

FEEL GOOD

The universal language of humanity

Writer Emily Esfahani Smith, in her TED Talk, told the world that happiness is not the answer to a healthy life, but rather, having meaning to it. So what does it mean to have a meaningful life? According to Smith, having a purpose in life gives it true meaning. If you have already found the reason for waking up every day, great! But, if like most of us, you are struggling to find a reason to live, then let's start small. Small gestures of giving back to the people living around you may be just as fulfilling as starting your own NGO. Any deed, whether big or small, can bring a warm smile on someone's face or make them want to live to see another day.

The first step is as simple as being kind to others. We are so used to criticising people that we rarely appreciate them for all the good that they have. Make it a healthy practice to just smile at a grocery store owner and to say thank you. Perhaps ask your rickshaw puller how his day has been going. He might give you a puzzled look at first, but it will definitely brighten up his day. Tell your teachers that they inspire you. Praise your parents every day and tell your friends how much you appreciate their company. Words are sometimes stronger than any action.

If you have mastered the skill of using your words and kindness, then you can move forward. Your next step can be buying the local kids some chocolate or taking an hour out of your day to teach them basic courtesy and morals at a local NGO, giving your rickshaw puller an extra ten bucks or buying a small present for your domestic helper, assisting your driver in washing your car or leaving a positive feedback about your waiter to the restaurant manager. Maybe you can volunteer to help a neighbourhood child with his math homework, clean the table after dinner or babysit a neighbour's baby to let the mother rest for a few hours. Small actions can have a bigger impact than you may realise.

If you're ready to take it up a notch, then maybe start your own little revolution. No, don't go rioting with slogans; just ask a few neighbours to help you once a week to clean the roads around your neighbourhood. Set an example and soon, people living a few blocks away will be seen doing the same. You could also help raise money for a good cause. For instance, a literature group on Facebook by the name 'Litmosphere' recently raised about a hundred grand for 'LitMama,' a disabled book street vendor, by hosting auctions in the group. Maybe you can raise a little to help a young boy get a chance at a better education, or help an old woman get better treatment.

You can always join NGOs and other organisations dedicated to social services if you want to make a change on a larger scale. But remember, no deed remains unnoticed. You will feel happy when you will be appreciated for your kindness and generosity, but you will feel ecstatic when you see that you, a micro-speck in this vast universe, can help bring light to someone else's universe by just a mere good intention. Life is beautiful when you stop living for yourself and start living to serve others.

By Tanzim Islam Silony

A VEGAN'S DIARY

BY RUBAIYA AHMAD
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My two year old nephew, who I hoped would grow up to be a vegetarian, if not vegan, is neither anymore. He started off on a good note with eating miso mashed potatoes and date brownies, but slowly he learned to *ask* for food. Needless to say, he asks for anything that's on the table, that he sees others eating, and anything that he hasn't tried before. My heart sank the first time I heard him say "mangto dao" (pass me the meat), pointing at a bowl of chicken curry on the table. Before my nephew started eating meat, I would often talk about his vegetarian diet to others, and many had told me that it was cruel (?) to put a child on a vegetarian/vegan diet and that they should be able to choose whether or not to be vegan when they grow up. This got me thinking about choice!

When a 2 year old is asking for meat, he doesn't know what it is that he is asking for. He doesn't know that the chicken leg he is enjoying so much used to be a beautiful bird. He doesn't know that if he was put in front of the bird, then his natural instincts would be to play with the bird and not eat it. In fact, he would probably be quite traumatized if you killed a chicken in front of him. He doesn't know that meat can give him high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease and many forms of cancer. He doesn't know that the hormones he is consuming with animal products can play havoc on his system. Meat is addictive. And when WE choose to introduce our children to this addiction, we effectively take away their freedom to choose in the long run. A baby that grows up eating chicken legs and hamburgers is highly unlikely to choose healthy/vegetarian food as an adult. I remember my struggle with it and wishing how wonderful it would have been to be raised on a vegan diet. But as a child, I didn't get to choose. My food was chosen for me by the adults (back then, they didn't know any better). As I grew older, my addiction did the choosing for me.

