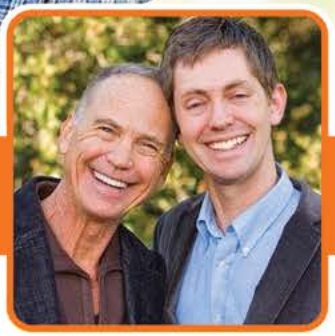
The Real Food ACTION GUIDE

Restore Your Health **and** Save the Planet

John Robbins **Ocean Robbins**



THE FOOD REVOLUTION NETWORK

The Real Food Action Guide

Restore Your Health and Save the Planet

By John and Ocean Robbins

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Excerpted from the 2013 book, Voices of the Food Revolution.
Get all 21 gamechanging conversations when you order the book now.

Introduction

By Ocean Robbins

Thank you for participating in one of the most important conversations about our food that has ever taken place.

Our food chain is in crisis. Big agribusiness has made profits more important than your health—more important than the environment—more important than your right to know how your food is produced.

Large-scale industrialized food production is wreaking havoc on our forests, topsoil, air, water, and climate. Farm animals are being treated with tremendous cruelty, and farm workers are often exploited. Genetically engineered "Frankenfoods" are being released, without adequate testing, into the food supply on a vast scale. Meanwhile, people are eating more and more artificial food—and getting fatter and sicker. In fact, more people are chronically ill today than at any time in the history of the world.

You probably already know that large-scale industrial agribusiness is controlling an expanding share of the world's food supply. They have huge advertising budgets to market highly processed, genetically engineered, chemical-laden, pesticide-contaminated pseudo-foods. With all their lobbyists and political donations, they pretty well run the show in most of our government regulatory and agricultural agencies.

These corporations want to keep your mind closed and your voice silent. They'd like you, and all the rest of us, to keep eating foods that are unhealthy, because by eating these foods, we provide big profits for companies like McDonald's, Monsanto, and Coca-Cola. They'd like to keep you subordinate to their agenda, and so distracted that you won't raise a peep of protest.

Fortunately, you don't have to do that.

Now is the time to find out how you and your family can get informed and take action.

Have you ever been chronically ill? Worried about the health or survival of a loved one? Would you like to know how to lose weight, clean up your arteries, or defend yourself against cancer?

Do you sometimes wish you had more energy, got sick less often, and felt more confident about what to eat for optimal health?

For most of us, a good diet is the best gift we can give to ourselves and our loved ones... because it's the gift of lasting health. And it's not rocket science. Using simple and easy-to-remember steps, you can dramatically increase your chances of living a long and vibrant life.

You have a right to know the truth about what you eat, where it comes from, and what its impact is on your life and on the planet. The more you know, the more power you have to take meaningful action. The more you know, the better able you are to bring your food choices into alignment with your purpose and your passion. Your mind will be clearer, your heart will be more at peace, and your body will thank you for the rest of your life.

The three conversations in this action guide are excerpted from our 2013 book, Voices of the Food Revolution. In this book, for the first time ever, one of the founders of the modern food movement, my dad and colleague, John Robbins, engages in breakthrough dialogues with twenty-one of today's top food revolutionary experts.

Thanks for joining us in taking action for healthy, sustainable, humane and delicious food for all.

Bon appétit.

Ocean Robbins

Dean Ornish, M.D.

Simple and Proven Breakthroughs That are Changing the World

Dean Ornish, M.D., is one of the greatest medical pioneers in the world. His research has demonstrated—for the first time—that integrative changes in diet and lifestyle can reverse heart disease, turn on health-promoting genes, slow aging, and slow or even reverse early-stage prostate cancer. Medicare and many of the largest insurance companies have made his program the first lifestyle-based approach they have ever covered. Chosen by Forbes as "one of the seven most powerful teachers in the world", Dr. Ornish's work is changing the face of medicine.

Dr. Ornish challenges the myth that you have to choose between what's good for you and what's fun for you. His research proves that better diet can lead to better sex, more energy, and a happier life.

John Robbins: Your results have been extraordinary. Patients in your program see their angina reverse or decrease as early as the first few weeks. Blood flow to the heart improves, often in a month or less. After a year, even severely blocked coronary arteries become measurably less blocked. It seems that as the years go by there is even more reversal and more improvement. Have you seen comparative improvements in patients following the more moderate American Heart Association Guidelines or any other program that you know of?

Dr. Dean Ornish: Moderate changes may be enough to prevent heart disease in some people, but they are usually not enough to reverse it. We were able to show in a scientific way that most traditional recommendations didn't go far enough. The more you change your diet and lifestyle, the more you improve in virtually every way we can measure, whether it is your heart disease improving, your PSA coming down, or your gene expression changing. We found that over 500 genes were changed in just three months, with the up-regulating or turning on of genes that prevent disease, and down regulating or turning off of genes that help promote disease. Particularly what are called the RAS oncogenes that promote cancers of the prostate, breast, and colon were down regulated. These processes are much more dynamic than anyone had realized. The more we look, the more we find.

Some people think taking a pill is easy and everyone will do it, but that changing diet and lifestyle is difficult, if not impossible, and hardly anyone will do it. What we're finding is actually the opposite. Adherence to most medications, whether they are cholesterol-lowering drugs or blood pressure pills, is only about 30 percent at three or four months. But we are getting 85–90 percent adherence after a year in Nebraska, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, even though West Virginia leads the United States in heart disease. The reason is that the pill may not make you feel better, but changing your diet and lifestyle will. The better you feel, the more you want to keep doing it so you get into a virtuous cycle. That is one of the reasons people are continuing to do it—not just to live longer, but to live better.

John Robbins: So they enter the program because they have some medical problem that they want to alleviate and they end up changing their life in a way that creates benefits across the board. It seems as though you have found an entry point into people's lives that is healing in a profound sense.

Dr. Dean Ornish: Well it is, and that is why I love doing this work. You know, we are all going to die of something. The mortality rate is still 100 percent, it is one per person. But the question is not just not how long we live,

but also how well we live.

There is a belief that you have to choose between what is good for you and what is fun for you. But we're saying you can have both. You can have more fun, have better sex, sleep deeper, enjoy your food more, and not have all those aches and pains.

The ancient swamis, rabbis, priests, monks, and nuns didn't develop techniques like meditation, yoga, and so on to unclog their arteries or lower their blood pressure. But it turns out that they developed some really powerful tools for transformation that are also physiologically healing. I can't tell you how many patients have said things to me like, "Even if I knew I wouldn't live another day longer I would still make these changes now that I know what they are like because my life is transformed."

What is most meaningful to me is how we can work with people to use the experience of suffering in whatever way they are feeling it as a catalyst and a doorway for transforming their lives. For some, it is physical suffering, because they have angina or chest pain. For others, it is the suffering of depression or isolation. If we can work at that level, then we find that people are much more likely to make lifestyle choices that are life enhancing rather than ones that are self-destructive.

To me it is really about transformation, and then on a physical level, just about everything we measure tends to get better. We're seeing dramatic improvements in things that were never measured before. We found that even telomerase increased by 30 percent in the first three months.

John Robbins: Why it that important?

Dr. Dean Ornish: Dr. Elizabeth Blackburn won the Nobel Prize in 2009 for her co-discovery of telomerase. Telomerase repairs and lengthens our telomeres, which are the ends of our chromosomes. Telomeres control aging, which in turn controls how long we live. So as your telomeres get shorter, your life gets shorter.

She had done a pioneering study with women who were caregivers of parents with Alzheimer's or kids with autism. The more stress the women reported feeling and the longer they reported feeling that way, the lower their telomerase and the shorter were their telomeres. It made headlines because it was the first study showing that even at the genetic level, chronic stress can actually shorten your life.

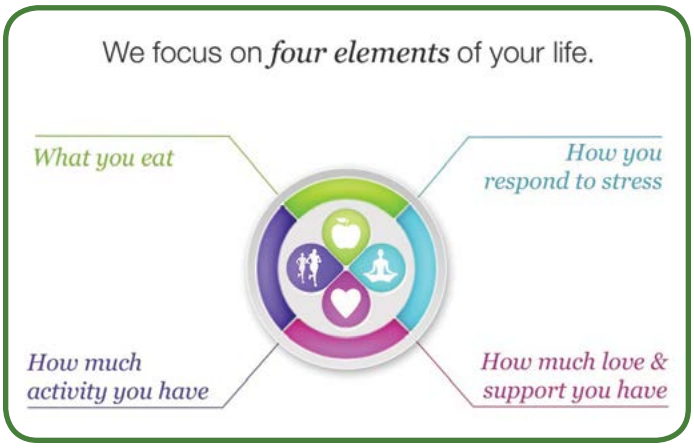
What was one of the more interesting findings of this study is that stress is not simply what happens to you, it is how you deal with it. You could have two women who were in very comparable life situations, but one was coping much better than the other. It wasn't the objective measure of stress that determined its effects on telomerase; it was the women's perception of it. So when people learn how to meditate and do yoga and use other methods to manage stress, they can be in the same job or the same family or the same environment and react in different ways.

