

Rip Esselstyn:

I am super pumped for you to spend time with today's guest, a veritable lighthouse in this Plant-Strong movement and a true matriarch. Victoria Moran has been in the trenches for well, over 35 years and at age 70, she's just getting started her mission to share the joys and rewards of living a whole food vegan lifestyle with the entire world. She's written, get this, 13 books, hosts her own radio show and podcast called Main Street Vegan. And most recently produced a new documentary called A Prayer For Compassion that we'll discuss later in the show. She also runs the Main Street Vegan Academy, a program for training and certifying vegan lifestyle coaches and entrepreneurs around the world.

Rip Esselstyn:

If I didn't mention, Victoria is 70 and as you're going to hear in our conversation, one of her goals is to help others age in slow motion. And I think you'll agree she is doing just that. And that's a fantastic thing because the world needs Victoria Moran and others like her who have the heart of a hero and the compassion to change the world. Enjoy this inspiring and timeless talk with the Main Street Vegan host, Victoria Moran. I want to start out by asking you, so your brand is Main Street Vegan. Why Main Stream Vegan?

Victoria Moran:

Well, it's a story actually, Rip. I went to a PETA fundraiser late in 2010 and they showed videos and I've been seeing videos like this for 40 years. It took me quite a while to get from vegetarian to vegan back in the day. So I've been around this movement forever, and I've seen those videos about things that humans do to animals. But that night my heart was extra open and all I wanted to do was write a check for a \$100,000 and hand it to the PETA founder, Ingrid Newkirk, and say here, go fix something. But the check would have bounced. So I got on the train thinking, okay, what's the plan B. And I literally had inspiration. I don't know how to explain this. You could say God, you could say angels. I don't know what, all I know is that it came to me very clearly. Okay. You don't have a 100,000K to spare, but what you can do is make your next book Main Street Vegan.

Victoria Moran:

We want it to be geared to the young woman that you were in Wheaton, Illinois in 1983, when you finally stopped messing around and became a 100% full time vegan. It needs to have 40 short chapters with a recipe at the end of each one. And I'm just kind of taking notes in my head. I can do this. I can do this. So my wonderful literary agent sold the proposal to Tarcher Penguin. And the editor called to say so happy to have you, happy to have the book, but we hate Main Street, you need to change the title. And they'd bought it so I had to do something and I'm coming up with these other titles and they were so boring, but I kept trying to write. And then I had a vegan miracle and I really do believe that this is the age of those.

Victoria Moran:

I believe that this is the time when all these other ridiculous diets are going to go the way of the dinosaur. Plant-based is going to be the only thing that sensible people are interested in. And the idea that we are killing our fellow beings and destroying the planet is going to start to look like, are you serious people really did that? So my vegan miracle that day was walking up Broadway we saw somebody so famous. You can recognize him from the back and that was Michael Moore. Now, he had liked another book that I had written a weight loss book Fit from Within. And so I just handed my card to the woman who was with him. And a few seconds later, I hear Victoria, there was Michael Moore

following me up Broadway, and we started talking and then we started talking on the phone and on one of these phone conversations, I said, the book that I'm supposed to write should be called Main Street Vegan, publisher hates Main Street. He said, they're wrong. Let me talk to them.

Victoria Moran:

So in a three way, call with an Academy award winner, my editor and me, he convinced her. She convinced the higher ups. And when she called to say, Main Street Vegan is your title, everything else started to pop. And I've been given my mission for the rest of my life. So why Main Street? Because this thing that we do, whether we're coming from the health or the environment or the animals or whatever, this is for everybody, this is not some elitist thing. We don't have to be rich. We don't have to be leftover hippies or punk rockers. We can just be who we are, eat reasonably and love more. And to me, that's main street.

Rip Esselstyn:

That is main street. You land on something that just resonated and you knew it was the right thing.

Victoria Moran:

And I grew up two blocks off main street in Kansas City, Missouri. So that may have had something to do with it.

Rip Esselstyn:

And Main Stream Vegan, was that your eighth or ninth book? Because you've written 11 books, right?

Victoria Moran:

No, I've written 13, Main Street Vegan would have been 11.

Rip Esselstyn:

And the most recent is The Good Karma?

Victoria Moran:

Good Karma Diet came after Main Street. Then we did a cookbook because as you know, I have a school Main Street Vegan Academy that trains vegan coaches. So last year in January, we came out with the Main Street Vegan Academy cookbook with recipes from 60 of our 400 graduates from 28 countries and six continents.

Rip Esselstyn:

That's amazing. I can't believe how prolific you are. I mean, I've done four books and I don't know if I'll ever be able to do another book. You just love them, don't you?

Victoria Moran:

I love writing. There's the two times in my life when I've been happiest, one was when I was pregnant with my daughter and the other 13 times have been when I've been writing books, there's just something about just stating creativity. That's a real happy maker.

Rip Esselstyn:

And your daughter has followed the Main Street Vegan after her life, right?

Victoria Moran:

She has. Yeah, actually, when I finally was able to do this, a couple of things had to come together for me because I was a practicing binge eater. I wasn't just somebody who enjoyed food or didn't know about nutrition. I knew lots about nutrition. I was still binge eating and I had already interviewed Kenneth Cooper who created Aerobics. I was in this thing, but I couldn't do it. And so for me, I had to get recovery for my eating disorder. And that happened for me in Overeaters Anonymous, 12 Step Program. And that gave me the power of choice over what I would eat.

