

MIND & BODY

Helping Others Can Help You Cope With Lockdown

In the time of COVID-19,
trying to ease the lives
of others is a win-win
prospect **2**

Donating boosts
your well-being
as you boost the
well-being of
others.

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Time of COVID-19

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TRUTH CAN BE BLOCKED BUT NEVER STOPPED

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I enjoy reading The Epoch Times daily and share links, stories and “real news” updates whenever I can. Because of this, several friends and family members are now subscribers and have thanked me for sharing “real news” that is going on globally.

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Helping Others Can Help You Cope With Lockdown

In the time of COVID-19, trying to ease the lives of others is a win-win prospect

ELIZABETH SVOBODA

It's easy to feel like we're swirling in a COVID-19-induced vortex of helplessness.

Our first instinct may be to hunker down and protect ourselves and our immediate families. But to get through these times with our sanity and well-being intact, we may need to push back on this initial impulse. Research shows that when we put a high priority on reaching out to others, our own mental and physical health flourish.

It's a rare win-win proposition in a bleak landscape: In helping other people get through this crisis, you can help yourself in equal measure. “It's a way of reframing your existence,” says bioethicist Stephen Post, “getting out from the negative vortex and feeling free to do something that is meaningful.”

Helping Buys the Helper, Not Just the Recipient

While we've never faced a foe quite like COVID-19 before, doctors and scientists have studied what happens when people pull together and help others after a setback. About a year after the 2008 financial crisis, when thousands of people lost their jobs and homes, Post and his Stony Brook University colleagues surveyed 4,500 Americans about their volunteering habits and their mental health.

In the wake of the financial downturn, rates of volunteering were higher than they had been the year before—and that bump came with clear psychological benefits.

Eighty-nine percent of people felt happier overall thanks to their helping efforts, and 78 percent reported that volunteering helped them better deal with disappointment and loss. About three in four volunteers felt less stressed. Many respondents reported making deeper friendships by connecting with other helpers.

“When people feel vulnerable, they can take their mind off the self and the problems of the self, and just experience the simple gratification of contributing to the life of another human being,” Post says. “That's how people were coping.”

Helping also buoys us mentally because it directs our focus away from scary abstractions and back toward concrete, solvable problems.

Psychologist Paul Slovic has long contended that our brains check out when we consider the abstract fate of large populations: We aren't fully equipped to process what it means when a small town's worth of people dies each day. Concentrating on what individual people need, on the other hand, motivates us to help—and we then reap the benefits that come with that decision.

During a pandemic, it seems especially relevant that helping promotes robust physical health, as well.

In a 2013 study of adults over 50, those who volunteered regularly were 40 percent less likely than non-volunteers to have high blood pressure years later. And frequent volunteers have lower mortality rates across the board. A Stanford University team reported that, over an eight-year period, people who volunteered occasionally had a 25 percent lower risk of dying than those who didn't help—while people who volunteered frequently were 33 percent less likely to die.

Creative Stay-At-Home Helping Ventures Abound

But how do you help people when you're stuck at home?

Social distancing and shelter-in-place restrictions do put some volunteer opportunities out of reach, especially for members of high-risk groups. However, motivated helpers have found plenty of creative ways to serve others remotely.

When doctors and nurses in the San Francisco Bay Area started running out of personal protection equipment (PPE), thousands of people donated surgical and N95 masks, face shields, antiseptic wipes, and other materials to Kaiser Permanente and other health care organizations.

After medical students around the country were pulled from clinics, fourth-year University of Michigan student Marina Haque launched an online community under the hashtag #students_against_covid to support and amplify the helping efforts of many other students and allies. Some students, Haque says, are caring for the children of doctors on the front lines, while others are reaching out to local labs that can donate PPE to hospitals.

In Boston, high school teacher Randi Stern has created an uplifting newsletter called The Daily Drop, complete with suggested lockdown activities, book recommendations, and inspiring quotes. She sends it regularly to her friends and family. “It calms me for a couple hours each day,” Stern says. “It's also nice to get emails back in response to what I've written.” She enjoys fostering social connection at a time when so many are hungry for it.

On an even more individual level, Kara Loewentheil, a life coach and podcast host, is offering free web meetings and coaching calls to help people stay grounded and optimistic during the coronavirus pandemic.

Efforts like these are “the key to staying sane, I think,” Loewentheil says. “When we focus on others, we get connected back into the community and big picture and out of our stress-response brain.”

Matching Your Strengths to the Right Opportunities

We tend to get caught up in thinking that only medical personnel and first responders can make a meaningful difference during this crisis. Yet in the COVID-19 era, “simply reaching out to people is being helpful and heroic in small ways,” says University of Richmond psychologist Scott Allison. “Each of us can make a positive difference by tapping into our strengths and sharing them.”

In a shelter-in-place context, that might mean teaching a free online math class to kids who can't attend regular school, or a few minutes a day doing Skype check-ins with lonely members of your social circle.

You don't have to commit full-time to these practices to make a major difference in others' lives—and your own. In Post's study, most volunteers “weren't overdoing. They were volunteering on average 100 hours a year,” he points out. “If you wanted to space that out, you're talking about a couple of hours a week, more or less.”

Thinking about helping as an incremental venture, rather than an all-or-nothing one, may help you overcome any initial inertia. Even making a donation to a helping organization whose mission you support—which may take less than a minute—can boost your well-being measurably.

If you live alone and you're in good health, you may be eligible for essential helping roles that involve a higher degree of risk. Food banks around the country desperately need volunteers at community centers to distribute produce and pantry staples to households in need. Opportunities like this require you to weigh the positive impact you can have against the likelihood of contracting the virus.

In stepping into a helping identity in times of hardship, Post observes, you can embark on a kind of inner journey philosopher Martin Buber described: the transition from an “I-It” mindset, in which you see other people as peripheral objects in your own universe, to an “I-Thou” mindset, in which you relate to others as worthy, complete beings in their own right. This journey mirrors Joseph Campbell's vision of finding your highest self in the act of helping others.

“They're gonna come up with something” is passive,” Post says. “Volunteering is an active form of hope.”

Elizabeth Svoboda is a writer in San Jose, Calif., and a regular contributor to Greater Good. She is the author of “What Makes a Hero?: The Surprising Science of Selflessness.” Her newest book, for kids, is “The Life Heroic.” This article was first published on Greater Good magazine online.



Facing the COVID-19 Crisis Together Could Lead to Psychological Growth

‘Tending and befriending’ rather than ‘fighting or freezing’ could spell the difference in our pandemic experience

LOWRI DOWTHWAITE

Although news reports of hoarding and panic-buying might make it hard to believe, research shows that natural disasters, like the COVID-19 pandemic, can actually bring out the best in people. Although times of significant threat or crisis can cause post-traumatic stress, research shows that so-called “adversarial growth” is just as common as a response. This is our capacity to not only overcome a crisis but to actually grow stronger, wiser and more resilient.

When people experience adversity—such as life-changing illness or loss—research shows their relationship with the world changes. Often, adversity may help us experience a new appreciation of life, improve our relationships with others, and help us gain personal strength. In other words, what doesn't kill us makes us stronger.

In situations of social stress, our primal instincts kick in. These innate survival responses protect us against unwanted threats, and can both help and hinder how we cope. Though we may not be able to choose our stress response, there are ways that we can train it.

The most common response to threats in humans is the “fight, flight or freeze” response, where stress triggers a hormonal response that prepares the body to either fight or run from a threat.

But more recent research shows we

also have a “tend and befriend” response. When faced with a threat, this response releases hormones—like oxytocin—that encourage us to build and maintain our social network to reduce stress and anxiety, and build empathy.

Post-Traumatic Growth

Studies looking at natural disasters show the “tend and befriend” response actually reduces incidents of post-traumatic stress disorder and promotes “post-traumatic growth.” These are positive psychological changes that happen in response to a traumatic event, including increased resilience, self-confidence, greater empathy, and improved subjective wellbeing.

Natural disasters, like COVID-19, can help people grow stronger, wiser, and more resilient.

In fact, a study of people from Hong Kong who lived through the SARS pandemic found that although people experienced significant trauma, most reported positive changes as a result. The most noticeable changes were increased social support, better mental health awareness, and healthier lifestyles.

Research also shows there are benefits to facing a crisis collectively, compared to experiencing it alone. Studies have found that social support during times of trauma can lead to better emotional health and less severe stress reactions in the long term.

For example, after the 2010 7.1 magnitude earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand, one study's participants reported feeling more connected to others because of this shared experience. People that had a role to play, helped others, or contributed to their communities were found to experience greater personal growth, and a better ability to manage stress carry on with their normal routine following the earthquake.

Coming Together

So is it possible we might experience similar growth during the COVID-19 pandemic? Based on past psychological research, we will. However, researchers also acknowledge that experiencing this level of crisis will bring about painful emotions, uncertainty, physical suffering, and psychological distress. How we cope with this—either through the “fight or flight” or “tend and befriend” response—is vital to our psychological health as individuals and as a community.

The “fight or flight” response tends to happen when we face an outside threat—whereas the “tend and befriend” response happens in order to support those around you. However, during natural disasters and pandemics, there's no “outside threat,” so the “tend and befriend” response may be more likely to happen.

When we choose the “tend and befriend” response, this means we connect with others, either physically or metaphorically (such as trying to see things from their perspective to understand their feelings and struggles). In doing this, we release oxytocin, a neural-hormone, part of our adaptive stress response. Also known as the “love hormone,” oxytocin is a chemical messenger involved in important human behaviors, including sexual arousal, trust, and anxiety. Not only is oxytocin produced in large amounts after birth to allow mothers to bond with their baby, it's also produced when we seek out social support during stress. This helps us bond through hugging, touching, or closeness.

Given that many governments are now advising social distancing, we're now relying on technology to trigger our “tend and befriend” response. Though technology will impact our ability to feel connected and bond with others, studies show being in contact virtually with friends and family can still enhance bonding and reduce the negative effects of stress. In fact, talking on the phone is shown to be better than texting. Video chats are even more beneficial than phone calls, as you can see the person you're talking to.

If we can still regularly socialize—even virtually—this can help people bond, and build personal growth and social wellbeing in those affected by a collective trauma. This “communal coping” also makes us more open to making new friends. The “tend and befriend” response encourages empathy and compassion, gives us better social awareness, and makes us better able to understand the needs of others and how to behave in an empathetic and helpful way.

Though stress is an understandable response during a time like this, choosing how you respond to it is important. The “tend and befriend” response will help us consider others in our community, and may be important for social distancing, and increasing charitable responses or acts of kindness. In the midst of a global crisis, this adaptive stress response may not only reduce incidents of anger, prejudice, and violence, but may also foster collective humanity and post-pandemic growth.

Lowri Dowthwaite is a lecturer in psychological interventions at the University of Central Lancashire in the UK. This article was first published on The Conversation.



Adversity can help us appreciate life, improve our relationships, and gain personal strength.



Life can stop us from getting to the gym, but not from working out.

When the World Is in Chaos, Control What You Can

We can't change many things, but the things we can change do add up

JOSHUA BECKER

There are times in our lives when we are confronted with the reality that we are not in control of the world around us.

