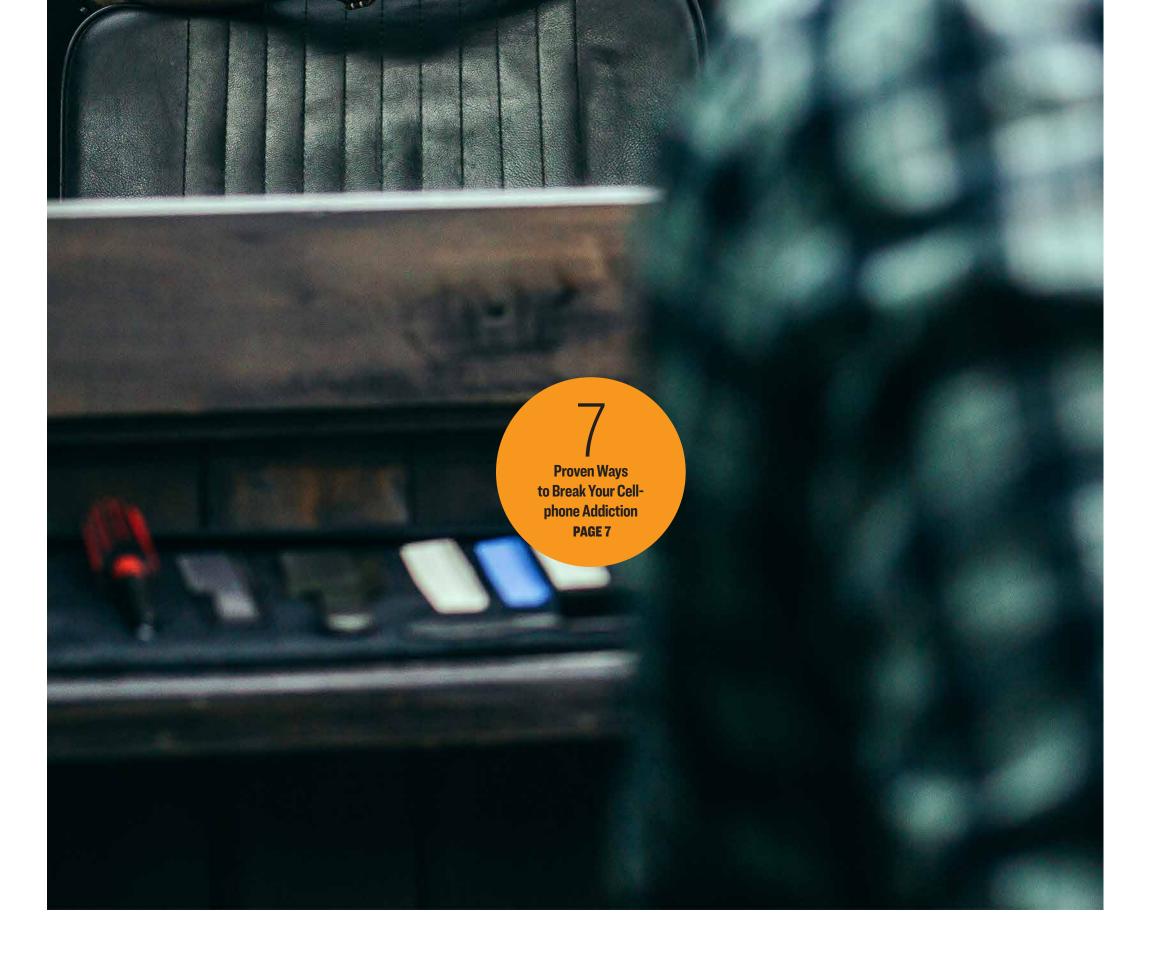
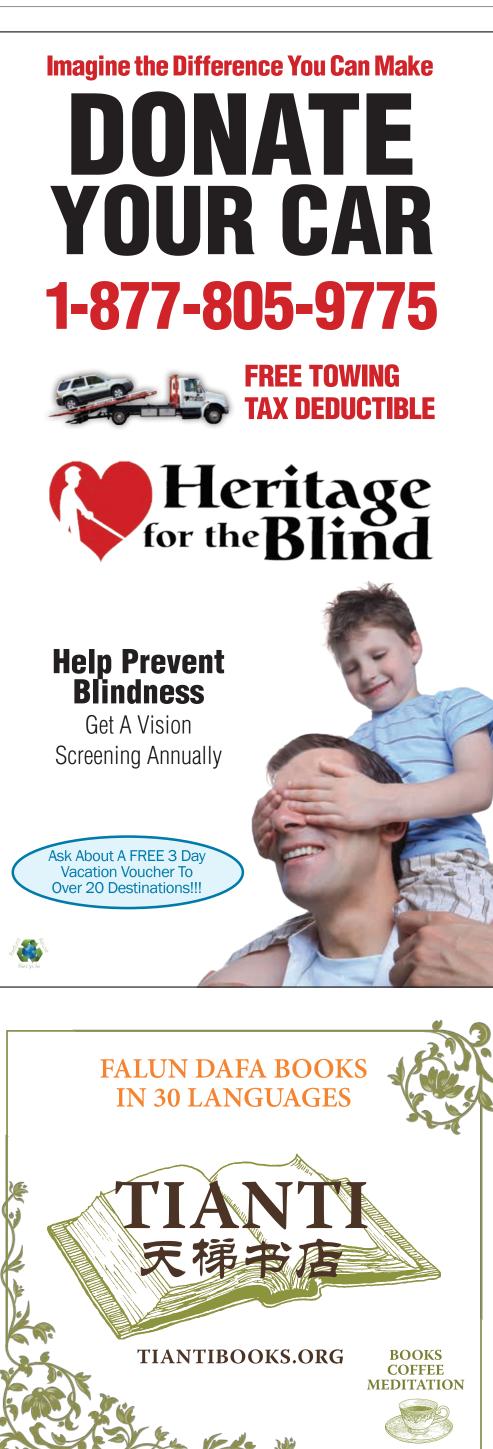
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## The Unique Struggle of Forgiving Yourself

Many of us either overlook our shortcomings or believe they are all that we are 6







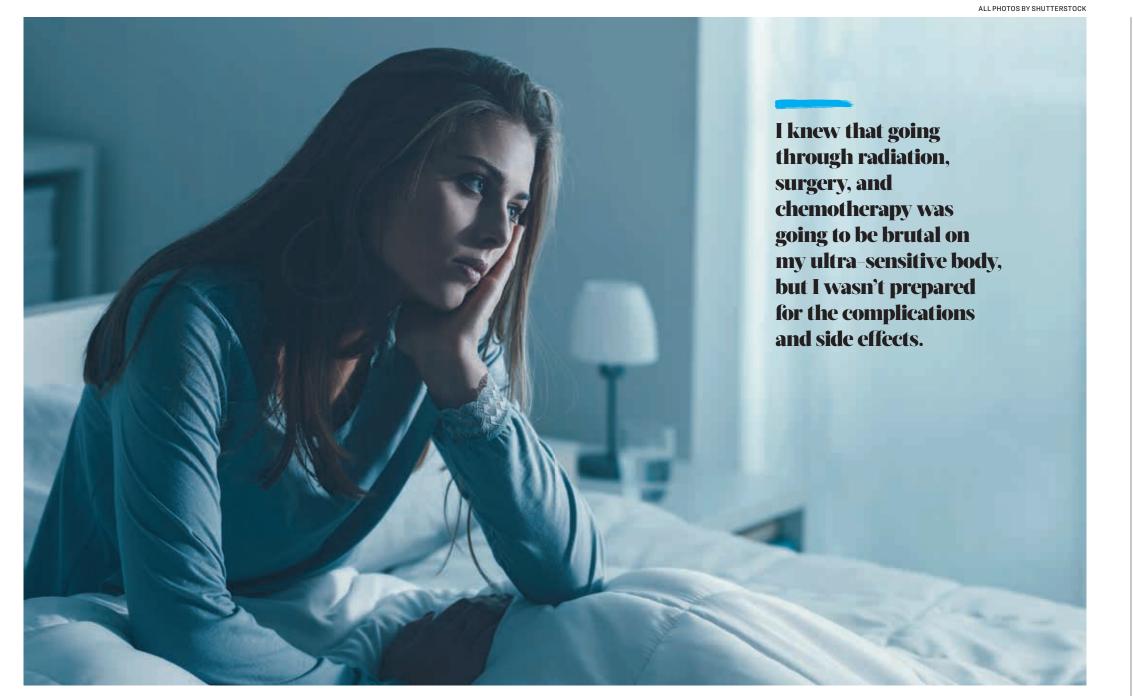
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Cancer treatment can lead to weight loss and exhaustion. A determined effort to eat well is one of the best ways to speed recovery and weight gain.

#### **CANCER UP CLOSE**

# Caring for My Body During and After Cancer Treatment

Eating well, resting often, and exercising can help you survive cancer and thrive afterward

#### **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 prediagnosis to life after treatment.

'll never forget what the gastrointestinal doctor who found my rectal tumor told me moments after he said I had cancer. With a bit of hope and encouragement in his voice, he said: "You are young and healthy. You'll get through it, good luck." I didn't understand fully why he said that at the time, but now having finished my cancer treatments, I get what he meant.

I knew that going through radiation, surgery, and chemotherapy was going to be brutal on my ultra-sensitive body, but I wasn't prepared for the complications and side effects. I went on short-term disability the minute I was diagnosed. It was one of the best decisions I made, since it eliminated the stress of work for sixmonth intervals, and let me focus on getting through the battle I was about to face. (Note: You can go on short-term disability more than once, which will be covered in another article.)

Despite cancer, I was otherwise healthy. I was a lifelong nonsmoker, with no sign of chronic disease, though I did have pretty severe gastrointestinal issues and countless food sensitivities that would trigger auto-immune joint pain throughout my body. I had also learned through a genetics test that I had a poor ability to detoxify things from my body. I believe this is why I experienced severe side effects, especially from the chemotherapy.

#### Phase 1: Radiation and Chemo

I went through 51/2 weeks of radiation plus oral chemo pills as the first course of treatment. Out of all the phases of treatment, this one was the easiest. I would get my dose of radiation around 10 a.m. Monday through Friday, and by 1 to 2 p.m. I'd feel really tired. Taking a nap helped. I was also told to walk at least 30 minutes a day to keep my stamina and energy going, though some days were tough due to nausea and fatigue.

The last two weeks of treatment were my hardest. By then, my skin was burned from the radiation and my private areas had burning sores. Vaseline became my best friend. I was given pills that helped manage the stabbing-knife pain I felt when urinating. I did fairly well on the Xeloda (oral chemo pills) but I was taken off of them the last week of radiation because my feet were blistering and tender to the point that I couldn't walk. This is the most common side effect. They quickly healed when I stopped taking it. Throughout this phase, my diet was healthy, lots of green smoothies, nuts, berries, healthy proteins like fish and organic meat, and some rice. No major junk food, except coconut milk ice cream. I also had a friend (a chiropractor) who offered to give me two- to three-hour massages for free once a week during this time. It really helped soothe me and gave me something to look forward to.

#### Phase 2: Tumor Removal and **Ileostomy Surgery**

After a two-month rest from phase 1, I finally got my tumor removed. My surgeon said it was a long and difficult surgery because my organs were hard as a rock and stuck together due to inflammation from the radiation. I had a very tough recovery. The pain from the large incision, Recovery is hard and tiring, and there may be complications, so it's best to get lots of naps-and walks are encouraged. It's important, too, to keep a healthy diet.

the new ileostomy, my lack of appetite, **Ileostomy Reversal Surgery** and an infection that emerged five days after surgery hit my body very hard and led me to lose 20 pounds in a few weeks. However, through it all, I pushed myself to get out of bed and walk. All the doctors and nurses said that this was the best thing I could do for myself. I started out walking at least 10 laps around my hospital floor. When I went home, I started with one lap around the block, then two laps, until finally I could go to the park and walk for 30 minutes.

What also saved me was my incredible flexibility. I had to contort my body into crazy positions to change my ileostomy bag. I'd lie on the bathroom floor with a mirror balanced between my knees to see what I was doing when I'd have to apply various powders and sealants around my ileostomy when

sores formed (which was often). I also ate with determination and gained back my weight over several months by, among other things, drinking more green protein powder smoothies with nuts and

pouring olive oil on everything. Most importantly, I gave my body time to be still and rest. I'd take a daily nap, sometimes two. The exhaustion during this phase really surprised me, but by the eighth week after surgery, I started to feel OK again.

