

MIND & BODY

How to Bring More Meaning to Dying

Leaving this world can be a dignified and redeeming process when taken to heart **6**

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Ways My Shopping Habits Were Transformed After I Simplified My Life

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Make it your goal to adopt one of these back-to-school immune system tips each month.

Jumpstart School Cold Season an Immune System Makeover

Germs spread quickly as kids congregate
in classrooms, but it is possible
to keep colds at bay**ESTHER BLUM**

The season of school germ sharing has begun.

With kids back in school, it's an ideal time to stock up on natural items to help ward off coughs, colds, and other maladies.

This article is all about making easy but impactful shifts to help families address food and health challenges. Use these simple ideas to support your child's immune system.

1. Crack the code for hand washing.

This is one of the simplest ways to ward off colds. The secret to getting the job done is to make it fun. Try equipping your kids' bathroom with foaming natural soap, or soap bars in kid-friendly shapes. Or, make handwashing a game by teaching your kids to blow bubbles through their fingers.

2. Prepare your natural medicine cabinet.

Be ready at the first sign of a cough or sniffle. Here are seven immune-supporting items I keep in my cabinet at all times:

- Black Elderberry: Take this at the first sign of a stuffy nose or scratchy throat. The antioxidant-rich black elderberry is a real immune-health hero. It's been used since ancient times in remedies for colds, coughs, and upper-respiratory infections. Chewable Sambucol gummies are great for kids because they taste like berries.
- Vitamin D: Supplementing becomes even more important as days grow shorter and there's less sunshine. Plus, vitamin D3 is a natural flu fighter.
- Zinc: Liquid zinc boosts white blood cell production to kill off viruses.
- Probiotics: Since most of the body's immune cells are in the gut, you want to keep it replenished with the good guys!
- Omega-3s: These boost mental focus, and boost gut and immune health.
- Magnesium: This helps muscle recovery, digestive regularity, and promotes a good night's sleep.
- Barley Grass Juice powder: This contains many amino acids, and is chock-full of vitamins and minerals for overall wellness.

3. Sweeten their lunchboxes without sugar.

Refined sugar has a negative impact

on the immune system. So instead of processed snacks (like chips) which may be loaded with inflammatory oils and hidden sugars, pack thinly sliced cucumbers with a side of hummus. Toss in fresh fruit slices to quell a sweet tooth.

4. Tempt them with nutritious afternoon snacks.

Red apples are in season! They help clean up the liver as well as support the immune system. Serve them sliced with nut butter or sprinkled with cinnamon. Kids also love pears dipped in chocolate hummus, and Siete Foods tortilla chips (made with avocado oil and cassava flour) served with guacamole. Quench their thirst with smoothies or coconut water instead of sugary, caffeinated sports drinks.

5. Take advantage of opportunities to serve healthy meals at home.

I know all about a packed schedule once school starts. But when meals are prepared in your own kitchen, you have more control over what goes into them. When the weather turns cold, I get excited because it's bone broth season. Genuine, homemade bone broth helps us recover from colds, and it's my go-to afternoon pick-me-up. Pomegranates are also in season right now and they're antioxidant bombs. Carrots and sweet potatoes support respiratory health, and they are fresh in the fall. And be sure to watch for seasonal heirloom tomatoes. They not only taste great in tomato sauces and gazpacho, but I pack them like candy into lunch boxes.

Bottom Line

Making positive changes is a process. It takes time. Make it your goal to adopt one of these back-to-school immune system tips each month. Start now and by mid-winter, you may notice fewer sniffles and coughs around the family dinner table. My Nutrition School for Families on-line program has many more ideas and resources for transitioning from fast food to home-cooked meals.

*Esther Blum is a registered dietician, certified nutrition specialist, and the author of "Eat, Drink, and Be Gorgeous" and "Secrets of Gorgeous." This article was originally published on NaturallySavvy.com***CANCER UP CLOSE**

Taking Responsibility for My Thoughts

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.*

I have always believed that the human mind is very powerful. It can be our biggest asset and help us accomplish great things, but it can also be our worst enemy and hurt us tremendously if we let it run wild.

In the first few days after diagnosis, when my mind was really overwhelmed and swirling with thoughts of death, I was researching online everything I could about stage 3 rectal cancer (both traditional medical approaches and alternative.)

During this quest, I happened to come across a YouTube video of a naturopathic doctor recounting watching a hypnotist who told the person onstage whom he had placed under hypnosis that he was going to put a burning, red-hot iron on their hand. The hypnotist then put a spoon on their hand and within seconds, the person developed a burn blister.

The story really made me stop and reflect on what I was allowing myself to think at this most vulnerable and scary time in my life.

Deep down inside, I knew that if I kept dwelling on my fears about death, being forced into early menopause by radiation, living with an ileostomy bag for six months, and getting chemotherapy treatments, I may keep this dark energy around me and possibly even make my entire experience worse.

I knew I had to work on being responsible with my thoughts and emotions during what would be the most challenging road I've had to travel yet in my life. Easier said than done, of course.

From that moment on, I was on high alert and paid close attention to where my mind would wander off to during the day. I also consciously used different tools to help me manage my emotions and thoughts. This included tapping into my humor and seeking laughter, starting the day with positive visual stimulation (such as reading websites I enjoyed, or creating a vision board), seeing a therapist, and journaling my thoughts.

To be clear, my goal was to use these tactics to keep my negative thoughts to a minimum or to redirect my thinking when I was starting to see visions of me dying in a hospital bed. It was not to use "positive thinking" to potentially heal my cancer or shrink my tumor.

So, just days after my diagnosis, the first step I took in turning my frightened self around was to start watching television



I began a morning routine that focused on looking at things that I knew brought me joy.

programs that were very funny to me and I knew I could get a laugh from.

I also began a morning routine that focused on looking at things that I knew brought me joy. I absolutely love Paris, Italy, black-and-white photography, gardens, castles, well-decorated interiors, healthy eating, and beautifully dressed people. So I used my internet search engine to research these topics, and I found a bunch of Instagram sites and YouTube personalities that I could follow and soak in their great content, or gorgeous photographs and videos I knew would lift my spirits. I would wake up at 5 a.m. (I'm a natural early bird) and make myself tea or coffee, slip back into bed, and spend an hour reading through my favorite websites. It was (and is still) such a lovely way to start my day.

I was also seeing my therapist about once a week, which I was already doing before my diagnosis. This gave me a safe place to "let it all out" and just get real and raw with my emotions, which I think is critical when battling a serious illness. I found it hard to do this with family and friends to the degree that I did with my therapist. It was great to have someone there to talk to who wasn't so personally involved, but who could really listen and help me navigate my feelings.

It wasn't until a bit later on, during the middle of my radiation treatments, that I started writing a blog about how I felt and what I was going through. I found this to be incredibly empowering. It kind of gave

Deep down inside, I knew that if I kept dwelling on my fears, I may keep this dark energy around me and possibly even make my entire experience worse.

me a job to do, as I had already gone on medical leave by this point. Although I didn't keep it up as my treatments progressed (I didn't feel as well physically), it did give me an outlet at different points along the way.

Did these tactics in and of themselves help me erase all the negative thoughts and fears that I had at diagnosis and during my treatments? No. There were times when I was fully engulfed in fear, struggled with physical pain, or faced a tidal wave of emotions, which I lovingly call "meltdowns." These are normal experiences and to be expected. But I can say that I didn't dwell in any of these negative stages for too long, thanks, in part, to these tools.

I hope that sharing this has sparked some ideas for approaching the overwhelming flood of thoughts, moods, and emotions faced during a serious illness. Here's to putting our brain cells to better (or at least less harmful) use.

Join me next time when I'll share some of the approaches I've used to manage the toll that cancer and its treatment have had on my body.

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.

How to Form Healthy Habits

Motivating yourself to change old patterns takes practice—and some strategy

MOHAN GARIKIPARITHI

Why do so many people fail to keep themselves healthy?

There's a lot of information out there about how to reduce joint pain, limit inflammation, improve heart health, and limit the risk and impact of chronic illness. And on the surface, it all seems pretty straightforward.

But knowing something is healthy is one thing, doing it is another. The truth is, it's hard to implement new and healthy habits into your lifestyle.

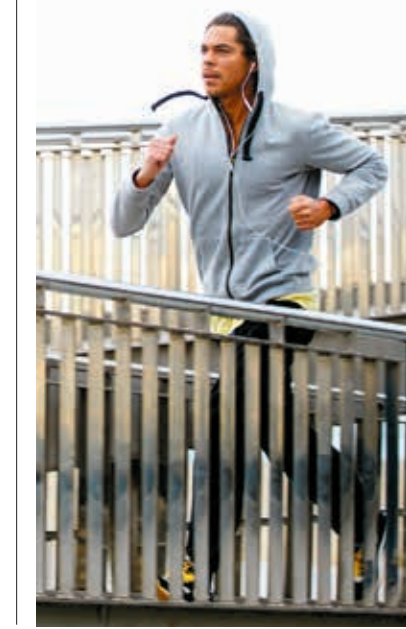
The actions required to make these changes are often major lifestyle adjustments. Changing your eating habits after eating a particular way for decades isn't exactly simple. Neither is adopting an exercise routine if the bulk of your life has been relatively inactive.

But that doesn't mean you can't replace your old habits with new ones.

Habits are a result of repeat-

able behavior. When you do something for long enough, the behavior can become automatic. Sitting on the sofa for hours per day, for example. Treating back pain by staying off your feet. Reaching for cookies when hungry.

Newer habits can form the same way; it's just harder to get started. After all, you have to re-program. But little by little, with a lot of effort, you can adopt habits that can ultimately improve your health. Here's how.

Know what you want: Identifying the goal, and why you're doing it, is a significant factor in achieving success. If your goal, for example, is to eat a more healthful diet to lower inflammation and improve heart health, then know why and believe in it. Simply wanting to eat better won't provide the motivation. But trading an increased chance of heart attack for a longer, more active life is**Habits are a result of repeatable behavior.**

likely something you can get behind with conviction.

Set incremental goals: Using the example from above, you may have some lofty goals that underscore your decisions. But winning the daily battles is what ultimately forms new habits so you reach your long-term goals. Setting smaller daily goals—eating another serving of fruits and vegetables, limiting soda, or getting rid of a processed snack—can all help make the right decisions more reflexive over time.**Journal and track progress:** If you're trying to implement more exercise into your life to reduce blood pressure, quell back pain, or improve circulation, then journal what you're doing. Write down how long you walked, where you went, and how you felt. That way, when you're feeling like you might not be making progress, you can

flip back and see how far you've come. Also, writing your efforts down can increase accountability until you've formed a new habit.

Forgive yourself: If you fall off the rails for a day or two, forgive yourself and pick up where you left off. This is where it's essential to have moved on, focus on your daily battle, and remember your long-term goal.

Teaching yourself new habits takes time, but it can be done.

