

# MIND & BODY

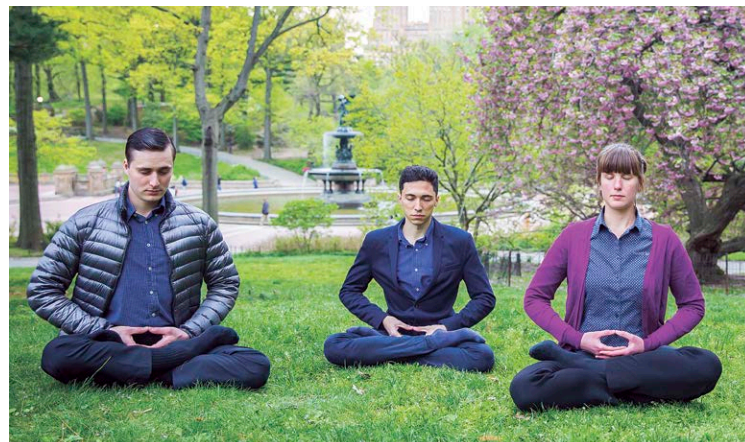
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## Good Reasons to Meditate

Meditation practices such as Falun Gong offer potent option to those seeking peace, healing



CONAN MILNER

**M**editation is a practice of calming and focusing the mind. There are a variety of methods, and some of them go back thousands of years. Now, the modern world is seeing a surge of interest in this quiet, ancient practice.

You might say that meditation has become trendy. Yoga studios are everywhere, Om and yin-yang symbols are seen frequently on T-shirts, tattoos, and jewelry. And for several years, there's been a push toward

everybody becoming more "mindful" in how they go about their lives.

Of course, this kind of widespread acceptance of these sorts of concepts didn't happen overnight. Exotic mantras and mystical ideas about merging mind and body managed to grab the attention of a few curious seekers over the years, but they had little mass influence until about the 1960s.

Before this, most Western folks didn't see the purpose of meditation. Just sitting there trying not to think about anything seemed like an odd and uncomfortable way

to spend your time. However, as researchers began to consider meditation's practical aspects, and more health professionals began to recommend it to their patients, people started to take more notice.

According to Dr. Margaret Trey, a meditation researcher and an integrative counselor who uses meditation in therapy, there have been a wealth of studies over the past 50 years validating the health and wellness benefits of this practice.

*Continued on Page 4*

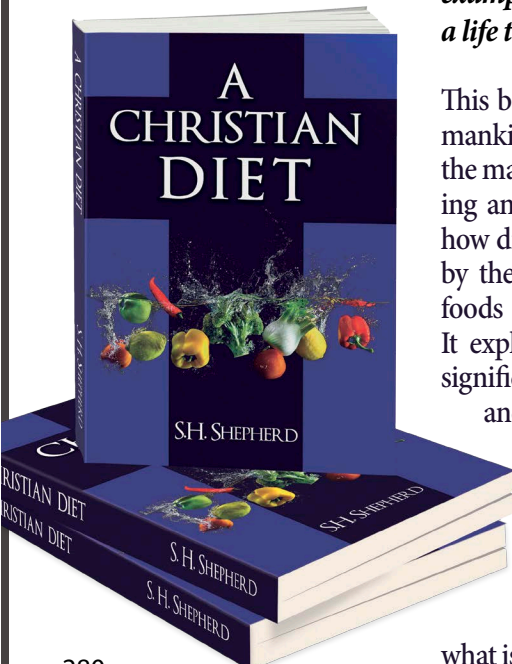
Meditation is an ancient practice with deep relevance in the modern world.

Christians have a diet, one given to them by God

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. He also gave to mankind a simple diet. He then showed the human race the way to live and the path of salvation through Jesus Christ. Jesus' example and teachings lead us into a simpler life, a life that is better for us in numerous ways.*

This book explains why the first diet ever given to mankind is the best possible diet for us. It describes the many health dangers of our current ways of eating and why they must be changed. It describes how diseases come about and how they are healed by the foods that have the powers that heal, the foods that are tailored to our biological makeup. It explores the supernatural design and spiritual significance of this diet. It provides the incentives and encouragement needed to change not only our diets, but the very way that we live. So strong are the effects that foods have on our lives.

God knows us far better than we know ourselves. He knows what we need and what is best for us. When we abide by His Word, we allow ourselves to live as He intended for us to live.



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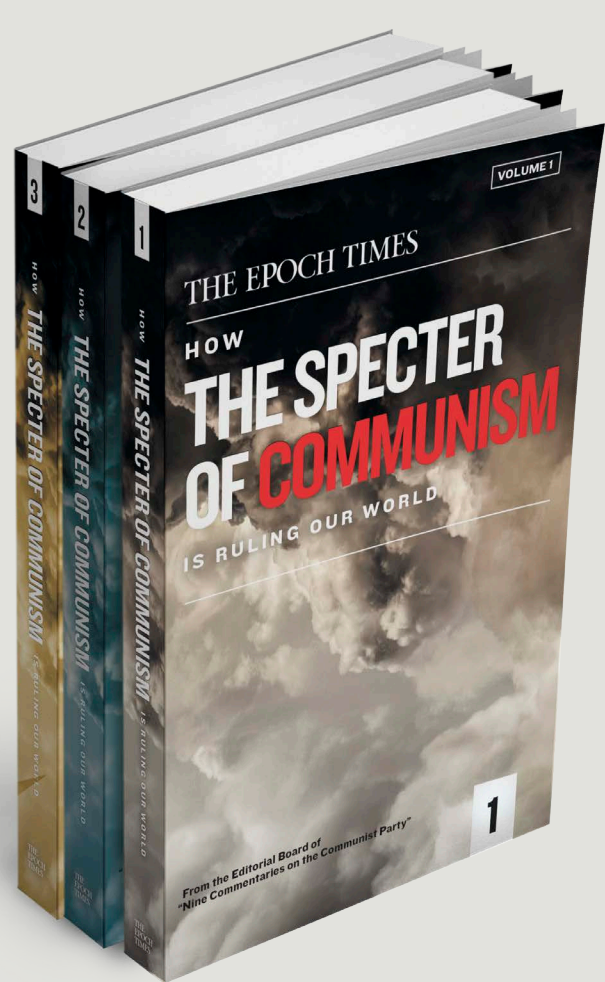
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# Low Zinc Levels Increase Risk of Death With COVID-19

JOSEPH MERCOLA

Although conventional medicine suggests there is no known cure for viral infections, there are steps you can take to support your body's immune system as it fights a virus.

Antibiotics aren't effective against viruses since they only work against bacteria. Bacteria are microorganisms made up of a single cell while viruses, which are even tinier, are parasitic and can't replicate independently. Viruses must insert themselves into your normal cells, where they use your cell function to multiply.

Your body uses a complex process to find, fight, and destroy viruses. One way it does this is to use zinc inside the cells to stop the virus from replicating. Zinc may effectively reduce the length of the average cold by 33 percent, according to a meta-analysis published in the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine in 2017. Emerging research presented at the 2020 ESCMID Conference on Coronavirus Disease suggests zinc plays a role in COVID-19 as well.

Zinc is normally found in your cells. It's also used to manufacture proteins, DNA, and is required for nearly 100 enzymes, wound healing, and cell division. Interestingly, an adequate amount of zinc is required for maintaining your sense of taste and smell. One of the early signs your body is fighting SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, is the loss of these senses.

**Bacteria are microorganisms made up of a single cell while viruses, which are even tinier, are parasitic and cannot replicate independently.**

Although you can absorb zinc from a variety of different foods, red meat and poultry are the major sources in a standard Western diet. Other foods high in zinc include nuts, dairy products, and fortified breakfast cereals. Certain groups of individuals may have more difficulty absorbing zinc from their diet. This includes people with:

- A history of gastrointestinal surgery
- Digestive disorders such as Crohn's disease
- A vegetarian lifestyle, since the meat they lack is a good source of zinc, and because the beans they eat to substitute for protein hinder zinc absorption in the body
- An alcohol-use disorder, as alcohol reduces the amount of zinc the body absorbs
- Sickle cell disease

### Low Zinc Linked to Higher Risk of COVID-19 Death

Data presented at the 2020 European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases on Coronavirus Disease suggest that people who have lower levels of plasma zinc also have lower rates of survival and poor patient outcomes when hospitalized with COVID-19.

The study analyzed the results of patient data gathered from a tertiary care university hospital from March 15 to April 30. During this time, patients routinely had fasting zinc levels drawn when they were admitted to the unit caring for COVID-19 patients. The researchers analyzed data from 249 patients and found the mean baseline was 61 micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dl).

There were 21 patients (8 percent) who died, whose baseline levels were 43 mcg/dl. The baseline of the survivors was 63.1 mcg/dl. Using computer modeling



Zinc is an essential trace element that has antiviral properties.

and statistical analyses, the researchers found that low zinc levels, measuring 50 mcg/dl and below, were linked with a 2.3-fold increased risk of death while hospitalized.

After adjusting for confounding variables, the data suggested for every single unit increase of zinc at admission, the individual had a 7 percent lower risk of death while hospitalized. The study was led by Dr. Roberto Güerri-Fernández from Barcelona, who commented on the results:

"We have submitted a paper with this work and some in vitro studies that demonstrate that zinc has some clinical implications in virus control. I believe that if these results are confirmed, further studies with zinc supplementation could be done.

Moreover, some studies have already been done with zinc and respiratory infections. Probably those patients with lower levels are the ones that would benefit the most."

The results of this retrospective analysis support other reviews demonstrating zinc's action in the prevention and treatment of viruses and COVID-19. In describing the need for treatment options, one paper published in Frontiers in Immunology this year calls for "cost-effective, globally available, and safe options with minimal side effects and simple application."

The authors go on to say that "zinc meets all the above described criteria."

They conclude: "Finally, due to its direct antiviral properties, it can be assumed that zinc administration is beneficial for most of the population, especially those with suboptimal zinc status." Another paper published this year (in Medical Hypothesis) reviewed the research on zinc's potential as a treatment for COVID-19 and concluded zinc may have potential benefits for treatment and prevention of the disease.

### Zinc Stops Viral Replication Inside the Cell

The reason zinc is such a powerful strategy against viral replication is because of how it works inside the cell to stop the virus.

The double-strand DNA inside the nucleus of your cells is transcribed into a single strand of RNA. This RNA then moves out of the nucleus into the cytoplasm of the cell. There it undergoes another change, which allows ribosomes to read the code and create proteins. These proteins drive the actions of your cells to support optimal health. For example, the proteins can combine oxygen with hemoglobin or modulate cellular metabolism. When the coronavirus enters the cytosol of the cell, it has the same head and tail as your body's RNA. When the ribosomes read that RNA, they don't produce a productive protein but, rather, RNA dependent RNA polymerase. This enzyme then reads the RNA of the virus and replicates it.

Since it makes more of the virus, the RNA-dependent RNA polymerase is also



Low zinc levels leave people more vulnerable to viruses.

known as "replicase." Within the cytosol, zinc shuts off replicase so the virus can't duplicate.

However, because zinc is an ion, it can't pass through the cell membrane without help. In one collaborative study with researchers in the United States and the Netherlands, researchers tested the effectiveness of zinc within the cell by using a zinc ionophore. An ionophore functions as a transporter, moving zinc across the cell membrane. The researchers found that zinc effectively stopped the activity of the RNA-dependent RNA polymerase in the cell.

### Treatment With a Zinc Ionophore Boosts Patient Outcome

Using zinc to fight a viral infection isn't as simple as taking a zinc supplement since the ion requires a transporter. In 2014, a team of researchers investigated chloroquine for its anticancer activity and discovered it increased zinc uptake, resulting in a concentration of zinc in the lysosomes of the cells.

In a second paper published in Medical Hypothesis, researchers outline the direct antiviral effect chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine have by increasing the pH in the intracellular vesicles, which in turn inhibits replication of the virus. They believe that the combination of zinc with hydroxychloroquine would improve the efficacy of the drug.

They also wrote that zinc deficiencies occur more frequently in older adults and in people with diabetes and cardiovascular disease, which are groups of individuals the CDC has identified as having a higher risk of severe disease and poor outcomes with COVID-19. In a call for more clinical trials to evaluate the combination of chloroquine and zinc, researchers at Michigan Technological University write:

"Chloroquine can induce the uptake of zinc into the cytosol of the cell, which is capable of inhibiting RNA-dependent RNA polymerase and ultimately halting the replication of coronavirus in the host cell.

Currently, there are several clinical trials that are currently underway in several countries of the world to assess the efficacy of chloroquine as an anti-coronavirus agent. Since chloroquine has been widely prescribed for use as an anti-malarial, its safety is not in doubt."

Chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine are medications that have been used for decades to treat malaria. They have known side effects and are generally well-tolerated.

It is important to know that while zinc

**Viruses must insert themselves into your normal cells, where they use your cell function to multiply.**

is important in the fight against viral infections, as Chris Masterjohn, an expert in nutritional sciences, points out on his website, it is possible to get too much zinc, which can depress your immune system and negatively affect your health.

### Quercetin, EGCG Are Natural Zinc Ionophores

The good news is that while these two drugs are generally well-tolerated, there are other zinc ionophore options you may consider at home that don't require a prescription. In 2014, a comparative study was published looking at quercetin and epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG) as zinc ionophores. EGCG is a polyphenol found in green tea.

The researchers hypothesized that polyphenols would act as a zinc ionophore and demonstrated this in the laboratory using mouse hepatic carcinoma Hepa 1-6 cells. Both quercetin and EGCG had an added advantage of inhibiting an enzyme the virus uses to infect healthy cells. According to a 2020 study, quercetin, EGCG, and other flavonoids also can inhibit the SARS coronavirus.

