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The Endless Effects of Magnesium Deficiency

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MARK SIRCUS



ew 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, magne-

sium 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, ie, 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 | levels. Magnesium deficiency will

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 numbress 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

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 lisiointed 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 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 premen-

strual 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 sten 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 nervous-

ness, irritability, and jitters–symptoms closely associated with magnesium deficiency. Slight magnesium deficiency can

make a person irritable, highly-strung, sensitive to noise, hyper-excitable, 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.

The foods they are eating are **L**. stripped of magnesium because foods in general, as we shall see below are declining in mineral content in an alarming way.

• The foods many children eat are **4.** highly processed junk foods that do not provide real nutrition to the body. • Because most children on the spec-**.** trum 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.

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 problem atic 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) (acupuncturist, doctor of oriental and pastoral medicine) is a prolific writer and author of some astounding medical and healthrelated 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

Why Do We Crave Comfort Food in Winter?

Our gut-brain connection has ways to deal with our emotions and seasons



MEGAN LEE & JACQUI YOXALL

Once winter arrives, many of us find ourselves drawn to bowls of cheesy pasta, oozing puddings, warming soups, and hot chocolate with marshmallows.

These and other comfort foods can make us feel good. But why? And why do we crave them in winter and not in summer?

Research tells us there are three good reasons.

1. The Gut 'Speaks' to the Brain

We know from the relatively new field of nutritional psychiatry that our stomachs produce the "happiness chemicals" dopamine and serotonin. When we eat, a complex process involving the brain means these neurochemicals trigger feelings of happiness and well-being.

These happiness chemicals are also produced when we exercise and when we're exposed to sunlight, which declines in winter. This results in a change in the fine balance between the good and bad bacteria that live in our stomachs, and consequently, the relationship between the gut and the brain.

So, in winter when we eat our favorite comfort foods, we get a rush of happiness chemicals sent from the gut to our brain and this makes us feel happy and content.

In winter when we eat our favorite comfort foods, we get a rush of happiness chemicals sent from the gut to our brain.

2. Adaption May Have a Hand

The second reason we crave more comfort foods during the winter months could be because before we enjoyed technological advances such as housing, heating, supermarkets, and clothing, humans who increased their body weight during winter to keep warm were more likely to survive their environmental conditions. Craving carbohydrate and sugar-rich foods were, therefore, a protective mechanism.

Although we aren't still living in shelters or foraging for food, food cravings in winter may still be programmed into our biology.

3. Psychology, Craving, and Mood

Social learning theory says people learn from each other through observing, imitating, and modeling. In the context of food cravings, this suggests that what our caregivers gave to us in winter as children has a striking Megan Lee is an academic tutor and docimpact on what we choose to eat in winter as adults.

easons behind eating comfort food says this Cross University. This article was orig food may play a role in alleviating loneliness *nally published on The Conversation*.

and boosting positive thoughts of childhood social interaction.

We may also naturally experience a lower mood in winter and low mood has been linked to emotional eating.

In winter, due to it being darker and colder, we tend to stay indoors longer and self-medicate with foods that are carbohydrate- and sugar-rich. These types of foods release glucose straight to our brain, which gives us an instant feeling of happiness when we are feeling cold, sad, tired, or bored.

Comfort Food Can Be Healthy

For all the comfort they provide, comfort foods generally receive a bad rap because they are usually energy and calorie-dense; they can be high in sugar, fat, and refined carbohydrates.

These types of foods are usually linked to weight gain in winter, and if you eat too much over the longer term, can increase the risk of heart disease and diabetes.

However, not all comfort foods are created equally, nor are they all bad for our health. You can get the same comforting feelings

from winter foods containing ingredients that are good for you. For example, a hearty bowl of soup with a slice of whole-grain bread can give you all the components you need for optimal physical and psychological health. Steaming bowls of chili and curries can provide immunity-boosting properties with the use of their warming spices. All the wonderful citrus fruits that become available in the winter are also a great way to get a healthy sugar fix.

If you are craving something that is carbohydrate-rich, try swapping white varieties for whole-grain versions that will dampen carbohydrate cravings. If you crave a hot chocolate, try swapping the cocoa powder for cacao, which has a higher concentration of vitamins and minerals.

More Good News

The good news for all of us who crave comfort foods in winter is studies that assess intuitive eating-eating when you're hungry, stopping when you're full, and listening to what your body is telling you to eat-suggest people who eat this way are happier with their body image, feel better psychologically, and are less likely to have disordered eating.

So, embrace this wonderful chilly weather. Sit by the fire, cuddle up with a loved one, and make some healthier swaps for your classic comfort foods. You can remove the food guilt and better listen to what your body is telling you it needs during these cold winter months.

toral candidate at Southern Cross University in Australia, and Jacqui Yoxall is a A review of studies on the psychological senior lecturer in Allied Health at Southern

Surprising Things You Didn't Know About Pumpkinsbut Should

MICHAEL KANTER

umpkins are one of the best things about fall. From making jack-o-lanterns for Halloween, to pumpkin spice lattes, to festive pumpkin pies, we love this superstar squash. As you head to the pumpkin patch, here are some important (and surprising) things you should know.

1. Pumpkins Are High in Nutrition Pumpkins are low in calories, fat, and sodium, while high in fiber. They're a good source of vitamin A, vitamin B, potassium, protein, and iron. They also contain free-radical-scavenging antioxidants, which can give your health a much-needed boost during the holiday season.

2. Pumpkin Seeds Are Also Nutritious

Just how nutritious are pumpkin

seeds? Let me count the ways. Pump-

kin seeds are packed with magnesium,

zinc, and Omega-3 fats. They contain

tryptophan for restful sleep, are good

for prostate health, and aid in reduc-

ing menopausal symptoms. Pumpkin

seeds have both anti-diabetic and anti-

3. Plant Your Own Pumpkins

After you've carved out your scary jacko-lantern face, save your seeds to plant the following year. Pumpkin seeds should be planted between the last week of May and the middle of June. They take roughly 120 days to grow, and are picked in October. Watching your pumpkin patch grow is a great way to teach your kids how to garden, and how to care for the environment. Pumpkins, when planted in non-organic gardening soil, can also help start the clean-up process of your soil if you're aiming to plant a chemical-free garden the following spring.

4. Choose Organic Pumpkins

Many organizations claim pumpkins are relatively safe because of their thick skin. However, most of the chemicals used in pumpkin production are systemic, therefore the chemicals are in the pumpkin flesh and will not wash off of your pumpkin. In 2014, California pumpkin farmers dumped close to 14,000 pounds of malathion to meet the supply of Halloween pumpkins. Malathion is a suspected endocrine disrupter, cholinesterase inhibitor, and a possible carcinogen. Buying an organic pumpkin is easy, and tells next year's pumpkin farmers that they need to grow organic!



Don't throw your pumpkin in the trash after Halloween or Thanksgiving, compost it. Doing so will provide future nutrients to your garden soil. For a conventional pumpkin, recycle it into your yard waste pile so that it doesn't end up in a landfill.

