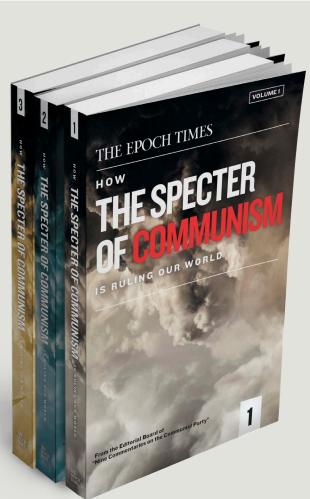




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Classical Music-Healing More Than Just the Soul

Research and human experience affirm that certain kinds of music can have a profound effect

to improve

TATIANA DENNING

✓ ozart makes you believe in God because it cannot be by chance that such a phenomenon arrives into this world and leaves such an unbounded number of unparalleled masterpieces." -

It seems like only yesterday that I first heard it. It was so beautiful, so stirring, I was moved down to my very soul.

It was the summer before my third-grade year, while I was visiting family in Morgantown, West Virginia, that my aunt Veronica sat down to play the piano. I hadn't even known she could play, but boy, could

What came forth amazed my ears! I'd grown up listening to music, but nothing like this. As my aunt's fingers so nimbly glided across the expanse of the keyboard, the sounds of Mozart and Tchaikovsky filled the air with a lightness and airiness that's hard to put into words.

I was hooked from the first moment

When I returned home, I told my mom I had to learn to play the piano. It RAWPIXEL.COM6/ in charge of both music and healing, was something I felt driven to do, though

we didn't even own a piano at the time. Of course, I didn't want to play just any music-it had to be classical music. This was something that thrilled my eventual piano teacher, Mrs. Rinehart, as all her other students wanted to play pop music. But the from a wild boar only being stopped with pop and rock music I was accustomed to just a musical incantation, and the poet Praticouldn't compare, couldn't produce the same sense of wonder and majesty, that classical

Many prominent medical institutions include music in their treatment plans.

Thus began my journey into the world of classical music.

It Moves the Soul

Just what is it that makes classical music resonate so much with us, that moves us in a way no other music has the power to do?

Clemency Burton-Hill, the author of "Year of Wonder: Classical Music to Enjoy Day by Day," says, "I believe the greatest works of music are engines of empathy: they allow us to travel without moving into other lives, ages, souls." She says classical music has benefited her life in a myriad of ways.

Vardinistar says on the website My Story that "Classical music touches a human's heart and soul, makes him better, gives him ideas and peace. Why do churches like classical music so much? Because it helps to find the connection with God. Not without a reason, people say that classical music is divine."

He agrees with what the ancients knew to be true, that "classical music can heal your soul and mind because your body reacts to its vibrations, rhythm, tempo."

The Ancients Views on Music

Ancient cultures were well aware of music's healing abilities.

Composer Gao Yuan, of the Shen Yun Symphony Orchestra, explains the importance of music in ancient China.

"Our ancestors believed that music has the power to harmonize a person's soul in ways that medicine could not. In ancient China, one of music's earliest purposes was for healing. The Chinese word, or character, for medicine actually comes from the character for music."

Interestingly, this character also is related to the word happiness. Dimitrios Dermentzioglou, on the site Uplifters, explains how the two relate.

"Medicine is characterized by bitterness, yet a patient is able to regain health and happiness only after suffering its bitterness."

He notes that the Great Yellow Emperor, known as the forefather of the Chinese people, developed a deep understanding of the power of music after being inspired-by a divine fairy in a dream no less-to use drums to defeat his enemies in battle.

Gao says it was during the Yellow Emperor's rule that "people discovered the relationship between the pentatonic scale, the five elements, and the human body's

> five internal [organs] and five sensory organs." He notes that music was also

used to influence a person's be-"During Confucius's time, scholars used music's calming

properties to improve and strengthen people's character and conduct." Music was also understood as divinely inspired in ancient Greece. The word "music" comes from the Muses, the patron goddesses of creconcentration ative endeavors. Music and healing were also tied together. The ancient Greeks put one god, Apollo,

demonstrating their belief that the two are closely related.

Hektoen International, the humanities journal owned by the Hektoen Institute of Medicine in Chicago, notes that "The Odyssey told of the bleeding of Odysseus's wounds nas in the 6th century B.C. recorded plague in Sparta being quelled by the music of the composer Thaletas."

The Greeks believed that music had to resonate with the body and soul in order to be beneficial, and viewed music as a way of connecting the soul of man with the universe.

Modern medicine is rediscovering the many health benefits of music, and particularly, those of classical music.

Modern Medicine and Music

Today, a number of prominent medical institutions incorporate music into their treat-

For example, Johns Hopkins Center for Music and Medicine has formed a choral group called ParkiSonics, where participants with Parkinson's disease demonstrate improvement in both movement and vocal expression, which are often impaired in Parkinson's.

"It's fascinating and powerful to think that music, something that has been floating around in our environment forever-that this natural, omnipresent human activity has demonstrable benefit as treatment," says Sarah Hoover, co-director of the center, on the center's website

Weill Cornell Medicine, a graduate college of Cornell University, has developed a music and medicine program and even formed its own orchestra. They've also collaborated with Juilliard to provide mini-concerts for patients and their families, hospital staff, and the surrounding NYC community. They plan to offer a semester-long course to medical students on music and medicine in the

Claudius Conrad, M.D., Ph.D., of MD Anderson Cancer Center, is a pianist and surgeon who believes in the healing power of music. He notes on the center's website, "in the Middle Ages, popular prescriptions involved specific musical combinations. The example he offers involves alternating between playing the flute and harp to alleviate gout.'

During his fellowship in ICU medicine, Conrad conducted a study on his patients and found a novel stress pathway that mediates music relaxation. He discovered that some intensive care patients could be spared sedative medication when listening to clas-



The medicinal effects of classical music have been studied by researchers for more insight into their healing potential.

Decreased Blood Pressure and Heart Rate

There are several studies showing that classical music can decrease both blood pressure

and heart rate. One study in the British Journal of Health

Psychology compared the effects of classical, pop, and jazz music. It showed that "participants who listened to classical music had significantly lower post-task systolic blood pressure levels than did participants who heard no music. Other musical styles did not produce significantly better recovery than

A 2015 study by professor Peter Sleight of Oxford University found that listening to slower pieces by Verdi, Beethoven's 9th symphony, as well as Puccini, significantly lowered blood pressure, confirming other In another study, Hans-Joachim Trappe

and Gabriele Voit demonstrated that music by Mozart and Strauss markedly lowered not just the subjects' heart rate, but also their blood pressure by nearly five systolic points, which is better than some medications. By comparison, music by ABBA didn't demonstrate any improvement. Mozart's Symphony No. 40 in G minor demonstrated the strongest

A study by Itao, Komazawa, and Kobayashi in Scientific Research Publishing revealed that classical music improved heart rate variability, indicating lowered autonomic nervous system activity, and thus, lower stress levels. Classical music also increased blood flow, as well as body surface temperature, both signs of a state of relaxation.

Improved Mood, Memory, and More So what else can classical music do for your

Studies show that classical music can help not only relieve stress and anxiety but lismore effective than psychotherapy in treating low- to medium-grade depression, according to a small study published in The Arts in Psychotherapy.

Classical music has been shown to improve alertness and concentration, leading to greater productivity. Memory is also enhanced when listening to classical music, with some studies even showing benefits in improving

In addition, improvement in ADHD, particularly when listening to pieces such as Handel's "Water Music" or Bach's "Brandenburg Concertos," has been demonstrated. Classical music helps put the brain into "alpha mode," thereby improving focus, concentration, and the ability to learn. It's even been shown to regulate genes responsible for brain function, according to research at the University of Helsinki.

Studies have demonstrated that classical music also improves the quality of sleep, helps with patient self-disclosure (something useful when discussing traumatic events), and even aids in decreasing pain.

A study in the International Journal of Critical Illness & Injury Science found that classical music aids in ICU patient recovery.

"The most benefit from music on health and therefore on the intensive care patient is seen in classical and in meditation music, whereas heavy metal or techno are ineffective or even dangerous. This kind of music is effective and can be utilized as an effective intervention in patients with cardiovascular disturbances, pain, and intensive care medicine," the study reads.

But not all music is therapeutic. The negative effects of certain types of music has been demonstrated in various studies.

One of the most fascinating studies was done by a Virginia high school student, David Merrell, in 1997. His award-winning science experiment was covered by Virginian-Pilot, the state's largest daily newspaper.

"The rising junior captured top honors in regional and state science fairs and earned accolades from the Navy and the CIA," the tening to 50 minutes a day has even proven Pilot reported.



While modern music often reflects anger and lust, classical music reflects a kinder, calmer state.

Classical music can heal your soul and mind because your body reacts to its vibrations, rhythm, tempo.

Vardinistar

Merrell looked at the effects of music on mice as they moved through a maze. After establishing a baseline of 10 minutes to navigate the maze, he found the control group of mice, which weren't exposed to music, were able to cut five minutes off their time. That feat was beaten by mice that listened to classical music, and managed to cut their time by eight and a half minutes.

DM_CHERRY/SHUTTERSTOCK

MIND & BODY | 3

Meanwhile, mice that were exposed to hard-rock music took 20 minutes longer to navigate the maze.

"I had to cut my project short because all the hard-rock mice killed each other," Merrell said at the time. "None of the classical mice did that at all."

Merrell isn't the only researcher to notice that classical music improved maze times among mice. In fact, in a study published in Neurological Research in 2005, the effect was described as the "generalized Mozart effect."

Some ICU patients could be spared sedative medication when listening to classical music.

"The Mozart group exhibited significant enhancements compared with the control mice," the researchers noted.

However, it doesn't seem others have repeated Merrell's hard rock comparison.

Let Classical Music Brighten Your Life

With so many benefits to mind, body, and soul, it's unfortunate that we aren't being exposed more to classical music. My son said a teacher told the kids that classical music is "just boring."

What a shame. My guess is that she was never exposed to it enough to develop an

So, just how can we increase our appreciation for classical music?

First, visit your local symphony, whether in person or online. I've taken my son to our Richmond Symphony since he was 5, and he's especially enjoyed a series called LolliPops, which introduces kids to classical music in a way that's fun and entertaining.

There are a variety of books and movies on classical music and composers. "Beethoven Lives Upstairs," which LolliPops adapted from a 1992 HBO original movie, is one of my son's favorites.

There are also many courses out there. Coursera offers one on the wonders of classical music, while Udemy offers classes on ear training and adventures in classical music. And to explore some of classical music's best works, Classic FM has compiled a list of pieces that "will 100 percent change your life." And don't forget to check out your local

performances. So what if you really want to get to know

a piece of music? Chad Hagy, on the website Our Pastimes, suggests researching the history of the piece, learning a little about the composer's life, and then finding a quiet place to listen to the piece–over and over again. Then watch as your blood pressure comes down, and your mood improves, all while your knowledge expands.

