

My name is Stephen Cooperman. I am 65 years old. I am a US Navy veteran having served from November 1972 to December 1978 during the Vietnam War era. I have a long family history of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and strokes. Like most children born in the 50s, I was raised on a diet filled with meat, dairy, and fats. It was just the way it was. My paternal grandfather passed away from a heart attack. My uncle, my father's brother, had two heart attacks. My father had his first heart attack at age 32. He passed away from a heart attack in 1992 at the age of 65.

In retrospect of my life, I realize now that I had warning signs since my early 30s. A

chest pain here, another one there. High blood pressure came next. High cholesterol followed soon after. In July 2008, I passed out and fell—was hospitalized for a week, had umpteen tests, none of which indicated I had heart problems. Followed up with a cardiologist who said, “Let’s do an angiogram just to be safe. If we find a blockage, we’ll do a stent and you’ll be home the next day.” July 31, 2008, went in for the test. It lasted 5 minutes. As I lay on the exam table I thought, well that was quick; they must not have found anything. I was wheeled to a room and in walked the doctor surrounded by my family. “It went pretty good, huh,” I said. the doctor looked at me and said, “No.” The rest of what he said is a blur. Blockages, hospital,

transferring now. When the fog cleared, I had 4 blocked arteries. One was 100% blocked, two were 80% blocked, and one was 70% blocked. I was taken directly from the procedure facility to the hospital via ambulance. Four days later on August 4, 2008, I had triple bypass surgery. The surgery itself went well, but there were complications once surgery was completed, as I have myasthenia gravis and it flared during recovery. I was placed into a drug-induced coma for 8 days. I spent a total of 23 days in the hospital. But the surgery was a success, and slowly I healed and began to live life again. I was told to eat a heart-healthy diet consisting of lean animal proteins and low-fat items.

Over the course of the next nine years, I was relatively healthy; at least I thought I was. I was still eating the way I always had which included meats, dairy, oils, etc. I still had high blood pressure and cholesterol. I was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes in 2012. I was told to lose weight, and to maintain my heart-healthy diet, so my eating habits remained the same.

I had a horrible health year in 2017. My weight ballooned up to 280. In March 2017, I had an arterial blood clot behind my right knee and nearly lost my leg below the knee. I was discharged from the hospital and told nothing about changing my way of eating. September 26, 2017, I

was rushed to the VA hospital with crushing chest pains. Yup, it was a heart attack. I spent 3 days in the hospital and was sent home with instructions to try to lose weight. Not one word about changing my diet. Just watch what you eat and try to slim down. Once home, I realized simple activities were causing angina pains. It was scary for sure. Made an attempt to lose some weight and did. I got down to 265.

December 1, 2017, I was awakened by some chest discomfort. Got up and walked around and realized that something was wrong, called 911 and was rushed to the hospital. Diagnosis? Heart attack number two. Again, spent 3 days in the hospital and sent home. Instructions? Lose weight. I

came home and was at a loss as to what to do. I was despondent, lost, and sure I was going to have another heart attack soon and that one would be the one to take me. I felt the Sword of Damocles hanging over my head. I had no hope. I was the walking dead. I stayed in bed, afraid to do much of anything. I saw no future. I had two heart attacks 62 days apart. My life was over, I thought.

A few weeks later, I made the walk to the mailbox to get the mail and there was a letter from the Veterans Hospital at Mather Field. It was an invitation to come to a seminar to hear about a Heart Disease Reversal Program (HDRP) put on by Dr.

Themis Yiaslas in conjunction with Dr. Saul Schaefer, the head of cardiology at Mather. Heart Disease Reversal Program? What was that? My first thought was, is that even possible? I had never heard of that before. My head was spinning. What could it possibly entail? What kinds of torture would I have to be subjected to? Was it a diet? Was it an exercise program? Would they sew my lips shut so I couldn't eat? A thousand thoughts and images ran through my mind.

