

MIND & BODY



Communities across the country are grappling with the heartbreaking impact of an opioid crisis that could have been avoided.

DRUGS

Addicted: America's Opioid Crisis

Misleading claims led to billions in drug sales but inflicted a staggering catastrophe on the nation

JOSEPH MERCOLA

The 2019 BBC documentary, "Addicted: America's Opioid Crisis," explores the depth of the nation's addiction to opioid painkillers and the role played by Purdue Pharma and other makers of the drug.

As noted in the film, opioids kill more people than any other drug on the market, and it's the only type of drug that can condemn a person to a life of addiction after a single week of use.

According to the BBC, "1 in 8 American children live with a parent who suffers from a substance abuse disorder," and "every 15 minutes, a baby in America is born suffering from opioid withdrawal." Middle

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BBC

school-aged children interviewed also say they have easy access to drugs, should they want them.

Many now blame the drug companies that make these drugs and have falsely promoted them as safe and nonaddictive for patients of all kinds, including children.

That includes one of the former addicts followed in the film, who says he thinks the drug companies need to be held responsible for their role in creating this epidemic, and made to help pay for the solution.

Purdue Pharma Pleads Guilty and Folds

One of the most prominent drug companies involved in the creation of this opioid

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JOHN MOORE/GETTY IMAGES



Purdue Pharma doesn't have the \$8.3 billion to pay fines relating to its role in the opioid crisis.

5 Tips for Sensible Holiday Eating

TATIANA DENNING

"Moderation. Small helpings. Sample a little bit of everything. These are the secrets of happiness and good health."

- Julia Child

The holiday season is upon us. It's that time of year when we gather together to enjoy family and friends, merriment and laughter, and of course, good food. But with such an abundance of delicious dishes and tasty temptations, we may find our waistlines challenged.



Smaller plates lead to smaller portions and give your stomach time to register being full.

GLEAMINVISIBLE/SHUTTERSTOCK

And with the stress of this unusual year, we may be more tempted than ever to over-indulge. In fact, surveys show that many of us are already coming into the holiday season with a weight surplus.

But take heart. There are some simple things you can do to prevent the holidays from being a choice between enjoying yourself a little, and fitting into your clothes.

Use a Smaller Plate

One easy trick to help prevent weight gain is the act of using a smaller plate.

While it may sound simple, studies show that even a small decrease in plate size can lead to consuming substantially fewer calories, thereby helping you maintain, or even lose, weight. And the same principle even applies to using a smaller spoon.

So instead of grabbing that large plate for your main course, try reaching for the smaller dessert plate for your next meal.

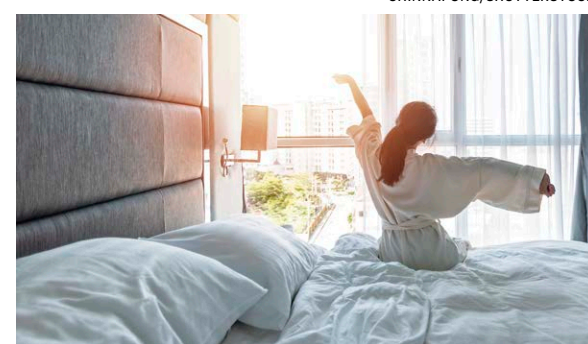
Don't Skip Meals and Savor Every Bite

Ok, so this is technically two tips, but they're both important.

First, be sure not to skip breakfast or lunch in anticipation of stuffing yourself later in the day. While waiting for the good

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CHINNAPONG/SHUTTERSTOCK



Studies show sleeping well can help you better resist high-fat and high sugar foods.

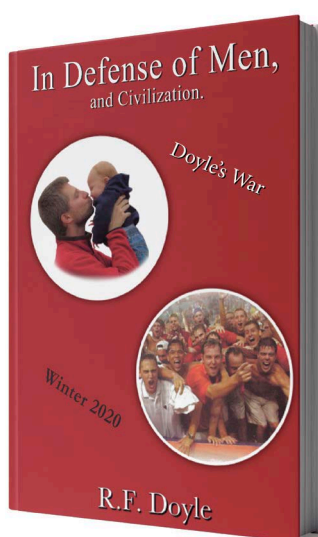
In Defense of Men, and Civilization



MEN'S LIB – It's about time.

The other side of the gender issues coin. 332 pages of commonsense on gender and politics. Causes of and solutions to legal and social problems. Fight crime and drugs with fathers, not cops or social "workers." End emasculating, leftist social experiments. Politically incorrect!!!

Received wisdom is that women are more discriminated against than men—a hoax promoted by mod/lib/fems. The war against men is harmful to all humanity, and must be taken seriously. This book refutes the idea that men cannot and should not do "fathering." Men's sorry situation results largely from a misandric mindset and metastasizing of feminism, these and a "woken" mentality have severely damaged men, society and especially families.



Order In Defense of Men, and Civilization 2020 edition
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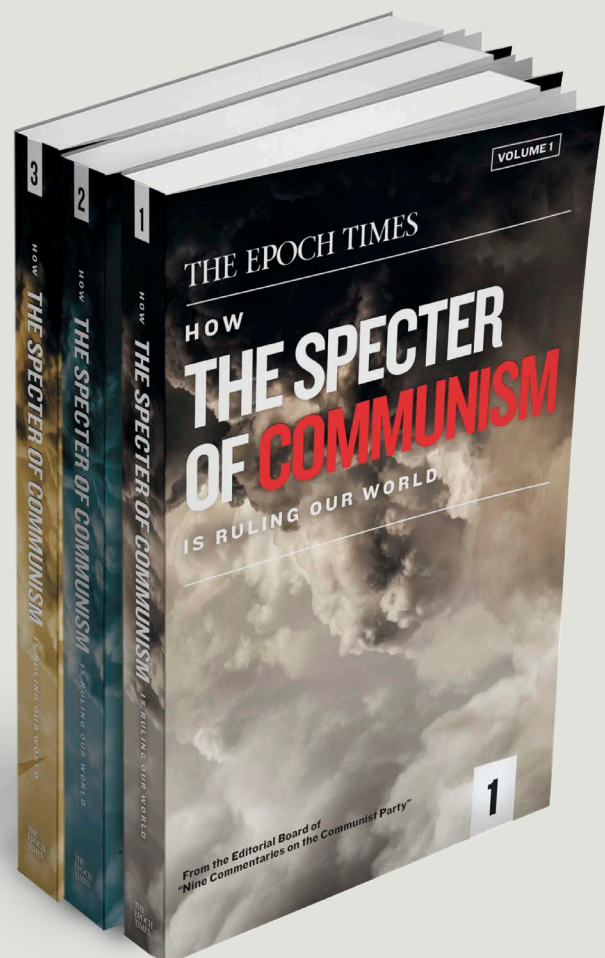
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CHINESE WISDOM FOR SEASONAL LIVING

