

Week 32, 2020 THE EPOCH TIMES



I really cherish every time I can hang up the phone with a happy customer.

**Marcus Green** Customer Service

### Customer Service: From the Other Side

Dear Epoch VIP,

Thank you so much for being one of our readers! As one of the customer service representatives responsible for your experience with The Epoch Times, I try my best to make your life easy.

But, as some of you may know (and may have even experienced firsthand), it's something easier said than done. One afternoon, I picked up a call from a customer who was unhappy about his subscription. He seemed very frustrated - that much was evident from the emotion I could feel behind his words.

This all came to a head, though, when I happened to mistype his telephone number.

"Are you dyslexic?!" came the other side of the phone. "There are ten numbers, can't you even get that right? God, you're stupid."

To be completely honest, the thought crossed my mind that I should've called in sick that day. But at the same time, I knew that whatever frustration I was feeling then, he must be feeling at least twice as much.

So, looking within myself for all the empathy, kindness, and strength that I could muster, I... transferred him to a supervisor.

This story does have a happy ending though; the supervisor and the man ended up having a great conversation, and they were able to find a resolution to his issue that satisfied his needs. This is my favorite ending to tell for all my customer stories.

With the CCP Virus pandemic still ongoing and turning many people's lives upside down, sitting down at my desk every morning can feel like setting foot on a battlefield. Everyone calls in with a different life situation, and I, like a soldier, have to fight off their frustrations, their anxieties, their fear, their uncertainty through empathizing with them and crafting a solution that meets their specific needs.

After all, everyone already has enough to worry about outside of the paper they read, and taking care of this one worry for them – giving them the gift of peace of mind, is something I take quiet pride in.

I like good questions and I'm ready to find the answer to the best to my knowledge. Some people want to prioritize their time to read in these uncertain times, and I even help some people on a budget. Though sometimes we can't get a satisfactory resolution, I really cherish every time I can hang up the phone with a happy customer.

And I not only like what I do - I love my job here. Before the CCP Virus came and we had to practice social distancing, I would often chat with the editorial team in my free time. From their words, I could always sense an attention to detail for conveying the facts of the situation precisely.

When they were frustrated, it would be because they have trouble tracking down a source or finding a citation (or that their editors were asking them to support their claims with even better sources). But at the same time, there's still an overall feeling of warmth and support, a feeling that at the end of the day, we're

It's something that I can't put into words exactly, but I do know one thing for sure: that I don't think I can find a company like this anywhere else. We really do care about reporting the truth and about putting others before ourselves, and I hope that's something you can feel in everything we do.

And if you can't, give me a call and let me know. It's okay if you call me dyslexic - I'll understand.

In Truth and Tradition, Marcus Green

The Epoch Times



# TRUTH CAN BE BLOCKED BUT NEVER STOPPED

Pass it on, one friend at a time



My mother received a local newspaper for many years. Shortly after President Trump was elected, she noticed that the paper became more and more liberal, biased, and untruthful. She called the paper's subscription department, complained that it was not the paper that it used to be, and canceled her subscription. I told her and my sister about The Epoch Times, and they subscribed shortly after and have been reading it ever since then.

BARBARA WENDELL



In a time when lies and subversive, treasonous tactics threaten our Republic - when 'truth' is threatened as a beacon to freedom - The Epoch Times has been a welcome and refreshing antidote that re-instills sanity and rationality, as well as sanctity for human life.

NEAL BOGOSIAN



In my political monthly forum I have taken copies of some of my weekly editions for members to look over and take home to read. I've recommended many of my friends to take out subscriptions. There has been good feedback from information in some articles I've shown around to others.

RITA MARTINSON



I have mentioned to my family and friends how much my husband and I value The Epoch Times. One of the fronts in our nation's battle to preserve our Constitutionally established political, cultural, and religious freedom is in our school rooms where the covert strategic assault against them began a hundred years ago. Truth is our sword. Would that this "sword" could be in the hands of educators and school boards throughout our nation.

**CYNTHIA PETERSON** 

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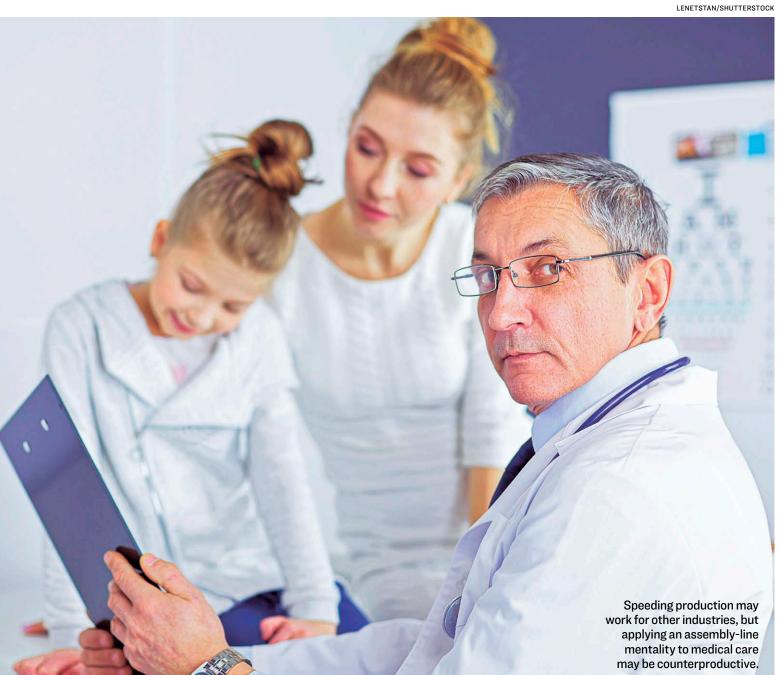
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### Slow Medicine Saves Money, Improves Care

**CONAN MILNER** 

octors have been treating the sick since forever. But in the past few decades, medicine has undergone a drastic

Much of the change has been positive; because of new technology and scientific insight, countless lives have been saved and extended. Yet, some trends in medicine may be hurting patients and doctors—and wasting

Dr. Victoria Sweet first shone a light on some of the blights of our medical system in her 2012 book, "God's Hotel." It tells of Sweet's more than 20 years working at Laguna Honda Hospital in San Francisco. The facility was unique because, for a time, it was able to preserve a model of care that's nearly vanished today

Sweet resigned from Laguna Honda when she saw it take on the same unsavory traits she had seen infect the rest of the medical system—an increasingly bureaucratic model of care, in which doctors got less and less time to spend with patients, and fewer meaningful opportunities to apply their knowledge.

"At every talk I go to around the country, somebody raises their hand and says the same thing: 'My doctor doesn't look at me anymore.' It's terrible for the doctors and terrible for the patients," Sweet said.

Doctors used to be in charge of care, so they took however much time they thought was necessary with a patient. But starting in the late 1970s, as insurance companies, HMOs, and private organizations all got interested in the health care racket, new policies cut physicians' time short.

In pursuit of efficiency and profit, some primary care doctors working in hospitals are now expected to see a different patient every 11 minutes.

Speeding production may work for other industries, but applying an assembly-line mentality to medical care may be counterproductive. In her new book, "Slow Medicine: The Way to Healing," Sweet shows how important it is for doctors to have adequate time to consider their cases.

"When doctors have enough time to do a good job and do the right thing, you can actually save money," she said, "because when doctors don't have enough time, they get the wrong diagnosis. Nothing can be more inefficient than that."

Sweet's concept of slow medicine takes inspiration from slow food, a

culinary philosophy focused on quality ingredients and careful preparation that emerged in response to fast-food

If our meals deserve more mindfulness, our medicine certainly does as

An amazing amount of information is contained in a doctor's mind: anatomy, microbiology, pharmacology, and more. Modern tools can certainly help with diagnosis and treatment, but there remains a process of putting the pieces together that no technology can replace. Good care still requires careful examination and a thoughtful

However, with only a few minutes with each patient, doctors have little opportunity to explore the narrative thread that connects patients with their symptoms and charts. In a time crunch, doctors are typically left with only two choices: prescribing a drug or ordering a test.

"If you don't feel good, I'll order a bunch of lab tests. What else am I going to do? Back pain: Get an MRI, because I don't have the time to examine your back pain. If I did, I wouldn't order the MRI," Sweet said.

In most cases, Sweet said she could find the underlying cause of a patient's back pain without an MRI. It would take a bit more time, but when you compare an extra \$100 doctor's fee with an unnecessary \$1,800 MRI, the choice is clear.

"And we're just talking money," Sweet said.

Similarly, prescriptions provide a quick answer to patient complaints. However, when the drugs pile up, lots of money is wasted at the expense of patients' health.

It takes a doctor with extra time to clean up the mess. When Sweet worked at the hospital, the average patient who came in was taking 15 to 26 medications. These were sick individuals, yet most of the drugs they had been prescribed were no longer relevant. Their prescribing doctors just didn't have the time to review their cases.

"I figured out that, on average, a pill probably costs about \$10 a day," Sweet said. "So when I cut them back from 15 medications to four, I was saving \$110 a day—plus the adverse reactions, the side effects, and the nurse—for just a few hours of my time."

#### **Evidence-Based Care**

While the architects of the modern medical system saw great potential ir preliminary models, it's been a different story in practice. That's why

Sweet challenges policymakers to see whether their full-speed format really is as efficient as they say.

"Why not have a study where you take a group of patients and let them have as much doctor time as they need, and see if that's more expensive?" asked Sweet, pointing to studies that show that when doctors are given enough time, ER visits drop by 40 percent and hospitalizations by 15 percent.

Dr. David Meltzer is one researcher who's putting the status quo to the test. Meltzer, a practicing internist and with a doctorate in economics, has researched how the conventional model of care compares to the continuity of

In the conventional model, patients are handed over to hospital physicians when they are admitted. Primary care doctors are often so busy seeing patients in their clinic that they don't have time to go see these patients when they're admitted to the hospital.

In the continuity of care model, primary physicians play an active and important role in their patient's care, even after hospitalization.

In the most recent study on this subject that Meltzer participated in, researchers looked at how often dementia patients were put on feeding tubes when admitted to a hospital.

"Hospitalized dementia patients in hospitals in which continuity of care was lower had higher rates of feeding tube insertions," concluded the study, published in May 2020.

In one of Meltzer's earlier studies, one group of doctors was allowed to concentrate on a smaller pool of patients, so that they can follow those that end up in the hospital. The other group stuck with the standard model: Patients see a different doctor when they're hospitalized.

After studying this problem for some time, Meltzer has come to be a firm supporter of continuity of care. He argues that having hospital specialists take over has raised costs and hurt patients. Meltzer links continuity of care to fewer hospitalizations and better mental and physical health.

"We probably can't have a health care system where doctors can spend all the time they want with every patient they see," Meltzer said. "But we also don't want one where you're paid to spend little snippets of time with people. It's not enough to meaningfully make a difference for those patients."

Evaluating every aspect of our medical system may take decades. But many physicians are already fed up with conventional care. Sweet notes a growing trend of doctors who are ditching the

hospital system and adopting a private, concierge-type practice.

In these practices, doctors work for themselves, so they can control how many patients they see and the form their records take. Some concierge doctors don't even take insurance; patients just pay directly as they would for any

other service. "We're not any more expensive than going to a fancy salon," Sweet says.

This model may also provide more value to the consumer because it removes some of the middlemen that drive up costs.

"We only spend 15 percent of our health care dollar on all the people who give you health care: doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, acupuncturists, rehab, all those people," Sweet said. "We spend more on advertising and marketing than we do on the docs."

