

MIND & BODY

Whatever it takes, you must force yourself to believe that there is a solution.

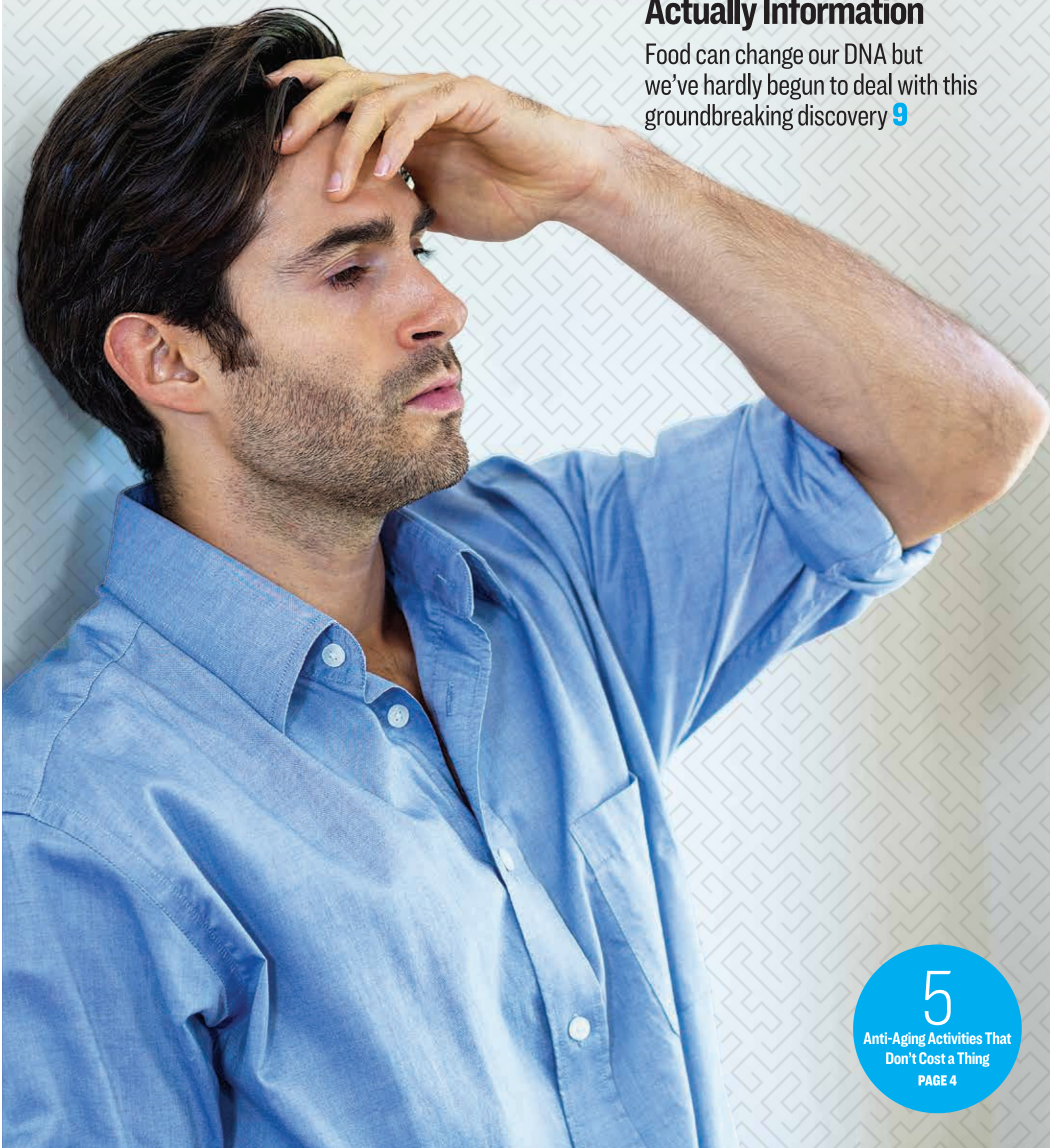


Your Mind: The Superdrug That Solves All Mental Ailments

A simple tactic to get a better grip on the thoughts and behaviors that create anxiety and depression **2**

Why Food Is Actually Information

Food can change our DNA but we've hardly begun to deal with this groundbreaking discovery **9**



5

Anti-Aging Activities That Don't Cost a Thing
PAGE 4

Your Mind: The Superdrug That Solves All Mental Ailments

A simple tactic to get a better grip on the thoughts and behaviors that create anxiety and depression

MONROE MANN

Life is tough. We all know it. So what's to be done about it?

Like it or not, for most of us, reality is going to bite at some point. No matter how great our lives may be today, they can fall apart tomorrow. This is not pessimism—it's life.

What goes up must always come down. No one lives trouble-free. It's just part of the human condition. Those who recognize that another great challenge is always right around the corner are better prepared for life. We need to be ready.

But as Prussian general and military theorist Claus von Clausewitz knew so long ago, "No plan survives first contact with the enemy." In other words, no matter how prepared we are for life's next setback, we are but human. And it's going to hurt. And how you choose to handle that pain will have a significant impact on your future.

There's a term in psychology called rumination, and in my opinion, it is what causes most depression.

Rumination is the act of thinking over and over about one negative thing, which then catapults your thought processes to another negative thought, and on and on in a deepening cycle that is often hard to break free from. For example, first, you wake up late. Then, you run into traffic driving to work. Then you lose a big client. Then your girlfriend breaks up with you. Next thing you know you are thinking, "I am such a loser. Why is this happening to me?" Next, come the prognostications and the absolutes: "I'm going to get fired. I'll never find a new client. I'll never find a new girlfriend. I'll probably never get married!"

And then there you are, fighting just to stay sane.

These thoughts that drive you further into depression and despondency are natural. But do you need a drug to handle this? Is alcohol the solution? Probably not. Here's why: drugs do not solve the underlying issues, and drugs bring you an artificial high that will eventually leave you feeling worse than before.

Instead, I'd suggest an ancient superdrug: your mind. It is 100 percent natural, safe, effective, and free! And

it's ready to use right out of the box.

You are going to use your mind to do three things: divert, detect, and destigmatize.

Divert

The first thing you have to do is divert your mind away from the rumination before it gets out of hand. I do it myself via a tasty cocktail of cognitive-behavioral therapy coupled with 'flow.' You're going to get a crash course right now in both. It's a two-step process.

1) Stop the negative self-talk and predictions about the future.

Stop with the 'why me' and 'I suck' diatribes. Stop with the 'I'm never going to recover' and 'No one is ever going to hire me again' exaggerations. Just stop. Force yourself to stop beating yourself up. Force yourself to say some kind things about yourself that are closer in line with the truth.

For example, instead of "I suck, I'll never find another job," say, "I'm human and like other humans, I've lost my job. Big deal. It happens." and follow up with "Sure, I am sad that I lost my job, but there are many other jobs out there, and I'm going to find one."

2) Do something with flow to distract your mind.

As Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi discusses in his amazing book, "Flow," flow happens when we are so engaged in something that everything else is forgotten.

These flow activities can be different for everyone. This is why you can't necessarily ask someone else, "What should I do to forget this situation?" You need to figure that out for yourself. For me, computer programming forces me to use so much of my brain that as soon as I'm engaged with it, I forget all else. If I want to emote while diverting, I will write a new song and play guitar and sing, which always tends to cheer me up.

The idea is to do something that absorbs your mind. It takes time and practice to determine what these activities are. For many people, it's too much work to find their flow activities so they take shortcuts, i.e. drugs, alcohol, spending money, etc. Trust me: don't take the shortcuts—it's far better to learn to stop berating yourself and find your flow activities. These can keep depression from get-

ting worse and diffuse an emotional situation.

Detect

Once you are less emotional, find the cause of the depression. What triggered these feelings? It shouldn't be too difficult.

Once you are certain you have figured out the causes, you must take steps to remove them. Psychologist Martin Seligman came up with the term "learned helplessness" to describe a condition in which someone who has no restraints holding him back still refuses to act out of a false perception of helplessness.

The solution: get over it, as hard as it is.

Sometimes you need someone else to help you over the hump so you can believe in yourself again. Whatever it takes, you must force yourself to believe that there is a solution. Because the truth is: there is, and until you believe you can improve your situation, you are done.

So brainstorm up multiple possible solutions, and then start putting those plans into motion. Why is this step important? If you don't solve the underlying cause, the trigger remains, and you will continually have to go back to step one as soon as the trigger is pulled again. The purpose of detecting the trigger is so you can neutralize it.

Destigmatize

When something sends us into depression or sadness, good memories can suddenly be turned into bad memories. As a result, you steer clear of places, events, and situations that remind you of whatever it was that caused the depression in the first place.

For example, if you used to always eat at the diner down the street with your husband, and now you are divorced, perhaps even seeing that diner upsets you. So you plan your driving routes every day to ensure you never pass the diner, and you avoid invitations that are planned at that diner.

Wrong solution.

If you do this, you are building bigger walls of pain, rather than breaking down them down and moving forward with your life. The better solution is to force yourself to create new memories at the diner by destig-

matizing the location, place, or event.

For example, call up your friends and go to that diner and sit in the same booth you always used to sit in with your husband. Force yourself to drive by it every day, so each new day is a memory of that place as you drive by.

Essentially, you need to create new memories of that place or situation so that the new memories become the new normal. If you continue to avoid that diner, your new normal will always involve associating that diner with your ex-husband, i.e. the old normal is still the norm. You need to reframe that old association into something new that can displace those bad memories.

The truth is: you can overcome sadness, depression, and anxiety without medication. Your mind is stronger than any drug on the market, and using your mind as your new superdrug won't have any of the side-effects of a high from drugs or alcohol.

Is it easy to take control of your mind and really learn how to divert, detect, and destigmatize? No, it's not. It requires work and constant practice.

There are countless books on cognitive behavioral therapy, flow, reframing, etc. you may want to read to help you become a mind ninja. The effort is worth it to become a student of these disciplines because gaining control of your mind virtually turns you into a superhero.

Most people (and I include myself in this group) will never fully gain control over the mind, but practicing to divert, detect, and destigmatize every day can go a long way towards making your life more pleasant. This method can reduce your sadness and depression, increase your resiliency, and help you further develop your emotional control. The best part: you get all these benefits without any side effects.

Try it. You'll be glad you did. Divert. Detect. Destigmatize.

Monroe Mann holds a doctorate in psychology, an MBA, a law degree, and is also a bronze-star nominated Iraq war veteran. He is the founder of the positive psychology-based social network, BreakDiv-ing.io and the author of "Time Zen," "Successful New Year," and "T.R.U.S.T." For more info, visit MonroeMannLaw.com

Contraception Depression: Can the Pill Affect Your Mood?

Big pharma's birth control pills are poorly studied but come with concerning side effects

KELLY BROGAN

What if I told you that a product is available that can interfere with your hormones to the extent that your daily and monthly rhythms are no longer operational?

And because you will no longer have functional brain-to-ovary signaling, you will likely avoid conceiving if you have sex during what would otherwise have been your six fertile days a month. Of course, this product's hormonal effects also leave you with the sense that everything is stable and predictable which is something like turning the white noise up so loud that you don't hear your own baby crying.

For this, you will risk migraines, weight gain, hypertension, gallstones, cancer, and yes, sudden death without warning. Would you believe that millions of women the world over, line up to take it every day? In fact, they even fight for their right to take it.