#### Phase 3: Chemo

This phase didn't last long, as I experienced severe neurological side effects, random paralysis of left hand and lips from the infusions of Oxaliplatin and the oral chemo pills (Xeloda). I only did two out of six cycles of the infusions and pills

The trouble started when my throat swelled up so bad after the first infusion that I sat outside the emergency room in my brother's car for an hour until my Benadryl kicked in. I had to take half a Benadryl pill with each chemo dose took for the 14 days after my infusion. I also vomited quite

a bit the week following the infusion. I relied on herbal peppermint tea and charcoal pills to help with this. They gave me Zofran, an anti-nausea med, but this didn't always work and I wanted to have natural solutions as well.

Honestly, I just wanted to purge this toxic stuff, so I didn't want to suppress my body's natural instinct to get it out. The walking during this phase was on and off, and I mostly focused on eating well, as I had throughout the other phases.

This phase was also very difficult for me. I thought I was good to go when I was released three days after my surgery, but

severe abdominal spasms, diarrhea, and my inability to eat or drink anything a few days later led me back into the hospital for another 11 days Prayer and humor got me through this phase more than anything, although I

did the best I could walking around my hospital floor and home. Bathroom urgency made it difficult for me to walk too far, though. It was as if I was smacked into my

> previous surgery. I slowly got back to a healthy diet, but it took a while to eat normal portions of nuts, fruits, and veg gies again.

#### Phase 4: Post-

Treatment At this point, I'm dealing with inflammation, fatigue, increased food sensitivities, and joint pain throughout my body. It started a few weeks after my 11-day hospital stay. I'd wake up numerous times to numb and tingling hands and feet

and have to shake them out. I didn't know what was happening.

I took a heavy metals test with my functional medicine doctor, knowing that my body was probably dealing with all of the metals contained in the chemo and in the contrast dyes

that I took in the hospital. I was right. My platinum levels and three other metals were through the roof. I'm now in the process of purging these via infrared sauna visits at a spa (I just bought one for my home), and via

supplements that I'm told in a few months will remove the metals. So far, after one month I'm seeing positive signs that it's working. I continue to walk about 45 minutes 3 to 5 times a week and still eat very clean and healthy with an occasional splurge on glutenfree muffins or cookies.

Join me next time when I share how faith and spirituality helped me through some desperate times. Until then, breathe deep, be kind, and take it one day at a time.

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

# Why Fidgeting Could Be Good for Your Child's Health

Moving around, even in small amounts, can have a big impact on health and longevity

#### **JOHN J REILLY & XANNE JANSSEN**

idgeting is usually considered as a sign of boredom or lack of attention which can be distracting to others. Parents and teachers often demand that their children and pupils stop doing it. But fidgeting could actually be good for their health. Research suggests it might help protect against obesity, improve cardiovascular health, and even save lives.

In our recent study, we measured the energy expenditure of 40 children aged 4 to 6, while they each spent an hour in a "whole-room calorimeter." This is a chamber the size of a small bedroom, in which energy expenditure is accurately measured from the amount of oxygen inhaled and the amount of carbon dioxide exhaled.

The children all followed the same procedure in the calorimeter: 30 minutes watching TV, ten minutes drawing or coloring, and 20 minutes playing with toys on the floor. We counted the number of times children changed posture and took that as our measure of fidgeting.

The fidgeting we witnessedwith colleagues from the Australian universities of Wollongong and Deakin-varied enormously, despite all of the children following the standard set of activities. There were 53 posture changes per hour in the most fidgety third of the sample and only 11 per hour in the least fidgety third. These differences directly affected the number of calories burned.

The difference between the most and the least fidgety groups was only around six calories per hour. But when extrapolated over months and years, this could lead to large differences in energy use.

After all, children of that age typically spend around 9 to 10 hours per day sitting down, so a six calorie difference per hour of sitting would become a difference of 60 calories per day, 420 calories per week (about three bags of chips), and 22,000 calories per year (equivalent to about 2 kilograms of body weight in a 20 kilogram child).

We also found that children were much less fidgety while watching TV than when drawing, coloring, or playing with toys on the floor. This may partly explain why time spent watching TV increases the risk of obesity so strongly in children of this age compared to other sedentary activities.

Meanwhile, an older study found that more fidgety adults resisted weight gain when overfed compared to less fidgety individuals. Taken together, this evidence suggests that differences in the tendency to fidget might partly explain why some

people are more susceptible to obesity than others.

Fidgeting as Health Strategy? It is now well established that prolonged periods of sitting are harmful to health, and it is possible that fidgeting might reduce the harms of sitting.

A study of more than 12,000 adult women in the United Kingdom found, as expected, that the amount of time spent sitting per day predicted the risk of premature death over the subsequent 12 vears.

At the start of the study, the women had been asked to selfrate their tendency to fidget on a scale of 1 (no fidgeting) to 10 (constant fidgeting). In the most fidgety third, the risks of premature death from sitting were substantially reduced compared to the least fidgety third.

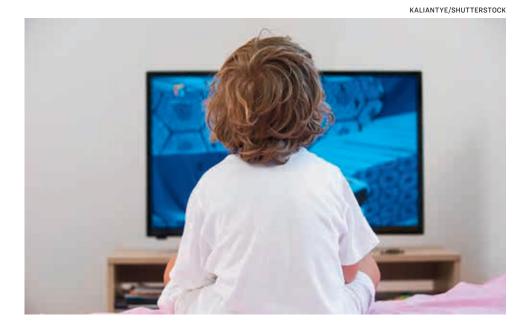
Why fidgeting seemed to reduce premature mortality was not explored in that study. However, a more recent laboratorybased study in adults found that the harmful effects of prolonged sitting on blood vessels in the legs (such as reduced blood flow) could be mitigated by asking the study participants to fidget by moving their legs while sitting. Fidgety individuals may have some protection from cardiovascular disease compared to less fidgety individuals.

#### Fidgety individuals may have some protection from cardiovascular disease compared to less fidgety individuals.

Fidgeting is not considered as being important to health at the moment, but the growing body of research suggests that it should be. The evidence might even lead to new (and much needed) approaches to preventing obesity and promoting cardiovascular health.

Such approaches might be particularly practical as they involve fairly small changes in how we live. Fidgeting or standing breaks during long periods of sitting in the classroom, or at home, far from being an annoying habit, could be precisely what we need.

John J Reilly is a professor of physical activity and public health science at the University of Strathclyde in the UK, and Xanne Janssen is a research associate at the University of Strathclyde. This article was first published on The Conversation.



Children's

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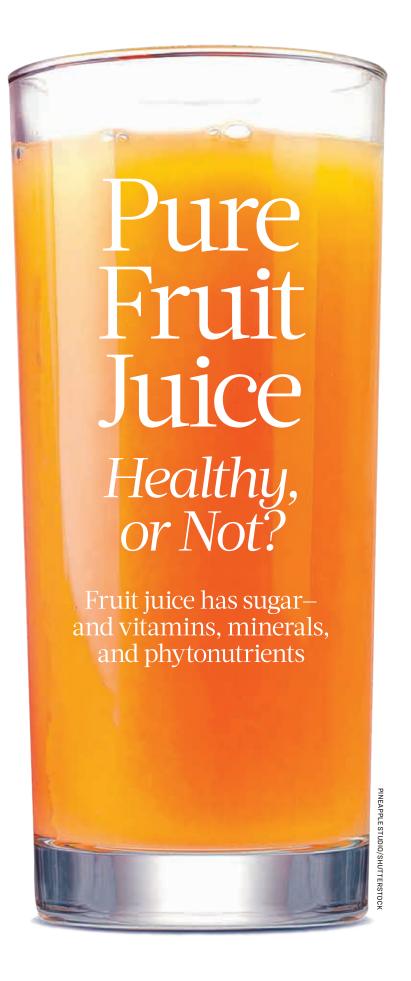
still are far-

ing better,

finds new

research.

It is now well established that prolonged periods of sitting are harmful to health.



#### **DAVID BENTON & HAYLEY YOUNG**

ncreasingly, fruit juices are seen as junk foods, and consumption is falling. But fruit juice was once viewed as

high dose of sugar.

We argue in our recently published paper, however, that fruit juice shouldn't be ing that a poor diet is responsible for 1 in 5 cut from our diets. Major reasons for not deaths and suggesting that greater health

consuming whole fruit are that it involves effort and it is often inconvenient. But fruit juice avoids the problems of intact fruit while providing the same range of healthpromoting chemicals.

Global Burden of Disease study conclud-

benefits might result from eating more ange, yellow, and red colorings) have been whole grains, nuts, fruit, and vegetables rather than concentrating on reducing the intake of sugar and fat.

Research has shown that drinking pure juice can be good for us. The Food4Me study, funded by the European Commission, revealed that lower weight was associated with a greater intake of fruits, vegetables, and fruit juice. While a national nutritional survey in the United States found that adults who drink pure juice were at a lower risk of obesity and had better insulin sensitivity.

#### Sugar-Sweetened Drinks

Yet despite these benefits, several pressure groups and other organizations still suggest that juice shouldn't be part of our diet. But their concerns rely on an analogy with sugar-sweetened fizzy drinks, and confusion about what a fruit juice actually is. The There is a view that if people don't drink

fear is that because fruit juice contains naturally occurring sugar, it increases the risk of obesity. Although fruit juice does contain sugar, it shouldn't be viewed as similar to sugar-containing drinks.

The term "fruit juice" includes drinks sweetened with sugar that contain little (if any) juice from fruit. Take Sunny Delight, for ex-

ample. Thought to be a juice by many con- impractical to eat fruit. sumers, a 240 milliliter serving contains 14 grams of sugar and only 13 percent fruit juice from concentrate. Fruit squashes and ber. Instead, we look at the benefits of overcordials meanwhile are a mixture of fruit pulp and sugar syrup. In contrast, pure fruit juice is just that, it has no added sugar.

Research has shown these drinks have very different effects on our bodies. A joint U.S. and Chinese study of nearly 200,000 people found that drinking sugar-sweetened fruit juice increased the risk of diabetes, while drinking pure fruit juice didn't. Another showed that while sugar-sweetened drinks increase the weight of children over 6 years, pure fruit juice doesn't.

Juices contain many health-promoting nutrients-such as vitamin C, polyphenols, and carotenoids-that occur only to limited extents in sugar-sweetened drinks. Vitamin C, in particular, has been associated with reduced blood pressure, lower risk of heart disease, and a better life expectancy for men

Polyphenols–which gives fruit its red, purple, and blue colors-have antioxidant, Most of us have heard we should eat five erties. A summary of 22 studies of flavopart of a healthy diet. Now it is often portions of fruit and vegetables a day. noids (a type of polyphenol) found that high seen as supplying little more than a Yet several surveys have shown that few intake cuts the risk of premature death by people meet this target. This is despite the a quarter. And intake of anthocyanidins– another polyphenol–reduces the risk of developing diabetes.

Finally, carotenoids (responsible for or-

associated with lower cancer risks. A summary of studies linked them with a lower risk of developing oral and laryngeal cancer. Similarly, greater levels of carotenoids in the blood have been related to a reduced rate of breast cancer.

#### Loss of Fiber

A joint U.S. and

Chinese study of nearly

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sweetened fruit juice

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diabetes, while drinking

pure fruit juice didn't.

But what about fiber? A second argument for not drinking juice is that it provides less dietary fiber than intact fruit. As the Mayo Clinic has pointed out, although fruit juice "contains most of the vitamins, minerals and plant chemicals (phytonutrients) found in the whole fruit ... healthy fiber is lost during most juicing."

Fiber helps prevent diabetes, heart disease, and some forms of cancer, but the Western diet doesn't provide enough.

juice, they will instead eat more intact fruit and the fiber that goes with it. But it's improbable that juice and intact fruit are often alternatives. If you stop drinking juice for breakfast you will replace it with another drink. We drink because we're thirsty not because we want to eat more fruit. The convenience of a drink allows consumption when it is

Nobody suggests that we shouldn't eat meat or fish because they don't contain fiall consumption–which is something we must start to do with fruit juice.

In 2017, an extensive survey of the benefits of fruit and vegetables found that the chances of premature death in those eating 5 to 7 portions a day are 30 percent less than those eating none, or just one portion. As the health-promoting chemicals in intact fruit are also found in juice, it is unsurprising that this-and other studies-have found fruit juice beneficial to our health. This research also showed that drinking either citrus or other fruit juices was associated with a lower risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, or death from any cause.