Pay Attention to Your Heart and Circulatory System; Choose Foods Red in Color

Solar Term: 'Heavy Snow' (Dec. 7–Dec. 20)

MOREEN LIAO

A solar term is a period of about two weeks and is based on the sun's position in the zodiac. Solar terms form the traditional Chinese calendar system. The calendar follows the ancient Chinese belief that living in accordance with nature will enable one to live a harmonious life. This article series explores each of the year's 24 solar terms, offering guidance on how to best navigate the season.

"Heavy Snow" (Dec. 7–20) is the third solar term of winter. Around this time, the cold yin energy reaches its peak, and the yang energy starts to evolve. The snow is getting much heavier, and the temperature is much colder in most of the Northern Hemisphere.

As the yang energy slowly starts to move and grow during this solar term, wild animals, such as tigers, who strongly reflect the yang energy of nature, start to come out of their caves and mate.

Daffodils and orchids sprout to reflect the movement and revival of the yang energy on the Earth, and in the natural realm.

In the Northern part of the world, heavy snow around this time indicates enough moisture for winter plants to grow well, such as radish, white radish, broccoli, and Chinese cabbage. In southern and warmer regions, instead of snow, ancient Chinese people would look forward to heavy rain and clouds. This would indicate sufficient moisture in the air, and would nourish plants and the soil thoroughly, for a good harvest of crops such as rice.

The fishing industry has its big catches of the year at this time, and the meat is soft and juicy due to body fat. Root plants such as radish are ripe and crunchy.

It's also the time of year that treats start showing up in stores and food vendors offer festive fare. Holiday vibes warm us and remind us to cherish the precious moments of our life.

Effects on People

People who are born during this solar term have plenty of the water element in their constitutions. As a result, they tend to be creative and full of ideas, and are believed to be very intelligent and outgoing. They're often good in communication with strong leadership qualities.

According to traditional Chinese medicine, these people need to pay special attention to their hearts and circulatory systems. They may experience irregular heartbeat, stroke, or even heart attacks due to the constriction of the blood vessels from the colder weather.

Lung and lung-related problems are more likely to develop or even become worse around this time. To protect against that, avoid polluted areas, stop smoking, and drink a good amount of warm water to cleanse toxins from the body and maintain active blood circulation.

Generally speaking, it's the time when people can easily get a cold or flu, so keeping warm is particularly important to maximize well-being.

Tips to Maximize Wellness During 'Heavy Snow'

1. Drink plenty of hot goji berry tea; add ginger root for those who have cold hands and feet.
2. Drink chai tea or chai lattes instead of coffee to strengthen kidney function, since too much coffee flushes the yang energy out from the body.
3. Eat less sugar, as it disrupts the body's natural energy balance.
4. Wear a hat, scarf, and gloves. For the elderly who live in extremely cold areas, a soft wool hat can preserve body heat during sleep.
5. Use the heel of one foot to massage the inner side of the other lower calf in circular motions to promote energy flow for the whole body.
6. Diffuse warm and sweet notes of essential oils (see suggestions below) to lift the energy, motivate the mind, and keep the body warm.
7. Avoid anger or sudden shocks to prevent strain on the heart and brain.

Lung and lung-related problems are more likely to develop or worsen around this time.

Seasonal Foods

Cooking with quality nut oils, such as sesame, walnut, or avocado, helps your body gain good energy and prolong the heat. Broccoli, dill, chestnut, cashew nut, almonds, macadamia, green onion, yam, and walnut are all very good sources of protein during this time of year.

For those who have concerns, or who want to strengthen their heart and circulatory systems, try ingesting foods that are red in color to enhance these functions.

Beetroot, carrots, tomatoes, cranberries, strawberries, cherries, rosehip jam, and rose tea are all good choices.

Seasonal Herbs and Essential Oils

Spicy and warm essential oils, such as geranium, rose, sandalwood, rosewood, lemongrass, wintergreen, ginger, or cinnamon, warm your heart and energize your body.

Epoch Times contributor Moreen Liao is a descendant of four generations of traditional Chinese medicine doctors. She is also a certified aromatherapist, former dean of the New Directions Institute of Natural Therapies in Sydney, and the founder of Ausganica, a certified organic cosmetic brand. Visit Liaomoreen.com



Goji berry tea can help you deal with the chill of "Heavy Snow."



Walking can prevent hypertension and lowers the risk of being hospitalized for heart failure.

MADE TO MOVE

Older Women Who Walk Daily Reduce Risk of High Blood Pressure

Research affirms walking could be primary way to prevent blood pressure issues in adults

DAVID HILL

Women who walk 30 minutes a day may have a significantly lower risk of developing high blood pressure, new research shows.

Further, women who don't walk 30 minutes—the federal physical activity guideline of moderate activity—but do walk at 2 mph (a 30-minute mile) or faster, still have a reduced risk of hypertension, according to the study in the journal Hypertension.

Another study of more than 80,000 postmenopausal women aged 50 to 79 in Circulation: Heart Failure reports that more time spent in sedentary behavior while awake, such as sitting or lying on the couch, is associated with a higher risk of hospitalization for heart failure.

In fact, women who spent more than 9.5 hours per day sitting or lying down had a 42 percent higher risk of developing heart failure during the nine years after first assessing sedentary time through the Women's Health Initiative Observational Study.

The finding was evident even after accounting for physical activity levels and heart failure risk factors such as hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and heart attack.

Walking and moving are simple activities that can be easily integrated into our daily lives.

Jean Wactawski-Wende, co-author of both studies and dean of the University at Buffalo's School of Public Health and Health Professions

Taken together, the two papers send a powerful message, says Michael LaMonte, research associate professor of epidemiology in the University at Buffalo's School of Public Health and Health Professions. "Sit less, walk more for heart health."

