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Health Perspectives. Research paper

The documentary that I watched, was Fat, Sick, and Nearly Dead. I chose it because it was something that sounded interesting and why it was entitled that. Documentaries about people who have turned their lives around by eating healthy, have really intrigued me. Or documentaries about the affects that food can have in your life. I remember being in middle school and watching the documentary Super-Size Me. It struck me with how bad fast food can be if you live off it and the affects it has on your body. Or even what it is made of! I am shocked every time I watch a show on how food is made and the process of raising animals, or the plants that have become daily use of food. What are we really eating?

In Fat, Sick, and Nearly Dead, there is a man name Joe from Australia, who has a rare autoimmune disease called Urticaria vasculitis. A condition where he has a rash and inflammation all over that flares up whenever. He went to the doctors and they did test after test to determine what was causing all his rashes that he had. He was put on many prescriptions for it including steroids. Joe mentioned that things were going great for him, that he quickly owned his own business which meant many social visits and that meant lots of food. After years of struggling with this disease and after so many doctors’ visits, he decided that he was going to kick his habit finally and decided to do a 60 day fast and just drink freshly juiced fruits and vegetables to cure himself of urticaria. He came to America during his fasting journey to talk with people about what he was doing. For every meal he had, he got his juicer out and had a glass of his fresh juice and he could have beans and nuts. In the beginning he mentioned how hard it was for him just to get out of bed and how awful he felt. He was going through all the withdrawal symptoms and was miserable. After the first couple of days he said he felt better than he ever had before and felt like he had so much energy. More than what he had before. In the documentary they interviewed his parents and his mom mentioned that he had called her and said it was hard to go out into public and it was so hard to sit in the car while all the tv producers and camera men went into a restaurant to eat. Joe mentions that for a bit he became a hermit and avoided temptations of food and didn’t want to face that. After a while he was able to get out and talked to a lot of people about their nutrition intake and what they thought about food. While he was on the streets and telling people, he was doing a 60 day fast and only drinking his juice, everyone thought he was crazy for doing it. They also said how they could never give up eating for 60 days to do a reboot. He eventually found a woman named Stacy who suffered from terrible migraines and was intrigued with what Joe was doing and took him up on the challenge and did a 10 days juice fast. During the first couple of days, Stacy suffered much of what Joe felt like at the beginning. She was grumpy and miserable and didn’t have a lot of energy. Stacy use to drink coffee every morning and that was really weighting heavily on her because she felt like she needed the caffeine to help her get going and she no longer could have that. Stacy had a supportive husband and a friend who was all about the eating clean lifestyle and she helper her a lot through the 10 days. By the end of it, Stacy felt and looked so much better and said that she felt like she had so much energy to do things and felt so young again. Another guy that Joe met was a man by the name of Philip. Philip is a truck driver and suffered with the exact same thing as Joe struggles with. And has the exact same symptoms. Joe told him his story and what he was out to accomplish and gave Philip his number and they parted ways. After Joe was done with his 60 day fast and down 70 pounds, he returned to Australia and everyone that he worked with mentioned how much happier and better he looked after his fasting. He had more energy and was doing so good. It was during his time home that he received a desperate phone call from Philip asking for helping in getting his life back together. Joe returned to the states and went to the doctors with Philip where he got the ok to go on a 10 day fast. Just as with Stacy and with Joe, Philip had those first couple of days where he didn’t feel good but after the first couple of days he could tell a difference in how he felt. After the 10 days he got the ok to do 30 days and then he ended up doing the full 60 days. Philip went from being sad and depressed, to happy and excited about life. His family use to ask him if he wanted to be cremated when he died or buried, but he was too heavy to bury so he needed to lose weight. He hid from his 8-year-old son because he knew he couldn’t be a father figure to his son. At the end of it, he was running around with his son and was inspiring others to try the 10-day juice fast and turn their lives around. Philip also helped his brother, who recently had a heart attack, start making better life choices with food as well as with working out. Both Joe and Philip to this day are still inspiring others to change their lives around and to make better food choices. Eating healthy and clean is cheaper than eating unhealthily and the hospital visits.

The directors of the film are Joe Cross and Kurt Engfehr. Joe Cross in the beginning didn’t have a lot of a nutrition background until he got tired of taking his pills for his rashes and then thought if the body could heal itself on the outside, why couldn’t it heal itself on the inside and thus started his journey to turning his life around and on his path to being healthier. The other director is Kurt Engfehr has no nutritional background other than filming other documentaries.

Fat, Sick, and Nearly Dead was filmed in 2011. In the show it gave a lot of statistics about what we mostly eat today. Which consists of 60% is processed, 30% of animal products, 5% whole grains and white potatoes, and 5% fruits and vegetables. Since 2011, we are getting worse with fast food restaurants popping up faster and faster and everyone becoming busier and busier. With what Joe was doing, was rebooting his system by upping his micronutrients. Which in turn helps revive our cells that fight off diseases and illnesses. Without micronutrients, we are weak. What we eat affects how we feel and really affects how we look and our energy levels.

One thing in the documentary that it mentions is that micronutrients help to build your bodies immune system. They help to revive the body’s cells so that they are strong enough to fight illnesses that come into your system. In the book it says, “Many of the cells that support the immune system…are rapidly turned over. Their constant synthesis requires steady nutrient intake. In general, rapidly dividing cells need adequate protein, folate, vitamin B-6, vitamin B-12, and iron.” (pg. 335). It later goes on to say, “Zinc and copper play structural roles and are critical for the synthesis of white blood cells. Iron and zinc are also required for the production of enzymes used by white blood cells to destroy pathogens.” (pgs. 335-336). Another concept that was mainly present in the show is a way of rebooting your system. While reading in the book, I couldn’t find a thing for rebooting, but it did talk about detoxifying your body through really restricting what you eat, but there are major consequences of doing so. “currently, there is no clinical evidence to support the benefits of these detox diets. Side effects such as fatigue, headaches, or decreased mental acuity are signs of low blood sugar. Taken to an extreme, prolonged fasts and nutritionally inadequate diets can lead to chemical imbalances, which could affect heart function.” (pgs 339-340). While Joe and Philip went on this “fast” with just drinking fresh juice, nuts, and beans, they were supervised by a doctor and constantly had blood work done. The difference in their diet is that they didn’t just limit it to juice they drank but made sure they were eating protein and cleared everything with a nutritionist before going through with their diets.

While watching Fat, Sick, and Nearly Dead I feel like I really saw and learned how important it is to make sure that I am eating enough micronutrients and exercising to stay healthy while I work in a hospital full of sick kids who sometimes cough all over me and then I tend to get sick, but another way for me to fight against those infections is to eat healthier so that my body can fight those infections. I also got to see and learn the importance of a healthy diet can lead to more energy throughout the day to be able to get all that I need to get done and not feel so tired. I will apply this knowledge by making sure that my meals are more consistent with the MyPlate standards and making sure that I am eating the types of foods that will provide those micronutrients as well as macronutrients to make sure that I am eating healthy. I will also take time to exercise every week so that I am staying in the range of a healthy body weight and will feel better.

*Fat, Sick, and Nearly Dead,* Created by Joe Cross and Kurt Engfehr, performance by Joe Cross, 2011.

Anne M. Smith, Angela L. Collene, Colleen K. Spees, *Wardlaw’s Contemporary Nutrition,* Fifth edition, 2015, pp.335-336, 339-340.