

WEEK 52, 2019

THE EPOCH TIMES

MIND & BODY

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People didn't always consider water as the plentiful hygiene essential that we do today.

Enjoy Your Food,
Without Going Too Far:
**4 MINDFUL
EATING TIPS FOR
THE HOLIDAYS**

PAGE 13

How Hygiene Changed Our Lives

Indoor plumbing inspired a profound shift in our culture and cleanliness **4**

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East Acupuncture Dr. Ping H Liou



Chinese Medicine Acupuncturist, Pharmacist

Born in a family of traditional Chinese medicine, Liou studied at Chengdu University of Traditional Chinese Medicine under famous doctors Benshu Diao and Yuqin Lai. has been practicing Chinese medicine for 13 years. Liou is expert in comprehensive treatment combining acupuncture and medicine.

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Reconnecting the exit portion of a digestive system after an ileostomy can come with significant discomfort as the body gets back to normal.

CANCER UP CLOSE

My Challenging Ileostomy Reversal Surgery Experience

The final gruelling step of cancer treatment put my body back together

MICHELE GONCALVES

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

I remember feeling both nervous and excited as I was being wheeled into the surgery room on March 1, 2019. This was the last hurdle I had to get through in order to complete my cancer treatment protocol. After living with an ileostomy bag hanging out of my abdomen for 9 months, I was looking forward to going to the bathroom normally again. My only worry was that I didn't know how my overly-sensitive belly and body would handle another big shake-up. Turns out, not so well.

Unlike my tumor reversal surgery, this one was quick and took only about two hours. Shortly after waking from anesthesia, my physical therapist came to visit me and had me stand up (which hurt like crazy) and start walking. I felt like I had been run over by a bus, but I was able to get steady on my feet and do a few laps around the floor. From there I quickly progressed my diet from clear liquids to low fiber foods, to normal foods. My goal was to pass gas or have a full bowel movement in order to leave the hospital. After just three days, the goal was met, and I went home.

Everything seemed fine at home for a few days, until suddenly I started to get really bad chills. Then, I started to have a very painful abdominal spasm every 10-20 minutes. My surgeon was concerned, and I went into my cancer center for an ER-type visit. I had a blood test done, and was given some fluids with added potassium, but everyone said that this was expected and was part of the recovery process, so I was sent home.

The next day, which was a Saturday, I started to throw up everything and couldn't even keep down water. This was in addition to my chills and spasms. I knew something was very wrong, yet I endured two days like this since the weekends at my cancer center are not fully staffed. I barely made it.

Monday came, and I went back to the hospital. This time I had a CT scan done and they said I had two obstructions in my intestines, plus my potassium levels dropped to 2.5, which is dangerously low. The news came that I was going to be readmitted to the hospital.

Then, two nurses approached me with a tense look on their faces and said they were given orders to put in an NG tube to help with my nausea. I didn't know what this meant, but suddenly one kind of held my arms, while the other whipped out a tube and tried to stick it quickly up my nose and down my throat, but it wasn't going in.

We had to switch nostrils, and this time it worked. I was gagging and almost

throwing up the entire time. Of everything that I have endured on my cancer journey, this was one of the worst. Unfortunately, this tube was piercing my throat and felt like I was being stabbed in the esophagus every time I swallowed, and stayed in for 9 of the 11 days I was in the hospital.

Apparently, my intestines were not working or waking up, which was causing all of my pain. For several days I was given a drug called Reglan, which stimulates the intestines to start working. However, it made me very ill and made me lose my bowels in less than a minute. I reached a point where I asked the nurse to administer the IV push of this drug while I sat on the toilet so I didn't dirty the bed. I'd say looking back, this was my lowest point both physically and emotionally.

I felt like I had been run over by a bus, but I was able to get steady on my feet and do a few laps around the floor.

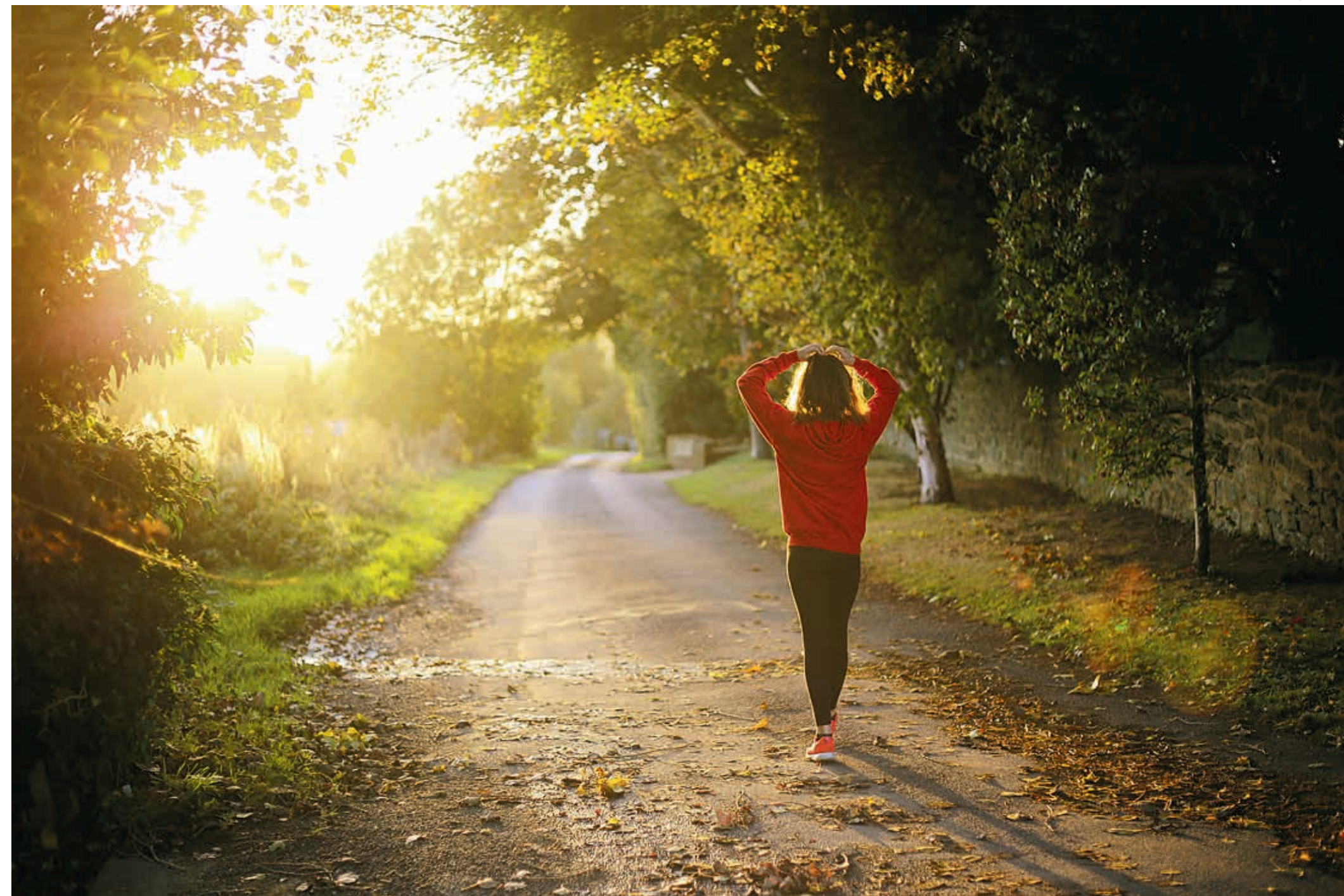
After 11 days of countless x-rays of my belly, CT scans, a colonoscopy, and balloon catheterization, as well as a contrast dye review, I was told I could go home. I didn't feel quite ready, but I was happy for a change of scenery. I was eating very small bites of solid food at this point, but I was also on a liquid medical food called TPN (total parenteral nutrition). Once again, I was going to have to learn from a home nurse how to administer a 12-hour IV drip of this medical food into a PICC line overnight for one week to help supplement my nutrition as I got back to normal. Luckily, I had some prior experience with this, and it didn't seem as daunting this time.

Things improved quickly as far as eating went. However, I was facing many episodes of incontinence during the day. It took some time (a week or so) before I felt ready to take a chance and leave the house wearing special underwear, but accidents did (and still do) happen. However, despite all of the difficult issues I faced, I am grateful that at this point I no longer have an ileostomy.

Come back next week when I will share highlights of my post-surgery healing journey, such as learning to live with periodic incontinence, dealing with heavy metal toxicity, and accepting my scars.

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.



From a functional medicine viewpoint, this study adds more evidence to an already established practice used to make metabolism more efficient and optimize our capacity for self-healing.