As for being cruel, we only think that it's cruel to raise a child vegan because our adult mind equates a meatless meal with deprivation. Nowadays, food is less about nourishment and more about satisfying our taste buds. I feel that we are cruel to our children when we knowingly feed them food that we know is not good for them. We are cruel when we choose food based on availability and convenience because making healthy, humane food is too much work. We must not also forget that encouraging our children to eat animal products is how we plant the seed of selective compassion in their minds. The child grows up learning to eat one animal, and love (if at all) another.

Now comes the question of nutrition. Making sure children get enough and the right kind of calories is key to meeting needs for growth. Regularly monitor your child's growth. When feeding your

"Baby's right to choose"

vegan baby and toddler, here are some tips to keep in mind:

PROTEIN

Most foods contain some protein. Vegan protein-rich foods include: beans, peas, lentils, ground nuts/seeds or thinly spread or well blended nut/seed butters, tofu and other soy products. Children have slightly higher protein needs (per kilogram of their body weight) than adults. Vegans may also have slightly higher requirements than non-vegans. Complete protein needs can be met entirely through plant-based foods. There is no need to combine foods at meals to create complete proteins. Aim to include a variety of protein-rich foods daily.

VITAMIN B12

Vitamin B12 is naturally found in animal foods. Vegans need a vitamin B12 supplement or a consistent intake of foods fortified with vitamin B12 to meet their needs. Regularly including enough fortified foods in the diet of a baby or



toddler would be a challenge. Aim to give your toddler 0.9 mcg of vitamin B12 daily. Vegan breastfeeding mothers should make sure they are getting at least 2.8 mcg of vitamin B12 daily.

CALCIUM

An important role for calcium is to build strong, healthy bones and teeth. Calcium is found in: breastmilk and store-bought infant formula, calcium fortified tofu, almond and sesame (tahini) butter, beans, peas, lentils, leafy greens, and black strap molasses. Aim to give your toddler 700mg of calcium daily.

IRON

Iron deficiency is the most common nutrient deficiency in babies and young children. Iron is essential for growth and brain development. A 7 to 12 month old baby needs 11mg and a 1 to 3 year old toddler needs 7mg of iron daily. Vegetarians may require an intake of 1.8 times more iron than non-vegetarians. Offer iron rich foods at least 2 to 3 times each day to help your baby meet their needs. Vegan food sources of iron include: fortified cereals, beans, peas,

lentils, tofu, broccoli, kale, and green beans. As vitamin C helps to increase absorption of iron, pair your iron-containing foods with tomatoes, citrus, melon, strawberries, broccoli, papaya, or bell peppers for an added boost!

OMEGA-3

Omega-3 fats are important for brain development and eye health. Because vegan children only get their omega-3 fats from plant-based foods, they may have a higher requirement than non-vegan children. Food sources of omega-3 include: ground walnuts, flaxseed oil, ground flaxseeds (tishi), chia seeds and canola oil.

Raise your children vegan. If you want him/her to choose his food, then let him do so when he is at an age to make an informed decision. Your child may take up smoking and other unhealthy habits too as he grows older, but as adults, it is our responsibility to equip them with the right education and information.

TUKLU'S MISO MASHED POTATO!

Ingredients

2 pounds red potatoes, scrubbed
2 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp Miso paste (You can use any miso paste that you can find at grocery stores (usually in refrigerated section near tofu at Korean stores).
2 tbsp coconut milk
2 tsp minced fresh chives, parsley or green onion

Method

In a large pot, add the potatoes and cover with water by 2 inches. Bring to a boil, then turn heat to medium and let cook for 20 minutes, or until the potatoes are easily pierced with a fork.

Drain the water, leaving the potatoes in the pot. Mash the potatoes with a potato masher or in a food processor. Add in the remaining ingredients and mix well. Taste and season with additional miso (needs more flavour) or milk (too thick) if needed.

By Rubaiya Ahmad
Photo: Rubaiya Ahmad