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LOVE IS A FAR BETTER MOTIVATOR THAN FEAR

By Dr. Kerry Graff

I had the good fortune to hear Dr. Dean Ornish speak at the American College of Lifestyle Medicine conference in the fall of 2014. Impressively, he was the first physician to clinically demonstrate reversal of heart disease using lifestyle. His work is so extensive and so credible that his program was approved by Congress for Medicare reimbursement. As of this writing, it is the only such program with this distinction.

The title of Dr. Ornish's talk that day was "*The Power of Lifestyle Changes, Social Networks and Love.*" He brought to my attention another great failing of my profession—the fact that physicians try to motivate patients through fear, and that fear is a poor motivator in the long run.

Sure, I've had patients quit smoking and start exercising and eating healthier right after their heart attacks, scared to death about having another. However, six months down the line, most were back to their bad habits. Although fear is an excellent motivator immediately following a life-threatening event, it is too uncomfortable for us to stay in

that mindset for very long. Imagine if you motivated yourself to stick with your new healthier lifestyle only by concentrating on what horrible things might happen to you if you didn't. I'm sorry, but that doesn't sound like a life worth living.

We need to transition from thinking in terms of what bad things are going to happen if we don't change to focusing instead on what good things will happen if we do. This process is called "cognitive reframing" and it is crucial for any lasting lifestyle change. Let me take you through a personal example.

I was pre-diabetic before I adopted a whole food, plant-based diet. Initially I was motivated by fear, knowing the huge health implications of being diabetic.

FEAR Response: "I don't want to become diabetic!"

But soon after adopting a 4Leaf diet, I changed my outlook to one of love.

LOVE Response: "I love the way I feel when I eat this way! I have so much more energy and enjoy life so much more than I did before. I can't wait to raft down the Grand Canyon with my kids!"

Both of these types of responses keep me motivated to stay on a healthy path, but I focus on the *Love Response* because it makes me feel happy and I don't focus on the *Fear Response* because it makes me feel scared. For my mental health, happy is much better than scared!

Please take a minute and jot down some things you would like to do in the future with your good health:

The next time a choice comes up as to what you will eat (and it will at least three times a day!), focus on making your choice from a place of love.

For example: “I am going to eat vegetable soup rather than a hamburger for lunch because I want to: dance at my granddaughter’s wedding, celebrate my 50th anniversary with a trip to Hawaii, or volunteer in El Salvador when I retire.”

I don’t know what it is that you love. But you do. Use it as your motivation!

Love and Fear on a Global Scale. Throughout this book, Jim and I have described social and environmental disasters that are likely to occur unless a whole lot of humans move to a plant-based diet quickly. Some might say that that qualifies as a “fear response” instead of one driven by LOVE.

If you are feeling some fear right now about the future of humanity, we have done our job to make you aware of what is truly at stake here, in addition to your personal health. Hopefully, you are now also aware that YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE with regard to really big issues like climate change and world hunger just by changing to a plant-based diet.

Instead of focusing on your fear for humanity’s future, turn to what you love and what you can do to help.