Although it shouldn't be seen as an alternative to intact fruit, having a daily, pure fruit juice is a simple way to increase the intake of beneficial chemicals. As part of a healthy diet, pure juice should be viewed as a health food–not a junk food.

anti-inflammatory, and anti-viral prop- David Benton is a professor of psychology at Swansea University in England and a former member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the European Fruit Juice Association. Hayley Young is an associate professor of psychology at Swansea University. This article was first published on The Conversation.

### Baby Gut Study Finds Bacteria Different After C-Section Births

LONDON-A huge study of babies' stool samples has found key differences between infants born vaginally and those born via cesarean section, offering clues about the development of the human immune system, researchers said on Sept. 18, 2019.

Vaginally born babies got most of their gut bacteria from their mother, but C-section babies didn't and had more bacteria linked to the hospital around them, the study found.

It isn't clear what impact the difference may have on children's future health, and the findings shouldn't deter women from having C-section births, the scientists leading the work said.

But the so-called "baby biome" project-the world's largest such study-had opened a window on a little-understood stage in the development of human immunity, they added.

"The first weeks of life are a critical window of development of the baby's immune system, but we know very little about it," said Peter Brocklehurst, a Birmingham University professor who co-led the study.

"We need to follow up ... these babies as they grow to see if early differences in the microbiome lead to any health issues."

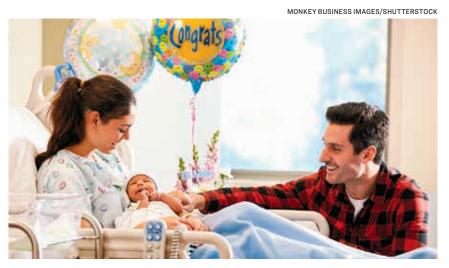
The gut microbiome is a complex ecosystem of millions of microbes and is thought by scientists to be important for how the immune system develops. Previous research has suggested

that a lack of exposure to some microbes in early life is implicated in autoimmune diseases such as asthma, allergies, and diabetes.

But scientists haven't yet been able to work out how important the initial gut microbiome-or "baby biome"-is to future immunity and health, or how a baby's microbiome develops, or what happens to it with different modes of birth.

In this research, published in the journal Nature, scientists from University College London, Wellcome Sanger Institute, and Birmingham University used DNA sequencing to analyze more than 1,600 gut bacteria samples from 175 mothers and almost 600 babies.

In samples from mothers and from the babies at 4, 7, and 21 days old, the team found there was a significant difference between the two delivery methods, with vaginally delivered babies hav-



Babies inherit a wealth of beneficial microbes from their mother during natural childbirth.

#### 66

The first weeks of life are a critical window of development of the baby's immune system, but we know very little about it.

Peter Brocklehurst, a Birmingham University professor who co-led the study ing many more health-associated bacteria from their mothers than babies born by Caesarean.

In place of some of the mother's bacteria, the C-section babies had more bacteria typically found in hospitals, the researchers said, and these bugs were also more likely to be drug-resistant.

"At the moment, we don't understand the long-term consequences of this," Brocklehurst said at a briefing about the results. "It's clearly complex and we're only just beginning to scratch the surface."

By Kate Kelland From Reuters

YAKOBCHUK VIACHESLAV/SHUTTERSTOC

# The Most Loathed Industry in the US

Big Pharma has a terrible reputation that it has worked hard to earn

🔨 very year, Gallup surveys Americans about their attitudes toward 25 industries. Ranking in the lowest position as the most-loathed industry is the pharmaceutical industry, which got so many bad rankings that it has a score of -31. For comparison, the top-rated sector, the restaurant industry, has a net positive score of +58.

The survey involved 1,525 adults, who were asked to choose their overall view of 25 industries, using the rankings very positive, somewhat positive, neutral, somewhat negative or very negative. Overall, 58 percent of Americans ranked the pharmaceutical industry negatively, more than double the amount that ranked it positively (27 percent).

Pharma's Lowest Rating Since 2001 The pharmaceutical industry's -31 score is the lowest for the sector since Gallup's "Americans' Views of U.S. Business Industry Sectors" survey began in 2001. Only a few other industries have received such negative ratings over the survey's nearly two-decade run, including the federal government, oil and gas, real estate and automobile industries.

"The new low in the pharmaceutical industry's U.S. image comes amid a range of criticisms of industry norms, from generating the highest drug costs in the world, to spending massive amounts in lobbying politicians, to the industry's role in the U.S. opioid crisis," Gallup noted.

While other industries, like real estate, have made favorable turnarounds by cleaning up their images, Gallup suggests it will be some time before Big Pharma gets a favorable glow, in large part due to the opioid crisis facing the United States. Drug overdose deaths involving opi-

oids increased 45 percent from 2016 to 2017, and in 2017, more than 70,000 people died from drug overdoses–68 percent of which involved an opioid. Already, pharma giant Johnson & Johnson has been ordered by an Oklahoma judge to pay \$572 million to the state for fueling the opioid epidemic.

The state accused Johnson & Johnson of being a public nuisance for its deceptive advertising of opioids to doctors, and similar lawsuits against pharmaceutical companies have been filed across the U.S. Gallup reported: "As the opioid epidemic rages on–and as the actors involved in creating it continue to experience lawsuits, protests and public shaming-it may be hard for the pharmaceutical industry to make a comeback just yet."

"The industry's rating likely will not recover until its role in the opioid epidemic is addressed, and the political pressure on the industry for high prices and massive profits subsides."

Distrust of Big Pharma Well Earned Americans have caught on to Big Pharma's deception, with many having lost loved ones to opioids and others having faced drug side effects or been pushed into financial ruin trying to afford medications that offer meager benefits if any at all.

Many of those preyed upon are in their weakest moments, clinging to hope that a drug will offer them survival or freedom from pain. Ipilimumab (Yervoy) is one such drug, which is approved to treat colorectal cancer, renal cell carcinoma and melanoma. Costs for ipilimumab were estimated at more than \$1.8 million per patient, which is even higher than other expensive cancer drugs. Yet, the drug is linked to severe im-

mune-related side effects, some of which may be life-threatening or fatal. This is but one example of why Americans are right to loathe the pharmaceutical industry. When you factor in their reputation for fraud and deception, it's clear why Americans' distrust of Big Pharma has been well earned.

#### Do You Want Your Health in Big **Pharma's Hands?**

Many natural substances exert pharmacological actions similar to pharmaceuticals–in fact, many drugs are based on these compounds-but with fewer adverse effects. In GreenMedInfo's database, you can find 501 such compounds,



#### 66

The new low in the pharmaceutical industry's U.S. image comes amid a range of criticisms of industry norms, from generating the highest drug costs in the world, to spending massive amounts in lobbying politicians, to the industry's role in the U.S. opioid crisis.

Gallup

including anti-inflammatory, neuroprotective, chemopreventive (cancer-fighting) and cardioprotective agents. Natural therapeutic actions-things like exercise, acupuncture, massage, and breastfeeding–also exist to support your body's natural ability to heal and maintain balance to keep you feeling mentally and physically well. There are 216 therapeutic actions in GreenMedInfo's database, many of which rival pharmaceuticals in their effectiveness. Whether you're facing a health challenge or looking to uphold your current level of health, consider if you want to put your faith in the mostloathed industry in the United States, or seek out solutions with a much less sordid past.

The GMI Research Group is dedicated to investigating the most important health and environmental issues of the day. This article was originally published on GreenMedinfo.com

#### **HOW DO OTHER INDUSTRIES STACK UP?**

In case you're wondering how the other industries fared, here's the full list of rankings, from best to worst:

	Total		Total	
	positive	Neutral	negative	Net positive
	%	%	%	
Restaurant industry	66	25	8	58
Computer industry	61	28	11	50
Grocery industry	58	27	15	43
Farming and agriculture	58	24	17	41
Travel industry	52	35	13	39
Accounting	45	45	9	36
Automobile industry	53	29	18	35
Retail industry	50	28	19	31
Real estate industry	49	31	19	30
Banking	50	25	25	25
Electric and gas utilities	47	28	24	23
Sports industry	45	29	25	20
Airline industry	42	32	23	19
Telephone industry	42	32	26	16
Publishing industry	39	36	24	15
Internet industry	43	26	30	13
Movie industry	41	31	28	13
Education	45	18	35	10
Television and radio industry	/ 40	27	32	8
The legal field	35	34	30	5
Oil and gas industry	39	25	36	3
Advertising and public relations industry	33	32	34	-1
Health care industry	38	14	48	-10
The federal government	25	23	52	-27
Pharmaceutical industry	27	15	58	-31

SOURCE: GALLUP'S "BIG PHARMA SINKS TO THE BOTTOM OF U.S. INDUSTRY RANKINGS"



20-minute walk outdoors in the morning leads to more energy and vitality than a walk inside.

#### A Morning Walk Improves Clarity, Energy Levels, and Muscle Mass

#### **DEVON ANDRE**

The opioid cri-

sis and endless

drug contro-

versies have

left the phar-

industry with a

ghastly repu-

maceutical

tation.

A quiet morning routine is a great way to start the day. Read the paper, watch the news, and eat some brekkie while sipping a coffee. Sounds perfect. But before getting to all that, you might want to do this first.

And you might not jump at the idea, but trust me, it works.

There is plenty of research that indicates that getting up and going for a 20- to 30-minute walk to kick off your morning routine can play a big role in health and longev ity. So, before settling in, slip on the sneakers and step out. Morning walks have been

found to contribute to more energy throughout the day. improved cognitive function, less stress, better mood, stronger muscles, improved sleep, and more. It might be the best time of the day to get outside and get some exercise. And of course, you'll get the benefits that more exercise brings like lower blood

pressure. Research has shown, for example, that a 20-minute walk outdoors in the morning leads to more energy and vitality than a walk inside. Another found that 10-minutes on a stair-climber was more energizing than a cup of coffee, indicating that movement stimulates the body and mind. And I can attest to this, as well. I used to start my days with a 30-minute cardio session that left me wide awake and energized until bedtime.

Another study found that older adults who start their day with a morning walk have better cognitive function than those who get up and sit. So, if you want to make better decisions, or perhaps improve memory, a morning saunter should be on the docket. Now, I don't have to tell you that getting up and active isn't exactly the most appealing idea. But the truth is that it is only a 20-minute delay until you can grab the paper and a coffee. Try getting up a little earlier tomorrow and heading out for a walk, you could notice the benefits instantly.

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

# THE UNIQUE STRUGGLE OF Forgiving Yourself

Self-forgiveness is about owning up to what you did, accepting your faults, and working to avoid a repeat of the same mistake.

#### **CONAN MILNER**

rgiveness is the reease of resentment in exchange for compassion. It is a highly regarded pursuit in some religions, and research shows that it can improve our mental and physical health.

But the benefits don't come easy. Just try genuinely loving your enemies and praying for your persecutors. When resentment is tied to pain and disappointment, releasing it can seem impossible.

The same struggles still apply when it comes to forgiving ourselves. Many of us subject ourselves to a cruel inner dialogue for years over past mistakes. For some, even a tiny stumble can trigger a disproportionate helping of grief.

How could I have been so stupid? What was I thinking? How could I let this happen? What's wrong with me?

It's appropriate to feel some regret-the queasy twinge of guilt and shame plays a role in keeping us on the straight and narrow. But according to Dr. Gail Saltz, a psychoanalyst, best-selling author, and psychiatry professor at the New York-Presbyterian Hospital Weill-Cornell Medicine, subjecting yourself to an endless tape loop of trash talk only makes things worse.

"There's a reason why we do it, but taken too far it has other negative consequences," Saltz said. "If you are angry, upset, or intensely guilty toward yourself, this can precipitate depression and anxiety.'

Being upset with ourselves is perhaps the worst feeling we can experience, and until the rift is resolved we have no escape from this inner battle. It's a relationship we're most compelled to fix, because our happiness, peace, and well being depends on it. We either forgive, or carry on a lifelong habit of self-hate.

But Saltz said forgiving ourselves can be even more challenging than forgiving others. Both types of forgiveness have the same basic goal of finding compassion. But self-forgiveness has a unique feature that can make compassion much harder to locate: a lack of space.

We have the option to forgive people who are no longer in our lives. With time to reflect on our pain at a safe distance, the process of forgiveness may become a little easier. But we never have a chance to get away from ourselves.

NEW AFRICA/SHUTTERSTOCI



It's important to have a support system of people who can encourage you and affirm that you are not a monster.