Victoria Moran:

And coincidentally with that, my daughter was an infant. I looked down on the crib and I thought, Oh, for heaven's sake, you don't want to tell her this story that you tell yourself of yeah, well, we don't have milk at home because we don't want to take the milk away from the baby calf. But when you're out, you've got to put something in your coffee and it's like, what is wrong with you? So the combination of 12 step recovery and having this baby that I wanted to raise the best way possible, made me vegan back when Ronald Reagan was president. So it's a while ago.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah. What was the initial spark that informed your decision to become a vegan? Hardcore?

Victoria Moran:

Well, it was such a long time coming and I think sometimes I get impatient with people who know about all this. And now I think because of what we know about what's going on with the environment, climate change, the extinctions that are predicted, it's like, you don't have the luxury that I had back then. You can't just mess around with this thing. But the truth is I shouldn't have been messing around back then. I should have seen and done, but we do what we do. And for me, I think you come to your knowing and it depends on where you are when you get the information. And sometimes you need a few steps back. I love how Dr. Neal Barnard always will say that it takes smokers, I believe he says nine times to quit and fall off and start over again. And so, yeah, that's of what it took for me.

Victoria Moran:

I would be vegan at home for long periods, but not when I was out or I would be vegan until I went on an eating binge and I'd go to the 7-Eleven in the middle of the night and I'd read all the labels and there was always way or egg albumin. And it would just be like, Oh, what the heck Haagen-Dazs is better, I'll have that. So it was a long journey for me. And I know it's a long journey for some people now it is a lot easier now, but it's also a little bit harder because when I finally managed to become vegan, I was whole food plant-based. Now we didn't know about no oil back then. Because even Dean Ornish hadn't happened yet, but certainly whole food plant-based and no tropical oils, which is a really interesting thing to me because nowadays a lot of people believe that coconut oil is a health food. It's like, Oh my God, it's a pure saturated fat.

Victoria Moran:

But anyway, in those days we knew we were not having tropical oils and we were having whole foods because there were no junk foods except maybe potato chips and those weren't classy. So at that time, vegan meant pretty much whole food plant-based. And the statistic then was everybody lost 15 pounds even if you didn't need to lose any weight. Now I lost 63 because I had it to lose, didn't try. In fact, I kind of thought maybe I'll never lose any weight now because I'm eating all these carbs, but all those carbs...

Rip Esselstyn:

You lost 63 pounds?

Victoria Moran:

63 pounds and it stayed off 35 years and counting,

Rip Esselstyn:

Right there, that's a testament to a good lifestyle.

Victoria Moran:

It is.

Rip Esselstyn:

That you can lose the weight and then keep it off and you probably are eating copious amounts for breakfast.

Victoria Moran:

It is funny. I heard somebody say not long ago, it might've been Dr. Alan Goldhammer that if your salad does not cause someone who walks by to say you can't eat all that, can you? It's not big enough.

Rip Esselstyn:

What would you say to somebody that wants to come on board with this lifestyle, but has no idea where to start? They're overwhelmed. What's the first step?

Victoria Moran:

The first step is to immerse yourself in these ideas and let that other stuff go for now. So somebody could say, Oh, you're saying people should get brainwashed. You know what? People should get educated. I remember that when I was pregnant with my daughter, there were two kinds of books about how to raise kids. And one seemed very straight-laced and you feed the child on a schedule and you never bring the baby to bed. And it kind of made sense intellectually. Then there was this other way and they called it the continuum concept, this hands on parenting where you carry the baby around, you feed on demand. You bring the baby to your bed. And these were very new ideas at that time. And yet were the ones that resonated with me. So if this resonates with you, just do this. If you see an article about how great Keto is, you just file that away six months from now, read that if you feel like it.

Victoria Moran:

But for now you do what I did when I was a pregnant mom so long ago, I just let those other people with their all feed on a schedule and all that. I just stopped reading that and immersed myself in this way of

doing it. So you need to learn and there's going to be a little bit of contradiction in what you learn. Even in our world, you read different things, different physicians, different dietitians. It's okay. You don't have to worry so much about the small stuff right now. Obviously, if you're dealing with a serious medical issue and you're working with a plant-based doctor, you're going to do what he or she tells you.

Victoria Moran:

But if you're just coming into this because your heart has brought you, your metaphorical heart has brought you then just do. And the next thing I'd say, and this comes from my 12 step background. You do this for today. It doesn't matter if you're going to go on vacation in Argentina next August. It doesn't matter if your sister is getting married in three months, what happens those days, that'll be then. But for now you just want to eat as well as you can and do the best that you can. And if, Oh my gosh, I did something terrible. I went to Starbucks and I said, almond milk. And they put in cow's milk. Well, you know what, if you catch it in time, they'll remake it for you. If not, you'll live to see another day.

Rip Esselstyn:

Good. So the first step then if I can just repeat is, just do. Just do, just start, and following the first step don't overcomplicate it. Just make it happen.

Victoria Moran:

Exactly. And get friends, get support. I know for example, that you do these wonderful things on Facebook where people can be part of a group and get the support for starting this. So whether it's online support, I mean, in-person support is wonderful. If you can get it, if you can find just a few friends who are willing to do this. And I always say a few instead of a buddy, because the truth is the recidivism rate is very high. Not everybody is going to stick with this, but if you have maybe five people around you, I love that, number five, the ancient Greek said that five was the best number for a dinner party because the conversation would go so nicely. But you want to be supported in this because a lot of people have coworkers and relatives and others who find this absurd. They find it extreme, and they want to make jokes about it. And it's very hard to be the butt of somebody's joke, meal after meal holiday, after holiday for a really long period of time.