Mohan Garikiparithi holds a degree in medicine from Osmania University (University of Health Sciences). He practiced clinical medicine for over a decade. During a three-year communications program in Germany, he developed an interest in German medicine (homeopathy) and other alternative systems of medicine. This article was originally published on Bel Marra Health.

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Vegetables include sensitive compounds like amino acids, vitamins, and phytonutrients that are damaged more severely by microwaving than other forms of cooking.

Studies Show Microwaves Drastically Reduce Nutrients

The speed and convenience of microwaves comes at a price we are just beginning to uncover

EDWARD BAUMAN

Did you know that microwaving your food is one of the most damaging things you can do to reduce food quality and nutrition? I can remember the days growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, when we prepared foods without a microwave oven. Water was boiled on the stove. Chicken was baked in an oven. Vegetables were steamed, baked, or sautéed. Food was whole and fresh. Even a TV dinner was baked in the oven, which took about 15 minutes to warm.

And then, modern science and technology brought us the microwave oven that could heat food rapidly, from 30 seconds to a couple of minutes.

The industry has claimed that microwave cooking protects the nutrient content of foods. Somehow, in tasting foods that came out of a

Microwaving creates new compounds that aren't found in nature, called radiolytic compounds.

microwave oven, the texture was changed, as was the flavor. Foods cooked or reheated in microwave ovens became rubbery and lacked the savory smells and layered flavors that come from cooking foods slower and longer.

Nevertheless, people bought the convenience aspect: the speed and simplicity of heating and eating prepared foods. The science, which has been supported by the food industry, has continued to claim the health benefits of microwave cooking. Recently published data from reliable sources questions the health benefits of microwaved food.

Does this mean an occasional microwaved meal will be harmful? Not likely. But what about a steady diet of eating foods cooked at such a high heat? Do the sensitive compounds in food, such as amino acids, fatty acids, vitamins, and phytonutrients change? It appears so. Read on to follow the scientific literature surrounding the depletion of our

soil, foods, and health as a result of modern farming, food processing, microwave cooking, and not eating enough fresh, natural, uncooked, organic whole foods.

- Three studies of historical food composition have shown 5 to 40 percent declines in some of the minerals in fresh produce, and another study found a similar decline in our protein sources.
- A 1999 Scandinavian study of the cooking of asparagus spears found that microwaving caused a reduction in vitamins.
- In a study of garlic, as little as 60 seconds of microwave heating was enough to inactivate its alliinase, garlic's principal active ingredient against cancer.
- A study published in the November 2003 issue of *The Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture* found that broccoli "zapped" in the microwave with a little

water lost up to 97 percent of its beneficial antioxidants. By comparison, steamed broccoli lost 11 percent or fewer of its antioxidants. There were also reductions in phenolic compounds and glucosinolates, but mineral levels remained intact.

- A recent Australian study showed that microwaves cause a higher degree of "protein unfolding" than conventional heating.
- Microwaving can destroy the essential disease-fighting agents in breast milk that offer protection for your baby. In 1992, a Stanford University School of Medicine study found that microwaved breast milk lost lysozyme activity, antibodies, and fostered the growth of more potentially pathogenic bacteria.

The Stanford study found more damage was done to the milk by microwaving than by other methods of heating, concluding: "Microwaving appears to be contraindicated at high temperatures, and questions regarding its safety exist even at low temperatures."

Needless to say, we don't recommend cooking food in microwave ovens, though mildly heating leftovers may not pose the same problems as discussed above.

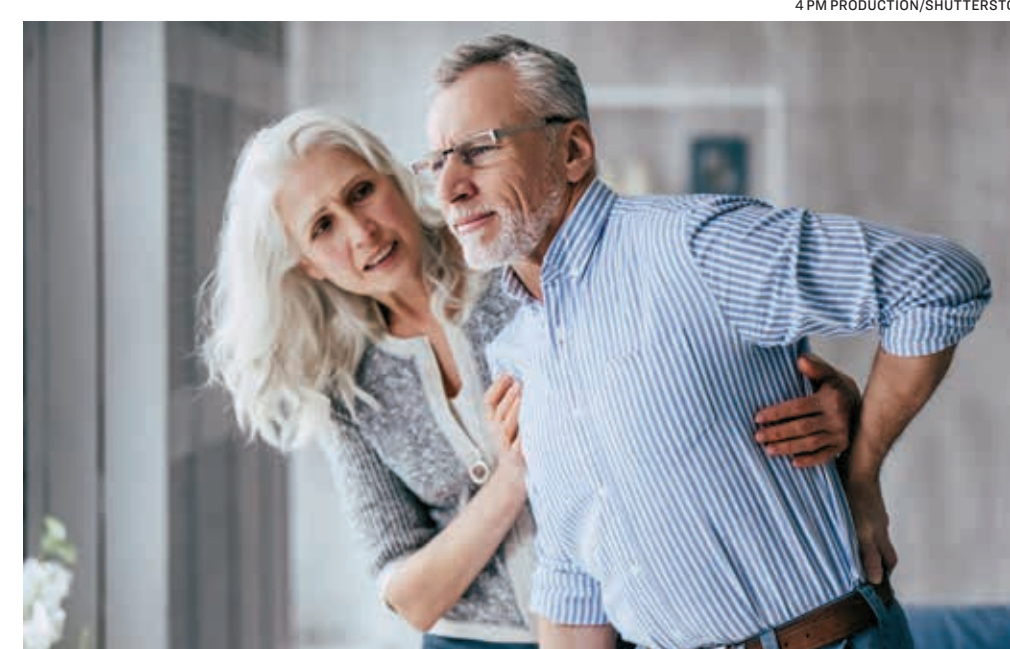
In other cases, the problems outweigh the convenience. Microwaving fatty foods in plastic containers leads to the release of dioxins (known carcinogens) and other toxins into your food. Common microwavable foods include pizzas, chips, and popcorn. Chemicals released include polyethylene terephthalate, benzene, toluene, and xylene.

Additionally, microwaving creates new compounds that aren't found in humans or in nature, called radiolytic compounds. We don't yet know what these compounds are doing to your body, but they aren't health-promoting. Eating fresh, uncooked, or minimally heated fruits and vegetables, nuts and seeds, herbs and spices is the basis of my Eating for Health meal plan. With whole grains and legumes, cooking them on a stovetop by boiling and simmering them until tender is advised.

For flesh foods, steaming, sautéing, baking, or blending into slow-cooked crockpot soups and stews is advised. Dairy products, such as milk cheese, from goats, cows, or sheep, are most nutrient-rich when unheated. Raw, organic cheese is best added to salads or warm grains, legumes, or vegetables without heating the dish in a high-heat oven, broiler, or microwave oven.

For more information on microwave technology's adverse effects on food and health consult the GreenMedInfo database on the subject: 28 Studies on the adverse effects caused by microwave cooking.

Edward Bauman holds a master's in education and a doctorate in health promotion. Bauman is the founder and president of Bauman College Holistic Nutrition and Culinary Arts. After decades of studying health and nutrition systems, Bauman created the 'Eating for Health' (E4H) nutrition system, which is the foundation of the Bauman College Nutrition and Natural Chef Training Programs. This article was first published on GreenMedInfo.com



Taking Opioids for Chronic Pain

Experts recommend caution to avoid the risks from prescribing opioids long-term

LESLEY COLVIN & BLAIR H. SMITH

Chronic pain—acute pain that lasts for longer than three months—affects around 1 in 5 people in Europe. The increase in use of strong morphine-type drugs (opioids) for the treatment of chronic pain is an area of much concern, particularly in North America.

Termed an "opioid epidemic," most developed countries have seen a major increase in opioid prescribing and addiction during the last decade or so. Our latest research assesses how good the evidence is that opioids can help chronic pain effectively, balanced against any harms they can cause.

Chronic pain very often doesn't get better, so people can be prescribed opioids for a long time—years, or even decades. Is there evidence that opioids continue to work well to reduce chronic pain and improve quality of life? The majority of clinical trials only study opioid use for three months, so we don't really know much about their effectiveness over the longer term.

One of the few studies that have looked at how effective opioids are after 12 months, found that people who took opioid painkillers weren't any more active than those on other types of painkillers.

There is also evidence that long-term use of opioids may be harmful. This is likely to be dose-related as risks increase at higher doses. Known harms include increased risks of:

Risks of Opioid Use

- **Addiction and misuse:** this can affect anyone who is prescribed opioids for pain. Prescribers and patients need to be aware of, and minimize, the risk from the beginning.
- **Overdose and death:** deaths from prescription opioids are increasing dramatically in the United States.

- **Interfering with the endocrine system:** changes in hormone levels that can impact on sexual function and fertility.
- **Heart problems:** heart attack risk is more than doubled in people taking long-term opioids.
- **Being in a road traffic accident:** the risk is higher among drivers taking even relatively low doses of opioids.
- **Worsening pain or opioid-induced hyperalgesia:** when long-term use makes the pain worse. This is often difficult to recognize.
- **Opioid tolerance:** when the body becomes used to opioids and requires a bigger dose to get the same painkilling effect.
- **Adverse effects on the immune system:** people taking opioids eventually become more prone to infections.

Should We Use Opioids for Chronic Pain?

Yes, when appropriate—but with caution. The Scottish Inter-collegiate Guideline Network (SIGN) publishes high-quality, evidence-based management guidelines. SIGN 136 was the first comprehensive guideline on the management of chronic pain, published in 2013.

As a result of new evidence, SIGN 136 has specifically reviewed the section on opioid use and updated recommendations have recently been published. New research since 2013 has been critically reviewed to ensure that the new recommendations are based on the best available evidence. Some of the key points in the new advice include the following:

- Opioids should be used for as short a time as possible, in carefully selected people with chronic pain. This should happen when other treatments haven't worked to

manage the pain and where the benefits outweigh the risks of the serious harms listed above.

- Before starting treatment, the person with chronic pain and the prescriber should agree what the treatment aims are. These might include reduced pain, increased activity, or better quality of life. If this doesn't happen then there should be an agreed action plan to reduce and stop opioids.
- There should be ongoing, regular review by a member of the primary health care team, especially if the daily dose is equivalent to more than 50 mg of morphine. Review should be frequent in the early stages, and at least annually, after treatment is established. If problems arise—such as opioids no longer providing good pain relief, increasing the dose provides no sustained pain relief, or there is evidence of addiction—then more frequent review will be needed and consideration given to reducing or stopping treatment.
- We should always use the lowest effective dose. Higher doses (equivalent to more than 90 mg per day of morphine) should only be prescribed alongside review by a pain specialist.

Chronic pain is a leading cause of disability, but long-term opioid use comes with its own problems.

These recommendations are consistent with those of The International Association for the Study of Pain. The organization emphasizes that the use of other approaches, including behavioral therapies and increasing physical activity to improve quality of life, is preferred.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Current evidence indicates that widespread, long-term opioid prescribing for chronic pain is likely to cause more harm than benefit in society. But some individuals with chronic pain do benefit. They should continue to be prescribed opioids, with recommended caution, careful monitoring and review, and the use of proven non-pharmacological therapies. Some people may also need support to reduce and stop long-term opioids, where the harms outweigh the benefits.