Improve Metabolism and Self Healing With Time-Restricted Eating

The body is better able to repair and rebuild at a cellular level if given downtime from digestion

ARMEN NIKOGOSIAN

Nearly one-third of the American population is affected by metabolic syndrome, a cluster of conditions that include high cholesterol, high blood sugar, and obesity, which increase the risk for Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.

Adopting a healthy diet and increasing physical exercise can improve this condition, but these lifestyle changes can be difficult to implement and even tougher to maintain. Many times these lifestyle interventions, even when combined with supplements and pharmaceuticals, are not enough to fully control the disease.

In a recent small pilot study in Cell Metabolism, researchers found that a 10-hour time-restricted eating intervention in patients with metabolic syndrome resulted in reduced abdominal fat, weight loss, lower blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, and insulin levels. This is another addition to the long list of studies that have demonstrated that the timing of when we eat affects our metabolism.

From a conventional medicine viewpoint, this exciting new treatment option may add a new tool for treating patients with

This is another addition to the long list of studies that have demonstrated that the timing of when we eat affects our metabolism.

metabolic syndrome. From a functional medicine viewpoint, this study adds more evidence to an already established practice used to make metabolism more efficient and optimize our capacity for self-healing.

Time-restricted eating is a method of eating where all calories are consumed within a consistent 10-hour window. In an effort to support their own circadian rhythms, participants were allowed to choose their own time-restricted eating interval within the confines of a continuous 10-hour span where eating was allowed and a 14-hour window of intermittent fasting where they were not allowed to eat. Circadian rhythm is the 24-hour bio-rhythm primarily involved in our daily sleep/wake cycle. Past studies have found that irregular eating patterns and meals close to bedtime could disrupt this rhythm and increase the risk for metabolic syndrome and other chronic diseases associated with it.

The small study included patients with metabolic syndrome. Although calories were not recommended to be reduced, some participants did report eating less, probably due to the shorter eating window.

Focusing all food consumption within a 10-hour window allows the metabolism to have a consistent 14-hour period to optimize the restoration of body systems without digestion siphoning away valuable metabolic resources or high insulin levels interfering with cellular recycling.

This is particularly important during sleep and the several hours leading up to it. While participants were allowed to choose their own 10-hour time intervals for eating, certain patterns became evident in the course of the study. The eating intervals moved further and further away from sleep. To restrict food intake within their 10-hour window, most participants had breakfast later by two-four hours and dinner earlier by one-four hours each day in order to not skip any meals.

The study participants experienced a three to four percent reduction in body weight, body mass index, abdominal fat, and waist circumference. Risk factors for heart disease were diminished six percent in blood pressure and seven percent in total cholesterol. Primary drivers for diabetes such as blood sugar and insulin

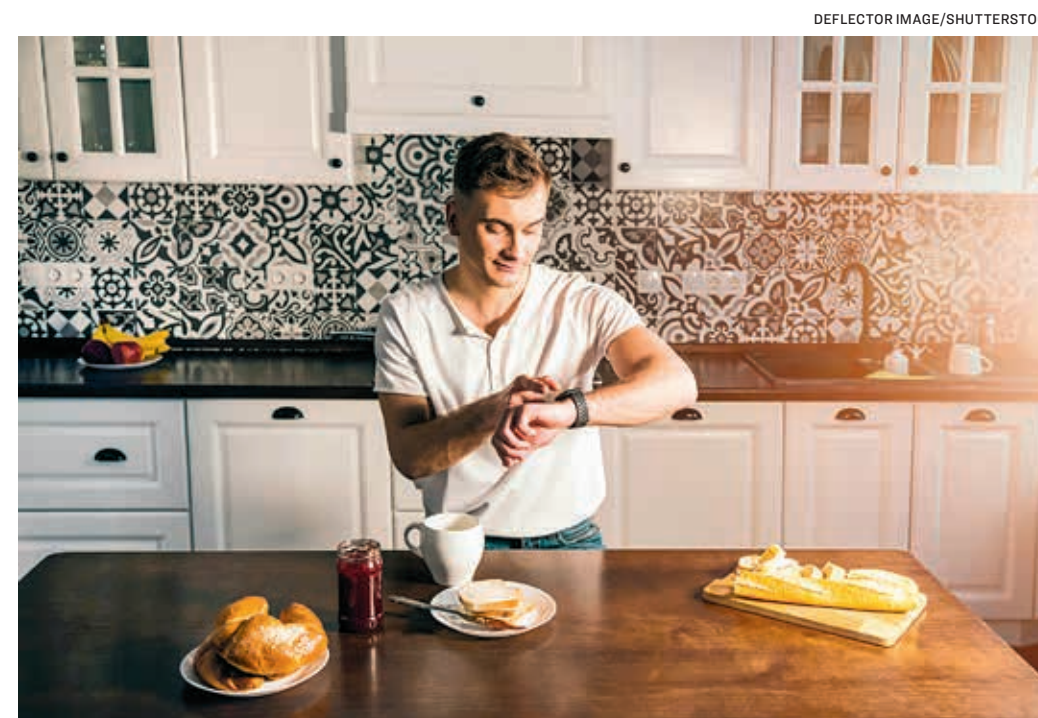
were reduced five percent and twenty-one percent respectively. There were no adverse effects noted.

The gains seen by participants of this study were driven by autophagy, which means "self-eating." Autophagy is how cells recycle their contents and, ultimately, themselves. This process is central to how the human body repairs itself and it primarily occurs while we are sleeping. Intermittent fasting, particularly around the hours of sleep, will enhance this process. The fewer resources spent on metabolically expensive functions such as digestion and the lower the insulin level, the more efficient this cellular recycling becomes and the better the body is able to heal itself of various imbalances.

Insulin reduces autophagy. The more insulin resistant a person becomes, the less their body is able to activate its own inherent healing systems. This also pertains to your average insulin-sensitive person as well because insulin rises after meals in everybody. A late, large dinner or recurrent bouts of late-night snacking can keep insulin levels elevated for several hours after bedtime. By timing our food intake, we can control the efficiency of our metabolism while we sleep.

Through the course of the study, it was also observed that patients placed themselves on more regular eating intervals which allowed the body to anticipate when digestion would be needed so it could prepare to optimize metabolic function. Coupling this with 14 hours of intermittent fasting around sleep brings us one step closer to understanding how to optimize our own healing and regeneration.

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.



Each time he adapted to Joan's changing condition, another setback would occur, setting off new crises and fueling uncertainty and stress.

Doctor-Turned-Caregiver Shares About Health Care's Blindspot

Caregivers are the backbone of the nation's long-term care system—and they need help

JUDITH GRAHAM

Caring for someone with a serious illness stretches people spiritually and emotionally, often beyond what they might have thought possible.

Dr. Arthur Kleinman, a professor of psychiatry and anthropology at Harvard University, calls this "enduring the unendurable" in his recently published book, "The Soul of Care: The Moral Education of a Husband and a Doctor."

The book describes Kleinman's awakening to the realities of caregiving when his beloved wife, Joan, was diagnosed with a rare form of early Alzheimer's disease that causes blindness as well as cognitive deterioration.

Kleinman wasn't prepared for the roller coaster of caregiving even though his specialty is studying how patients experience illness. Each time he adapted to Joan's changing condition, another setback would occur, setting off new crises and fueling uncertainty and stress.

During 11 years of caregiving until Joan's death in 2011, Kleinman learned that no one who goes through this emerges unchanged. He became less self-centered, more compassionate, and more aware of how the health care system fails to support family caregivers, the very people that are the backbone of the nation's long-term care system.

I spoke with Kleinman in mid-November at a caregiving panel. His remarks below are edited for length and clarity.

About his book. "I wrote it for a specific reason. I had spent my whole

career as an expert on care. I myself was a psychiatrist who worked with patients with chronic medical disorders, [such as] chronic pain, diabetes, heart disease, cancer. I thought I knew it all. A veil of ignorance was raised from my eyes by my experience as a primary family caregiver.

"What is that veil of ignorance about? It's about recognizing just how difficult family care is for [people with] dementia and, not just dementia, but many other problems."

Daily responsibilities. "Let's say in the fifth year, what was it like? I would get Joan up around 6 a.m. and take her to the bathroom. I have to handle the toilet paper, wash her hands, dress her to work out, take her to the bath and bathe her. "I would shampoo her hair, dry her, pick out her clothes [for the day]. After that, I would prepare breakfast. As she got increasingly agitated, [that] became difficult because I had to sometimes hold her hands [to] keep her from throwing things or getting up and hurting herself. Because she was blind, she couldn't see where she was. And then I would help her eat—usually, at the end, feeding her—and then take her to a room where we would sit and listen quietly to music.

"Maybe six, seven years into this, I would just sit there and hold her hands. And even that became difficult. So, I would tell her stories of the past ... our stories. [Editorial note: This is just the beginning of a day full of similar tasks.]