To help kids develop an appreciation for classical music, check out Charlene Habermeyer's book, "Good Music Brighter Children," and her website Good Parenting, Brighter Children. She offers a music course along with a guide geared toward kids, from grade school through college.

Habermeyer recognizes the power of classical music in helping children study and learn, noting that "the American Psychological Association (APA) found in 20 different studies that elementary school children listen, focus, and learn better when listening to certain pieces of classical music."

There seems to be something special about classical music.

My aunt Veronica knew this. Unfortunately, she died last year. I'd never thought to tell her she was the reason I'd learned to play classical piano. When I mentioned this on her memorial page, her husband and children said she would've been so happy to know she'd inspired her same love of classical music in me.

While it may seem like a simple thing, classical music can bring so much to our lives. Even the composers recognized there was more to their music than meets the eye. As Johann Sebastian Bach said, "I play the notes as they are written, but it is God who

makes the music." Ludwig van Beethoven concurred, saying,

"Music is the language of God." So why not tap into this source of joy sent down from the heavens? It may change your

life in ways you never imagined!

Tatiana Denning, D.O., is a family medicine physician who focuses on wellness and prevention. She believes in empowering her patients with the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain and improve their own health.

Important for

Sleep loss can affect hormones, hunger, and healthiness of our food choices

EMMA SWEENEY & IAN WALSHE

ally thought of as the two key factors that will achieve results. However, sleep is an often-neglected lifestyle factor that also plays an important role.

The recommended sleep duration for adults is 7 to 9 hours a night, but many people often sleep less than that. Research has shown that sleeping less than the recommended amount is linked to having greater body fat, increased risk of obesity, and can tive effects of sleep also influence

how easily you lose weight on a

calorie-controlled diet. Typically, the goal for weight loss is usually to decrease body fat while retaining as much muscle mass as possible. Not obtaining the correct amount of sleep can determine how much fat is lost, as well as how much muscle mass you retain while on a calorie-restricted diet.

One study found that sleeping 5.5 hours each night over a twoweek period while on a calorierestricted diet resulted in less fat loss when compared to sleeping 8.5 hours each night. But it also resulted in a greater loss of fat-free mass (including muscle).

Another study has shown similar results over an eight-week period when sleep was reduced by only one hour each night for five nights of the week. These results showed that even catch-up sleep on the weekend may not be enough to reverse the negadeprivation while on a caloriecontrolled diet.

Metabolism, Appetite, and Sleep There are several reasons why shorter sleep may be associated with higher body weight and affected weight loss. These include changes in metabolism, appetite, and food selection.

Sleep influences two important appetite hormones in our body: leptin and ghrelin. Leptin is a hormone that decreases appetite, so when leptin levels are high, we usually feel fuller. On the other hand, ghrelin is a hormone that can stimulate appetite, and is often referred to as the "hunger hormone" because it's thought to be respon-

sible for the feeling of hunger. One study found that sleep restriction increases levels of ghrelin and decreases leptin. Another study, which included a sample of 1,024 adults, also found that short sleep was associated with higher levels of ghrelin and lower levels of leptin. This combination could increase a person's appetite, making caloric restriction more difficult to adhere to, and may make a person more likely to overeat.

Reduced sleep has also been shown to impact on food selection and the way the brain perceives food.

Consequently, increased food intake due to changes in appetite hormones may result in weight gain. This means that, in the long term, sleep deprivation may lead to weight gain due to these changes in appetite. So getting a good night's sleep should be prioritized. Along with changes in appetite

drome may be the driver that

is leading to these more severe

Researchers followed out-

comes for 287 patients hospi-

talized for COVID-19 at Tulane

Medical Center and University

Medical Center New Orleans

from March 30 to April 5, which

hormones, reduced sleep has also been shown to impact on food selection and the way the brain perceives food. Researchers have found that the areas of the brain responsible for reward are more active in response to food after sleep loss (six nights of only four hours of sleep) when compared

nights of nine hours of sleep). This could possibly explain why sleep-deprived people snack more often and tend to choose carbohydrate-rich foods and sweet-tasting snacks, compared to those who get enough sleep.

to people who had good sleep (six

Sleep duration also influences metabolism, particularly glucose (sugar) metabolism. When food is eaten, our bodies release insulin, a hormone that helps to process the glucose in our blood. However, sleep loss can impair our bodies' response to insulin, reducing its ability to uptake glucose. We may be able to recover from the occasional night of sleep loss, but in the long term, this could lead to health conditions such as obesity and Type 2 diabetes.

Our own research has shown that a single night of limited sleep (only four hours) is enough to impair the insulin response to glucose intake in healthy young men. Given that sleep-deprived people already tend to choose foods high in glucose due to increased appetite and reward-seeking behavior, the impaired ability to process glucose can make things worse.

An excess of glucose (both from increased intake and a reduced ability to uptake into the tissues) could be converted to fatty acids and stored as fat. Collectively, this can accumulate over the long term, leading to weight gain.

However, physical activity may show promise as a countermeasure against the detrimental impact of poor sleep. Exercise has a positive impact on appetite, by reducing ghrelin levels and increasing levels of peptide YY, a

hormone that is released from the gut, and is associated with the feeling of being satisfied and full.

After exercise, people tend to eat less, particularly when the energy expended by exercise is taken into account. However, it's unknown if this still remains in the context of sleep restriction.

Research has also shown that exercise training may protect against the metabolic impairments that result from a lack of sleep, by improving the body's response to insulin, leading to improved glucose control.

Short sleep was associated with higher levels of ghrelin and lower levels of leptin.

We have also shown the potential benefits of just a single session of exercise on glucose metabolism after sleep restriction. While this shows promise, studies are yet to determine the role of long-term physical activity in people with poor sleep.

It's clear that sleep is important for losing weight. A lack of sleep can increase appetite by changing hormones, makes us more likely to eat unhealthy foods, and can influence how body fat is lost while counting our calories. Sleep should therefore be considered as essential alongside diet and physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Emma Sweeney is a lecturer in exercise and health at Nottingham Trent University in the UK, and Ian Walshe is a lecturer in health and exercise sciences at Northumbria University, Newcastle in the UK. This article was first pub-



Metabolic Syndrome Triples COVID-19 Death Risk

Underlying inflammation linked to obesity, hypertension, and other conditions possible cause of increased mortality

KEITH BRANNON

atients hospitalized with COVID-19 who had a combination of high blood pressure, obesity, and diabetes were more than three times more likely to die from the disease, according to a new study. Metabolic syndrome is a cluster of at least three of five conditions—hypertension, high blood sugar, obesity, high triglycerides, and low HDL cholesterol—that increase the risk for cardiovascular The study in the journal Dia-

betes Care is the first to look at

the impact of metabolic syn- is seen with metabolic syndrome on outcomes for COV-ID-19 patients.

"Together, obesity, diabetes and pre-diabetes, high blood pressure, and abnormal cholesterol levels are all predictive of higher incidents of death in these patients. The more of these diagnoses that you have, the worse the outcomes," says lead author Joshua Denson, assistant professor of medical care medicine physician at Tulane University School of

was at the peak of the pandemic in New Orleans. More than 85 percent of patients in the study cine and pulmonary and critiidentified as non-Hispanic "The underlying inflammation that

The most common conditions were hypertension (80 percent), obesity (65 percent), diabetes (54 percent), and low HDL (39

Researchers looked at two groups—those diagnosed with metabolic syndrome and those who weren't. They tracked outcomes including if patients were admitted to an intensive care unit, placed on a ventilator, developed acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), or died from the disease.

Almost 66 percent of the patients in the study had metabolic syndrome. When these cases were compared with patients without the condition, 56 percent versus 24 percent required the ICU, 48 percent versus 18 **Ventilator.** percent required a ventilator, 37 percent versus 11 percent developed ARDS, and 26 percent versus 10 percent died.

Importantly, after accounting for age, sex, race, hospital location, and other conditions, the patients with metabolic syndrome were 3.4 times more likely to die from COVID-19 than those who didn't have the

These patients were also nearly five times more likely to be admitted to an ICU, need a ventilator, or develop ARDS.

The study didn't find an increase in mortality for patients when only one of the conditions clustered with metabolic syndrome was examined alone.

black. The mean age was 61 However, being obese or having diabetes was associated with increased odds of ICU admission and being put on a ventilator.

"Metabolic syndrome should be considered a composite predictor of COVID-19 lethal outcome, increasing the odds of mortality by the combined effects of its individual components," Denson says.

Being obese or having diabetes was associated with increased odds of ICU admission and being put on a

He would advise anyone who meets the criteria for metabolic syndrome to be vigilant in taking measures to reduce risk or exposure to the coronavirus.

"It doesn't matter if you're young or old—we took that into account," he says. "You really should be extra careful. I would say it should impact both preventing your exposures and, if you end up getting sick, you should probably see your doctor sooner."

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What Are the Benefits of Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy?

A treatment once reserved for decompression sickness is being researched for several conditions

o you ever feel like you How Hyperbaric need to breathe deeper than you've ever breathed before? Modern life's daily stressors can deplete your body and make you feel lifeless, but hyperbaric oxygen therapy may help.

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy, or HBOT, is a specialized treatment providing high levels of oxygen to the body. HBOT is often used to help heal wounds (especially those that result from diabetes or radiation injury) and stop infections that occur when damaged tissues are starved of oxygen.

HBOT is typically administered to people with decompression sickness, a dangerous condition experienced by mountain climbers and deep-sea divers undergoing a sudden or severe change in air or water pressure. HBOT is also prescribed to those suffering from issues such as burns, severe anemia, carbon monoxide poisoning, gangrene, and major tissue

Decompression sickness also called "the bends," occurs when nitrogen in blood and tissues, which normally dissipates gradually, instead ation) that can damage tissues and block blood flow.

Besides divers and climbers, individuals with heart defects, asthma, and lung disease can develop decompression sickness, as can older and susceptible individuals traveling from sea-level to high-altitude locations.

Traditionally administered in a hospital setting, today there are private facilities across the United States offering hyperbaric treatment for general wellness. Hyper-oxygenating the body has proven to be safe and healthful for civilians and landlubbers alike, so you don't need to suffer "the bends" in order to seek the benefits.

Benefits of Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy

The healing mechanism of HBOT involves increasing the percentage of oxygen that is available for tissue repair. First used in the early 20th century to successfully treat someone dying from the flu, HBOT reduces swelling while flooding the tissues with oxygen.

By returning blood supply to oxygen-starved tissues, HBOT prevents "reperfusion injury," the severe tissue damage caused by oxygen deprivation. HBOT also helps block the action of harmful bacteria, encourages the formation of new connective tissue and skin cells through collagen generation, and is believed to strengthen the immune system.

HBOT is recognized as generally safe with a low risk of complications. While the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has cleared HBOT for injuries such as wounds, necrotizing infections, burns, radiation injury, and carbon monoxide poisoning, individuals receiving HBOT from a qualified private facility for general wellness are likely to pay out-of-pocket since health insurance is unlikely to cover off-label uses. Depending on the nature of healing that is sought, successful HBOT treatment may require

as many as 40 treatments.