Whatever form the health care of the future may take, Sweet urges us not to put all the responsibility on our doctors. Instead, we should each strive to be the primary advocate for our own well-being. Keep up with the basics: Get enough sleep, eat right, and exercise. Avoid the doctor, if you can.

"All the way back to the Middle Ages people would say, 'Even if you don't have a doctor, you have three doctors: Dr. Diet, Dr. Quiet, and Dr. Merryman," Sweet said. "Do the things that keep you healthy."

**Technology That Hurts Medicine** Just as with everything else in our lives, computers have become a fundamental part of our medical system. In some cases, they hurt more than they help.

In his book "The Digital Doctor: Hope, Hype, and Harm at the Dawn of Medicine's Computer Age," Dr. Robert Wachter examines the ways in which technology impacts the doctor-patient relationship.

#### **Evaluating every aspect of** our medical system may take decades. But many physicians are already fed up with conventional care.

"What I've come to understand is that computers and medicine are awkward companions," Wachter writes. "The simple narrative of our age—that computers improve the performance of every industry they touch—turns out

to have been magical thinking when it

comes to health care." For many doctors, the most frustrating, time-wasting, and enthusiasmdraining activity is a relative newcomer to modern medicine: electronic health records (EHR). Doctors have always kept notes, but since 2014, medical professionals have been required to keep their records electronically in order to maintain an important stream of revenue: Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement.

The federal mandate for EHR was made in the name of efficiency, but many doctors complain that it's accelerating doctor burnout.

In his book, Wachter talks to one renowned physician who used to review his handwritten notes the evening before surgery for better insight into his patients' problems. However, when he consults his EHR notes, he finds they only provide confusion. Patients become a blur.

"It's like I never saw them before. I can't even picture their faces," the sur-The promise of EHR was to improve

care coordination, quality, safety, and patient engagement. In reality, however, it mostly serves to streamline billing. The federal government has poured tens of billions of dollars into incentives to implement the program. Yet instead of assisting doctors, EHR creates a new burden: It gives doctors, who are already tight on time, a data-entry job that draws their attention further from their patient.

"It's the thing that is most frustrating docs and leading them to jump out of the window because you can't get around it if you work in a big system," said Sweet. "They are poorly designed, and they take all your time."

Wachter and Sweet believe computers can play a valuable role in medicine. However, doctors need to have more say

"It would be very easy to put together an electronic medical system that was more like our paper charts, in that they are more like a book," Sweet said.



# Pandemic Food Labeling Changes Raise Allergy Concerns

Looser requirements meant to ease supply chain issues put people with allergies at risk

**SANDY WEST** 

allergies, Heather Sapp was wellversed in reading labels and calling manufacturers to verify ingredients. For years, she kept her daughter's diet free of the peanuts and tree nuts that could kill her.

But when a bite of lemon-ginger hummus three years ago sent Sapp herself into life-threatening anaphylactic shock, her dependence on labeling accuracy became more complicated. Testing determined that Sapp, now 43, had developed adult-onset allergies to chickpeas, sesame, and cilantro. More recently, Sapp, who lives in Phoenix, had an anaphylactic reaction to parsley.

None of Sapp's allergens are among those the Food and Drug Administration requires to be individually listed on food labels. Parsley and cilantro are regularly included under "spices" or "natural flavors." Like many Americans with food allergies, Sapp reads ingredient labels closely, often following up with a phone call to verify ingredients, and

Unlisted ingredient swaps put some people at risk as safe ingredients are replaced with others that can trigger their allergies.



#### s the mother of a child with food **Like many Americans** with food allergies, Sapp reads ingredient labels closely, often following up with a phone call to verify ingredients.

had developed a list of manufacturers and products she considered safe.

However, Sapp was stunned when, in late May and with no warning, the FDA released new temporary guidelines allowing manufacturers facing supply chain shortages amid the COVID-19 pandemic to make ingredient substitutions without changing food labels.

"How can we trust that anything is going to be safe at this point?" Sapp asked. "Even if you don't have an allergy, people want to know what's in their food."

While FDA spokesperson Peter Cassell declined to address specific concerns from consumers with food allergies, he said the new guidelines were developed in conjunction with other federal agencies as one of several temporary measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Manufacturers are required to

For example, if a company hits a snag in the supply chain for a peppercorn it's been using, it can substitute another type of peppercorn. Some peppercorns are related to cashews and can trigger anaphylaxis in people allergic to cashews and other tree nuts. Or, while the FDA considers highly refined oils safe for people with food allergies, many consumers don't. The new guidelines allow manufacturers to substitute sunflower oil for canola oil, for example, because they share similar fatty

make ingredient substitutions public.

food for America," Cassell said.

and industry needs.

package labels.

country are able to provide safe and ample

Because the guidelines were issued as an

emergency measure, no public comment pe-

riod preceded them. The FDA is accepting

comments on the new guidelines, which will

remain in place until the end of the declared

public health emergency, Cassell said. At that

point, the FDA will decide if it should con-

tinue the policy, based on public comments

Under the emergency measure, manufac-

turers aren't allowed to substitute ingredi-

ents that may have an "adverse health effect,

including food allergens, gluten, sulfites, or

other ingredients known to cause sensitivi-

ties." The top eight recognized food allergens

in the United States–milk, eggs, fish, shell-

fish, peanuts, tree nuts, wheat, and soy-as

well as other priority allergens, including

sesame, celery, lupin (a legume), buckwheat,

molluscan shellfish, and mustards, can't be

The FDA still requires them to be listed on

But other minor ingredients can be tem-

porarily substituted. With 170 known food

allergens in the United States, and with

concerns about cross-contact among ingre-

dients, people with allergies are concerned

about these unannounced substitutions.

substituted under the new guidelines.

The FDA guidelines don't require new ingredient labels but recommend companies put an informational sticker on products with substituted ingredients or make that information available on their websites. The from scratch, the same isn't true for everytemporary guidelines went into effect upon one, and contacting manufacturers requires their May 22 release.

Mary Vargas, a Washington lawyer and food allergy advocate, said she believes some Mot everyone can call during business hours. of the language in the temporary guidelines Some people have language issues," she said.

makes it unclear how strict the FDA will be "It's a temporary guidance in order to make in its oversight of labeling and substitutions,

"I just have a lot of confusion about what this even means," said Vargas. "It muddies the waters rather than clarifies them."

Molly Rittberg's 8-year-old son is allergic to peanuts, tree nuts, sunflower, and sesame. Sunflower seeds or oil are often included under "spices" or "natural flavors," which required phone calls and additional research before the new guidelines. But now Rittberg, who lives in Milwaukee, said she can't assume manufacturers she had considered safe for ingredients or cross-contact will continue to be OK under the new labeling rules.

"We are label readers," said Rittberg. "Even when we call and verify a product, every time I purchase a new bag or box of something, I always check the label to make sure the recipe hasn't changed. With this temporary label change, it is going to make it even harder for us because we already have this area of not knowing what's in the food we are con-

"Now that things can be changed or substituted without notification, it's like we are back to square one."

Families who are dependent on government food assistance, such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, are especially vulnerable because the selection of allergy-safe food allowed under those programs already is limited, said Emily Brown, founder of the Food Equality Initiative in Kansas City, Missouri, which works to increase access to allergysafe and gluten-free foods for economically disadvantaged families.

"You only have access to specific brands with specific quantities. So, if brands change their formula and it's not clear, then really the most vulnerable of the vulnerable will not have access to what they need," said Brown, whose daughters have food allergies.

Sharon Wong, a food allergy advocate and recipe blogger in California whose two sons have 30 food allergies between them, echoed Brown's concerns. She said that while many Americans, like her, have the option to cook resources and time.

"Not everybody has access to the internet.

The new guidelines compound existing shortfalls in labeling requirements for the estimated 32 million in the U.S. with food allergies or other sensitivities, said Jen Jobrack, food allergy advocate and founding principal of Food Allergy Pros, a consulting firm that works with companies and other organizations to improve safety for people with food allergies.

The top cause of food recalls is typically undeclared allergens, according to Food Safety Magazine and Stericycle Expert Solutions, which both review food recall data. Because many Americans have more than one food allergy, Jobrack said, reliable labeling is im-

She added that the new guidelines also affect the hospitality industry, schools, and day care centers, which will only exacerbate the problem as the country continues to reopen from the pandemic closures. She and others fear the guidance won't be rescinded even after pandemic supply chain issues are

"The concern really all boils down to what ingredients and what information will manufacturers be required to let consumers know," Jobrack said.

Sandy West is a freelance writer and reporter. This story was produced by Kaiser Health News, which publishes California Healthline, a service of the California Health Care Foundation.

### Why Vaccines Are Less Effective in Older People, What It Means for COVID-19

Vaccine developers use processes that bias vaccines toward young people with healthy immune systems

#### **BYRAM W. BRIDLE & SHAYAN SHARIF**

As the global spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2)-the cause of CO-VID-19–continues, we learn more about the effects of this new virus.

For many respiratory pathogens, including influenza viruses and respiratory syncytial viruses, older adults experience the most severe forms of disease and the highest death rates. For example, for every 10,000 Americans between 18 and 49 years old, only 0.4 people die from the annual flu. That number increases to 5.9 people per 10,000 for those aged 65-74 years, and 47.5 people per 10,000 for those over 74 years old.

However, most of these diseases can also have a predilection for causing severe disease in those who are

In this respect, COVID-19 is very different. Data from relatively early in the COVID-19 pandemic showed a dramatic difference in the rates of age-associated deaths, with a case fatality rate of 4.5 percent for patients ages 60 and up, versus only 1.4 percent for those under 60 years old, with those under 30 years ranging from zero to 0.19 percent.

We are immunologists with research programs devoted to developing vaccines. With COVID-19 placing a spotlight on the elderly as the age demographic most in need of a vaccine, we have felt compelled to evaluate how well scientists are doing at tailoring immunization strategies for this population.

Our conclusion is that vaccinologists have largely failed to focus on tailoring vaccines for those most as risk-older people with weaker im-

This is also associated with an increase in the incidence of inflammatory diseases, because an elderly body tends to be in a state of chronic low-grade inflammation.

This "inflamm-aging" is one reason safety, not efficacy of vaccines. There-regimens than younger people. develop more severe forms of respira-

The key problem with SARS-CoV-2 infection is inflammation in the respiratory tract, which can be exacerbated in individuals predisposed toward potent inflammatory Immunosenescence also results in

diminished responses to vaccination. Indeed, annual flu vaccines are notoriously less effective in the elderly. This phenomenon is very important in the context of the massive efforts and funds being invested worldwide into the ultra-rapid development of vaccines for COVID-19.

The fact that older people don't respond well to immunizations has largely been ignored in most discus-

sions of COVID-19 vaccines, despite this being the group in greatest need. Most of the scientific community's experience with vaccine development for any disease has been focused on vaccinating the relatively

#### Vaccinologists have largely failed to focus on tailoring vaccines for those most as risk—older people with weaker immune systems.

#### **Young Mice and Older Humans**

Here is an interesting exercise for people reading this article: Find as many original research articles as you can on the topic of vaccine development that have used animal models (it could be for any disease). Then look in the subsection of the "materials and methods" section and check the age of the animals. We were shocked by what we found.

