

# VEGAN.



Feed the hungry.  
Save indigenous people.  
Stand up for workers' rights.



Be kind to animals.  
Stop factory/animal farms.  
Save 100 animals every year.



End deforestation for grazing.  
Save an acre of trees per year.  
End grazing on public lands.



Tell the government  
to stop killing wildlife for  
corporate ranchers' profits.



Stop wars for resources.  
Help end corporate rule.  
Make the world a better place.



Help stop climate change.  
Stop the #1 polluter of water.  
Support a sustainable planet.



Live your values.  
Live with compassion.  
Stop the violence.

GRAPHIC COURTESY  
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BY MARISA MOORE

Last year, approximately 5 percent of American adults identified themselves as vegetarians — essentially unchanged from the 6 percent who were vegetarians in 1999 and 2001 — and fewer than 3 percent were vegan. However, Americans are incorporating more meatless meals into their diets, and plant-based lifestyles are garnering more attention, and arguably more acceptance, in mainstream culture.

Ethics, environment and personal health are the most commonly cited motivations for adopting a strict vegetarian or vegan lifestyle in Western populations, and people who became vegan at a younger age cite ethical and environmental concerns as their primary motivations. While there are a number of other reasons why people are vegan or vegetarian — culture, religion and taste preference among them — ethical veganism is the intersection of animal liberation, human rights and environmental conservation.

Vegans follow a plant-based diet with no animal flesh, eggs or dairy products. They also may exclude honey, leather goods or other products that compromise the lives or welfare of living creatures, opting instead for alternatives that support a nonviolent existence.

The philosophy that animals have the right to a pain-free existence can be powerful motivation. Carolyn Tampe, MS, RD, LDN, CDE, who has been vegan since

YOU MAY NOT  
BE VEGAN, BUT  
YOU SHOULD  
UNDERSTAND VEGAN

# Counseling a

the age of 12, says going vegan sends a message. “It’s a protest against the meat industry to decrease the demand for meat,” says Tampe.

Since 1990, the U.S. has seen an increase in meat production of 50 percent, in milk production of 16 percent and in egg production of almost 33 percent. Industrialized farm animal producers may adopt voluntary standards of animal treatment, but this likely will be of little solace to the ethical vegan community. Meat suppliers and processors also have faced criticism by human rights groups for allegations of labor exploitation, many of which were refuted by producers.

The impact that meat and dairy production has on the environment is also a key factor in ethical veganism. While the extent of the damage is hotly debated with regard to greenhouse gas emissions, most sources acknowledge livestock’s contribution to massive deforestation of the Amazon. In addition, water-polluting agents from meat and dairy sectors include animal wastes, antibiotics and hormones, chemicals from tanneries, and fertilizers and pesticides used to spray feed crops.

Jack Norris, RD, president of Vegan Outreach, describes being vegan as a vow “to protect animals, to protect people’s own personal health and to save environmental resources.” Norris, whose own journey began in a record store in 1987 when he came upon a *People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals* benefit album, became a registered dietitian to help those who were interested in a plant-based diet but didn’t believe they could maintain the lifestyle healthfully.

“Being vegan is very important to them. When vegans meet a dietitian or doctor who tries to change that, it’s a turnoff,” says Norris. “A person desiring a vegan diet should be treated with the same respect as someone who follows a kosher or halal diet.”

While the health advantages of vegetarian diets are well documented (lower risk for hypertension, type 2 diabetes and heart disease; lower body mass index and lower overall cancer rates), research supporting additional health benefits of a vegan diet is not as strong — largely because most research is conducted in lacto- and lacto-ovo-vegetarian populations. And health not only is a common motivation for adopting a plant-based diet, but among the main reasons cited by individuals who shift from vegan to vegetarian or return to an omnivorous diet.

As with any lifestyle or behavior, external influences can have an enormous impact on a vegan experience. A recent study in the *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research* found taste, health, convenience, cost and social relationships often undermine a meat-free lifestyle (see “Tips for Vegan Victory” on page 20).

To work effectively with vegan clients, Tampe encourages health practitioners to fully understand the science behind plant-based nutrition and become familiar with common vegan foods. Educate yourself on vegan supplements and where they can be purchased. For example, knowing that vitamin D<sub>3</sub> is not

## VEGAN DIETS AND EATING DISORDERS: *A Troubling Connection*

There are myriad motivations for adopting a vegan lifestyle, but some studies suggest it also may be used as a socially acceptable way to practice food avoidance and restriction. When inquiring about the primary motivation for being vegetarian or vegan, be aware of any distorted thoughts about “good,” “bad” or “forbidden” foods. Engage in frank but sensitive discussions about the client’s eating habits, attitudes, weight control behaviors or eating disorder history. And if the client’s needs are beyond your area of expertise, refer him or her to an eating disorder specialist or mental health professional.

vegan or that vegan-friendly omega-3 fatty acids can be obtained from microalgae may help you build rapport and establish credibility — whether you are vegan or not.

Boston-based registered dietitian Janel Funk agrees. “People assume I am vegan, but I just eat what makes me feel best,” says Funk, whose food blog *Eat Well with Janel* features mostly plant-based recipes. The fact is, she has never been vegan. But she does describe her experiences exploring a more plant-based diet as a blessing. “It got me into the kitchen experimenting with fermented foods, different grains, lentils and other foods I hadn’t tried,” Funk says.

For informed, meaningful and sensitive encounters with vegan clients, first inquire about their motivations and let that lead the conversation.

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# Conscious Choice