There is an urgent need for research to understand how to manage chronic pain better, including the safe use of and withdrawal from opioids.

In tandem, we need national policies, based on best available evidence and approaches to educate health care professionals and patients. This is likely to require investment in the short term, but it may be a small price to pay for the longer-term benefits and probable cost savings of improving chronic pain management, which is the leading cause of disability globally.

Lesley Colvin is deputy head of population health & genomics & chair in pain medicine at the University of Dundee in the UK, and Blair H. Smith is a professor of population health science at the University of Dundee. This article was originally published on The Conversation.



▶ Eat lots of fiber, in the form of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, to feed your microbiome what it needs to thrive.

The Path to Better Gut Health

Your health depends on trillions of microorganisms in your gut—treat them right

ERIKA LONG

Your gut is home to trillions of microorganisms, including viruses, bacteria, and yeast.

Collectively known as the microbiome, or "gut flora," these microorganisms can be beneficial or detrimental and have a significant impact on the state of your health.

Your goal, in terms of this microbiome, is to increase the number of friendly microorganisms—especially good bacteria—while reducing the bad ones. A healthy gut refers to a balance of microorganisms required to sustain a strong immune system, the production of various hormones, and the inevitable future discovery of other critical bodily functions. This balance directly correlates to better overall health. If you are wondering how to begin restoring the health of your gut, here are a few effective steps.

It is no surprise that the health of your gut largely depends on what you directly put into it.

Start With a Healthy Diet
It is no surprise that the health of your gut largely depends on what you directly put into it. Fiber is key when it comes to improving the state of the microbiome, hence, consuming a diet rich in whole grains, vegetables, and fruits and is a must.

Also consider reducing processed and refined foods, like sugar. Studies have been conducted that break down the effects of each macronutrient (carbohydrates, proteins, and fats) showing that a change in diet can directly influence the microbiome. Keep a daily food diary to track how many whole foods versus refined foods you're consuming and change accordingly.

Consume Probiotics and Prebiotics
Probiotics are the good bacteria that already resides in your gut. In effect, you can bolster

the army of good gut flora by consuming probiotics in the form of supplements or as fermented foods such as yogurt, kimchi, sauerkraut, and kefir.

Prebiotics, on the other hand, are the fiber that feeds the microbiome. In short, your gut flora needs to eat and thrives when it gets a healthy dose of prebiotics every day. Therefore, incorporating a diet rich in prebiotic foods contributes directly to good gut health. Some common prebiotic-rich foods include garlic, onions, bananas, asparagus, oats, apples, and flaxseeds.

Eliminate Food Allergens

Symptoms of an unhealthy gut are indigestion, weight gain or loss, and fatigue and can be caused by certain foods that may be considered healthy for some but just don't suit that person's particular constitution.

For example, while some people do fine drinking milk, others can get an upset stomach from just a few spoons of ice cream.

Consider trying an elimination diet that excludes common allergens such as gluten, dairy, corn, and soy for a month and see if that

Some common prebiotic rich foods include garlic, onions, bananas, asparagus, oats, apples, and flaxseeds.



makes a difference. If you notice a significant reduction in bloating, stomach ache, dizziness, nausea, and fatigue, you are on the right track. Then, reintroduce the eliminated foods one by one to see which of them works well in your system versus those that aren't suitable for you.

Also, research shows that treating an unhealthy gut could reverse the effects of some of the foods you might have been initially allergic to. Thus once gut health is restored, you may be able to enjoy those foods again.

Minimize Antibiotics

Antibiotics were invented to cure infections. Unfortunately, while antibiotics kill harmful, infection-causing bacteria, they also kill the good bacteria that protect your gut. Prolonged use of antibiotics can cause irreparable damage to your microbiome. Studies have found that even a single course of antibiotics can negatively alter the microbiome for a year.

If you have a condition for which your physician has recommended antibiotics, always ask if there are any alternatives. In scenarios where antibiotics aren't optional, ask

your doctor to recommend a good probiotic supplement that could replenish some of the helpful bacteria that have been depleted.

Exercise and Sleep Well

Diet and exercise go hand-in-hand for overall health and the same applies to the health of your microbiome. Exercise and sleep have both been proven to have a significant impact on the quality and quantity of good bacteria in the gut.

Your goal, in terms of this microbiome, is to increase the number of friendly microorganisms—especially good bacteria—while reducing the bad ones.

Athletes who follow strict training protocols have been seen to have a more diverse range of microorganism spe-

cies as compared to non-athletes. This doesn't mean you have to become a professional athlete to have a healthy gut, but some form of daily physical exercise is recommended alongside a diet rich in fiber.

Lack of sufficient sleep is another factor that contributes to an imbalanced microbiome, leading to gut inflammation and a malfunctioning immune system. Limit late nights and irregular sleep patterns and instead adopt proper sleep hygiene for better gut health and a stronger immune system.

A 'Gut Feeling'

Maintaining a healthy gut is an essential step to sustaining good health. The best strategy for strengthening your gut is to adopt a healthy lifestyle that also includes reducing stress. Remember, a "gut feeling" is literally the right feeling when it comes to the growth of your microbiome because a healthy gut translates into a healthier you.

Erika Long loves corgis, curry, and comedy. Always searching for the next great struggle, 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.

HOW TO BRING MORE MEANING TO DYING

It's important to mend old wounds before it's too late.



Leaving this world can be a dignified and redeeming process when taken to heart

BJ MILLER & SHOSHANA BERGER

Most of us don't like to talk about our own death. And when we refer to other people's deaths, we often say things like "Her health is failing," or "He failed treatment." These common sentiments make it sound like death is an option or that we can prevent it somehow—if only we ate more kale or walked 10,000 steps a day. But guess what? Death isn't optional.

Death is as much a part of our life as birth. And, just like a birth, it goes better when we are prepared for it. Not that we can control all outcomes or make it pain-free—but there is a lot we can do to help make it easier and more meaningful.

In our new book, "A Beginner's Guide to the End," we talk about all of the ways people can prepare themselves and their family members for the inevitable. Some of our book focuses on basic practicalities—like how to talk to doctors if you have a chronic illness, how to make treatment decisions, what documents to have in place for your end-of-life care, and how to create wills and trusts. We try to provide a comprehensive list of resources and detailed advice about how to manage this part of dying.

But, while many people think to prepare for the practical aspects of dying, too often they give short shrift to the emotional side of dying—meaning, what to do so that your death has more meaning and is less emotionally trying for yourself and those left behind.

There are many ways that you can improve the experience of dying if you plan for it and communicate your wishes to your loved ones. Here are some of the ideas we recommend in our book.

Don't Leave a Mess

Many people don't realize that the stuff they've been saving may not be of much value to those they leave behind. Therefore, it's important to take time

while you're still alive to clean out those closets and attics. Doing a big purge serves a dual purpose: It will make you feel lighter and also lighten the load on loved ones when you're not around to help sort through your belongings.

It's important to ask yourself why you're keeping so much stuff. It is because you still use it and it brings you pleasure? Or does keeping it push away thoughts of dying? Or are you overwhelmed by the task of going through it all?

It can be cathartic to set aside time to go through your possessions, reflecting on what they mean to you, then letting them go. In some cases, you may want to save family heirlooms that have special value and make a plan to talk to your heirs about keeping them after you die. But it will have more meaning for them if you explain why you'd like them to have the item and what it means to you.

Clean Out Your Emotional Attic

Cleaning out your emotional attic is important, too. This may include sharing old secrets that you have kept from loved ones that are likely to be discovered after your death. Especially in this age of popular DNA testing, it's important not to leave important things unsaid, though it requires sensitivity in the delivery.

If your secrets are just too damaging to reveal, consider enlisting someone to "scrub down" your life after you die. This can be a close friend who goes through your medicine cabinet, electronic files, and nightstand to rid them of old medications, personal diaries, and other unmentionables. If you are happier knowing that these parts of your personal life won't be exposed after you're gone, we are not here to shame you! Just take care to make it a choice.

Mend Important Relationships

When people die, they don't regret not having worked harder; they regret not having worked on their relationships. It's important to mend old wounds before it's too late. Even if you meet resistance from loved ones, keep pushing for more conversations, making sure you say what you want to say to them now.

In Ira Byock's book, *The Four Things That Matter Most*, the pioneering palliative care physician talks about what most people long to hear that can help mend even long-fractured relationships:

Please forgive me.
I forgive you.
Thank you.
I love you.

Why these four phrases? True apologies and forgiveness, while helpful to consider at any stage of life, can go a long way toward making someone's death more peaceful. Gratitude and love are what most people tend to need at the end of life. Closure is a human construct, rather than an act of nature, and a very useful one at that. This framework offers a recipe.

When we asked Dr. Byock if he would add anything to this list, 14 years after publishing that book, he said, "It's useful for a parent to say to their child, 'I'm so proud to be your mother, I'm proud to be your father.'" He's met many men in their 60s who still yearn to hear that from a father who's long gone.

Leave a Mark

"Legacy" can be a loaded word. But most dying people want to know they mattered in some way, and they want to leave a mark. While for some this will mean using assets to fund a scholarship or a trust for their kids, others will have fewer material—but no less valuable—things to leave behind.

In a survey of baby boomers, only 10 percent thought it "very important" to inherit financial assets from parents, while 77 percent said that receiving and providing "values and life lessons" is very important. This means that money is not the only thing of value you can leave behind, and you may want to start thinking about what you want to pass down.

Here are some ideas that we've found helpful to those who wonder what to leave.

1. Leave your story. Telling the story of your life and leaving a record of experiences, people, and ideas that mattered to you gives those who love you a feeling of continuity from one generation to the next.

While you may assume that no one will care, imagine this: What would it be like to have the story of your great-great-grandmother in your hands? Wouldn't that be amazing?

If you're still daunted by this idea, you may want to enlist the services of StoryCorps or StoryWorth—two organizations committed to helping people get their stories down. Or you could create a family tree, perhaps using

Ancestry.com or the National Archives. Fun for you, important for those you leave behind, and research suggests doing so may help improve your and your caregiver's well-being at the end of life.

2. Leave a letter. Writing a letter can be a good way to put into words things that may be difficult to say in person. You might want to express how much you love someone, how proud you are of them, what they mean to you, or your hopes for their future. If you need help, you can look to services like Last[ing] Letters.

3. Leave an ethical will. An ethical will is a way of transferring immaterial things to your loved ones: your life lessons and values. It's not a replacement for a regular will, but a complement to it, and research suggests it reduces your suffering by taking care of "unfinished business" and bringing a deeper sense of purpose to the life you still have.

An ethical will can explain why you made certain choices in your legal will—e.g., why you left your car to your youngest daughter instead of all of your children—or tell a story about where you came from and what you value. Barry Baines, a hospice medical director who wrote a book called "Ethical Wills," found that 77 percent of his patients felt their emotional well-being improve and 85 percent felt their physical well-being improve after completing an ethical will.