Mice are the most common animals used in preclinical vaccine research and the overwhelming majority of these are 12 weeks old or younger. This is equivalent to people 20 years old and younger. It's comparatively much rarer for studies to use immunosenescent mice that are at least 18 months old and equivalent to an

Translational studies that take promising preclinical discoveries and move them toward clinical trials often use non-human primates such as Rhesus macaques. In the majority of cases, these are around 3 to 6 years old, which is equivalent to an adolescent or young-adult human. The same trend applies to all other

animals used in vaccine research. Early-phase clinical trials focus on systems until Phase 2 and 3 clinical trials. The time to find out that a vaccine doesn't work well in the context of immunosenescence isn't at this extremely late stage, when it is too late to fix the problem. This testing should begin in the preclinical phase where an iterative process can be followed to tailor a vaccine for a senes

Interestingly, many commercial suppliers of animals that are purpose-bred for research don't have adequate inventories of old animals. Of concern, most old mice that are readily available are of the C57BL/6 strain. This is the most common strain used in research, and is known to have an immune system with a strong bias toward effective responses against

Intriguingly, aged mice experience a more severe form of SARS after infection, akin to senior humans. The excessive use of young mice with immune systems that are optimal for antiviral responses, and that experience less severe disease, could bias results in a way that overestimates the potential of vaccines to perform well in the elderly.

#### **Developing Vaccines for a Key** Demographic

People age 65 and over suffer the most severe cases of COVID-19 and have the highest associated mortality rate. If the goal is to have COVID-19 vaccines ready for public use by early 2021, the only ones that have a chance are those that are currently in clinical trials. It is likely that most of these did not undergo preclinical optimization for an elderly population, meaning these first-generation CO-VID-19 vaccines may perform poorly in the people that need them most.

For the COVID-19 pandemic, it's too late to go back and build these considerations into preclinical testing. However, it's imperative that researchers still in the preclinical phase incorporate head-to-head testing of their vaccine candidates in young versus aged animals and develop strategies to optimize them in the latter. This will help the world prepare for the next outbreak of a dangerous coronavirus.

For that matter, a focus on older adults should be incorporated into other vaccine development programs, including those to treat cancers, which have the highest incidence in senior citizens.

There are viable strategies to improve the effectiveness of vaccines in older people, including changes in formulations, doses, and routes of administration. However, it takes substantial time and appropriate animal models to conduct this research. It is possible that the elderly may need fundamentally different vaccination

Although a few researchers do con tested in the context of aged immune duct vaccine studies in old animals, considerations for the elderly need to be adopted by far more vaccinologists. This is of growing importance for countries with aging populations. This will mean changing the current philosophy of the field of vaccine development and incorporating age as a critical variable.

> Byram W. Bridle is an associate professor of viral immunology in the department of pathobiology at the University of Guelph in Canada, and Shayan Sharif is a professor of immunology and the associate dean for research and graduate studies at the University of Guelph. This article was first published on The Conversation.

### Maintain Testosterone Levels With Plant-Based Diet

New study finds hormone levels have little to do with amount of meat one eats

#### **MOHAN GARIKIPARITHI**

Cultural narratives are pervasive in society, to say the least. Men are supposed to be big and strong and eat a lot of meat. Hunting animals and ingesting them as burgers, steaks, and hot dogs are all associated with masculinity and testosterone.

But does that mean it's true? Do men need meat to manufacture enough testosterone to make them as "manly" as possible?

A new study is saying it's bologna. "The old idea that men need to consume a traditional diet with plenty of meat to have a healthy testosterone level was based on pure conjecture, not evidence," said Dr. Ranjith Ramasamy, a researcher from the University of Miami Health System and a co-author of the study.

Looking at data from 191 men between the ages of 18 and 75, the study found little variance in blood testosterone whether their diets were high in meat, plant-based, or a less healthy plant-based diet. Plant-based diets aren't always healthy-soda and chips are plant-based, after all.

Plant-based diets, or diets very high in plant-based food, are associated with a number of health benefits, including lower blood pressure, improved heart health, and a lower risk for diabetes, heart disease, and a host of other illnesses.

Lean mass and muscle are closely related to testosterone levels. Muscle is built from protein consumption,



The notion that men need to eat large quantities of meat to maintain testosterone is outdated. unscientific. and unhealthy

and animal-based foods are the best source of protein. But this study is saying that diet doesn't play a significant role in testosterone, and it echoes previous research.

Other research has suggested that fat loss and body composition both factor into testosterone. So, perhaps that people who consume a healthy plant-based diet are leaner allows them to have levels similar to over-

weight folks who eat plenty of meat. Ultimately, several variables determine testosterone levels. Genetics, lifestyle, and diet are each involved.

Making healthy food choices focused on moderate intake of lean, unprocessed meat and plenty of plant-based foods is likely the key to optimizing health. Healthy fats are also an essential part of optimizing testosterone.

You don't need to eat a lot of meat to keep testosterone high. Cultural narratives aren't necessarily true, and eating more plant-based foods is always a good idea, regardless of your goals.

Slowing testosterone loss might be accomplished by improving overall diet, losing weight, and incorporating more strength-based activity into

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

### Why You'll Love **Apartment Living**

Here are 7 reasons apartments beat single family homes if you want more time and less to worry about

#### **JULIA UBBENGA**

ately, I've been happily fielding a not-so-surprising question: "Why are you raising your family in a 1,000-square-foot apartment?" Well, actually, the question usually sounds more like, "Aren't you looking for

While we certainly could be house hunting if we wanted, the truth is, we don't have the desire. We did the live-in-a-house thing for three years before moving to our current apartment. And we aren't in a hurry to get back to that lifestyle.

Yes, we realize it's a bit countercultural. In the United States, 80 percent of the population prefers to live in a single-family home, while only 70 percent actually do. Meanwhile, apartment and condo living is preferred by only 8 percent of the population, yet 17 percent of Americans do live in an apartment or condo.

In European countries, however, apartment living is more common. In Spain, for example, 65 percent of the population lives

Clearly, choosing an apartment over a home is not the "American norm." So is our family in that 8 percent that prefers living in an apartment? There are many benefits.

#### 7 Reasons We Love Apartment Living

Apartment living is a simpler way of living, which translates to a happier, lower-stress life. A simpler lifestyle provides the space to figure out what matters most and the freedom to focus on these things.

Some people may love fixing up their home, and that's great. But if that's not how you feel called to spend your time, then apartment living will free you from 5. Financial Flexibility

park and the pool. You can relax more and even nap more.

This is not lazy living, it's intentional living that focuses on what you believe

#### 2. Less Stuff

A smaller space simply can't fit a lot in it. It's minimalist by design. This reality forces you to edit your life constantly by making decisions about what stays in your home.

If you let clutter pile up, you quickly lose living space. In a smaller space, you're not tempted to buy more furniture or other

"toys" because you just don't have a spot for them. When new things do come into your home, other things have to leave. You quickly learn the feel of "enough" in your home and become motivated to maintain this balance.

#### 3. Connection

Connections thrive in smaller spaces. These connections could be within your family, your faith, or even with yourself. With less home to care for, family time, prayer, and self-care can become a daily theme, not a side note.

An apartment's smaller space allows families to be more present for one another. This leads to more connection and more shared experiences.

You will talk more, play more, and do more together because you're closer together in proximity (although apartments are still big enough to allow breathing room when needed).

Apartment complexes can sometimes come with a built-in community. Many have weekly activities or a clubhouse where people often meet. This can be beneficial, especially for stay-at-home-moms (or those of us who work from home).

A face-to-face, adult conversation is always easy to find, which can be a very welcome thing during a day spent taking care of kiddos.

Feelings of social isolation is harder to come by in apartment complexes. Befriending elderly neighbors can be especially rewarding. The memories they share are almost always about family and experiences—not stuff. Hearing stories from their lives will remind you to slow down and keep a big-picture perspective on life.

the obligations that come with owning Apartment living helps shape your spending around the lifestyle you feel most called Instead of spending your weekends on to. If your family wants to pursue better rehome maintenance projects or mow- lationships, travel, health, and community ing a yard, you can take your kids to the involvement, but your finances and time are going toward home maintenance and repairs, then you won't be able to focus as much on those pursuits.

A simpler lifestyle provides Consider whether the trade-offs make sense. Instead of saving up for a new roof, the space to you could travel to see family out of state multiple times a year. Instead of redoing figure out what your flooring, you could have frequent matters most and nights out with your loved one. Instead of repairing your basement's foundation, the freedom to you could invest in your health by eating organic, real foods. Instead of renovating focus on these your kitchen, you could donate to a cause things. you're passionate about.

#### A smaller living space is not only easier to clean, it can (literally) bring your family closer

together.

Happiness is found in being true to yourself and your values—not someone else's. Studies show time and again that possessions don't make us happier. Although many people may pursue the "American Dream" (a bigger home, more stuff), they

don't report being any happier for it. Raising your family in an apartment also instills this in your children. As your children observe your family's lifestyle, they will realize that you don't have to do what everyone else is doing or live the way everyone else is living to be happy.

#### 7. A Tidy Home

6. Contentment

Any living space requires upkeep. Apartments, by design, are easy to keep tidy. Less space means less to clean in less time. When cleaning doesn't seem overwhelming, you'll be more motivated to do it. And the peace that comes from a clean, uncluttered living space will motivate you to maintain this feeling in your home.

Home maintenance systems are also easy to implement. Consider laundry, for example. When your washer and dryer are only steps away, you're much more

TIJANAM/SHUTTERSTOC

likely to stay on top of laundry than if you had to descend two sets of stairs to wash your clothes. Being in close proximity to your daily chores increases the chance vou will do them.

We realize that apartment living isn't for everyone. But for us, a minimalist life style in a 1,000-square-foot apartment leads to more joy, more fulfillment, and more family togetherness.

Our home has never been tidier and our family is thriving in this simple, manage-

If you're looking for a way to simplify your life and focus on what matters most, why not give apartment living a try? It's not the American norm, but it could

just be the right lifestyle for you.

Julia Ubbenga is a freelance journalist whose teachings on minimalism, simplicity, and intentional living have reached thousands of people worldwide through her blog, "Rich in What Matters." Julia practices what she preaches in her Kansas City apartment home with her husband and two extremely lively young daughters. This article was first published on BecomingMinimalist.com

With less home to care for, family time, prayer, and selfcare can become a daily theme, not a side note.



### The Harder Life Gets, the Softer We Need to Be

When we brace against life's bumps, we feel every stone more deeply

#### **NANCY COLIER**

When life gets hard and things go wrong, the most counterintuitive and seemingly impossible choice is to relax and find ease with what's happening. After all, why would we relax when life feels out of control?

When difficulty arises, we brace against it. Our resistance is a way of saying that we're not okay with reality and we want something different. Unfortunately, life doesn't work that way, and these feelings of unease don't help.

These days, with four broken bones in my foot, I've taken to tooling around New York City on a knee scooter. As you might imagine, the ride is bumpy. My scooter is no mountain bike; its wheels are small and fragile. It takes nothing more than a twig or pebble to tip it over. I've gone flying numerous times, landing on my broken foot in excruciating pain.

As I've gotten more skilled as a scooter pilot, I've noticed something important about what makes for a harder ride. It seems that the rougher the road, the more precarious my path, the tighter I would grip onto the fact that our life is like other lives, with its handlebars. I would tense my body and brace share of suffering and struggle, is to force against the jostling of my tiny vehicle. I be- ourselves to suffer more than necessary. Hu came more rigid in body—and mind. As a result of the chronic bracing and constriction, I ended up with a spasming upper back and strained pectoral muscles, which made taking a deep breath impossible.

But after a while, I noticed that if I opened my hands and loosened my grip when the bumps came, I didn't tip over. I learned to relax my upper body as the scooter tried to right itself in the uneven terrain. I just had to allow the bumping, tilting, and shaking to happen. The scooter would adjust and find its way through without my having to fight against it, or break anything else along the way.

It brought my attention to an important understanding: In life, when the road gets rough—as it has been for all of us of late—we tend to brace against it and try to control it. When we lose our job, the doctor calls with bad news, or a pandemic arrives, we tense our minds and bodies to fight against it. The more difficulty life delivers, the tighter we grip onto what we know, which is often an imaginary sense of safety and permanence. We cling to an idea of what we had and what we're losing. The more flexibility life demands, the more rigid we become—and the more we suffer.