Steve Kurniawan

Self-forgiveness is about owning up to what you did, accepting your faults, and working to avoid a repeat of the same mistake. But Saltz said that, because of the distorted perspective we often have of ourselves, we actually prevent this process from happening. Instead of really examining and acknowledging our behavior, we view it in a polarized way: either all good, or all bad. the problem, or beat ourselves mercilessly with it.

"Many people have these rigid standards of themselves where they're either perfect or awful," Saltz said. "That's why it's hard for people to accept that they have made mistakes, to own their mistakes, and to be able to forgive themselves."

The ease with which we forgive often boils down to the amount of malicious intent we perceive a mistake to contain. Deeds filled with malice are the most challenging cases, because they're vicious and intentional. However, most mistakes are a mix of less volatile ingredients: accidents, poor judgment, laziness, bad timing, ignorance, and confusion.

When it comes to forgiving others, it's a lot easier to let things go when we see the offender's bethey show appropriate remorse, ceal the extent of the damage. clarify misunderstandings, or convince you that they never meant the harm they caused, forgiveness can be a breeze.

But Saltz said people can become so attached to their selfflagellation that they're never able to have this understanding with themselves.

"There are people who think, 'If I don't feel guilty all the time, than I risk becoming a terrible person. I have to keep paying this price every day. This is what keeps me in check," she said. "The vast majority of people who are saying these things to themselves may not be conscious of them. They're stuck in a cycle of holding on to this."

#### A Need for Others

We pay a high price for chronic self-resentment. Feeling hurt fore being really able to forgive we are not seeing," Wock said. and fundamentally broken, we myself," Kurniawan said. "It's "Try remembering it in a third withdraw from life. Over time, important to have a support we wall ourselves off for fear of system of people who can en-

screwing something else up. But this loner impulse can become an obstacle to resolving the relationship with ourselves. Although self-forgiveness is primarily an internal struggle, Saltz said the way out typically involves other people. Sometimes the process involves an apology, or finding another way to resolve matters with someone we've hurt. For other instances, Saltz said forgiveness is much therapist, clergy person, close you're human. It's about under and move on.

"It often requires some communication with someone else because it's hard to do it in the vacuum of your own head," Saltz said. "That objective other is really helpful in doing that. If you're stuck in a loop it's hard to break out of it on your own."

If sharing details of your inner struggle can help foster selfforgiveness, hiding them surely pushes this opportunity further away. A few years ago, marketing strategist Steve Kurniawan suffered with a gambling addiction. This led to financial disaster, followed by an escalating series of lies told to family and havior as an honest mistake. If friends to secure loans and con-As his life was falling apart, Kurniawan was devastated by

what he had become, but he still couldn't stop the cycle. "After the mistake, we see ourselves as some kind of a

monster and hate ourselves," Kurniawan said. "We keep blaming ourselves and often it leads to a relapse of making the same mistake."

What ultimately allowed Kurniawan to move on was divulging his problem with those closest to him, and demonstrating that he was dedicated to change. In turn, the people he let in were able to acknowledge his improvement. The feedback let Kurniawan slowly see himself in a better light.

"I personally went through

courage you and affirm that you are not a monster."

#### **Self Examination**

Other people can provide a sounding board, but the effort to examine our mistakes has to come from within

If you're feeling like a failure, it can be comforting to remember that we all make mistakes. But This causes us to either ignore we just need an objective ear. A more than just admitting that friend, or a family member we standing where your mistakes trust can provide the kind of come from, working toward an clear and honest perspective effective way to deal with them, we need to help us to really see and dropping the useless self our mistakes for what they are, abuse routine that is holding the process in limbo.

"Insights come where the person says ... 'The mode I am processing this through makes sense in a perverse way, but in the light of day it is not helping me or my kids," Saltz said.

Although it's tempting to run from negative feelings about ourselves, Katie Wock, a certified life coach specializing in forgiveness, encourages us to embrace them.

"Don't push these negative feelings away. Open them up an explore them," Wock said. "Try to remember the event in its entirety and try to name the emotions associated. This is hard. It's going to make you cringe and feel gross, but it's worth the effort." Once you have recalled the in-

cident to the best of your ability, consider why it still makes you react. Does it trigger some sense of incompetence or unworthiness? If so, try to untangle it.

"Anger and shame are often intertwined," Wock said. "Most likely, the anger's only purpose is to cover the hurt you may feel when remembering this incident. Let it go. It is not helping you."

Finally, consider the deeper lesson to be learned, and take it to heart. For example, if you are haunted by a hurtful comment you said to someone in the past, consider if you still have a habit of making hurtful comments.

"Sometimes, our brains will keep bringing up events which we thought we have made peace. If this is the case, there may be a long spiritual journey be- something more to the situation person's point of view. Objectivity might support a breakthrough."



## Proven Ways to Break Your **Cellphone Addiction**

Don't let your phone devour the time you need for a meaningful life and relationships

#### **JOSHUA BECKER**

he statistics about how we use our cellphones are overwhelming. The typical cellphone

user touches his or her phone 2,617 and 15 minutes on their phones talk about it–almost 10 years ago. each day. And half of all phone Choose one day each week (usupickups happen within three min-

utes of a previous one. And the impact of this usage is staggering. Researchers have found that our overuse of cellphones is:

- Reducing the quality of conversations
- Adversely impacting short-term memory and problem-solving Negatively affecting our sleep patterns
- Resulting in more negativity, distress, and less emotional recovery in young children
- Increasing obesity • And the positive correlation
- between smartphone addiction and depression is alarming.

You would think, given the statistics and what we know to be true suits in life. Since that first experiabout cellphone usage, it would be ment, I have used the 30-day reset easy to put the screen down and two additional times-each with walk away. But, as too many of us great success. know, the struggle is real.

As a parent of two who makes **Use apps to bolster** his living online in this modern world, I know full-well the addic- U There are apps for almost evtive nature of mobile devices and very problem in life. In fact, there how great the internal battle is to are even some wonderful apps to harness the benefits of the smart- help us limit our time on apps. phone without falling prey to its Here are some of my favorites: intentionally addictive design.

Nor do I overlook the ironic fact daily progress to manage your that many of you are reading this very article on your phone.

Phones are good and helpful. But we know all too well they also have the potential to become a negative tion to productivity and results in presence in our life–if we allow them.

So how do we keep cellphone usage in proper alignment with our lives?

Here are some tools and ideas I have used myself or learned from others to help cut down on cellphone usage.

7 Proven Ways to Break Your **Cellphone Addiction** 

Set aside one day a week This is, by far, the most com-**L**• mon approach I see among people who have taken intentional steps to curb their cellphone habit a habit of it.

Use a 30-Day Experiment to reset your usage

• For me personally, this has been the most helpful way to break my cellphone habit. My cellphone use, when not intentionally limited, tends to take over more and Christopher Mims writes a more of my free time. It happens weekly technology column unintentionally and quietly-I for The Wall Street Jourdon't even seem to notice it hap- nal-a job that certainly pening.

Seven years ago, I gave up my tech on a consistent smartphone for Lent and used it basis. His simple only for calling and texting (no and proven other apps allowed–even maps way to keep and photos). It was a 40-day period of reset that helped me align my usage with more important pur-

#### self-control

Space. Set goals and track your habits.

Forest. (\$1.99) Stay focused, be present. Forest is a beautifully designed app that brings gamificareal trees being planted based on your personal phone-use habits. Moment. Through short, daily exercises, Moment helps you use your phone in a healthy way.

Flipd. Lock away distracting apps for complete focus.

Screentime. Set daily usage limits on your phone or specific apps.

#### Don't charge your phone near your bed

• Want to know the best way to keep your kids off their phones too much? Don't allow them to charge their phones in their bedroom

times every day. 2,617 times. Most nowadays. I credit Tammy Strobel keep yourself off your phone? usage is simply changing the setpeople, on average, spend 3 hours for being the first person I heard Don't charge it in your bedroom. tings on your phone. The most phone more difficult (including Many of the negative effects of common suggested ideas: overuse (poor sleep, hindered ally a Saturday or a Sunday) and set communication and intimacy) • Turn off notifications your phone aside. That's it, make can be eliminated by keeping your cellphone out of your bedroom. As with many of the items on this list, this is a principle I've found personally helpful.

#### — Put your phone away when you walk in the **U**• door

requires the use of

life in healthy balance with his cellphone is to put it in a kitchen cabinet at the end of the workday. In his words, "The more you physically remove the phone, the more you can build a habit of having some ability to ignore it when it's on your person."

When you finish your day of work, put your phone in a drawer or cabinet. This is a helpful practice for all people, but I think it is especially important if you have kids or a spouse at home in need of your undivided attention.

#### Change your phone settings

• Among the most often sug-Want to know a great way to gested ideas for reducing cellphone

- Set screen to black-and-white Remove distraction-based apps from your home screen Set a longer passcode

• Turn on "do not disturb" mode

• Use airplane mode

In my opinion, turning off notifications is something

everyone should do

regardless of how habitual their cellphone use is. Just because someone in the world wants to text you, email you, or tag you in a post on Facebook doesn't mean they deserve your attention. My cellphone screen is not currently set to grayscale, but I have found that setting helpful in the past.

#### Put a hairband

around your phone. • In one of the most thoughtful personal stories I've ever read on how to overcome cellphone addiction, Brad Soroka recommended placing a hairband around your cellphone. When placed in the middle of the phone, the hairband allows users to answer phone calls easily, but makes other uses of the simple texting).

#### **Turning off** notifications is something everyone should do regardless of how habitual their cellphone use is.

In his words, "Every time you want to use your phone, this brings about a mindfulness exercise and makes you ask 'What is my intention?' If you really want to use the phone, set your intention for why, and remove the hairband."

The hairband trick isn't about making your phone impossible to use. The practice is about bringing greater mindfulness to each specific use of it, as opposed to mindlessly unlocking your phone every three minutes.

When used as a collection of tools to improve my work, health, parenting, and life, cellphones are wonderful and bring countless benefits. But when used mindlessly and unintentionally, they become a distraction from the things in life that matter most. Learning how to use our smart-

phones effectively may be one of the most important life skills any of us can learn.

Joshua Becker is an author, public speaker, and the founder and editor of Becoming Minimalist where he inspires others to live more by owning less. Visit BecomingMinimalist.com

# Put More Bliss in Your Life

Bliss is good for the mind, body, and for warding off distractions



#### LAWRENCE W. REED

"You can't buy happiness but you can buy fishing gear, and that's kind of the same thing," or so said an unknown author. As always, a week in the glorious wilds of Montana will be the calmest, most relaxing, and rejuvenating seven days of book exudes praise for this remarkable my year. I'll think of it at least once every 24 hours until I go again next year. We'll hike, spot moose and deer (and a bear if we're really lucky), devour our own cabin-cooked food, and solve many of the world's problems over a campfire with cigars and liquid refreshments. But I know the best moments will find us in the water with rod and reel in hand.

"Fishing" isn't the best term for what we'll be doing. We'll be "angling." Fishing is the generic word for catching fish, which can be accomplished with or without a rod and reel. For instance, you can catch a fish with string, with a club, with a net, with a spear, with dynamite, or even with your bare hands.

An angler uses a rod, a reel and, at the end of a line, a lure with a hook in it. The lures we're using in Montana are "flies" with names like "hopper," "nymph," and "midge"-man-made imitations of insects. We'll wade into streams up to our waists, stalk our prey, revel in the sheer beauty of a perfect cast and plant each fly where a trout can't resist it. We'll few for dinner.

#### Nature, Bliss, and Angling

Why do we love doing this? I'll speak for myself but I'm pretty sure Robert, Javi, and Tyler will agree: It's sheer bliss. We all need bliss. Bliss is good for the mind and body. It's the antidote to the unabating bombardment of noise, stress, and distractions we deal with the other 51 weeks of the year.

Nearly 400 years ago, an Englishman named Izaak Walton wrote a classic originally published on FEE.org

about fly fishing. "No book, apart from the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer," claims one reviewer, "has been more often reprinted." Titled The Compleat Angler and modernized in more recent editions as The Complete Angler, the first edition appeared in 1653. The pastime

"God never did make a more calm, quiet, innocent recreation than angling." "You will find angling ... [to have] a calmness of spirit and a world of blessing attending upon it."

"Blessings upon all that hate contention, and love quietness, and virtue, and angling."

"Doubt not but angling is so pleasant that it will prove to be, like virtue, a reward to itself."

Maybe fly fishing isn't your thing. For bliss, maybe you listen to classical music or lie on a beach, read a good book, or do a little yoga. That, of course, is perfectly alright. Life is personal and value is subjective. By whatever means you choose, I hope bliss is on your agenda.

