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Why Taking Care of Your Own Well-Being Helps Others

Our emotional well-being can provide a healthful effect on those around us—even during the pandemic **6**



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TRUTH and TRADITION

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WHO: 5 Ways to Boost Immunity to Fight COVID-19

The WHO's director general has shared tips to boost immunity and limit the health effects of isolation

The World Health Organization's (WHO) Director-General shared five tips to look after your physical and mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. The suggestions may not only protect your health in the long-term but could also help you fight COVID-19 if you become ill.

In a media briefing held March 20, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus gave advice for individuals around the world who are "adjusting to a new reality" during various levels of quarantine imposed to slow the spread of novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

"During this difficult time, it's important to continue looking after your physical and mental health. This will not only help you in the long-term, but it will also help you fight COVID-19 if you get it," Ghebreyesus said, before offering five solid steps that virtually everyone can take to boost immunity and stay healthy not only during this pandemic but also after it ends.

1. Eat a Healthy and Nutritious Diet

This helps your immune system to function properly, Ghebreyesus noted. Indeed, whole foods are a powerful force to boost your immune function, including plenty of fruits and vegetables, which are rich in vitamins, antioxidants, and other phytochemicals.

Flavonoids, for instance, found in berries and onions, among other produce, reduce the incidence of upper respiratory tract infections, while vitamin C, found in foods like broccoli and kiwi, exerts anti-viral immune responses as well as has antioxidant, immunomodulatory, and anti-infectious effects.

Fermented foods and beverages, such as yogurt and kefir, are also beneficial. Consuming a probiotic drink has been found to reduce the incidence of influenza in children while eating yogurt fermented with *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* ssp. *bulgaricus* augmented natural killer cell activity and reduced the risk of catching a common cold among the elderly.

Specific superfoods, like turmeric and its active ingredient curcumin, garlic, and mushrooms, can further support your immune system health.

2. Limit Your Alcohol Consumption and Avoid Sugary Drinks

Excess alcohol consumption affects both innate and adaptive immunity, leading to a significant weakening of your defenses and heightening the risk of infections.

Avoiding sugary drinks—and processed sugar in general—will also benefit your immune function, while a high sugar intake is associated with increased mortality risk from all causes.

3. Don't Smoke

"Smoking can increase your risk of developing the severe disease if you become infected with COVID-19," according to Ghebreyesus. If you need help quitting smoking, there are many natural strategies that may help, many of which can easily be done while you're at home.

Exercising at moderate intensity for five minutes can temporarily reduce your desire to smoke and your tobacco withdrawal symptoms. Continued physical activity can help you to quit in the longer term, possibly by improving your mood and self-efficacy.

Fresh lime can also help to cut cravings, while acupuncture, self-massage, essential oils, (including black pepper essential oil) and mindfulness training can help with smoking cessation.

4. Exercise

WHO recommends 30 minutes of physical activity a day for adults and one hour a day for children. "If your local or national guidelines allow it, go outside for a walk, a run or a ride, and keep a safe distance from others. If you can't leave the house, find an exercise video online, dance to music, do some yoga, or walk up and down the stairs," Ghebreyesus said.



Eating a nutritious diet and getting moderate exercise are important, especially when you need your immune system in top shape.

Exercise boosts your immune system in multiple ways, including causing white blood cells, which fight disease, to circulate more rapidly, allowing them to detect illnesses sooner.

The rise in body temperature that occurs when you break a sweat during your workout could also help your body fight off infections, similar to the effects of a fever. In a review published in *Exercise and Sport Sciences Reviews*, it's further noted:

"[M]oderate intensity exercise reduces inflammation and improves the immune response to respiratory viral infections.

"We hypothesize that acute and chronic moderate exercise induces a level of stress hormones that down-regulates excessive inflammation within the respiratory tract and aids in activating innate anti-viral immunity..."

In addition to regular exercise, you'll also want to be sure you're not sitting too much. "If you're working at home, make sure you don't sit in the same position for long periods. Get up and take a 3-minute break every 30 minutes," Ghebreyesus advised.

Indeed, excess sitting is a risk factor for disease in its own right and has even been linked to an increased risk of death from all causes.

5. Look After Your Mental Health

If you're feeling excessively stressed or anxious over COVID-19, the blow this stress delivers to your immune system may increase your risk of infection. So Ghebreyesus' advice to protect your mental health is wise.

"It's normal to feel stressed, confused and scared during a crisis. Talking to people you know and trust can help. Supporting other people in your community can help you as much as it does them.

"Check in on neighbors, family, and friends. Compassion is medicine. Listen to music, read a book or play a game. And try not to read or watch too much news if it makes you anxious. Get your information from reliable sources once or twice a day," he said.

These tips are especially pertinent during a pandemic, but remember that supporting your immune health is something that can be done year-round. The more you lead a healthy lifestyle, the better prepared your body will be—on a physical, mental and emotional level—to deal with external stressors or pathogens.

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How to Get Healthy According to 3 Traditions

Western medicine, Chinese medicine, and Qigong offer unique pathways to heal illness

JOCELYN NEO

How often do you fall sick, catch a cold, or come down with a fever? And how do you usually recover from it? Do you just wait it out, or head to a doctor or a pharmacy? Do you seek herbal remedies of Chinese medicine? Or is there an alternative unconventional approach that brings you back to peak health?

Let's have a quick look at three common healing methods available in the world today, including an alternative approach practiced by over 100 million people.

Western Medicine

This is the method we are most familiar with, so no need to explain it in great detail. For most people in our society today, when they fall ill they visit a doctor of Western medicine or a pharmacy for prescribed pills that they take until they recover. These pills generally attack the disease or disease systems directly and largely bypass the body's own disease fighting systems. If you have a fever, the pills will suppress the body's fever response, which is actually an immune response used to burn out pathogens but can become dangerous if the body overheats in the process of fighting the disease. Western medicine has a set of clinical theories and treatment methods that include pills, surgery, injections, radiation therapy, etc.

Western medicine focuses on direct methods like "fix the head when the head hurts" and "fix the foot when the foot aches." For example, radiation therapy might be given to someone undergoing cancer treatment, whilst a fever would require antipyretics. On the other hand, a tumor can be removed via an operation.

Traditional Chinese Medicine

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) employs a holistic approach to treating an illness instead of solely relying on medication. It tries to work with the body's existing systems, to strengthen them to fight the disease or it directs the patient in how to remove the root cause of the disease.

In TCM, the human body is viewed as an integrated system, and physicians use the different theories of yin and yang, the Five Elements theory, and the Meridian system

to make a diagnosis. In addition, there is also an emphasis on living in harmony with the environment and the relationship between mind and body. It also focuses on how emotions and environmental factors can affect human health.

Thus, when a doctor of Western medicine deduces that a cold was due to virus infection, a doctor of TCM, on the contrary, would conclude that it was a result of the imbalance of yin and yang caused by blocked energy channels. This may be caused by emotional upheaval, lack of rest, and a poor diet.

"TCM is an advanced medical/healing system that has a very close relationship with Daoism, including a strong focus on prevention and preservation," said Christina Xu of PreserveHealth.com.au, a website that specializes in TCM.

"This is very different from western medicine, which is more focused on curing illness after it develops. Chinese medicine aims to maintain and optimize health and wellbeing and is a preventative form of medicine," she further added.

Dr. Jingduan Yang, an MD who is also an expert in Chinese medicine and acupuncture, agrees. Dr. Yang once mentioned in an interview, which was published in *CBS Health Watch* in 2000, that if a patient were to seek him out for treatment in Western medicine, he would charge the patient US\$200, whereas he would only charge US\$100 if a patient asks for other traditional medicine.

Citing the reason for the price variation, Dr. Yang said, "The patient will be shouldering half the responsibility for their own wellness by watching their diet and making prescribed changes to their lifestyle in order to heal."

Dr. Yang is also the founder of Yang Institute of Integrative Medicine, Tao Clinic of Acupuncture, and the American Institute of Clinical Acupuncture.

