Boost Health Without Sacrificing Yum – A Conversation With Food Babe, Vani Hari

How can you lose weight while still eating what you crave? Where can you find cheap options to eating healthy and yummy? What 6 simple habits can dramatically improve your overall wellbeing and help you lose weight naturally? In this interview, Food Babe, Vani Hari, will en”lighten” us.

Vani Hari is a revolutionary food activist, the creator of FoodBabe.com, the author of the #1 bestselling book, *The Food Babe Way*, and was named one of the *Most Influential People On The Internet* by Time Magazine. In her work, Hari has influenced how food giants like Kraft, Subway, Chipotle, Chick-fil-A, and Starbucks create their products, steering them towards more healthful policies. Vani teaches people how to make the right purchasing decisions at the grocery store, how to live an organic lifestyle, and how to travel healthfully. The success of her writing and investigative work can be seen in the way food companies react to her uncanny ability to find and expose the truth. She lives in North Carolina and travels around the world to speak about health and food awareness. She is currently planning her next campaign.

Cortney: On my first trip to Europe, 20 years ago, I was stunned by the almost total lack of obesity. Now historically fit populations—Europe, Japan, you name it—are catching up to the U.S. What would you say is the number one cause of this increase in obesity throughout the world? Toxic food, sedentary lifestyles, or something else?

Vani: Worldwide obesity is influenced by a number of things, including those that you mentioned. Obesity rates are going up all across the globe, and we need to ask more questions about the food we are eating and the chemicals that are polluting our environment as these may play a role. Certain chemicals that have infiltrated our food have been coined "obesogens", and many of them are not listed on ingredient lists.

Obesogens include such things as pesticides, antibiotics, and food packaging materials, like plastics, that can leach chemicals into our food. As I explain in detail in my new book, *The Food Babe Way*, obesogens can trigger our bodies to store fat even though we might be restricting calories. The effects are complex. Some of these chemicals increase the number of fat cells, others expand the size of fat cells, and still others influence appetite, cravings, fullness, and how well the body burns calories. I've made it my mission to teach people to take a closer look at what they are eating, to read ingredient labels, know where it comes from, and to demand transparency from the companies that are feeding the world.

Tip #1: Read Ingredient Labels & Know What You're Eating

Cortney: One of the things I love about *The Food Babe Way* is that it urges us to do more of what fit populations have always done; they eat simple, nutritious food at home. Could this one simple habit be the answer to the problems we were just talking about and the key to dramatically improving the quality of our lives and health?

Vani: No matter where you live, you have the choice to take your health into your owns hands or hand it over to food manufacturers. People who eat more food prepared in their homes avoid thousands of unnecessary food additives that they would otherwise be exposed to. I encourage everyone to prepare as many meals at home as possible. When I make food at my

house it is far more nutritious and tastes way better than anything I could find at a restaurant. I created The Food Babe Membership Program for this reason, to provide anyone looking for extra guidance with an easy plan to follow for making healthy food at home.

Tip #2: Prepare Your Own Healthy Meals As Much As Possible

Cortney: My sister, who lives in suburban Illinois, tells me about how difficult it is to find a variety of toxic-free food nearby and how she has to pay more for fewer options. How can the right food choices at the right price point be made available to the majority?

Vani: Thankfully, more affordable organic food choices are becoming available in conventional grocery stores like Walmart, Target, and Kroger. However, I know that sometimes this isn't even an option. Use Local Harvest to find local farmer's markets, co-ops, and family farms, which are great sources of organic produce, grass-fed beef, fresh herbs, and other organic goodies. There are online organic grocery stores with competitive prices, such as Thrive Market, which is similar to a Whole Foods Market, but available to anyone with an Internet connection. Also, consider starting your own garden. You might think this is a crazy suggestion, but hear me out. Growing your own food isn't as hard as you might think and it's definitely the cheaper route to having access to healthy eats all the time. My mother has always had a large vegetable garden. She takes great joy in cultivating her vegetables and preparing meals with them. She always encouraged me to have my own garden, too.

