

Dr. Michael Klaper is a practicing physician with forty years of experience in general practice and acute care medicine. He is well-known for his deep respect and passion for applied nutrition and complementary medicine.

Here is a four-part interview with Dr. Michael Klaper published in November 2011 by Michael Mountain, editor of EarthInTransition.org.

For more about Dr. Klaper, visit his web site: DoctorKlaper.com.

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Doctors with a Difference

by Michael Mountain, editor of EarthInTransition.org

'Your body wants to be well!'

"I'm so in awe of the human body," says Dr. Michael Klaper, "even after so many years of working with it."

Dr. Klaper is among the growing number of physicians who have found that simply giving the body what it needs to be healthy is the key to enabling a true and healthful transformation.

"To see the body make the transformations toward health, there's an innate force. The body wants to be healthy. There's such beautiful justice in the world that with the right food, the natural food of humans, the body reclaims its natural heritage of health."

The "natural" food Dr. Klaper speaks of is basically a plant-based diet. And while, as a doctor, he sees the health benefits not eating animal foods, he's also pleased that good health and good ethics are so totally in synch with each other.

The gift we give ourselves is also a gift to all the animals and to the Earth.

“I’m an ethical vegan. And I know every person who adopts a plant-based diet means more poor animals won’t be in factory farms and face that dismal existence.”

Treating ourselves to good health automatically means good health for the whole planet – “this dear Earth planet that I love so much and that I grieve for every day. The blight of animal agriculture will be lifted one person at a time.”

In other words, we can all make a difference. And there’s no sacrifice involved. The gift we give ourselves is a gift to all the animals and to the Earth. “To think that I’m helping the animals and the Earth at the same time as I’m helping my patients, those are the things that keep me going.”

Dr. Klaper is one of many of the top nutritional physicians in the country at the upcoming Healthy Lifestyle Expo in Woodland Hills, California, October 14-16.

The dozens of medical and nutritional experts (and some great chefs, too) include Dr. Neal Barnard, director of the Physicians’ Committee for Responsible Medicine, which opposes factory farming and vivisection; Dr. Joel Fuhrman, who specializes in nutrition-based treatments for obesity and chronic disease; and Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn, who was recently featured on CNN’s special report on heart health.

Well worth the \$200 for the full three days.

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The One-Step Key to Good Health

by Michael Mountain on November 3, 2011

“The body knows how to heal and wants to be well.”

Dr. Michael Klaper says that while medicine is a complex, subtle and beautiful art, primary care medicine today needs to be, more than anything, about diet and lifestyle.

With a background in surgery, anesthesiology, obstetrics and orthopedics, Dr. Klaper focuses more on diet and lifestyle. For 10 years, he hosted the radio program *Sounds of Healing*, and was a contributor to two programs on PBS: *Food for Thought* and *Diet for a New America*.

In a series of interviews, we talked with him about how our own health is linked to our relationship to other animals and the natural world.

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Part One: The One-Step Key to Good Health

Michael Mountain: You've said that the body wants to be well and knows how to heal itself. What does that mean?

Dr. Michael Klaper: That's a very important question. Basically, the body wants to be healthy. The body knows how to heal.

I work in urgent care clinics where people come in with bad skin lacerations, and I've studied plastic surgery. I do a very beautiful wound repair. But I know I'm just being a mechanic. I'm bringing the two edges of the skin edges as beautifully as I can. The real healing is happening by forces within the body that know how to spin protein strands across the wound, and how to bring in the new blood vessels and what's required to heal the wound. The body knows that, and the body wants to be healthy. Those arteries don't want to clog up. Blood pressure doesn't want to be high.

M.M.: So why is there so much disease today? Heart attacks, cancer, diabetes – so much of it.

M.K.: The majority of diseases that every primary caregiver sees on a daily basis are a rather small, dismal group of degenerative diseases – obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure – inflammatory states that are largely dietary diseases. And these are the results of running a high fat, high protein, overly processed, animal-based food stream through our system, hour after hour, day after day, month after month, year after year.

