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WHY IS 4LEAF NEEDED?

By J. Morris Hicks

To help clear up the overwhelming CONFUSION in the developed world about what we should be eating.

A little history. Life began on our planet about four billion years ago. Humankind emerged as a species just 200,000 years ago--a mere blink in the eye of history. During those four billion years, there have been millions of different species of Earthlings, and Mother Nature had an eating plan for each one. Almost all of those millions of species have followed her plan to the letter, but not humans.

Why is that? We consider ourselves the smartest of all species, yet we still haven't figured out what we should be eating. As such, we now have hundreds, if not thousands, of different dietary theories--perpetuating the outrageous confusion that exists around what food choices are best for humans.

While some of those hundreds of eating plans are excellent, there are many that are extremely unhealthy. How is the

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average person supposed to sort through all of the hype and decide which are better and why? Here are 71 of those hundreds of dietary plans, from A to Z:

ATKINS, Best Bet, BEVERLY HILLS, Blood Type, BUDDHIST, Campbell Plan, CARNIVORE, China Study, CHIP, Colon Cancer, DASH, Diabetic, DUKAN, Eat to Live, EDENIC, Elemental, ENGINE2, Esselstyn Plan, FLEXITARIAN, Food Combining, FORKS OVER KNIVES DIET, Fruitarian, GLUTEN-FREE, Graham, GRAPEFRUIT, Hacker's, HALLELUJAH, Israeli Army, JENNY CRAIG, Junk Food, KANGATARIAN, Ketogenic, KOSHER, Lacto Vegetarian, LACTO-OVO VEGETARIAN, Locavore, MACROBIOTIC, McDougall Plan, MEDITERRANEAN, Neal Barnard's Program, NUTRI-SYSTEM, Nutritarian, OKINAWA, Omnivore, ORNISH PROGRAM, Ovo Vegetarian, PALEO, Pesca-Ovo-Lacto VEGETARIAN, Pescatarian, PRISON LOAF, Pritikin, RAW VEGAN, Scarsdale, SEARS, Shangri-La, SLIMMING WORLD, Slow-Carb, SONOMA, South Beach, STANDARD AMERICAN (SAD), Stillman, SUGAR BUSTERS, Vegan, VEGETARIAN, Warrior, WEIGHT WATCHERS, Typical Western Diet (TWD), WESTON A. PRICE, World of Wisdom, and ZONE.

Thirteen of the above eating plans would probably score at or near the 4Leaf level: McDougall Plan, Engine2 Diet, Ornish Program, Eat to Live, Pritikin, Dr. Esselstyn Plan, Raw Vegan, CHIP, Forks Over Knives, Campbell Plan, Fruitarian, Neal Barnard's Program and The China Study.

While the creators of those thirteen dietary plans may occasionally disagree on a few minor details, they would all agree that we should be getting the vast majority of our calories from whole plants. The simple 4Leaf Survey (in Chapter 6) makes it possible to quickly estimate your

percentage of total calories derived from whole, plant-based foods--no matter which dietary regimen you are following.

Some of the 13 are considered extreme by many. I am referring specifically to Fruitarian and Raw Vegan. The world's healthiest populations eat mostly whole plants and include all of these food groups in their diets: vegetables, fruits, grains, beans and/or potatoes. And most disease reversal studies have focused on diets that include that full spectrum of whole, plant-based foods. Although Fruitarian and Raw Vegan diets, which are more limited, are very likely to have similarly positive effects on health and are certainly much healthier than the Standard American Diet, they have not undergone the same level of study.

Too much confusion. Many nights on the evening news, we hear about a new study that shows this and that about some obscure nutrient--a never ending flow of conflicting information that keeps the innocent public totally confused. It simply doesn't have to be so complicated. It's time for a healthy dose of clarity in an outrageously confusing world of dietary regimens. Our 4Leaf approach delivers that clarity.

That's because of the simplicity of 4Leaf, with each level of eating defined by the percentage of daily calories derived from whole plants. Any dietary regimen can be evaluated by its 4Leaf score, which compares it to the healthiest diet that is comprised of mostly whole plants.

When people are describing their vegan or vegetarian diets, I usually wonder what they are really eating. That's because they usually describe their diet by listing the things that they are NOT eating. And since what we ARE eating is so much more important, I simply ask them to please tell me their

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4Leaf score. With that score in hand, I have a pretty good idea about the overall quality of their diet.

For a better understanding, I may ask them to send me a copy of their twelve multiple choice responses on the survey. With that information, I can tell them precisely how they might improve their score and their health. With this book, you will have all the information you need to determine that for yourself.

In addition, the 4Leaf Program allows for flexibility. While we would love for everyone to eat at the 4Leaf level, we realize that some folks are simply not willing to make that much change, regardless of the profound health and environmental benefits. It is up to each individual to choose how close they would like to get to an optimal diet comprised of mostly whole, plant-based foods.

The 4Leaf Survey and the other 4Leaf tools on our website were designed to help you measure your progress as you work to achieve your goal. The next chapter covers a plethora of reasons for why this way of eating makes so much sense.