After four months of post-pill amenorrhea (no return of my natural cycle after stopping 12 years of birth control), I decided to see what the research showed about lesser-known side effects of the pill. I was astounded to find evidence supporting its inflammatory, nutrient-depleting, metabolic, and microbiota-impairing effects.

I've also found recent research linking the pill to cancer, autism, and even brain-based changes. But because so many critical questions have not been asked about what happens when we manipulate the hormonal pathways and feedback loops in the body, we rely on post-marketing research, including girls and women dying due to contraceptives, sometimes used for acne or so they can avoid having an inconvenient period.

Then I began paying attention to my patients' stories. Over and over again, I would learn about their onset of anxiety, depression, and even mania after beginning synthetic hormones.

The Pill and Your Mood

Since the 1960s, there has been controversy around the potential mood-altering effects of oral contraceptives. Over 50 years of public use has not settled the question.

There is acknowledgment, however, that depression is the most common reason for discontinuation of use. Pilot studies have demonstrated that women using the combined (estrogen and progestogen) oral contraceptive pill were significantly more depressed than a matched group who were not. The existing research is of fairly compromised quality—mostly reflecting the fact that this topic has not been a research focus over the past several decades. What does exist in the annals of science suggests that there is likely a subset of women for whom oral contraceptives represent a major risk factor for depression and/or related mood disturbance.

Who might these at-risk women be?

I've also found recent research linking the pill to cancer, autism, and even brain-based changes.

Over and over again, I would learn about their onset of anxiety, depression, and even mania after beginning synthetic hormones.

You can never truly own your primal femininity, nor fully know what your symptoms are saying from irregular periods to PMS—without deep contact with your hormonal self.



ARIF RIVANTO/UNSPLASH

From 13 prospective trials, it appears that they have a personal or family psychiatric history (a rapidly growing group of people), one that has been exacerbated by pregnancy/postpartum, and premenstrual periods, and young age. More specifically, women with premenstrual mood symptoms prior to use experience more adverse effects with lower progestin dosages or triphasic oral contraceptives, unlike women without this history who experience more psychiatric side effects with higher progestin preparations.

The Pill and Antidepressants: Perfect Together?

Now we have the largest epidemiologic study of its kind, published in JAMA, out of Denmark, entitled Association of Hormonal Contraception with Depression. One million women ages 15-34 were followed for 13 years.

Here's what they found:

- Women who were prescribed the combined pill were 23 percent more likely to be treated with antidepressants
- Progestin-only treated women (sometimes called the "mini pill") were 34 percent more likely to be treated with antidepressants
- Teens were 80 percent more likely if prescribed the combined pill and two-fold more likely with the progestin-only pill to be treated with antidepressants

Epidemiologic data is rife with potential confounders and certainly doesn't demonstrate a clear causal signal, so this is merely

food for thought. But what thought? What should we be thinking about as prescribers, mothers, and women?

I believe in informed consent and free choice.

Because oral contraceptives are poorly studied drugs given to healthy women, prescribers are morally obligated to thoroughly explore the known risks. If you still want to take a pill daily knowing you could develop everything from weight gain to migraines to an unhealthy relationship with your moods, all the way to your very life, then that is your choice.

What We Are Trading to Control Our Cycle

I have come to the perspective that you can never truly own your primal femininity, nor fully know what your symptoms are saying—from irregular periods to PMS—without deep contact with your hormonal self. Your symptoms are telling you that you need to change something, your diet, your sleep schedule, your stress level, or maybe just that plastic you've been microwaving.

I'm not sure it's truly possible to live the life you are here to live while your vitality-supportive sex hormones are hijacked by Pharma.

If you're taking birth control for your hormonal imbalance, heal your body. Start with food. Add detox and meditation the way we do in Vital Mind Reset. Consider herbal support.

It's not hard, and the side effects are incredible—from clear skin to weight loss to a healthy sex drive. When you balance your hormones, you learn that a woman's experience is cyclical. Energies shift to particular rhythms and you can watch yourself to know exactly when in your life you're supposed to be doing what. It's called getting in touch with yourself and it's what true empowerment is all about.

If you're taking birth control for contraception, own your right to keep Pharma out of your bedroom, to bring your full vital self to your sexuality, and work with your body, not against it. The Days fertility tracker and its birth control protocol and fix your period program, is my favorite gadget for learning how to do that—and it's 99.3 percent effective.

Kelly Brogan, MD, is a holistic women's health psychiatrist and author of The New York Times bestselling book "A Mind of Your Own," the children's book "A Time for Rain," and co-editor of the landmark textbook "Integrative Therapies for Depression." This work is reproduced and distributed with the permission of Kelly Brogan, MD. For more articles, sign up for the newsletter at www.KellyBroganMD.com

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Anti-Aging Activities That Don't Cost a Thing

ERIKA LONG

Aging is a natural process that none of us can avoid, but the decline can be less severe if we practice good self-care.

There are many expensive treatments and serums that help ward off the signs of aging, but treating our bodies with kindness and feeding our soul what it craves can give some of the best results available without spending a penny.

Eating nutritious foods, exercising consistently, and even indulging from time-to-time, will all support health. There are also anti-aging activities that won't break the bank. By practicing these completely free activities, you'll help yourself age more gracefully without hurting your wallet.

1. Sleep

Not getting enough sleep can make you age more quickly. Our skin, immune system, and metabolism all suffer when we are sleep deprived. Human growth hormone is produced when we sleep and cutting back on shut-eye will leave you tired, grumpy and aching. Adults ages 18 to 64 should aim for 7-9 hours of sleep, while those 65 and older can thrive on 7-8 hours of sleep.

Here are a couple of tips to get more and better sleep:

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.
- Establish a nighttime routine where you shut off all screens and start winding down the hour before you sleep.
- Keep your room quiet and cool when you sleep.
- Walk for 30-45 minutes in the morning sun to spur production of serotonin.

2. Time in Nature

Nature helps us unplug from the modern world and reconnect with a greater sense of the eternal. Fresh air, sunlight, and exercise are good for the body and soul. Whether it's the woods, the beach, or the desert, nature is easily accessible, even in big cities. Most cities have local parks nearby. In the winter, even viewing pictures of nature will change your mood and how your brain functions.

3. Meditation

Meditation slows the aging process. Even

Healthy habits like spending time in nature and getting morning sun can help us age with grace and ease.

Eating nutritious foods, exercising consistently, and even indulging from time to time, will all support health.



NADYA EUGENE/SHUTTERSTOCK

taking as little as fifteen minutes a day to be present with your breath can help you to feel more at ease and allow you to think better. Normally, aging brings on a decrease in memory and cognition. However, dementia and Alzheimer's may be prevented or slowed through practicing meditation as it helps with brain connectivity. Finally, highly productive and successful people take the time to meditate to help them see their goals and desires more clearly so they can accomplish more throughout the day.

4. Friendship

Having healthy relationships provides connection and companionship, which is crucial for our emotional and mental health. Friendships that are nurturing influence our habits and hobbies. Whether we stay active or sedentary, eat right or drink too often, depends on the people we associate with the most. Our closest friends affect our decisions and moods. They can provide help when we are in need and laughter when we are blue. To keep friendships healthy, it's important to resolve conflict when it comes up. The stress and anxiety from being upset can lead to depression and a suppressed immune system.

5. Laughter

Laughter is fun and good for our bodies. It releases endorphins, a hormone that makes us feel good and relieves pain. Laughter also decreases cortisol, a stress hormone, that can cause inflammation in the body. Less inflammation means less stress on our immune system, freeing it up to protect us from infection and disease. Laughter also promotes heart health as it lowers blood pressure, increases circulation and oxygen intake, and improves the function of blood vessels. Plus, studies have found that about 15 minutes of laughing can burn up to 40 calories. No, you won't be able to shed excessive weight with a few hearty chuckles, but burning extra calories is always a bonus so don't hold back.

By incorporating these free activities into your life, you can experience more vibrant health as you grow older. You can also age with more grace and ease.

Erika Long loves corgis, curry, and comedy. Always searching for the next great snuggle, flavor, or laugh, she inspires people to live their best life now. When not writing, Erika can be found at her local brewery dominating Harry Potter trivia night.

ERMOLAEV ALEXANDER/SHUTTERSTOCK

NO NONSENSE HEALTH ADVICE

North American Diet a Recipe for Blindness

Processed foods and sugars are major factors in macular degeneration, warns doctor

W. GIFFORD-JONES

How often have we been warned that we are what we eat? Now, a book by Dr. Chris Knobbe, "Ancestral Dietary Strategy to Prevent and Treat Macular Degeneration," is an eye-opener.

Knobbe claims doctors have been taught for years that macular degeneration—the top cause of serious, irreversible vision loss for people over age 60—is due to aging and genetics, but it's not entirely true. Rather, he claims the leading cause of blindness in North America is due to the garbage we're eating.

"Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes" was a military command given to British soldiers long ago. But if these soldiers had MD they would not have fired a single shot. MD destroys the macula, a tiny spot on the retina responsible for central vision. Dr. Knobbe, an ophthalmologist, reports

that before 1925 there were about 50 cases of MD in the world's medical literature. But by 1975, 8.8 percent of Americans over the age of 50 had this disease.

Dr. William Osler, professor of medicine at McGill University, once commented only a doctor who has a particular disease really understands it. In this case, Knobbe, who suffered from arthritis for 15 years, heard about the Paleo Diet. Then after 10 days of following it, he noticed his pain was 80 percent improved. Obviously, he wanted to understand why.

First, he discovered the research of dentist Dr. Weston A. Price (1870-1948). Price reported that people who consumed refined white flour, sugar, canned goods, sweets, and vegetable oils had developed diseases of civilization such as heart disease, stroke, hypertension, obesity, Type 2 diabetes, cancer, and all the autoimmune disorders.

Price found that native, traditional foods contain 10 times as many fat-soluble vitamins A, D, and K2, four times as many water-soluble vitamins such as all the B vitamins and C, and one-and-a-half to 60 times more minerals than today's diet.

Dr. Knobbe asked himself, "Could macular degeneration also be the result of poor nutrition?"

This question changed the course of his life. He discovered that MD was strongly associated with heart disease and Type 2 diabetes. And that MD, and these diseases, once rare, are now of epidemic proportions.

Knobbe claims the change is due to the introduction of processed oils and refined flour. Today, 20 percent of the North American diet is wheat, and 85 percent of it is refined and nutrient deficient. Add to this sugar, trans fats and the most dangerous of all, polyunsaturated vegetable oils. All this garbage, processed foods with refined sugar, makes up 63 percent of the North American diet.

Dr. Knobbe now urges doctors to stop attributing MD to aging and genetics and consider the role of diet. In 1961, North Americans were consuming 9 grams daily of polyunsaturated vegetable oils. By 2000, it increased to 40 grams daily.

This is not just a North American problem. Knobbe's research shows that the same situation exists in New Zealand and Japan. It is obvious that something has gone terribly wrong. So what can consumers do?

Knobbe says a good start is to start saying "no" to processed foods, vegetable oils, and sugar. This means switching to eating unprocessed whole foods. And fast-food restaurants are off-limits. He adds that bone broth is helpful and since MD patients are deficient in vitamin A, D, and K2, they need a tablespoon of extra virgin cod liver oil twice a week.

