

THE EPOCH TIMES LIFE & TRADITION

Thor's talent as a storyteller and his perceptive grasp of America's struggles give his novels tremendous plausibility.



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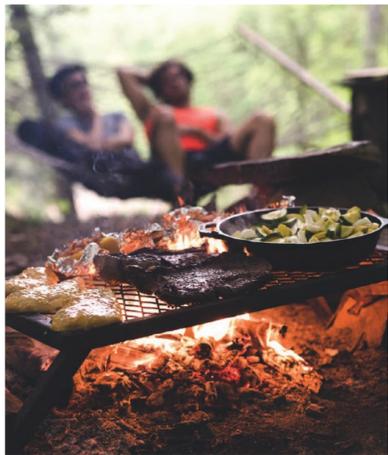
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ALL PHOTOS BY UNSPLASH UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE



(Above) A highlight of camping: good company around a fire. (Right) When you choose a campground, consider how much you want to rough it.



CAMPING GUIDE 101: Roughing It in the Great Outdoors

KEVIN REVOLINSKI

I remember the smell of grass and canvas, the songs of birds and cicadas, the dawn sunlight gracing the top of my tent as I lay there until the smell of bacon drifted through the campsite. I climbed out of my sleeping bag, pulled back the tent flaps, and ran the 20 feet to the back door for breakfast. That was camping when I was five, and I've loved sleeping outside ever since.

I ventured a wee bit farther from home over the years, however. The edge of the Grand Canyon, the bottom of Mexico's Copper Canyon, beachside on an island in the Andaman Sea, sandbars in the middle of rivers, or county parks right outside of town.

Near or far there is a campsite with your name on it—literally, in fact, if you book a reservation. While the pandemic has some of us climbing the walls, why not get outside them and go camping? Fresh air, spaced-out socially distant campsites, and some of what the Japanese call “shinrin-yoku” or “forest bathing”—time in green space that cleanses the mind and soothes the nerves.

Not an experienced camper? No problem. You don't need to be an old pro to load up the car and hit a national, state, county, or even city park with designated sites. Many parks are fully modern with electrical hookups, hot showers, and concessionaires for firewood, kayak rentals, and even Wi-Fi (but don't use it—you're getting away, right?). Even the most rustic (and cheap) national forest sites

often supply picnic tables,

fire rings, a water source, and vault toilets.

Where to Go

There are many things to consider when choosing a campground. How rough do you want to go? How far do you want to drive? Just down the road or clear across state lines to landscapes quite different from your own corner of the country. Is there swimming? Hiking? Is it accessible?

Each state's Department of Natural Resources keeps good online information about its parks, but county and city parks may require a bit more googling. The US Forest Service ([fs.usda.gov](https://www.fs.usda.gov)) and National Parks websites ([nps.gov](https://www.nps.gov)) are searchable by state, or if you know your destination, type the forest or park name in the search bar with “camping.” You can find bigger modern campgrounds and abundant rustic ones that might be nothing more than six sites in a loop or a short hike from a gravel parking lot.

Some sites may be first-come, first-served while others offer or even require reservations. Some states have farmed out reservations to services such as Going to Camp ([GoingToCamp.com](https://www.GoingToCamp.com)) or Reserve America ([ReserveAmerica.com](https://www.ReserveAmerica.com)) with both online and phone options. Other states have their own systems, such as Ohio, for example, with [ReserveOhio.com](https://www.ReserveOhio.com). When calculating camping costs be aware that many parks have vehicle or entry fees as well, which may be different for out-of-state plates.

Best Time to Go

Modern outdoor gear has pushed camping to a year-round activity, even snowy winter. Of course, summer is hugely popular, meaning you need to consider parks filling, especially on weekends. Autumn colors and the decline of mosquitoes make fall a great choice as well. Once in mid-September, I was the only camper on Rock

Island, a Wisconsin state park in Lake Michigan; it was paradise.

Bringing Pets

Pets are domesticated animals, so going camping is as much a break from the comfort zone for them as it is for us. Many parks have leash rules, and some places, such as picnic areas, beaches, designated nature trails, and playgrounds, don't allow them at all—although some parks do offer pet swim areas and off-leash areas. Many people love a happy pup, but a barking dog at night amid 100 other campers won't make you any friends.

Near or far there is a campsite with your name on it—literally, in fact, if you book a reservation.

Planning Well

I asked park rangers about the biggest mistakes campers make and a popular answer was “packing too much stuff.” Still, you do want to be prepared for various possibilities.

This may seem like an odd time to pull out Maslow's hierarchy of needs, but the base level of that pyramid is most important when you head into nature: physical needs, food, water, warmth, and rest. Carry a cooler with enough ice (depending on your distance from an ice source at the park) and sufficient food, and don't forget the necessary cooking utensils and a lighter or matches if you plan to build a fire. A grill may not be necessary if your park has them on their fire rings, and firewood is typically sold nearby.

Even the most rustic sites will have a potable water source for campers, even if just a hand-pump, but you'd need a vessel to carry that back to your site. Pack clothes for every eventuality: rain, a cool night (which becomes especially cooler if your clothes are wet or you've been swimming), and strong sun and heat.

And finally, shelter: Most tents are easy to

set up these days and waterproof. Consider sleeping pads for under your sleeping bag. I had no problem sleeping on rocks and tree roots when I was five; adult me, however, is a whiny bear to be around the morning after such sleep. Most sites have picnic tables (check to be sure) but you might want lawn or camp chairs for around the fire, or a hammock for lazing in the afternoon. Properly store food and dispose garbage; if your campsite is messy you may end up sharing your shelter with the local raccoons, or worse, a curious bear depending on where you're camping.

Maslow's next level of concern is safety. Pack your medicines and bandages, sunscreen and ointments or antibiotic creams for cuts, burns, and bug bites, and perhaps a whistle if you get lost hiking or tweezers for splinter or stinger removal. Have a plan for when the emergency exceeds your band-aids and aspirin, and know where to go in a lightning storm or tornado.

After the basics are covered, address those mental and emotional needs: bring good company, whether that's your favorite people, a good book, or a pair of binoculars and a bird guide. Then immerse yourself in the great outdoors. A 2017 review of 64 health studies conducted from 2007-2017 found broad agreement that “Nature therapy as a health-promotion method and potential universal health model is implicated for the reduction of reported modern-day ‘stress-state’ and ‘technostress.’” Just what the doctor ordered.

And one more thing: if you are not a morning person or have never been to the wild, maybe pack earplugs and a sleeping mask. Morning comes quickly enough, and while there may be no city noise, the hustle and bustle of the forest may surprise some. I assure you, it's all worth it.

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Traditions New and Old: Why They Matter

JEFF MINICK

At the beginning of “Fiddler On The Roof,” the Broadway musical set in a Jewish village in czarist Russia, the main character, a poor milkman named Tevye, compares the precarious position of the Jews in the village to a fiddler on a roof and asks the question, “And how do we keep our balance? That I can tell you in one word. Tradition!”

The traditions of Tevye's age—arranged marriages, sons following in their father's footsteps, daughters raised to become wives and mothers—are long gone, swept away by 150 years of emancipation, revolutions, wars, industrialism, and technology. Some cultures still hold to these traditions even today, but if you, as a Westerner, were to advocate arranged marriages (and surely some fathers look at their daughters and the boys they are dating, and wish this were a possibility), expect to find yourself savaged by a mob or at the least, to endure a lecture from your mother on the meaning of the word Neanderthal.

But does Tevye have a point? Do traditions help us keep our balance?

Traditions large and small help us keep our balance. They draw us together as families, as communities, and as Americans.

Traditions Lost

Some traditions come and go. When I was a kid, it was customary to lightly spank children on their birthday, one swat for each year of life and “one to grow on,” a ritual that never made any sense to me. In the Catholic Church, bishops once tapped teenage confirmandi on the cheek, a symbolic gesture reminding them that the practice of their faith may bring suffering. Was that the reason for the birthday spankings, to remind us that growing older brings more pain? Perhaps. At any rate, I am happy this practice has, at least in my own family, trotted off to the boneyard.