Of course, there are many other ways people can make the experience of saying goodbye less fraught. Few folks will get to every last detail before the end comes. As ever, do the best with what you have, while you can, and forgive yourself and others the rest.

By taking care of emotional needs and focusing on what you hope to leave behind, you can bring more meaning to the experience and ease the burden on loved ones in the process. In other words, bring the same dignity and care to death that you bring to life.

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A Prison Created by Your Mind

Learned helplessness is an affliction that can torment you throughout your life

MONROE MANN

It is a condition coined by psychologist Martin Seligman in 1967 that describes the erroneous belief that there is no solution to a problem, even when there actually is—sometimes right in front of you.

Seligman discovered the condition during an experiment.

The experiment was simple. It started off with two groups of dogs. Group one dogs were conditioned to expect an electric shock when they heard a tone. They could do nothing to avoid the shock. Group two dogs were not so conditioned.

The scientists then put the dogs, one by one, on the left side of a shuttlebox that was separated by a small partition in the middle. The floor on the left side of the box could be mildly electrified by the scientist; the right side floor was not electrified and was a safe place to stand.

With a dog in the box, the scientists would sound the tone, and then shortly thereafter, the left side floor would exhibit a mild electrical current.

The group two dogs (which were not conditioned by the sound of the tone), had no reaction to the tone, and then, upon being shocked, yelped and jumped quickly over the small barrier to the other side of the box that was not electrified.

Group one dogs, however, did nothing. They heard the tone and knew to expect a shock due to their prior conditioning. When shocked, the dogs remained where they were, whimpering, convinced they could not escape the pain.

They had learned to be helpless, so they just stayed there, accepting the pain.

The same happens with humans. And most of us don't even realize it. Dreams are abandoned, businesses are shut down, and people decide not to get up after falling because they have lost hope. They think it's all over. They think it's not worth even trying.

And yet, hopelessness is a lie created by our minds.

I suspect at least one thought of learned helplessness runs through each of our minds daily. We give up without trying because of prior situations we deem to be similar. But in most cases, the new situation is not exactly the same. Almost every situation is different than what came before. That includes ourselves. We learn new things, we mature, we change. But we foolishly convince ourselves the situation is the same as before. The trick? We need to start being more aware of this fallacy every time we face a decision where we are tempted to give up before we even try.

What's a real-life situation of learned helplessness in action? The most common example is "battered-woman syndrome." In these situations, an abused woman is so intimidated by her spouse that she won't leave him. She's convinced that somehow he is going to hurt her if she does. As a result, even when an opportunity to leave arises, she stays.

The thought process of someone in this situation is as follows, "If I leave, somehow he'll find me. Besides, he takes care of me in many ways, and I'll probably never find someone else. So if I leave, I'll also be terribly lonely. I have to stay. That's what's best for me."

Such a woman is not pathetic. She has simply been tricked into thinking there is no escape from

the situation.

Make no mistake, however: There is almost always an escape. And with other life challenges, there are often more ways to get through them than we have the will power to try.

Learned helplessness doesn't just appear in extreme situations like domestic abuse. We all make poor decisions or abandon dreams or plans because something makes us believe there is no hope, and that we are powerless to change a situation for ourselves.

For example, someone may have paid money for advertising, only to see all the money disappear, with zero new clients. Then they decide advertising never works. That's a form of learned helplessness. Instead, they could have reflected on how to make a better ad or find a better medium.

Instead of learning from failure to draw insight and improve, learned helplessness stunts our growth by keeping us from trying again, like someone who experiences terrible turbulence on a plane and refuses to fly again, missing out on a world of experiences.

This can happen in business as well where an executive is known for being a specific kind of risk-averse, to the point where employees won't even pitch potentially actionable proposals. The examples are innumerable.

The point is: If you don't start to make an effort to recognize when your statements or actions are based on learned helplessness, you will lose out on opportunities to advance your



The most common example is 'battered-woman syndrome.'

Hopelessness is a lie created by our minds.

life, career, and relationships. You'll also make bad decision.

Whenever you bring untruths into the decision-making process, you lose. So, the solution is to do all you can to make sure your decisions are made with accurate information. Here are some tips to help you do just that.

Every Day, Ask Yourself 5 Questions

How has the situation changed recently? How have I changed? How has my personal situation changed? How have the other people involved changed? How has the world changed? Often, we can't see the forest through the trees, and we don't even realize that some major variable has changed. How many times have you found yourself in a seemingly tough situation, and then suddenly, like magic, you remember something that has changed, and



voilà, the situation is a lot less dire. That's a perfect scenario explaining how learned helplessness can trick us into believing a situation is different from what it actually is.

Stop Being So Cocky

Guess what? You're not perfect. It's time for you to admit it. You are a fallible creature, just like the rest of us. It sounds odd to think that someone who is cocky could be helpless, but think about it: Someone who is cocky and arrogant and knows everything is very unlikely to listen to what other people have to say. Yet, often, when you are fixated on the impossibility of some situation, you absolutely need someone else to remind you that you're being overly pessimistic. So keep reading business and psychology books. Make sure you encourage critical feedback to help you grow. Stop assuming that what didn't work last year also won't work this year. Maybe this year, the situation is different.

Learn How to Talk Back to Yourself

When you hear your inner voice telling you negative things, turn it around. When it says, "Give up," you say, "Get up." When it says, "You're a failure destined for mediocrity," you say, "Every failure is one step closer to success." It's hard to recognize when you are talking yourself down and then elevate that thinking with something positive, but it's a talent worth mastering. Almost nothing contributes more to our depression, sadness, and misery than listening to the negative bozo in our brain who thinks he knows everything. No joke: You need to tell him to shut up, and remind yourself what you really are: An amazing individual with an incredible potential to create and innovate.

The nice thing about recognizing and understanding learned helplessness is that you will be able to improve your own life and have the tools to help your friends, family, and colleagues do the same.

Everyone tries to put on a strong front in this brutal world, but the truth is we are all hurting, and more often than not, it's because we are listening to the learned helplessness diatribes in our heads. Do not listen to the lies. Ignore the false criticism. Do not believe that you are helpless or that your situation is hopeless.

You are full of strength and resourcefulness. Your situation is full of possibility.

Whenever you bring untruths into the decision making process, you lose.

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, BreakDiving.io and the author of "Time Zen," "Successful New Year," and "T.R.U.S.T." For more info: MonroeMannLaw.com

Want Less Stress? Try Kindness

Researchers say helping others is calming, life extending, and just feels great

TATIANA DENNING

You've tried it all. From deep breathing, to taking a nap, to venting to your friends, and yet you still feel stressed.

Why not try a little kindness? Stress seems to be an epidemic these days. And if we're not careful, today's stress can become tomorrow's anxiety, depression, or worse. But as we seek ways to help ourselves, perhaps the solution actually lies in helping others.

It turns out that when we put our own troubles aside and focus our energy on being kind and helping others, our stress levels decrease. Kindness positively impacts hormonal levels in our bodies, leading to both mental and physical health benefits.

For example, those who strive to be kind have 23 percent less cortisol (the stress hormone) and age slower than the average population. Kindness also stimulates the production of serotonin (the feel-good hormone), helping calm the mind and elevate mood.

Not only do stress levels decrease, but so does blood pressure and pain level. Being kind to others releases chemicals like endorphins and oxytocin. Oxytocin dilates blood vessels, which in turn helps decrease blood pressure, while endorphins act as our body's natural pain killers.

And if you're feeling a little sluggish, try spreading some kindness for a natural energy boost.

One study reported about half the study participants felt stronger and more energetic

Being kind to others releases chemicals like endorphins and oxytocin.

Tatiana Denning, D.O., is a family medicine physician who focuses on wellness and prevention. She believes in empowering her patients with the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain and improve their own health.



after helping others, with many participants saying they felt calmer, less depressed, or had greater feelings of self-worth.

A Yale University study published in *Clinical Psychological Science* found that even basic politeness helps to decrease stress levels. Participants were asked to track how often they performed prosocial behaviors every day over a two week period. Performing behaviors as simple as asking someone if they need help, or opening the door for someone, led participants to rate their mood as more positive when compared to days when they were not as helpful. The authors point out that "[these] results suggest that even brief periods of supporting or helping others might help to mitigate the negative emotional effects of daily stress."

And what better way to help others than by doing volunteer work? Studies show that those who volunteer reap just as many benefits as those they are helping.

Research finds people 55 and older who volunteer for two or more organizations are less likely to die early, a staggering 44 percent less likely.

But when helping others, it turns out that motives matter. A study published in *Health Psychology* found that people who volunteer with some regularity live longer, but it's interesting to note that these benefits

were seen only if they were volunteering to truly help others, rather than to make themselves feel better or look good to others. In other words, their motives had to be altruistic rather than self-serving.

So what if we find ourselves a little rusty at flexing our kindness muscle? Don't despair. Kindness can be learned.

"It's kind of like weight training; we found that people can actually build up their compassion 'muscle' and respond to others' suffering with care and a desire to help," Helen Weng, a graduate student in clinical psychology and lead author, wrote in a 2013 paper on the brain and compassion.

And the great thing is, kindness is contagious. Good deeds catch on like a yawn, which means kindness in a crowd can spread like ripples through a pond.

Why not give it a try? Just one act of kindness can make the difference between a good day and a bad day. So make it a good day, not just for yourself, but for the person you're helping and those witnessing your kindness.

In the words of the Greek philosopher Aristotle, the purpose of life is "To serve others and do good." If research is any indication, acts of kindness and serving others may also be the recipe for combating stress and maintaining good health.

▲ Often the best way to feel better about yourself or your life is to do something kind for someone else.



Cohousing communities bring people together who choose to live cooperatively.

COHOUSING OFFERS NEW OPTION FOR Older Baby Boomers

Cohousing creates opportunities for seniors to stay engaged in a real community

NANCY P. KROFF & SHERRY CUMMINGS

One of the major questions of growing older is "Where do I want to live as I age?" For many baby boomers, an important goal is staying independent as long as possible.

Many in this generation desire to age in their homes and make their own choices as long as possible.

Living preferences are changing, as are relationship patterns, such as greater numbers of mid- and late-life adults who are single, childless, or live at a distance from adult children. "Senior cohousing communities," or SCCs, are a form of communal living that integrates common areas and private residences. They promote choice and independence, which are particularly important for the aging baby boom generation.

As academic social workers and gerontologists, we have studied numerous issues of later life. Professionally, we wanted to see how these communities promote health and well-being.

Personally, we are both baby boomers and are exploring options for our retirement years. We both have had a parent who lived in a long-term care setting. Our caregiving experience prompted us to consider where we wanted to live, and where we saw ourselves aging.

Shared Values, Shared Lifestyles

Cohousing is a relatively new type of living arrangement. The first modern cohousing community was developed in Denmark in 1972. In the United States, senior cohousing started in the early 2000s. There are now 17 such communities, and 28 are currently in formation or under construction.

