

Dr. Jane Powley's Story

When I was growing up in China, 99.9% of our diet was plant-based food. This was not because we read *The China Study*; it was the traditional diet. It was inexpensive and my family did not have a lot of money. We didn't have a refrigerator in my home, so we went to the market to purchase rice, beans, fruit, and vegetables almost every day. At that time, almost 60 years ago, the government issued permits that allowed families to get eight ounces of cooking oil and about two ounces of meat per person each month. Even people with money could not get more because these foods were rationed. We used those foods very sparingly because they were scarce. For special occasions, like the Chinese New Year, we would get coupons for white flour and white rice.

I came to the U.S. to attend graduate school at the University of Maryland. When I arrived, I weighed about 130 pounds and I was eating a traditional Chinese diet of rice, vegetables and beans. I shared an office with another graduate student, and one day she was eating something that smelled so good. I asked her what it was and she told me it was fried chicken. She told me I could buy it at a fast food restaurant in the student center, and since my English was not very good, my new friend instructed me to ask for "two pieces of dark meat chicken." The next day I bought my first dark meat fried chicken. It was delicious!

After a few days, I started noticing that I became tired after lunch so my new friend suggested drinking Coca-Cola with my chicken. It worked! I loved the chicken and I had lots of energy. Gradually I found out about other delicious American foods, including ice cream, which I also added to my daily diet.

I really did not understand that there would be health consequences from eating these new foods. I never worried about my weight in China, but soon I needed new clothes because I was gaining weight on my new American diet. I also became more tired and so I started drinking more Coke to get me through the day. Soon other problems, much more serious ones, developed – I had an irregular heartbeat, chronic infections, pneumonia, digestive problems, an ulcer, and many other health issues.

I transferred to the University of Delaware and during the very first semester I was hospitalized. Shortly after, I met my future husband, Dr. Chuck Powley. By this time, I weighed 188 pounds and my health problems had progressed. I'm lucky because Chuck loved me even though I was at my heaviest and sickest. He told me not to worry because we had great insurance, and he sent me to doctors who gave me prescription drugs. My condition continued to get worse, so I consulted a Chinese herbalist. I still did not get better and I was still gaining weight; I know now that it was because I was still eating the American diet.

When things were about as bad as they could be, someone gave me a tape of a lecture by Dr. Pam Popper and it really made an impression on me. I flew to Columbus and learned about the plant-based diet. I made the decision to adopt it right away, flew home and started eating only plant foods. I went back to the peasant-style diet I ate as a child in China.

My husband encouraged me because he understood that this new diet could make me well, but he did not want to eat this way. For a while, he ate dinner out; he said he didn't want to eat "Jane food."

Gradually, the weight fell off, I stopped taking all the medications, and my health issues resolved. I have not even taken an over-the-counter drug since 1994! I was so excited that I opened a center in Wilmington, Delaware, to offer the classes developed by Dr. Pam. Now I help other people change their health and their lives like Dr. Pam helped me!

Over time, I learned to make "Jane food" more delicious, and eventually Chuck asked if he could join me at the dinner table again. Since then, he has also learned to cook tasty "Jane food" – in

fact he attended cooking classes at my center to learn how to make healthy, delicious foods for me!

Today, when I go home to China, I see more and more Chinese people, especially the younger generation, eating an American diet. Fast food restaurants are everywhere, the government no longer regulates the availability of meats and oils, and people with money can afford to eat foods that destroy health. Heart disease, cancer and diabetes are all increasing in the major cities. It breaks my heart to see this.

I love my new diet and lifestyle, I love being healthy, and I love helping others. Clients ask me for advice and I tell them the most important thing to remember is that little changes do not work. You have to change the whole diet in order to get results. They ask how long you have to commit to this lifestyle and I tell them it is for the rest of your life – and then I tell them they will be rewarded for the rest of their lives too!