But what of other and more substantial lost traditions? Did they keep us from slipping from rooftops? In rural America, it was once the custom for family members young and old to share a large midday

meal on Sunday. A chicken was slaughtered, plucked, and roasted, and the women of the house cooked up all sorts of dishes: potatoes, green beans, steamed carrots, corn, gravy, biscuits, and pies made from whatever fruit was in season or preserved. Today, the enormous number of calories in that assembly of foods might appall us, but then most of us aren't spending our days chopping wood, plowing fields, or walking five miles into town and back.

That tradition existed to strengthen the family and pay homage to a day of rest.

Entertainment also brought families together in those days. We have account after account from colonial times through the first part of the 20th century of families gathering in the evenings to sing or to enjoy music together, like Pa sawing away on his fiddle in the “Little House on the Prairie” books. Reading aloud was also popular, with the literary selections ranging from the Bible to the novels of Charles Dickens. Storytelling, too, was standard fare, with folks sitting on a front porch listening to Uncle Billy's tales of his youth or Mamaw scaring the hoot out of the young ones with her tales of monsters and “haints.”

New Traditions

Though we may no longer gather around a piano and belt out “I've Been Working on the Railroad,” we have created other ways to share time as a family and as a culture.

Movie nights at home are popular among many parents and their children. Mom or Dad whips up a bowl of popcorn, the overhead lights are dimmed, and the whole crew watches a film together. That viewing may lack the intimacy of read-alouds and shared stories, but the event nonetheless brings them together.

Black Friday, the shopping day after Thanksgiving, has become a tradition in the United States. On this day, shoppers swarm malls and stores offering enormous discounts on goods ahead of the Christmas season. Though sometimes the buying mayhem leads to fights and stampedes, this holiday ritual has become for some Americans the time to look for that widescreen television or computer on sale for half-price.

Football has also allowed Americans to establish certain traditions. Tailgate parties find fans bringing their grills and beverages to the parking lots of stadiums hours before a game begins, where they visit and carouse while waiting to enjoy the game. Super Bowl Sunday brings together millions across the



(Top) Whether it used to be reading aloud together or movie nights today, families continue to enjoy time together.

(Above) A Texas Rangers fan works the grill as he tailgates before the opening day game between the Houston Astros and the Texas Rangers at Globe Life Park in Arlington on March 29, 2018, in Arlington, Texas.

country, as football aficionados and people who never watch the sport gather together to eat wings and chips, and to enjoy both the sports contest and the advertisements accompanying it.

Old Customs

Many Jewish families commemorate Passover and Hanukkah with special prayers and meals, and Christians and non-Christians alike celebrate Christmas by exchanging presents and decorating evergreens. Many Americans observe Thanksgiving with turkey and dressing, Memorial Day with backyard barbecues, and the Fourth of July with grilled burgers and fireworks.

Some of us recognize the significance of those holidays. Our Jewish friends, for instance, know that Passover represents the liberation of the Jews from the tyranny of the ancient Egyptians, Christians celebrate Christmas as the birthday of Jesus, and patriots pause on Independence Day to acknowledge the Thomas Jefferson's Declaration and the rights of all human beings to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

But even for those who celebrate these events without understanding their meaning—the college student who has no clue as to why we're filling the sky with lights and explosions on July 4th, the man who gives no thought to dead sol-

diers while enjoying a cold beer in his backyard on Memorial Day, the kids who have never set foot in a church but who scramble after plastic eggs filled with chocolates in a public park on a certain Sunday in the spring—these traditions matter. They act as links connecting generation to generation.

Balance

Traditions large and small help us keep our balance. They draw us together as families, as communities, and as Americans. We may misunderstand the origins of these customs, or ignore them even while practicing their rites, but we nonetheless observe them.

Let's look, for example, at Valentine's Day. That holiday, which began with the ancient Romans, remains in play today, as may be evidenced at 5 p.m. on Feb. 14 in any florist shop or grocery store when large numbers of men line up to purchase flowers and candies for the women they love—and yes, I have stood in that line. They may be late in their purchases, yet they still wish to acknowledge those they love with a Valentine Day's gift.

Traditions are a glue holding our families and culture together. They bond us to the past, provide pleasure in the present, and act as ballast as we sail into an uncertain future.

G.K. Chesterton once wrote: “Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about.”

When we honor our traditions, we give votes to our ancestors and keep our balance on the rooftops of life.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See [JeffMinick.com](https://www.JeffMinick.com) to follow his blog.

Veteran Runs With US Flag Through Every City in Arkansas to Spread Unity Amid Pandemic

LOUISE BEVAN

A Gulf War veteran from Lee County, Arkansas, has taken to the streets to spread the message of love and unity by running through his state carrying an American flag.

Nathaniel Thomas, a fitness trainer who owns a gym, launched his statewide mission in March when the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) virus, commonly known as the novel coronavirus, first started spreading. He started in his hometown of Forrest City and has since hoped to make it to every major city in Arkansas.

Thomas said that it was “placed on his heart” to take to the streets to boost the spirits and encourage his community to stay strong amid these unprecedented times. “I'm trying to go all over Arkansas,” Thomas told KAIT 8, “trying to hit every major city I can hit, and continue to do it as long as we go

through the challenges we're going through right now.”

Alluding to his run, Thomas told the Malvern Daily Record that after the first case of the virus was announced in a town hall meeting to alert the citizens, he decided to go “on this journey until we have defeated this virus.”

Thomas runs 10 miles every Saturday with the American flag resting upon his left shoulder.

“I just want to do my part and hope to touch hearts,” Thomas said. “This is a big honor, and I'm all about unity and want everyone to know we are all in this together.”

Thomas admitted feeling overwhelmed by the reception he has received from Arkansans as he passes by their vehicles, with many saluting, applauding, or honking their horns. In return, Thomas makes it a point to salute them.

Thomas tracks his progress through the state on his Facebook page. On



Thomas runs 10 miles every Saturday with the American flag resting upon his left shoulder.

July 4, the runner announced he would be passing through Texarkana. “Ol Glory said she's ready to inspire,” he wrote, “so let's do this, Texarkana.”

Just two days later, Thomas posted that he was in Jonesboro, “spreading inspiration.”

“Thank you for your service, and God bless the USA,” one netizen responded. “Traveling man,” wrote another. “Thank you for being a great person. Be safe.”

Thomas plans to keep running every weekend through August 2020 and will finish where he started, in Forrest City. He anticipates that his statewide mission, once complete, will be one to remember.

“It's going to be an emotional one for me because of all the things I have done and the people I've met on this journey,” he told local news station KAIT 8. “It's going to be emotional, but we're going to get it and get through it.”

Elsewhere, in Massachusetts, one patriotic family is paying tribute to those who died from the virus in their state by placing a miniature American flag in their front yard for each victim. They have planted more than 8,000 flags so far.

Through these efforts, the Labbe family of Grafton, Massachusetts, also wishes to highlight the bravery of the first responders and health care workers on the front lines, calling them the “true heroes” of the pandemic.

“Never in a million years did I ever think we'd get to this number,” father Michael Labbe, a 54-year-old former EMT, told The Milford Daily News. “We obviously prayed to be in the hundreds, not thousands.”

The family believes that their gesture is worth every ounce of their given time and money if drive-by visitors can glean a little comfort from the front-yard tribute. “It's about paying it forward in life,” he said.

THE AMBASSADOR
OF GOOD FICTION

Brad Thor

on His Latest Thriller, His Bestselling Success, and America's Future

FRED J. ECKERT

There are two key reasons why I am such a huge fan of Brad Thor thriller novels: First, they are supremely entertaining, always great fun to read. Second, readers come away from his novels with considerably deeper and significantly more accurate understanding of the threats America faces than they get from the mainstream media.

No one writes a better thriller than Brad Thor. I believe what sets him apart is that his talent as a great storyteller is so well-paired with his perceptive grasp of America's struggles at this point in our history, giving his works such tremendous plausibility.

He's the king of the thriller genre, and one of America's most popular novelists. He's had a bestseller every year since 2002, except for the year he had two. Nearly 20 million copies of his books have been sold.

For four years in a row now, I have published book reviews touting his latest novel as his best ever. I would worry that this could strain my credibility—but, while it's astonishing, it happens to be the simple truth.

