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THE EPOCH TIMES

MIND & BODY

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Magnesium deficiency has never been on doctor's radars and cannot be revealed through their go-to blood tests.

The Endless Effects of Magnesium Deficiency

We are starving en masse for the most important mineral our bodies need

MARK SIRCUS

Few people are aware of the enormous role magnesium plays in our bodies. Magnesium is by far the most important mineral in the body. And yet, magnesium deficiency is often misdiagnosed because it does not show up in blood tests—only 1 percent of the body's magnesium is stored in the blood.

Most doctors and laboratories don't even include magnesium status in routine blood tests. Thus, most doctors don't know when their patients are deficient in magnesium, even though studies show that the majority of Americans are deficient in magnesium.

Dr. Norman Shealy's notes that "Every known illness is associated with a magnesium deficiency." He describes it as "the most critical mineral required for electrical stability of every cell in the body. A magnesium deficiency may be responsible for more diseases than any other nutrient."

This truth exposes a gaping hole in modern medicine. Without addressing this key issue, it is impossible to address what good many treatments really offer. If a key mineral is missing and the symptoms of that are treated with drugs or treatments, which themselves have side effects, who is responsible for the continued sickness or death of that individual? Should these be considered a form of iatrogenic death, meaning they were induced in a patient by a physician's treatment, i.e. a "complication"?

One has to recognize the signs of magnesium thirst or hunger on their own since allopathic medicine is lost in this regard. It is much more subtle than our regular hunger and thirst, but it is comparable. And it is not surprising that this thirst is overlooked, by ourselves or our physicians, given our actual thirst is

commonly overlooked, leaving many of us in a constant state of mild hydration (another deficiency under-emphasized in modern clinical practice).

After oxygen, water, and basic food, magnesium may be the most vitally important element needed by our bodies, yet hardly known. It outranks and regulates calcium, potassium, and sodium, and has countless impacts on bodily functions. Millions suffer daily from magnesium deficiency without even knowing it.

Symptoms of Magnesium Deficiency:

- Extreme thirst
- Extreme hunger
- Frequent urination
- Sores or bruises that heal slowly
- Dry, itchy skin
- Unexplained weight loss
- Blurry vision that changes from day to day
- Unusual tiredness or drowsiness
- Tingling or numbness in the hands or feet
- Frequent or recurring skin, gum, bladder or vaginal yeast infections

Thirst can indicate a lack of water but it can also mean that one is not getting enough nutrients and electrolytes. Magnesium, Potassium, Bicarbonate, Chloride, and Sodium are some principle examples.

Some doctors have struggled to give patients an answer for their constant thirst, dismissing it as "in their head." It is hard to comprehend that such an essential element to our well being, so widely deficient, isn't one of the first things addressed in modern clinical practice.

Magnesium deficiency can be tormenting, however it manifests. A lack of this mineral can rob an athlete of their ability to perform, steal our sleep, or spur a rise in our background stress levels. Magnesium deficiency will

lower our quality of life.

Magnesium deficiency has never been on doctor's radars and cannot be revealed through their go-to blood tests. As a result magnesium deficiencies have snowballed.

Symptoms of Magnesium Deficiency

Dr. Sidney Baker gave a full outline of magnesium deficiency in a recent article, warning that "magnesium deficiency can affect virtually every organ system of the body."

She describes results that are strangely disjointed and irregular

"One may experience twitches, cramps, muscle tension, muscle soreness, including backaches, neck pain, tension headaches, and jaw joint (or TMJ) dysfunction. Also, one may experience chest tightness or a peculiar sensation that he can't take a deep breath. Sometimes a person may sigh a lot."

Slight magnesium deficiency can make a person irritable, highly strung, sensitive to noise, hyper excitable, apprehensive, and belligerent.

She goes on: "Symptoms involving impaired contraction of smooth muscles include constipation; urinary spasms; menstrual cramps; difficulty swallowing or a lump in the throat—especially provoked by eating sugar; photophobia, especially difficulty adjusting to oncoming bright headlights in the absence of eye disease; and loud noise sensitivity from stapedius muscle tension in the ear."

The bewildering list includes, she warns, a marked effect on the central nervous system leading to "insomnia, anxiety, hyperactivity, and restlessness with constant movement, panic attacks, agoraphobia, and premenstrual irritability."

Her list of symptoms of involving the peripheral nervous system sound like something from a bizarre cartoon, abnormal feelings like "numbness, tingling, and other abnormal sensations, such as zips, zaps and vibratory sensations."

Within the cardiovascular system, she outlines a list that will be familiar to many people who have been treated: "palpitations, heart arrhythmias, and angina due to spasms of the coronary arteries, high blood pressure, and mitral

valve prolapse." While symptoms can appear on their own, some do group together, she notes.