There are several reasons to suspect that quercetin may offer hope for treatment against COVID-19. In addition to functioning as a zinc ionophore, quercetin binds to the spike protein of SARS-CoV (the virus responsible for SARS), thereby inhibiting its ability to infect host cells. It also boosts interferon response

**Zinc may effectively reduce the length of the average cold by 33 percent.**

to viruses and modulates the response involved in a cytokine storm. According to a research review published in Frontiers of Immunology in July, "There is evidence that vitamin C and quercetin

co-administration exerts a synergistic antiviral action due to overlapping antiviral and immunomodulatory properties and the capacity of ascorbate to recycle quercetin, increasing its efficacy."

### Nebulized Hydrogen Peroxide Is Highly Effective

I believe one of the most effective treatment options you can use at home is nebulized hydrogen peroxide. I recommend everyone become familiar with the process. You can see a demonstration on Mercola.com. In many cases it can improve symptoms within hours. While quercetin and zinc are highly effective in the early stages, nebulized hydrogen peroxide is particularly effective when an individual is experiencing shortness of breath.

It is extremely safe and can be administered at home without a prescription. In my opinion, it is one of the absolute best therapies for respiratory viral infections such as COVID-19. Dr. David Brownstein published a case paper about this treatment, which he has used to successfully treat more than 100 patients with COVID-19.

It's important to get the equipment and peroxide before you need it, since the sooner you start the treatment the better the results will be.

However, it isn't necessary and not recommended to use this to treat yourself preventively. Instead, use it only if you're sick or you've been exposed to someone who is sick with an upper respiratory tract infection. While I recommend a 0.1 percent dilution of food-grade hydrogen peroxide in normal saline, Brownstein uses an even lower concentration of 0.04 percent.

Neither Brownstein nor I recommend you use commercial grade 3 percent hydrogen peroxide since it has toxic chemical stabilizers to extend the shelf life of the product. For optimal benefits, use food-grade peroxide and refrigerate it to extend the shelf-life, as it doesn't have stabilizers.

As I discussed in the video, use the treatment every hour for the first several hours if you have shortness of breath, fever, and coughing. Typically, within the first several treatments, you'll start to feel better. You can then take the treatment every 4 to 6 hours until you're completely well.

Dr. Joseph Mercola is the founder of Mercola.com. An osteopathic physician, best-selling author, and recipient of multiple awards in the field of natural health, his primary vision is to change the modern health paradigm by providing people with a valuable resource to help them take control of their health. This article was originally published on Mercola.com

## The Piece of Knowledge You Need for a Healthy Colon

Certain foods feed a diversity of microbes living inside you that are critical to a healthy colon

MOHAN GARIKIPARITHI

Colon health is a real concern, no matter who you are. Finding ways to keep it healthy is a priority for men and women around the world.

You may find it surprising to learn that a few small decisions each day have the potential to reduce the risk of colon-related illness in a significant way.

I'd like you to think of how often you hear about "gut health." But guess what? Gut health is practically synonymous with colon health. Of the roughly 40 trillion bacteria residing on your body, the overwhelming majority of them stay in your intestines.

The ones that live in your colon can have a massive impact on the risk of colon-related disease.

And you have a lot of power over which types of bacteria take up residence.

Bacteria living in your body can fight disease or contribute to it. It really comes down to which types are living inside of you. Generally speaking, a diverse array is healthy and may help fight against illness.

Disease risk goes up when the population is largely homogenous.

There is a genetic component to your microbiota (gut population), but you can manipulate it with food choices. There's plenty of data to suggest that the more diverse a person's diet, the more diverse and healthier their gut bacterial population.

What does a diverse diet look like? Certainly not like the Western or Standard American diet, typically made up of meat, potatoes, junk food, and food with a uniform shade of golden brown.

That stuff, particularly the golden brown and junk foods, can hijack your gut bacteria. Sugar and grease can sabotage colon health.

Instead, you'll want to build your diet around fiber-rich foods, which feed healthy bacteria, so they grow and breed. Known as prebiotics, these foods can make a huge impact on colon health and help lower the risk of disease.

So, next time you're reaching for a snack or building a meal, try colorful fruits and veggies. Some great prebiotic foods include:

- Raspberries
- Blueberries
- Artichokes
- Whole grains
- Potatoes (not particularly high fiber when peeled, but they do feature resistance starch, which can feed healthy gut bacteria)
- Broccoli
- Beans
- Lentils
- Leafy greens

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

Berries are a fantastic snack that can nourish a healthy microbial balance.





Meditation has gone from a fringe fad to a research-backed treatment option acknowledged for its profound impact.

## Good Reasons to Meditate

Continued from Page 1

She points to studies that show increases in happiness and positive thoughts, as well as improved problem-solving skills, a boost in self-confidence, and better memory as a result of meditation. It has also been found to decrease anxiety and substance abuse, while improving resilience and general psychological well-being.

"The mountain of research on the benefits of meditation in general is overwhelming. And most of the research is very positive," Trey said. Through studies and clinical experience, meditation experienced a rebranding. Public perception has shifted its view on meditation from a mysterious activity reserved only for monks and weirdos, to a type of mind-body medicine that can benefit just about anybody willing to try.

"Most people know meditation is a good thing," Trey said. "Many people are drawn to meditation in general because they perceive it as a form of relaxation. Others see meditation as a way to reduce stress and anxiety."



Dr. Margaret Trey, author and meditation researcher.

**Meditation has been found to decrease anxiety and substance abuse, while improving resilience and general psychological well-being.**

**Meditation Under the Microscope**  
Meditation's allure has always been the benefits said to come with practice. Enlightenment is traditionally the ultimate goal, but some are content just to grasp some moments of inner peace in an otherwise chaotic world. Ancient tales also tell of extraordinary abilities bestowed on those who meditated diligently, often over the course of many years.

Even today, people report miraculous healings that they trace to their practice.

But what can meditation actually do? The truth is that science has only scratched the surface of this question. One obstacle to developing a deeper understanding in scientific terms is the complexity of the subject. For example, you can't test meditation like you would a drug, because there are several variables inherent to each individual, such as natural ability, patience, and persistence. These are difficult, if not impossible, to control for in a randomized trial.

But you have to start somewhere. And the most direct way to collect data is simply to ask people what they experience. So when Trey wanted to examine a meditation practice known as Falun Gong, she turned to a research method synonymous with social science: a survey.

In 2007, as part of her doctoral dissertation at the University of South Australia, Trey administered an online survey comparing the health and wellness effects of Falun Gong practitioners measured against a control group of non-practitioner participants.

The results—detailed in Trey's latest book, "The Effect of Falun Gong on Health

and Wellness,"—strongly suggest that practicing Falun Gong has a positive effect on both physical and emotional health.

"I'm not looking at the molecules or the genes. I'm just looking at people's perceptions of how they got better because they do this meditation practice," Trey said. "Lo and behold, they don't have to take any drugs for anxiety disorder or depression anymore. There are people who have recovered from various psycho-emotional disorders."

### China's Qigong Culture

One reason that Trey wanted to research Falun Gong is that it had seen very little scientific investigation. Compared to other forms of meditation practiced in society, such as yoga, Transcendental Meditation or Zen Buddhism, Falun Gong seems like a relative newcomer on the meditation scene, but it's much older than you might imagine. According to Falun Gong founder Mr. Li Hongzhi, the practice has been passed from master to student since ancient times.

Falun Gong only became publicly available in China starting in 1992. But by 1998, the practice was so popular that a Chinese government survey found that there were about 70 million Chinese practicing across the country, making it the largest and fastest-growing meditative practice in Chinese history.

The promise of better health was a big reason why. Many Chinese people already held a favorable opinion of the kind of graceful, meditative exercises featured in Falun Gong. Other types of qigong exercises—such as tai chi—have long

been known in Chinese culture to help practitioners keep a fit body and sharp mind. Falun Gong was also very accessible. Throughout the 1990s, free classes and exercise sites sprang up all over the country, and gave virtually anyone who was interested an opportunity to try.

Up until the Chinese government outlawed the practice in 1999, Chinese officials were singing its praises, claiming that it could save the country a bundle in health care costs. According to one estimate, if 100 million people practiced Falun Gong, China could save "100 billion yuan per year in medical fees."

**“There is no illness of the body apart from the mind.”**

Socrates

Independent, large-scale health surveys conducted in five Chinese provinces helped support this claim. Researchers found that more than 90 percent of respondents, or 31,000 individuals, reported having a variety of illnesses before they started Falun Gong. And 98 percent of them reported gaining significant health benefits as a result of adopting the practice.

Researchers continue to validate this trend. A 2013 study from the United States examining the cognitive and physiological effects of Falun Gong showed that the practice boosted energy levels and mood, and elicited lasting psychological benefits. And a 2016 observational cohort study published in the Journal of Clinical Oncology concluded that "Falun Gong practice can help terminal cancer patients survive significantly longer, in addition to notable symptom improvement."

### Finding Long-Term Motivation

How exactly Falun Gong can produce such results isn't clear. There are several aspects to the practice, and they are all believed to bring something to the table. In addition to a seated meditation and four standing exercises, Falun Gong practitioners also strive to meet a high moral standard in

daily life. At the heart of the practice is the book Zhuan Falun (Turning the Law Wheel), which discusses how to live by the principles of zhen, shan, and ren—truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance.

So which of these factors is the greatest contributor to the health improvements described above? The exercises are certainly the most eye-catching aspect, but according to Trey's survey, most veteran practitioners believe that simply trying to be a better person is the piece that does the most to improve their mental and physical well-being.

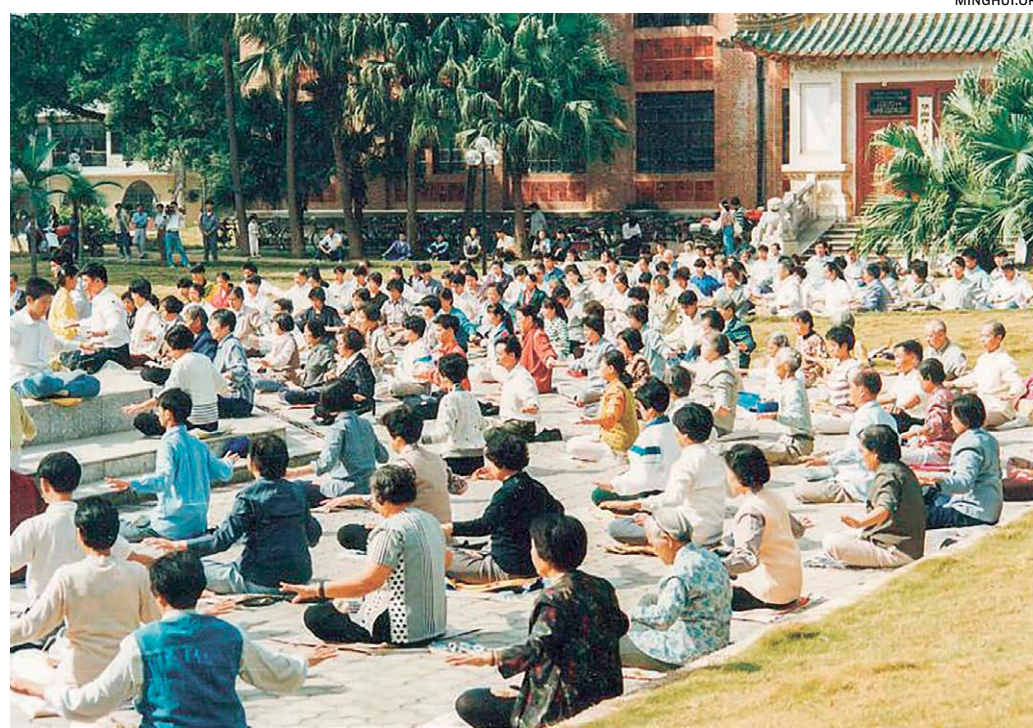
"Their focus is the elevation of their moral character. The impact we can see is that their health and wellness improved," Trey said. "We all know that the mind is very powerful. You are what you think. Even Socrates said, 'There is no illness of the body apart from the mind.'"

Today, Falun Gong is practiced in more than 90 countries. An interest in better health and a calmer mind remain big reasons why people take an interest in the practice. But according to Trey, these reasons alone typically aren't enough to keep people coming back. She says personal catastrophe or a deep yearning for something more transcendent are often what give people the push they need to pursue the practice long term.

"Even if they want to meditate, it takes them months or years to come around to it," Trey said. "They will say something like, 'I came across Falun Gong two years ago but just didn't have time to do it, until something serious happened.'"

Science can certainly provide practical reasons for how we might benefit from meditation, but it may still not be enough to make us actually do it. Trey says part of the problem with our perceiving meditation practice as nothing more than a form of therapy is that we may imagine that it's as effortless as taking a pill.

"For many people, they treat it like a visit to the doctor. Take some medicine, recover, and that's it," Trey said. "Another group are people who seek a spiritual path for enlightenment and spiritual development because they come to a stage in life where they feel like their life has no meaning, so they search for something that will change that."



Falun Gong practitioners meditating in public in Guangzhou, China, in 1998, before the Communist Party banned the spiritual group in 1999. Such sessions remain forbidden.

## How EMFs Disturb Your Immune System

Mounting research makes it impossible to ignore the biological effects of electromagnetic radiation

We are living in an unprecedented time, one in which electromagnetic fields (EMFs) from cellphones and cellphone base stations, Wi-Fi devices, power lines, electrical wiring, and even computers, televisions, and microwave ovens, surround us 24/7.

Olle Johansson, associate professor and head of the Experimental Dermatology Unit, Department of Neuroscience, at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden, is among those who have questioned whether humans are affected by such an assault.