Will North Americans heed this advice about the garbage we're eating? I hope some readers listen, as preventable blindness is a tragedy. So add more wild fish, meat, eggs, fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds to your diet. This can help to prevent macular degeneration and a host of other chronic disabling conditions.

Dr. Ken Walker (who writes under the pseudonym of Dr. W. Gifford-Jones, MD) is a graduate of Harvard Medical School who has written a weekly medical column since 1975. He is the author of nine books. For more information, visit www.docgiff.com

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Exercise for Life

Staying active into your old age will be easier if you keep it enjoyable



YOUSHELJUNG/ISTOCKPHOTO

LYNN JAFFEE

If there were such a thing as the fountain of youth, it would be physical activity. And when I think about being physically active for the rest of my life, I take a page out of my father's playbook.

As the commander of an underwater demolition team (UDT) in the Pacific, my dad spent the World War II in a swimsuit with a knife and explosives attached to his belt. He was suited to the work, having grown up swimming competitively, and for the rest of his life after the war, he made exercise a priority. Whether it was hammering out 20 laps in the pool, hiking in the woods, skiing, or riding his bike, Dad made it a point to move his body almost every day.

But there was more to his playbook than that. Dad never overdid it. He kept exercise fun and did just enough to keep in shape. I believe that was the key to his ability to stay active and uninjured until a week or two before he died at age 87.

In the clinic, I see so many patients with sports injuries caused by overuse. I've treated competitive, professional, and weekend athletes, many of whom had very preventable injuries. Often, they are so highly trained that their bodies are on a knife-edge between peak performance and complete breakdown. I've seen them go back to their sport before an injury is completely healed, only to reinjure themselves very quickly.

I have also treated many that are so depleted from their training regimen that they are either repeatedly injured or catch every cold or flu that's going around and it takes months to restore their health.

In Chinese medicine, there are a number of underlying causes of illness, such as eating poorly, stress, emotional upsets, and traumatic injury. However, there is also a source of illness called overwork, and it's exactly what it sounds like. When you work too many hours at anything, you can become depleted or injured. This can translate into too many hours at the office, caregiving without a break, studying for long periods, or exercising too much or too intensely.

According to Chinese medicine, both too little and too much exercise can lead to illness. When it comes to too much, the ancient text called The Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor (the Huangdi Nei Jing), states, "Overstrain or stress consumes the vital energy of the body." This

According to Chinese medicine, both too little and too much exercise can lead to illness.

Moving your body is not meant to be a source of overwork, depletion, and injury.

Think of rest and recovery as a key component to healthy exercise.

means that overworking weakens your Qi, the life force that drives every system in your body. As a result, your ability to heal and your resistance to illness is compromised.

So what's the key to common sense and injury-free exercise until you're 87 or older? Here are some strategies straight from my dad:

Mix things up. Dad never did the same thing day after day. His exercise was a mix of hiking, swimming, biking, and yard work. As a result, he was never injured.

Increase intensity gradually. If you're working toward an event, such as a race, a hiking trip, or a long bike ride, increase your workouts very gradually. A good rule of thumb is to increase your training sessions by no more than 10 percent a week.

Recover. Think of rest and recovery as a key component to healthy exercise. By allowing your body to recover after a hard workout, you give it the opportunity to become fit—that's called the training effect. Pushing the exercise envelope day after day only wears you down.

Heal. If you do become injured, allow yourself the time to heal. Resist the urge to test an injury before you're completely better. I have seen many patients reinjure themselves or prolong their recovery because they didn't allow their body the time it needed to fully heal.

Keep it fun. It can be easy to get caught up in the intensity of getting better or having to do your sport every day. However, that intensity can undermine the health benefits of exercise. If you remember to have fun with whatever activities you choose, your chances of becoming injured tend to be lower.

The bottom line is that moving your body is not meant to be a source of overwork, depletion, and injury. Instead, it can be the foundation of physical and mental health and longevity. The goal is to stay active throughout your life, not to burn out by overwork.

Lynn Jaffee is a licensed acupuncturist and the author of "Simple Steps: The Chinese Way to Better Health." This article was originally published on AcupunctureTwinCities.com

FOOD IS MEDICINE

Dried Plums Slow Bone Loss in Aging

Medical researchers confirm traditional Chinese medicine's prune prescription

CASE ADAMS

Several recent studies have confirmed what traditional oriental medicine has known for centuries—that dried plums have the capacity to prevent and even reverse bone loss that can occur in our later years.

A previous review of 24 studies in 2017 published in *Nutrients* also confirmed that prunes can have help bones stay healthy.

More recently Florida State University researchers tested 236 women who were between one and ten years into menopause. The women were randomly divided into two groups. One group was given 100 grams of dried plums per day while the other group was given 100 grams of dried apples per day for a year. After doing bone scans at three months, six months and twelve months, the researchers found that the dried plum group showed significantly greater bone mineral density than those women consuming the dried apples over that same period.

Before the trial, every three months and after the twelve-month period, the women were tested for bone strength, physical activity, blood levels of bone density and bone turnover markers along with other signs of bone health.

In the recent study, biomarkers such as alkaline phosphatase and tartrate-resistant acid phosphatase-5b levels were significantly lower in the dried plum group, for example. These indicate a slower turnover of bone minerals and reduced bone loss.

The research was led by Dr. Bahram Arjmandi, Professor and Chair of Florida State's Nutrition, Food, and Exercise Sciences Department. Dr. Arjmandi commented on the research. "Dried plums are the most bone-friendly fruit that I have seen in decades. They are nature's solution to maintaining good bone health. Over my career, I have tested numerous fruits, including figs, dates, strawberries and raisins, and none of them come anywhere close to having the effect on bone density that dried plums have," wrote Dr. Arjmandi.

Plums contain a variety of nutrients, including bone health-promoting vitamin K, potassium, copper and boron. According to Dr. Arjmandi, these work synergistically to prevent bone mineral loss, which can lead to osteoporosis.

Dr. Arjmandi has also found that California plums seem to provide some of the best nutrient levels. "Incorporating California dried plums (prunes) into holiday recipes is a step in the right direction. After people start cooking with and snacking on them they love the taste. The good news is they are good for you."

California produces 99 percent of the dried plums consumed in the United States and 48 percent of the world's supply of dried plums. What is the difference between dried plums and prunes? Only the name. In 2000, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration accepted a new identity standard—changing prunes to dried plums—a more accurate description.

These plum findings are confirmed by a study conducted by researchers at Oklahoma State University who looked at postmenopausal mice. For eight weeks, the mice were given either a control diet or a diet that was supplemented with dried plum or other fruits.

Those mice given dried fruit were given dried plum, dried mango, dried apple or dried grape for the eight-week period to determine whether dried fruit, in general, produced the effect or specifically the dried plums. Only the dried plum diet prevented bone loss among the mice.

The researchers also found that the dried plum diet also reversed bone loss among the aging female mice. Other clinical studies have confirmed these findings that dried plums prevent and even reverse bone loss among postmenopausal women, including research from the Medical College of the University of California-San Francisco.

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Case Adams is a California naturopath with a doctorate in natural health sciences and a board-certified alternative medicine practitioner. He has authored 26 books on natural healing strategies. His focus is upon researching, writing about and authenticating traditional therapies with clinical evidence. Some of his books can also be found on the GreenMedInfo store. This article was originally published on GreenMedInfo.com



While genetics may play a role in vision loss, diet is a major factor too many doctors overlook.



Researchers found dried plums have a unique impact on bones, something traditional Chinese medicine has known for a very long time.

VALANTINA PROKHORINA/SHUTTERSTOCK

You'll Have a Lot to Gain by Swapping Sauces for Salsas

DEVON ANDRE

Barbecue sauce, ketchup, mayonnaise, and soy sauce are staples for garnishing your meats, poultry, and fish. But for the most part, they don't carry much nutrition.

Barbecue sauce and ketchup are high in sugar—and we all know what that can do—while mayo is high calories and soy sauce is high sodium. In a couple of shakes and squeezes, you can turn an otherwise healthy meal into an inflammatory response.

But if you swap these sauces for sweet and spicy salsas, you can increase healthfulness and add some new life into some of your favorite meals. Further, they can contribute to the recommended four-to-five servings of fruit and vegetables per day.

Fresh salsas can be made relatively quickly and come with none of the calories or potential health troubles of most other sauces and spreads. They can be rich in flavor, nutrition, antioxidants, and help fight back against inflammation, weight gain, type-2 diabetes, and more. Chopping and mixing together tomato, onion, cilantro, jalapeno, mango, pineapple, or many other fruits and vegetables can add value to any meal in minutes.

Take mango, for example. It's a great source of fiber, vitamin A, and vitamin C. It also has a host of other nutrients, including vitamin B6, folate, and iron. It's also high in antioxidants, and there is research indicating mango can:

- Improve constipation symptoms
- Prevent diarrhea
- Enhance gut microbial populations
- Improve overall digestion
- Promote heart health
- Lower inflammation
- Maintain healthy hair and skin



KRISTELLE PEREIRA/ISTOCK

You can add some spice and sweetness to your meats with this nutrient-dense salsa:

- 2 mangos, diced
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1/2 red onion, diced
- 1/2 cup packed cilantro
- 2 jalapeños, seeded and diced
- 1 lime, zested and juiced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

Mix all the ingredients into a large bowl and let it sit for a few minutes. You can also cover and refrigerate it for about four-to-five days. It can be easily added to meats, fish, or veggies, and you can give it a little extra by grilling the mango before dicing.

Devon Andre holds a bachelor's of forensic science from the University of Windsor in Canada and a Juris Doctor from the University of Pittsburgh. This article was first published on Bel Marra Health.



MLADEN ZIVKOVIC/SHUTTERSTOCK

The human body is so efficient that even a good workout isn't enough to burn off calorie-rich foods. Combine good food with exercise for the best effect.

The Exercise Conundrum

When Exercise Leads to Weight Gain

Getting active is supposed to help you lose weight, but that can come undone if you eat more than you burn

ALEX JOHNSTONE

Governments are always telling us to eat less and exercise more to be healthier, but this presents an obvious problem. Being active is liable to make you hungrier, so there's a risk you end up eating extra to compensate and putting on more weight than if you'd never got off the sofa in the first place.

Exercise levels often have no bearing on how much we eat on the same day.

Dieticians dream of the day when they can design diets for people where they are more active but don't get hungry in the process. Unfortunately, it's trickier than you might think: we're still searching for the mechanism that governs how the energy we expend translates into our level of appetite. And as we shall see, that's by no means the only thing that makes this area complicated.

In an ideal world, the human body would be wired to immediately detect changes in the amount of energy we use and then give us the appetite to eat the right amount to balance it out. Alas not: we all get hungry two or three times a day, sometimes more, regardless of what we are getting up to. Our bodies also release far stronger signals about our appetite when we haven't eaten enough than when we've eaten too much. This poor daily feedback relationship helps to explain why obese people still experience strong feelings of hunger—that and all the cheap calorie-dense food that is widely available, of course.

Mysteries of Appetite

There is much that we don't understand about the effect of increased activity. Most of us burn different amounts of calories on different days—gym-goers have days off, while everyone has days where they walk around more shops, do more housework or whatever.

Studies don't find any clear relationship between these variations and the

amount of food that the average person consumes on the day in question. But neither is it easy to say anything definitive. Most research has focused on people doing aerobic exercise and has found, for instance, that while some highly trained and lean people tend to eat the right amount to compensate for the extra calories they burn, overweight people are more prone to over-eat.