"For example, people with mitral valve prolapse frequently have palpitations, anxiety, panic attacks, and premenstrual symptoms."

There are also other symptoms that seem relatively common, she said. "People with magnesium deficiency often seem to be 'uptight.' Other general symptoms include a salt craving, both carbohydrate craving, and carbohydrate intolerance, especially of chocolate."

These far-reaching symptoms stem from the many body functions dependent on this crucial mineral that has disappeared from our food.

Magnesium is needed by every cell in the body including brain cells.

It has a vital role in hundreds of enzyme systems and functions related to cell metabolism.

It is also essential for the synthesis of proteins, for the utilization of fats and carbohydrates, and to produce specific detoxification enzymes. It is also important for energy production related to cell detoxification.

The Cost Of Missing Magnesium

Doctors write millions of prescriptions for tranquilizers each year for nervousness, irritability, and jitters—symptoms closely associated with magnesium deficiency.

Slight magnesium deficiency can make a person irritable, highly-strung, sensitive to noise, hyper-excitabile, apprehensive, and belligerent. If the deficiency is more severe or prolonged, they may develop twitchiness, tremors, irregular pulse, insomnia, muscle weakness, jerkiness, and leg and foot cramps.

If magnesium is severely deficient, the brain is particularly affected. Clouded thinking, confusion, disorientation, and marked depression can all develop. Even the terrifying hallucinations of delirium tremens (aka, 'the DTs') are largely brought on by a lack of this nutrient.

These afflictions can be remedied by supplementing with magnesium. And if magnesium deficiency is not addressed, the effects can cascade.

Our bodies lose large amounts of calcium in the urine when magnesium is undersupplied, which can then lead to rampant tooth decay, poor bone development, osteoporosis and slow healing of broken bones and fractures. Vitamin B6 (pyridoxine) uses magnesium to reduce and dissolve calcium phosphate, aka kidney stones.

Magnesium deficiency may be a common factor associated with insu-

lin resistance. Symptoms of multiple sclerosis (MS) that are also symptoms of magnesium deficiency include muscle spasms, weakness, twitching, muscle atrophy, an inability to control the bladder, nystagmus (rapid eye movements), hearing loss, and osteoporosis. People with MS also have higher rates of epilepsy. Epilepsy has also been linked to magnesium deficiencies.

Thirst can indicate a lack of water but it can also mean that one is not getting enough nutrients and electrolytes.

Severe magnesium deficiency can result in low levels of calcium in the blood (hypocalcemia). Magnesium deficiency is also associated with low levels of potassium in the blood (hypokalemia). Magnesium levels drop at night, leading to poor REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep cycles and unrefreshed sleep. Headaches, blurred vision, mouth ulcers, fatigue, and anxiety are also early signs of depletion.

We hear all the time about how heart disease is the number one health crisis in the country, about how high blood pressure is the "silent killer," and about how ever-increasing numbers of our citizens are having their lives and the lives of their families destroyed by diabetes.

But wait a minute, aren't those the same symptoms for diabetes? Many people have diabetes for about 5 years before they show strong symptoms. By that time, some people already have eye, kidney, gum or nerve damage caused by the deteriorating condition of their cells due to insulin resistance and magnesium deficiency.

Magnesium deficiency is synonymous with diabetes and is likely at the root of many if not all cardiovascular problems.

Magnesium deficiency is a predictor of diabetes and heart disease both. Diabetics both need more magnesium and lose more magnesium than most people. In two new studies, in both men and women, those who consumed the most magnesium in their diet were least likely to develop type 2 diabetes, according to a report in the January 2006 issue of the journal Diabetes Care.

Until now, very few large studies have directly examined the long-term effects of dietary magnesium on diabetes. Dr. Simin Liu of the Harvard Medical School and School of Public Health in Boston

says, "Our studies provided some direct evidence that greater intake of dietary magnesium may have a long-term protective effect on lowering risk," said Liu, who was involved in both studies.

The thirst of diabetes is part of the body's response to excessive urination. The excessive urination is the body's attempt to get rid of the extra glucose in the blood. This excessive urination causes increased thirst. But we have to look at what is causing this level of disharmony. We have to probe deeper into layers of cause. The body needs to dump glucose because of increasing insulin resistance and that resistance is being fueled directly by magnesium deficiency, which makes toxic insults more damaging to the tissues at the same time.

Magnesium deficiency has never been on doctor's radars and cannot be revealed through their go-to blood tests.