John Robbins: I am hearing two things. I am hearing that your research is showing that the kind of lifestyle changes you recommend actually affect gene expression, turning on disease-preventing genes and turning off genes that promote cancer, heart disease, and other diseases. I am also hearing that there is evidence that these same lifestyle changes have an affect on aging, because they actually impact the telomerase.

Dr. Dean Ornish: Yes, we found that the telomerase increased by almost 30 percent in just three months, and ours is the only intervention to date that has been shown to do that. We are now looking to see the effects on telomere lengths.

John Robbins: That is astounding information and a major breakthrough.

Dr. Dean Ornish: It is a radically simple idea that when you eat healthier, when you love more, when you manage stress better, when you exercise moderately, and when you don't smoke, you are happier and your life is more fun.



John Robbins: You have become primarily known for your nutritional wisdom and research, but you have also written in great depth about the healing power of relationships and intimacy. We live in a culture where loneliness probably kills more people than cigarettes. What are you learning about the connection between relationships and health?

Dr. Dean Ornish: We get to know each other really well in some of my studies. After a while I asked some of my patients, "Why do you smoke? Why do you overeat and drink too much and work too hard and abuse yourself? These behaviors seem so maladaptive to me."

They would say: "You don't get it. You don't have a clue. These are adaptive behaviors, because they help us get through the day."

One patient said, "I've got twenty friends in this package of cigarettes and they are always there for me."

So it is true that loneliness kills more people than cigarettes, but keep in mind that it is often loneliness that causes people to smoke in the first place. Or they use food to fill the void or alcohol to numb the pain, or they work all the time to distract themselves.

To me, the function of pain is to say, "Hey, listen up. Pay attention. You are doing something that is not in your best interest." Then we start to say, "Oh, I have a different choice. I can do this instead of that," and then it comes out of your own experience, not because some authority figure told you.

John Robbins: I want to take the example of your friend, former President Bill Clinton. He has had serious health problems for a long time. In 2004 he underwent a quadruple bypass to restore blood flow to his heart. A few years later, there were more problems and he had two stents placed inside one of his coronary arteries that had once again become clogged. After that he made a decision that I think you had probably been encouraging him toward for some time. That decision seems to have transformed his life. He has lost more than twenty-five pounds. The last time I heard from him, he said he was feeling healthier than ever. He may have become the world's most famous vegan. What can you share about President Clinton's health journey and your involvement with it?

Dr. Dean Ornish: Well I love President Clinton. I think he is an amazing human being. I began working with the Clintons in 1993 when someone arranged for Mrs. Clinton to meet with me. She was interested in the research that we were doing and after showing her the research she said, "Would you work with the chefs who cook for us?" And I said, "Excuse me?" She repeated it and I said, "Of course, I would be honored to." So I brought in some of the top chefs that we have worked with over the years. We went to the White House and we worked with the chefs who cooked for the President. We also worked with the chefs from Camp David and from Air Force One. It was a great privilege to be able to do that.

I also began working with the President on his own health. He did make some changes in the way he was eating and it

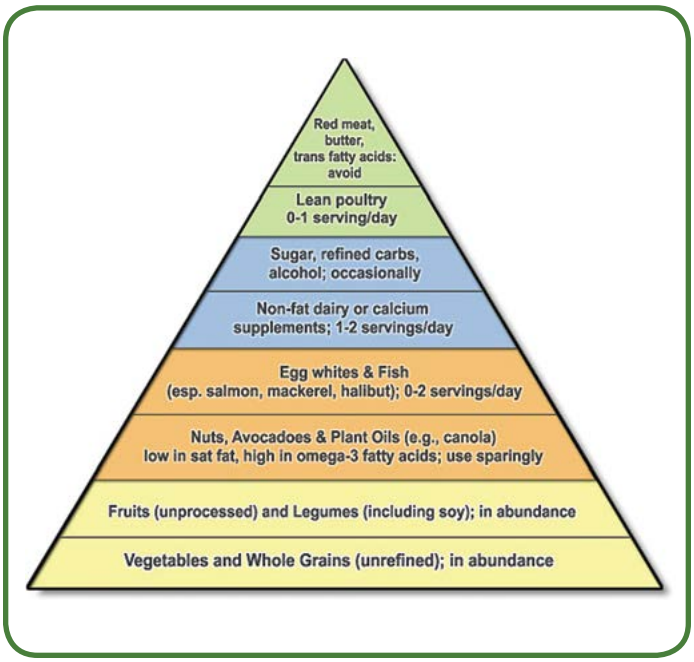
did lead to some benefits, but when his bypass clogged up, there was a press conference in which it was announced that it was all in his genes and his diet and lifestyle had nothing to do with the bypass clogging up. So I communicated with him and said, "The friends that I value the most are the ones who tell me what I need to hear, not necessarily what I want to hear. What you need to know is that it is not all in your genes. I say this not to blame you, but to empower you, because if it were all in your genes, you would just be a victim. There is a lot you can do. Again, that is the opportunity. It is not a criticism in any way. It is out of great respect and love."

I sent President Clinton some of the research and a couple of books that I have written on the topic, and when we met a week or so later, he said that he had decided to do it. I was really happy that he did that because I care about him so much. I was also happy because I think, whatever your politics, when the President of the United States—especially one who was known earlier in his life for eating particularly unhealthfully—makes a choice to eat a lot healthier, that sets a great example for everyone. So, as you say, he may have become the world's most well-known vegan. Whatever other considerable good that he does in the world, he will have added to it substantially by showing that this is possible.

John Robbins: I want to share one of my favorite quotes of yours. You said, "I don't understand why asking people to eat a well-balanced, vegetarian diet is considered radical, while it is medically conservative to cut people open and put them on powerful cholesterol-lowering drugs for the rest of their lives."

Dr. Dean Ornish: We pay for things that are dangerous, invasive, expensive, and largely ineffective. And we have a hard time believing that simple choices in our lives that we make each day—like what we eat, how we respond to stress, how much love we give each other, and how much we exercise—can make such a powerful difference. But they really do. That is probably our unique contribution: we use these very high tech, expensive, state-of-the-art measures working with first-rate scientists to show how powerful these very simple, low-tech, and low-cost interventions can be. Three-quarters of the 2.8 trillion dollars that we spend each year on health care in the United States is for chronic diseases that can often be prevented or even reversed by simply making these same kinds of changes. In every one of our studies, the more people have changed their diet and lifestyle, the more they have improved.

It is not like there is one diet and lifestyle intervention for heart disease and a different one for prostate cancer and a different one for Type 2 Diabetes and a different one for changing your genes or making your telomeres longer. It is really just to the degree that you move in this direction, we've found there is a corresponding benefit. It is not all or nothing. Being a vegan is too much for some people, so we say, "Okay great. Just do what you can. What matters most is your overall way of eating and living. Foods aren't good or bad, but some are healthier for you than others." So we have categorized foods from the healthiest (group one) to the least healthful (group five), and groups two through four are intermediate. If you are eating mostly four and five, you are eating mostly unhealthy food.



If you feel like making any changes, of course that is up to you. You can say, "Okay, maybe I will eat a little less four and five and maybe more one through three." Then you do that and you see if you feel better. If you start to feel better, then maybe you want to make even bigger changes, but again it is coming out of your own experience.

The problem with going on a diet is that when you go on a diet, sooner or later you are likely to go off it. Once you go off it, you may feel like you are a failure. Be compassionate with yourself. Just say, "Directionally I am going to go more towards a plant-based diet because I want to feel better. So if I indulge myself one day, then I will eat healthier the next. If I don't exercise one day, I will do a little more the next. If I don't have time to meditate for an hour, I will do it for a minute." Just the consistency is more important than anything, and that way you can't fail. It just becomes a way of living in the world rather than just a diet that you go on and off.

John Robbins: It reminds me of the old story, The Tortoise and the Hare. Slow and steady wins the race.

Dr. Dean Ornish: That's true. And it's also true that sometimes people do really well when they make big changes all at once because they feel so much better so quickly, and the effect of their changes is highly visible. For others it is easier to go with slow and steady.

We say, "Here are the risks and the benefits, the costs and the side effects. This is your life, and your responsibility. I am only here to support you and make sure that you have all of the information that you can use to make intelligent choices. I'm here to support whatever you choose to do, whether it is drugs, surgery, lifestyle, or a combination."

John Robbins: You have been engaged in a dialogue with Medicare for a long time that is now bearing fruit. One would hope that if you do good science it is going to change medical practice. But if there isn't reimbursement, then it might not.

Dr. Dean Ornish: I am grateful for Medicare. They are now covering "Dr. Ornish's Program for Reversing Heart Disease" as a named program in the clinics, hospitals, and physician's offices where we train and certify. Having seen what powerful changes diet and lifestyle can make over the past thirty-five years of studies, it is great to be able to make them available. Reimbursement is an important determinant of medical practice and even medical education.

I learned a painful lesson when we opened a number of sites before we had reimbursement to cover our program. Even though we got excellent clinical outcomes, some of those sites closed down. They didn't close because the treatment wasn't working. They closed because it wasn't reimbursable.

If you change reimbursement, then everything follows. Without that even a thousand studies may not be enough to really change things.

