



Your story

By Vicki McLeod

● **Gabi Steiner** from Lifeplus was speaking to Vicki McLeod
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My boss changed my life.

I was living in Fellbach, close to Stuttgart. I was fifteen years old and I was the office junior for a steel company. I worked for a man called Werner Greiner. He was only twenty eight years old, but he used a wheelchair as he suffered from Multiple Sclerosis. He was very interested in nutrition and what he put into his body. He would tell me how important it was that I took care of what I ate. He saw the connection between what a person ate and their health, and back in the 60s this was not something that many people understood. I would bring sandwiches to work but I would hide them from him as I was embarrassed to eat them in front of him! But over the course of a couple of years he convinced me that he was right, I saw his condition remain the same and I thought, there must be something in this. So I started to change my diet. I would even take my own food with me to dinner parties. That was the start really.

Nutrition became my hobby and my passion. I read everything I could find. In the 70s and 80s I was aware about Free Radicals long before they became public knowledge. People thought they were a political party! I had a folder of every scientific article, journal and newspaper that I could put my hands on, there was maybe one a year published, although these days you can find anything you want online. I had to work hard to get the information I craved.

Convinced

I became convinced that the face is only the expression of the situation of what is in the body, and I became more and more interested in the ageing process. By the time I was twenty years old I knew I had to make sure I looked after my health to take care of my future. I lost 17 kilos after I changed my diet: I ate raw food and much more healthily than my traditional German family. My father would laugh at me and said I was eating bird food. But I felt so much better in my mind, I felt as if I was tak-



A life changing experience for Gabi Steiner. PHOTO: OLIVER NEILSON

ing care of myself. I tried very hard to convince my friends as I saw people around me receiving a warning about their health, people having heart attacks or even just looking very unwell but they seemed to prefer to die than change the way that they lived their lives. From my observations of these people I realised that your way of life had something to do with the way you died.

When I was younger I had some very bad times financially; there was no one to help me, certainly not my family. I was a single parent, I remember when my

son Tim was about five, and I had no money, none. A hairdresser moved into our apartment building and put some vouchers through the doors of all of the flats for free introductory haircuts. It was a ten euro voucher. I sent him to have his haircut with the voucher, and I gave him a little bit of money in case the haircut was more than the voucher. He was very proud, he went to the hairdresser on his own and when he came back he said

to me 'Oh Mama, I don't need the voucher, the money was enough'. I wanted to kill him, I couldn't afford to lose a Mark. Not

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one. The situation was so frightening to me that I made a decision that I didn't want to have that feeling anymore. My family never had any money.

My father was an alcoholic and all of his money went on that. With my first pay check I had bought my mother some shoes it was an important thing for me to do, and something that she has always spoken about. Right now I see a lot of people struggling; they're panicking as the situation gets more difficult. You need to build your security not when you need it, do it before you need it.

Fate

Then fate knocked on my door. A man I knew who ran a gym asked me if I wanted to have a job where I could be healthy and earn money. I said yes straight away, although I didn't know anything about the company or its products. When I looked at the products I found that it was something that I was interested in as here were all of the vitamins that I had been reading about. I worked with this company, Herbalife until 1999. It was a tough business; the sales system was very demanding, you had to order a lot of products each month to get the commission. There was a lot of pressure on me, and I struggled with it. I wasn't happy, it was a stressful job. I couldn't escape the pressure. Things finally changed when I started to work for Lifeplus in 1999, it changed my life. When I discovered the company I was so excited that I didn't sleep properly for two days! I was still working hard: twenty hours a day, and I travelled a lot, but I built it up. I went all over Germany in a mobile home, living and working out of it. All my life I have wanted to give something back. That's why my job is perfect for me, as it is about nutrition, ageing process and it is helping people.

Now when I think back to my youth, and to the effect that Werner had on my life, I am very grateful. He was like a father figure to me. I'll never forget him."