When diabetics' blood sugars get too high, the body creates "ketones" as a by-product of breaking down fats. These ketones cause blood acidity which causes "acidosis" of the blood, leading to diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA). This is a very dangerous condition that can lead to coma and death. It is also called "diabetic acidosis," "ketosis," "ketoacidosis" or "diabetic coma." DKA is a common way for new type 1 diabetics to be diagnosed. If they fail to seek medical advice on symptoms like urination, which is driving thirst, they can die of DKA.

Oral magnesium supplements reduce erythrocyte dehydration. In general, optimal balances of electrolytes are necessary to maintain the best possible hydration. Diabetic thirst is initiated specifically by magnesium deficiency with relative calcium excess in the cells. Even water, our most basic nutrient, starts having a hard time getting into the cells with more going out through the kidneys.

Autism and Magnesium Deficiency

When dealing with autism spectrum and other neurological disorders in children it is important to know the signs of low magnesium: restless, can't keep still, body rocking, grinding teeth, hiccups, noise sensitive, poor attention span, poor concentration, irritable, aggressive, ready to explode, easily stressed. When it comes to children today, we need to assume a large magnesium deficiency for several reasons.

1. The foods they are eating are stripped of magnesium because foods in general, as we shall see below are declining in mineral content in an alarming way.
2. The foods many children eat are highly processed junk food that do not provide real nutrition to the body.
3. Because most children on the spectrum are not absorbing the minerals they need even when present in the gut. Magnesium absorption is dependent on intestinal health, which is compromised totally in leaky gut syndromes and other intestinal problems that are common in autism syndrome disorders.
4. Because the oral supplements doctors rely on are not easily absorbed, because they are not in the right form and because magnesium, in general, is not administered easily orally.

Too many doctors are ignorant of the importance of magnesium, making many medical interventions problematic because they further drive down magnesium levels when they should be driving them up. Many, if not most pharmaceutical drugs, drive magnesium levels into very dangerous zones. Surgery done without increasing magnesium levels is much more dangerous than surgery done with. In fact, this is one of the few times that doctors really pay attention to magnesium levels.

Dr. Mark Sircus, Ac., OMD, DM (P) (acupunctureist, doctor of oriental and pastoral medicine) is a prolific writer and author of some astounding medical and health-related books. His books are heavily referenced, and for many years Dr. Sircus has been researching into the human condition and into the causes of disease; he has distilled many of the divergent medical systems into a new form of medicine that he has coined Natural Allopathic Medicine. This article was originally published on GreenMedInfo.com

Want to Change the World? First Change Yourself

Don't underestimate the power that self-improvement can release in your circle

TYLER BRANDT

The world is an imperfect place, full of suffering and tragedy. The humanitarian in each of us longs to change the world. For example, maybe you would like to alleviate crippling poverty, disease, or mental illness. Maybe you wish people would stop killing each other, be it by homicide, war, or even genocide. Maybe you wish every human being could have a roof over her head, a stable income, and something decent to eat.

But doubts may creep in. Who are you to make these things happen? Isn't it true that you are just a small pawn in an intricate game, subject to the arbitrary power of ruthless politicians and corrupt corporations? Maybe the only way to make a change is through the political process: by supporting some political savior or by becoming one yourself. Or maybe you become deeply nihilistic, give up all hope of changing anything, and distract yourself from the awful tragedy of the world by pursuing a life of shallow pleasures. After all, you are just one individual in the face of billions of others.

The question becomes: What can you do in this imperfect world?

Maybe what you need is a change in perspective.

First Change Yourself

Before you can get to the level of solving such gargantuan, globe-spanning problems, you must first change yourself. It sounds insignificant, but don't underestimate the power that self-improvement can bring.

Ask yourself what things you can do today to make the world a better place. What bad habits are you clinging to? What behaviors do you wish to change? Are you following a path that brings you fulfillment? Are you taking adequate time to recognize the importance of the others around you? Could your room use a little cleaning? Could the rest of your home use some work, too?

This is the central message of Jordan B. Peterson, a psychologist whose perspective has taken the world of public discourse by storm and has transformed the lives of many.

When many consider the flawed nature of existence, they think that change must happen at the highest level possible. Perhaps they wish for sweeping global legislation regarding climate change or poverty alleviation. Perhaps they blame politicians for the world's woes and seek to elect "better" politicians or wish to overturn the entire system. While the motivation is understandable, not only is it difficult to



A moment to consider who you are and what you would do with yourself can be the first step on a journey to make the world a better place.

design perfect systems, it is also near impossible to actually implement them.

As Peterson says:

You want to be very careful about doing large-scale experimentation with large-scale systems because the probability that if you implement a scheme in a large-scale social system that the scheme will have the result you intended is negligible. What will happen will be something that you don't intend and, even worse, something that works at counter-purposes to your original intent.

