

WEEK 12, 2020

THE EPOCH TIMES

MIND & BODY

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TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

What Happens to Your Brain on Acupuncture

Researchers have begun delving into the neurological and biochemical effects of acupuncture

LYNN JAFFEE

Back when I was in acupuncture school, we would see an uptick of chiropractic students in the teaching clinic right before big exams. Even though they were studying to be chiropractors, they were looking to us acupuncturists to help enhance their focus and increase their memory to give them an edge on exam day. They said the treatments worked, and every quarter, we'd have another group of students wanting acupuncture before their exams.

Who knew that acupuncture could help your memory, or have any effect on your brain at all? Apparently scientists know and are continuing to study this topic. There are a number of ways in which acupuncture treatments can change your brain chemistry, all in a good way. Here are a few:

Endorphins

Acupuncture increases the circulation of feel-good endorphins in your brain, according to a 2004 study published in *Neuroscience Letters*. Endorphins are a kind of neurotransmitter that have a calming, slightly euphoric effect. They're responsible for the runner's high that athletes experience after a hard workout. Don't think they're real? I've had a patient tell me that after her acupuncture treatments, she sits in her car for ten minutes because she's just a little too relaxed to drive.

Pain Relief

We know that clinically, acupuncture can be effective for relieving pain of all kinds. Scientists tell us why: it ramps up your body's natural opioid system. The circulation of chemicals similar to opioids, but made by your body, increases after an acupuncture treatment. In addition, acupuncture chemically blocks some of the pain signals being transmitted to your brain.

Memory

Research is suggesting that acupuncture may help you with your memory. A review of studies

on the effect of acupuncture on people with mild cognitive impairment (a kind of pre-dementia) found that the subjects who had acupuncture scored better on tests for memory and dementia than those who didn't have acupuncture. While research in this area is still early, it suggests that there may be a role for acupuncture in treating memory loss in aging populations.

Acupuncture helps to balance out the stress hormones of cortisol, adrenaline, and insulin.

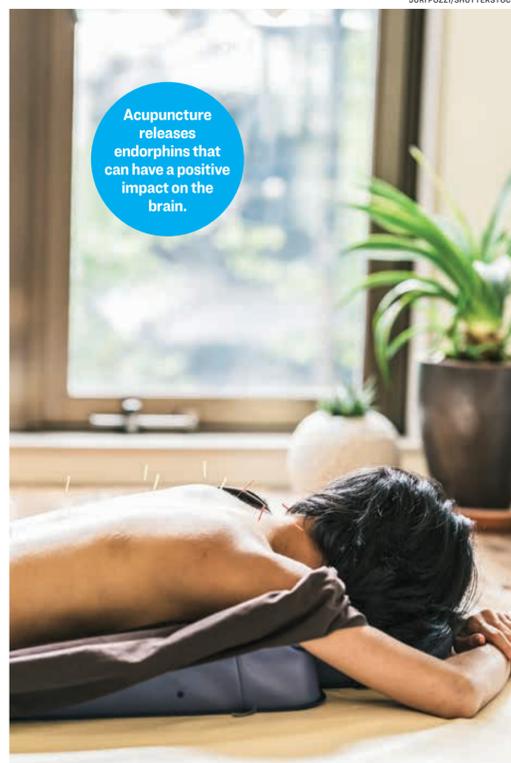
Stress

Acupuncture helps you deal with stress. Research has uncovered that acupuncture regulates the HPA axis, the interaction between the hypothalamus (a part of your brain), the pituitary gland (also in your brain), and adrenal glands, which regulate your body's hormones, most notably those that are related to the stress response. In addition, acupuncture helps to balance out the stress hormones of cortisol, adrenaline, and insulin.

Is acupuncture the magic bullet for memory loss? It's too early to tell, but this research gives us a better understanding of how acupuncture impacts your brain. If you're one of those people who suspect that acupuncture is all in your head, I would say 'yes!' Those chiropractic students from twenty years ago were onto something, and scientists continue to show us that acupuncture affects your brain in ways that may relieve your pain, reduce the stress response, treat anxiety, help with depression, and improve your memory.

Lynn Jaffee is a licensed acupuncturist and the author of "Simple Steps: The Chinese Way to Better Health." This article was originally published on AcupunctureTwinCities.com

JURI POZZI/SHUTTERSTOCK



NAVIGATING AGING

The Haunting Fear That Dementia Is Stalking You

Watching loved ones lose themselves to dementia can easily lead to unpleasant thoughts

JUDITH GRAHAM

Do I know I'm at risk for developing dementia? You bet.

My father died of Alzheimer's disease at age 72; my sister was felled by frontotemporal dementia at 58.

And that's not all: Two maternal uncles had Alzheimer's, and my maternal grandfather may have had vascular dementia. (In his generation, it was called senility.)

So what happens when I misplace a pair of eyeglasses or can't remember the name of a movie I saw a week ago? "Now comes my turn with dementia," I think.

Then I talk myself down from that emotional cliff.

Am I alone in this? Hardly. Many people, like me, who've watched this cruel illness destroy a family member, dread the prospect that they, too, might become demented.

The lack of a cure or effective treatments only adds to the anxiety. Recently news emerged that another study trying to stop Alzheimer's in people at extremely high genetic risk had failed.

How do we cope as we face our fears and peer into our future?

Andrea Kline, whose mother, as well as her mother's sister and uncle, had Alzheimer's disease, just turned 71 and lives in Boynton Beach, Florida. She's a retired registered nurse who teaches yoga to seniors at community centers and assisted-living facilities.

"I worry about dementia incessantly. Every little thing that goes wrong, I'm convinced it's the beginning," she told me.

Because Kline has had multiple family members with Alzheimer's, she's more likely to have a genetic vulnerability than someone with a single occurrence in their family. But that doesn't mean this condition lies in her future. Risk is just that: It's not a guarantee.

The age of onset is also important. People with close relatives struck by dementia early—before age 65—are more likely to be susceptible genetically.

Kline was the primary caregiver for her mother, Charlotte Kline, who received an Alzheimer's diagnosis in 1999 and passed away in 2007 at age 80. "I try to eat very healthily. I exercise. I have an advance directive, and I've discussed what I want [in the way of care] with my son," she said. "Lately, I've been thinking I should probably get a test for APOE4 [a gene variant that can raise the risk of developing Alzheimer's], although I'm not really sure if it would help," Kline added. "Maybe it would add some intensity to my planning for the future."

I spoke to half a dozen experts for this column. None was in favor of genetic testing, except in unusual circumstances.

"Having the APOE4 allele [gene variant] does not mean you'll get Alzheimer's disease. Plenty of people with Alzheimer's don't have the allele," said Mark Mapstone, a professor of neurology at the University of California-Irvine. "And conversely, plenty of

people with the allele never develop Alzheimer's."

Tamar Gefen, an assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, strongly suggests having an in-depth discussion with a genetic counselor if you're considering a test.

"Before you say 'I have to know,' really understand what you're dealing with, how your life might be affected, and what these tests can and cannot tell you," she advised.

Karen Larsen, 55, is a social worker in the Boston area. Her father, George Larsen, was diagnosed with vascular dementia and Alzheimer's at age 84 and died within a year in 2014.

Larsen is firm: She doesn't want to investigate her risk of having memory or thinking problems.

"I've already planned for the future. I have a health care proxy and a living will and long-term care insurance. I've assigned powers of attorney, and I've saved my money," she said. "Eating a healthy diet, getting exercise, remaining socially engaged—I already do all that, and I plan to as long as I can."

"What would I do if I learned some negative from a test—sit around and worry?" Larsen said.

Currently, the gold standard in cognitive testing consists of a comprehensive neuropsychological exam. Among the domains examined over three to four hours: memory, attention, language, intellectual functioning, problem-solving, visual-spatial orientation, perception and more.

Brain scans are another diagnostic tool. CT and MRI scans can show whether parts of the brain have structural abnormalities or aren't functioning optimally. PET scans (not covered by Medicare) can demonstrate the buildup of amyloid proteins—a marker of Alzheimer's. Also, spinal taps can show whether amyloid and tau proteins are present in cerebrospinal fluid.

A note of caution: While amyloid and tau proteins in the brain are a signature characteristic of Alzheimer's, not all people with these proteins develop cognitive impairment.

Several experts recommend that people concerned about their Alzheimer's risk get a baseline set of neuropsychological tests, followed by repeat tests if and when they start experiencing worrisome symptoms.

"When it comes to thinking and memory, everyone is different," said Frederick Schmitt, a neurology professor at the University of Kentucky. Having baseline results is "very helpful" and "allows us to more carefully measure whether, in fact, significant changes have occurred" overtime, he said.

Nora Super, senior director of the Milken Institute Center for the Future of Aging, watched her father, Bill Super, and all three of his siblings succumb to Alzheimer's disease over the course of several years—falling, she said, "like a row of dominoes." Rather than get genetic or



When a loved one develops dementia, it can prompt us to consider what would happen to loved ones if we developed the illness.

“Before you say ‘I have to know,’ really understand what you’re dealing with, how your life might be affected, and what these tests can and cannot tell you.

Tamar Gefen, an assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine

neuropsychological tests, Super has focused on learning as much as she can about how to protect her brain. At the top of the list: managing her depression as well as stress. Both have been linked to dementia.

Also, Super exercises routinely and eats a MIND-style diet, rich in vegetables, berries, whole grains, nuts, fish and beans. She is learning French (a form of cognitive stimulation), meditates regularly and is socially and intellectually active.

According to a growing body of research, physical inactivity, hearing loss, depression, obesity, hypertension, smoking, social isolation, diabetes, and low education levels raise the risk of dementia. All of these factors are modifiable.

What if Super started having memory problems? "I fear I would get really depressed," she admitted. "Alzheimer's is such a horrible disease: To see what people you love go through, especially in the early stages, when they're aware of what's happening but can't do anything about it, is excruciating. I'm not sure I want to go through that."

Nigel Smith, 49, had a change of heart after caring for his mother, Nancy Smith, 81, who's in hospice care in the Boston area with Alzheimer's. When he brought his mother in for a

neuropsychological exam in early 2017 and she received a diagnosis of moderate Alzheimer's, she was furious. Eventually, after his mother ended up in the hospital, Smith was given legal authority over her affairs and he moved her to a memory care unit.

"Now, she's deteriorated to the point where she has about 5 percent of her previous verbal skills," Nigel said. "She smiles but she doesn't recognize me."

Does he want to know if something like this might lie in his future?

A couple of years ago, Smith said he was too afraid of Alzheimer's to contemplate this question. Now he's determined to know as much as possible, "not so much because I'm curious but so I can help prepare myself and my family. I see the burden of what I'm doing for my mother, and I want to do everything I can to ease that burden for them."

