

My Journey of Empowerment

by Barb Morris

I was only 32 years old when I got the bad news: “You have stage three metastatic breast cancer.” I had young children at home. I felt overwhelmed and hoped medical science would lead me to safety. I had surgery, followed by chemo, and seemed to be doing well for 18 years.

Then, in 2001, I had a reoccurrence. That’s when I began taking charge of my own health. I read everything I could find, including alternative views on cancer treatment. Since I had estrogen-receptor positive cancer, I began avoiding everything that had estrogen or turned to estrogen within me, which included such unlikely things as plastics and some cosmetics. I put together my own wellness team, choosing medical doctors and other professionals who would support me in my quest for healing. I am in charge of my team because I realize I’m responsible for my own health.

One day I bumped into a woman who had previously been my personal trainer. She said, “I’ve got a book you just have to read.” It was *[The China Study](#)* by T. Colin Campbell, Ph.D. This book explains how a diet based upon whole plant foods supports health whereas the typical western diet of

animal products and processed food undermines health and promotes cancer. I read it, it made sense, and I became vegan the next day. That was Christmas Day, 2008.

Shortly after that I attended a [Cancer Project Food for Life](#) series, which taught me how to prepare healthy and tasty meals of whole plant foods. This class helped me put the pieces together to make a vegan diet work for me. By the way, I do eat minimally processed soy foods as research has shown that it can be protective against cancer even though it contains phytoestrogens.

I love eating a plant-based diet. Food tastes better to me now that my taste buds aren’t dulled by high fat and processed foods. I’m doing more cooking than I did before changing my diet. I’m also having fun learning to prepare foods that are new to me. I have a subscription to Full Circle Farm (www.fullcirclefarm.com) and receive a box of organic produce each week. Sometimes I get something I’ve never eaten before, like eggplant, so I have the fun of discovering how to fix it.

I feel better since I’ve switched to a plant-based diet. My bones don’t hurt anymore. I have more energy and more en-



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duration. I can think more clearly. I've lost 20 pounds, my cholesterol has dropped 30 points, my blood pressure has dropped, and I just feel good! The results of all my medical tests are good. Even my eyesight has gotten better!

I live alone, so it has been easier for me to make the switch than it might have been if I'd had others in the house. My friends are supportive of my choices, but haven't changed their diets. I have a gallery of watchers, including my doctors and my friends, all watching to see how I do in the long term.

One of my friends said something about how it would be hard not to be able to eat certain things. I told her, "I can eat anything I want to! It's a choice not to eat animal

products." I think it makes a big difference if you see it as a choice instead of as deprivation.

The one thing that has been hard for me is traveling. When I drive through the Midwest, it's hard to find the variety of healthy foods I can buy so easily in Alaska.

But I'm figuring out ways to get around the inconvenience. I just have to plan ahead more and maybe take some things with me when I go.

I don't actively worry about the cancer coming back, but it's always there in the background and it continues to motivate me. I stay active and enjoy yoga, walking, riding my bike, and kayaking. I have peace of mind about my vegan diet and know it's the right choice for me.

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