Oxygen Therapy Works

HBOT requires the recipient to lie inside of a pressurized, sealed chamber while breathing highly oxygenated air for a specified period, generally from 30 minutes up to two hours for non-life-threatening conditions. Oxygen chambers can be constructed of rigid or flexible materials but must be airtight with the means of introduc-

ing near-100 percent oxygenated air. Multi-person chambers are more common outside of a hospital setting. Multiple recipients may be in the chamber at the same time, typically in a seated posture with oxygen administered individually via oxygen masks or head hoods.

Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy helps block the action of harmful bacteria, encourages the formation of new connective tissue and skin cells through collagen generation, and is believed to strengthen the immune system.

Participants are encouraged to rest and relax during treatment but may experience mildly unpleasant sensations such as ear pressure changes like those experienced when taking off in an airplane, or feelings of claustrophobia, fatigue, or headache. Individuals with a cold or fever should not seek hyperbaric therapy, nor should those with recent ear trauma or treatment for ear problems, or certain types of lung disease.

HBOT is considered by some to be the most overlooked and effective prescription drug. It has demonstrated effectiveness in treating neurological disorders such as autism and schizophrenia, possibly due to enhanced neurogenesis or healthy replication of nervous system cells, which has been observed in clinical trials.

HBOT has shown promise in treating nerve pain, headaches, and diseases of inflammation such as inflammatory bowel disease. With HBOT acting to reduce inflamed tissues, the potential for healing applications is virtually limitless.

The New Anti-Inflammatory 'Drug'? Depression is another neurological condition with possible inflammatory roots. A study released in May explored the use of HBOT to treat post-stroke depression, or PSD, a common after-effect of stroke that may go untreated, especially in developing countries.

In this meta-analysis, seven electronic databases were comprehensively searched for randomized clinical trials on HBOT through May 2019. Outcomes that were measured included response rate, depression

severity, neurological deficit, physical disability, and adverse events experienced by HBOT patients. A total of 27 trials involving more than 2,000 participants were identified and reviewed in the analysis.

Researchers deduced that patients in HBOT groups had a higher response rate to depression treatment than patients in control groups. HBOT significantly reduced Hamilton Depression scores, National Institute of Health Stroke Scale scores, Chinese Stroke Scale scores, and Modified Scandinavian Stroke Scale scores. HBOT also improved the Barthel Index, which is often used to assess functional independence in stroke

In addition, patients with HBOT along with antidepressant treatment achieved superior results than patients who used only antidepressants, and patients who used only HBOT achieved a slightly higher response rate than patients who used only antidepressants. The most frequent side effect of HBOT was ear pain (26 cases).

A Safe Treatment Option

Another HBOT study, released February in the journal Case Reports in Pulmonology, explored hyperbaric oxygen therapy as an adjunctive therapy for a non-healing venous ulcer, a wound on the leg caused by abnormal or damaged veins. The patient in this study was a 65-year-old woman who suffered from systemic sclerosis, a connective tissue disease that caused chronic, non-healing skin ulcers that hurt her quality of life.

Further complications were presented by pulmonary arterial hypertension, a type of high blood pressure affecting arteries in the lungs and heart. At the study's commencement, the patient's non-healing, lower leg ulcer had confined her to a wheelchair. Doctors administered a total of 30 90-minute HBOT treatments over a five-week period, along with prescribed wound care.

The patient steadily improved over the course of a year until her mobility returned to normal levels. Researchers concluded that HBOT was a successful adjunct therapy in her wound management regimen, resulting in complete resolution of the venous ulcer and improved quality of life without any adverse effects on her pulmonary arterial hypertension.

While hyperbaric oxygen therapy is generally safe and well-tolerated, there are some instances where it's contraindicated. Speak to a trusted health professional to explore if HBOT may be a useful adjunct to your health and wellness routine.

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MADE TO MOVE

MIND & BODY | 5

Why You Need Strong Muscles, and How to Get Them

Muscle does more than help you move-it can limit joint pain, fight depression, and regulate blood sugar

DEVON ANDRE

our muscles support you in virtually everything you do—so why aren't you supporting them? Building strength and muscle is crucial to good health, especially as you age. Muscle plays an essential role in maintaining a high quality of life, reducing the risk of injury, and protecting you from falls.

Muscle goes much further than strength, balance, and physical capabilities. It helps keep your bones strong, regulate blood sugar, improve cholesterol levels, manage blood pressure, limit joint pain, and fight mild depression.

Every one of those things contributes to healthy and independent aging.

Even if you have a decent amount of muscle and are having a pretty easy time moving through life right now, it might not always be that way. If you don't regularly use muscle, you lose it. And your body wants to lose it. Muscle is expensive, so when it's not being used, your body gets rid of it.

To build, maintain, and support muscle, you need to continually strengthen and weight train. Using weights such as dumbbells or resistance bands two or three times per week with moderate intensity will keep muscle hanging around.

Working out, however, isn't enough. Supplementing your workouts with a healthy, protein-rich diet and plenty of sleep is also required to build and maintain muscle. Without protein, your body doesn't have the tools to build muscle. And without 7 to

repair and replenish muscle cells. You can also find ways to use your muscles throughout the day. When standing at the computer or talking on the phone, you can do calf raises or leg lifts. Maybe curl that milk carton or serving bowl a few

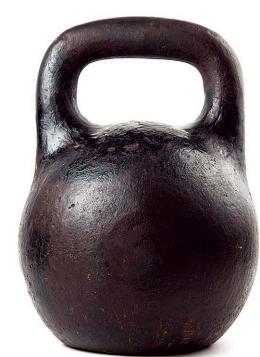
8 hours of sleep every night, your body can't

times before putting it away. It's understandable if the idea of adopting a strength training program is intimidating. But it doesn't have to be.

Finding a certified professional to teach you movements and design routines for you, either in-person or through virtual platforms can lighten the learning curve and send you on your way to a stronger and more independent life.

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

To build, maintain, and support muscle, you need to continually strength and weight train.



VITEC/SHUTTERSTOCK

Sometimes

are driven mainly by a

need to be listened to and affirmed.

conversations with others

MINDSET MATTERS

What's Really Driving You in Conversation?

When we seek validation from others, we surrender essential powers to external forces

NANCY COLIER

hen in conversation eliciting a response with other human beings, most of us are inclined to offer an uh-huh, hmmm or head nod every now and again, to let the other person know we're hearing them and receiving their information. These gestures are a way of maintaining a connection in the interaction and assuring the other person that we're with them in their story.

Without being aware of it, we're trying to get something from our listener, to elicit a certain response, and ultimately, make something feel better in ourselves.

One friend, whom I've known for many years, simply doesn't participate in this customary behavior. These normal symbols of our experience is understood, that acknowledgment don't happen and never have. When I share other person with the power to fulthoughts or experiences with this fill or deny us this primal craving, friend, I don't receive any clear signal that he's receiving them, much less absorbing my experience in any meaningful way. I assume that he's hearing me, given that he's in the room and not deaf, and also because he will often allude to what I've shared in a later conversation. But in the actual interaction, there's nothing to affirm the fact that I'm being listened to. And often it feels as if I'm speaking

this friend, I noticed that I was about something we said or did, to growing increasingly anxious confirm our rightness. Sometimes

the absence of any acknowledging words or gestures from him, in the silence, I felt increasingly untethered, ungrounded, off-center, and no longer in touch with my own experience. I was losing connection with myself. The words that were coming out of my mouth were still telling the story I wanted to tell, but the one saying them (me) had left the scene. I was disconnected from what was important to me about what I was sharing. Imperceptible though it nally I was on a fever-

from him, on getting him to hear me, validate my experience, and ultimately, show me that I existed.

Regardless of what you or I might think about my friend's behavior, or my choice to be in a relationship with him, the experience points us toward a larger issue. If we stop and check in

with ourselves, take note of our internal state while in conversation with cause for self friends and significant others, frequently we find a background feeling of anxiety, struggle, or effort. Without being aware of it, we're trying to get something

from our listener, to elicit a certain response, and ultimately, make something feel better in ourselves. Often, we need something from

our listener that we're not even aware of needing. We're trying to get the other person to make us feel heard, to give us the feeling that we are understood. We award the the most basic of all human longings. And because this longing to be heard is so deep and profound, so painful when it doesn't happen, giving it away to our conversation partner creates a sense of stress and even desperation in us. Without knowing it, we render ourselves powerless in the fulfillment of one of our most basic needs.

Sometimes, in addition to trying to be heard, we're struggling to get support or validation, to get the In a recent "conversation" with other person to make us feel okay

that will assuage our guilt, shame, breath. I paused and turned my ator fear, and quiet our own negative thoughts. At other times, we're trying to get the other person to see us in a particular light, as smart, impressive, good, or any other positive identity; we're trying to elicit a response that will make us feel like we're enough.

No matter what we're trying to get from the other person—and home on my own. usually, it's something—we suffer

a background feeling of stress and struggle. In order to free ourselves from this way of relating, we need

First, we need to become aware of when we're internally caught in an interaction and being driven by the need to get something from our listener. We need to be able to stop

right there, in that moment of caught-ness, and pull the lens back. Then we can observe our own internal

There is

We need to become conscious of what's really driving us, what response we're trying to get, and most importantly, what such a response would sat-

With awareness, we can step out of the struggle, step back from the relentless effort. We can turn our attention away from the other and toward our own longings. Then we can begin feeding ourselves in ways that we can control. The heavy lifting required to get someone else to give us what we need can then melt into a compassion-

ate presence within ourselves. In a recent conversation with my aforementioned, non-responsive friend, my body alerted me to the fact that I was in a state of intense anxiety and distress. I became aware that my shoulders were up by my ears and my breathing was rapid. My voice was growing louder and there was a boulderlike tightness in my chest. As soon as I became aware of these physical sensations, I stopped the chase, and workshops, and also works unhooked from the conversation, with clients via Skype around the from the trying to get him to hear world. For more information, and even low-grade frantic. In we're trying to elicit a response me, and took a slow conscious visit NancyColier.com

tention from outward to inward. I literally and figuratively gathered up all the energy I was launching outward, at my friend, and brought it back into myself. Through this process of awareness, I was once again at the center of my own universe. I had stopped orbiting around his planet and settled back

I then continued to tell the same story, but instead of telling it to and Trying to elicit a response is a at him, I told it to myself. I began, may have been externally, inter- normal part of every human in- not just to speak, but also to listen to teraction. But at a sub- and receive my own words. Rather tle and not so subtle than sending my energy out into level, this often hid- the ether, giving away my words, den intention creates hoping to get some signal back from space that would prove I existed, I consciously became my own destination and mirror.

> What's most important is that we stay in touch with ourselves, stay internally conscious and connected when interacting with others. At any moment, we can check in with ourselves and notice our state of being. Are we feeling anxious or disconnected? Are we chasing after something, trying to elicit a certain response from the other? Are we blindly striving to get some need fulfilled?

