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## BABY STEPS OR ALL THE WAY?

By Dr. Kerry Graff

Okay, you have decided that you want to achieve vibrant health. Should you take baby steps and start out by adding a few fruits and vegetables to your diet and gradually work your way up the 4Leaf scale? Or should you jump into the deep end of the pool and start swimming with all you've got?

To answer that question, you may want to consider the following statements from these whole food, plant-based experts:

**Dr. Dean Ornish:** “In our research, we learned that it is often easier for people to make comprehensive changes in diet and lifestyle than to make only moderate ones. At first, this may seem like a paradox, but it makes sense when you understand why. If you make only moderate changes in lifestyle--then you have the worst of both worlds. You feel deprived and hungry because you are not eating everything you want

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and are used to, but you're not making changes big enough to feel that much better or to significantly affect your weight or how you feel, your cholesterol, blood pressure or heart disease.”

**Dr. John McDougall:** “If you are sincere about making the change, do so with 100% of your effort. Many people feel that it would be easier for them to slide into this diet plan gradually. Unfortunately, we seldom manage to discard old ways and old established tastes unless 100% of our effort is devoted to the change and unless, from the beginning, we make a clear break from our old behavior. A smoker who cuts down to four cigarettes a day only goes through slow torture and rarely quits completely.”

**Dr. T. Colin Campbell:** “Following this diet requires a radical shift in your thinking about food. It's more work to just do it halfway. If you plan for animal-based products, you'll eat them--and you'll almost certainly eat more than you should. You'll feel deprived. Instead of viewing your new food habit as being able to eat all the plant-based food you want, you'll be seeing it in terms of having to limit yourself, which is not conducive to staying on the diet long-term.”

**Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn** sums up his advice on this subject in just two words: “Moderation kills.”

While there are exceptions, the greater your commitment to the 4Leaf way of eating in the beginning, the greater the likelihood that your healthier eating habits will be permanent and that you will achieve and maintain the lifelong benefits of vibrant health that you seek.

**In pursuit of vibrant health.** 4Leaf is a simple, yet powerful, way to eat that will reward you for the rest of your life. It is well worth the effort to make 4Leaf a permanent lifestyle change in your pursuit of vibrant health. So how do you begin a permanent lifestyle change? It all begins with commitment.

By reading this book, you've already made a commitment--to learn about the health-promoting, whole food, plant-based way of eating. Congratulations! After you have finished reading this book, I want you to make another commitment. Well, actually, I want you to make two.

**Commitment 1: To 4Leaf in 4 weeks.** I want you to get to the 4leaf level of eating as quickly as possible, but I also understand that you have to learn a whole new way of thinking about food. For most people, that isn't going to happen overnight. You will need to learn new recipes and create new habits. So, although I recommend that you shift as rapidly as you can all the way to the 4leaf level, I suggest that you take no longer than four weeks to get there for all the reasons stated by the experts above.

**Commitment 2: Eat 4Leaf for 4 months.** I strongly recommend that, once you get to the 4Leaf level of eating, you stick with it for at least four months. After that, you will look and feel so much better and the habits will be so ingrained, that you are likely to eat 4Leaf for the rest of your very long and healthy life.

**Wiggle Room.** I get it that nobody likes “all or nothing.” While there's implied “wiggle room” in the 4Leaf formula (since you can reach the 4Leaf level with only 80% of your calories from whole plants), I recommend that you try to avoid ALL the foods that result in negative points in the

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survey for the duration of your commitment period.

Yup, I mean trying to avoid all meat, dairy, eggs, cheese, fish, sweets, salty snacks, white flour, sugars and oils. If you eat some cheese by mistake at a potluck dinner, it's not a big deal. In our society, these unhealthy foods are ubiquitous and nearly impossible to avoid entirely. The main point is that you don't "plan" to eat any of these foods during your all-important commitment period.

**Baby Stepping.** Although I don't recommend baby steps, I do acknowledge that some people have been successful at reaching the 4Leaf level after taking the leisurely route down the pathway to vibrant health. I also acknowledge that eating at the 2Leaf level for the rest of your life is much better for your health than eating at the *Unhealthful Diet* level for your likely shorter and sicker life.

But it is your life and, of course, it is your choice as to what level you aim for and how quickly you choose to get there. We really do (80% of the time, anyway) choose to be sick or healthy by the decisions we make every day. I hope that you choose the 4Leaf level of eating and that you will be rewarded with the very best health possible.

You're now ready to start figuring out what you ARE going to be eating for the next few months--and hopefully, for the rest of your life. You might be interested in how I explained this whole concept to one of my patients in the next chapter.