In a 2009 review published in Pathophysiology, Johansson points out that since life on Earth began more than 3.5 billion years ago, the geomagnetic fields and radiation from the sun have remained largely static. During life's progression, living organisms have developed ways to cope with these influences, including developing pigmented skin to shield from the sun or, for other species, living underground or under the dense, protective foliage of a rainforest.

During the past 100 years, however, as EMFs became prolific, we haven't developed a similar adaptation. "Is it possible to adapt our biology to altered exposure

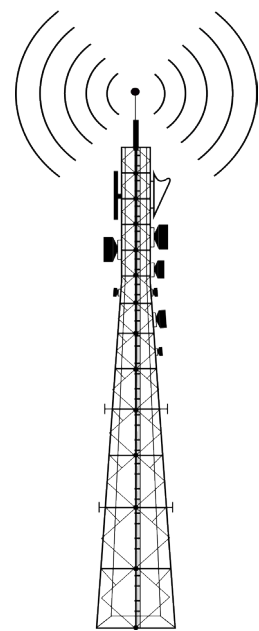
conditions in less than 100 years, or do we have to have thousands of years—or longer—for such an adaptation? And, in the meantime, what kind of safety standards must we adopt?" Johansson asked.

After reviewing a number of papers on the effects of manmade EMFs on the immune system, he found disturbing consequences and ultimately concluded not only that existing public safety limits are inadequate to protect public health but also that limits should be set on the deployment of further untested technologies.

### EMFs Disturb Immune Function

EMFs present in everyday life, including at workplaces, homes, and areas of recreation, disturb the human body at the cellular level, often at low or very low (non-thermal) levels. Johansson cites research showing that EMF exposures stimulate increases in mast cells and other physiological changes that indicate an allergic response and inflammatory conditions.

He believes that rapid rises in the incidence of allergies, asthma, and other sensitivities worldwide are a warning signal,



Our cities are now saturated with electromagnetic fields that may be interfering with immune system function, inflammatory responses, and cellular repair mechanisms.

as chronic exposure to EMFs may lead to immune dysfunction, chronic allergic responses, inflammatory responses, and overall ill health.

EMF exposures have also been linked to a variety of specific immune system effects, including: overreaction of the immune system, alteration of immune cells, profound increases in mast cells in the upper layers of the skin, larger size of mast cells in electrohypersensitive individual, suppressed or impaired immune function, decreased count of natural killer cells, immune cells that help kill cells infected with viruses and control early signs of cancer, and negative effects on pregnancy.

Research published by the World Health Organization in 2006 suggested 1 percent to 3.5 percent of people are hypersensitive to electromagnetic radiation, though estimates have reached as high as 10 percent of populations in the United States, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, Norway, and many other countries.

This condition is known as electrohypersensitivity (EHS), and it leads to a number of physical and cognitive symptoms upon exposure to EMFs. Common symptoms of EHS include headaches, dizziness, fatigue, trouble concentrating, cognitive problems, sleep interruptions, and skin symptoms such as stinging, itching, and burning.

According to Johansson, "It is evident from our preliminary experimental data that various biological alterations are present in EHS persons claiming to suffer from exposure to EMF. The alterations are themselves enough to fully explain the EHS symptoms, and the involvement of the immune system is evident."

Damages from EMF exposure aren't only a matter of increased cell damage but also of reduced repair, facilitating the spread of disease. The report cites evidence that EMF exposure may contribute to DNA damage and adverse effects on cellular communication, metabolism and repair, and cancer surveillance within the body, along with causing adverse cardiac and neurological effects, including memory impairment, changes in brainwave activity, and disturbed cognitive function.

Biological effects from EMF exposure may occur at levels significantly below U.S. and international limits. Biologically based exposure standards are needed to protect humans from the effects of even low-level EMF exposure, but, according to Johansson, "such a completely protective safety limit would, for many exposure situations, be zero."

Unfortunately, the currently accelerated rollout of 5G technology, which requires the installation of numerous small cell transmission devices in neighborhoods, stands to dramatically increase EMF exposures and their related health consequences.

### 1,000 Studies on Adverse Effects of EMFs

The body of evidence showing that EMFs cause harm has become too large to ignore. At GreenMedInfo.com, you can browse through more than 1,000 EMF abstracts and their connection to oxidative stress, DNA damage, cancer, inflammation, and more.

More than a dozen studies focus on the immunotoxic effects of EMFs, including potentially reducing immune function in the elderly and affecting cellular processes that play a role in cancer development and the proper growth and development of organisms.

"Living organisms can detect and respond immediately to low environmental levels of these fields," Henry Lai with the department of bioengineering at the University of Washington in Seattle, wrote. As such, it's important to take action now to protect yourself and your family from unnecessary EMF exposures as much as possible.

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## Distance Learning Hits Low-Income Children Harder

Children in low-income communities lose out on crucial opportunities to exercise amid pandemic

KATELYN ESMONDE & KESHIA POLLACK PORTER

This fall hasn't felt much like "back to school" for many children. Instead, many are staying at home and attending virtual classes indefinitely.

According to the Center on Reinventing Public Education, a nonpartisan research center, about 25 percent of U.S. school districts started the year fully remote. This means that children will miss out on vital opportunities for educational, social, and emotional development. And, as is familiar during this pandemic, the impact will be unequal: Children in under-resourced districts are more likely to be remote learners. These children are hardest hit by school closures as they are more likely to lack access to necessary technologies and are less likely to receive parental help with their learning. They will also lose out on easy access to school meals.

But there's another harm done by school closures: a child's ability to be physically active. We are researchers at Johns Hopkins University studying physical activity and its impact on public health. Based on our research, we believe the pandemic is exacerbating health disparities among children and having significant impacts on their physical, social, and cognitive development.

### No Gym Classes, No Team Sports

Children not in school don't have recess or physical education classes. They aren't walking to school or to a bus stop. Generally, they can't participate in school teams or clubs that promote physical activity either (although in some school districts, team sports may go ahead even while in-person education doesn't).

What's more, children have traditionally been less physically active in the summer than during the school year, with notable differences by race and ethnicity. And given the punishing trajectory of the pandemic, it isn't clear when those prospects for physical activity will be available again.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that children between ages 6 and 17 engage in one hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day. That can improve a child's physical and mental health and prevent the onset of chronic disease, including Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers.

Physical activity and active play can also be a source of joy for children. As they socialize with peers, they find pleasure in moving their bodies and developing their strength and physical literacy. Many of us look back fondly on childhood memories of soccer games and running around until we tired ourselves out, a delight every child deserves.

Schools, of course, aren't perfect when it comes to meeting children's physical activity needs. Physical education is chronically underfunded, and black and Latino children typically lose out the most. Even so, schools provide some opportunities for children to be well and healthy.

### Low-Income Communities Are Hurt the Most

A child's decrease in physical activity isn't only a public health issue. It's also a matter of fairness.

Prior to the pandemic, children from low-income communities and communities of color already experienced greater challenges in access-

ing physical activity opportunities. They were already less likely to meet physical activity recommendations because of a lack of affordable options. There are also safety issues, challenges to parental support and a neighborhood environment that doesn't foster play and physical activity.

As more activities have moved outdoors to decrease the risk of virus spread, these inequities are felt more than ever before. In many cases, the parents of children in low-income communities are essential workers who can't be home to support either learning or physical activity. Private backyards for play are frequently missing, and public spaces are often inadequate.

**The pandemic is exacerbating health disparities among children and having significant impacts on their physical, social, and cognitive development.**

The weather poses additional barriers. Because of less green space and tree canopy, low-income neighborhoods tend to be hotter in the summer, sometimes significantly so, than higher-income neighborhoods in the same city. They also have poorer air quality. In the winter, many families can't afford a warm coat, which makes outdoor play more difficult.

### Promoting Outdoor Play

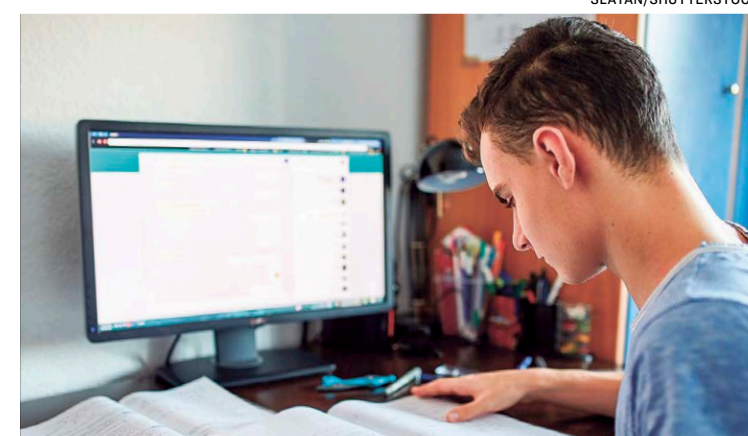
These aren't intractable problems. Solutions exist to promote a child's active outdoor play. Some strategies work in all settings, although urban, suburban, and rural environments will have to vary approaches. But in all cases, it's essential that children have the clothing and nourishment they need to play outside through all types of weather.

First, supervised play can take place on unused schoolyards through policies such as joint use agreements. This shouldn't be a heavy lift, as schools are usually in centralized locations and they already support active play.

Second, many cities worldwide have increased access to public spaces during the pandemic. They have closed down entire streets and driving lanes and replaced them with activity areas. These efforts can be expanded to focus on children by creating specialized spaces for child-friendly games. This was already happening before the pandemic: Initiatives such as Play Streets, where neighborhood blocks are shut down to promote play, were becoming popular. This can be a model, albeit with additional safeguards built in to promote physical distancing.

The pandemic has created previously unimaginable challenges for so many of us. Children's health and well-being, particularly for those facing significant barriers, must be a priority.

*Katelyn Esmonde is a postdoctoral fellow at Johns Hopkins University. Keshia Pollack Porter is a professor of public health at Johns Hopkins University. This article was first published on The Conversation.*



School districts with less money are more likely to institute distance learning and that has health consequences for the children in those communities.

# Jordan Peterson's 'Antidote to Chaos' Saved His Own Life

Jordan Peterson prescribed, both for himself and his audience, a life of meaning and responsibility

DAN SANCHEZ

Jordan Peterson has been through hell. In mid-2019, Peterson disappeared from public life as he struggled with severe health problems stemming from a physical dependency to prescription tranquilizers. "Absolute hell," is how his daughter Mikhaila described what he went through. A few weeks ago, Peterson reemerged on YouTube to announce that he has recovered enough to start releasing new content again.

"I'm alive, and I have plans for the future," he reported.

Peterson is also ready to share what he's learned from his ordeal.

"I've learned some things during that trying time, I suppose," he said, "or at least I can tell you what kept me going during what was certainly the worst period of my life."

A look at how Jordan Peterson escaped the underworld with his spirit intact may hold lessons for us all. But first let's briefly trace how he got there, as he and Mikhaila related his journey in a video from June.

## Descensus ad Infernos

Peterson's descent began in April 2019, when his wife Tammy was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

At that moment, Peterson experienced something he has discussed extensively in his books and lectures: the collapse of order and the emergence of chaos.

In his bestselling book *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*, Peterson described order as "explored territory": the known and the expected in our lives. "Order," for example, "is

the stability of your marriage."

Indeed, Jordan's marriage to Tammy was a major source of order and stability in his life. In the acknowledgments section of *12 Rules*, Peterson wrote that his wife Tammy "has been an absolute pillar of honesty, stability, support, practical help, organization and patience."

But then, he was informed, that pillar was soon to fall. "Chaos," Peterson wrote, "is the new place and time that emerges when tragedy strikes suddenly."

"It's the new and unpredictable suddenly emerging in the midst of the commonplace familiar."

"It's the place you end up when things fall apart."

And when things fall apart, it can throw us for a loop emotionally. As Peterson wrote in his much earlier book, *Maps of Meaning*, "When the world remains known and familiar ... our emotions remain under control. When the world suddenly transforms itself into something new, however, our emotions are dysregulated."

Faced with such terrible news, Peterson's anxiety spiked. He had already long been taking prescription benzodiazepines for anxiety. After his wife's diagnosis, his doctor increased the dosage. However, this only seemed to make the anxiety worse. Peterson realized that he had developed a dangerous physical dependency.

Tammy defied her diagnosis by recovering soon after. But Jordan's ordeal was just beginning. His doctor had him try to quit cold turkey by swapping meds. But this sent his anxiety levels soaring. Then he tried to taper off, but that, too, was unbearable. Worst of all was that he developed a condition called akathisia, which Peterson likened to being jabbed with a cattle prod non-stop for all his waking hours. The condition kept him in constant motion, as lying, sitting, or standing still was unbearable.

Then Jordan, along with Mikhaila and her husband,

began a long quest, first in North America and ultimately in eastern Europe, for medical help that would get him off the benzos and help him recover from the neurological damage he had suffered. At various points, Peterson suffered delirium, hallucinations, time distortion, and physical impairments such that he was unable to walk upstairs or get into bed. "It's no overstatement," Peterson said, "to say that for me the consequences of benzodiazepine withdrawal were worse than death."

"You know, you don't want to say something like that lightly," he said, "but there were lots of times, plenty of times, when it would have been preferable, as far as I could tell, just not to be there than to experience what I was experiencing."

There is good reason not to dismiss Peterson's account as an exaggeration. For example, a 2017 research article in the *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* found a link between major physical illnesses and suicide risk.

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“When the world remains known and familiar ... our emotions remain under control. When the world suddenly transforms itself into something new, however, our emotions are dysregulated.”

Jordan Peterson



One of Jordan Peterson's "12 Rules for Life" is to treat yourself like someone you are responsible for helping.

One of the ways Solzhenitsyn embraced radical responsibility was to uncover within his soul any blame he himself bears in producing his own plight.