As hard as we try, and as much as we'd like to think we're in control, the reality is, we are not. And there are seasons and circumstances that remind us of that fact. A natural disaster, a terminal diagnosis, a wayward son, an unexpected layoff—anything can happen.

At this current moment, almost everyone in the world, simultaneously, is being confronted with the reality of lost control through the spread of a virus. A tiny virus, invisible to the naked eye, has brought the world to a screeching halt, disrupting everything in its path—even life as normal. Our control has been upended. No doubt about it.

We, of course, never had as much control over our lives and the world as we thought we did, but still, it is hard to lose the little that we had. The world, it feels, has spun into chaos.

So how do we respond when the world is in chaos? How do we begin to move forward? For one, we take back control of what we can control—even in the smallest of ways.

We've all been reminded that we are not in ultimate control of the universe. But that doesn't mean we've lost all ability to maintain control over our lives. Even if our usual day-to-day opportunities have been taken from us by another, there is still much we can control.

For example: We can still control what time we wake up in the morning.

We can still choose to get ready in the morning for the day ahead.

We can eat healthy. We can remain physically active.

We can make our bed in the morning, we can choose to reset our home in the evening.

We can choose what we watch and listen to, and we can control what time we turn off the television at night.

We can always control our attitude and our response to the people and events around us.

We can love our family.

We can choose kind words in conversations.

If you are a man or woman of faith, you can choose to rely upon it during this time.

We can still decide to make the most of each day in front of us. Controlling what you can might not seem like much, but it's something.

Actually, it's a lot more than something. It is an essential strategy for each of us going forward.

It is the first step in moving from a reactive life to a proactive one. And it is the first step in making the most of our current circumstances.

So, focus your energy there, even if it seems like very little. When the world is in chaos, control what you can.

Stay healthy, stay well, and stay focused. We'll get through this together.

Joshua Becker is an author, public speaker and the founder and editor of *Becoming Minimalist* where he inspires others to live more by owning less. Visit BecomingMinimalist.com

Communicating With Your Partner While Stuck at Home

Move to better connection through these 5 tips for relationships in the time of COVID-19

KARA FLETCHER

Many of us are several weeks into stay-at-home directives from our governments and health officials. For many, social distancing means sharing a confined space with romantic partners while navigating new stressful issues including sudden unemployment, working from home, child care and the never-ceasing uncertainty.

Unsurprisingly, there are reports of divorce rates skyrocketing in China since the outbreak of COVID-19. Instability and stress can exacerbate insecurities and increase conflict for couples. As a scholar and a couple and family therapist, I offer five practical, evidence-based tips for couples when being stuck at home is making you feel stuck in your relationship.

1. Take Space

Sharing a physical space with your partner for extended periods of time can increase pressure and stress. Without the daily routine of leaving the home, your space may begin to feel very small and irritation with one another may escalate quickly.

Research demonstrates that actively choosing to take alone time can contribute to relaxation and reduced stress. Consider taking regular blocks of alone time each day, whether it is a walk around the neighborhood, closing the door to a room where you will not be disturbed or engaging in an activity that is just for you.

Communicating how you plan to take space will help your partner know how to

When you need to tell your partner how you feel, try to speak from your perspective as opposed to accusing them of doing something wrong.

If you find yourself continuing to get stuck in conflict with your partner, ask yourself, "what part do I play in this conflict?"

support your efforts, and will encourage them to do the same. If you're not taking care of yourself, you will have little to offer your partner.

2. Where Possible, Use 'I' Statements

When you need to tell your partner how you feel, try to speak from your perspective as opposed to accusing them of doing something wrong. For example, "I feel really defeated when I continue to find dirty dishes in the sink. Is there any way you can help me keep the kitchen clean?"

Using "I" language has been found to reduce perceptions of hostility and anger. "I" statements can help your partner hear your perspective instead of interpreting it as an attack and becoming defensive.

3. Press Pause

Press pause on conflicts that are not going anywhere and set a time to try again later. When conflicts become heated, many couples enter into an automatic "fight, flight or freeze" response.

Our brains can experience conflict as a threat, and emotions and defenses can become activated. When this happens we shut down and conflict resolution becomes impossible. If you notice you or your partner getting angry or distressed in a conflict, request to put the conversation on pause to give you both a chance to step back, breathe, and think.

Once stress levels are lower, complex thinking, reflection, and reasoning become possible. Set an agreed upon time to return to the discussion when you're both awake, nourished, and feeling more calm.

4. What's Your Part?

If you find yourself continuing to get stuck in conflict with your partner, ask yourself, what part do I play in this conflict? Do I nag or pursue my partner when I am feeling anxious? Or, do I have a tendency to shut down, or avoid my partner when I am feeling pressured?

Emotionality focused therapist and researcher Sue Johnson, has found that couples often get stuck in problematic interaction cycles. Considering what role you take in a conflict cycle can help you try out new positions.

For example, what happens when you respond to your partner's anxiety with compassion as opposed to feeling annoyed and walking away? What happens when you share your worries with your partner, instead of getting angry at them for not taking the garbage out, or not helping enough with child care?

Couples who are able to adopt new positions in their relationship and try new ways of responding are more able to interrupt problematic interaction cycles.

5. Acknowledge Strengths

Try to acknowledge one another's strengths. What special skills does your partner have to get through hard times? If your partner is the one making home school schedules for the kids, or braving the grocery store while you work, let them know they are appreciated and compliment their ability to handle difficult situations.

Research demonstrates that actively choosing to take alone time can contribute to relaxation and reduced stress.

Note what strengths they have that you admire. As recent research demonstrated, greater appreciation for one's partner's strengths predicted increased relationship satisfaction and intimacy. Acknowledging your partner's positive attributes creates more good feelings between you.

While these tips will help you mitigate conflict in your relationship, remember to not expect perfection. These are stressful times, and you will inevitably lose your patience and experience frustration. Compassion for yourself and your partner will go a long way as you navigate these uncharted waters together.

Kara Fletcher is an assistant professor in the faculty of social work at the University of Regina in Canada. This article was first published on *The Conversation*.



MADE TO MOVE

Physical Activity Is Linked With Good Mental Health in Menopausal Women

While some women have little trouble with menopausal symptoms, others may find relief through increased exercise

MAT LECOMPTÉ

New research is helping to outline the importance of physical activity for mental health in women experiencing menopause. Women in all stages of menopause show a higher risk of depressive symptoms, and this new study helps to understand new treatment options for those struggling with mental health issues.

Those with late menopausal status were found to show the most elevated levels

of depression. However, the study suggests that a high level of physical activity is linked to fewer depressive symptoms, higher satisfaction with life, and higher positive affectivity in menopausal women.

Doctoral student Dmitriy Bondarev from the Gerontology Research Center and Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, said, "According to our research, postmenopausal women had more depressive symptoms than perimenopausal women. At the same time menopause was not related to positive mental well-being."

What Is Menopause?

Menopause is the time in a woman's life when menstruation stops. On average, it occurs naturally around the age of 45 when the ovaries stop producing the hormones estrogen and progesterone. Studies have shown that it can have a far-reaching effect on many bodily functions, however, the

research between menopause and psychological functioning in middle-aged women has only just begun.

Some women don't have any trouble with menopausal symptoms. For others, it can be a tough time, bringing hot flashes, insomnia, moodiness and irritability, pain during sex, and depression.

A woman's menopausal years are divided into three stages. Pre-menopause begins five to ten years before menopause with gradual irregularity in menstrual cycles. Perimenopause is the time before the last menstruation when the function of the ovaries noticeably fades away, and post menopause is the time in a woman's life once menstruation has finished.

"Physically active women had lower depressive symptoms, had higher positive affectivity scores and were more satisfied with life in comparison to inactive women," Bondarev explains. "Thus, being physically active during the menopausal transition

may help to withstand the negative influence of menopause on depressive symptomatology and spare positive mental well-being."

The study was part of the Estrogenic Regulation of Muscle Apoptosis study involving over 1,000 women aged 47–55 living in Jyväskylä, Finland. Researchers relied on self-reporting of the participants about physical activity and mental well-being.

Due to the restrictions of this study, more research is needed to come to a better understanding of the cause and effect of the link between physical activity and mental health. Questions remain such as how much exercise is needed, and what types of exercise are best for women in menopause. Researchers hope these questions will be answered in follow up studies.

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

What Does Recovery From COVID-19 Look Like? It Depends. A Pulmonologist Explains.

Dr. Kenneth Lyn-Kew shares observations from the front lines on those hardest hit by the pandemic

JUDITH GRAHAM

Reports of recovery from serious illness caused by COVID-19 have been trickling in from around the world.

Physicians are swapping anecdotes on social media: a 38-year-old man who went home after three weeks at the Cleveland Clinic, including 10 days in intensive care. A 93-year-old woman in New Orleans whose breathing tube was removed, successfully, after three days. A patient at Massachusetts General Hospital who was taken off a ventilator after five days and was doing well.

"Patients are definitely recovering from Covid-19 ARDS [acute respiratory distress syndrome] and coming off vents," Dr. Theodore "Jack" Iwashyna, a professor of pulmonary and critical care medicine at the University of Michigan, wrote on Twitter recently.

But the outlook for older adults, who account for a disproportionate share of critically ill COVID-19 patients, is not encouraging. Advanced age is associated with significantly worse outcomes for older patients, and even those who survive are unlikely to return to their previous level of functioning.