Victoria Moran:

And so a lot of people just say, okay, forget it, give me some chicken. This is so sad. So you want to be supported online and in-person, because there are a lot of people doing this now, and we do have a planet to save, it was one thing when we were going after the people who had awakened to the suffering of animals, these are beautiful, wonderful people, fairly small group. And then we're reaching out to the people who care about their own health, that's a big group, but most people would rather care about their health in a way that is perceived as easier than doing what we do although it seems pretty easy to me. But now we really do have a planet to save and we need to get everybody on board. This is everybody regardless of economic status, of political persuasion, religious views, we can argue about that stuff 20 years from now, when we know the planet is still here.

Rip Esselstyn:

You said a couple things. One is support, two years ago, you joined us for the launch of our Engine 2-Seven Day Rescue diet program did a phenomenal job with that. And so we have an online, private Facebook community with over 33,000. So that's a really good place to go. You also mentioned Keto, I

saw a T-shirt yesterday. It was an Instagram post that said friends, don't let friends do Keto, have you seen that?

Victoria Moran:

Yes, I saw it. And I actually commented on it because I had an experience yesterday that just left me dumbfounded. I have an acquaintance, a fellow writer who has done some work in film. And she wrote to me to congratulate me on the film that we're doing A Prayer For Compassion, which is to interest people who identify as religious or spiritual in this way of life. And she said, one of my favorite documentaries is on a similar topic and she named this film and she said, it's about the ketogenic diet, which my doctor has my husband and me on because of our ethnic heritage, except they have different ethnic heritage. I'm like, okay.

Victoria Moran:

But what got me was similar topic because a way of eating that is science based that has shown to reverse heart disease, to reverse type 2 diabetes, to keep people alive who were supposed to be dead, not to mention a way of life that is part of the upward progression of the universe, as we become more loving and more open to others and that can save the planet. That is not a similar topic to, Oh my gosh, I just got on this wonderful diet and I lost 11 pounds and aren't I cool, no.

Rip Esselstyn:

This is a higher plane.

Victoria Moran:

This is a higher plane. And I think when people get that, then the food part becomes easy. If it was just a diet, it's like, Oh, this is a diet. When's the first time I can cheat. No, no, this is not that, this is a higher calling and the food is part of it. It's so cool. And we're so lucky to have found it.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah. It's amazing. I started down this path and I refer to it as the plant-based path. You embrace that word vegan, right?

Victoria Moran:

Yeah.

Rip Esselstyn:

That is Victoria to the core. And I love that, but it's funny how I've been doing this now 32 years. And like you've said, I mean, it checks every box imaginable. The farther you go down this rabbit hole and it's spectacular. The Good Karma Diet book, off the top of your head, can you say what the subtitle is? If not, I can say it.

Victoria Moran:

I know the last part...

Rip Esselstyn:

Eat gently, feel amazing, age in slow motion. I love that subtitle. It's fantastic. But I'd love to dive into, so you say eat gently. What exactly does that mean?

Victoria Moran:

Well, certainly that embraces the vegan part, to eat as an omnivore requires using your money to support an industry that is so cruel that almost no one would be involved in that if they knew what was going on. So we wear the blinders and push it aside, people who love their dogs, people who rescue wildlife, just don't get it about the animals. These very sentient, aware, smart beings. I mean, when I read that pigs are considered on the intelligence chart, whoever makes those as right next to chimps, but the pigs can beat the chimps playing video games. I mean, this is amazing. And it doesn't mean that we should be kinder to somebody who's smart than somebody who's not quite so intelligent, but just the idea that as humans, we're impressed by intelligence and that these pigs are so bright and so aware and so mistreated. So The Good Karma and the eating gently come right together, you want to eat gently. And we also know now that it's gentler on the planet, because we're not having to raise all these grains and beans to feed to animals that can go straight to people. This is really a humanitarian way of eating and living.

Rip Esselstyn:

And the age in slow motion. I don't know anybody that doesn't want to age in slow motion.

Victoria Moran:

I think it happens with this. You look around and we have our genetic predispositions and some people spend a lot of time in the sun. And so maybe their skin, isn't going to look as young at a certain age, but you run around the block with them and, you know gosh, you're younger than me. And so it's this idea of maybe not aging too quickly, because I think what happens in our culture, we have a lot that's against us. Certainly the way that most people eat is aging. We live in a time now where we can be completely sedentary and have a really interesting life. And certainly for anyone who's wheelchair bound, I mean, this is a better time to live than ever. If you cannot get around and do a lot of moving. And certainly now I'm thinking of the wheelchair athletes, so this doesn't count for even everybody there, but people who do have limited mobility can have a much more interesting life because of what's going on digitally and so forth.

Victoria Moran:

But those of us who are blessed with the ability to move, have to make ourselves do that. And I know for Europe, you grow up in a very athletic family and it's probably second nature to do that. For me, I've always liked the sitting pursuits. I love conversation, reading and theater and film and all that. And so it's a thing, push but without doing that, I'm going to speed up the aging process and there's all the stress and all the chemicals. And so there's a lot out there saying, Oh, let's just make you old before your time. And so we do the beautiful high color plant-based diet and we move our bodies and we meditate. I have this program MEND, M-E-N-D meditation, exercise, nourishment, and detoxification. And you get those things going on and yeah, you're going to grow older and things happen. It's quite adventurous to be 69. It's like, wow, things are different, some things but certainly the internal attitude is not different. And yeah, I don't feel irrelevant at all.