But Peterson rejected the notion that the pursuit of happiness is the proper goal of life, citing Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a survivor and documenter of the Soviet gulag system, who wrote that "the 'pitiful ideology' holding that 'human beings are created for happiness' was an ideology 'done in by the first blow of the work assigner's cudgel.'"

"In a crisis," Peterson said, "the inevitable suffering that life entails can rapidly make a mockery of the idea that happiness is the proper pursuit of the individual. ... A deeper meaning was required."

And Peterson credits his survival to his attachment to his family ("The reason [I survived] was that I had family that I was very attached to") and his dedication to his work ("My work ... was also extremely useful because I could sustain myself by producing and then culling through thoughts that were helpful, despite my anguish ... and my lack of hope for the future.")

Incredibly, Peterson managed to continue working on his next book throughout most of his health crisis. "Responsibility: that's what gives life meaning," Peterson once said in a lecture. And, as he demonstrated in practice, a life of meaning is one that can weather a storm of suffering.

Peterson also credits his survival to the support of his family, which he described as "above and beyond the call of duty." His daughter and his son-in-law were especially instrumental, as they took the lead in seeking and obtaining medical treatment for him, even as that quest took them into Russia in the dead of winter. "Yeah well, I wasn't going to give up," Mikhaila responded after Jordan, choked up with emotion, thanked her for her help.

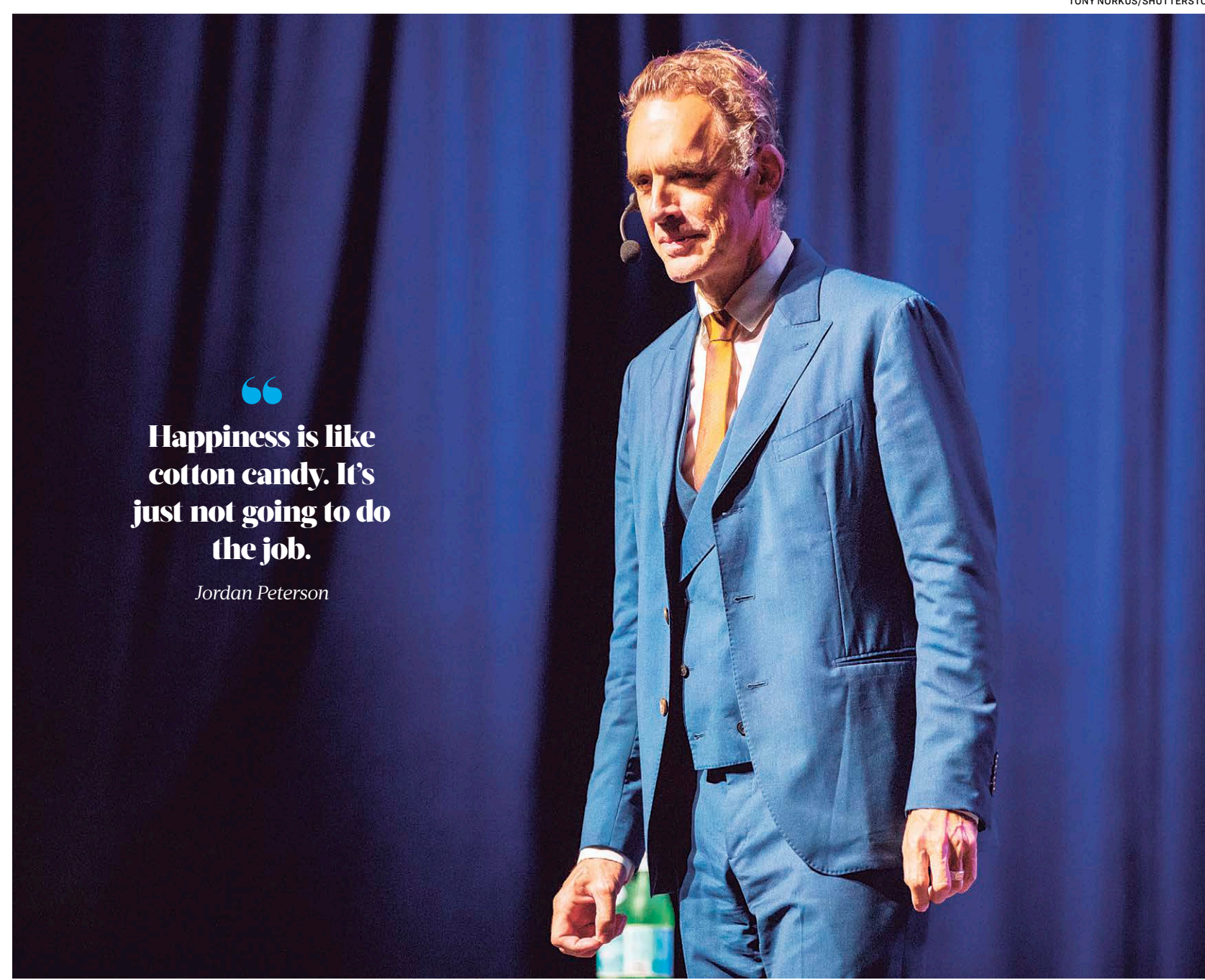
This was especially poignant given that Peterson dedicated an entire chapter of *12 Rules* to tell the story of Mikhaila's own extremely painful lifelong battle with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis.

The Peterson family moved heaven and earth to help Mikhaila, while being careful not to rob her of her own strength by fostering helplessness. And now the responsibility that Jordan embraced long ago has come back to bless him, as the daughter he raised and cared for undertook the burden of helping him in return.

"I have seen my teenage daughter," Peterson wrote, "live through the destruction of her hip and her ankle and survive two years of continual, intense pain and emerge with her spirit intact. I watched her younger brother voluntarily and without resentment sacrifice many opportunities for friendship and social engagement to stand by her and us while she suffered. With love, encouragement, and character intact, a human being can be resilient beyond imagining."

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“Happiness is like cotton candy. It's just not going to do the job.”

Jordan Peterson

Jordan Peterson said his book "12 Rules for Life" wasn't just advice for others, but a warning for himself.

"It's all very well to think the meaning of life is happiness," Peterson said in an interview with *The Guardian*, "but what happens when you're unhappy? Happiness is a great side effect. When it comes, accept it gratefully. But it's fleeting and unpredictable. It's not something to aim at—because it's not an aim. And if happiness is the purpose of life, what happens when you're unhappy? Then you're a failure. And perhaps a suicidal failure. Happiness is like cotton candy. It's just not going to do the job."

In an interview with Dr. Oz, Peterson said of happiness, "It's a shallow boat in a very rough ocean."

And indeed, as Peterson related, it wasn't happiness that got him through his health crisis. "The reason I did survive," he said, "certainly wasn't because I was enjoying my life."

So what was the reason? What kind of life purpose is strong enough to withstand the overwhelming degree of suffering that can befall us in times of crisis and chaos? What "deeper meaning" will sustain the human spirit through a

long, grinding sojourn into the underworld: through a bout of severe illness or a stint in a gulag?

At various points, Peterson suffered delirium, hallucinations, time distortion, and physical impairments such that he was unable to walk upstairs or get into bed.

For Peterson and Solzhenitsyn, the answer is responsibility. As Peterson said, Solzhenitsyn embraced radical responsibility, and that was how he survived the gulag with his spirit, not only intact, but triumphant. And Peterson credits his own survival to his attachment to his family ("The reason [I sur-

ved] was that I had family that I was very attached to") and his dedication to his work ("My work ... was also extremely useful because I could sustain myself by producing and then culling through thoughts that were helpful, despite my anguish ... and my lack of hope for the future.")

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# Should You Call or Text? Science Weighs In

A new study suggests that we undervalue the bonding and enjoyment we get from hearing someone's voice

JILL SUTTIE

Like most people, I've been doing a lot of texting with friends and family lately. COVID-19 (and the physical separation it necessitates) has limited socializing in person, which means I've had to work harder than ever to keep my relationships strong and healthy.

But a new study suggests that if that's my aim, texting may not be enough. To stay close at a time when we all need companionship and support, we'd be better off picking up the phone or setting up a video call—doing something where we can actually hear another person's voice.

In the study, participants imagined having a conversation with a friend they hadn't been in touch with for at least two years. They predicted how awkward or enjoyable it would be and how close they'd feel if they connected by phone versus email. They also said which medium they'd prefer to use.

Then participants were randomly assigned to connect with their old friend

via phone or email and to report back on the experience. Though most people anticipated that talking by phone would be more uncomfortable for them, those who spoke on the phone were happier with the exchange, felt closer to the other person, and felt no more uncomfortable than those who'd emailed—even if they'd said they preferred to email, not call.

"We think it's going to be awkward to talk to somebody, but that just turns out not to be the case," says lead author Amit Kumar. Instead, "people form significantly stronger bonds when they're talking on the phone than when communicating over email."

This finding also held true for people conversing with someone they didn't know at all, according to another part of the study. Participants were told they'd be using voice chat, video chat, or text chat to get to know a stranger. As in the previous experiment, they were asked to predict what the experience would be like and how close they might become to the person. Then they were paired with a stranger to do a "fast

“People form significantly stronger bonds when they're talking on the phone than when communicating over email.”

Amit Kumar, lead author

friends" exercise, asking and answering a series of increasingly personal questions, like "What would constitute the 'perfect' day for you?" and "What is one of the more embarrassing moments in your life?"

Overall, those assigned to voice chat or video chat expected conversations to be more awkward and not bring any more closeness than those assigned to text-chat. But they were wrong: Being able to hear people's voices made them feel significantly closer to the stranger and was no more awkward than text-chatting.

Even though video chatting might seem better than audio alone (because people could see each other's faces), it didn't seem to matter—the two methods had similar results.

## The Power of the Voice

These experiments suggest there's something about the voice, in particular, that increases intimacy.

"There are linguistic cues that come through someone's voice that suggest a

feeling and thinking mind," says Kumar. "And since connecting with somebody means getting a little closer to their mind, voice-based communication makes that easier or more likely."

He points to other research that also emphasizes the importance of voice in our communication. For example, people asked to evaluate a potential job applicant found the applicant to be more thoughtful, intelligent, and competent if they'd heard rather than read the person's job pitch. Similar to Kumar's study, adding a video to the pitch was no more impactful than hearing the pitch without one.

In another study, people who listened to someone express a political viewpoint that they disagreed with were less likely to dehumanize that person than people who simply read the transcript of their argument. This suggests that talking to people from different political parties (rather than texting or responding to them on Facebook) might help bridge divides.

One reason for this is that our voices convey a myriad of emotions, which helps us understand one another better and feel more empathic. In fact, at least one study found that voice-only communications may be superior to those that include video, because they help people read others' emotions more accurately. Although it might seem trivial, the way

we choose to communicate is significant. We shouldn't let fears of awkwardness lead to less promising interactions, says Kumar.

"People can sometimes be relatively insensitive to the effect of their communication media on their experience," says Kumar. "But if their goal is to become closer to someone, they'd be smarter to pay attention to that."

Texting can be useful if you need to just pass on a quick message or set up a time to talk with someone, he says, but if you want stronger social connections—and the happiness and well-being that come with those—calling may be the better way to reach out, especially during this time when it's harder to be close to those we care about.

"We're living in a time when loneliness is an increasing concern, and people need to know what to do about it," says Kumar. "When it comes to maintaining and building the social relationships that are so integral to well-being, folks would be wise to connect with others using their voices—by talking rather than typing."

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

Few things make us feel better than a friendly voice.



Admitting His Mistakes One of the ways Solzhenitsyn embraced radical responsibility was to uncover within his soul any blame he himself bears in producing his own plight.

Peterson emulated his hero in this way as well. "It's quite shocking to me actually," he confessed to his daughter, "that I didn't know—despite my professional specialty, that I had no idea how catastrophic benzodiazepine use could be."

Mikhaila pointed out for the audience that he's not a psychiatrist, but a psychologist. And psychologists counsel not to prescribe medicine.

Yet Peterson refused to let himself off the hook, saying, "It's still useful to keep up on the relevant literature."

Peterson is also seeking to redeem his mistakes and his suffering by spreading awareness of the dangers of benzodiazepine use. He addressed head-on a criticism that some have levied against him:

"What's the old saying: 'physician heal thyself,' right? I wrote a self-help book. I'm a psychologist. It's like, 'Well, why the hell didn't I see this coming?' and 'Why wasn't I more cautious?' And I think those are reasonable questions. ... Well, and then that's the next question is: why should people take anything I say seriously, because of that? And I guess what I would say is, if you're going to wait to learn from people who don't make mistakes, or don't have tragedy enter their life, you're going to spend a long time waiting to learn something. And the second thing I would say is, in my lectures and my writings, I've never suggested that I was anything other than one of the people who also needed to learn these lessons. So I included myself in the population of people who needed some moral improvement."

In an interview with *The Guardian*, Peterson described "12 Rules for Life" as a something not only written for other people. "It's a warning to me. I'm also saying: 'Look the hell out because the chickens come home to roost.'"

Peterson prescribed, both for himself and his audience, a life of meaning and responsibility as an antidote to chaos and despair. That prescription saved his life. Someday, it might save yours and mine as well.

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It takes a small effort to steer our mind away from the hardships of life and look at what is good and worth appreciating—and what a difference that effort makes.

# November: A Month for Gratitude

Gratitude is a potent practice that can uplift our spirit

JOSHUA BECKER

It's been a rough year—for everyone. Wherever you live in the world, you have likely encountered a pandemic, social isolation, economic slowdown, and civil unrest. Whether or not you have been personally affected by any of these factors, you almost certainly know someone who has. And our mental well-being has suffered as a result. In the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- 40 percent of people have experienced a mental or behavioral health condition related to the pandemic.
- 1 in 4 have experienced symptoms of depression—four times higher than previous years.
- 1 in 10 had considered suicide at some point during the last 30 days—an increase of 100 percent from previous years.
- 13.3 percent of Americans have begun or increased substance use to cope with stress related to the pandemic.