Long past the point by which most authors have produced all the best works they're capable of and are coasting or waning, Brad Thor keeps getting better and better. It's no accident; it's the result of the passion that drives him. His latest release is the 20th in his "Scot Harvath" series. It's about this former Navy SEAL with incredible skills and a phenomenal record of defeating enemy actions who is, in effect, the president's personal lethal secret weapon for espionage and counterterrorism. He's the key agent in a private, secretive sort of streamlined alternative CIA group that a strong-minded president of the United States turns to for discreetly carrying out ultrasensitive national security actions that he thinks the CIA remains incapable of getting right.

"Near Dark" is not only Brad Thor's best ever novel—I've read every one of them—it is also very different from any of his others.

His early works mainly focused on the threat to America from radical Islamic terrorists. A few years ago, he switched the focus to the threat America faces from Putin's Russia. He has an eerie ability to make you feel you might be glimpsing news from the future.

As "Near Dark" begins, Scot Harvath is an emotional wreck. He's heartbroken by the murders (in a Russian operation conducted on

DAN PASARIC/GETTY IMAGES



Brad Thor at Build Studio in New York on June 27, 2017.

American soil) of the persons most dear to him—his mentor, a best friend, and the woman he loves and had just secretly married. He's consumed with guilt, blaming himself for them. He's cut himself off from everyone, just wanting to be left alone, passing his days trying to drown his sorrow with alcohol.

In Thor's two preceding sequential novels—"Spymaster" and "Backlash"—Harvath had been captured during that murderous attack and whisked away to Russia. The enemy intended to torture him until they broke him. That'd yield Russia invaluable knowledge they coveted about America's covert operations and network of spies. Then they would kill him and in so doing eliminate one of the greatest threats they faced. The Russian president retained for himself the honor of being Harvath's executioner.

A freak plane crash leads to his escaping, a thrilling cat-and-mouse chase follows, and eventually he's evacuated from Russia by a U.S. force. But once safely home, he insists on promptly returning to Russia. In constant danger deep inside enemy territory, driven by rage and craving revenge, he makes everyone connected with the attack that killed his loved ones—including the president of Russia—pay an excruciatingly painful price.

Back home again, dejected, and seemingly defeated and giving up on life, Scot Harvath is the most vulnerable he has ever been at precisely the worst possible time: in the opening pages of "Near Dark."

The new adventure begins when he's saved from assassination just in the nick of time. Former teammates suddenly appear, kill his would-be assassin, and carry him off to a super-secure location: the president's Camp David retreat.

He learns that the world's largest bounty—\$100 million—has been placed on him and that some of the world's deadliest assassins are competing to win it. No one on his side knows who is behind the bounty or how many or who might be among those coming for him.

It's the greatest challenge he's ever faced, and he must do so while putting himself back together and without knowing who he can trust or depend on for help. He knows he can't just hide and wait forever, so he decides to take the offensive and try to first figure out who placed the bounty and then destroy the operation.

"Near Dark" introduces in a semi-starring role a fascinating new character we'll probably see a lot more of in the future. Solvi Kolstad, who is a beautiful, smart Norwegian intelligence operative, is every bit the deadly, skilled operator Harvath is. What a team they make!

As in any Brad Thor book, "Near Dark" has everything you could hope for in a great thriller novel: Fast-paced action. Pulse-pounding excitement. Highly plausible plot yet with surprising twists. It is hard to put down because the suspense keeps you on edge, anxious to discover what comes next and how it all will end.

I interviewed Brad Thor by phone from his home in Nashville, Tennessee:

AMBASSADOR ECKERT: What do you try to accomplish in your novels?
BRAD THOR: My number-one goal is to entertain people. I also strive to add extra value. If you finish one of my thrillers feeling a little bit smarter, or if you have questions that might otherwise not have crossed your mind, or if you want to learn more about something that's new or different for you, well, I feel good about that.

AMB. ECKERT: You've had 19 best-selling thriller novels in the past 18 years, and there are nearly 20 million copies of your books in print. What do you think explains your success?

MR. THOR: I pay great attention to the details. I do a great deal of research. I try to learn as much as I can about anything and everything I include in a book. I rewrite a lot to try to make it as good as I can. It's that Midwestern work ethic. My dad and my mom taught me to treat every day as if it's the first day on the job. Every book that I write, I say to myself, "If nobody knew who I was, is this book good enough to get me a contract with Simon & Schuster?"

AMB. ECKERT: Tell me how you see your protagonist Scot Harvath.

MR. THOR: I have long held that there can be no American Dream without those willing to fight and protect it. Harvath is one of those protectors: a noble American willing to put his country before himself so that our way of life and the freedoms we enjoy may not perish from the earth.

AMB. ECKERT: Is there any—much—of you in Scot Harvath? Is he based



Thor had the opportunity to fly with the Blue Angels in fall 2015.



Thor calls himself a "Reagan optimist." At a book signing event at the Reagan Library in Simi Valley Calif.

on anyone you know? A composite?

MR. THOR: I like to say that Harvath gets to do the things my wife won't let me do. Though whenever I say that in her presence, she reminds me that she did "let" me go to Afghanistan back in 2008. While that's true, my wife draws the line at car chases and my attempting to seduce foreign female intelligence agents.

While there's a lot of me in Harvath (as I am sure there was a lot of Fleming in James Bond and Clancy in Jack Ryan), he really is a composite of courageous people I know in the worlds of special operations and espionage. Harvath is an homage to those "quiet professionals" who technically don't exist and aren't allowed to publicize their own courageous exploits.

AMB. ECKERT: What writers have had the most influence on you—and why?

MR. THOR: My parents read a lot of thrillers, and growing up I would always grab their books when they were done. The writers who had the most influence on me were people such as Frederick Forsyth, Robert Ludlum, John le Carré, as well as—and this shocks some people—Sidney Sheldon. He wrote a few great spy-style thrillers.

AMB. ECKERT: Where do you get your plot ideas?

MR. THOR: In the shower or after my second glass of wine. My ideas come to me when I am most relaxed. Jack London once said, "You can't wait for inspiration; you have to go after it with a club." While that's true about following through and writing an entire novel, I find the idea for the book has to come organically. Put yourself in the right frame of mind and the muse will whisper to you. Just make sure your ears are open to hear what she has to say. And then, of course, make sure to do what she says.

AMB. ECKERT: Which current writers do you enjoy reading, and why?

MR. THOR: I am a big James Rollins and Steve Berry fan. They have been friends for years and I really enjoy their work. I also think Kyle Mills has done a fabulous job with the Vince Flynn series. Harlan Coben is terrific. Michael Connelly is also great. The hottest new writer on the scene, though, is Jack Carr. If you haven't read him, you absolutely should check him out.

AMB. ECKERT: What advice would you give an aspiring novelist?

MR. THOR: Never quit. That's the greatest difference between a published author and a nonpublished author. The published author didn't quit. Also, Stephen King had it right when he said, write what you love to read because that's where your passion is. Finally, you

can't even be a semidecent writer without being a voracious reader. So read, read. Read everything you can get your hands on. Learn from successful authors and never stop perfecting your craft.

AMB. ECKERT: Besides being known for the qualities that mark any great thriller novel—exciting, surprising, fast-paced, plausible—you are known for your eerie ability to so often make readers feel as if they're glimpsing at some possible future news. How do you do it?

MR. THOR: You can't imagine tomorrow's headlines if you aren't paying really close attention to today's. I'm a non-stop consumer of the news, domestic and international. I have the kind of mind that makes me want to look at things from every possible angle. And I'm always wondering, what if? I want readers to read plots they feel could explode on their doorstep tomorrow. Even if the book is five years old, I still want to feel immediate. That's where the art of storytelling comes in.

AMB. ECKERT: It's obvious to anyone who reads your thrillers that you're very patriotic. How would you describe your political views?

MR. THOR: The United States was set up to protect the biggest minority group there is—the individual. I'm a constitutionalist. I have a libertarian streak; sometimes I call myself a "conservatarian." Government can't do many things right. I believe, as Jefferson did, that we establish government to protect our lives, our liberties, and our pursuit of happiness, not to tell us how to run our lives. It needs to keep us safe and get out of our way as much as possible. I believe in a strong national defense. As Ronald Reagan said, it's weakness, not strength, that tempts tyrants. I'm a big, really big, fiscal conservative. I believe our deficits and national debt are serious national security issues.

AMB. ECKERT: Who do you see as the greatest threat to America?