"I discovered early on that the ritualization of acts of caring—the dressing, bathing, all these things—is a way of habit formation that keeps you going."

Challenging masculinity. "We had a great relationship, but it was asymmetrical. For 36 years, my wife took care of me. I was raised as a classical male in the 1940s. When I showed an interest in cooking, my grandmother said to me, 'What are

you, a sissy?' I was a tough kid on New York [City] streets. I had the most unpromising beginnings to be a caregiver. And my wife slowly socialized me to a different kind of masculinity, to be able to care.

"[Pay family members for caregiving] and you'll see more men do it. Go to Australia, for example, where there's very good compensation for care, and you're astonished at the number of men who are caring for children, who are caring for elderly, and the like."

Asking for help. "I have a wide circle of friends and colleagues, and [after the book] many of them said they had never realized what was involved. Part of that was my fault. I had a lot of trouble asking for help. Actually, at one point, I so exhausted myself that my kids, who are great, said, 'You really need assistance.' And they stepped in, as did my mother. My mother, who at the time was in her 90s.

"So, I had a great system of care around me, but I [also] needed a home health aide to [help with Joan and] keep myself going. I found an Irish woman ... and she was fabulous."

Maintaining presence. "In spite of that, I found it extraordinarily difficult in terms of other elements of care, one of which is presence. To keep your liveliness—your love, the presence of who you are going while you're doing all this work of caregiving—is extremely difficult and demanding, but it's crucial.

"When people ask 'Why do you do [this]?' the answer of most family caregivers I've spoken to is 'Well, it was there to do. It's got to be done, [so] you do it.'"

Learning about failure. "I was fortunate in life; I had a golden career. I have a personality that is like a bulldog, and when I start something I finish it. But there's no finishing care. Every one of us [family caregivers], if we're hon-

est, you fail at a certain point. The frustrations build, anger mounts, you control your anger so you don't injure the person you're caring for. But you've got to somehow handle it inside you."

The soul of care. "I think what lies at the soul of care is a form of love. You will do everything you can for another because they mean so much to you. [But] it is also problematic because we all have complex relationships and we've got other things going on in our lives.

"We endure, we learn how to endure, how to keep going. We're marked, we're injured, we're wounded. We're changed ... [in] my case, for the better. If you had known me before my 11 years of care, you wouldn't recognize me today. I was your classical hard-driving Harvard professor ... as tough as any other professor at Harvard Medical School.

"I've redeemed myself through this experience, in a way."

A call for change. "How do we strengthen caregiving? How do we do those things that will make it recognized as important as it is? It's going to take a radical rethinking. Our health care system [is focused on] entirely the wrong issues. Economics is not the most central aspect of care; it's caregiving.

"Do you know not a single one of the senior neurologists I went to with Joan, who wanted to do everything diagnostically, made the recommendation 'You want to think about a home health aide now, even though you don't need it right now. You have to look into how you're going to reconfigure your house [for] someone who's both blind and with dementia. [Or] a social worker is a great navigator of what the health care system is about. You want to take advantage of that.'"

"So, this is where I believe that our whole health care system has got to be rethought, from the bottom up with attention to care at its core."

MINDSET MATTERS

What Elon Musk's Shattered Windshield Can Teach Us About Mindset

How you think about your failure determines your future success

BARRY BROWNSTEIN

Last month CEO Elon Musk helped unveil Tesla's new Cybertruck. The Cybertruck's abstract design won't work for those needing a large flatbed for hauling, but Tesla's innovative project is moving the needle for weekend warriors. Already 200,000 Tesla fans have put down a deposit to reserve their truck for 2021 delivery.

If you're hauling large payloads, durability is crucial. Musk boasted the "truck" was "bulletproof." When Tesla's chief designer Franz Von Holzhausen threw "a metal ball at one of its armored windows, audible surprise could be heard as the glass smashed—twice."

Musk exclaimed, "Well, maybe that was a little too hard."

Tesla has enjoyed success but has also left a trail of broken promises. Musk, like many entrepreneurs, learns from mistakes. Musk graciously tweeted: "Franz throws steel ball at Cybertruck window right before launch. Guess we have some improvements to make before production haha."

For an entrepreneur, setbacks and failure come with the job title. Successful entrepreneurs pick themselves up and go right back to figuring out how to best serve the needs of consumers.

Accepting responsibility is the only way to lasting change.

Shattered Windshields

Like Musk, many of us have "shattered a windshield." A major presentation flops. A person rejects us. A poor decision puts our career plans in grave jeopardy. We've all been there.

When setbacks happen, perhaps you are consumed by thoughts such as "I'm a miserable failure" or "My life is ruined." Do you wallow in those thoughts, fall into depression, or substitute addictive behavior for needed action?

How you think about your failure determines your future success. Research by famed Stanford University psychology professor Carol Dweck helps reveal how your fundamental mindset about your abilities and intelligence is a significant determinant of your success.

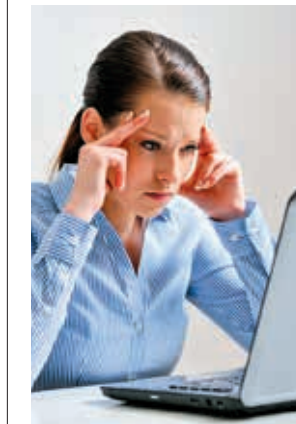
Dweck asks us to become more aware of our thinking. When facing a challenge, is your thinking dominated by questions such as, "Will I succeed or fail? Will I look smart or dumb? Will I be accepted or rejected? Will I feel like a winner or a loser?" If so, you may have what Dweck calls a fixed mindset. In some form, those questions arise for most of us; but when they consume our attention, they may inhibit needed action.

"Challenges often frighten a person with a fixed mindset," writes Dweck in her book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Why? If you have a fixed mindset, you believe that your abilities are set in stone. If you apply effort yet fail, the failure says something permanent about your abilities. If you choke during a presentation, thoughts of how to improve are submerged in a tsunami of negative thinking.

Dweck explains how "believing that your qualities are carved in stone...creates an urgency to prove yourself over and over."

If you are wedded to the ideas that your level of intelligence is a fixed trait and that not much can be done to change the kind of person you are, you have a fixed mindset.

PETER RUTER/SHUTTERSTOCK



People who have a fixed mindset believe their work should be effortless; as a result, they expend little effort in what they do.



Tesla has enjoyed success but has also left a trail of broken promises. Musk, like many entrepreneurs, learns from mistakes.

You don't want to "look or feel deficient." You cover up your errors and refuse to learn from them.

Secretly your suffering is immense. Going through life with a fixed mindset, Dweck writes, is like "always trying to convince yourself and others that you have a royal flush when you're secretly worried it's a pair of tens."

A growth mindset is the alternative. Dweck explains:

This growth mindset is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts, your strategies, and help from others. Although people may differ in every which way—in their initial talents and aptitudes, interests, or temperaments—everyone can change and grow through application and experience.

If you are wedded to the ideas that your level of intelligence is a fixed trait and that not much can be done to change the kind of person you are, you have a fixed mindset. But, if you believe that you can "substantially change" both your level of intelligence and the kind of person you are, you likely have a growth mindset.

Fixed and growth mindsets lie on a continuum. Interestingly, you can have a fixed mindset in one area of your life and a growth mindset in another. In any part of your life, unquestioned fixed mindset beliefs bind you. Becoming aware of your own beliefs automatically begins the process of change. Identification with a growth mindset beliefs emboldens you.

A growth mindset doesn't protect you from failure. "Even in the growth mindset," Dweck writes, "failure can be a painful experience. But it doesn't define you. It's a problem to be faced, dealt with, and learned from." Musk's self-effacing shattered windshield Tweet indicates he is ready to learn.

Mindset and Leadership

As an entrepreneur, Musk has a growth mindset. As a leader, his mindset is questionable.

Dweck examined the research in the seminal leadership book by Jim Collins, *Good to Great* and found:

[Successful leaders] were not the larger-than-life, charismatic types who oozed ego and self-proclaimed talent. They were self-effacing people who constantly asked questions and had the ability to confront the most brutal answers—that is, to look failures in the face, even their own, while maintaining faith that they would succeed in the end.

If "the more self-effacing growth-minded people" are the most successful leaders," how Dweck wondered, "did CEO and gargantuan ego become synonymous?" In a recent cameo on *Rick and Morty*, Musk was willing to satirize his ego. Dweck observes:

Fixed-mindset leaders, like fixed-mindset people in general, live in a world where some people are superior and some are inferior. They must repeatedly affirm that they are superior, and the company is simply a platform for this.

