

# Plant-Based Eating: Video Transcript

Welcome to the PN Definitive Guide: The Science and Practice of Plant-Based Eating. In this video, we'll explore the various components of plant-based eating and help you or your clients build a plant-powered action plan. We'll address

- what plant-based eating means;
- how plant-based diets and eaters are unique and diverse;
- the benefits and challenges of eating more plants; and
- why it's important for coaches to take a biopsychosocial approach rooted in deep health when working with clients.

Most importantly, we'll show how you can better support your clients on their plant-based journey towards improved health, wellness, and performance.

Are you ready?

Then, let's go!

## What does “plant-based” eating mean anyway?

There are many different ways to be a plant-based eater.

On one end of the spectrum, you have “plant-curious” — which are people who are considering adding more plant foods into their diet and are wondering how to do it.

A little bit further down the line, there's “plant-forward” or “plant-centered”. These individuals want to get a majority of their diet from plant foods but might still eat animal products.

Then there's fully plant-based where all animal products are excluded from diets in its entirety.

And on the other end of the spectrum, there's the fully plant-based lifestyle. This type of lifestyle excludes all animal products not just from their diets but from the

rest of their lives as well. You won't see these people wearing leather jackets and ugly holiday sweaters made from wool.

## People can have many beliefs and behaviors around plant-based eating.

For instance, plant-based diets and eaters can vary based on factors such as:

- which plants and animal products people actually eat;
- how processed or nutrient-dense their food choices are;
- whether “plant-based” means “include more plants” or simply “avoid meat more”;
- how diligently people aim to replace any lost nutrients, such as supplementing with vitamin B<sub>12</sub>;
- people's level of education, access to health care, and family situations;
- what other health behaviors people (consistently) do; and/or
- how consistently they eat plant-based.

People's choices can also change day to day.

They may choose differently at a restaurant than a family dinner, a work lunch instead of a home breakfast, or a get-together with friends versus a late-night snack on the couch.

So if your client chooses “plant-based” today, they may not do so tomorrow, or at the next meal, and vice versa.

## Eating more plants is probably good for us.

Research suggests that in general, people who regularly eat more minimally-processed plant foods (such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds, and beans and legumes) tend to:

- be healthier;
- avoid or delay many chronic age, metabolic, and life-style-related diseases;

- have a better body composition; and
- recover more effectively from exercise or general stressors.

## You might ask “Why is this the case?”

Well, minimally-processed plant foods:

- Tend to have a high nutrient density — in other words, more vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients, along with thousands of other potentially helpful chemical compounds known as antioxidants or phytonutrients.
- They improve our fatty acid profile by supplying us with healthy fatty acids.
- They’re high in water and fiber which helps bulk up stool, keeps our GI tract moving, and binds to / excretes substances such as cholesterol.
- They aid in appetite and hunger regulation which helps us feel fuller longer by slowing digestion.
- And, minimally-processed plant foods help with what we call dietary displacement. When we purposely eat more plants, we tend to eat fewer processed foods overall.

## However, some plants may cause problems for some people.

Common challenges include:

- Antinutrients such as phytic acid and lectins which are substances that inhibit or block the uptake or conversion of nutrients
- Bioavailability of the nutrients due to its molecular form. Simply having more nutrients in a plant doesn’t mean we’ll absorb and use those nutrients when we eat it.
- Fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides and polyols or (FODMAPs), which are in many plant foods. Some people cannot digest these well, which can lead to gas, bloating, pain, flatulence, and/or diarrhea.

- And of course, there are food intolerances and allergies which can occur in response to any food. Certain plant foods such as tree and ground nuts, soy, wheat, mustard, sesame, garlic and even chocolate can cause itching, swelling, hives, or anaphylaxis.

So... are plants bad? Of course not.

Some plant parts are poisonous to everyone or are toxic if not properly prepared. Other plants are not ideal choices for some people, some of the time, for various reasons ranging from a specific genetic inability to tolerate it, to a general intolerance, to “I just don’t like it”.

Each person will enjoy, prefer, tolerate, and know how to cook or prepare different foods.

It’s important to work with your client to identify which plant foods do and don’t work for them on their plant-powered journey.