BRAD THOR: We face a lot of bad actors—especially China, Russia, Iran, North Korea. They each pose an interesting and unique set of threats. I think the Chinese are the most devious, with the greatest potential to cause the most problems for us—because their pockets are so deep, and because they're light-years ahead of the Russians when it comes to technology. So I think the one that can do us the greatest

damage is China. I'm very, very worried about the Chinese. But if the Russians figure out how to get inside and shut off the internet, then that's a huge problem no matter how deep or not-so-deep their pockets are.

AMB. ECKERT: Besides China and Russia, Iran, and North Korea, what else do you see as a great threat?

MR. THOR: Given our dependence on technology, with just about everything going into a computer, it would not take much to cripple this country. M16, the British Secret Intelligence Service, says that because we're so dreadfully dependent on our supply chains, we are only three or four meals away from anarchy. So I worry about the power grid and the internet—it touches everything. They're our two biggest soft-underbelly vulnerabilities. If they were to go down, it would be an absolute disaster: Lights out. You wouldn't be able to get gas. Drug stores wouldn't be resupplied. There'd be no 911 response. It'd be

total anarchy. These are big worries. And, of course, I never stop worrying about radical Islam.

AMB. ECKERT: You were just referring to an Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) attack?
MR. THOR: Exactly.

AMB. ECKERT: You once urged me to read a novel called "One Second After" by William R. Forstchen that you told me accurately portrayed how an EMP attack could send us hurling a couple centuries backward virtually overnight. I found it to be a frightening wakeup call about something few Americans have even heard of but should be deeply concerned about. Have you had a chance to read the June 4 Epoch Times article that I sent you by Simon Veazey about EMP and grid security, and, if so, any thoughts on it?

MR. THOR: It is spot on! My thriller "Act of War" is all about the Chinese launching an EMP attack on the United States. It deals with the corruption of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the Chinese "princelings" attending elite universities in the United States, and how an EMP attack on America would play out, including how the CCP would leverage North Korea into a prominent role, potentially setting them up to take the fall if things went sideways. I think it is one of the most engaging, timely, and frightening books I have ever written.

AMB. ECKERT: Do you think we're up to the threats?

MR. THOR: There are always those known unknowns. We never know exactly what's coming. But the one good shift I've seen in the government—I was involved in one of the programs they did—is that they've realized they can't fight the next war by looking in the rearview mirror. And so they have developed and devoted a lot of resources to trying to stay six or seven steps ahead of the bad guys. I was in the Analytic Red Cell Unit at the Department of Homeland Security, and our task was to help them come up with bad ideas before the bad guys had the bad ideas. I think we are up to the threats.

AMB. ECKERT: These are difficult times. Are you discouraged about the future our country faces?

MR. THOR: We've been through tough times before. I am a sunny Reagan optimist. No pale pastels here, Fred. As President Reagan said, we have unleashed the creative genius of the individual as has never been done before. If you have any questions about America, go back and read Ronald Reagan's first inaugural address. If the hair doesn't stand up on your arms with pride for this country you ain't a patriot, brother.

AMB. ECKERT: What's coming next from Brad Thor?

MR. THOR: I am working on my next Scot Harvath thriller for summer 2021. Reading the geopolitical tea leaves in an election year during a pandemic is quite a challenge. But at the same time, it is fascinating to try to project ahead what things are going to look like in the near future. As a sunny Reagan optimist, I believe we will come through this and that America's best days are always ahead of her. We know a freedom and empowerment in this country like no other human beings have ever known in the history of the world. Our destiny as individuals and as a nation is what we choose to make it. America, even in challenging times, is still the greatest nation with the greatest system of government to ever grace the face of the earth. I am thankful for all that she has given me and has allowed me to give to others.

AMB. ECKERT: Any final thoughts?

MR. THOR: I think it's important for every American to keep in mind this wise warning from President Reagan: "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free."

He's had a bestseller every year since 2002, except for the year he had two. Nearly 20 million copies of his books have been sold.

The "Ambassador of Good Fiction" series recommends to our readers a work of fiction, giving information not just about the novel but also what makes its author worth checking out—and, when possible, interviewing that author.

A writer and favorably reviewed novelist himself, Fred J. Eckert has been a member of Congress and twice served under President Ronald Reagan as a United States ambassador.

Reading the geopolitical tea leaves in an election year during a pandemic is quite a challenge. But at the same time, it is fascinating to try to project ahead what things are going to look like in the near future.

Brad Thor



Best-selling author Brad Thor (2nd L) on the set of MSNBC program "Morning Joe."

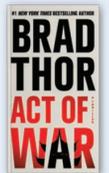
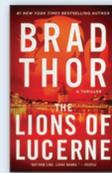
WANT MORE THOR?

If you like "Near Dark," consider reading the two that came before it: "Spymaster," then "Backlash." If you weren't deeply concerned about the threat to America posed by Putin's Russia, you will be after reading them.
Read "Act of War." If you view the Chinese Communist Party as evil and China as an

even more dangerous threat to America than Russia is, you will be even more convinced after you read this one.

Read "Blowback" and/or "The Last Patriot." These are thrilling and informative works about the ongoing threat America faces from radical Islam and its fanatical terrorists.

Read "The Lions of Lucerne." During a presidential vacation in Utah, 30 Secret Service agents are murdered and the president is kidnapped. This is Thor's debut novel that got me hooked on following Scot Harvath 18 years ago. A fantastic read.



Repairing a Marriage: A Journey From Contempt to Forgiveness

JUNE KELLUM

The person you marry is not, strictly speaking, the person you will spend your life with. This is because people grow and change.

In a good marriage, people change for the better—but very often, growth is preceded by hardship and mistakes.

Sometimes, couples make each other miserable for years before making the effort to change, as in this example from the marriage help book, “Fascinating Womanhood”:

“We were both very strong-willed. I think there was an unconscious power struggle to see who could get the upper hand, the last word, and ultimately win the argument.... Marriage left me so depressed and disillusioned with life.... I was so discouraged and tired of it all. After considering divorce for the umpteenth time because I was unfairly yoked to an impossible man, I found [the book] Fascinating Womanhood.

It has opened my eyes to see the truth about myself and my marriage relationship. Acting on the principles of F.W. has saved my marriage and home.... [My husband] is much more tender and gentle now. Even when he occasionally gets angry with me, it’s different. He is kinder and not as harsh. He is so thoughtful and generous, too. I know now he was always like that. But I had to learn to love and understand him in order to find out.” “Fascinating Womanhood” was published in the mid-1960s by Helen Andelin, a wife and mother of eight. Andelin brought together ideas about marriage and femininity from Christianity, classical literature, and women’s advice pamphlets from the 1920s. These ideas—such as appreciating inherent differences between the sexes, embracing masculine and feminine roles, and working on one’s character—brought great joy to her marriage, and the book became a best-seller.

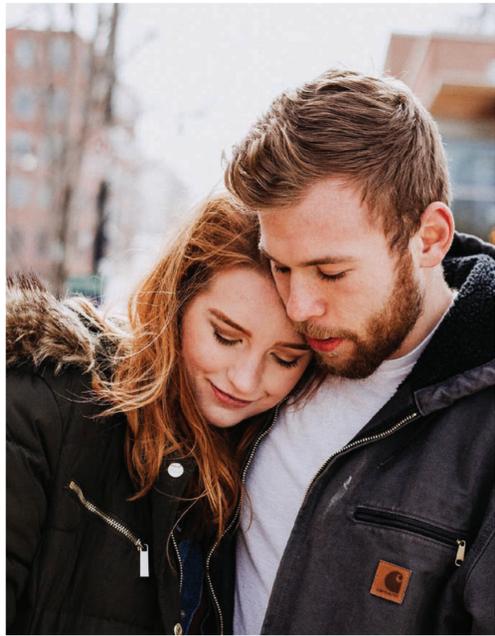
The book shares many stories from women who wrote to Andelin about how their marriage transformed after they began treating their husbands differently.

Tensions and Contempt

Every healthy marriage has its points of tension, and if not properly dealt with, they intensify.

The old proverb “familiarity breeds contempt” reminds us that close association with a person will very likely lead to a loss of respect for him or her, as we see human frailties play out. If you’re married, you’ve probably experienced contempt for your spouse in small things—irritating habits like laundry left on the floor—or perhaps in serious character flaws such as financial irresponsibility.

