

Happy Vegetarian Family

Janelle Nightingale / Sutra Study Class

Both my parents were raised vegetarian, but I was not – I was raised on a hybrid diet of eating actual meat and also vegetarian meals. So when I was 12, and my dad decided to become a vegetarian once again, I decided to jump on board with his idea. Today, I am 28 and have been a vegetarian for 15 years. The last 2 years, due largely to my Buddhist practice, I have developed a 70% vegan diet.

Being a vegetarian has become easier through the years, for instance if I am going to a big event like a wedding, or company get-together, I know eat just enough before the event to tie me over in case there is nothing for me to eat there, which is common; although sometimes there are side dishes like salad, fruit and or mashed potatoes I can dig into. When going out to eat, I can pretty much eat anywhere! If a dish has meat, I simply ask to replace the meat with something else or just remove it – I love Mexican food, a good example of the replacement request is replacing the meat with beans in a taco salad. Yummy!

Also through the years, people ask questions... So many questions. Like...

“But WHY are you a vegetarian? Meat is so good!” ... and ...

“Where do you get your protein?” ... Or this classic ...



“If you were on a deserted island and the only thing to do was hunt for food, would you eat meat?” ...I’m serious, I’ve got this question and others like it through the years, and I think other vegetarians know what I am talking about.

Other questions are ...

“So you’re a vegetarian, you eat fish and chicken then, right?”

“How do you stay healthy?”

“What do you eat? Salad?”

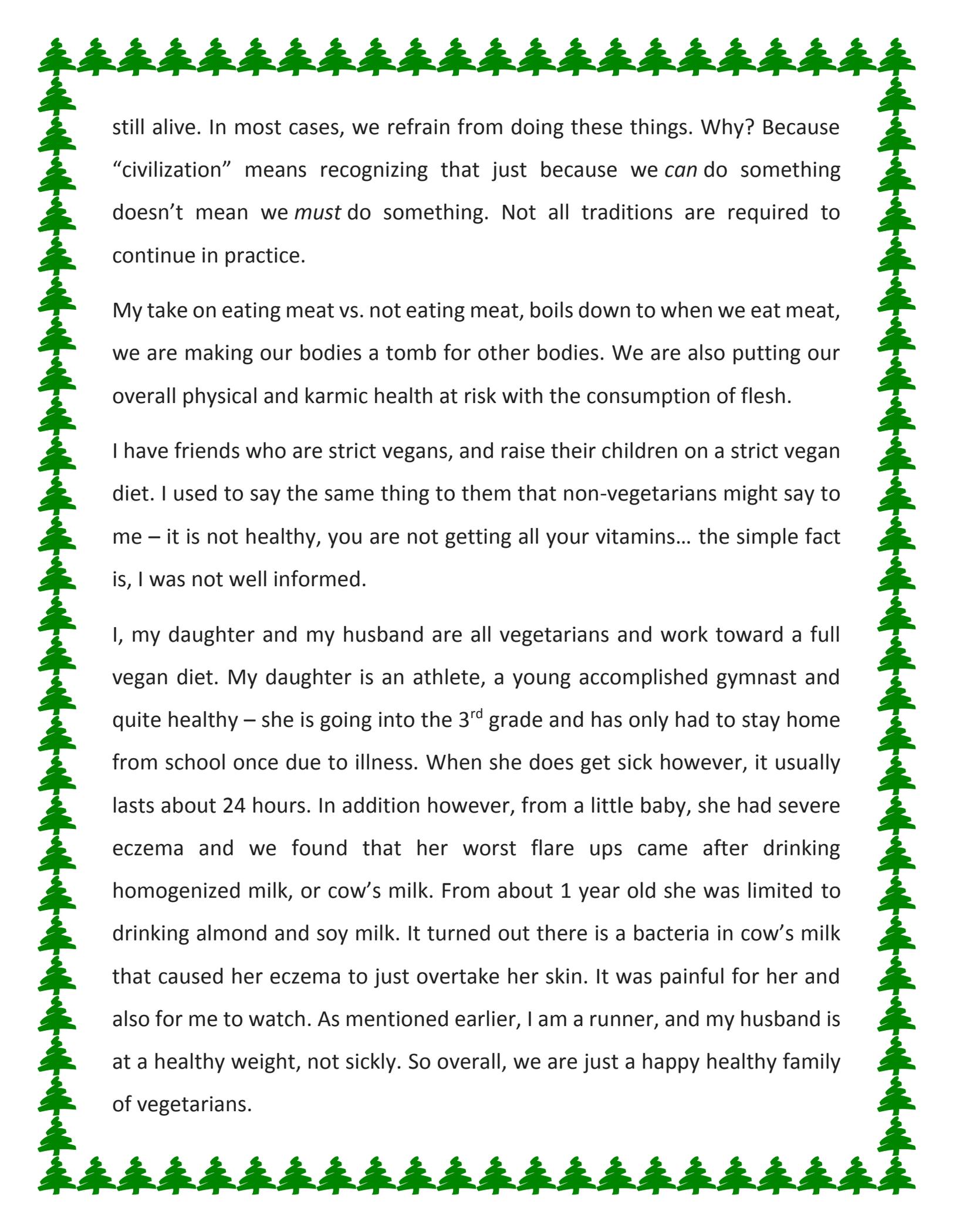
Or...the friends who try and trick you into eating meat... they are trying to be funny, but due to this happening so many times in 15 years to me, I can spot a dot of meat in my food a mile away.

The short and long of this is...

Today I am a vegetarian because I realize that:

It is not necessary in today’s civilization where I live to eat a living breathing creatures. I get my protein and other nutritional essentials from plants, pastas, vegetables and fruit. I am a half-marathon runner and when training I intake roughly 65 grams of protein a day, 40 of those grams are from a plant-based protein, no soy, no whey. With that said, I can run 13.1 miles just fine, and yes, I consider myself healthy.

The human body can eat and digest lots of things. It can, for example, chew up and digest other humans. It can also eat animals while those animals are



still alive. In most cases, we refrain from doing these things. Why? Because “civilization” means recognizing that just because we *can* do something doesn’t mean we *must* do something. Not all traditions are required to continue in practice.

My take on eating meat vs. not eating meat, boils down to when we eat meat, we are making our bodies a tomb for other bodies. We are also putting our overall physical and karmic health at risk with the consumption of flesh.

I have friends who are strict vegans, and raise their children on a strict vegan diet. I used to say the same thing to them that non-vegetarians might say to me – it is not healthy, you are not getting all your vitamins... the simple fact is, I was not well informed.

I, my daughter and my husband are all vegetarians and work toward a full vegan diet. My daughter is an athlete, a young accomplished gymnast and quite healthy – she is going into the 3rd grade and has only had to stay home from school once due to illness. When she does get sick however, it usually lasts about 24 hours. In addition however, from a little baby, she had severe eczema and we found that her worst flare ups came after drinking homogenized milk, or cow’s milk. From about 1 year old she was limited to drinking almond and soy milk. It turned out there is a bacteria in cow’s milk that caused her eczema to just overtake her skin. It was painful for her and also for me to watch. As mentioned earlier, I am a runner, and my husband is at a healthy weight, not sickly. So overall, we are just a happy healthy family of vegetarians.