What could lie behind this difference? One possibility is that physiological processes change in people who do more exercise—for instance, their gut hormones might be released in different concentrations when they eat, potentially with a bearing on how much food they need.

One longstanding question, dating back some 60 years, is where metabolism fits into the picture. Some important work published in 2013 by a team in Leeds found that overweight people were hungrier and consumed more calories than thinner people. Since overweight people have a higher resting metabolic rate—the rate at which the body burns energy while at rest—the group proposed that there was a correlation between this rate and the size of meals that people eat. The fact that people's resting metabolic rates are stable, regardless of fluctuations in daily exercise, might help explain why exercise levels often have no bearing on how much we eat on the same day.

Yet this doesn't mean that resting metabolic rate actually determines how much food we eat. The team proposed that a person's body composition, specifically their amount of muscle mass, might be governing their metabolic rate. If so, the metabolic rate might just be acting as an intermediary—routing the information about body composition through hypothalamic networks in the brain, which are believed to control appetite. Either way, this still needs further research.

Our Study

To examine what happens in the real-life situation, rather than the lab setting, I've co-authored a new study that looks at what happens to people's calorie intake on days when they are more active without deliberately taking exercise—this could be anything from a trip to the dentist to a day out at the beach with

the children. We looked at 242 individuals—114 men and 128 women. We found that their amount of activity did have a bearing on how much they ate, but that their resting metabolic rates influenced their appetites as well—in other words, overweight people tended to eat more.

This is another step forward in understanding the relationship between activity and the calories we consume. But don't expect this to translate into a magic formula for optimizing everyone's relationship with activity and food any time soon. There are many variables that have barely been taken into account by researchers. Most work has tended to focus on white men aged 20–30, for instance, yet there is evidence that women are more prone to compensate for extra physical activity by eating.

Equally, different genetic characteristics are likely to be important—some people are more fidgety, for instance. Then there are differences in people's psychology and to what extent they use food as a reward. People who have been losing or gaining weight will have different appetite signals to people whose weight is stable. The time of the activity in the course of the day is likely to make a difference, too.

Most of us burn different amounts of calories on different days.

I doubt that in my lifetime we will reach a point where we can look at any person's entire genetic make-up and tell them exactly what will work for them. What we can say from our study is that many people are liable to eat more when they are more active. Just moving more will not lead to spontaneously losing weight—people should be aware of this and watch how much extra they eat as a result.

Alex Johnstone is the personal chair in nutrition at The Rowett Institute at the University of Aberdeen in the UK. This article was first published on The Conversation.

CONNECT TO LEAD

Being Surrounded on Purpose

Sometimes you need to submerge yourself before you can rise to the top

SCOTT MANN

In 2011, we were conducting village stability operations in Afghanistan. We were living by, with, and through indigenous Pashtun villagers in the most rural villages until we became invited guests, and in some cases even members of the community. This was a deliberate campaign to establish a foothold in contentious Taliban-dominated areas so that the locals could stand up on their own, fight back, and push the Taliban out.

Around that time, there was an unfortunate incident where several Qurans were incinerated at a detention facility, setting a literal firestorm across Afghanistan. There were riots and attacks. It was ugly, but what was interesting was wherever our Green Berets and Special Operators were living, the locals came in and said, "Lay low. Don't walk around in the open until this blows over. We'll tell you when it's safe."

This didn't happen in just one village, but dozens of villages around the country. Not a single special operator living in the most remote, violent places, who should have been the most at risk for these attacks and uprisings, was injured. How is that possible? It was because they had developed a mindset that allowed them to be surrounded on purpose, a leadership approach where you immerse yourself in your surroundings.

If we had tried to come from the top-down, the locals who lived in those areas would naturally have pulled back. They wouldn't have viewed us as relevant, but as outsiders and maybe even as threats. I think the same concept is true in today's business world.

In the trust-depleted environment we work in today, we're turning our employees into social insurgents against our goals; not the willing population that wants to stand up and do the right thing because they don't want to let you down. How do we change this? By getting 'surrounded on purpose.'

We need to get a really clear understanding of what the goals are, for us and the other party. For example, if I'm taking over as the new VP in a company, and I want to build a high performing culture, then the first thing I have to get clear on is what my goals are, and I have to put those goals out there.

Where we really miss the boat is when we don't think about what the other party's goals are. We don't think about the goals of our teammates, our associates, our employees. What are their goals? What are their dreams? Some goals may be to actually overcome pain points, the things that jam them up every day. If we don't have a fundamental understanding of our goals and their goals, then we're



LIGHTFIELD STUDIOS/SHUTTERSTOCK

To lead a team, you need to get into it and understand where its members are coming from.

We need to get a really clear understanding of what the goals are.

not in a position to get surrounded on purpose. You're still working with an authoritarian mindset.

Once we understand that, then the homework starts. The goals are just the beginning. I want to understand everything I can about the people I'm going to immerse myself around. If I'm a law enforcement officer, and I want to get serious about community policing, I want to do the homework on the influencers in that community. I want to do a micro-history analysis. I want to know what's happened there.

Think of how this applies to you. What are the indicators and aspects of your organization that make it tick? Who are the influencers? Where are they from? What are they about? What are the preexisting tensions within that organization? You want to really understand your organization as best you can before going in.

Why? Because that's going to allow you to meet them where they are, not where you want them to be. This doesn't mean you have to concede or compromise your values, but it costs you nothing to hear someone out and really see the pictures in their head, as negotiator Stuart Diamond says. Then repeat back to them, so they know you understand. This is an

ongoing process. Really immerse yourself and meet people where they are. You'll start to see people open up to you. They will share things with you about the business, your goals, and the financials that you never saw before.

That is the essence of getting surrounded on purpose. Being immersed in the organization and the group that we value. We're a part of it. We're not a guest. We're not a pedestrian. We are surrounded on purpose and we fully commit to that mindset. We do it by getting our goals clear, by really learning about the people, the groups, and the leaders that we're going to be working with, and we continue to do so every day. Then we meet people where they are not where we want them to be. We ask thoughtful, open-ended questions. We connect. We engage.

We build trust when risk is low, not high. That's the mindset of leading from the rooftop.

Scott Mann is a former Green Beret who specialized in unconventional, high-impact missions and relationship building. He is the founder of Rooftop Leadership and appears frequently on TV and many syndicated radio programs. For more information, visit RooftopLeadership.com

Fewer Health Troubles for Older Workers With the Right Job

AMY MCCAIG

Staying in the wrong job can be bad for the health of older people and push them into early retirement, research suggests.

The researchers found that when older workers' reasoning abilities matched well with their job demands, they reported fewer chronic health problems than when they couldn't keep up. And when workers couldn't keep up with the reasoning demands of their jobs, the odds that they would stay at work decreased by nearly 34 percent instead of retiring.

Margaret Beier, a professor of psychological sciences at Rice University and the study's lead author, said the study has important implications for

designing work that keeps people engaged past typical retirement age. "This is particularly important given that the average age of workers in the U.S. is increasing," she said.

Cognitive Demands

Beier and fellow study authors Wendy Jackeline Torres, a graduate student in psychology at Rice, and Gwenith Fisher and Lauren Wallace, industrial/organizational psychologists at Colorado State University, studied 383 workers over the age of 51 as well as retirees who participated in the Study of Cognition and Aging in the USA conducted between 2007 and 2014.

The researchers analyzed a series of surveys evaluating cognitive abilities and job demands. Participants



PIKSELSTOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK

reported their retirement status and the prevalence of nine chronic health conditions: high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, stroke, cancer, lung disease, arthritis, emotional or psychiatric problems, and memory-related diseases.

The study included people from a variety of professions including business, finance, architecture, engineering, education, arts and entertainment, sports, media, construction, and transportation. Abilities required for the specific jobs ranged from mathematical reasoning (which is the ability to choose correct mathemati-

Older workers are valuable to companies but need the right role to keep them from retiring.

cal methods or formulas for problem-solving) to fluency of ideas (the ability to generate ideas on a specific topic).

Older Workers As Mentors

Beier said the study is an important step toward understanding how to extend the careers of older workers.

"Mature workers are a great benefit to the workforce by sharing their knowledge and mentoring younger workers," she said. "In fact, they may be suited for mentoring roles and emotionally challenging situations in a way that younger workers simply aren't."

Beier plans to use the study's results to support future work on understanding how to design better jobs and training for older workers.

The paper appears in the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology. Funding came from the National Institutes of Health's National Institute on Aging and the Centers for Disease Control's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

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WISE HABITS

The Most Neglected and Powerful Act of Self-Care

LEO BABAUTA

Many of us are (rightfully) focused on taking care of our health, eating nourishing whole foods, and trying to be active, while meditating, flossing, and taking time to disconnect from devices.

These are wonderful acts of self-care, and they are necessary and important. But there's one act of self-care that is very often neglected, and it might be even more important than all the others: the practice of loving yourself.

In fact, this is so often neglected that when I mention "loving yourself," many people don't know what that means. Many of us have never consciously done it. If we have, it's so rare as to be a forgotten memory. But it's my belief that we should do it throughout the day, like trying to drink 8 glasses of water. We should give

I coach a number of people—and pretty much everyone I meet is hard on themselves in some way.

ourselves at least 8 doses of loving ourselves every day.

What is this "self-love"? Imagine pouring the love in your heart to someone you care for dearly—what would that feel like? Now try doing the same thing for yourself. That's self-love, and it's a completely foreign concept to the vast majority of people.

Why It's So Important

I coach a number of people, one-on-one and in small and large groups—and pretty much everyone I meet is hard on themselves in some way. The cause themselves stress and pain. Disappointed in themselves, angry at themselves, they constantly feel inadequate.

I think most of us can find these tendencies in ourselves. This is something most of us face every single day.

We stress out about uncertainty because we don't think we're good enough to deal with it. We don't trust ourselves to stick to something, because we've formed a really bad picture of ourselves over the years. We get angry at ourselves for eating too much, drinking too much, messing up in a social situation, getting distracted and watching too many videos or playing too many games. We don't like how we look, or who we are, or how we act, in too many ways.

This affects everything in our lives. It makes us more stressed, less happy, anxious, depressed, and stuck. It leads to procrastinating, unhappy relationships, a loss of focus, and a search for comfort in all the wrong places, like comfort foods, shopping, and sometimes even addiction. We seek relief from the stress and pain of being who we are.

But giving ourselves love can start to heal all of this. It creates a shift. With more self-love, we can better deal with uncertainty, chaos, and difficulty in a much more resilient way. Giving ourselves love is such an important act of self-care, and yet it's rarely ever done.

How to Give Ourselves Love Often

Set reminders for yourself, everywhere you go. Put reminders on your fridge, on your computer, on your phone, on your bathroom mirror, in your car, at your desk, near your TV. The reminders only need to be two words: "Love yourself."

When you see the reminder, the act is very simple (even if it doesn't feel natural to most people yet—give it time):

1. Pause and feel any stress, pain, self-doubt, anger, frustration, or anxiety you might be feeling. Let yourself actually feel it, physically in your body, for just a few moments. It's OK to feel this.
2. Now give yourself the balm of love. As weird or silly as it feels, just try it. Imagine first that you are sending love to someone you love very much—your child, your parent, your best friend. Imagine them going through difficulty, and send love from your heart to theirs, hoping to make them better. Notice how that feels in your heart. Now try it for yourself, generating the same feeling in your heart, but sending it to yourself instead.
3. Feel the love as a healing balm. No matter how little you're able to generate, feel it wash over your stress, pain, anger, and doubt. Feel it like a thick, syrupy liquid soothing the pain. Let yourself receive this love like the love you've been craving.