When life throws us a curveball that hits us smack in the knee, we suffer from our smashed kneecap, as well as from the thought that this shouldn't be happening to us. We "shouldn't" get hit in the knee, we don't deserve that, this is not the life we signed up for. We get stuck in the idea of what our life "should" look like. We fight against reality, but reality has no interest in our protests, and reality always wins.

We cling to an idea of how our life "should" be, and at the same time, we personalize the bumps in our path. We deny the truth, that everyone struggles, and every human life includes difficulty. We reject the fact that we are no different from other humans, that we too will encounter bumps, and that this is a fact of the human condition.

When difficulty arrives, we're temporarily shattered out of our delusion that we are magically protected from hard times. But rather than accept this, we continue to imagine that challenges are happening specifically to and against us. We feel punished, victimized, and deprived of what we deserve. We feel burdened with difficulties that we "shouldn't"

have to endure. The result: We suffer more. So, what does loosening our grip on the handlebars look like in real life? How do we roll over the bumps in the road without bracing against them?

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To begin with, we stop fighting with the truth. We release the idea that this can't be happening. Whether we want it or not, this is our reality. The bumps are there. That doesn't mean we like the bumps or stop doing what we can do to make them better. But the sooner we accept our reality, the sooner we can start adapting to it and righting ourselves within it.

More than anything else, we need to release this dangerous and damaging idea about the way our life "should" be. We must see that our life is not inherently different from all other lives and somehow protected from pain. We are not entitled to a life that is without big bumps.

To wish for a smooth and easy life, without great hardship, is natural and healthy, but to be tortured and feel punished by the man life includes hardship. You are human. You do the math.

Releasing our grip on the handlebars requires acceptance. This bump, or crevasse in our path, is not something we can control; it's bigger than us. What it's doing here, why the universe put it in our path, we may never

To move forward involves the profound step known as surrender. When we truly surrender to the fact that we cannot wish, work, buy, pray, seduce, or strategize this challenge away, we begin a path to a smoother ride with a different sort of serenity.

Simultaneously, relaxing in the face of difficulty includes considering the possibility that there might be something for us to learn from this bumpy path.

While this broken pavement is a huge and scary obstacle now, perhaps something in all this turbulence can serve us later and help us grow. Perhaps something in all this difficulty and pain will help us be of service to others. While we can't yet know what good might come from this hardship, staying open to this possibility can help us relax and roll with more ease.

As you roll through your life and encounter the bumps that every life contains, contemplate what it might mean to loosen your grip on the handlebars. Ask yourself what that would look like. See if there's a way to let go of your fight with reality, no matter how much you may dislike it.

What's certain is that when we brace against the challenges of life, reject our human vulnerability, and fight against reality, we strain other muscles, break other bones,

and ultimately, suffer more than we have to.

Counterintuitively, when we give ourselves the gift of relaxation and acceptance—when we roll with our situation—we offer ourselves the smoothest ride possible on an inherently bumpy path. Strength and toughness are great attributes, but it's our ability to relax and roll when life gets hard that ultimately determines our resilience and well-being.

Nancy Colier is a psychotherapist, interfaith minister, public speaker, workshop leader, and author of "The Power of Off: The Mindful Way to Stay Sane in a Virtual World." For more information, visit NancyColier.com

### Helping Children Understand the Loss of a Loved One

Children need to have a chance for a forthright discussion-in their own time and in terms they understand

#### **ANTHONY RAO**

discussion.

Losing someone—a friend or family member—is a difficult time in our lives. It's also an important time to think about how to talk to your kids. There are some important It is critical you things you should adapt whatever be mindful of as you say to the you navigate this

level of your Foremost, be honchild. est and direct (avoid euphemisms) with your children. It is critical you adapt whatever you say to the developmental level of your child. Psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-

1980) offers developmental mark-

Before 7 years old, children think more magically, more imaginatively, and often think they can cause events outside of their control. This age group gets con-

fused or misled most by euphemisms. They developmental can't think abstractly. Some very young children wonder if they did something to cause death, simply because they'd wished it during an angry don't think they caused it. And, offer only as much information as a youngster can handle. Young kids often circle back and ask for more information when they need it or can tolerate it. Otherwise, don't

Between 8 and 11 or 12 kids are more sophisticated, but concrete in their thinking. They like to connect things, appreciate how things go together, and start to think about how the bigger world works. They can handle greater complexity, so don't sell them short. Tell older kids the truth, but moment or had a fight just before it's a good practice to ask permissomeone died, so make sure they sion—have them tell you when formation than younger siblings.

these tragic events.

they feel ready to talk. They too can get easily overwhelmed by the strong emotions associated with **Teens** possess abstract thinking

skills. They can handle more in-

They can think more critically and have opinions as well as strong beliefs of their own. It's important to respect their way of understanding things. Tell them you are available to talk when they want. Tell them you're sad and confused as well. But reassure them that, together,

you will all get through this. Know those social relationships are important in the teen years, so they may want to be with friends more than usual. Encourage this and tell them its great to have good people to help them through tough times.

General Advice Finally—here are general points that parents should keep in mind:

- Children are thinkers and they generate lots of questions. That's healthy—encourage it.
- When parents (and other adults) don't know the answers to difficult or complex questions, they should just admit it. We're all human. It's normal to be confused. It may take a long time to understand what happened and adjust. Sometimes there are no answers, and that's
- If you're sad, be sad. Show your sadness, don't hide it. You need to model the full range of human emotions as normal and healthy. Tell younger kids that you're upset and sad and that by crying or being angry, you are going to start

feeling better soon

- Let everyone work through loss in their own way. In my experience, boys may be less emotional than girls, but not always. Teens may get more angry and irritable. In general, those of us who are more social may reach out to other people for support, but those of us who are more introverted may need time for personal reflection.
- This isn't a time to pressure yourself. Don't worry about being perfect or getting everything right. It's very human to feel your way through these hard unfamiliar events. Expect mistakes. Learn from them.
- Finally, take care of yourself. If you're staying healthy and emotionally supported, you can better help your kids through tough times.

Anthony Rao is a nationally-known child psychologist. For more than 20 years, he was a psychologist at Boston's Children's Hospital and an instructor at Harvard Medical School. He is the co-author of "The Power of Agency: The 7 Principles to Conquer Obstacles, Make Effective Decisions & Create a Life on Your Own Terms."

It is normal for parents to grieve the loss of a loved one. Doing so shows children how loss can affect us, and how to move through it.

### Domestic Violence Surged During Quarantine, New Study Finds

While lockdowns have helped slow the spread of COVID-19, drug abuse, suicide, and domestic violence have risen

#### **JON MILTIMORE**

The unintended consequences of the COVID-19 lockdowns have been severe: mass unemployment, increased drug overdoses and suicides, and widespread

This month, the National Bureau of Economic Research released a paper detailing another: increased domestic violence.

Analyzing government-mandated lockdowns in India, researchers Saravana Ravindran and Manisha Shah found evidence of a 131 percent increase in complaints of domestic violence in May in "red zone districts," or districts that experienced the strictest lockdown measures relative to districts that had less strict measures ("green zones").

The researchers, who used a difference-in-differences empirical strategy, found the increase in domestic violence complaints was consistent with a surge in Google search activity for terms related to domestic violence over the same period.

The authors say their findings "contribute to a growing literature on the impacts of lockdowns and stay-at-home policies on violence against women during the CO-VID-19 pandemic."

The findings, which also found a decline in reported sexual assaults because of decreased mobility, are similar to those from research that found lockdowns led to a 100 percent increase in intimate partner violence calls in Mexico City. A study analyzing data from police departments in four U.S. cities showed smaller

increases in domestic violence, 10–27 percent, during lockdown

Globally about one-third of women experience "intimate partner violence" (IPV), which negatively impacts female earnings, labor participation, earnings, mental health, and household consumption.

The lockdowns triggered violence in so many ways. People can't work, there's alcoholism. overcrowding; it's a lot.

Perla Acosta Galindo, director of Más Sueños A.C., a women's community center

**Unseen Costs of Lockdowns** The global increase in domestic violence during the lockdown period has received relatively little attention, though CNN recently reported on the increase south of the American border.

In Mexico, federal lawmakers shut down most of the economy on March 23, urging people to stay indoors. Activists told the network the action spurred "an onslaught of domestic violence," and data show 911 calls for domestic violence are up 44 percent from the same time the

"The lockdowns triggered vio-

lence in so many ways," Perla Acosta Galindo, director of Más Sueños A.C., a women's community center, told CNN. "People can't work, there's alcoholism,

#### **Lockdowns Are Destructive**

overcrowding; it's a lot."

To some degree, the COVID pandemic has been portrayed as a morality play. Some would have you believe those who care about people support lockdowns; those who don't care about people oppose them. We're presented with false choices: We can support the economy or protect American lives.

These types of arguments only serve to divide. They can also obscure a basic truth: There are human costs to lockdowns, besides the economic ones, that can ravage lives just as badly as disease.

The Washington Post, for example, recently reported on "a hidden epidemic within the coronavirus pandemic": drug overdoses. One Ohio coroner said he can't process the bodies fast enough. "We've literally run out of

wheeled carts to put them on,"

Anahi Ortiz told the paper. Statistics suggest the trend is national in scope. Data from the Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program show that overdoses were up 18 percent in March, 29 percent in April, and 42 percent in May from the same periods the previous year.

These statistics should come as no surprise. Social scientists have been writing about the deadly consequences of social isolation

It's not just higher stress levels,



Lockdown conditions, unemployment, and the stress of disrupted routines have likely contributed to an observed rise in domestic violence.

disrupted sleep patterns, and altered immune systems. One 2015 study determined that social isolation substantially increased the risk of stroke (32 percent) and heart disease (29 percent).

Social isolation is also linked to suicide. While there is no comprehensive 2020 data on suicides, anecdotal evidence suggests many are struggling to cope with quarantine life. In May, during the peak of the lockdowns, one California doctor told local media his hospital has seen "a year's worth of suicide attempts in the last four weeks."

#### **Lockdowns Have Victims**

As the French economist Frédéric Bastiat stressed, every policy "produces not only one effect, but a series of effects." The immediate and intended effects are what he calls "the seen," while the indirect, unintended consequences are "the unseen." "The seen" usually gets all the attention, while "the unseen" often goes neglected.

In this case, "the seen" are the victims of the virus and those who hopefully avoid spreading or catching the disease because of

the lockdowns. They are, without a doubt, worthy of our care and

But we also must not ignore "the unseen": the millions of human beings who, as a result of the lockdowns, have become victims of domestic violence, drug overdos-

es, depression, suicide, and more. As Antony Davies and James Harrigan wrote, "The uncomfortable truth is that no policy can save lives; it can only trade lives." It may one day be determined that the lockdowns saved more lives than they destroyed, although recent evidence suggests the correlation between lockdown severity and COVID-19 deaths is weak. But let's not underestimate the devastating human toll of this policy. The lives ruined or snuffed out

Jonathan Miltimore is the managing editor of FEE.org. His writing/reporting has been the subject of articles in TIME magazine, The Wall Street Journal, CNN, Forbes, Fox News, and the Star Tribune. This article was originally published on FEE.org





# The Simplicity of Discipline

How to thrive without the baggage of expectations

#### **LEO BABAUTA**

he clients I work with almost all put incredible expectations on themselves—they have higher standards than almost anybody I know. It's why they work with me.

It can be hard to see, but the expectations they've set for themselves often stand in the way of what they want the most.