Kim Hall, 54, of Plymouth, Minnesota, feels a similar need for a plan. Her mother, Kathleen Peterson, 89, a registered nurse for over 50 years, was diagnosed with vascular dementia five years ago. Today, she resides in assisted living and doesn't recognize most of her large family, including dozens of nieces and nephews who grew up with Hall.

Hall knows her mother

had medical issues that may have harmed her brain: a traumatic brain injury as a young adult, uncontrolled high blood pressure for many years, several operations with general anesthesia, and an addiction to prescription painkillers. "I don't share these, and that may work in my favor," she said.

Still, Hall is concerned. "I guess I want to know if I'm at risk for dementia and if there is anything I can do to slow it down," she said. "I don't want what happened to my mother to happen to me." Probably, Hall speculated, she'll arrange to take a neuropsychological exam at some point.

Several years ago, when I was grieving my sister's death from frontotemporal dementia, my doctor suggested that a baseline exam of this sort might be a good idea.

I knew then I wouldn't take him up on the offer. If and when my time with dementia comes, I'll have to deal with it. Until then, I'd rather not know.

Judith Graham is a contributing columnist for *Kaiser Health News*, which originally published this article. KHN's coverage of these topics is supported by The John A. Hartford Foundation, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, and The SCAN Foundation.

THE ROOT CAUSE

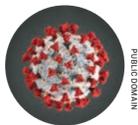
Natural Ways to Prepare for the Coronavirus COVID-19

While we may not be able to avoid exposure, there is much we can do to get our body into virus-fighting form

ARMEN NIKOGOSIAN

What can you do against a virus with no known treatment? Although there is no known direct treatment, there are many interventions you can do to optimize your general health and immunity which could streamline the course of illness or even prevent you from getting infected with COVID-19 in the first place.

The most recent threat to global health is the ongoing spread of the respiratory disease known as Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). It was first recognized in December 2019 in Wuhan City in China. This was a novel coronavirus structurally related to one of the primary viruses causing the common cold. A novel coronavirus is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans, such as COVID-19. Moving in the more pathogenic direction, it also has a relation to the viruses which caused prior outbreaks of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS 2002 and 2003) and the Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS 2012 to the present).



Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause a broad range of illnesses ranging from the ubiquitous common cold to more serious and deadly SARS and MERS.

While the initial mortality reports seem to be hovering somewhere between 1 and 3 percent, the overall clinical consequences of this communicable disease are more along the lines of a severe seasonal influenza (mortality rate of about 0.1 percent) rather than a SARS or MERS (mortality rates of 10 percent and 36 percent respectively).

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause a broad range of illnesses ranging from the ubiquitous common cold to more serious and deadly SARS and MERS. Common signs of infection include fever as well as respiratory symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. More severe cases can cause pneumonia, respiratory failure, and even death.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has the following recommendations to prevent the spread of infection: regular hand washing, covering mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, thoroughly cooking meat and eggs, avoiding close contact with



Your immune system cannot function optimally without good quality regular sleep.

anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.

Avoidance is the best initial course of action, but in the near future, that may not be a realistic option for many of us. What else can you do to curtail or prevent this potentially deadly infection?

The following list of interventions has been used for generations to prevent the viruses which cause colds and flu. These interventions should be just as effective against a novel coronavirus as it would be against the typical coronavirus strains we all battle annually. If you have a chronic medical condition or think you may already be infected with COVID-19, see your doctor immediately. Don't rely on a newspaper for your medical advice.

Hydration: An average adult should be drinking between 32-64 ounces of water daily, depending on the climate they live in and their level of activity.

Sleep: Most adults need 7-9 hours daily. If you wake in the morning without an alarm and feel refreshed, you are probably getting enough sleep. Your immune system cannot function optimally without good quality regular sleep. You can also use an extra pillow to improve sinus drainage by elevating your head while you sleep.

Nasal irrigation: While this can be tremendously helpful for keeping your sinuses clear prior to contracting an illness, use caution with this intervention once you are sick. Never use tap water for nasal irrigation.

Vitamin D: Maintaining a healthy immune-boosting blood level between 60-100 ng/mL is essential for fighting off infections. There is some evidence for the benefit of short-term megadosing, but this should be done with doctor supervision.

Vitamin C: While this has never been proven to prevent cold symptoms, it has been proven to decrease the duration of the illness by boosting immunity. Doses vary but starting at 500mg three-four times per day can be helpful for most.

Zinc: It has demonstrated antiviral activity and reductions in the duration of colds and flu. Anti-viral activity seems to work topically in the mouth and throat. Lozenges containing zinc gluconate seem to be the best choice.

Echinacea tea with Manuka honey: Echinacea is a potent immunomodulatory herb that can be used for limited times as a sort of immune booster. Pairing this with anti-viral and anti-microbial properties of Manuka honey makes this beverage a potent natural "Corona-Buster"

Elderberry: This herb has antiviral properties and may reduce mucus production as well.

Chicken soup: Your grandma was right, it really does help. Hot liquids will help reduce mucus buildup while maintaining hydration. Its anti-inflammatory properties have even been established in medical literature.

Garlic: Crushing garlic cloves will generate a compound known as allicin, which has potent antiviral, antibacterial and antifungal properties

Astragalus: This Chinese medicine herb has been used for over a for millennia for its antiviral and immune-strengthening effects. You can use astragalus along with garlic as part of an immune-enhancing chicken soup broth.

Essential oils: You can use camphor and menthol to reduce mucus buildup, peppermint and eucalyptus to reduce congestion as well as oregano for its potent anti-viral and anti-microbial effects.

Probiotics: This can be taken in the form of supplements or fermented foods such as sauerkraut. These healthy gut bacteria boost immunity and may help reduce the severity and duration of viral infections. Higher colony counts tend to be more effective in boosting immunity.

With the help of these interventions in conjunction with good infection control practices, such as proper handwashing and avoidance of infected people, you can minimize your chances of falling ill from COVID-19.

Armen Nikogosian, M.D., 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.

Too Much Junk Food May Not Be Why We Struggle With a Healthy Diet

Focusing too much on what we should not eat—rather than focusing on what we should eat—could be working against us

DEBORAH MITCHELL

An endless number of studies and experts emphasize that eating a healthy diet is essential for overall health and disease prevention and that consuming too much junk food is a big reason why we often fail to meet this goal. Yet a new study published in *Lancet* and commented on in the media points out that "at the population level, a low intake of healthy foods is the most important factor, rather than the high intake of unhealthy [junk] foods."

In other words, 20 percent of people around the world who die every year don't succumb because they did not stop eating junk food. The real reason is that they did not eat enough fruit, whole grains, nuts, and seeds, and they consumed too much sodium.

This was no small study. In fact, the Global Burden of Disease study spanned 27 years and gathered data from 195 countries from adults aged 25 years and older. It examined the relationship between dietary habits (specifically, a suboptimal diet) and preventable non-communicable diseases, including Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and cancers.

What the Study Said About a Healthy Diet

The findings of the study are not surprising. Much of the data reported in the study pointed out the many populations where individuals are consuming much more than the recommended amount of red and processed meats, sugary beverages, trans fats, and sodium.

However, the study shifts the focus of dietary recommendations from telling people to stop eating junk food, sugar, and unhealthy foods to pointing out a few foods we should be including more of in our diets.

For example, a lack of whole grains was the number one diet-related risk factor for deaths and morbidity in the United States and several

other countries, including India, Germany, Turkey, and Russia. The problem is that many of the foods being sold as whole grains have actually been processed and stripped of their natural nutrients.

Low intake of nuts and seeds was the number one risk factor in Mexico. This was followed by a low consumption of vegetables, whole grains, and fruit. Mexico also ranked very high in the use of sugary drinks. Two factors are believed to be behind this habit: a lack of clean drinking water and a cultural preference for homemade sugary beverages.

How to Stop Eating Junk Food

Ironically, the way to help people stop eating junk food or to stop eating sugar or too much salt may be to stop emphasizing all of the "don'ts." Focusing on what not to do is not productive. In fact, telling consumers to avoid unhealthy food just draws their attention to unhealthy food.

Instead, we would likely get better results if we focused on positive food choices. Once we include more of the foods in our diet that were noted in the study, they should automatically take the place of junk food and other unhealthy choices without specifically avoiding them.

Tips on Junk Food Versus Healthy Food

Choose fruits. Whole (organic when available) fresh fruits are preferred over fruit juices because of their high fiber content. The juicing process also causes most of the water-soluble vitamins to be lost.

If fresh fruit is not available, frozen is comparable and dried is an alternative. In fact, one piece of dried fruit contains nearly the same amount of nutrients as the fresh version. By weight, however, dried fruit contains approximately 3.5 times the fiber, minerals, and vitamins of fresh fruit.

A lack of whole grains was the number one diet-related risk factor for deaths and morbidity in the United States and several other countries, including India, Germany, Turkey, and Russia.

Choose nuts and seeds. Both of these highly portable, snack-worthy foods are nutrient-dense and rich in a variety of vitamins and minerals as well as fiber and protein. When combined with some dried fruit, this natural food combination is a great alternative to junk food.

Choose whole grains. One of the biggest challenges consumers face is choosing real whole grains. According to Andrew Reynolds, a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Otago in New Zealand, who was not involved with the dietary study, we need to be aware that "whole grains are being included in ultra-processed products that may be finely milled down and have added sodium, added free sugars, and added saturated fats."

These products should not be confused with those that contain "intact, minimally processed whole grains." If you want to know whether a product contains real whole grains, look for the Whole Grain Stamp. This stamp is provided by the Whole Grains Council and available in 61 countries. The stamp certifies the degree

of whole grains in a product.

The Bottom Line

Perhaps it's time to take a different perspective on junk food and healthy diets. Let's focus on including more fruits, nuts and seeds, and whole grains on our plates rather than worrying so much about how to stop eating junk food. We may live longer!

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



KODDA/SHUTTERSTOCK

The Placebo Effect and Supplements

Nutritional supplements may be taking the credit for improvements caused by the placebo effect

GABE MIRKIN

Fifty-two percent of North Americans buy over-the-counter food supplements of questionable value, to the tune \$41 billion a year. A 2019 review of 277 clinical trials on 992,129 participants, using 24 different supplements, found that nutritional supplements were not associated with increased lifespan or prevention of heart disease.

Athletes and exercisers spend more than 14 percent of the \$41 billion, or \$5.67 billion, for supplements that are supposed to make them faster or stronger, according to the *Nutrition Business Journal*.

But many sports supplements have no benefit beyond the placebo effect that is gained by taking anything, even a known placebo. An 2007 study published in *The Sport Psychologist*. The same held when they

thought they had been given a new breakthrough sports pill, found a 2004 study published in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*.

Fifteen endurance runners, average age 27, ran 1.8 miles nine seconds faster after injecting themselves with a placebo than they did after taking no injections, found a 2015 study published in the same journal. Nine seconds can be the difference between winning and losing many races.