After sixteen years of reviewing our work internally and externally, Medicare agreed to cover it. Now we can make it available to people everywhere, because most other insurance companies are following their lead.

We trained ten hospitals in West Virginia which has been the number one state in the country for heart disease, and 44 hospitals and clinics elsewhere, with many more to come. We trained the St. Vincent de Paul Society homeless clinic in San Francisco in our Spectrum Integrative Medicine Program and they have treated more than 15,000 people through it in the past year and a half. We will be offering our reversing heart disease program there as well which Medicare will reimburse, and then we'll clone it to St. Vincent de Paul homeless clinics throughout the country.

We are in the process of training lots of different people in our program and providing a truly integrative paradigm that incorporates the best of drugs and surgery when they are effective, but also addresses the more fundamental causes of why we get sick.

John Robbins: You have become known for advocating a low-fat diet, and yet as you have so often pointed out,

low fat is not synonymous with healthy. I have seen studies that purport to measure low-fat diets to see if there are any benefits, but they define "low fat" as an intake barely less than the norm in our culture, and then don't see benefits. There is barely any reduction in fat consumption, so you see barely any results.

Dr. Dean Ornish: Right, well not only is there barely any reduction in fat, but also they usually put in tons of sugar. I am so sorry that I somehow have gotten this reputation as the low-fat guy. I think it came out of the debates I was in with Dr. Atkins. To me that is the least interesting part of the work that we do.

John Robbins: What would you say is the role of fat in an optimally healthy diet?

Dr. Dean Ornish: It depends. Three or four grams a day of omega-3 fatty acids taken during pregnancy can increase a child's IQ. For adults, they can reduce your risk of sudden cardiac death by up to 80 percent, because they raise the threshold for ventricular fibrillation. They can reduce your risk of prostate or breast cancer. They can help reduce inflammation. They can lower triglycerides. I think that those are good things to have in your diet.

If you are vegan, you can get omega-3 fats from the plankton-based supplements, and if you are not, you can get them from fish oil. I recommend that just about everybody take three or four grams a day of fish oil or the equivalent.

There is a consensus that trans fats are harmful in a number of different ways. There is a lot of controversy about whether saturated fat is harmful or not. I think it is, with the possible exceptions of the saturated fat that you find in chocolate, which, although it is dense in calories, may actually be good for your heart.

Total fat consumption matters in a number of ways, one of which is that fat is the most dense form of calories. Fat has nine calories per gram and protein and carbs have only four. So if you are eating less fat, you are getting fewer calories without having to eat less food. It is the volume of the food that really seems to stimulate satiety more than the caloric density of the food. An easy way to lose weight is to just reduce the amount of fat in your diet, because you are going to be getting the same quantity of food, but it will be less dense in calories, so you are going to be eating fewer of them.

John Robbins: How about coconut?

Dr. Dean Ornish: Coconut is high in saturated fat. I think the jury is out on coconut. I haven't seen enough good evidence either way.

John Robbins: Olive oil is frequently touted as a health food and the center of the Mediterranean Diet. At the same time, canola oil is getting a bad reputation in certain circles. What do you think of this controversy?

Dr. Dean Ornish: One of the main reasons people think that olive oil is good for you is because of the Lyon Study that took place in France. People consuming what was termed a Mediterranean Diet had an 80 percent lower risk of heart attacks than those who didn't. But if you actually looked at what they were eating on this so-called Mediterranean Diet, they were reducing their intake of saturated fats—meat and butter and dairy and so on. And they were eating a diet that was high in canola oil. What makes canola oil beneficial are the omega-3 fatty acids that are high in canola oil but are very low in olive oil. That is what they were eating in the Lyon study, and so the Mediterranean Diet that was so beneficial was high in canola oil, more than in olive oil.

Now olive oil does have antioxidants. It has some good things. The problem with olive oil is that, like all oils, it is so dense in calories. One tablespoon of olive oil has about fourteen grams of fat. People dip their bread in it and soak up large amounts of oil, thinking it is somehow going to be good for them and not realizing that they are getting a lot of calories.

John Robbins: I want to ask you about alcohol. I have always seen you as somebody who wants people to enjoy their life.

Dr. Dean Ornish: Absolutely. What is the point otherwise?

John Robbins: For many people, alcohol is part of their joy in life and their connection with other people. Yet of course, in excess it is addictive and terribly destructive. We are seeing some evidence that moderate alcohol consumption has actual health benefits. What is your take on this?

Dr. Dean Ornish: I think that you should do things you enjoy. I don't prescribe alcohol. I don't proscribe alcohol. I say if you are going to drink, the studies show that it is best to keep it on average under two drinks a day. Two drinks means two glasses of wine, two cans of beer, two shots of whiskey, or the equivalent.

The studies show that people who drink moderately can derive some benefit. But these are people who like to hang out with their friends after work. They go to a bar or go to a restaurant for happy hour. It's a great place for people to get social support. So it's hard to separate how much of that benefit is due to the social support, and how much is due to moderate alcohol consumption. Rather than trying to sort out the relative parts, I would say they are probably both important. But I wouldn't tell somebody who is not drinking to start. I think that it is important that people feel like they have lots of ways of increasing their social support or managing stress. Some people may sit around drinking, and other people will do it in other ways.

John Robbins: Medicine is a business and there are powerful commercial forces involved. There is a lot of money at stake, and the incentives haven't always been aligned with patient well-being.

Dr. Dean Ornish: I think that is beginning to change with the Affordable Care Act. Now instead of reimbursement by procedure we're seeing reimbursement by diagnosis. When you say, "Here is X amount of dollars to take care of someone who has got heart disease," then suddenly the doctor might be advising doing fewer procedures and helping people to change their lifestyles.

We all know that lifestyle is important in preventing disease. But now we're seeing lifestyle as a treatment. It can often work as well or even better, at a fraction of the cost, with only good side effects.

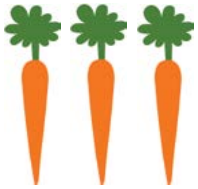
There is a convergence of forces that make this the right idea at the right time. The limitations of high-tech medicine are becoming clear. Stents and angioplasties don't work for stable patients, and the surgery for prostate cancer isn't really necessary most of the time. Meanwhile, the power of these very simple, low-tech, low-cost interventions like lifestyle changes have become increasingly well-documented.

The opportunities are really ripe now for industries to realize that a new paradigm of medical care can be much more sustainable, and even profitable.

Health care costs are reaching a tipping point. They are not financially sustainable for the government nor for many families. Most large businesses are self-insured, and this is coming right off their bottom line. There is a debate between some people who say, "Let's just raise taxes and let the deficit go up," and other people who say, "No, let's just dismantle or privatize Medicare."

I say, "If 75% of the $2.8 trillion in health care costs are for chronic diseases that can often be prevented and even reversed by making comprehensive lifestyle changes, this can be a third alternative. By teaching people how to change their lifestyles, we can make better care available to more people at significantly lower costs—and the only side-effects are good ones."

For more info on Dr. Ornish' work, and to gain access to many resources and opportunities, visit www.ornishspectrum.com.



Vandana Shiva, Ph.D.

The Big Picture

Vandana Shiva, Ph.D., is a world-renowned environmental leader and thinker. Starting from her mother's cowshed in India, she founded the Research Foundation on Science, Technology, and Ecology. Vandana is also founder of Navdanya ("nine seeds"), a movement promoting diversity and use of native seeds. Vandana is author of many bestselling books, and the recipient of numerous awards and honorary degrees including the Alternative Nobel Peace Prize. In 2011 Forbes named her "one of the 7 most influential feminists in the world."

Vandana reflects on the tragic irony that in the land where Gandhi spun freedom through cotton and the spinning wheel, 95 percent of the cotton is now controlled by Monsanto. The result? More than 250,000 farmers in India have committed suicide since Monsanto began to take control of the cotton industry. Dr. Shiva is working with 500,000 farmers in India and worldwide, creating sixty-six seed banks, and mobilizing millions to work for food sovereignty. This is her inspiring story and her call to action.

John Robbins: There are corporations that are seeking to profit from and control every aspect of the food-supply chain, from seeds to land to water. What is at risk and what is being threatened by the efforts of Monsanto and other biotech companies to patent the seeds we depend on for our food?

Dr. Vandana Shiva: I think the very future of life is at risk with patenting and the attempt by a handful of corporations to control our seeds.

First, corporations with their centralized control cannot deal with the diversity that the planet has. That diversity has been nourished by caring farmers at a small-scale level. For example, India evolved 200,000 varieties of rice. Small farms can grow twenty-five to thirty varieties of rice. Navdanya, on its farm in Doon Valley, grows about 700 varieties of rice. But doing that requires a kind of love and care that is only possible at the small scale. We have had Monsanto around for the past fifteen years, commercializing GM crops. What have they given us? Mainly four crops: Roundup Ready canola, Roundup Ready soya, Roundup Ready and Bt corn, and Bt cotton. Four crops with two traits. One trait enables more spraying of herbicides, which are causing more toxins in the plants and creating resistant superweeds. The other trait is Bt crops, which are creating resistant superpests. So we're getting superweeds and superpests, and the loss of diversity.