Qigong

Apart from Western and Chinese medicine, there are now many popular yet unconventional ways that people choose to get relief from their ailments, especially when neither of the conventional methods work. One of them is "Qigong," is a modern term that most people recognize in regards to slow-moving exercises like Tai Qi. In fact, the term actually means self-



Traditional Chinese medicine employs a holistic approach to treating illness instead of solely relying on medication.

improvement cultivation practice.

Cultivation practices, especially ancient Chinese practices, were largely rooted in the religions of Buddhism and Daoism. Apart from doing the exercises to keep fit, these practices entail the refinement of mind and spirit. Dr. Yang mentioned that he would charge US\$100 if someone seeks him out for TCM treatment. However, he promised to provide free services for those who want to learn cultivation practice—to be more precise, Falun Gong. The reason?

The TCM expert said it's because in this situation "the patient has assumed complete responsibility for his or her own health and is on the road to wellness." But how exactly does a cultivation practice, like Falun Gong, help a person gain physical wellness?

Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, was introduced to the public in China in 1992. Based on the principles of Truthfulness, Compassion, and Forbearance, this ancient mind-body practice consists of five gentle moving exercises.

At the root of Falun Gong's healing power is its ability to help a person change themselves, to help them change their mental state to be more calm, and exercise self-restraint to refrain from damaging thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. This can allow them to stop holding resentments or resorting to unhealthy comfort foods when they feel anxious. There are deeper aspects as well.

Within five years since its introduction in China, the number of people practicing it skyrocketed to at least 70 million people, according to a state-run survey in China. The reason was its healing power, both spiritual and physical. Today, Falun Gong is practiced by over 100 million people from all over the world.

In September 1998, the Chinese State Sports Bureau conducted a survey on 12,553 Falun Gong practitioners and found that the illness healing rate was 77.5 percent, while another 20.4 percent said that their overall health had improved. In another survey conducted in over five districts in Beijing on 14,199 practitioners, the results showed 80.3 percent of people were in better physical shape after taking up the practice, and 96.5 percent said they saw an improvement in their mental state.

"The medical healing power produced by Falun Gong [the exercises of Falun Dafa] is hard to understand because it belongs to another paradigm," Dr. Yang said, but shared that "the cultivation of mind and spirit that Falun Dafa teaches is consistent with the modern understanding of health."

Milan Freitag, a clinical psychologist, is not a practitioner of Falun Gong; however, he told *CBS Health Watch* that integrating mind, body, and spirit into healing is becoming a "powerful force."

"There is an emerging realization that it is not all about looking at the liver in isolation," he said. "You have to look at the whole person: exercise, meditation, social support system, and mindful living."

Having done research on the connection between the mind and body, and its relation to health, Freitag, a Ph.D. graduate, gave an example of how one's mind can affect health. "Cumulative stress decreases the activity of the immune system and eventually takes a toll on our health," Freitag said.

Zhi Ping Kolouch, a Falun Gong practitioner who is also an acupuncturist, added on to Freitag's illustration with a simplified example: "If a person is miserable inside their heart, then they will get sick."



Falun Gong has five sets of gentle exercises, which includes a sitting meditation, and focuses on the cultivation of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance.



WHY TAKING CARE OF YOUR OWN

Well-Being

HELPS OTHERS

Our emotional well-being can provide a healthful effect on those around us—even during the pandemic

JILL SUTTIE

Many of us are stressed and worried, wondering what this global pandemic means for our friends, families, and communities. The pursuit of happiness is likely the furthest thing from people's minds.

Yet, as Buddhist monk and psychologist Jack Kornfield once said in an interview, cultivating a joyful spirit can help not only us, but the people around us—especially when things are hard. “Our gift to the world comes as much through our being and presence, our smile and touch, our sense of possibility and the mystery of human life, as it does in the specifics of what we do,” he said.

It's a lovely sentiment, and it also seems to be supported by science. Study after study shows that well-being—either being in a positive mood or recognizing that you have a good life—benefits those in our social sphere, whether we're talking about our families, workplaces, schools, or society at large. When we're happy, we're better relationship partners, more kind and helpful in our communities, and more productive in our workplaces—all of which may be useful during this time of crisis.

In other words, our emotional state affects others, too. Here are some of the ways that pursuing our well-being might make a positive difference in other people's lives.

Our Well-Being Is Contagious

Researchers Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler have found that, in social networks, happiness can be contagious up to three degrees of separation from its initial source (you!). That means that when you are happy, the people you are connected to tend to be happier, as are the friends of those

friends and the friends of your friends' friends—like, for example, your sister's boss's running buddy. Happiness contagion can also happen in schools. One study found that a student's individual well-being and happiness at the end of the school year partly depended on how happy and satisfied with life their classmates were earlier in the year. And it can happen at home in families and in workplaces, too.

Why would that be? It turns out that our brains are pretty attuned to the emotions of those around us. Through a complex neural system sometimes referred to as “mirror neurons,” we experience the feelings of others inside ourselves. It's why when we smile, it can make others smile, and when we laugh, it tickles other people's funny bones. As long as we are in some kind of contact with people—physically or even online—our good feelings tend to spread to them.

Our Well-Being Helps Us Bond

Even when we're isolated, good relationships are just as important as ever—of-fering the love, care, and connection we need for these difficult times. And taking care of our well-being can help us maintain those relationships in a myriad of ways—and help keep anger and tension at bay.

In one experiment, researchers found that inducing happiness in individual romantic partners by showing them happy imagery made them feel better about their relationship. In another experiment, people expressing greater positive feelings tended to have more satisfying, less contentious marital discussions around conflicts, which could help couples stay together longer.

In a large review of these kinds of studies, authors Shannon Moore, Ed Diener,

and Kenneth Tan suggested several possible ways that good feelings could contribute to relationship building, in both the short term and the long term. Among them are:

- Happy people are more likely to engage with others and be more social.
- When meeting new people, happier people tend to have more substantial interactions and feel a greater sense of commonality than less happy people.
- Happy people are less likely to have conflicts with others and are better at negotiating differences.
- Happy people may be more kind and helpful toward others.
- Other people find it rewarding to be with happy people.

This suggests that there is some kind of reciprocal relationship between well-being and social bonds, which strengthens both. That's not only good for you, but it's also good for each person you're connected to.

Our Well-Being Improves Others' Health

It's true that happiness seems to have positive effects on your health and longevity. Studies have found that happier people tend to have stronger immunity, maintain their weight better, and sleep better—which all, in turn, can lead to better health.

But could our well-being affect the health of those around us, too? At least some research suggests it does.

When we're happy, we're better relationship partners, more kind and helpful in our communities, and more productive in our workplaces—all of which may be useful during this time of crisis.

Studies have found that when we're happier, our spouses have better health and greater longevity, though the exact reasons for that are unclear. It could be that happier spouses have more energy for helping and supporting sick partners, as researcher Olga Stavrova speculates. But it could also be that a cheerful spouse makes their partner feel happier or less stressed, and that's what indirectly makes them healthier.

Our Well-Being Helps Us Engage

We all need to pitch in right now and do the right thing to protect society at large. Fortunately, taking care of our own well-being may give us the emotional resources to help those around us deal with struggles like the coronavirus.

As one study found, happier people are more likely to care about the problems of the world and to take action to alleviate suffering—perhaps because they have more personal agency and energy to do so. Another study in Germany found that happier people tended to be more involved citizens—meaning, they voted, volunteered, and participated in community activities more than less happy people—possibly because they were optimistic and trusted others more. Yet another study in Latin America found that happier people tended to vote more, and that happiness was likely the cause—not the effect—of voting.

Of course, saying that your well-being helps others isn't meant to pressure you to be happy all the time, which is pretty much impossible even in more normal times. It's good to remember that all emotions can be useful under certain circumstances, including negative ones, such as when fear keeps us from taking unnecessary risks or sadness helps signal to others that we need comfort. Nor does it mean that we should simply put on a happy face when we don't feel happy. Accepting our negative emotions is actually useful for our well-being, while repressing them generally isn't.