LaMonte is the first author of the Circulation: Heart Failure study and senior author of the Hypertension paper. Both studies relied on data collected over time from participants in the Women's Health Initiative.

"The WHI participants have provided us information on the importance of walking, regular activity, and avoidance of seden-

tary time in prevention of both hypertension and heart failure," says Jean Wactawski-Wende, co-author of both studies and dean of the School of Public Health and Health Professions. "Walking and moving are simple activities that can be easily integrated into our daily lives."

Walking and High Blood Pressure Risk
The Hypertension study found that brisk walking—identified as a 30-minute mile—for 150 minutes or more per week is associated with a lower risk of hypertension in older women.

"Our work adds to growing evidence that you don't necessarily have to be an avid jogger or cyclist to gain health benefits from physical activity," says Connor Miller, first author of the Hypertension paper, which he worked on while obtaining his master's in epidemiology.

"Just going for regular walks can have meaningful impact on important risk factors for cardiovascular disease, in this case, blood pressure. This is especially important to appreciate for older adults, because walking is an accessible activity for all ages," says Miller, now an epidemiologist at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Few studies have evaluated hypertension in relation to walking, a common physical activity among adults. Miller and colleagues examined the association between walking and hypertension incidence in 83,435 postmenopausal women between the ages of 50 and 79 who had no known hypertension, heart failure, coronary heart disease, or stroke, and reported the ability to walk at least one block without assistance.

During an 11-year follow-up, researchers identified 38,230 hypertension cases. After controlling for sociodemographic, lifestyle, and clinical factors, researchers observed significantly lower hypertension risks of 11 percent and 21 percent in postmenopausal women reporting the highest walking volume and speed.

Walking speed remained significantly associated with lower hypertension risk after adjusting for walking duration, suggesting that walking faster might have greater blood pressure benefits over volume or duration.

"To put it simply, get your steps in, and try to make them quick," Miller says.

Women Who Walk Gain Big Benefits
Slower walking speed, Miller points out, has been associated with increased cardio-

vascular disease in previous WHI studies.

If further studies confirm the group's findings, it's possible that a randomized clinical trial could be established to evaluate walking for the primary prevention of high blood pressure in adults, Miller says. "When recommending ways for a patient to modify lifestyle factors, clinicians can use this research to emphasize that even a relatively minor behavioral change—in this case, going for walks regularly—is a step in the right direction for cardiovascular health," Miller says.

And for someone who thinks their blood pressure levels seem to indicate there's nothing they can do, Miller has a message. "Our research says otherwise. Even among those women who initially had blood pressure levels inching close to the hypertension threshold, walking volume and speed were still associated with lower risk of developing hypertension later on."

Sitting Around and Heart Failure

The study published in Circulation: Heart Failure was a follow up to a 2018 paper that was the first to show an association between increased physical activity and reduced risk of heart failure.

During an average of nine years of follow-up, 1,402 women were hospitalized due to heart failure. Compared with women who reported spending less than 6.5 hours per day sitting or lying down, the risk of heart failure hospitalization was:

- 15 percent higher in women reporting 6.6–9.5 hours daily spent sitting or lying down;
- 42 percent higher in women reporting more than 9.5 hours daily spent sitting or lying down.

Compared with women who reported sitting less than 4.5 hours a day, the risk of heart failure hospitalization was:

- 14 percent higher in women who sat between 4.6 and 8.5 hours each day;
- 54 percent higher in women who sat more than 8.5 hours a day.

Researchers saw a 42 percent higher risk of developing heart failure among women who were sedentary for more than 9.5 hours per day, even after accounting for several factors, including age, race-ethnicity, and menopause hormone therapy use.

"Even among women who reported recreational physical activity levels that meet current guidelines, heart failure risk was

elevated in the women who also reported more than 9.5 hours per day in sedentary activity," LaMonte says. "This latter finding points to the need to not only promote more physical activity for heart failure prevention, but to also promote interruption of sedentary time throughout the day."

The team will soon have results from a separate WHI study using accelerometers, which will show that simply standing up to break up sedentary time is associated with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease.

Our work adds to growing evidence that you don't necessarily have to be an avid jogger or cyclist to gain health benefits from physical activity.

Connor Miller, lead author of the Hypertension paper

Sedentary behavior promotes poorer cardiometabolic risk factor profiles, which increases the likelihood of onset and progression of arterial atherosclerosis and blood clots in arteries, LaMonte explains. "These are precursors to angina and heart attack, of which heart failure is a major consequence. Sedentary time also reduces the pumping effectiveness of the heart, which is a major manifestation of clinical heart failure."

"Whether sedentary time directly causes reduced cardiac pumping effectiveness or exacerbates the effect of some other cause remains unclear. An observational study like ours cannot disentangle these complex mechanistic questions," LaMonte says.

Additional coauthors are from the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center; Harvard University; the University of California, San Diego; University of Alabama at Birmingham; University of Arizona Cancer Center; University of Tennessee Health Sciences Center; University of California, San Francisco; Brown University; and Stanford University.

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DRUGS

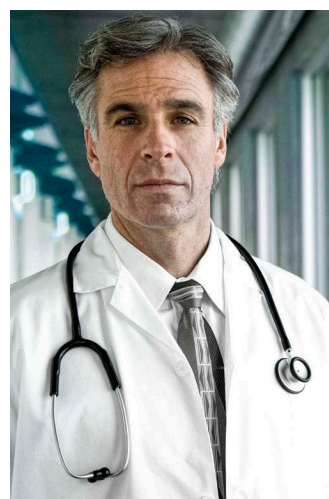
Addicted: America's Opioid Crisis

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addiction crisis is Purdue Pharma, the maker of OxyContin. At the end of October 2020, Purdue Pharma agreed to plead guilty to three federal criminal charges relating to its role in the opioid crisis, including violating a federal anti-kickback law, conspiracy to defraud the U.S. government and violating the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act.

To settle the charges, Purdue is supposed to pay \$8.3 billion in fines, forfeiture of past profits, and civil liability payments, but because it doesn't have the cash, the company will instead be dissolved and its assets used to erect a "public benefit company" that both makes opioids and pays for addiction treatment.