Cohousing communities bring people together who choose to live cooperatively. Some communities are based upon shared values. Examples are the desire to promote environmental sustainability or a shared spirituality. Common elements include a commu-

'Senior cohousing communities,' or SCCs, are a form of communal living that integrates common areas and private residences.

nity vision statement that articulates important principles along with hierarchical governance and decision-making structure.

Residents live in individual homes but share some spaces, such as a common building with a kitchen, library, and exercise room. Patios and gardens are positioned in a way to promote interaction. As a result, residents engage in communal meals and other activities.

These new arrangements differ from traditional over-55 residential communities, which are planned and managed by a developer. These places are often large and provide organized activities for those who live there.

SCCs, however, are typically small and are planned, developed, and operated by the residents themselves. The whole idea is to promote community, social engagement, and active aging.

Life in a Shared Community

To experience life in the shared living communities, we visited 12 of them in six states and interviewed 76 people during the summer and fall of 2018. The smallest included 10 individual homes, while the largest consisted of 41 condo

units. Some communities were in rural areas, while others were in cities.

In a few places, we spent the night and participated in some of the activities, such as shared meals, happy hours, vespers, and soaking in a hot tub. The ages of the residents ranged from the mid-50s to the mid-90s. Our book, "Senior Cohousing: A New Way Forward for Active Older Adults," describes our visits and interviews.

The communities were quite different. Some had individual housing units, while others were condominiums. All had a common house with a kitchen area and spaces for meetings and socializing, and some had elevators to accommodate those who couldn't manage stairs. Many had a guest room, where visiting family members or prospective residents could stay for a few nights.

Several themes emerged from our interviews and conversations with the residents.

Social Engagement

A major reason that people choose to move to a shared housing community is social engagement.

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People described being more patient, open to learning, having vitality, and valuing multiple perspectives.

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A major reason that people choose to move to a shared housing community is social engagement.

COHOUSING OFFERS NEW OPTION FOR

Older Baby Boomers

Cohousing creates opportunities for seniors to stay engaged in a real community

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This is a critical issue since one in three people over age 45 is lonely. Being part of a community that offers mutual support has a positive impact on health status, connection, and quality of life during later years.

The residents we interviewed reported that they enjoy the common activities, such as shared meals, parties, and discussion groups, along with the opportunity for spontaneous interactions. Caring relationships develop among the residents, and many described the support received after major events such as a hospitalization or significant loss, and also for smaller tasks such as a ride to the airport or pet sitting.

In addition, being a source of assistance was important and engendered feelings of being worthwhile and needed. However, those interviewed were also clear that there is a difference between offering assistance and being a caregiver for others, which was not a role that people expected within the shared communities.

We were surprised to find many in these communities are introverts, as several residents had taken personality inventories. One of the women offered an explanation, “For introverts, it's perfect, because you go in your house and you can be in there as much as you want, but when you come out, you don't even have to go make friends somewhere.”

There were many norms around interactions to manage public-private spaces. In one community, for example, sitting on the front porch meant that you were available for conversation. If you sat on your back porch, however, others did not bother you. The opportunity to have close relationships with others, but also have individual space, is an important

element of SCCs.

Living and Learning

From our time at the shared communities, it was clear that living in shared governance, communal housing arrangements provide opportunities for growth. People described being more patient, open to learning, having vitality, and valuing multiple perspectives. These experiences are consistent with the gerotranscendence theory of aging. This theory suggests that as a person grows older, it is possible to “transcend” or move beyond previous understandings and gain new perspectives on fundamental existential issues, the meaning and importance of relationships, and definitions of self.

This type of community is not for everyone, though. Although some shared community units are moderately priced, with a one-bedroom home for under \$100,000, many are very costly, with some well over a half-million dollars. Also, a person must be willing to work, as the shared areas require maintenance. And, residents are expected to serve on governance committees.

Like all living arrangements, these communities have their promoters and detractors. But for those who value community and may be interested, current senior cohousers recommend that you don't hesitate—do your research, and go visit one for a few days.

Nancy P. Kropf is the dean of Perimeter College and professor of social work at Georgia State University, and Sherry Cummings is an associate dean and professor of social work at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. This article was first published on The Conversation.

New Treatment Helps Newborns Facing Chronic Lung Disease

Doctors aim to minimize harm and maximize joy for newborns facing bronchopulmonary dysplasia

ANDREW THOMAS

A new treatment at Nationwide Children's Hospital has increased the survival rate for babies facing a chronic lung disease from four in five to 99 in 100.

Babies who are born prematurely can experience an array of health problems, and one of the most common is bronchopulmonary dysplasia, also known by the acronym BPD.

In severe cases, BPD has a fatality rate of 20 percent. However, Nationwide Children's Hospital (NCH) is using a new ventilator and neurodevelopment approach that is having transformative results.

Since these infants' lungs aren't developed fully enough, doctors are often forced to put them on ventilators. Sometimes, infants are sedated to keep them calm while on the ventilator and reduce their need for the ventilator to help them breathe. The ventilators can lead to long-term lung damage while the sedatives hurt their neurodevelopment.

It's particularly tragic when a newborn succumbs to BPD because death usually occurs months after birth, and the family has had time to bond with the baby.

The course of the disease is also a difficult one for the infant, Dr. Edward Shepherd, section chief of Neonatology at NCH, told The Epoch Times.

“It requires, in general, lots of treatments that are good in the short term, but bad in the long term,” he said.

Short Term and Long Term

Besides sedation and ventilators, infants with BPD are also treated with steroids. While steroids can effectively treat the lung inflammation associated with BPD, they interact with other cells in the newborn's body and affect brain development and overall growth.

BPD is associated with neurological conditions such as cerebral palsy, blindness, and deafness.

The problems associated with these standard treatments gave the team at NCH a goal to minimize the



Joe Shields playing with his son Jack who was diagnosed with BPD after being born 14 weeks early.

We've learned how to treat the lung disease in a way that also makes the brain better.

Dr. Edward Shepherd, section chief of Neonatology at Ohio's Nationwide Children's Hospital

use of sedatives and steroids for children suffering from BPD.

A New Approach

Doctors discovered that adjusting the ventilator, so the infant gets larger breaths at a slower rate, is less damaging to the lungs than the standard ventilation rate.

That, combined with an effort to minimize sedatives and steroids, lowers the side-effects of the standard treatment program.

And then the staff at Nationwide Children's do everything they can to stimulate neurodevelopment. They do that in large part by keeping these struggling children happy by tending to their developmental and social needs.

This involves a long list of approaches, including massage therapy, music therapy, and physical therapy. It's also critical to have the parents interact with the baby as much as possible. Doctors try to minimize upsetting experiences for the baby by checking blood pressure and taking blood

less frequently.

“We've learned how to treat the lung disease in a way that also makes the brain better,” Shepherd explained.

Two newborns who have benefited from this new treatment approach are twins Jack and Jonah Shields. The twins were born Dec. 8, 2017, and were born 14 weeks early. Both developed BPD.

The first time their father Joe Shields saw the twins was when the medical team was taking them on warmers to the incubators.

“It was pretty scary,” Shields said.

The Shields twins arrived at NCH in Columbus, Ohio, on April 11, 2018. The twins were put on ventilators, and underwent the new treatment approach.

Even though the twins may not be able to run marathons, they are expected to make a full recovery. Both twins just turned 21 months old.

“It is an absolute joy to watch them every day,” Shields said.

Cancer Is Now the Leading Cause of Death

Heart disease falls to second place as cause of death in developed countries

Cancer has dethroned heart disease to earn the nefarious title of leading cause of death in high-income and certain middle-income countries.

While heart disease remains the No. 1 cause of death globally among adults aged 35 to 70, in high-income countries, which included Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Canada, and Sweden, cancer caused sometimes twice as many deaths as heart disease.

Some middle-income countries, which included the Philippines, Iran, South Africa, Colombia, China, Brazil, Malaysia, Turkey, Poland, Argentina, and Chile, also saw cancer become the leading cause of death. While the United States wasn't included in the new analysis, research published in 2018 suggested that “the United States is in the midst of an epidemiologic transition in the leading cause of death,” moving from heart disease to cancer.

That study, too, found that cancer was quickly outpacing heart disease as the top killer, with high-income countries transitioning first. In fact, while only 21 percent of U.S. counties had cancer as the leading cause of death in 2003, this rose to 41 percent in 2015.

“The shift to cancer as the leading cause of death was greatest in the highest-income counties,” the researchers explained, echoing the current study, which also cited “a transition in the predominant causes of deaths in middle-age” in high-income countries.

“The world is witnessing a new epidemiologic transition among the different categories of noncommunicable diseases, with CVD [cardiovascular disease] no longer the leading cause of death in HIC [high-income countries],” lead author Dr. Gilles Dagenais, professor emeritus at Laval University in

Quebec, Canada, said in a statement.

Why Is Cancer a Top Killer?

The study suggested cancer is rising to the top because heart disease is better treated in high-income countries, saving more lives from heart disease and paving the way for cancer deaths to rise. But perhaps a better question is why cancer continues to kill so many.

Even globally, cancer still comes in as the second-leading cause of death behind heart disease, responsible for 26 percent of deaths worldwide. Americans have a one in three risk of developing cancer at some point in their lifetimes, along with a one in five risk of dying from the disease.

In early 2019, it was announced that cancer death rates in the United States declined 27 percent since

chemotherapy, or radiation to treat cancer is, on the whole, working.

While death rates from certain cancer have declined, others have increased.

Overall, cancer deaths in the United States in 2016 were similar to those in 1930—despite all the “advances” in detection and treatment.

It's becoming increasingly clear that in order to conquer cancer, it's necessary to change the way we think about it. There are many factors that contribute to cancer, but there is evidence to suggest that natural substances and therapies that support the body's overall health can be useful in the fight against cancer.

Nearly 1,000 Substances Have Anti-Cancer Potential

GreenMedInfo has a database of 986 substances that have been researched as potential cancer prevention and treatment strategies. There are undoubtedly many more out there that have yet to be discovered. At the top of the list is curcumin, the active ingredient in the curry spice turmeric, which targets cancer stem cells while leaving normal stem cells



Cancer rates dropped as smoking fell out of fashion but the disease is now quickly outpacing heart disease as the top cause of death in higher income countries. (ESB Professional/Shutterstock)

unharmful.

Another top contender is vitamin D, which you can get for free from adequate sun exposure. Higher vitamin D levels are not only known to lower your cancer risk but also to improve outcomes if you've already been diagnosed. Fiber, resveratrol, sulforaphane and vitamin E—all substances you can get from your diet—also show anti-cancer promise, as does coffee, perhaps because it improves the body's ability to efficiently repair DNA damage.

So if there was one silver lining to the news that cancer is now the leading cause of death in some countries, it would be that it's a condition that has many promising natural avenues for prevention and treatment. Current conventional cancer treatments are failing, but that doesn't mean cancer is unstoppable—it means it's time to broaden our research into and usage of traditional therapies.