If allowed to run unchecked, contempt can ruin a good marriage. It



Setting out to repair a marriage may mean listening more deeply to your partner and understanding their fears, needs, hopes, and priorities.

In a good marriage, people change for the better—but very often, growth is preceded by hardship and mistakes.

eclipses the admiration and respect you have for your spouse, and he or she becomes the sum of their faults in your eyes.

When in the midst of this contempt, it is difficult to see beyond it to feel emotionally connected and empathize with the pain and struggles of your partner.

Yet these annoyances, frustrations, negative cycles, and even some serious character flaws—are an invitation for growth—perhaps individually and/or as a couple.

And with the right tools and circumstances, many unhappy marriages can become happy.

Citing a study from the Institute for American Values, Diane Medved, psychologist and author of the book “Don’t Divorce: Powerful Arguments for Saving and Revitalizing Your Marriage,” writes, “Nearly three out of four spouses who rate themselves as ‘unhappy’ in their marriages but stick it out say they’re ‘happy’ or ‘very happy’ just five years later.”

Some marriages might take longer to become happy and require more effort, as in the story from “Fascinating Womanhood” below:

“My husband and I had been married for fifteen years. Eleven of those years were spent struggling with the disease of alcoholism. Anyone who has ever had to deal with the baffling problem with a friend or relative knows the agony of watching those you love destroy themselves. But looking back, I can see that my husband’s problem with alcohol was

a very convenient scapegoat for my own shortcomings. I could always blame his drinking for my attitudes.”

Her husband finally stopped drinking of his own accord, but after two more years of floundering, she thought herself in love with someone else and they agreed to separate in three months. Then, she began to read “Fascinating Womanhood” and realized she had a lot of misconceptions about men and marriage. It was a struggle at first to accept and appreciate her husband, but she did.

“It was a beautiful thing to see my husband respond.... In January there was no talk of separation. In fact we took a weekend trip with friends.... As we walked along after breakfast, he said, ‘I think I’m falling in love with you again.’”

The Right Tools

There are many tools—therapies, self-help books, and counselors—available to help you if you have a rocky marriage. Some will certainly work better for you than others. Find ones that fit with your values, offer hope, and help you look at your own challenges, vulnerabilities, and shortcomings.

Just like marriage, repairing one is also a journey. It will probably mean adjusting your expectations, looking at yourself from your partner’s perspective, and understanding how elements of your temperament, character, background, expectations, fears, and insecurities are fueling the tensions.

It also means listening more deeply to your partner and understanding their fears, needs, hopes, and priorities. It may leave you vulnerable and shocked at how much you were unintentionally hurting your partner. You may learn that doing just a few small things for your partner each day will make them feel loved.

Even marriages in which one partner has made serious mistakes can be repaired if the will and desire are there, even if the desire is only one-sided to begin with.

“If you want your relationship, you really have to be willing to deal with the fact that you have hurt and scared your partner,” says Dr. Johnson, psychologist and creator of Emotionally Focused Therapy, which helps couples understand and transcend negative emotional patterns by fostering understanding and connection.

“And your partner has to be willing

to talk to you about all the difficulties that happen as a result of that, how hard it is then to put yourself in the hands of a person who has violated your trust.

“People can have these conversations. They are difficult conversations, but they can have them. But unless you have a certain ability to create safety and really show the other person that you care about the impact you’re having, it’s pretty difficult.”

Learning How to Love

In times past, cultures in both East and West talked about temperament as being one aspect of human beings—and understanding how different temperaments are prone to different strengths and weaknesses.

Depending on your family situation, loving someone else may or may not come naturally to you. And even if most aspects of love and marriage are easy and natural, you may have some that are really subpar. If you are willing to learn and improve, almost any shortcoming can be transformed into, if not a strength, then at least a real competency.

Like anything important and dynamic, a good marriage needs some maintenance.

If we are honest with ourselves, probably some of the qualities that attracted us to our partner are also the opposite of some of our qualities, and can rub us the wrong way.

For example, your husband might like to do things very fast, and you admire how quickly he works, but you can feel rushed when he wants you to go at his pace.

Forgiveness:

An Antidote to Contempt

When we look honestly at ourselves, we will see many faults. We all have work to do. The humility that comes with seeing and correcting our faults washes away contempt and helps us forgive ourselves and those we love.

Gary Chapman, in his book “Love as a Way of Life,” writes about the power of forgiveness:

“The challenge of living a life of true love is that in this tension we must offer forgiveness to those who have done us wrong, even as we acknowledge the hurt they have caused. The husband whose wife left with another man later told me, ‘She returned after three months and told me that she had made a terrible mistake and wanted work on our marriage. I didn’t think I could ever forgive her. It didn’t happen overnight, but as I realized that she was sincere, I found the ability to forgive. Today we have a great marriage.’”

Our important relationships are hard because we are vulnerable in them. It takes courage to face our demons but becomes much easier as we build a stronger connection to our partner.

Afghan Interpreter Who Saved 5 US Soldiers in Afghanistan Becomes American Citizen

LOUISE BEVAN

A former military interpreter targeted by the Taliban after saving the lives of five U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan has officially become a U.S. citizen.

Afghani interpreter Janis Shinwari and his family attended a naturalization ceremony for 170 immigrants in Fairfax, Virginia, on June 29.

Shinwari, 42, told Fox News that his two children were “very excited” the night before the ceremony.

“They asked me, ‘Dad, if we wake up tomorrow morning, we’ll be U.S. citizens?’” he shared, adding, “I said, ‘Yes, you guys should be U.S. citizens tomorrow.’”

Shinwari served eight years as an in-



Matt Zeller and Janis Shinwari during an interview in Arlington, Va., on Nov. 21, 2013.

terpreter for U.S. Army troops deployed overseas. Among the soldiers he is credited with saving is former Army Capt. Matt Zeller, with whom Shinwari now shares a brotherly bond.

Zeller and other troops were ambushed by Taliban fighters in 2008 during combat in Afghanistan’s Ghazni Province. In the middle of the conflict, Shinwari found Zeller in a ditch, alive but vulnerable.

“There were two Taliban behind him to kill him,” Shinwari explained, “and I shot those two Taliban.” Zeller had only met the interpreter 10 days previously.

“It was the worst firefight of my life,” Zeller recalled, speaking to NPR. “Some-

body yelled, ‘Zeller!’ and I turned and I saw Janis shoot a guy. There was a guy rushing up to attack me and Janis shot him, saving my life.”

Shinwari became a marked man when the Taliban put him on its kill list in 2009, and admitted he feared that he would lose his life if he was caught. He spent a protracted period of time hiding out at a U.S. military base near Kabul, KPBS reported.

“That was really hard for me that I couldn’t see my kids for a while,” he said. “The saddest part was that my kids couldn’t go outside to play with the other kids because of some security reasons. They were home all the time.”

The father of two sought asylum in the United States by applying for a special immigrant visa for former military service personnel. Zeller lobbied on his behalf, telling USA Today: “From this point forward, I’m his family, and he’s mine, and I’m going to do anything I can to take care of him.”

The Special Immigrant Visa Program authorizes 4,000 visas annually. Fox News reported, yet wait times are notoriously lengthy. But after one near miss, numerous lobbies, and letters of recommendation, Shinwari was finally approved.

“It took three years to get my visa,” Shinwari revealed, claiming that many inter-

preters were killed by the Taliban while waiting for visas. The interpreter moved his family to the States in November 2013. Zeller met them at the airport.

The former Army captain launched a GoFundMe campaign to help the Afghani family find their feet stateside, raising \$35,000 within days, but Shinwari declined the money. Instead, he teamed up with Zeller to launch a nonprofit, called No One Left Behind, to lobby for other U.S. military interpreters to gain asylum and support them with donations upon arrival.

Shinwari says that he feels safe in his new home and is still in the business of saving lives. The former interpreter now works for Briartek, a company that manufactures rescue beacons for sailors.

“You don’t have to worry, you can sleep free,” he said. “Once you are here, you’re free.”

“What’s made our country truly great is not just that we’ve been born with amazing people, we’ve imported them,” Zeller told The Christian Science Monitor. “We seek out the best and the brightest, and we recruit them to be on our team.”