To affirm they are superior, fixed-mindset leaders may surround themselves with sycophants to clap for potentially disastrous schemes:

As these leaders cloaked themselves in the trappings of royalty, surrounded themselves with flatterers who extolled their virtues, and hid from problems, it is no wonder they felt invincible. Their fixed mindset created a magical realm in which the brilliance and perfection of the king were constantly validated. Within that mindset, they were completely fulfilled. Why would they want to step outside that realm to face the ugly reality of warts and failures?

Musk is well known for his emotional immaturity and explosive temper. He instills fear by firing people on the spot. At the Tesla factory, stories like this abound:

At about 10 o'clock on Saturday evening, an angry Musk was examining one of the production line's mechanized modules, trying to figure out what was wrong, when the young, excited engineer was brought over to assist him.

"Hey, buddy, this doesn't work!" Musk shouted at the engineer, according to someone who heard the conversation. "Did you do this?"

The engineer was taken aback. He had never met Musk before. Musk didn't even know the engineer's name. The young man wasn't certain what, exactly, Musk was asking him, or why he sounded so angry.

"You mean, program the robot?" the engineer said. "Or design that tool?"

"Did you [expletive] do this?" Musk asked him.

"I'm not sure what you're referring to?" the engineer replied apologetically.

"You're a [expletive] idiot!" Musk shouted back. "Get [expletive] out and don't come back!"

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MINDSET MATTERS

What Elon Musk's Shattered Windshield Can Teach Us About Mindset



How you think about your failure determines your future success

Continued from Page 7

The young engineer climbed over a low safety barrier and walked away. He was bewildered by what had just happened. The entire conversation had lasted less than a minute. A few moments later, his manager came over to say that he had been fired on Musk's orders.

This incident was not an aberration:

One manager had a name for these outbursts—Elon's rage firings—and had forbidden subordinates from walking too close to Musk's desk at the Gigafactory out of concern that a chance encoun-

ter, an unexpected question answered incorrectly, might endanger a career.

Be like Musk, the entrepreneur. Don't be like Musk, the leader.

A Growth Mindset Is the Secret Sauce of Success

People who have a fixed mindset believe their work should be effortless; as a result, they expend little effort in what they do. When work is challenging, they quickly lose interest. When things go wrong, they tend to blame others. Whatever a person with a fixed mindset aspires to, they believe they have a natural-born aptitude or not. Practicing is for people who are

not endowed with the talent they think they have.

Compared to those with a fixed mindset, individuals with a growth mindset have entirely different beliefs about abilities and practice. They do not believe that anybody can accomplish anything. They understand natural ability is important. However, they also believe in devoting continuous and ongoing effort to develop their abilities.

If you're a sports fan, you often see the impact of mindset. Some players, while blessed with physical gifts, never seem to improve. They are unwilling to devote the effort needed to improve their game. They have a fixed mindset. Those with a growth mindset may have lesser physical abilities but their game keeps improving.

To become more growth-minded, shine a light on your fixed mindset beliefs. Dweck coaches us with these questions:

What happens when our fixed-mindset "persona" shows up—the character within who warns us to avoid challenges and beats us up when we fail at something? How does that persona make us feel? What does it make us think and how does it make us act? How do those thoughts, feelings, and actions affect us and those around us? And, most important, what can we do over time to keep that persona from interfering with our growth...? How can we persuade that fixed-mindset persona to get on board with the goals that spring from our growth mindset?

Beware of constant judgment; it's a sign of having a fixed mindset. Dweck writes:

The fixed mindset creates an internal monologue that is focused on judging: "This means I'm a loser." "This means I'm a better person than they are." "This means I'm a bad husband." "This means my partner is selfish."

Giving Up a Sense of Entitlement

Dweck has observed, "Many people with the fixed mindset think the world needs to change, not them. Thus, they feel entitled to something better—a better job, house, or spouse." They think that "the world should recognize their special qualities and treat them accordingly."

Are you willing to change your mindset? If so, you will see the world differently, says Dweck:

You begin to consider the idea that some people stand out because of their commitment and effort. Little by little you try putting more effort into things and seeing if you get more of the rewards you wanted.

Beware of constant judgment; it's a sign of having a fixed mindset.

Yet, life doesn't come with a guarantee:

Although you can slowly accept the idea that effort might be necessary, you still can't accept that it's no guarantee. It's enough of an indignity to have to work at things, but to work and still not have them turn out the way you want—now, that's really not fair. That means you could work hard and somebody else could still get the promotion. Outrageous.

Over time, further changes occur:

You begin to enjoy putting in effort and... you begin to think in terms of learning...

As you become a more growth-minded person, you're amazed at how people start to help you, support you. They no longer seem like adversaries out to deny you what you deserve.

Dweck's theory can be applied in business, in relationships, in sports, with your children, and with your students.

Soon you will break another windshield. Learn from your failure and your life will seem full of new possibilities.

Barry Brownstein is a professor emeritus of economics and leadership at the University of Baltimore. He is the author of "The Inner-Work of Leadership." To receive his essays, subscribe to Mindset Shifts at BarryBrownstein.com. This article was first published by the Foundation for Economic Education.



People in the past were sensitive to subtle cues in the environment and bodies because their survival depended on it.

Tune In to Your Body's Wisdom

Intuition partnered with scientific knowledge could get us even closer to a cure

CONAN MILNER

Modern medicine has made some amazing advances over the past century, but there's still no match for our most powerful diagnostic tool: body wisdom.

Body wisdom is our ability to listen to and interpret the sensations in our body that guide us toward what we need, according to

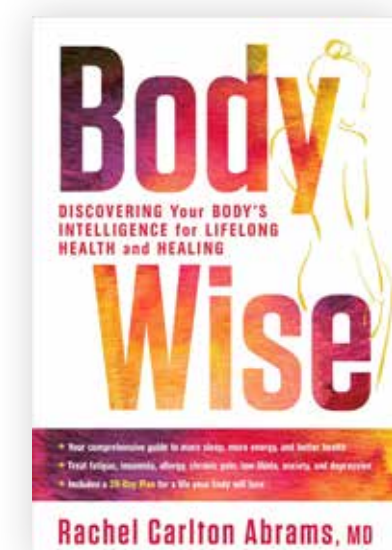
Dr. Rachel Carlton Abrams, a family practice physician who is also board-certified in holistic medicine.

In her book "Bodywise: Discovering Your Body's Intelligence for Lifelong Health and Healing," Abrams explains how we can learn to sense this often ignored guidance.

Most of us can handle the body basics—hunger, thirst, and the urge to urinate—but we miss a lot of the more subtle messages our bodies try to send us, says Abrams. When we can't hear or refuse to listen, the body's call grows louder, urging us to pay attention.

"When the body first starts to talk to us, it's knocking on the door. If we don't listen, the body gives us a shout. If we really don't listen, it slaps us upside the head. Then, we actually have a physical problem," Abrams said.

Continued on Page 10



Body Wise: Discovering Your Body's Intelligence for Lifelong Health and Healing.

“Ninety percent of illness in the United States is caused by lifestyle. You can't fix that with a lab or MRI.”

Dr. Rachel Carlton Abrams, author

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Sometimes, we have to ignore our body's needs temporarily to get things done, but that's not a sustainable life strategy.

Tune In to Your Body's Wisdom

Intuition partnered with scientific knowledge could get us even closer to a cure

Continued from Page 9

This pattern is common in people who spend most of their day sitting in a chair, behind a desk. This position may seem benign, but it's not a form our bodies were designed to endure for hours on end. That's why desk-bound people often develop head and neck pain, headaches, and carpal tunnel syndrome.

"It's the ignoring of those body signals that allow it to go from a little twinge, to an actual pathology where we now have disk disease because of so much breakdown," said Abrams.

“

It's really sad. We've stripped the physician of their brilliance. We give them a bunch of data and say, 'Fix this problem.'

Dr. Rachel Carlton Abrams, author

Our Body Wisdom Legacy

Body wisdom is a new name for an old idea. Abrams says our society is suffering from historically low body wisdom, because we live much more in our heads. People in the past were sensitive to subtle cues in the environment and bodies because their survival depended on it.

Technology has minimized many of the struggles we face, but Abrams says our body wisdom has also faded in kind. In a world where we can order food online, earn a living by working on a computer, and travel virtually anywhere with little effort, the highly attuned senses our ancestors cultivated are of little use today.

Technology has replaced body wisdom in medicine, too. Before X-rays, echocardiograms, and MRIs, doctors closely examined a patient's symptoms, hab-

its, and environment. They combined observation and intuition to reveal the underlying pattern of imbalance in the patient, then came up with a treatment to complement this imbalance. Such body-reading practices can still be found in Chinese, ayurvedic, Tibetan, and several other traditional medical systems that have endured for thousands of years.