But these findings do suggest that taking care of our well-being need not be entirely a selfish pursuit, even now. We can all try to do so as individuals—by practicing keys to more sustained well-being, like gratitude, mindfulness, awe, and compassion—and try to build societies that promote wellness. And you can pretty much bet that by nurturing our well-being, we will be helping those around us to cope better with the coronavirus, contributing to a better world for all.

Jill Suttie, Psy.D., is Greater Good's book review editor and a frequent contributor to the magazine. This article was originally published by the Greater Good online magazine.

Even when we're isolated, good relationships are just as important as ever.

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Simple Things You Can Do Right Now for Better Health

If you wake up with no energy and feel awful, then it's time for some easy changes

LYNN JAFFEE

Sometimes life gets in the way of taking care of your health. You get lazy or busy or distracted. One day, you wake up and realize you have no energy, carry too many extra pounds, and feel awful. You know you have to get it together and think about revamping your diet or starting that new, incredible exercise regimen. But it all feels so overwhelming.

That can all seem doubly true amid a pandemic that raises new difficulties in fixing your lifestyle or reaching out to people you need for moral or other support. And yet, it is especially during this kind of threat to our health that it becomes even more essential to tend to our bodies and minds.

Isn't there something easy that you can do? The good news is that there is, and research has documented that small changes make a difference in the state of your health. So here are some simple tweaks that you can do that can have an immediate impact.

1) GET MORE SLEEP. Your body repairs and rejuvenates itself while you're sleeping. If you're not getting a good 7–8 hours a night, you are likely operating at a sleep deficit. Go to bed a little earlier and turn off all your screens and devices at least an hour before turning in. And try to sleep in a cool, dark room.

2) GO OUTDOORS. Spending time outside in wooded or natural settings affects your health in positive ways. Research has documented that spending time in the woods can lower blood pressure, decrease stress and the stress hormone cortisol, and boost immunity. In a nutshell, walking in the woods is calming and good for your health.

3) ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR STRESS. Unrelenting stress can be a silent killer because it hurts almost every system in your body—from sleep to digestion to immunity. I see many patients who are experiencing incredible levels of stress, mostly because they believe they have no control over difficult situations. The reality is that, in most cases, they do have some control or choice—whether it is to make a change or to choose to look at the circumstances from another perspective. Whatever it takes, dealing with your stress is one of the most important things you can do for yourself.

4) TAKE A WALK. If there ever existed such a thing as the fountain of youth, physical activity might just be it. According to Chinese medicine, you need enough energy to power your body's systems, and that energy has to flow. Moving your body moves your energy, clears your mind, strengthens your heart and lungs, lubricates your joints, boosts your immunity, and helps to maintain your memory. If you live in a dense urban area, be mindful of social distancing.

5) TAKE SOME TIME FOR YOURSELF. So many of the people I see are overwhelmed by their jobs, or doing things for others without a break. Months can go by without them having done anything that they really enjoy. Carve out some time to do the things that feed your soul. Whether it's reading a good book, working on a creative project, or spending time with someone you really enjoy, taking time for yourself isn't selfish. Think of it as recharging your batteries.

6) PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR DIGESTION. In Chinese medicine, you get your energy from the air you breathe and the food you eat. If your digestion is funky, your energy will suffer. If you have symptoms such as heartburn, stomachaches, gas, bloating, constipation, or loose stool, your digestion needs help. My advice is to visit a Chinese medicine practitioner, who can use acupuncture, herbal treatments, and dietary therapy to set things to rights.

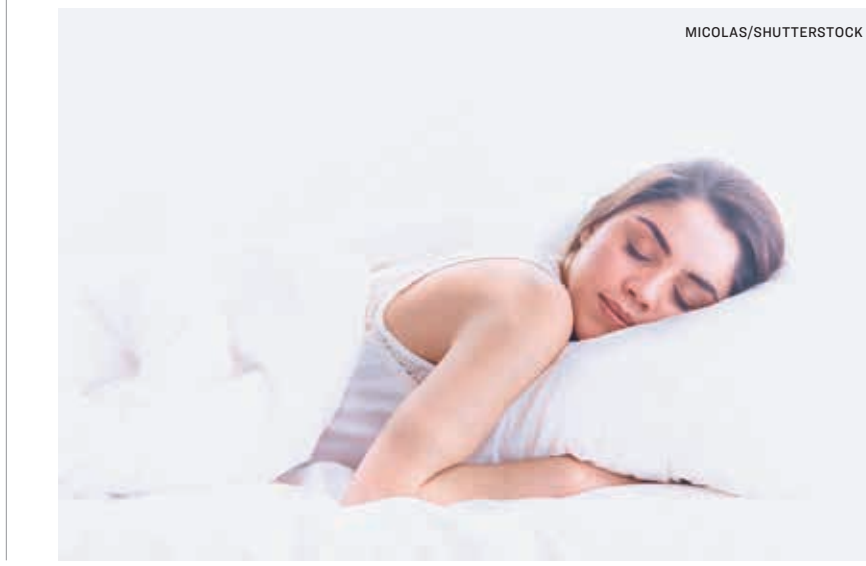
7) EAT MORE PLANT-BASED FOODS. Choosing the right foods can feel like a formidable task, in light of all the



Once the quarantine lifts, make sure you get out and enjoy physical activity with friends.

Spending time in the woods can lower blood pressure, decrease stress and the stress hormone cortisol, and boost immunity.

Your body repairs and rejuvenates itself while you're sleeping.



theories that swarm the media about what you should eat. Here's a simple guideline: eat more plant-based foods, and according to Chinese medicine, eat them cooked. It takes a lot of energy to digest raw vegetables and fruits, so when you can, cook them in soups, stews, stir-fried dishes, and compotes. They're much easier to digest and will give you more energy.

8) CHOOSE SIMPLE, WHOLESOME FOODS. Here's one more on choosing what to eat: Would your grandma have recognized it as food? If not, leave it at the grocery store or drive-thru window. If Granny would have cooked with it, you're probably good to go. (Thank you, Michael Pollen, author of “Food Rules,” for this one.) Simply put, we're not meant to eat foods that have been altered to last years on the shelf or filled with ingredients that aren't really food.

9) SIT UP STRAIGHT. Our collective posture has changed over the past few decades as we began to hunch over computers and cell phones. As a result, I have seen a dramatic increase in the number of patients suffering from neck and shoulder pain. In many cases, the

culprit is shortened pectoral muscles in front of the shoulder and overwhelmed rotator cuff muscles, resulting from too much time spent in a hunched position. If your day is spent in front of a screen, a simple stretch you can do to open up your chest and relax your shoulders is to lie down on the floor and move your arms as if you were making a snow angel.

10) LEARN TO LET GO. Being overwhelmed with too many things to do and not enough time to get them done is very stressful, demanding, and demoralizing. Acknowledge that you will never get everything done, figure out what tasks are low priority, and just let them go.

11) SPEND MORE TIME WITH PEOPLE YOU LOVE. This one is simple and easy and feels good. Nurturing social connections is good for your health and can actually improve your longevity. You may have exactly this time now to reconnect with immediate family, or perhaps reach out through a phone call or—even better—through a video chat. Don't let this slide when the call for self-isolation lifts. In fact, make it happen in the real world with face-to-face meetups.

12) PLAY MORE. In Chinese medicine, overworking is considered to be a major cause of illness. Long hours with your nose to the grindstone may make you a stellar and productive member of your company or community, but it can destroy your health. Make some time for the fun stuff and file it under the heading of “Improving My Health.”

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

MINDSET MATTERS

Tips for Looking After Your Mental Health

Advice on how best to cope with your fears and worries during these difficult times

SETH RESNICK

As a psychiatrist, my patients teach me new things as often as I teach them. While our nation continues to grapple with the growing concerns over COVID-19, I want to share helpful advice on how best to cope with your fears and worries during these difficult times.

