

The Social Vegetarian

Whenever you make a major change in your lifestyle, having a strong support group around you is crucial. And the decision to become a vegetarian is definitely a major change of lifestyle. So one of the best ways you can ensure your success in making this transition is to build a strong support structure around you for support, friendship and advice. This does not mean you are not going to continue to maintain your existing friendships and relationships.

But our friendship network is always going to reflect our values. And when you make the change to a vegetarian way of life, your values to reflect the new priorities in your life. So you will want to be able to spend time with people who not only understand your reasons for becoming a vegetarian but know the ins and out of the lifestyle you are learning. So making it an ambition to find new friendships in the vegetarian community makes good sense.

The vegetarian movement is closely tied to the "green" and organic movements so you can find "haunts" around town where these kinds of people gather. Natural food stores or even clothing stores that focus on organic materials will also have a clientele that are no doubt vegetarian. Vegetarianism is also popular on college campuses and in the bohemian parts of society so you may find a good resource of new friends in those café's and coffee houses. And these populations will provide you with very colorful and fascinating people as to build a support group around as well.

While you are visiting these local "hang outs" where the vegetarian community shops or dines, keep an eye on the public bulletin boards or other announcement resources. There you will find lecture series, clubs, vegetarian cooking classes and schools and other social events where the vegetarian community will gather. Any costs associated with being involved with these kinds of organizations and taking classes that further your knowledge of the vegetarian lifestyle will pay off. Not only will you learn a lot, you will come out of such events with plenty of new friends you can use to build your new vegetarian social world around.

The larger vegetarian world is a rich source of information for you about your new lifestyle. By subscribing to newsletters and researching vegetarian issues at the library or your local public library, you are going to be drawn to the local vegetarian subculture as well. By being proactive in finding new social contacts, your support group will grow quickly.

The internet is another rich source of new friendships and vegetarian social contacts that you can explore entirely online but might open up new contacts for

you locally as well. Message boards, newsletters, email lists and chat rooms that are devoted to the vegetarian lifestyle. These online sources will also point you to local events and new groups forming up based on the vegetarian way of life. But you can take the initiative and build an online community that you then sponsor social gatherings. By having your new vegetarian friends over to share recipes, enjoy a dinner and talk about vegetarian, green and healthy living issues, you not only make new friends that understand you, you are making the vegetarian community stronger for the next person who might come along after you who will also need the support and friendship of you and others in your local setting to encourage their big step into this lifestyle.

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