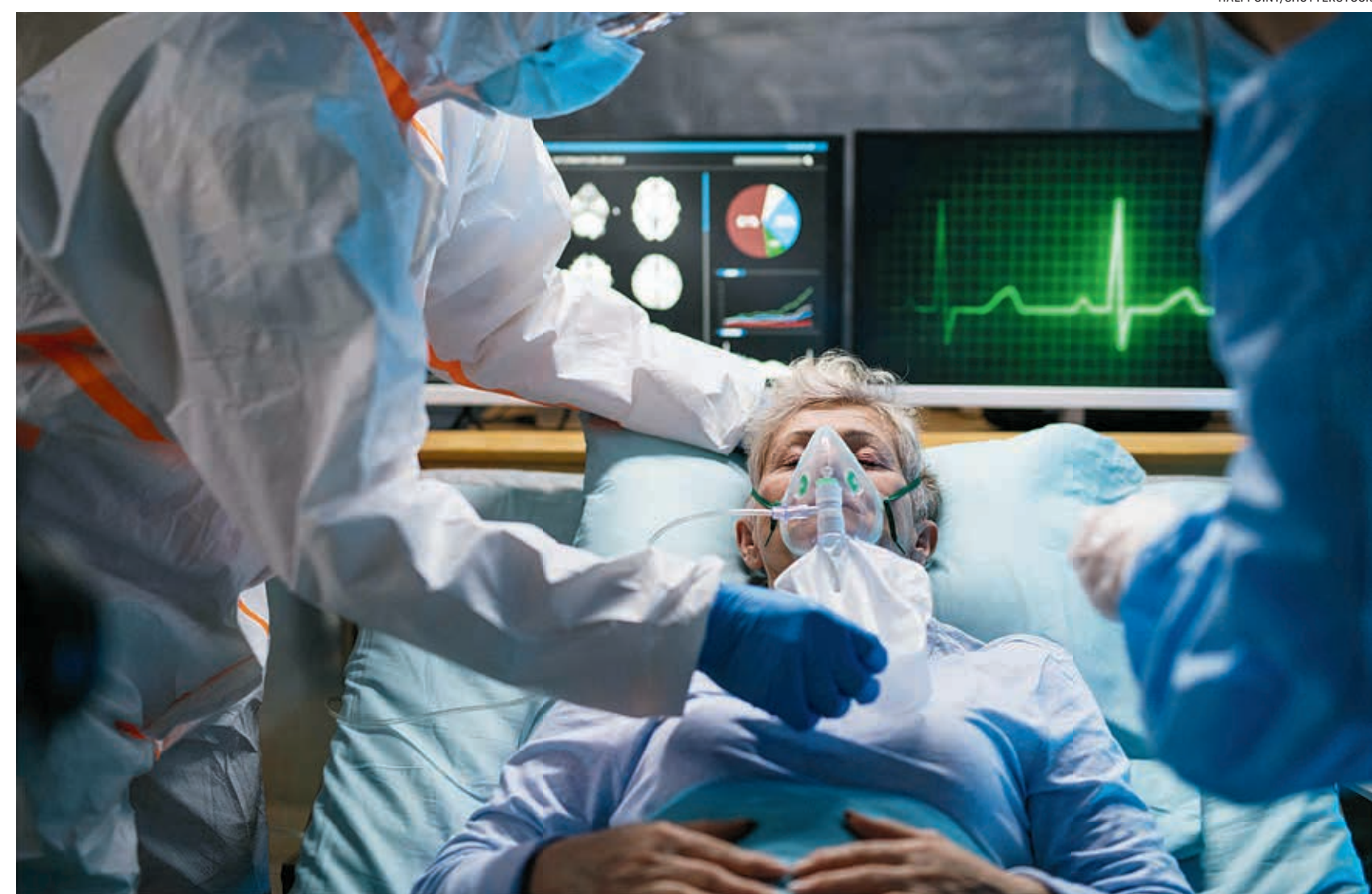
According to a new study in *The Lancet* based on data from China, the overall death rate for people diagnosed with coronavirus is 1.4 percent. But that rises to 4 percent for those in their 60s, 8.6 percent for people in their 70s and 13.4 percent for those age 80 and older.

[Editor's note: *The Epoch Times* has uncovered a pattern of evidence revealing the Chinese Communist Party has consistently and significantly underreported COVID-19 infection and mortality rates.]

How often do people who are critically ill recover? According to a report from Britain out last week, of 775 patients with COVID-19 admitted to critical care, 79 died, 86 survived and were discharged to another location, and 609 were still being treated in critical care, with uncertain futures. Experts note this is preliminary data, before a surge of patients expected over the next several weeks.

According to a just-published small study of 24 critically ill COVID-19 patients treated in Seattle hospitals, 50 percent died within 18 days. (Four of the 12 who died had a do-not-resuscitate order in place.) Of those who survived, three remained on ventilators in intensive care units, four left the ICU but stayed in the hospital, and five were discharged home. The study appeared in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

What does recovery from COVID-19 look like? I asked Dr. Kenneth Lyn-Kew, an associate professor of pulmonology and critical care medicine at National Jewish Health in Denver, named the No. 1 respiratory hospital in the nation last year by U.S. News & World Report. Our conversation has been



Recovering from COVID-19 is more difficult for elderly patients with certain pre-existing conditions.

edited for length and clarity.

JUDITH GRAHAM: What's known about recovery?

DR. KENNETH LYN-KEW: It's helpful to think about mild, moderate and severe disease. Most people, upwards of 80 percent, will have mild symptoms. Their recovery typically takes a couple of weeks. They might feel horrible, profoundly fatigued, with muscle aches, a bad cough, a fever and chest discomfort. Then, that goes away. Also, there are some people who never have symptoms, who never even know they had it.

GRAHAM: What about people with moderate illness?

DR. LYN-KEW: Because we're so early into this, we have less information about these patients. Often, they spend a few days in the hospital. People feel more short of breath. Sometimes, an underlying condition like asthma is exacerbated. Typically, they need a bit of oxygen for a few days.

Also, there are patients who have high fevers or severe diarrheal illness with COVID-19. Those patients can get dehydrated and need IV fluids.

There also appears to be a small population of people who can develop myocarditis—inflammation of the heart. They come in with symptoms that mimic heart attacks.

GRAHAM: How long do these patients stay hospitalized?

DR. LYN-KEW: It can vary. Some people get a little oxygen and IV fluid and leave the hospital after two to three days. Some of these moderate patients start to look a little better, then all of a sudden



Advanced age is associated with significantly worse outcomes for COVID-19 patients. Even those who survive are unlikely to fully recover.

get a lot worse and decompensate [when the body systems being treated suddenly deteriorate].

GRAHAM: What about patients with serious illness?

DR. LYN-KEW: Many of the sickest patients have acute respiratory distress syndrome [ARDS, a disease that floods the lungs with fluid and deprives people of oxygen]. These are the patients who end up on mechanical ventilators.

Those least likely to recover seem to be frail older patients with other preexisting illnesses such as COPD [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease] or heart disease. But there's no guarantee that a young person who gets ARDS will recover.

ARDS mortality is usually between 30 percent and 40 percent. But if you break that down, people who have ARDS due to trauma—for instance, car accidents—tend to have lower death rates than people who have ARDS due to infection. For older people, who tend to have more infections, mortality rates are much higher—up to 60 percent. But this isn't COVID-specific data. We still have a lot to learn about that.

GRAHAM: If someone is sick enough to need ventilation, what's involved?

DR. LYN-KEW: People usually need a couple of weeks of mechanical ventilation. Ventilation is very uncomfortable for many people and they end up on medication to make them more comfortable. For some people, just a bit of medication is enough.

Other people require heavier doses of medications such as narcotics, propofol, benzodiazepines or Precedex [a sedative]. Because they act on your brain, these medications can induce delirium [a sudden, serious alteration in thinking and awareness]. We really try to minimize that because delirium has a significant impact on a person's recovery.

Being on more medication affects other things also: a patient's sleep-wake cycle. Their mobility, which can make them weaker. It can slow down their gastrointestinal tract so they don't tolerate nutrition as well and get suboptimal nutrition. Many of these patients end up having PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] and impaired concentration afterwards.

GRAHAM: When can someone go off a respirator?

DR. LYN-KEW: There are three criteria. They have to be awake enough to protect their swallowing mechanism and their airway. They have to have a low enough need for oxygen that I can support that with something else, such as nasal prongs. And they have to be able to clear enough carbon dioxide.

GRAHAM: What will a patient look like at the end of those two weeks?

DR. LYN-KEW: That depends. If we're able to do everything right, these people are up and walking around with the ventilator. Those patients come out on the other end looking pretty good. Maybe they'll have some weakness, some weight loss, a little PTSD.

“Most people, upwards of 80 percent, will have mild symptoms. Their recovery typically takes a couple of weeks.”

Dr. Theodore "Jack" Iwashyna, a professor of pulmonary and critical care medicine at the University of Michigan

The patients who are sicker and more intolerant of the technology, they tend to come out weak, forgetful, confused, deconditioned, maybe not even able to get out of bed. Sometimes, in spite of our best efforts, they'll have skin wounds.

Some of these patients have significant lung fibrosis—scarring of the lungs and reduced lung function. This might be a short-term part of their recovery or it could be long-term.

GRAHAM: Are there special considerations for older adults?

DR. LYN-KEW: Older adults tend to have more preexisting illnesses that put them at more risk for complications. Their immune system is less robust. They're more prone to secondary infections such as pneumonia in spite of everything we do to prevent that.

Frailty is an important factor as well. If you come in frail and weak, you have less reserve to fight this through.

GRAHAM: When are people ready to be discharged?

DR. LYN-KEW: You can go home on supplemental oxygen if you still need that kind of assistance. But you need to be able to feed yourself and move around or, if you have more disability, have someone to provide that for you.

Some people spend a couple of weeks in the ICU, then two to three days on a medical/surgical ward. Other people take another week or two to regain some strength. Some will go to an acute rehabilitation facility to get rehab three times a day. Others can go to a skilled nursing facility, where they'll get rehab over a couple of months and then go home.

GRAHAM: Who's unlikely to recover?

DR. LYN-KEW: That we just don't know yet. When we sit down after all this and look at everything afterwards, we can pull up those patterns.

In the ideal world, I wish I could predict who would do well and who wouldn't, so I could talk to them and their family and have an honest conversation.

GRAHAM: Are there factors complicating recovery?

DR. LYN-KEW: With such a high number of sick people, it's harder to do things to maximize recovery, such as bringing in physical therapy and occupational therapy. People aren't able to get as much therapy because there are only so many therapists and some hospitals are limiting who can come in.

COVID-19 is really a nasty disease because of its infectiousness. It isolates people from a lot of things they need to get better—perhaps, most importantly, their family, whose support is really critical along with all the other things I've talked about here.

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*.



Inhaling lavender reduces anxiety as well as cortisol levels.

ESSENTIAL OILS

Therapeutic Uses for Lavender Essential Oil

Lavender has a long history with humans who have valued its medicinal qualities

Lavender has been used for medicinal purposes, especially in traditional Chinese medicine, for over 2,500 years. Today lavender is the most popular essential oil in the world.

Compounds contained in the oil have antifungal, antimicrobial, and antibiotic effects.

Ancient Persians, Greeks, and Romans added lavender flowers to their bathwater. The name itself comes from the Latin “lavare” meaning to wash. The Egyptians used lavender as a perfume, as well as for mummification.

Scientific studies back up seven therapeutic results from lavender essential oil:

1. Anxiety Relief

A German study found lavender oil is more effective than a placebo in relieving anxiety in elderly patients. The researchers concluded that it would be an effective and well-tolerated alternative to synthetic drugs.

In another study of 90 anxious patients awaiting open-heart surgery, researchers had the patients inhale either lavender oil or distilled water for 20 minutes. Inhaling lavender reduced anxiety as well as cortisol levels. Questionnaires answered by the patients showed the lavender decreased anxiety by 10.8 percent. Blood testing revealed that cortisol levels dropped by a whopping 69.6 percent.

Patients were given 2 percent lavender essential oil via inhalation every day in a study of 60 heart patients in a coronary intensive care unit (ICU). After 15 days, the patients inhaling lavender reported significantly less anxiety. Researchers concluded that lavender is a non-invasive, cheap, easily applied, and cost-effective intervention for cardiac patients in the ICU.

2. Improve Sleep

Several studies show the effectiveness of lavender aromatherapy in sleep-related disorders. In one 2015 study of 158 new mothers in Iran, women were

assigned to two random groups. One group dropped lavender oil on a cotton ball and inhaled 10 deep breaths before going to sleep. They also kept the lavender ball near their pillow until morning. They did this four times a week. A control group did the same thing with a placebo oil rather than lavender. After eight weeks, women inhaling lavender had a significant improvement in their sleep quality compared to the control group.