So, the day comes and off we go to listen, and I hear the words that will change my life forever: WHOLE FOOD, PLANT-BASED LIFESTYLE. What??!! What for-

eign language was this doctor speaking? I need to eliminate all animal proteins, all added fats, all dairy, and no oil? Is that even possible? I thought. That would mean changing everything I knew. Give up everything I like? Who does that? Wait, I have to give up cheese, too??!! I looked at my wife and said, "I don't know if I can do this." It would mean changing everything. But as we sat there listening and watching the presentation, I knew one thing. If I wanted to live, if I wanted to see another birthday, I WOULD BE STUPID, IF I AT LEAST DID NOT GIVE THIS A TRY!!

So, when Dr. Yiaslas asked what I thought, could I commit to the program, I said, "I'm in. I'm all in." 100% commitment. In my

heart and mind, I wasn't sure I could do it, but what did I have to lose? I had no idea what I was in for. So, it was done. I had committed to changing my lifestyle. The program was due to start in a month. I thought about holidays, birthdays, every celebration knowing/feeling that I would never look at food the same way again.

Every day, I checked a day off the calendar knowing that the start date was coming. But questions abound. What foods will I be able to eat? What is prohibited? How will I feel? How much weight will I lose? Will my medications be reduced at some point? I assume all will be answered in the HDRP.

January 23, 2018: Day 1 of my new life begins. HDRP provided a ton of information immediately. First up was learning what to eat versus what not to eat. Overwhelming to start? Absolutely!! But I was committed to following this to the letter during the program to gain the maximum benefit. After the first session, I came home and cleared out the pantry and the refrigerator. My wife and I headed to the grocery store to stock up all the new foods I was to eat. I had never spent so much time in the produce aisle before. All the leafy greens I had never paid attention to before were now in my shopping cart.

My initial goal was to find four to five meals that I liked and repeat them until I could

expand my menus. Initially, I ate a lot of salads, beans and brown rice. Boring, I know, but it was quick, easy, and fulfilling. At each HDRP session we discovered new recipes and techniques to build our repertoire of menu items. I learned how to cook without oil, using vegetable broth instead. I learned that calories didn't matter on this plan and the goal was to eat until full. That turned out to be pretty easy. I began cooking again. All of a sudden, I was making soups, chilis, stews, burritos, and tacos ALL without meat, dairy, or oils—never would have imagined it.

After the first month, I noticed that my jeans were a bit looser; I was feeling better,

less depressed, and able to move more with less pain. We had done a baseline of various levels prior to the first session and after one month on the program we retested. My total cholesterol had dropped 24 points from an already respectable 105 to 81. My LDL, or bad cholesterol, went from 38 to 22—a 16-point drop. My triglycerides went from 179 to 159 and, last but not least, my fasting glucose went from 113 to 92. I was amazed. I'd never seen those numbers before. Oh yeah and my weight went from 255 pounds down to 246 along with a waist circumference reduction of 2.5 inches. In just ONE month. And if that wasn't enough, I realized that my angina pains were nearly gone. That was all the motivation I needed. If I had any doubts as

to whether or not this was going to work, they were gone now. I was infused with new energy.

At the completion of the Heart Disease Reversal Program in April 2018, we tested again and my final results were as follows: Total cholesterol is 81; LDL is 21 and HDL is 27. Triglycerides are 111 and fasting glucose is 88. My type 2 diabetes numbers are currently within normal ranges, with my A1C having gone from a high of 6.4 to currently at 5.2, even after decreasing my diabetes medicine by 50%. I currently weigh 205 pounds. My goal is to be at 175. As the weeks and months progress, HDRP was

and is a focus in my life. I am enjoying life again and not fearful that every pain I experience is angina or a heart attack. I do not fear the future but rather I embrace it.

I wake up each day invigorated. Had it not been for the initial letter and HDRP and Dr. Themis Yiaslas, I am convinced I would not be here today. I am completely angina free and have been for nearly nine months now. I no longer worry about little aches and pains. I live a completely normal life. I exercise regularly and I cannot express how grateful I am to be living a whole food, plant-based, oil and dairy-free lifestyle. It has saved my life!¹

¹ Yiaslas, T., Taylor, J., Embree, J., & Schaefer, S. (2019). Elimination of Angina, Comprehensive Cardio-Metabolic Risk Reduction, and 50-Pound Weight Loss in a US Navy Veteran with Myasthenia Gravis. *International Journal of Disease Reversal and Prevention*, 1(1), 7 pp.