

## From Challenge to Gift: The Story of a Former Sugar Addict

*Kathy Hansen's Vegan Story*

What started out as a challenge by a coworker turned into a family adventure, and the amazing results of it all are like a gift.

Last December, my coworker said, "On January 1st, we're going vegan for 28 days."

We were always trying to lose weight, and we also did a lot of kidding around, teasing, and challenging each other. We'd had "biggest loser" cash contests for the office in the past. I wanted to lose weight, but I thought, "No, I'm not doing this. It's too unhealthy to give up meat and dairy, even for the short term." I wanted to put my efforts into something that would be permanent, not just some crazy, temporary, unhealthy whim.

But my coworker gave me a book to read: *The China Study*, by T. Colin Campbell, Ph.D. The information in that book was so compelling that I decided to go vegan by the time I was part way through.

The China Study was so interesting to me that I started reading portions of it out loud to my husband, Jaydee, just to share what I was so excited about. To my surprise, it wasn't long before he said, "I'm in!" So we decided we would do this as a family, with our two daughters, Skye, 11, and Sarah, 9.

Our adventure started with a complete kitchen clean out. After removing five totes of junk food, we had a clean slate. Then we had to figure out what we were going to eat! We went to Costco and I told everyone they could pick out any fruits and vegetables they wanted, and there would always be healthy food that they had chosen in the fridge, so they couldn't complain to me if they didn't like it!

I experimented with lots of recipes, many of which were complete flops that nobody liked. But I kept at it and slowly compiled a notebook of

recipes that we like. Some of our favorites are homemade pizza, where everyone chooses their own toppings, and spaghetti, with loads of veggies in the sauce. After the first 28 days, we decided to try it for 12 weeks and see if our cholesterol numbers would improve.

We treated our trips to the grocery store like a treasure hunt, looking for new things to try, reading all the labels, and going home and trying them. Some of them have been such a hit that the girls want to make them for their friends when they are visiting. And they proudly say, "We can eat things like this because we're vegan!"

My girls are at an age where they're starting to learn to cook, and I want them to learn to cook these healthy foods so they'll have a great foundation for the rest of their lives. They take turns helping me in the kitchen every night. Sarah helps one night, and Skye the next. It has been a great experience and gives me special time with each of them.

Now you know about the challenge and the family adventure; let me tell you about the gifts.

I've been a sugar addict for years. It was horrible. I couldn't control it. I was always either wishing I had certain foods, or feeling guilty that I had eaten them. The guilt and shame were awful, and I was depressed and moody.

I'd also gained weight, up to a high of 175, then had dieted down to 145 by counting calories. But I was always hungry, and I made some really unhealthy choices. Sometimes I'd go to Dairy Queen instead of eating a regular dinner, but still stayed within my calorie budget. I seemed to be stuck at 145 pounds, and that's when my coworker made that crazy challenge to go vegan for the month of January.



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It was like a miracle! Within days of going vegan, I felt so much better! My mood lifted and I had much more energy. But the most miraculous part was my sugar cravings went away! I did experience a lot of GI distress for the first couple of weeks, but even with that, I felt SO much better.

I also started losing weight again, but this time, without being hungry. At first, I continued to count calories out of curiosity and because I was afraid not to. But I gradually became confident that I wasn't going to gain weight eating this way, and I've actually lost another 8 pounds so far. I've also given up counting calories. Instead, I follow Dr. Joel Fuhrman's *Eat to Live* plan. I also took the *Healthy Weight Loss Class* from Delisa in March and April, which helped me feel confident and committed to this plan.

Some other amazing things happened. I'd had surgery the year before and had a wound that wouldn't heal. I'd made an appointment with my doctor to see about that, but after going vegan, my wound miraculously healed! I gave my doctor a copy of *The China Study* and the related DVD, *Forks Over Knives* in case it could help someone else.

My cholesterol had been around 200 for several years running, but after twelve weeks, it dropped to 157. All of the numbers had improved.

My skin also changed. It started glowing, and

even my skin tone changed. I'm 41 and could see wrinkles starting, but the wrinkles stopped progressing and some have faded.

My 11 year old daughter, Skye, was starting to get acne, but when she began to eat vegan, her skin cleared up in about two weeks. I'm so happy for her because I had terrible acne from the time I was her age until my 20's. I wish I'd known about this healthy diet then!

But of all the gifts I've received from this change in our diet, the best and most miraculous is losing my sugar addiction. My diet has permanently changed for the better. And I can't help but wonder what this diet could do for others suffering from other types of addictions.

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I wanted everyone to know about this, so I budgeted money every month to give away books. Besides *The China Study*, my other favorite books are *Eat to Live* and *Super Immunity* by Dr. Joel Fuhrman. I see changes happening as several of my coworkers adopted this healthy diet. One coworker has lost 35 pounds since January 1st and looks like a different person! Another found hope to reverse her heart disease. She even bought a copy of *The China Study* for her heart doctor!

I now also realize that when we eat the standard American diet, it not only makes us sick, but it takes even simple foods away from hungry people around the world. I really care about making choices that don't victimize other people, so I'm very happy to eat in a way that is in alignment with my values.

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