Our body was never meant to run on such a high – the greasy, inhuman, literally, fuel.

M.M.: You make it sound like a car running on bad fuel!

M.K.: Exactly. It's a good analogy: So you're driving your car, and the needle on the gas gauge reads empty, and you pull into the gas station. But instead of pulling up to the gasoline pump, you pull up to the diesel pump. Well, diesel is an oily fuel that doesn't burn clean in a V8 engine. So, if you fill your gas tank up with diesel fuel, you're going to see black smoke coming out of the exhaust, and the engine is going to sputter and cough and grind to a stop.

As soon as you put in a nice, lean, clean plant-based fuel, the body gets leaner, those arteries open up, the blood pressure comes down, the insulin receptors clear up so the diabetes goes away.

And you get pulled back into the garage, and you tell the mechanic, "My car has a disease! It has black smoke coming out and it's not running."

And the mechanic says, "What did you use for fuel?" And you say, "Oh, diesel fuel." And he says, "I have an idea. Try gasoline."

So they drain the kerosene out, and they clean off the spark plugs, and they put high test octane gasoline inside the tank, and vroom, the car runs great.

Well, that mechanic's smart! He cured my car's disease. But the car didn't have a disease. It was just the inevitable result of putting the wrong fuel in that's going to clog up the system and the engine.

Well, it's the same thing with our dietary patterns and the diseases they create. They're simply the result of the overly oily, low-fiber food stream running through our systems. And so you get these "diseases." But they're just the body's way of compensating for this abnormal fuel. And as soon as you put in a nice, lean, clean plant-based fuel, look what happens! The body gets leaner, those arteries open up, the blood pressures come down, the insulin receptors clear up so the diabetes

goes away. And wow, that doctor's so smart. But all he said was, "Put the fuel in that the body was meant to run on."

M.M.: So what's the fuel that we're supposed to run on?

M.K.: We're meant to run on a whole food, plant-based, unprocessed food stream.

So much of healing is just aligning the body, and the person, the lifestyle within, with the laws of nature that are within their very beings.

The French philosopher Voltaire said that the role of the physician is to entertain the patient while nature does the healing. And I often feel that's what I'm doing. You know, I can do a few pharmaceutical tricks but basically, my most important healing modality is talking about what the person's eating, how to shop, how to make good foods happen at home. And I know the body knows how to heal itself.

An early physician said that if you would like to know the healing secrets of the body, go walk in the green world and see nature at work and you will know how to heal. And those words are still true today. We are not carnivores. We don't have claws or big fangs. We're meant to be plant-eaters. And the body loves this type of food stream.

And when we turn ourselves into carnivores and sugar eaters and fat eaters, well then we turn into these monstrous beings who are grotesquely overweight and clogged up with all these diseases. And that's because we're not supposed to be eating animals.

Part of my counseling before healing comes down to adopting a plant-based diet. And take a walk everyday and get out in the sunshine and do meaningful work, have as much love and laughter in your life as you can, drink plenty of fresh water and get enough sleep.

These are all natural laws that if you apply them, work magic in the body, and healing happens.

Medicine is a very complex and subtle and beautiful art. But practicing medicine in America in the 21st century – primary care medicine – is

really about becoming diet and lifestyle counselors and helping people stop this self abuse, and much of this disease will go away.

And you hope at that time that you'll also help to waken some compassion in people about the animals and about the natural world. We can't be polluting the water. We need clean air. And we need green spaces. And that's all part of the healing as well.

MM: *We'll talk about that next time.*

Living Nature's Way

by Michael Mountain on November 8, 2011

Part Two of our talk with Dr. Michael Klaper

In the first part of this discussion, we talked with Dr. Klaper about his One Step Key to Good Health and about how the body *wants* to be healthy and has what it takes to heal itself. All we have to do is give it what it needs and live by what he calls "the laws of nature."