Take the time to tune into a sustained experience of joy.

Be assured that when you get back to the grind in a few days, there'll be plenty of noise, stress, and distraction. Getting release most of what we catch but save a away from it for a spell helps keeps it in check.

> Lawrence W. Reed is president emeritus, Humphreys Family senior fellow, and Ron Manners ambassador for Global Liberty at the Foundation for Economic Education. He is also the author of "Real Heroes: Incredible True Stories of Courage, Character, and Conviction" and "Excuse Me, *Professor: Challenging the Myths* of Progressivism." This article was



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# Why Do We Think **Money Buys Happiness?**

A Pennsylvania couple's \$120,000 spending spree is case study on humanity

#### **EMILIANA R. SIMON-THOMAS**

hat would you do if a large amount of money suddenly appeared in your bank account?

For Robert and Tiffany Williams of Montoursville, Pennsylvania, this was more than a thought exercise. In May, their bank accidentally put \$120,000 in their account. While nobody knows quite why this happened, we all know what the police said they did next.

Instead of notifying their bank, the Williamses allegedly spent their inadvertent windfall on an SUV, two four-wheelers, and a camper, among other things. They also apparently gave \$15,000 to friends who needed money.

They are facing felony theft chargesand massive overdraft fees from the bank.

"All I'm going to say is we took some bad legal advice from some people, and it probably wasn't the best thing in the end," Robert Williams told CNN affiliate WNEP outside the court early this month, when the couple made their first appearance in the case.

Research on human social behavior suggests that we should not be too surprised by what they did–but we also shouldn't be too quick to draw cynical conclusions about humanity from this story.

Humans Prefer Fairness

Despite the allure of gratuitous wealth, exploiting others for personal profit is not considered admirable or virtuousand, in most circumstances, getting something for nothing doesn't feel nearly as good as earning it fair and square.

According to research in psychology and neuroscience, people are born with an overriding impulse to cooperate and to make choices that are fair and serve the greater good.

Very young babies prefer friendly, helpful people over villains, and children routinely help strangers without being prompted or congratulated.

Involuntary social isolation (e.g., loneliness, imprisonment) is inherently punishing, while having a friend close by makes challenges feel more doable, or even fun. People naturally form trusting relationships, and befriend, encourage, and console each other. All of this is for the purpose of fostering and maintaining long-term, supportive social bonds.

#### Wired to Cooperate

When people act generously, do something to uphold justice, or meet a shared goal, the reward pathways in their brains light up with pleasure. The

**People who** play the lottery believe winning will make them much happier than it actually does.

tenth cranial nerve, which relays key signals between the brain and body, inherently links systems for personal calm with pathways that drive interpersonal care and affection. Worldwide, the more charitable residents of different countries are, the higher their national happiness levels are.

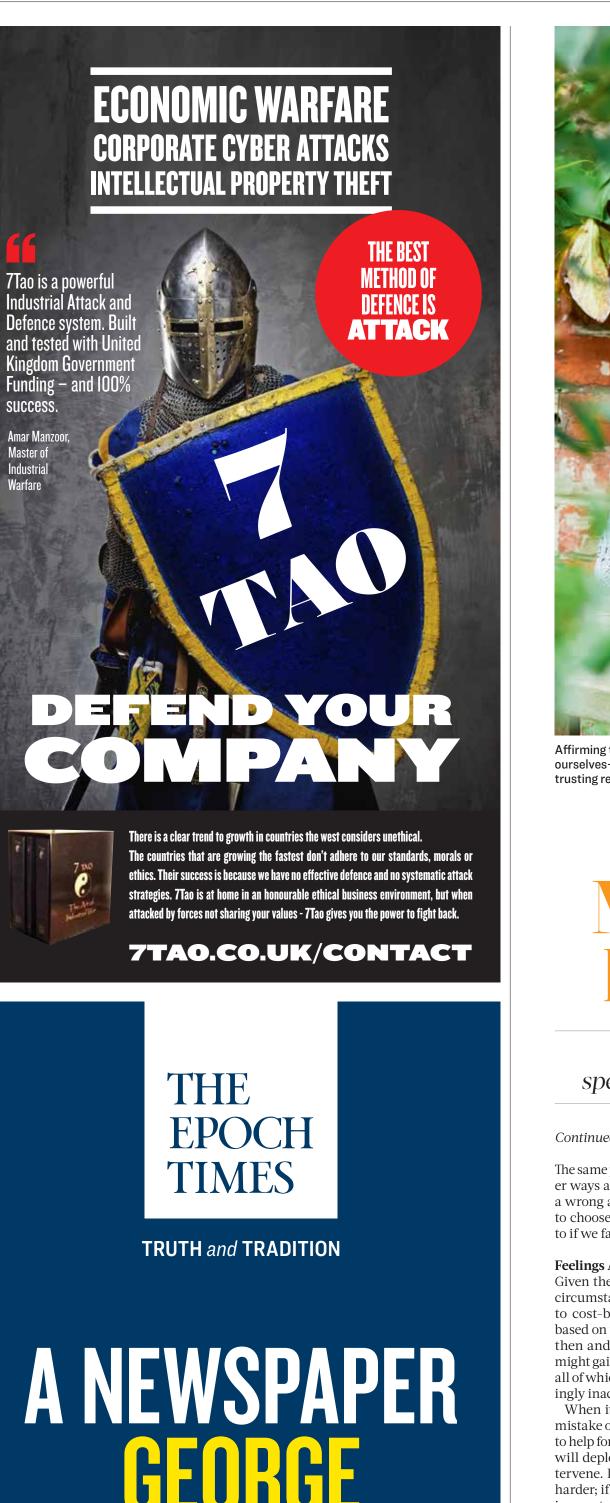
Humans, it turns out, are a deeply social species. Our innate "prosocial" urges to concern ourselves with the welfare of others and care about community, to enjoy being generous, and to prefer fair and equitable contexts, are tied to several biological systems that ensure our collective success.

At the same time, however, humans learn from experience and adapt to dynamic features of their physical and social settings. When we feel threatened, for example, our biological systems for self-preservation get priority over systems that help us socially connect.

In making decisions, we're strongly affected by how things are framed and what's normal amongst the people around us. Very small nudges in language can influence behavior.

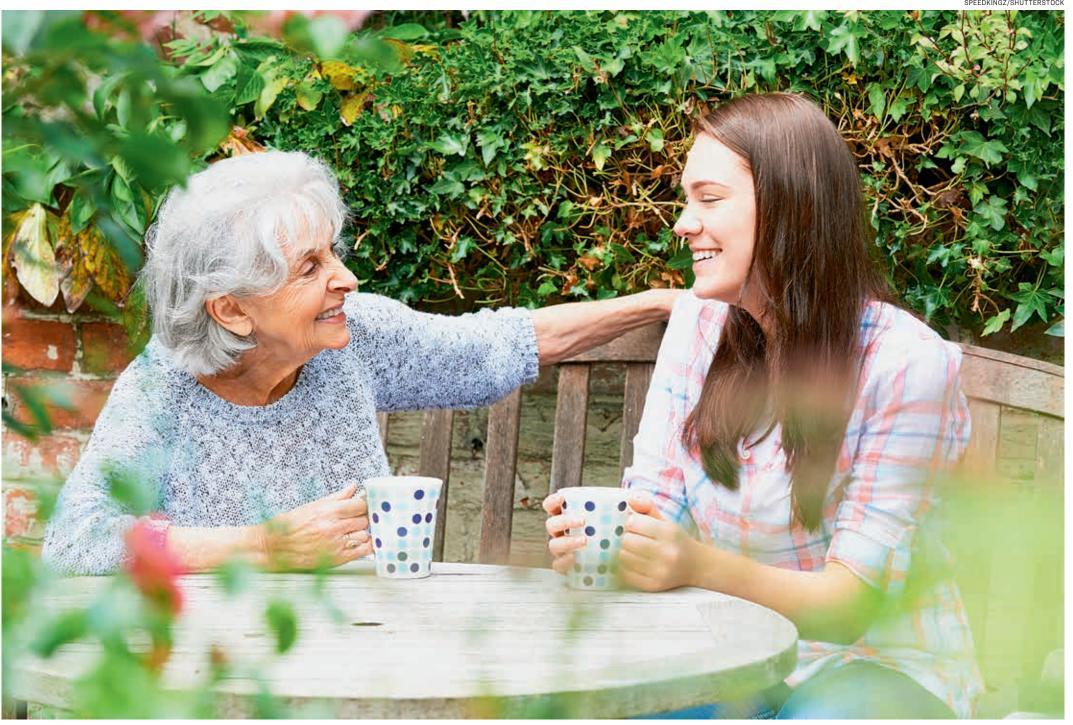
For example, if a laboratory task is called "The Community Game," people play more generously and cooperatively than they do if the exact same task is called "The Wall Street Game."

Continued on Page 10



# GEORGE WASHINGTON WOULD READ

## **SUBSCRIBE TODAY ReadEpoch.com**



Affirming the goodness in life and acknowledging that sources of goodness lie beyond ourselves - can strengthen our common humanity, healthy optimism, and binds us in trusting relationships where others help us and we lend help

# Why Do We Think Noney Buys Happiness?

A Pennsylvania couple's \$120,000 spending spree is case study on humanity

#### Continued from Page 9

The same principle seems to apply in other ways as well. If we see others choose a wrong answer, we're also more likely to choose the wrong answer compared to if we faced the same question alone.

#### Feelings Affect Decisions

Given the complex array of day-to-day circumstances and choices, people tend to cost-benefit analyze their options based on things like how they feel right then and there, what they think they might gain or lose, and who's watchingall of which, regrettably, can be surprisingly inaccurate.

When it comes to helping others, we mistake our self-doubt about being able to help for worry that the effort required will deplete us, and thus we fail to intervene. If others are watching, we try harder; if others are there but not reacting, we take the cue to do the same, even if there's smoke billowing under the door.

As a general pattern, people tend to over-focus on immediate threats and desires and on upholding a favorable personal and social identity. This mostly serves our safety and guides social experience. But under some circumstances, without watchful eyes or collaborative input, our brains can lead us astray.

Our predictions about day-to-day dangers or how pleasurable events will delight us don't often match what really happens. For example, driving to the beach is far more dangerous than sharks in the ocean, but many ocean swimmers fear sharks more than the drive. And people who play the lottery believe winning will make them much happier than it actually does.

With these facts in mind, it's not hard to see how people around the Williamses many have influenced them to take the money, by encouraging them to do so. The Williamses also likely overestimated how much pleasure the money would bring them and underestimated the problems that could come from taking the money. And since they likely planned to give

some money to their friends right from the start, they probably also thought it would boost their social identity.

#### When Do We Make Unethical

Choices?

There are also other factors that could have affected the Williamses decision. We can't know for sure, but science suggests that several other forces may have been in play.

First, the money came from a bank error not connected to a particular personwhich took empathy out of the equation. If the Williams had considered the fact that their gain would be another person's loss, they might have acted differently. This bank error issue also made it seem

like nobody was watching, which tends to make people less accountable. When laboratory studies give people chances to cheat in self-interest without hurting others, and without being detected, most do

Second, people who make morally questionable choices often underestimate their chances of getting caught in the long term, and fall prey to a more fleeting "cheaters high." People have a cognitive bias toward thinking that they are more invincible than others. The raw appeal of getting away with taking the money may have fueled the Williamses' decision to go on their ill-advised spending spree.

Thirdly, today's constantly-on media culture incessantly promotes the idea that happiness comes from consumerism and entertainment. Mainstream channels promise genuine happiness from the fleeting pleasure that comes with new possessions, increased status, or exclusive access to luxury. But studies show that pursuing happiness this way actually makes people less happy. It's possible that the Williamses, like many others, believed that their new things would bring more happiness than doing the right thing.

In a related vein, we are also in an age of social-media propelled FOMO (fear of missing out), or muted resentment about how much more impressive other people's privileges and opportunities are than our own. What better way to allay this malaise than to stock up on fancy stuff?

Fourth, the Williamses actually did do something nice-they gave away a chunk of the money to other people. Back to the cost-benefit equation, this variable likely bolstered their moral righteousness in a Robin Hood sort of way. The illusion of to the good things and positive influences restoring broader fairness by giving the nameless-faceless bank's money away to people who needed it may have countered their sensitivity to the immediate moral failure of theft.

Finally, news stories about people in positions of power behaving unethically constantly-on media and not having to pay the consequences have been dishearteningly common in recent days.