Placebo Effects on Cycling Performance

Six highly-fit male cyclists did two-time trials with no pills to establish a baseline for each cyclist, and three-time trials where they were given pills labeled either "placebo", "4.5 mg/kg caffeine", or "9.0 mg/kg caffeine", at random.

Actually, all of the pills were placebos, with none of them containing any caffeine. Caffeine can enhance performance, so these experienced bicycle racers knew that if they were given caffeine, it could help them ride faster. On all three time trials the cyclists had their power measured on an objective power meter. The cyclists produced:

- 1.4 percent less power than baseline when they believed they had ingested a placebo,
- 1.3 percent more power when they believed they had ingested 4.5 mg/kg caffeine, and
- 3.1 percent more power when they believed they had ingested 9.0 mg/kg caffeine.

Furthermore, all of the cyclists reported that they felt benefits from the placebo pills labeled as containing caffeine. The results were published in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* in 2006.

How a Placebo Can Help You Move Faster

The limiting factor to how fast you can run or cycle over distance is determined by how fast you can bring oxygen into your exercising muscles. When your muscles start to run low on oxygen, they accumulate lactic acid which makes them burn and hurt, and you gasp for breath to increase your oxygen supply.

You slow down because you are gasping for breath and suffering from burning muscles. But people are willing to suffer more after being given a placebo than they are after receiving no suggestion of an advantage. When athletes believe that they have been helped, even though the pills or injections are worthless, this psychological benefit helps them to work through pain and suffering.

The Placebo Effect Is Real

In a test of the placebo effect, people who suffered severe migraine headaches were divided into three groups that were given: no pills; a correctly-labeled 10-mg Maxalt pills (a recognized medication for migraine pain), or pills correctly labeled as a placebo.

The patients reported that the bottle clearly marked as a placebo was 50 percent as effective as the real

Migraine sufferers felt less pain because their bodies produced their own pain hormones when they took the pills.



Athletes are prime customers for nutritional supplements, but research suggests the effects are questionable.

drug, and far more effective than taking no pill at all, reported the 2004 study published in *Science Translational Medicine*.

The researchers felt that migraine sufferers felt less pain because their bodies produced their own pain hormones when they took the pills. The lead researcher said, "Even if they know it's not medicine, the action itself can stimulate the brain into thinking the body is being healed."

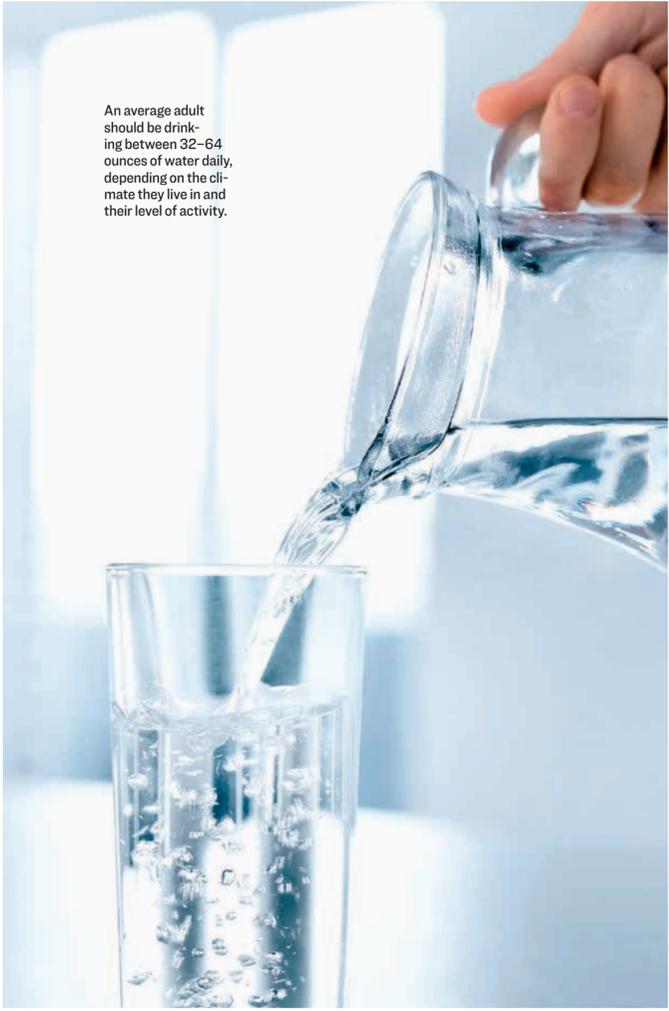
Recommendation

North American athletes and exercisers spend almost \$6 billion a year on food supplements advertised to make them become faster or stronger. The placebo effect may go a long way toward explaining why these supplements are so popular. It is hard to give yourself a placebo because you know that you are just taking a sugar pill. However, when a nutritional supplement is widely advertised and promoted as something that will help you, you may be persuaded to believe that it will deliver the advertised benefits. Then, thanks to the placebo effect, it actually does.

Dr. Gabe Mirkin has been a practicing physician for over 50 years. He is board-certified in sports medicine, allergy and immunology, pediatrics, and pediatric immunology. "The Dr. Mirkin Show," his call-in show on fitness and health, was syndicated in more than 120 cities. This article was originally published on [DrMirkin.com](#)

An average adult should be drinking between 32-64 ounces of water daily, depending on the climate they live in and their level of activity.

PUHHA/SHUTTERSTOCK



IN DEFENSE OF Downtime

Get more done by getting away from it all

CONAN MILNER

For nearly a decade, Alex Soojung-Kim Pang was a busy consultant in Silicon Valley. The work was exciting, but the pace took a toll. In an environment of young entrepreneurs who often boasted 100-hour work weeks in pursuit of their fortunes, Pang soon burned out.

He got a chance to recover in Cambridge, England, where Microsoft Research offered him a visiting fellowship. As he eased into the leisurely vibe of his three-month sabbatical, Pang had more time to read, relax, and reflect than he'd had in years. To his surprise, it actually made him more productive.

"I was getting an incredible amount of stuff done," he said. "I was writing a lot. I got two books out of those three months, and I was having great ideas. But I didn't feel at all compressed the way that I normally did in California."

Before his Cambridge experience, Pang assumed that focusing on his career was critical to staying on top of his game. After all, hard work is essential to success. However, it may only be part of the equation.

In his book, "Rest: Why You Get More Done When You Work Less," Pang examines the work ethic of the industrial world—long hours and little time off—and compares it to the goal of nearly every ancient society: a balance of work and rest.

While we often consider rest and work to be opposing forces, they're actually meant to work together, like tension and release. We need to work to support ourselves, but we also need opportunities to recharge so we can take on another day.

"Work provides the means to live. Rest provides meaning to life," Pang said.

It sounds simple, yet such wisdom has been lost in much of the working world. Even if we're offered time off, many of us don't dare take it.

In 2018, American workers left 768 million vacation days unused. That was up 9 percent from the previous year according to the U.S. Travel Association. And 236 million of those vacation days were forfeited completely, a loss of \$65 billion in unused benefits.

Why would someone sacrifice their hard-earned free time? According to psychotherapist Kelley Kitley, many of the high-achieving executives who come to her Chicago-based practice are reluctant to take a break because they see time off more like a setback than a chance to recover.

"They believe they're going to lose momentum," Kitley said. "They think, 'If I take a break, I'm not going to be able to keep going at this pace.' But they don't recognize that taking a break will actually help them sustain more productivity in the long run."

The Benefits of Time Off

If you think you perform better with less rest, think again. Research has found that overwork raises your risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. It also increases the



Finding new passions gives us a chance to enjoy new vistas—in ourselves and the world.

Several great minds of art, science, and business have tempered their ambition with long walks, hobbies, and regular naps.

likelihood of insomnia and alcohol abuse—further eroding our ability to bounce back from stress.

On the other hand, when we allow ourselves some time to take it easy, our brain becomes uniquely active: reviewing past events, consolidating memories, and even solving problems we couldn't figure out with our conscious attention.

Pang points to several great minds of art, science, and business who have tempered their ambition with long walks, hobbies, and regular naps. Some may have been workaholics in their youth, but what sustained their work as they grew older was a habit of mixing frequent periods of downtime into their otherwise intense routine.

"These people spend only a fraction of

their day doing what we would regard as work: Sitting at the keyboard and doing stuff that produces words, or images on the canvas," Pang said. "The rest of the time they spend in what looks like leisure."

One example comes from the men who discovered the structure of DNA. Francis Crick and James Watson didn't arrive at their revolutionary insights hunkered down in the lab, but over long lunches at the local pub, strolling through campus, playing tennis, and browsing in bookstores.

Employers may benefit from this model as well. Pang points to companies where employees who had previously been clocking in 50- or 60-hour workweeks were able to maintain productivity and increase profitability when they shifted to a four-day

workweek and a five- or six-hour workday.

"We have a growing number of companies who have been able to put this into place with great success, and to sustain it for several years," he said.

Claiming Your Best Rest

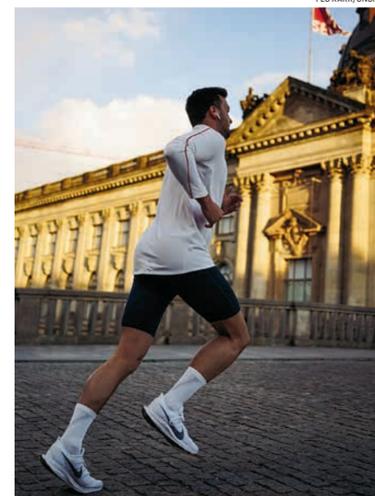
Even when we realize we need some time off—when we're just going through the motions and relying on caffeine to carry us through the day—numerous factors still stand in our way.

Let's be realistic: Time is money, and both are tight for most of us.

It's also getting harder to leave the job at the end of the day. Technology that was originally promoted as time-saving now blurs the line between where work stops

CRISTINA GOTTARDI/UNSPLASH

FLO KARR/UNSPLASH



Strenuous activities like running invigorate the body and help us better adapt to stress.

CCDC/UNSPLASH



Cultivating a garden is a wonderful way to engage the senses and relax in nature.

If downtime doesn't come easy, start small.

Don't Go to Work Sick

You will recover more quickly resting at home and return to work ready for an honest day's work

JEFF GARTON

Presenteeism is the term that describes when you're present at work but sick and unproductive and should be home recuperating.

A loss of productivity is possible anytime you're in pain or don't feel well. You may be present in body but you're absent in mind and spirit. Yet going to work sick has become so widespread, costly, and concerning to businesses that the term presenteeism was created to describe it.

Returning to work prematurely from an illness can prolong your sickness, infect others, perpetuate your exhaustion, reduce your efficiency, and provoke your irritability. And because your mind isn't in the game, the inability to concentrate can contribute to accidents.