Rip Esselstyn:

Well, I just came from Cleveland, Ohio where I was interviewing my parents for the show and they're in their mid 80s, they're to me epitomize of aging slowly being vibrant, being active, medication free, having their mental faculties 100%. They haven't diminished one iota. And that's what I want to be when I'm in my 80s. It's just remarkable.

Victoria Moran:

Yeah. That's what I want with you. And certainly your parents are such incredible role models for all of this. The image that I of your parents is in one of the films. I don't know which one, maybe...

Rip Esselstyn:

Forks Over Knives?

Victoria Moran:

I think it's Forks Over Knives and people come to their house for dinner and dessert is this beautiful big bowl of apples, red apples. And whenever I've had dinner and I'm thinking, I'm feeling a bit peckish, what do I want? And I think of that image and it's like, I want an Apple.

Rip Esselstyn:

Do you slice it up or do you just eat it whole?

Victoria Moran:

I do both. I like to slice it horizontally and see the star.

Rip Esselstyn:

As Victoria just said, animals are smart, sentient beings who deserve the best treatment and an equal chance at a long vibrant life. In fact just like a whole food plant-based diet will help humans age in reverse, so too will the same diet for our dogs. Wild Earth is that dog food that's packed with clean fuel and environmentally friendly plant-based proteins for your dog. Try today, visit the episode page at plantstrongpodcast.com and claim up to 50% off your order. So you mentioned the MEND program. I would love for you to go through that acronym because I think it's brilliant. I think it's brilliant. I think you've done a really wonderful job with each one of those pillars, if you call them. So could you share that with us?

Victoria Moran:

Sure. So M is for meditation.

Rip Esselstyn:

Which I do none of.

Victoria Moran:

It's a great thing to do because you're already at 110%, if you want to go to 112, 120, I don't know, but meditation they've been studying since the 1970s and the body of scientific literature. It's kind of like the body of literature for plant-based eating. There is a lot there. And first they were looking almost entirely at people who did transcendental meditation, which is a mantra based of a nonsensical sound

just to give your mind something to focus on. And now they've expanded and they're looking at all different kinds of meditation, but in all these studies, what we see is that people get healthier and happier and calmer. So one study, this is my favorite. It showed that people who meditated regularly for five years or more were 12 years younger physiologically than people who didn't.

Victoria Moran:

And so they were looking at physiological aging in terms of body mass index, cholesterol, blood pressure, blood sugar, joint flexibility, hearing, vision, all these things that are supposed to go South over time, but meditating regularly. And they were looking at 20 minutes twice a day. So that's a time commitment, but 12 years. So you take 12 years off your chronological age and whatever your age is, that's really big. So to me, it's this beautiful balance with the second thing, which is exercise. And I always say, there's an acronym within an acronym. Within MEND, we have ME meditation and exercise. Take care of me in the morning. And then you can take care of everybody else all day long.

Rip Esselstyn:

Can I ask you about, before you go much farther. So with the meditation, I happened to listen to some of you last night before I went to bed and I woke up this morning and I was like, okay, I am going to relax. And I am going to do some meditations. And I did the all is well that you like. So when I breathed in, I said all is, and then on the exhale I did well. And I felt so... I did it for like 10 minutes. And I finished and I said, thank you, Victoria for that. I got that little trick from you last night.

Victoria Moran:

Thank you.

Rip Esselstyn:

So the meditation, that's something that I do want to delve into. And I think it's an important part of overall health.

Victoria Moran:

It very much is. And yet it's a cultural. In this culture, the idea of sitting, I mean, we know that too much sitting is bad for you. And we should be setting the alarm for five minutes before the hour and getting up and walking around and all that. And yet this act of sitting consciously, in fact, in Buddhism, they call meditation sitting. It has so much value and it's an active rest. It's not just like lolling around, it's really this active intention that is putting your brain in this very healing alpha state. And I happen to think that's where all the youthening comes from. That maybe when you're in that state, you're not aging. At least, that's what I'm betting on.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah. So speaking of active meditation, I know the exercise, you suffer from a disorder called active resistant.

Victoria Moran:

Activity resistance disorder.

Rip Esselstyn:

ARD.

Victoria Moran:

I made that up, but I know it's real.

Rip Esselstyn:

I know it is too. A lot of America knows it's real. So what do we do about that?

Victoria Moran:

Well, to me the most difficult piece of equipment at any gym is the front door. So you get there or if you don't go to the gym, whatever it is, the tracker, the whatever you just show up, you bring the body and the mind will follow. They say that in 12 steps, it works for exercise. You bring the body and so people will say to me about the MEND program, and then what ME in the morning. They'll say, well, what do I do first, meditation or exercise? You do the one that you would otherwise blow off. And I mean, I keep my exercise clothes right there by the bed.

Victoria Moran:

So as soon as I turn on the light, I see running shoes and I don't want to see running shoes. I want to see my breakfast. I want to see a phone call from somebody I haven't talked to in a really long time, but I see those shoes. And I am reminded that no matter how ethereal I see myself, no matter how comfortable I feel in the world of ideas, I am living in a physical body and I'm not going to have any spiritual experiences if this body decides to leave early. So put on the shoes, go to the gym. Then I come back and meditate.