> Whatever we discover can then be an opportunity, not for criticism or judgment, but to know ourselves better, to uncover what's driving us

> and what we really need and want. Such an inquiry is an invitation not just to become more selfaware, but also more self-compassionate. Through this process, we acknowledge our own struggle and the suffering that comes when our own needs go unmet.

> We self-inflict suffering when we abandon ourselves and award others with the power to fulfill or deprive us of our deepest needs. Here's the good news: We can change the way we experience basic human interactions. Awareness is the door to freedom.

> 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,



If our identity is defined by what we do, then we can become the person who does those things

LEO BABAUTA

ne of the most powerful switches I ever made was switching up my self perception, the identity I held for myself. I didn't do it overnight, but I did do it in multiple areas.

er from a smoker—and once I did, I stopped thinking of smoking as something to do when I was

I went vegetarian (and later vegan) from being a meat-eater. It literally took meat off the menu for me, so that I didn't even consider eating it.

I thought of myself as a marathoner, and later, as just someone who exercises regularly to stay fit and healthy. It meant that there was no question I was going to exercise, even if I fell out of it for a bit because of disruptions.

I became a meditator (and later, a Zen student). That means even if I stop meditating for a little bit, I'll always come back to it.

I became a writer. Sure, before this change, I did write, but not daily (join my Create Daily Challenge in Sea Change if you want to change this one).

I became a minimalist. Actually, before I decided to call myself that, there wasn't really anyone else who called themselves "minimalists." This purposeful change in identity allowed me to free myself of clutter and enjoy a

amples: as a father, unschooling parent, early riser, reader, teacher, speaker, entrepreneur, someone who takes meticulous care of his finances—every time I've made a major (or minor) life change that stuck, I changed my identity. It's more powerful than most

Benefits of a New Identity

While it takes a little work, if you you'll gain several benefits, in-

struggle.

these beliefs aside.

How to Change Your Identity

isn't as easy as flipping a switch. **Do it consciously.** We can change

There are dozens of other ex-

people realize, and it's doable.

can shift how you see yourself, cluding changing your behaviors. Things that you have to debate

vourself about, like waking up early or not eating a cheeseburger, cease to be a question. This saves you a lot of mental energy It becomes much less of a daily A more subtle change is a shift

in long-standing beliefs about yourself. These are usually limiting beliefs such as, "You can't do this, you're no good at this, you aren't someone who does this." If they're not serving you, toss

With this approach, you begin to get a mindset that you can change anything. You're not stuck in old ways, but someone who can grow and become new with possibility.

Unfortunately, changing yourself

It is, however, eminently doable. It can be done a million different ways, but here are some points I've found to be important:

our identity without doing it intentionally, but I've found that it works much better if you do it intentionally. Doing it accidentally is like blindly stumbling upon something amazing. It's not a sure thing. Instead, make it an intention to consciously shift your identity in this area.

If you can shift yourself, you'll gain several benefits, including changing your behaviors.

Think about who you want to be. Do you want to be a person who writes every morning? A person who only eats plant-based foods? Someone who buys very little? Write it down: "I am a morning

Intentionally start doing the Don't Become Rigid **actions**. Set up visual reminders, phone reminders, whatever you need to do, but start doing the things that you would do if you're this new version of yourself. If you're a runner, go run.

BE the new version of you. Doing the actions is one thing, but you might be doing it while thinking that this is so not you. Instead, do the actions as if you were already that person. See yourself as the runner, the early riser, the vegan. Feel it in your being. Stand as this

Reinforce it by appreciating **yourself**. Each day, take a minute where you look back and see what you did. And appreciate this about yourself. See that you're already shifting. "Yeah, this is happening, good job me!" We tend to focus on the bumps in the road are helpful, if they're chosen rather than the progress we're consciously (i.e., a limit of eating

When you falter, think about what this new version of you would do. Notice I said "when you falter," not "if." Even a Zen teacher misses a day of meditation sometimes. That's a part of life. We don't always do things "perfectly" but a Zen teacher wouldn't miss a day of meditation and then just give up. She'd just sit the next day. A runner will get back into it even after a week of disruption (maybe due to visitors, illness, travel, injury, etc.). Don't think of the disruption as proof that you're not a runner, but instead approach the disruption as if you are a runner.

It's important to note that creating a new identity for yourself—seeing yourself in a new way—can also have some pitfalls. A big one is that you might create a fixed, rigid view of yourself.

For example, if you create a new identity of yourself that you're an early riser, that could come with the rigidity that you'll never stay up late or sleep in a little. And if your family has a gathering that's later in the evening, you might just pass—not because it will affect anything important, but because of a rigid view of yourself.

MIND & BODY

There are lots of other possible examples: "If I always work hard, then I can't take a rest;" "If I am an expert in my field, then I can't ever admit I'm wrong."

We don't want our view of ourselves to limit us. Some limits processed foods). Other limits can be unhelpful if they don't let us situation.

So while shifting identity can be helpful, I encourage you to not be too rigid. Think of your identity as fluid, something you can shift as needed, consciously.

I encourage you to pick one area at a time. Don't try to shift everything about yourself. Choose one, and apply the steps above.

I am compassionate about myself.

I write every day.

Visit ZenHabits.net

I am a loving parent.

What would you like to try?

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

In Peacock's 'Brave New World,' Everyone Is Very Happy, or so It Seems

One key component that confers true happiness is missing from even the most perfectly engineered society

JEN MAFFESSANTI

hat do people need to be In the new Peacock original series "Brave New World," as well as the 1932 Aldous Huxley novel it's based on, happiness in the fictional society of New London is mandated by the powers that be.

Everyone in New London is genetically engineered and psychologically conditioned to be suited to, and satisfied with, a specific role in their society. They're encouraged to the point of compulsion

Adversity actually makes us stronger.

to engage in every kind of hedonistic indulgence imaginable. There are no difficult decisions to be made. And for those pesky times when discomfort or anxiety rear their ugly heads, the perfectly effective, perfectly side-effect-free drug Soma is there to smooth it away.

Everyone is happy. Except that they're not.

But why? Why, when every physical need is amply satisfied and every pleasure available and every discomfort eased, would people not be happy? Why would a worker kill himself in the opening act? Why would

some citizens need the occasional "reconditioning" in order to bring them back in line? Why do the residents of New London feel the need for so much Soma? Especially given that the fictional world

of New London that Huxley imagined back in the early 1930s rather closely resembles the fantasies of "luxury communism" that have been recently proposed, it's an impor-

Happiness is... weird, which may seem weird to say. After all, we all know what happiness is. Don't we?

Broadly speaking, we can define happiness as a general state of contentment with one's circumstances. Generally, people who are happy know and pursue their life's purpose, they smile a lot, they're meeting their basic needs for survival, they're able to give and receive gifts and attention without resentment, and are

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In Peacock's 'Brave New World,' Everyone Is Very Happy, or so It Seems

One key component that confers true happiness is missing from even the most perfectly engineered society

Continued from Page 7

But that's not all that we need to be happy. For many people, not having to fuss with making decisions about difficult things—or even easy things—sounds pretty relaxing. Never having to hear, see, or otherwise experience activities or ideas they find objectionable feels comforting. A place for everyone and everyone in their place with no worry about whether it's what they want to be doing with their life appears neat, clean, and ideal. Surely, this can be a way to

And maybe, just maybe, it would be nice, for a little while. Just like a vacation is nice, for a little while. When bills are due and stress levels are high and the kids are asking what's for dinner, yes, I certainly understand the appeal.

But I wouldn't want to live my entire life that way. And in practice, highly controlled societies like the Soviet Union or modern-day North Korea, where what you do, who you do it with, what you consume, and where you go is decided by someone else, happiness tends to be in pretty short supply.

This is because happiness is intrinsically tied to personal choice and autonomy. It's about feeling like you have control over your own life. Material comforts are nice, but they don't seem to have that big of an impact on people's happiness levels. Studies have shown that autonomy is actually the number one predictor of happiness.

Our society. broadly speaking, is wealthier, healthier, and more comfortable than it's ever been, and yet more people are struggling with anxiety than ever before.

And it's autonomy that's conspicuously missing from the fictional society of New London and from real-life command-and-control societies around the world.

But maybe having an easy, cushy life would still be better, if we were able to arrange it so that a certain measure of autonomy could be accommodated. After all, it's distressing to worry about bills and dealing with people who don't agree with you. Life is filled with anxiety and pain. Wouldn't we be



(Above) Brave New World streams on NBCUniversal's Peacock online service.

(Left) Aldous Huxley published "Brave New World" in 1932. The novel described a future where marriage is taboo, babies are born in test tubes, and people are genetically

Generally, people who are happy know and pursue their life's purpose, they smile a lot, they're meeting their basic needs for survival.

Jen Maffessanti is a senior associate editor at the Foundation for Economic Education and mother of two. When she's not advocating for liberty or chasing kids, she can usually be found cooking or maybe racing cars. Check out her website at www.JenMaffessanti com. This article was originally published

Yet, in spite of the ubiquity of the phenomenon, there is no word for the exact opposite of fragile. Let us call it antifragile. Antifragility is beyond resilience or robustness. The resilient resists shocks and stays the same; the antifragile gets And the human psyche is anti-

adventure, risk, and uncertainty.

Even if it were possible to perfectly control our social environment to shield ourselves from conflict, and experience only pleasurable interactions like in New London—and, to be clear, it emphatically isn't possible—our world itself is a chaotic, largely unpredictable place. As we are all too keenly aware right now, disease and natural disasters are always a possibility, even if nothing else were at issue.

Disruptions to supply lines, changes in our understanding of the natural world, or simply growing up are all shocks to our systems. If we don't allow ourselves to experience and become accustomed to the discomfort of change, not only will we as individuals and as a society stagnate, we will become so fragile that a single hammer-blow of unanticipated hardship could shatter us.

Happiness cannot be engineered. Humans cannot have all—or even a slim majority—of their choices made for them and still be happy. Autonomy—that is, freedom—is necessary for human happiness.

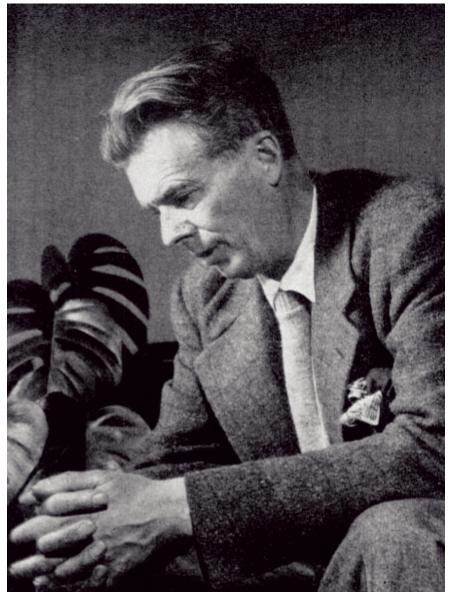
While the psychological research on this might be relatively recent, this wisdom didn't escape early 20th-century economists. Economics is, after all, at its core, the study of human behavior and interaction. Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises wrote in his book Liberalism in 1927:

"It is impossible, in the long run, to subject men against their will to a regime that they reject. Whoever tries to do so by force will ultimately come to grief, and the struggles provoked by his attempt will do more harm than the worst government based on the consent of the governed could ever do. Men cannot be made happy against their will."