ALL ILLUSTRATIONS BY BIBADASH/SHUTTERSTOCK

6. Buy Edible Pumpkins

Reduce, re-use, and recycle! When you buy edible pumpkins you can use the pumpkin flesh to make pies and soups, the core to make a decoration like a jacko-lantern, and you get to eat the seeds. The smell of homemade pumpkin pie always whips my taste buds into a flurry. If pumpkin pie isn't your thing, there are hundreds of delicious recipes, from chili to pumpkin smoothies, to use the remaining pumpkin flesh in!

Pumpkin can be a fun, nutritious addition to your fall routine. Armed with this information, you'll be able to get the most out of your pumpkins.

Michael Kanter is a writer, culinary enthusiast, poet, photographer, father, and a certified yoga instructor with a passion to serve and a tendency to empower those around him. This article was originally published on NaturallySavvy.com





Using Stimulants to Cram for Exams

Students lose sleep as they turn to stimulants for an edge during test time

SARA C. MEDNICK

his year's incoming freshman university class will be confronted with a steeper financial burden, an increasingly competitive academic environment, and likely more pressure to take a little pill that some popular culture references say will make you "awesome at everything."

Or they may eschew the temptation and rely on the standard practice of study, sleep, repeat.

Welcome to #GenerationAdderall, the kids who grew up in the years of the diagnosis boom of attention-deficit and hyperactivity disorder. As such, their formative years normalized the medication habit and granted easy access to stimulants traditionally used to treat children with this diagnosis.

Nonprescription use of stimulants is a growing problem for young people, bringing a risk of overdose, addic-

tion, and damage to sleep. Between 2008 and 2012, the nonmedical use of stimulants in 18- to 25-yearolds increased from 5.7 percent to 9.3 percent. The last two decades saw a 10-fold increase. College-age adults show the greatest prevalence, but up to 20 percent of those 12 and up report experience with nonmedical use of prescription drugs, indicating these medications are being diverted for nonmedical use in middle and high school.

I study the important role of sleep for brain function and health. My work has introduced napping as a fatigue countermeasure and a powerful vehicle to boost long-term memory, creativity, executive function, and restorative processes. Given the escalating campus crisis of stimulant use and damage to sleep, recent work in my lab has studied nonmedical use of stimulants in healthy young adults and demonstrated that they're not getting the academic edge they want, and they could be harming themselves.

A Cocktail of Substances Leads to Complications

Misusing prescription stimulants doesn't occur in a bubble. Compared with medical users and nonusers, adolescents who report nonmedical use of prescription drugs also engage in binge drinking more often. They also have lower academic attainment and a higher likelihood to screen positive for other substance abuse.

This is deeply troubling to those of us who study drugs' various effects on the brain and body. Co-ingestion of prescription drugs and alcohol is linked to higher blood alcohol concentrations that can cause fatal overdoses, increased risk for liver and heart damage, impaired driving, and traffic accidents. Indeed, emergency room visits due to nonmedical use of stimulants tripled from 5,212 visits in 2005 to 15,585 visits in 2017, due to negative side effects, including nervousness, insomnia, dizziness, and cardiovascular or psychiatric problems.

Unlike opioids, the motivation to misuse stimulants isn't to check out, but



Students are getting their hands on prescription drugs without a prescription.

Nonprescription use of stimulants is a growing problem for young people, bringing a risk of overdose, addiction, and damage to sleep.

Emergency room visits

due to nonmedical use of

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rather to check in at superhero scale. Nonmedical stimulant use is primarily to increase wakefulness, having been used for decades by individuals whose jobs include sleep disruption. For emergency workers, military, and shift workers, long periods without sleep can cause lifethreatening lapses in attention. But these extreme scenarios bear little resemblance to the desired benefits by college students, who report popping pills "to improve intellectual performance" or to "party longer and drink more."

Given these differences, a critical question is whether stimulants actually produce a cognitive enhancement in healthy, well-rested people. Surprisingly, the answer is: sometimes, and only a little.

More Hype Than Help

During the two to four hours that the drug is active, some studies in healthy well-rested adults have shown shortterm increases in attention and working memory. Some, however, have shown no benefit.

In fact, some studies suggest that stimulants may simply serve to make boring tasks more interesting by acting on the dopamine system. This extraordinary excitement allows students to stick with a particularly arduous assignment for longer periods of time than they



normally would, which may promote the feeling of being smarter, as well as

increasing the potential for addiction. The question then becomes: Does the cognitive enhancement of stimulants exceed the significant long-term toll on sleep and the cognitive and health processes that rely on sleep?

Research in my lab has shown that there are significant trade-offs of longterm sleeplessness for this small uptick in attention. We show that even a dose at 9 a.m. harms nighttime sleep. This is particularly true for deep sleep, which is important for complex thinking, longterm memory, immune function, and physical restoration.

Additionally, stimulants reduce performance improvements on cognitive tasks that overnight sleep confers, such as improvement in working memory and long-term memory. This reduction is directly related to a decrease in deep sleep. Therefore, even when stimulants are taken earlier in the day, they disrupt nighttime sleep and subsequent cognitive performance.

So, is the fleeting benefit from stimulants worth the damage to sleep and long-term cognitive and health processes? Is the risk of increased substance abuse that comes with the misuse of stimulants tolerable? Is it easier to be a superhero by taking a pill to stay awake and a pill to go to sleep than to simply get enough sleep?

Many students will likely be faced with these questions at college this year. As university leaders, counselors, parents, teachers, coaches, and peers, it's our job

to help them make an informed decision. As a sleep expert and cognitive neuroscientist, I think the answer to all these questions is no.

Sara C. Mednick is an associate professor of cognitive science at the University of California-Irvine. This article was originally published on The Conversation.

A Daytime Nap Lowers Risk of Heart Attack and Stroke

Napping can be healthy, but not too many, and not too long

MAT LECOMPTE

Those who like to take a nap may have a lower risk of heart attack and stroke. The impact of napping on heart health has long been contested, but according to a new study, a daytime nap taken once or twice a week may lower the risk of having a heart attack or stroke.

The research published online in the journal Heart looked at the association between napping frequency, average nap duration, and the risk of cardiovascular disease. This included both fatal and nonfatal events such as heart attack, stroke, and heart failure. The study included 3,462 randomly selected residents of Lausanne, Switzerland. Each participant was between the ages of 35 and 75, and the study



For those who do nap, be sure to keep them limited to 20 mins a day, once or twice a week

lasted between 2009 and 2012. Participant's first check-ups took information on their sleep and nap patterns and their health was then subsequently monitored for an average of five years.

More than half of the participants reported no napping, around one in five said they took one to two naps, around one in 10 said they took three to five naps, and a similar number said they took six to seven.

Researchers found that frequent nappers who took three to seven naps a week tended to be older, male, smokers, and had a higher weight. They reported more daytime sleepiness and more severe obstructive sleep apnea.

During the monitoring period, **An Ongoing Debate** it was found that there were 155 In a linked editorial, Dr. Yue fatal and nonfatal cardiovascular Leng and Dr. Kristine Yaffe point

events. But the study showed that occasional napping, once to twice weekly, was associated with an almost halving in heart attack, stroke, and heart failure risk. This was compared to those who didn't nap at all.

These findings held true even after taking potentially influential factors into account, such as age, nighttime sleep duration, high blood pressure, and cholesterol.

This is an observational study, so it can't establish cause, but nap frequency may help to explain the differing conclusions reached by previous researchers about the impact of napping on heart health.

out, "While the exact physiological pathways linking daytime napping to [cardiovascular disease] risk are not clear, [this research] contributes to the ongoing debate on the health implications of napping, and suggests that it might not only be the duration, but also the frequency that matters."

