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PATIENT NOW ON PATH TO VIBRANT HEALTH

By Dr. Kerry Graff

KG: “So, it’s been about a month since our last visit. How are things going?”

TM: “Great. Well, mostly. Scoring 24 (3Leaf level) pretty consistently on the 4Leaf Survey, I feel great except I get really gassy from the beans, so I have been limiting them. I’m doing yoga after work, including the relaxation part, with my wife and we both love that. I feel a lot less stressed in the evenings and even while I’m at work. I’m drinking more water, and usually keeping my wine to two a day. The after dinner TLC part was the BEST suggestion--and I’m not talking about coffee or tea! Since I changed my diet, that is working much better. I had thought that I was just getting older.”

KG: “Yes, getting the inflammation out of the arteries by cutting the oil definitely helps with blood flow and sex life! Glad all of that is going so well. As for the gassiness, over time the bacteria in your gut will shift to handle beans better, but in the short run, you can take Beano. If you are

cooking your beans, adding kombu (a seaweed vegetable) while they are cooking helps to break them down so they cause less gas. Where are you losing points on the survey?”

TM: “Well, when we go over to visit friends or family, I don’t feel comfortable telling them about my new way of eating so I just eat what they have. I am still drinking two glasses of wine a day so I lose a few sugar points. It isn’t so much that I’m losing points, though, it’s that I don’t score high enough in the whole grain, bean and potato category. I eat a lot of whole grains, but they are in bread or pasta so they don’t count.”

KG: “I know how uncomfortable it feels to tell your hosts you are on a specific diet. I feel like I’m inconveniencing people and they won’t invite me back! One of the tricks I’ve learned is to offer to bring something you know you can eat and, if they say don’t bother, I bring it anyway! I also eat something healthy before I go, so I’m not starving. I’ve found it helpful to say why I’m eating this way--what my specific health issues are that prompted me to change and the success that I’ve had. Of course, you have to feel comfortable with your hosts to do that.

A number of people at social gatherings have changed to eating this way after I talk to them about why I did it, so you may help other people get healthier too. You can also just say that your doctor has you following this diet and blame me. I don’t have to eat dinner with them! And I cut myself some slack when I’m eating at someone else’s home. Food is an integral part of bonding with people and those connections are really important.

I try to eat especially healthy the rest of the day and cheat as little as I can at the meal to stay close to 4Leaf but still keep the peace. If I only eat at a 3Leaf level that day, so be it. It doesn’t happen that often.”

TM: “Good suggestions. I’ll try those.”

KG: “As for eating the processed whole grains, rather than the whole grains themselves, do you think having additional recipes might help?”

TM: “Well, two of the staple recipes we have been making are veggie pizza on whole wheat crust and veggies over whole wheat pasta. If we had some other recipes that used the whole grains rather than the processed versions, that would help.”

KG: “I have a couple of whole food, plant-based cookbooks in the office you can check out. If you like one of them, you can buy it. My personal favorite is the *Oh She Glows* cookbook, but you would need to eliminate the oil, which is easy enough to do. The recipes turn out fine without it.”

Another month later

TM: “I’m eating 4Leaf level just about every day! Is my bloodwork in? It’s got to be good!”

KG: “Yes it is in, and yes it looks way better! Your total cholesterol is down to 220. It was 272. Your LDL is down to 128. It was 177. And your triglycerides are down to 118 from 222.”

TM: “So does this mean I don’t have the genetic cholesterol problem?”

KG: “Well, most people who are eating at the 4Leaf level have cholesterol levels lower than yours. So I think you do have a genetic predisposition to higher levels. But your diet had a huge impact on your numbers, and you have substantially reduced your risk with the diet changes you

made. You are now hitting the guideline numbers we like to see.”

TM: “Should I go on cholesterol lowering medication in addition? Would that further lower my risk?”

KG: “I would not recommend that. Medication comes with risks and side effects and I don’t believe that the potential benefits of further cholesterol reduction outweigh the risks from the medication in your case since you are hitting the guideline levels.”

TM: “If I go on the medication, can I go back to eating whatever I want?”

KG: “You can always do whatever you want because what you eat is your personal choice. But think back to the study by Dr. Esselstyn in *Forks Over Knives*. The folks that stuck with the diet did great. Those that didn’t, and received medications and the best that modern medicine had to offer at one of the best institutions in the world, did poorly by comparison--even when their cholesterol levels looked good. Medical intervention, including cholesterol-lowering medication, is a poor substitute for an optimal diet.”

TM: “Well, I feel so much better that I don’t want to come off the diet anyway. I have tons of energy, my gut doesn’t hurt anymore, I’ve lost the extra 15 pounds I was carrying, I haven’t had any more kidney stones and my sex life is awesome. It does take more time and planning, but it’s worth it. It’s my life!”

It’s my life! Does it get any better than that?