It's that simple. It only takes a few moments—feel your stress and pain, send yourself love, let yourself feel it. Do it eight times a day. Or a dozen, if you can. You need this care. Don't hold it back from yourself any longer.

Leo Babauta is the author of six books, the writer of "Zen Habits," a blog with over 2 million subscribers, and the creator of several online programs to help you master your habits. Visit ZenHabits.net



Taking a moment to actively send yourself some love can be an act of self-care that sets you up for the challenges ahead.

GOODLUZ/SHUTTERSTOCK



Why Food Is Actually Information

Food can change our DNA but we've hardly begun to deal with this groundbreaking discovery

SAYER JI

Food, a precondition for the possibility of life as we know it, is rarely appreciated for its true power. Far beyond its conventionally defined role as a source of energy and building blocks for the body-machine, new discoveries on the frontiers of science reveal that food is also a powerful source of information.

We are all hardwired to be deeply concerned with food when hungry, an interest that rapidly extinguishes the moment we are satiated. But as an object of everyday interest and scientific inquiry, food often makes for a bland topic.

This is all the more apparent when juxtaposed against its traditional status in

Until we understand the true nature of food, and its profound impact on our consciousness, we will not be able to understand our own nature and destiny.

ancient cultures as sacred; or in contemporary religious traditions like Catholicism, in which a cracker still represents the body of Christ (Eucharist).

But as my previous investigations into the dark side of wheat have revealed, food is one of the most fascinating and existentially important topics there is. And in many ways, until we understand the true nature of food, and its profound impact on our consciousness, we will not be able to understand our own nature and destiny.

How We Got Here

Modern Western concepts of food are a byproduct of a centuries-old process of intense secularization. Food is now largely conceived of in terms of its economic value as a commodity and its nutritional value as a source of physical sustenance.

In the nutritional regard, its value is quantified through the presence and molecular weight of macro- and micro-

nutrients, or its "fat-inducing" calories.

In the process of reducing food's value to these strictly quantitative dimensions, it has lost its soul. Food is no longer believed to possess a vital life force, much less a sacred one. But the very etymology of sacred, namely, to make holy, and the etymology of holy, which connects to heal, whole, and health, points us toward food's ability to make us whole.

Food as Nourishment on All Levels

If talk of food as "sacred" and "whole-making" sounds pseudo-scientific, consider how nature designed our very first experience of nourishment (if we were fortunate enough to not have been given a bottle full of formula): breast milk taken from the mother's breast was simultaneously a nutritional, physical, thermic, emotional, genetic, and spiritual form of nourishment.

Continued on Page 12

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How does food make us whole?

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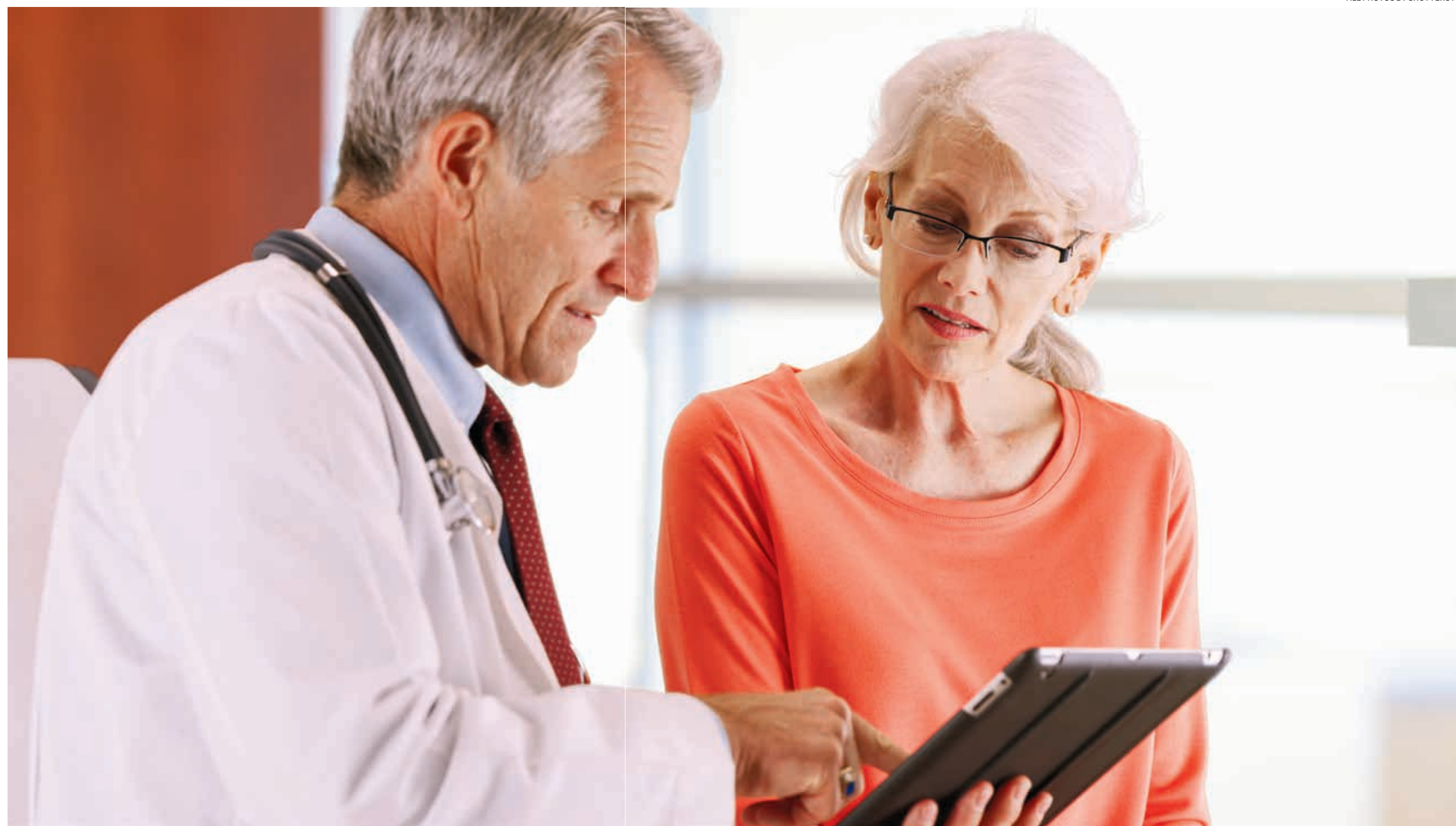
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Some doctors fail to listen to their patients, one reason someone diagnosed with cancer may want to shop around.

CANCER UP CLOSE

Learning What to Look for in a Cancer Specialist

Cancer is a tough disease, and having the right team with you through the process is key

MICHELE GONCALVES

Cancer is one of the most common diseases of our age, and yet those who face it rarely know what's about to happen to them beyond the broadest terms. "Cancer up Close" is an open recount of Michele Goncalves's cancer journey from pre-diagnosis to life after treatment.

As someone who favors treating my maladies as holistically as possible, I struggled with the idea of treating my stage 3 rectal cancer with chemotherapy.

Chemotherapy and radiation therapy damage cancer cells but can't distinguish these cells from normal cells and so the side-effects of this treatment can be devastating.

In my mind, chemo was a toxic substance that I didn't want within a 100-mile radius of me. In the end, I had no choice and I'm now dealing with side effects and platinum toxicity. (More on that subject in a future article.)

However, as if on cue, the first surgeon I met 17 hours after my diagnosis urged (I'd even say pushed) me to talk to his oncology partner, Dr. S., before making any decisions. I resisted but eventually agreed. What unfolded in that meeting still upsets me, but before I tell you what happened, I need to share something.

Cancer treatment is a multibillion-

dollar industry. This is an important fact to keep in mind as you face a diagnosis. Hospitals will even offer free cancer screenings as a way to identify and attract new patients. While the people working in this industry have a sincere wish to help their patient, there are realities that patients need to understand. For one, there is a sales aspect involved. And another is that cancer doctors and hospitals are in competition with one another for your business, hence the commercials you've seen on TV. In other words, you have a choice of where you get treated.

If you look at treating your cancer like dating, I think you will be better prepared for what may come. Would you marry the first person who asks you out on a date, thinking they are the only person on earth you could possibly spend your life with? Of course not. So, I would urge everyone not to settle for the first oncologist or surgeon you are referred to.

In fact, I'd suggest setting up appointments immediately after diagnosis with at least two other cancer centers to hear what they have to say (once you have all your CT scans, MRIs, and any other test results back in hand). Just remember to call quickly because appointments with doctors (especially good ones) can sometimes be several weeks away, and with a fast-growing tumor, it's better for you to not drag things out.

Also, remember that you are the boss in this surreal experience of "speed dating" for a cancer team. It's you who decides who gets the honor and income of treating your illness. I hope you never feel pushed or rushed into making your final decision.

Take the adequate time (but be quick) to think about your "dates" with the different doctors, and choose the team

that feels right. Do you feel like your opinions are being respected in that initial meeting? Did you feel like you can talk candidly and freely with them? Do you get the sense that they will work with you as a team to modify or stop your treatment if you don't feel comfortable? These are critical questions to consider. It is one of the most important decisions you can make along this journey.

I'd like to tell you the story about my meeting with an oncologist at a hospital in central New Jersey.

As I said earlier, the first surgeon I met took it upon himself to reach out to his oncology partner after I told him I didn't want chemo. He tried to get me in as soon as possible. I met the surgeon early in the morning on Dec. 15, and had a message on my phone later in the afternoon that day from the oncologist's office. They said an appointment had been made for Dec. 21.

I was asked to call back and confirm, but I didn't. I was mentally and emotionally exhausted, frightened, and angry. I wasn't sure yet whether I would use alternative or conventional cancer therapy or a mix of both.

In my heart, I wanted to avoid going the chemo route, and now, I was coming face to face with this treatment. On top of that, I felt like I was being pushed (by doctors and some family) into accepting this option, which made me rebel a bit.

I received a follow-up call from Dr. S.'s office on Dec. 18. This person left me a voicemail and said in a nasty tone, "This is our second call, you have not confirmed yet, so let us know if you want to cancel so we can give this appointment to a patient in need." I was a bit annoyed, but being from New Jersey, I'm used to rudeness, so I called them back and told them I felt this appointment was too soon.

I explained that I had not even had my required CT scan and MRI done yet, so what were we going to talk about exactly? There are no tangible results to discuss. I wanted to reschedule for Jan. 8 after my tests would be completed.

The person I was talking to kept pushing me to keep my Dec. 21 appointment and was giving me a very hard time about moving it to Jan. 8. She said that I'd feel so much better if I just sat down with the beloved Dr. S. who was so great.

However, I kept insisting that I wanted to talk about real and concrete things about my case, once I got the test results back. I didn't need to discuss theory. I felt like I was talking to customer service and trying to get out of a cellphone contract. This person wouldn't take no for an answer.

I thought she was trying to earn a commission or get some kind of year-



Nobody has more insight into their own body and how it reacts to medications, food, and so on than they themselves.

end bonus through my visit. Her sales pitch was just a bit too hard for my taste at this delicate time.