Our mental well-being has suffered greatly during 2020. For that reason, it is more important than ever to embrace the month of November as a month of gratitude. No matter where you live, no matter how the pandemic

**It is essential that we focus on what we can actually control—most importantly those things within the realm of our thoughts and actions.**

is affecting your locality, no matter how your political elections turn out, this is the month to begin righting the ship toward healthier mental well-being. It is no longer possible to wait for better days. It is essential that we focus on what we can actually control—most importantly those things within the realm of our thoughts and actions. Now, let's be clear, if you are suffering with anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts, intentionally embracing gratitude this coming month may not be all you need. But it is something you can do right away and may help begin to turn the cycle around in your own life. Gratitude is a topic I have often written about because minimalism sparked a renewed passion for it in my life. Research that I was not previously aware of confirmed its importance to a new level. And the recent decline in mental well-being increased my desire to return to it today.

**The Benefits of Gratitude**  
Gratitude offers numerous mental and physical health benefits. Its importance cannot be overstated: Gratitude reduces stress and makes us more resilient. Gratitude helps us feel more positive emotions. Gratitude unshackles us from toxic emotions.

Gratitude improves our self-esteem. Gratitude decreases the symptoms of depression. Gratitude helps us sleep better. Gratitude improves our interpersonal relationships. Gratitude enhances optimism. Gratitude can even help us lower blood pressure, stop smoking, or lose weight.

**Commit to increased thankfulness during prayer or meditation this month.**

**How to Practice Gratitude this November**  
Given all the mental and physical benefits of gratitude, how do we become intentional in practicing more of it? There are many plans and ideas to spur gratitude this coming month. It is, after all, National Gratitude Month. And because of that, there may be no month more important to start a daily gratitude practice than right now. To get you started, I'll include a few popular approaches to finding gratitude this month: You could:

- Join the 30-day Bring Gratitude Challenge.
- Participate in #Gratitude30 on social media.
- Start a 30-day gratitude journal.
- Use an app like Grateful.
- Write one gratitude email each day in November.
- Commit to increased thankfulness during prayer or meditation this month.
- Start a new November gratitude tradition with your family.

Any of these ideas would be helpful. I have committed myself to increased thankfulness during prayer/meditation this month. But maybe a different approach would work better for you.

One important key to remember is that the benefits of gratitude are most experienced when we intentionally choose to practice it regardless of our circumstances, rather than waiting for more positive circumstances. No matter what trial you may be facing, there is always, always, always something to be thankful for. And the sooner we get started recognizing those good things, the sooner we'll discover even more.

*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](http://BecomingMinimalist.com)*



Gratitude reduces stress and makes us more resilient.



JOYCE HUIS/UNSPLASH

**Imposter syndrome causes people who, despite possessing great skill and accomplishment, feel like they're frauds.**

## Feeling Like a Fraud: Exposing Imposter Syndrome

An affliction of the able that can be cured with a new self image

CONAN MILNER

Since he was 6 years old, Greg Pignataro had a passion for soccer. He grew up with dreams of going pro or at least earning a college scholarship. At a soccer camp during his senior year of high school, he began to see his dream come true. He caught the eye of university coaches who offered him a scholarship and a spot on the team. Pignataro was overjoyed. But after a few weeks among top-tier athletes, serious doubts started to creep in. "I was playing against people playing at a higher level than I had before, so there were definitely days where I felt I was the worst player on this team," Pignataro said. "I thought, 'I don't deserve to be here. How soon until they figure me out?'" Then he had another thought: The guys

who got injured were lucky because they didn't have to come to practice. As luck would have it, the very next practice, he tore the arch of his left foot in a non-contact incident. He was out for six weeks. Because he was a freshman, coaches granted Pignataro another chance to prove himself the next season. Once again, he earned a spot on the team. But he hardly played once he got there. He was haunted by the specter of self-doubt. "I think I had solidified the perception of the coaches and teammates' minds that I wasn't good enough to be there," he said. "I spent the longest time wondering what was wrong with me." **More Than Women** Years later, Pignataro discovered that many people suffer a similar experience. It's called imposter syndrome.

*Continued on Page 11*

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## Do Re Mi Fa Sol La Ti Do

Music programs offer seniors a new chance to learn an instrument

MARILYN MURRAY WILLISON

Did you have music lessons when you were a youngster? For most of the last century, it is reported, 15 percent to 20 percent of high school students nationally participated in some sort of music education.

That means an estimated 80 percent of America's adult population would need beginning instruction in order to participate in a group that makes music.

If you would like to begin learning how to play a musical instrument, or to pick up where you left off in music lessons as a child, there's a national program designed to help you do just that.

The New Horizons Music program provides "entry points to music making for adults." It was founded in 1991 at the Eastman School of Music under the guidance of Roy Ernst, a professor emeritus at the school. Since that time, the idea has been adopted throughout the United States and Canada and has resulted in a mini-explosion of music-focused organizations. While that first program was just a small band, a few short years later, New Horizons orchestras began to appear. According to The New York Times, the New Horizons International Music Association, which caters primarily to adults over 50 who want to play an instrument in a group setting, currently has 10,000 participants in over 230 bands and orchestras around the country.

**A recent study conducted on patients in a coma proves that even injured brains can benefit from being exposed to favorite melodies.**

For years, gerontologists have said that interaction with others is an important aspect of good health for senior citizens, and taking part in a music program, whether a band, chorus or orchestra, is an easy way to meet people, make new friends, and socialize. According to the New Horizons website, participants look forward to attending, playing in, and traveling to concerts, and there have even been several marriages among members. While rehearsals are currently suspended due to the pandemic, you can expect them to resume when conditions permit.

The music-making and wellness movement, as promoted by the NAMM Foundation, supports re-

search designed to closely investigate the link between active music-making and physical well-being. It's hoped that future studies will prove that playing a musical instrument can reduce depression as well as increase the strength of the immune system. It is an already-accepted truism that participating in music programs provides seniors with an enjoyable and challenging intellectual activity, a sense of being a contributing member to a well-intentioned group, and the all-important ability to look forward to future events.

According to Denise C. Park, the director of research at the Center for Vital Longevity at the University of Texas, Dallas, "there's the sense that tasks that are mentally demanding and maintain cognition in older adults." But anecdotal evidence indicates that people are joining these music programs for reasons that have very little to do with mental or intellectual benefit. Many seniors just want to either begin or continue a rewarding relationship with a musical instrument.

Some participants now have the time to practice that was never available when they were younger. And some report that the years have stripped away the perfectionism and frustration that once made lessons seem so unpleasant. Both Ernst and Ceol Compton, education program director at the Brattleboro Music Center in Vermont, report a significant increase in program membership during the past five years. As more and more hit retirement age, the likelihood of searching out a worthwhile activity such as music increases.

Music offers everyone a way to connect to the past, present, and future. And for anyone who questions the value or importance of music, a recent study conducted on patients in a coma proves that even injured brains can benefit from being exposed to favorite melodies. Electroencephalograms performed during the study showed more electrical activity in the brains of coma patients who listened to music than in those who only heard nondescript noise. The study authors concluded, "It is the autobiographical quality of music, its connection to our emotions, that elicits a strong neurological response from patients."

Marilyn Murray Willison has had a varied career as a six-time nonfiction author, columnist, motivational speaker, and journalist in both the UK and the U.S. She is the author of "The Self-Empowered Woman" blog and the award-winning memoir "One Woman, Four Decades, Eight Wishes." She can be reached at [MarilynWillison.com](mailto:MarilynWillison.com). To find out more about Marilyn and read her past columns, please visit the Creators Syndicate website at [Creators.com](https://www.creators.com). Copyright 2020 Creators.com



You are never too old to learn an instrument. In fact, it might be even easier with a few years under your belt.

## Feeling Like a Fraud: Exposing Imposter Syndrome

An affliction of the able that can be cured with a new self image

Continued from Page 9

It causes people who, despite possessing great skill and accomplishment, feel like they're frauds.

This thought pattern was first discovered in the 1970s as researchers were studying high-achieving women. These subjects worked hard to get where they were, yet for some reason felt like they didn't deserve to be there. They reported living in constant fear of exposing the incompetence they'd somehow managed to hide from the people who hired them.

Dr. Jennifer Hunt has known many who fit this profile. Hunt is chair of pathology at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, but she began studying imposter syndrome through her side gig: leadership development for women in health care. When she discovered how many of her colleagues suffered from this affliction, she created a program to help them overcome it.

"I designed it specifically for women physicians, but the tools are probably applicable to almost any group of people," Hunt said.

Initially, researchers believed that imposter syndrome was something that only impacted women. But recent findings show that men may suffer from it even more. The defining factor, however, has nothing to do with whether you're male or female. In fact, there may only be one variable that binds these cases together.

"These women come from all walks of life, all kinds of childhoods. I don't see any themes," Hunt said. "But the one thing I see over and over again is that they are high-achieving people."

People with imposter syndrome strive for excellence, but in their minds, they always fall far short of their goal. It's this dynamic of high standards combined with crushing self-doubt that makes this problem so painful. Friends, family, and co-workers are often impressed by the person's skill and drive, but the person doesn't value themselves as the world does. Their inner world doesn't match their outer world, and yet the source of this discrepancy remains elusive.

"Whose standards are you trying to live up to?" Hunt asks the doctors she coaches. "It's really interesting to see people's eyes open when they realize that it's actually nobody's standard—nobody is telling them that they ought to be living up to this."

**Hunt believes that people cling to self-doubt because at one point in their lives it served a purpose.**

**Frozen Self-Image**

So how does such a warped view of oneself take root? According to John Graden, author of "The Impostor Syndrome: How to Replace Self-Doubt with Self-Confidence and Train Your Brain for Success," people get stuck seeing themselves at a certain age or incident.

"Parental insults and bullying can freeze your self-image and self-talk at that age until you do some research and uncover this," he said.

For Graden, his self-image was shaped by a violent and unpredictable father. As a result, he was a painfully shy kid who always did his best to blend into the background.

Kung fu movies brought him out of his shell. Graden was motivated to learn the martial arts moves he saw on screen because it made him feel much less vulnerable. He trained intensely to get his black belt. And within just a few years, he became a well-respected karate instructor with his



For people who suffer from a harsh inner critic, any external judgment gets amplified.

own local television show.

But despite his accomplishments, Graden said his hard-earned success still felt false. Eventually, someone would find him out and take it all away.

Graden believed he was the only person to suffer this inner conflict until he saw actor Paul Newman in a television interview confessing to a similar worry: One day someone was going to come out of nowhere, grab him by the elbow, and tell him, "It's over, Newman. It's all been a mistake."

As Graden came to better understand imposter syndrome, he found that many celebrities share the same feeling of fraudulence. And the more successful they get, the more conflicted they feel.

"People who are super ambitious become A-list movie and television stars. They work so hard. They get there, and then they sabotage it with drugs and alcohol because there's a lack of congruency there. There's a lack of internal belief that they belong here," Graden said.

**Dysfunctional Humility**

Hunt believes that people cling to self-doubt because at one point in their lives it served a purpose.

At its best, self-doubt is a protective mechanism that can keep you alert and help you avoid dangerous situations. However, you lose clarity when self-doubt becomes your default response. You can set yourself up for failure, and your best never has a chance to shine through.

"Thankfully, imposter syndrome isn't a disease, but a frame of mind. So Hunt recommends tools to change perception.

"It's like putting on a pair of glasses, and seeing the world from a different frame of mind," she said.

People with imposter syndrome are humble to a fault, yet they often fear they might come off as the polar opposite: arrogant. But Hunt says it shouldn't be a concern. These people don't vacillate from one extreme to the other. In fact, they have to work really hard just to reach an appropriate level of self-confidence.

"I want to rename imposter syndrome as self-depreciation syndrome. We depreciate ourselves just like investments," Hunt said. "The opposite is self-deception syndrome, where we are deceiving ourselves about how valuable we are. In the middle is self-appreciation."

**Compliments and Criticism**

Both Graden and Hunt say one of the major hurdles in addressing imposter syndrome is learning how to take a compliment. It seems like a small thing, but it can be extremely difficult to reply with a simple "Thank you" when you habitually devalue yourself. You can't help but lace it with an excuse. "Thank you, I had a lot of help," or "Thanks, but I should have done better."

"There's a difference between being humble and not allowing yourself to enjoy the fruits of your labor," Graden said. "Saying 'thank you' doesn't mean that you're cocky. You're recognizing someone's compliment, and showing your appreciation for it."

Another common theme with imposter syndrome is difficulty accepting criticism. For people who suffer from a harsh inner critic, any external judgment gets amplified.

"I see it all time in the groups that I coach," said Hunt. "It doesn't matter if 98 percent of the feedback is positive. If two percent is even remotely negative, or even imaged negative, then that's what you remember."

**"I want to rename imposter syndrome as self-depreciation syndrome. We depreciate ourselves just like investments."**

Dr. Jennifer Hunt, chair of pathology at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences

One of the tools Hunt employs in getting people to take criticism without turning it into a personal attack is to look at the experience for what it is, not what they imagine it to be.

"If my original thought is 'My boss hates me,' decide if it's really true," she said. "Force the argument with your inner critic into defending the truth of that statement. It never can."

Graden tames his inner critic by getting control over his internal talk. When that inner voice keeps dwelling in negativity, turn the message around.

"You have to work very hard to not let the past define you," Graden said. "I've learned that when I start to go down that road, I cancel that line of thinking and start thinking, 'What's next? What's the most positive thing I can do? How can I build my business? How can I get in better shape? How can I help the community?' Anything to stop from dwelling on the past."