Doctors following drug company guidelines overprescribed opioids.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

Abuse, prescription opioid use is a significant risk factor for subsequent heroin use.

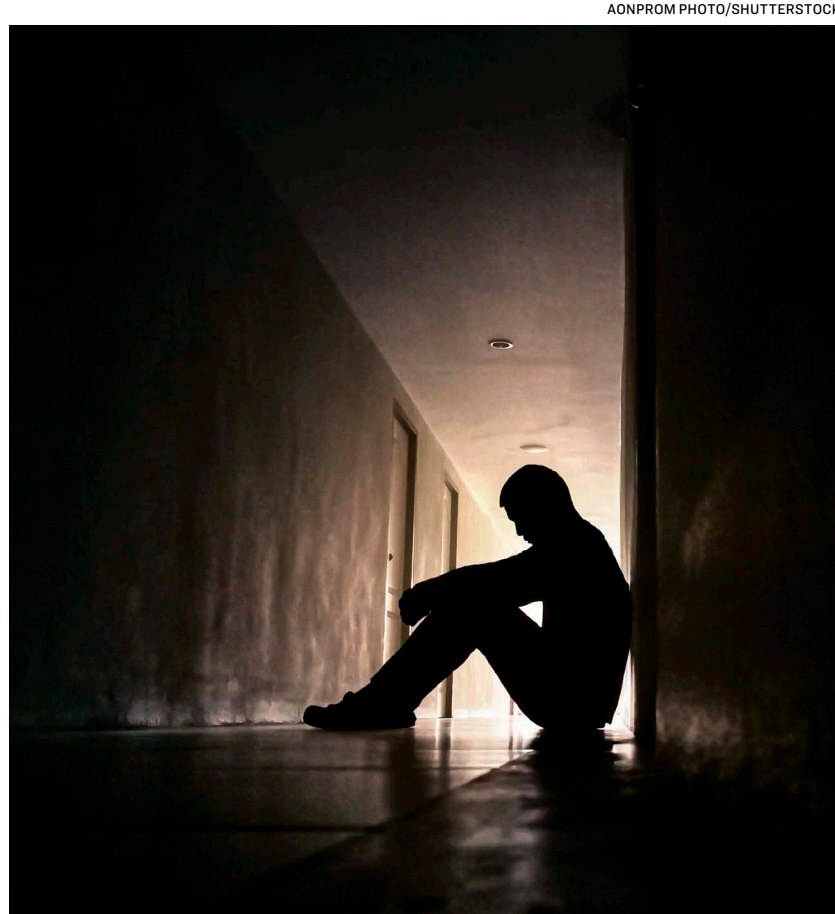
The incidence of heroin use is 19 times higher among those who have used opioids nonmedically than among those who have no history of opioid use, and 86 percent of young, urban injection drug users report using opioid pain relievers nonmedically before starting heroin. Overall, nearly 80 percent of heroin users now report using prescription opioids prior to heroin.

Similarly, data from the University of Michigan shows just under 1 in 3 people (31.8 percent) who misused opioids during their high school years ended up using heroin by age 35.

When it comes to children and teens, a major source of opioids are dentists, who wrote a staggering 18.1 million prescriptions for opioids in 2017. Opioids are frequently prescribed when extracting wisdom teeth, even though there's no evidence to support this strategy.

This is especially true if you see a biological dentist who knows what they are doing. Earlier this year I had a periapical abscess and had to have the tooth extracted. I saw one of the best dentists in Florida, Dr. Carl Litano, just south of Tampa. He used platelet rich plasma (PRP) at the extraction site and I had zero pain and no swelling without any medication. Afterward, no one could tell I had an extraction the previous day.

Children are also recklessly prescribed addictive opioids for minor surgical procedures. For example, insurance claims data from 2016 and 2017 reveal 60 percent of children between the ages of 1 and 18 with



AGNFROM PHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK

▲ Addiction leaves many people feeling alone and ashamed.

Opioids kill more people than any other drug on the market, and it's the only type of drug that can condemn a person to a life of addiction after a single week of use.

private insurance filled one or more opioid prescriptions after surgical tonsil removal.

Meanwhile, research shows opioids (including morphine, Vicodin, oxycodone, and fentanyl) fail to control moderate to severe pain any better than over-the-counter drugs such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen, and naproxen.

An Epidemic Caused by Greed

As noted in the film, this is an epidemic caused by greed within the medical system. Purdue Pharma was exceptionally skilled at marketing its product, cleverly disguising its advertisements as educational material. (The same can clearly be said about many other drug companies and their wares today.)

There can be no doubt that false advertising played a central role in the opioid epidemic, and for doctors, it highlights the importance of staying on top of published research rather than relying on drug company sales reps for their education.

The fraud has its roots in a short letter to the editor published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* in 1980. The letter—which was simply commenting on a cursory examination of patient files in a Boston hospital—stated that narcotic addiction in patients with no history of addiction was very rare.

Purdue built its marketing of OxyContin on this letter, for years falsely claiming that opioid addiction affects less than 1 percent of patients treated with the drugs. According to Purdue's marketing material, featured in the film, "the most serious risk with opioids is respiratory depression."

In reality, opioids have a very high rate of addiction and have not been proven effective for long-term use. A number of court cases in recent years have demonstrated how Purdue systematically misled doctors about OxyContin's addictiveness to drive up sales.

As noted by David Powell, a senior economist at Rand, to produce the most lethal drug epidemic America has ever seen "you need a huge rise in opioid access, in a way that

misuse is easy, but you also need demand to misuse the product."

According to the documentary, Purdue made more than \$1 billion a year from its sales of OxyContin. OxyContin's success also quickly led to other drug companies mimicking Purdue's tactics. Other companies being called to account include Allergan, Cephalon, Endo International, Egalet Corporation, Insys Therapeutics, Johnson & Johnson, Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Mallinckrodt plc, and Teva Pharmaceutical Industries.

In the final analysis, it's clear that unconscionably deceitful marketing tactics have resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of Americans; 46,802 Americans died from opioid overdoses in 2018 alone. As of June 2017, opioids became the leading cause of death among Americans under the age of 50.