3. Ease Premenstrual Symptoms

It is estimated that 45 percent of women suffer from moderate to severe dysmenorrhea. This condition develops at the time of menstruation and can cause cramps, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, loss of appetite, diarrhea, and headaches.

A lavender oil massage can help relieve dysmenorrhea according to one small study from Turkey. In it, 44 midwifery or nursing students administered a self-massage with either lavender oil or petroleum oil as a placebo. The lavender oil was found to reduce menstrual pain at a statistically significant rate.

In an Iranian study of 80 midwifery and nursing students, volunteers were randomly assigned to receive either a lavender oil massage or placebo massage during two consecutive menstrual cycles. Their level of pain was measured before and 30 minutes after the massage. The lavender oil massage caused a significant decrease in dysmenorrhea symptoms compared to the placebo.

The researchers noted that topical application of lavender oil relaxes the muscles, improves blood supply to the tissues, and increases elasticity. And the active compounds in lavender oil remain on the skin for about 90 minutes after the massage. In addition, the oil—after topical use or inhalation—is absorbed into the bloodstream.

In addition to pain, many women suffer with emotional stress during their menstrual periods. A Japanese study published in 2013 found that inhaling lavender can help. Researchers

motions. A good plan would be to alternate the kinds of exercise you do, combined with stretching. In addition, make sure you're drinking plenty of water, especially if you're very physically active, as dehydration affects your muscle tissues and can contribute to the formations of adhesions and knots.

In Chinese medicine, muscle knots are considered to be an area of stagnation, in which natural flow is hampered. This means that the adhesion is blocking the circulation of blood and nutrients in your muscles, as well as hampering your ability to move optimally, sometimes affecting your range of motion.

Painful muscle knots are called Ah Shi points in Chinese medicine. Ah Shi means “That’s the spot!” This feeling can direct your acupuncturist where to place needles during treatment. While needling a tender point may sound like a painful technique, it actually doesn't create more pain, and is effective in loosening up the knot and relieving pain.

Your acupuncturist may use another technique, called Stuck Needle, in which one or more acupuncture needles are inserted into your knot and then gently twisted until it feels stuck to the practitioner's touch. This technique affects the muscle fibers that have formed the knot, and over a series of treatments can actually reduce the size of the knot and decrease your pain.

Chinese medicine has a couple of other methods for treating muscle knots. One is a kind of bodywork, called Tui Na. To you it will feel like a kind of massage, but the practitioner is employing a number of manipulations to the affected muscle to increase circulation, break up the adhesion, relieve pain, and loosen up your muscle.



Compounds in lavender oil have antifungal, antimicrobial, and antibiotic effects.

studied 17 women in their early 20s with mild to moderate premenstrual symptoms. The women inhaled either lavender or water. They found that inhaling lavender for just 10 minutes significantly increased the activity of the parasympathetic nervous system compared to the water. In addition, psychological tests on the women revealed that lavender significantly decreased feelings of depression/dejection and confusion for as long as 35 minutes after inhalation.

4. Reduce Pain

Lavender is proven to relieve pain. In one study, 106 patients undergoing peripheral venous cannulation (PVC) were divided into two groups. PVC is a procedure in which a tube is placed inside a vein to draw blood or administer fluids, medications, nutrition, chemotherapy, or blood products. One group of patients received lavender aromatherapy and the other received sham aromatherapy. After the PVC procedure, the pain scores of the lavender group were significantly lower than the placebo group. In addition, patient satisfaction was significantly higher in the lavender group.

Kidney dialysis is another painful procedure that can cause patient anxiety during the insertion of dialysis needles. In a study from Iran, 34 hemodialysis patients were divided into three groups. The first group received topical lavender essential oil during the insertion of their arterial

needles for dialysis. The second group received no intervention and the third group received a water placebo. Pain intensity dropped 37 percent for the lavender group compared to the no-intervention group, and dropped 31 percent compared to the placebo group.

And, in a recent study in the Journal of Alternative Complementary Medicine, 100 patients aged 19-64 years with kidney stones were divided into two groups. One group received the standard treatment of 75 mg of diclofenac sodium, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug. The second group received lavender aromatherapy in addition to the diclofenac. Pain measured 30 minutes after the treatments was significantly lower in the group using lavender aromatherapy.

5. Lessen Stress

In addition to relieving anxiety and pain, lavender oil can help reduce physiological signs of stress. In a study of 20 healthy volunteers, Thai researchers compared lavender to sweet almond oil. They measured the subjects' blood pressure, heart rate, respiratory rate, and skin temperature to determine the level of stress in the autonomic nervous system. In addition, subjects were asked to estimate their mood responses such as feeling pleasant or unpleasant, uncomfortable, sensual, relaxed, or refreshed.

The results revealed that inhaling lavender oil caused significant decreases in blood pressure, heart

rate, and skin temperature. In addition, the lavender group said they felt more active, fresher, and more relaxed than the almond oil group.

6. Clear Vaginal Yeast Infections

About 75 percent of women experience a vaginal candidiasis infection at least once in their lifetime. The culprit in 85-90 percent of these cases is the *Candida albicans* fungus. Conventional medicine uses the drug clotrimazole to treat vaginal infections. It has side effects like increased liver enzymes, painful urination, and depression.

In a recent study researchers compared lavender essential oil with clotrimazole on the *C. albicans* fungus in the lab. After 48 hours the fungal cell count was lower for lavender than for clotrimazole.

7. Heal Mouth Ulcers

Lavender oil has been shown to help heal mouth ulcers. In a study of 115 patients with recurrent aphthous ulcers, subjects were treated with lavender oil or placebo. The lavender group had a significant reduction in inflammation and ulcer size. In addition, the healing time was faster by two to four days in the lavender group. And pain relief was noted from the first dose of lavender.

While some of the studies above are small and offer limited affirmation, lavender's soothing scent and medicinal quality have been treasured and passed down by humans around the world for centuries in the Mediterranean, Arabia, China, and beyond.

When buying lavender essential oil, look for an organic, therapeutic-grade product. Use it topically on the skin—full-strength or mixed with a carrier oil such as sesame or coconut oil.

You can also rub two or three drops of lavender essential oil in your palms and then inhale the oil. Or add a couple of drops to your washing machine. You can also add four to six drops to a spray bottle with about a cup of water. Mist your skin or room.

To learn more about natural, healing substances like lavender essential oil, use the GreenMedInfo.com research dashboard.

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TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

What You Need to Know About Muscle Knots

When our muscle tissue binds, we can use massage, acupuncture, and physical therapy to help relieve them

LYNN JAFFEE

It's the rare person who can say that they've never had a muscle knots. These sometimes painful lumps in your muscles can be puzzling—where did they come from, and how do you get rid of them? Here are some things to know that will help you understand what muscle knots are, how you got them, and what you can do to deal with them.

What are muscle knots?

Your muscles are made of sheets of fibers, which are layered one on top of another. Most of those muscle sheets run in different directions from the layer above or below. In order to do their job of moving your skeletal structure, those muscles need to be flexible and elastic. Muscle knots are the result of injury, overuse, static positions, and even chronic dehydration. Those normally pliable muscles begin to adhere to the adjoining sheets creating a knot, which limits movement and function in the muscle.

Muscle knots can show up in almost any of the large muscles in your body. However, they're most commonly found in your upper back, neck, shoulders, and buttocks.

They feel like a thick lump in the muscle, and can be painful or not. Large muscle knots in the wrong places can cause migraines, back spasms, shoulder, and neck pain, and compress nerves.

When do muscle knots become a problem?

Most of us have muscle knots, and for some, they're not a problem. However, large knots can become sensitive and painful. The knots that are painful or irritable are also called trigger points—basically a knot in the muscle, but you can put your finger right on it because it hurts. Over time, this knot or trigger point can become a permanent adhesion, create scar tissue in the muscle, and limit your range of motion.

How do you prevent muscle knots?

The most common site of muscle knots are your trapezius muscles, at the top of your shoulders; a by-product of too much computer time or stress. Working on your posture, taking frequent breaks from the computer, and managing your stress can help limit muscle knots. Staying physically active is also helpful in limiting muscle knots, however, be mindful of repetitive

Working on your posture, taking frequent breaks from the computer, and managing your stress can help limit muscle knots.

Another technique that may be helpful is called Gua Sha. This involves using a special tool to abrade the skin over the knot. This creates a red mark on your skin that looks a little like a bruise, but it helps to increase circulation, loosen muscle fibers, relieve pain, and promote healing of the muscle. While Gua Sha may sound painful, most people say it feels good because it's addressing the knot directly, and it's effective.

In Chinese medicine, muscle knots are considered to be an area of stagnation, in which natural flow is hampered.

Physical therapy may also be a good choice in treating painful knots. A good physical therapist can assess the underlying cause of your knot and treat it through massage and manipulations. They will also likely send you home with stretches and exercises to help you loosen up and strengthen the affected muscles. Physical therapy can be especially effective when combined with acupuncture.

A series of sessions with a skilled massage therapist can also be effective. Massage helps to boost circulation in the muscle, increase range of motion, relieve pain, and loosen up adhesions.

The bottom line is that it's common to have muscle knots. However, when a

muscle knot becomes painful, limits your range of motion, or hampers your ability to be active, it's time to get some help. A good acupuncturist, physical therapist, or massage therapist can help relieve the pain and loss of function associated with muscle knots.

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

DMYTRO ZINKEVYCH/SHUTTERSTOCK



The trapezius muscles at the top of your shoulders are a frequent spot for muscle knots, a by-product of too much computer time or too much stress.



Children and adolescents should be active for a minimum of 60 minutes a day.

MADE TO MOVE

How to Keep Quarantined Children Active and Healthy

Play is an essential way children learn and grow—especially during a pandemic lockdown

TEGWEN GADAIS & MAUD DESCHENES

The battle against the spread of COVID-19 requires social distancing or confinement that radically changes the way we live with our children and adolescents.

As physical and health education teachers responsible for the health education courses offered at the University of Quebec in Montreal for future teachers, we have some advice for families living in confinement to help parents and children lead the healthiest and most active lives possible.

First of all, always keep this formula in mind: move, eat well, sleep, relax, manage screen time, play.

Continue to Be Active

Adopting or maintaining physical activity is essential, even in a confined space. Children and adolescents should be active for a minimum of 60 minutes a day as recommended by the CDC and WebMD.

These can be intense moments of activity such as simple games—playing hide and seek, making a fort in the basement, inventing a route in the alley, throwing a basketball, kicking a soccer ball, playing ball hockey in the street, dancing, biking or skateboarding.

You can also ask your child to explain the latest game they learned at recess or in their health and physical education class and try it out with them. The possibilities are endless!

Take Active Breaks

As well, you can alternate with fine motor activities such as writing, painting, drawing, modeling, sewing or crafts. These activities should be interspersed with breaks and ideally be done in several short periods of five to 15 minutes rather than in one long 60-minute period. What is important is that the activities are diversified and regular.

Other options exist for getting young people moving, such as walking and household chores. Additional strategies can be found online, such as active breaks with GoNoodle, Wixx (in French) and H2GO, for example.

Be careful to choose your breaks carefully. Some of them are more useful or even more fun. Finally, free play outside, in a backyard, garden or in the street, without contact with others, is another possibility.

