

A GARDEN LIFE

A Whole New Direction

by Kristen Hampshire | September, 2013

Nadia was tired, uncomfortable and confused about why she was diagnosed with cancer a second time. So she looked for answers and healing by spending a week at a holistic health retreat. And life has never been the same...



Photo courtesy of Hippocrates Health Institute

“I feel like my biological age has actually reversed,” says the 68-year-old Toronto native who opted for a healing alternative after two bouts of melanoma, a decade of unexplainable pain (at one point, her right hip was so uncomfortable she couldn’t step into the car) and anxiety over her ailing body.

She wasn’t sleeping. And she saw no end to the chronic, general feeling of malaise.

Nadia feels a whole lot better today after a decision in 2009 to try a Life Transformation Program at Hippocrates Health Institute (HHI) in West Palm Beach, Fla. During a week stay, Nadia, a retired teacher, jumpstarted a mind-body-spirit overhaul. It started with moving to a plant-based diet, and continues with the support she gains from community and staff of healthy living advocates that keep her inspired and committed to her new lifestyle.

“Empowerment is the word,” Nadia says of how she feels today. “I can take control of my own wellbeing.”

Operation Overhaul

HHI is known for wheatgrass, a sprouted food often blended into a green juice famous for its myriad health benefits: strengthening the immune system, detoxifying the body and warding off disease.

“We are the people who brought the raw and living diet into the world again,” says Dr. Brian Clement, co-director of HHI and a doctor of naturopathic medicine. “When you process, cook and chemicalize foods, even vegetables can be bad for you. When you eat them in an unadulterated, raw form, you are getting their full benefit.”

Before Nadia attended HHI for one week, she had maintained a healthy diet, choosing organic vegetables and filtered water. But she would “love, love, love the sun,” she admits of her early adulthood. At age 40, she was diagnosed with melanoma—two patches, one on her stomach and another on her back. That, and a basal cell carcinoma on her neck, was successfully removed. “I continued what I thought was a healthy lifestyle and kept out of the sun for the next 25 years,” she says.

In fall 2009, at age 65, she found a spot on her left thigh. “I thought, ‘O.K. I don’t remember that being there, I better get it checked out,’” Nadia says. “And it was melanoma after not being in the sun for 25 years.



“I thought, ‘Why am I getting cancer?’” she continues. She festered over the inexplicable recurrence. What next? Her health caused her anxiety and insomnia. The cancer was removed, but emotionally she felt deeply scarred.

Nadia felt out of control of her health.

During her stay at HHI, she tapped into the institute’s rich educational program—back-to-back days of lectures. She learned about eating a diet of organically grown, enzyme rich raw foods, the benefit of exercise, stress management, wheatgrass therapies and detoxification. Most of all, she found a community of individuals who wanted to heal and be healed by nature.

“There is such a positive vibration,” Nadia says of the environment at HHI. “There are guests from all over the world sharing their experiences.”

Brian has watched significant life overhauls occur at HHI for more than four decades. He tells of an 83-year-old woman who visited HHI for the first time 20 years ago. She had Stage III breast cancer that had metastasized into her liver. She told Brian: “I wasn’t sure if I had the wherewithal to heal the cancer, but I found out how to love and respect myself, and when I did that, I took full responsibility and healed a disease they told me I would die from in a year.”

Make Big Changes in Small Ways

Not ready to dump out your pantry and start growing wheatgrass? We understand. A road to better health doesn't have to be an all-or-nothing approach. Just get started, and make small changes that will make a big impact. Healthy living is contagious, so the chances are your efforts will extend as you realize the benefits of living better.

Pace yourself. Rather than challenging yourself to adopt a plant-based, organic diet overnight, set a long-term goal. For example, this month you will seek out organic produce. Next month you will try juicing and find a couple recipes you enjoy. Before the end of the year, you will switch out one meal to include a raw salad.

Catch more Zzzs. How much sleep are you getting these days? If you are like most Americans, the answer is not nearly enough. Aim for 8 hours. If you're averaging 6 hours, go to bed a half hour earlier, and continue to turn back the clock. (Or, sleep in later if you have the flexibility to do so.)

Get out! Aim to exercise 35 minutes at least five days a week. Starting at zero? Then shoot for three days of walking for a half-hour. Gradually build up to five days, and then vary your activities, mixing in some strength training.

HHI is focused on the big picture of natural healing, which includes meditation, group counseling for those who choose, yoga, cooking classes, massage and exercise. Together, the elements of building a stronger mind, body and spirit give guests confidence that they can conquer life's challenges, Brian says—even the most grim medical circumstances.

“It's about taking responsibility in every single aspect of your life,” Brian says. “Not just eating right — thinking right: I do have a purpose, passion and a reason and that is why I am here.

“You have to live for what and who you are, and once you find that central role that each of us possess, then you start to fulfill your life and you are unstoppable,” Brian says. “We give you the tools, the roots, the courage and chemistry and education necessary to conquer anything.”

Staying On Course

One of the biggest changes for Nadia was adopting a raw diet, but after spending a week eating vegan at HHI, she hasn't looked back, she says. "I think to myself, I want to taste 'whatever' food, but after 15 minutes, the experience is gone and then may suffer from the bad effects in my body for the next several days or a lifetime," she says. She still prepares traditional fare for her family on special occasions, adding a few vegan side dishes to the mix that always go over well, she says.

"Now, if I don't have time to make my big salad with 20 different ingredients, I crave it," Nadia says. "Your body chemistry changes."

Nadia is cancer-free, sleeping in peace at night knowing that she is doing all she can to feed her body with "life," she says. "I don't get tired," she says. "I just go all day long." (And that's without caffeine, of course.) "I feel younger now than I ever did," she affirms. "And the most rewarding aspect is a sense of control over my life. You have this power."

Nadia goes back to HHI every six months for a "tune-up" and watches monthly online seminars to continue learning more about healthy living and to stay on course.

"Everyone has the potential to prevent premature aging and to reverse disease," Clement encourages. "I have watched it for four decades—no matter how grim or bad someone appears to be, they should never give up. Nature is here to support you."

Destination: Mind-Body-Spirit Overhaul

You don't have to live in Florida to visit a holistic health center. Here are some options:

Hippocrates Health Institute

The institute's Life Transformation Program is a three-week commitment to mind, body and spirit. The foundation of the program is a detoxifying diet of living foods. Focusing on exercise, positive attitudes, emotional health, stress management and more, the program is designed to get you started on a journey to better health.

Contact:

1465 Skees Road
West Palm Beach, Fla.
888-228-1755

Sanivan

A day at Sanivan could include anything from drumming to yoga to spa treatments. There are special events, holistic facials, therapeutic massages and all kinds of healthy meals from raw to vegetarian to vegan. If you're looking for a real detoxification diet, try the private cleansing and rejuvenating retreat or the juices, which are full of enzymes, amino acids, wheatgrass and more.

Contact:

12 Columbia Drive
Hurleyville, N.Y.
845-434-1849