In general, you should do your best to find as much balance as you can especially when everything seems so out of sorts. Health and government officials continue to provide updates with the latest information, but you may still feel uncertain about the impact of this contagious illness. It's okay to be worried. But there are ways to make sure you are prioritizing your mental and physical wellbeing while still adhering to recommended guidelines

Take Action on What You Can and Accepting What You Can't

It's natural to feel anxious right now. Restaurants, schools, and many businesses are closed, and officials are advising the public to stay indoors. Your everyday routine has been turned upside down, and everyone is having to adjust.

This is understandably difficult.

But it's important to focus on the things you can control: follow the recommended guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding personal hygiene, practice social distancing, and stay in touch with your family, friends, and neighbors.

Adhering to guidelines is the part you do have control over, and will likely reduce your risk substantially. Knowing that you are keeping yourself and your close contacts safe and healthy, plus doing your part

to limit the spread in your community, can go a long way in helping to manage and reduce your anxiety.

Reduce Screen Time and Avoid Information Overload

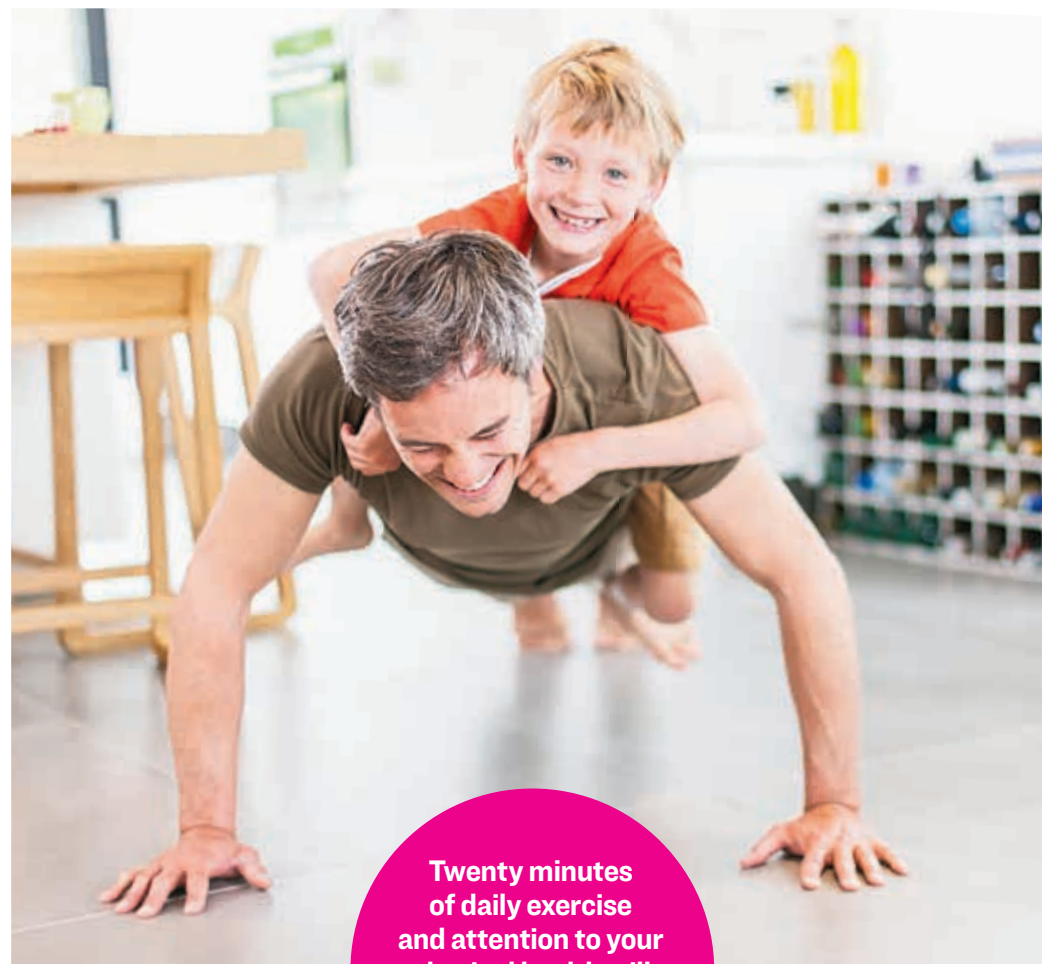
Getting the latest information on COVID-19 from trusted health officials is helpful, but watching television and following social media all day long isn't always productive or healthy. Notice how your body responds when exposed to your phone, tablet or TV screen for an extended period of time. Does your heart rate increase? Does your breathing pattern change? Adding aggravating factors to already stressful circumstances can be harmful to your overall health.

If you notice additional screen time is increasing your anxiety levels, it's important to take measured steps to address it. Turning off your television for a few hours each day or reducing the number of social media notifications you receive can help. It is useful to identify just one or a few trusted resources that will help you to keep abreast of the situation without becoming overloaded with information.

If you are still feeling overwhelmed, I recommend finding a free exercise class online or dedicating time each day to meditate and clear your mind. This will help improve your mental health and can have a positive effect on your physical well-being. Twenty minutes a day of exercise and attention to your physical health, in turn, will have positive effects on your mental well-being and how you feel overall.

Keep in Touch Without Touching

The CDC has recommended practicing social distancing to reduce the risk of exposure and spreading COVID-19. For many, this means spending a significant



Twenty minutes of daily exercise and attention to your physical health will nurture your mental well-being and how you feel overall.

amount of time indoors, which can feel isolating and confining. As a psychiatrist, I understand how important social interaction is for our mental health, and while social distancing can sound like confinement, it doesn't have to be that way.

Do you have lunch regularly with your co-workers, but are now working remotely? Use video chat to keep your lunch date and stay engaged. Did you have to cancel a dinner with a close friend? Set a time to call your friend to catch up while you both eat dinner.

It is critical to adhere to social distancing, but you can still keep in touch with family, friends, and co-workers.

As You Plan Your Daily Life Feel Free to Look Ahead

While it's uncertain when things will return to normal, we do know the cautionary guidelines will not be in place forever. Looking ahead to some time in the weeks and months ahead past this

crisis can boost your overall mood.

Remember, it's normal to worry or feel anxious in times like these—but remember to focus on the things you can control and ensure you are coping in a positive, healthy way. We are all in this together and there are many resources and support structures in place to help you throughout this challenging period.

Dr. Seth Resnick is the founding chair of the new psychiatry and behavioral health department at AdvantageCare Physicians. Dr. Resnick is board certified and maintains a clinical practice and expertise in general psychiatry, as well as pain medicine, palliative medicine, and addiction medicine. He attended Mount Sinai School of Medicine and is a clinical assistant professor in the department of psychiatry at New York University School of Medicine. He is a distinguished fellow of the American Psychiatric Association.

It's OK to Grieve

COVID-19 has upended our world



It's important to acknowledge and grieve lost routines, social connections, and our sense of security.

Giving voice to our losses is important to understanding them—and then moving past them

STEPHANIE O'NEILL

On weekday evenings, sisters Lesley Laine and Lisa Ingle stage online happy hours from the Southern California home they share. It's something they've been enjoying with local and faraway friends during this period of social distancing and self-isolation.

On a recent evening, I shared a toast

with them.

We laughed and had fun during our half-hour FaceTime meetup. But unlike our pre-pandemic visits, we now worried out loud about a lot of things—like our millennial-aged kids, their health and jobs. And what about the fragile elders, the economy? Will life ever return to “normal”?

“It feels like a free fall,” said Francis Weller, a Santa Rosa, California, psy-

chotherapist. “What we once held as solid is no longer something we can rely upon.”

The coronavirus pandemic sweeping the globe has left many anxious about life-and-death issues, and others struggling with a host of less obvious, existential losses as they heed stay-home warnings and wonder how bad all this will get.