In an attempt to get a handle on presenteeism, researchers have been gathering data to formulate procedures for managing ill and recovering employees. They're identifying the recovery times associated with common illnesses and the cost of di-

A loss of productivity is possible anytime you're in pain or don't feel well.



ESTRADA ANTON/SHUTTERSTOCK

Returning to work when you're sick can lead to poor performance and infected coworkers.

minished productivity associated with the flu, allergies, arthritis, back pain, migraine headaches, depression, and irritable bowel syndrome.

What the researchers are finding out is that the inability to function due to presenteeism may be three times more costly to a business than absenteeism. At least you know when someone's absent, but you can't always tell when they're not on the job due to presenteeism.

In a report titled the American Productivity Audit, the Center for Health Research & Rural Advocacy found that presenteeism could be costing American businesses over \$150 billion dollars annually.

In short, don't go back to work until you're well enough to deliver a consistently good performance.

Here is your prescription.

First and foremost—follow your doctor's orders. Get a written excuse to be absent from work and manage your illness to the best of your ability so you can return to your duties sooner than later.

Explore all options available to you for

preventing future illnesses. Participate in your employer's wellness programs. Eat well, get good rest, routinely exercise, manage your stress, and take your earned vacations. And stay away from people with infectious illnesses.

Do an honest self-evaluation as to why you feel motivated to return to work sooner than you should. If this is due to an unsympathetic boss, contact your HR representative and give them your doctor's excuse and a link to this article.

If the decision to return to work prematurely is motivated by fear, worry, guilt, shame, or anxiety, then it's up to you to down-regulate those unhelpful emotions by assigning a different meaning to your situation. Think differently.

Those unwanted emotions are created by allowing yourself to think habitually about all the things you can't control. For example:

- My supervisor and management will think I'm weak or disloyal.
- I'll lose my job if I don't show up for work.

- This will destroy my performance evaluation and potential for promotion.
- They'll hire someone to take my job before I'm able to return.
- My coworkers will take over my projects.
- I'm going to lose out on some of the upcoming projects I wanted.

If you don't replace these negative thoughts with non-negative ones, the unhelpful emotions you unintentionally create have the potential of exacerbating your illness and further prolonging your return to work.

The better approach is to take control of what you can, which is your ability to think intentionally to create helpful emotions. Rather than dwell on the uncertainties of not returning to work, think about healing faster to create the helpful emotions of peace, hope, optimism, courage, and confidence. Keep in mind the old saying that there's nothing more important than your health.

A few years ago, I had a bout with the flu and was eager to get back to work. During a follow-up visit with my doctor, he insisted that I rest another two days at home. He could

and our personal time begins.

"We have tools that literally allow us to carry offices around in our pockets," Pang said.

Women face even greater pressure to work more and rest less. Particularly working mothers, who must raise kids as if they have no jobs, and move up the corporate ladder as if they have no children.

"Women are wired to be caretakers and put everybody else's needs before theirs. They just don't have time for self-care," Kitley said.

Economic realities and personal responsibilities are obstacles to downtime that we can't control but there are some that we can.

When we're up against forces that want to turn our remaining free time into more labor, it's up to us to make rest a priority. That's why Kitley gets her clients to pencil it in.

"We work on it being non-negotiable. Sometime during the day, you need to take at least 30 minutes to decompress and recharge," Kitley said. "Sometimes people need a class to go to so they can schedule it."

Another key factor under our control is the quality of our rest. In addition to sleep, we also need recreation. Unfortunately, the default mode of relaxation for many of us is watching TV or scrolling through our phone. But it turns out that passively consuming entertainment isn't so restorative.

Since our free time is finite, Pang urges us to seek forms of rest that recharge us more.

This is especially important for people in high-stress occupations like police and doctors. Jobs that see a lot of crises and unpredictability can be psychologically draining. To get our balance back, Pang recommends activities that develop a sense of control and mastery.

"Having hobbies where control is an element is really very helpful," Pang said. "The best kinds of rest are active. They involve the cultivation of skills, and they can be physically challenging."

Strenuous activities like running and rock climbing, or more cerebral hobbies like playing piano and landscape painting may not sound like rest, but they can provide much more recharge power than binge-watching with a bowl of salty snacks. Exercise helps our body better adapt to stress, and recreational challenges allow us to detach our attention from our day-to-day.

If downtime doesn't come easy, start small. Kitley asks her time-crunched clients to make a list of things they enjoy and will be likely to do. It can be as simple as getting together with a friend or going for a walk.

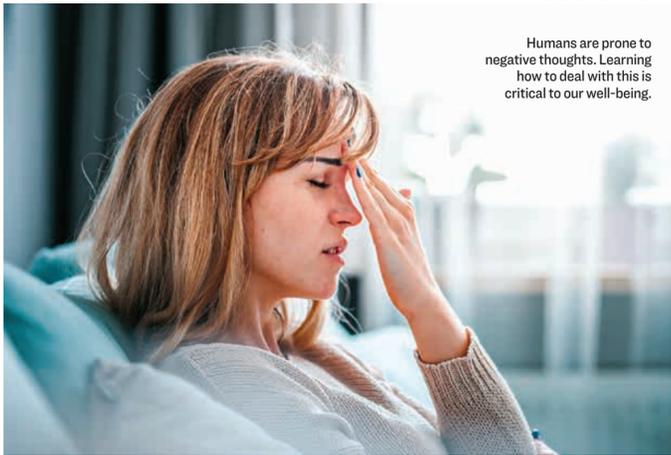
"Walking around the block for 15 minutes can reset them," she said. "They're getting energy, fresh air, they're changing their scenery. That's helpful for people who are just starting to find ways to recharge."

tell that I was frustrated by this so he said if I didn't care enough about my health then I should find another doctor, that he prefers to treat patients who follow his orders.

Now think about what I was doing in my doctor's office. I was experiencing the early symptoms of presenteeism. My sick body was present in his office while my mind and spirit were still on the job. Had he not insisted I stay home, I would have gone to work.

My doctor made it okay for me to give myself permission to be sick and recuperate without guilt. Then by imposing guilt on me, he motivated my cooperation in bringing my mind back to where it should be in helping to heal my body. Only then did I go to work.

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



LESZEK GLASNER/SHUTTERSTOCK
Humans are prone to negative thoughts. Learning how to deal with this is critical to our well-being.

MINDSET MATTERS

How to Live Peacefully With Negative Thoughts

Turning the volume down on the words in your head can give you room for a broader perspective

NANCY COLIER

Do you have repetitive negative thoughts? If so, the diagnosis is confirmed: You're human.

The average person experiences 60,000 to 70,000 thoughts per day, according to the Laboratory of Neuro Imaging at the University of Southern California. As a psychotherapist, I can say with certainty that a large percentage of those thoughts are about what can go wrong, what will go wrong, what we've done wrong, and what others are doing wrong.

What makes negative repetitive thoughts so challenging is that they often stem from core self-beliefs like

An important aspect of this practice is not judging the fact that we have negative thoughts in the first place.

"I'm not good enough," "I won't get what I want," or "The world is not trustworthy." Because they're built out of these deeply held beliefs, repetitive thought loops are very powerful and sticky. We believe them—as if their persistence is somehow evidence of their truth. As a result, we are compelled to engage with their content.

We should learn early in life that we need to do something about our negative thoughts: Prove them wrong, convince ourselves that they're false, or actively replace them with positive thoughts. In any case, we need to put up a fight.

There is nothing inherently wrong with these strategies. Arguing with

and disproving negative thoughts is sometimes helpful, as is actively replacing them with positive thoughts. But the most effective approach that I have found for repetitive negative thoughts is actually the least intuitive. It looks something like this: Stop trying to change negative thoughts; don't do anything with or about them; stop fighting what's already happening; look elsewhere.

Reconciling Negative Thoughts

How can we be okay when what's happening in our minds is not okay? We may assume that by agreeing to not change our negative thoughts, we are also agreeing to believe them—to invest them with meaning. But what if that weren't true?

What if negative thoughts could appear in your inner world, and you could comprehend their content but not have to do anything about them—not have to make them go away, invest energy in them, get involved in their stories, or even believe them? What if the negative thoughts could mean nothing about who you are? Before we can practice this approach, however, we need to believe it's possible.

We are a culture of doers, and for some, the instruction to not do can feel inadequate. It can be helpful, therefore, to reframe the "not doing" as something more proactive. Specifically, instead of focusing on not changing your thoughts, practice turning your attention away from the thoughts themselves toward what is behind them.

As soon as negative thoughts appear, we tend to narrow our attention onto them with laser beam focus, thereby blocking out anything else that might exist in our awareness. And yet, what if we were to look beyond them and contemplate what else is there? What is behind and under the thoughts? In so doing, we leave the thoughts alone and direct our attention to the spaciousness around them. It's like shifting our attention from the birds to the sky.

An important aspect of this practice is not judging the fact that we have negative thoughts in the first place. In truth, thoughts happen

with or without our consent. The fact that negative thoughts come back again and again is a byproduct of our mind's operating system. It is not a failing on our part; it does not make us less spiritual, or especially troubled. The sooner we can accept this truth, the sooner we can get on with the business of living.

Turning Down the Volume

Try it out for a day or an hour: Don't change your thoughts, no matter what they contain—just leave them alone, let them happen. Turn your attention away from the thoughts and toward the one who's listening—your own awareness and presence. Sense the space in which the thoughts are appearing, the silence behind the noise, and the stillness under the movement.

When we shift our attention in this way, something very curious happens: The thoughts start losing their power. They may still be there, but they contain less "oomph." The volume of the thoughts shifts from a shout to a whisper. Sometimes, as the thoughts become less enticing and fail to move or engage us, they start to fade altogether. And yet sometimes they don't fade. While we would prefer that the negative thoughts subside rather than continue, neither is evidence of the success or failure of our process.

Repetitive negative thoughts are part of the human journey; we cannot stop them. We can, however, stop trying to change the unchangeable. What matters is how we relate to the thoughts and ourselves. We generate internal peace when we give up the fight with the inevitable and direct our attention toward new frontiers. Ultimately, the relationship we build with our thoughts, and the agency we take with our attention, is what creates our experience.

Nancy Colier is a psychotherapist, an interfaith minister, and the author of the book "The Power of Off: The Mindful Way to Stay Sane in a Virtual World." For more information, visit her website NancyColier.com



EVGENY ATAMANENKO/SHUTTERSTOCK
It's all about finding ways and words, instead of using food, to show your kids how much you love them.

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How to Stop Using Food to Reward and Punish Your Kids

Ice cream doesn't heal a child's scraped knee but many parents will use it as an emotional treatment

STEPHANIE MEYERS

At one time or another, just about every parent uses food to reward their kids for good behavior and achievements—or to console them when they're sad or disappointed.

