

The Power to Change Your Past

by Delisa Renideo

We all know we can change our future, right? But did you know we can also change our past? Hang in there with me and you'll see what I mean.

The power to choose is a tremendous power. We can only make choices in this present moment, but the choices we make now can change both our future and our past.

Our present life is the result of the choices we've made in the past. If we are in shape, it's because we've made choices in the past to exercise. If we're out of shape, we've made the choice to be inactive. The vocations we follow, the relationships we're in, whether or not we have children, how much education we have, what skills we've developed are all the result of choices we've made in the past.

We can change our future by making different choices in this present moment. If we're out of shape, we can change our exercise patterns and be in shape in the future. If we have coronary artery disease, diabetes, or obesity, we can change our future by changing to a healthy plant-based diet. We can reduce the risk of cancer in the future by choosing a healthy plant-based diet and regular exercise. We don't have to live in fear, with the prospects of getting fatter and sicker as the years go by. Our genes don't control our future nearly as much as our lifestyle does.

We can also change our lives by changing the way we THINK about the choices we make. Some people who choose a plant-based diet choose to focus on what they "can't" eat and how hard or inconvenient it is to eat a vegan diet in our world. This way of thinking can lead to an experience of struggle and deprivation. On the other hand, we can choose to focus on enjoying the foods we are eating: how colorful and flavorful they are, how healthy they

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are, how good we feel when we eat this way, and how rewarding it is to live in alignment with our deeper values of compassion and care for the earth, for other people, and for the animals. Instead of feeling deprived, we feel joyful about our food choices. And this joyful attitude will undoubtedly increase the health benefits of a plant-based diet!

Okay -- ready to hear how we can change our past?

We've all had joyful experiences in the past and we've all had difficult experiences, but it is up to us to decide how to think about these experiences.

I attended a workshop years ago in which the leader had us pair up and tell our partner the story of our life, and to tell it as a tragedy. In the space of about five minutes, there was an abundance of tears throughout the room. It didn't matter whether the story was about losing a spelling bee in the 5th grade or losing a parent at a young age. The feelings generated were powerful and sad. Then, the leader instructed us to tell our story again, but this time to tell it as a triumph. Within a minute, the energy in the room changed dramatically. Losing the spelling bee turned out to be an opportunity to learn that our value isn't determined by winning. Losing a parent at a young age led to increased resourcefulness and self-confidence. By changing the way we think about our past, we have, in effect, changed our past.

When I was 20 years old, I developed acute iritis, an inflammation of the eyes. The ophthalmologist told me I would become blind -- if not right away, then later. The cause was unknown, there was no cure, and it was expected to recur. All they could do was treat the symptoms with powerful steroids.

The thought of losing my sight was devastating. I decided that while I could still see, I

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needed to look at everything as closely as possible so that I would always remember what it looked like. It was summer in Alaska, so everything was lush, green and beautiful and fields of fireweed were in full bloom. I'd never seen it look so spectacular!

It turns out that I didn't go blind, and I've enjoyed the gift of enhanced sight ever since that horrible prognosis. I'm actually grateful for the iritis because I never

really learned to see until then.

My friend, June, was diagnosed with breast cancer 3 years ago. She found out about the Food for Life Classes, she and her husband became vegan, and she says that everything in her life changed dramatically for the better as a result. She told me not a day goes by that she doesn't feel grateful for the cancer because of how it changed her life. From tragedy to triumph.

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[Back](#)