This kept going on for a few more minutes, until I finally said: "Look, I'm not going to die in the next few weeks, so let's set it for Jan. 8, OK?" Finally, she backed off and agreed and the call was over. Sheesh!

I thought to myself, how can you hassle someone who was just freshly diagnosed with cancer like this? Unfortunately, the tone from that phone call carried over to my actual visit with the doctor on Jan. 8.

I attended the meeting alone (by choice), and my goal was to get information and hear what they had to say about their treatment protocol. At this point, they had seen my MRI and CT Scan results, so now we could actually talk about facts.

I walked in and finally met Dr. S. (after my blood pressure and other vitals were taken, of course). I went through my long history going back to when I had food poisoning on a business trip in Colombia, to having a stool test done in 2015 by my functional medicine doctor in Michigan that revealed a rogue bacterial infection (Klebsiella Pneumoniae), to having blood in my stool for a long time, to the present pains during my last business trip in Russia.

She took very detailed notes for about 20 minutes and then sat down next to me to discuss how staging works for rectal cancer. The information was the same as I had heard from the surgeon.

Then, she said she looked at my MRI and placed me in Stage 3, or borderline Stage 4. Several lymph nodes appeared to be impacted and the MRI report wasn't conclusive if the tumor had already penetrated outside the immediate area. She looked very serious, and her tone was hardly hopeful.

From my prepared list of questions, I asked her what her success rate was with my type and stage of cancer, and she looked at me as if I had horns growing out of my head! She replied in a stern voice, "Everyone is different." She never answered the question or offered a few successful cases she had to give me some hope.

Cancer doctors are very reticent to use the word "cure" and will sometimes say treatments have "curative intent."

Sometimes it can take years to know if cancer has been truly cured, or if it is simply hiding and waiting.

She walked me through her protocol for treating Stage 3 or 4 rectal cancer. The only option presented to me was to put a port into my chest and follow a regimen called FOLFOX, a mix of two different chemotherapy drugs that would be given via infusion over two hours. Then I'd have to drag around a bag of chemo in a pouch for two ad-

ditional days infusing into my port. This would be done for eight cycles two weeks apart. There would be chemo and radiation following that for 5 1/2 weeks, and then surgery.

I asked to see an example of what this "port" looked like. When she showed me, I almost fainted. I pictured myself as a cyborg walking around like a chemo zombie with a bag of this crazy toxic liquid in my Louis Vuitton purse.

I said, "Um, I really don't want that thing." She replied that this approach was the gold standard to treat my cancer and anyone who says otherwise is not following standards. (It turns out this is not quite true as another protocol exists without a port.) Then she reminded me that I had stage 3 cancer and that it isn't a joke! I thought to myself, "Gee thanks, honey, for making me feel like I've got no chance at all."

I would urge everyone not to settle for the first oncologist or surgeon you are referred to.

I told her that I was getting a second opinion at the Cancer Treatment Centers of America in Philadelphia the following day. Dr. S. and the nurse both rolled their eyes. The doctor said to her nurse, "Um, you want to take this one? I can't, I can't."

The nurse went on to say in a very schoolmarm lecturing tone that they heard bad stories about them, like how they did unnecessary CT scans after every cycle of chemo to make more money (which isn't true). I was appalled at their commentary which struck me as unprofessional.

The final straw came when I mentioned that I have a functional medicine doctor in Michigan, and I asked if they would be willing to work with them during my treatment, as I intended to stay on my supplements to boost my immune system through any type of conventional treatment.

Dr. S. said their pharmacy would evaluate all of them and they would be the ones to decide if I could use it or not. However, she said that the red blood cell support I was on was a definite no because these are usually high in iron and it could make me more constipated than I already was (my tumor was almost fully blocking my colon).

It's you who decides who gets the honor and income of treating your illness.

I explained that I was put on that supplement after my diagnosis because a blood test showed I was anemic. The pills made me feel better, and my light-headedness was less severe since taking them. However, my explanation apparently didn't matter (in other words how I actually felt didn't matter); she said she didn't support them. I was furious.

Nobody has more insight into their own body and how it reacts to medications, food, and so on than they themselves. There is also nobody who has more invested and therefore should have more say in how they pursue medical treatment. Unfortunately, many doctors don't quite understand or accept this reality.

I got up out of my chair and said, "OK, thanks!" I couldn't get out of there fast enough. This was the worst doctor's appointment I had ever had. I felt disrespected and dismissed.

I never went back. A few days later, I received an email asking for written feedback of my visit with that doctor. I documented everything I've just shared and added: "If you think this is the way to earn my business, you are sadly mistaken."

I was relieved that I had another facility to consult within my back pocket. My experience at the Cancer Treatment Centers of America was very different, so tune in next time when I will share what that was like.

Until then, breathe deep, be kind, and take it one day at a time.

Michele Goncalves is a financial compliance and fraud auditor for a Fortune 500 company by day and a passionate pursuer of holistic and functional medicine knowledge by night. She is also the author of the column The Consummate Traveler.

Why Food Is Actually Information

Food can change our DNA but we've hardly begun to deal with this groundbreaking discovery

Continued from Page 9

Food, therefore, can't and shouldn't truly be reduced to an object of biochemistry.

And so, as we dig deeper, we discover that the topic of food is a highly cerebral one. And this begins with any simple act of eating, albeit in a slightly different way.

It's called the cephalic phase of nutrition, "in your head," which reflects how you are actually experiencing the food. Is it delicious? Does it give you pleasure? These "subjective" aspects profoundly affect the physiology of digestion and assimilation.

My colleague Marc David has dedicated many years to awakening people to this amazing process. Food, therefore, begins in a context that transcends merely physiochemical conditions and concerns.

The nocebo and placebo effects, which are powerful forces in the setting of clinical medicine, also apply to the field and experience of nutrition. And therefore, it is hard to ignore how this important layer of nutrition—the firsthand experience, and even our intention and level of gratitude—has been lost in the fixation on the chemistry and reductionism of food science.

But the inquiring mind wants more specific scientific answers to the question: How does food make us whole? How does its arrangement of atoms possess such extraordinary power to sustain our species? Why can't we answer the most rudimentary questions that go back to ancient times, such as the still timeless mystery and miracle of how bread is transmuted into blood and flesh?

Perhaps, the information (and intelligence) within food will help explain some of this mystery. After all, information literally means "to put form into." This understanding will add much-needed depth and nuance to conventional nutritional concepts where food is still conceived as a bunch of essentially dead and uninteresting atoms and molecules.

The Old Story of Food as a Thing

Our concept of food is still generally constrained to the Newtonian view that all things are comprised of atoms, externally related to one another, and built up from there into molecules, cells, etc.

The story goes that when we eat things, digestion breaks them down into their constituent parts and our bodies then take these parts and build them back up into our blood and bones. This very mechanical, simplistic view, while valid in limited ways, no longer holds true in light of the new biology and science. Along with this view of food as matter, is the correlate perspective, that food can be "burned" for energy and that, like a furnace or a car, our body uses food for "fuel" measured by calories to drive its engines along.

Of course, this is reinforced by nutrition labels that make it appear that food is as simple as caloric content and the presence or absence of a relatively small set of essential nutrients such as carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, or minerals.

I will call this reductionistic view of food "the old story of food," in recognition of Charles Eisenstein's thinking. This narrative focuses on two primary dimensions: food as matter and food as energy.

Food as Matter

If we are looking at the "material" aspects of food, we are looking at the physically quantifiable or measurable



elements.

You could not, for instance, objectively measure taste, as it differs qualitatively from person to person. It is a subjective experience. And so, nutritional science focuses on what is presumably objective, namely, quantities like the molecular weight of a given substance, e.g., 50 mg of ascorbic acid, 10 grams of carbohydrate, or 200 mg of magnesium.

These material aspects, while providing information, are not considered to be "informational" in the sense of giving off distinct messages to the DNA in our body, which can alter gene expression. They are considered part of the physical world. Therefore, while providing building blocks for our body, including its DNA, they are not understood to alter or control the expression of the DNA in a meaningful way.

Food, therefore, is considered "dead," and not biologically meaningful beyond its brick-and-mortar functions in building up the body-machine.

Food as Energy

Energy is commonly defined as the power derived from the utilization of physical resources, especially to drive machines.

In this view, food provides the fuel to power the body-machine. Food energy is conventionally defined in chemical terms. The basic concept is that humans extract energy from food and oxygen through cellular respiration.

That is, the body joins oxygen from the air with molecules from food (aerobic respiration), or creates energy without oxygen (anaerobic respiration) through reorganization of the molecules. The system used to quantify the energy content of food is based on the food calorie. One food calorie is the amount of heat required at a pressure of one atmosphere to raise the temperature of a gram of water by 1 degree Celsius.

The traditional way to ascertain the caloric content of a sample of food is using a calorimeter, which literally burns the food sample to a crisp, measuring the amount of heat given off (its caloric content).

In order to account for the varying densities of material within a sample, e.g., fiber, fat, water, a more complex algorithm is used today, but either way,

food isn't an informational substance in the biological sense (e.g., DNA), but simply a source of energy that can fuel the body-machine.

The New Story: Food as Information

The new view of food as replete with biologically important information, is based on a number of relatively recent discoveries in various fields of scientific research.

For instance, the discovery that food contains methyl groups (a carbon atom attached to three hydrogen atoms (CH₃) capable of methylating (silencing) genes, brought into focus the capability of food to profoundly affect disease risk as well phenotypal expression.

If folate, B12, or Betaine—three common food components—can literally shut off gene expression with high specificity, food becomes a powerful informational vector, one which may actually supervene over the DNA within our body by determining which sequences find expression.

This discovery of nutrition's prime role in epigenetics opened up an entirely new realm of research, including the disciplines of nutrigenomics, which looks at nutrient-gene interactions, and nutritional genomics, which looks at gene-based risks that provide individualization of nutritional recommendations.

Suddenly, almost overnight, food became infinitely more interesting to geneticists, biologists, and medical professionals. It's newly discovered information role could affect, and, in some cases, control, the expression of the DNA—biomedicine's holy grail.

Food's role as a source of methyl group donors capable of epigenetic modulation of DNA expression is a powerful demonstration of its informational properties, but this is not the whole story.

Food also contains classical genetic information vectors, such as non-coding RNAs, which—like methyl donors—have the ability to profoundly alter the expression of our DNA. In fact, there are estimated to be somewhere in the range of 100,000 different sites in the human genome capable of producing non-coding RNAs, far eclipsing our

20,000 to 25,000 protein-coding genes.

Together, these RNAs orchestrate the expression of most of the genes in the body. They are, therefore, supervening forces largely responsible for maintaining our genetic and epigenetic integrity.

These RNAs are carried by virus-sized microvesicles called exosomes found in all the food we eat. They are secreted by all plant, animal, and fungal cells, and survive ingestion to significantly alter our gene expression.

In 2012, a groundbreaking study titled, "Exogenous plant MIR168a specifically targets mammalian LDL-RAP1: evidence of cross-kingdom (plant, animal, fungi, etc) regulation by microRNA," found that exosomal miRNAs from rice altered LDL receptors in the livers of Chinese subjects, effectively proving cross-kingdom regulation by microRNA exists and is occurring on an ongoing basis through the food we eat.