When children make honor roll, win a big game, or persevere through a struggle, a parent might express their pride and joy with candy or ice cream. Likewise, when kids feel down and out, pick-me-ups can take the form of a treat. The reasons for this are simple: Using food as an incentive might get results, and salty, sweet, or sugary foods are often within easy reach. You may figure there's no harm in doing this kind of thing. But as a dietitian and

As a dietitian and nutritionist focused on family nutrition, I consider regularly using food as an incentive for kids to be risky.

nutritionist focused on family nutrition, I consider regularly using food as an incentive for kids to be risky.

Rewarding and comforting kids with food can lead to overeating when they aren't hungry. It also increases the chances they will try to deal with their emotions through what they eat.

I spend a lot of my time at work helping clients break this cycle. I show them how to stop using tactics like bribery, judgment, and shame that involve foods and drinks that can range from a bowl of chocolate pudding to a big glass of soda. I also teach parents other ways to celebrate and soothe that don't depend on food.

Continued on Page 10



MARINO MANNA/SHUTTERSTOCK
There are many ways to show your affection and help children deal with emotional difficulties without using treats or food as a default.

ECONOMIC WARFARE CORPORATE CYBER ATTACKS INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY THEFT

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Amar Manzoor,
Master of
Industrial
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There is a clear trend to growth in countries the west considers unethical. The countries that are growing the fastest don't adhere to our standards, morals or ethics. Their success is because we have no effective defence and no systematic attack strategies. 7Tao is at home in an honourable ethical business environment, but when attacked by forces not sharing your values - 7Tao gives you the power to fight back.

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How to Stop Using Food to Reward and Punish Your Kids

Continued from Page 9

Plenty of research shows kids consume more total calories, carbohydrates and fat daily when parents use food to reward behavior. For example, when the mothers of preschool-age children use food to ease their kids' emotions, those children eat more sweets when they get upset. And a French study found that moms who used food as rewards for their children stimulated their kids' tendency to overeat—even when their children weren't hungry. Of course, it's not just moms and dads using food in this way but caregivers of all kinds, from babysitters to grandparents. And while it's a big problem at school, too, changing patterns at home is key.

To help parents get the hang of kicking this habit, I've zeroed in on four steps to purge guilt and let go of food as a reward.

It increases the chances they will try to deal with their emotions through what they eat.

1. Recognize Common Scenarios

Think about how you celebrate after performances or if you often promise a treat when your kids finish a task. Do you prod your kids to clean their room by dangling the possibility of dessert?

With small children, when they're refusing to leave the playground or get into a bath, try engaging them with a stuffed animal or squishy toy to fidget with.

Try to get your child to help choose some alternatives. They might have good ideas that don't occur to you.

2. Don't Blame Yourself

You are not alone if food is ingrained in how you interact with kids when you're not at the table. What matters most is your willingness to explore a new path without stewing in self-judgment. Using food to reward kids undermines healthy habits you're trying to instill, so any effort toward change may have long-term benefits.

3. Name the Feeling You Aim to Convey

Separating your intent from your actions will help you stop using food as a way to soothe or praise. To do this, imagine your child in a situation where you might use food that way. Play the scene out in your mind, stopping before you bring on the food. As you envision your child in the scenario, ask yourself what feeling you would like to convey.

For example, your kid falls down on the sidewalk and skins their knee. You crouch to comfort them and tend their

wound as the wailing escalates. You keep consoling after you've carefully stuck a Band-Aid on them but they just can't calm down. If you're like many of my clients, you'll be tempted to say, "I'll help you up and then we can go get ice cream."

Ask yourself at that point what feeling you want them to perceive. In this case, I'll wager that it's comfort and relief—rather than a delicious dairy product.

Becoming mindful of your specific feelings enables two things to happen. First, you'll see how food stands in for various emotions. Second, it will help you separate your feelings from food—making it easier to deliver something else that's truly needed in the moment.

You can also try saying your feelings out loud. For example, when your child doesn't get invited to a friend's party, say, "This feels sad. My wish for you is knowing how much you are loved." That can help you remember to try something else besides food to console them.

4. Do Something Else

There are plenty of ways to comfort your kid that don't involve food. You can hug them or give them a bubble bath, for example.

To celebrate, try watching a family video together, taking the time to say what makes you feel most proud of them. If you're trying to motivate or inspire your child, you can crank up their favorite song, then dance and sing along with the music.

When you want to compel or encourage kids to, say, do their homework, give praising their effort a try. Tell them that you see them working hard and ask, "How can I support you right now?"

With small children, when they're refusing to leave the playground or get into a bath, try engaging them with a stuffed animal or squishy toy to fidget with.

Try to get your child to help choose some alternatives. They might have good ideas that don't occur to you.

Ways and words

Using food to reward or console kids is pervasive enough that the American Academy of Pediatrics and five other professional organizations recommend that parents not use food this way.

But no one, including doctors, is suggesting that you should never make a birthday cake or use food as a reward in any situation. Food is an integral part of cultures everywhere and meant to be fully enjoyed.

Should you find that you regularly rely on food to express emotions with your kids, I believe you ought to try to switch gears.

It's all about finding ways and words, instead of using food, to show your kids how much you love them.

Stephanie Meyers is a registered dietitian and nutritionist at Boston University. This article was originally published on The Conversation.

MILLAF/SHUTTERSTOCK



Using food to reward kids undermines healthy habits you're trying to instill.



Clear your calendar and make space for unexpected fun and connection.

How a 'Do Nothing' Day Can Change Your Life

Setting aside time with no agenda gives us a chance to discover ourselves

HILARY BARNETT

Doing nothing. The mere thought gives you a sudden twitch, right?

Me too, my friend, but despite the twitch, I would like to make a proposal: for one day out of each week, you do absolutely nothing. This doesn't mean you don't go anywhere, or just sit on your couch and stare at the wall. It means, simply, that you clear your calendar and make space for what could happen.

You remove any social obligations, you let projects sit idle, you turn off your notifications, and you simply take a day to just be.

Ever since my first daughter was born, I felt the pull toward a "do nothing" day. I went back to work part time when she was only 11 weeks old, and when I spent time away from her, her demeanor and behavior was just different.

She wasn't as settled, and neither was I. I could tell she was a happier kid when I was able to spend one day just being with her. So when we were able to be together on my days off, I tried to make it a point to have one day where we didn't have a million places to be, if I could help it.

No agenda, no rushing around, no one else to please. Just me and her, together. Doing whatever we felt like doing, or getting into whatever adventure may come our way.

Recently, I heard someone say if you want to see where your priorities really lie, look at two things: your calendar and your bank statement.

If you believe your priorities are what truly

matters to you, look no further than those two places to confirm or deny your hunch.

The 'Do Nothing' Day

Let's do an experiment. Take a look at your calendar, and take an inventory with me. How much of it is work-related? How much of it is spent on social engagements? With family? Doing hobbies? Self-improvement?

Depriving ourselves of our normal comforts for even a short amount of time can go a long way in teaching us what we really need.

And how much white space do you see?

We have become a culture that is severely uncomfortable with white space. We don't like being left alone with ourselves, and that's because it isn't always fun.

We then have to face our true feelings, our negative emotions, our relational drama, and figure out what to do with it. It is much easier to simply turn on the TV, check our phones, and continue numbing.

We are terrified of silence, of nothing on the agenda—who are we without these things to hold us up, to give us significance?

We pack our schedules full, hoping that will keep us from stopping long enough to notice our inner lives are in great need of

attention. The essence of simplifying your life is recognizing you have intrinsic value by simply being.

You matter, your life matters, and you have worth. Period.

You matter without the stuff, without the outside approval and conferred significance, without the career, the projects, the friends, without anything.

Just. You.

It takes the absence of an agenda to really learn yourself. It takes quiet. It takes room. It takes time. But everything in the world is going to fight you for it.

Learning to be comfortable with a "do nothing" day isn't going to come easily. It is hard work, but it is work worth doing.

So today, look at your calendar. What can you say no to, just this time around? If there is a colored notification on each day, which of those can you clear out? Which day can hold some white space, some possibility, some openness?

Here are a few tips as you consider your own "do nothing" day:

1. Set it aside, and make it known.

We make things sacred through our intentions and our actions. So set your intention—what day will it be? And then let some people close to you know, so they can support you in your effort.

2. Don't stress about it.

Wake up, and simply resist the urge to immediately DO. It might take time to break this habit, but as soon as you remove all of your go-to distractions, you will instantly notice how often you rely on them.

3. Pay attention.

Depriving ourselves of our normal comforts for even a short amount of time can go a long way in teaching us what we really need. We are able to notice when we have an urge to check our phone, or make a call. We can get a better feel for our own patterns of behavior and the motivations behind them.

4. Listen to your heart.

If someone invited you to attend something, don't simply give a knee jerk response. Stop and wait. Is this something you would typically just say yes to because you feel obligated? Or is this something that would really breathe life into you? Notice, and respond with authenticity and vulnerability.

5. Spend some time in silence.

Our brains are constantly bombarded with information, images, and noise. We tend to assume our minds are like fortresses, and all this stimulation can simply bounce off, but that isn't the case. Our minds are vulnerable, and everything we see and experience influences our thoughts and emotions. So for your "do nothing" day, set a guard at the gate.

Have you ever given yourself a "do nothing" day? What would be your ideal way to spend one if you had it?

Hilary Barnett empowers moms to dream big on Whole Motherhood. She has a podcast or you can follow her on Instagram. This article was originally published on Becoming Minimalist.

BECOMING MINIMALIST

Things Minimalists Don't Do

These 10 un-habits are a great way to enrich your life without emptying your wallet

You might think that minimalists are all about white walls and clutter-free countertops, but that's not the whole story. Minimalists know that having less stuff offers more space for focus, gratitude, and meaningful work.

Whether your own desk is clear or your bookshelves are overstuffed, consider trying out these 10 things that minimalists don't do.

1. They don't lose sleep over keeping up with trends.

When it comes to stuff, minimalists aim to own just enough. They might invest in fewer, higher-quality pieces, but they're not spending a lot of time and energy shopping for those shoes/tote bags/cof-

fee table baubles everyone else is after, the ones that will be outdated and disposed of when their season of fashionability is over.

That's not to say that minimalists don't pay attention to style—they just tend to invest more in their own personal style, not the style dictated by consumer trends. Instead of trying to fit in, minimalists focus on who they are and what's right for them.

2. They don't succumb to decision fatigue before noon.

Energy spent on inconsequential decisions—what to wear, what to eat for breakfast, where to look for the keys that are missing yet again—adds up fast.

Continued on Page 12

Keep things that support who you are, who you're becoming, and let go of the rest.



ALAN PHO/SHUTTERSTOCK

BECOMING MINIMALIST

Things Minimalists Don't Do

These 10 un-habits are a great way to enrich your life without emptying your wallet

Continued from Page 11

We all have a limited amount of decision-making power each day, and using it on details takes away from our ability to be decisive when it really matters.