To weather these uncertain times, it's important to acknowledge and grieve lost routines, social connections, family structures, and our sense of security—and then create new ways to move forward—interfaith chaplain and trauma counselor Terri Daniel says.

“We need to recognize that mixed in with all the feelings we're having of anger, disappointment, perhaps

rage, blame, and powerlessness, is grief,” said Daniel, who works with the dying and bereaved.

Left unrecognized and unattended, grief can hurt “every aspect of our being—physically, cognitively, emotionally, spiritually,” said Sonya Lott, a Philadelphia psychologist specializing in grief counseling.

Yet with our national focus on the new coronavirus, as it spreads and brings chaos, these underlying or secondary losses may escape us. People who are physically well may not feel entitled to their emotional upset over the disruption of normal life. Yet, Lott argues, it's important to honor our own losses even if those losses seem small compared with others.

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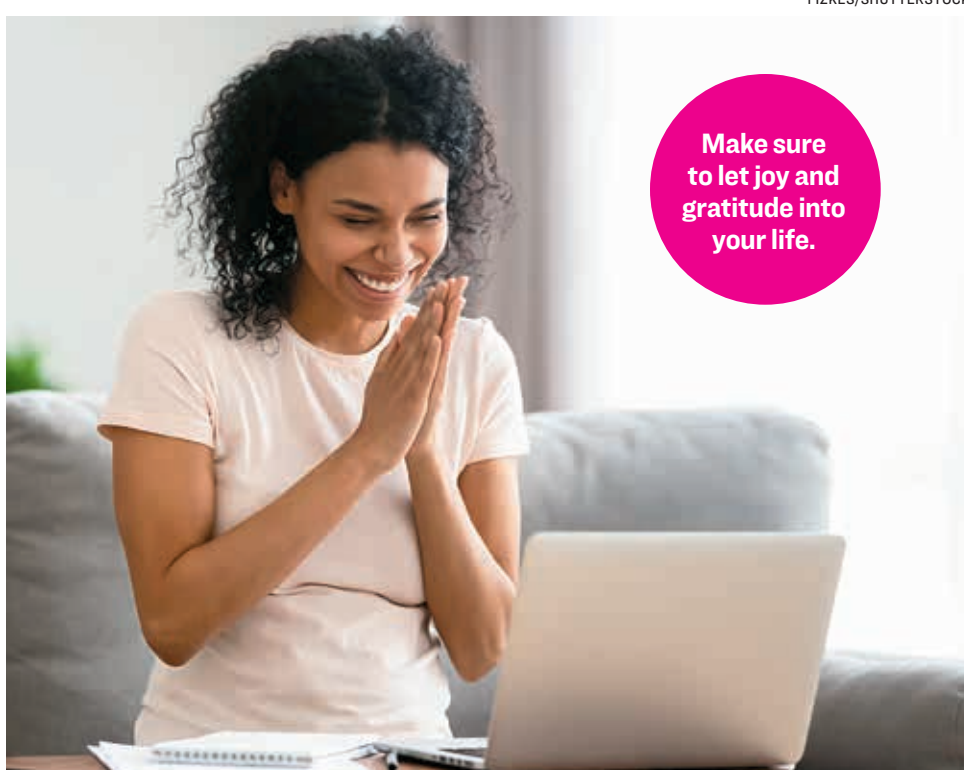
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It's OK to Grieve

COVID-19 has upended our world

Continued from Page 9

"We can't heal what we don't have an awareness of," Lott said.

Recognize Our Losses

Whether we've named them or not, these are some of the community-wide losses many of us are grieving. Consider how you feel when you think of these.

Social connections. Perhaps the most impactful of the immediate losses as we hunker down at home is separation from close friends and family.

"Children aren't able to play together. There's no in-person social engagement, no hugging, no touching—which is disruptive to our emotional well-being," Daniel said.

Separation from our colleagues and office mates also creates a significant loss.

"Our work environment is like a second family. Even if we don't love all the people we work with, we still depend on each other," Lott said.

Habits and habitat. With the world outside our homes no longer safe to inhabit the way we once did, Daniel said, we've lost our "habits and habitats." We can no longer engage in our usual routines and rituals. And no matter how mundane they may have seemed—whether grabbing a morning coffee at the local cafe, driving to work, or picking up the kids from school—routines help define your sense of self in the world.

Losing them, Daniel says, "shocks your system."

Assumptions and security. We go to sleep assuming that we'll wake up the next morning, "that the sun will be there, and your friends will all be alive, and you'll be healthy," Weller said. But the spread of the coronavirus has shaken nearly every assumption we once counted on.

"And so we're losing our sense of safety in the world and our assumptions about ourselves," he said.

Trust in our systems. When government leaders, government agencies, medical systems, religious bodies, the stock market, and corporations fail to meet public expectations, citizens can feel betrayed and emotionally unmoored.

"We are all grieving this loss," Daniel said.

Sympathy for others' losses. Even if you're not directly affected by a particular loss, you may feel the grief of others, including that of displaced workers, of health care workers on the front lines, of people barred from visiting older relatives in nursing homes, of those who have already lost friends and family to the virus, and of those who will.

Ways to Honor Your Grief

Once you identify the losses you're feel-

ing, look for ways to honor the grief surrounding you, grief experts urge.

Bear witness and communicate. Sharing our stories is an essential step, Daniel said.

"If you can't talk about what's happened to you and you can't share it, you can't really start working on it," she said. "So communicate with your friends and family about your experience."

It can be as simple as picking up the phone and calling a friend or family member, Weller said. He suggests simply asking for and offering a space in which to share your feelings, without either of you offering advice or trying to fix anything for the other.

"Grief is not a problem to be solved," he said. "It's a presence in the psyche awaiting, witnessing."

For those with robust social networks, Daniel suggests gathering a group of friends virtually to share these losses together. Using apps such as Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, or Facebook Live, virtual meetings are easy to set up daily or weekly.

Write, create, express. Whether you're an extrovert or introvert, keeping a written or recorded journal of these days offers another way to express, to identify, and to acknowledge loss and grief.

And then there's art therapy, which can be especially helpful for children unable to express themselves well with words, and also for teens and even many adults.

"Make a sculpture, or draw a picture," said Daniel.

Meditate. Regular meditation or just taking time to slow down and take several deep, calming breaths throughout the day also works to lower stress—and is available to everyone, Lott said. For beginners who want guidance, she suggests downloading a meditation app onto your smartphone or computer.

Be open to joy. And finally, Lott urges, make sure to let joy and gratitude into your life during these challenging times. Whether it's a virtual happy hour, tea time, or dance party, reach out to others, she said.

"If we can find gratitude in the creative ways that we connect with each other and help somebody," she said, "then we can hold our grief better and move through it with less difficulty and more grace."

This story was produced in partnership with NPR and Kaiser Health News. Stephanie O'Neill is the recipient of a journalism fellowship at the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado-Boulder, supported by Direct Relief. Kaiser Health News is a national health policy news service. It is an editorially independent program of the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, which is not affiliated with Kaiser Permanente.

MINDSET MATTERS

6 Ways to Turn Anxiety Into Healthy Mental Habits

COVID-19 has left many of us unsettled—and that presents an opportunity

DUSANA DORJEE

Given the constant stream of negative news about the novel coronavirus pandemic, it's easy to feel anxious and uncertain. Anxiety is an understandable reaction, since coronavirus has made many of us change our daily routines, and threatens our sense of safety. It can be difficult to let go of these thoughts and feelings, but we can also try to use this anxiety to develop habits that can protect our mental health.

Our brain has the capacity to change and "rewire" in response to our experiences. We call this capacity "neural plasticity." If we have recurrent, anxious thoughts, we are establishing neural connections that make thinking anxious thoughts easier for us the next time we do so.

But we can also use anxious thoughts as triggers for engaging in activities and thoughts that help manage and reduce anxiety. In this way, we can transform anxiety into a building block for habits that support our well-being when we face challenging circumstances.