Second, allowing the patenting of life-forms is eroding the very ethical fabric of our existence on this planet. We are part of the earth family; we are one among many species. If a handful of corporations now claim to be creators and inventors of life on earth, that is going to put our thinking and our relationship with the earth in disarray. In addition, the only reason corporations like Monsanto take a patent is to create a monopoly, giving them the right to extract superprofits in the form of royalties. They get these patents on very false grounds of having invented seeds—which they haven't. They poison the seeds, and they should be treated as polluters and fined, not rewarded with a monopoly.

When the British colonized the Third World, they took over the land and revenues from the land, and dispossessed the Indian people. That is what created the hunger and famines and landlessness in India, or in Africa, or in Latin America, where it was more the Spanish and the Portuguese who colonized. Today the colonization is of the seeds themselves. The small persons who are given the seed, who are the source of the seed, have never before had to

buy seed. They don't have money and when the companies' agents come they say "You are going to be a millionaire! You are going to get 1,500 kilograms of cotton per acre. Just sign on this little piece of paper." The signing on the piece of paper is a mortgage on the land.

The farmer thinks, "If I get that much yield, if I get that many returns, I will be able to pay back this loan, so what's the problem?" The loan is against an 8,000 percent increase in seed prices and the false promise of pest control. This is a guaranteed debt trap. Farmers in the cotton belt of India today have lost control over the seed. Ninety five percent of it is owned by Monsanto, in just a decade! In the land where cotton evolved, in the land where Gandhi spun freedom through cotton and the spinning wheel, today 95 percent of the cottonseed is owned and controlled by Monsanto.

Monsanto's superprofits and royalties have trapped our farmers in debt, and a quarter-million Indian farmers, mostly in the cotton areas, have committed suicide. Patents on seed mean genocide.

John Robbins: What are the economics at play that are forcing people to have no possible recourse?

Dr. Vandana Shiva: I think it is a mixture of factors. Monsanto actually emerged as a war chemicals industry. It is known for Agent Orange, and for toxics. It wasn't ever in seed and agriculture. This is a recent entry, because they realized controlling the seed means controlling the entire food chain and the profits they can make from that are so much more than they can make at any other level. So in a way they brought war to our farmlands. They brought war against our farmers. The economics of it are first and foremost the economics of a monopoly, created by a highly undemocratic, international trade treaty, which brought clauses on control over the seed.

There is an article 27.3(b) in the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement, which is the agreement of the World Trade Organization, that governs seeds, agriculture, patenting, and intellectual property. Monsanto is on record saying, "We were the patient, diagnostician, and physician, all in one in drafting this treaty. We defined the problem." And the problem they defined was that farmers save seeds and the solution they offered was that if farmers saved their seeds, it should be treated as an intellectual property crime. Worse, Monsanto has gone further to say that if Monsanto contaminates a farmer's field with genetic pollution from their seeds pollinating, the contamination represents not a pollution for which Monsanto should be liable, but rather a theft of Monsanto's technology.

This is what they did with Percy Schmeiser, a Canadian farmer whom they sued for $200,000 after they contaminated his canola crop. That is why I joined the group of eighty-four plaintiffs who brought a case to the District Court in New York to stop Monsanto from using patent law to sue organic farmers after contaminating their crops. Unfortunately the District Court dismissed the case, saying those farmers have no standing. You have no standing to protect your crops? You have no standing to protect your rights as

farmers? This is the ultimate abuse of human rights.

Another economic reality is that Monsanto and their agenda really has taken over governments. It has taken over the White House, it has taken over the USDA, and it has even taken over our Indian Prime Minister's office. Our entire seed and agriculture policy is being drafted by these companies. The United States passed the Global Food Security Act of 2009 with the singular focus of distributing GM seeds around the world. It was a 7.7 billion dollar subsidy to Monsanto using the arm twisting of USAID.

Economics is no longer about fair play. It is no longer about competition. It has come to be about stealing of governments, stealing democracy, stealing our seeds, and stealing our freedom. This is the ultimate test, which is why I have dedicated my entire life to fighting it and have created an entire organization and movement.

I am not the kind to build institutions. I wanted to be a free bird doing physics quietly with my little equations. That was my dream of life. But instead I am working with 500,000 farmers, mobilizing millions, creating real alternatives with sixty-six community seed banks, and training more than 300 farmers every month to be free in their seed and free in their food. It's because there is too much at stake. In fact, everything is at stake.

John Robbins: Shouldn't it be the responsibility of Monsanto and of farmers who plant GMO crops to ensure that genetically engineered DNA does not trespass onto neighboring farmlands?

Dr. Vandana Shiva: Yes, it should. There is now a United Nations International Treaty on Biosafety. I had a big role in introducing the clauses that led to it at the Earth Summit in 1990 in Rio. Under this treaty, there is a new protocol on liability. We need to see that every country implements this protocol so that Monsanto is held responsible for the contamination it is causing.

John Robbins: After Monsanto introduced Roundup Ready canola, organic canola became virtually nonexistent in its pure form because of the contamination. We are starting to see a similar pattern now with corn, soybeans, cotton, sugar beets, and alfalfa. Is it even possible for transgenic seed to coexist with organic seed, or will it eventually contaminate the entire organic world?

Dr. Vandana Shiva: I don't think coexistence between GM crops and organic is at all possible. Any official who says it is, is lying through their teeth. Last year at a conference organized by Prince Charles in Washington, I had been invited to speak at the International Session. Tom Vilsack, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, began his speech by saying "I have two sons: GMO and organic, and I love them both and I want them to coexist," and someone got up from the audience and said: "We're very sorry, but one of your sons is a bully and won't allow the other one to exist." And that is the reality.

Genetic engineering is done in the lab, and then the plants are released in the fields and they behave like any other plant: they cross-pollinate. The pollen spreads by wind, and genetic contamination is inevitable. This is why we've said to stop the deliberate release. Because the systems that should build a caution around this technology have all been deliberately dismantled.

At the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, when we got the biosafety clauses to include the Convention on Biological Diversity, U.S. President Bush stormed out and refused to sign the convention. He came back and immediately asked his Vice President, Dan Quayle, to advise him. The Vice President became an advocate for what was called substantial equivalence. They just declared, "Treat every genetically modified crop as equivalent to the crops from which you robbed the parent material." This is a policy of don't look, don't see. But this is also a policy of what I have called ontological schizophrenia.

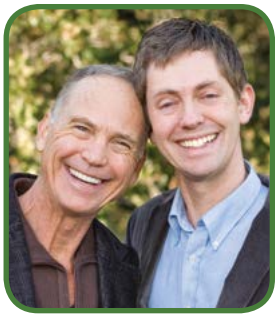
When you want to patent that same seed, you say, "I made something totally new, it didn't exist in nature, no farmer has ever bred it, I am the inventor, give me a patent." And then when we turn around and say, "And this will have consequences so you should own the contamination and therefore pay for it and compensate the farmers whose fields you have destroyed," they say "No, no, it's just like nature made it. This is a natural organism." You can't have the same organism being natural when it comes to responsibility for pollution, and totally an invention of Monsanto when it comes to taking rights over the seed. The whole structure is so dishonest and that is why I am starting a huge campaign on seed freedom. We want to remind the world that there is no food sovereignty without seed sovereignty, and there is no food freedom without seed freedom.

John Robbins: My hope is that one seed at a time, one farm at a time, one meal at a time, we can break free from corporate food dictatorships, and in the process, create a vibrant and fertile food democracy.

For more info on Dr. Vandana Shiva's work, and to join the movement for food freedom and seed justice, visit www.navdanya.org.

Being a Food Revolutionary

Ocean Robbins Interviews his dad and colleague, John Robbins



Now we turn the tables, and I get to interview the interviewer, who happens to be my dad, the one who literally wrote the book on The Food Revolution.

You may know a little of our family story: My grandfather started Baskin-Robbins, and groomed my dad, John Robbins, to one day succeed him. My dad walked away from what became the world's largest ice cream company—and the money it represented—to follow his own "rocky road", and devote his life to advocating for health and sustainability.

Starting with the million-copy Diet for a New America, my dad's books became international bestsellers and helped awaken our society to the possibility of far more compassionate, healthy, and earth-friendly food. He's the recipient of the Albert Schweitzer Prize for Humanitarianism, the Rachel Carson Award, The Peace Abbey's Courage of Conscience Award, Green America's Lifetime Achievement Award, and numerous other accolades. For twenty-five years, John Robbins has been challenging some of the most powerful industries on the planet, and inspiring millions of people to look at their food and life choices as an opportunity to get empowered and make a difference.

What are the most surprising and useful things he's uncovered in his decades of study?

If you want to be a food revolutionary and take advantage of the health secrets we've discovered, what are the top things you need to do?

My dad had polio as a child, and this helped form him into the health advocate he is today. How do suffering and adversity shape us, and how can we seek to use them on behalf of the purposes for which we live?

And how the heck can he bench press his own weight twenty times, at the age of 65?

Of course, my dad's been known to turn the tables and ask me a question or two as well. Here's our lively conversation.