That said, the BBC also rightfully points out that we need stronger regulations and more effective checks and balances to prevent this kind of situation from happening again in the future. Merely making drug companies pay is not enough.

Purdue Lured in, Then Abandoned Doctors

Steven May, a former Purdue sales rep, also highlights yet another scandal. The company came up with a plan to help doctors better document their treatment of pain. Sales reps were taught how to instruct doctors to use these tools.

When those same doctors eventually got in trouble for overprescribing opioids, using Purdue's tools, the company walked away and offered no support. Many doctors lost their medical licenses. Some ended up doing jail sentences and some committed suicide. "And they were doing exactly what [Purdue] taught us to teach them to do," May says.

No Remorse

Adding insult to injury, when it became clear that people were dying in droves from opioid overdoses, Purdue launched an extensive damage-control operation that included the suggestion that those dying from opioids were already addicts, and that this wouldn't happen to patients who were not already addicted to drugs. It was basically just a variation on the original lie.

According to lawsuits filed against Purdue, the company knew as early as the 1990s that OxyContin was one of the most abused drugs in the country, yet they did nothing to change their marketing and sales strategies.

Unemployment and Poverty Fuel Addiction

Many of the opioid and heroin abusers featured in "Addicted" live on the streets. Desperation and despair are evident in all. Several investigations seeking to gain insight into the causes fueling the opioid epidemic have been conducted in recent years.

Among them is a 2019 study published in the *Medical Care Research Review Journal*, which looked at the effects of state-level economic conditions—unemployment rates, median house prices, median household income, insurance coverage, and average hours of weekly work—on drug overdose deaths between 1999 and 2014. According to the authors:

"Drug overdose deaths significantly declined with higher house prices... by nearly 0.17 deaths per 100,000 (~4 percent) with a



DARWIN BRANDIS/SHUTTERSTOCK

HALAW/SHUTTERSTOCK

\$10,000 increase in median house price. House price effects were... only significant among males, non-Hispanic Whites, and individuals younger 45 years."

"Our findings suggest that economic downturns that substantially reduce house prices such as the Great Recession can increase opioid-related deaths, suggesting that efforts to control access to such drugs should especially intensify during these periods."

Similarly, an investigation published in the *International Journal of Drug Policy* in 2017 connected economic recessions and unemployment with rises in illegal drug use among adults. Seventeen of the 28 studies included in the review found that the psychological distress associated with economic recessions and unemployment was a significant factor:

A review of available research by scientists in the Netherlands and United Kingdom concluded: "The current evidence is in line with the hypothesis that drug use increases in times of recession because unemployment increases psychological distress which increases drug use. During times of recession, psychological support for those who lost their job and are vulnerable to drug use (relapse) is likely to be important."

Another 2019 study published in *Population Health* reviewed the links between free trade and deaths from opioid use between 1999 and 2015, finding that "Job loss due to international trade is positively associated with opioid overdose mortality at the county level." Overall, for each 1,000 people who lost their jobs due to international trade—commonly due to factory shutdowns—there was a 2.7 percent increase in opioid-related deaths.

Trauma Raises Addiction Risk

Abuse-related trauma is also linked to unemployment and financial stress, and that too can increase your risk of drug use and addiction. As noted in *The Atlantic*, when the coal mining industry in northeastern Pennsylvania collapsed, leaving many locals without job prospects, alcohol use increased, as did child abuse.

▲ Drug addiction is linked to financial difficulties.

Opioids are frequently prescribed when extracting wisdom teeth, even though there's no evidence to support this strategy.

Many of these traumatized children, in turn, sought relief from the turmoil and ended up becoming addicted to opioids. All of this is particularly pertinent today, as many parts of the U.S. have been shut down for extended periods of time over fears of COVID-19.

Not being allowed to work, being forced to stay at home for weeks or months on end, maintaining an unnatural distance even to your loved ones and not being able to see people's faces when out in public—all of these things can contribute to fear, anxiety and, ultimately, despair that fuels addiction. Indeed, reports warn that substance abuse is on the rise as a result of pandemic measures, as is domestic violence.

Struggling With Opioid Addiction? Please Seek Help

It's vitally important to realize that opioids are extremely addictive drugs that are not meant for long-term use for nonfatal conditions. If you've been on an opioid for more than two months, or if you find yourself taking a higher dosage, or taking the drug more often, you may already be addicted. Resources where you can find help include the following. You can also learn more in the article "How to Wean Off Opioids" on Mercola.com

Your workplace Employee Assistance Program may also be able to help and the Substance Abuse Mental Health Service Administration can be contacted 24 hours a day at 1-800-622-HELP

I also urge you to listen to my interview with Dr. Sarah Zielsdorf. She explains how low-dose naltrexone (LDN), used in microdoses, can help you combat opioid addiction and aid in your recovery.

Using microdoses of 0.001 milligrams (1 microgram), long-term users of opioids who have developed a tolerance to the drug are able to, over time, lower their opioid dose and avoid withdrawal symptoms as the LDN makes the opioid more effective.

For opioid dependence, the typical starting dose is 1 microgram twice a day, which

will allow them to lower their opioid dose by about 60 percent. When the opioid is taken for pain, the LDN must be taken four to six hours apart from the opioid in order to not displace the opioid's effects.

Nondrug Pain Relief

Many types of pain can be treated entirely without drugs. Recommendations by Harvard Medical School and the British National Health Service include the following:

- Gentle exercise
- Physical therapy or occupational therapy
- Hypnotherapy
- Distracting yourself with an enjoyable activity
- Maintaining a regular sleep schedule
- Mind-body techniques such as controlled breathing, meditation, guided imagery, and mindfulness practice that encourages relaxation. One of my personal favorites is the Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT)
- Yoga and tai chi
- Practicing gratitude and positive thinking
- Hot or cold packs
- Biofeedback
- Music therapy
- Therapeutic massage

You can find more detailed information about most of these techniques in "13 Mind-Body Techniques That Can Help Ease Pain and Depression" on Mercola.com.

Additional approaches include helpful supplements and dietary changes. These can be used separately or in combination with the strategies listed above to control both acute and chronic pain.

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, visit for article sources.

5 Tips for Sensible Holiday Eating

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stuff may seem like a great idea, it will not only hurt your blood sugar and hunger levels, but it will also set you up for failure when you do eat. By having the expectation of eating a large meal later, you're bound to create a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby you're likely to overeat.