When you pare down your wardrobe, your kitchen, or your clutter, you cut out unnecessary options. You can save your decision-making power for creative projects, for your relationships, and for productive work. By eliminating the unnecessary, you create more energy for what matters most.

3. They aren't drowning in email.

Decluttering isn't just for office supplies. Minimalists keep their digital lives clutter-free too, and that includes unsubscribing from emails that aren't useful. Just like the mantra from William Morris, "Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful," only invite messages into your inbox if they're useful or delightful to receive.

4. They don't worry about what other people think.

Minimalists have learned not to defer to the crowd when it comes to important decisions. Living with less is like swimming upstream, so minimalists get lots of practice at doing what they think is best instead of following popular opinion.

Most of us have a tendency to be overly influenced by other peoples' opinions. What will they think about what I wear, where I live, what I do? Our best choices are made when we let

go of that fearful inner voice. We could all stand to practice that more often.

5. They don't spend Saturdays cleaning out the garage.

When you're not using all those things you buy, they need to be taken care of: stored, cleaned, fixed, organized. Minimalists refuse to give up their free time for extra stuff maintenance. Instead of storing everything you've ever owned, let go of the things you don't use anymore. Less time spent cleaning and organizing all that junk you've stored means more Saturdays spent doing what you love.

6. Or tidying up everything else.

Many minimalists say they love a clean home, but hate to clean. The easiest way to keep things tidy is to get rid of everything that clutters up a space. Clear counters are easier to wipe up. Clear floors are easier to vacuum. Don't just reorganize; remove. And make sure that everything you do keep has a specific home in your house, so you can put things away when they're not in use.

7. They don't let the past dictate their future.

The things you're surrounded by remind you of what you believe is important. If you don't weed out the belongings you've outgrown, it's like your past is living with you all the time. You don't need to own everything you've ever used. Keep things that support who you are, who you're becoming, and let go of the rest.

8. They don't forget what their loved ones look like.

Minimalists believe wanting less is better than buying more. They don't spend time and money buying things they don't need, to impress people they may or may not even like.

Whatever your budget, spending less will help it stretch farther—leaving you with more time to be with friends and family away from work, and less stress during your downtime so you can actually enjoy the people you're with.

9. They don't lose the habit of curiosity.

Creative thinking requires staying curious. Minimalists get to practice curiosity all the time, asking themselves questions like: Why do I own this? Why did I say yes to that? Is this habit still serving me? What would life be like without this? What's really important to me? What can I let go of?

The practice of asking questions and seeking your own answers—not just the culturally approved ones—is helpful in all kinds of areas beyond dealing with desktop clutter.

10. They don't skip out on great memories.

Many minimalists prioritize experiences over things. Instead of collecting knick-knacks, they collect memories. Whether they're having fun as a family, planning outings with friends, or going on solo treks, minimalists aren't looking for the next great buy, they're keeping an eye out for their next adventure.



CDC/UNSPASH

Instead of trying to fit in, minimalists focus on who they are and what's right for them.

Make sure that everything you do keep has a specific home in your house, so you can put things away when they're not in use.

Melissa Camara Wilkins writes a beautiful blog (MelissaCamaraWilkins.com/blog/) about giving yourself permission to be who you were made to be. You can also follow her on Facebook. This article was originally published on *Becoming Minimalist*.

Just Minutes a Day in Nature Could Reduce a Student's Stress, Anxiety

Research review affirms healing impact of nature on today's increasingly anxious, depressed young people

CARLY WOOD

Around the globe, college- and university-aged students are experiencing high levels of stress and mental illness.

For example, in the past 10 years in the United Kingdom, there has been a fivefold increase in the number of students reporting mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, and schizophrenia. Some of the most common mental health concerns experienced by U.S. students include overwhelming anxiety, feeling so depressed that it's difficult to function, and hopelessness. Some even reported contemplating suicide. Yet, even as mental ill-health becomes more common among students, many face long waits or limited access to mental health services.

A growing body of research suggests that one way of improving our mental health might be as simple as getting outdoors. In fact, a recent review of evidence found as little as 10 minutes a day of exposure to nature could be beneficial to students—although there are caveats.

While evidence shows that being in natural environments can help reduce stress and improve mental well-being, finding the opportunity can be challenging. Many students have to spend the majority of their time indoors studying, attending lectures, or in the library.

Numerous studies looking at the health benefits of being in nature have begun to focus on finding out how much time in nature is needed to experience health improvements. One study found that 20–30 minutes three times a week was most ef-



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A recent review of evidence found as little as 10 minutes a day of exposure to nature could be beneficial to students.

fective for reducing levels of cortisol (the "stress" hormone) in the body.

Another study showed spending a minimum of 120 minutes in a natural environment—compared with having had no contact with nature in the previous week—significantly increased the likelihood that a person would report feeling in good health and having high well-being. However, neither of these studies specifically focused on college- or university-aged students.

Minimum Dosage

The recent review sought to identify the minimum nature dose needed to improve the mental health of college- and university-aged students and what types of nature-based activities these benefits came from. The reviewers looked at a total of 14 studies, which altogether included 706 students from Japan, the United States, and Sweden.

The authors looked specifically at studies published in English or French, where the participants were aged between 15 and 30 years old. They also looked only at studies that examined how much time a person needed to spend in nature, whether the study monitored changes in the participant's mental health, and compared these changes across at least two environments.

All the studies they looked at compared urban environments to natural environments (areas like nature reserves, forests, urban parks, and nature areas on university campuses).

Overall, the review found that compared with equal time spent in an urban setting, as little as 10–20 minutes (and up to 50 minutes) of sitting or walking in a range of natural settings led to significant health improvements. These included reduced heart rate, lower blood pressure and cortisol, improved mood, and reduced anxiety. These findings support the results of previous studies that looked at people of all ages. This suggests that college and university settings could provide regular doses of nature to target and improve the mental well-being of their students. Students might also do well to incorporate nature exposure into their every day lives as one way of combating stress and mental ill-health.

But despite these encouraging findings, they should be interpreted with caution. Most of the studies included in this review were conducted in Japan and in male participants. So these findings might not be true for students of all genders and from other places in the world.

It's also unclear whether the students

Some of the most common mental health problems experienced by American students include overwhelming anxiety, feeling so depressed it is difficult to function, and hopelessness.

studied were suffering from mental ill-health at the time of the research. Emerging evidence suggests that nature exposure might be most beneficial for individuals with low well-being. So it's important to determine which groups of students this kind of experience will most benefit.

The review also failed to investigate what benefits that physical activity (other than walking) in natural settings would have. So-called "green exercise" has been shown to have additional health benefits compared to nature exposure or physical activity alone, resulting in greater improvements in self-esteem and mood.

Finally, the researchers didn't include a meta-analysis of the studies—a technique for bringing together multiple scientific studies to find any common effects—in order to determine the strength of the overall evidence. Nor did it consider the bias or quality of the studies included. So it's not clear how strong the overall effect is or how reliable the included studies are. Further research will need to address these gaps.

But despite those shortcomings, the findings of this review—and a growing body of research—support the mental health benefits of nature exposure and green exercise. Both students and the general population should try to spend time in nature as part of their daily lives as a way of combating stress and improving mental health.

Carly Wood is a lecturer in nutrition and exercise science at the University of Westminster in the United Kingdom. This article was originally published on *The Conversation*.

NAVIGATING AGING

US Medical Panel Thinks Twice About Pushing

Cognitive Screening for Dementia

Benefits of screening remain unproven though older adults experiencing cognitive decline are encouraged to get assessed

JUDITH GRAHAM

A leading group of medical experts last month declined to endorse cognitive screening for older adults, fueling a debate that has simmered for years.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force said it could neither recommend nor oppose cognitive screening, citing insufficient scientific evidence of the practice's benefits and harms and calling for further studies.

The task force's work informs policies set by Medicare and private insurers. Its recommendations, an accompanying scientific statement, and two editorials were published Tuesday in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

The task force's new position comes as concern mounts over a rising tide of older adults with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Treatments remain elusive. Nearly 6 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease; that population is expected to swell to nearly 14 million by 2050.

Because seniors are at higher risk of cognitive impairment, proponents say screening—testing people without any symptoms—is an important strategy to identify people with unrecognized difficulties and potentially lead to better care.

"This can start a discussion with your doctor: 'You know, you're having problems with your cognition, let's follow this up,'" said Stephen Rao of Cleveland Clinic's Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health.

Opponents say the benefits of screening are unproven and the potential for harm is worrisome. "Getting a positive result can make someone wary about their cognition and memory for the rest of their life," said Benjamin Bensadon, an associate professor of geriatric medicine at the University of Florida College of Medicine.

The task force's stance is controversial, given how poorly the health care system serves seniors with memory and thinking problems. Physicians routinely overlook cognitive impairment and dementia in older patients, failing to recognize these conditions at least 50 percent of the time, according to several studies.

When the Alzheimer's Association surveyed 1,954 seniors in December 2018, 82 percent said they thought it was important to have their thinking or memory checked. But only 16 percent said physicians regularly checked their cognition.

What's more, Medicare policies appear to affirm the value of screening. Since 2011, Medicare has required that physicians assess a patient's cognition during an annual wellness visit. But only 19 percent of seniors took advantage of this voluntary benefit in 2016, the most recent year for which data is available.

Dr. Ronald Petersen, the co-author of an editorial accompanying the recommendations, cautioned that they shouldn't discourage physicians from evaluating older patients' memory and thinking.

"There is increased awareness, both on the part of patients and physicians, of the importance of cognitive impairment," said Petersen, director of the Mayo Clinic's Alzheimer's Disease Research Center. "It would be a mistake if physicians didn't pay more attention to cognition and consider screening on a case-by-case basis."

Similarly, seniors shouldn't avoid addressing worrisome symptoms.

Physicians routinely overlook cognitive impairment and dementia in older patients, failing to recognize these conditions at least 50 percent of the time.

“If someone has concerns or a family member has concerns about their memory or cognitive abilities, they should certainly discuss that with their clinician.”

Dr. Douglas Owens, chair of the task force and a professor at Stanford University School of Medicine.

Cognitive screening involves administering short tests (usually five minutes or less) to people without any symptoms of cognitive decline.



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"If someone has concerns or a family member has concerns about their memory or cognitive abilities, they should certainly discuss that with their clinician," said Dr. Douglas Owens, chair of the task force and a professor at Stanford University School of Medicine.

In more than a dozen interviews, experts teased out complexities surrounding this topic. Here's what they told me:

Screening basics. Cognitive screening involves administering short tests (usually five minutes or less) to people without any symptoms of cognitive decline. It's an effort to bring to light problems with thinking and memory that otherwise might escape attention.