Another study, this time in animals, found that exosomes in commonly consumed foods, like grapefruit and oranges, affect important physiological pathways in the animal's bodies.

Essentially, these food components "talk" to animal cells by regulating gene expression and conferring significant therapeutic effects.

Food is considered 'dead,' and not biologically meaningful beyond its brick-and-mortar functions in building up the body-machine.

The ability of exosomes to mediate the transfer of miRNAs across kingdoms redefines our notion of the human species as genetically hermetically sealed off from others within the animal, plant, and fungi kingdoms.

In this sense, foodborne exosomes are the mechanism through which all living things in the biosphere are intimately interconnected, perhaps even adding a new explanatory layer to how the Gaia hypothesis could be true.

Another important though overlooked mechanism through which food components may carry and transfer energy and information is through so-called prionic conformational states (protein folding patterns).

Prions have been primarily looked upon as pathological in configuration and effect. A classical example is the beta-sheet formation of brain proteins in Alzheimer's. These secondary protein conformations act as a template through which certain deleterious folding states are transferred laterally between proteins.

But prions aren't always pathological. For instance, naturally forming prions are essential for the health of the myelin sheath in the brain, and likely perform many other important though still largely unknown functions. So, when we look at the phenomena neutrally, the fact that the conformational state (folding state) of a protein can hold and laterally transfer information es-

sential to the structure and function of neighboring proteins, without needing nucleic acids, indicates just how important the morphology of food may be.

It's possible, therefore, that food grown and prepared differently, will have vastly different protein folding patterns. This will carry radically different types of biologically vital information.

This is another example where one can not exhaustively assess the value of food strictly through quantitative methods, e.g., measuring how much protein there is by weight. We need also to account for qualitative dimensions, e.g., the vast amounts of information contained within secondary, tertiary, and quaternary conformational states of these proteins.

'Microbiome of Food'

Full of Information

Acknowledging the role the microbiome plays in the food we eat further deepens our understanding of food as information.

In fact, the microbiome could be considered food's most profound informational contribution. When we consider the genetic contribution of all the bacteria, fungi, and viruses naturally found in food (especially raw and cultured varieties) this represents a vast store of biologically meaningful information.

Some of this microbial information can even "jump" laterally from these micro-organisms into our body's microbiome, conferring to us significant extra-chromosomal "powers," essentially extending our genetic capabilities by proxy. For instance, a recent study identified a marine bacteria enzyme in the gut of Japanese people, presumably a byproduct of having consumed seaweed naturally colonized by it.

This marine bacteria enzyme is capable of digesting sulfated polysaccharides—a type of carbohydrate that humans aren't equipped to digest because it is marine-specific.

This indicates that the genes provided by these microbes represent a genetic library of sorts, whose contributions may vastly extend the genetic capabilities of our species.

Indeed, the human genome only contains genetic templates for 17 enzymes, whereas the gut bacteria contains genetic information capable of producing hundreds of different enzymes. And these are capable of degrading thousands of different carbohydrates.

There are actually many other capabilities provided by these "germs," including the ability to produce vitamins (including vitamin C) and other essential bio compounds.

The microbiome of our food could, therefore, be considered an information storehouse. To learn more about how this ancient information (even millions of years old) is preserved in raw foods like honey, read my article: "Could Eating Honey Be a Form of Microbial Time Travel?"

Water as Information

Carrier in Food

Another extremely important element is the role of water in food. Not only

has water been found to carry energy and information, but water has also been identified as an instrument of bioemiosis.

The water component of food, therefore, could contribute biologically important information—even genetic and epigenetically meaningful information—without needing nucleic acids to do so.

To learn more about how water has "memory," and can store and transmit genetic information, read about the DNA teleportation experiment performed by Nobel laureate Luc Montagnier.

As discussed above, conventional food science starts on a completely dehydrated basis, focusing almost exclusively on the "dry" measurable material aspects of the food, or the amount of energy it contains, which ironically requires burning off the water to obtain measurements.

All readily edible food is hydrated. Were it not, it would be dehydrated food, which is generally not considered ready to eat. As such, we can't talk about biomolecules without considering their hydration shells as integrally and inseparably bound to the dry components, e.g., amino acids, fatty acids, and sugars.

Water has the capacity to carry information and to determine the structure and therefore functions of the biochemicals and biopolymers it surrounds.

Water, which is capable of taking in free energy from the environment (Pollack's infrared heat), has its own information and energy. This means, therefore, that food qua water content has the potential to carry relatively vast amounts of information beyond what is found in its material composition itself.

As science progresses, both the quantitative and qualitative elements of water will increasingly be revealed to be vitally important in understanding food as information.

Powerful Implications

When food is looked upon as a vital source of biologically important information that can inform the expression of our genome, it's much easier to understand how our ancestors considered its creation, production, harvesting, cooking, and consumption sacred.

We can also understand how the seemingly poetic relationships between foods and the organs they nourish may have emerged, via the informational bridges described above (RNAs, prions, water).

Today, as a wide range of industrial farming technologies change the quality (and informational component) of our food, it is no longer sufficient to look at only the material aspects of these changes.

Irradiation, genetic modification, pesticides, soil quality, processing, and a wide range of other factors may greatly alter the informational state and quality of a good without being reflected in overt changes in grosser qualities like caloric and materially defined dimensions.

No longer can we look at the difference, say, between infant formula and breast milk, strictly through the material or energetic lens of conventional nutritional analysis.

On an informational level, they are qualitatively light years apart, even if they have so many similarities in crude nutritional metrics, e.g. similar carbohydrate and caloric content.

This will be true for all areas of food production and nutrition where an essentially dead ontology governs the way we understand and interact with the things we eat.

Once we understand the true implications of food as information, our entire worldview should change. Learn more by reading Sayer Ji and co-writer Ali Le Vere's chapter in the recently published clinician's primer textbook: *Revisiting Cellular Bioenergetics: Food As Information and The Light-Driven Body*.

Sayer Ji is the founder of *Greenmedinfo.com*, a reviewer at the *International Journal of Human Nutrition and Functional Medicine*, co-founder and CEO of *Systome Biomed*, vice chairman of the Board of the *National Health Federation*, and steering committee member of the *Global Non-GMO Foundation*. This article was originally published on *Greenmedinfo.com*



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MOHANA MURTHY/SHUTTERSTOCK

Food's role as a source of methyl group donors capable of epigenetic modulation of DNA expression is a powerful demonstration of its informational properties.

The system used to quantify the energy content of food is based on food caloric.

Once we understand the true implications of food as information, our entire worldview should change.

A mother's breast milk is simultaneously a nutritional, physical, thermal, emotional, genetic, and spiritual form of nourishment.

We've learned that food can affect our genes, and that means we need to relearn everything we thought we knew about eating.



RAWPIXEL.COM/SHUTTERSTOCK

You'll Have a Lot to Gain by Swapping Sauces for Salsas

DEVON ANDRE

Barbecue sauce, ketchup, mayonnaise, and soy sauce are staples for garnishing your meats, poultry, and fish. But for the most part, they don't carry much nutrition.

Barbecue sauce and ketchup are high in sugar—and we all know what that can do—while mayo is high calories and soy sauce is high sodium. In a couple of shakes and squeezes, you can turn an otherwise healthy meal into an inflammatory response. But if you swap these sauces for sweet and spicy salsas, you can increase healthfulness and add some new life into some of your favorite meals. Further, they can contribute to the recommended four-to-five servings of fruit and vegetables per day.

Fresh salsas can be made relatively quickly and come with none of the calories or potential health troubles of most other sauces and spreads. They can be rich in flavor, nutrition, antioxidants, and help fight back against inflammation, weight gain, type-2 diabetes, and more. Chopping and mixing together tomato, onion, cilantro, jalapeno, mango, pineapple, or many other fruits and vegetables can add value to any meal in minutes.

Take mango, for example. It's a great source of fiber, vitamin A, and vitamin C. It also has a host of other nutrients, including vitamin B6, folate, and iron. It's also high in antioxidants, and there is research indicating mango can:

- Improve constipation symptoms
- Prevent diarrhea
- Enhance gut microbial populations
- Improve overall digestion
- Promote heart health
- Lower inflammation
- Maintain healthy hair and skin



LARISA KUNIN/SHUTTERSTOCK

You can add some spice and sweetness to your meats with this nutrient-dense salsa:

- 2 mangos, diced
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1/2 red onion, diced
- 1/2 cup packed cilantro
- 2 jalapenos, seeded and diced
- 1 lime, zested and juiced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

Mix all the ingredients into a large bowl and let it sit for a few minutes. You can also cover and refrigerate it for about four-to-five days. It can be easily added to meats, fish, or veggies, and you can give it a little extra by grilling the mango before dicing.

Devon Andre holds a bachelor's of forensic science from the University of Windsor in Canada and a Juris Doctor from the University of Pittsburgh. This article was first published on Bel Marra Health.



MLADEN ZIVKOVIC/SHUTTERSTOCK

The human body is so efficient that even a good workout isn't enough to burn off calorie-rich foods. Combine good food with exercise for the best effect.

The Exercise Conundrum

When Exercise Leads to Weight Gain

Getting active is supposed to help you lose weight, but that can come undone if you eat more than you burn

ALEX JOHNSTONE

Governments are always telling us to eat less and exercise more to be healthier, but this presents an obvious problem. Being active is liable to make you hungrier, so there's a risk you end up eating extra to compensate and putting on more weight than if you'd never got off the sofa in the first place.

Exercise levels often have no bearing on how much we eat on the same day.

Dieticians dream of the day when they can design diets for people where they are more active but don't get hungry in the process. Unfortunately, it's trickier than you might think: we're still searching for the mechanism that governs how the energy we expend translates into our level of appetite. And as we shall see, that's by no means the only thing that makes this area complicated.

In an ideal world, the human body would be wired to immediately detect changes in the amount of energy we use and then give us the appetite to eat the right amount to balance it out. Alas not: we all get hungry two or three times a day, sometimes more, regardless of what we are getting up to. Our bodies also release far stronger signals about our appetite when we haven't eaten enough than when we've eaten too much. This poor daily feedback relationship helps to explain why obese people still experience strong feelings of hunger—that and all the cheap calorie-dense food that is widely available, of course.

Mysteries of Appetite

There is much that we don't understand about the effect of increased activity. Most of us burn different amounts of calories on different days—gym-goers have days off, while everyone has days where they walk around more shops, do more housework or whatever.

Studies don't find any clear relationship between these variations and the

amount of food that the average person consumes on the day in question. But neither is it easy to say anything definitive. Most research has focused on people doing aerobic exercise and has found, for instance, that while some highly trained and lean people tend to eat the right amount to compensate for the extra calories they burn, overweight people are more prone to over-eat.

What could lie behind this difference? One possibility is that physiological processes change in people who do more exercise—for instance, their gut hormones might be released in different concentrations when they eat, potentially with a bearing on how much food they need.

One longstanding question, dating back some 60 years, is where metabolism fits into the picture. Some important work published in 2013 by a team in Leeds found that overweight people were hungrier and consumed more calories than thinner people. Since overweight people have a higher resting metabolic rate—the rate at which the body burns energy while at rest—the group proposed that there was a correlation between this rate and the size of meals that people eat. The fact that people's resting metabolic rates are stable, regardless of fluctuations in daily exercise, might help explain why exercise levels often have no bearing on how much we eat on the same day.