For those who do nap, be sure to keep them limited to 20 mins a day, once or twice a week. If you find you are napping too frequently, talk to your doctor about your daytime fatigue. You want to make sure your daytime nap is doing more good than bad.

Mat Lecompte is a health and wellness journalist. This article was originally published on Bel Marra Health.



PRESERVE HEALTH

Mental Health and **Chinese Medicine**

The mind and body are connected in ways that can help or hinder each other

CHRISTINA XU

Mental illness is common in today's fast-paced, lonely, nutrient-deprived world.

It's projected that one in five Americans will experience a mental illness, and most of us will experience a mental health problem at some time in our lives, with anxiety and depressive disorders being the most common ailments.

In Chinese medicine, the key to treating mental ailments is to identify the patient's specific symptoms and treat them with the appropriate herbs, acupuncture, and lifestyle changes.

Generate Yang to Balance Yin The root cause of an illness is an imbalance in the body. Too much heat (inflammation), or too little water (dehydration) are two common imbalances that lead to a wide range of health issues. In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), these are seen in terms of yin and yang. For example, water is considered yin, while heat is considered yang.

In terms of mental health, many conditions arise from what are known as the three lows, where yang is deficient.

The first is a low mood level. This refers to persistent sadness, feeling useless or unable to cope with life, feeling bored all the time, or increased feelings of anxiety and isolation.

Second is a low level of activity. For example, loss of interest in anything, feeling tired all the time, wanting to go to sleep and never wake up again, finding no fun or enjoyment in life, loss of energy.

Third, a low mentality. This refers to slow thinking, and poor reaction time. It causes inefficiency in study or work, leading to difficulties in making personal and business decisions.

Most of the symptoms belong to yin. So one of the solutions might be to produce more yang to balance them out.

At a very basic level, yang can be increased by physical activity such as regular exercise, walking, and spending time outdoors. Research has found several benefits to these as well, though doctors rarely prescribe walking or time in nature in Western clinical practice.

Acupoints for Self-Assistance While walking and physical exercise are acknowledged in Western medicine, the idea of acupoints isn't as clearly understood. This is largely because Western medicine has yet to accept that the human body is highly dependent on energetic systems.

Our cells go through a variety of processes, requiring very specific balances of nutrients, vitamins, minerals, air, and food to create the energy that moves our body. Our brains require electrical connection to let our neurons fire and run the body.

In TCM, this life energy is known as "qi." Breathing and eating create qi in the human body. Lungs extract the qi by breathing, while the stomach and spleen system extract qi from food and water and then deliver it to the whole body.

Acupoints tie into this energetic system by stimulating areas that are connected to specific functions. The following points are commonly used in managing neurological and mental health issues.

Baihui Points: In Chinese, the name of these points means "a hundred channels meet together." It's closely related to the brain and is the key point for regulating brain function. To locate the Baihui point, draw a line from your nose to the center of the top of the head. Draw another line between two ear tips to the top of the scalp. The Baihui point is located at the intersection.

Use your fingers to lightly massage this point, or gently hit with an empty fist.

Neiguan (P6): Neiguan is the gateway for the human body to communicate with the outside world. Neiguan points can help people achieve better sleep, treat insomnia, relieve stress, and stop nausea from motion sickness. To locate the Neiguan point, lift fists or palms so that two tendons appear in the wrist. The point is located in the middle of the tendons and 3 fingers width from the wrist-line.

In traditional Chinese medicine, emotions are tied to the interdependence of internal organ systems and their functions.



Acupuncture is sometimes used in treatments aimed at ailments like depression or anxiety.

Use your thumb to massage the point.

Shenmen (HT7): The Chinese name is the spirit gate. It's good for emotional issues, especially those related to sleep or mental manifestations such as insomnia and muddled thinking. The Shenmen point extends from the little finger to the lateral stripes of the wrist, at the end of the root of the palm.

You can use the other thumb to massage this point. Alternatively, you can put your hand on the table with this point touching the table, and roll your hand left and right, using your weight of hand to massage it. This is easy to do while you're at work or studying.

Emotional and Physical Health

In TCM theory, it's understood that emotions and the body have an influence on each other. This is something many of us know intuitively, like how stress may give us an upset stomach, or how exercising makes us feel happier.

In TCM, emotions are tied to the interdependence of internal organ systems and their functions.

This is in contrast to Western medicine, which has historically viewed organs as having a single specific physical function only, independent of the whole system, akin to a component in a car. This thinking is proving inadequate, though, with the discovery of the microbiome and an ever-expanding fact-base showing ties between mind and body, like the fact that some neurotransmitters are produced in the stomach. These new findings, however, will likely take years to make their way into actual clinical practice.

Emotional management is very important to the health of the body. Emotions follow thoughts, so paying attention to what you're thinking can help resolve many of these types of issues.

Christina Xu holds a bachelor's degree from Beijing University of Chinese Medicine. Now based in Australia, she dedicates her time to advocating for and promoting the benefits of TCM to mainstream Western society. Learn more at PreserveHealth.com.au

MINDSET MATTERS

The Stories We Tell Ourselves

How we script ourselves in our mind can write a tale we want to live

JOSHUA BECKER

A good story can entertain, motivate, and teach valuable lessons. That is why it is important we pay attention

to the stories we tell ourselves. Stories can change how we see the world. But they can also impact how we see ourselves–especially if we tell ourselves the same stories over and over again.

I had a rule when my kids were young. Under no circumstances would they wear clothing that told an unflattering story.

You know the type. Most of the time, designers created them to be funny. They use brightly colored fonts on a T-shirt with sayings like: "Here comes trouble." "Wild Child.' Or "Just a kid that loves to watch YouTube.'

And I suppose they are kind of funny to the adults in the room. I just didn't want my kids wearing them. The last thing I wanted every time my child walked into a room was everybody greeting him/her by saying, "Oh, here comes trouble!" Or "Here's Wild Child!" If every time my child walked into a room they were referred to as "trouble," it wouldn't

take long before they began to believe that story and act on it. The stories we tell ourselves matter. And

the stories we allow others to tell us about ourselves matter as well. Too often, as adults, we miss this fact. Or

we get so used to the same stories over and over again, we forget that we get to write our own.

Somewhere along the way, we adopted the story as truth. So we believe certain things to be true about ourselves.

• I can't get in shape, it's not my thing. • I can't declutter my home, I'm just a messy person

- I can't be brave, I'm a worrier.
- I can't quit smoking, I've tried. • I can't be stable, my entire family is dysfunctional.
- I can't achieve that lifelong goal, I'm just not wired that way.

In almost every one of the circumstances above, it's not you that can't achieve the change you want to see in life ... it's the story you are telling yourself that is keeping

you from achieving that goal. And you can change the story you tell your-

- self any time you want! You don't have to be unhealthy.
- You don't have to be a messy person.
- You don't have to be a worrier. And on and on and on.

MINDSET MATTERS

- Those old stories don't have to define you. Start telling yourself a new one!
- You accomplish this in two ways: 1) The words that you use and 2) The actions

you take. I'm a fan of positive self-talk. But I'm wise



enough to know that you don't just speak change into existence. Change takes work, effort, and discipline. But the first step is to change how you talk to yourself. That is why positive self-talk is so valuable.