Many natural substances, like noni leaf, have even been shown to work better than chemotherapy, highlighting why, if we're going to win the war against cancer, we're going to need to do it with nature on our side.

For more on how to naturally fight cancer, visit the GreenMedInfo database on the subject.

The GMI Research Group (GMIRG) is dedicated to investigating the most important health and environmental issues of the day. Special emphasis will be placed on environmental health. Our focused and deep research will explore the many ways in which the present condition of the human body directly reflects the true state of the ambient environment. This article was originally published on GreenMedInfo.com

Benefits of Extreme Temperature Workouts Are Lukewarm

Working out in the heat or cold offers tradeoffs that may or may not be worth the effort



Cold can help you lose weight faster, but the effect would be small for a one-hour workout in the cold.

Diet and Your Risk of Bowel Cancer

Know which foods increase or decrease your chances of this common cancer

SUZANNE MAHADY

Australia has one of the highest rates of bowel cancer in the world, though the United States is high as well. In 2017, bowel cancer was the second-most-common cancer in Australia and rates are increasing in people under 50.

The World Health Organization puts the cumulative risk of developing collector cancer at 4.1 percent in Australia and New Zealand, compared to 2.96 percent in North America, which is still comparatively high in international rankings.

Up to 35 percent of cancers worldwide might be caused by lifestyle factors such as diet and smoking. So how can we go about reducing our risk of bowel cancer?

What to Eat

Based on current evidence, a high-fiber diet is important to reduce bowel cancer risk. Fiber can be divided into two types: insoluble fiber, which creates a bulky stool that can be easily passed along the bowel; and soluble fiber,

which draws in water to keep the stool soft.

Fiber from cereal and whole grains is an ideal fiber source. Australian guidelines suggest aiming for 30 grams of fiber per day for adults, but fewer than 20 percent of Australian adults meet that target. In the United States, as few as 5 percent are eating recommended levels of fiber daily.

Wheat bran is one of the richest sources of fiber, and in an Australian trial in people at high risk of bowel cancer, 25 grams of wheat bran reduced precancerous growths. Wheat bran can be added to cooking, smoothies, and your usual cereal.

It's not clear how fiber may reduce bowel cancer risk, but possible mechanisms include reducing the time it takes food to pass through the gut (and therefore exposure to potential carcinogens), or through a beneficial effect on gut bacteria. Once bowel cancer is diagnosed, a high-fiber diet has also been associated with improved survival.

Milk and dairy products are also thought to reduce bowel cancer

risk. The evidence for milk is graded as "probably protective" in current Australian bowel cancer guidelines, with the benefit increasing with higher amounts.

In the United States, as few as 5 percent are eating recommended levels of fiber daily.

Oily fish may also have some protective elements. In people with hereditary conditions that make them prone to developing lots of precancerous growths (polyps) in the bowel, a trial where one group received a daily supplement of an omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acid (found in fish oil) and one group received a placebo, found that this supplement was associated with reduced polyp growth. Whether this is also true for people at average risk of bowel cancer, which is most of the population, is unknown.

And while only an observational study (meaning it only

LINDSAY BOTTOMS & DANIEL MUNIZ

First, there were heated fitness studios, now the latest trend is working out in frigid temperatures. Although there are some health benefits associated with each of these regimes, there are also some risks. Here's what you need to know:

Hot Workouts

The ideal body temperature is around 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit (37 degrees Celsius). When you exercise, your muscles are very inefficient and only 25 percent of the energy is used for movement. The other 75 percent of the energy muscles produce is lost as heat, increasing the temperature of your body. If it exceeds 104 degrees F (40 degrees C), it can be dangerous, so your body tries to keep the temperature at around 98.6 F.

One strategy to prevent body temperature from rising is getting more blood to the skin, which can make people's faces flush during an intense workout. If you exercise in an already hot environment, the difference between body temperature and room temperature is small, and your heart needs to work harder to try to get more blood to the skin.

Another way your body gets rid of excess heat is by warming up sweat to the point at which it evaporates, which then takes heat with it when it evaporates to the air. You can lose up to two liters of water every hour through sweat. As you sweat more during exercise in the heat, it is important to replace the fluid you have lost or your blood can become thicker, which increases strain on the heart.

Both ways of keeping the body under 104 degrees F (40 degrees C) add an extra burden on the heart. As a result, cardio workouts are more difficult in hot environments and endurance performance is decreased in hot environments.

But exercising in a hot environment might be good for short activities that need powerful muscle contractions. There is also a school of thought that light-intensity workouts, such as yoga, can benefit because the extra strain on the heart during exercise in the heat can increase the number of calories you burn. But research by Central Michigan University contradicts that calorie theory. It showed that there was no difference in exercise intensity, so the number of calories burned doing yoga at 68 degrees F (20 degrees C) and 95 degrees F (35 degrees C) were the same.

Increasing muscle temperature can increase flexibility and reduce the risk of injury. But a hot environment doesn't necessarily mean increased muscle temperature.

Regularly undertaking workouts in a hot environment can help endurance performance in the heat, but your overall fitness and health may not get anything extra.

Cold Workouts

In the cold, your body is hotter than the surrounding environment and can easily get rid of the heat produced in the muscles during exercise. This stops the temperature of the body from increasing during prolonged exercise and performance in your cardio session will usually be better on cold days. Researchers from the University of Aberdeen found endurance to be best at around 50 degrees F (10 degrees C) (compared with: 39, 70, and 88 degrees F; 4, 21, and 31 degrees C).

When it's really cold, the heat produced by your muscles is not enough to maintain a core temperature at 98.6 degrees F (37 degrees C). The body has ways to cope with extreme cold environments, such as shivering. Shivering is essentially muscles contracting to produce heat, not movement. As with any muscle contraction, shivering requires energy and burns calories, so at rest, you may burn more calories in the cold than in normal temperatures.

Another strategy to cope with the cold is to use fat to produce heat. Researchers in the United States have shown repeated workouts in the cold increases the amount of brown fat in your body. Brown fat is known as "good fat" as it burns calories.

Both shivering and burning fat consume calories, and studies that hold workout classes at 44.6 degrees F (7 degrees C) have begun to appear, with the idea that they can help people lose weight. Researchers from Spain found that exposure to a progressively cold environment can increase energy expenditure by up to 30 percent, which corresponds to around 500 calories for 24 hours of cold exposure. This means exposure to cold can help you lose weight faster, but the effect would be small for a one-hour workout in the cold. And feeling cold is unpleasant.

If you want to increase your muscle strength, doing workouts in the cold probably won't help. Muscles work best at hot temperatures. When muscles get cold, the force they can produce decreases. You are also more likely to be injured in the cold, but the extra risk of injury is reduced if you warm up properly.

Take-Home Message

The small extra amount of calories burned in extreme environments (hot or cold) may help you lose weight, but it could be outweighed by the increased health risks and reduced performance. Doing 150 minutes of physical activity a week is the key to good health, regardless of the temperature.

Lindsay Bottoms is a principal lecturer in exercise physiology at the University of Hertfordshire in the UK, and Daniel Muniz is a senior lecturer in exercise physiology at the University of Hertfordshire. This article was first published on *The Conversation*.

It is important to replace the fluid you have lost or your blood can become thicker, which increases strain on the heart.

How to Use Oregano Oil for Colds and Flu

Carvacrol gives this essential oil disease-fighting super powers

ANDREA DONSKY

With cold and flu season around the corner, it's a good idea to prepare in advance as much as we can. Oil of oregano could win an award as one of the most effective natural preventives and treatments for the common cold and flu.

Many have also reported great results using oregano oil for sore throats. And in case you're wondering, this oregano isn't the same as the herb you put in your pasta sauce.

One reason oil of oregano is considered an essential oil here is the presence of carvacrol, one of the most bioactive components of this herb. Carvacrol has demonstrated its anti-disease potential in preclinical trials, but human trials are still lacking. That said, its antimicrobial, antioxidant, and anticancer properties have been documented by researchers.

Oil of oregano, which is made from the leaves and flowers of the herb, also contains some other potent compounds that can be helpful when you want to prevent or treat a cold or flu. Here are four reasons why this herb is so potent:

- Thymol: a natural antiseptic that can enhance immune system function and promote healing
- Beta-caryophyllin: known for its anti-inflammatory benefits
- Naringin: enhances the antioxidants in oregano oil, which in turn can improve its ability to fight cold and flu viruses
- Rosmarinic acid: an antioxidant that also is a natural antihistamine

To enjoy the health benefits of oregano essential oil, it's important that you choose an oil produced from wild oregano (*Origanum vulgare*), which is native to the Mediterranean, or from *Thymus capitatus*, a variety found in Spain. More than 40 other oregano species are available, so be sure to read the label and buy from reputable manufacturers only.

How Powerful Is Oil of Oregano?

For those who want to see what the scientists say, there's a study in the *Journal of Applied Microbiology* in which researchers exposed a mouse norovirus (a human norovirus surrogate) to oregano oil and carvacrol. Both treatments were effective against the virus, but carvacrol was better, inactivating the virus within one hour of exposure.

Using Oil of Oregano for Colds and Flu

If you want to help prevent the spread of cold and flu viruses on your hands and household surfaces, then you may want to use a liquid soap that contains oregano essential oil or add the oil to an all-natural brand you are using now.

An investigative team looked at the use of liquid detergent solution with added oil of oregano (0.5 percent) and found that it was as effective as a commercial antimicrobial soap, but without the harmful ingredients such as triclosan and chloroxylenol. And since the FDA recently banned many antibacterial chemicals, it makes sense to use a safer homemade alternative.



Oil of oregano could win an award as one of the most effective natural preventives and treatments for the common cold and flu.



Oil of oregano was found to be as effective as a commercial antimicrobial soap, but without the harmful ingredients such as triclosan and chloroxylenol.

It's important that you choose an oil produced from wild oregano (*Origanum vulgare*).

How to Use Oregano Oil for Colds and Flu

Since the taste can be strong, I have found the best way to take oregano oil is by diluting several drops of the oil in orange juice, olive oil, or coconut oil. However, according to Theresa Ramsey, NMD, if you place a few drops under your tongue and keep them there for several minutes, the strong taste will be minimal and the results will be faster and stronger because it gets absorbed faster. If you prefer not to taste anything, then you can purchase oil of oregano capsules at natural product stores.

The general dosing for oil of oregano for adults is two to three drops, three to four times daily once you have a cold or flu. For preventive or maintenance purposes, take two to three drops twice a day.

Oil of Oregano Capsule Dosage

If you prefer to take supplements, use 100 to 150 mg oregano oil capsules in place of the three to four doses daily. To treat a sore throat, you can add five to six drops of oregano oil to a glass of water and gargle several times a day. I like to place the drops directly in my throat so I'm sure they are doing their magic.