Tip #3: Grow Your Own Food & Take

Advantage of Locally Grown Healthy Options

Cortney: Another obstacle to eating right is when we don't listen to the needs of our bodies. How is that connection lost, and—more importantly—how can it be regained?

Vani: Many of us are living a fast-paced lifestyle, eating meals on the run without taking the time to consciously consider how the food we are eating could impact our bodies. This leads to weight gain and sickness, which I know from first-hand experience. Several years ago while I was working as a management consultant, I let my work life take over and that's when I had my wake up moment. I was sick, overweight and looked horrible. It was then that I made a conscious decision to avoid processed food. If there was something I really wanted to eat that I knew was filled with additives, artificial ingredients, or other questionable substances, I would make it at home with my own organic ingredients so I could indulge. And then something dramatic happened. All the issues I had as a child—asthma, eczema, allergies went away. I was on six – eight different prescription drugs depending on the season and I'm on zero today. My weight normalized, and I actually lost another 5 pounds on top of that! I began to have more energy than I had when I was years younger! All you have to do is clean up your diet and be more conscious of not putting unnecessary chemicals in your mouth. The way you treat yourself, the way you treat your body, what you put in it, can make a HUGE life changing difference.

Tip #4: Listen to & Love Your Body

Cortney: In his book, Integrative Nutrition, Joshua Rosenthal talks about the difference between primary and secondary nutrition. Primary foods include thriving relationships and purpose-driven careers, while secondary foods are what we put

in our mouth. I've met many fit, vibrant people who do not eat well. Can we chalk these examples up to great primary nutrition?

Vani: It all comes down to your beliefs and the practices those beliefs generate. For example, when I stopped thinking of food as "good" or "bad" and started asking questions like, "Is this going to serve my cells, my body, my health?" that shift in focus let me dismiss any disordered thinking so that my body and mind were able to receive the primary and secondary nutrition they needed to function at optimal levels. It's about learning to accept and love yourself. Louise Hay's work helped me a lot in creating and aligning new, positive thought patterns and self-talk with my purpose. And those perspective shifts allowed me to look and feel great without the struggle.

Tip #5: Change Your Beliefs, Change Your Body

Cortney: Speaking of primary nutrition, the Blue Zones—areas in the world where people live into the 100s—are historically known for higher levels of health and vibrancy. Could we apply what these micro populations are doing to create a health plan for the rest of the world?

Vani: Studies on the Blue Zones have shown that overall these people have strong relationships with their friends and families, and simply enjoy their life. I try to take time out every day to spend time with my loved ones, and also to exercise (outside if possible), meditate, and get out to meet new people. Personal relationship building is imperative to good health – no doubt about it! This is an area of health that many of us do not give much weight, but we should pay more attention to it. Of course, I think the local diets of the Blue Zones contribute to longevity as well. When food hasn't been processed or packaged for a long shelf life, and

hasn’t traveled miles to get to you, it is better for your health. That’s why I encourage people to get out and meet local farmers, go to farmer’s markets, and take advantage of the food that is grown locally in your area.

Tip #6: Take Time Every Day to Connect with Loved Ones, Exercise, & Meditate

To learn more about Vani Hari and her work check out her website or purchase her book through Amazon: The Food Babe Way. To find alternative grocery stores, try The Local Harvest.

Recommended Reading:

- *8 Easy Steps to Health*
- *The Way We Used To Eat – The Real Paleo Diet*
- *80% Raw Food Diet*

Recommended Reading:

- *Total Nutrition – Make your own Homemade Multivitamin and Mineral Formula* (great source of vegan protein!)
- *10 Vegan-Friendly Sources Of Protein*
- *Buckwheat Granola w/ Stevia* – Sketch Free Eating (featured image, see recipe)