



# ALIVE!

## THE CHIP HIGHWAY

**CARL HAD THE** typical cardio metabolic syndrome profile: diabetes, obesity, hypertension, and elevated cholesterol and triglycerides. He approached me after a week into the Complete Health Improvement Program (CHIP) that I was leading at the Adventist Health Medical Center. “I am not going to change the way I eat,” he said. “I have eaten beef and chicken every day of my life. I rarely eat vegetables. I don’t cook and I’m not going to start. This program isn’t going to work for me.”

I assured Carl there was no pressure to stay in the program. He could drop out at any time, but I encouraged him to keep coming. Maybe there would be something worthwhile? We also enjoyed having him in the group.

A couple weeks passed, and I noticed Carl was contributing more and more to the discussions. His attitude had clearly changed. He was interacting with other participants. He began including some fruits and vegetables into his diet. One evening he told the group about the chili and minestrone soup he made and shared the recipes with everyone. Towards the end of the program, he met with me. It was pretty obvious he’d made some radical changes. “I am getting tired of the chili and soup and need more recipes,” he stated. “But, Risë, I’m a happier man. I’ve struggled with depression for decades. How I wish I had done the program

long ago. We should learn this stuff when we are young. It should be in every high school. I like the way I am living now. I can do this for life.”

This is one of the points I like to emphasize at the beginning of the program. CHIP is not a diet program. The world definitely does not need another one of those. Instead, we focus on educating, inspiring, and equipping people with tools and information that will be useful to them for life.

I was thrilled as she shared how she’d lost approximately 100 pounds.

Sarah participated in CHIP a little over a year ago. Full of enthusiasm, she implemented what she was learning, how to eat differently, tried new recipes, and started increasing her physical activity. Her disappointment, though, was palpable on the final day of the program when we handed out before and after lab results and anthropometrics. The numbers on the scale had not changed that much. I feared this might discourage her from maintaining all the changes she’d made. However, I ran into her a couple weeks ago, about a year after she had attended CHIP. I was thrilled as she shared how she’d lost approximately 100 pounds. She had just returned from vacation and felt like it had stunted her progress, but she said, “I know what to do and how to do it.”

CHIP is not an all-or-nothing program. It's a program that equips the individual to move forward toward improved health.

Sue was a cute blonde Montana woman. She was raised on the ranch, eating red meat. Her family owns a meat-packing house. She admitted to me that if she had known CHIP was a whole-foods, plant-based program, she would never have joined. She told herself she would work the program until her birthday, at which time she would treat herself to a large steak. "Now," she stated, "I don't even want one." This is the kind of transformation I love to see. While Sue ended up receiving the prize for most overall improvement at the end of the program, it's the change between the ears that I value most.

To experience complete health, multiple factors need to be addressed.

Life can be like a journey. With their destination of improved health, CHIP participants obtain directions, learn to read the map, and discover how to shift their vehicle so they can pass obstacles in their way.

Mark grabbed ahold of the exercise component of the program and walked over 331 miles in two months. However, it wasn't until the night on forgiveness that, with tears in his eyes, he expressed how he found the roadblock that was keeping him from being a healthier man. To experience complete health, multiple factors need to be addressed.

Joan wrote me a thank you note at the end of the program. She expressed the positive impact it had on her life. Her family members noted that the difference in her was more than smaller love handles. Her attitude and spirit were lighter and happier. Her joint inflammation was gone. "I don't have acid reflux anymore and I wake up with so much energy."

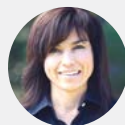
I know when people experience dramatic progress as a result of applying key principles to their lives, they won't ever be the same. I don't mean they won't regain the weight or that their blood pressure, cholesterol, or blood sugar won't rise again. It may. But you see, now I'm not the only one who knows the

results of living in harmony with God-designed natural law. They know that now too.

Joe told me how he had expressed to his physician that he felt he was taking enough medications for his arthritis and didn't want to take more. He was experiencing debilitating pain though, and he asked if there was anything else he could do. Would diet or lifestyle changes help him? His physician assured him that diet had nothing to do with his condition. After attending CHIP and experiencing dramatic relief and a decrease in inflammation though, he knew that just wasn't true.

Sometimes on life's journeys we take a wrong turn and must navigate back. There are often pit stops that slow us down. While I seek to create enthusiasm and impart knowledge with my work, I don't expect perfection from people. Sometimes I get to see tremendous results. Some continue on the path or adapt it to best fit them. Others complete the program and take a wrong exit. They might regain weight or flounder without the support. They might take too many pit stops or dally too long. I remind them ahead of time that when that happens, don't give up and get stuck there. Yes, they might have to pass all those proverbial slow-moving trucks again but that is better than going back. Just get back on the highway.

Dwayne was another participant who wanted to lose weight, but his primary concern was diabetes and his out-of-control blood sugar levels. At the end of the program, his fasting blood sugar dropped 124 points. One evening he testified to the group how he had needed CHIP for years. He shared how he'd gone from doctor to doctor, but it wasn't until he came to Adventist Health that he received a fuller picture of how to improve his health. He said, "You guys have a message that the world needs to hear." 📌



### RISË RAFFERTY, RDN

Risë is a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist. Her understanding of how significantly diet and lifestyle impact one's health and happiness fuels her passion to help, educate, and inspire others.