

Celeste's Story - La Leche Mom

I realized a couple of years ago that the vegetarian diet I was on was killing me. Not that there's anything wrong with vegetarianism for some people, but I was not getting enough protein for the stress I was living with and I was eating way too many processed foods and craving sugar. My triglycerides were very high, with high cholesterol, and I was overweight, extremely fatigued, with irritability, and depression. I hadn't had a good night's sleep for many, many years due to children with sleep issues and then peri-menopause.

Originally my children and I were conscientious vegetarians. We ate healthy foods. But as our family stresses increased and my health deteriorated over the years, our diet became more processed and included more sugar. As the stress mounted, it was just easier to serve the convenient, more processed foods. My husband is less interested in health education and subtly sabotaged my attempts to keep up with a good diet by buying junk food and taking the kids to eat out a lot. I didn't have the energy to fight it.

My children were breastfed, one for 14 months, the second for two years, and the last for 5 ½ years. Helping mother's breastfeed is my passion in life. I am continually amazed by our society's insistence on local and organically grown foods on the one hand, and tolerance of commercialized artificial milk on the other. Of course, we all have our strengths and blind spots. I did a good job on nursing my children, but I ultimately let myself down in the stress management department.

Fortunately I had some good roots to return to. My maternal grandfather was a Merchant Seaman. He learned yoga and eventually became a practitioner of foot reflexology before most people ever knew the word. He was an advocate of healthy, non processed foods, encouraged his children to breastfeed and stop smoking and, as the family lore tells it, he was one of the first to subscribe to Prevention magazine. Apparently his children didn't follow his example. With the passing years, they were all in poor health. Growing up I was fed formula, and my mother and father smoked. We did eat healthy foods and had little sugar, but all of us had terrible teeth and ended up with a mouthful of mercury amalgam fillings. In addition, my siblings and I struggled with depression, weight issues, and cardiovascular issues at young ages.

With a new health care provider I started learning about what to eat and included more protein and supplements into my diet. I changed the sleeping routine to try and get more sleep and started including daily exercise into the routine. My children now think we are one of the healthiest families in town, but we still need to incorporate more vegetables in our diet. The Suppers program has helped me see how we can add more protein and vegetables into our diet, with great recipes and cooking experiences. The program has helped me understand that there is no such thing as a diet that's right for everybody; we all have very specific biochemical needs. And the presenters at Speakers Forum have helped me redefine what our supplements should be. The social aspect has improved my morale, and now I don't feel so alone in the kitchen cooking dinner.

It helps me to stay in health's way. It's just too easy to make quick, automatic choices when I'm stressed or feeling down. Knowing I'm going to weekly Suppers meetings helps me recharge my batteries, regardless of what's going on at home.