**Self Acknowledgement**

Part of the pain of imposter syndrome is that it can feel so isolating. Just knowing that there are others who suffer the same strange cognitive disconnect can help. Almost everyone in Hunt's coaching group says the best part is hearing that other people share this problem.

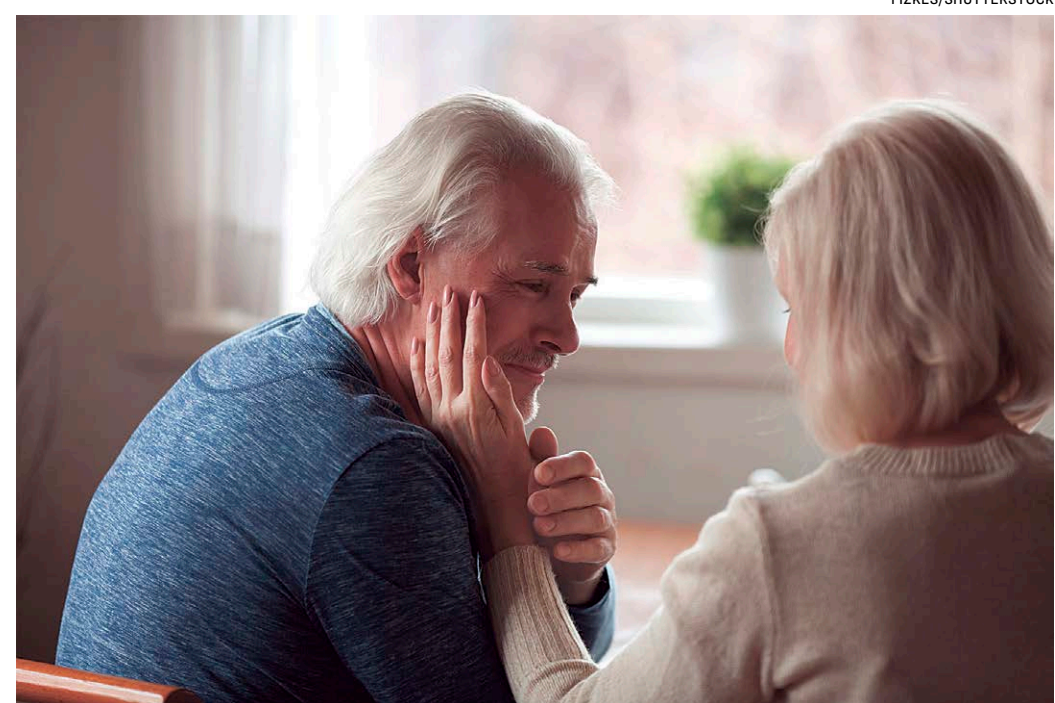
"One person said it so well: 'I looked around and saw all these amazing women who thought they were imposters. If they could be wrong, maybe I could be wrong, too,'" Hunt said.

Even if self-doubt is your gut reaction, with enough awareness and practice at recognizing your self-worth, you can keep it from controlling your life.

Today, Pignataro works full time as a personal trainer, and a strength and conditioning coach. It's a job he's passionate about, but making it work meant confronting the doubts in his head: "Do I know enough? Am I good enough?"

But Pignataro has become familiar enough with the imposter dynamic to keep his self-defeating thoughts in check.

"Through all the people I've trained and worked with professionally, all the certifications I've received, all the reading I've done, and all the experience I have, I was able to determine, 'Yes, I am good enough and I can make a difference for these people,'" he said.



Friends, family, and co-workers are often impressed by the person's skill and drive, but the person doesn't value themselves as the world does.

# How to Discover a More Intentional Life

These 6 thought-provoking questions can reveal what you want from life—and what's keeping you from it

JOSHUA BECKER

Minimalism is, essentially, about intentionality. It is the intentional promotion of the things we most value by removing anything that distracts us from it.

In most cases, when referring to minimalism, people think about physical possessions. And it is true that minimalists own fewer possessions, but that's not the entire story.

Intentionality leads to intentionality. So, becoming more intentional in one area of life, like possessions, typically spills over into other areas of life as well, like your schedule or relationships, for example.

When my wife and I (and two young children) began minimizing our possessions, we began to notice how unintentional we had been living. We had closets and shelves and drawers full of things that we didn't need and didn't use. We owned more than needed.

When we began to consider how much money and time and energy had gone into purchasing, managing, and maintaining all those possessions, we began to notice the foolishness of unintentional living. Our lives were being wasted, to a great degree, pursuing and accumulating physical items. I knew, from that moment forward, we would be more thoughtful in the items we purchased, kept, and pursued. We both knew there are more important things to pursue in life than material possessions—and we had wasted too much on them.

This approach quickly spread to other areas of life. Were there nonmaterial things we had also collected that were distracting us from our greatest pursuits?

What about our time commitments? Our habits? Our work pursuits? Our finances? Our parenting? Even our relationships?

Had we become unintentional in those areas of life as well—allowing things to creep in that didn't belong there? It didn't take long to notice we had. In this way, intentionality in one area of life brought greater intentionality in other areas as well.

So how do we become more intentional in all areas of life?

We begin by asking questions. Not necessarily easy questions, but important ones.

Finding intentionality isn't always easy. It takes work and thoughtfulness and deep self-awareness.

But these six questions will help foster those characteristics in your life. You likely won't be able to answer them all, right now, as you sit down to read them. But answering them quickly wasn't the goal when I created the list.



It is easy to flow through life on autopilot, but becoming more intentional can help us choose the life we live.



Finding intentionality isn't always easy. It takes work and thoughtfulness and deep self-awareness.

GLENN CARSTENS-PETERS/UNSPLASH

For many people, becoming intentional about their possessions contributes to greater intentionality in other areas of their lives as well.

PROSTOCK-STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK



Write them down. Or come back to this article. Work through each one, in order, seeking the richest answers for each. The time spent pursuing intentional living is never wasted—no matter how long it takes.

## 1. What do I want to accomplish with my life?

An intention means: an idea that you plan (or intend) to carry out. By definition, living an intentional life, in any area, requires an answer to this question above. What is the aim of my life? What do I want to accomplish with it?

Don't quit on this question thinking you need every detail of it answered, but a general direction is important. What three or four good things do you most desire to accomplish in this world? It may be related to your faith, your family, your work, your passion, or any combination of them.

Do your best. You'll need some answers here to continue.

## 2. What do I need in order to accomplish that goal?

Whatever you want to accomplish in life, however you define it, will require resources.

It will require your time, your energy, your focus, and your money.

It will, almost certainly, also require some physical possessions, a healthy body, and enriching relationships.

It might also require a certain level of training, or education, or personal attributes.

Your needed items will change or evolve over the years. But as you seek to answer this question at this point in time, ask yourself, "Right now, to take my next step forward, what do I need?"

## 3. What is getting in the way of those goals?

What has accumulated in your life that is keeping you from reaching your goal(s)?

The items on this list may be actively preventing you from reaching your goal or just passively distracting you from it.

For example, an unhealthy addiction may be an example of something in your life actively preventing you from being your best self. But "watching too much television" may be just an example of a distraction.

Either way, actively or passively, if it is keeping you from your goal, it is wise to recognize and identify.

## 4. What caused me to allow things into my life that don't contribute to that goal?

This question will require deep self-reflection, on many levels, but don't avoid it. In order to identify how these distractions will be removed, it is important to recognize how they came to be.

Some habits, behaviors, possessions, or commitments appeared in your life just because you weren't paying attention. They started to accumulate, became normal, and weren't even recognized as distractions until we considered the question above.

But others accumulated because of fear or avoidance or unhealthy motivations. Unhealthy motivations that take us away

from significance and meaning—or however you answered the first question.

If we are going to find victory in the long run living an intentional life, we need to begin identifying the reasons we pursue distractions from it.

## 5. What steps do I need to take in order to remove them?

After identifying your goals in life, the distractions that keep you from those goals, and the reasons for them, you can begin making a plan to remove those distractions. Granted, entire articles or blogs or books could be written about specifically removing distractions. And depending on which distractions you need to begin removing, the resources you turn to may vary from person to person.

Depending on what you identified in Question 3, a simple internet search may be a great place to start.

"How do I stop watching so much television?"

"How do I remove unneeded time commitments?"

"How do I break the habit of \_\_\_\_\_?"

Again, I don't think any of these questions are necessarily easy to answer. (I hope you can see by now how difficult some of this work is). But answering this question is always worth the effort.

## What 3 or 4 good things do you most desire to accomplish in this world?

## 6. How often do I need to re-evaluate my life direction?

Unintentionality has a crafty way of sneaking up on us. We can claim intentionality in our calendar today, only to have it slowly fill back up again. We gain victory over unhealthy habits for a period of time only to see new unhealthy habits begin to emerge down the road.

So, a final question to ask needs to be focused on how often you will return to this list. Consider it your Intentionality Check Up.

You will find these questions get easier and easier the more often you ask them. Answering them the first time is always the hardest.

And while it is true that our goals/needs/distractions may change from season to season in our lives, once we begin in a direction toward intentionality, it is easier to steer back in that direction down the road when needed.

These six questions about intentionality in any area of life can be applied in countless phases and stages of our lives. As well they should.

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](http://BecomingMinimalist.com)

# Seniors Form COVID Pods to Ward Off Isolation This Winter

Psychologists recommend single individuals without social circles reach out to others with similar interests

JUDITH GRAHAM

Over the past month, Dr. Richard Besdine and his wife have been discussing whether to see family and friends indoors this fall and winter.

He thinks they should, so long as people have been taking strict precautions during the pandemic.

She's not convinced it's safe, given the heightened risk of viral transmission in indoor spaces.

Both are well-positioned to weigh in on the question. Besdine, 80, was the longtime director of the division of geriatrics and palliative medicine at Brown University's Alpert Medical School. His wife, Terrie Wetle, 73, also an aging specialist, was the founding dean of Brown's School of Public Health. "We differ, but I respect her hesitancy, so we don't argue," Besdine said.

Older adults in all kinds of circumstances—those living alone and those who are partnered, those in good health and those who are not—are similarly deliberating what to do as days and nights turn chilly and COVID-19 cases rise across the country.

Some are forming "bubbles" or "pods." These are small groups of people that agree on pandemic precautions and will see one another in person in the months ahead. Others, meanwhile, are planning to go it alone.

Judith Rosenmeier, 84, of Boston, a widow who's survived three bouts of breast cancer, doesn't intend to invite friends to her apartment or visit them in theirs.

"My oncologist said when all this started, 'You really have to stay home more than other people because the treatments you've had have destroyed a lot of your immune defenses,'" she said.

Since mid-March, Rosenmeier has been outside only three times: once, in September, to go to the eye doctor and twice since to walk with a few friends. After living in Denmark for most of her adult life, she doesn't have a lot of close contacts. Her son lives in Edinburgh, Scotland.

"There's a good chance I'll be alone on Thanksgiving and on Christmas, but I'll survive," she said.

A friend who lives nearby, Joan Doucette, 82, is determined to maintain in-person social contacts. With her husband, Harry Fisher, 84, she's formed a "pod" with two other couples in her nine-unit apartment building. All are members of Beacon Hill Village, an organization that provides various services to seniors aging in place. Doucette sees her pod almost every day.

"We're always running up and down the stairs or elevator and bringing each other cookies or soup," she said. "I don't think I would have survived this pandemic without that companionship."

About once a week, the couples have dinner together, and "we don't wear masks,"

“I wear a mask, I socially distance myself, but I don't isolate myself.”

Eleanor Weiss, 86



PRESSMASTER/SHUTTERSTOCK

While some people can survive the isolation of current pandemic conditions, others need regular contact with friends and family to sustain their well-being.

said Jerry Fielder, 74, who moved to Boston two years ago with his partner, Daniel, 73. But he said he feels safe because "we know where everyone goes and what they do: We're all on the same page. We go out for walks every day, all of us. Otherwise, we're very careful."

Eleanor Weiss, 86, and her husband are also members of the group. "I wear a mask, I socially distance myself, but I don't isolate myself," Weiss said. This winter, she said, she'll see "a few close friends" and three daughters who live in the Boston area.

One daughter is hosting Thanksgiving at her house, and everyone will get tested for COVID-19 beforehand. "We're all careful. We don't hug and kiss. We do the elbow thing," Weiss said.

In Chicago, Arthur Koff, 85, and his wife, Norma, 69, don't yet have plans for Thanksgiving or Christmas. "It's up in the air depending on what's happening with the virus," he said. The couple has a wide circle of friends.

"I think it's going to be a very hard winter," said Koff, who has diabetes and blood cancer. He doesn't plan to go to restaurants but hopes to meet some friends he trusts inside their homes or apartments when the weather turns bad.

Julie Freestone, 75, and her husband, Rudi Raab, 74, are "pretty fanatic" about staying safe during the pandemic. The couple invited six friends over for "Thanksgiving in October" earlier this month—outside, in their backyard in Richmond, California.

"Instead of a seating chart, this year I had a plating chart and I plated everything in advance," Freestone said. "I asked everybody to tell me what they wanted—White or dark meat? Brussels sprouts or broccoli?"

This winter, Freestone isn't planning to see people inside, but she'll visit with people in groups, virtually. One is her monthly women's group, which has been getting together over Zoom. "In some ways, I feel we've reached a new level of intimacy because people are struggling with so many issues—and we're all talking about that," she said.

"I think you need to redefine bubbles," said Freestone, who's on the board of Ashby Village, a Berkeley, California-based organization for seniors aging in place that's hosting lots of virtual groups. "It should be something you feel a part of, but it doesn't have to be people who come into your house."

In the Minneapolis-St. Paul area in Minnesota, two psychologists—Leni de Mik, 79, and Brenda Hartman, 65—are calling attention to what they call SILOS, an acronym for "single individuals left out of social circles," and their need for dependable social contact this winter and fall.