Every positive change begins with these four words: "I can do this.' So start there.

If you're a person who struggles with eating healthy and have always believed you cannot change, start each morning with one simple phrase, "I can do this." Look yourself in the mirror and say it aloud, "I can do this. I can change my diet. I can be a healthier eater."

And then follow it up with action.

How? By choosing to only eat fruits and vegetables every meal for the rest of your life? Probably not. But your first step in the right direction doesn't need to be a large one. Change one meal. Go one day without sugar. Or change your order at the restaurant.

When you go to bed, remind yourself, "I did it. I ate healthier today. I feel better about myself. I can do it again tomorrow. I can become a healthier person."

Almost certainly there will be progress and setbacks. When the setbacks happen, don't fall back into the same old story of "See, I knew I couldn't do it." Tell yourself a new story, "I can't believe I took a step backward! I was doing so well. I will start again tomor row. I can do it."

The stories we tell ourselves matter. Choose positive ones that foster the life you want to live and the person you want to become.

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

begins with good ideas about ourselves and our character.

A good day

Envy usually occurs when a person lacks a superior quality, achievement, or possession someone else has and either desires it or wishes they didn't have it.

Now let's scratch that last part about wishing ill on someone else and focus on the wish to acquire that attribute for ourselves.

Not athletic? Just spend five or six

Afraid of dancing? Spend time after

these cases: paralyzing fear mixed with regret and envy of the people who feel neither. You don't have to hold on to these feelings. All those people are having fun without younot because they dislike you, but because you're too afraid to join in. If positive incentive alone isn't enough,

Many of my own transformations in the past years have come from a basic desire to not be left out of the fun. And as far as envy goes, that has served me without many side effects. I've become an athlete, a speaker, a writer, a dancer, and karaoke singernot the best, but at least good enough to participate.

The "positive envy" that drove this change is not the exclusionary kind of envy-others can still enjoy themselves while I enjoy myself. It's not the domination kind of envy, not a desire to be better than others. It's a desire to join in on the fun.

If you ever want to discover where you've been not brave enough, think of the things you see everyone else (but you) enjoying.

On the other hand, you may decide you are desiring something that just isn't for you and you'd be better off letting go and moving on. It's not always the case that just because you envy someone else's ability that you need it yourself. It might be that you need to value your own unique attributes, focus on those, and stop comparing yourself with others.

James Walpole is a writer, startup marketer, intellectual explorer, and perpetual apprentice. He is an alumnus of Praxis and a Foundation for Economic Education's *Eugene S. Thorpe fellow. He writes* regularly at jameswalpole.com. This article was originally published on FEE.org

We get so

used to the

same stories

over and over

again, we for

get that we

get to write

our own.

Is a Grudge Keeping You Up at Night?

According to a new study, people who are more forgiving sleep better (and have better health)

SOPHIE MCMULLEN

Many of us have had the experience of tossing and turning at night, wishing we could sleep, watching the minutes tick by on the clock by our bedside. In fact, one-third of Americans say they lie awake at least a few nights a week.

You may have tried counting sheep or listening to a bedtime meditation to help you fall asleep, but according to a new study, there's another practice you could consider instead: forgiveness.

Researchers asked 1,423 American adults to rate themselves on how likely they were to forgive themselves for the things they did wrong and forgive others for hurting them. The participants also answered survey questions about how they had slept in the past 30 days, how they would rate their health at the moment, and how satisfied they were with their life.

The results suggested that people who were more forgiving were more likely to sleep better and for longer, and in turn have better physical health. They were also more satisfied with life. This was true of people who were more forgiving of others, and people who were more forgiving of themselvesalthough forgiving others had a stronger relationship with better sleep.

Forgiveness of self and others "may help individuals leave the past day's regrets and offenses in the past and offer an important buffer between the events of the waking day and the onset and maintenance of sound sleep," wrote the researchers, led by Luther College professor Loren Toussaint. Otherwise, as many troubled sleepers have experienced, we might have too much on our minds to get any rest.

The resentment or bitterness we are harboring could be detracting from our sleep quality and our well-being.

When we don't forgive, the researchers say, we tend to linger on unpleasant thoughts and feelings, such as anger, blame, and regret. This can involve painful ruminationfocused attention and repetitive thoughts about our distress. Ultimately, this study suggests, that resentment or bitterness we are harboring could be detracting from our sleep quality and our well-being.

overall health, this study offers a new perspective on forgiveness as a key factor in achieving healthy sleep. In practice, the more we minimize the rumination that we engage in about unresolved issues, the better our sleep (and, in turn, our overall health) may be.

others and self-forgiveness can help people cope with the day's psychological and emotional burdens in a way that frees one's mind and promotes a more restful mental state for sleep, then they support the health-related process of sleep in meaningful ways."

causes better sleep; only that people who tend to be forgiving also tend to sleep better. So while it isn't guaranteed to completely resolve your sleeping issues, forgiveness could be one constructive practice to try, when you feel ready. Letting go of some of the difficult thoughts and feelings you're hanging on to may help you not only avoid that stare-down

Sophie McMullen is a fourth-year undergraduate student at the University of California–Berkeley studying psychology with a double minor in Spanish and public policy. She is a research and editorial assistant for Greater Good magazine, which first published this article.



If you ever want to discover where you've been not brave enough, think of the things you see everyone else (but you) enjoying.



Wanting what others have can be motivating. if you put in the effort to achieve it

JAMES WALPOLE

Envy sucks as an emotion. It typically makes us miserable, and it can also make us want to make others miserable. But envy can also be used for good, particularly if we struggle to make changes, to face fears, or to take up new things.

years watching everyone else play soccer, compete in track meets, do martial arts, and win football games. Let that feeling simmer.

time sitting awkwardly while everyone else has a great time on the dance floor. Miss out on those opportunities to dance with pretty girls. Feel fear while everyone else feels joy.

Fearing your next steps in the business world? Watch while all your peers and friends leave you in your unsatisfying job.

You'll feel the same feeling in all

you can use your envy as fuel to act.

While we know sleep is important for

As the researchers state, "If forgiveness of

This study doesn't prove that forgiveness with your clock and feel better tomorrow.

Want to Change the World? First Change Yourself

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

TYLER BRANDT

he world is an imperfect place, el of solving such gargantuan, 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 behaviors do you wish to change? Are you could have a roof over her head, a stable income, and something decent to eat.

to make these things happen? Isn't it true around you? Could your room use a little 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 levglobe-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 following a path that brings you fulfillment? Are you taking adequate time to But doubts may creep in. Who are you recognize the importance of the others 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.

WARREN WONG/UNSPLAS

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.

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Autism Is Treatable It is time to move past the outdated psychiatric paradigm

THE ROOT CAUSE



ARMEN NIKOGOSIAN



ver 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 of function they have achieved. 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 diagnos- day engaged in repetitive, self-stiming 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 Continued on Page 12

in themselves. I commend these individuals for their bravery and the level

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 ulatory 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.





TRUTH and **TRADITION**

A NEWSPAPER GEORGE WOULD READ

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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

urvival 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.

66

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-

tective 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.