If we accept this premise, what can we do if we still want to achieve good in the world? To that, Peterson says:

You try not to step outside the boundaries of your competence and you start small and you start with the things that you actually could adjust, that you actually do understand, that you actually could fix.

You should restrict your attempts to fix things to what's at hand. So there's probably things about you that you could fix, things that you know that aren't right.

After starting small and realizing how difficult it is to even change things at the individual level, we might develop some humility and rescind our grandiose plans for the world. As Peterson says:

It's hard to put yourself together, it's really hard to put your family together, why the hell do you think you can put the world together? Because obviously the world is more complicated than you and your family. So if you're stymied in your attempts even to set your own house in order, which of course you are, then you would think that what that would do would be to make you very very leery about announcing your broadscale plans for social revolution.

As soon as you start improving, others around will take notice. Hopefully, your growth inspires people in your immediate sphere to grow alongside you. But, if others try to bring you down out of jealousy, don't let that distract you. All you can do is offer a shining example for those ready to follow it.

If every individual would dedicate themselves towards first bettering their own corner of the world—the part where they have the most interest and the best incentives—imagine how much better the whole world would be.

Tyler Brandt is an associate editor at FEE. He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin–Madison with a bachelor's in political science. This article was first published on FEE.org

THE ROOT CAUSE

Autism Is Treatable

It is time to move past the outdated psychiatric paradigm



Conventional medicine practitioners have very little to offer these children because they have been trained that there is no treatment or cure for autism.

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ARMEN NIKOGOSIAN

Over the past 30 years, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has gone from a rare and obscure medical curiosity to a common developmental disorder affecting millions of American children. Conventional medical and psychiatric treatments are limited to therapy and a handful of minimally effective drugs. But decades of research and clinical practice from a small group of dedicated practitioners has shown that autism is, in fact, treatable.

ASD affects 1 in 59 children and now comprises 1 percent of the whole population of the United States. Lifetime cost over the entire lifespan of each autistic individual is estimated at nearly \$2 million per person. Thirty-five percent of young adults with ASD are unable to work and are dependent on family or public services for survival. Prevalence is projected to increase 15-25 percent in the coming decade, making all these figures even worse. The average American gives this problem very little attention until it enters their lives through an affected family member. At this rate, a larger and larger proportion of Americans will be thinking about it soon.

ASD is a behavioral and neurodevelopmental disorder characterized clinically by delays and qualitative differences in communication and social interactions as well as repetitive behaviors and restricted interests. Cur-



The average American gives this problem very little attention until it enters their lives through an affected family member.

PATCHARIN SIMALHEK/SHUTTERSTOCK

rently, it is characterized by the vast majority of healthcare practitioners as a subjective psychiatric diagnosis based on behaviors exhibited in the child rather than an objective medical diagnosis based on measurable core clinical imbalances resulting in their abnormal behaviors. This subtle but powerful difference in diagnosing patients with autism has resulted in profound effects on medical trials. Many of these trials have been plagued with inconsistent results because patients are being selected based on the subjective behaviors they exhibit rather than the objective clinical imbalances they possess that cause or contribute to the behaviors. This effectively reduces the power of the study and dilutes the therapeutic potential of the therapeutic agent being studied.

There is no single cause of autism. Instead, the causes are as varied and diverse as the individuals who are affected. This is the primary reason why the pharmaceutical industry has failed to produce any effective treatments beyond simple symptom control (such as antipsychotics for agitation or stimulants for inattention).

I want to be clear on which ASD individuals I am not referring to. There is a growing number of very high functioning ASD adolescents and adults who can be seen writing long, eloquent social media posts outlining their support for neurodiversity and see no need to change anything

in themselves. I commend these individuals for their bravery and the level of function they have achieved.

I am referring to ASD children who are unable to engage in a simple conversation with loved ones and cannot communicate their needs. These children may spend the majority of their day engaged in repetitive, self-stimulatory activities and are frequently unable to go on a simple shopping trip or even sit in a restaurant with their parents without one severe melt-down after another. These are the children who have a very low level of function and without intervention will likely be dependent on others for their survival well into adulthood.

Conventional medicine practitioners have very little to offer these children because they have been trained that there is no treatment or cure for autism and the child's symptoms and behaviors are a result of their autism. In the current diagnostic paradigm, the diagnosis of autism in the child is made subjectively, based on the symptoms and behaviors they exhibit. This reasoning dictates that the symptoms define the disease (behaviors, therefore, autism) and the disease causes the symptoms (autism, therefore, behaviors). This is a logical fallacy called circular cause and consequence. With this illogical thinking, it is no wonder conventional medicine has little to offer these children beyond an applied behavior analysis (ABA) therapy referral and possibly a symptom-suppressing medication.