## So how can you help your clients on this journey?

Start by taking a biopsychosocial approach rooted in deep health.

In other words, look at how biological features, psychological features (such as mindset), and social features (such as relationships) interact to affect a client’s choices and coaching journey.

Also consider how each area affects a person’s deep health. Deep health is a “whole-person, whole-life” phenomenon that is concerned with thriving in all domains of human experience.

Specifically, it incorporates:

- Physical health: such as how our body feels, functions, and performs
- Emotional health: such as our moods or feelings about our choices
- Environmental health: such as having safe and secure surroundings and caring for the environment
- Mental and cognitive health: Including our perspective and outlook on the world and our capacity for insight and conscious awareness
- Existential health: or a sense of meaning, purpose and feeling part of something greater than ourselves, and lastly,

- Relational and social health: including our immediate social support and broader cultural norms

For many people, plant-based eating isn't just a set of food choices; it's part of an overall philosophy of living better. As coaches, when we judge whether a given dietary pattern is "working", we want to look at all aspects of deep health — not just the physical.

As you continue to learn more about plant-based eating and how it ties into a person's overall deep health, it's important to think and coach your client through this process systematically.

Now, follow our 6-step PN coaching process to help you better support your clients on their plant-based journey towards improved health, wellness, and performance.

## Step 1: Assess your client.

Start by gathering as much information as possible about your client.

Ask them about things like:

- What are their goals? Are they realistic and appropriate?
- What's their current state of health? Any medications or other health-related behaviors you should know about?
- How active are they? What expectations do they have for exercise and athletic performance?
- What other skills, capacities, and resources do they bring to this process? Are they competent and creative cooks? Or, does making a simple salad freak them out?

Remember that plant-based eaters will struggle with the same lifestyle challenges as everyone else.

In fact, our research shows that the top five nutritional challenges people face (including plant-based eaters) are:

- Emotional or stress eating
- Cravings with certain foods
- Lack of planning and preparation
- Eating too quickly

- And snacking when not hungry

So whether it's ribeyes or rice, remember that each client is different, but also, the same.

## Step 2: Understand your client and “build the story”.

Once you've taken the time to properly assess your client, now it's time to go beyond the data and really understand who they are as people, and how their unique story plays a role in their journey of plant-based eating.

A great resource to help you build your client's story includes our worksheet “Why Choose a Plant-Based Diet?” found in your online Resource Center. This form asks your client about various domains of their life, to help both you and the client understand where plant-based eating fits within the broader context of their life.

Other questions you may wish to explore with your client to better understand their overall story and situation include:

- Why this, why now? What makes plant-based eating important to you at the moment?
- How ready, willing, and able are you to make changes?
- What exactly are the values, priorities, and goals that are driving you?
- What trade-offs are you willing to make?
- What support do you have for this — what and who is around you?
- What other life skills do you have to help implement plant-based eating or solve problems around it?

Remember, clients' reasons for adopting a plant-based diet may affect how they do it.

Some clients may be looking to simply improve their overall “plantiness” of food choices; shifting from foods that are high on the “meaty” end to foods on the “planty” end of the continuum.

Other clients might be focused on improving their overall plantiness and food quality. Eating highly-processed plant-based foods like bars, burgers, and hot dogs simply won't check the box.

Still, your client might want to combine both improving plantiness and overall quality with a specific goal.

Whatever your client wishes to accomplish, it's important that you as the coach understand what matters to your client and you work together to help understand and create an action plan.

Speaking of action plans, let's move on to . . .

## Step 3: Generate potential action steps.

This stage involves taking all the data you gathered in Step 1, and the deeper understanding you got in Step 2, and collaborating with your client to come up with a draft action plan for the near future.

We want to know:

- what SKILLS your client needs to learn, maintain, or improve to move towards that goal;
- what PRACTICES will build those skills; and
- what kind of small regular ACTIONS support the practices.

For example, perhaps your client wants to work on creating a more consistent menu where they add more plants.