Oil of oregano can be given to children, although the strong taste makes convincing them a challenge. Fortunately, there are oregano oil supplements specially formulated for youngsters, including natural cinnamon or mint oil to mask the taste of the oregano. They should be dosed as recommended by the manufacturer. You can also add a couple of drops of the liquid to the bottom of their feet and then cover with socks to trap the vapors. We call this "pizza feet" in our house.

You also can add a few oregano oil drops in a diffuser or vaporizer to help clear up a stuffy nose and sinuses. Breathe in the pleasant aroma for a few minutes several times a day.

Oregano Oil and Breastfeeding?

You should limit your use of oregano oil to only seven to 10 days. Oil of oregano is not recommended for infants or pregnant women. As you should also conclude, using oregano oil while breastfeeding is not recommended. Also, avoid if you have high blood pressure or heart disease.

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Oil of oregano isn't recommended for infants or pregnant women.

The Healing Powers of Blue and Purple Foods

A flavonoid found in the pigment of these foods does more than make them look good

DEVON ANDRE

Blueberries have long been identified as a top "superfood." A rich source of anthocyanins—the pigment that gives them their deep purple-blue hue—blueberries have become a healthy diet staple.

But there are plenty of other blue or purple foods that may also boost your health in a number of ways.

Anthocyanins, a type of polyphenol, are a potent flavonoid antioxidant. They are associated with several health benefits including better heart health, lower risk of obesity and type-2 diabetes, and may even offer support as a natural remedy for the cold and flu. Some other powerful blue or purple "superfoods" are elderberries and blackberries.

Elderberries

One of the most popular plant remedies worldwide, these bluish-purple berries may offer a strong defense against cold and flu. Elderberries may have the potential to act as immune-system boosters, reducing the likelihood of infection or shortening the intensity and duration of cold and flu symptoms. Research has indicated elderberry may activate the immune system to fight off these viruses.

There are also studies to suggest that taking elderberry syrup daily can shorten the duration of flu by four days. If you want to try elderberry, cook it first. If eaten raw, it can lead to negative reactions in the stomach.

Blackberries

Blackberries are one of the densest sources of vitamin K available, as well as being very high in fiber, vitamin C, and manganese. Each of these compounds provides healthful benefits including immune health, heart health, digestive health, bone health, and more. One cup of blackberries features eight grams of fiber, and big percentages of your daily requirement of several vitamins: 40 percent of your daily required manganese, 34 percent of your vitamin C, and nearly a quarter of your vitamin K.

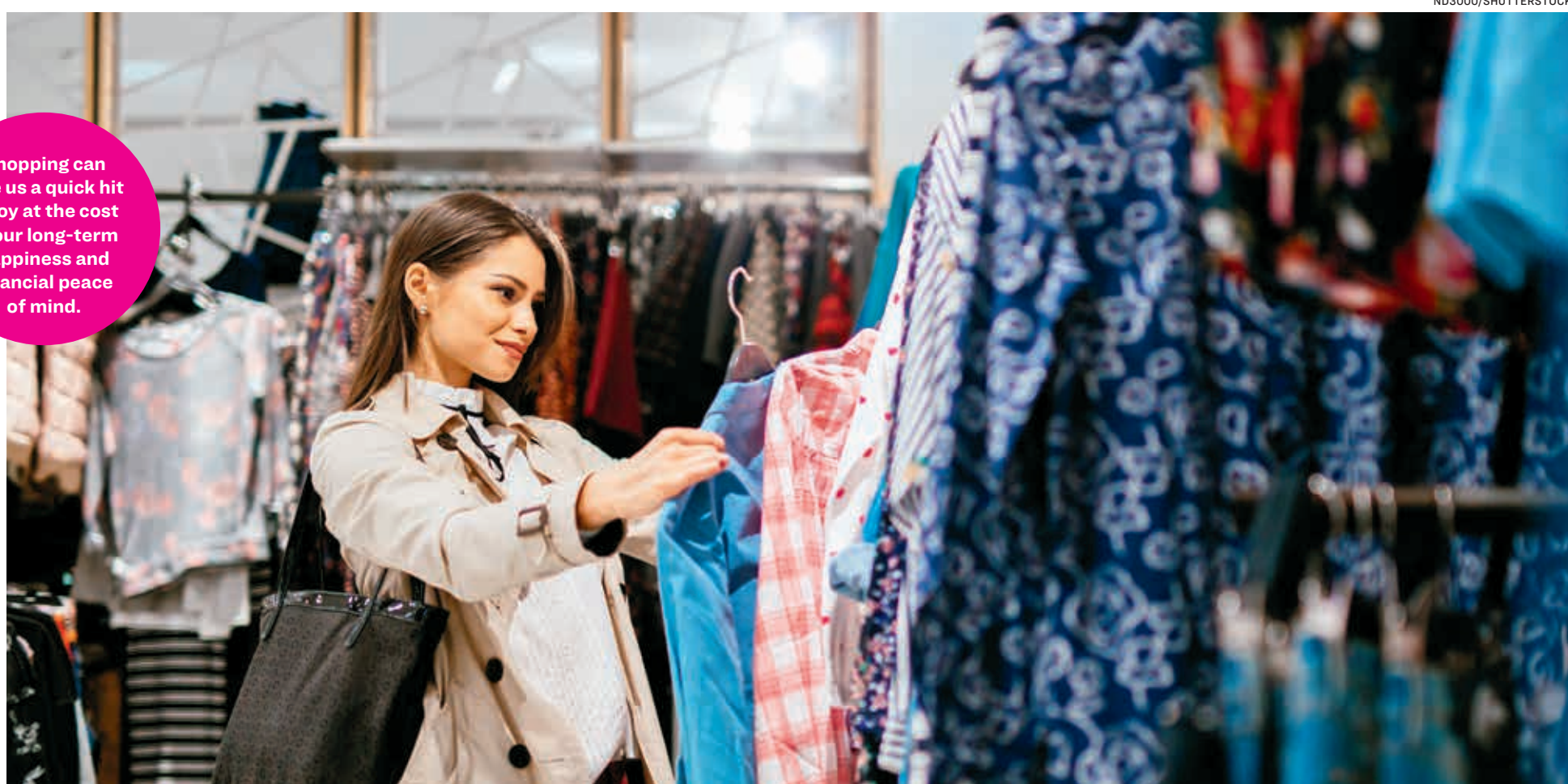
Blueberries

It's hard to avoid mentioning blueberries again. They are a rich source of nutrition and anthocyanin that can help protect cells from harmful free radicals. One study in healthy men suggested that eating two cups per day was able to protect DNA from free radical damage. Blueberries can be added to yogurt, salads, oatmeal, or eaten raw.

Including a variety of polyphenol and anthocyanin-rich foods may help improve your health in a number of ways, so try to mix up your berries from time to time. If berries aren't your thing, you can also get anthocyanin from grapes, plum, blue tomato, and eggplant.

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Shopping can give us a quick hit of joy at the cost of our long-term happiness and financial peace of mind.



BECOMING MINIMALIST

How My SHOPPING HABITS Were Transformed

Simplifying my home, life led to a breakthrough in how I shopped

JULIANNA POPLIN

It wasn't that long ago when a trip to the mall would mean hours scouring stores looking for the best deal and all the new trendy things I just had to have. Shopping, for me, was part-hobby, part-sport.

It was my idea of fun.

If I spent too much, I'd feel guilty and experience buyer's remorse. There would be a sinking feeling in my gut every time I opened my credit card bill. But that didn't stop me from continuing the cycle.

I maintained that pattern from my teenage years into my 30s. But then, something changed. I had children and suddenly my time, priorities, and life began to look different. When my kids were little, I started on a journey to simplify my life—one drawer and one closet at a time.

It wasn't easy. The process forced me to ask difficult questions: Why had I spent money on some of these things? What had I been thinking at the time? I felt careless and foolish for some of the decisions I'd made.

I decluttered my home. Somewhere along the way, my thoughts about shopping changed drastically.

After I simplified my life, my relationship to acquiring things changed in five important ways.

1. Shopping Is No Longer a Hobby

Gone are the days of enjoying marathon shopping trips just for the fun of it. I no longer find myself in a store because I'm bored or can't think of anything else to do. That doesn't mean I don't have downtime in my life, it just means I have found other things to do that are more enjoyable than a walk through a department store full of things I don't need.

I've come to a place where my desire to live simply and without clutter outweighs any desire I have to shop.

It isn't easy to live simply in a consumer culture. We've been told shopping is a great way to spend your day and that the sale happening right now will never be repeated. Social media is filled with memes about moms shopping at Target because there's truth to it. I used to be one of those moms.

Target isn't my happy place anymore. After dealing with my clutter, I saw consumerism differently. My eyes were opened anew to marketing messages and the con-

The high of simply buying something new wears off quickly and dealing with regret and mistakes feels terrible.

Julianne Poplin blogs at *The Simplicity Habit*. She is a wife, mama, and professional declutterer who helps people create margin so they can say 'yes' to the great. This article was originally published on *BecomingMinimalist.com*

sumer traps I'd fallen into. I woke up and saw advertising for what it is: companies trying to make money by making us feel like we need things that we often don't actually need.

Shopping is no longer something I do for entertainment. There are better things that I can do with my time for both my bank account and my well-being. I much prefer reading, writing, or having coffee with a friend. Consider how your time could be better spent if you quit shopping for fun. What would you do instead? How could your money be better used?

On the rare occasion when I do go shopping, it's for something specific. I often leave the store empty-handed. I'm fine with that. It saves me money. The only time it frustrates me is when I feel like I've spent too much time looking for just the "right" thing.

2. I Have Become Extraordinarily Picky

After simplifying my home, I have become more selective and more intentional in my purchases.

This is an artifact of sorting, decluttering, and ridding my home of so many items. During the process, I found so many things I had simply settled for and never really used or loved. At the time, maybe they were on sale or I hated the idea of leaving a store empty-handed. I wasted so much money on so many unnecessary things.

Clothes were the biggest offender. I'd convince myself I needed to be on-trend or buy the latest style or color. I'd try on various pairs of jeans and simply settle for what was good enough.

Nowadays, I need to be sure I really love or need an item before I purchase it. The high of simply buying something new wears off quickly and dealing with regret and mistakes feels terrible and can last longer. So be selective in what you buy. Don't settle. You're better than that.

3. Buying Gifts Became More Thoughtful

In the past, I rarely considered the potential impact of a gift on the person I was giving it to. If it was an item I thought they might enjoy or was their favorite color, I'd buy it. But after simplifying and decluttering, I've become much more intentional in my gift-giving.

I don't want to create clutter in other people's homes. I want the gift to be enjoyable and useful. I never want someone hanging

onto a gift I had given them that they didn't like. Some people have a hard time getting rid of gifts.

Now, I give much more thought to whether a gift will actually be useful to them. I have found that buying consumables or experiences as gifts helps. In those instances, I know the gift will not be something that adds clutter to their home.

Don't be afraid to ask people what they want or would find useful. Let's agree to stop giving each other clutter.

4. I'm More Protective About What My Kids Receive From Others

I am fortunate to have parents and in-laws who try to respect my need for simplicity. I know that isn't always the case.