Continued on Page 12

ECONOMIC WARFARE CORPORATE CYBER ATTACKS INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY THEFT

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Sorry Darwin, but Bacteria Don't Compete to Survive

Bacteria reveal that cooperation, not competition, is the key to success and survival

MICHAEL SKOV JENSEN

“Survival of the friendliest” outweighs “the survival of the fittest” for groups of bacteria, according to new research. The research reveals that bacteria would rather unite against external threats, such as antibiotics, than fight against each other. The discovery is a major step towards understanding complex bacteria interactions and the development of new treatment models for a wide range of human diseases and new green technologies.

“When it comes to microorganisms like bacteria, our findings reveal the most cooperative ones survive.

Soren Johannes Sorensen, professor of microbiology at the University of Copenhagen

For a number of years, the researchers have studied how combinations of bacteria behave together when in a confined area. After investigating many thousands of combinations it has become clear that bacteria cooperate to survive and that these results contradict what Darwin said in his theories of evolution.

“In the classic Darwinian mindset, competition is the name of the game. The best suited survive and outcompete those less well suited. However, when it comes to microorganisms like bacteria, our findings reveal the most cooperative ones survive,” explains Soren Johannes Sorensen, a professor of microbiology at the University of Copenhagen.

Bacteria Survival as Team Sport
By isolating bacteria from a small corn husk (where they were forced to “fight” for space) the scientists were able to investigate the degree to which bacteria compete or cooperate to survive. They selected bacterial strains based on their ability to grow together. Researchers measured bacterial biofilm, a slimy pro-

ductive layer that shields bacteria against external threats such as antibiotics or predators. When bacteria are healthy, they produce more biofilm and become stronger and more resilient.

Time after time, the researchers observed the same result: Instead of the strongest out-competing the others in biofilm production, bacteria allowed space for the weakest, so they could grow better than they would have on their own. At the same time, the researchers could see that the bacteria split up laborious tasks by shutting down unnecessary mechanisms and sharing them with their neighbors.

“It may well be that Henry Ford thought that he had found something brilliant when he introduced the assembly line and worker specialization, but bacteria have been taking advantage of this strategy for a billion years,” Sorensen said, referring to the oldest known bacterial fossils with biofilm.

“Our new study demonstrates that bacteria organize themselves in a structured way, distribute work, and even help each other. This means that we can find out which bacteria cooperate, and possibly, which ones depend on ... by looking at who sits next to who,” he said.

All Alone Versus Part of the Team

The researchers also investigated what properties bacteria had when they were alone versus when they were with other bacteria. Humans often discuss the workplace or group synergy, and how people inspire each other. Bacteria take this one step further when they survive in small communities.

“Bacteria take our understanding of group synergy and inspiration to a completely different level. They induce attributes in their neighbors that would otherwise remain dormant. In this way groups of bacteria can express properties that aren't possible when they are alone. When they are together totally new features can suddenly emerge,” Sorensen said.

This article was originally published by the University of Copenhagen in Denmark. Republished via Futurity.org under Creative Commons License 4.0.



Bacteria forced to live in a confined space found ways to share resources and cooperate, researchers found.

CANCER UP CLOSE

Getting a Breast Thermography Scan After Cancer

A lump spurred a desperate search for answers when it came the week after cancer treatment ended

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 Gonçalves's cancer journey from pre-diagnosis to life after treatment.

My mother had breast cancer over 20 years ago, so you can understand why I freaked out when a kidney-shaped lump appeared in my left armpit one week after I ended five and a half weeks of radiation/oral chemo treatments.

“How could this be happening?” I thought to myself. I started crying and couldn't help but touch the lump constantly. I immediately thought the worst and ran to the internet to look up “lumps in the armpit.” And of course, I found all manner of diagnoses.