Rip Esselstyn:

And you never regret it probably.

Victoria Moran:

Oh, are you kidding? I mean, that is so interesting.

Rip Esselstyn:

It's so funny how sometimes the hardest thing in the world is to get yourself up out of bed at 5:30 or 6:00, whenever the alarm goes off and you're warm under the sheets, but then once you can do it and you finish that workout, you're like on top of the world. And now you can conquer that day.

Victoria Moran:

Yeah. And I think if you have activity resistance disorder, it sounds funny but it is really true. And what it is this feeling that to get out, to work out or sometimes even to get up off the couch, it's like there's an elephant sitting on your chest, you cannot do it, but you can. And it comes from this deep love for yourself and this body that's been taking care of you for so long. And then you just do tricks. You do things to make it easy for you. So I teach yoga in my building two mornings a week. And that means that on Tuesday and Thursday, not only do I know I'm going to get an hour of yoga in, but I get it an hour of just the way I want it. And that's cool. What can you do in your life? And I have a trainer. I have a trainer only once a week, but I can't afford to have a trainer more than once a week. And I can't afford not to

have one once a week because knowing that I'm going to see her on Wednesday means that I'm at least going to lift something on Monday and Friday.

Rip Esselstyn:

You've created some high accountability for yourself. So you're teaching classes, you're going to show up for those. And then the trainer, that's great. You mentioned something a second ago about loving yourself. I find that a lot of people have a hard time loving themselves.

Victoria Moran:

Oh, it's really hard.

Rip Esselstyn:

Do you have any thoughts or solutions to that for people that are having a hard time?

Victoria Moran:

Well, I still struggle with it. I think so many of these things that we carry through life were ways that we were imprinted as very small children. And as some people had an easier or a more emotionally privileged young life than others. And there are times that self care is a real challenge for me. And I just have to push through. Sometimes I get out one of my own books, one of my old books that was more in that self-help world, like *Creating a Charmed Life*. And I read one of those little essays to remind myself in my own words, this is important because when I feel that, Oh my goodness, it's just not working. I've taken wrong turns, things are not proceeding the way I would want them to go.

Victoria Moran:

The main way I know that I'm off track is that I don't want to wash lettuce. That's the thing I do not want to wash lettuce. I don't want to mess with that food. I don't want to take the asparagus out of the bag and tear that bottom part off. There's just something about getting that earthy, getting that down and dirty with the food. I don't want to do it. And that's a symbol, I think of wanting to just get out of the situation. Let's not deal with all this stuff in life that's not working. Let's just pretend we're not physical and go hide in a book or a TV show. And so to me, I know myself well enough that this is like a bell, ding, ding, ding, things are not working. Something's out of balance, what do you need to do? Did I not meditate? Did I not exercise? What else is going on in my life?

Victoria Moran:

Did I miss out on sleep? That happens, sometimes my web guy is in Australia. And so sometimes I have to talk to him in the middle of the night and that just doesn't work. I think it might've worked at 20, we all remember all nighters. It doesn't work now. And then a night like that will lead to a day when I don't want to wash lettuce. So you have to know yourself and work with yourself and then have people around you who just can love you up. Not let you get by with anything, but understand where you're coming from and then move you onto the next thing. I think that's why this coach concept has come into the world. I remember when nobody had a coach except athletes and then movie stars got them and then multimillionaires got them. And now this idea that, you know what, for a shorter or longer period, maybe we all need a life coach, vegan lifestyle coach or whatever it is. We just need somebody to say, what was that thing from the Ronald Reagan movie? Do this one for the Gipper, Kippur? I don't know.

Rip Esselstyn:

Gipper.

Victoria Moran:

Yeah. Him. Yeah. We all need one of those.

Rip Esselstyn:

I love what you just said. And I've got three kids and all that stuff and there's days when I'm dragging and I've got to look back and say, okay, did I get my exercise? How much sleep did I get? Did I stay up too late watching Game of Thrones episode, whatever, and season six. And usually if you're honest with yourself, you can figure out what's going on. I know I can.

Victoria Moran:

And as an addictive person, I mean, I am a food addict and people will look at me and...

Rip Esselstyn:

Can you give me an example.

Victoria Moran:

Yeah, I'll totally. So I think of three types of people who have problems with food and or body weight and the first person will just say, category A, this is somebody who is really a victim of the standard American diet. I mean, we have this food that is designed to make people fat that is designed to make people want to eat more. And then people say, Oh, I'm such a terrible person. I eat all the... no, you're not, you are a victim, no less than somebody is a victim of prescription painkillers or anything else. And very often with a person in that category, all they need is the information and the education, and they can go forward.

Victoria Moran:

Then you've got your category B and these are people who eat for emotional solace. And I always think of a category B person, although certainly it could be anyone, but I think of a young woman who knows a lot about nutrition or at least the kind of women's magazine, kind of nutrition and really does the very best she can. And she's usually having yogurt and a little bit of fruit and salads and a little salmon, that kind of out in the world, but people think is good. But then the boss is mean, or the boyfriend leaves or something happens that is upsetting. And then this person turns to food for solace. And then of course feels guilty and awful.

