

We're In This Together

Julie and Tom Pickard

Julie: I have been athletic most of my life. In high school, I played varsity soccer and volley ball, and enjoyed basketball, football, softball, hiking, skiing, biking, and swimming. Back then I began having terrible menstrual cramps that incapacitated me for a day every month. I even missed my last varsity soccer game because of it. The doctor prescribed pain pills, and later, even birth control pills to try to help me, but they didn't resolve the problem. (I didn't stay on the birth control pills because of all the known side effects.) I learned to cope.

In my 20's, I started having a lot of digestive and sinus problems and was on medications for them. I continued to be very active, though, and didn't start gaining a lot of weight until 2002.

A doctor misdiagnosed me as having endometriosis and prescribed birth control pills to help, but they just made me gain a lot of weight really fast-- about 30 pounds in 2 months! About that time, I started dating Tom, and we'd often go biking or hiking. Having grown up as an athlete, I really wanted to lose the excess weight so I started on a dieting yo-yo. I tried everything, even prescription appetite suppressants. I'd lose 20 pounds, then get stuck there, get discouraged, and go back to my old eating pattern (Lean Cuisines, no soda, skim milk, little cheese, rarely beef, mostly lean meats, occasional desserts) and gain it back, plus some. What added to the frustration was that my regular food intake was considered healthy and I didn't frequent fast food restaurants. I typically made "healthy" choices. I didn't find anything that really worked until we started eating a low-fat vegan diet in May of this year. And it works! I've lost 23 pounds since mid-May and I'm still gradually losing.

Tom: I have always supported Julie in whatever she tried to do to feel better or to lose weight, so we were on the yo-yo diet together. I hated having to measure things and keep track of what I ate. And I

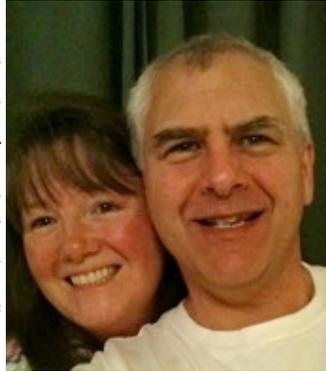
always felt deprived. One thing I love about our vegan diet is that I don't have to measure or count things. And I never feel deprived. If I'm hungry, I get something to eat and don't feel guilty about it. I've lost 20 pounds since mid-May.

Julie: In August of 2010, I started having pain in my right foot, a condition called plantar faciitis and an x-ray revealed a heel spur. After unsuccessful treatment attempts and with the increased pain and no relief in sight (I couldn't exercise so was gaining weight again), I became so discouraged that I might not be

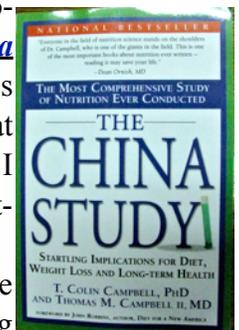
able to be normally active again. I had heard about reflexology massage, but the facility required I see their nurse practitioner before-hand to prescribe this form of medical massage. I met with her, and she did a very thorough interview and exam. I was frustrated and unloaded all my health-related problems. She listened, where others had not. She tested me for food allergies and the results showed I had allergies to dairy, eggs, and wheat/gluten. I did an elimination diet for each and found that wheat/gluten wasn't a problem, but dairy and eggs definitely were.

At about the same time, a co-worker told me about [The China Study](#), by T. Colin Campbell. This book really opened my eyes! That was just the first of several books I read about the benefits of a plant-based diet.

Tom: Julie started telling me about all the things she was reading in [The China Study](#) and I began finding information online. I found YouTube videos that enforced what Julie was telling me about, and I started watching lots of other related videos. I was really impressed with how so many common health problems could actually be reversed by a plant-based diet and there was evidence to back it, so I said to Julie, "Let's do it!" I



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was especially interested since both my parents have heart disease and diabetes and my brother and sister have MS. I wanted to share with them what I learned. Fortunately, a co-worker told me about the [Food for Life Classes](#) and Julie and I immediately decided to register for the next series.

Julie: We started eating a vegan diet on our own on April 1, but didn't really know what we were doing until we started the classes in June, 2011. Then it all made sense and we found it to be amazingly simple and tasty!

Tom: I had been a meat and potatoes guy and didn't really like vegetables, but I knew it would be the best for us, so I just made the decision and it was like a switch flipped inside. I had no trouble changing

my diet. I really like the food, and how we are both losing weight. I feel so healthy, I only wish I had known all this sooner!

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Julie: I have more energy now and don't have to battle any cravings; I'm always satisfied. My intense menstrual cramps are gone, my digestive problems are gone, my cholesterol is 146, and my blood pressure is 110/77. I still have trouble with my foot, but I think after I lose more weight, it'll get better too. We're going to Hawaii soon and I'm so excited about getting to go swimming everyday and checking out the Whole Foods Market in Honolulu.

Tom: And I'm really happy that since we've lost weight we feel better and believe that the health benefits will continue into old age!

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