"It's really sad. We've stripped the physician of their brilliance. We give them a bunch of data and say, 'Fix this problem,'" said Abrams. "That occasionally works, but most of the time it doesn't." Abrams appreciates the tools modern medicine has to offer, and she applies them when necessary. But she worries that the system has lost touch with basic aspects of medicine.

A case in point is widespread magnesium deficiency. Magnesium contributes to more than 300 enzymatic reactions but up to 80 percent of Americans don't get enough of this critical nutrient and suffer many symptoms as a result. Rather than identifying and treating this deficiency, patients may be prescribed treatments for everything from headaches to depression.

Doctors today rely on tests and scans to diagnose illness, and these are often administered by algorithm: If this symptom, prescribe this test. These tools can provide specific details to rule out specific problems, but they miss much, including essential aspects of diet and lifestyle. They especially fall short at addressing more systemic problems and promoting overall wellness.

"Ninety percent of illness in the United States is caused by lifestyle. You can't fix that with a lab or MRI," she said. "You actually have to be with a human being who is eating at McDonald's and working a hard job 12 hours a day, and ask, 'How can I help in this particular situation, [for] this particular human?'"

Abrams personally felt this disconnect

while working at a multispecialty clinic early in her career. Seven years into the job, she started to develop headaches. She sought relief from various treatments, but the pain persisted. Then, her osteopath noticed a pattern: Abrams only had headaches on days when she was at work.

"I've always loved being a doctor, but a practice where you see a new person every 10 to 15 minutes is painful for someone trying to pay attention to why people are sick and not just write prescriptions, because it's very difficult to do that in a short period of time," she said.

When Abrams realized her job was the issue, she decided she would quit. The headaches disappeared, even though she had to work there six more months. Once she addressed her body's message, she no longer had pain.

"I can't explain that to you physiologically, but I can tell you that it is not an unusual story. I hear stories like that from my patients all the time. Their body is trying to signal them about decisions they need to make, or even about health problems," she said.

When body wisdom is combined with modern medicine, the results can be miraculous. One of Abrams's patients, Sophia, a 26-year-old mother, came in because she feared she couldn't have a second child. She traced her fear to a recurring dream of a snake biting her on the head and neck. Following the intuition, Abrams called for brain imaging tests, which revealed that Sophia had tumors in her pituitary and parathyroid glands, right where the dream snake was biting.

Sophia was unable to have more kids, but her body wisdom helped catch the cancer early, and she completely recovered. It also prompted her father to seek diagnosis and recover successfully with treatment for a similar condition.

Tuning In to the Body

In Abrams's current practice, she now spends an hour with each patient. The extra time allows for a deeper understanding for both doctor and patient.

But you don't need a doctor to hear what



Dr. Rachel Carlton
Abrams

JANISOT DUNNE/PHOTOFEST

your body is saying. In fact, Abrams says it's your responsibility to regularly tune in to your body's messages. A medical professional can help assemble a clearer picture, but you have to provide the important pieces of information.

When tuning in to your body, Abrams describes four levels to keep in mind.

The first is measurements: keeping track of blood pressure, pulse rate, fat to muscle ratio, what day you're on in your menstrual cycle, etc. This data can come from simple or high-tech methods, but staying on top of changes in these numbers can help signal a problem.

The second level is sense: What do you feel in your body, and what is the quality of that sensation? Get specific. Is it dense, electric, tight, hot, or buzzy? Clear your mind, take a few deep breaths, and let the sensation tell its story.

The third is feelings: Try to identify if your pain has any emotional context. Could it be connected to a fight, a sense of frustration, or a traumatic experience that you'd rather forget?

For example, abdominal pain could mean an ulcer, gallbladder disease, or appendicitis, or it could also signal a failing marriage. "What I feel is a clenching in my belly," Abrams said. "That's not pathology, it's physiologic, but the cause is emotional."

The fourth level is discernment: Collect all the information you've gathered into a story that makes sense about the message your body is trying to send.

Masking the Message

If life is a journey, then body wisdom serves as a navigational system. The map is what Abrams considers the fundamentals of health: eating, sleeping, moving, loving, being part of a community, and having a sense of purpose.

Sometimes, we have to ignore our body's needs temporarily to get things done, but that's not a sustainable life strategy. With her office near Silicon Valley, Abrams often sees people who

have turned ignoring their body's needs into a lifestyle.

"They don't sleep, don't eat well, work 16 hours a day, and drive themselves into the ground," she said. "And it doesn't look good. They all look about 15 years older than their actual chronological age."

Modern doctors are trained to recognize that lifestyle changes are the first thing to consider, but change is hard and appointments are short. A doctor typically only has time for a few general statements about diet and exercise, and unless patients are motivated, they'll usually succumb to their old habits once they walk out of the office. As a result, the system turns to drugs by default.

Abrams agrees that pharmaceuticals are occasionally necessary, but says most of the time drugs only silence what our body is trying to tell us.

Consider an athlete who develops an injury in training, and instead of seeking rest and physical therapy, turns to regular doses of ibuprofen for relief while continuing to train as usual.

Another example would be someone who doesn't change his diet because Prilosec takes care of his acid reflux or Lipitor takes care of his cholesterol. The lab results may look better, but the body's message likely hasn't been heard.

Even with natural supplements, the predominant health care philosophy remains "a pill for every ill."

Modern medicine is unique in that it's the only healing culture that doesn't have a word for general "life force" energy. There is no equivalent to qi (as it's known in Chinese) or prana (as it's known in Sanskrit) in a medical dictionary, yet this was a fundamental idea that guided health care around the world before scientific inquiry became our primary way of understanding.

For optimal health, Abrams recommends that we bring some of these old ideas back into our lives.

"I'm a huge lover of science. I think it's an amazing tool. It's done remarkable things for us. We just have to come back into balance," she said.

IRINA SOBOLJEVA S/SHUTTERSTOCK



Consider an athlete who develops an injury in training, and instead of seeking rest and physical therapy, turns to regular doses of ibuprofen for relief, while continuing to train as usual.

How People With Dementia Can Best Enjoy the Holidays

Consider needs of both a loved one with dementia and the person that cares for them

PATTI VERBANAS

Family caregivers and people with dementia or Alzheimer's disease are at risk for increased stress during the holidays—but holiday visits can be a joyous time with adjusted expectations and careful planning.

Mary Catherine Lundquist is program director of Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care's Care2Caregivers, a peer counseling helpline (at 800-424-2494) for caregivers of people with dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

Lundquist offers the following advice for families preparing to spend the holidays with someone who has dementia and their caregiver.

Question: How should families approach traditional holiday gatherings?

Answer: Adult children who have one parent with dementia and the other as the caregiver should consider what is in the best interest of each parent when planning events. For example, while children might long to visit their parents with their families on one special day for the sake of tradition, that might be the last thing the caregiver desires. Mom might have been up all night caring for Dad and the house might be disorderly because she is too busy to clean.

Structure and routine are important for a person with dementia. If there is any change—like attending a gathering at another home—he or she could be out of sorts for the next few days, adding stress to the caregiver. Sometimes, it's best for the loved one to stay at home and receive visits of 30 minutes or less from a small number of guests stretched out over a period of days. Keep the number of guests to a minimum; sometimes even having two extra people in the room can be too much stimulation.

Question: How can caregivers prepare traveling family members for the changes in their loved one?

Answer: Talk with your out-of-town family beforehand and let them know that their loved one may be different than last year, so they are not shocked by changes.

Be specific. Say, for example, "He's not talking a lot" or "She may ask the same questions over and over again" or "He may not know who you are." Discuss some behaviors they might witness, such as aimlessly walking around the house, needing assistance in using the bathroom, or having difficulties when eating.

Question: How should families celebrate



Although people lose the ability to converse, their ability to sing may be preserved in a beautiful way.

with loved ones in a care facility?

Answer: Although we may want our family members to be home for these special days, sometimes it can be very upsetting for them to transition from the care facility to home and then back again. Bring the gathering to your loved one. Many facilities have family meeting rooms where you can plan your own celebration.

Question: How should family members initially approach a loved one with dementia?

Answer: Enter the room slowly and offer your hand respectfully. Wait for the loved one to take it and respect them if they do not. Introduce yourself by name and relationship. Never ask, "Do you know who I am?" If you want to hug them, lean in slowly and read their cues. If they get tense or back up, they are not comfortable. Realize that people who never wanted to be touched may suddenly be interested in holding your hand all the time—and vice versa.

Question: What are the best ways that family members can spend quality time with a loved one during a visit?

Answer: Bring a bag of tricks: snacks, coloring books, crafts, photographs, or memorabilia. There are so many ways we can connect with each other even when a person can no longer talk or remember a shared history. Music—especially singing songs together—is a wonderful way to share an experience. Although people lose the ability to converse, their ability to sing may be preserved in a beautiful way.