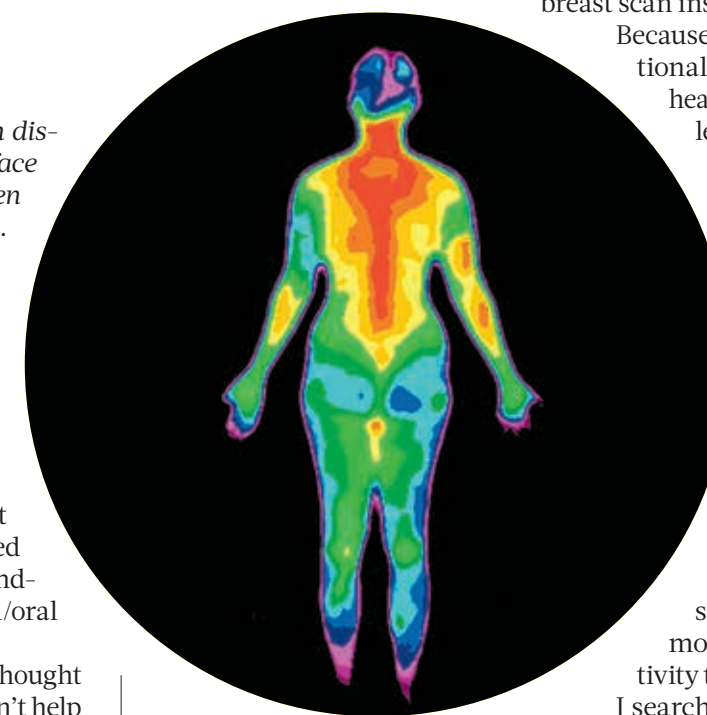
It could be a swollen lymph node, an ingrown or infected underarm hair shaft, or just a benign cyst like a pimple. Or, it could be cancer.

I concluded that I must have a swollen lymph node. The reason I chose this option is that everything I read said lymph nodes are shaped like kidney beans, exactly like mine. It was hard as a rock and very painful too.

I called the cancer center I was being treated at and spoke to my nurse navigator (case manager) to share this news.

“Do you have any injuries/cuts near your arm? It could be an infection from that or an infected hair follicle,” she asked.

“No,” I replied. “Well, I'll let the doctor know but maybe you should go see your GP. Let's talk again in a bit and see how it



Thermography attempts to decipher what is happening inside the body by closely examining its heat signature.

ANITA VAN DEN BROEK/SHUTTERSTOCK

goes,” she said, not sounding concerned. “OK thanks,” I said, adding a regretful “for nothing” in my mind.

I e-mailed my functional medicine doctor in Michigan. She was more concerned, especially since the lump was hard and not soft. She asked me to take a picture and send it to her. She didn't like the look of it and said we needed to watch it. I was asked to take another picture and send it to her in a week to see if it was growing or going away, since a cancerous tumor grows quickly and wouldn't show signs of shrinking on its own, according to her.

I appreciated this response. At least somebody cared enough to look at it. However, I wasn't fully satisfied and wanted to be proactive and do more than just wait and see if it shrank. Given the fact that I had just finished intensive radiation treatments, I absolutely refused to get a CT Scan or mammography and have more exposure, so I immediately thought about getting a thermography breast scan instead.

Because of my interest in functional medicine and holistic healing, I had already heard lectures on YouTube and read articles discussing thermography as an option for women to monitor what is happening in their breasts. Thermography measures heat activity in the body to see where there are active zones. If there is a red zone on the picture where it doesn't make sense, this could suggest that there are more blood flow and activity that could be a problem.

I searched online and found a thermography practitioner near me in New Jersey, where I live.

When I spoke to the owner on the phone, I mentioned that I was doing this because I had a suspicious lump under my arm, and I had just finished chemo and radiation therapy. She said that generally, you need to have a six-month rest if you have been on chemo before a thermography scan due to inflammation. But, given my circumstances, she contacted the naturopathic doctor to confirm it was okay to do and I scheduled an appointment for March 16, 2018.

I was a little bit anxious since I wasn't completely sure what was going to happen. My brother was nice enough to go with me.

She took some time to explain what thermography was all about and asked me to remove my shirt and bra since I had to acclimate to the room's temperature for at least 10 minutes with my skin exposed.

She put up a fold away privacy screen and

I sat on a stool for about 13 minutes before getting the green light to start.

She removed the screen and proceeded to take pictures of me from different angles with a special camera. The entire thing took about 15 minutes. Not bad at all.

Given the fact that I had just finished intensive radiation treatments, I absolutely refused to get a CT Scan or mammography and have more exposure.

She could look at the photos on her screen, but she is not the one who interprets their results. This has to be done by an actual doctor after, she uploads the photos to a database. A licensed naturopathic doctor from Canada then reviews the images and writes the report.

She explained that my results would come in about a week. I'd get a log-in code to view my report online and download the images. I'd also get a free phone consult with someone to discuss my results if I wanted. All told, it cost me \$240.

On March 23rd, I received my report. It was hard for me to interpret. The medical professional in Canada explained that the images revealed lymphatic congestion in my breast area. Blue areas on the images mean no heat activity, thus low to no blood flow (congestion), of which I had a lot of. I did have a few spots of red, which shows high heat (thus blood activity), but it was nothing of significance. Yay!