The tendency of so many generally well-meaning people, from academics to helicopter parents, to socially engineer a perfectly happy society with no strife, no discord, no struggle, will always have the opposite effect. The attempts to "fix" the problems with human nature will always backfire.

People can't be forced into being "better." People cannot be forced into being happy.

And while freedom is no guarantee of happiness, it is essential if we are ever to be able to find it on



better if we could eliminate those No, not really.

And it isn't as though we haven't tried. We have. Certain portions of American society have worked very hard to eliminate psychological discomfort with intellectual coddling, safe spaces, and a hyperfocus on self-esteem.

The result is millions of people who don't know how to handle adversity or discomfort. The result is fragility. Our society, broadly speaking, is wealthier, healthier, and more comfortable than it's ever been,

and younger people. The human psyche doesn't actually do well with perfect comfort and zero difficulty. It isn't particularly pleasant, but distress, discomfort, and disorder can be good for us. Adversity actually makes us stronger. Author Nassim Nicholas Taleb coined the term "antifragile" to describe this phenomenon. He says: "Some things benefit from shocks; they thrive and grow when exposed to volatility, randomness,

with anxiety than ever before. Sui-

cide rates are rising among younger



How Mindset Shapes BOCV



Studies have begun to validate an important connection between mind and midriff

CONAN MILNER

t's one of the great ironies of the modern age: We're a culture obsessed with staying slim, yet we're fatter than we've ever been. Since the 1980s, the percentage of obese adults has doubled, and the percentage of obese children has tripled.

We know what to avoid: sugar, trans fats, a sedentary lifestyle, and other factors that have been promoted as clear contributors to this epidemic. So why do we keep getting bigger?

According to health editor Nancy L. Bryan, it's because we're overlooking the root cause: our mindset.

The impact our mindset has on our body is a subject that has fascinated Bryan for decades. Her book, "Thin Is a State Of Mind: The No-Stress Weight Loss Guide," was first published in 1980. She says her ideas were considered "hippydippy" back then, but they've aged remarkably well.

Over the past 40 years, research has validated many of her observations. "These are now mainstream ideas,"

The title of Bryan's book doesn't mean you can simply wish yourself thin. Instead, she points to evidence that our

possible to lose weight in a short span of time, experts say those who take it slowly are more likely to stay slim in the long term.

While it's

thoughts do indeed shape our body.

Stress and anxiety, for example, can stimulate fat-promoting chemicals like cortisol. This stress hormone is also known as the belly fat hormone because our abdominal region often swells with chronic surges of cortisol.

Scientists aren't exactly sure why this happens. One hypothesis is that when our ancestors experienced prolonged bouts of stress, it meant their lives were in danger, so their bodies responded by creating extra abdominal fat to protect vital organs.

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We don't

expect our children to be abl

to run the momer they're born.



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THE EPOCH TIMES



Life Is Too Short ...

Seneca told us there was enough time-unless we wasted it

JOSHUA BECKER

eneca once wrote: "It is not that we have a short time to live, but that we waste a lot of it. Life is long enough, and a sufficiently generous amount has been given to us for the highest achievements if it were all well invested. But when it is wasted

in heedless luxury and spent on no good activity, we are forced at last by death's final constraint to realize that it has passed away before we knew it was passing. So it is: we are not given

a short life but we make it short, and we are not ill-supplied but wasteful of it ... Life is long if you know how to use it." This is a profound statement, and I would encourage you to read it again.

spired by it. These phrases stick out the most to

The more I read it, the more I'm in-

"It is not that we have a short time to live ... but that we waste a lot of it." "Life is long enough for the highest achievements if it were all well in-

"It is wasted in heedless luxury and spent on no good activity."

"We are not given a short life but we make it short, and we are not ill-supplied but wasteful of it."

I should, perhaps, end this article right now-with Seneca's own words—rather than thinking I can

improve upon them. But maybe, for just a few short sentences, I will comment.

You (the person reading these words right now) were designed to achieve great things. You are unique in your being, your substance, your abilities, and your relationships. And there is no one else on the face of the earth who can live your life and accomplish your

Please don't forget that.

There's no doubt that "success" and "achievement" are relative words, and your highest achievement is different from someone else's highest achievement. You may never lead thousands

or cure cancer. But make no mistake, there is a good that you are designed to bring into this world. And there are people in your life that you can serve and love better than anyone else.

Your highest achievement will be different than mine, but we both have one. And "life is long enough for us to

There is no one else on luxury and spent on the face of the earth who can live your life and accomplish

your good.

It is up to us to decide, every day, to focus our energies on those things worthy of the life we've been given. Discard the ines-

Unless, as Seneca

wrote, "Our lives are

wasted in needless

no good activity."

sential. Remove the distractions. Reject worthless activity.

Your life is too short ... to waste accumulating material possessions. Your life is too short ... to be offended

Your life is too short ... to chase accolades.

Your life is too short ... to compare it to others. Your life is too short ... to watch 6

Your life is too short ... to pursue Your life is too short ... to not believe

hours of television per day.

all the time.

in yourself. Your life is too short ... to not forgive.

Your life is too short ... to not speak your mind. Your life is too short ... to worry about

the future. Your life is too short ... to regret the

past.

Your life is too short ... to live in fear. Your life is too short ... to be unhappy. Your life is too short ... to waste time on the trivial.

Your life is too short ... to live like everyone else.

Your life is too short ... to not be true to yourself.

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



There is a unique goodness that each of us brings to this world—if we only make the effort



MINDSET MATTERS

We Weren't

so What?

ourselves for doing so

NANCY COLIER

cast judgment.

walk, and no sense in shaming

Always as Good as We Are Now,

There's no shame in crawling before we can

■ here's something pro-

foundly disturbing go-

ing on in our culture

right now. Well, truth

be told, there are a mul-

titude of profoundly disturbing

things going on. But at the cen-

ter of our toxic culture is a rap-

idly metastasizing and malignant

sense of entitlement—righteous-

ness. And specifically, the right to

As a society, we have become

astoundingly judgmental. We feel

entitled and emboldened to cast

judgment on absolutely every-

thing and everyone. We not only

judge what everyone is saying,

doing, and believing right now,

but we judge what everyone said,

did, and believed throughout his-

tory. We feel entitled to criticize

and condemn those who came

before us, specifically, for be-

ing less aware and evolved than

we are now. We shame who we

used to be, and at the same time,

We do this judging not only on a

public stage, to other people, but

also personally—to ourselves. We

are constantly attacking, sham-

ing, and rejecting earlier versions

of ourselves, judging and blaming

who we used to be. But we judge

and blame through the lens of

deny that that's who we were.

understand. We shame ourselves for being works in progress, for having to grow up and keep grow-

ing up, for not coming out of the womb fully formed and perfect. As we become more awake and aware beings, sadly, we look back at less mature incarnations of ourselves with disdain and con-

Laura, a client, started to tell me about a recent, wonderful experience in which she did something profoundly kind for her neighbor. She felt really good about her choice, and about herself. But before she had gotten even a few sentences into her story, Laura veered off into a shaming and critical diatribe on herself specifically, about a past experience from 20 years ago, when she had acted with less kindness and

When it comes to our emotional and spiritual evolution, the matura tion of our character and awareness, we expect perfection right out of the gate.

who we are now—who we've be-The opportunity to honor this Oddly, we expect ourselves to lovely experience, and also fully have always known and underinhabit the person she had bestood what we now know and come as a woman in her forties, was hijacked by her need to vilify and condemn who she had been in her twenties. In an instant, she

had abandoned her present-day self and was back in self-loathing and shame, caught in an old narrative, and an ocean of regret about who she used to be.

It's odd, really. We don't expect our children to be able to run the moment they're born. We all understand that, as human beings, we need to roll around for 9 or 10 months, then slide along on our butts for another few months, then crawl, then stand up and fall down, then toddle for a while holding onto something, then take a couple of steps on our own, then fall down some more, then take more steps, then fall dow and then walk.

We accept that we need to grow into ourselves on a physical level, to fail until we can succeed. And to some degree, we hold this same acceptance with regard to our mental evolution, recognizing our need for education. And yet, for some reason, when it comes to our emotional and spiritual evolution, the maturation of our character and awareness, we expect perfection right out of the gate. We deny ourselves the right to learn and evolve over a lifetime, and similarly, to change and grow

Life is a process of endless becoming. We're never fully done growing, never done becoming. We are works in progress, throughout life. Over time and through our lived experiences, we learn who we want to be, who we are capable of being.

over generations, as a species.

The truth is, we don't come out as our best self; we grow into and learn how to be our best self. Particularly if we didn't have parents or caretakers that could serve as models for our best behavior. We become more evolved and aware, and hopefully more compassionate, through trial and error, good examples, failure, time, and experience; we become the people we can respect and be proud of. That's precisely the journey of life, precisely the point of it. To deny this truth or demand that it should be otherwise is to deny

When we judge and condemn our past behaviors and our level of awareness based on what we're capable of now, we not only deny reality, but we reject and abandon our more evolved selves. We refuse ourselves the privilege to change, to become and be better versions of ourselves. We cling to our past failures in the face of our current

successes as a way of holding onto an old identity, an outdated narrative on ourselves as bad or not who we should have been. Often, at the root of our judging is shame. We shame ourselves for having to spiritually and mor-

happen. We condemn ourselves for having to grow into our best Simultaneously, we block the self we've become from becoming even more, and from fulfill-

ally mature, as if there were some

other way for our evolution to

ing its potential. As human beings, we are works in progress. We grow into who we are on a daily basis. There's no point at which we reach our final destination, a completed self. Again and again, we realize that what we thought and believed before, maybe even yesterday, we no longer think and believe now. We discover that we

The same holds true for us as a species. Who we were at other times in history is not who we are now. There's no shame in that; it's just what is. But each minute we spend condemning and judging who we were; each present moment we waste expecting and demanding a past self to have known what a present self knows, is not only complete rejection of reality, of the human condition, but it's also a moment we've lost, one that could have been spent living our life as the more evolved self we are right 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



have changed.

Again and again, we realize that what we thought and believed before, maybe even yesterday, we no longer think and believe now.

The more you get

out and move, the

healthier your body is.

Continued from Page 9

The stress response is about survival and triggers the fightor-flight state—an extreme reaction reserved for emergency situations. But today, it never seems to shut off. Although life is, in many ways, much easier than it's ever been, we also face more things that drive us mad, and have less patience to deal with them. Debt, traffic, polarized politics, countless distractions, and detailed coverage of the latest crisis in the 24-hour news cycle can irk us into producing steady surges of cortisol throughout our day.

Some people can soldier through on willpower for years, but it's not a sustainable method in the long term.

