



Restart for Health

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It is an astonishing fact that America -- the best fed nation in the world -- is the most unhealthy. Immigrants to America plunge from being healthy to unhealthy in a few short years of arrival. Every country that follows our dietary example is on a declining curve toward ill health.

I am reminded of this travesty every day in my work in the public health system. It pains me to note that the African American community of which I am a member is the unhealthiest of all.

The big shame in all this is that it doesn't have to be this way. We do not have to accept being obese, tired, and dependent on drugs to keep us going. As is shown in the remarkable film "Forks Over Knives," diet is the primary driver for fixing what ails us. It can immediately improve both the quality and duration of our lives.

I know this to be true. I've done it.

Many years ago, I started a program called Restart4Health. It began as a personal challenge to change my eating habits after what I call "the season of gluttony" -- Thanksgiving through Christmas. I decided to use the turn of the New Year in January as a time to commit myself to not eating "anything that has a face." For one month, that is what I did. It restarted my system and put me back on the path to healthy eating, a path I continue to follow.

Today, I teach the Restart system to others. I gather people together at my church, talk to them about the reasons people are so at-risk, and show them how to change the paradigm through diet. The plan is simple and easy. All one must do is commit to 30 days of not eating anything that walks, hops, swims, crawls, slithers, has eyes and a mother and father. Instead, start the day with fresh fruit. Enjoy a tasty tossed green salad with beans and brown rice for lunch. Fill your plate with sweet potato stew and vegetables for dinner.

Although I concentrate my public crusade during January, when I host group meetings every week for education and moral support, Restart doesn't have to happen at any special time. It can be done in any month on the calendar -- whenever a person realizes they are "sick and tired of being sick and tired."

My hope is that participation in the Restart program will inspire people to permanently change their lifestyles and eating habits, just as it did for me. How can they not change after experiencing the immediate benefits of weight loss, lower blood pressure -- and waking up every day feeling better, stronger, and more vital?

I believe we Americans ate our way into ill health and we can eat our way back out again. I want everyone to choose their fork over the surgical knife and dig in for better health.