Victoria Moran:

And then the type three person could have elements of either of the other two. But this is somebody who has been using food for a while. And it's like a rubber band. You stretch that willpower and it comes back and you stretch it and it comes back. But one day you stretch that rubber band and it breaks, how are you going to get it back together? So for me, I believe that takes a complete change from the inside. Carl Young talked about alcoholism, and he said that for someone to get over this, and this was in the days before AA, they need a complete emotional displacement and rearrangement, something akin to a spiritual experience. And in my experience, and that of a lot of people that I've worked with over the

past 30 plus years, it really does take that shift from the inside so that someone can go forward making good choices day after day.

Rip Esselstyn:

We talked about meditation now we've done our exercise. What about the N?

Victoria Moran:

Well, N is what we're so much about in your work, my work, everybody who's in this plant-based world and that is nourishment. And I always preface that by saying that we're nourished in a lot of ways before we even get to the nutrition part of it, let's say that you're going to get up in the morning and you're going to have your purple smoothie with the wild blueberries and all this great stuff in there. You could put it in a plastic superheros cup from the Taco Bell, or you could put it in a stem goblet it's same stuff. It's going to operate in your body just the same way, but you're going to look at it and look at yourself very differently. If you feel like, you know what, I deserve this lovely glass and this lovely time to sit and really eat this food and think about all that it's doing for my body instead of just chugging it down.

Victoria Moran:

And I understand some mornings are busy. You're going to chug it down, but whenever you can possibly allow even an extra five minutes to treat yourself like somebody who matters. And I always think of it as kind of the Queen Elizabeth plan. If Queen Elizabeth were coming for breakfast at your house, would you give her a plastic superheroes cup from the Taco Bell? Probably not. So what makes her so much better than you? Why does she deserve a stem goblet and you don't? Absolutely no reason. So we want to nourish ourselves in all kinds of ways and also with conversation. And when we do sit down to watch a TV show or whatever, let's make it something that we love, because whenever you do something that you're just crazy about and it makes you happy, then that puts out some of those same endorphins that we get from exercise. And then of course...

Rip Esselstyn:

What was the last thing you did that you just loved?

Victoria Moran:

Oh, I do it pretty often. I guess the last thing I did that I just loved was, Sunday afternoon, I went to a cruelty free fashion show featuring [Pilush 00:40:48] which is a beautiful fake fur, for fur design. They talk about refaux-lution and this woman came from fashion houses. She was at Fendi, she had this wonderful background and now she puts all of her brilliance into doing these cruelty-free environmentally friendly, very elegant and upscale coats and other garments. And I came to New York City in 2000, from Kansas city, Missouri with stars in my eyes, maybe 30 years later than a lot of people would have come to New York. But I did it when I did it. And I've been seeing those pictures of people at New York City fashion week shows, where the chairs are in a couple of rows and then the runway is in the middle. And you got a couple of more rows and where people's names like Anna Wintour is on the chair. I walked into this thing, there's my friend's name, there's my name. I mean, it was just like teen fantasy coming true. And believe me, no matter how old you get, those teen fantasies are still in there.

Rip Esselstyn:

So we're at MEN, we're missing out on the D. What in the world is D?

Victoria Moran:

Well, D is detoxification. And I don't mean it in that kind of trendy way of I'm going to drink juice for a week because I need to detoxify, although certainly that's a choice you can make if you wish. But the idea is there are toxins in the environment that have never existed before. Certainly not to the degree I was watching a documentary not long ago that said that every human in the United States, every baby born has the chemicals that go into Teflon. I mean, where did this come from? And yet it's there. And so what we want to do is eat really great food. First, get rid of the animal foods because that's where the toxins, the pesticides and herbicides are caught up in those tissues because of the biomagnification and then organic when you can and wash your vegetables and fruits really well, whether it's organic or not, because even organic uses some pesticides.

Victoria Moran:

And so we want the food to be pretty clean. Then of course, we have to take our B12 because I'm making sure we're not getting any of the bacteria where we would have gotten the B12. So that's a little bit of a partnership that we do, and then you just want to live a clean life. So I'm not one for a lot of alcohol because I'm fond of my liver. And I know that that my liver has to deal with anything that I take in that isn't food. And the old days of Natural Hygiene, it's National Health Association now. But back when it was Natural Hygiene, it was kind of the health fanatics all found their way there. And I found my way there. And they would say that the body takes in two things. One is food and the other is poison.

Victoria Moran:

And so it has to deal with that. So if we're taking any kind of drugs or medications, even if it's needed, even if it's lifesaving, it's still something that the liver has to deal with. Coffee caffeine, the liver has to deal with it, green tea. I love green tea, not too much caffeine, but the little bit that's there, the liver has to deal with. And so anything that we can do to kind of keep those exogenous toxins out of our bodies, the same for what goes on top. And sometimes people will say, it doesn't matter what you just put on your skin. And yet there are people who are stopping smoking because of nicotine on the skin. There are people who are avoiding pregnancy because of birth control patches. It goes through the skin. So you want to use the kind of products that are clean and pure.

Victoria Moran:

And interestingly enough, the nontoxic products are usually cruelty free and vice versa. Not always, so you can do a little research. The Environmental Working Group has a great site about that. And then also what we use to clean our houses. Most people have a toxic waste dump under their sink. So you want to clear that stuff out, either use the natural stuff or kind of go DIY and make it yourself. You can clean almost anything with baking soda and club soda and white vinegar. And it's easy, you save lots of money.

