



# I Cut My Weight in Half on a Whole-Food, Plant-Based Diet

By Andrea Sereda  
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I started struggling with obesity during childhood. Despite many attempts to manage my weight, it continually crept up. I was eventually diagnosed with hypothyroidism. I moved to a lacto-ovo vegetarian diet in 2001 in an effort to control my weight and thyroid symptoms, but it didn't help. By the time I had my youngest child, I weighed more than 250 pounds and had type 2 diabetes and nonalcoholic fatty liver disease. My mobility had gotten so bad that it was difficult to move some days. I was on the waiting list for knee surgery.

## Trial and Error

In September 2014, my husband suggested that we watch the *Forks Over Knives* documentary. As the credits rolled, we both agreed to stop buying eggs and dairy and to transition to a vegan diet. I was sure this would end my decades-long weight battle and all the health problems that came with it.

I was shocked and confused when, in the first few months of going vegan, I gained 30 pounds (bringing my weight up to around 300 pounds). We rewatched *Forks Over Knives* and quickly realized that we had missed an important distinction: It was about adopting a whole-food, plant-based diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains—not a vegan diet in which animal-based foods were replaced by [highly processed alternatives](#).

## Going All In

In January 2015, I went full-on whole-food, plant-based. My husband and I changed how we cooked. We removed almost every trace of vegan junk food from our diets. And because we were aiming to lose a lot of weight, we initially also reduced our intake of nuts and avocados (since those are high in fat compared with other plant foods).

My husband and I both cook, which also made the transition fun—an adventure in the kitchen! Not all recipes turned out well the first time, especially with our making low-fat changes and substitutions, but we had far more successes than flops. Doing this as a couple made it easier: When one of us struggled, the other was there for support.

Almost immediately after transitioning to this new diet, my skin began to improve, I started losing weight, and my energy level increased.

## Staying Healthy

Since January 2015, I've lost more than 150 pounds, and my husband has lost more than 60 pounds. I've reversed my type 2 diabetes and fatty liver disease. I no longer need knee surgery. Keeping the weight off has been easy. I have reflected quite a bit on why that is. I believe it is because I like to eat a large volume of food, which I'm [able to do](#) on a WFPB diet.

My husband and I continue to get better at navigating potentially tricky situations. For instance, if we're going to a friend's or relative's house, we now make sure to bring along a dish we know we can enjoy there. More often than not, our special dish is a hit with everyone else, too! Some of our friends have also adopted this way of eating. I brought one friend a meal when she was going through cancer treatment. She asked for more information, and now she, her husband, and their three beautiful little girls are all WFPB.

I teach three high-intensity interval training classes and three Zumba classes a week. I also run a weight-management program in a physician's practice, teaching people about the power of plants, [calorie density](#), no-oil cooking techniques, and much more. I see clients there choosing more plant-based foods and, in doing so, lowering their A1C numbers, losing weight, and improving

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their energy and mobility.

My health couldn't be better than it is today. Perhaps most importantly, I can now climb with my young children, and I know I am giving them the healthiest version of myself.

*Ready to get started? Check out [Forks Meal Planner](#), FOK's easy weekly meal-planning tool to keep you on a healthy plant-based path. To learn more about a whole-food, plant-based diet, visit our [Plant-Based Primer](#).*