They recommend that older adults in this situation reach out to others with similar interests—people they may have met at church or in book clubs or art classes, for instance—and try to form a group. Similarly, they recommend that families or friends invite a single older friend into their pods or bubbles.

"Look around at who's in your community. Who used to come to your house that you haven't seen? Reach out," de Mik recommended.

Both psychologists are single and live alone. De Mik's pod will include two friends who are "super careful outside," as she is. Hartman's will include her sister, 67, and her father, 89, who also live alone. Because her daughter works in an elementary school, she'll see her only outside. Also, she'll be walking regularly with two friends over the winter.

"COVID brings life and death right up in front of us," Hartman said, "and when that happens, we have the opportunity to make crucial choices—the opportunity to take care of each other."

Judith Graham is a contributing columnist for Kaiser Health News, which originally published this article. KHN's coverage of these topics is supported by The John A. Hartford Foundation, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, and The SCAN Foundation.

# Positive Affect Can Slow Memory Loss

New research links the cheerfulness of our disposition to the quality of our memory

DEVON ANDRE

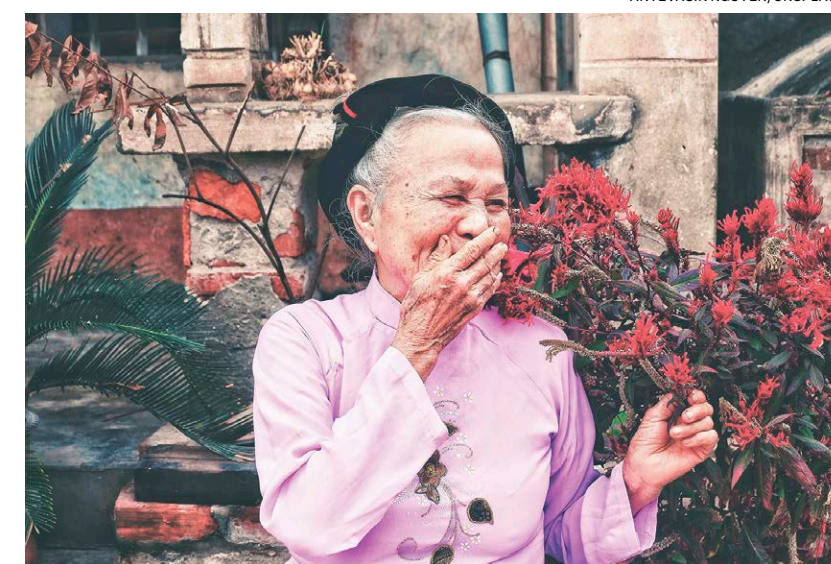
The COVID-19 pandemic comes with plenty of peripheral consequences. One may be advanced memory loss.

It's not that the virus infects your brain. Instead, it can make it extremely difficult to maintain what scientists call "positive affect."

It's pretty tough to stay cheerful and optimistic as the pandemic has upended life in so many ways. Add that on to political and civil unrest, and you might not be seeing the world through rose-colored lenses.

Yet, there are still things to be hopeful for and smile about. Believing the pandemic will pass, recalling positive memories, and doing activities each day that put a smile on your face can all help boost both outlook and positive affect.

Doing so could slow down



ANDEVASIN NGUYEN/UNSPLASH

It can take a conscious effort to stay upbeat, but doing so could help preserve your memory. That's a compelling reason to make some happy memories.

memory loss and brain aging.

A recent study published in Psychological Science found that people who feel enthusiastic and cheerful are less likely to experience memory decline

with age. These findings add on to existing research that outlook is a component of healthy aging.

Researchers from Northwestern University analyzed data

from nearly 1,000 middle-aged or older adults who participated in a national study conducted at three time periods: 1995-1996, 2004-2006, 2013-2014.

“People who feel enthusiastic and cheerful are less likely to experience memory decline with age.”

Participants reported on a range of positive emotions they would experience in the 30 days prior to the assessment, while during the last two assessments, they also underwent tests to rate memory performance.

Findings showed that memory

generally declined with age, but participants with higher levels of positive affect had much flatter memory decline over the course of a decade than those with a more negative disposition.

There will always be bumps in the road and sometimes significant hurdles that can sink a person's spirit. But how you bounce back could play a major role in memory and aging. That gives good reason to take some time every day to focus on the things that put a smile on your face.

It turns out positive memories can keep you in good mental shape to build new ones as you age.

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 BelMarraHealth, which first published this article.

# The Interconnection Between Anxiety and Inflammation

Your body has 2 major biochemical states—and the wrong one is running rampant



ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

Your sympathetic nervous system triggers the fight-or-flight response. Your parasympathetic nervous system handles rest and digest activities.

## JOSEPH MERCOLA

Dr. David Hanscom is an orthopedic surgeon who quit his practice to focus on helping teach people about nonsurgical strategies for chronic back pain. Most recently, after surviving COVID-19, he turned his attention toward raising awareness about COVID-19 prevention and how those who get infected can better survive the virus.

We've known for some time now that with diet, exercise, and other interventions, you can radically reduce your risk of COVID-19. The focus of Hanscom's COVID-19 prevention method is on strengthening immune function through stress and anxiety reduction, and he has very specific and precise recommendations on how to do that.

Stress, especially the chronic stress so common today, is closely linked to anxiety, and both can cause inflammation. Inflammation is an effective immune response for healing disease and injury but leaves the body depleted and vulnerable when it's overactive.

The chemistry that unfolds in your body due to the stress-inflammation cycle has a profound impact on disease, pain, and your ability to feel well.

As explained by Hanscom, pain is very often a symptom of stress and anxiety. "You have to feel safe. When you feel safe, there's a profound shift in your body's chemistry."

"You're going from adrenaline, cortisol, histamines, and inflammatory cytokines to growth hormone, dopamine, serotonin, and GABA—all these incredible hormones and anti-inflammatory [compounds]. So, there's a profound shift in the body's chemistry, and people's pain disappears. They don't just manage the pain. The pain disappears."

In essence, your body has two biochemical states. One based on stress and inflammation, and one based on relaxation and recovery. The first state helps keep you alive in a crisis—but can kill you slowly if it never shuts off.

## Cytokines, Anxiety, Pain, and Poor Immune Function

Cytokines are small proteins that serve to regulate different tissues. There are both pro-inflammatory and anti-inflammatory cytokines. Cytokines have specific relevance to COVID-19, as they modulate your immune system and its function.

By reducing or resolving stress and anxiety, you lower levels of inflammatory cytokines, thereby allowing your immune system to function better.

"Cytokines are everywhere. Every cell in the body has cytokines. It's how they talk to each other," Hanscom said.

He used non-neuronal glial cells in the brain as an example. These cells don't produce electrical impulses like neurons, but they do put out cytokines. Glial cells are responsible for helping keep a state of homeostasis, which is when your body maintains a stable state despite changes in the environment. If these cells are putting out too many inflammatory cytokines, the impact can be significant.

Endothelial cells also put out cytokines, Hanscom said. These cells line blood vessels and create a permeable barrier that's critical to wound healing, inflammation, and the blood-brain barrier.

“What I didn't realize is that threat fires up the immune system, and 'threat' is all sorts of stuff. It's viruses, bacteria, cancer cells, a bully, a difficult boss, but also your thoughts, emotions, and repressed emotions.”

Dr. David Hanscom, orthopedic surgeon

In short, your stress response affects your body in profound ways at the very root of its life-sustaining chemistry. Inflammation caused by stress has a foundational role in the most common diseases of our day. This is something Hanscom wants more people to understand.

"When you have a threat—surgeons think in terms of muscle tension, sweating, and heart rate—that to us is a threat response, versus safety where you relax and regenerate. What I didn't realize is that threat fires up the immune system, and 'threat' is all sorts of stuff. It's viruses, bacteria, cancer cells, a bully, a difficult boss, but also your thoughts, emotions, and repressed emotions," Hanscom said.

"Neuroscience has shown us that those thoughts and emotions are processed in the brain the same way as a physical threat. It turns out that every degenerative disease is, what Clawson says, the same soup. In other words, we know that cardiac disease, critical vascular disease, adult onset diabetes, obesity, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's are just examples of inflammatory disorders. It's all inflammatory."

## Anxiety Is a Symptom of Inflammation

Your body is incredibly intricate, with complex systems managing endless functions, from turning food into cellular energy to programming disease reactions into the acquired immune system for future use against a returning pathogen.

These systems are tuned to a careful balance. They regulate how your body handles things such as organ function and metabolism. When these systems fall out of tune and become dysregulated, the consequences can be immediate and severe.

When your autonomic nervous system becomes dysregulated, you can—as Hanscom did—go from feeling fine one day to having a panic attack out of the blue the next. Inflammation is the primary way these systems become dysregulated for people today.

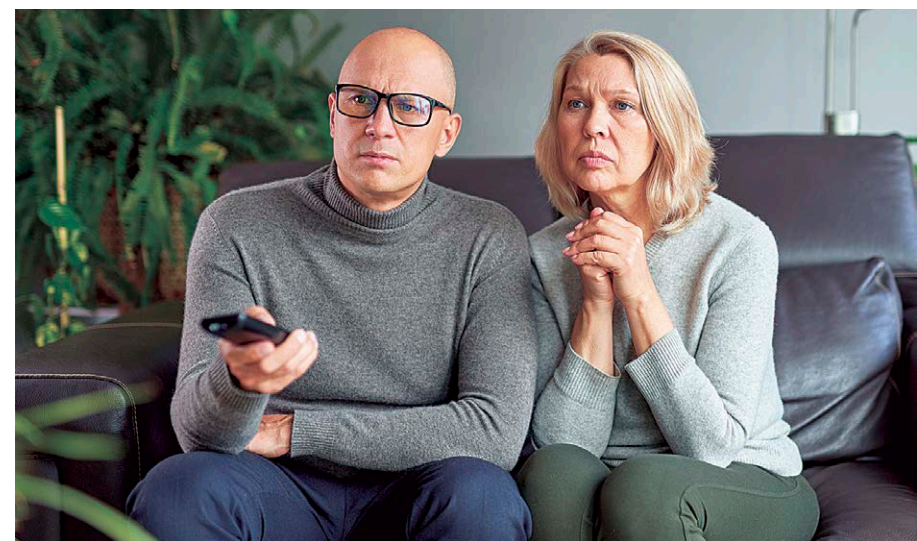
Just watching the news can create stress, and this stress triggers inflammation. And the biochemical processes within this stress response also create feelings.

"The threat creates a bodily response, which includes your immune system, and that sensation generated by the adrenaline and cortisol and these inflammatory cytokines, that's the sensation of anxiety," Hanscom said.

Because of the powerful physiological component to anxiety, Hanscom emphasizes the need for a physiological response.

"The way you decrease anxiety is simply decrease that stress response. And you do it through direct means: mindfulness, meditation, relaxation, anti-inflammatory diet. The anti-inflammatory diet turns out to be a huge deal."

Much of the modern diet triggers inflammation. That's because the chemistry of your food doesn't register as nourishing to your body. When you eat heavily processed substances that include toxic pesticides, chemical preservatives, and flavor enhancers, your body receives them as a threat that needs dealing with.



Just watching the news can create stress, and this stress triggers inflammation.

"What happens when you're in a constant threat, i.e., inflammation, which includes processed foods, these inflammatory cells start destroying your body," Hanscom said. "The biggest message I want to get out there [is that] anxiety is a physiological response to a threat. Your whole body is on fire. You need to decrease anxiety, decrease cytokines, decrease that stress response. Again, if your body's inflamed, you're going to feel anxious."

Sometimes that threat is self-imposed. It's a consequence of repetitive negative thoughts and skewed perspectives. In that sense, there is a mental component, but Hanscom's point is that your common state of constant inflammation is creating a physiological—and psychological—condition.

With regard to diet, there are several reasons processed foods cause inflammation. For starters, they tend to be very high in refined carbohydrates which, when consumed in excess, causes insulin resistance, thereby raising inflammatory cytokine production and massively increasing your risk of COVID-19. They're also loaded with industrially processed omega-6 vegetable oils, which are also pro-inflammatory. They also include excess sugar, which is associated with inflammatory diseases.

## Lowering Inflammation Improves COVID-19 Survival

According to Hanscom, removing the threat and creating a sense of safety not only lowers inflammatory markers and eliminates pain, it also improves your immune system's ability to respond appropriately to fight off foreign invaders, be it SARS-CoV-2 or any other pathogen.

"The virus, of course, is the threat, [and] you want your immune system to respond. A vast majority of people fight off the virus very quickly, but the elephant in the room, the obvious factor that has to be looked at, is that almost every person that dies from COVID-19 has 'risk factors' [and] every one of these risk factors has elevated inflammatory markers," he said.

"The idea is, if you take charge of your health and lower those inflammatory markers, then we have this normal cytokine rise. In other words, the cytokines are your defense against the [virus]. We have this normal cytokine rise that stays below that threshold."

"If you hit a certain threshold, the inflammatory response becomes too strong, and you flood your lungs out. You drown in your own fluids, because everything becomes inflamed. Almost every person that's passed away from COVID-19 has had some risk factor where this inflammatory process is going out of control."

## The Vagus Nerve

Your vagus nerve, the 10th cranial nerve, is the main part of your parasympathetic nervous system. It acts as a brake on your sympathetic nervous system. Your sympathetic nervous system is activated in response to threats, and, among other things, triggers the fight-or-flight response. Your parasympathetic nervous system is activated through the relaxation response, and is responsible for, among other things, "rest and digest" activities.

"The Vagus nerve is seeing all this input, and it decides what to do with

your body. There's a direct effect on metabolism, the endocrine system, your blood sugars, the cytokines."