Ocean Robbins: What's really at stake today in the world of food?

John Robbins: There are powerful forces at work, and they are pushing in very different directions. On the one side there are Monsanto, McDonald's, the agrichemical companies, and the massive vested interests that are behind industrial agriculture, factory farms, and the destruction of family farms. These forces are heavily invested in the status quo. They're profiting from selling food that is harmful to us to eat, and producing it in a way that is harmful to the planet and cruel to farm animals. But they are making a lot of money and are heavily invested in making sure this system continues the way that it is.

On the other side, we have a rising tide of people who want to eat food that is healthy, that has been produced in a way that is friendly to the earth, and that is a celebration of life. These two opposing forces are fighting a war… over dinner. I am a journalist reporting on this battle. But I'm also taking a side as an advocate and an activist. I want to help people to answer these challenges in their lives.

Will we let big agribusiness continue to control the entire food supply chain from seeds, to land, to water? Will we let Monsanto and the other biotech companies continue to patent the seeds we depend on for our food crops? Or will we develop food systems that produce nutritious food in harmony with the natural world? Can we put an end to the

escalating rates of diabetes, cancer, and obesity? Can we finally make sure that everyone has enough to eat? Can we feed ourselves and our children food that nourishes body, mind, and soul?

Ocean Robbins: We're facing some pretty disturbing realities. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are spreading all over the world, and are now in 75 percent of the restaurant meals and supermarket items that the average American is consuming. GMOs have been linked to all kinds of problems, including potentially cancer and food allergies. We're learning about dangerous chemicals in our food system, frightening threats to our climate, potential shortages of soil and water, and industries that are profiting from people's ill health. A lot of us feel overwhelmed just trying to cope with our lives as is, and making a change or trying to face so much destruction can feel like too much. Do you ever feel like you're making people's lives more difficult by sharing so much depressing information? Is ignorance sometimes a form of bliss?

John Robbins: I actually don't think, in matters like these, that ignorance is bliss. I think ignorance is accommodation; ignorance is supplication and subordination. When we choose to remain ignorant, we acquiesce to our own oppression. The most powerful weapon any oppressor can wield is power over the mind of the oppressed.

Ignorance can seem blissful, because sometimes the process of awakening, of becoming aware of things that are disturbing, is painful. But that pain is the breaking of the shell that otherwise encloses our understanding, our capacity to act, and our ability to make a difference.

If we remain encased in ignorance, we don't do anything differently and we in effect condone, and become partners in, the destruction that's taking place. When we become conscious, then we start to be able to actually make choices that make a difference.

Our way of eating is deeply intertwined with an economic system, and with a belief system about the human relationship with the natural world. In many cases, we humans have been exploiters. We've preyed on the earth and its creatures, and even on one another. In the process we've done a tremendous amount of damage. There are so many of us now on the planet that if we continue to cause as much damage per person as we have been, the consequence will be our own demise.

We're doing something that's utterly out of phase with our own greatness, our own beauty, and our own love. We are literally destroying the earth on which we depend for our food, for our economy, and for our lives. The effort to bring our food systems, our personal choices, our ways of life, and our definition of success back into alignment with the well-being of the whole is a tremendous challenge. What I hope is that in bringing this information to people and raising these questions, we can enliven people's ability to experience themselves as positive and creative vehicles for change in their lives and in the world.

Ocean Robbins: What are the benefits that we can look forward to as we participate in the food revolution?

John Robbins: Greater health, greater vitality, less disease, a stronger immune system, a stronger respiratory system, a stronger cardiovascular system, a longer life, more joy, more sensuality, more pleasure, and a greater capacity to respond creatively to life's challenges with resilience and resourcefulness rather than with resignation and passivity.

Ocean Robbins: You've been a passionate gardener for much of my life. And every Saturday morning you grab a bunch of canvas shopping bags and head over to the local farmers' market. Why do you love growing food and shopping at farmers' markets?

John Robbins: When you grow food on any scale, it helps you to experience your connection with the earth, and to take pleasure in the earth's fertility. Second best to

growing your own food is to buy directly from the grower. Farmers' markets are places where you can meet the farmers and buy directly from them.

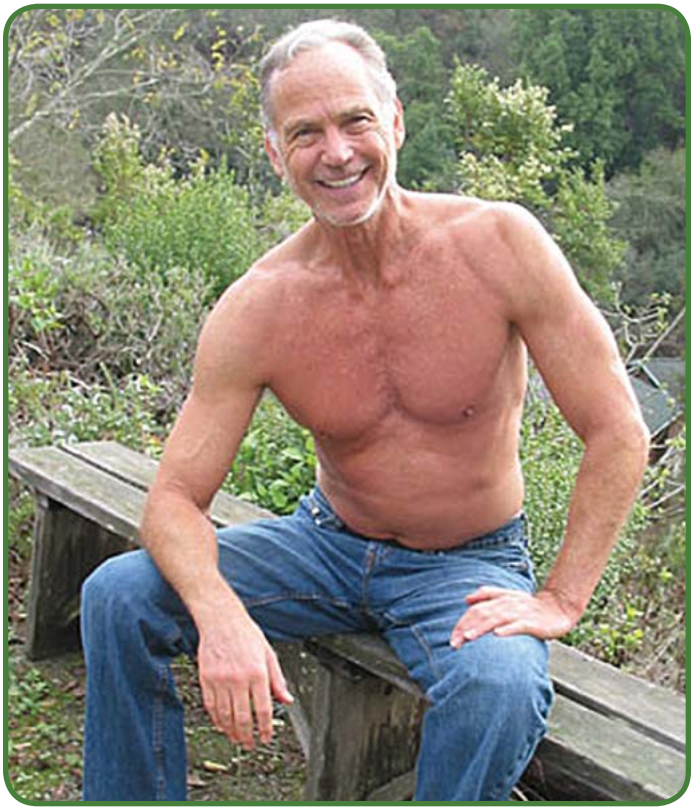
When you buy from a grower, there's a direct contact in that—to the farmer, and even to the land. For those who have access to one, a farmers' market is a great place to get food that is fresh, nutritious, and beautiful.

Ocean Robbins: I think food should be fun. It should be a source of beauty and happiness. When we nourish our bodies, we are truly making a statement to ourselves and to our world that we want to care for ourselves and that we are participants in a larger community of life. There is something extraordinary about stepping lovingly into the web of relations that consuming food represents. Bringing joy to our relationship with food adds a bounce to the step of our lives. There is a lot of heaviness in some of the data, but when we can actually embody what is possible, we can find tremendous richness and beauty.

John Robbins: And pleasure. Like you and many others, I love food. My diet is relatively simple. I don't eat very many processed foods, and I don't eat a lot of fat. Some people would consider my diet Spartan. But the truth is, I get more pleasure now out of eating say a simple baked potato than I used to out of eating a baked potato smothered in sour cream and butter and beef gravy—because I am more present. I feel more centered in my body; and I feel more connected to my senses.

When you're healthy and you're living a life that's true to your essential spirit, then the simple pleasures of life are fulfilling. I believe that eating simple food in a healthy body with a clean conscience is more pleasurable, and infinitely more satisfying, then eating decadent food that makes you and your world ill.

Ocean Robbins: Healthy food is an important facet of fitness, but you're also an advocate for exercise. And you really do walk your talk. When I was about 8 years old, you introduced me to running, and became my coach. By the time I was 10 we were running marathons together, and you were competing in triathlons. Now we work out at the gym together, and even though you are a 65-year-old grandfather, you still regularly bench press your weight twenty times. I don't know if many people of any age can do that.



John Robbins at 66

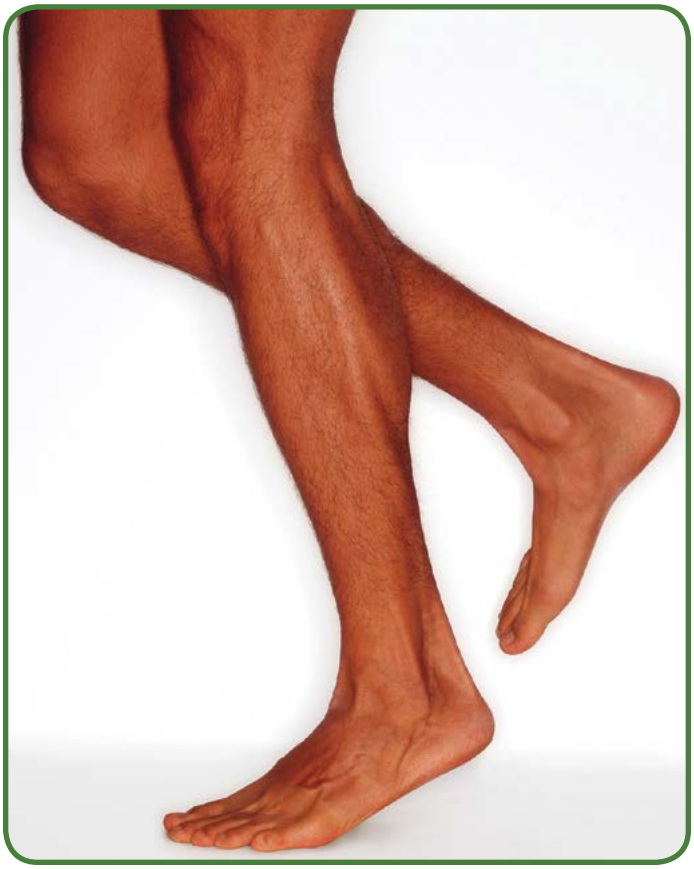
Your accomplishments are exceptional, but your message has always been accessible. Wherever we are in the fitness spectrum, we can all do something. Whether we get a little exercise or a lot of exercise, we can lean into the health that we want to have. Over time, our body can become a source of increasing fulfillment and joy. What does exercise mean to you, and why do you think it's so important?

