

A
Deeper
Look
by Delisa Renideo

Escaping The Mythological Monster

When I was 25, I had a friend in her early 30's. She warned me, "When you hit 30, you start falling apart."

I'm not sure how I made it past 30 without falling apart, but, as I've gotten older, I've heard this same dire message repeated, with greater emphasis, as each decade is reached. Somehow, I've managed to escape the mythological monster that chases people through their succession of birthdays, intent on destroying their quality of life through illness, increasing weight, lack of energy, an inability to "learn new tricks" and a belief that we're powerless to change.

Of course, when we look around, we see evidence that the monster really does exist. It's true that many people suffer from all sorts of physical problems which increase as they age. However, and this is the big **HOWEVER** . . . the myth is that the monster is related to age. We've been led to believe by the ubiquitous "they" that our problems stem from getting older. We're fatter because we're older. Our blood pressure is higher because we're older. Our joints are stiff and inflexible because we're older. We have aches and pains because we're older. We can't learn new things because we're older. It's too hard to change as we get older.

Fortunately for all of us, the cause of all these problems is not that we are getting older. The cause of these increasing problems is unhealthy daily habits: our dietary habits, our exercise habits, our mental and emotional habits, our social habits. Healthy habits create a healthy life. Unhealthy habits create an unhealthy life. And the longer we practice unhealthy habits, the more unhealthy we get. That's why we mistakenly think age is the culprit!

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Once we take the first step in changing a habit, we begin to loosen the grip of the mythological monster. We discover that we really *do* have the power to make changes. And these changes really *can* make a difference in our lives. We begin to see for ourselves that it's possible to reverse patterns that may be generations deep. We realize we don't have to travel the same road our parents did, who may have died of heart disease. We don't have to perpetuate the habits that caused these problems.

Opening our minds is the first step in changing our lives. Most of us have been conditioned to believe a lot of erroneous information, such as that "milk does the body good," or that protein is only found in meat. Being willing to take another look at this (mis)information is an essential part of moving toward freedom.

We get misinformation from many places. My grandmother, a hardworking woman of German descent, died of a stroke in 1972 and I can remember her saying in response to someone who asked how she managed to live a long life, "I never walk when I can stand still, I never stand when I can sit, and I never sit when I can lie down." If she had actually lived like that, she would NOT have lived to be 94! We now know we need to do just the opposite. Our bodies are made for moving. We live longer and have more energy when we are very active. So even though I loved my grandmother and respected her wisdom and life experience, I still need to be discerning rather than automatically believing everything she said.

Doctors actually recommended smoking until the early 1950's, even to pregnant women. We can see old commercials with doctors saying they prefer Camel cigarettes over other brands. We now find it shocking to learn that doctors recommended something that kills so many people! I think the day will

come when we think the same about doctors recommending meat and dairy products.

One of the great joys of my life is working with people who change their diets and end up transforming their lives. We feature someone's story in each issue of our newsletter. Be sure to read June and Paul Cordasci's inspiring story in this month's Vegan Story. You can read more vegan stories from past newsletters on our website: www.alaskaveg.org.

As each of us discovers our power to change our lives by changing our habits, we make it easier

for others to do the same. The mythological monster that keeps track of our birthdays begins to look a bit

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less menacing, and eventually, we begin to see it for what it is: an illusion based on misinformation. We can stop fearing and fighting the monster and begin living joyfully, with enthusiasm for today and anticipation for tomorrow.

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