

## Beyond Boundaries

This year launches year number eight for *Walk About* magazine. I have had the pleasure and privilege of writing for the magazine during this time. Thank you for your support and sharing your thoughts on the “Walk Write” column. I enjoy hearing from you.

This issue of *Walk About* is focused on being your best self.” The turn to a new year tends to be the time for re-evaluation, re-centering, and re-balancing. A time to review what is working and what is not. What do you want to change? What is going to stay the same? Life is about growing, learning, and living. Life simply is. What we do with it is what is important.

How many of you are satisfied with your overall health and wellness? Are you happy in your skin? Are you pleased with the body you have? Or, are you someone who is contributing to the 30 to 60 billion dollars spent in America on diet products and weight-loss programs? Are you trying to figure out how to avoid the diseases that surround us? Have you joined a gym with the intention of getting active and being healthier and then find excuses to not go? You are not alone.

I want to share with you the most important information I learned in 2010. Last March, I stumbled upon a new food paradigm when I went for my annual appointment with my physician. I am borderline osteopenic/osteoporotic; my father has heart disease; my mother had both breast and throat cancer. All this history makes me a firm believer in knowing my numbers: blood lipids, glucose, thyroid, blood chemistry, bone DEXA scan, vitamin D, and vitamin B12.

I like my doctor.\* He is always thinking outside the box. We were discussing bone health, and I was proudly telling him how I had added yogurt to my oatmeal, supplements to my morning routine, and more skim milk to my meals. He was silent, and then said that he was no longer recommending dairy products to his patients. He explained that he had read

two books and done some research to come to this conclusion. The books he recommended were *The China Study* by T. Colin Campbell and *The Spectrum* by Dean Ornish. I went home and devoured both books.

Campbell, a professor at Cornell and member of many national nutrition and disease commissions, summarizes 40 years of nutritional research in *The China Study*. The bottom line is that a diet high in fiber, low in fat, and focused on whole plants has been shown to prevent, and even reverse, heart disease. No current drugs can make that same claim. In addition, for years, cancer research has been focused on how food choices can help prevent cancer and, when diagnosed, can help or improve survival. In many studies researchers have found that people following plant-based diets tend to have strikingly low cancer rates.

I read these two books, then felt compelled to learn more by reading *Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease* by Caldwell B. Esselstyn Jr., M.D.; *Eat for Health* by Joel Fuhrman, M.D.; *The Cancer Survivor's Guide* by Neal D. Barnard, M.D. & Jennifer K. Reilly, R.D.; and others, including the work of John McDougall, M.D. I couldn't get the information fast enough, and soon I obtained a Certificate in Plant-Based Nutrition through e-Cornell and the T. Colin Campbell Foundation.

I was hooked. I followed the recommendations to eat food that is high in fiber (which help us feel full, cleanse the liver, move the “sludge” quickly through the system and help prevent colon cancer); low in fat (no or minimal added fat; fat is fat; fat is not a health food); based on plants (fruits, vegetables, and whole grains — known as “complex carbohydrates”). Eating this way provides foods rich in antioxidants and phytochemicals (protective compounds), boosts the immune system, and decreases the risk of disease. I began to feel wonderful, and I dropped those extra pounds I had been carrying without even trying.

“Why stay within the boundaries, when the boundlessness is so near.”

— Deepak Chopra

I embarked upon this shift in March 2010, and haven't looked back. The benefits I've noticed are healthier skin, lower blood lipids, decreased body fat and weight, and increased energy. As a competitive race walker who wants to be the best I can be next July for the 2011 World Masters Athletics Championships, I know I am on the right track. I am walking faster and stronger.

Previously, I felt good, but now I am feeling better! I am sharing this important information so that you may find yourself feeling better, as have my clients. Pick up *The China Study* or one of the other books I mentioned. Open your mind to these new ideas and join me on this journey. As Campbell says, “Sometimes the most elegant solution is the most simple. Why plant-based nutrition? Why not? Why develop heart disease? cancer? diabetes? The epidemic of chronic, degenerative disease that is sweeping the western world can not only be stopped, it can be reversed. The power lies in the hands of the consumer, in the choices we make about what to put on our plates.” Making informed choices is being an advocate for your health. Best wishes and Happy New Year as you embark upon 2011. **WA**

### Recommendations:

Movie: *Forks Over Knives*

Article: Jane Black, “Public health advocates worry that dietary advice will get lost in translation,” *Washington Post*, October 2, 2010

\* Disclaimer: The information above should not be substituted for your doctor's advice. Always consult your physician before beginning any new exercise or treatment.



Judy Heller, founder of Wonders of Walking LLC, advocates walking for well being and pleasure. Judy Heller is also founder of EroFit & Associates, LLC, celebrating Fitness for a Lifetime. Heller offers personalized fitness training and coaching for individuals and groups.

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