There are also many online resources for parents, such as yoga, pilates, CrossFit and circuit training at home (in French).

Healthy, Balanced Eating

Boredom and withdrawal can easily lead to complacency in a confinement situation. This is an excellent opportunity to cook as a family and to learn how to eat healthily with our children by offering them recipes adapted to their abilities and needs. A balanced menu can be planned ahead of time by including the necessary groceries according to your budget.

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MADE TO MOVE

How to Keep Quarantined Children Active and Healthy

Play is an essential way children learn and grow—especially during a pandemic lockdown

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The Canadian Food Guide can be an excellent home reference tool for children. It is also possible to introduce children to new foods, our own cultural specialties, and other foods through well-known sites such as Ricardo.

For parents who like to experiment, this is the opportunity to try out new recipes or to dust off the old recipe books that are lying around in your library. It's also an opportunity to make your children aware of the importance of gardening, food waste, recycling and composting.

As the food guide indicates, we must encourage diversity, reasonable portions, meals in good company and the pleasure of enjoying our food. In this time of confinement and upheaval of routine, the temptation to lose good habits can be great.

Get a Good Night's Sleep

The current crisis requires a major change of pace. For the well-being of all (parents and children alike), it is important to get enough sleep.

A tired child is under stress and will be more irritable, which can have an impact on the whole family.

It is best to keep the usual bedtime and wake-up times, with a preference for quiet activities (without screens) just before bedtime.

Reduce Sources of Stress

Isolation is a difficult time because we need to exchange with others. It is important to find other ways to do this, such as organizing a meal for friends via



Skype, FaceTime or Messenger, calling or writing messages to family and friends.

There may also be times when your children experience stress, boredom or mental exhaustion related to the confinement situation. It is important to give them periods of rest, alone and quiet.

Pay attention to the well-being of all family members. Organize breaks during the day when you find that motivation is no longer there. It's good to change tasks after 30 or 45 minutes or when you think that the screen time has lasted long enough. Read something other than the news and allow everyone to quietly retreat to a room in the house when necessary.

Manage Screen Time Well

Exposure of young people to screens has the potential to

This is a good time to develop children's curiosity and independence, which will enable them to enjoy classes even more when school starts again.

change their behavior and can have a negative effect on sleep.

In this regard, studies show that the more time spent in front of the screen, the greater the risk of suffering from depressive symptoms, anxiety, and obesity in the longer term.

For good TV management, educator Philippe Meirieu suggests adopting the following formula: choose in advance, watch with, and talk after.

We must change our children's relationship with screens. First, help them choose screen content and formats, watch videos or play games with them and then discuss what has been viewed.

This accompaniment allows children to distance themselves from the content they consume, to criticize it, and to reflect on it. Finally, we must manage what Meirieu called the "available

brain time" for learning so that children can continue to learn and not just be entertained.

Learn by Playing

Young people learn first and foremost through play. This can be free play outside, board games or directed play under parental supervision. Above all they must keep their motivation and confidence.

A multitude of games and activities help consolidate what has been learned at school. Cooking, arts and crafts, and physical activity are extraordinary opportunities for children to confront problems, look for ways to solve them and apply their knowledge.

This is a good time to develop children's curiosity and independence, which will enable them to enjoy classes even more when school starts again. The most important thing is that children grow up playing and being active.

If the situation becomes difficult, or your days seem long and complicated, or you find that your children need special support, don't stay isolated. Check out blogs or chat virtually with people in similar situations. A wide range of resources are available to support the physical and mental well-being of your family unit during this time of crisis.

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Giving Care in the Midst of a Pandemic Crisis

Home health aides, nannies, and other care workers are stepping up amid the hardship

CATHERINE YANG

When New York started shutting down in the midst of a pandemic, Magueda St. Jean's first thought was that now more than ever she had to be strong, especially for her patients.

"I had to be strong and take life by its horns. I knew, at this time—now—I'm needed more than anything," said St. Jean, a home health aide who has been working with Royal Care in New York City since last December. Caring for others has been a lifelong passion of St. Jean's, who was previously a nanny for children with autism, and

St. Jean says she has been driven by compassion more than ever at this time, in order to stay present for her patients.

a patient companion for older patients with autism at the Long Island Jewish Hospital.

Home health aides help patients who need to stay at home with a variety of things, including preparing meals, bathing, light housework. These infirm and elderly patients are a vulnerable population, so aides are required to take additional steps during this time, as the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) virus commonly known as novel coronavirus is widely contagious.

Driven by Compassion

Just as important as the physical health and safety protocol St. Jean abides by—donning a mask and gloves, sanitizing, not sitting while she commutes by subway or

train—is the emotional support that St. Jean provides the patients she helps during this time.

"Their reactions in general have been quite frightening unfortunately," she said.

St. Jean currently cares for one patient with dementia and another with Alzheimer's, and watching the news has become a great source of fear for them in recent weeks. Her own level of calmness and presence becomes a barometer for the patients, having great influence over their emotions. So St. Jean says she has been driven by compassion more than ever at this time, in order to stay present for them.

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Fevers of 39.5C (103.1F) were linked to better survival and quicker recovery.

THE ROOT CAUSE

Stop Fighting Your Immune System

How fevers and Finnish saunas can help the body battle a virus

ARMEN NIKOGOSIAN

Important aspects of our immune system have gone overlooked within the current dominant practice of allopathic medicine. One of these aspects is fever. Sometimes we need a different way of looking at something to recognize its value.

So with that in mind, let's look at what an "externally-induced fever" can do for the body, according to modern science. Understanding this might help us pause before seeking treatments to suppress a fever that is not actually threatening our well-being. In fact, it could be preserving it.

So what do I mean by an externally-induced fever? It's a fever that comes from outside the body rather than inside. Basically, it means we heat up the body, like in a sauna. Remarkably, these two types of fever have very similar impacts on our health. And these benefits are something people have known for generations.

The Finnish sauna, Russian banya, Japanese mushi-buro, and Korean jimjilbang are all examples of traditional practices with solid scientific backing. In these similar traditions, a person is exposed to extreme hot temperatures followed by a rapid cooling. Both the heating aspect and the cooling aspect have unique impacts on our immune system. Research has found that imposing dramatic body temperature changes can improve immune function, specifically the type of immune function which many viruses including COVID-19 are known to attack.

Immunity: Learning a Disease

We have two broad categories to our immune systems: the acquired and innate. The acquired immune system comes into play after a new infection comes on the scene and "surprises" us. Since this

new bug has never been encountered before, our immune system has not had time to recruit immune cells to mount an adequate defense. However, once the infection has run its course, the acquired immune system will remember that particular pathogen and we will be protected for many years into the future.

So why do we get that feeling of malaise, fatigue, fever and all the other symptoms of a cold and flu? Those symptoms come from the innate immune system. This branch of the immune system is not specific to the particular pathogen and basically reacts to certain pathogen-associated molecular patterns (PAMPs). The immune system recognizes a PAMP as dangerous and immediately mounts an attack—regardless of whether it is familiar with the pathogen or not.

Generally speaking, the younger and healthier the individual is, the more aggressive their innate immune response will be and the more likely they will successfully fight off the invader.

Some PAMPs are recognized sequences of RNA in COVID-19 and influenza viruses, as well as unique components in the cell walls of yeasts and chains of sugars strung together outside pathogenic bacteria, called lipopolysaccharide.

These unique microbial identifiers are

all recognized as PAMPs by our innate immune system.

It is this non-specific early response to a variety of invaders which determines the severity of symptoms we may experience early in the course of infection. Generally speaking, the younger and healthier the individual is, the more aggressive their innate immune response will be and the more likely they will successfully fight off the invader.

An Unknown Virus

I need to preface this discussion with a little science, so bear with me.

There are no randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trials specifically dealing with treatments for COVID-19 though one study did find the flu vaccine could make one more susceptible to the virus.

These studies take time and while they are sure to emerge shortly, the rapid development of this pandemic has just not given us this time. Further studies are needed for everything specifically relating to COVID-19.

But that doesn't mean there are not some important lessons we have learned generally about dealing with viruses or how our immune system functions.

One of our primary defenses against viruses is Type I interferon, a cytokine, or immune protein. It is responsible for activating our non-specific innate immunity when the genetic material of PAMPs, such as COVID-19, are identified. When infected cells secrete interferon, this protein signals the healthy cells around the infected cell to prepare to take on the invader.

We know of many similarities between COVID-19 and the other novel coronaviruses of the 21st century such as SARS and MERS. In a review performed in March 2020 at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand, researchers found that this group of viruses actually interfered with activation of our innate immune systems by suppressing interferon secretion early in the course of disease.

This means no immediate immune response and all those symptoms created by our immune response. This explains the high rate of asymptomatic carriers, those that don't show symptoms, who later experience a full-blown case of the disease. It also explains the overall mild nature of the disease in children and young adults.

Children and young adults tend to have a more aggressive innate immune response but this response wanes with age and chronic disease. An analysis of MERS patients who died revealed they had a significantly lower innate immune response due to lower interferon levels than patients who recovered.

The cells that make the compounds that activate our innate immunity are called monocytes and natural killer cells or NK cells. Both of these immunity cell types appear to be depressed and deficient early in the disease course of COVID-19 infected patients.

Hot and Cold

One of the key features of our innate immune response is increased body temperature or fever. Fever burns off pathogens. Fevers of 39.5C (103.1F) were linked to better survival and quicker recovery. Researchers found that a fever could activate monocytes.

And, despite popular belief, short periods of cold exposure did not actually lower immune response. On the contrary, a 1999 study found that cold exposure could stimulate immunity in much the same way fever does.

So when your immune system mounts that fever early in the course of an infection, it is doing exactly what it has been designed for millions of years to do. That means the best thing you can do is not get in its way.

There are always exceptions to every statement and only you and your doctor will know the nuances of your particular metabolism. There are specific signs and symptoms associated with fever which require immediate medical attention. What I am trying to dissuade you from is the knee-jerk reaction to treat the fever. You're not necessarily treating the illness, instead you are blunting your immune response. In most cases, fever is one of the best tools in our immune toolbox.

Unfortunately, many of us have been conditioned to immediately reduce our temperatures at first sign of an increase. We've even included the quasi-medical terminology of "low-grade fever" which generously includes any temperature deviation between 98.7F up to 100.4F. The accepted medical definition of a fever is a body temperature of greater than 100.4F. Normal body temperature

Research has found that imposing dramatic body temperature changes can improve immune function, specifically the type of immune function which many viruses including COVID-19 are known to attack.

is defined as a static 98.6F but this is a dynamic number which may deviate for a variety of reasons—an activated immune system being only one possible explanation.

Also, I should make an important disclaimer: This article isn't intended to guide you in how to treat yourself if you think you are sick—particularly in today's world of pandemic viruses. I don't know you or your general health. If you are seeking medical advice, get it from your doctor, preferably one who also understands and incorporates the important role of your body's immune system.

Sauna Science

That said, just as fever is a critical way your body fights infection, the Finnish sauna and its other cultural equivalents reveal another treatment course, though one largely unavailable to people in the United States, especially during the pandemic. (Hot baths can work as well, but because water is on the skin, getting it too hot can cause burns. This makes it is not as effective at raising body temperature safely.)