So the next time you notice anxious thoughts racing through your mind or feel your shoulders tensing up from worry, try one of these activities to turn your anxiety into a prompt for better mental habit.

1. Practice Self-Care

When you feel anxious or overwhelmed, the simplest thing you can do is to just take three slow, deep breaths to calm down. Count slowly to four as you breathe in and then count slowly to five as you breathe out.

This simple exercise helps increase activation in the parasympathetic nervous system, which is associated with resting and digesting. It also reduces the activity of the sympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for our fight-or-flight response and is linked to anxiety.

Other self-care options include listening to your favorite upbeat song or a joyous some brief physical exercise at home. These can help improve your mental health and reduce anxiety.

2. Do Something Relaxing

After waking up and just before you go to sleep, try to do things that are relaxing and uplifting. What you do early in the morning sets the mood for the day. If you notice having anxious thoughts soon after waking, try to think about something positive if you can. Or, do a few mindful stretches and focus on the sensations in your body.

In the evening, try to avoid reading news or comments on social media about the virus spread. Negative emotions experienced in the eve-

Some people might react to anxiety with hoarding behaviors. Others respond to anxiety with compassion.

ning impact sleep quality. Listening to a calming podcast, practicing meditation, or using other relaxation techniques might help calm anxiety before bed.

3. Notice the Small Things

Reading the latest news about COVID-19 and planning all the changes to your work, child care, or travel can lead to a nearly constant stream of stressful or anxious thoughts. When you notice the worry building up, try to look or listen to the things around you.

Notice flowers in your garden, clouds in the sky, or the sound of a bird outside. Take a couple of minutes just to see or listen. This simple mindfulness practice not only gives your busy mind a bit of a break, but it also may reduce activity in the midline structures of the prefrontal cortex of the brain involved in anxious rumination. As a result, you may find that you start feeling less anxious.

4. Do Something to Help

Some people might react to anxiety with hoarding behaviors like the panic-buying and stockpiling of groceries in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Others respond to anxiety with compassion, through prosocial behaviors such as helping or sharing. Prosocial behavior

can protect our well-being.

When feeling anxious, think about doing something positive. Maybe this is just dropping an email to your colleague or friend and asking how they're doing. Or perhaps you can call older relatives so that they have somebody to talk to for 10 minutes. There are many other ways to help—the main one is staying at home so that you (and others) don't catch or spread the virus.

5. Put Things Into Perspective

Our mind has a built-in negativity bias making us think of and remember negative events better than positive ones. This helps us remember not to eat certain foods that made us ill in the past but also means that we notice and remember negative events more clearly than positive events.

Knowing this, when you feel anxious try to make a conscious effort to overcome the negativity bias. This might mean changing your perspective and trying to remind yourself of the many positive things that have happened because of coronavirus—such as examples of kindness, or reductions in pollution. Research shows that increased hope strongly predicts decreases in anxiety.

6. Meditate or Pray

More than 80 percent of adults in the



Keeping Your Mind Healthy During Social Distancing

DEVON ANDRE

So, you're staying inside and isolated to protect yourself from COVID-19. And while you're reducing your risk for contracting the virus, you could be boosting the risk for other illnesses.

Self-isolation is a trade-off. Staying in and limiting contact with others for the foreseeable future can offer self-protection, protection for loved ones, and for society at large. But it also leaves you vulnerable to loneliness.

Humans are social creatures, after all.

Loneliness can affect your memory, heart health, and more. A recent report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineer-

ing, and Medicine suggests that social isolation is linked to a 50 percent increased risk for dementia, a 29 percent higher risk for heart disease, and a 32 percent higher stroke risk.

There is even data to suggest that loneliness's influence on longevity could be equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes per day. It may even exceed the risks associated with obesity, heavy drinking, and sedentary living.

When all that is considered, social isolation may protect you from COVID 19, but it can also leave you susceptible to other health risks. So, how can you self-isolate and practice responsible citizenry without getting lonely?

Quite simply, call your friends.

Social isolation may protect you from COVID 19, but it can also leave you susceptible to other health risks.

Don't text or email them. Use the phone so you can hear their voice, and they yours, so you can make a personal connection. Video-calling or conferencing among friends and social groups helps you feel connected and protects against the health risks of loneliness.

When chatting with friends, even if it's for as little as five minutes, try to fully engage. Avoid trying to multitask, and just sit down for a good attentive chat. That way, all the parties involved will get more out of it. Another way to reduce the impact of loneliness is to do something productive. If you know your neighbor down the street might be lonely or has a hard time moving around, find out how you can help.

Aside from helping them, it can

United States identify as spiritual or religious. Spirituality and religiousness have been associated with better well-being, particularly because they give us a sense of purpose and meaning in life. Having a sense of purpose and meaning can also protect us against anxiety.

You can use your feelings of anxiety as a reminder to meditate or say a short prayer. Even brief regular meditations may reduce anxiety levels.

Of course, different activities might work better for different people. So the next time you feel anxious, list a couple of activities that you know will help calm you down. Then try to do these things the next time you feel anxious to eventually turn your negative thoughts and feelings into habits that support your mental health.

We can use anxious thoughts as triggers to engage healthy activities and thoughts.

In this way, you will be creating new connections in the brain that will associate anxiety with something positive instead of an endless spiral of negative thoughts and feelings. With practice, you may find that anxiety you may have in response to the negative headlines becomes less threatening and easier to let go of.

Dusana Dorjee is a lecturer of psychology in the Education Research Centre at the Department of Education at the University of York in England. This article was first published on The Conversation.

BOBEX 73/SHUTTERSTOCK

Devon Andre holds a bachelor's degree in forensic science from the University of Windsor in Canada and a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Pittsburgh. Andre is a journalist for BelMarra-Health, which first published this article.

FOOD AS MEDICINE

FOODS YOU CAN EAT TO CONTROL

High Blood Pressure

Pills are often a first-line of defense against hypertension, but food offers a lasting cure

These foods are tasty and easy to incorporate into your diet. Not only will they help lower your blood pressure, they will fuel your day with healthy energy and necessary nutrients.

LISA ROTH COLLINS

Controlling blood pressure is a critical issue for many adults. Having levels that are higher or lower than normal can bring serious consequences. The blood pressure reading that comes to our mind should be 120/80. But, what does this mean?

Blood pressure refers to the strength of the blood in your veins when pumped by your heart, 120 mmHg refers to the strength recorded when the heart beats and 80 mmHg to the strength recorded when the heart relaxes before the next beat. A doctor should immediately check anything below or over those numbers.

Even though having low blood pressure is also dangerous for our health, it is more common to find people suffering from hypertension, high blood pressure.

These are some foods you can try to lower your blood pressure levels if the doctor has already told you to take care of it:

Beetroot

Beetroot contains a nutrient called dietary nitrate that your body converts into nitric oxide, which your body can then use to lower your blood pressure.

It works by relaxing and expanding the blood vessels so there is more space for the fluids to go through your body.

Cashews and Almonds

Just like bananas, cashews and almonds are an excellent way to fight high blood pressure levels because of the potassium they contain. Try to eat them without salt because salt causes the exact opposite result you are looking for. They can be added to yogurt, cereal, trail mix, or even rice and meat plates.

Kale

Most of the time green means healthy. Leafy vegetables are full of vitamins such as A, C, and K. They also contain fiber and are low in calories, which make them an incredible part of your diet. The magnesium and potassium in kale are responsible for its power to lower your blood pressure levels. Two cups of kale twice a week will give you enough nutrients to fight hypertension.

Garlic

Many people adore garlic, regardless of

Cashews and almonds are an excellent way to fight high blood pressure levels.

the terrible breath you may get afterward. Some others can't stand the smell and prefer to avoid it at all costs. What this second group of people may not be aware of is garlic's ability to help them avoid high blood pressure. What makes garlic such a great option? It acts twice in your system. First, it relaxes the blood vessels so more fluid can go through, and second, it makes blood more liquid so that it flows through the veins more easily.

