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PHYSICIAN HEAL THYSELF THEN OTHERS

By Dr. Kerry Graff

After almost twenty years of practicing medicine, I have Theresa Butler to thank for opening my eyes to the incredible failures of my profession. She was an elderly patient who came to see me for severe depression and anxiety. Her husband had died from colon cancer and I thought that might have been the trigger for her symptoms. It wasn't. Instead, she told me about her alcoholic son, Bobby, who still lived with her.

Bobby worked odd jobs a few hours a week and spent most of the little he earned on booze. Theresa paid all the bills, bought the groceries, prepared the meals and did all the housekeeping. In exchange, Bobby got drunk and beat her. Theresa had been seeing a counselor who set up a family meeting to intervene and get Bobby out of the house. She was so down and so anxious that she could barely function. I started her on an antidepressant and some anxiety medication to help.

On her next visit with me a few weeks later, she was smiling and much more relaxed. The family meeting had

gone as planned and her son had been evicted. However, Theresa felt so much better from the medications I had prescribed, that she let Bobby move back in, confident that she could cope with his drunken aggression now that she had medication to “treat her anxiety.”

That was the pivotal moment of my medical career, as I suddenly realized that by medicating patients, I was enabling them to continue the same destructive behaviors that caused their symptoms in the first place. That did not feel good--at all. In fact, I was sick to my stomach when I realized how often in my career as a family physician, I had treated someone for depression, fully intending to help them, but in reality, making it just bearable enough for them to stay in a bad relationship or a bad job.

Then it hit me. I was no different from Theresa Butler. I had been on antidepressants for twenty years but had not addressed what was making me so depressed in the first place! The medication kept me from jumping off a bridge, but made me too tired to actually change my situation.

I had not been listening to what my body was trying to tell me. Pain, whether physical or emotional, is information. It tells you “Something is wrong” or “Don’t do that.” It is uncomfortable for a reason--to get you to make a change! Medication was enabling me to stay in a situation that my body was clearly telling me wasn’t healthy for me. Finally ready to listen, I stopped my antidepressant and it quickly became obvious what I needed to do. Honestly, it didn’t even feel that there was a choice.

After the Theresa Butler incident, I was beginning to see a few trees in the forest, but I didn’t start to see the whole forest of knowledge until I watched *Forks Over Knives*, the powerful documentary (featuring Dr. T. Colin Campbell and Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn) that presented the research

behind the conclusion that we are killing ourselves with what we eat.

Oh God, another moment of profound nausea. If what they said was true, almost everything I had done as a physician for the past twenty years was just plain wrong. In essence, I had been letting people put their hands on a hot stove, then giving them pain medication to make it tolerable without telling them to “GET YOUR HANDS OFF THE #\$\$%^%\$ STOVE!”

Hoping the people in the movie were a bunch of veggie-loving quacks and I could just go back to doing business as usual, I checked out their research. I concluded that what they presented was true. As an experiment, I started eating the whole food, plant-based diet that they recommended. The effects were so stunning, so quick and so enormous, that I no longer had any trace of doubt.

Sugar levels—ALL normal when NONE had been normal prior. Reflux? Gone. Energy? Phenomenal. I no longer needed thyroid medication. And, without even trying, I lost the extra 25 pounds I was carrying! I felt and looked better than I had, well, EVER. Patients started asking what I was doing, and I started talking about this new way of eating and just never shut up.

In talking to patients about diet, I'd ask them to watch *Forks Over Knives*. Many would come back and say, “Wow. I get it. What I eat is making me sick. Now what do I do?” I needed something to help them bridge from WHAT they knew to HOW to do it.

Looking online for resources to help my patients, I found J. Morris Hicks' *4Leaf Survey* and his book, *Healthy Eating, Healthy World*. I emailed him to get permission (which he graciously gave) to use his survey and other 4Leaf materials

as teaching tools for my patients.

I joke that my practice became the 4Leaf beta test site because virtually no one was using those 4Leaf materials prior to that. I have now used them hundreds of times and have seen amazing results in patients (and friends, and family!) who have embraced the 4Leaf way of eating--simply striving to maximize the percentage of their daily calories from the healthiest of foods: whole plants.

I had spent the first half of my career putting patients on medications for various ills and then hounding them to take their pills to “stay healthy.” Now, in an effort to undo the damage I had inadvertently caused while treating just the *symptoms* of disease, I have dedicated the second half of my career to focusing primarily on treating the *cause* of disease.

The US Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that 80% of the time, YOU have the power to prevent, reverse and even cure the diseases experienced in our western society by the lifestyle choices that you make. Seriously, YOU are so much more powerful than you think. And your doctor is so much less powerful than HE or SHE thinks!

It took me 44 years, seven abdominal surgeries, infertility (my kids were adopted), an episode of pulmonary edema from a “medical misadventure,” 22 years of depression, treatment for hypothyroidism and reflux, developing pre-diabetes, and undergoing a mega-dollar workup for symptoms that looked life-threatening but turned out to be due to side effects from my antidepressant--before I figured out that the Standard American Diet and my lifestyle were making me sick.

Once I understood what to do, it took me less than three months to reclaim my health. Now it is my mission to help YOU reclaim yours. This *4Leaf Guide to Vibrant Health* will show you how.

Note: All patient names have been changed to protect confidentiality.