

Excerpt

The OMNI Diet:

The Revolutionary 70% Plant + 30% Protein Program to Lose Weight, Reverse Disease, Fight Inflammation, and Change Your Life Forever

“Those who think they have no time for healthy eating, will sooner or later have to find time for illness.” ~ Edward Stanley

Can donuts change your life? You bet they can. They changed Tami’s life. Or, more accurately, giving them up changed her life. I’ll tell you all about Tami (and donuts), but first, let’s spend a little time on sugar.

I talk about dietary sugar, blood sugar, glucose control, and insulin a lot. One reason for this is because diabetes is such a devastating disease. Type 2 diabetes affects nearly 26 million Americans, or 8.3 percent of the population. Of those, 7 million are undiagnosed. Diabetes is lethal: It is one of the top causes of death in the United States, and is a major cause of heart disease and stroke. It is the leading cause of kidney failure, non-traumatic limb amputation, and new cases of blindness among adults.

Those are the facts. But for me, diabetes has a much more personal side. It robbed me of one of the most important people in my life: My grandmother Abla.

One of my first—and fondest—memories of my grandmother is her large, soft belly. When she cuddled me close, her ample belly and infectious giggles gave me much-needed comfort and security. Everything on Abla’s 4-foot-11, 200-pound body was round and soft. I found her plumpness endearing—that is, until I learned that it was killing her.

I used to love the comfort foods that my grandmother would prepare for the two of us. I savored the warm Syrian bread smothered in butter and dripping with honey. (In a pinch we’d substitute tortillas with butter and sugar.) Unfortunately, though, my grandmother also passed along to me some of her unhealthy attachments to food. As a lonely child who was left on her

own a lot, I learned quickly that I could comfort myself with the same warm sugary foods that my grandmother ate.

A Frightening Turn

My grandmother had been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes before I was born, and when I was 11 years old, I started administering her insulin shots. She could no longer be trusted to give herself the correct dose because the diabetes had compromised her eyesight. And because my mother worked from early in the morning until long after I was in bed at night, I was the only option.

I practiced giving shots on oranges, which wasn't so hard. But calculating the correct dose of insulin terrified me. Oranges don't die of insulin overdoses, but my grandmother could—miscalculating her insulin could have killed her.

I'm certain that taking care of my grandmother in this way had a huge impact on my decision to become a nurse, and even more on my passion to help people break the bonds to the unhealthy food and lifestyle that keep them hostage to chronic disease, depression, and addiction.

By the time I was 12 years old, Abla was legally blind and had heart disease as well as significant neuropathy (painful, numbness, tingling and ulcerations) in her hands, feet, and eyes. She spent her days staring at the television set in her bedroom, even though she could barely see it.

Diabetes continued to take more and more of my grandmother. Her neuropathy-riddled feet made it a struggle for her to walk—even just to make the journey from her bed to the bathroom. She finally gave in to using a bedside commode. Eventually she couldn't even bathe herself and needed help from my mother or me—a humiliation for such a proud, modest woman. The tips of her toes turned black, sores oozed on her legs, and she sometimes cried from the pain. Had she not died of heart disease, her toes would have had to be amputated.

My grandmother had immigrated to America from Lebanon in 1928, when she was 18 years old. She had experienced significant emotional trauma as a child living in a war-torn country during a time that food was scarce and fear was plentiful. When she arrived in America, she turned to food for comfort. She had not received a formal education, and spoke broken English with a heavy Arabic accent. Although I understood her perfectly, her accent obstructed her communication with others. Regardless of how many times doctors and nurses warned her to stop eating sugar because it was making her diabetes worse, she never seemed to understand. She

always kept Lebanese pastries and cookies around, as well as a stash of chocolate in her purse. She continued to eat excessive sweets until she passed away.

Sometimes I think she did understand the risks but chose to ignore them. As her health declined steadily, she turned to the one thing that gave her comfort: food.

A Tragic Ending

My grandmother died at the age of 84 from heart disease brought on by diabetes. Her doctors were surprised that she lived so long, since they had been telling us for decades that she would “not live beyond a year.” But those decades were not pleasant or filled with joy and great memories. She lived isolated, in pain, and afraid to change.

My grandmother is a perfect example of the concepts of “lifespan” vs. “healthspan.” Although she lived a fairly *long* life, her *quality* of life was poor. Her lifespan was pretty good, but her healthspan—her years of health and energy—was not good at all!

I think of my grandmother frequently when I work with people who are trying to improve their health. I wish that her doctors and nurses had pushed harder to help her change the behaviors that took her life. Even more, I wish they had actually taken time to *teach her!*

And, although I understand that her life hit her with blows that I can’t even begin to imagine, I also wish that somehow she could have found the strength to turn away from food and look elsewhere for comfort.

It’s too late for my grandmother. But unless you are lying in the ICU on life support, it’s not too late for you. *Anybody* can take steps to improve their health. *Anyone* with diabetes, pre-diabetes, or a family history of diabetes can make changes that will slow or stop the progression of this awful disease. The best way to start is by getting treatment—and following the Omni Diet.

Sweetly Killing You: Type 2 Diabetes

As my grandmother’s story shows, it’s hard to overstate the importance of healthy blood sugar control. That’s why it plays such a major part in the Omni Diet. You need to control the amount of sugar in your blood in order to control your health.