You should also remember that, when the time to eat does arrive, it's important to eat slowly. By savoring each and every bite, you'll not only enjoy your food more, but your brain will have the 20 minutes or so it needs to send the signal that you're full. Otherwise, you're likely to find that you've overstuffed yourself and consumed more calories than needed.

Make Wise Food Choices

It comes as no surprise that paying close attention to what foods you're eating is important.



▼ Certain holiday foods seem essential, but others have healthier alternatives.

KIAN OKSANA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Consuming more complex carbs, such as fruits and vegetables, as well as more protein, like turkey or ham, while going light on the simple carbs, such as white potatoes, bread, and desserts, is a good rule of thumb.

And remember, there are some great options to substitute in place of higher calorie or higher glycemic index foods. For example, try mashed cauliflower in place of white potatoes, or you can even try sweet potatoes instead of white potatoes—that is, as long as they're not loaded with marshmallows or maple syrup.

With that said, it's the holidays after all, so you have reason to partake of the things you may only get to enjoy once a year, like your grandma's pecan pie, or your aunt's famous macaroni and cheese. Otherwise, you may be left feeling deprived and unsatisfied, which will ultimately backfire. What's key is to follow Julia Child's advice, and not partake to excess.

Liquids are an often-overlooked source of calories, so it's important to watch sugary drinks, such as sodas and sugar-added juices. It's also a good idea to limit or avoid alcohol due to the extra calories it brings. Instead, try some seltzer water infused with a bit of muddled fruit and fresh mint. This way, you'll feel like you're enjoying a special treat, without the added alcohol.

It's also interesting to note that people regularly mistake hunger for thirst. So having a glass of water before a meal can help satisfy that need, while decreasing how much you eat.

Get Moving

Making physical activity a part of your holidays is a good decision, whether it's going to the gym, using an exercise DVD or app, or taking a brisk walk around the neighborhood.

Not only does a little cardio help burn off some calories, but studies show that when you participate in physical activity, you're also more motivated to make healthy food choices. In addition, the process of strengthening and toning your body builds up mus-

What's key is to follow Julia Child's advice, and not partake to excess.

cle mass and decreases fat, which in turn, acts to burn more calories.

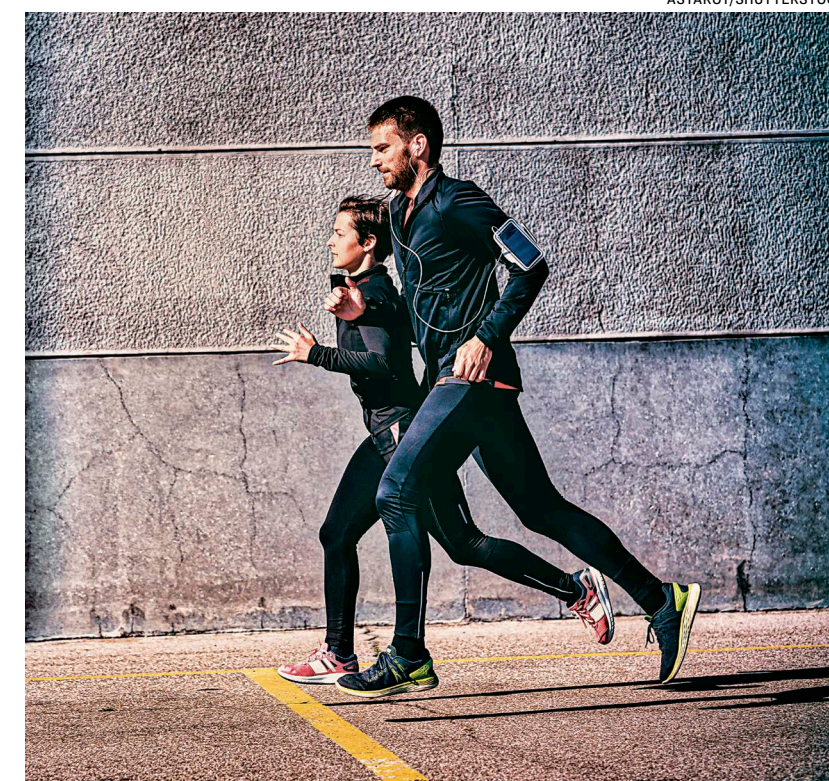
Get Your Zzz's

While often overlooked, sleep is crucial to a healthy weight.

Studies show that when you're sleep-deprived, you tend to not only eat more, but also consume more high-fat, high-sugar foods.

This is because sleep deprivation impacts our hormone levels. Studies show that lack of sleep leads to higher levels of the hormone ghrelin, which acts as an appetite stimulant, while decreasing the level of the hormone leptin, which acts as an appetite suppressant.

To guard against mindless, unhealthy



ASTAROT/SHUTTERSTOCK

It is almost guaranteed you will overeat this holiday season. That's part of the reason we have New Year's resolutions.

eating, set a goal of 7 to 8 hours of sleep a night. Your body and mind will thank you.

In Conclusion

Losing weight and maintaining weight requires a multifaceted approach, not just during the holidays, but every day of the year.

It's not just about what foods you eat, or how much you eat. Psychological factors, such as visual cues and your expectations, also have a role to play. In addition, your level of physical activity, as well as how much sleep you get, also matter in your efforts toward a healthy weight.

By using some of these simple and easy approaches, you can set yourself up for success, and enjoy your holiday meals without worry or guilt.

Tatiana Denning, D.O. is a preventive family medicine physician and owner of Simpura Weight Loss and Wellness. She believes in empowering her patients with the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain and improve their own health through weight management, healthy habits, and disease prevention.

What Happens When Grandparents Help Raise Children

Research reveals key role grandparents play as co-caregivers

MARYAM ABDULLAH

About one billion people in the world today are grandparents. Because humans are living longer, we're spending more time in the grandparenting role compared to past generations. What's more, people are having fewer children overall, which means grandparents can dedicate more distinct time to each grandchild.

Grandparents have been universally important in families across time, and their role continues to evolve, but their involvement in their grandchildren's lives is different around the world. In the United States, roughly 10 percent of grandparents lived with a grandchild in 2012. In Africa and Asia, living in a multi-generational household is a common practice.

