



Love is a Far Better Motivator Than Fear

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The following is an excerpt from [The 4Leaf Guide to Vibrant Health](#).

I had the good fortune to hear Dr. Dean Ornish speak at the American College of Lifestyle Medicine conference in the fall of 2014. Impressively, he was the first physician to clinically demonstrate reversal of heart disease using lifestyle. His work is so extensive and so credible that [his program](#) was approved by Congress for Medicare reimbursement.

The title of Dr. Ornish's talk that day was "The Power of Lifestyle Changes, Social Networks and Love." He brought to my attention another great failing of my profession—the fact that physicians try to motivate patients through fear, and that fear is a poor motivator in the long run.

Sure, I've had patients quit smoking and start exercising and eating healthier right after their heart attacks, scared to death about having another. However, six months down the line, most were back to their bad habits. Although fear is an excellent motivator immediately following a life-threatening event, it is too uncomfortable for us to stay in that mindset for very long. Imagine if you motivated yourself to stick with your new healthier lifestyle only by concentrating on what horrible things might happen to you if you didn't. I'm sorry, but that doesn't sound like a life worth living.

We need to transition from thinking in terms of what bad things are going to happen if we don't change to focusing instead on what good things will happen if we do. This process is called "cognitive reframing" and it is crucial for any lasting lifestyle change. Let me take you through a personal example.

I was [pre-diabetic](#) before I adopted a whole-food, plant-based diet. Initially I was motivated by fear, knowing the huge health implications of being diabetic.

FEAR Response: "I don't want to become diabetic!"

But soon after adopting a [WFPB diet](#), I changed my outlook to one of love.

LOVE Response: "I love the way I feel when I eat this

way! I have so much more energy and enjoy life so much more than I did before. I can't wait to raft down the Grand Canyon with my kids!"

Both of these types of responses keep me motivated to stay on a healthy path, but I focus on the Love Response because it makes me feel happy and I don't focus on the Fear Response because it makes me feel scared. For my mental health, happy is much better than scared! Please take a minute and jot down some things you would like to do in the future with your good health:

The next time a choice comes up as to what you will eat (and it will at least three times a day!), focus on making your choice from a place of love.

For example: "I am going to eat vegetable soup rather than a hamburger for lunch because I want to: dance at my granddaughter's wedding, celebrate my 50th anniversary with a trip to Hawaii, or volunteer in El Salvador when I retire."

I don't know what it is that you love. But you do. Use it as your motivation!