At the same time, there is a wide chasm between sectors of society with deeply conflicting social and political beliefs. These divided sectors face ambiguity about what is factual or "alternate factual," which undermines a spirit of na-

tional consensus and compromise. This combination of divisiveness and unaccountability is ideal for morally deviant behavior.

Put simply, we're strongly influenced by what's happening outside of our heads. If those influences are positive, we're more likely to make good decisions. If they're not–if we take "some bad legal advice from some people," as Robert Williams said-then we find ourselves on the way to jail.

#### The more charitable residents of different countries are, the higher their national happiness levels are.

Happiness and Social Goodness If freely spending \$120,000 doesn't boost happiness, then what does?

According to the science to date, the most promising route to real happiness is through meaningful social connection, contributing to the welfare of others, and having a sense of purpose–in short, feeling like you matter in the world. Fortunately, there are many science-backed practices, activities, and exercises for working toward this kind of happiness.

Mindfulness, for example, helps us be Emiliana R. Simon-Thomas holds a more aware of real-time inner experienc- doctorate in psychology and is the scies and outer circumstances, in ways that reduce overly self-focused, imagined, or otherwise biased thinking. Getting be- published on Greater Good Magazine.

yond this self-focus also helps tether decisions to compassionate, ethical values. At the Greater Good Science Center (GGSC), we define mindfulness as "maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment, through a gentle, nurturing lens." This is a practice that can make you more alert around you.

**Today's** culture incessantly promotes the idea that happiness comes from consumerism and entertainment.

Studies also showcase gratitude-which means affirming the goodness in life and acknowledging that sources of goodness lie beyond ourselves- can strengthen our common humanity, healthy optimism, and binds us in trusting relationships where others help us and we lend help. This is a happiness-increasing formula.

The skills of apology and forgiveness, which the Williamses might need to embrace, also improve happiness. The kind of happiness that comes from prioritizing activities and behaviors like gratitude and helping others feel good and last. They also improve health and longevity, lead to better relationships-and make you more successful. Happier people earn higher salaries, are rated as more socially appealing and deserving of leadership roles, and bring out more happiness in others.

Even if the Williamses hadn't gotten caught, it is likely that their short-sighted, self-focused, and dishonest choices would chip away at their happiness, even with their small nod to helping others.

While stories like this one can inspire cynicism, they are also great opportunities for reflection and learning. Are there aspects of popular culture and lifestyle that made their choice, alongside the bad legal advice, seem reasonable? Perhaps this story should compel us to

ask deeper questions about what kind of society we have-and what we can do to bring out the best in all of us.

ence director of the Greater Good Science Center. This article was originally **WISE HABITS** 

# Embrace Groundlessness When Everything Seems Out of Control

Life goes in some unexpected directions, but that can be wonderful if you let go-and let it flow

#### **LEO BABAUTA**

t's a fundamental fact of human life that we want our lives to be under control-we develop plans, goals, routines, systems, tools, and schedules to give structure to our lives.

But while developing some structure is a very helpful thing for most of us, the truth is, there's so much that we don't control. Life is chaotic.

It's what Pema Chodron calls "groundlessness"-the feeling of no solid ground under our feet. Other Buddhists might call it impermanence, which is a basic fact of life that we very often don't want to accept. Whatever you call it, we don't usually like it. People want solidity.

So what do we do when life feels out of control? We open up to it.

Normally, we seek some kind of control or permanence. The routines and systems, the hardened opinions about how life should be and how others should act, the comfort foods and distractions, all provide certainty and comfort. It contributes to why we procrastinate, put off healthy habits, get angry at others' behavior, and feel so much anxiety. But what if we could embrace the ground-

lessness?

#### Fresh, Open Experience of Groundlessness

We normally think of the world around us, other people, and ourselves as solid things. But in fact, the things we think of as solid are just our ideas of them. The things themselves are constantly in flux. Consider yourself:

- You think you're an individual person, step. separate from everything around you.
- from the breath of air you just took in? • You drink water and eat food that becomes a part of you, and that food was brought to you by others, the water was brought by a whole system of water distribution, a whole weather system before that. You are only existing because of everything around you. Where do you begin and everything else ends?
- You are made out of atoms with electrons that are bouncing off, generating heat waves from your body and sound waves from your voice. You radiate an electromagnetic field. In a very real way, you are this field, from a quantum perspective. And you are absorbing the energy from the atoms around you, through breath, your skin, and so on.

In fact, we're all just interrelated phenomena, constantly shifting. The line between one thing and everything else is in our minds.

OK, that might all seem too abstract. The idea is that nothing is as solid as we think, and everything is interconnected in such a way that we can't really say that "this is this, and that is that."

- To take it to an experiential level, try this:
- 1. Pause for a moment and take in everything around you in this moment. Notice all the objects, the space, the light, the sounds. Bring everything around you, yourself included, into your awareness.
- 2. See everything as less than solid. Imagine that everything isn't as solid as it seems. The air isn't solid, it's constantly flowing and changing-now imagine that everything else is similarly fluid, yourself included. Imagine that it's all just one big sea of changing flowing matter.
- 3. Experience the openness. If nothing is solid and permanent, then everything is changing and open. Feel this openness as freedom, a fresh, exhilarating vastness. Relax into this openness, and feel its beauty.

This is the openness of groundlessness. Nothing is solid, nothing is fixed, but this is the good news. Openness is unconstricted, free, peaceful, and gorgeous.

#### Learning to Find the Beauty in Groundlessness

So things seem out of control and it brings up anxiety in you. How can we work with this? First, we can allow ourselves to feel the sensations of uncertainty in our body as physical sensations. How does your fear, anxiety, frustration feel in your body? Forget the story about it and just feel the feeling. Being present with this is a courageous first

Next, we can experience the groundless But in fact, you breathe in the air and it ness of the situation. Your life is up in the becomes a part of you. What separates you air-feel the openness of this, the freedom of nothing being fixed. It's beautiful.

Yes, you have some things to do-that's the practical aspect of needing to get things done in your life. But for now, just experience the beautifully fresh freedom, the vastly open groundless moment.

Relax into it. Appreciate it. See it with fresh eyes, as if you've never experienced this particular moment before. Because you haven't. No one has.

Then, from this place of openness, ask yourself, "What's the most important thing I can do right now? What's the most loving thing I can do for myself and others?" Take that next step, not out of anxiety or fear, but out of love.

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

MARKUS GANN/SHUTTERSTOCH



Your life is up in the air-feel the openness of this, the freedom of nothing being fixed. It's beautiful

THINK WELL, WORK WELL



Sometimes our mind tells us an irrational story of how we can't do what we hope to do before we even give it a try. Sometimes we don't even notice that we're listening to it.

# Seeking Love Taught One Man How to Conquer His Thoughts

Albert Ellis's pursuit of romance taught him how to conquer his fear, help others beat learned helplessness

#### **JEFF GARTON**

ne of the difficult challenges we face in life is controlling what we think. But when we do we can improve how we feel and thus find the will to take action.

Controlling your thoughts allows you to choose your emotions, and doing so can affect all aspects of your life, including your work, where supervising your thinking can help you find and maintain a contented work life. A resource on this topic I sometimes refer to was developed based on a young boy's fear of talking with members of the opposite sex.

To conquer this fear, Albert Ellis forced himself to speak with as many women as possible. This would ultimately lead to his becoming a clinical psychologist and, in 1955, his creation of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) as the solution.

REBT is a form of psychotherapy that is still in use today. It was designed to help Dr. Ellis's clients understand how their doubts and fears were caused by thoughts they might not have realized were irrational. And by learning to challenge the rationality of your thoughts, you can prevent the negative feelings

that can impair your actions. REBT relies on what Ellis referred to as the ABC model where A stands for the activating event or adversity that occurs. B stands for the belief or thoughts you have about A, and C stands for the consequence of having that thought, the emotional reaction and behavior it motivated. Here's a sample of the ABC model in action.

A - The job you've had your eye on for some time suddenly becomes available and this prompts you to think about whether you should post for the opportunity.

B - You think your chances of being offered the job are dismal. You believe others are more qualified and your last performance rating wasn't that great. You think you may never get out of the job you're in.

C - You feel helpless, down, and blue about yourself and this situation. You consequently lack the mo-

By learning to challenge the rationality of your thoughts, you can prevent the negative feelings that can impair your actions.



Albert Ellis became an influential clinical psychologist via the unusual route of trying to talk

with women.

tivation to apply for the job you've always wanted. You give up. Was this the best decision? It depends on whether the beliefs that motivated it were rational. Was it rational to think you'll never move out of your current job? Or that other people are more qualified when you don't know who the competition is? Or that you won't be liked because of an old performance appraisal?

Not only was the belief in this example irrational, it motivated a self-destructive behavior that could have been avoided. If only the person had developed the skill of challenging or disputing their irrational thoughts and habitual pessimistic thinking.

In his bestselling book, "Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life," educator and psychologist Martin Seligman makes good use of Ellis's ABC model in explaining how to control your thoughts and feelings. That you should "go on the attack and give your thoughts an argument." Dr. Seligman is the founder of positive psychology and past presi-

dent of the American Psychological Association. He refers to the giving up reaction in the above example as learned hopelessness, which is caused by your explanatory style or how you habitually explain to yourself why things happen in either a pessimistic or optimistic manner.

In his research, Seligman found that people feel hopeless and give up when their explanatory beliefs take the form of being personal (e.g., your chances of being offered a job are dismal), pervasive (e.g., your performance appraisal will always become a problem), and permanent (e.g., you may never get out of the job you're in). But when explanatory beliefs take the opposite form, which is more optimistic, you become energized and won't give up. This is the benefit of attempting to control your thoughts.

But because your beliefs have been reinforced over time, their underlying thoughts can occur automatically or without you realizing what you were habitually thinking. And since they're your thoughts and beliefs, you make the mistake of believing they're true even if they may be irrational.

For example, if you were to encounter a stranger who gives you an unflattering comment, you're likely to believe what they said about you is untrue since they don't actually know you. But when you give yourself an unflattering comment, there's a greater chance you'll believe it's true. You don't normally dispute your own thoughts.

The solution to correct for Seligman's learned helplessness and faulty explanatory beliefs is his learned optimism. You learn to "tune-in to your internal dialogue." Pay attention to how you feel as an indicator of what you were thinking then look for evidence to dispute the thoughts that caused the feeling. You can also look for a different or better explanation to dispute your thoughts. Ask yourself, "Is there a less destructive way to look at this situation?"

While Seligman found that disputing your thoughts offers the most reliable means for improving your explanatory beliefs, he also suggests redeploying your attention. This involves distracting yourself from thinking a pessimistic thought.

Here are some of the examples he provides. When the troubling thought occurs, distract yourself from thinking by standing up and slapping the wall, while saying STOP. Carry a 3x5 inch card with the word STOP written on it and pull it out as a reminder. Wear a rubber band on your wrist and snap it when the thought occurs. Pick up a small nearby object and meditate on it instead of thinking the thought. Or write the thought down and move on without thinking any more about it.

The desire to establish a relationship with a woman certainly motivated Ellis to conquer his fears. And in doing so, he enabled all of us the means to conquer the difficulties involved in how we think, feel, and take action in a rational manner. To quote Seligman, "It's as easy as ABC."

Jeff Garton is a Milwaukee-based author, certified career coach, and former HR executive and training provider. He holds an MA degree in organizational communication and public personnel administration. He is the originator of the concept and instruction of career contentment.

# Gearing Down to an Early Death?

Exercise is important as you age, and downsizing your activity level can shorten your life

#### **SCOTT LEAR**

It's well-documented that regular exercise is good for us. Being active can reduce your risk for a variety of diseases such as heart disease and cancer, as well as improving psychological well-being. Current guidelines from the World Health Organization recommend getting 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per week. This works out to about 20 to 30 minutes per day of activity such as brisk walking, swimming, or playing tennis

It's not much of a time commitment, yet most people don't achieve it. Barely 20 percent of Canadians are considered physically active, according to national guidelines. And if things in Canada are the same as in the United States, this number likely hasn't changed in the past 15 years.

The good news is that the very best time to start exercising is now. Research from the United States and the UK reveals that middle-aged and older adults can reduce their risk of death by becoming more physically active, irrespective of past physical activity levels.

Why We Exercise Less as We Age Hidden among these statistics on physical activity is how much it decreases with age. As an adult, our activity usually peaks in our 20s. After that, there is a steady decline in vigorous activity (exercise that increases heart rate) throughout life, while light physical activity (such as easy walking) stays relatively constant until around 60 years of age and then declines. In addition, sedentary time

increases. Many will argue that this is part of the aging process: we get weaker as we age and therefore we can't do as much vigorous activity.