I thanked God that my report showed no suspicious activity. While this gave me some peace of mind, I still held my breath as I continued to monitor the lump like a hawk. Gradually it got less red and less painful. Eventually, after several months, it turned into a huge pus-filled pimple that busted and healed on its own. I still have a tiny mark from it over a year later. It was gross, but it may have been a cyst all along.

Come back next week when I discuss how I panicked after my radiation treatments didn't shrink my tumor, and how long it took before I eventually saw positive signs.

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

Michele Gonçalves 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*.

Stretch Safely to Fight Stiffness and Improve Mobility

MOHAN GARIKIPARITHI

Do you find it's harder to move around and do the things you used to, or even simple daily tasks like getting out of bed or walk to the kitchen? If you do, you may need to start stretching.

Tight muscles can lead to a stiff neck, back pain, or sore knees, and massively decrease mobility and quality of life. The truth is that when it's easier to move, it's easier to get out and do things that make you feel good.

To loosen up and improve mobility, stretch. Stiff muscles become limber when they are stretched out, have their range increased, and are used regularly.

Stretching, however, should be done with care.

Applying added tension to a cold muscle, using poor posture, or going beyond your limits can all lead to pain and potential injury. So, when you're about to get in that stretch, here are a few tips to remember:

Warm up: Muscles stretch more quickly when they are warm. You can perform “dynamic stretches” (stretches with movement) and kill two birds with one stone, or spend a few minutes standing marching in place, dancing, or swinging your arms

Keeping your body limber will help it keep you moving.

before “static” stretching (holding a position).

Listen to your body: The tension created through stretching should be mildly uncomfortable, but not painful. If it hurts, stop, reposition, and try the move again. Over time your flexibility will improve.

Make a mind muscle connection: Focus on feeling the stretch in the muscle you are targeting. That way, you'll know you're doing the movement properly. Also, you'll probably notice that one side may have better mobility than the other. Focus your efforts to correct this imbalance over time. Lastly, you'll want to re-

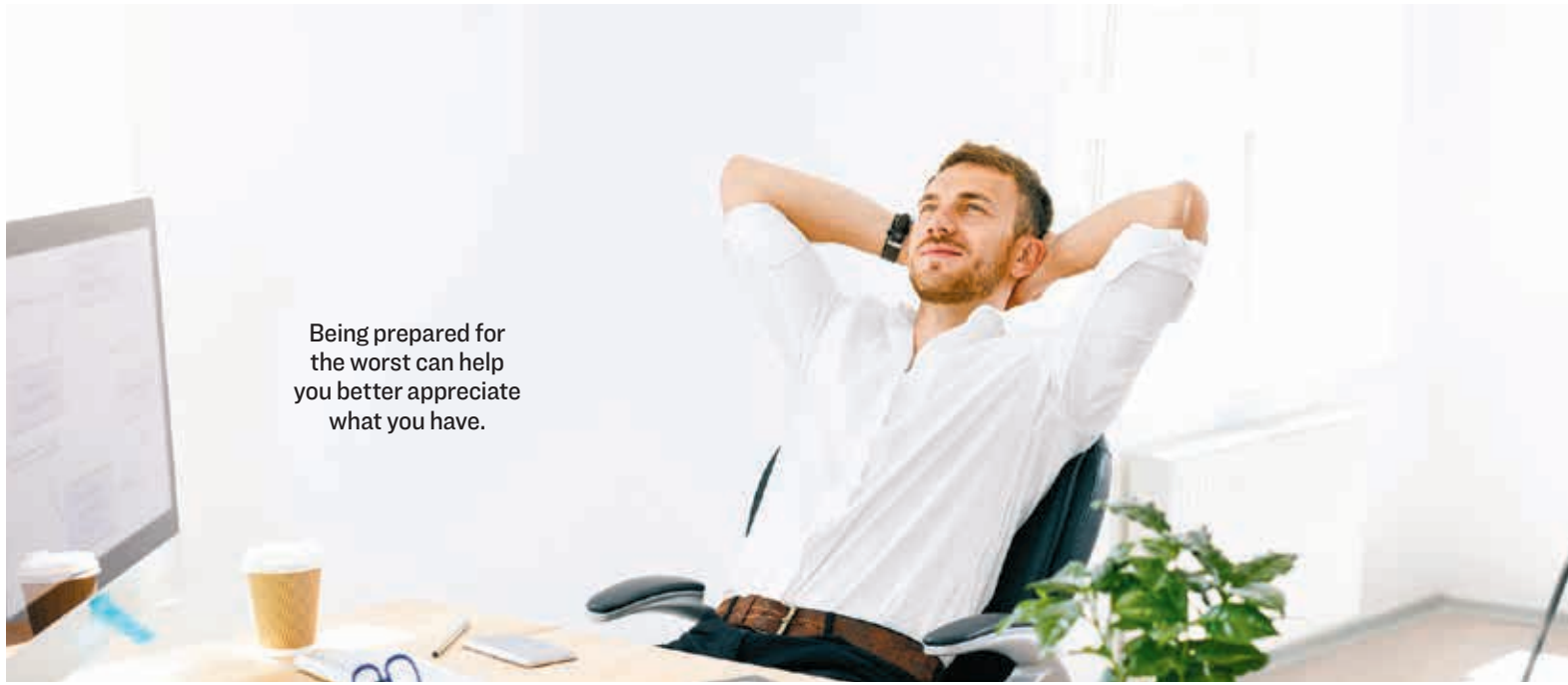
member to breathe regularly and make stretching a regular part of your day. The more often you practice, the better you will become and the easier it will be to move around. In time, pain and immobility may be a thing of the past.

