

Staying Healthy with Nutrition: The Complete Guide to Diet and Nutritional Medicine. 21st Century Edition. Elson M. Haas, MD, with Buck Levin, PhD, RD. Celestial Arts, Berkeley, CA. (ISBN-10: 1-58761-282-8. ISBN-13: 978-15761-282.4).

A Message from Dr. Buck Levin

Staying Healthy with Nutrition is a book with a payoff. In several different ways, it will pay you to read this book. First of all, *Staying Healthy* will sort out a wide range of information and make this information much easier for you to understand. Second, it will not only teach you how to apply this information in your own life, but it will also inspire you to do so. You will be able to grab onto each one of its 1,000-plus pages and take the information inward, into the nooks and crannies of your personal life. If you will adopt the principles in this book, you will very likely become healthier and better nourished. But I hope you won't.

Or more exactly, I hope you won't settle for this inward kind of journey. What I'm hoping is that you'll also go outward. Outward into the not-you world that has nothing to do with the impact of magnesium on your cardiovascular system and in fact may offer you no personal payoff whatsoever. I even hope that you will change the name of the book in your mind from "*Staying Healthy with Nutrition*" to "*Staying With: The Myth of Nutrition.*" The reason is simple. Nourishment is mythic – not mythic in the sense of "make-believe" or "illusionary", but mythic in the sense "beyond all worldly proportions." All of us know that nutrients come from food, and we know just as clearly that food comes from the earth. But we don't take that last part seriously, as part of our intrinsic responsibility when it comes to eating. The fact of the matter is, we cannot make food. We can only find it (and in some instances cultivate it, although we seem to botch that up a good bit of the time). Where we find food is right where it belongs, at home in its spot, some unique niche in an ecosystem where soil and seasons and climate and geography come together in some amazingly cooperative way. As my 11 year-old son would say, "That's massive dude."

It's this massiveness we've got to embrace if we want to take part in the nourishment. Food cannot be extracted from the earth. That approach might work in business, where profit can be extracted out of a situation in a predatory way that seizes upon volatility and lack of constraints (volume constraints, speed constraints, ethical constraints). But this approach doesn't work with food. Food comes to us with earthy constraints. The only way for us to profit from food is to safeguard the earth's potential for producing it, and that potential involves every ocean, every river, every landmass, every cubic meter of air. Carrots in a zip-lock bag and styrofoam-boxed burgers won't work because there is no "where" to put the plastic and the styrofoam once we're done. Damming up rivers for crop irrigation won't work because hydrology cycles are part of the earth's food production potential. Nothing will work except an unbounded kindness on our part for everything natural, a "staying with" the world even when it's inconvenient and doesn't pay. The myth of nutrition is a myth of connection between our inward health and most distant reaches of the earth. We break this connection whenever we live in an isolationist, separatist, exclusionary, exploitative and extractive way, and we restore it by being inclusive, accommodating, integrative, and considerate. When all is said and done, nourishment is about the connection - not the payoff.