A number of recent studies of families in several Asian countries help to shed light on how grandparents are involved in coparenting, which researchers define as the sharing of child care and upbringing responsibility among two or more adults. These studies suggest that children benefit when parents have strong relationships with coparenting grandparents, and point to some ways that this relationship can be nurtured.

How Parent-Grandparent Harmony Helps Children

When parents and grandparents get along, the benefits seem to trickle down to both parents themselves and to children.

Researcher Xiaowei Li and her colleagues recently explored parent-grandparent coparenting in China, where it is very common, across multiple studies. In their 2019 study, nearly 180 mothers of preschoolers completed questionnaires about their coparenting. The majority of families lived in three-generational households, and 80 percent of families had only one child.

The questionnaire asked about the positive aspects of the parent-grandparent coparenting relationship, such as how much they agreed, felt close, supported each other, and endorsed the grandparent's parenting, as well as challenging aspects like how much the grandparent undermined them or didn't do their fair share of child care, and how often they had conflict in front of the child. The researchers also measured how competent mothers felt in using parenting strategies and teaching their children age-appropriate skills. At the start of the study and six months later, mothers answered questions about their children's social competence—how well they were able to get along with others.

The findings? Mothers who had strong coparenting relationships with grandparents (mostly grandmothers) tended to feel more effective in their role as a parent, and, in turn, their children tended to be more socially competent six months later. The researchers explain that grandparents, with their rich parenting experience, can provide support, role modeling, and encouragement when they collaborate in raising children, which could influence how competent mothers feel in their parenting role. And when mothers are feeling more confident, they can approach parenting with more positivity and persistence, which can boost their children's social development.

Parent-grandparent coparenting also seems to influence other aspects of children's development. In a 2020 study, Li and her colleagues explored its effects on preschoolers'



SUKJAI PHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Mothers who had strong coparenting relationships with grandparents felt more effective in their role as a parent and their children were more socially competent six months later.

Children benefit from having the added attention and care that grandparents can bring.

effortful control—their ability to regulate how they respond to a situation, plan, and notice novelty or mistakes—which plays a role in children's social-emotional well-being. For preschoolers, it might come into play when they get a gift they don't like, have to figure out how to share toys, or recognize that someone broke a rule in a game.

Over 250 couples from China, both mothers and fathers, completed questionnaires about their relationship with the primary coparenting grandparent (85 percent grandmothers, 15 percent grandfathers) twice over 10 months. Mothers also completed questionnaires about their children's effortful control.

The study found that mothers and fathers whose coparenting relationships with grandparents were more similar tended to have children with greater effortful control 10 months later. In other words, when both parents are on the same page about how they view the quality of their relationships with grandparents (for example, moms and dads both say that they work well as a team with grandparents), it tends to be good for children. On the other hand, when one parent has a better coparenting relationship with the grandparent than their partner, their children tend to have less effortful control.

Li and her colleagues propose that when parents' coparenting relationships with grandparents are not in alignment, then greater conflict between mothers and fathers can impact the emotional environment of the family and, in turn, drain children's energy and resilience. On the other hand, greater harmony in parent-grandparent coparenting relationships can create a more nurturing environment for children to observe and learn self-regulation.

Finally, parent-grandparent conflict can influence other family relationships. In another 2020 study, Li and her colleague took a deeper look at the three generations of interpersonal relationships. In addition to measuring the quality of parent-grandparent coparenting relationships, they also measured mother-father marital relationships and parent-child relationships in over 300 families from China. Specifically, they asked mothers and fathers how frequently they had conflict in their marriage. They also asked mothers and fathers about the closeness, conflict, and dependence between themselves and their preschoolers.

The results? Overall, families with better

mother-grandparent coparenting relationships tended to have fewer marital conflicts and, in turn, more positive parent-child relationships.

"There is an old saying in China that 'everything will flourish if the family is in harmony,' which shows that [the] family's harmony is supreme," Li and her colleague say. "Even in cases of conflict, parents and grandparents would put their family interests first and control their negative feelings." On the other hand, if negative interactions are happening between parents and grandparents, then the stress and conflict can spill over into other family relationships.

Communicate for Better Coparenting

What steps can parents and grandparents take toward a stronger, more harmonious relationship? A new study offers at least one clue about the role of good communication.

Coparenting between parents and grandparents is prevalent in Vietnam, where 50 percent of grandparents live with a grandchild. A 2020 study by Nam-Phuong Hoang and her colleagues of over 500 parents from Vietnam explored cooperation and conflict in coparenting between parents and grandparents of 4-year-old children.

Parents (mostly mothers with a university education or higher) completed questionnaires about how open or conflictual their communication patterns were with the grandparents. They also were asked about the grandparents' psychologically controlling behaviors, like whether the grandparent was disappointed if they were not relied upon or whether they interfered in the parents' problems.

The researchers found that parents with more open communication patterns tended to have more cooperative coparenting relationships with grandparents. In addition, grandparents who were less psychologically controlling tended to have more open communication patterns and, in turn, less conflict in their coparenting relationships.

Hoang and her colleagues explain that parents can achieve a more balanced coparenting dynamic with grandparents by building up their assertive and constructive communication skills to resolve disagreements. Open communication involves feeling that you can freely exchange information without constraints, and you have a sense of being understood.

This recent research on grandparents highlights that navigating the coparenting relationship is not without its challenges. But grandparents' involvement in children's upbringing can confer great benefits for families, and for grandparents themselves.

Maryam Abdullah, Ph.D., is the parenting program director of the Greater Good Science Center. She is a developmental psychologist with expertise in parent-child relationships and children's development of prosocial behaviors. This article was originally published on the Greater Good online magazine.

In Africa and Asia, living in a multi-generational household is a common practice.

WISE HABITS

The Heartbreaking Effects of Being Only Partly Committed to Most Things

Finding true commitment takes determination and self honesty

LEO BABAUTA

If we're absolutely honest with ourselves, most of us are only half-committed to most things—in many cases, much less than half-committed.

We say that we're going to change our diet, but are we fully committed? Do we make a meal plan and buy the groceries and clear out the junk food and set time in our calendar to prep meals for the week and change our habit of eating out much of the time?

Do we feel so committed in our hearts that we'd bet our lives on it?