We would love to hear your stories! You can share them with us at emg.inspired@epochtimes.net



Coss Marte is the founder of ConBody. The gym’s routine features the same exercises Marte adopted while he was incarcerated.

From Jail to Gym, Doing the Time

Coss Marte is giving a 2nd chance to the formerly incarcerated

ANDREW THOMAS

The last time Coss Marte was locked up, he knew he never wanted to go back to prison. Now, he’s back in his old neighborhood with a good kind of hustle: a no-equipment, high-intensity workout program.

Marte, 34, was born and raised on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in New York City. When he was growing up, the neighborhood was marred with drugs, violence, and prostitution, before it became a trendy place to live. He vividly remembers the long lines of people on the block waiting to buy drugs.

“It was a bit normalized for me growing up. It looked like everybody was doing it. Everybody was involved, and that’s how it was,” Marte said.

Prison Pushups

His mother emigrated from the Dominican Republic in 1985 while she was pregnant with him. He and his mother lived with his aunt for a while, before they moved into the small apartment next door with his father and all of his siblings. Marte’s parents slept on one mattress and the kids slept on another.

Marte recalls drug and criminal activity on every floor of his building. He saw his older cousins selling drugs on the corner, and envied the lifestyle. The drug game made an impression on him, and at age 13, he started selling drugs. Despite multiple arrests, he continued to sell.

“I just got into that world where I felt like I was trapped, and it was hard to get out. There were very limited opportunities, and I didn’t see any other opportunities out there

“I wanted to do something with my life instead of selling drugs for the rest of my life.”

Coss Marte, founder, ConBody



ConBody only features bodyweight and cardiovascular exercises.

for me except for that,” Marte said.

His stature in the drug world rose quickly. By age 19, he was running a lucrative drug delivery business and was making about \$2 million a year. He and his partner had moved from the old business model of selling cocaine and crack on the street corner to a delivery business that served an older, wealthier clientele. Marte and his partner even created business cards and wore suits and ties.

After Marte was arrested again in 2009 at age 23, the doctors in the prison system informed him that he suffered from severely high cholesterol and was in danger of having a heart attack while locked up. The doctors recommended exercise and healthy eating.

Marte began running in the yard every day and doing calisthenics. He did pushups, dips, jumping jacks, lunges, squats, and burpees in his cell. Within six months, he had lost 70 pounds, and his exercise routine caught the attention of other inmates. During his incarceration, he helped more than 20 inmates shed a combined 1,000 pounds.

“I got my health back,” Marte said. “I just felt way better. I looked better.” Following an altercation with a guard, he decided he was never going back to prison. And during a stretch in solitary confinement, he decided to make more of his life, and the idea for a fitness business was conceived.

“I wanted to do something with my life instead of selling drugs for the rest of my life,” Marte said.

Building the Gym Business

Marte was released on March 29, 2013, at age 27, and returned to the Lower East Side, which had by then undergone a huge transformation. He had no money, no job, and struggled to provide for his family financially. He worked odd jobs off the books, but couldn’t find steady employment, largely due to his criminal record.

“That brought him back to his idea for a fitness business, featuring the same workouts he had done in prison: a routine comprised of bodyweight-only and cardio exercises in a 45-minute hardcore workout.

Marte started ConBody by approaching people he knew in the park—and also some he didn’t know—asking if they would work out with him. Over time, he developed a regular crowd and began renting out studios and hosting pop-up events. Through a lot of hustling and hard work, he secured a permanent location for a gym in 2016.

Marte started ConBody to make a better life for himself, and also knew that he wanted to hire former inmates to teach the classes. From his own experience, he knew the difficulty of finding a job after prison and wanted to give them a second chance, as their talent and work ethic are often overlooked because of their past.

“I felt the pain. I tried to find any type of job when I came home, and you’d just see the body language once you hand over the application and the second line says, ‘Have you ever committed a felony?’ and you check the box ‘yes,’” he said. “To date, Marte has employed more than 40 people who have come out of the prison system; ConBody has had a zero recidivism rate among its employees.

Changing Shape

The gym’s slogan is “Do the time,” and the space itself features a prison theme. ConBody has trained more than 30,000 people to date, and the vast majority of his clients have responded enthusiastically to the fitness bootcamp concept.

Most recently, Marte started a nonprofit called Second Chance Studios to train former inmates for careers in digital media. Now, he’s trying to raise \$50,000 to secure the space above the ConBody facility for the nonprofit.

Since the pandemic, Marte has featured ConBody workouts via Zoom, and says he’d like to open franchises around the country—and possibly around the world.

A lot of people depend on weights and machines to work out, but that’s not the way at ConBody.

“I feel like God gave us everything we needed. We don’t need weights. We don’t need anything around us. Everything we have is within us,” Marte said.

Housekeepers Hailed as ‘Hidden Heroes’ During the Pandemic: ‘We Know Lives Are at Stake’

LOUISE BEVAN

The pandemic has pushed hygiene into the fore of people’s consciousness and changed the way we think about the simplest day-to-day activities.

It has also shone a spotlight on some “hidden heroes” who ordinarily would not stand out at all—the janitors and housekeepers who ensure health care centers are clean and safe enough for medical staff, who face the comings and goings of patients seeking testing or treatment.

David Abrams, housekeeping director for Coliseum Northside Hospital in Macon in Georgia, said his staff clean every room and every workstation in the building twice a day, including the floors.

“That creates that comfort level,” Abrams told KHOU 11. “What we do is done with the utmost integrity and done with a passion, because we know lives are at stake.”

But it hasn’t been easy since the number of cases has increased. “It really, really has changed,” housekeeper Katrina Burrell said. “I’m trying to wipe down everything and sanitize everything, sanitize every day, high and low for the nurses, the doctors, and for the patients.”

Recognition makes a world of difference to staff morale in difficult times.

“We get letters from patients who not only recognize doctors for their excellent work, not only recognize our nursing staff for their help, they recognize the housekeeping team,” Abrams

said. “[They] mention my housekeepers by name.”

Elsewhere, Willie Nash, executive director of Environmental Services at UCHealth Memorial Hospital in Colorado Springs, worked 28 days straight after the virus sprang up in his state. He habitually rose at 3 a.m. and worked 12- to 14-hour shifts, reported UCHealth.

And for Nash, it’s personal. “My drive is this,” Nash said. “My wife, my two kids, they know this is the fire that burns in me. My agenda in my life is not to put anyone else in a bed that I wouldn’t put my father in.”

Nash’s father had lung cancer but died in the hospital after contracting a preventable secondary infection. Nash channeled his grief into a mission to protect



Coliseum Northside Hospital in Macon, Ga.

others from a similar outcome.

Alongside his colleague Margaret Waggett, 70, a housekeeper with nearly 15 years’ experience at Memorial, Nash didn’t hesitate to clean the room used by the first patient who had the virus.

It’s not complex, Nash said, but it is hard work.

“We clean all the airborne things every single day and we do it diligently,” he said. “We just explained to our employees that this is no different than any other airborne, and this is no different procedure than any other day.... The only difference is we don’t know what this is.”

Waggett noted the heightened risk during the pandemic, adding that she and her team don full PPE and are doing “everything we can to be safe.”

“I feel right now that I am healthy enough and I have taken care of myself pretty good,” she said. “There is no reason that I can’t be in here to do something.”

Despite her pivotal role in maintaining hygiene on the front lines, Waggett humbly deflected the credit back to the nurses and doctors in hard-hit areas. “I praise them, I pray for them every day, and I just want everything to get better for everybody,” she said.

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK



To motivate your children, identify their interests—whether it's dinosaurs, LEGOs, or marine life—and encourage them to dive deep.

Finding Confidence as a Homeschool Parent

BARBARA DANZA

At one time or another, most budding homeschool parents experience fear, anxiety, and doubt in their abilities to successfully guide their children through their education. They worry they don't have the training, the know-how, the resources, the patience, the intelligence, and even the energy to homeschool their kids. They think other homeschool parents must be more creative, more organized, and more knowledgeable about curriculum, education, and learning in general.

The truth is, parents are innately qualified to teach their children, regardless of their own educational accomplishments or professional experience. No one knows their children better—their interests, learning styles, strengths, and weaknesses. And no one has their children's backs like they do.

Here are some things to keep in mind the next time you feel your confidence as a homeschool mom or dad waning.