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NOBEASTSOFIERCE/SHUTTERSTOCK



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

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

y 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 treat-

ed 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 happen ing 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 I had just finished 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

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 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 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.

Stretch Safely to Fight Stiffness and Improve **Mobility**

MOHAN GARIKIPARITHI

• o you find it's harder to move around and do the things you used to, or even simple daily tasks like getting out 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 vou moving.

before "static" stretching (holding a position).

Listen to your body: The more often you practice, 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 con**nection:** 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 Germany, he developed an 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 regu larly and make stretching a regular part of your day. 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 interest in German medicine (homeopathy) and other alternative systems of medicine. This article was originally published on Bel Marra Health.

THE ROOT CAUSE Autism Is Treatable

It is time to move past the outdated psychiatric paradigm

Continued from Page 9

Autism is not an entity that infects your child and then causes disease, it is just a convenient name to place individuals exhibiting similar behaviors stemming from a multitude of different physiological insults and imbalances. Language may guide thought, but names do not cause disease.

The Role of Genetics

Over the past decade, conventional medicine has directed much of its research efforts and funding toward identifying the genes responsible for autism. Billions of dollars have been spent with no substantial changes in the proportion of patients identified with a clear-cut genetic cause. This misdirection of research resources has resulted in a grave disservice to children with autism. Future generations of children with autism may possibly benefit from this research but the current generation is being marginalized by resource allocation decisions of our current conventional medical model. Effective treatments are available for these children today and with the availability of adequate research dollars, these treatments could be refined and improved at a much quicker pace than is currently happening

The Functional Medicine Treatment Approach

We start with two key questions:

1. Is the body and brain getting what it needs to function optimally (i.e. vitafatty acids, healthy clean food, etc.)? Get the good stuff in.

2. Is something present in the body and brain that is interfering with its ability to function optimally (i.e. toxins, occult infection, disrupted microbiome, free radicals, cytokines, histamine etc.)? Get the bad stuff out.

In the context of these two questions, causes and contributing factors leading to clinical imbalances are identified and corrected.

We do not accept the conventional thinking that autism is an entity onto it- may directly or indirectly self causing disease in the individual. Instead, autism is viewed only as a label for a group of individuals who share similar abnormalities in development and behaviors. By providing the body and brain with what they need and eliminating that which may be interfering, the potential exists to significantly improve brain function and improve the quality of life for these individuals.

Current Treatment for ASD

The backbone of current treatment for ASD is Applied Behavior Analysis or ABA. This is a form of therapy built upon the principles of operant conditioning and the evidence supports that these modalities should be come generators of inflamcontinued as the child and their families work with an experienced practitioner to **Unmet nutrient needs**: determine the causes and

mins, minerals, omega-3 contributing factors driv ing the autism.

Autism Spectrum Disorder Causes and

Contributing Factors A large and rapidly growing body of research points toward ASD as an inflammatory disease associated with immune dysfunction activated by environmental triggers. The various permutations of these three components then become the causes and/or contributing factors that we connect to the patient's existing psychiatric diagnosis of ASD. There are a myriad of core clinical imbalances that affect the brain function of children with autism.

Oxidative stress and chronic inflammation: Both are present in the vast majority of children on the spectrum. Addressing these two key issues is critical to treatment success.

Gastrointestinal dysbiosis with increased intestinal permeability: A pathological alteration in the gut microbiome with "leaky gut,"

both of which can underlie a subsequent immune dysfunction or autoimmunity.

Mitochondrial dysfunc tion: This refers to the impaired function of the portion of the cell responsible this therapy is effective for for providing all the energy children with ASD. Occu- needs of the individual. It pational and speech thera- has been theorized that in pies can also be helpful. All this state mitochondria bemation rather than energy.

These are rarely a cause

but commonly a contributor. These result from nutritional deficiencies, gastrointestinal malabsorption, or variations and mutations in the enzymes involved in nutrient utilization.

Food sensitivities and intol erances: This is particularly true of gluten and casein. They can produce immune dysfunction and inflammation or opiate-like byproducts in susceptible patients.

Impaired detoxification: This is typically a consequence of other imbalances and occasionally an isolated cause of disease.

Autoimmunity or immune dysfunction: This is frequently caused by persisting gut issues and a contributing factor to decreased energy production and chronic inflammation. Caution should be exercised when altering immune function.

Impaired production of hormones and neurotrans**mitters:** This is evident in decreased levels of oxytocin (the "love hormone"), increase levels of cortisol (the "stress hormone"), as well as erratic levels of adrenaline, dopamine, and serotonin driving much of the self-stimulatory behaviors and sleep disturbances commonly present.

A large and rapidly growing body of research points toward ASD as an inflammatory disease associated with immune dysfunction activated by environmental triggers.

Conclusion

One or more of these factors are present in almost all individuals with autism and it is the intricate interplay of these imbalances which ultimately create the complex clinical presentation of ASD. Dozens of other, less common, imbalances have also been identified as contributors to the complex condition of ASD.

Autism is now treatable but we have to displace the out-dated psychiatric baggage it brings with it from the 20th century. The optimal approach to treating ASD in the 21st century continues to be early intervention with psychological and educational services (ABA, special education, speech, and occupational therapies) working from the "outside-in" as well as an in-depth functional medicine investigation into the causes and contributing factors working from the "inside-out".

Armen Nikogosian, MD, practices functional and integrative medicine at Southwest Functional Medicine in Henderson, Nev. He is board-certified in internal medicine and a member of the Institute for Functional Medicine and the Medical Academy of Pediatric Special Needs. His practice focuses on the treatment of complex medical conditions with a special emphasis on autism spectrum disorder in children as well as chronic gut issues and autoimmune conditions in adults.

PHOTOGRAPHEE.EU/SHUTTERSTOCK



To Ease Dementia Agitation, Drugs May Not Be Best Option

Researchers suggest treatments like massage and touch therapy be used before drugs

Symptoms of aggression and agitation in dementia patients may respond better to non-drug therapies such as massage, touch therapy, and outdoor activities, a new study suggests.

In a reanalysis of more than 163 studies involving nearly 25,000 patients, Canadian researchers found that multidisciplinary care, massage and touch therapy, and music combined with massage and touch therapy were more effective than patients' usual care, according to a report in the Annals of Internal Medicine.

"Our results suggest that multidisciplinary care and non-medication therapy should be prioritized in treating our patient population and this should be incorporated into evidence-based guidelines," said lead study author Dr. Jennifer Watt, a geriatrician and scientist at the Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute within Unity Health Toronto.

Antipsychotic drugs, which are often prescribed to treat these behavioral symptoms, come with some concerning side-effects, such as an increased risk of stroke and death, Watt said. That's why she suggests caregivers try nonpharmacological treatments first.

In multidisciplinary therapy, a team of specialists works with patients and caregivers, Watt explained. The team might include nurses trained in geriatrics, a physician who can look at possible medical causes for the behaviors and prescribe appropriate medications, and an occupational therapist who can try to modify the patient's environment or adapt the



patient's routine to avoid frustration. Sometimes patients become aggressive or agitated "when they can't remember or can't do the steps (involved in daily activities)," Watt said.

Antipsychotic drugs, which are often prescribed to treat these behavioral symptoms, come with some concerning sideeffects, such as an increased risk of stroke and death.

