccoli Casserole

2 c or 8 oz shredded cheddar cheese or non dairy substitute
1½ c cut up firm tofu or cooked chicken
2/3 c finely chopped onion
10 oz of fresh broccoli chopped into small pieces or 1 pkg frozen chopped broccoli, thawed, and drained
1 1/3 c milk or non dairy substitute
3 eggs or equivalent egg replacer
¾ c of The Gluten Free Pantry's Quick Mix
¼ t pepper
1/8 t dried thyme leaves

1 c shredded cheese or non dairy substitute, for topping

- Heat oven to 400° F.
- Mix the 2 c of cheese, tofu or chicken, onions, and broccoli in a greased casserole dish.
- Beat remaining ingredients, except cheese, with wire whisk or hand beater until well mixed. Pour into dish.
- Bake until knife inserted in center comes out clean (approximately 25-30 minutes).
- Top with remaining cheese.
- Bake just until melted.
- Cool 5 minutes. Serves 6-8.

Grits Casserole

serves 6

Good for brunches and dinner w/turkey etc

1 c gluten free quick cooking grits
4 eggs or egg substitute
3 c water
1 c milk or milk substitute
½ c butter
1 c shredded cheddar cheese
1 t garlic
salt and pepper to taste

- Preheat oven to 350° F.
- Put grits in water. Cook over medium heat until very thick. Remove from heat and add butter.
- Stir in salt and pepper.
- Beat eggs and milk together.
- Add to grits and mix well. Add cheese.
- Pour into 3 quart greased casserole and bake uncovered for 45 minutes

NislaWhetstone is a Licensed Massage Therapist and Gluten Free Lifestyle Coach in private practice in conjunction with Dr. Joe Esposito. Contact her at 770-653-6017 or magickhand@gmail.com for additional information.

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