Tactile projects, such as coloring or making cookies, are other ways to enjoy time together. Engage loved ones in ways that match their abilities: Perhaps they can hold a bowl or roll dough. It's even meaningful if they simply sit at the table while others perform the tasks. You also can look at holiday cards together and use the visuals to make small talk.

People with dementia may lose their ability to have a conversation. Guests and caregivers can converse but should make the loved one feel included even if they don't respond. Don't shy away from reminiscing, as that can be a comfort to the caregiver. However, refrain from asking the loved one "Do you remember?" or expecting them

to give you details from the past. It's also good to remind the loved one of your name and your relationship to them from time to time.

Question: What can you give to someone with memory issues and their caregivers?

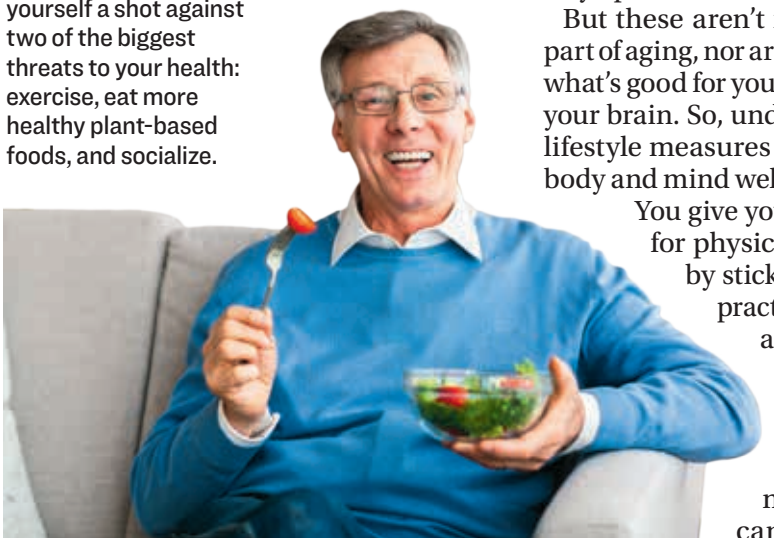
Answer: Try practical and useful gifts, such as identification bracelets, easy-to-remove clothing, or favorite music. Caregivers usually appreciate anything that makes their life easier, such as gift cards for take-out food or a promise to help with a project around the home that they haven't been able to tackle. You can offer to stay with the person so the caregiver can attend a family gathering or take time for him or herself. Extend the gift of yourself throughout the year.

If you're an adult child of someone with dementia, offer to stay with a parent each weekend for a few hours to provide relief to a caregiving parent or sibling.

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Are You Ready for the Two Biggest Health Threats You Face?

If you want to give yourself a shot against two of the biggest threats to your health: exercise, eat more healthy plant-based foods, and socialize.



Combat the dual risks of heart failure and Alzheimer's disease by fuelling your body to protect your brain

MOHAN GARIKIPARITHI

Two of the most significant health threats facing you right now are heart failure and Alzheimer's disease.

Don't believe me? Check the facts: Nine out of 10 deaths from heart failure are in the 65-plus age bracket, and 7.3 million Americans have dementia. That number is expected to double in the next 20 years.

One specialist recently said, "We are now in the midst of a 'silver tsunami' of heart disease and heart failure," a title that could easily extend to dementia and Alzheimer's. As the population ages, the risk for these conditions and their potential dangers goes way up.

But these aren't necessarily a natural part of aging, nor are they separate. In fact, what's good for your heart is also good for your brain. So, undertaking preventative lifestyle measures today can serve both body and mind well in the future.

You give yourself the best chance for physical and mental health by sticking to a few common practices. The first is staying active. Numerous studies show that moderate to vigorous exercise (brisk walking, raking, dancing, etc.) multiple times a week can vastly reduce heart

disease risk factors and promote cognitive function. That means lower blood pressure, improved blood flow, and better memory.

Diet is another area that can do a great deal to protect your heart and mind. And guess what? A diet that's good for your heart is good for your mind. Research indicates that both Mediterranean and DASH-style diets slash cholesterol, blood pressure, and the risk of heart disease.

A residual effect of this is that nutrient- and oxygen-rich blood reaches the brain, increasing the likelihood of activity between its different regions. Plenty of fruits, vegetables, and healthy fats aid your efforts. One study found that eating a Mediterranean diet slows changes in the brain that are associated with Alzheimer's disease.

Lastly, maintaining social connections has benefits for both the brain and body. Meaningful relationships or participating in activities that promote engagement (courses, hobbies, clubs) can keep your brain fresh and prevent the closure of neural pathways. These connections also are associated with less stress and lower rates of anxiety and depression, all of which play a role in mental and cardiovascular health.

In short, if you want to give yourself a shot against two of the biggest threats to your



Moderate to vigorous exercise multiple times a week can vastly reduce heart disease risk factors and promote cognitive function.

health: exercise, eat more healthy plant-based foods, and socialize.

Nothing is a guarantee, but undertaking these three practices at any age can help you stay healthy and reduce your chance of adding to these bleak statistics.

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

Mindful Eating Can Elevate Your Holiday Indulgences

It's easy to overindulge during the holiday season, so here's how to enjoy your food—without going too far



ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

JILL SUTTIE

It's hard not to overindulge during the holiday season ... at least for me. This time of year is full of temptation, from yummy baked treats, to special holiday feasts, to champagne- and wine-filled parties. The added stresses of holiday shopping, out-of-town visitors, and multiple social gatherings can all be triggers for us to eat without thinking. In short, we are not truly aware of what and how much food we want and need. Mindfulness—that is, non-judgmentally paying attention to what's happening while it's happening—can help. Here are four mindful eating tips for the holidays that could help you enjoy your food, without going too far.

1. Truly savor your food. How many of us slave over making a special holiday meal and then sit down to eat it all in record time, without really tasting it? Perhaps the most important thing we can do to eat mindfully is to learn to slow down and to savor our food.

When you sit down to dinner, take a moment to really see the food in front of you, to smell the aromas, to let the flavors rest on your tongue before swallowing or picking up that next bite. Mindful eating is not about denying yourself the pleasures of eating; it's just the opposite: It's all about enjoying fully whatever you eat. You don't want to miss out on the flavors of the holiday season, so don't feel you can't have that piece of pumpkin pie or sugar cookie. The key is recognizing that you are making a conscious choice to do that and then really savoring the experience in all of its richness—without feeling guilty about it.

2. Expect social distractions and take precautions. We all know that when we're engaged socially we cannot be truly focused on what we are eating and drinking. Research shows that when other people around us are indulging, we tend to indulge more, too.



Research shows that when other people around us are indulging, we tend to indulge more, too.

The added stresses of holiday shopping, out-of-town visitors, and multiple social gatherings can all be triggers for us to eat without thinking.

Try to be conscious of this tendency as you gather with others. Alternate drinking glasses of wine with drinking glasses of sparkling water. Don't socialize at a cocktail party within easy reach of the food table. If you're having a sit-down dinner, put your fork down between bites of food and while conversing. Or, instead of having food-focused social gatherings at all, suggest other ways to get together with your friends and family, like going caroling or taking a New Year's Day hike. Whatever you do, be prepared to be distracted in social situations, and have a plan that makes sense for you.

3. Check to see how hungry you are before you take your first bite. Most of us eat because the food is in front of us, whether or not we're truly hungry. But if you pause a moment before eating to check in with yourself, you may find that you're not hungry at all, or at least not as hungry as you thought.

Many of us reach for food for reasons other than hunger—emotional reasons, like feeling lonely or being stressed out. We think eating will make us feel better, and it may, in the short run. But more effective remedies for these feelings might be calling a friend or taking a walk. If we don't stop to recognize that we feel uncomfortable rather than hungry, we may miss these important emotional cues. Even when we know we're hungry and we're sitting down to eat, it still helps to monitor our hunger level before heaping food on our plates. Taking small portions, consistent with our hunger level, can be a good way of keeping overeating in check.

4. Practice gratitude. Holiday meals are a perfect time to stop and give thanks for all of the abundance in our lives and for the many people whose efforts went into providing the meal before us: the farmers who grew our food, the truckers who transported it to the grocery store, the artisans who crafted our plates, the cooks who prepared the dishes.

To recognize all that goes into creating a meal is a great way to eat mindfully and to experience gratitude for all that's given to us. Plus, expressing gratitude—whether that gratitude is directed toward God, the universe, or the people in your life—is a key way to make us happier and less stressed. So, don't forget to say "Thanks." It may help you feel overjoyed rather than overstuffed.

Jill Suttie holds a doctorate in psychology. She is Greater Good's book review editor and a frequent contributor to the magazine. This article was originally published on the Greater Good Magazine online.