However, the physiological changes in our body with age likely only account for a small portion in the decline in activity. People who remain active see only a fraction of the decrease in fitness compared to their inactive counterparts.

Much of this decrease in activity is due to conscious and unconscious changes in life circumstances. In our 20s, we're more likely to have been engaged in competitive and recreational sports, rely more on ransit and active transportation as we can't afford our own car. Our entry-level



jobs are more active, but as we progress up the career ladder, we're likely to spend more time sitting at a desk.

Downsizing to an Early Death? Retirement is also another significant stage at which time most people experience a further decrease in activity. Even if one's job was sedentary, it usually provides a small amount of activity. So unless a conscious effort is made to keep some form of activity up in retirement, it will be lost.

Many people also downsize their home in retirement, perhaps moving to a one-story apartment and losing their yard. While there may be good reasons for downsizing, it also results in further decreases in activity, as there are no stairs to take or yard to manage. Some people downsize purposely, thinking they should be doing less activity.

As activity decreases, so do our fitness and strength levels. Because of those changes, we become even less capable of doing activities we did when we were younger, so we further decrease our activity, and the cycle continues. As a result, risk factors such as high blood pressure, obesity, and high blood

When it comes to exercise and health, what you have done lately is more important than what you did years or decades ago.

Scott Lear is a professor of health sciences at Simon Fraser University in Canada. This article was originally nuhlished on The Conversation.

sugar may appear, further increasing our risk for disease and early death.

#### It's Exercising Now That Matters

However, it's not all bad. Our body can also adapt to increasing activity. And when it comes to exercise and health, what you have done lately is more important than what you did years or decades ago.

A study of more than 300,000 men and women aged 50 to 71 living in the United States divided participants into maintainers (high level of activity during leisure time throughout life), decreasers (high activity in teens and low in later life), and increasers (low activity in teens and high in later life).

Of the three groups, maintainers had the lowest risk for early death, but the increasers had a similar benefit. The decreasers didn't fare much better than

people who were inactive their entire life. When looking at total physical activity (activity during leisure combined with occupational activity), similar results were reported among 15,000 people in the United Kingdom.

Again, what mattered most was how much activity people were doing most recently, not 25 years earlier. Those who increased their activity had the lowest risk for early death, even if their previous activity levels were high to begin with. In addition, people with heart disease or cancer also benefited to the same extent as those without.

#### Walk for 20 Minutes a Day

Beginning, or even restarting, an exercise program in middle-age or later can be daunting. From time to time, we hear inspiring stories of people running their first marathon in their 70s, but these people are the exception, and not everyone needs (or wants) to be exercising that much.

We demonstrated that as little as 20 minutes of brisk walking per day can result in a 20 percent reduction in early death over seven years. If you increase to 90 minutes of walking or 25 minutes of running, you get a 35 percent reduction.

The greatest gains come from doing nothing to doing something. And every little bit helps throughout the day, not just the time you go to the gym or do a run. Taking the stairs, going for a walk on your lunch, or parking farther away all add up.

BAIBAZ/SHUTTERSTOCK

#### **FOOD IS MEDICINE**

## Daily Probiotics Can Ease Depression and Anxiety

Brain-gut connection drives link between the microbes in our stomach and our state of mind

#### **DEBORAH MITCHELL**

Once upon a time, experts considered beneficial bacteria (probiotics) to be helpful in managing only physical symptoms and conditions, such as diarrhea, heartburn, and irritable bowel.

The presence of these microorganisms in the gut environment has been shown to help restore balance to the intestinal tract and assist in keeping related functions running smoothly.

Now, a growing number of studies are indicating that mental health is among those related functions.

This line of thinking goes handin-hand with the growing evidence of the strong link between the brain and the gut, also known as the brain-gut connection or brain-gut axis. This link is the basis of the constant communication and reciprocity between these two areas of the body and the effect they have collectively on our health.

#### **Probiotics for Mental Health**

The majority of research thus far has looked at the impact of probiotics on the gut bacteria environment in animals, and the findings are promising. We have seen, for

ics to mice, which modified the had taken the probiotic showed a they name names. For exbacteria in their gut, caused the rodents to be less anxious and lowered their levels of cortisol, a stress hormone

Every little

throughout

the day, not

just the time

you go to the

gym or do

a run.

bit helps

Human studies have demonstrated a significant relationship between beneficial bacteria in the gut and mental health. In a clinical trial involving 40 patients with major depressive disorder, for example, half were given a placebo and the other half took a probiotic supplement (Lactobacillus acidophilus, L. casei, and Bifidobacterium bifidum, 2 billion CFUs each) for eight weeks. At the end of the study, individuals who had taken the probiotic had significantly lower scores on a depression test when compared with placebo.

The probiotic group also experienced other benefits, including significantly lower insulin levels, reduced systemic inflammation, lower insulin resistance, and a significant rise in the antioxidant glutathione.

In another study, a group of individuals with chronic fatigue syndrome was given a probiotic and anxiety symptoms were reduced. For two months, the patients in the double-blind, randomized study took either a placebo or 24 billion CFUs of Lactobacillus casei strain. example, that providing probiot- At the end of the study, those who

significant decrease in anxiety ample, they call out neusymptoms.

#### **Probiotics and the Gut-Brain** Connection

Researchers are delving deep into the mysteries and functions of the gut-brain axis and uncovering various relationships. For example, a new study entitled "Anxiety, Depression, and the Microbiome: A Role for Gut Peptides," the authors explain how the two-way communication between the brain and the gut is very much a cooperative effort of different systems, including the immune, endocrine, enteric, and autonomic nervous systems.

Despite this realization, however, there is still much to be learned about all of the interactions and how they affect mental and physical health. The authors noted that, "given the emerging role of the gut-brain axis in a variety of brain disorders, such as anxiety creted in the gut, they may cause and depression, it is important to understand the contribution of bidirectional interactions between peptide hormones released from the gut and intestinal bacteria in the context of this axis."

These experts believe gut peptides and brain peptides are very significant in the regulation of brain-gut communication and gut is paramount to good mental as

ropeptide Y, pancreatic polypeptide, peptide YY, corticotropinreleasing factor, oxytocin, and ghrelin, among others.

These and other peptides play a significant role in brain-gut signaling in stress-related psychiatric conditions. Two examples are gut peptides that are known to bind with receptors on immune system cells and vagus nerve terminals, which enables indirect brain-gut communication.

Another way that probiotics affect mental health may be through their ability to produce neurotransmitters, such as serotonin, gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), and acetylcholine. When these neurotransmitters are secells in the gut lining to release molecules that send messages to the brain and impact behavior.

#### Taking Probiotics for Mental Health

So what does this mean for the average person? Maintaining a healthy balance of bacteria in the

**Healing the** body can help well as neal the mind, and physical fermented foods health. To like yogurt, that end, if can help. you aren't

getting enough probiotics in your diet, daily supplementation with a high-quality and clinically proven probiotic is recommended.

Deborah Mitchell is a freelance health writer who is passionate about animals and the environment. She has authored, co-authored, and written more than 50 books and thousands of articles on a wide range of topics. This article was originally published on NaturallySavvy.com

The most active ingredients in elery ... have shown hypolipidemic, antidiabetic, and hypotensive properties. Researchers

# **Eat This** Crunchy Veggie to Fight Metabolic Syndrome

Celery has a humble reputation considering it can combat metabolic syndrome

> etabolic syndrome is on the rise due to processed food and inactivity, but you can fight back by adding more celery to your diet. This unassuming vegetable contains a surprising blend of antioxidants, flavonoids, and other phytochemicals that work together, tackling metabolic syndrome via multiple pathways.

Nature is full of powerful compounds that can boost your health, even in vegetables as unassuming as celery-and for conditions as complex and prevalent as metabolic syndrome.

Metabolic syndrome is better described as a cluster of risk factors that can increase your risk of multiple chronic diseases, including heart disease, arthritis, chronic kidney disease, and cancer. The risk factors-abdominal obesity, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and dyslipidemia (abnormal levels of fats in your blood)–combine to seriously undermine your health, even leading to early death in some cases.

Metabolic syndrome is on the rise-spreading globally-fueled by an increasingly popular fastfood diet, along with decreases in physical activity. In the United States, metabolic syndrome increased from 1988 to 2012, at which time more than one-third of U.S. adults met the criteria to be diagnosed with this potentially debilitating condition.

The good news is that, as researchers wrote in Phytotherapy Research, "lifestyle adjustment and weight loss have a vital role." This brings me to the importance of celery-a veggie that offers multiple beneficial effects on metabolic syndrome.

#### **Celery Versus Oxidative Damage** and Inflammation

An excess of reactive oxygen species (oxidative stress) is a major contributing factor to metabolic syndrome. Everything from poor diet to environmental pollutants can lead to excessive oxidative stress in your system, but celery (Apium graveolens) contains a wealth of phytochemicals and antioxidants that can decrease oxidative damage. This includes substances such as phenolic acids flavones, flavonols, vitamin C, beta-carotene, and manganese.

#### **Celery contains**

#### a wealth of phytochemicals and antioxidants that can decrease oxidative damage.

Also impressive, celery contains phytochemicals known to decrease proinflammatory cytokines and inflammation, along with flavonoids that suppress cardiovascular inflammation. This is important, as low-grade inflammation-the type caused by poor diet and physical inactivity–is linked to metabolic syndrome. The duo of oxidative stress and inflammation is primarily

responsible for increasing heart disease and atherosclerosis, or hardening and narrowing of the arteries, in people with metabolic syndrome, and celery compounds are effective against both.

**Celery Lowers Blood Pressure** Celery can also benefit the high blood pressure often seen along with metabolic syndrome, due to compounds called phthalides (3-n-butylphthalide). Phthalides are responsible for celery's odor and help to expand smooth muscle, helping to lower blood pressure.

Anecdotally, celery's bloodpressure-lowering effects were noticed by one set of researchers when a family member's blood pressure declined after eating a quarter-pound of the crunchy vegetable daily for one week. A study using celery seed extract in people with high blood pressure also found the compound led to significant decreases in both systolic and diastolic

blood pressure.

Celery Is Antidiabetic Luteolin, a flavone flavonoid found in celery, is anti-obesity and anti-diabetic, helping to suppress inflammation. In an animal study, a luteolin-enriched supplement even prevented obesity and related metabolic disorders, such as dyslipidemia, insulin resistance, and inflammation-the same ones seen along with metabolic syndrome.

"The most active ingredients in celery ... have shown hypolipidemic, antidiabetic, and hypotensive properties," researchers said, adding clear-cut support for adding this versatile vegetable to your regular diet.

**Celery Fights Cancer, Boosts Brain Health** 

When you add whole foods such as celery to your diet, the benefits are far-reaching–a sentiment that's been understood since ancient times. Traditionally, celery has been used for stomach problems and as a heart tonic, as well as to treat joint problems.

Modern research has shown that beyond its role in fighting metabolic syndrome, celery also contains compounds, such as the flavoneapigenin, that have anticancer activity. It's also heralded for being protective to the digestive tract, including protecting the gastric mucosa from ulcers, and can reduce high triglycerides, another hallmark of metabolic syndrome.

Further, due to celery's antiinflammatory prowess, celery may improve cognitive health by dampening inflammatory cytokines in the brain. So while celery doesn't get nearly the attention that flashier vegetables like kale and broccoli do, it's earned a spot on the list of superfoods worth eating often.

#### How to Enjoy Celery

Part of what makes celery so lovable, aside from its healthy nature, is its extreme versatility. Add it to salads, soups, and stews. Juice it or eat it alone as a snackthe uses for celery are only limited by your imagination. If you choose to cook celery, steaming it may help retain the antioxidants better than boiling or blanching.

When choosing celery, look for crisp, bright green stalks-the fresher the better. Also choose organic celery to avoid exposure to pesticides, although it's worth noting that one of celery's additional claims to fame is helping to protect against pesticide-induced toxicity.

Not a fan of celery? Not to worry, as metabolic syndrome responds to a wide range of natural foods and lifestyle changes. Pomegranate, rosemary, coffee, and nuts are just a few examples of foods that, like celery, are beneficial for metabolic syndrome.

Combined with exercise and other positive lifestyle moves, such as avoiding sugary beverages and artificial sweeteners, you can support your health and even ward off chronic diseases like metabolic syndrome. View the latest evidence on natural substances for metabolic syndrome at GreenMedinfo's database of studies on the topic.