Rip Esselstyn:

What's the recipe for that? What's the ratios, do you know?

Victoria Moran:

It's different things. So for example, white vinegar is great for windows and baking soda, you can use anywhere that you would have used any kind of a scouring powder. Vinegar is good when you want any kind of disinfecting. There's a book it's called Clean and Green by Annie Berthold-Bond. And she has little

recipes for do it yourself, cleaning stuff. And she'll tell you how to clean piano keys and whitewall tires, really on the cheap and fun. Who doesn't want to breathe in club soda? It's not going to do anything bad to you.

Rip Esselstyn:

You mentioned coffee. So did you ever drink coffee?

Victoria Moran:

Yeah. But your dad kind of scared me off of coffee, frankly. I will not say that I will never drink coffee again because medicinally, if I had to drive and I was sleepy or something like that, but yeah. I react really strongly to coffee to the point that it's actually a mood altering chemical. It's just like, I have a cup of coffee, the world is good. I mean, it is good, my life is good. Yes.

Rip Esselstyn:

Does it get bad at some point?

Victoria Moran:

It just gets kind of like, Oh, that was misleading. And I think it's absolutely an individual thing. People love coffee. I think we need to make becoming plant-based as easy as possible and not as hard as possible. So I would never tell anybody who enjoys coffee, not to have it. And you know what, it might be one of those days that I would have it with them. Generally speaking, and ever since I heard your dad speak last October, I haven't had it. I may have it tomorrow so if anybody sees me drinking coffee, I didn't say never.

Rip Esselstyn:

And that's probably because he talks about how the caffeine injures the endothelial cells, which is the innermost lining of our vessels. Yeah. It's funny. He said something when I was young about coffee, how his sister said, Essy, you're never going to get through medical school without drinking coffee. And he said, well, if that's the case, I won't go to medical school. And so what he did is he would just wake up extra early when he had to study. And so there's something that I just took to heart about that. And so I decided I was never going to drink coffee, and I don't like the taste either. But I understand America has a loving relationship with caffeine. And I would not deprive that of people either.

Victoria Moran:

Well, the world has it, because if you go to places where coffee is not commonly drunk, they make their tea so dark and thick and full of caffeine, that it has as much caffeine as people here get from coffee. So it's interesting sometimes at an airport, I'll see a big line and think, Oh my goodness, a flight's been delayed. And then I'll say, no, it's the Starbucks. I mean, we do what we can do and coffee is not destroying the planet to the degree certainly that animal products are. And so that's an individual choice, so many of these other things, and one of my kind of soap boxes is that everybody who opts not to eat animals is part of this wonderful group that is doing amazing things for the world.

Victoria Moran:

And whether we're whole food plant-based, no oil, or whether we're super gourmet, I've got to get to the next fabulous vegan restaurant or whether it's the young guy who was driving me in Chicago, who

said, I don't know why anybody has any trouble being vegan. If I want a pepperoni pizza, I have vegan pepperoni pizza. If I wanted chili cheese dog, I have a vegan chili cheese dog. And I'm thinking my arteries are clogging just sitting next to you. And yet he's a 22 year old athlete. And for now, that's what he's doing. And so we can approve or disapprove of somebody else's personal habits, but all together, we need to hang tight to save this planet. This is a big deal.

Rip Esselstyn:

You're right. Collectively, we can do this, but we have to do it collectively. We have to unite behind this amazing mother earth, right?

Victoria Moran:

Plants-Strong as someone says.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah. Somebody out there, Plant-Strong. So we've mended ourselves through meditation, exercise, nourishment and detoxification. Now I want to switch gears a bit. Victoria, as I mentioned at the top of this podcast has written 13 books. She runs online courses. She has the podcast, and she has also released a prolific film that she mentioned earlier in the interview called A Prayer For Compassion. This film available on Amazon Prime asked the question, can compassion grow to include all beings? Can people who identify as religious or spiritual come to embrace the call to include all human and non human beings in our circle of respect, caring, and love. Let's explore the making of this groundbreaking film and how you can help spread the word on its important message.

Victoria Moran:

Well, I am the producer. I'm not even the filmmaker so talk about hard work. Several years ago, probably 10 years ago, I spoke at a church here in New York City. And a gentleman came up to me and said that he was the head of the ushers. And he read Main Street Vegan and blah, blah, blah. And so I guess it wasn't 10 years ago because I hadn't written Main Street Vegan 10 years ago. But anyway, I met him briefly and then about three and a half years ago because my Main Street Vegan show is a podcast, but it's a live radio show first and people can call in. So there was a book giveaway that day and someone called in and won the book and my engineer said, the guy that won the book wants you to call him.

Victoria Moran:

So I did. And it turns out it was this man that I had met when I spoke at the church and he said, I want to do a documentary to interest people who identify as religious or spiritual in going vegan. Will you produce this movie for me? And my first thought is, I don't know anything about the movie business. And my second thought is don't producers have lots and lots of money lying around. And my third thought was, yes.

Rip Esselstyn:

They find the money.

Victoria Moran:

Yeah. And so I maybe learned this from my daughter, who you've mentioned you as a lifelong vegan, she's also an actor and a stunt performer. And she was just doing background work on the movie Revolutionary Road. And the director saw her and liked how she looked and said, can you do swing dancing? She said, absolutely. And the choreographer tested her out. She got the featured dancer role. She gets royalty checks to this day. Now, did she know how to do swing dancing? Never. She'd never done it in her life, but she'd taken ballet and tap and jazz and she figured I'll wing it. The worst thing that can happen is I won't do very well.