Every corner of your home has the potential to be a learning space. The kitchen's a laboratory, the dining room is a workshop, the yard is a fantastic place to make a mess.



You don't have to do it all; outsource any classes that you don't want to teach.



Find a curriculum you like, but be flexible. It is just one of many tools.

Every Parent Is a Teacher

Parents doubting their ability to teach should recognize that every parent is a teacher. You've been teaching your children all along, and you'll continue to do so no matter where they go to school. What teachers are trained in is mostly classroom management and teaching philosophies for a collective. You don't need any formal training to teach your children and provide them an education that far surpasses anything the public school system could deliver. You need only be resourceful, available, curious, and loving.

Kids Are Always Learning

Children can't help but learn. If you can discourage addictions to video games and digital screens (for they steal the energy to learn and the space to be curious), in time you'll find your kids diving into subjects of all sorts. They'll build large LEGO structures, ask questions about marine life, wonder how earthquakes happen, and try to build a motor from scratch. They'll dive deep, and you can encourage and assist that fire to burn until they've exhausted their interest—and likely found another.

Curate Your Environment

Your home environment will play a significant role in your child's education. Hang maps, play classical music, surround yourself with excellent books, stock up on art supplies, strew interesting objects strategically, reduce clutter,

and invite creativity and exploration. Consider the available workspaces in your home. Allow space to hide away and think something through in solitude as well as to gather together and collaborate on projects or games.

Every corner of your home has the potential to be a learning space. The kitchen's a laboratory, the dining room is a workshop, the yard is a fantastic place to make a mess. Rather than the next cover of your favorite home decor magazine, see your home as a space to learn, create, and explore. Use your creativity to make it as inviting and inspiring as possible.

Use Their Interests

If you find motivating your children to do school work challenging, use their interests. For example, if your child loves dinosaurs, you can do the math to calculate how long ago different ones lived, practice geography to map where they are believed to have lived, learn Latin in memorizing their scientific names, practice spelling the complicated names of dinosaurs, make art projects about dinosaurs, research theories of their extinction in science, and learn about how they lived, ate, nested, and behaved. You could plot their existence and extinction on a timeline. You can learn about the characteristics of the Earth when they lived. There are countless "school" subjects that can be touched upon by simply diving deep into the world of dinosaurs.

This exercise works for any subject. Want to make school fun? This is the way. Give it a try.

Make It Easy

Homeschooling is easy, if you choose to make it so. Have activities on hand for the days the furnace needs repair or you have a headache. When things break down, cancel the work for the day and let everyone read independently. See your curriculum as a tool you use, not a tyrant that rules over you. Skip lessons you deem unimportant. If your child understands the circumference of a circle after two examples, move on, don't force her to complete an entire page of monotonous problems. Homeschool provides your family the freedom to bask in the wonders of the world. If you keep it simple, that wonder will continue to thrive.

Outsource Strategically

Outsourcing education should be a part of your homeschool plan. Music lessons, art lessons, clubs, sports, dance—any specialized interest or activity that you either don't want to teach or feel your child needs specialized training in should be outsourced. Just because you're a homeschooler doesn't mean you have to teach everything yourself.

Rethink School

If you really want to feel confident in your decision to homeschool, look into what today's schools are actually teaching, their standards, and the academic results they're achieving. This research, coupled with a deep dive into the true history of public education, will cure any homeschooler's doubts about their choice to homeschool.

Enjoy

If you're embarking on this journey for the very first time, enjoy it. This precious time with your children won't last forever. It won't be perfect and it won't always be easy, but, like so many before you, you may look back on your time homeschooling as the very best parenting decision you ever made.

6 Ways Experienced Homeschoolers Can Help the Newbies

BARBARA DANZA

So you've been homeschooling for a while, and your inbox is chock-full of new and potential homeschoolers seeking advice and perspective. While homeschooling has been steadily increasing in popularity for many years, 2020 looks like it's about to go down as the year of the homeschooler.

You may be wondering how you can best support and help those reaching out to make the best decisions for their families. Here are a few ideas.

Listen

I don't know any homeschooling parents who took the decision to homeschool lightly. Do you? When we're working through a big decision, a lending ear is often the most helpful form of support.

Listening is a skill, and this is a great opportunity to sharpen yours. Listen not to respond, but to understand. It may be tempting to unleash a boatload of resources upon them, but unless they specifically ask for resources, allow them to do most of the talking. Have compassion for their hopes, fears, and goals for their unique family.

Allowing them to verbalize their thoughts—and sharing your own experiences where appropriate—will offer both comfort and clarity.

Welcome Them

Parents deciding to homeschool at this unique time may be coming to this decision in an entirely different way than you did. For some, the events of this year were just the push they needed to do what they've been wanting to do for some time. Others, though, never thought in a million years they'd consider something like homeschooling, yet here they are.

Some parents are familiar with the vast amounts of resources and educational approaches available to homeschoolers; some are looking to simply mimic their school's curriculum and enroll their children right back in next year. And, of course, there are countless varieties of circumstances in between.

Whatever the case, hold compassion in your heart and welcome them into the world of homeschooling. The last thing a nervous, new homeschooler needs to encounter is judgment for their approach or understanding. Everyone is doing their very best to do what's right for their children. Anyone taking this leap is summoning all the bravery they've got. Welcome them all with open arms and root for their success.

Offer Supplies

You may be cleaning out old curricula, resources, and other homeschool supplies at this time. If you have materials that might be useful to a new homeschooler in your community, consider offering them as a gift. Perhaps there's a local homeschool group or co-op looking for extra supplies as well. Small gestures of support can be both helpful and encouraging to a new homeschooler.

Invite Them Along

If there are in-person or even virtual outings, meetups, or group classes for homeschoolers in your community, invite the newbies along. You know they're worried about "socialization." Opportunities to meet fellow homeschoolers are sure to be appreciated.

Share Your Struggles

Not every homeschool day looks like a page out of *Mary Poppins*, am I right? Don't forget to share your struggles, along with the many blessings of homeschooling. Homeschoolers tend to feel like they've discovered a magical formula they want to share with every parent they know. But of course, it's not all roses. Sometimes the kids hate math, and sometimes the house is a disaster, and sometimes Mommy hides in the bathroom sobbing with a chocolate bar.

Think back on your first year homeschooling, and assure the newbies that no matter how many times they feel like they need to scrap everything and start over, no matter how many times they feel like they're ruining their children, no matter how many times they wonder how they ever convinced themselves they could do this—we've all been there. This is a huge leap of faith and the rewards at the end of this bumpy journey are worth it.

Keep in Touch

While homeschool is picking up enormous steam, it's still the road less traveled, which can feel lonely. Reach out to the new homeschoolers you know and check in on them from time to time. The smallest gestures are often the most meaningful.



FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

Week 31, 2020

The Rainbow

by William Wordsworth

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky;
So was it when my life began,
So is it now I am a man,
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The child is father of the man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

WHAT'S HARDER TO CATCH THE FASTER YOU RUN?

YOUR BREATH

THOMAS EDISON (1847-1931), INVENTOR AND BUSINESSMAN

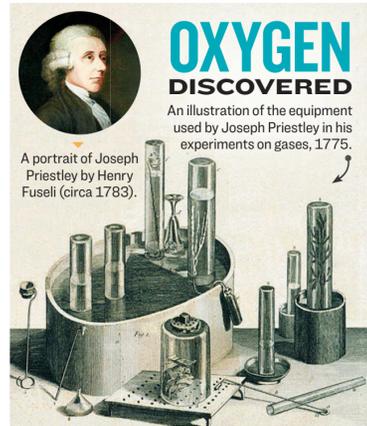
DAIXIAO PRODUCTIONS/SHUTTERSTOCK

“The doctor of the future will give no medicine, but will involve the proper use of food, fresh air, and exercise.”

THOMAS EDISON (1847-1931), INVENTOR AND BUSINESSMAN

DAIXIAO PRODUCTIONS/SHUTTERSTOCK

This Week in History



OXYGEN DISCOVERED
An illustration of the equipment used by Joseph Priestley in his experiments on gases, 1775.

A portrait of Joseph Priestley by Henry Fuseli (circa 1783).

