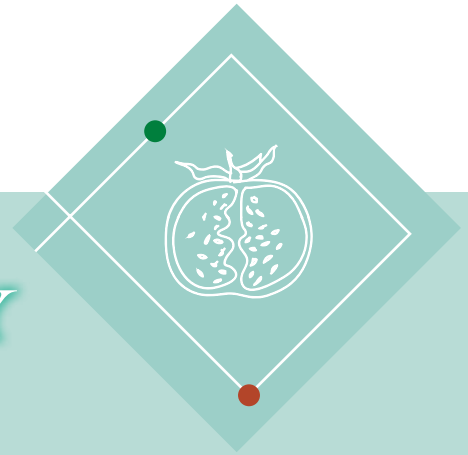




# WONDERFUL WAY TO LOSE WEIGHT



**By Kuo Jen-Che, Psychiatry Ward Head Nurse, Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital**

Lately, when people see me they asked, “Your skin looks better, where did you have treatment?” When I heard it, I squeezed a smile and said, “I am not young anymore, so all the pimples said bye-bye to me.” Before, due to my own body’s nature and different work shifts, my face and neck were full of pimples and scars. Now not only the pimples disappeared, my skin is now smooth and fair.

Once in an elevator I met a girl who asked, “You are less than 30 years old, right?” Ha-ha! I am almost 40. At that moment, I actually wanted to turn and laugh. I did not do so out of respect to others.

I actually have not done any plastic surgery or medical treatment. All these changes are the result of being a vegetarian.

## **Being a Vegetarian Is a Choice**

I first learned that food is divided into vegetation and meat category about a quarter century ago. Due to her religious belief, my mother quit eating meat. However, she did not require us to follow. She prepared food as usual. She simply divided the dishes and ate her special veggie meal with us.

At that time, my father’s job was a fisherman. My mother sold the fishes he caught. They were busy working and often would come home late. Aware of their hard work, I fixed dinner before they return to spare them the labor on cooking. Once, I cooked vegetables with meat for the family. My father was angry with me for not having a separate veggie dish for my mother. At that moment, I realized the so-called vegetarian food was food without meat.

My mother has been a vegetarian for many years. She works as hard as usual. In my memory, she seldom gets sick. Therefore, I am not against being a vegetarian. Yet I did not think of becoming a veggie either. For the sake of my mother’s kindness,

I understood that whether meat or vegetation, they are all food. Being a vegetarian is a choice.

If life is made of a series of choices, the choice of being a vegetarian was not a priority to me. After all, there are so many delicious foods in the world. I did not consume a lot of meat, but many special cuisines are cooked with meat. In addition, when you work full-time, convenience is important. Once a while eating vegetarian food is healthy, but it is tough to have it long-term.

Since I have been working in the Buddhist Tzu Chi hospital for more than a decade, there might be people wondering why I have not converted, or why I was so much craved for meat. Although I used to order a dish of pork with cheese every time I visited a particular restaurant to satisfy my taste buds, I was not obsessed with meat.

At the workplace, I am always in contact with information that veggie food is good for our environment and planet Earth; and vegetarian food is healthy. I do understand and agree with the concepts but I did not take action. It might be just because I was rebellious.

### What Happens Without Extra Effort

Vegetarian food in the past few years is getting more popular, and people are fond of the veggie culture. Whether it is due to religion, environment or health reasons, I think being a vegetarian should be by choice. However, there are many people after they become vegetarians they always want the people around them to be like them. It looks like they care about you. Actually, I think it is more like criticism than promotion for veggie eating.

I am particular against those who criticize others being meat eaters. It is especially hard to accept meat-like veggie food. If people eat veggie food but their minds are actually on meat, what kind of compassion is that?



Kuo Jen-Che had once been the cover model of Tzu Chi Nursing Journal Chinese version.



The meaning of being vegetarian is to cultivate compassion. I have had awards in many occasions for being a good person. Even if I did not mention all the positive things I had done, I am still a good person. How can people negate all the good and positives with one thing wrong, the meat eater? Therefore, every time I was asked when I would start eating vegetarian food, I always smiled and said the time had not come yet.

I thought my timing might not come in this life. However, one day while I was walking in the garden worrying about the health issue of one of my family members, I passed by a meeting room. I saw the words: "Cultivate your most original intent, enlightenment is within reach." It flashed before me and I immediately wanted to cultivate good karma with all beings. I do not want to have meat anymore.

It happened afterwards without any extra effort. I was not reluctant to be a vegetarian anymore. I am flexible. After I made-up my mind, I did not crave for meat anymore. Due to my work environment, I had not encountered any big hurdle along the way to become a vegetarian.

At the beginning, the noticeable difference of my eating routine has become more regular. Before the change, breakfast was often turned into lunch and dinner was taken late at night after work due to a busy work schedule. After the start of a vegetarian habit, my stomach could not stay hungry long. When the time came, my stomach would make noises. It was more punctual than an alarm. In addition, vegetarian restaurants only provide three meals during the day, and not much for snacks in between. Therefore, I need to eat at the right time, and follow regular eating habits; otherwise, there will not be any food after hours.

### **Eat out Healthy and Fitness**

The next notable difference is my improved health. I have been suffering from high blood pressure and obesity for years because of a busy and stressful work environment. Last year, the readings of my physical exam were all within acceptable ranges. I felt ashamed being a medical worker, how I can persuade others if I am not able to take care of my body.

This April, I visited a cardiovascular doctor to follow-up my high blood pressure with some laboratory tests. The result was a big surprise. I had recovered very well. I thought about what I had done during this period, which was work most of the time. Although I talked about exercises but I was never really into it. The only thing I had done was the change to being veggie.

After being a vegetarian for some time, more and more people said, "You lost weight, how did you do it? What exercises are you doing lately?" I did not take it

seriously at the beginning. I thought people were just joking around. Therefore, I jokingly answered, “Yeah, I worked hard to reduce my weight every day. I exercised my right index and middle fingers (for using a computer mouse).”

Actually, I have been used to my chubby image. My chin was invisible. If you do not look carefully, it is hard to notice on a picture. Although I wished to become skinnier, I knew it was impossible. Therefore, when people said I lost weight, it is hard to think that it is real.



**Head Nurse Kuo Jen-Che before and now**



I noticed I had to adjust the belt that goes with my pants I always wear. I just realized the belt has moved inward for quite a bit. Without any hesitation, I measured my waist. It was four inches less than before. I stepped on a scale and found out I lost almost 10 kilos. I was so excited. I have never thought vegetarian food can have such an impact on the body.

My chin showed itself after many years. This convinced my colleagues that I had a beautiful oval-shaped face when I was young. I was happy with the result. I did not try any special way to lose weight. What I have done was only changing to a vegetarian diet.

Eating vegetarian food is a manifestation of compassion and respect lives. I would like to share this experience with everyone and to eliminate bad karma.