



7 Stories of Personal and Professional Transformation Sparked by 'Forks Over Knives'

By Karen Asp, MA, CPT, VLCE
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Since *Forks Over Knives* was released, many have [shared stories](#) of how the documentary inspired them to turn their health around with a [whole-food, plant-based diet](#). For some, the film was a catalyst for change not only in their personal lives but also in their professional lives.

In celebration of the 10th anniversary of *Forks Over Knives*, we've profiled seven influential individuals who transformed both their health and careers after watching the documentary. Read on for inspiration.



A Doctor Learns Firsthand that Food Is Medicine

You might know James Loomis, Jr., MD, MBA, FACLM, from his appearance in the hit documentary *The Game Changers*. While he's now a

plant-powered picture of health, that wasn't always the case.

In 2011, he was scrolling for something to watch on Netflix when he found *Forks Over Knives*. At the time, he had numerous health challenges, including [obesity](#), high cholesterol, sleep apnea, intermittent atrial fibrillation, metabolic syndrome, chronic allergies, and exercise-induced asthma. He'd also had knee surgery a few months before, so he wasn't able to exercise much. He knew he had to make changes, but lasting change had always eluded him. "Whenever I tried to eat healthy—which at the time meant low-fat dairy, lean meat, whole grains, fruits and veggies, and not too many donuts—it was a temporary fix," he says.

He knew what a [vegan](#) was ("someone who ate granola and hugged trees," he says in jest), but he'd never heard of a whole-food, plant-based diet until the movie, and he was intrigued. "The idea of using food as medicine, something I didn't learn in medical school, resonated, and I knew I needed to learn more," he says.

After reviewing the research, he decided to try eating whole plant foods while rehabbing his knee. Three months later, even with minimal exercise, he'd lost 30 to 40 pounds, lowered his cholesterol more than 100 points, and reversed all chronic medical issues. He began sharing that message with patients and teaching plant-based cooking classes at a culinary school in St. Louis.

Five years later, he relocated to Washington, D.C., to become medical director at the Barnard Medical Center, where he uses lifestyle medicine, including diet, to help patients prevent, treat, and sometimes reverse chronic diseases. He speaks nationally and still teaches cooking classes at the Center for Plant-Based Living. And that knee? It's no longer a problem: He's completed numerous half-marathons, marathons, and triathlons, and he completed an Ironman triathlon two weeks after he turned 60.

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Putting a Disordered Past Behind Her

Actress, model, and producer Gianna Simone says that for years, she struggled with eating disorders, overexercising, and fad dieting. When her skin started [breaking out](#), a dermatologist put her on antibiotics for almost a year, with no improvement. Her hair started to fall out. "I knew there had to be another way," she says.

In 2012, while searching for health documentaries, she found *Forks Over Knives*. She spent the next year transitioning to a whole-food, plant-based diet. Today, Simone says that the lifestyle has helped her heal. "I believe God used this way of eating to set me free from eating disorders," she says, adding that her skin has cleared up and her hair is thick and healthy.

Today, Simone hosts *Love Gianna*, an Amazon series in which she interviews plant-based experts and explores the health benefits of veganism. She's also authored an oil- and sugar-free cookbook called *Plant Love* and speaks publicly about her transition to whole-food, plant-based eating. Simone says that she's had family members reach out to let her know they've been inspired after hearing her story. "It's quite special to know we can help and transform others' lives for the better," she says.

Credit Pax Ahimsa Gethen, CC BY-SA 4.0

Tackling Change Head On

When David Carter—a former NFL defensive end for the Cardinals, Cowboys, Raiders, Jaguars and Bears—watched *Forks Over Knives* in 2014 and learned the health risks of consuming [dairy](#), meat, and highly processed foods, he didn't waste any time springing to action. Carter told *Sports Illustrated* in 2018, "I was drinking a milkshake while I was watching the documentary and poured it out." In less than a day, Carter went from at times eating six double hamburgers after tough practices to becoming a full vegan. Making matters a little easier, Carter's wife, Paige, was already vegan at the time.

In the first month after going vegan, his chronic tendinitis pain disappeared and he no longer had to use anti-inflammatories. On top of that, his high blood pressure decreased so significantly that he no longer needed blood pressure medication; and his weight dropped from 300 to 265 pounds; and he went from bench pressing 315 pounds to 465 pounds. "I was still fast and strong," he said in an interview with [Cleveland.com](#), adding that many of his teammates started asking him for advice about their diets. His football career ended in 2015, and today he's a motivational speaker who touts the benefits of a plant-based diet, often speaking at VegFests around the country.

In an interview that ran on [NFL.com](#), Carter said that *Forks Over Knives* got him thinking about why people feel the need to eat meat to [be strong](#). "Look at some of the largest and strongest animals in the world. ... None of them eat meat," he said.