Depending on the test, people may be asked to recall words, draw a clock face, name the date, spell a word backward, relate a recent news event or sort items into different categories, among other tasks. Common tests include the Mini-Cog, the Memory Impairment Screen, the General Practitioner Assessment of Cognition and the Mini-Mental Status Examination.

The task force's evaluation focuses on "universal screening": whether all adults age 65 and older without symptoms should be given tests to assess their cognition. It found a lack of high-quality scientific evidence that this practice would improve older adults' quality of life, ensure that they get better care, or otherwise positively affect other outcomes such as caregivers' efficacy and well-being.

Selective screening. Selective screening for cognitive impairment is an alternative to universal screening and has gained support.

In a statement published last fall, the American Academy of Neurology recommended that all patients 65 and older seen by neurologists get yearly cognitive health assessments. Also, the American Diabetes Association recommends that all adults with diabetes age 65 and older be screened for cognitive impairment at an initial visit and annually thereafter "as appropriate." And the American College of Surgeons now recommends screening older adults for cognitive impairment before surgery.

Why test select groups? Many patients with diabetes or neurological conditions have overlapping cognitive symptoms and "it's important to know if a patient is having trouble remembering what the doctor said," said Dr. Norman Foster, chair of the workgroup that developed the neurology statement and a professor of neurology at the University of Utah.

Physicians may need to alter treatment regimens for older adults with cognitive impairment or work more closely with family members. "If someone needs to manage their own care, it's important to know if they can do that reliably," Foster said.

With surgery, older patients who have preexisting cognitive impairments are at higher risk of developing delirium, an acute, sudden-onset brain disorder. Identifying these patients can alert medical staff to this risk, which can be prevented or mitigated with appropriate medical attention.

Also, people who learn they have early-stage cognitive impairment can be connected with community resources and take steps to plan for their future, medically and financially. The hope is that one day, medical treatments will be able to halt

or slow the progression of dementia. But treatments currently available don't fulfill that promise.

Steps after screening. Screening shouldn't be confused with diagnosis: All these short tests can do is signal potential problems.

If results indicate reason for concern, a physician should ask knowledgeable family members or friends what's going on with an older patient. "Are they depressed? Having problems taking care of themselves? Asking the same question repeatedly?" said Dr. David Reuben, chief of geriatrics at UCLA's David Geffen School of Medicine and director of UCLA's Alzheimer's and Dementia Care program.

A comprehensive history and physical examination should then be undertaken to rule out potentially reversible causes of cognitive difficulties, implicated in about 10 percent of cases. These include sleep apnea, depression, hearing or vision loss, vitamin B12 or folic acid deficiencies, alcohol abuse, and side effects from anticholinergic drugs or other medications, among other conditions.

Once other causes are ruled out, neuropsychological tests can help establish a diagnosis.

"If I detect mild cognitive impairment, the first thing I'll do is tell a patient I don't have any drugs for that but I can help you compensate for deficits," Reuben said. The good news, he said: A substantial number of patients with MCI—about 50 percent—don't develop dementia within five years of being diagnosed.

The bottom line. "If you're concerned about your memory or thinking, ask your physician for an assessment," said Dr. David Knopman, a neurologist at the Mayo Clinic. If that test indicates reason for concern, make sure you get the appropriate follow-up.

That's easier said than done if you want to see a dementia specialist, noted Dr. Soo Borson, a professor emerita of psychiatry at the University of Washington. "Everyone I know who's doing clinical dementia care says they have waitlists of four to six months," she said.

With shortages of geriatric psychiatrists, geriatricians, neuropsychologists, and neurologists, there aren't enough specialists to handle demands that would arise if universal screening for cognitive impairment were implemented, Borson warned.

If you're a family member of an older adult who's resisting getting tested, "reach out privately to your primary care physician and express your concerns," said Holden of Washington University. "And let your doctor know if the person isn't seeing these changes or is resistant to talk about it."

This happens frequently because people with cognitive impairments are often unaware of their problems. "But there are ways that we, as physicians, can work around that," Holden said. "If a physician handles the situation with sensitivity and takes things one step at a time, you can build trust and that can make things much easier."

Judith Graham is a contributing columnist for *Kaiser Health News*, which originally published this article. KHN's coverage of these topics is supported by *The John A. Hartford Foundation*, *Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation*, and *The SCAN Foundation*.

10 Signs You're Sleep Deprived—and What to Do About It

Getting enough sleep helps the brain function better, maintains hormone balance critical to healthy weight, and more

ANDREA DONSKY

If you are getting less than seven hours of sleep on a regular basis, chances are you are experiencing signs of sleep deprivation. You have a busy life, your job is demanding, your family depends on you, and you don't have time to get the 8–9 hours you need. So what's the big deal over a little lost sleep?

It is a big deal. In fact, sleep deprivation could make you look old before your time, have a negative impact on your concentration and attention span, jeopardize your job or promotion, take a big toll on your immune system, make you irritable with your partner and coworkers, and even result in injury or death if you nod off while driving. Perhaps it's time to rethink your need for sleep.

Lack of sufficient sleep can actually pose a number of significant health and lifestyle hazards you may not have considered. So what are the signs you are not getting enough sleep and what can you do about them?

1. You're hungry all the time.

Your brain needs energy all the time to function properly, and much of that energy is generated while you sleep. However, if you don't get enough sleep, your brain searches for energy elsewhere, and what better place than food?

People who are sleep deprived often experience

hormone problems; namely, they produce more of the hunger hormone called ghrelin and less of the hormone that makes you feel full called leptin. The result is that you crave certain foods (and you can bet they don't include broccoli and carrots) and your brain does not receive enough messages to stop eating. This combination can lead to another sign you are sleep deprived: weight gain.

2. You're packing on the pounds.

Weight gain associated with sleep deprivation can be associated with the increase in hunger (and food intake) as we've already noted, plus a decline in metabolic rate that accompanies lack of sleep. Yet another contributor to weight gain among sleep-deprived individuals is a careless approach to food choices. When you're tired, you're less likely to take the time to make wise menu selections. In addition, sleep deprivation for four days in a row can reduce the ability of your fat cells to respond to insulin by 30 percent.

3. You're having trouble thinking clearly.

Insufficient sleep has a negative impact on your ability to make decisions, solve problems, and respond quickly to situations. In a study of about 50 young adults, those who were sleep-deprived showed a drop of 2.4

percent in accuracy testing while those who had adequate sleep improved accuracy by 4.3 percent.

People who are sleep deprived often experience hormone problems; namely, they produce more of the hunger hormone called ghrelin and less of the hormone that makes you feel full called leptin.

4. You're moody, grouchy, and irritable.

If you're much less fun to be around and you're putting people off with your attitude, then you're quite possibly sleep deprived. This is true for people of all ages, including adolescents. An August 2015 study in *Sleep Medicine* reports that healthy adolescents who missed a night of sleep showed significantly worsened depression, anger, anxiety, confusion, and fatigue when compared with nights of adequate sleep. Females were especially susceptible to these mood changes.

5. You approach risk differently.

A recent study found that men and women respond to risk and risk decisions differently when they are sleep deprived. One reason for this shift is that the prefrontal cortex is especially vulnerable to sleep loss, and risk-taking is located in that area of the brain. In the study, researchers found that sleep loss caused males to make riskier decisions than when they were well-rested, while females did the opposite.

6. You're more impulsive.

When you're tired, you're more likely to act without thinking. That's because your ability to think has been compromised. So you're more likely to reach for that doughnut, make a callous remark, get into an argument with your spouse, cut someone off on the highway, or buy that overpriced sweater.

7. Your memory is fuzzy.

It makes perfect sense: sleep deprivation makes it more difficult for you to think clearly and your attention is less sharp. So if you experience memory problems associated with sleep loss, you haven't completely lost your mind. In a study of 50 young adults, participants were given memory and reasoning tasks before and after 24 hours of sleep deprivation. The authors found that sleep deprivation "strongly compromises time-based prospective memory compliance" as well as "the ability to perform an intended action after a few minutes."

8. Your emotions are out of control.

A University of California (UC)-Berkeley study reported that sleep deprivation can make it more difficult to keep your emotions under control. Thus you may find yourself crying, laughing, getting angry, or anxiety-ridden at the drop of a hat. It appears this is true because a lack of sleep is associated with a disconnect in an area of the brain that regulates emotions.

According to one of the study's authors, Matthew Walker, director of the UC Berkeley's Sleep and Neuroimaging Laboratory, "It's almost as though, without sleep, the brain had reverted back to more primitive patterns of activity, in that it was unable to put emotional ex-

periences into context and produce controlled, appropriate responses."

9. You get sick more often.

One of the more common side effects of sleep deprivation is a compromised immune system and, as a result, less ability to ward off infections. For example, a study of 153 adults looked at sleep habits for 14 straight days and the likelihood of developing the common cold. The researchers found that participants who got less than seven hours of sleep were nearly three times more likely to develop a cold than those who got eight hours or more of sleep. Sleep is essential for a properly functioning immune system because that's the time it makes substances called cytokines, which are proteins that fight inflammation and disease-causing organisms. A recent study has shed more light on this situation. While formerly it was believed cytokines were produced only by the immune system and were active there alone, now it's clear cytokines are also present and active in the brain, where they interact with other factors that control sleep.

10. You nod off.

Nod-off sessions, also known as micro-sleep, are your brain's way of saying you are sleep deprived. It's not unusual to nod off during a boring meeting or when you're a passenger in a car or plane. But it's quite another to do it frequently or when you place your life and others in danger because you're behind the wheel of a car or operating dangerous equipment. According to a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 4.2 percent of adults said they had nodded off while driving within the last 30 days. Don't let that be you!

What to Do about Sleep Deprivation

Establish a schedule. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day. Although there will be occasions when this schedule will not be possible, stick to it as much as possible.

Relax before bedtime. If your thoughts won't shut off or you find it difficult to relax before going to bed, practice a routine that promotes relaxation, such as yoga, meditation, deep breathing, listening to

soothing music, reading poetry, or taking a hot shower.

Take naps. According to the National Sleep Foundation, taking a short nap (20–30 minutes) improves alertness. It also is the best length of time to help you feel refreshed and not interfere with your nighttime sleep. A nap is critical if you are drowsy when driving.

Sleep deprivation for four days in a row can reduce the ability of your fat cells to respond to insulin by 30 percent.

Turn off the electronics. The blue light glow from laptops, cell phones, TVs, and tablets tricks your brain into thinking its daytime and disrupts the production of the sleep hormone, melatonin. Wean yourself off of the gadgets and don't even have them near you at night.

Limit or avoid alcohol. Although you may think having several drinks will help you sleep better, they actually can disturb sleep quality. Alcohol can cause you to wake up multiple times throughout the night and prevents you from getting REM and deep sleep that you need.