Fish Oil

Fish oil has been linked to preventing heart diseases for a very long time. Its benefits have made fish oil an important part of many families' preventative and curative health care. To have the correct intake of oil, you have to consume fatty cold-water fish like salmon, mackerel, herring, sardines, lake trout, and tuna. If you don't like fish, there are always omega-3 supplements that can help you lower your blood pressure.

Green Coffee and Green Tea

Green coffee and black coffee differ because of the roasting process, there-



fore their effects on the body also differ. Green coffee is rich in chlorogenic acid, which is a type of polyphenol and has been proven to have antihypertensive effects. Black coffee, on the other hand, seems to increase blood pressure temporarily due to caffeine. However, people who consume black coffee regularly develop a resistance to caffeine that can help lower their blood pressure levels.

Fruit Juice

The benefits and properties of fruit are very well known all over the world. Many diets and special regimes include fruit as a healthy snack in the middle of the morning and some afternoons. Fruit contains plenty of water, vitamins, fiber and other nutrients that are beneficial to your body and brain. Fruit also reduces blood pressure, for example:

Pineapples have excellent diuretic properties that help the body get rid of the excess of liquid. This makes blood flow smoothly without making too much pressure on vein walls. If you are going for your favorite pineapple smoothie, be

Changing your diet is often a cheaper, healthier, and more delicious way to ease hypertension than taking drugs.

sure to leave some of the pulp in your drink. This will give you extra fiber that you need to have a healthy digestive system.

Bananas contain potassium that helps reduce blood pressure. Adding one banana to your daily diet will help increase your potassium levels, which will in turn decrease blood pressure.

Pomegranate is an awesome fruit full of antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties. It is so effective that drinking 8 ounces per day can reduce your blood pressure and your cholesterol levels.

Bottom Line

These foods are tasty and easy to incorporate into your diet. Not only will they help lower your blood pressure, they will fuel your day with healthy energy and necessary nutrients.

Lisa Roth Collins is a registered holistic nutritionist and the marketing manager at NaturallySavvy.com, which first published this article.

Are All Plant-Based Diets Created Equal?

DEVON ANDRE

If the goal is heart health, blood sugar control, or management for seemingly countless conditions, what's the universal answer?

Say it with me: Eat more plant-based foods.

But does a plant-based diet necessarily mean you're going to experience a drop in blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, and improve your heart health? Not exactly, says a preliminary study.

The study first compared animal product eaters. They found that people with heavier plant consumption had about three servings of animal food per day, and those eating less plants had five animal food servings per day. Even a small reduction of animal-based products—particularly processed meats—was associated with better cardiovascular health. Next, they looked at people who ate more plant-based foods to assess the overall health of their diet.

What emerged is that plant-based doesn't necessarily translate to better health. The type of plant-based foods makes a major difference. So much so that diets high in some plant-based foods didn't see a drop in cardiovascular disease risk.

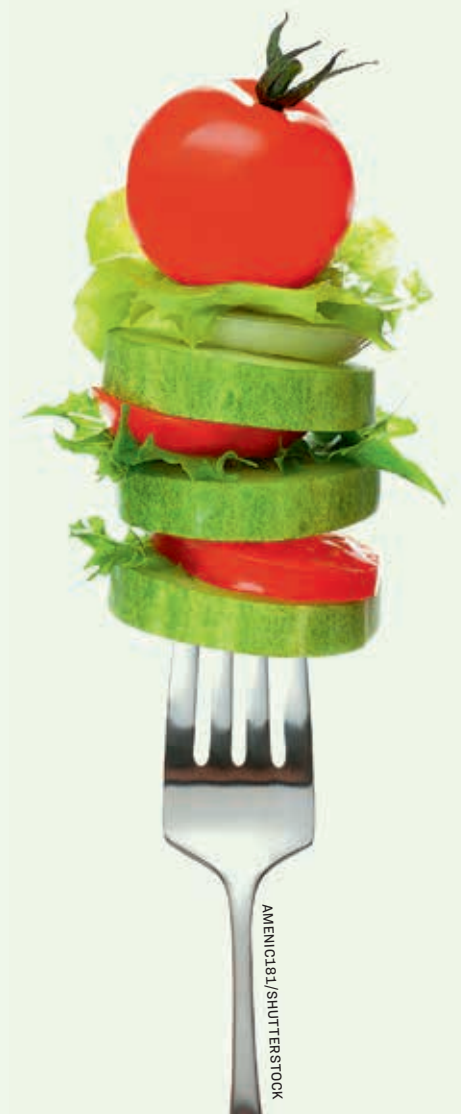
People who ate more whole fruits, vegetables, nuts, whole grains, legumes, olive oil, coffee, and tea showed a much lower risk for cardiovascular disease.

But those who ate more unhealthy plant-based foods, like sugar-sweetened beverages, refined grains, sweets, and the like, didn't see their risk drop.

Theoretically, a plate of french fries, a bag of chips, a chocolate bar, and a can of soda are all plant-based foods. It is possible to be a vegetarian and have an unhealthy diet. But the reality is that french fries don't have the nutrition of potatoes. Not even close.

So, if you want to cut back on meat and boost plant-based items to improve your heart health, avoid processed foods like white bread, candy, and french fries. Instead, focus your efforts on colorful fruits and veggies, whole grains, and other "natural" foods.

Devon Andre holds a bachelor's degree in forensic science from the University of Windsor in Canada and a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Pittsburgh. Andre is a journalist for BelMarra-Health, which first published this article.



FOOD AS MEDICINE

Drinking Matcha Tea Can Reduce Anxiety

Researchers affirm effects of specialized blend of beloved coffee alternative

You may love a cup of warm green tea in the morning, but did you know you may also set you up for a calmer, less anxious mood throughout your day? Research shows this coffee substitute may be a mood-booster as well. According to "The Book of Tea," written in 1906 by Japanese scholar Okakura Kakuzo, "Tea began as a medicine and grew into a beverage." With that simple yet profound statement, Okakura succinctly explained why green tea has long been celebrated as both a soothing refreshment and health-boosting tonic.

Researchers at Kumamoto University in the Kyushu region of Japan studied green tea's beneficial properties, specifically its ability to calm the mind. Published in the Journal of Functional Foods in 2019, the study examined the stress-reducing function of matcha green tea in animal experiments and clinical trials. Matcha tea is a potent form of powdered green tea, containing more medicinal phytochemicals than regular green tea and also more caffeine. The study honed in on the effects of L-theanine, a primary amino

acid in green tea that has been shown to exhibit stress-reducing effects in mice and humans with high-trait anxiety.

Tea began as a medicine and grew into a beverage.

Okakura Kakuzo, "The Book of Tea"

The amino acid L-arginine, also present in traditional green tea, has previously been shown to enhance stress-reducing effects of certain amino acids. Matcha tea, also called "fine powder tea," has higher concentrations of theanine and arginine than traditional green tea preparations.

However, the higher caffeine level creates an effect that is antagonistic to theanine, meaning it reduces theanine's calming effects. Previous studies have suggested that differences in the quantities and ratios of these three green tea components (theanine, arginine, and caffeine) affect the efficiency of its stress-reducing

action.

Therefore, the stress-reducing effect of a standard matcha preparation was first evaluated in an animal (mouse) experiment before moving on to human trials utilizing a specialized matcha preparation with reduced levels of caffeine ("test matcha").

Stress-Reducing Effect of Matcha Tea

Researchers expected matcha tea to have a stress-reducing effect due to its high theanine content and sought to test their hypothesis with mice that were placed under controlled stress.

The stress-reducing effect of tea components was measured by comparing four groups of mice that were fed as follows: Group 1 received a standard powder diet; group 2 was fed a diet containing only theanine; group 3 was fed a diet containing theanine, caffeine, and EGCG, the most abundant polyphenol in tea; and group 4 mice were fed a diet containing theanine, caffeine, EGCG, and arginine.