Dissatisfaction with our bodies adds to this modern stress mosaic. It's frustrating to be fat, especially in an image-conscious culture where flab is considered a mortal sin. We may tell ourselves that looks don't matter, curse unrealistic beauty standards, or camouflage ourselves under dark and blousy clothes, but we can never escape the judgment particularly our own.

This stress and anxiety mindset follows us when we decide to shed

extra pounds with a self-punishing approach: forcing ourselves into an overzealous exercise routine, restricting our diet to a miserable degree, and feeling worthless when we can't stick to the strict regimen. Each disappointment contributes another

"We have set up exactly the wrong state of mind," Bryan said. "We set ourselves up to fail."

Reactionary Mindset

Overeating and under-exercising are significant factors in weight gain, but Bryan sees them more as symptoms than causes.

For example, when our stress response is activated, our inflammation increases, leading to pain-root cause of the compulsion. ful muscles and joints. If it hurts to Some people can soldier through zero—motivation to exercise.

Stress also prompts us to seek comfort, and for many of us that means food.

Bryan recalls a pattern throughout her life of overeating whenever life was tough. Her latest episode of stress eating began four years ago following her husband's death. She noticed she was getting fatter, but she was too heart-

"Then one day, I realized that at this particular point in my life, I was eating in order to keep my grief out of my consciousness," she said. "I was using food as a

According to Jacquie Lavin, head of nutrition and research at Slimming World, a weight-loss organization in the United King-

dom, also active in the United States, examining the emotional reasons behind why we indulge in the things that we shouldn't is essential to overcoming these unhealthy urges.

"You have to step back and think: What are the things you need support with in your life? What can you do to raise your confidence? How can you tackle your stress and your anxieties? By doing that, you will probably feel the weight loss process is a lot

easier," said Lavin. Without exploring the emotional triggers that keep us fat, the only strategy we have is willpower: a mindset based in selfdenial that doesn't address the on willpower for years, but it's not a sustainable method in the long term. When willpower eventually gives out, and it always does, the

give up and return to old habits.

Rebels find every reason to avoid

doing what they're told. Even if an

established exercise and eating

program works well for others,

weight inevitably returns. In the process of adopting a healthy new mindset, you have to overcome the resistance from old patterns. Lavin sees two common roadblocks among those who struggle with their weight: Just say that to yourself." perfectionism and rebelliousness.

Perfectionists see weight loss as an all-or-nothing endeavor, their own personal triggers and in which eating a single cookie is considered a major disaster. Devastated by this small failure, they

tion they're going to take, it makes them more likely to achieve it, because it's their own," she said.

Give It Time the suspicious rebel will be sure Will a compassionate approach

to ruin it. Because they lack confidence in their ability to follow through, they routinely sabotage

To calm the perfectionist, Lavin says, we need to be gentle and compassionate. Instead of subjecting ourselves to the harsh inner critic, we should treat ourselves as we would a good friend.

In the process of adopting a healthy new mindset, you have to overcome the resistance from old patterns.

"Because you would never beat your friend up, would you?" she said. "If you found your friend eating donuts, you would give them support and reassurance. You'd say, 'You slipped a little bit, but tomorrow you'll get back on track.'

To tame the rebel, Lavin recommends that people understand develop their own plan to over-

"When people decide what ac-

give you the beach body of your dreams by summer? Probably not, particularly if you've endured years of self-criticism and have habitually turned to food as your primary source of comfort. Changes in body and mindset

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will take time. But time is a luxury many of us feel we can't afford. People who struggle with weight are often busy taking care of others and believe they have neither the time nor energy to give back to

However, Lavin says that if we invest some time in ourselves, it can help us feel more in control

"If you're eating a healthy diet, sleeping better, and losing weight, all of these things are going to reduce your stress level and get you out of this vicious cycle," Lavin

While it's possible to lose weight in a short span of time, experts say those who take it slowly are more likely to stay slim in the long term. If we adopt a more reasonable routine, and learn to bounce back from our failures, we can create a lifestyle that will last.

Bryan recommends learning meditation to help with this process because it quiets the reactionary mind and puts us in touch with our true selves.

Meditation also promotes bigpicture thinking. When we see that our weight is triggered by stress, we can be more forgiving toward ourselves. It allows us some extra space for a new mindset to take hold.

It's a simple truth

The Seeds of a Family Mental Health Crisis

Parental depression, anxiety are rising during COVID-19, and could have lifelong effects on children

LESLIE E. ROOS & LIANNE TOMFOHR-MADSEN

or most parents, to say the CO-VID-19 pandemic has been stressful would be a dramatic understatement. The combi nation of financial pressure, loss of child care, and health concerns has been exceedingly challeng ing for families.

Mental health problems are expected to rise dramatically as a secondary effect of COVID-19 and the measures that have been put in place to contain it.

The potential long-term consequences on children from increased parental stress, anxiety, and depression are only beginning to be understood. However, past research tells us that the children exposed to these problems are more likely to experience mental health problems themselves, in addition to developing an increased risk of learning and behavior problems and reduced economic mobility throughout their

We need to develop an approach that helps parents now and protects children's

The Rise of Parental Anxiety.

In our current studies, we report that pregnant mothers and those with young children are experiencing three- to five-fold increases in self-reported anxiety and depression symptoms. A history of mental illness, current domestic conflict, and financial stress were associated with worse mental health across multiple child age groups. These figures are especially concerning because young children are highly vulnerable to maternal mental illness due to their near-total reliance on caregivers to meet basic health and safety needs.

High rates of parental mental illness combined with children spending more time at home due to COVID-19 present multiple risks, including alterations in children's stress-system function, higher rates of physical health problems, and cognitive impairments.

Parenting stress associated with mental illness can lead to negative interactions, including harsh discipline and being less responsive to children's needs. For parents, depression contributes to health problems and low quality of life. Suicide is a leading cause of death for women of child-bearing age that we expect to increase should high rates of mental health problems continue to be unaddressed.

Mental Health System Needs Urgent

The World Health Organization (WHO) and other child welfare leaders highlight the critical nature of prioritizing parent mental health services so that parents can build their capacity to fulfill children's health and development needs.

Addressing parental mental illness not only mitigates harmful effects on child health but builds children's capacities to manage other stressors, such as school

Parenting stress associated with mental illness can lead to negative interactions, including harsh discipline and being less responsive to

children's needs.

Mental health problems are expected to rise dramatically as a secondary effect of COVID-19.

Leslie E. Roos is an assistant professor in the department of psychology at the University of Manitoba in Canada, and Lianne Tomfohr-Madsen is an associate professor in the department of psychology at the University of Calgary in Canada. This article was first published by The Conversation.

transitions and other unpredictable events. Effective treatments exist for parental mental illness; however, the high barriers to accessing standard care have become even higher during COVID-19. Existing barriers such as the high cost of psychotherapy and child care demands have been exacerbated due to physical distancing, closure of existing services, and closure of daycares and schools.

Shifting treatment options to evidencebased online formats has also been slow and requires substantial investments for large-scale delivery and program refinement in response to current needs. Another problem is that most existing telehealth models don't simultaneously treat parental mental illness and parenting risks, despite substantial evidence for the importance of addressing both.

Small Steps That May Help

Although many of the causes of parents' poor mental health are out of our control, there are small steps you can try right now:

Reaffirm that your emotions make sense. This is an unprecedented time of difficulty that comes with stress, sadness, and anxiety. You are not alone in these feelings and wondering about what comes next. Many other parents are similarly feeling distressed and trying to problem solve how to care for themselves and their families.

Talk about your feelings. Sharing your emotions with supportive partners, friends, family members, and service providers can be helpful. Brainstorming and problem solving with others can alleviate stress and improve your mood. Just the simple act of sharing can help normalize the fact that you're working hard and still having a hard time feeling well.

Practice self-compassion. Too often we are kind to others and cruel or dismissive of our own distress. It's important to prioritize your own well-being and self-care. If you're experiencing stress, anxiety, or depression, talk to and treat yourself like you would a friend. Many people are not used to treating themselves compassionately, but there are resources available to help you cultivate self-compassion.

Seek professional help. If you are having persistent thoughts of self-harm, hopelessness, or an increase in alcohol or substance use that is difficult to manage, don't wait to ask for support. If your low mood or anxiety affects your functioning at home, with friends, or at work for two weeks or more, seeking additional help to work through challenges could be important to get to the place you'd like to be.

Urgent Action Needed on Key Risk

Immediate action is needed to address key risk factors across family, community, and policy levels.

The time is now for the development of a national perinatal and family mental health strategy. Early intervention investments are expected to yield high health and economic benefits by preventing the long-term consequences of parental mental illness from becoming embedded in children's biological and behavioral de-

Investing in family mental health and parenting support now and on multiple fronts, before problems are entrenched, will yield enormous payoffs. It is one that government must prioritize as part of the COVID-19 pandemic response.

SHAPOVALPHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Habits That

Are Adding Years to Your Life

The pattern of our daily life can decide if we age more quickly, or ease into our golden years

MOHAN GARIKIPARITHI

t's easy to ask what you can do to look and feel younger. It's harder to look at what you're already doing to accelerate aging.

Chronological aging is a fact of life. Years climb as they pass, and there is nothing you can do about it. The years will lead to some natural decline, but how much impact they have has a lot to do with how you live.

On the other side of chronological age, there is biological age. This is how your cells and organs age. In some cases, they are well behind your chronological age cases, they are far ahead.

You could have a series of habits that accelerate your biological age. The signs might be showing up on your face and how you feel. But if you don't know how these factors are affecting you, how can you do anything about them?

Some of the factors that could be leading you to look and feel older include:

Poor Sleep: Inadequate sleep can affect how your skin looks and body feels. It also promotes higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol that can break down collagen, promote inflammation, and suck the energy from your day.

Unhealthy Diet: A healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats, and protein can help keep you strong, prevent heart disease, slow cell oxidation, prevent Type 2 diabetes, and combat chronic inflammation that taxes your

Inactivity: The more you get out and move, the healthier your body is. Activity helps keep muscles strong, blood moving, and keeps you energized and enthused.

Isolation: Maintaining meaningful emotional relationships with friends and family can also help you fight back against biological aging. Connections to others help keep your mood up, ease stress, and may slow down cognitive decline.

These are just a few factors that can influence aging. Depending on your lifestyle, you could be accelerating aging or slowing the aging process down. Take a look at what you're doing and how it could be affecting the aging process.

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.

WISE HABITS

Clear Up Life's Clutter

We each need time to tend to the little tasks of life

LEO BABAUTA

've recently reminded myself of the value of dedicating some time to just clearing things out.

It's a simple truth that wherever things can accumulate, they will. Emails pile up, clutter piles up, the readlater list piles up, and small admin tasks build up like cruft.

This is the nature of things: They accumulate if we don't tend to them. And so, we must tend to them.

What I've found valuable is leaving some blocks of time for clearing things out:

out your email inbox or unread instant • A day every week where I read through

• Some space at the end of each day to clear

The problem is that we pack our days with tasks, meetings, calls, and other things so much that we don't leave time to tend to our lives.