This practice involves spending time in an extremely hot sauna with temperatures upwards of 200F followed by a rapid cool down by plunging into cold water or even snow in some cases.

This practice has long been considered beneficial to health in the Finnish culture. While similar practices are also followed in Russia, Japan, and Korea, I am focusing on the Finnish sauna simply because of its high rate of use by its people. In a nation of about 5.5 million people, there are roughly 2 million saunas.

A thirty-year-old study from the Annals of Medicine looked at sauna bathing and the incidence of common cold, which non-COVID-19 varieties of coronavirus are frequently responsible for. They found that the group of people who regularly used saunas had half the incidence of the common cold over the three month period that they followed them for in the study than the non-sauna users.

In a study from 1999 in the Journal of Applied Physiology, researchers found that acute cold exposure also had an immune-stimulating effect. That effect was specifically seen on monocytes, NK cells and other immune cells and proteins that are all known to be key players in the innate immune response.

Looking at the latest COVID-19 data, Finland has far more favorable COVID-19 numbers than its other Nordic counterparts of Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Finland's total COVID-19 caseload per million people at nearly half and its death rate per million people is nearly one third when compared to other Nordic countries. Interestingly, when we look at these same epidemiological metrics for Russia, Japan, and Korea, they are also more favorable than their geographic neighbors.

My comparison here is far from a scientific study. There are many confounding factors that could explain these differences. But it is food for thought. The scientific data on immune response from increasing core body temperature clearly shows improvements in the particular immune cell which the COVID-19 virus is known to suppress early in its disease course. Whether that increase in core temperature is produced internally from fever or externally from sauna, the effect is essentially the same. When compounded by the additional immune-stimulating effect of acute cold exposure, the impact of spurring the immune system to action can be even more pronounced.

So the next time you think you may be coming down with something, don't fight against your own immune system. That fever may actually be helping you. From a preventative lifestyle perspective, you can replicate this elegant immune response. This seems to be something the Finns, Russians, Japanese, and Koreans have known for centuries. This might even partly explain why many of us crave a hot bath when we're under the weather.

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.



Snacks can seem to ease emotional pain, but really they just temporarily distract us from it.

Halting This Unintended Drawback of Self-Isolation

Eating is an easy distraction when you are trapped at home, but overeating comes with consequences

DEVON ANDRE

Has there ever been an easier time for stress eating? All of this time at home has made it pretty easy to sneak off to the fridge or pantry throughout the day for a little treat.

While it's certainly tempting to get a little bit of stress relief with a few cookies, chocolate almonds, or a spoonful of ice cream, too much emotional eating can be tough from a physical and mental health standpoint.

Stress eating unhealthy or comfort foods can promote hormonal imbalance, rollercoaster emotions, and contribute to inflammation, high cholesterol, elevated blood sugar, and weight gain.

Finding ways to avoid stress eating can help promote better physical and mental health during self-isolation, and may help lower cholesterol, reduce blood pressure, and improve other facets of your health during these trying times.

One way to ensure you're not making repeated trips to the kitchen is by staying occupied.

- **Set a schedule:** One way to ensure you're not making repeated trips to the kitchen is by staying occupied. Set a schedule with chunks of your day allocated to work, exercise, relaxation, eating, cooking, and chatting with friends.
- **Plan your food intake:** Ordering or shopping for high-nutrient healthy items is another way to limit the eating—or at least mitigate its negative effects. Plan healthy meals and have snacks like yogurt, nuts, fruit, and veggies when the hunger pangs hit.
- **Find other outlets:** Eating is by far the easiest response to stress and anxiety, but it's by no means the only one. Exploring calming activities like knitting, yoga, exercise, reading, or arts and crafts can all help you calm down and reduce food intake.
- **Stay connected:** When you're feeling bored or anxious, don't hesitate to call a friend. Even using video conferencing to bring friends together for a glass of wine, movie night, or dinner is worthwhile. And if you just need to have a serious talk, phone a friend to ease your nerves.

Eating is a strong reaction to stressful times but can cause far more harm than good. Finding alternative ways to spend your time and calm anxieties can promote better health and potentially improve any health conditions you might be suffering from.

Setting boundaries to control eating is yet another way you can use self-isolation as a tool toward self-improvement.

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.

Research shows that meditation can help with the chronic stress triggered by the collective freak-out so many are currently experiencing.



A woman doing Falun Dafa meditation. After an experiment with brain scans, a group of longtime meditators could better manage their reaction to stress and relax the body out of an unnecessary immune response.

Keeping the Mind from Undermining the Body

Meditation has biochemical impact that can improve immune function

CONAN MILNER

Within the span of just a few months, the world has descended into a worldwide pandemic. As the number of deaths, scandals, and social restrictions escalate, it's anyone's guess as to what will happen next.

The sense of uncertainty can be stressful, scary, even infuriating. These feelings are a natural reaction to a crisis. But if left to fester, they can take a toll on our immune systems right at the time when we need them most. Since the early 2000s, several hundred studies have shown that those who carry chronic stress are more vulnerable to infection.

So how can we reliably rein in our anxiety? Instead of seeking outside distractions—like constantly scanning the news, and indulging our vices in order to cope—consider that true peace of mind only comes from within.

A Montana resident and mother, Rene Nazelrod, believes that meditation can not only heal our bodies, but the planet at large. With a daughter living in Japan, a son who is moving to California, and an elderly mother with cancer, Nazelrod admits to moments of panic and worry about how the pandemic will affect her family. She says meditation tames her inner chaos, and she encourages everyone to join her for at least one minute a week.

Nazelrod's Instagram page, "The One Minute Movement" promotes the activity—a one-minute meditation every Friday at 5 p.m. Mountain Daylight Time. You don't have to sign up, there's no Zoom conference to join, and no dogma to adopt. Participation is free, and the time commitment is short.

"When I first posted this, I had friends texting me who I hadn't talked to in a long time saying, 'Not only did I think about it before 5 o'clock on Friday, I thought about it the whole next day,'" Nazelrod said.

Nazelrod has meditated regularly for years. The idea for a collective meditation minute came to her when she heard that basketball games were canceled.

Prayer—a kind of meditation with intention—has also been shown in some studies to have psychological and social benefits.

"I used to watch basketball with my husband when I was pregnant with my son. And it really hit me. Think of the collective energy when you're at a basketball game. You're in the final minute. It's the last free throw. You can cut the energy with a knife. I thought, we can do that in the world by all coming together for one minute and starting to meditate and pray," she said.

While the idea may seem naïve and blindly optimistic, research shows that meditation can help with the chronic stress triggered by the collective freak-out so many are currently experiencing.

The activity might not be approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, but scientists have shown that it can improve our mental and physical health.



When stress becomes chronic, it can lead to a higher risk of cancer, accelerated aging, pain, and depression.

Although meditation is typically seen as an activity of the mind, it may also help improve our body, leading to better immune function, through stress reduction. Several studies over the last few decades suggest that meditation can ease many of the symptoms caused by chronic stress, such as depression, anxiety, pain, and insomnia.

A 2017 review published in the journal *Frontiers in Immunology* found that meditation and other mind-body interventions can actually "reverse" the molecular reactions in our DNA which cause illness.

Once again, stress is at the heart of this process. When people are exposed to a stressful event, their "fight-or-flight" response is triggered. This increases the production of a molecule called nuclear factor kappa B (NF-kB), which regulates how our genes are expressed.

NF-kB activates genes to produce proteins called cytokines that cause inflammation at the cellular level. This reaction is useful as a short-lived fight-or-flight reaction. But when stress becomes chronic, it can lead to a higher risk of cancer, accelerated aging, pain, and depression.

Researchers have found that meditators exhibit the opposite effect—a decrease in production of NF-kB and cytokines. This leads to a reversal of the pro-inflammatory gene expression pattern and a risk

reduction of inflammatory diseases.

Meditation leaves "a molecular signature in our cells, which reverses the effect that stress or anxiety would have on the body by changing how our genes are expressed," says Ivana Buric, the review's lead investigator from the Brain, Belief, and Behaviour Lab in Coventry University's Centre for Psychology, Behaviour, and Achievement, in a release.

Prayer—a kind of meditation with intention—has also been shown in some studies to have psychological and social benefits.

"I understand that there are skeptics who will say, 'if this doesn't cure coronavirus tomorrow, then it didn't work.' Well, we don't know exactly what it does," Nazelrod said. "Why can't we just do good without being connected to the outcome?"

Meditation has been known to benefit mind and body for ages, but the scientific understanding of how it works remains murky. Some suggest that meditation's power is merely the result of the placebo effect—the idea that simply because you believe, a certain amount of well-being will result.

Drugmakers typically look at the placebo effect as more of a statistical inconvenience than an actual benefit, but the phenomenon studied on its own has shown in published research to have great potential for healing.

"Let's turn that belief to ourselves and to the world," Nazelrod said.

How to Do It

Meditation is simply a method to calm the mind. The idea is that if your mind is clear and content, you'll make better choices, and avoid responding to life in an agitated and reactionary manner.

It's basically the opposite of what advertisers and some politicians do when they try to get you angry about or lusty after whatever suits their agenda, be it dissuading you from voting for the other guy, or buying that amazing new product that's supposed to change your life.

You don't need a study to see that the better people are at remaining calm and clear in the midst of a crisis, the better world we're bound to have. Even so, meditating for the first time can seem silly, awkward, and intimidating. How should you sit? What are you supposed to be thinking? What if your mind won't stop racing?

Nazelrod offers a simple technique for beginners: focus on your breathing, and concentrate on slowing it down.

Since the goal of meditation is a quiet mind, you might think it's better to learn it in a moment of calm, where you don't have to work so hard to drown out the nagging

worries that can infect your inner dialogue. But experts say the opposite is true. According to psychoanalyst and Buddhist meditation teacher Dr. Pilar Jennings, crisis offers a unique opportunity to turn inward. Jennings will offer a class later this year on coping with anxiety in a time of crisis.

"One of the interesting things about acute experience is that it frequently inspires people who didn't have any prior conscious interest in spirituality to come to some new longing for a sense of meaning and refuge," Jennings says.

"It gets back to that old adage: 'There are no atheists in a foxhole.' If the suffering becomes acute enough, those very deep layers of the psyche that push for meaning will start to surface. People start to wonder: What is this life about? How have I been living it? Who is really there for me?"

When fears and anxieties start to emerge, Jennings says don't try to stifle them. Just observe them. She says when people can make room for these feelings rather than trying to eradicate them, their minds become recalibrated, and begin to relax.

"Trying to get rid of those feelings is what fuels things like addiction, binge eating, excessive drinking," she said.

Some meditation practices rely on breathing exercises, chanting, drumming, or some other technique to help get you in the zone. One reliable path to stillness that everyone can call on is nature.

Jennings says people can look to nature for meditation guidance because it allows you to become aware that you are part of a larger reality that is much more than any of your individual concerns or worries.

"And that's a relief," she said. "It's a little counter-intuitive, because we often think that if we stop worrying about ourselves then everything will fall apart. But when we can settle that worry, and it happens very easily when we're staring at a beautiful body of water or walking in a park, there is a sense of being part of the natural world. "And, of course, the world will continue without us."