Sometimes the patient is triggered because they don't recognize the person caring for them. "If a person they can't recall having met comes into the room, escorts them to the bathroom and then starts pulling down their pants, you can imagine that can be alarming," Watt said.

For the new study, Watt's team initially identified nearly 20,000 earlier studies that evaluated the effectiveness of nonpharmacological therapies. They narrowed that down to 163, which included information on 23,143 patients whose average age was 70.

The researchers found that outdoor activities were more effective than antipsychotic medications for treating physically aggressive patients. When it came to verbal aggression, massage and touch therapy were more effective than the patients' usual care. From Reuters

Those techniques were also more effective than usual care in treating patient agitation. Watt points to her personal experience teaching caregivers to do hand massage when a patient is getting dialysis. "Massaging the hand can be very calming for them," she said.

The new results were not surprising to Dr. Milap Nowrangi, an assistant professor in the department of psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins Medical School. But "they are important," he said, adding that aggression and agitation are the kinds of symptoms "that lead to caregiver burnout and institutionalization of patients."

While the study mostly dealt with patients in assisted living situations or nursing homes, the findings may also be helpful for family members taking care of a loved one at home, Nowrangi said.

Because no single therapy can help every patient, he suggests families experiment with a number of options. First and foremost, caregivers should check to see if there is any physical cause for the behaviors, such as hunger, pain or discomfort.

If that's not the problem, caregivers might try "going for a walk or drive; having them do something repetitive, like folding towels or washing dishes; using a scented candle; or brushing the patient's hair or massaging them," Nowrangi suggested.

By Linda Carroll

COURTESY OF MADISON AVENUE PERIODONTICS

Highest Quality **Dental Implants** Require Digital Imaging

Dental implant technology has become so advanced, that replacement teeth can be just as comfortable and functional as the real thing.

3D scans create top notch tooth replacements that last a lifetime

eeth are essential to the quality of our lives. They chew, help us articulate words, and give us a bright, beautiful smile. Lose your teetheither to disease or injury– and your life undoubtedly suffers.

In the past, people turned to bridges and dentures to fix missing teeth. Then came dental implants-a more permanent, better fitting, and natural-looking replacement. Today, dental implant technology has become so advanced, that replacement teeth can be just as comfortable and functional as the real thing.

Thanks to computer-guided implant surgery, the procedure has become more precise and less invasive than ever. The technology allows dentists to place an implant exactly where it will look and work best.

Of course, like everything else, you can always find inferior implants at a cheaper price. The trade-off typically means lowerquality materials, a clumsier procedure, and more post-operative complications.

Training for implant surgery varies dramatically as well. An implant surgeon typically completes a three to four year post-graduate program and has years of training prior to practicing in the private sector. However, a dentist with only a weekend's worth of training can also perform implant surgery.

So how can you know that you're getting a high-quality product from a seasoned professional? Consider the following factors.

Scan and Plan

Any good job starts with a good blueprint. The better and more detailed the image your dentist has to work with, the more successful his or her implant placement will be. Cone beam CT scans create very detailed 3-D radiographic images of your jawbones and teeth. Digital intra-oral scans create detailed virtual models of your teeth and gums-replacing the messy and often uncomfortable procedure of dental impressions. These images provide the precision and clarity needed for a good restoration.

The gold standard for implant dentistry involves fusing the two types of scans with sophisticated software to create a comprehensive 3-D virtual model of the entire mouth. Good imaging makes for a good game plan, as the strength of an implant depends largely on the health of the tissue that will hold it.

Dental implants are embedded right into your alveolar bone, the jawbone that holds your natural teeth. That's why Dr. Matthew Neary, a periodontist at Madison Avenue Periodontics in New York City, says preservation of the tooth socket during tooth extraction is essential for implant success.

"It is very important to determine where implants will be viable pre-operatively, to avoid complications that make ideal implant placement difficult," Dr. Neary said.

With clear imagery and a solid plan, your dentist can steer clear of possible obstacles before you begin any treatment.

Print and Place

A dental implant is something you want

The state-of-the-art imaging at Madison Avenue Periodontics in New York.

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It is very important to determine where implants will be viable pre-operatively, to avoid complications that make ideal implant placement difficult.

Dr. Matthew Neary, a periodontist at Madison Avenue Periodontics in New York City

to last a lifetime. But a poor fit and subpar materials mean it may break down much sooner. Two common reasons for implant failure are poor positioning in the bone and the use of cement to hold the restoration in place.

How can you ensure a great fit and a longer lasting implant? With precision placement. Data gathered from digital imaging can generate a surgical stent on a 3-D printer. This stent fits precisely over your teeth, and guides the surgeon's drills with much greater accuracy. This insures that implants are placed at the right angle in the best quality bone without the need for large incisions to reveal the bone. The result is less post-operative discomfort and swelling, lower risk of infection, and in many cases no sutures are required.

restoration in place, rather than cement. mary choice for implant restorations for standard in periodontal care. the past 20 years, recent research reveals that excess cement under the gum line routinely leads to implant infection, bone loss and implant failure.

When it gets under the gum line, cement can microscopically penetrate the bone and destroy the implant-bone interface.

"Cement-related complications typically take two or three years to manifest, so early on all seems well when in fact, just the reverse is true," Dr. Lanzetta said.

Care and Cleaning

According to periodontist Dr. Chris Chondro-

giannis, another critical factor in the long-term success of dental implants is good hygiene.

"It is a common and false belief that implants don't require preventive care. This could not be farther from reality," Dr. Chondrogiannis said.

While the implants themselves will not decay, the bone and gums around them are susceptible. Without a precise fit, it can be difficult to effectively clean the gums around the implant.

Correct anatomical implant placement with computer guidance allows for as close to a normal re-creation of your natural teeth as possible. The result is a healthy and maintainable restoration that can last a lifetime.

The periodontists at Madison Avenue Periodontics in New York City represent the pinnacle of the prevention, diagnosis, Because the stent allows for ideal place- and treatment of gum disease and dental ment, a screw can be used to keep your implants. We invite you to experience our approach to comprehensive diagnosis in Periodontist Dr. John Lanzetta explains the kind of full-service dental office where that although cement has been the pri- artistry, skill, and comfort are setting a new

> **Madison Avenue Periodontics** 501 Madison Avenue, 22nd Floor (Between 52nd and 53rd St.) New York, NY 10022 New Patients: (646) 693-5466 Current Patients: (212) 755-1144 MadisonAvenuePeriodontics.com

Green Tea Goes to Battle With **Superbugs**

DEVON ANDRE

If there's a global outbreak of an antibiotic-resistant superbug, you might want to have plenty of green tea on hand. New research is showing it could play a key role in protecting your health.

Using natural products, in combination with established antibiotics. may be the key to mounting defenses against a variety of illnesses.

Superbug is a term you likely hear often. With cold and flu season on the way, along with a constant risk of bacterial infection, doctors are becoming increasingly concerned

about the threat of drug-resistant bacteria. These bacteria are now immune to the effects of traditional antibiotics, leaving millions exposed to potential illness. Last year, for example, two million people in the United States were infected by such bacteria. About 23,000 died. A new study, however, is show-

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ing that green tea offers some much-needed assistance.