• A day to get to all the small admin tasks that pile up, or a couple of half days • A time on the weekend for taking care of small chores and repairs that I didn't

have time to get to during the week • A Sunday weekly review where I make sure all the piles are cleared, my to-do and project lists are updated, and everything is in order

These don't have to take long—an hour, sometimes less. Some things take a few hours. The problem is that we pack our days with tasks, meetings, calls, and other things so much that we don't leave time to tend to our lives. And when we do have some space, we

tend to fill it with our favorite distractions. That's all fine, but it's also incredibly helpful to leave some space to tending to our little gardens. Clear out the weeds, take care of things.

The mental ease that results from tending to our lives, clearing out piles, and cleaning up messes is replenishing.



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



The potential long-term consequences on children from increased parental stress, anxiety, and depression are only beginning to be understood.

Study Finds Fenugreek Increases Strength and

This herb can add flavor to your dishes as it enhances your health and helps ward off disease

proved more than the

Further analysis showed that ad-

ditional improvements were

observed in the fenugreek

groups in a dose-dependent

manner, with subjects taking

600 mg of Testofen displaying

more significant results across

an array of indicators.

to placebo.

size and strength.

Fenugreek Helps Retain

Muscle While Reducing Fat

Fitness enthusiasts seeking to increase

lean muscle mass while decreasing body

fat should take note: Study participants

taking 600 mg of fenugreek extract experi-

enced decreased body fat of around 1.4 per-

cent while also demonstrating increased

lean muscle mass of 1.8 percent after eight

weeks of supplementation as compared

The 600-mg group also demonstrated

an increase in testosterone concentration

from baseline to the final eight-week mea-

surement. Increased testosterone is gener-

Researchers concluded that this study

indicates that Testofen may be an effec-

improve their exercise performance ca-

placebo group.

Lean Muscle Mass

news tudy shows that an

unassuming spice may be an efficient way to safely boost strength, endurance, and even testosterone. Published in June in the journal Translational Sports Medicine, the randomized, placebo-controlled, double-blind study was led by Amanda J. Rao, based at the University of Sydney, Australia, and funded by Gencor Pacific, a botanical nu-

traceuticals company. Researchers examined changes in muscular strength and endurance, body composition, sex hormones, and functional power threshold in response to an eightweek calisthenics program combined with daily supplementation of a patented fenugreek extract called Testofen or placebo.

The final approved test group consisted of 138 male participants between 25 and 47 years of age who were randomized into three equal groups receiving either 600 milligrams (mg) of Testofen, 300 mg of Testofen, or placebo.

Baseline measurements were taken of each participant's muscle strength and endurance, functional power threshold, body composition, and sex hormones, with follow-up measurements taken at four and eight weeks. Participants agreed to perform a whole-body calisthenics program three times per week for the duration of the study

After eight weeks, researchers analyzed ally associated with increases in muscle the data and determined that all three groups had improved their maximal leg press scores from baseline measurements. Notable to researchers, however, was that tive aid for individuals wanting to rapidly both fenugreek-treated groups had im-

pabilities and body composition above and beyond that of calisthenic exercise alone. Testofen is a standardized fenugreek extract that has previously been studied for uses such as male sexual desire and andropause, sometimes described as male menopause.

Fenugreek: An Ancient **Spice With Modern Relevance**

Fenugreek is an annual plant that has been used for medicinal purposes for thousands of years. Latin name Trigonella foenumgraecum, fenugreek has records of use going back to ancient Egypt and is a staple of Greek, Chinese, and Ayurvedic herbal

In modern times, fenugreek is best known for crossing over from the medicinal apothecary into the kitchen. Seeds from the plant are used in cooking and the fragrant leaves are eaten in some cultures as a green vegetable. Fenugreek's sweet, aromatic flavor profile is likened to maple syrup, which explains its use as a flavoring agent in foods such as imitation maple syrup, beverages, and tobacco.

Fenugreek's association with hormonal health applies to men and women alike. In addition to studied uses for male sexual health, fenugreek has demonstrated value for women's hormonal health. Women who are at or near menopause can benefit from research on herbs that spotlights fenugreek's effectiveness. A 2016 study

of 88 women (split between a treatment group and placebo group) showed that an extract of fenugreek husk alleviated postmenopausal symptoms and helped to establish plant that has been used hormonal balance. The study participants all had moderate to severe postmenopausal

discomforts and poor quality

Fenugreek is an annual

for medicinal purposes

for thousands of years.

Women who are nursing young infants may want this spice in their cabinet, too. A 2005 study showed that giving nursing mothers a combination of fenugreek and fennel extract enhanced breast milk quality resulting in improvement of colic symptoms in breastfed infants.

Similarly, a 2011 study sought to evaluate whether consumption by nursing mothers of herbal tea containing fenugreek had effects on breast milk production and infants' weight gain patterns in the early postnatal period. After studying 66 mother-infant pairs at birth and on the third day post-delivery, researchers concluded that mothers who drank the fenugreek tea had significantly enhanced breast milk production.

The effect on babies' weight was also pronounced: Infants who consumed the fenugreek-enhanced breast milk had significantly less weight loss than placebo and

control groups, and they regained their birth weight faster. (Newborns typically lose weight in the first days after birth but regain it over the following weeks.) The timing of supplementation with fenugreek is worth considering since the National Institutes of Health warns pregnant women against taking fenugreek, as it may affect uterine contractions.

Fenugreek's Wide-Ranging **Health Benefits**

Beyond hormonal health, there are numerous reasons why you may want to consider incorporating fenugreek into your diet. Fenugreek seeds have demonstrated significant therapeutic value in the treatment of Type 2 diabetic patients. A 2009 clinical trial studied 24 Type 2 diabetic patients, placing them on a supplementation regimen of 10 grams per day of powdered fenugreek seeds mixed with yogurt or soaked

Biometric data such as weight, fasting blood sugar, triglyceride, and cholesterol levels were recorded before and after the study. After exclusion of six participants for changes to medication protocols or personal problems, results were calculated

for the remaining 18 patients. Findings showed that fasting blood sugar, triglycerides. and LDL cholesterol decreased significantly (25 percent, 30 percent, and 30.6 percent, respectively) when fenugreek seeds were soaked in hot water, versus no significant changes in lab parameters when fenugreek was mixed with yogurt. Researchers concluded that consuming fenugreek seeds can be an effective adjuvant in the control of Type 2 diabetes mellitus when seeds are soaked in hot water prior to consumption.

The blood sugar benefits of fenugreek are further supported by animal studies demonstrating ability to reduce glycemic response and insulin secretion, while also reducing abdominal fat in rats fed a high-sucrose diet. Another study showed that fenugreek reduced the body weight gain and plasma triglyceride levels that were induced by feeding obese mice a high-fat diet.

Considering fenugreek's overall low risk and high potential for health value, there is little reason to delay the benefits that may be obtained by adding this common kitchen spice to your regular menu. Search the GreenMedInfo.com fenugreek database for more information on the

For links to the studies referred to in this article, please find it at TheEpochTimes. com/author-GreenMedInfo



the many ways in which the present condition of the human body directly reflects the true state of the ambient environment. This work is reproduced and distributed with the permission of GreenMedInfo LLC. Sign up for the

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Grab a Rope: 7 Reasons Why Skipping Is So Good for You

Jumping rope is a whole body workout that can be a fun way to achieve several key fitness goals

LINDSAY BOTTOMS

hile many of us may remember skipping as something we did as children, the pastime has regained popularity during the pandemic as a way of keeping fit. Not only is jumping rope a fun, affordable, and portable form of exercise, it also **2. Full-Body Workout** has many benefits for our health and fitness. Here are just a few reasons why jump-

1. Cardiovascular Fitness

Jumping rope has long been used by boxers as a form of training to help improve their footwork and general conditioning. Jumping rope will cause an increase in

ing rope is such a good form of exercise.

heart rate and breathing similar to jogging. If you were to do ten minutes of jump rope every day, you would create adaptations to your body that are beneficial to cardiovascular health, such as lowering blood pressure and reducing resting heart rate.

Jumping rope will also increase your cardiorespiratory fitness, which essentially means your body becomes more efficient at taking up and

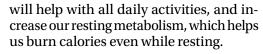
using oxygen.

Research has shown that cardiorespiratory fitness is linked to improved health and longevity. Improved cardiorespiratory fitness has been shown to reduce blood pressure, improve insulin sensitivity, reduce inflammation in the body, and lower the chances of developing diabetes and many other chronic diseases.

Skipping is a full-body workout that uses your abdominal muscles to stabilize the body, your legs for jumping, and your shoulders and arms for turning the rope. It therefore provides an all-over workout rather than just isolating one portion of the body.

Full-body workouts increase muscle tone, which

Skipping is a full-body work out that uses your abdominal museles to stabilize the body, your legs for jumping, and your shoulders and arms for turning the rope.



3. Coordination and Motor Skills

Skipping involves coordination to time your jump with the rope. Research has shown that it improves coordination, balance, and basic movement skills in children. These are important fitness components for later in life as they reduce our chances of trips and falls.

There are so many different exercises you can do with the rope and each one requires different coordination to complete the exercise. This may help exercise your brain as well.

4. Bone Mineral Density

Jumping rope involves making an impact with the ground with every jump. These impacts cause our bones to remodel themselves to become stronger, thus increasing bone density. Bone density can be a benefit later on in life when it naturally begins to decrease.

Research has shown that jumping rope increases bone mineral density. Higher bone mineral density makes you less likely to break a bone or develop osteoporosis as you get older. Hip fractures are a major cause of morbid-

> ity and mortality in older people, leading to a loss of independence and a huge economic burden. Improving bone density and balance throughout your life reduces the chances of trips and falls later on.

5. Speed

Because jumping rope requires fast movement of the feet and arms, it's considered a plyometric exercise. This is where the muscles exert maximum force in short intervals of time,

with the goal of increasing power. Plyometric exercise is used in the sporting world to increase an athlete's speed. A lot of exercises, such as jogging, only improve cardiovascular health. Jumping rope has the added benefit of improving speed as well. Daily jump rope practice may help you run quicker than before.

Higher bone mineral density makes you less likely to break a bone or develop osteoporosis as you get older.

6. Time Efficient

Jumping rope offers many health benefits that may be achieved in a short period of time. Because it's a full body exercise that requires speed and coordination, you could argue that it's a form of high intensity interval training (HIIT).

HIIT exercise is where you have short bouts of high-intensity efforts followed by a short rest interval. This is repeated several times. HIIT has been shown to produce higher levels of cardiorespiratory fitness in comparison to traditional endurance

It's also more time efficient, as you can perform exercise over a shorter period. This is why HIIT training has become the most popular workout worldwide.

Jumping rope is easily adaptable, and can be a high-intensity workout depending on the effort and power a person puts into their training.

7. Enjoyable

One of the most important points we need to consider to help us change our exercise habits is that what we do needs to be enjoyable to us. One of the biggest barriers for people when it comes to sticking with exercise is enjoyment. And research shows enjoying exercise is critical for helping us change our exercise habits and continue exercising.