Another helpful aspect of nature in guiding the journey inward is that it slows things down. Tuning in to the waves, wind rustling leaves, or the song of a bird can be a balm to the racing mind. When we succumb to nature's rhythm, we start to notice more because there's less pressure. We can think things through in ways our day-to-day pace might not allow.

"The whole nervous system starts to feel more regulated," Jennings said.

These lessons from the natural world echo the same theme found in most spiritual traditions: self-transcendence. Although meditation starts with a journey inward, it often leads to ideas about what we can do to alleviate the suffering of others and make the world a better place.

"It's about feeling into a bigger reality that helps soften that grip on self. This situation offers people lots of opportunities to do service and to orient toward the collective," Jennings says.

Anxiety is, by contrast, an isolating affair.

When we can connect to the larger scope of life, it naturally has a positive effect on our mood and our well-being. While current physical distance requirements restrict some of our abilities to connect, Nazelrod says we can still join together in meaningful ways.

"No matter what our belief structure, we can unite," she said. "We need to connect to each other. We need to connect to our surroundings. We need to connect with our world. And the only way to do that is to get connected with ourselves again."

Opportunities for Compassion

It's hard to say what might happen when people come together in meditation for a single minute. But you can start to see benefits on a small scale. The more you meditate, the better you can apply that calm yet focused mindset to the rest of your life, even in times of crisis. As a result, you're more likely to be patient with neighbors, strangers, friends, family members, or anyone you encounter who is agitated or upset.

Instead of trying to offer direct advice about what to do and how to stop it, Jennings suggests just listening to where they're at.

The same principle applies to yourself. If and when you get rattled, or make poor decisions because you're reacting out of fear or anger rather than reason, don't beat yourself up or try to bury it. Instead, take a deep breath, and just observe it. This makes it much easier to let it go.

"Practice some self-compassion," Jennings said. "Actually, it's an ethical act right now, because it will have ripple effects on being able to access that compassion more easily on behalf of others."

Eating Walnuts Preserves Youthful Telomere Strands

Research findings on the benefits of nutrient dense foods affirm diet as a key to anti-aging

If you care about aging gracefully, you will want to learn how to protect your telomeres. Like the plastic tip on the ends of your shoelaces, telomeres keep DNA strands from unraveling—and eating walnuts is a great way to keep telomeres laced tight.

Science has established that diet plays a role in the length and integrity of telomeres, affecting their vital role protecting the DNA information inside the nucleus of a cell.

In December 2018, a cross-functional team of researchers from Spain and California deepened this body of knowledge by publishing their research into the effects of eating walnuts on leukocyte telomere length, or LTL.

This opportunistic sub-study was conducted within a larger study called "Walnuts and Healthy Aging," a parallel trial conducted between Barcelona, Spain and Loma Linda University in California. The study's primary aim was to explore whether the inclusion of walnuts in the diet for two years would maintain LTL in cognitively healthy elders as compared to a control group that abstained from walnuts.

Walnuts and Telomeres: Partners in Healthy Aging

In this trial, walnuts comprised 15 percent of total caloric intake, equating 30–60 grams per day, based on the energy requirements of individuals in the experimental group.

The final participant pool was comprised of 169 cognitively healthy men and women between 63 and 79 years who were living independently and had met eligibility requirements after a clinical visit, physical examination and other exclusionary criteria were applied.

The final 169 subjects were randomized to the two diet groups and 162 completed the trial. There were two dropouts due to severe indigestion attributed to walnuts, while six participants had milder indigestion that was alleviated by reducing the walnut doses.

By the end of the trial, complete data on LTL, dietary anthropometrics and fatty acids were available for 149 participants: 80 in the experimental group consuming walnuts and 69 in the control or abstaining group.

Researchers assessed LTL at baseline and after two years on the experimental dietary protocols via blood samples drawn after an overnight fast. Serum lipid and glucose concentrations were determined by standard enzymatic methods in the hospital clinical laboratory. Telomere length quantification was carried out using high-throughput quantitative fluorescence microscopy.

After assessing the cumulative data, researchers concluded that there was a trend indicating that walnut consumption did preserve leukocyte telomere length in test subjects. Researchers called for a further study involving larger test groups and longer time periods, noting that positive dietary impact on health is cumulative over time.

Telomeres: The Forward Edge of Anti-Aging Science

With nearly 72 million baby boomers worldwide, the needs of the geriatric population are at the forefront of modern health care. The standard approach in anti-aging medicine is to replace diminishing hormones with synthetic or "bioidentical" versions.

Natural health devotees look to a nutrient-dense diet and supplementation to stimulate rapid cell turnover. Scientists on the fringes are developing even more controversial therapies involving genetic manipulation of DNA to try and stop the biological clock. With so much investment into the science of staying young, the discovery of telomeres may be the most valuable finding to date in the race to slow down the way your body ages.

Telomeres get shortened each time a cell replicates, eventually becoming too short to function properly, which correlates with declining health experienced as aging. Telomeres can also become damaged by poor lifestyle habits, such as smoking, obesity, unhealthy diet, and lack of exercise.

Walnuts Protect and Preserve Telomere Length

DNA information essentially writes the code for health or disease into every cell of your body, making the length and integrity of telomeres vital to healthy cell replication. Leukocytes are white blood cells that are found throughout your body and are a major part of your immune system response.

In humans, leukocyte telomere length (LTL) is positively correlated with lifespan, while shorter LTL is associated with an increased risk of age-related disease. Telomere length, or LTL, is therefore considered a reliable biomarker of aging.

Walnuts are an excellent source of polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs), a type of essential fatty acid that is known to have beneficial effects on the heart. Prior studies have been conducted on the effects of PUFA consumption on telomere length, however, the fatty acids were derived from fish oils, a source that is less sustainable than tree nuts.

Walnuts are a vegan source of PUFA containing the highest amount of alpha-linolenic acid and a rich matrix of antioxidants, namely polyphenols and vitamin E, which have also been related to maintained leukocyte telomere length when included in the diet.

There are dozens of reasons to eat more walnuts. They benefit the heart, brain, bones and more, and have been shown to reduce the risk of certain cancers. Walnuts can even help improve the way you respond to stress. To learn more about the health-boosting power of this beneficial tree nut, and to explore further ways you can protect your telomeres, explore the thousands of scientific articles and natural health abstracts on GreenMedInfo.com.

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PIXABAY/CCO

Giving Care in the Midst of a Pandemic Crisis

Home health aides, nannies, and other care workers are stepping up amid the hardship

Continued from Page 9

"I make it a priority for me to come in, at a time like this, and put away all my gadgets, books, and newspapers and just be fully present with them going through this, and being sensitive to their emotions and how they feel about it," she explained. Just today she visited a patient, and after fixing breakfast and taking his medication as usual, he got very upset at the television and she quickly switched the program to something lighter that let him remember the good old days.

"It's something that's worrisome, with their psychological, mental, and emotional states. It's not just about doing tasks and getting them ready for their day."

But sometimes patients do want the news, and St. Jean does not want to keep them in the dark, and sometimes dementia patients need to be reminded why they should not leave the house. She will sit with them and read the news together, trying to make it a calming and enlightening experience rather than a stressful one or keep them in the dark about bad news.

"Even if they're quarantined, I like to let them know they're not the only ones going through it, and there's a lot of activities that you can do at home, even if you want to be out, or you just want everything to be back to the way it was," St. Jean said.

St. Jean is one of hundreds of aides in the city who continue to commute to visit the homes of home-bound, often elderly patients who need care.

"I feel honored to be a part of this and help and push America through," she said.

'Have the Heart to Help One Another'
Persaud Salita, another home health aide with Royal Care, has actually had a patient who tested positive for COVID-19.

"On the 23rd I went to work and saw that my patient was not feeling good," Salita said. The patient seemed feverish and her temperature turned out to be 102 degrees, and had to go to the ER. Because it was the contagious CCP virus, Salita could not go to emergency room with the patient.

Later that day, Salita got a call from the patient's niece telling her the patient tested positive for COVID-19.

It was shocking news, but Salita was not very moved, because she had been keeping up with the news and knew how pervasive the virus has been. She felt no fear for herself.

Salita ended up having no symptoms, so hospitals told her she did not need to be tested, but to self isolate for 14 days. Since then, the patient has been at the hospital



I feel honored to be a part of this and help and push America through.

Magueda St. Jean, home health aide with Royal Care in New York City

and is currently on oxygen, and Salita communicates with her regularly by phone, and has daily calls with her patient's niece. Salita returned to work on April 6 after being restless to do so.

"I feel 100 percent fine," she said with a laugh. "I need to get back to work, I would like to get up out of my bed and get on out there with my job."

Salita has had a passion for helping others ever since she helped take care of her brother as a child, and feels especially called to work with the elderly. She says her support system through this time has been her frequent calls with her many family members. She hopes others can help each other

out during this time as well, so as to not be overcome by fear.

"To be honest with you, I'm sad. I know a lot of people are going through a lot, and if there's one thing everybody could come together to do right now is to just have the heart to help one another," she said. "We never know what's going to come today, what's going to come tomorrow."

"I won't stress out over it, but the news is very sad, and my heart goes out to all the family members that lose their loved ones," Salita said.

'This Has Been So Wild'

Nannies are also essential caregivers during

Frontline staff working together to care for America.



COURTESY OF MAQUEDA ST. JEAN

Just as important as the physical health and safety protocol St. Jean abides by—donning a mask and gloves, sanitizing, not sitting while she commutes by subway or train—is the emotional support that St. Jean provides the patients she helps during this time.



Home health aide Magueda St. Jean will read a newspaper with a client to keep them up-to-date, but will also change the TV channel if a client is getting too upset at the news.

this time, though the rules vary by state.

"This has been so wild, I mean I could never have predicted in my life that it would be like this," said Katie Proviziano, founder of Westside Nannies, the largest nanny agency in Los Angeles. Things have been changing constantly since February, and Proviziano feels like she's working three jobs now, as she keeps up with updating regulation and passing on information and best practices to all the nannies and families in her network. "We've seen just dramatic changes in our business," Proviziano said.

Her agency provides services across the board, from babysitting to part-time, full-time, live-in, and many families have re-

quested their nannies to switch to live-in, so they can self-quarantine together, which is generally safer, but also because nannies are not considered essential workers in California right now unless they are either live-in, or working for parents who are essential infrastructure workers like ER doctors.

Changes began even before state mandates were settled on, with uncertainty and parents working from home and changing their regular schedules.

Then schools closed.

"And then that was huge," Proviziano said. Some parents could work from home but some wouldn't, and not everyone can work from home and handle childcare as well. "And then about a week after that, the governor said, don't expect schools to open again, your kids probably won't physically in school until the fall. And that was like a bomb that dropped across every single parents' radar. It was such a stark reality."

"And I think families are just wondering, how am I going to work myself? How do I work while taking care of my kids, while making sure they're doing their virtual schoolwork," she said. "And then at a point, the stay-at-home order is going to be lifted, and parents are going to be able to go into an office, but yet their kids are still not going to be in school."