Researchers looked at unique compound in green tea called epigallocatechin, or EGCG. It is a powerful polyphenol (a type of antioxidant) that may offer anti-inflammatory benefits and prevent some chronic

diseases. Although it is available in small amounts in several plants, green tea is the best source on earth. The team wanted to see if it would improve the ability of aztreonam, a common antibiotic, in fighting a drug-resistant bacterium.

They used a drug-resistant strain of bacteria Pseudomonas aeruginosa (P.aeruginosa), which causes severe infections to skin, blood, respiratory, and urinary tracts, and is listed by the WHO as a critical threat to human health. In both lab and ani-

mal tests, they found that the EGCG/aztreonam combination effectively reduced

the number of bacteria present, indicating it restored the efficacy of the drug. The scientists believe the EGCG makes the bacteria permeable, allowing the antibiotic to enter and kill more easily. This is a potentially major finding, however, future studies will likely be needed for confirmation.

Using natural products, in combination with established antibiotics, may be the key to mounting defenses against a variety of illnesses. It's unclear if drinking green tea on a regular basis is enough to limit the risk of infection or bolster the efficacy of antibiotics, but it may have other useful benefits.

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 Power of Being Different

What eccentric minds can teach us about playing to our strengths

CONAN MILNER

Nikola Tesla, onardo da Vinci-some of the greatest minds in history came with unusual quirks.

lbert Einstein,

Many of Einstein's scientific breakthroughs, for example, emerged during his daydreams. He was famously absent-minded, yet his unconventional thinking led to an understanding of the universe that was light-years ahead of his time.

People have long witnessed a connection between creative thinking and peculiar behavior. Plato described it as "divine madness"; Aristotle recognized that creative people tended toward bouts of depression.

Suffering can build resilience and empathy, which are valuable assets for creative individuals.

Recent research sees a similar pattern. Traits such as distractibility, anxiety, melancholy, and other mental obstacles are strongly associated with creativity. In multiple studies, bipolar disorder has been shown to correlate with an artistic temperament.

Psychiatrist and best-selling author Dr. Gail Saltz has been pondering this connection since childhood. Her fascination was sparked by her younger brother, as-

trophysicist Adam Riess, who received the Nobel Prize in physics in 2011. His lifelong insatiable curiosity and fervent questioning led Saltz to wonder how his mind worked.

"My brother's curiosity was so evident, and it made a big impression on me," Saltz told The Epoch Times. "His thirst for knowing is

highly important." Saltz's 2017 book, "The Power of Different: The Link Between Disorder and Genius," examines the unique features and struggles behind some of the world's greatest minds. Her investigation looks at historical examples, the latest science, and firsthand accounts of people who endured depression, dyslexia, autism, and other psychological hurdles but went on to do great things.

"Many of the most successful people in their arenas got there because their brain worked differently," she said. "That isn't just an accident. It's a difference that was bound to their particular strength and their subsequent success."

Strength in Disguise Stereotypes such as the tortured artist or absentminded professor exist for a reason. Genius and eccentricity tend to go together, and that may be by design. Research has shown that deficiencies in certain areas of the brain typically allow for acuities in another. Like the ancient Chinese principle of yin and yang, a particular strength is often married to a complementary weakness.

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), for example, is characterized by dysfunction of the ex-





(Top) Nikola Tesla circa 1890. (Above) Portrait of Leonardo by Francesco Melzi.

ecutive functions and dysregulation of the emotions. Contrary to popular belief, people with ADHD are cable of paying attention– they may even possess an ability for hyper-focused attention–but they can't always control the target of their focus. This can create problems in the classroom. But the drifting, distractible mind (like Einstein's) can also uncover a novel idea or see a problem from a new angle.

There's a clear theme of assets and flaws in the brains Saltz profiles in her book. One example is Dr. Beryl Benacerraf, a clinical professor at Harvard University and world-renowned radiology expert.

When Benacerraf was young, her teachers and parents were baffled as to why an otherwise bright child had such trouble reading and did so poorly on tests. They concluded that she must be lazy. After years of frustration, Benacerraf discovered she had a severe case of dyslexia–a learning disability in which letters become shuffled and written text is extremely difficult to decipher.

Despite this drawback, Benacerraf built a path to success. When she enrolled in Harvard Medical School, she learned to retain information by studying charts and graphs, rather than text. It was her remarkable ability for pattern recognition that led her to specialize in radiology.

While dyslexia made reading extremely difficult, it also granted Benacerraf a highly tuned peripheral vision. This allowed her to spot abnormalities on a scan that most would miss and led to her breakthrough discovery on prenatal signs

Physicist Albert Einstein

playing the violin in 1931.

Playing the Hand You're

of Down syndrome.

Among remarkable brains, Benacerraf's experience is more the rule than the exception. Saltz points to numerous examples where weakness and strength are paired in high-functioning individuals.

While geniuses may display more extreme duality, Saltz believes most of our brains work in a similar fashion. We're naturally good at some things and fall short in others. We tend to want to celebrate our strengths and hide our weaknesses. However, both sides make us who we are.

Despite the pain of their weaknesses, everyone Saltz interviewed said they would never give up their disability. They considered it a fundamental part of who they are and how they think

"I don't know if I hadn't had dyslexia if I'd have done something important in another area," Benacerraf told Saltz. "I was dealt a deck of cards, and I did my best with it."

We benefit from having some pain and challenge in our lives-it's how we grow. Suffering can build resilience and empathy, which are valuable assets for creative individuals. But too much pain, and not enough purpose, will eventually grind us down, says Saltz. We may miss the opportunity to develop our strengths because we are constantly plagued by our weaknesses.

The key to a positive identity is finding a way to feel productive, Saltz says. While it's important

Nurturing Genius Saltz argues there's a lot of potential genius lurking in the world that is never able to emerge. Many factors contribute to this loss. But the education systemwhich increasingly relies on standardized testing as a measure of success-may deserve part of the blame.

In ancient Rome, for example, a genius was not a person, but a conduit for ideas from another realm.

"The educational system believes we should all be good at everything," said Saltz. "We have standardized tests all over the place, but these measures do not acknowledge the fact that many people, if not most, are angular thinkers-we're very good at something and not as good at something else."

Scientific support for this idea can be found in the Human Connectome Project, an ongoing research effort that aims to map the neural networks of individual brains. Their most impressive finding thus far reveals that all of our brains are vastly different. Not just between us regular folk and geniuses, but everybody.

"There is such variation from brain to brain," Saltz said. "The idea that there is some black and white between normal and not normal is simply not the case."

While educators typically teach a standard mold that every student is required to meet, many don't fit comfortably in this tidy box. For a better education model, particularly for creative students, Saltz points to the work of Kevin Pelphrey, director of the child neuroscience lab at the Yale School of Medicine. Pelphrey believes most of students' time in the classroom should be spent on discovering and developing their strengths, and much less on treating their rela-

tive weaknesses. This model could have saved Einstein a lot of frustration. He was notoriously at odds with the school system and rebelled against its constraints. He excelled at math and science but fell behind in other subjects. One teacher famously told him he would never amount to anything.

Einstein claimed he could shrug off the negative judgments of others, but few are so confident. Award-winning author John Irving, for example, grew up thinking he was "lazy" and "stupid" because that's what his teachers told him. If it hadn't been for the support of his wrestling coach, he probably would've dropped out of school.