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



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Being prepared for the worst can help you better appreciate what you have.

MINDSET MATTERS

Healthy Pessimism Can Lead to Personal Freedom

What if the way we're pursuing happiness is pushing it further away?

DAVID EVANS

We all want to be happy, but we're not terribly good at it. As a result, for centuries philosophers have wrestled with how to attain happiness. Few, though, have offered as novel an answer as Marcus Aurelius, one of Rome's greatest emperors.

Ready for it? Be a pessimist. This is admittedly an unappealing proposition, like paying for college by selling encyclopedias door-to-door.

But reflect for a moment about where we're at, and you might start to rethink your initial reaction.

Acknowledge the Negative Aspects of Life

Despite the fact that we're drowning in an

ocean of entertainment with legions of "self-help" gurus acting as lifeguards, the World Happiness Report reveals that general levels of happiness have been in steady decline.

Instead of being a slave to the whims of desire, Aurelius's pessimism puts our desires in perspective.

The report attributes this decline to growth in addictions, but a close reading of Aurelius's autobiographical work, "Meditations," suggests there might be a deeper problem with how we're pursuing happiness: We're not focusing on the negatives in life.

Don't believe me? "Meditations," is filled with little nuggets such as:

"Our lifetime is so brief. ... Nothing to get excited about."

"In such deep darkness, such a sewer ... I don't know what there is to value or to work for."

"When you wake up in the morning, tell yourself: The people I deal with today will be meddling, ungrateful, arrogant, dishonest, jealous, and surly."

Such a grim view of life would seem to lead straight to a psychiatric office but it doesn't.

Pessimism Is Not Despair

Before you reject Aurelius out of hand, think for a moment about what pessimism is. According to Merriam-Webster, pessimism is "an inclination to emphasize adverse

aspects." Aurelius, then, is not advocating despair. To the contrary, he writes, "When you arise in the morning, think of what a precious privilege it is to be alive."

What he is saying is that by focusing on the negative in everyday life, while also appreciating life's inherent value, we will have a better sense of perspective, which constitutes the second step to real happiness.

Reflect for a moment. How many of the things that we want daily will matter or be remembered in five years? Ten years? Fifteen years?

Personally, I cannot think of that many. And to be clear, I am not talking about needs (food, shelter, etc.). I'm talking about wants. The things we chase that only have transitory value. New gadgets, new fads, new friends. We are too often "those who seek pleasure" and whose "happiness ... fluctuates with moods outside their control."

Freedom From Longing for Happiness

Instead of being a slave to the whims of desire, Aurelius's pessimism puts our desires in perspective.

"If you can't stop prizing a lot of other things ... then you'll never be free—free, independent, imperturbable," he writes.

Once we "stop prizing a lot of other things," we will "[e]ver be fulfilled, ever stop desiring—lust and longing for people and things to enjoy."

To Aurelius, that is what true happiness consists of. Freedom from the endless pull of the new, the novel, the pleasurable. Freedom to focus on what is actually important.

Let's face it: this isn't a particularly appealing conclusion. It isn't nearly fun as the other paths that culture presents being the true path to happiness. It requires doing the hard thing of accepting the present as is, and that the future will likely not be as pleasant as we would like to assume.

But the beauty of Aurelius's pessimism is that it frees us from that needing to be the case. If nothing else, Aurelius and his pessimism tells us to "remember that very little is needed to make a happy life."

David Evans is from Minnesota. He has volunteered for political campaigns and spent a summer with the Blue Earth County Historical Society researching World War I in local papers. He wants to go to law school. This article was originally published on FEE.org

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