John Robbins: When I was 6 years old, I had a form of polio and it left me for a time in a wheelchair and unable to move my legs. Eventually the feeling and movement

returned to my legs, but it did so much less in my left leg than in my right. When I was 21 my left leg was three inches shorter than my right leg and was very weak; I could hardly put weight on it and it was fairly withered. The doctors at the time told me, "John, your growing years are over. You're just going to have to live with it." Have you ever noticed that doctors don't always know everything?

Ocean Robbins: We sometimes act as if MD stood for Medical Deity.

John Robbins: Yes, and then we supplicate before anyone in a white coat. But I didn't accept the prognosis I was given. Instead, I changed my life. I stopped trying to live up to the agenda that my father had for me. I changed the way I ate completely—from an ice cream centered diet to a plant-strong diet; from a lot of processed and artificial foods to natural foods. I began to do yoga, and I began to meditate. I began to do a lot of deep therapy and work on myself to investigate and explore my own beliefs and my own assumptions so that I could work with them. What



in fact happened was that over the next ten years, my leg did grow, becoming as long as the right one. It never got fully as strong, but now it comes close. I always love the opportunity to hike, to climb mountains, and to be athletic. I never take the ability to do these things for granted. I am grateful beyond description that my body works as well as it does, and I want to make the most of it.

Our capacity to respond to the suffering and pain in our lives is very important. Sometimes we find that we have the ability to activate rather than merely to accommodate. We learn how to use our suffering for growth, for learning, to deepen our empathy, and to make us stronger at the broken places. For me, exercise has been a way of expressing a commitment to living fully, and to engaging with suffering and stress in a positive way. Every time I work out at the gym, every time I run a race or just jog or hike, I feel physically alive. I'm doing it as an expression of gratitude for the opportunity to live in a body that works.

I'm grateful that I can breathe. I'm grateful that I can walk. I'm grateful that I can do these things that I enjoy so much and that are a beautiful part of being human.

We can take our health for granted. When I was in high school and I was, to a large extent, unable to express myself physically, I used to admire the football stars and the track team captains, who had natural athletic gifts. I know some of these guys today, and a lot of them have heart disease and are overweight. They haven't taken care of themselves because they took their gifts for granted. I didn't take them for granted, because I didn't have them. I'm actually now grateful for the fact that I struggled so much physically, because it spurred me to do what I could with what I had. I think when we use what we have to the fullest extent possible, we get more. We get more responsibility, and we get more ability.

Ocean Robbins: If you want to know how important breathing is, you can just talk to someone who's had asthma, lung cancer, or emphysema.

John Robbins: When I see people smoke, I know the emptiness that they are probably dealing with and that there is pain and loneliness inside them. I hope they are getting some relief, but I also know that the habit is a dangerous one. We need to support each other with love, kindness and compassion so that we can shift out of the destructive habits and create natural highs. We need to develop ways of getting our needs met, and of finding our relief and our pleasures, that are consistent with our greatness as human beings rather than our destruction.

Ocean Robbins: Only about 25 percent of the 141 medical schools in the United States require their students to take a single nutrition course over the course of their six years of training. Why are these institutions not educating future physicians about the foundation of health?

John Robbins: The practice of medicine as we know it is not actually designed to support the health of people. It's really designed to diagnose and treat disease—primarily with drugs and surgery. We might think that a doctor would be someone who would know about preventing disease and promoting health. But in fact, compared to others, our medical doctors live shorter lives. They have a higher rate of drug addiction, and they have more heart disease. They aren't examples of health, because they haven't learned the principles of healthy living. Their education has taught them a great deal about drugs, surgery, treatments, and procedures. But they've been taught little to nothing about the practices and principles that actually prevent disease in the first place. Doctors are working in a system that pushes them really hard, and they are usually so overworked that they don't have time to investigate on their own. They haven't been taught, and generally don't learn, much if anything about prevention.

Fortunately, there are many health researchers all over the world who have taken it upon themselves to study prevention and the role of nutrition. Some of them are MDs like Dr. Esselstyn, Dr. Ornish, Dr. Fuhrman, and Dr. Barnard. Because of their work, we now know how to prevent many of the diseases that afflict us today. We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to them for their courageous work.

Ocean Robbins: With all that we know about diet and health, why do you think so many people continue to eat food that is killing us? And perhaps more importantly, what can we do about it?

John Robbins: Many of us are drawn to eat unhealthfully because processed junk foods are tasty, convenient, and inexpensive. Part of the reason we find them tasty is that they are familiar. They are convenient because they are widely available and heavily marketed. And they are inexpensive in part because they are subsidized.

It's crazy, but government policy actually subsidizes those foods that are least healthy. We subsidize genetically engineered corn and soy, which become livestock feed in factory farms, high-fructose corn syrup, isolated proteins, and hydrogenated vegetable oils. Why don't we instead subsidize healthy foods? What if we were to tax white bread and then use the revenue to lower the cost to the consumer of whole wheat bread? What if we were to tax pesticides and use the income from that tax to lower the

cost to the consumer of organic food? What if we taxed sugary sodas, and used the income from that to lower the cost to the consumer of fresh fruits and vegetables? There are revenue-neutral actions we can take to not just level the playing field, but also to tilt it in the direction of greater health.

Ocean Robbins: There are about 46 million Americans that use the food stamp program to buy food. People in communities that depend on the food stamp program tend to eat less fruits and vegetables and more highly processed, heavily packaged and tragically unhealthy foods. It's little wonder, then, that some of the poorest communities in the United States also have the highest rates of cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and all the other preventable illnesses that plague the modern world. Do you think there's anything that could or should be done with the hundreds of billions of food stamp dollars to, as you say, "tilt the playing field" in the direction of greater health?

John Robbins: At present, food stamps cannot be used for tobacco or alcohol purchases, but it is true that they are frequently used to purchase foods that we know will, in the long run, make people sick. What if we were to restrict food stamps to be used for real and healthy foods? If we did that, then consumer demand would necessitate that the convenience stores, 7-Elevens, and other food sources that are often the only options available in lower income communities would start to provide fresh fruits and vegetables. Changing what foods stamps are used for would go a long way towards helping lower income people to live healthier lives. This would lower medical costs and lower the rates of obesity and diabetes. It would help millions of people to feel better, and to be more capable of raising healthy children and producing healthier communities. In the long run, the health care savings would be tremendous, and this would help the whole economy.

Ocean Robbins: If food stamps were used only for healthy foods, then I don't know that ice cream would be on the list. But your dad, Irv Robbins, and your uncle, Burt Baskin, started a multibillion-dollar ice cream company. When you were in your teen years, and your dad was grooming you to one day run the company, the advertising department came up with a new slogan. It was: "We make people happy." Your dad was quite excited about this slogan and it did turn out to be extremely successful in terms of selling ice cream. But you were disturbed by it.

John Robbins: Baskin-Robbins based its whole ad campaign for a year around that phrase. I told my dad at the time that I didn't like it. He loved it and of course he had the final word. But I said, "I don't like it because I don't think it's true. We don't make people happy. We sell ice cream, which is a product that provides momentary pleasure. Human happiness is a very difficult thing. It's challenging. It's certainly not something you can buy." My dad responded by saying, "We're just trying to sell ice cream here. Stop with the philosophy." I said, "That's the point. We're selling ice cream; that's what we do. We don't make people happy, we sell ice cream."

Irvine Robbins, cofounder of Baskin-Robbins

My dad was not pleased with my way of thinking, and I admit I wasn't especially pleased with his either. What was becoming apparent to me was that he and I weren't on the same page at all. We didn't really have the same agenda. It

was very painful for me to realize it, but I was being called in a different direction than the one he wanted for me. He really did want me to one day join him in running the company, but I was coming to realize that I had a different path.

Not long after our conversation about the ad campaign, my uncle Burt Baskin died of a heart attack at the age of fifty-four. He was a very big man who ate a lot of ice cream. I asked my dad when that happened if he thought there might be a connection between the amount of ice cream my uncle would eat and his fatal heart attack. My father looked at me and he said, "Don't ever ask that again." Then he said, "No. His ticker just got tired and stopped working." I realized that my dad simply could not bear to consider the possibility that there might be a connection. And I understood why. By that time he had manufactured and sold more ice cream than any human being who had ever lived on the planet. He didn't want to think that the family product was harming anybody, much less that it could have played a role in the death of his beloved partner and brother-in-law—my uncle. But even if he couldn't consider the possibility, I felt I should. I didn't want to be involved in selling a product that might be undermining people's health.