Michael Mountain: When you talk about living according to the laws of nature, are you referring to what you eat and drink or do you mean something more fundamental?

Dr. Michael Klaper: I guess a combination of both. We humans are amazing in our ability to adapt, including to adapt to unnatural and bizarre environments. Today, rather than eating real food, we mostly eat food-like substances in colorful packages and boxes.

You want to eat food as grown, so you can recognize a piece of lettuce as what grew in the field as part of a lettuce plant. Corn chips do not look like corn. Potato chips do not look like potatoes. So when I say natural law, I mean that it starts with natural, whole foods in their real, live, whole state.

And next, we're meant to be out in the sunshine. We're meant to be physically active. We're meant to interact with each other and laugh

and care for each other. We are tribal creatures, designed to be connected in a natural world with the sun and water and physical activity. And when we start severing those ties, then disease happens – physical diseases and societal diseases, too, like crime and neglect. And that, in turn, breeds economic diseases, with sky rocketing health care costs and loss of work and loss of wages and all that.

There's nothing mysterious about natural law. It feels good to be warm and fit and loved, and it feels bad to be cold and alone and sick. I want people to get in touch with those things that truly give us a good life.

So we're bringing this catastrophe on ourselves by ignoring the natural world and disconnecting from it. There's nothing mysterious about natural law. It feels good to be warm and fit and loved, and it feels bad to be cold and alone and sick. And so, I want people to get in touch with those things that truly give us a good life.

Get your pleasurable sensations through natural means, get your foods in an unprocessed form, be clear and honest and open in your relationships with other people and with the natural world. Get out in the sunshine.

I tell parents all the time: Take your kids to the park, away from that computer screen. Take them up to the stream or to the ocean or the forest, and see how nature really works, and you'll start overcoming that great disconnect that is one of the primary ills of our society, this huge disconnect from the natural world on which we all depend.

M.M.: *How would you apply this to how we relate to other animals and to the environment overall?*

M.K.: It starts with a sense of humility. Hundreds of years ago, when people stood in front of a buffalo or an elephant or giraffe or a polar bear, they were far more huge and powerful than we are. We've overblown our sense of self importance. We've lost the wonder of these animals and we've lost respect for them.

John Denver had a lovely phrase in a song that said, "Man with all his power, his reason and his choice – who's to say the nightingale has any lesser voice?"

Each one of these animals has a right to be here. They were here long before we were. And it's so arrogant on our part, so callous, to say that they do not have a legitimate role in this world.

There are people who would turn the entire planet into suburbia with lawns and dairy farms and that, and that's the end of nature as far as they're concerned. It's like "Who needs nature? I've got my computer."

M.M.: *We grow up in a culture that says that everything on this planet is simply a "resource" that's here for our use.*

M.K.: That seems to be the message we've been given since childhood. The Bible tells us to take dominion over the Earth, and that's been interpreted that we can do anything we want with the planet and its inhabitants.

There are wonders all around us, in everything from the insects to the redwood trees.

But this totally ignores natural law. In ancient times, awareness of nature permeated all societies. People honored the natural laws. And the animals were part of that. They were respected. They were killed and consumed, but it was done with a sense of balance and not a sense of exploitation.

But today, there's a callousness toward animals. The juggernaut of exploitation is all-permeating, and it finds its way into medicine and nutrition.

And that's such a hollow, life-defeating stance to have. So, it starts with regaining that sense of respect and that sense of wonder.

M.M.: *You only have to step outside, even in a big city, and it's all around you.*

M.K.: You know, it's autumn now, and there are tiny little birds flying 3,000 miles a stretch, over open oceans, as they migrate. The golden plover flies from Alaska to Hawaii. I used to live in Hawaii and you see these plovers come in. How do they find those islands in the middle of

the Pacific? And how do they gear up for something like six days of continuous flying at 50 miles an hour. That should make everyone stop and hold their hearts and applaud at this wonder.