Crafting a Healthy Coffee

If you're using coffee to solve other problems, such as lack of sleep, you're missing the benefits

DEVON ANDRE

It's rich in antioxidants, water, and is associated with improved cognitive function, lower risk for neurodegenerative diseases, better mood, and anti-inflammatory effects. But is coffee healthy?

It depends on who you are and what your overall lifestyle looks like. As with any other food, the benefits of coffee are purely contextual. In some cases, it can contribute to some desirable outcomes. In other cases, it's futile. Sometimes, it can be detrimental.

So, how do you craft a perfect cup of healthy coffee? Doing things such as exercising, maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking, and eating plenty of fruits and vegetables can help. Those lifestyle choices can enhance coffee's effects and make it more useful in providing its gifts.

Not "needing a coffee" can also help ensure you're setting coffee up to do your mind and body good. If you can't focus or stay awake without it, your body is trying to tell you something. Drinking coffee to mask poor sleep habits, brain fog, or depression will likely mean you're not getting its best benefits. While you might get the charge from the caffeine, the lack of sleep or other issues that you're having are likely snuffing out coffee's benefits for brain health and inflammation.

Not adding a ton of stuff to your coffee also can help you get a step closer to the perfect cup. Sugars, heavy cream, and flavors can all reduce the health quality of your coffee by adding plenty of empty calories. That can contribute to weight gain, inflammation, high blood sugar, and metabolic problems.

Lastly, knowing how coffee affects you—how you metabolize caffeine—determines your perfect cup. If it makes you jittery and anxious, drink less or switch to a dark roast. If you can't drink it in the afternoon because it will impair sleep, don't have it. Coffee is beneficial if it works with your lifestyle.

So, there you have it: the perfect cup. To get the most from your coffee, understand how it fits into your overall lifestyle, don't add too many ingredients, and listen to your body. If you're doing those things, living a healthy lifestyle, and limiting intake to a maximum of four cups per day, you're probably getting all of the benefits that a cup of Joe has to offer.

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.

Christmas Reflections

From Years Past

The season of snow and mistletoe is really about memories of time with people

TATIANA DENNING

Ah, Christmas. It's a time of joy and cheer, lights and festivities, family and friends. It is, as they say, the most wonderful time of the year.

I grew up loving Christmas. My mom always went to great lengths to make the holiday season fun for us kids. Of course, it always seemed like Christmas would never arrive, and the anticipation of it all was almost as much fun as the day itself.

But arrive it did. And it was like magic.

At holiday time, everything imaginable was decorated, both inside and outside the house. All of the normal decor was put away, and in its place went beautiful holiday decorations, from mistletoe to nutcrackers to Santas. The outside was equally impressive, with lights bedazzling the eye, and lovely Christmas wreaths topped with red velvet bows adorning the windows.

The Christmas season was always filled with hustle and bustle. You could almost feel the electricity in the air.

There was always a lot of baking to be done, and though I was never one to be found in the kitchen if I could help it, I always enjoyed helping with the Christmas baking. I think all of us kids did. We enjoyed slipping some cookie dough, or licking the bowl of all the leftover frosting, just a much as we did the finished goodies.

Then there were the Christmas gatherings. My parents' friends would often have parties, as would some organizations around town. We kids were happy to go along, where we could play with our friends and stay up past our bedtime. We'd get dressed in our holiday best, and bring along something yummy to share with everyone, as a show of gratitude for the hospitality.

My piano teacher, Mrs. Rhinehart, always had the best food at our Christmas piano recitals. My favorite was her holiday punch, a recipe my mom got from her, and something I still have tucked away to this day. While Mrs. Rhinehart is no longer here, I have great memories of her kindness and generosity.

Some years, we went Christmas caroling around town. This was a favorite of mine. It was so much fun, dressing up in our warmest and best clothes, lighting our candles, and walking house-to-house as we sang carols to our neighbors, despite the often frigid temperatures. Our neighbors seemed to appreciate our efforts, with some even joining in the revelry.

Watching holiday movies was always a Christmas tradition in

our house. "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "Frosty the Snowman" were some of our favorites when we were young, while my mom loved the holiday classics. "It's a Wonderful Life" had to be her favorite, and became one of ours as well. It

We'd get dressed in our holiday best, and bring along something yummy to share with everyone, as a show of gratitude for the hospitality.

was always so heartwarming to see the town of Bedford Falls come together to help George, a man who'd selflessly done so much for others throughout his life, and had asked for nothing in return. Seeing everyone so joyously helping George in his time of need, and then hearing the tinkle of the little bell as Clarence earned his wings, always brought a smile to our faces. It was indeed a wonderful life.

Growing up in West Virginia, we often had snow at Christmastime. Memories of wading through waist-deep snow as I scurried back up the hill near our house, pulling my sled behind me to take another thrilling ride, stand out like they were yesterday. Making the biggest snowman we could, and then searching for sticks and rocks, and perhaps a carrot from the kitchen, to adorn it was a must. Hours went by before we took any notice of being tired or cold, as nothing could eclipse our joy at playing with our siblings and friends in the snow.

When Christmas Eve arrived, we would bake cookies for Santa, placing them on a plate alongside a cup of milk, as Santa was sure to need a snack after all his dashing about. Once our letter to Santa was written, we were allowed to pick out one present to open, and this was almost as much fun for us as Christmas Day itself. This tradition is one I've continued with my son to this day, and I think he loves it as much as we did.

Finally, bedtime seemed to come earlier than usual. We didn't want Santa to pass us by because we weren't sound asleep.

The anticipation of it all often made sleep elusive. I recall one

Christmas, when I was about 6 or 7 years old, tossing and turning in my top bunk, while my brother slept soundly below. As I looked out the window, I noticed a red blinking light off in the distance. I could hardly believe it! Rudolph was so close to our house, and I'd not yet fallen asleep! I tried my best to drift off, but couldn't resist a couple more peeks through my nearly closed eyes. Santa seemed to be taking a long time at someone's house, but no matter, I knew he would soon be here. Finally, sleep overtook me.

The next morning, I rushed to tell my family, with the excitement and wonder that only a child can have, about my good fortune in seeing Rudolph. I can still remember that feeling—that certainty of belief, that sense of awe—just as I can remember when it finally started to fade.

It's hard to find that sort of innocence, pure faith, and wonder again as an adult.

Funnily enough, Christmas Day is somewhat of a blur as I reminisce today. There were presents of course, and lots of good food, and visits to Grammy King's house, my great-grandmother and the glue that held

Chances are, when we look back years from now, neither we nor our children are going to remember the things we receive this Christmas.

our family together. And while there are a few special presents that stand out, much like Ralphie's Red Ryder BB gun in "A Christmas Story," those aren't the things that I really remember. It's the time spent with family and friends that has always made

Christmas special.

Playing with my brothers and friends in the snow, spending time with family and friends in the kitchen and at gatherings, spreading a little holiday cheer to neighbors and our small town—these are the things that made those times special.

Chances are, when we look back years from now, neither we nor our children are going to remember the things we receive this Christmas. Things are fleeting. What's important and popular today probably won't matter much a few years from now. As Christmas becomes more and more commercialized, we tend to forget these things.

Maybe a return to some of our Christmas traditions, with a focus on spending time with family and friends, helping our next-door neighbor, or doing something nice for our community, would bring a kind of joy to our heart that no object ever could. This is important for us adults to remember, and to instill in our children. Thinking of what we can do for someone else this season may be the best gift we can give—not just to others, but to ourselves as well.

Looking at the world through the eyes of a child, perhaps we can reach the state of purity we once had, and recall, with the deep knowing we each have, why we are here and what really matters. Things don't bring lasting happiness. How we treat one another and the kindness we show—these are the things that matter.

As I reflect back on Christmases past, I wish for you all kindness and good-cheer—for Christmastime and throughout the year.

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



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Fantasy is a normal and healthy part of child development.

Why It's OK for Kids to Believe in Santa

Santa's kind and generous nature can be an inspiration to children

ELENA MERENDA & NIKKI MARTYN

Many children today know Santa Claus as that jolly man in red who delivers presents to children on Christmas Eve. But the legend of Santa stretches back hundreds of years to a monk named St. Nicholas.

Popular accounts say St. Nicholas gave away his inheritance and traveled the countryside to help the poor and sick. He became known as the protector of children and was admired for his kindness.

Although the story of a man flying around the world in a sleigh led by flying reindeer is fantasy, the magic of Santa Claus is a long-standing tradition. For many families, incorporating Santa traditions into their holiday celebrations creates joyful and fun experiences. It also provides opportunities for shared belief and play, re-living and sharing childhood memories, and encouraging empathy, kindness, and generosity.

Believing in Santa Claus can also benefit children's development as an avenue for creativity, imagination, and play. There are developmentally appropriate ways to sensitively and honestly respond to your child's questions about him.