A specific skill to help you achieve your goal of eating more plant-based meals might be

- planning and preparing plant-based meals so that they balance taste, enjoyment, and family preferences

A practice to help with planning and preparing plant-based meals might involve

- experimenting with new meal types, cuisines, or methods of preparation

And a small, specific action consistently done over time to help you experiment might be

- making a grocery list each week that includes an intentional amount of plant-based items

Implementing short-term tactics while helping your client identify an overall long-term strategy will help your client successfully master the actions, practices, and skills needed to achieve their goals.

But, despite the excitement to try all the things, the best experiments focus on one thing and adjust from there.

Let's talk about the next step in our coaching process. . .

## Step 4: Choose 1 action step and test it.

You and your client probably have some good ideas, but you won't know which action step works best until you actually try it.

So:

- Pick something together from the list of potential actions that you've just collaborated on. Maybe it's an additional day of shopping for fresh fruits or vegetables. Or taking a regular trip down to the local Farmers' market.
- Next, ask the client to try that one specific task as an experiment for a pre-specified period such as a day, a week, two weeks, etc.
- Then, at the end of that period, you'll reconvene, look at how it went, and decide what to do next based on that experiment.

A few things to consider:

- Make sure you and your client define what "doing the thing" really is. This action should be clear, concrete, and easily understood.
- How will you track whether your client did it?
- How will you decide if this action or plan is actually "working"?
- How long is the testing period? Does that match the goal and plan chosen?
- How often will you track progress? And at what frequency will you evaluate both whether this specific action was a good idea, as well as the overall value of the bigger plan?

Once you and your client have chosen an action step to test out, move on to the next stage.



## Step 5: Monitor and evaluate

Remember, each client is unique.

Not all of us respond the same way to particular foods or dietary plans.

Some people absolutely love plant-based eating right away. To them, it feels good, fits their goals, and suits their body or routine.

However, others don't find it such an easy ride. Luckily, there are many small changes that can often help.

First, begin with an overall assessment of how the client feels and performs on their current plan. Consider our Diet Satisfaction Assessment form that you'll find in your online Resource Center.

Collect any metrics that you and the client have agreed are relevant, such as:

- Behavior or process indicators including: How consistently they're following the agreed-upon action steps? Or how well they're planning their meals?
- Physical indicators including bloodwork from health care providers, body composition, athletic or fitness performance, sleep quantity, or anything else that seems relevant, and
- Subjective indicators such as their overall sense of wellbeing, energy levels, mood, and confidence in their ability to follow the program.

Then, analyze and discuss what you've both discovered. Invite them to think about what it means, and what it could suggest for the next steps.

Some challenges and concerns can be diet-related, but can also be symptoms of an underlying chronic health problem.

If it's not obviously connected to specific choices of plant-based eating (such as "Every time your client eats tofu, they get an upset stomach"), suggest that your client also consults with their health care provider.

And don't forget to help your client celebrate any successes, big or small, during this plant-eating discovery process.

Congratulate them for taking charge of their health and fitness, and call out any victories, even if it's just making and eating their first kale salad or bean burger.

Once your client has been monitored and evaluated, it's time to move to the final part of our coaching process:

## Step 6: Decide what to do next.

If it's working, keep going.

Your observations as the coach plus the client's feedback and results of their experience will help identify any patterns or relationships.

If what your client is doing is working, then continue on the plant-powered path.

If it's not working, adjust and try again.

If the data show your client going in the wrong direction, revise the plan. Don't ignore the indicators telling you to change course.

Stay objective. Stay compassionate. Stay client-centered.

This will help you and your client both understand more accurately what is happening and help you make a better decision about what to do next.

Continue your regular schedule of checking in and monitoring your client to give you data about how well things are working. Then, choose the next task or action based on what you come up with.

## In summary, remember one major concept:

Just like there isn't a "best" diet, there's no "best" way to be "plant-based".

Embrace the opportunity to experiment and find what works best for you and your client.

Try out some of the tools and resources in your online Resource Center.

Such as our:

- PN Plant-Based Eating (PBE) Professional Calculator
- Micronutrient Deficiency Guide
- Plant-based Food Spectrums
- And more

You may already feel confident about working with clients who are plant-based eaters, or you may feel more hesitant. Either way, brush up on your coaching skills and method by thinking and practicing systematically.

Remember that plant-based eating is just one tool in a big coaching toolbox.

If it works and it's a fit, great. If not, try something else.

Happy planting!