And there are wonders all around us, in everything from the insects to the redwood trees.

We depend on fresh air, fresh water and healthy soils, and it's in our peril that we, we denude the forests and we erode the top soils and pollute the waters and, and it's coming back to bite us. We're watching the polar ice caps melt, and the species disappear, the forests disappear, and we're going to find ourselves very lonely on a desert planet at this point.

And I think Chief Seattle said, if all the animals disappear, there will be a great loneliness.

M.M.: *How do you get that sense of wonder and humility back?*

M.K.: Children have it. If you bring them out into the natural world early, they have it. We've got to see how precious that is, and nurture that. Don't extinguish it with some handheld computer device. That love of the natural world is where it has to start.

You know, I find that kids want to be vegetarian. As soon as they find out where that lamb chop really comes from, and where that steak and that chicken really comes from, they're appalled by that. They love the animals. And that needs to be recognized and nurtured.

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How to Start on a Plant-Based Diet

by Michael Mountain on November 14, 2011

And the big difference you can make by doing this

Third in a series of conversations with Dr. Michael Klaper.

M.M.: What do you say to people who are interested in maybe getting into a vegan or vegetarian way of life, but aren't in a position to come to your office for a personal consultation?

M.K.: There are some excellent websites and books. The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine has a vegan starter kit. Dr. Joel Fuhrman wrote a beautiful book called, ***Eat to Live***, and he makes a simple, plant-based diet really nutritious and delicious. Or, just Google "vegan meals" and you'll get lots of recipes.

Just start simply, maybe just one day a week. Like, on Thursday, just have granola and fruit with rice milk or almond milk for breakfast, a heart vegetarian chili or stew for lunch, and spaghetti with tomato sauce and steamed greens for dinner just to show yourself that you can make it for one day without animal products. Then, make it two days, then three days. Instead of having meat three times a day, make it one meal a day.

Make two of your three meals vegan meals every day. Just have people put their toe in the water and they'll find it's pretty good food.

M.M.: Let's talk a moment about vivisection. If you had your druthers, would you just say shut the whole thing down, the labs, all of it?

M.K.: If it's hurting the animals we simply shouldn't do it. But then you say what about the potential cures for some cancers or whatever? I couldn't say that we've learned nothing from animal experimentation. We probably have, but the wholesale callousness of it ... it's such a huge industry at this point.

When it comes to animal research, white mice are pulled out of cages like tissues out of a box. And the thought for the individual animal's life never even enters the equation.

There comes a point when you have to say stop or you know you're going to lose your soul. You have to say "Stop, I'm making a stand on behalf of compassion – on behalf of my humanity, on behalf of common sense."

“Get serious about healthy living and the need for animal experimentation for truly life-saving drugs will drop down to a thimble of what it is now.”

We could certainly do away with 95 percent of animal experimentation, but I would say first adopt a plant-based diet and a healthy lifestyle. Start subsidizing the fruit and vegetable growers, make produce freely available through the schools and government food programs and really get serious about getting people healthier, and your need for all this huge animal experimentation will diminish to almost zero.

I mean, what are we killing all these animals for except to find another magic pill so we can go eat our cheese burgers and pizzas. That is really what it’s all about. Health comes from healthy living. Get serious about that and the need for animal experimentation for truly life-saving drugs will drop down to a thimble of what it is now. Get serious about that and the need for vivisection will essentially disappear.

M.M.: *We now have seven billion people on the planet. The climate is changing. Lots of things are changing. What’s your prognosis for our collective future?*

M.K.: I grew up in Chicago, and I was a long-suffering Chicago sports fan watching the Cubs, the White Sox and the Bears lose every year. I feel like I’m in a long drawn out Chicago Cubs game, and we’re in the bottom of the ninth and the prognosis is not good. You’d have to be an idiot to not see these terrible signs: the animals are disappearing, the ice caps are melting, the oceans are going acidic, these are huge destructive forces.