Victoria Moran:

So I learned that from her and I said, sure. And then I started learning this whole new industry. So the film has Thomas going across the U.S. a couple of times to the climate conference in Marrakesh, Morocco, and then all over India, because they have a thing in India about dairy, very difficult for people in India to let go of dairy and what we have is the most beautiful ecumenical story of Thomas's own journey.

Rip Esselstyn:

What does that word mean, ecumenical?

Victoria Moran:

That means it doesn't matter what religion you are, we're all going the same place. And so he has found people from not every faith tradition on the planet, but a very large number of them. People who respect one another coming together to say at the heart of every tradition is love. So let's start living from that love of ourselves, love of other beings, love of this planet. And let's just fix this thing. And I know a lot of the vegans that I know, they've kind of given up on religion and that's a personal thing, but 7.2 billion people on this planet are a part of a religion. And if we could get 7.2 billion people, at least talking about food, and it's so interesting to me that in churches and synagogues and mosques and temples people wrestle with really sticky issues. There are some people who will go to war because they believe this is God's will. There are other people who will go to prison instead of go to war because they believe this is God's will, these are people wrestling. People will wrestle with abortion and immigration and all kinds of things. Talk about food, that's just out. So we want to bring the food into the conversation.

Rip Esselstyn:

A Prayer For Compassion.

Victoria Moran:

A Prayer For Compassion.

Rip Esselstyn:

How many years has that been in to work?

Victoria Moran:

Three and a half years? I thought writing books was a challenging thing. This film business is really, it's complex. It's mystifying, it's ups and downs and all kinds of emotional roller coaster rides. And yet it's such a powerful medium. I mean, we've seen in our movement Forks Over Knives and What The Health

and Earthlings and so many of these powerful films, or Cowspiracy. Cowspiracy actually inspired A Prayer For Compassion. Thomas, the filmmaker had gone to the church where I met him and he learned about a loving God and oneness of all life and just on his own, he thought, well, if we're all one, I shouldn't be eating other beings. But then he would go out to brunch with the people who were teaching him this from the church. And he was the only one, not eating animal foods. And he figured, none of my business, I'm going to live and let live. And then his daughter was born and he saw Cowspiracy. And those two events coincided.

Victoria Moran:

And between knowing that he had a little girl who was going to inherit this planet and the information from Cowspiracy, he knew he had to do something. Now, Thomas has an interesting story because he won a student Academy award for a short film, Slow Dancin' Down the Aisles of the Quickcheck. And that kind of success at a young age was too much for him. And so he's worked in film, but always working for somebody else. And so this was the first time that he felt moved to really go out there in the world and starting from nothing, because really our budget at the beginning was zero. He's done it and we're just hoping that people will watch and people will talk and that a high percentage of them will change.

Rip Esselstyn:

Do you have anything that you've been able to get excited about or are you breathing right now, relaxing before you jump into another film or book or program?

Victoria Moran:

I do have my next book idea and my next book title, it relates some to the film. It's called Food, Faith and Alchemy. And my working subtitle is what kind clean eating can do for your body and soul. So that's exciting. And then I get excited four times a year when I do Main Street Vegan Academy and people come for a week long adventure in New York City to be trained and certified as vegan lifestyle coaches and educators. And I'm so proud of my graduates. And some of them have companies who have Kat Mendenhall, cowboy boots in Dallas and V Marks the Shop is a lovely, yet convenient store in Philadelphia. River Dell fine foods, dairy free, little fromage here in Brooklyn. So yeah, people come to the academy and go out and change the world in big ways. And that's really what we all need to be about right now.

Rip Esselstyn:

Well, speaking of changing the world in big ways, Victoria, thank you for your continued leadership and the leadership role that you take. It's not easy. And obviously you find the strength somewhere within you to get out there in front and make a difference. So thank you for that. You are fashionable, you are beautiful. You are Ms. Main Stream Vegan. Thank you for being on the show. And I look forward to having you many more times.

Victoria Moran:

Oh, Rip bless your heart. Thank you. And it's wonderful to be on this planet, doing this work at the same time as you.

Rip Esselstyn:

This transcript was exported on Sep 02, 2020 - view latest version [here](#).

Thank you, Victoria, for the compassion and light that you've brought to this movement for over 35 incredible years. And even though this interview was recorded long before COVID, I wanted you to hear some of the businesses and entrepreneurs who have graduated and thrived with successful ethical businesses, thanks to the Main Street Vegan Academy in the Big Apple. And good news classes are continuing and full force on Zoom. You can learn more about this and all of Victoria's tireless work, including the film, A Prayer For Compassion at mainstreetvegan.net. Our hope is that you too follow the acronym MEND, M-E-N-D and mend your life through meditation, exercise, nourishment and detoxification. And it wouldn't be a proper sendoff if I didn't say peace, engine 2, keep it Plant-Strong. We'll see you next week with another blockbuster conversation.

Rip Esselstyn:

The Plant-Strong podcast team includes Laurie Kortowich, Ami Mackey, Patrick Gavin, Wade Clark and Carrie Barrett. I want to thank my parents, Dr. Caldwell B. Esselstyn, Jr. and Ann Crile Esselstyn for creating a legacy that will be carried on for generations and being willing to go against the current and trudge upstream to the causation.