On Aug. 1, 1774, chemist Joseph Priestley of England conducted an experiment in which he used a lens to focus sunlight on a lump of mercuric oxide in a glass container that was placed in mercury. The gas that resulted caused a flame to burn more intensely and helped keep a mouse alive. The gas he successfully isolated was oxygen.

By Aidan Danza, age 14

THE LIFE OF STARS

FORMATION

Stars are formed from a nebula, or a cloudy mass made of mostly hydrogen and helium. It is believed that when these nebulas begin to spin, their mass starts to collect into clumps and becomes more dense, forming a "protostar." As this protostar spins and spins, gaining more mass and heat, nuclear fusion (when parts of atoms fuse together, releasing a massive amount of energy) begins, and the star is officially born.

ADULTHOOD

Newborn stars fuse their supply of hydrogen atoms to produce their energy, and have entered their main sequence, which could be likened to adulthood. There are four types of main sequence stars: blue stars, yellow dwarves, orange dwarves, and red dwarves. Our sun is a middle-aged yellow dwarf.

OLD AGE

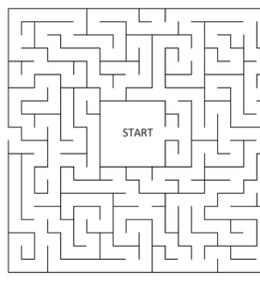
Toward the end of a star's life, it uses up its supply of hydrogen, and starts to fuse its helium the same way it was fusing its hydrogen in its younger days. When this happens, stars swell to an enormous size. Blue stars become blue giants and supergiants, yellow dwarves become red giants, and orange dwarves become red giants and supergiants. It's unknown what a red dwarf forms because they burn their hydrogen so slowly that we haven't found one that has grown old.

DEATH

Most stars die peacefully. All stars giant and smaller simply use up their hydrogen, helium, carbon, oxygen, and anything else they have, let go of their outer shells, and compress into a small mass (about Earth-size) called a white dwarf. However, supergiants sometimes consume too much of their own mass, and their core collapses, causing a massive explosion called a supernova. At the end of a supernova, two results can occur. The first is a neutron star, in which the core's protons (tiny, positive particles) and electrons (tiny, negative particles) are compressed into neutrons (neutral particles). The second is a black hole. According to NASA, black holes exist when very massive star explodes in a supernova and its matter gets compressed causing a massive gravitational pull concentrated in a tiny space, which will attract anything in its vicinity, and suck it inside.

Stars are the joy of many a summer night, looking up at their twinkling beauty. Even more interesting is a deeper knowledge about them.

AMAZING ESCAPES!



USE THE FOUR NUMBERS IN THE CORNERS, AND THE OPERANDS (+, -, AND X) to build an equation to get the solution in the middle. There may be more than one "unique" solution but, there may also be "equivalent" solutions. For example: 6 + (7 X 3) + 1 = 28 and 1+ (7 X 3) + 6 = 28

Easy puzzle 1

5	10		
1	7		
+	-	x	÷

Solution For Easy 1

5 × (1 - 7 - 0) = 1 × (1 - 9 - 2)

Medium puzzle 1

11	16		
4	13		
+	-	x	÷

Solution for Medium 1

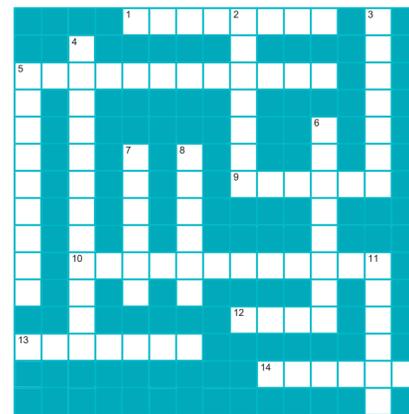
01 = 0 × (11 + 61)

Hard puzzle 1

21	23		
6	22		
+	-	x	÷

Solution for Hard 1

22 - 9 = 12 + 22



Across

- Lay on your back and pedal in the air (8)
- Kick like you're swimming in the air (7,5)
- Start laying down with your hands behind your head; touch elbows to knees (3,3)

Down

- Pull yourself up and look over a bar (4-3)
- Another name for 2 Down (4-3)
- Not "Sitting Jills" (7,5)
- Say "Ribbit!" when you do these (4,5)
- "Half" sit-ups (8)
- Touching the ground with only your toes and elbows - stay straight! (6)
- One leg forward, one back; lower rear knee toward the ground and stand back up (6)
- While standing, bend both knees like you're sitting down (6)

- Bend down and then stand back up (5,7)
- Use parallel bars to lower yourself and then lift up (4)
- Lay flat and lift your chest off the ground (4-3)
- Turn left and then turn right (6)

THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH *and* TRADITION



Preserving Our Values for the Next Generation

Unimaginable Change

You know about the state of our nation.

Day after day, freedoms are taken from us. The words, and even the reputations, of our Founding Fathers are being twisted.

The concepts of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness have morphed into something working to silence and bind us.

What's more is that our nation is experiencing an erosion of family values, the desecration of morality—and most of all, the increasing dominance of socialist and communist factors in our government and broader society.

Our great nation, with its ideals of individual liberty and the freedom to build our own lives, is becoming “free” in name only and slowly being dragged down by the specter of communism.

At this rate, our grandchildren may grow up in a country that's far different from the America we knew.

An Antidote

This potential future worries us. But it also drives us to work harder—because our work here at The Epoch Times is part of this poison's antidote.

Our society's demoralization comes down to one source: communist ideology in its myriad forms and with its ultimate goal of destroying human morality. When we as Americans clearly see and heartily reject this evil force, we can win this battle.

Massive Challenges

For months, Americans faced the threat of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Virus. More

than 100,000 Americans lost their lives, while millions more lost their livelihoods. In a matter of weeks, our booming economy took a massive hit.

And before we were able to recover, the communist-extremist group Antifa took advantage of civil unrest. They began to incite violence, burning homes and small businesses across dozens of cities. These extremist movements now call for radical changes to America's legal system— including abolishing the police.

The Root Cause

These happenings remind us that communism did not disappear with the fall of the Soviet Union. It's still alive today, and its aim is to silence people, crush our spirits and destroy the traditional values of our human society.

Despite having taken on different forms throughout the past century, communism's destructive nature never changes. Communism is a poison which aims to snuff out the best parts of humanity using any and all tactics: the ends always justify the means.

The Epoch Way

We've lived through this before. Many of us here at The Epoch Times have been victims of communism and have witnessed firsthand how fear and ignorance are manipulated—turning good, decent people into willing slaves.

Our motto is “Truth and Tradition,” the opposite of communist thought. From our founding, we've stood against the lies, deceit and rejection of humankind's collective history that communism foments.

A Bumpy Road

In 2000, soon after we began publishing, the Chinese Communist Party arrested, jailed and tortured 10 of our China-based journalists.

Over the years, our journalists have been shot at, threatened and imprisoned. Our offices have been robbed and even set on fire. They keep trying to silence us, but we will never be silenced.

Our journalists have the courage and fortitude to investigate and report stories that most media won't. And because we call into question the “established” narratives when facts don't seem to line up, we've been further attacked, demonetized and de-platformed by some giant tech companies, legacy news outlets and service providers.

So what we're doing is not simply reporting stories or conducting investigations.

We are holding the line.

And it's working. Despite major resistance, we've become the fastest-growing newspaper in the United States.

The Honest News Renaissance

If you're looking for an honest source of news that brings you the facts and let you make up your own mind, then The Epoch Times is your best choice. Your subscription won't only bring honest news directly to your doorstep—it will also contribute to the revival of American journalism and help safeguard our freedoms for future generations.

In Truth and Tradition,
The Epoch Times

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING



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.

DELINDA FORSYTHE



The Epoch Times truly has a neutral stance on news events in comparison to large media companies and **enables me to create my own opinions about issues.**

CORBIN LUBIANSKI



I recommend the paper, usually on Twitter, and in person. **I never expected the wealth of articles on health, aging, parenting, communications, American history, and more.**

LINORE ROSE BURKARD



I saw a Facebook ad that pulled me in. I do not have a local paper that doesn't read like the whole thing is an opinion piece. Having true factual reporting and an opinion section for opinions is so refreshing. **I enjoy reading The Epoch Times as it shows me how a newspaper should be and I'm grateful for it.**

ABBY LONDON