If the Earth was a medical patient, I would put it in the intensive care unit. It needs intensive care.

So, yes, I’m extremely concerned. Can we still turn it around? Yes, but it’s going to take a huge awakening. And there are a lot of forces against that, seducing us into somnolence. “Feed them food and entertain them and distract them so they don’t see what’s happening.” We have to wake up from that somnolence. There’s still time. We can turn it around, and I’m going to keep working to help people wake up.

I used to do anesthesia to put people to sleep; now it's much more fun to wake them up!

M.M.: *What can anyone do to help the planet?*

You empower yourself through the choices you make and what you spend your money on. I try to make my life a statement of compassion and integrity. I've stopped eating animals and I've stopped wearing animals. I try to stand up when animals are being cruelly exploited. In my practice, I do simple things like trying to avoid prescribing medicines in capsules that are gelatin-based. I would rather use tablets.

"I'm going to keep working to help people wake up. I used to do anesthesia to put people to sleep; now it's much more fun to wake them up!"

When you have enough people making individual statements, that makes a movement. And so I'm proud to be a part of that movement. And because I happen to be a physician, I will make that stand in my medical circles.

Once you know how the animals are suffering, and once you understand how connected it is, you can't ignore it.

We each have power for good or for evil. Every cheeseburger we eat creates destruction in the forest, in the waters, and in the soils. But if you eat vegetable stir-fry, you help the world a bit, and you support the farmers growing the vegetables, too.

What we do really does make a difference. Everything on this planet is a miracle when you look at it. When you understand the biology, the chemistry, and the physics involved, life is so improbable; it's so precious.

So have reverence for life, and let your example be the message to make the world good around you. That's all we can do.

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Help Others to Start on a Plant-Based Diet

by Michael Mountain on November 15, 2011

Fourth in a series of conversations with Dr. Michael Klaper.

Michael Mountain: Do you find yourself running into opposition from parents who feel you're preaching a personal agenda to their kids?

Dr. Michael Klaper: When people come to see me all clogged up and on eight different pills, and they've got chest pain when they walk half a block, they usually don't need a whole lot of convincing. That's why they came to me. They know they are going to hear a message about a plant-based diet and healthier eating. But when I go to schools and I talk about what a meat-based diet is doing to our planet and to our health, and then the kids go home and say, "I don't want to eat my meat tonight," you bet we get some angry calls from parents.

"It's easier to talk to people about a sex change operation than it is about changing our diets!"

It's easier to talk to people about a sex change operation than it is about changing our diets! The comfort foods we were given as children put some powerful imprinting on our nervous system, but there's another factor. It means that mother or dad were wrong when they gave us meat every night just out of love. They didn't know it, but it means that it was a mistake, and that the American Dietetic Association is wrong, the family doctor's been wrong, the commercials on TV are wrong, and it's such a dramatic blow to one's reality orientation. People wonder: If I've been deceived about that, what else am I being deceived about?

M.M.: What do you say to them?

M.K.: It needs to be done in a sensitive manner in an appropriate venue. The Internet is making it easier because the information is out there and the kids are talking about it with each other online. So the kids know about it, but modern society is such a juggernaut. The fast food restaurants are everywhere, the advertising is everywhere, your

peers are say, "Let's go get a hamburger or pizza." It's hard to say "No, I don't want to do that."

The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine and others have put out a lot of information, and when I speak at the Vegetarian Association, there are always a lot of kids there. And although parents sometimes get upset at first, when you really talk to them say, "Well, yes, my husband has just been diagnosed with high blood pressure," and "Yes, I just found this lump in my breast last month."

M.M.: I was talking to someone the other day who was saying, "Yes, I'm really concerned and I'm looking closer at cutting out meat and dairy foods but it's difficult to talk to my husband and even my 7-year old son about it, especially since his dad may feel that I'm influencing him in the wrong direction."