The best way to control your intake of sugar and simple carbohydrates is to eliminate them from your diet. Giving up sugar and simple carbohydrates is hard for some people. But I believe it's an absolutely crucial step in the quest for optimal health!

If you eat too much sugar and simple carbohydrates in your diet, you will have too much sugar in your blood. And for millions of people, too much sugar in the blood leads to type-2 diabetes, which is one of the leading causes of death and disability in the United States. (When I refer to diabetes, I'm talking only about type-2 diabetes. Type-1 is a different kind of disease.)

When you eat a food that contains carbohydrates, your body breaks them down and converts them to glucose, which elevates your blood sugar. If all is working well and is in balance, your cells, with the help of insulin from your pancreas, use the glucose in your blood for energy.

Simple carbohydrates found in just about anything white—table sugar, flour, and *nearly all* bread, pasta, and rice (foods that Dr. Steven Gundry refers to as “white poisons”)—as well as sugary beverages and fruit juice. All of these foods are converted into glucose very quickly by your body. In contrast, *complex carbohydrate*—found in fibrous foods such as vegetables, whole fruits, and some whole grains—take longer to break down.

As you digest carbohydrates, glucose (and fructose, which comes from fruit) pours into your blood. Glucose from simple carbohydrates enters the blood quickly, causing rapid blood sugar spikes; glucose from complex carbohydrates enters the blood a bit more slowly.

In response to glucose entering the blood, your pancreas secretes the hormone insulin, which pushes glucose into your cells, muscles, liver to use as energy. (Fructose doesn't need insulin because it goes directly to the liver to be metabolized. Fructose is toxic to the liver—more on that later.)

Insulin resistance and Type 2 diabetes begins when your pancreas can't produce enough insulin to keep up with the glucose being launched in your body. If you have type 2 diabetes or insulin resistance, your body is being assaulted by glucose overloads—your body can't muster enough insulin to handle it all. (Having insulin resistance doesn't necessarily mean you have diabetes, but it usually suggest you are well on your way to developing it.) When this happens, it's harder for glucose to enter the cells, so it builds up in your blood, leading to continuous high blood sugar. Over time, excess blood sugar injures the walls of blood vessels throughout the body.

This damage can lead to a long list of health problems, including eye disorders that may lead to blindness, neuropathy (numbness, tingling, and pain) from nerve damage, heart disease, high blood pressure, hearing loss, kidney disease, intestinal damage, and gum disease, and more. Recent findings suggest it may also contribute to Alzheimer's disease.

If you think you can't kick your sugar habit, take heart: I've seen even the most sugar-addicted people dump it once they set their minds to it. Take Kim, for example. Although she was eating what she thought was a healthy vegan diet, her meals were full of sugar in the form of fruit, pasta, whole grain breads, legumes, and rice. Kim suffered from mental fog and energy dips. She also admitted to an insatiable sweet tooth.

Kim started following the Omni Diet principles, and within *one week* she had lost her sweet tooth. Her mental fog disappeared, and her energy was improving and staying steady, rather than jumping around all day.

If Kim can do it, you can!

Lifestyle choices can have a huge impact on the prevention and progression of diabetes and metabolic dysfunction. Being overweight or having diabetes in your family doesn't give you an automatic death sentence. You have the ability to dramatically lower your risk. And if you already have diabetes, you can get it in control and limit the damage it does to your body. You may even be able to reduce or get off your medications—I've seen this many, many times in people who follow the Omni Diet.

Omni Motivation Blast

CREATE A MANTRA

Having your own personal mantra—a sentence you can repeat to yourself over and over when you need help getting through a difficult challenge—is an incredibly useful tool. Take some time to create your own mantra. It has to be something meaningful and inspirational, something that speaks to you in a very personal, real way.

I've got a great story about the power of mantras. Ronnette, a gal in one of my Omni Diet classes, was about to turn 50. She told her friends she didn't want a party, but they went ahead and threw one anyway—complete with a big birthday cake. When they handed Ronnette a slice, she said no thanks. She'd worked very hard to break her addiction to sugar, and she didn't want

one piece of cake to set her back. Besides, she really didn't want any cake—amazingly, although she used to crave it, she was happy to do without it.

Despite pressure from her friends, Lisa didn't give in. She simply focused on her mantra: "I'm fit and 50, not fat and 50." For her, that mantra says it all: At this point in her life, being healthy is much more important to her than gorging on cake. Her mantra gave her the strength to stick to her decision, and eventually, her friends backed off.

Ronnette was surprised that her food-pushing friends would be annoyed with her decision to avoid food that was hurting her, but I wasn't. When we take a stand to fight for our health, others can feel that our *good* decisions shine a light on their *harmful* decisions.

My mantra is different from Ronnette's, but it is equally good at coming to my rescue in difficult situations. I think of myself as a rock, a foundation of good health, an example for others. In spite of my health challenges, I choose to focus on being the strongest I can be and the best leader I can be. So the mantra that works best for me is, "I'm a living example of health and fitness."

Here are some other successful mantras:

- "This is how healthy people eat."
- "That's not how I eat anymore!"
- "No food tastes as good as being healthy feels."
- "I deserve to take care of myself."
- "I can do this."
- "I am strong and brave!"
- "I love my body and want to take care of myself."
- "Put down the fork and go for a walk."
- "Health is vital to be all God wants me to be."
- "My body is a temple, bought with a price."
- "I am a warrior for health!"