

Lauren Dana
March 22nd, 2021

Why everyone should be just a little more vegan

Willpower and self-control are common words associated with the vegan lifestyle; however, it really isn't as scary as you think it is to implement small and positive aspects of the lifestyle in your everyday life.

For about three years, I was one of those strict, die-hard, annoying vegans you run away from at Whole Foods. Today, I incorporate fish and eggs into my diet as a way to keep my health on the right track. Throughout my journey in veganism, I learned that I was lacking a balance; I was focused too much on being an exemplary vegan who would never accidentally eat a product that may contain dairy. As a result, I neglected my health and became malnourished. I stopped caring about getting the right nutrients through vegetables and supplements, and was only focused on not making mistakes. By switching over from a perfect vegan to someone who is just a little bit vegan, I gave myself a way to still incorporate the positive aspects of veganism into my life without the pressure that comes with the title. You don't have to make the complete lifestyle change to veganism, but incorporating some aspects of it in your life will provide you with a higher awareness about how your everyday actions can impact the environment. It means making the choice to order oat milk in your coffee rather than 2% dairy milk, in order to lessen your carbon footprint.

“Veganism is the lifestyle transformation that only a brave few can be successful in,” said Chloe Buikus, college student at the University of Florida. When talking about veganism with several college students I have gathered that most people shy away from the idea based on the fact that it seems like a life-altering decision. However, just implementing small changes throughout your day and becoming just a little more vegan, can make a positive difference on the environment and your health.

Based on an unofficial poll I posted on my Instagram story, out of 300 mostly college-aged students, about 74% of people say they would be interested in a vegan diet but are held back by a few factors. 53% of people said they don't think going vegan would make much of a difference, 71% of people said they can't imagine giving up cheese, and 59% said they feel like it would make them feel excluded from their friends or hold them back from social situations. If these are some of the reasons keeping you from implementing veganism into your life, here is why they shouldn't be.

“It won't make much of a difference”

If you are someone who doesn't want to implement veganism into his or her life because you think it won't make much of a difference, it definitely can. Believe it or not, animal agriculture is one of the biggest industries contributing to climate change. “Animal agriculture is one of the most detrimental industries to our environment,” said Corey Farmer, sustainability coordinator at the University of Florida's office of sustainability. When talking with Corey Farmer, I realized just how impactful limiting your meat and dairy intake can be for the environment. According to a scientific journal on the

environment¹, for every gram of beef production, 221.6g of carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere. “Animal agriculture alone is responsible for 18 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions just by itself,” said Farmer, which is more than all forms of transpiration combined emit. The easiest way for me to understand the environmental impact of animal agriculture was to break it down into four main factors: greenhouse gas emissions, land use, water use, and energy use. According to UNESCO’s Institute for Water Education, about two pounds of beef requires 4,068 pounds of water. This means that about one third of the world’s fresh water has been invested in animal agriculture. Runoffs of several animal pollutants have ended up in lakes and oceans, which results in aquatic life dying off and a depletion of water supplies. With all these facts presented, reducing your intake of animal products by a small amount has the potential to make a difference. With the way our economy works in the United States, if we don’t demand a product, the supply decreases.

“I can’t give up cheese”

One food I cannot escape in any conversation about veganism is cheese. Personally, I have never met a cheese I didn’t like and I have never met someone who doesn’t like cheese. According to my informal Instagram poll and through talking with students my age, most people are either afraid of vegan cheese or don’t think it will compare to real cheese in any sense of the way. After being both vegan and a cheese lover for several years, I have been through trials of vegan cheese and have discovered the two brands that make it easier to make the occasional switch to non-dairy cheese. By far the best vegan cheese in my opinion is from the brand Miyoko’s. Due to the fact that it is made from a base of cashews, it is a lot healthier than cheese made from cow’s milk. According to a Medical News Today article², cheese made from cow’s milk contains a significant amount of sodium and saturated fat and is high in calories, making non-dairy cheese a better alternative. Miyoko’s has a wide range of cheeses, from cheddar to double cream garlic herb. They are creamy and tangy just like real cheese, but don’t leave you feeling guilty. The second best vegan cheese to try is called Chao from the brand Field Roast. This vegan cheese is great for pizza or lasagna due to its ability to melt seamlessly, which you might be surprised to learn, is hard to find in vegan cheese. Unlike Miyoko’s, Chao is made from a base of coconut oil and fermented tofu, and they have self-proclaimed “revolutionized vegan cheese.”

“I don’t want to feel excluded.”

It can be daunting to go to a restaurant knowing you’re going to order differently than your friends, or having to search the menu for something that is missing a list of common ingredients. At the start of my vegan journey, this was one of my biggest struggles. For some reason, telling a waiter “I’m vegan” is one of the scariest concepts on earth. However, many restaurants have started adding vegan items to their menu. Several chain restaurants have started to make it so much easier to be vegan, like Burger King adding the Impossible Whopper to their menu and Chipotle offering a plant based protein option.

A common misconception about going to restaurants as a vegan is that you have to order a side of lettuce and call it a day; however, most if not all restaurants will accommodate anyone who wants a meatless option.

Word count: 1108

- 1 Clark, M., & Tilman, D. (2017). Comparative analysis of environmental impacts of agricultural production systems, agricultural input efficiency, and food choice. *Environmental Research Letters*, 12(6), 064016. doi:10.1088/1748-9326/aa6cd5
- 2 Cheese: Types, health benefits, and risks. (n.d.). Retrieved March 22, 2021, from <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/299147#nutritional-content>

To: kerriaresenault@orionmag.com at Orion Magazine

Subject line: Story idea: why your reasons for avoiding a plant-based diet aren't good enough

Why everyone should be just a little more vegan

Willpower and self-control are common words associated with the vegan lifestyle; however, it really isn't as scary as you think it is to implement small and positive aspects of the lifestyle in your everyday life.

Good afternoon Kerri,

I have been working on a story where I have ranked the top three reasons people don't want to go vegan and debunked those reasons. The main purpose of my story is to discuss why people should be more vegan, even if it is just changing one small thing every day.

I don't personally follow a vegan lifestyle, so the story discusses the different ways that I try and incorporate more veganism into my life without actually taking the full leap into the lifestyle change. The story also includes various citations and research that validates some points I make about how impactful veganism can be for the environment and health. The research included mostly focuses on how detrimental the meat and dairy industries are for the environment, one main point being from a sustainability coordinator at the University of Florida who told me that animal agriculture is one of the leading contributors to climate change.

The point of the story is not to convert people to veganism, but rather bring up points about this lifestyle that people might not consider, and especially coming from someone who doesn't practice the lifestyle in full. The purpose of this story is to take the top three reasons I have gathered why people don't want to be vegan and discuss why these reasons shouldn't be holding them back from veganism. Mainly, the point is to educate people in a non-judgmental or aggressive way, simply to make the topic one that can be thought about when you reach for the next menu at a restaurant. This is important now because it deals with environmental concerns and can be education for people who only consider veganism as a hippie lifestyle. I think your readers would be interested in this piece, as it is both entertaining and informative without being too controversial or combative, as some topics of veganism can be. It also deals with issues that everyone can relate to and consider.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Lauren Dana

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Mon 3/22/2021 2:48 PM

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