Yet this doesn't mean that resting metabolic rate actually determines how much food we eat. The team proposed that a person's body composition, specifically their amount of muscle mass, might be governing their metabolic rate. If so, the metabolic rate might just be acting as an intermediary—routing the information about body composition through hypothalamic networks in the brain, which are believed to control appetite. Either way, this still needs further research.

Our Study

To examine what happens in the real-life situation, rather than the lab setting, I've co-authored a new study that looks at what happens to people's calorie intake on days when they are more active without deliberately taking exercise—this could be anything from a trip to the dentist to a day out at the beach with

the children. We looked at 242 individuals—114 men and 128 women. We found that their amount of activity did have a bearing on how much they ate, but that their resting metabolic rates influenced their appetites as well—in other words, overweight people tended to eat more.

This is another step forward in understanding the relationship between activity and the calories we consume. But don't expect this to translate into a magic formula for optimizing everyone's relationship with activity and food any time soon. There are many variables that have barely been taken into account by researchers. Most work has tended to focus on white men aged 20–30, for instance, yet there is evidence that women are more prone to compensate for extra physical activity by eating.

Equally, different genetic characteristics are likely to be important—some people are more fidgety, for instance. Then there are differences in people's psychology and to what extent they use food as a reward. People who have been losing or gaining weight will have different appetite signals to people whose weight is stable. The time of the activity in the course of the day is likely to make a difference, too.

Most of us burn different amounts of calories on different days.

I doubt that in my lifetime we will reach a point where we can look at any person's entire genetic make-up and tell them exactly what will work for them. What we can say from our study is that many people are liable to eat more when they are more active. Just moving more will not lead to spontaneously losing weight—people should be aware of this and watch how much extra they eat as a result.

Alex Johnstone is the personal chair in nutrition at The Rowett Institute at the University of Aberdeen in the UK. This article was first published on The Conversation.

CONNECT TO LEAD

Being Surrounded on Purpose

Sometimes you need to submerge yourself before you can rise to the top

SCOTT MANN

In 2011, we were conducting village stability operations in Afghanistan. We were living by, with, and through indigenous Pashtun villagers in the most rural villages until we became invited guests, and in some cases even members of the community. This was a deliberate campaign to establish a foothold in contentious Taliban-dominated areas so that the locals could stand up on their own, fight back, and push the Taliban out.

Around that time, there was an unfortunate incident where several Qurans were incinerated at a detention facility, setting a literal firestorm across Afghanistan. There were riots and attacks. It was ugly, but what was interesting was wherever our Green Berets and Special Operators were living, the locals came in and said, "Lay low. Don't walk around in the open until this blows over. We'll tell you when it's safe."

This didn't happen in just one village, but dozens of villages around the country. Not a single special operator living in the most remote, violent places, who should have been the most at risk for these attacks and uprisings, was injured. How is that possible? It was because they had developed a mindset that allowed them to be surrounded on purpose, a leadership approach where you immerse yourself in your surroundings.

If we had tried to come from the top-down, the locals who lived in those areas would naturally have pulled back. They wouldn't have viewed us as relevant, but as outsiders and maybe even as threats. I think the same concept is true in today's business world.

In the trust-depleted environment we work in today, we're turning our employees into social insurgents against our goals; not the willing population that wants to stand up and do the right thing because they don't want to let you down. How do we change this? By getting 'surrounded on purpose.'

We need to get a really clear understanding of what the goals are, for us and the other party. For example, if I'm taking over as the new VP in a company, and I want to build a high performing culture, then the first thing I have to get clear on is what my goals are, and I have to put those goals out there.

Where we really miss the boat is when we don't think about what the other party's goals are. We don't think about the goals of our teammates, our associates, our employees. What are their goals? What are their dreams? Some goals may be to actually overcome pain points, the things that jam them up every day. If we don't have a fundamental understanding of our goals and their goals, then we're



LIGHTFIELD STUDIOS/SHUTTERSTOCK

To lead a team, you need to get into it and understand where its members are coming from.

We need to get a really clear understanding of what the goals are.

not in a position to get surrounded on purpose. You're still working with an authoritarian mindset.

Once we understand that, then the homework starts. The goals are just the beginning. I want to understand everything I can about the people I'm going to immerse myself around. If I'm a law enforcement officer, and I want to get serious about community policing, I want to do the homework on the influencers in that community. I want to do a micro-history analysis. I want to know what's happened there.

Think of how this applies to you. What are the indicators and aspects of your organization that make it tick? Who are the influencers? Where are they from? What are they about? What are the preexisting tensions within that organization? You want to really understand your organization as best you can before going in.

Why? Because that's going to allow you to meet them where they are, not where you want them to be. This doesn't mean you have to concede or compromise your values, but it costs you nothing to hear someone out and really see the pictures in their head, as negotiator Stuart Diamond says. Then repeat back to them, so they know you understand. This is an

ongoing process. Really immerse yourself and meet people where they are. You'll start to see people open up to you. They will share things with you about the business, your goals, and the financials that you never saw before.

That is the essence of getting surrounded on purpose. Being immersed in the organization and the group that we value. We're a part of it. We're not a guest. We're not a pedestrian. We are surrounded on purpose and we fully commit to that mindset. We do it by getting our goals clear, by really learning about the people, the groups, and the leaders that we're going to be working with, and we continue to do so every day. Then we meet people where they are not where we want them to be. We ask thoughtful, open-ended questions. We connect. We engage.

We build trust when risk is low, not high. That's the mindset of leading from the rooftop.

Scott Mann is a former Green Beret who specialized in unconventional, high-impact missions and relationship building. He is the founder of Rooftop Leadership and appears frequently on TV and many syndicated radio programs. For more information, visit RooftopLeadership.com

Fewer Health Troubles for Older Workers With the Right Job

AMY MCCAIG

Staying in the wrong job can be bad for the health of older people and push them into early retirement, research suggests.

The researchers found that when older workers' reasoning abilities matched well with their job demands, they reported fewer chronic health problems than when they couldn't keep up. And when workers couldn't keep up with the reasoning demands of their jobs, the odds that they would stay at work decreased by nearly 34 percent instead of retiring.

Margaret Beier, a professor of psychological sciences at Rice University and the study's lead author, said the study has important implications for

designing work that keeps people engaged past typical retirement age. "This is particularly important given that the average age of workers in the U.S. is increasing," she said.

Cognitive Demands

Beier and fellow study authors Wendy Jackeline Torres, a graduate student in psychology at Rice, and Gwenith Fisher and Lauren Wallace, industrial/organizational psychologists at Colorado State University, studied 383 workers over the age of 51 as well as retirees who participated in the Study of Cognition and Aging in the USA conducted between 2007 and 2014.

The researchers analyzed a series of surveys evaluating cognitive abilities and job demands. Participants



PIKSELSTOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK

Older workers are valuable to companies but need the right role to keep them from retiring.

reported their retirement status and the prevalence of nine chronic health conditions: high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, stroke, cancer, lung disease, arthritis, emotional or psychiatric problems, and memory-related diseases.

The study included people from a variety of professions including business, finance, architecture, engineering, education, arts and entertainment, sports, media, construction, and transportation. Abilities required for the specific jobs ranged from mathematical reasoning (which is the ability to choose correct mathemati-

cal methods or formulas for problem-solving) to fluency of ideas (the ability to generate ideas on a specific topic).

Older Workers As Mentors

Beier said the study is an important step toward understanding how to extend the careers of older workers. "Mature workers are a great benefit to the workforce by sharing their knowledge and mentoring younger workers," she said. "In fact, they may be suited for mentoring roles and emotionally challenging situations in a way that younger workers simply aren't."

Beier plans to use the study's results to support future work on understanding how to design better jobs and training for older workers.

The paper appears in the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology. Funding came from the National Institutes of Health's National Institute on Aging and the Centers for Disease Control's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

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WISE HABITS

The Most Neglected and Powerful Act of Self-Care

LEO BABAUTA

Many of us are (rightfully) focused on taking care of our health, eating nourishing whole foods, and trying to be active, while meditating, flossing, and taking time to disconnect from devices.

These are wonderful acts of self-care, and they are necessary and important. But there's one act of self-care that is very often neglected, and it might be even more important than all the others: the practice of loving yourself.

In fact, this is so often neglected that when I mention "loving yourself," many people don't know what that means. Many of us have never consciously done it. If we have, it's so rare as to be a forgotten memory. But it's my belief that we should do it throughout the day, like trying to drink 8 glasses of water. We should give

I coach a number of people, and pretty much everyone I meet is hard on themselves in some way.

ourselves at least 8 doses of loving ourselves every day.

What is this "self-love"? Imagine pouring the love in your heart to someone you care for dearly—what would that feel like? Now try doing the same thing for yourself. That's self-love, and it's a completely foreign concept to the vast majority of people.

Why It's So Important

I coach a number of people, one-on-one and in small and large groups—and pretty much everyone I meet is hard on themselves in some way. The cause themselves stress and pain. Disappointed in themselves, angry at themselves, they constantly feel inadequate.

I think most of us can find these tendencies in ourselves. This is something most of us face every single day.

We stress out about uncertainty because we don't think we're good enough to deal with it. We don't trust ourselves to stick to something, because we've formed a really bad picture of ourselves over the years. We get angry at ourselves for eating too much, drinking too much, messing up in a social situation, getting distracted and watching too many videos or playing too many games. We don't like how we look, or who we are, or how we act, in too many ways.

This affects everything in our lives. It makes us more stressed, less happy, anxious, depressed, and stuck. It leads to procrastinating, unhappy relationships, a loss of focus, and a search for comfort in all the wrong places, like comfort foods, shopping, and sometimes even addiction. We seek relief from the stress and pain of being who we are.

But giving ourselves love can start to heal all of this. It creates a shift. With more self-love, we can better deal with uncertainty, chaos, and difficulty in a much more resilient way. Giving ourselves love is such an important act of self-care, and yet it's rarely ever done.

How to Give Ourselves Love Often

Set reminders for yourself, everywhere you go. Put reminders on your fridge, on your computer, on your phone, on your bathroom mirror, in your car, at your desk, near your TV. The reminders only need to be two words: "Love yourself." When you see the reminder, the act is very simple (even if it doesn't feel natural to most people yet—give it time):

1. Pause and feel any stress, pain, self-doubt, anger, frustration, or anxiety you might be feeling. Let yourself actually feel it, physically in your body, for just a few moments. It's OK to feel this.
2. Now give yourself the balm of love. As weird or silly as it feels, just try it. Imagine first that you are sending love to someone you love very much—your child, your parent, your best friend. Imagine them going through difficulty, and send love from your heart to theirs, hoping to make them better. Notice how that feels in your heart. Now try it for yourself, generating the same feeling in your heart, but sending it to yourself instead.
3. Feel the love as a healing balm. No matter how little you're able to generate, feel it wash over your stress, pain, anger, and doubt. Feel it like a thick, syrupy liquid soothing the pain. Let yourself receive this love like the love you've been craving.

It's that simple. It only takes a few moments—feel your stress and pain, send yourself love, let yourself feel it. Do it eight times a day. Or a dozen, if you can. You need this care. Don't hold it back from yourself any longer.

Leo Babauta is the author of six books, the writer of "Zen Habits," a blog with over 2 million subscribers, and the creator of several online programs to help you master your habits. Visit ZenHabits.net



Taking a moment to actively send yourself some love can be an act of self-care that sets you up for the challenges ahead.



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