It's hard to see because they became successful because of those expectations. It's

The breakthrough to the next level for many of us who perform at high levels-

is to let go of all

expectations.

what got them this far.

But after a certain point, the expectations become the anchor, not the engine.

The breakthrough to the next level for many of us who perform at high levels and actually for people of all kinds—is to let go of all expectations.

Tony Robbins is famous for saying, "Turn your expectations ... into appreciation." It's a beautiful saying and helps us to start to see where expectations are getting in the way. Let's take a look.

#### **Expectations Don't Always Help**

I know lots of people who improved their lives because they had an expectation that they should be better.

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"I should be in better shape. I should have a better job. I should be more productive. I should be more disciplined. I should be more mindful. I should eat healthier."

I know these expectations well. That was me at the start of my journey. It's how almost all of us start out.

Continued on Page 11



# Life Saving Information

Dear Epoch VIP,

We are very pleased that you have become our newest

In the pages of The Epoch Times, you will find news you need to know, with insight not available in other

For instance, we have led other media in our coverage of the CCP virus, also known as the novel coronavirus. We reported on Jan. 2 on the presence of this unknown disease in the city of Wuhan. Early on, we reported that i was spreading rapidly, and killing far more people than the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) would admit.

If our coverage had been heeded by nations around the world, precautions could have been taken much earlier, and the resulting deaths and economic destruction

#### We were able to be ahead of the curve in our reporting on the CCP virus because of our insight into the CCP

**itself.** Indeed, we named the novel coronavirus the CCP virus in order to express the fact that the CCP was responsible for the resulting pandemic.

We had seen this before, with the SARS outbreak in 2003. Then, our Chinese edition was the first to report in Mandarin the presence of a new disease, and we watched as the CCP, seeking to preserve its own power, withheld life-saving information about this epidemic from the Chinese people and the world.

This time we reported how the CCP quarantined the disease's epicenter, Wuhan, while simultaneously allowing flights from Wuhan to the rest of the world, effectively ensuring the spread of the virus.

This episode illustrates how urgently the world needs to understand the CCP, knowledge we are uniquely able to provide. The Epoch Times was founded to expose

the negative impact on the world of the dangerous ideology of communism.

Partly due to our excellent reporting on the CCP virus, our subscriptions are skyrocketing. We are the fastest growing newspaper in America.

But our reporting on the virus is simply one instance of the kind of journalism that is bringing readers to us. They identify with our slogan, Truth and Tradition, and feel we are offering excellence in journalism they had often given up on finding.

They recognize that we are delivering honest, accurate news, without an agenda. And in our lifestyle sections, they find tradition-based features that enrich their lives.

I hope that you are enjoying this paper. I hope that you can share it with your friends and family. And I hope our efforts can help restore your faith in the press and in our society.

Finally—and most importantly—I'd like to thank you for being one of our readers. Knowing that there are people like you out there encourages us to keep fighting to bring you excellence in journalism.

In Truth and Tradition,

Stephen Gregory The Epoch Times





academics, and many other crucial issues. The big picture of these operations isn't pretty, but I've hoped—and have seen—

> Many trusted figures and institutions in the United States have folded to pressure from the Chinese Communist Party's programs of subversion—from news outlets, to heads of multinational corporations, to Hollywood elites, to government officials. The Chinese regime wants them to fall in line with its propaganda and its interests, and it has leveraged profits and personal interests to exert pressure.

> through all these years that truth can make

You can rest assured that The Epoch Times will never follow them. Our goal is to provide honest journalism at a time when it's very much needed—and to expose the unseen hands of the Chinese regime that would try to spread its system abroad. Though we face pressure, threats, and censorship, you can rest assured that we will never back down.

It's an honor to have you with us on this journey, and your continued support makes this work possible.

In Truth and Tradition,

Joshua Philipp Senior investigative reporter The Epoch Times

integrity of politicians and

# The Simplicity of Discipline

How to thrive without the baggage of expectations

Continued from Page 9

We take these expectations and turn them into action. "OK, it's finally time to get off my butt and do something about this

And that's when change starts to happen—when we've motivated ourselves to start.

#### After a certain point, the **expectations** become the anchor, not the engine.

So expectations can seem like they're doing a lot of work, because they're the things that got

But then they start getting in

- I expected to be perfect at this habit, but I'm still struggling
- I expected to keep my streak going, but then I missed a day I expected to enjoy yoga or meditation, but it's harder than
- This doesn't meet my expectations, so don't appreciate it

And so on.

The expectations actually hold us back from the simplicity of discipline.

#### The Simplicity of Discipline The things we want to be disciplined at are actually fairly

simple in a lot of ways. We want to be consistent with journaling, or meditation, or exercise. The best thing to do is just start, as simply as possible. Do that again the next day. If you miss a day, no problem—just start again. Over and over.

All of the problems of habits start to go away when we drop expectations. We can start to appreciate doing the habit, at concerned with how it will turn out in the future—or how disappointed we may be with how we did in the past

It's very simple when we drop our expectations.

A daily writing habit becomes as simple as picking up the writing tool and doing it, without any expectation that it be any good or that people will love it.

A daily exercise habit becomes as simple as putting your shoes on, going outside, and going for a walk or a run or a hike or a bodyweight workout. You don't need fancy equipment, the perfect program, or a membership to anything. You just start moving, as simply as possible.

Of course, we have all kinds of hangups when it comes to exercise, or writing, or eating. These come from years of beating ourselves up, or getting judged by others, and internalizing those judgments. We can stop beating ourselves up the moment we drop expectations. Then, without the layers of self-judgment, we can simply get moving.

Every time we "fail" at a habit, we get discouraged. Because of expectations. What if we dropped any expectation that we be perfect at it, and just return to doing the habit at the earliest opportunity? Over and over again.

It all becomes exceedingly simple. And if we become fully present and put our heart into it, it can even be joyful. The joy of being in the moment, doing something meaningful.

#### **Dropping Expectations** So simple right? Now we just have to figure out how to drop

those pesky expectations. Here's the thing: It turns out the human mind is a powerful expectations generator. It is constantly creating expectations. Just willy nilly, without any real grounding in reality. Out of

So do we just turn off the expectations machine? We can try, but it's extremely hard to do. In fact, the hope that we can just turn off the expectations is in itself an expectation.

The practice is to just notice the expectations. Bring a gentle awareness to them. Just say, "Aha! I see you, Expectation. I know you're the reason I'm feeling discouraged, overwhelmed, behind, frustrated, inadequate."

And it's true, isn't it? We feel inadequate because we have some expectation that we be more than this. We feel behind because of some made-up expectations of what we should have done already. We feel discouraged because we haven't met some expectation. We feel overwhelmed because we have an expectation that we should be able to handle all of this easily and at once. We feel frustrated because someone (us, or someone else) has failed to meet an expectation.

All of these feelings are clearcut signs that we have an expectation. And we can simply bring awareness to the expectation.

Then we're in a place of choice. Do I want to hold myself and everything else to this made-up ideal? Or can I let go of that and simply see things as they are? Simply do the next step.

Seeing things as they are, without expectations, is seeing the bare experience, the actual physical reality of things, without all of the ideals and fantasies and frustrations we layer on top of

This means that when we miss a day, we don't have to get caught up in thoughts about how that sucks—we just look at the moment we're in, and sit down on the meditation cushion. Break out the writing pad. Do the next thing, with clear eyes.

So in this place of choice, we can decide whether we want expectations—or drop out of it and into the world as it is. Which is wide open. Ready for us to go do the next thing.

That's the choice we can make, every time if we are aware of our expectations in the moment.

#### 2 Discipline Practices Let's talk briefly about two

practices: the discipline of doing work, and the discipline of sticking consistently to a habit.

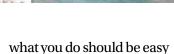
1. The Discipline of Doing Work So let's say you have a task list, with five important tasks, and 10 smaller ones (including to respond to Tanya's email, buy a replacement faucet for the kitchen sink, etc.).

What would stand in the way of doing all of that? Not being clear on what to do first (or expecting that you pick the "right" task), feeling resistance to doing it (expecting the work to be comfortable), worrying about how it will turn out (expecting people think you're awesome), stressing about all the things you have to do today (expecting to have a calm, orderly, simple day), or wanting to run to your favorite distractions (expecting that things

So noticing these difficulties caused by expectations, you can decide if you want to be in this place of expectations, or if you'd like to drop them and just be in the moment as it is.

Then, you do the simple discipline of work:

- 1. Pick one task. Whatever feels important right now. Let go of expectations that it be the
- 2. Put everything else aside other tasks, distractions. Let go of the expectation that you do everything right now, and that



3. Do the task. Be in the moment

and comfortable.

The real work of

habit comes when

we fail. We had

expectations of

perfect consistency

Then we miss a day.

Or it is harder than

we expected. The

real burden comes

from expecting it

would be easy, or

expecting we'd never

fail. Let go of the

expectation and the

work becomes clear

and simple.

We can decide

whether we

want to stay

world of

in this fantasy

expectations-

or drop out of

it and into the

world as it is.

with it. Let go of expectations of comfort, or expectations that you succeed at this and that others not judge you. Just do. Find the joy of doing.

4. Stay with it as long as you can. If you get interrupted, simply come back.

5. When you're done, or it's time to move on, pick something else. Let go of expectations that you have everything done right away, and just pick one thing to

#### And repeat.

It's important to make a distinction between letting go of the expectation that you not be tired, and actually overworking yourself. We are not advocating overworking to the point of burnout. But that doesn't mean we should never do anything when we're not feeling it. We have to let go of the expectation that we not be tired when we work—and also the expectation that we never stop working. Rest when you need it, but don't let yourself off the hook just because you don't feel like it.

#### 2. The Discipline of Consistent Habits

Let's say you want to get more consistent with habits. You pick one—journaling, for example.

What would get in the way of consistency with this habit? Not making space for it in your day (expecting things to come easy without fully committing to it), not enjoying the habit (expecting things to be comfortable and fun), not doing as well as you hoped and getting discouraged (expectations that you'll be great at it), missing some days and getting discouraged (expectation that you be perfectly consistent), resisting doing it when you have other things to do (expectation that you don't have to sacrifice

something you want to do

So noticing these difficulties caused by expectations, you car decide if you want to be in this place of expectations, or if you'd like to drop them and just be in the moment as it is.

Then, you do the simple discipline of this habit:

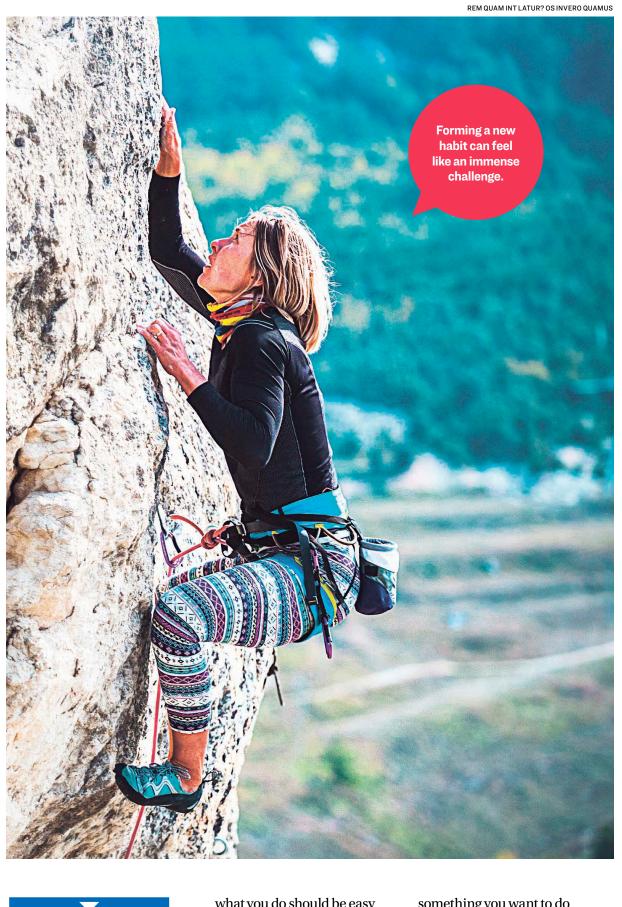
- 6. Carve out space. Commit yourself to doing this habit
- 7. Do the habit. Notice if you're feeling resistance, and just do it.
- 8. Try to appreciate the habit as you do it. Let go of how you think it should be. 9. Do it the next day, and the
- 10. If you miss a day, simply start again. Let go of the expectation that you will do the habit flawlessly.