"I simply accepted the conventional wisdom of the day–I was a struggling student, therefore I was stu-

pid," he told Saltz. Another roadblock while learning to work with a unique brain is the societal stigma against mental illness. We like the genius part but tend to shun the psychological suffering that often comes with it. Part of this problem is language and the discomfort with labels like schizophrenia, anxiety disorder, or clinical depression. Critics of modern psychology also note the discipline's tendency to over-pathologize behavior in pursuit of a diagnosis.

"We have created artificial boxes because it's a way of speaking to each other. The downside is that we've done a disservice because it excludes people and leaves them feeling ashamed," Saltz said. "But this is evolving. More and more people are aware of the neurodiversity of our species."

The Burden of Genius In her book "Big Magic," best-selling author Elizabeth Gilbert (of "Eat, Pray, Love" fame) argued that our modern idea of creative genius puts too much focus and pressure on the individual, which tends to destroy mental health.

"It's like asking somebody to swallow the sun," Gilbert said in a 2016 TED talk. "It just completely warps and distorts egos, and it creates all these unmanageable expectations about performance. And I think the pressure of that has been killing off our artists for the last 500 years."

While modern culture considers genius to be a built-in feature of a particularly creative individual, the ancients believed that big ideas came from an otherworldly source. In ancient Rome, for example, a genius was not a person, but a conduit for ideas from another realm.

In other words, a person of great accomplishments wasn't considered a genius; rather, he had genius. The accomplishment was in tuning into this spirit and jotting down what it said to share with fellow humans. Artistic success, and failure, was easier to navigate when it wasn't so intimately tied to one individual's fragile ego

We all have relative weaknesses, and we all have relative strengths.

Dr. Gail Saltz

This mystical idea died out in the Renaissance, when humans came to be considered the fount of all knowledge, but Gilbert thinks bringing this old notion back into vogue would make the world a more creative place. The stereotype that an individual must be tortured, depressed, or inherently brilliant in order to create true art deters the average person from following their creative passions, she argues.

Whether or not there is a supernatural force behind our big ideas, birthing them still involves a great deal of effort, and not everyone is up for the challenge. Saltz believes that those who have the strength of mind and character to persist, while managing their obstacles, can achieve the freedom to pursue what they really love.

"We all have relative weaknesses, and we all have relative strengths," Saltz said. "It's how you manage your weaknesses and play to your strengths that's ultimately going to define where you go in life."

Taming the Grief Monster

When the joy of having having had a child finally outweighs the pain of losing him

LINDA ZELIK

aving been a bereaved mother for nine years I can now look back and L see how I was able to get from, "I don't think I can survive this all-consuming pain" to "I will always love and miss Kevin, but the memories and joy of having him for 24 years now outweigh the pain of losing him."

Traversing this path of profound grief may be the most difficult thing you ever face in life. Unfortunately, there are no magic wands or quick fixes. How could there be? A parent's love for their child is total and unconditional, unlike any other kind of love. Even if we didn't always like their actions or choices, our children held our love and it never wavered.

Since we are each unique individuals, as was our relationship with our child, there is no one "cookie-cutter" way to grieve or heal.

However, there are things you can do to help yourself. The following are some suggestions that have helped me and others make the journey through grief a little easier and less frightening. Be prepared though, there will be some work involved, the mere passage of time does not magically heal grief.

Taking Care of Yourself

First and foremost you need to take care of yourself. Never feel guilty about taking time for yourself or asking for help. Be as compassionate with yourself as you would with a dear friend going through a tragedy. What is helpful varies greatly from person to person. Some find staying busy helps while others need solitude; some benefit by a bubble bath or massage, others prefer exercise, while still others prefer talking to a friend. No matter how you find small respites from the agony of grief, there is one important constant-taking care of your health. It is important to avoid under-eating or over-eating (especially with junk food.) Be sure to stay hydrated; dehydration puts an additional and unnecessary strain on your body. Avoid excessive caffeine or alcohol, water and/or juices are best.

Sleep is frequently a major problem, as it was for me. I needed prescription medication for the first three years. Talk to your doctor or psychiatrist if this is an issue for you. Sleep deprivation takes a major toll on both your body and mind.

Crying

Never underestimate the healing power of tears! They are the body's way to release toxins and the mind's way to express strong emotions. Allow yourself as much crying as you need. If it makes others uncomfortable, so be it. Obviously there are going to be times when it is inappropriate. Try to put the tears "on hold" until you can be alone, like in the car or at home. I believe I was lucky because I cried easily, and excessively. After a good cry, I would feel a degree of relief from the pain and anxiety. Some people aren't able to cry, or



Linda Zelik's loss of her 24-year-old son has given her insight in how to recover from devastating grie

Be as

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can only cry minimally. If this is the case I suggest using a prompt to bring on the tears, for instance, a song or holding an item related to your child. Otherwise, try vigorous physical exercise to release some of those emotions.

Anger

Anger is almost always present, no matter the circumstances of your child's death. A parent is never supposed to lose a child. We want to lash out at someone, even God. How could He take our beautiful child from us? We are often angry at ourselves, thinking that somehow we should have been able to prevent it. It is

normal and natural to have these feelings in the beginning. Sometimes there is a person responsible for your child's death-either accidentally or intentionally. If anger towards a particular person becomes all-consuming, especially to the point of wanting to

take revenge, this is serious. If this is the case you should seek counseling as soon as possible. Extreme anger is not only harmful to you but delays healing. There is an old saying that, "Holding on to anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die." Although it sounds strange, letting go of the anger, and eventually coming to some form of forgiveness, is a gift of freedom you give yourself. This doesn't mean that you need to make that person your new best friend or that you will ever forget, but giving power to the anger can destroy you.

Journaling

Journaling can be a very helpful way to tame the jumble of thoughts that accompany any significant life tragedy. It is a tool that you can easily utilize. I found that writing provided an excellent outlet for me. I wrote down my thoughts and emotions, significant dreams, as well as things I wanted to say to Kevin. It doesn't have to be seen by anyone else and can be rambling or repetitive. Journaling also provides a way to measure your healing. As you look back, months or years later, you are able to see your progress and appreciate just how far you have come.

Is There a God?

Not everyone believes in God (or a higher power) but if they do, as in my case, faith is almost always questioned in a life-altering face in life. tragedy such as this. I remember screaming, "Why did Kevin have to die when bad people get to live? Eventually, as my anger subsided, I thought of a famous book by Rabbi Kushner, "When Bad Things Happen to Good People." His theory was that God didn't cause the tragedy but he can be a source of strength afterward. When I was finally able to pray again, I was rewarded with the comfort and strength I needed then, and still do.

> Eventually, as I let go of the anger, I came to some realizations that helped me put things into a better perspective. These included: I appreciate all the many blessings and people who still exist in my life; the depth of the pain is not as great as the depth of the love; I will see Kevin again when it's my time to cross over.

> Look for the next two parts in this series of Taming the Grief Monster: Beginning to Heal, and Moving Forward.

Linda Zelik is a graduate of the University of Southern California and a retired occupational therapist. Her world came crashing down in 2010 when she suddenly lost her 24-year-old son. The devastation led her through years of depression, tears, and a long and painful journey to heal her broken heart. She wrote the book, "From Despair to Hope, Survival Guide for Bereaved Parents," to help others through their grief.



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 "selfhelp" 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-lusting 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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