In my family, before holidays and birthdays, family members will ask me for suggestions on what to get my girls. My mom's love language isn't gift-giving, she much prefers quality time. So her new tradition is to take my girls out on a date. They enjoy breakfast together and then shop for something I've said they need—usually shoes.

My in-laws, on the other hand, are gift-givers. It is their love language and they enjoy seeing the girls' faces light up at whatever toy they've purchased for them. Most years, I've been able to think of something fun they would enjoy—but I will admit it is getting harder as they get older.

When kids have more toys than they can manage, it creates problems. Things stop getting put back. They get stressed about "not knowing where things go." I either end up doing more picking up or we have "heated conversations" over needing to take care of their things otherwise Mom will take the things away. It's an unneeded stress for them and for me.

I am now a fan of experience-based gifts. The kids enjoy them and they don't create more clutter and stress in our home. And this isn't just about keeping clutter down, science tells us those experiences create far more meaningful and lasting memories than a plastic toy. It's not always easy to get everyone on board, but a mom can try.

5. Shopping Became Less Selfish

How you spend your money reflects your priorities and your heart.

When I would shop for fun and buy things I didn't need, my priority was me. It was self-centered and focused on what I thought I was lacking. Marketing aimed to make me think about me more, and that's already a pretty natural tendency.

My selfish shopping habits ended with me having a cluttered home. Ultimately, they cost me more than they benefited me.

Once I was able to get outside of myself and my own desires, I was able to see how much true need there is in the world. Suddenly, the purpose for my money wasn't just to make me happier.

Simplifying helped me see there are better and more important things I can do with my money than spend it on things I don't need. Wasting my money on silly things made me feel satisfied in the short run, but made me feel bad in the long run. Choosing instead to be responsible by saving and giving brought me long-lasting peace and contentment.

My life and shopping habits have changed for the better as I decluttered and simplified. Now, I focus on what I already have. I choose to be grateful instead of dwelling on what I'm lacking.

I don't miss shopping at all. I think about all the time I've now got to do better things. Simplifying didn't force me to stop shopping—it increased my awareness and changed my perspective so I no longer enjoyed accumulating more.

Is It OK to Cry at Work?

Before the tears start flowing, consider the cause

CHLOE ANAGNOS

I'm not quite a decade into my career and I know that I have cried on the job at least four or five times.

As work life and personal life have become increasingly integrated, boundaries and social etiquette practices have continued to shift, such as bringing your dog to work, going barefoot in the office (still gross!), and crying.

According to a study from Monster, crying at work is not uncommon.

Their poll of 3,000 workers found that eight out of 10 people have cried at work. Bosses or co-workers were cited as the reason for tears at the office, according to 45 percent of respondents.

More than 15 percent of people said they cried because of their workload, while almost 13 percent said they were upset about workplace bullying.

Is it OK to show emotion and even cry at work? Absolutely.

But if it's happening every week—or worse, every day—then it's best to figure out the source of the tears or find a new work environment.

Take these points into consideration if you or a colleague are frequently experiencing waterworks.

Who Are You Surrounded By?

Is it your boss? Trusted colleagues? Understanding the people around you may determine the appropriateness of crying based on context alone.

For instance, there's a distinction between breaking down in front of the CEO of your company because your cat died over the weekend or being overwhelmed by a verbally abusive boss. Before the tears start flowing, know your audience and use discretion to determine if it's appropriate.

What's Causing the Tears?

When the tears come, think back to the trigger that brought them in the first place. Was it because you were treated poorly by a boss or coworker? Were you unprepared for a meeting?

Determining the source can help you personally address if the cause is justifiable or not. Look back at the trigger to decide if the cause is work-related or irrelevant.

Is It Work-Related or Personal?

Sometimes, our own baggage can serve as a barrier when we let it affect our daily ability in the office.

If you are struggling with a personal

matter, it may not always be appropriate to continue to resolve it while on the job.

However, there is power in being vulnerable when appropriate with your co-workers if something major is going on. If your issue is work-related, it may be time to have a conversation with your human resources department.

Is This an Isolated or Ongoing Concern?

Though crying at work should not become a regular habit, an emotional release given the appropriateness of the circumstances can and should be acceptable. But when it becomes more frequent, it may be time to ask for help either from human resources or a professional counselor or therapist.

Remember, crying at work is a personal decision that completely depends on your own level of comfort. If you are comfortable and justified in your tears and are actively seeking a resolution to what may have caused them, then more power to you.

Why It Matters

We spend a lot of time at work and most of us spend more time with our coworkers than our own families during the week. One of the biggest indicators of professional growth is learning to openly confront our feelings.

If we bury our feelings and run from conflict, not only does it undermine our work but it doesn't help us grow professionally or personally.

Red Hat CEO Jim Whitehurst argues that expressing your feelings reflects your passion for what you do. "You might see tears

from time to time, but I think that signals that the person cares about what is happening," Whitehurst said. "Emotions at work can help you understand how others truly feel—that's a good thing."

Chloe Anagnos is a professional writer, digital strategist, and marketer. Although a millennial, she's never accepted a participation trophy. This article was originally published on *FEE.org*



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Before the tears start flowing, know your audience and use discretion to determine if it's appropriate.



FIZES/SHUTTERSTOCK

WISE HABITS

Transforming Overwhelm, Burden Into Something Powerful

Change in mindset can work wonders, open up new worlds

LEO BABAUTA

How many of you have felt overwhelmed recently by everything you have to do?

How many of you have felt something you have to do—or everything you have to do—is a burden?

Many of us feel like the tasks of life are overwhelming. Almost all of us see things this way sometimes. It seems like it's something hardwired into us.

It stems from how we look at the world and our life. But it's changeable. It starts by shifting our perspective.

Instead of seeing the world as a burden, can we see it as a gift?

Instead of seeing the world as difficulty and struggle, can we see it as a possibility and opportunity?

Instead of thinking that we have too much to do, can we see the joy in each task, and see that a pile of tasks is an abundance of possibility?

Yes, we have many things to do, and we

feel like we don't have enough time to do them all. But we all have the same amount of time, and all we can do is one task at a time. We can get better at choosing which tasks to do (prioritizing), but in the end, there's never any certainty that we're doing the right tasks.



While we can expand our capabilities through automation, delegation, and outsourcing, experience tells us that even doing all of that, we still have too many tasks to do. The problem doesn't go away with these resources.

The amount of tasks isn't the problem, because we'll always have too many to do. The problem comes partly from overcommitting to too much, but even if we get better at that, we often still feel overwhelmed and burdened.

The only real solution is a change in mindset: to see everything we have to do as a gift, as possibility and opportunity, as an abundance of joy. We need to accept that

Instead of seeing the world as a burden, can we see it as a gift?

we simply can't do everything, and there will always be more things to do than we can ever get done.

So here's a practice to deal with having too much to do:

1. When you are overwhelmed, burdened, or fearful, pause and feel it. Let yourself be fully with it, experience it, feel it fully, and open up to it. Can you be curious about it? Can you find a way to love the feeling?
2. See if you can see the tasks in front of you as a gift. You choose to do these things because you want to. They benefit you and others. Do them with love, and be grateful for the gift of each one.
3. See if you can see the possibility and opportunity in each one. What can be done with them? How are they more open and vast than you think they are?
4. Can you experience the abundance of joy in your list of tasks? If each one is a joyful gift, then isn't there pure abundance in your list? You can dive into what you have to do and pull out an opportunity for joy and growth. It's your chance to give something to the world.

Mindset shifts aren't something we can just flip like a switch. They need to be consciously practiced, but new worlds open up if you do.

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*

CONNECT TO LEAD

Don't Swing the Hammer

Coming down hard on subordinates is an outdated management tactic

SCOTT MANN

Have you ever chewed someone out in a meeting and afterward, you knew that it was the wrong approach?

Not too long ago, my 18-year-old son managed to dump 20 ounces of milk onto his 16-year-old brother's head in the kitchen and at first, I laughed. Then both of them said it was an accident and I wasn't laughing then. I lost it. We were about to eat. There was milk all over the floor. There was milk dripping off Brayden's nose. I launched into them. I chewed them out, told them they were disrespectful. I landed on them with all four feet. If you could have seen the looks on their faces when I did that. Thankfully, I went back a little later, I put my arms around them, and I apologized.

It was a really poignant lesson. Now, did they need a butt chewing? Yeah, probably. But, the way I went at it was complete coercion. I work with a lot of senior business leaders and I see the same thing. Someone makes a bad trade, you land on them. Someone violates an HR policy, you call them out in front of the entire meeting.

The coercion mindset, what I call "the hammer," is where you basically cajole, push, intimidate, and demand. It is rarely an effective tool in today's leadership climate. There is a time and place for the hammer, but in this day and age, it

needs to be surgical and it certainly shouldn't be the default leadership mechanism.

If the only tool in your kit bag is a hammer, then every problem you face in life is going to be a nail. There is a reason that we are in the crappy situation we are today socially. Distrustful, disengaged, distracted—that's the world we live in. Around 85 percent of Americans, according to Gallup, are disengaged. They lack purpose. They're looking at their senior leaders and managers with a jaundiced eye because they can't connect to their vision.

So, if you go in there with your hands on your hips, telling everybody off, not only are they going to be disconnected, they're going to become a social insurgent to the very movement you're trying to create. They will tube your goals, show apathy towards your vision, and be lackadaisical on sales—all because you pissed them off. You threatened them, you came at them, you called them out, and you took their honor down a notch.

The leaders who build high performing cultures, according to New York Times best-selling author Daniel Coyle, achieve three things—a sense of psychological safety in the room, a deep sense of human connection, and a shared vision.

For any of that to be possible, Coyle says that there has to be a



▲ There is a time and place for the hammer, but in this day and age, it needs to be surgical.

vulnerability loop between the leader and those they lead. Now, if you don't adjust your mindset and just keep swinging the hammer, it's going to put you at a disadvantage. My recommendation is to lay the hammer down and lead with connection.

Here's what I'd like you to do. Find someone who is relevant in your life ... it could be an employee, a peer at work, your spouse, or one

The coercion mindset, what I call 'the hammer,' is where you basically cajole, push, intimidate, and demand.

of your kids. The next time you have an altercation with them or a high stakes moment where the temptation is to land on them with all four feet and swing the hammer, I want you to do two things to intentionally shift your mindset.

One is to lead with a thoughtful, open-ended question. Allow them to tell you what happened. It costs you nothing. It will allow your emotional temperature to come down and get you ready to listen. It's what I should have done with my boys. Then I want you to ask permission to give your perspective. "Would you mind if I share with you why this is upsetting?"

Next, you take your own scars and your own struggle and you share it with them. This is how humans learn. This is how we connect. This is how we build reciprocity. Does it take more effort on your part? Yeah, it does. But, it's also how you build a culture of reciprocity, a culture of high performance, a culture of connection where people run up the ladders after you, not because they have to, but because they choose to.

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



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