Summer tends to bring an uptick in childcare need anyway, and California is currently dealing with a childcare conundrum as most facilities can't operate (just try social distancing small children).

"So now we're seeing families saying, 'I need to find a nanny from now until the fall,' which is a much longer time period, and it's also much higher costs for families because you require care longer," Proviziano said. Not every family who needs it can afford childcare and business has decreased as a result. Many parents are working at home and foregoing nanny services, or have been furloughed or lost their jobs and cannot afford childcare anymore. Many people in the industry are out of a job.

"They're worried, they're scared about everything that's going on, but we're also seeing such bravery," Proviziano said of the nannies. "They're really stepping up and accepting that they're going to take of the kids while the moms and dads are out fighting this thing."

Providing Stability

It's important that kids aren't sharing the fear, Proviziano said, which is something the agency talks about.

"We talked about how to talk about this age-appropriately, and also the big thing is to not have the kids sense the fear and the anxiety that we're all experiencing. Kids shouldn't have that burden on them," Proviziano said.

Jacqueline Castro is a nanny for a family in LA where the mom is an ER doctor and the dad is an acupuncturist. Castro has been focusing on creating new routines for the second-grader she takes care of.

"He's super smart," Castro said. "He's aware of what his parents do, and what his mom is dealing with, he knows what a virus is, what a pandemic is. He's even asked me, 'Are you afraid of my mom? Are you afraid of me? Are you afraid of my house?' And I told him 'I'm not afraid, but I need to take extra precautions,' so I'm extra aware of where

we're at, what we're doing in the house, and how clean we're being."

"He is, just like every child, they feed off their parents' energy. And a lot of parents are stressed out because this is a new for everyone. Everyone is learning how to adjust and they can feel that anxiety. Children can just feel that," she said.

Usually, when Mom gets home, they see her enter the house, in her scrubs, and greet her with a hug. Now the scrubs don't enter the house at all; she changes in the garage where there is an extra set of clothes, and Dad opens all of the doors for her until she makes it into the shower.

"So we don't even see her until she's done with all of that, and I feel like that takes 30 to 40 minutes," she said. Everyone is very aware of new routes and patterns in the house, and Castro has a set of "nanny clothes" she only wears at work as well, and her shoes stay outside. "She's [Mom] not allowed to come into the little boy's room. We have to go and out like it's very, very different now."

Castro's own schedule has changed dramatically as well. She is not living with the family, but her hours have doubled, as her mornings used to be free while the boy was in school, but now his mother is working many more hours than usual. Castro is a certified teacher and normally spends mornings preparing a curriculum and now she spends it at the family's house with the boy while the parents are at work.

"We have a different kind of routine now," Castro said. "I basically have to resort to pure creativeness—this is how we're going to come up with sounds and instruments, this is the next arts and crafts activity, and this is how I'm going to keep creative and just keep some kind of stability in his life."

"He's missing his regular schedule, he's missing his teachers, his friends, his regular piano, and all these things he's had, and he's aware, and I think that affects a lot of children at home," she said. "We try to keep a curriculum and a schedule and

always something that's just like we always did: we always have lunch at this time, we always have recess, this is piano time."

Castro says she is the "strict teacher" sort of nanny, always there to provide academic structure. But during these times, she has found herself trying to play a more comforting role.

"Because I'm aware of his feelings, and I'm aware he might have some kind of fear for his parents or his friends. So I'm finding myself being more nurturing," she said. Now she might watch a show together with the child, even though she would never have done that before. "I think parents are feeling guilty because they're letting their kids have iPads and TV time, and I think it's perfectly fine. I'm the one who never did that, but I now needed to give him some kind of sense of comfort and we can still go together and do this. It's okay. I think it's part of what he needs right now, and maybe all of us. We all need something that makes us feel better."

For Castro, being with the child and coming up with activities to do together has been a grounding force during this crisis.

"That makes me feel good. The fact that we're laughing on a daily basis with little games and scavenger hunts to just keep us both going. That keeps me going every day: children's laughter," she said.

On Netflix's 'Love Is Blind,' Mistaken Ideas Are the Villains

If our well-being comes from someone else, dissatisfaction and conflict will be a likely result

BARRY BROWNSTEIN

Like millions of others, I couldn't look away from Netflix's smash-hit reality show "Love Is Blind." The contestants were looking for love, but most seemed to hold mistaken beliefs about the nature of love.

With their attention riveted on who would make them happy and fulfill their needs, the contestants expressed their feelings:

You are the one who has the power to define my fate.

You were made in a factory put together for me.

He assured me that I will always make him happy, no matter what.

I've waited so long to find the perfect person.

I love the way he makes me feel.

Contestants endlessly dissected and measured both their feelings and those of their partner asking questions like, "Do you

Could a fundamental shift in orientation from a focus on being loved to loving have improved the outcomes for the 'Love Is Blind' contestants?



A focus on loving, instead on of being loved, could have improved the outcomes for the "Love Is Blind" contestants on Netflix.

still feel the same way you did last night about me?"

With so many mistaken ideas about love, the resulting train wreck was not a sur-

REUTERS/LUCY NICHOLSON

prise: One bride and two grooms were rejected at the altar.

Clinical psychologist Dr. Kelly Flanagan explains that feelings are not meant to be the control center in our lives:

"Our wisdom—or heart or soul or true self or center or divine ground, depending upon your culture or tradition—is meant to be the control center within us. It's the quiet space within us, which can calmly sort through all the chaotic

data of life, including our feelings, and suggest the most optimal path forward. When we run our feelings through this control center, we'll discover that some of our feel-

ings actually arise from the wisdom itself, but others do not."

Flanagan adds, "Love arises from wisdom, but infatuation does not."

In his classic book *The Art of Loving*, social psychologist Erich Fromm nails the mistaken idea about love: "Most people see the problem of love primarily as that of being loved, rather than that of loving, of one's capacity to love."

Fromm observes that many "are starved for [love]; they watch endless numbers of films about happy and unhappy love stories, they listen to hundreds of trashy songs about love." As the old song goes, "Feelings, nothing more than feelings."

The contestants, like many of us, were asking the wrong questions about marriage and love. Fromm writes, "Hardly anyone thinks that there is anything that needs to be learned about love."

Could a fundamental shift in orientation from a focus on being loved to loving have improved the outcomes for the "Love Is Blind" contestants?

The contestants, like many of us, were asking the wrong questions about marriage and love.

Jessica, derisively referred to as the villainous *Messica* on social media, is a contestant who left Mark at the altar. Mark, someone would have you believe, is a hero who valiantly tried to love but was rejected.

I saw it differently. Yes, Jessica mistreated Mark; she was not so secretly pining for another contestant, Matt Barnett. Yet, Mark treated Jessica badly as well.

Mark claimed he fell in love with Jessica instantly, "I loved you from the first time you said 'hey!'"

Some thought Mark offered Jessica love, but all I heard him offer was guilt. Mark's theme was, I've been so loving so why aren't you reciprocating. "I put my heart out there, and someone reciprocated it and then ripped it out for no reason," Mark whined.

To be sure, Mark was not the only person on the show victimized by their mistaken ideas.

Kelly left Kenny, the patient, and super nice guy, at the altar too. She too was still searching for better feelings when the season ended: "My feelings weren't as intense as his are for me."

Kenny might not have been Kelly's person, but Kelly will never find someone who can permanently fill the void she feels. Gently, Kelly's sister pointed out how

many times feelings of infatuation led Kelly astray. As the show ended, Kelly still hadn't learned the lesson about the nature of love.

Gianna, too, was continually taking her relationship temperature with Damien: "I lost my butterflies, and I'm trying to get them back."

Barnett, portrayed as an affable bro who married Amber, had this expectation: "I want to make sure it's going to be someone I'm going to be happy with forever."

Fromm would say if you are loving, happiness will be your reward. If you are full of expectations, suffering will be your companion. If our well-being arises from what someone else does or says, dissatisfaction and conflict will be the result.

Before season two of "Love Is Blind" is filmed, the producers might call in Dr. Flanagan to deliver a crash course on loving relationships. But then again, without conflict, the producers wouldn't have a show.

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A Break From FOMO

As the world hits ‘pause,’ we get a rare chance to see ourselves

SETH RILEY

Up until a month ago, it seemed like everyone else in the world was getting what we’ve always wanted.

Every time we opened social media, there they were: taking some awesome trip, fielding the opportunities we ought to have gotten, achieving what we only dream of.

Meanwhile, we sat on our couches, missing out on everything. Even worse, it felt as if this cycle would continue forever. Given the constant advance of technology, it seemed pretty impossible that any of this overwhelm would lessen anytime soon.

But these days, there is a lot less to miss out on. Everything has been canceled, and, for a while, we’re all living the same shut-in life.

It’s hard, in the thick of this global tragedy, to see many positives. So many people are horrifically sick, and so many others are reeling from the sudden loss of their livelihoods. Despite the many encouraging shifts in society—the refocus on community, the renewed sense of our shared humanity—this is just a tough, scary time.

Yet, as with any sort of catastrophic event, there are small mercies even in the midst of the anxiety and loss. And, to me, one of the most life-giving

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Now that our digital feeds are quieting down from the constant barrage of “everyone’s eating at cool restaurants, attending events, sitting on the beach, having the time of their lives, or buying that thing we’ve always wanted,” we’ve been given a precious opportunity.

We suddenly have the freedom to evaluate our lives with almost no external pressure to keep up.

All of the voices that tell us, 24/7, that we’re not enough are, to a large extent, gone.

For right now, we’re all relative equals living very similar lives. The celebrities we spend our days idolizing are stuck in their houses, too. They’re in their living rooms as we are in ours. Maybe we go out for a walk. Maybe we have to run out to Trader Joe’s. But, the rest of the time, we’re all just at home.

For the next while, there’s nothing we’re missing out on. If you have your

health, if you have a roof, and if you have people to love, you are incredibly blessed.

This is a rare chance to take stock. Through all of the anxiety, we still have the option to start practicing those values we usually ignore and, with all of the closures and cancellations, we have been given the blank-slate we can ever expect to receive.

Given the opportunity to clear the decks, to perform a hard reset on our lives, we can emerge from this tragic historical moment as better versions of ourselves.

But, to do this, we have to use this interim time well. We have to be willing to truly cut ties with our unhealthy patterns and to replace our taste for FOMO (fear of missing out)-driven distraction with something better. And, most important, we need to take a deep—and probably uncomfortable—dive into ourselves to root out those things holding us back from being who we are truly meant to be.

It’s often hard to make changes in our lives because we usually have the option not to. But tragedy has a way

of jarring us toward clarity. Now that everything has been paused, we have a chance to re-align our actions with our values.

So, what will we do?

We could begin with our families. We always claim that our families are our number one priority. Yet how often do we put them on the back burner?

We could refocus on our creativity, finding ways to use our talents to bring life to the people around us.

We could make time to slow down, to enjoy the many blessings in our lives, to spend less time looking at the horizon and more time enjoying the things immediately around us.

Only you can know the right answer.

Life is precious, beautiful, and limited.

Start being the you that you have been missing out on.

*Seth Riley is a writer and father of seven kids living in a 960ish-square-foot house. This article is republished from *Becoming Minimalist*.*

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