Examine your drug use. Certain prescription and nonprescription drugs can cause sleep disturbances and cause you to be sleep deprived. Some of them include beta-blockers, oral contraceptives, steroids, inhaled respiratory drugs, seizure medications, some antidepressants, pseudoephedrine, amphetamines, and caffeine.

Create a sleep-worthy environment. It's difficult to get a good night's sleep if you're not comfortable. That includes everything from a suitable mattress, pillow, and coverings, as well as temperature (keep your

room cool), light (keep it dark), and smell. "Having a pleasant scent and a relaxing bedroom routine can contribute to a good night's sleep," said David Cloud, CEO of the National Sleep Foundation.

Eat light. A piece of fruit or a few whole-grain crackers before bedtime can ward off hunger pangs. However, large meals will cause your digestive system to be working into the night and disrupt your ability to sleep.

Avoid sleeping pills. These pharmaceutical wonders may have a negative impact on sleep's ability to consolidate memories. When you are in a deep, slow-wave sleep and REM sleep, your brain is actively consolidating and converting short-term to long-term memory. Sleeping pills can disrupt these critical functions. In addition, sleeping pills are associated with a long list of side effects, including daytime drowsiness, constipation, diarrhea, dizziness, unusual dreams, problems with balance, headaches, and more.

Check with your doctor. It's possible your sleep deprivation is associated with a medical condition such as asthma, restless legs syndrome, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), chronic pain, or sleep apnea. If so, you can work with your physician to correct the problem and your sleep issues as well!

You can win the battle against sleep deprivation by making some modifications to your lifestyle. Once you do, the rewards will be remarkable in terms of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health and wellness.

Andrea Donsky is an author, registered holistic nutritionist, editor-in-chief of NaturallySavvy.com, and co-founder of The Healthy Shopper Inc. and Naturally Savvy Media. This article was first published on NaturallySavvy.com—a recipient of Healthline's Best Healthy Living Blogs for 2019.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, taking a short nap (20–30 minutes) improves alertness.



The Surprising Health Benefits of Potatoes

Potatoes are packed with complex carbohydrates and anti-cancer proteins

ANDREA DONSKY

Potatoes are among the most ancient and basic foods, topping the list as the number one vegetable crop in the United States and the world. These tubers have been cultivated for as long as 10,000 years by the Indians living in the Andean mountain regions and today are often considered comfort food by people around the world.

For all of their history and nutritional and health benefits (which I will get to in a moment), some people on low-carb diets banish potatoes from their diets because the spuds are a source of carbohydrates. While limiting simple carbs is a wise choice for nearly everyone, it's important to include complex carbohydrates in your diet on a daily basis since they are a major source of energy for the brain and body. In addition, complex carbs, unlike simple carbs, retain their nutrients, are a significant source of fiber, aid digestion, and are metabolized more slowly by the body.

Therefore, moderate consumption of potatoes is a nutritious dietary choice when

you prepare them in a healthy way. In other words, skip the deep-fried potatoes and gobs of butter, sour cream, and cheese. Instead, enjoy them with the skin, grilled, baked, or mashed with pureed veggies and herbs. Delicious!

One small baked potato with skin provides 128 calories, 3 grams protein, 0 grams fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 3 grams fiber, and 29 grams carbohydrates. As an added bonus, potatoes contain the essential amino acid lysine, which is typically not found in other complex carb foods such as grains.

Now let's dig into the health benefits of potatoes. Here are 9 great reasons to eat them:

Potatoes help reduce blood pressure. Potatoes contain at least two substances that can help lower blood pressure. One type is kukoamines, which were discovered in potatoes by a scientist at the Institute for Food Research in the United Kingdom. Another is potassium, a mineral that plays an important role in blood pressure. One small baked potato with skin provides 21 percent of your daily

value of potassium.

Potatoes help reduce arthritis pain. If you suffer from rheumatoid arthritis, one traditional recipe attested to for generations recommends taking 2 teaspoons of raw potato juice before meals to ease your pain and discomfort.



Potatoes love your heart. Potatoes are an especially good source of vitamin B6, a nutrient that is associated with reduced rates of heart

disease. Other heart-friendly nutrients in potatoes include fiber, potassium, niacin, and vitamin C. By the way, the fiber in potatoes helps reduce cholesterol, another heart-healthy advantage.

Potatoes help bones. Enjoy potatoes for their bone-building properties. Potatoes contain minerals associated with maintaining bone structure and strength, including calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, and zinc.

Potatoes have cancer-fighting agents. Researchers have found that potatoes contain lectins, a group of proteins and glycoproteins shown to have anti-cancer properties in the lab, animal studies, and human studies.

Potatoes are not fattening. Eating potatoes will not make you fat and can be part of a weight-loss plan. In a study of 86 overweight adults, the participants were assigned to one of three groups for 12 weeks: two groups re-

duced their calorie intake by 500 calories daily and ate diets that were mostly either low-glycemic index or high-glycemic-index, respectively. The third group had no calorie restrictions. All of the groups ate 5–7 servings of potatoes per week. At the end of the study, all three groups showed a modest weight loss. As the authors noted, "Potato intake did not cause weight gain." Here's a little-known tip about potatoes that can help with weight loss: When you cook a cooked potato, it produces greater levels of resistant starch, which helps your body burn 25 percent more fat!

Potatoes support nerve health. The B vitamins in potatoes are essential for maintaining a healthy nervous system and supporting the optimal function of the adrenal glands. The excellent levels of vitamin B6 (21 percent of daily value) in potatoes helps in the production of brain chemicals called neurotransmitters, which support nerve cell communication.

Potatoes promote skin health. Nearly one-quarter of your daily value of vitamin C is found in each small baked



Potatoes contain minerals associated with maintaining bone structure and strength, including calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, and zinc.

Nearly one-quarter of your daily value of vitamin C is found in each small baked potato.

potato. Vitamin C is important for collagen, the protein that gives the skin its strength and the most abundant protein in the body.

Potatoes support healthy muscles. The complex carbs in potatoes are a great way to fuel the process called glycolysis, which is the breakdown of carbs during and after exercise. The potassium in potatoes also is helpful for muscle contraction.

Conventional vs Organic Potatoes? The answer to this question is clear. If you are familiar with the Environmental Working Group's yearly report called the Dirty Dozen, you probably already know that potatoes, while not part of the dozen, are not far behind. In 2018, spuds were number 11 on the list and had the distinction of bearing more pesticides by weight than any other fruit or vegetable.

According to the USDA's Pesticide Data Program, conventionally grown potatoes host 35 different pesticides, 6 of which are known or probable carcinogens, 12 are believed to disrupt hormones, 7 are neurotoxins, and 6 are associated with reproductive or developmental toxicity. More than three-quarters of conventionally grown potatoes have a residue of chlorpropham, a honeybee killing herbicide that has caused dramatic health damage in laboratory animals.

Conventionally grown potatoes not only absorb toxins that have been sprayed above ground; they also absorb them from the soil. Potatoes are sprayed during the growing season, before they are harvested, and once again after harvest to prevent them from sprouting.

Eating potatoes will not make you fat and can be part of a weight loss plan.

Of course, any potato you cooked yourself is significantly superior to one you got at a drive-through or vending machine. Are you ready to enjoy delicious, nutritious baked, grilled, or mashed potatoes? Did I mention there are about 100 different varieties of edible potatoes from which to choose? Sounds like you have a lot of spuds to explore. Bon appetite!

Andrea Donsky, who holds a Bachelor of Commerce from McGill University, is an international TV Health Expert, Best Selling Author, Nutritionist Podcast Host, and Founder of NaturallySavvy.com—a recipient of Healthline's Best Healthy Living Blogs for 2019. This article was originally published on NaturallySavvy.com

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Calories, Energy, and Chinese Medicine

Raw food is often upheld as the pinnacle of healthy but cooked food shares more of its energy

LYNN JAFFEE

It's not uncommon to see patients in my acupuncture clinic who are struggling with poor energy. Some sleep well but wake up tired. Some wear out over the course of the day, others fluctuate during the day, and still, others are just plain exhausted from morning to night.

I ask about their energy because, in Chinese medicine, energy is the all-important ingredient in moving your body, transforming food into nutrients, protecting you from outside pathogens, and keeping you warm. Energy is all important in doing all the things you want to do.

When I ask my tired patients what they're eating, they almost always tell me that they're eating healthfully—lots of fruits and vegetables. Unfortunately, they're eating all those good foods raw, which is only aggravating their poor energy levels. How is their seemingly wonderful diet a problem?

Well, the ancient Chinese knew that while you derive your energy from the foods you eat, it also takes a certain amount of energy to digest those foods.

For years, I've been telling my patients who struggle with fatigue or digestive problems to cook their vegetables and fruits, as they're easier to digest and it takes far less energy to do so. In addition, I've advised them to avoid very cold foods, as their body has to heat the food to body temperature

before it can be properly broken down and digested. While this may sound far-fetched, food scientists are now telling us essentially the same thing.

Wait ... what? A calorie is a calorie is a calorie, right? Well, technically yes, but according to an article in Scientific American, it turns out the calorie counts you see on food labels are merely estimates. In fact, nutrition scientists are now learning that how much energy you get from your food is far more complicated than we ever thought. The actual caloric content of a particular food can vary, depending on a number of factors.

A calorie is a scientific way to measure the amount of energy available in food. A gram of fat provides about nine calories because it's easily digested and provides more energy than a gram of protein (four calories), which is harder to digest. In other words, it takes more energy to digest protein, so you give up a little energy in the process of digesting and gain fewer calories.

A gram of fiber only gives you about two

calories, because it takes even more work, or energy, to digest. A gram of carbohydrate also gives you four calories, but that said, all of these counts are just approximations.

Because heat does some of the work of digestion for us, there are more calories in cooked food than the same food that is raw.

For example, because heat does some of the work of digestion for us, there are more calories in cooked food than the same food that is raw.

One of the foundations of Chinese food therapy is that the ideal diet is different for

each person. Therefore, a person who is ill or has digestive problems would benefit from a very different diet than a healthy person with good digestion.

In Chinese medicine, foods are chosen according to their inherent warmth or coolness and their action on the body. In addition, how foods are cooked or combined also impacts how beneficial they are to your body and how much energy they provide.

The bottom line is that the calorie count in foods are not created equal. How you cook a particular food and what your body does to digest it has an impact on how much energy you'll get from it. So if you're struggling with fatigue or poor energy, there are ways to get a little more of a boost from what you're eating.

Lynn Jaffee is a licensed acupuncturist and the author of "Simple Steps: The Chinese Way to Better Health." This article was originally published on Acupuncture-TwinCities.com

In Chinese medicine, energy is the all-important ingredient in moving your body, transforming food into nutrients, protecting you from outside pathogens, and keeping you warm. Energy is all important in doing all the things you want to do.



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