The problems with ice cream are considerable. Eaten in excess, it can cause great harm. Ben Cohen is the founder and was for many years the co-owner of Ben & Jerry's. Ben was forced to have a quintuple bypass procedure performed on his heart in his late forties. Ben is a very fine man who has done a lot of good in his life. He is also a big man who ate a lot of ice cream. I am not saying that an ice cream cone is going to hurt anybody. But the more you eat, the more likely you are to have heart disease, the more likely you are to become obese, and the more likely you are to become diabetic.

I decided that I didn't want to make my living and source myself in the sale of a product that might harm people. I made a decision to walk away from the company. And to be ethically consistent, I told my dad that I didn't want to have a trust fund. I didn't want to depend on his financial achievements for my life, and I walked away from the money.

Ocean Robbins: The media called you "The prophet of nonprofit."

John Robbins: They called me a lot of things. What was it like for you, Ocean? You grew up knowing my dad—your grandfather—and of course eating a very different diet than I did as a child. What was your experience of that process?

Ocean Robbins: I grew up in a family that grew a lot of its own food and loved eating simply. You used to quote

Henry David Thoreau: "I make myself rich by making my wants few." My early childhood was infused with those kinds of values. I think it's actually hard for you and I to grasp what different childhoods we knew. You grew up in a

family with a father who was working maybe seventy hours a week, building a huge company, and selling ice cream. I grew up in a family with parents who did yoga and meditated, and called their son "Ocean." In the home I grew up in, love and simplicity were more important that worldly accomplishments. Our lives had very different beginnings. And yet, remarkably enough, we have highly resonant values. I feel blessed that in my own life I've been able to use your life, your values, and all that you've learned as point to grow from. I feel that I grow out of rich soil.

I remember in my teen years when a lot of my peers were rebelling against their parents. I decided that there actually wasn't much point in rebelling against my parents, because to do so would also mean to rebel against my own values. It was more interesting to me to rebel against poverty, violence, and environmental destruction than to rebel against my family. I needed to differentiate; I needed to know myself as an individual. I deeply wanted to find my own unique contribution to the work of our times. You have really been a friend and an ally to that quest throughout my life. And now I'm so grateful that we have the opportunity to work together.

John Robbins: As our work has unfolded, what have you been learning? What has been meaningful to you?

Ocean Robbins: I've been inspired by the consistency with which the conversations have pointed in some very common directions. Each has its own perspective and its own contribution to make to the whole picture. But when you look at it together, it's clear that we need to make some big changes. I am also struck by the importance of holding our journey with compassion.

If we set an impossible standard for ourselves, then we are going to fail, and then that failure is going to only add to the sense of misery on this planet. But if we take one step at a time, if we lean into what's possible, then we really can be a part of something beautiful. Every single step we take matters. You don't have to go 1,000 miles to take a step. I think moving in the right direction is profound. And with every step you take, the next one gets easier.

As bad as things are in this world, as much suffering and violence as we experience, that's how much better things can be with a change. Just imagine: what would it be like to have really healthy arteries carrying healthy blood through your whole body? What would it be like to live in a world where more and more and more people had enough to eat, where our farms were healthy and life-giving, where there was more topsoil every year, where our water systems were clean and sufficient, where a stable climate was something we could count on? All of that is completely possible.

What you do matters, and it matters a lot. And yet, it's not enough just for individuals who can afford it to start making choices to go organic, eat locally, and bring more fruits and vegetables into their lives. We need to look at the policies and politics of our food systems.

When you look at the political landscape, what do you think are some of our key leverage points—the spots where we could make a huge and positive change on a systemic level?

John Robbins: I see several key places where we can make a substantial and immediate impact.

1. Label genetically engineered foods. If you don't want to eat genetically engineered foods, you should have the information that lets you make a choice that is consistent with your desires. But there's another reason you should have a right to know.

Right now if a mother feeds her baby Gerber's baby food and it's made with cornstarch, that cornstarch is probably made from genetically engineered corn. If the baby gets sick, the mother has no way of knowing if the genetically engineered corn that was used to make the cornstarch that's in the baby food

might have been the cause. If the labeling were there and that happened, she might go to her pediatrician and say, "I don't know if there's a connection, but my baby got sick when she ate this genetically engineered food." The doctor then, assuming there was a reporting mechanism, could report that information and gradually the Centers for Disease Control and other groups could be able to do some surveillance and be able to track what was going on.

Right now we're part of an enormous experiment—we're all guinea pigs. But no one is actually paying attention to the results. There is no tracking. We have no way of tracing these foods and the problems they might be causing.

What tests have been done are very troubling. We see toxicity, liver damage, and digestive disturbances in every type of lab animal that's been fed genetically modified foods. But the big test that's being done, the one in which we are the guinea pigs, isn't being monitored. I think labeling is a tipping point. We need to get labeling.

2. Move away from factory farms and back towards family farming. The whole industrial model of meat production is only cheap because it externalizes the costs onto society. If factory farms and feedlots had to pay full market value for the feed crops and water they use, the price of the products would be so high that Americans would have to treat them less like a staple and more like a garnish. If factory farms had to pay their own pollution costs instead of getting taxpayers to both pick up the tab and also suffer the consequences of the pollution, the whole model would no longer be economically viable. We need to stop subsidizing this tragic way of producing our food. And we need to stop the routine use of antibiotics in factory farms, so that we cease breeding antibiotic resistant bacteria, so that our antibiotics can retain their capacity to be effective medicines into the future.

3. Get over our schizophrenic attitude about animals. On the one hand, most people love animals. We treat our pets very well. We feed them. We pay for their food. We pay for their vet bills. They often sleep on our beds. We consider them part of our families. We lavish our affection on them, and we get a great deal in return. I think the relationships that people have with their companion animals are often extremely enriching to us as human beings, and that is beautiful.

On the other hand, though, we call other animals "livestock," or food animals. And by virtue of making that semantic distinction, we feel entitled to treat those animals with any manner of cruelty, as long as it lowers the price per pound.

If you are a meat producer or a dairy producer, you can treat your animals with any manner of cruelty as long as the practices you are employing are considered "customary." As long as it's considered standard farming practice, the degree of suffering that the animals endure is not a factor in what is legally permissible.

More and more people are lifting the veil and asking real questions. How has this food been produced? People don't want their chocolate to be harvested by child slaves. They don't want their coffee beans to have been grown by people laboring in sweatshop conditions. They don't want to buy tomatoes that have been harvested by people paid wages so low that they are in effect enslaved. And they don't want meat and dairy products that come from animals raised in conditions akin to concentration camps.

Ocean Robbins: Diet for a New America was first published in 1987. I was 13 at the time. In the five years after its publication, beef consumption in the United States dropped by nearly 20 percent and the meat industry was not exactly pleased with you. They spent a lot of money actually trying to discredit you and to destroy your work. They were paying academic institutions to write reports that sought to disparage your conclusions. They were calling on ranchers to mail you "gifts" of manure. They were shadowing your tours, trying to disrupt your public talks and your media appearances. They were making threats, some of which were pretty disturbing. Were you ever frightened by all of this, and what kept you going?

John Robbins: I was frightened at times by the death threats and to tell you the truth what frightened me the most was when your life was threatened. But ironically what kept me going was you. I would look at you and I would see so much innocence and hope. Seeing your

John and Ocean Robbins, 1973

beautiful soul would remind me that all children deserved to live in a world with clean air, clean water, and a viable economy. That everyone deserves a stable climate and a food system that produces food that's nutritious, healthy, and supports us in being the kinds of human beings we want to be.

So when I would receive these threats, I was, at times, frightened, but it actually made me more determined. If they had to resort to that level, then I felt there was all the more reason to bring about a revolution in our way of thinking about our food, our way of producing it, and our way of eating it. I actually think that in many ways I was strengthened by the attacks.

Ocean Robbins: Sometimes the greatest challenges we face can become something that we find a way to use on behalf of what we love. I think that growing up in an ice cream family taught you something not just about the madness of the food industry, but also about how important it is to create something different. What would you tell our readers who are inspired to make a change, but don't know where to start?

John Robbins: You start exactly where you are. If you quiet your mind and open your heart, you'll know what to do. I think you do it a step at a time, a day at a time, a mouthful at a time, a purchase at a time, a meal at a time. And I think we will change the world, one heart at a time. The primary agent of social change, to my way of seeing, is the human heart. As it awakens, as it becomes engaged, as it becomes alive with its responsibility, with its capacity for wisdom, for caring, and for soulful action, then our prayers start to manifest in our lives. Then our caring starts to be expressed in the way we are with each other. Then we start to bring out the best in one another. Then we live in a way that's worthy of the suffering we have endured, and that begins to transform the suffering into strength.

Food Revolutionary Action Plan

Action 1 - The Great Fridge Swap-Out

Look through your refrigerator and choose one thing in there that you are going to stop buying, and one healthier alternative that you are going to replace it with. Then the next time you go shopping, put your vision into action.

