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> By Chris Steinbach

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> TWIN FALLS – The answers to questions asked most frequently by readers who have read in the Times-News about my efforts to eat better and live healthier boil down to one word: Yes. As in, yes I:

>• Have lost some weight.

>• Feel better and have more energy.

>• Actually like many of the new foods I have been trying.

>Seven weeks ago I began meeting with Jill Sherman Skeem, a certified macrobiotic health counselor in Twin Falls and graduate of the Strengthening Health Institute in Philadelphia. The idea was that I would write a series of stories for the Times-News about this experience.

>When Jill and I met for the first time, my knees, hips and feet often hurt especially, for some reason, the tops of my feet. I would be stiff and sore when I woke up in the morning, or if I sat too long at work. My feet would hurt when I'd go for a walk in the evening.

>These aches have nearly disappeared, which ranks as the most profound change I have experienced in the past two months. My feet don't hurt, and my energy is growing. I feel wide-eyed and more rested when I get up in the morning.

>While feeling better is significant, it's also rewarding to put on Pants that didn't used to fit or to wear shorts I couldn't fit into last summer – both of which I've done in the past week. Shirt collars button a little easier. Sport coats aren't quite as snug.

>These changes, combined with questions about how much weight I have lost, prompted me to break one of Jill's rules last week and step on the scales at the gym. I've lost about 15 pounds, which I have described to friends as a small ripple in a really big lake, but nonetheless encouraging.

>What has been different than past attempts to lose weight is that I haven't really felt deprived or hungry. I haven't told my parents (former cattle and hog feeders), but two-thirds to three-quarters of the meals I am eating are vegetarian. And I like the food – even the dish made with millet (yes, I've heard all of the jokes about birdseed) and the miso soup made with seaweed mixed in for good measure. I really liked the fried tofu sandwiches served with sauteed onions and mushrooms and Vegenaïse sandwich spread instead of mayonnaise. My wife liked the sandwiches too, though she still wants a cheeseburger once in a while. And shopping for food is becoming easier. I was not accustomed to spending so much time in the bulk-food aisle or the produce section. On one of my earlier shopping trips, I bought some turnips, thinking they were leeks. But I have since figured out what leeks look like. I

have also bought for the first time – and really liked – parsnips, which I would describe as white carrots on steroids. Like carrots, parsnips are a root. But they are, I think, sweeter and better tasting.

>After hearing about my experiences, a colleague told me the other day:
>"This whole thing is going to wind up costing you money."
>He may very well be correct. And that could be a good thing for Tom
>Ashenbrener, owner of Rudy's – A Cook's Paradise in downtown Twin Falls. In recent weeks I have bought a better grater at Rudy's, along with a tray for steaming vegetables and a bigger cutting board to accommodate all of the fresh vegetables I am preparing and eating.

>The only really bad thing that has happened as a result of eating so many vegetables has been what happened to my garbage disposal. Let's just say it wasn't a good way to get rid of cabbage leaves that had gone bad. Live and learn, I guess. And I'm learning a lot and feeling – which also means living – better.

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