If you're struggling with feeling tired and not wanting to do something, you may have an expectation you shouldn't be tired and that you don't have to do things when you don't feel like it. Let go of that and you can simply do the task or habit.

You'll notice that none of this says that doing the task or habit will be easy, comfortable, or without fear, tiredness, or uncertainty. That would be an expectation. In fact, there's a good chance that these will be present for you as you do the task or habit. That's OK-we're not going to expect it to be any different

So then, letting go of that, we simply turn to what's in the moment, and get on with it.

Leo Babauta is the author of six books; the writer of "Zen Habits," a blog with more than 2 million subscribers; and the creator of several online programs to help you master your habits. Visit ZenHabits.net



Week 32, 2020 THE EPOCH TIMES

I blamed

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even wanting

#### **NANCY COLIER**

"Your life is perfect exactly the way it is." Imagine offering this to someone whose child was just killed in a terrorist attack. "You already have everything you need." Tell this to someone facing a serious illness or going through a divorce. "Only you can make yourself happy or unhappy." Huh?

Lisa, a client of mine, was in a bad relationship when she came to see me. Almost immediately after telling me about the situation, she explained that she knew she already had everything she needed to be happy. So, she was here to work on herself, since if she was unhappy and unsatisfied with her partner, she had only herself to blame.

Another client, Peter, is a seasoned meditator. He has been deeply disturbed by the political happenings in the world as of late. In a recent conversation, he expressed feeling angry and frightened by it. At the same time, he was sure that the world was evolving in exactly the way it needed to thought something was utterly wrong.

#### Mantras Go Mainstream

For many years, I too was confused by the "you have everything you need to be happy" mantras. I blamed myself for needing or even wanting anything outside myself for a sense of well-being. I was supposed to be able to feel joyful regardless of the contents of my life. Disappointment and desire, I thought, were for spiritual

Spiritual truths such as the ones I've mentioned are thrown around in yoga classes, on social media, at the bar, in casual conversation—everywhere. And yet, these mantras are being turned into platitudes that are misunderstood and misused. What makes this troublesome is that, as such slogans gain cultural traction, they are being used to shame and blame us for feeling the way we do, thereby cutting us off from our actual experience. So, too, they end up preventing us from making changes in our lives.

Feeling sad, angry, frustrated, or confused is perfectly sensible when life isn't how you want it to be. You feel pain when bad things happen; that's just the way it is. Wanting to change what's not working is a part of self-care and sanity. People often use the "life is perfect" mantra as a form of spiritual bypassing; that is, to avoid the feelings of suffering that come from not knowing how to fix the situation.

#### **Acting From Your Truth**

We exist at both a relative and absolute level. On a relative level, we are affected and impacted by our life situation. We feel better when we have social connections, financial security, and good health-better than when we are isolated, poor, and sick. We want our life to contain elements that make us feel good. Such is the human

At an absolute level, there is perfection in what is, simply because it's the truth it's the way life is manifesting at the moment. From an absolute perspective, we be. And so, it was best not to be angry or have what we need because our peace lies fight for what he believed in, but rather within us and not in anything we can atto just trust that everything is exactly as tain externally. Our deepest well-being it should be—even if he didn't like it, or arises from knowing that we aren't our current situation—or the thoughts and feelings it creates—but rather our presence

If you look at spiritual leaders like Gandhi or Mother Theresa, and so many others, they embodied joy and a deep sense of well-being. But at the same time, they lived their lives as agents of change in the world, working to make things better.

Whether you are pulled to activism or just want to change your life, this is a reflection of who you are in this moment. From that sense, it is a part of this moment's inherent rightness. If the truth is that you desire change, then acting from that truth is the same thing as accepting this moment as it is. This "perfect now" includes who you really are within it.

To try to improve your life is an aspect of psychological health; it is a form of agency, which we require to be well. And yet just because we try to make things better does not mean we must wage war with the way things are. We can try to create a better

We feel better when we have social connections, financial security, and good health-

better than

when we are

and sick.

isolated, poor,

CANON BOY/SHUTTERSTOCK

tomorrow while simultaneously accepting the truth of today. The two aren't contra-

So, too, we can seek to change our life without a strong sense of pursuit or entitlement. Remove the idea that you're missing out on a better life that exists in some par-

allel universe. There is only here and now. We can also work for better circumstances without believing that those new circumstances, should they come, will provide us with lasting happiness. Whatever new situation arises, it too will change and pass, and thus cannot be relied upon for our deepest well-being. We can work to improve our lives even though we know that all situations are impermanent.

#### **Making Peace With Paradox**

We are far more than just the contents of our life; we are the mystery that is life itself. Life is full of paradoxes: We are spiritual beings on a human journey and also human beings on a spiritual journey. We can know ourselves as spiritual beings while still taking good care of, and fully experiencing, our human selves.

Wanting your life to be different, and knowing that your life is perfect in this moment because it can't be any other way, creates a perfect handshake. Feeling the heartbreak that comes with being human, and knowing the joy and miracle that it is to be alive despite life's hardships, is also a perfect handshake.

So feel what you feel, fight for what matters to you, work to make your life better, and be who you are. All of it is in perfect alignment with knowing that things are exactly as they need to be, for now.

Nancy Colier is a psychotherapist, interfaith minister, author, public speaker, and workshop leader. A regular blogger for Psychology Today and The Huffington Post, she has also authored several books on mindfulness and personal growth. Colier is available for individual psychotherapy, mindfulness training, spiritual counseling, public speaking, and workshops, and also works with clients via Skype around the world. For more information, visit NancyColier.com

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Aerobic

is important

health and

might even

be more

the total

exercise

amount of

that we do.

than

important

fitness

for our

# When You Need a Little Self-Care

Massaging

and forehead or

having a cup of tea

your face

and refresh

Quick moments of stress relief can help ease us through difficult times

#### **DEVON ANDRE**

There's a lot of stress these days. Fear over COVID-19, loneliness, job loss, or the loss of a loved one can make life feel overwhelming. When the stress hits, it's time for some self-care.

Taking time for yourself every day can help keep stress levels down and make you feel calmer. Small five-minute doses throughout the day can fit into any schedule and provide some grounding when you need it most.

Just make sure you're able to

fully. Focus on what you are doing gently abandon distracting thoughts as you notice them

travel book or magazine. Though you can't physically go on holiday, taking a few minutes to take a mental vacation can offer a calming moment in

your day. When you see beauty, you feel better. Of course, it's even better if you can step outside into a beautiful natural setting. This experience of research showing that folding pa-published this article.

immerse yourself in the present nature can offer a mental exfoliate that clears away the psychological debris we accumulate in the course

Another quick option is to listen to some soothing or uplifting music. do is reach for a Using a vinyl record or CD might be the best option, as research has shown these tangible items may lead to heightened emotional arousal. Vinyl may be best, but use whichever is available.

A face massage can also be a quick way to self soothe. Massaging your face and forehead can help relieve tension to help you refocus

and refresh. Keeping your hands busy may also alleviate anxious feelings. There is for BelMarraHealth, which first

per can boost concentration and mindfulness. Going online to learn origami or other folding techniques may serve as a quick stress-reliever when you need it.

A hobby, a bit of exercise, a meaningful conversation, a cup of tea, and no expectation of productivity can all be opportunities to calm your mind and attend to your mental well-being.

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

# 'As Many Reps as Possible' Workouts Offer Another Route to Fitness

AMRAP workouts are popular way to get great workout done in short period of time

#### **MATTHEW HAINES**

Though it's recommended that we get a daily averof physical activity, many of us struggle to find that much time. This might be one of the reasons highintensity interval training (HIIT) workouts—which take just 15-30 minutes to complete—have become so Though HIIT workouts might

be short, a growing body of research shows they're just as effective as longer endurance workouts for our health and There are many different versions of high-intensity workouts, including CrossFit

and Tabata. But the latest trend is AMRAP, which stands for workouts. The intensity of workouts, based on what research shows about the effects of HIIT, it's likely this short but adaptable form of exercise can provide similar health benefits.

AMRAP training is based on time. You work to complete as many repetitions or rounds of exercises as possible within a set time. For example, you could do 10 press-ups, 10 crunches, and 10 jump squats, repeated in that order for as many rounds as possible until time

60 seconds before taking a rest making it more tolerable. Howcific time requirement, and workouts can be adjusted according to fitness levels. However, most AMRAP workouts tend to be between

period after each exercise. Some Tabata workouts—which usually involve a person performing 20 seconds of intense exercise, followed by 10 seconds of rest, repeated eight times—take as little as four minutes, but remarkably have been shown to improve a person's aerobic fitness by as much as 18 percent following 24 exercise sessions over an eight-week training period. This is important because our level of fitness has a powerful protec-

5 and 30 minutes long, with no rest

tive effect against cardiovascular disease. In these studies, fitness is typically defined as the maximum amount of oxygen you can use during intense exercise—known as VO2max.

Though it's seen a recent spike in popularity, AMRAP training isn't new. This form of training has been used in high-intensity circuit training for decades—most recently popularized by CrossFit. Although relatively little research has investigated the effects of AMRAP training specifically, strong evidence shows HIIT can improve blood pressure, blood sugar control, and lower body fat.

Also, improvements in aerobic fitness following HIIT exercise are similar—or even greater than—those seen after typical endurance training, such as running or cycling, despite a significantly lower exercise volume. Aerobic fitness is important for our health and might even be more important than the total amount of exercise that we do.

#### **Increase Intensity**

The key reason HIIT seems to be so effective is that it rapidly uses mus-

cle glycogen (stored carbohydrates) through a process known as glycogenolysis. Research shows that during HIIT performed on a cycling age of 60 minutes machine, it's the rate of glycogenolysis that acts as a "signal" to the body to increase fitness, which, in turn, leads to improvements in health and performance.

In short, the intensity of exercise is

Although it's uncertain if a similar mechanism happens following AM-RAP workouts, it's reasonable to assume they might be similar, especially if the activity is performed at a high intensity. Indeed, CrossFit has been shown to improve aerobic fitness, anaerobic capacity, and body composition (lowering body fat and increasing muscle) in people with varying fitness levels.

However, there are drawbacks to AMRAP-type "as many reps (or rounds) as the exercise could make it possible." While there's little difficult or unsuitable for research looking specifical- many, particularly those who ly at the effects of AMRAP aren't active or have long-term medical conditions. Also, high-intensity AMRAP can be very physically challenging so it's likely to feel unpleasant, which might make some people less likely to stick with this type of exercise.

Tabata-type workouts are shown to be less enjoyable to participants, and other approaches to HIIT cause greater displeasure compared with moderate-intensity continuous cycling. Just as with any workout, the benefits of AMRAP will only be seen if a person continues doing them.

Most AMRAP

workouts tend to

be between 5 and

30 minutes long.