The vagus nerve is also connected to your facial and neck muscles, which play important roles in facial expressions, a critical component of how we communicate. Hanscom said this element becomes more important amid current pandemic conditions.

"Instinctively we're a competitive species; we want to stay alive. When I walk up to you, I look at your facial expressions, you look at mine, and we do what's called coregulation, which calms down the autonomic nervous system. The problem with COVID-19 is we have masks on. We can't see each other's faces and we're socially isolated."

Coregulation refers to a psychological process that has physiological aspects. At the social level, it's the process of being shaped by and shaping your social environment. This social process has physiological dimensions. Just as being in an angry mob can stir your fight-or-flight response, seeing a kind human face can stir your rest-and-digest response.

**Stress, especially the chronic stress so common today, is closely linked to anxiety, and both can cause inflammation.**

"What happens is, when you're under chronic threat, your immune system is fired up. Then people become socially isolated, which also fires up the immune system even more. You can't coregulate, you're socially isolated, your nerve conduction doubles, you feel the pain more, and when this autonomic response is sustained, there are over 30 physical symptoms that occur," he said. "Stress isn't the problem. It's this physiological response to the threat. And the way you calm down anxiety is simply drop down the body's chemistry."

"When I do mindfulness, I'm actually directly lowering cytokines. That's not psychological, that's a true effect on my body. Same thing with diet. When you can link things like diet, relaxation and calming the nervous system to your inflammatory cytokines, it makes a big difference." Hanscom credits much of his understanding of this process to the work of Stephen Porges. Hanscom has developed a working group that meets once a week to discuss and share information. Porges, a behavioral neuroscientist who developed polyvagal theory, and Dr. David Clawson, a podiatrist who is very knowledgeable about cytokines, are members.

## How to Activate Relaxation Response and Lower Inflammation

So, just how do you activate this vagal response to induce relaxation and lower your inflammatory markers? Hanscom suggests several strategies known to do this, including the following:

**Expressive Writing:** Research shows expressive writing reduces viral load and inflammatory markers. How to do it: Simply write down your thoughts. Hanscom advocates tearing up the paper when you're done. "You can't escape your thoughts, but you can separate from them. You tear them up for two reasons. One is to write with freedom, positive or negative," he said. "The second one, which is more important, is to not analyze these things, because they're just thoughts. If you analyze and try to fix them, you actually reinforce them. What you're trying to do is stimulate neuroplasticity [through] awareness, separation, then redirection."

**Quality Sleep:** For dozens of sleep hygiene tips, see the article "Sleep—Why You Need It and 50 Ways to Improve It" at Mercola.com.

**Forgiveness Practice:** The antidote to anxiety is control. If you lose control, your body secretes more stress hormones, more cytokines, triggering anger and anxiety. In a study

published in the Journal of Pain in 2004, researchers linked an inability to forgive to chronic back pain.

Hanscom said most people in chronic pain have not let go of the situation that caused the problem in the first place. "Interestingly enough, the person they haven't forgiven is themselves," Hanscom said.

"We find that in this healing process, anger and forgiveness are always a tipping point. When you're angry or fired up, you're in a constant threat. When you're trapped by anything, especially chronic pain or trapped in your house from COVID, you're frustrated. Well, that has cranked up your inflammatory cytokines."

**Intermittent Fasting:** There are several ways to do this type of time-restricted eating. Some of the most common schedules are summarized in the article "Intermittent Fasting May Prevent Diabetes" on Mercola.com. One of the easiest is simply to restrict your eating to a six- to eight-hour window each day, making sure you eat your last meal at least three hours before bed. Research has shown that time-restricted eating will significantly lower your inflammatory markers.

**Exogenous Ketones:** While time-restricted eating and intermittent fasting will boost your ketone production, you can also use a ketone supplement. Ketones catalyze metabolic pathways that reduce inflammation. For example, they inhibit NLRP3 inflammasome and activate NRF2.

Viruses also don't like ketones, they like sugar, Hanscom said. Ketones can help lower viral replication. His work group has developed a nutritional protocol they believe is necessary as we face the pandemic. This protocol affects every step of the viral stage.

"As far as COVID-19 is concerned, you have to take vitamin B and C. Vitamin D is a big deal. It's the No. 1 deficiency in the world. And then you have to take zinc and magnesium just for your enzymes to work," he said.

Other simple ways to activate your vagus nerve, thereby triggering the relaxation response and lowering inflammatory markers include: deep breathing exercises, mindfulness, meditation, relaxation, humming, calming music, and acupuncture.

## More Information

To learn more, be sure to peruse Hanscom's "Thrive and Survive" manual, available on BackInControl.com. There, you can also find free guides explaining expressive writing and other pain-treatment guidelines.

Hanscom is also the author of "Do You Really Need Spine Surgery?" available at your local bookstore or online.

Hanscom is also in the process of releasing a subscription-based app, called DOCJourney, designed to help you resolve chronic pain without surgery. DOC stands for "direct your own care." The subscription includes virtual group coaching, live seminars, exclusive content, and more.

"The app will take you through steps of what we call sematic work of calming things down, breathing, et cetera. It's very concise, and I think something that will be very effective," Hanscom said.

For more details on Hanscom's strategies to combat pain, listen to the interview or read through the transcript at Mercola.com.

In closing, I'd like to reiterate one of the key take-home messages Hanscom stressed in this interview, namely that "anxiety is a physiological response to a threat. If your body is inflamed, you're going to feel anxious." And, that the answer, not just for anxiety, stress, and pain, but also for general immune system health, is to implement strategies that reduce your stress response, make you feel safe again, and lower inflammation.

Dr. Joseph Mercola is the founder of Mercola.com. An osteopathic physician, best-selling author, and recipient of multiple awards in the field of natural health, his primary vision is to change the modern health paradigm by providing people with a valuable resource to help them take control of their health. This article was originally published on Mercola.com

## PLANT MEDICINE

# What Are the Benefits of Moringa Oleifera?

Researchers are discovering what North Indians have known about this plant for thousands of years



The moringa oleifera tree is stuffed with nutrients and compounds that have therapeutic benefits.

Moringa oleifera is a plant with benefits and therapeutic uses that have been hailed for thousands of years.

Chock-full of healthy antioxidants and useful compounds, this large tree is native to North India and known by names such as drumstick tree, ben oil tree, and horseradish tree. Nearly all of its parts are consumed or used for herbal medicines, particularly the leaves and pods that are a dietary staple in parts of India and Africa.

There are numerous bioactive compounds found in moringa, including phenolic acids, flavonoids, isothiocyanates, tannins, and saponins—all present in considerable amounts in different parts of the plant.

Moringa leaves, for instance, provide many vitamins and minerals. A single cup of fresh, chopped leaves, or 21 grams (g), contains 2 g of protein, 19 percent of the recommended daily allowance (RDA) for vitamin B6, 12 percent of the RDA for vitamin C, and 11 percent of the RDA for iron and riboflavin (vitamin B2).

Moringa also has a wide range of health benefits that range from skin care to disease prevention and treatment. Here are some of the highlights.

**Moringa has a wide range of health benefits that range from skin care to disease prevention and treatment.**

## Moringa Provides Antioxidant Protection

Moringa's leaf extracts show the highest antioxidant activity of all of its parts, with different animal studies highlighting their high degree of safety. The leaf extracts may also be used as a natural food preservative, increasing the shelf life of meat through reduced oxidation.

Its high antioxidant content makes moringa well-positioned to fight free radicals in the body. These free radicals may cause oxidative stress, which has been linked to chronic conditions such as heart disease and Type 2 diabetes.

Women taking 7 g, or 1.5 teaspoons (tsp), of moringa leaf powder daily for three months also significantly increased their blood antioxidant levels in a study published in the Journal of Food Science and Technology.

In an animal study published earlier this year, the tree's leaf extract modulated oxidative stress, toxicity, sperm changes, and testicular damage induced by a synthetic opioid. It also lowered high blood pressure by easing vascular dysfunction and reducing oxidative stress in a study using hypertensive rats.

## Moringa May Prevent Inflammation

While inflammation is the body's natural response to infection or injury, it can be triggered for prolonged periods of time and cause chronic health problems, including cardiovascular disease and cancer. In a study using guinea pigs, moringa leaves prevented hepatic lipid accumulation and inflammation by inhibiting the expression of genes involved in fat metabolism.

Through its role in altering gut bacteria composition, the plant may also effectively regulate weight gain and inflammation.

In an animal study, those given a high-fat diet showed significantly reduced intestinal levels of *Bifidobacteria* and *Lactobacilli* bacteria, along with increased weight and other markers. When treated with moringa, their body weight, interleukin 6, and both bacteria levels were significantly restored. With its ability to help reduce weight gain, insulin resistance, and hepatic gluco-

neogenesis in studied mice, moringa may be effective in combatting obesity and Type 2 diabetes.

**Moringa May Treat Skin Disorders** Moringa is traditionally used to treat inflammatory conditions as well as skin diseases. A preliminary study showed that fermented moringa leaves reduced the clinical features of atopic dermatitis (eczema) based on macrography, scratching count and severity scores, as well as the animal subjects' serum IgE level.

Separate research concluded that parts of the plant seeds regulated the expression of Th17-relevant cytokines and improved psoriasis-like skin lesions in animal models. "To our knowledge, this is the first report regarding the mechanism and therapeutic application of seeds to treat psoriasis-like lesions *in vivo*," the researchers noted.

Moringa leaves also appeared as an alternative therapy to treat skin cancer, with previous studies indicating their anticancer activity against a variety of cell lines.

## Moringa May Protect Against Alzheimer's

Due to its high antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and neuroprotective effects, moringa has been evaluated in studies for its potential to fight Alzheimer's disease-like pathology in animal models. In Alzheimer's, naturally occurring phytochemicals with the properties mentioned above could be a useful adjunct to treatment.

The brain's monoaminergic systems, which play a role in memory processing, are disturbed in Alzheimer's cases. Moringa was shown in a separate study to exert its effects in the central nervous system by altering the hormones norepinephrine, dopamine, and serotonin.

According to its results, brain monoamines were altered discreetly in various brain areas in a rat model of Alzheimer's disease. After moringa treatment, those levels in brain regions were restored to near-control levels, indicating potential protection by altering brain monoamine levels and electrical activity.

## Hundreds of Studies on Moringa's Effects

It is well-documented that moringa oleifera can be a good strategy against various health issues, particularly those linked with oxidative stress and inflammatory conditions. These conditions include heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and fatty liver. The leaves, for one, can be used as a glycemic control agent in cases of diabetes, as well as prediabetes.

**Its high antioxidant content makes moringa well-positioned to fight free radicals in the body.**

The GreenMedInfo.com database offers more than 200 abstracts with moringa research, helping you know more about the wondrous benefits of this time-tested therapeutic plant.

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## AGE WELL

# One Spouse's View of Aging May Sway the Other's Health

Study highlights the health-promoting role wives play in their relationships

JARED WADLEY

Elderly people can expect their health to decline—as well as that of their spouse—when their self-perceptions about aging become negative, a new study suggests.

The study finds that health effects differ by gender among elderly couples. A husband's self-perceptions about aging are associated with his wife's depressive symptoms, whereas a wife's views correlate with her husband's physical disability, functional limitations, and chronic diseases, the findings indicate.

Previous research has focused on how individuals' aging self-perceptions affected them, but not the detrimental spillover effects on their spouses. In general, negative aging beliefs among the elderly can become a self-fulfilling prophecy affecting psychological, cognitive, and behavioral processes, the researchers said.

"As a result, these beliefs may become a reality," said study coauthor Lydia Li, professor of social work at the University of Michigan.

The researchers drew data from nearly 6,000 individuals over age 50 and their spouses from the Health and Retirement Survey, a longitudinal panel study that surveys a representative sample of about 20,000 people in the United States.

The analysis targeted six health domains: physical disability (or challenges doing daily tasks such as dressing and eating), functional performance (which measured a dozen tasks such as walking several blocks or sitting two hours), chronic disease,



PIKSELSTOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK

depressive symptoms, cognitive functioning, and self-rated health.

"By examining multiple health outcomes, we aim to obtain a broader picture with regard to the role of self-perception aging in older adults' health," Li said.

Women who hold less negative self-perceptions about aging are more likely to promptly and diligently adopt health-promotion behavior themselves. This means they are likely to act as the health expert and encourage their husbands to seek health care and adhere to medical treatment, the study shows.

When women hold higher negative self-perceptions about aging, they are less likely to do the health care work for themselves

and for other family members. Consequently, their husband's health, particularly physical health, is negatively affected.

However, a wife's depressive symptoms—not her physical health—are more reactive to her husband's negative self-perception about aging, researchers say.

"The fact that the husband's self-perception about aging is not associated with their wife's physical health further supports that it is usually women doing the health care work within the couple's context," said lead author of the study Meng Sha Luo, associate professor of sociology at Zhejiang University.

The nuanced gender differences in the spousal self-perception about an aging-health link are

Women who hold less negative self-perceptions about aging are more likely to promptly and diligently adopt health-promotion behavior themselves.

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important because they inform society that social service programs should pay attention to partner effects when designing programs to promote adults' well-being and improve health outcomes. For instance, when husbands face great challenges in physical health, interventions to boost their own as well as their wife's self-perceptions about aging may be helpful, Li said.

**Negative aging beliefs among the elderly can become a self-fulfilling prophecy affecting psychological, cognitive, and behavioral processes.**

Likewise, when wives display depressive symptoms, interventions should include strategies to lessen their own and their husband's negative self-perception about aging. As previous studies have indicated, many adult men are reluctant to admit their health problems or seek help, which might be due to the perception that health concerns threaten their masculinity.

"For these men, efforts to engage their wives may be a feasible approach and are beneficial to both the husbands and wives," Luo said.

The study appears in the Journal of Aging and Health.

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