Action 2 - Make A Food Diary

Expand your food consciousness by tracking everything you eat or drink, including both items and quantities. You can do this for a day, a week, or even longer. This works best if you bring a spirit of self-love and curiosity. After you're all done with your diary, take a look at the data and see what you notice. For a useful template to help you get started, check out: www.personal-nutrition-guide.com/food-diary-template.html

Action 3 - Track Your Mood

Make a chart to track how you are feeling. Do this at a consistent time each day, and give your energy level and happiness level a score in a range of 1 to 10. If you combine your Mood Chart with your food diary, you may get some especially interesting information. If you want to get even more into it, track your exercise level, too.

Action 4 - Get the Non-GMO Shopping Guide

The Non-GMO Shopping Guide features over 150 brands currently enrolled in the Non-GMO Project. This purse/pocket-sized guide will help you identify and avoid foods that contain genetically modified organisms (GMOs) foods while you shop. Available in English and Spanish at www.nongmoshoppingguide.com

Action 5 - Get the Non-GMO Mobile App

The Center for Food Safety created a mobile app to help you find and avoid genetically engineered (GE) ingredients wherever you shop. This guide gives you valuable information on common GE ingredients, brands to look for and look out for, and common sense tips to keep you in the know. Available at www.foodrevolution.org/gmopack

Action 6 - Find A Great Recipe and Use It

Find a new healthy recipe that you love, and start preparing it every week or two. Most of us don't have that many things that we prepare on a regular basis, so by adding something good to your "starting rotation", you can lean into a healthier life. After you get comfortable, bring in another one.

Action 7 - Buy Direct from Farmers

Find out where your closest farmer's market is, and if possible, check it out. Supporting farmer's markets and is a great way to get access to fresh, healthy, local food, and to support local living food economies. It can be fun, too. When you join a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), you enter into a direct win-win partnership with local farmers. In the U.S., the number of farmer's markets has more than doubled in the last decade. For more info on farmers' market and CSA opportunities near you, visit www.localharvest.org.

Action 8 - Write A Food Mission Statement

Write a sentence that describes what you want for your relationship with food, and post it somewhere prominent where you will see it every day.

Action 9 - Sign or Start Petitions

Check out and sign existing petitions sponsored by organizations like care2.com, change.org, or signon.org. All three of these organizations also make it easy for you to launch your own petition. The petition organizations generally deliver messages to targets via email. If you get a lot of signatures, you can deliver them in person, and contact the media to bring attention to your issue. Or join the Coke boycott, and sign the petition calling on Coca-Cola to stop spending millions fighting GMO labeling, at cokeboycott.com.

Action 10 - Spread The Word

Spread the word amongst friends and colleagues. Give them resources, books, videos and tools. Empower them with as much information as they're ready to absorb.

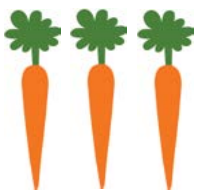
Voices Of The Food Revolution

This complimentary food revolutionary action guide was excerpted from Voices of the Food Revolution: You Can Heal Your Body, and Your World… with Food. For all 21 gamechanging conversations with brilliant food revolutionary leaders, and dozens of resources and action steps to help you thrive, a copy online, or from your local bookstore.

For Voices of the Food Revolution, John and Ocean Robbins conducted deeply informative and inspiring conversations with some of the world's leading scientists, doctors, teachers, farmers, economists, and nutritionists.

You'll hear Dr. Joel Fuhrman, Bill McKibben, Rory Freedman, Raj Patel, Jeffrey Smith, Frances Moore Lappe', Kathy Freston, Dr. Neal Barnard, Marianne Williamson, Dr. T. Colin Campbell, Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn, Gene Baur, and others as you've never heard them before: engaged in far-ranging, game-changing conversations with one of the undisputed pioneers of the food revolution.

Each "voice" has her or his own unique perspective on the food revolution. Each has taken on some piece of the work that s/he feels most passionate about—from undercover videotaping to show the world what really goes on in feedlots and factory farms to getting wholesome food to the poor to breakthrough research on treating obesity, diabetes, cancer, and heart disease through nutrient-rich diets. Together they make one rallying cry: for a healthy, sustainable, humane, and delicious revolution in how we and the world are fed.

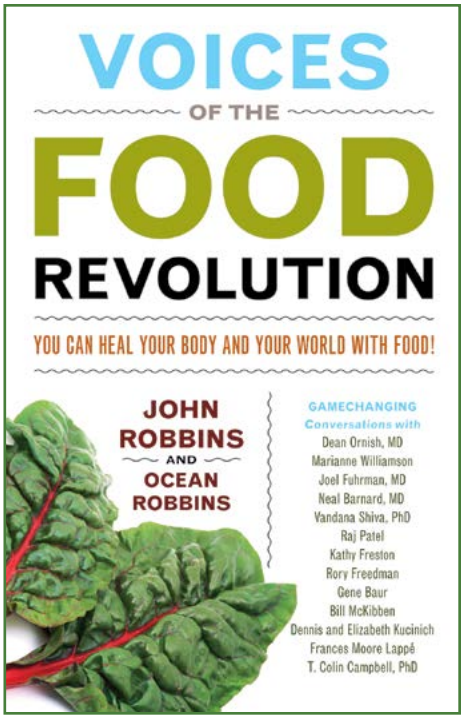


Did you know that:

- More than 75% of the foods you eat in restaurants and buy at supermarkets contain genetically engineered ingredients, and that these ingredients have been linked to toxic and allergic reactions in people; sickness, sterility, and fatalities in livestock; and damage to virtually every organ studied in lab animals?
- If you don't count French fries, ketchup or pizza as vegetables, more than half of Americans eat no vegetables at all?
- Cancer and heart disease can be prevented and even reversed with the right plant-based food choices?
- Cows raised for meat are impacting our climate more than cars?
- It's possible to be a positive food revolutionary without sounding like a self-righteous nag?

Read Voices of the Food Revolution and gain perspective and new tools in the fight to heal our bodies and our world – with food.

Available online by clicking here, or later from your local independent bookstore.



Join in the Food Revolution Summit

Every year, you have the opportunity to spend an inspiring and life-changing week with revolutionary thinkers and visionaries that will put the POWER IN YOUR HANDS when it comes to the food you eat!

Dare to discover the most cutting-edge information, startling facts, and inspirational wisdom that will heal you and have you CELEBRATING LIFE!

(For FREE and without having to leave home.)

Perhaps you're aware that we're entering a food crisis, unless something is done. And done now. Never before have the stakes been so high - and the risks.

Food is fundamental to your health and to the health of our world. Information is power. We want to empower you with what will help you and your loved ones thrive.

For each summit, John and Ocean Robbins personally interview 24 of the top food experts and activists on the planet in a week-long "virtual summit." These visionaries have inspired hundreds of millions of people and changed the way we think about food.

You'll have direct access to 3 highly focused half-hour interviews - personally conducted by John Robbins - every day for a week. You can listen via phone (conference call), or over the internet.

Here's what's in it for you. You'll get...

- Information and practical tips from modern day heroes of health and sustainability.
- Extremely current answers to your burning questions.
- Tools for talking with your family and peers.
- Inspiration, useful insights, ideas, motivation and new understanding.
- A deepened relationship with the food you love!

When voices are rising up everywhere to preserve access to healthy food, it's never been more important to roll up your sleeves, get involved, listen and be heard.

Please join us and invite your friends and family along!

Check out the latest on Food Revolution Summits, and sign up, at www.foodrevolution.org/summit

Want to catch up on all you missed? Get the entire transcripts and MP3s from past summits, plus a huge collection of bonuses, instantly here: www.foodrevolution.org/empowerment

Living The Food Revolution

Are you frustrated with our food industry and its impact on animals and the environment? Tired of not knowing which foods contain GMOs? Fed up with deceptive food labels and the brainwashing of children?

If you're ready to protect your family and raise consciousness in your community, this time-sensitive message is for you….

The world needs YOU to join the Food Revolution!

This is for you if you've already basically learned how to eat well. You've already eliminated most junk food, white bread, and trans fats from your diet. You already know that your food choices affect animals and the planet.

But you're frustrated with the world around you. You want your family and friends to eat better, but you don't want to nag them. You want food labels to be truthful.

If so, then I have a question. Are you willing to put up with today's unnatural, unfair, and unsustainable food system?

I didn't think so. That's why we've joined forces to help you protect your family and make a positive difference in the world.

We created a 4-part online course called Living the Food Revolution. It will empower you take a stand for a more compassionate and sustainable world.

What You'll Get Out of the Course

- Information and practical tips from modern day heroes of health and sustainability
- Extremely current answers to your burning questions
- Tools for engaging your family and peers
- Inspiration, motivation, and new understanding
- Help taking practical steps on the path of vitality and contribution
- A deepened relationship with the food you love!

If you want inspiration, tools, and support to help you be a food revolutionary… If you want to take a stand and make a difference for your loved ones and for the world… This course might be for you.

Find out more at www.foodrevolution.org/livingthefoodrevolution

The Real Food Action Guide

You Can Heal Your Body, and Your World… with Food!

THE FOOD REVOLUTION NETWORK

www.foodrevolution.org