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of years digging up extraordinary nuggets of information from books, science journals, websites, newsletters, and even forums where people pass on their tips and knowledge.

My mission has been to find inexpensive, natural and easy ways to improve our lives in many ways. But rather than follow what the mainstream press or big businesses TELL us is good for us, I've decided to open my mind and take my own path.

I am a self-confessed information junkie. And I look everywhere...

Old folk remedies, Chinese medicine, modern scientific breakthroughs, alternative therapies, cutting-edge revelations that haven't yet hit the news papers, forgotten herbal treatments used hundreds of years ago, old wives' tales that really work, secrets handed down through generations... you name it, I've looked into it. Probed it. Investigated further. Turned it upside down, and looked at it all over again.

If you keep an open mind, it will amaze you how wondrous and powerful are the gifts of Mother Nature. Which is a good thing too. Because in these times of artificial products, environmental pollution, food processing and expensive drugs, it's never been more important to remember the easily-available products that grow from trees or sprout from the ground.

I should know, because it was my own loved ones who spurred me to create my website, www.goodlifeletter.co.uk and write this book.

Let me introduce myself...

How my family taught me to look deeper into natural remedies and treatments

My name is Ray Collins. (I have a middle name as well, but that's best left alone.) I'm a shade over six foot, a little overweight, and with all the

aches and creaks associated with a middle-aged man. I used to play rugby at university, and picked up a fair few injuries along the way, including a neck problem that still troubles me from time to time. I like my wine, cheese, red meat and the occasional cigar.

You could say, I'm no goody two shoes. Never have been. I've lived the high life, and in my time I've eaten fast food, sprayed my home with chemicals to get rid of that "rugby sock" smell and wasted money I didn't have on expensive products I didn't need.

Know the kind of thing I'm talking about? Anything for an easy time.

Well, that was Yours Truly. But then, to my surprise and delight, I got married and had children. My family taught me how fragile and precious our health and homes can be.

As I've got older, and a little wiser, I've realised that the buck stops with me. Their well-being is my responsibility. Not with the medical establishment. Not with what I can pick up in daily newspapers. And not with the drug companies.

It's up to us to ensure we enjoy healthy, happy, stress-free lives

You and I, we share a goal. To live long, happy lives, and to give our friends and families the very best we have to offer. And we want to do it without breaking the bank, going into debt, ruining our health, or wrecking the world around us. Right?

The trouble is, if you read the papers or watch the news, you're bombarded with scare stories and revelations. Every day it seems we are told something new is bad for us, or bad for the environment. There's so much confusion in the mainstream media about what to eat and what not to eat. Worse still, much of the press is biased towards mega-corporations and their clinical trials. Big business rules the roost these days, I'm sad to say.

So what's the truth? What are you supposed to clean your home with? What are you supposed to eat? What are you supposed to avoid at all costs?

More importantly, how can you tell if the information you are being given is purely for your own benefit or if it's being driven by profits? There's so much money in cleaning products, processed foods and conventional medicines, you could hardly blame the business side of things for – shall we say – encouraging you to part with your money.

Take the humble lemon, for example. It's natural. It grows on trees. It costs pennies in the local shop. And yet, in its natural form, it has incredible cleaning and healing powers.

Just add it to water, squeeze it, eat it, cook with it. No processing necessary.

Imagine if a corporation invented the lemon. It would be patented, marketed and sold around the world for billions of dollars. But they can't do that to a fruit. So often they look for artificial equivalents of the same thing. And you don't really get told much these days about natural foods and how effective they really are – especially for the niggly problems of everyday life.

Sometimes, we simply don't NEED artificial products. They're often a waste of time and money. They can even damage our health.

Now it's time to fight back – by seeking knowledge

When I began looking into natural health remedies, I soon discovered many little-known and forgotten natural remedies for common ailments. Something as cheap as the lemon can be even better for you than many pricey medicines you get at the chemist.

Now, please understand. In no way am I denying the progress of