Childhood Is Magical

During childhood, imagination blurs the line between fantasy and reality, making it easier for children to believe.

The idea of believing without seeing is fundamental to being human, long after beliefs of Santa end. Our brains are wired to connect the dots in order to explain why things happen and why they are the way they are.

Our myths about Santa can encourage shared kindness and generosity.

Popular accounts say St. Nicholas gave away his inheritance and traveled the countryside to help the poor and sick.



Fantasy is a normal and healthy part of child development. Most children begin pretend play toward the end of their second year. The amount of time a child spends in pretend play increases during the preschool years and then decreases between ages 5 and 8. Children's beliefs in fantasy figures such as Santa Claus appear to be the strongest between the ages of 3 and 8.

Through imagination, children are developing emotional and psychological capacities that help them to understand and make sense of their world. Imagination, pretend, fantasy, and play all encourage children to focus, think through hypothetical situations, strengthen their reasoning skills, learn to solve problems, develop theories about how people think, practice social skills, work collaboratively, learn to negotiate, create new possibilities, create a new identity or new worlds—and even develop new possibilities for our shared world.

Creating Christmas Traditions

For many parents, if Santa was a part of their own childhood Christmas, they may want to continue this with their own children.

The tradition of Santa Claus may begin with writing letters to him and visiting him at local malls. Then on Christmas Eve, some families prepare a delicious plate of cookies for Santa and carrots for his reindeer.

More recently, some parents have incorporated Santa Claus personalized videos or track Santa with apps or via social media.

While some criticize digitized Santa trackers as straying from the simplicity of imagination or messages of peace, for others, these contemporary expressions are a way of keeping the magic of Christmas alive.

Family traditions are important for children. They strengthen family bonds, provide a sense of belonging for children, and create memories that last a lifetime. More importantly, family traditions tell children a story about who they are and the importance of family. Children who have knowledge of their family's history and take part in important traditions are typically more well-adjusted and have higher levels of confidence and self-esteem.

Discovering the Truth

While there are many benefits to protecting children's belief in Santa, it's not OK to lie to children about his existence.

Most children have a positive reaction to their Santa discovery. Discovering the truth about Santa is part of growing up and a sign that the child is developing critical thinking skills.

Psychologist Jean Piaget, the pioneer of cognitive development, proposed that between the ages of 4 and 8, children enter the "concrete operational stage" of thinking.

This stage is marked by questioning. Children become skeptical and they use their imagination to try to figure things out. They experiment, evaluate evidence, and analyze with logical reasoning. Can one man really fly all around the world in one night? Children are learning to think for themselves, and they'll use their critical thinking skills to solve the Santa mystery. This is all developmentally appropriate and signifies important learning.

Rite of Passage

When children ask whether Santa is real, it's important for parents to decide whether the child is ready to let go of the fantasy. When your children start asking these questions, let them lead the discussion. Asking them their thoughts about Santa and whether they believe will provide you with some ideas of how to respond.

You don't want to lie to them. It is important that children learn to trust their parents. These early relationships are important for children in developing strong relational connections that will last a lifetime.

But you might decide to talk to them about choosing to keep welcoming Santa as a family to keep the tradition alive beyond early childhood and to develop a unifying family tradition. You could also be surprised that they've been pretending to believe.

Sharing the story about St. Nicholas, highlighting the spirit of the season of generosity, altruism, showing kindness for others, and gratitude can be helpful in reinforcing with your children what unites us all.

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Don't Be Ashamed, Regifting Is Good Economics

With a healthy regifting economy, gifts flow to their most efficient uses

JAMES WALPOLE

Regifting is like free trade for Christmas presents. Allowing and encouraging regifting is within the true spirit of Christmas.

Let's say you want to be a great gift-giver. If you do, you need to 1) desire the best possible life outcomes for your recipient and also 2) recognize that you don't exactly know what that best outcome is.

Gift giving, like all business ventures, requires some risk and a leap of faith that you have found the solution to a problem for your recipient, despite all the unknown variables.

It's also true that most gifts, like most ventures, fail to do that.

You should encourage your recipient to feel free to regift your presents. An oven mitt that is useless to Sally (who already has an abundance of oven mitts) may be a perfect gift for her friend Sue (who is just getting started with cooking). One man's trash is another man's treasure. Our social stigma against regifting would leave Sue without a good oven mitt and leave a good oven mitt gathering dust in Sally's kitchen drawer.

With a healthy regifting economy, gifts (such as goods and services) flow to their most efficient uses.

You might tell me that regifting is bad because of a loss of symbolic value when you regift something. "It's the thought that counts," you might say.

I'm not suggesting that you take the positive thought or intention out of your gifts. I'm suggesting that your intentions should include the possibility that regifting and trade is actually a good thing for the recipient, too.



A gift that is free to find its perfect recipient is a gift that has fulfilled its purpose.

I gave my sister-in-law a bag of coffee beans for Christmas this year. It turns out coffee is not her thing (I didn't know this), so I encouraged her to re-gift to her colleagues. Coffee beans are a great professional gift, and good professional gifts are great for building social capital and rapport.

She ended up giving the coffee to my dad, which happened to be a great trade: He had just gotten a coffee bean grinder that same morning. This is a great example of the calculations involved in a regifting transaction. I'm none the poorer for her having given my gift away, and she is actually better off having done so.

James Walpole is a writer, startup marketer, intellectual explorer, and perpetual apprentice. He is an alumnus of Praxis and an FEE's Eugene S. Thorpe fellow. He writes regularly at JamesWalpole.com. This article was republished from Freedom for Economic Education.



Your role in this world is much larger than what you buy, despite whatever marketers may tell you.

BECOMING MINIMALIST

You Are More Than a Consumer

Human beings were designed to seek out purpose and meaning

JOSHUA BECKER

If you watch the news, you begin to see how our society often considers people as mere consumers. Many of our success metrics are based on consumerism: consumer spending, consumer confidence, consumer price index, retail sales, manufacturing, and so on.

If you turn on social media, you begin to see the same thing—a never-ending onslaught of commercials and advertisements. The item on sale at that business is the one that will result in the most smiling faces on Christmas morning.

If you open your mailbox (digital or physical), you are implicitly told that you are a consumer. You are offered credit cards, mortgage approvals, coupons, and fliers from countless local and not-so-local businesses.

Even around our own dinner tables, we treat each other as consumers. What are you hoping to get for Christmas? What

are you buying for your daughter? Do you know what so-and-so just bought? What is the hot new toy this holiday season?

But I want to remind you today: You are more than a consumer.

You are a human being who is designed for significance and meaning. Maybe you desire adventure and travel, or maybe you prefer a quiet evening at home. You will search for joy in different places, but you are designed to discover it.

You are a husband or wife faithful and committed to your partner, doing your best to create a loving, safe family and home.

You are a mother or father involved in your children's lives, wanting only the best for them. Or maybe you are a grandparent enjoying this season of life more than you ever thought possible.

You are a creative who desires to paint, write, knit, sculpt, or invent. When you do, you spread joy to those around you.

You are passionate about your

work. Maybe you are a schoolteacher, a janitor, a banker, a dentist, a policeman. You use your talents and passions to serve others every day.

You don't need more physical possessions to be the best you that you can possibly be.

You are involved in non-profit work. You are passionate about orphaned children, education, the environment, your faith, or someone in need. You volunteer, you give, and you make the world a better place.

You are a trusted friend. People share their lives with you, and you with them. You are the first phone call when someone is in need and the first to show up when an emergency has occurred.

You are a college student learning as much as you can right now about the world around you so you can make the biggest difference in it going forward.

You are a vital part of your community. You help at your daughter's school, you volunteer at your church, you coach your son's baseball team, or you help organize your neighborhood picnic every spring.

In every imaginable way, you are more than a consumer.

Over the holiday season, marketers (and society) will try to convince you to become a consumer once again.

"Want to be a loved mother this Christmas? Buy this toy!"

"Want to be a great husband this year? Buy this gift!"

"Want to be grandmother of the year? You can get the greatest number of toys at our store!"

"Want to be a good friend? Buy this pre-packaged gift set!"

"Want the perfect Christmas morning? Make sure you spend enough money to achieve it!"

"Want to find true joy? It's on

sale here—and 50 percent off today!"

Don't fall into their trappings and lies. You are so much more than a consumer. That is not how your life will be measured.

You are flesh and blood and soul and heart. Your greatest desires and dreams will never be found at a department store.

You don't need more physical possessions to be the best you that you can possibly be. In fact, you probably need fewer.

To be the best dad, wife, friend, grandmother, community member, and human being that you can possibly be, remember that you were designed for greater pursuits than consumption. Have the courage to craft a life around those pursuits—regardless of how society seeks to define you.

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

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