[Editors note: Please view online version for links to studies mentioned throughout the article.]

The GMI Research Group is dedicated to investigating the most important health and environmental issues of the day. This article was originally published on GreenMedinfo.com

# **Dietitian's Mistaken Claims** Confuse Obesity Health Risk

Experts challenge claim that stigma and yo-yo dieting are key factors behind chronic illness

#### JULIE APPLEBY

n a recent New York Times opinion column, dietitian Christy Harrison, an "intuitive eating coach" and L author, responded to a fellow clinician who had questioned some of her thoughts on the link between being overweight and de-

veloping other medical conditions. Harrison noted that although most health professionals have been taught that higher body mass index (BMI) causes poor health outcomes, she wrote, "unfortunately, that just isn't true."

She added: "We have a host of issues associated with high B.M.I.s. But correlation doesn't prove causation, and there's a significant body of research showing that weight stigma and weight cycling can explain most if not all of the associations we see between higher weights and poor health outcomes."

We decided to investigate the point she was making, which is at the center of a larger, often-heated debate about whether it is possible to be overweight and healthy at the same time-a perspective advocated by the "Health at Every Size" movement, of which Harrison is a part. With nearly 72 percent of U.S. adults considered overweight or obese, this is a pressing issue.

When we reached out to Harrison to find out the basis of her statement, she responded quickly, citing two papers as her main sources

it might be better to shift away from weight-loss efforts to improving health in other ways that are weight-neutral.

Its lead author, Linda Bacon, a professor at the University of California-Davis, wrote "Health at Every Size: The Surprising Truth About Your Weight," a 2010 book embraced by "fat acceptance" advocates.

It addresses Harrison's first point with this: "While it is well established that obesity is associated with increased risk for many diseases, causation is less well-

established."

in the Journal of Obesity, makes similar arguments.

#### Causation, Correlation,

Association: Let's Unpack That There is an old saw used by most statisticians: Correlation doesn't equal causation.

But what does that mean? Let's use a fake example: Some people have trouble seeing at night. Turns out all those people ate carrots. Ergo, there could be a correlation between eating carrots and night vision problems.

That doesn't prove anything else, though, such as causation. Correlation is necessary when trying to determine causation, but doesn't prove it

"Epidemiological studies never show causation, only association," said Dr. Samuel Klein, director of the Center for Human Nutrition at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. To establish cause, epidemiolo

gists need more evidence.

The best way, considered the "gold standard," is to randomly assign people to one group or another, feeding one group carrots and withholding carrots from the other. Researchers would then monitor any difference in how many people develop night vision problems

That's nifty, but not always possible or ethical. One could not, for example, randomly assign some people to a group and then cause them to become overweight.

Instead, researchers use differalready have the characteristicsay, carrot eating or being overweight-with those who don't to see if patterns emerge.

They use methods to control for things that might affect the results, such as age, gender, income level, whether a person smokes, and other factors. Then they can estimate how strong of an association or correlation they see.

With smoking and lung cancer, very strong associations were seen, leading to the conclusion that, yes, smoking causes lung cancer. But does excess weight cause other health conditions, such as diabe-The other paper, a 2014 piece tes, heart disease, cancer, sleep



Doctors have challenged the fat acceptance advocate who tried to discredit the link between obesity and chronic illness.

#### apnea, or joint problems?

"With the case of weight, the associations are much weaker," said Kendrin Sonneville, assistant professor of nutritional sciences at the University of Michigan School of Public Health

So on this point, Henderson's statement holds up. Current scientific research supports a correlation between being overweight and suffering poor health outcomes, but it doesn't definitively establish causation

But others, especially clinicians, say there is little doubt that being overweight strongly raises the risk of developing such health problems.

"This isn't up for debate," said Dr. Harold Bays, chief science officer for the Obesity Medicine Association, which represents practitio-

ners who treat overweight patients. "The overwhelming amount of clinical and scientific data supports obesity as a disease, both as a direct and indirect contributor to a large number of adverse metabolic and other health consequences," he said.

A 2018 Endocrine Society scientific statement, for example, looked across many studies of overweight and obesity, concluding that the two contribute to "type 2 diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease, The first, a 2011 piece published ent types of studies, such as those some cancers, kidney disease, hypertension, and cardiovascular in the Nutrition Journal, argues that compare groups of people who obstructive sleep apnea, gout, disease, the study said. osteoarthritis, and hepatobiliary disease, among others." Then things get murky.

> Bays and the other experts agreed that some people who are overweight might not develop other

conditions. "It is absolutely true that not all cases of diabetes, hypertension, cancer and fatty liver are due to obesity," said Bays.

They acknowledged that people who fall into the category of being obese or overweight may even appear healthy metabolically-at least

But there's also a caution. "If you say, 'Wait a minute, is

their blood sugar where we want it ... aren't their triglycerides a little high, and what about their blood pressure?' And that's not even to mention pain to the joints or sleep apnea," Bays said.

"When you drill down, very few people would truly meet the criteria of being metabolically healthy but obese, and if you follow them for five or 10 years, now the majority are going to have something."

#### What About the Stigma?

There's been less research around Harrison's second point: that most, if not all, of the diseases associated with being obese or overweight, is caused instead by the stigma heavy people face, or the yo-yo effect of dieting, losing weight and then gaining it back again, in regular cycles.

She pointed to research included in the paper by Bacon reporting that weight cycling could lead to hypertension or high blood pressure. The research, however, found associations though not specific causation.

Similarly, in another study, Harrison provided people who reported weight discrimination–6 percent of the sample studied–had twice the risk of physiological stress over nearly 10 years. Such stress can be associated with type 2 diabetes,

But most of those we spoke with There is far less evidence for the strongly disputed the sweeping statement that so many chronic conditions can be caused by stigma and weight cycling.

While those two things can factor into health problems, they are not responsible for most of the health outcomes seen by her patients, said Dr. Fatima Cody Stanford, an obesity medicine physician and an assistant professor of medicine and pediatrics at Harvard Medical School.

Stanford also takes issue with advocates who promote the idea that being overweight isn't a big health risk factor.

"The Health at Every Size movement goes against what we know about obesity as a disease," Stanford said. "Their aim in that movement is to not learn the science.'

#### Our Ruling

Harrison said the notion that a higher BMI causes poor health outcomes "just isn't true"-adding that "we have a host of issues associated with high BMIs. But correlation doesn't prove causation, and there's a significant body of research showing that weight stigma and weight cycling can explain most if not all of the associations we see between higher weights and poor health outcomes."

On a strict reading of the science, she has a point. It is very difficult to prove definitively what causes disease, and showing "correlation" is a different finding than causation. However, she appears to apply this standard selectively, using it both to undermine the relationship between high BMI and poor health outcomes, and as evidence of how weight cycling and stigma are linked to certain chronic health conditions.

But in the case of obesity, researchers in multiple studies nationally and worldwide have shown definite links between being overweight and developing diseases such as diabetes, and conditions such as painful joints. role that weight stigma and yo-yo dieting might have in the development of those medical problems, although the experts urge continuing research into those questions. We rate Harrison's statement as Mostly False.

Julie Appleby is a senior correspondent who reports on the health law's implementation, health care treatments and costs trends in health insurance, and policy affecting hospitals and other medical providers. This article was originally published on Kaiser Health News.

### How to Protect Yourself from Inflamm-aging

An immune response run amok may be accelerating your aging process

#### **MOHAN GARIKIPARITHI**

At any given moment, there are all kinds of things happening in your body that you have no idea are going on. Some are good, others are bad, and some are both. Inflammation is both.

When you get sick or hurt yourself, inflammation helps you heal. You know it's happening. Sometimes, people develop chronic inflammatory diseases that lead to flare-ups and pain, which can be managed with proper strategies.

Other times, you can suffer chronic inflammation and have absolutely no idea. This is very dangerous and can lead to heart disease, stroke, memory troubles, and more.

Uncontrolled chronic inflammation can drastically speed up the aging process of stress, increasing the risk for disease or rich in nutritious fruits and vegetables, as



Getting out in nature for a walk with friends is a great way to combat the stress that is eating years off your life.

a major health event. Termed "inflammaging," this is a process you may have the power to stop.

There are choices you can make to reduce the risk of chronic inflammation and put the brakes on inflamm-aging. Lifestyle choices shown to fight back against this hidden cause of illness and promote anti-aging effects include:

and put your cells and organs under a lot **Eating a heart-healthy diet:** Eating a diet

well as fatty fish and legumes, can fight back against inflammation. Fiber, antioxidants, healthy fats, and a host of vitamins and minerals can bolster immune health and work to both prevent and fix the problems resulting from an overactive immune system. Further, sugar and highly-processed foods promote inflammation.

Increase activity with mild cardio: Increasing activity also fights back against the pitfalls of inflamm-aging. Doing some mild exercise like walking, dancing, swimming, or anything else promotes lower inflammation. Aim for getting at least 30-minutes of activity per day on at least five days per week, but the more you get, the better.

Drop a few pounds: A major cause inflammation is body fat, primarily when it's located around the mid-section. Eating a healthier diet and embracing a more active lifestyle can result in a slimmer waistline.

**Prioritize sleep:** Aiming for 7 or 8 hours of sleep per night can help limit inflammation, promote heart health, and improve mood.

Moderate alcohol intake: Stick to daily maximums of 1 (women) and 2 (men) drinks per day, and do not drink within a few hours of bedtime.

Maintain strong relationships with friends and family: This is critical to keeping your heart and mind healthy. Face-to-face human contact has a calming reaction on the nervous system.

Adopt stress-management techniques: These can range from meditation, to afternoon walks, to time spent in nature. Even crafting or other hobbies can help you destress.

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.

for a while

#### NATURES MEDICINE

# Natural Ibuprofen Alternatives **Backed by Clinical Research**

Pain medication linked to thousands of cardiovascular disease-related deaths each year

#### **SAYER JI**

ith the public's growing awareness of the deadly side effects associated with the regular use of synthetic painkillers like ibuprofen, the need for natural, evidencebased alternatives has never been greater.

People generally think that over-the-counter drugs are safer than physician-prescribed ones. Unfortunately that doesn't hold true for drugs like ibuprofen, consumed at a rate of billions of doses annually, and responsible for thousands of cardiovascular disease-related deaths each year.

Did you know that Merck's blockbuster drug Vioxx caused more than 27,000 deaths and heart attacks between 1999 and 2003? In fact, it was the FDA's own drug safety researcher, David Graham, who blew the whistle on the agency in 2004 at a congressional hearing, estimating that more than 60,000 Americans died as a result of its use, and the FDA's inaction around their well-known side effects.

What does this have to do with ibuprofen? Researchers have known that ibuprofen is at least as dangerous as Vioxx for at least six years. But millions continue to take this drug, daily, without receiving adequate warning.

For more information, you can view Green-

Medinfo's ibuprofen database online. It collates the peer-reviewed research on the link between ibuprofen use and more than 30 different conditions.

Considering the veritable nightmare of adverse effects associated with ibuprofen use, it behooves both the medical profession and the health consumer to find safer alternatives, even if that means going back to the time-tested, multi-culturally validated tradition of herbal medicine.

#### **5** Clinically Validated, Natural Alternatives Worth Considering:

- 1. Arnica: A 2007 study found that arnica, applied topically, was as effective as ibuprofen for relieving symptoms associated with osteoarthritis of the wrist, and with less side effects.
- 2. Ginger: A 2009 study found that ginger was effective as ibuprofen for pain symptoms associated with difficult menstrual cycles (dysmenorrhea).
- 3. Turmeric: A 2014 study found that turmeric extracts were as effective as ibuprofen for relieving symptoms of knee osteoarthritis.
- 4. Thyme: A 2004 study found that an extract of thyme was as effective as ibuprofen in reducing pain and spasm symptoms associated with difficult menstrual cycles (dysmenorrhea).

- 5. Omega-3 fatty acids: A 2006 study found that omega-3 fatty acid supplementation with fish oil helped neurosurgery patients reduce their need for medications, and experience results consistent with previous research indicating palliative effects at least as effective as ibuprofen.
- 6. Cinnamon: A 2015 study found that cinnamon was as effective as ibuprofen for pain associated with difficult menstrual cycles (dysmenorrhea).

For related research, use the GreenMedInfo databases on natural anti-inflammatories and analgesics. Consider also that ibuprofen isn't the only NSAID with debilitating and even lethal side effects. Learn more about the dangers of this chemical class, including aspirin, on our NSAID database.

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



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