But our research has found that reexpires. Or to make duced-exertion approaches to HIIT things simpler, you can reduce strong feelings of displeacould perform a sin- sure during workouts. This type of gle exercise (such as burpees) for as HIIT decreases the total time spent many repetitions as possible for completing high-intensity exercise, and repeating. There's no spe-ever, it's uncertain if balancing volume and intensity during exercise brings the same positive health changes following HIIT.

Higher intensity exercise also raises concerns about injury risk. A recent review found the number of injuries sustained during CrossFit was quite high (between 19 percent and 74 percent of participants). Most injuries were to the shoulder or lower back. The challenge of working to a time limit during AMRAP could lead to poor technique, which may increase injury risk—particularly in those who are inexperienced.

Regular high-intensity workouts could also increase the chances of developing rhabdomyolysis, a rare but dangerous condition where muscle damage increases calcium levels, although the risk remains low.

AMRAP training is highly versatile and can be adapted for a wide range of fitness levels and environments. For example, it can be done at home doing only bodyweight exercises. The intensity of the activity can also be modified to make it more manageable, but this may not lead to significant fitness increases. It may be a cliché but it's true: the best exercise is the exercise you

will do. AMRAP will be effective for some but it might not work for everyone. Good exercise techniques, progressive overload, and sticking to a routine are important

Matthew Haines is the acting head of division for sport, exercise, and *nutrition science at the University* of Huddersfield in England. This article was first published on The Conversation.



staying physically active are two measures that could slow or prevent the onset of Alzheimer's, a new study suggests.

### New Study Identifies Alzheimer's Risk **Factors**

#### **MOHAN GARIKIPARITHI**

Dementia is a scary condition. The leading type of dementia, Alzheimer's, afflicts more than 5 million Americans over 65 and we understand little about how to prevent it. That number is expected to triple

by 2050 making it a significant concern, not just for families, but for the entire nation. Although knowledge is growing, the causes of Alzheimer's aren't fully understood. That makes it challeng-

ing to suggest preventative measures. Because of Alzheimer's close associations with heart disease and inflammation, there is strong evidence to suggest that what's good for the body is also good for the brain. A new study has taken the next step in identifying potential pre-

ventative measures. Looking at nearly 400 studies, a research team in Shanghai identified 21 possible strategies doctors could use to slow

Those measures include:

- Getting education early in life • Taking part in mentally stimulating activities such as reading
- Avoiding diabetes
- Limiting stress • Avoiding high blood pressure
- Maintaining a positive outlook • Avoiding head trauma/injury
- · Maintaining healthy weight later
- Controlling homocysteine levels

Another set of measures were identified, but with weaker evidence:

- Getting quality sleep
- Avoiding obesity in midlife Getting physical activity
- Not smoking Avoiding frailty

Of course, it is difficult for a person to check all of those boxes, but the more, the better. Alzheimer's isn't inevitable, so approaching it with a preventative approach may help you maintain memory and independence.

It may not come as much of a surprise that many of the lifestyle factors to prevent Alzheimer's are closely associated with general

The road to slowing the progression of Alzheimer's is continuous, but the decisions you make each day can help you maintain memory and mental capacity well into the future.

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

## Best Essential Oils to Reduce Stress

tress is a natural reaction to changes and tribulations that occur in your life. When you become overwhelmed by stress, or suffer chronic long-term stress, it can affect you physically, mentally, and emo-

Physically, stress can lead to headaches, sleep problems, muscle pain, high blood pressure, stomach issues, and more. Mental consequences of stress include excessive worrying, panic attacks, and depression. The emotional effects of stress include anxiety, moodiness, sadness, lack of motivation, and restlessness. Stress can also increase your risk for diseases of the heart, lungs, and immune system, as well as cancer, neurodegenerative disease, and problems with the gut and mental health.

The essential oils that follow lavender, rose, citrus family, and mint family—can have some effect helping to relieve stress. Aromatherapy essential oil blends also help to de-stress and restore your health. Just as certain sights and sounds can calm us, so can

Lavender is the most highly researched stress-reducing essential oil. In a human study of stress from performing math tests, those exposed to lavender aromatherapy showed lowered levels of two stress markers (cortisol—the stress hormone—and chromogranin A, or CgA) compared to a control group. In 60 coronary artery

patients in the ICU, inhaling two percent lavender essential oil for 15 days increased sleep quality and reduced anxiety. Results showed a nearly 11 percent variance in anxiety and 70 percent decrease in blood cortisol from lavender oil inhalation in a study of 90 open-heart surgery patients.

A hot foot-bath with lavender essential oil produced a significant increase in blood flow and relaxation in another study. Three stress-related symptoms (pain, anxiety, and satisfaction) were significantly improved by lavender aromatherapy with patients who had an IV catheter inserted before surgery, compared to a nonlavender control group.

Lavender aromatherapy in 15 pre-surgery participants significantly decreased stress levels, lowered their bispectral index score (a lower score indicates anesthesia is working), lessened pain intensity of needle insertion, reduced stress levels, and increased relaxation in 20 healthy adults.

Inastudyof40healthy adults, rose oil significantly decreased breathing rate, blood oxygen saturation, and systolic blood pressure compared to the placebo group. Subjects felt more

calm, relaxed, and likely to sleep than in the control group. In a labor/delivery study of 110 women, the use of rose oil aromatherapy reduced the severity of pain and anxiety in the first stage of labor. In animal studies, there is evidence of rose oil's anti-stress effects.

#### (Orange, Bergamot) Orange oil compared favorably to lavender oil

in reducing fatigue. Petitgrain (bitter orange) aromatherapy improved workplace performance by reducing stress and increasing attentiveness and alertness in a study that comprised 42 administrative university workers. In a statistical analysis of 200 dental patients in the waiting room, both orange and lavender aromatherapy groups (50 patients each) had reduced anxiety and improved mood. The other 100 patients were split between a music condition and a control condition (no music

In a study of 72 dental patients, women exposed to orange essential oil had a lower level of anxiety,

higher positive feelings than the control group.

# Sage, Peppermint)

ceae) has very aromatic members—rosemary, thyme, sage, and peppermint—which exhibit stress-A study of 108 participants

(one of which was a control group) compared different Saturna plants. The Saturna group includes rosemary and thyme. Saturna brevicalyx (highest linalool content of 21.2 percent) beat S. boliviana (which had 12.8 percent linalool) in decreasing anxi-

ety. In another study, both rosemary and lavender oils effectively decreased cortisol in 25 healthy subjects. The results of 33 employees in a chemical plant who drank rosemary-infused tea, indicated



tive tasks and lowered mental fatigue associated with extended task performance in a study of 24 healthy adults. In another study of 144 volunteers, peppermint oil was linked to enhanced memory and alertness.

#### **Aromatherapy Blends**

a control group.

who were treated with an aromatherapy blend (lavender, marjoram, eucalyptus, rosemary, peppermint) showed lower pain and depression levels. In a research study comparing the impact of lavender oil, an oil blend (lavender, sage, marjoram), and acupressure massage, quality of life was improved with each intervention, but sleep improved the most with the intervention that blended aromatherapy and acupressure massage together.

In 42 hypertensive patients, the aromatherapy group (lemon, lavender, ylang-ylang) showed lower systolic blood pressure and heart rate variability when compared to the control group. For 52 hyperten-



sive clients, lavender/bergamot/ ylang-ylang blend was linked to reduced psychological stress responses, serum cortisol levels, and blood pressure in another study.

the 20 healthy subjects who had bergamot/lavender oils rubbed on their bellies in another study showed significantly decreased pulse rate and blood pressure (systolic and diastolic) and self-rated as "more calm" and "more relaxed."

Burn patients reported decreased pain and anxiety following rose/ formance on demanding cognilavender aromatherapy. In a meta-analysis of 12 research experiments, aromatherapy using different blends was found to be an effective sleep enhancement and was linked to reduced anxiety and depression in four trial studies of postmenopausal and elderly women. In addition, a study of 28 dementia patients treated with aromatherapy (rosemary, lemon, lavender, orange) showed cognitive functional improvement, and those with Alzheimer's showed the

#### **Essential oils from** lavender, rose, citrus family, and mint can have some effect helping to relieve stress.

De-Stressing With Aromatherapy Combining increasing numbers of human studies with previous animal research of essential oils and stress, a holistic picture of aromatherapy's benefits emerges. For science-based evidence of these de-stressing impacts, see Green-MedInfo.com's research databases for aromatherapy, essential

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Although it's

[UV] probably

best solution

for direct air

disinfection.

David Sliney, a

faculty member

at Johns Hopkins

University and a

on germicidal UV

longtime researcher

not perfect,

offers the

Inside Marlaina's Mediterranean Kitchen, a Seattle area eatery, which is battling COVID-19 using

# Scientists Discuss Using UV Light to Fight COVID-19

Creating a virus 'killing zone' can help lower infection risk in high-risk areas, experts say

#### **WILL STONE**

igh up, near the ceiling in the dining room of his Seattle-area restaurant, Musa Firat recently \_ installed a "killing zone"—a place where swaths of invisible electromagnetic energy penetrate the air, ready to disarm COVID-19 and other dangerous pathogens that drift upward in tiny, airborne particles.

Firat's new system draws on a centuryold technology for fending off infectious diseases: Energetic waves of ultraviolet light—known as germicidal UV, or GUV. This light is delivered in the right dose to wipe out viruses, bacteria, and other microorganisms.

Research already shows that germicidal UV can effectively inactivate airborne microbes that transmit measles, tuberculosis, and SARS-CoV-1, a close relative of the novel coronavirus. Now, with concern mounting that the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 may be transmitted easily through microscopic floating particles known as aerosols, some researchers and physicians hope the technology can be recruited yet again to help disinfect high-risk

"I thought it was a great idea, and I want my customers to be safe," said Firat, whose casual eatery, Marlaina's Mediterranean Kitchen, is 20 minutes south of downtown Seattle.

As the U.S. grapples with how to interrupt the spread of the highly infectious virus, UV is being used to decontaminate surfaces on public transit and in hospitals where infectious droplets may have landed, as well as to disinfect N95 masks for reuse. But so far using this technology to provide continuous air disinfection has remained outside of most mainstream, policy-setting conversations about this coronavirus.

Experts attribute this to a combination of factors: misconceptions about UV's safety, a lack of public awareness and technical know-how, concerns about the costs of installing the technology, and a general reluctance to consider the role of aerosols in the spread of COVID-19.

Aerosols are microdroplets expelled when someone exhales, speaks, or coughs. Unlike the larger and heavier respiratory droplets that fall quickly to the ground, aerosols can linger in the air a long time and travel through indoor spaces.

When someone catches a virus this way,



Ultraviolet fixtures mounted above the restaurant's ceiling panels glow faint blue and create a "killing zone" that can wipe out viral aerosols building up in the air. Some experts are calling for wider adoption of UV light to help disinfect

the process is called "airborne transmission." It's already recognized that the coronavirus can spread by means of aerosols during medical procedures, which is why health care workers are advised to wear respirators, such as N95 masks, that filter out these tiny particles. Yet, there is still considerable debate over how likely the virus is to spread in other settings via aerosols.

Recently, the question of airborne transmission gained new urgency when a group of 239 scientists called on the World Health Organization to take the threat of infectious aerosols more seriously, arguing that the "lack of clear recommendations on the control measures against the airborne virus will have significant consequences."

WHO officials conceded that more research is needed but maintained that most infections don't happen this way.

As the science continues to evolve, UV could emerge as an attractive safeguard within the airborne transmission-zone. It has a track record against pathogens and can be deployed to reduce the risk of infectious aerosols accumulating in indoor settings such as schools and businesses.

#### Welcome to the 'Killing Zone'

At Firat's restaurant, there are just two visible clues of the new UV disinfection system—a subtle glow of blue light above the black grates of the drop ceiling, and a hand-chalked sign at the door, proudly announcing to diners: "Coronavirus Disinfected Here!"