The great thing about skipping is that there are so many different ways you can jump and hop over the rope. You can create a varied workout that helps maintain your enjoyment.

However, it's worth noting that skipping can put a lot of force on our lower limbs when we land. Though this improves our bone mineral density, it can lead to a lowerbody injury, especially if we're not used to this force. But different jumping styles can be used to help ease force and reduce the chance of injury. As with all types of exercise, it's good to build up duration gradually. This will help minimize injury.

Overall, jumping rope could be a very beneficial form of exercise. Not only does it improve many important aspects of our health—including cardiovascular health and bone density—but it's also affordable, portable, and doesn't require much space.

Lindsay Bottoms is a reader in exercise and health physiology at the University of Hertfordshire in the UK. This article was first published by The Conversation.

Diabetes-Friendly Drink Recommendations

For those living with diabetes, each drink becomes an exercise in managing blood sugar

SUSANNA DEERING

ALL IMAGES BY SHUTTERSTOCK

ood and eating aren't the same when you have diabetes. If you're living with Type 1, Type 2, or gestational diabetes, mealtime can be a cause of stress; but another source of worry is what to drink when you have

If you're controlling your diabetes and blood sugar by diet and exercise or with medications and insulin, you still need to be cautious of the food and drinks that enter your body.

Living with Type 1 diabetes myself, I know how one wrong drink choice can affect my blood sugar levels. A Type 1 diabetic doesn't produce insulin themselves so they must inject insulin with each meal. Making sure you account for what vou consume, including drinks in between meals, is important.

The same is true for those without diabetes as well, if not on such an immediate timeline. In fact, drinking just one sweetened drink a day can raise your risk of Type 2 diabetes by 25 percent.

People tend to think that fruit juice is a good choice, but with a high concentration of fructose, diabetics should only consume fruit in its whole form. When fruit is juiced, it is stripped of all its fiber, and fiber is what helps to slow down the blood sugar spike. Consuming fruit juice can set a diabetic on a blood-sugar roller coaster. Fruit juice should be reserved for when you're dealing with hypoglycemia—in this case, you are drinking it to increase blood sugar that has fallen too low.

Alcohol is another beverage that diabetics should be wary of. Alcohol is a contributing factor to hypoglycemia. You will first experience an increase in your blood sugar levels due to the sugar content, then a reactive drop in blood sugar, resulting in cravings, headaches, dizziness, fainting, and more. Avoid alcohol altogether, or minimize to one low-

sugar drink once or twice a week. I don't think I really have to mention it here, but soft drinks, sports drinks, or any artificial fruit drink are very high in sugar and

should strictly be avoided. A not-so-obvious option to avoid is diet soft drinks or other diet drinks. Although they don't contain including drinks in sugar and don't increase blood sugar levels much at all, they don't contribute to your health in any way. In fact, some studies have shown harmful effects they can have on the body.

Diabetics are often encouraged to consume artificial sweeteners, resulting in a high intake. My advice: If you still have a craving for sugary drinks, purchase the all-

natural sweetener stevia, which can be found in health food stores and is now sold in packets. Stevia doesn't contribute to raised blood sugar

Drinks for Optimal Blood Sugar While the above are drinks to be avoided, what follows are drinks to indulge in.

- Water: An obvious option, and not much of an indulgence, but a very important beverage. Keep a bottle of water with you at all times, and you'll find you won't be tempted to pick up a sugary drink. Purchasing a good quality water filter is also a good idea to avoid any unwanted chemicals in your water.
- Herbal teas: You can find an herbal tea to suit any taste. If you prefer, add a spoonful of stevia to sweeten it. Herbal teas are excellent warm or chilled with half a lemon squeezed in.
- Unsweetened almond or coconut milk: With only 2 grams of carbohydrates per cup of unsweetened almond milk, or 1 gram per cup of unsweetened coconut milk, these are good options for diabetics. The fat content will also slow down any rise in blood sugars. I add these milk alternatives to smoothies, cereal, or drink them on their own.

For a high fiber, low carbohydrate chocolaty treat, try out this recipe. The high good fat and fiber content will help balance your blood sugars and still give you a way to enjoy a yummy, healthy, chocolaty drink.

High Fiber Chocolate Berry Shake

• 1/2 avocado

Making

sure you

account for what

you consume,

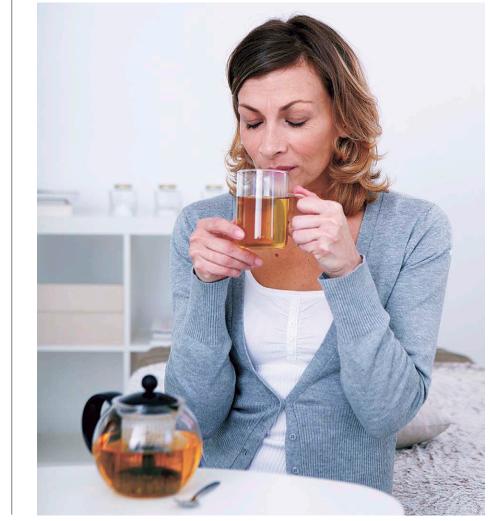
- 1 tablespoon raw cacao powder • 1 cup frozen berries of choice
- 1 cup unsweetened almond or coconut milk
- stevia, to sweeten to your liking filtered water (add as your blending to desired consistency—less liquid will make it more of a pudding, add more for a more

Add all ingredients together in a blender and blend. Add the water as needed and to desired consistency. Makes one large shake.

Susanna Deering has between meals a passion for nutrition is important. and great tasting food. Her journey into the field of holistic nutrition has helped her manage her diabetes and inspired her to help others manage their health through nutrition as well. For consultations with Susanna and more information, please visit Nourished-Life.com. This

article was originally published on

Naturally Savvy.



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Steroids are now a first-

line treatment in cases

of severe COVID-19

where patients require

oxygen or being put on a

Steroids Cut COVID-19 Death Rates, but Not for Everyone

For those with less severe infections, including the asymptomatic, steroids have more side-effects than benefits

BRYAN MCVERRY

ew studies show that treating critically ill COVID-19 patients with inexpensive steroids can cut their risk of dying from the illness by a third. The results are so clear that the World Health Organization changed its advice on Sept. 2 and now strongly recommends corticosteroids as a first-line treatment for the sickest patients.

Steroids aren't risk-free, however. They can have side effects, and they could do more harm than good in patients with milder cases of COVID-19.

I am a pulmonologist and critical care physician and co-author of 1 of 3 new studies that analyzed data from clinical trials involving the effect of steroids on thousands of critically and severely ill COV-ID-19 patients. Here's what people need to understand about steroids as a treatment for COVID-19.

Who Benefits From Taking Steroids?

It's important to understand that steroids can benefit the sickest patients hospitalized with COVID-19, but they're not a treatment for relatively mild cases.

With COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, there are two key components: the infection itself and the body's response to that infection.

In the sickest patients, the body's immune system response is so robust it can injure organs. So, calming the immune response may be important. But someone who is less severely ill may need the body's immune response to prevent the infection from getting worse. You wouldn't want to interfere with the immune response unless it was harming the patient.

How Do Corticosteroids Help Critically Ill Patients?

When an infection triggers an inflammatory response, specialized white blood cells

are activated to go find the virus or bacteria and destroy it. It's more of a bomb effect than a targeted missile strike. The immune cells attack broadly, and the inflammation created can damage other

cells in the vicinity.

That response can get out of control and continue even after the infectious agent is gone. In a really exuberant immune response, the patient can have respiratory failure and end up on a ventilator, or have circulatory failure and end up in shock, or they could develop kidney failure from the shock.

In patients with severe CO-VID-19, corticosteroids are likely able to calm that inflammatory response and prevent the progression of organ damage, potentially in the lungs.

Scientist aren't yet certain that that is how steroids are working. What we do know from the new studies is that people with severe COVID-19, particularly those with respiratory complications, benefit from relatively low-dose courses of corticosteroids. A combined analysis of the recent studies found the death rate four weeks after infection was significantly lower in patients with severe COVID-19 who received steroids than those who did not.

Steroids Not Used in Cases That Aren't Severe

No treatment comes without risk.

Steroids are well-known immunesuppressing medications that have been used for decades. They're commonly used for treating chronic diseases that are inflammation-related, such as asthma, or autoimmune disorders such as lupus or rheumatoid arthritis. But there may be consequences.

The potential harms from using steroids in a hospital include an increased risk of bacterial or fungal infections, hyperglycemia, acquired muscle weakness and gastrointestinal bleeding.

For people with milder cases of COV-ID-19, taking steroids could mean increasing their risks with little potential benefit.

Taking steroids long-term also carries other risks, including predisposition to infection and developing osteoporosis, cataracts, and glaucoma. So, to take steroids

sure against COVID-19 could come with significant potential risk to otherwise healthy people. This is why the WHO recommends not using steroids in COVID-19 cases that aren't se-

as a potential preventive mea-

Do Steroids Carry Risks for Critically Ill Patients?

It's common for ICU patients, particularly those on ventilators, to develop hospital-

acquired infections such as pneumonia or bloodstream infections related to intravenous catheters. Being on corticosteroids can increase a patient's risk of developing

ventilator. a patient's risk of developing ow secondary infections, or it can contribute ow to muscle weakness which may impact the ith patient's ability to come off of a ventilator when the disease resolves.

Still, the benefits of steroids for treating critically ill COVID-19 patients appear to outweigh the harms.

How Large Should the Dose Be?

Part of the challenge in treating critically ill patients with steroids is determining the dose and timing of the medication.

In the context of this study, the dose of steroids is relatively low and it's also a short duration. The trials haven't shown a significant increase in adverse events in the context of using the short-course, relatively low dose of steroids. So, in that patient population, the benefit outweighs the risk, but the risk is not zero.

The risk profile increases with higher

doses. So, the recommendation would be to start with the relatively low doses that have been studied. The WHO recommends low doses for 7 to 10 days.

Recent studies found the death rate four weeks after infection was significantly lower in patients with severe COVID-19 who received steroids than those who did not.

Which Steroids Are Most Effective?

I don't think it matters which corticosteroid is used as long as the steroid has some glucocorticoid activity.

The REMAP-CAP study looked at hydrocortisone. Another trial involved dexamethasone. Others studied methylprednisolone, though they were smaller and provided less data. The trials all point in a similar direction, suggesting the anti-inflammatory glucocorticoid activity is the important feature and not the specific steroid.

How Will This New Advice Change Treatment?

Based on the studies to date, hospitalized patients with COVID-19 pneumonia and requiring oxygen should be started on a low-dose course of steroids. That should certainly be the case if they're in the intensive care unit and require more intensive organ support, such as being on a ventilator, receiving non-invasive ventilation, or receiving high-flow oxygen.

Importantly, however, steroids have not been shown to benefit asymptomatic patients with COVID-19 or patients with mild disease without pulmonary problems based on the data we've seen so far.

Physicians should think of steroids at low doses as the standard of care for critically ill patients with COVID-19 pneumonia.

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