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Better Together

In 2013, Tim Kaufman's life was going downhill. He was sick and obese, weighing over 400 pounds. Worse? "I felt hopeless," he says, admitting that he was inactive and mostly noshing inflammatory foods such as meat, cheese, and processed foods. He'd been trying to get approved for bariatric surgery, but his doctor considered him too high risk.

Then *Forks Over Knives* popped up on Netflix. After watching it, he had a strong reaction. "I was frustrated and angry," he says. He wondered why the information in the film wasn't being shared everywhere, especially given that he and his wife, Heather, had just lost two family members to [cancer](#).

Today, Kaufman reports that he's happy and healthy. "Every single aspect of my life has improved since adopting a whole food, plant-based lifestyle," he says. Many of his chronic illnesses have disappeared, he doesn't take prescription medications, his weight is in a healthy range, and he's more active than people half his age. "Had I not watched this film, my wife would have been a widow," he says.

Meanwhile, when his wife, Heather, began to see her husband's change, she also went WFPB, dropping 90 pounds in the process. "At my yearly checkup, my doctor told me I'm going to live to be 120," she says.

Together, the Kaufmans have also made big changes in their careers. Heather sold her commercial cleaning company to open a plant-based restaurant, Flourish Café in Lancaster, New York, that focuses on education and community. They're both certified in plant-based nutrition and recently completed an eight-week cooking class. They've authored a best-selling book called *FatMan's Favorites Fast and Easy Whole Food Plant-Based Recipes* and own a veggie burger business called FatMan Foods. They also do weekly live videos and teach cooking classes.

"At almost 50 years old, we feel like kids again," Heather says.

Credit Harry A'Court

One Meal at a Time

The day was May 6, 2012, when Suzy Amis Cameron first watched *Forks Over Knives*. Months earlier, a friend had recommended watching it, and she bought a copy but put it on the backburner. Yet 10 minutes into watching the film while on her treadmill, she had to stop moving. "I was so blown away by what I was seeing," says the environmental advocate and author.

Cameron had already been hyper-focused on what she was feeding her family, at the time thinking organic, grass-fed, and cage-free meat and eggs were the healthiest options. "Only to find out that day that not only did we not need animal products—they were actually bad for us, and the planet," she says.

She wanted to share the news with her husband, director James Cameron, right away so the next day, they watched it with their children. Twenty-four hours later, their kitchen was 100 percent plant-based. The experience changed everything Cameron was doing from feeding her family to feeding the kids at MUSE School in Calabasas, California, which she had co-founded with her sister six years earlier. In 2015, MUSE became the first plant-based K-12 school in North America.

The Camerons also shifted their family investments to all things plant-based and in 2019, Suzy published *The OMD Plan* (which encourages omnivores to make one of their daily meals plant-based). She now spends most of her time helping people to change their behavior one meal at a time. "I get feedback daily from people who are doing one meal a day, two meals a day or all in, which is why I wrote *OMD*," she says. "I wanted people to feel like they didn't need to be perfect but to know that every plant-based meal they eat is helping their health, planet, [and] animals."

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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](#).

Getting to the Heart of Health Issues

Call it luck that prompted cardiologist Steven Lome, MD, to watch *Forks Over Knives*. The movie popped up as a Netflix suggestion, and Lome, who was trying to get healthier but had never heard of a plant-based diet, took the bait.

At the time, Lome was eating chicken (a boneless skinless breast two or three times daily), fish, low-fat dairy products, and olive oil, sometimes indulging in unhealthy junk foods but trying to restrict his calorie intake.

"I saw my cholesterol numbers rise, not realizing how much cholesterol I was consuming," he says. "You would think that as a cardiologist, I would have had some degree of knowledge regarding nutrition, but I had zero training in the subject and thought animal products were important for health."

After watching *Forks Over Knives*, Lome was angry. "I couldn't believe that during my six years of academic cardiology training after medical school, it was never mentioned that heart disease is predominantly preventable and even reversible to some degree," he says. "Why I was not taught to treat the cause of the disease is a question I still struggle with."

Lome immediately switched to a whole-food, plant-based diet, and the results were stunning. He lost so much weight that he reached his ideal body weight for the first time in his adult life, and his LDL cholesterol dropped from 135 to 60. He's since inspired many other cardiologists and physicians to change their diets and started a nonprofit organization called Plant Based Nutrition Movement. Recently, he moved his practice to Monterey, California, where he's educating patients through his new lifestyle medicine program.

When he made the switch, so, too, did his wife and six children. Lome has since shared the movie with his parents, who have lost nearly 100 pounds each and both reversed [type 2 diabetes](#) as a result. Other family members have also transitioned and seen the benefits. Lome says, "We need to focus on prevention and reversal of chronic diseases using the *farmacy*, not the pharmacy."