The system was installed while the restaurant was closed during Washington state's lockdown. The setup is known as "upper-room germicidal UV" because the UV fixtures are mounted high and angled away from humans below.

Ceiling fans circulate the air, eventually pushing any suspended viral particles that have accumulated in the dining space through the grated drop ceiling, to the area where UV lights, positioned horizontally, blast them with radiant energy.

Marlaina's owner gained inspiration and technical assistance from customer Bruce Davidson, a pulmonary physician who was Philadelphia's "tuberculosis czar" in the mid-'90s. Back then, the U.S. was grappling with a new outbreak of TB that included strains resistant to existing drugs.

"Preventing transmission was the most important part because we had no drugs, no vaccine," says Davidson, who now lives outside Seattle. UV light proved to be a key strategy back then, and Davidson thinks it can help again: "It really ought to be in most indoor public spaces now."

To demonstrate the concept, Davidson lit a cigar inside Marlaina's and showed how the smoke danced upward, collecting in the ceiling space with the UV fixtures.

rus and doesn't eat with a mask and is talking and so on, the vast majority of their particles are going to get pulled up there into the killing zone and circulate and bounce around," Davidson said. "Statistically, the risk to other people is going to be very low." Research shows close to 90 percent of airborne particles from a previous coronavirus

(SARS-CoV-1) can be inactivated in about 16 are considered negligible, especially comseconds when exposed to the same strength of UV as in the restaurant's ceiling. Other viruses, such as the adenovirus, are more resistant and require a higher dose of UV. "Although it's not perfect, it probably of-

fers the best solution for direct air disinfection" in the current pandemic, said David Sliney, a faculty member at Johns Hopkins University and a longtime researcher on germicidal UV.

When used with proper ventilation, upper-room GUV is about 80 percent effective against the spread of airborne tuberculosis, according to several studies. This is equivalent to replacing the air in a room up to 24 times an hour.

But widespread adoption of UV systems could be an uphill battle, Sliney said, because, in the United States, interest in using UV for air disinfection has waned in recent decades as scientists focused their to deal with infectious diseases.

#### **Understanding Aerosols, Airborne**

UV can be a powerful weapon against an airborne virus, but it can go only so far toward preventing infection. People can still get sick from the larger, heavier droplets ejected via coughs and sneezes. They can directly inhale those droplets or touch a fans, and bought black gridded plastic pansurface contaminated with them, and then touch their eyes, nose, or mouth.

UV also doesn't prevent someone from being exposed to infectious aerosols that have just emerged from an infected person and are lingering quite near his or her body—what researcher Richard Corsi called the "near field."

"In that scenario, you're inhaling a very concentrated cloud of these tiny particles that you can't see," said Corsi, dean of the Maseeh College of Engineering & Computer Science at Portland State University. and Kaiser Health News.

"You're getting a pretty significant dose in your respiratory system."

So, even if there is upper-room UV in a building, Corsi said, face masks and social distancing are still necessary to block larger respiratory droplets and remove some of the aerosols in the near field. But Corsi said there's now enough evidence to show that coronavirus aerosols can hang in the air and spread throughout a room ("the far field"), and it's time to take that airborne spread seriously.

One example of far-field transmission is documented in a study of a restaurant in China at which some diners seated at neighboring tables contracted the CO-VID-19 virus, despite never coming into close contact with the "index case-patient." Another piece of evidence came from a March 10 choir practice in Mount Vernon, Washington, after which the majority of singers contracted the coronavirus, even though members of the group took precautions to use hand sanitizer and avoid hugs and handshakes.

In their letter to WHO, scientists note that the coronavirus that causes MERS can spread through aerosols, and "there is every reason to expect that [the COVID virus] behaves similarly."

#### UV can be a powerful weapon against an airborne virus.

Understanding the Technology, Safety Germicidal UV harnesses a portion of the electromagnetic spectrum that contains short waves of radiant energy, called UV-C. This wavelength is further away from the visible spectrum than other forms of UV light.

Think of it as giving the virus a lethal

"We have very little practical experience to show how effective it can be [in a pandemic] since it's been out of use in this country and in Western Europe," said Sliney, who chairs a committee with the Illuminating Engineering Society, which recently released new guidance on GUV. Sliney recommends installing UV in bigbox stores, restaurants, and grocery stores,

which typically have high ceilings. "There needs to be vertical air exchange," he said, as with ceiling fans, so "it's not just sterilizing the air in the upper space of the room."

"No one doubts the efficacy of germicidal UV in killing small microorganisms and pathogens. I think the bigger controversy, if there is any, is misperceptions around "If somebody has undetected coronavi- safety," said Dr. Edward Nardell, a professor at Harvard Medical School

> Low-dose germicidal UV can damage the eyes and skin, but Nardell said those risks can be avoided by following the appropriate guidelines. While international guidelines warn against directly exposing humans to UV-C, the risks of skin cancer pared with longer wavelengths of UV that can penetrate more deeply.

#### Could UV Make a Comeback?

With interest in UV climbing, there is concern about shoddy products and exaggerated claims about their effectiveness against the virus, said Jim Malley, a professor at the University of New Hampshire who studies public health and disinfection.

Consumers should be wary of marketing claims about "UV wands" that can be waved quickly over surfaces or special "portals" that people walk through, he said, because those are probably not correctly calibrated to inactivate the virus and could be dangerous.

Malley said he doesn't think there's much of a viable market for upper-room GUV outside health care settings, but he supports installing the technology in the most highattention on powerful vaccines and drugs risk settings, such as meatpacking plants and nursing facilities.

"My gut feeling is we should do anything we can in those places because we have a horrendous fatality record" with the coronavirus, he said.

At Firat's restaurant, the installation was relatively straightforward.

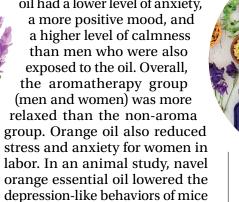
He purchased four UV fixtures (at \$165 each), hired an electrician to install the els to enclose the ceiling space where the UV is mounted.

Firat still encourages his customers to wear masks and maintain social distance. But he said the UV has become part of the

"It's more modern and clean, and the response is great, absolutely great," he said.

Will Stone is a journalist covering health for NPR, KHN, and KNKXFM. This story is part of a partnership that includes NPR



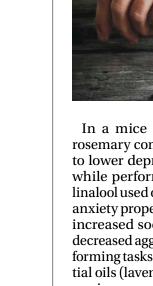


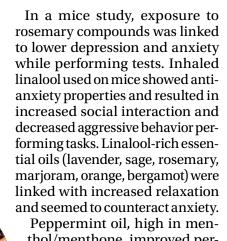
due to its limonene compound. Bergamot (citrus-based) aromatherapy combined with listening to soft music showed improved relaxation in experimental research of 119 healthy young adults (average age 25). In a study of 57 eligible participants waiting for mental health treatment, the bergamot scent group reported 17 percent

The mint family (Lamia-

who were divided into 6 groups

positive effects on occupational burnout (reduced stress, fatigue,

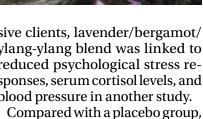




Research shows essential oil aromatherapy blends linked to improvements in stress-caused symptoms. For example, terminal cancer patients reported less pain and depression with aromatherapy (lavender/bergamot/frankincense) hand massages when compared to

Similarly, 20 arthritic patients





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### Sitting on the Floor Versus Sitting on a Chair

Sitting on the floor offers unique benefits and risks-depending on how you do it

#### NACHIAPPAN CHOCKALINGAM & AOIFE HEALY

or thousands of years, humans have rested on the ground using variations of a squat, cross-legged, or kneeling position. And despite the availability of chairs and things to sit on, sitting on the floor is still common in many cultures.

According to reports, many English-speaking people refer to floor sitting as "Indian style," though it's also known as "Turkish style." In Korea, it's called "Yangban style"—named after the traditional ruling class. In Japan, the formal way to sit is called seiza, which involves kneeling on the floor with the buttocks resting on the heels.

In yoga, sitting cross-legged on the floor is known as sukhasana or lotus—claimed to have been designed to stretch the muscles, improve posture, and bring peace of mind. Some people claim that if you sit in this position while eating it helps digestion.

These cross-legged, squatting, and kneeling positions stretch your hips, legs, pelvis, and spine helping to promote natural flexibility and movement. Given that people now spend increasing amounts of time sitting during the day, should we be opting for the floor over a chair in the interest of our health and well-being?

#### Effects on the Body

Anecdotal and clinical evidence shows that different ways of sitting place different physical stresses on our bodies. Sitting for a long time in the same position normally affects the structure of your low back, (called the lumbar region of the spine) and the movement characteristics of your pelvis.

Health professionals and re-

searchers advise us to make use of appropriate supports or assistive devices and to switch positions often when sitting for a long time.

Researchers and doctors have looked at the ergonomics of sitting on chairs and have provided a variety of tips on sitting upright and how to avoid long-term health problems. But there is actually little scientific research into sitting on the floor.

Despite this, some health professionals advise sitting on the floor as a way to help maintain the natural curvature of the spine and improve posture. Chairs, especially the over-size, over-stuffed living room furniture of today, make it all but impossible not to slouch. Sitting on the floor can force you to use your own body to keep yourself upright, thus improving strength and flexibility, which can in turn help you avoid lower-back pain.

#### **Spinal Structure**

Though there is limited research on floor sitting, there may be some truth to these claims. This is because the spinal structure shows an inward natural spine curvature at the lower back called lumbar lordosis. When sitting on the floor, the lumbar lordosis is relatively low, which is closer to our natural position and posture.

Sitting cross-legged can also bring about the natural and correct curvature both at the upper and lower back, effectively stabilizing the lower back and pelvis region. But that said, certain sitting postures rotate the pelvis backward and the lumbar lordosis is more flattened than it is when sitting on a chair, which can cause problems.

#### **Current Evidence**

A Korean study published in 2012 found that when sitting on the



floor, the changes in the lumbar lordosis mostly occur at a vertebral or the segmental level at the lower end of the spine. In this respect, sitting on the floor can easily aggravate lower back pain. To avoid this, it is important to maintain a sufficient lordotic lumbar curve at the base of sitting sitting of the spine.

the back while sitting on the floor. Studies also claim sitting with your legs crossed on a chair induces a greater load on the intervertebral discs and spine, especially when in a slumped position as this can further increase disc pressure and aggravate chronic low back pain. This is why it's very important to use the correct sitting posture.

The exact relationship between sitting posture, muscles, and lower back pain still needs to be established. But scientific research shows that some lumbo-pelvic muscles, the muscles in our

role in postural stabilization.
A 2016 study by researchers at Vidyasagar University found that sitting on the floor with folded legs is less harmful when compared to other sitting postures, such as squatting and sitting

on the floor with stretched legs.

Indeed, a 2009 study found

hip regions, play an important

that squatting along with cycling were both risk factors for knee osteoarthritis.

While high-quality scientific evidence is still lacking on the benefits of floor sitting, it is be-

coming a growing trend-par-

ticularly among people choos-

ing to adopt more minimalist

or furniture-free lifestyles.

So what's the best way to sit? While a comfortable sitting position will probably vary from person to person, the key to good sitting is regular movement and changing your position often. These changes could be as simple as moving side to side in the chair or standing up and stretching every now and again. Basically, listen to your body, it will tell you what it needs.

Nachiappan Chockalingam is a professor of clinical biomechanics at Staffordshire University in the U.K., and Aoife Healy is an associate professor of human movement biomechanics at Staffordshire University. This article was first published on The Conversation.

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