Using this test, researchers found that mouse anxiety (adrenal hypertrophy) was significantly reduced after consuming at least 33 milligrams

per kilogram of body weight of matcha powder or matcha extract. Relationships between elements were also analyzed. Researchers confirmed that theanine and arginine have a significant stress-reducing effect when used in combination. Theanine is needed at concentrations of at least 0.32 milligrams per kilogram of body weight to be effective; arginine supplementation alone was not effective. There was no relationship between caffeine and adrenal hypertrophy. Researchers then moved on to test a variety of specialized matcha preparations using human subjects.

Matcha Can Offset Human Stress

In the human trial, researchers sought to enhance the stress-reducing

effects of matcha tea by testing a specialized blend of matcha with reduced caffeine content, made from tea leaves that had been prepared by irrigating them with hot water at 95 degrees C for three minutes. This experimental preparation, called "test matcha," thereby enhanced quantities of theanine and arginine while suppressing caffeine ratio.

Thirty-nine healthy subjects (23 men and 16 women) were selected for this hu-



man trial and randomly allocated into experimental and control groups. Participants were university pharmacy students who were engaged in regular university life and a more intense, therefore anxiety-producing, pharmacy practice environment. All were free of acute or chronic diseases, were not taking major medications, and were non-smoking.

Participants were instructed to drink 3 grams of either test or placebo matcha preparation per day, suspended in 500 milliliters of room-temperature water. They were asked to avoid other caffeine and theanine-rich beverages such as other teas, coffee, and soda, for the duration of the experiment. They were also instructed to avoid caffeine-rich foods such as choco-

late and to avoid alcohol.

The intake of test- or placebo-matcha was conducted for a period of 15 days, which began with seven days of normal collegiate life followed by an intensified instructional experience of pharmacy practice that took place over eight days.

Participants were given the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) test before pharmacy practice began and at the end of this practice period. A questionnaire was also given in which feedback was solicited on their emotions, subjective stress, and physical condition. Sleeping hours were also recorded.

Before pharmacy practice, the STAI value of matcha test group participants was significantly lower than placebo group. On the eighth day of pharmacy practice, the mean values and differences between these groups was low, indicating that drinking matcha tea had a significant impact on anxiety levels before the stress period was induced.

After review of all data, includ-

ing the matcha variations, researchers concluded that both anxiety and physiological stress were decreased when test-matcha was consumed.

Green tea phytochemicals have a scientifically proven effect on mood and brain function.

Researchers noted that the quantities of theanine and arginine must be high, whereas the EGCG and caffeine levels must be low to receive optimum anti-anxiety benefits of matcha tea. Therefore, this research suggests that the quality of matcha tea preparation is highly important when an individual is consuming matcha for its calming properties.

Your Source for Green Tea Research

There are at least 400 reasons to drink green tea, including the scientifically proven effect of green tea phytochemicals on mood and brain function. Matcha green tea possesses the attributes of the whole leaf, which are shade-grown for three to four weeks before harvest, then removed from the stems

and deveined before grinding into a light green powder that is then dissolved in hot water as a beverage.

Green tea's therapeutic properties have been studied worldwide, predominantly by researchers in Asian countries where green tea is still commonly consumed. Studies have demonstrated green tea's anticarcinogenic properties, as well as its ability to enhance fat burning.

Matcha green tea can help diabetics through its beneficial effects on blood sugar and the ability to suppress blood glucose accumulation and promote lipid metabolism and antioxidant activities. Matcha has also been shown to slow the progression of renal and liver damage in Type 2 diabetic rats.

To learn more, steep yourself in the 927 abstracts with green tea research on GreenMedInfo.com.

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FOOD AS MEDICINE

Top Antiviral Benefits of Elderberry

These berries offer a safe and effective way to help ward off a cold or flu

JPC-PROD/SHUTTERSTOCK



Elderberries are high in phenolic compounds, a type of micronutrient found in berries and cacao.

Natural antiviral substances have been used for centuries to fight common infections, but interest has grown around elderberries, a purple berry long used for its cold and flu-reducing properties. Researchers believe elderberry's antiviral properties may be valuable in the widespread prevention and treatment of influenza and other viral illnesses.

Elderberries, small, dark purple berries grown on the Sambucus tree, are well known for their cold and flu-fighting properties. Used medicinally for centuries to reduce cold symptoms and other ailments, researchers believe elderberry may be one of the best natural antiviral substances and could be used to effectively treat the common cold and influenza A and B.

Broad-based antiviral therapies like elderberry supplementation block key viral proteins from entering host cells. Additionally, elderberry extract is also antimicrobial and works to fight bacterial infections (like pneumonia) that often develop as complications of the flu.

Elderberry for Viral Infection Protection

The common cold and flu account for more than 20 million doctor visits a year, causing numerous missed school and

workdays. While conventional remedies address temporary symptom relief, researchers believe that elderberry extract could be used to effectively shorten the duration of colds and cases of flu. Top benefits of elderberry supplementation include:

Elderberry Boasts Immune-Activating Benefits

Elderberry juice encourages the production of cytokines, a protein that works to regulate immunity and inflammation. In one study, elderberry's potent immune-boosting properties were shown to be effective against ten unique strains of the influenza virus.

Elderberry Extract Is a Powerful Antimicrobial

Elderberry juice is high in anthocyanins, a type of flavonoid that has both antimicrobial and antiviral properties. Many patients with severe influenza A or B are susceptible to bacterial infections like pneumonia, with pneumonia rates as high as 65.7 percent among hospitalized influenza patients.

Due to its potent antimicrobial properties, elderberry supplementation is a powerful natural compound in the prevention of both influenza and subsequent bacterial infections.

Elderberry Syrup Has Potent Antioxidant Ability

Elderberries are high in phenolic compounds, a type of micronutrient found in berries and cacao. These compounds are responsible for the deep red or purple color of elderberries and are bioactive, which means they enhance the antioxidant status of healthy individuals.

Additionally, anthocyanins found in elderberries have been proven to inhibit inflammatory biomarkers and promote health and disease prevention against multiple viral and bacterial infections.

Elderberry Treats Upper Respiratory Symptoms

Many researchers believe that there is a strong potential for misuse of antibiotics during cold and flu season, especially in Western countries. Elderberry is an alternative natural compound proven to effectively reduce cold and flu symptoms such as upper respiratory symptoms and maybe a safer alternative to prescription medications often used to treat these symptoms.

Elderberry extract is also antimicrobial and works to fight bacterial infections (like pneumonia) that often develop as complications of the flu.

Other benefits of elderberry extract include its high vitamins A, C, and E content, high levels of potassium, and its anti-inflammatory and antiseptic properties. For these reasons and its potent antiviral capacity, elderberry extract can be a useful natural compound to supplement with during cold and flu season.

Safety Profile of Elderberry Products

While most elderberry products are safe to consume, researchers have found that consuming raw elderberries or the leaves or bark of the Sambucus plant can cause adverse gastrointestinal effects such as nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, and diarrhea. For these reasons, it's best to avoid ingesting any raw elderberries.

Due to a lack of sufficient trials, most health care personnel

don't recommend the use of elderberry during pregnancy or while breastfeeding. Additionally, although a few studies have evaluated the efficacy of elderberry extract and it has been used effectively to treat influenza in children, there isn't much research on elderberry's safety profile for children.

While there are many elderberry products marketed to children, it's best to speak with a holistic health care provider before use. Otherwise, elderberry syrups, lozenges, and teas have a very high safety profile and are considered safe for home use.

Using Elderberry at Home

Due to the potent antiviral and antimicrobial capabilities of elderberry extract, many people add elderberry syrups or teas to their daily routine, especially during the winter months or peak flu season.

Organic, child-safe elderberry syrups and lozenges can be found in most health food stores, and elderberry tea can be made at home by boiling dried elderberries with water and ginger and stirring in a small amount of sweetener like honey or stevia.

For additional research on the antiviral benefits of elderberry supplementation, please visit the GreenMedInfo.com elderberry research database.

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