M.K.: What I tell them is don't say anything to your kids or your spouse or whomever. Just do it yourself. Just say, "Guys, you can eat what you want, but this shelf in the refrigerator is mine, and I'm going to put my veggie dogs and my tofu sandwich here, and I'm going to do this because I have to do this." That's all. Don't say anything else. Just start making your vegetable soups and your steamed greens, have your granola and soy milk in the morning, and you just do it yourself and don't make them feel defensive.

Gandhi said, "Example is not the best way to teach; example is the only way to teach." You'll get a little ridicule and resistance at the beginning, but after a while it will stop once the novelty wears off, and you'll be surprised after a few weeks when they start saying "Hey, that vegetable soup looks pretty good, can I have some of that?"

"Example is not the best way to teach; example is the only way to teach."

When I speak at company immersions where the company brings employees in for a week and feeds them vegan food and gives them lectures and all this stuff, I tell them not to march into the kitchen and announce that we're going to start eating healthy now. That's exactly how you're going to engender a lot of resistance. Just buy your food

and start eating it yourself and watch what happens. The good results will speak for themselves.

M.M.: Another thing that happens is when you go out to dinner with other people, or you're visiting their homes, and they get defensive about your way of eating. You find yourself apologizing and saying things like, "It's just something my doctor told me to do."

M.K.: Yes, I've been doing it for 30 years now and I'm at the point where I don't care when everyone orders steak and I order spaghetti. It's not 1950 anymore. People know about vegetarians, there are vegan items on the menu, and they even use the word now on the menus. Burger King sells bean burgers now. So I just smile and if they stop being a friend because I don't eat meat, then it's not a friendship that I'm going to mourn losing. I just make it very clear it's not a commentary. I love them all anyway. I'm just eating what I've got to eat.

M.M.: What about the health profession? Do you run into much flak or opposition from the more traditional medical field?

"The entrenched interests are so powerful that nobody is going to stand up and say a vegan diet is the answer to high blood pressure."

M.K.: The National Institutes of Health is composed of 27 different institutes, like the National Eye Institute, the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. And, not one of the 27 institutes has the word "nutrition" in its title. Western medicine does not believe that food has anything to do with disease, and certainly not the Western diet. The entrenched interests are so powerful, the multi-national companies that make food and drugs sponsor the medical schools and the researchers, and nobody is going to stand up and say a vegan diet is the answer to high blood pressure. It's much easier just to take a pill.

And there are the standard put-downs, like in the TV commercials that say, "When diet and exercise don't work ..." They're telling us that diet and exercise is not going to work. But that's because nobody's doing the real diet.

Cutting down to three cheeseburgers instead of four is not a diet that's going to work.

M.M.: But the word is still getting out there.

"If they stop subsidizing the meat industry, we may be astounded at how quickly the turn happens."

M.K.: Yes, you've seen everyone from Dr. Oz to Oprah talking about plant-based cooking, and there are movies like *Forks Over Knives*. And it's also starting to percolate up through the medical leaders. If you go to Medline, or the official medical libraries of NIH, and type in the word "vegan", you'll get lots of studies... Vegan Diet and Arthritis, Vegan Diet and Diabetes, Vegan Diet and High Blood Pressure. It's starting to show up in the medical studies.

And finally, you run into individual doctors. We've got a rheumatoid arthritis doctor who knows that his arthritis patients do better on a vegetarian diet. So, it's chinks in the armor. The wall of resistance is starting to crumble.

When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, it happened very quickly. I think that's what may happen. It may happen with breathtaking speed how quickly a change to a plant-based diet gets official approval on a lot of levels. If they stop subsidizing the meat industry, the economics is going to dictate it, the public health is going to dictate it, the animal fairness, the Internet, all these things are forces that we may be astounded at how quickly the turn happens.

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See Doctor Michael Klaper's web site: <http://DoctorKlaper.com/>