We make a commitment at work (to our team, client, partner) but we don't fully show up. We get distracted, we procrastinate, we are only half in it much of the time. We do the same thing to the people we love—we're only half there for them.

How often do we show up fully, with deep commitment?

This isn't about blaming or shaming, not about being judgmental or criticizing ourselves. This is about getting clear on whether we're fully committed to anything, and getting very clear on the effects of that in our lives.

How often do we let others down, not showing up as we promised we would, not delivering as we promised we would? How often do we let ourselves down? How often do we stay on our phones when our loved ones are



To be half committed is to gamble with the trust you would have others place in you.

JANTSARIK/SHUTTERSTOCK

We form the habit of shrinking away from scary and difficult things.

Why Jordan Peterson's New Book Couldn't Be More Timely

PATRICK CARROLL

Jordan Peterson has had a pretty rough year, having spent most of it crisscrossing the globe seeking treatment for a severe health issue. But to the relief of his many fans around the world, he is on the road to recovery, thanks to his family's relentless support and his own unwavering determination to take responsibility for his life.

On Nov. 23, he took another big step back into the spotlight as he announced the release of his latest book, "Beyond Order." Written as a sequel to his bestselling book "12 Rules For Life," "Beyond Order" offers a second set of 12 rules, this time focusing on the problems associated with excessive rigidity.

"Unlike my previous book, 'Beyond Order' explores as its overarching theme how the dangers of too much security and control might be profitably avoided," he says.

While "12 Rules For Life" was put forward as "an antidote to chaos," "Beyond Order" is designed to highlight the flipside of the archetypal landscape.

This is a critical perspective, because it exposes the reality that order isn't unconditionally good. Order can mean security and stability, but it can also mean tyranny and deadening uniformity. Chaos may present danger and uncertainty, but it can also be a source of potential, innovation, and renewal.

As Peterson says, "All states of order, no matter how secure and comfortable, have their flaws." In light of this, we need to move "beyond order" and actively seek out a degree of chaos. As he says elsewhere, "An orderly structure has to allow an element of chaos into it in order to become something new, and even to maintain its own survival, because things have to become something new as they move forward through time."

Hence, tipping his hat to the yin yang symbol with the color scheme, Peterson's goal with this book is to remind us that well-being is best fostered by pursuing a healthy balance of chaos and order, rather

than indulging an unhealthy obsession with either extreme.

The Dangers of Excessive Order

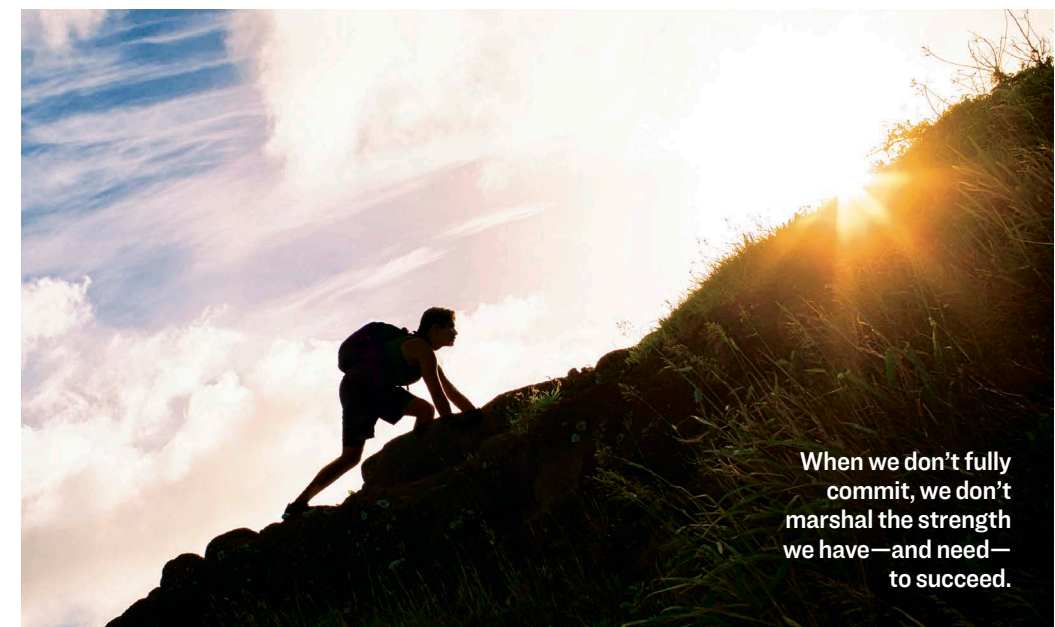
As part of his announcement, Peterson also highlighted some intriguing cultural and political implications of his philosophy.



Jordan Peterson speaks at the 2018 Student Action Summit at the Palm Beach County Convention Center in West Palm Beach, Fla. on Dec. 20, 2018.

Order can mean security and stability, but it can also mean tyranny and deadening uniformity.

"The order we strive to impose on the world can rigidify as a consequence of ill-advised attempts to eradicate from consideration all that is unknown," Peterson writes. "When such attempts go too far, totalitarianism threatens, driven by the desire to exercise full control, where such control is not possible, even in principle." As Peterson explains in one of his personality lectures, the tendency to take order too far likely has its roots in human biology.



When we don't fully commit, we don't marshal the strength we have—and need—to succeed.

craving our attention?

And how does it affect those around us, and ourselves, and our work in the world? It's heartbreaking.

We lose trust in ourselves. We beat ourselves up for failing again and create a negative self-image that affects everything.

We form the habit of shrinking away from scary and difficult things. We stay in our comfort zones and play a smaller game.

We lose the trust of others, and break their hearts. They still hope we'll be fully there for them.

We come across as flaky, wishy-washy, late for things, untrustworthy. This leaves others to depend on us, with a feeling of not being safe or able to relax. We, in turn, feel hurt by their not being able to trust us.

We never feel the joy of showing up powerfully in the world, of being incredibly committed, of deepening into that commitment.

Again, this is nothing to feel shameful or guilty about, or beat ourselves up about. It's about letting our hearts be broken by how we let others down and let ourselves down. It's about creating a commitment to show up fully in the world, powerfully, with full dedication.

How do we do that? It's a practice:

1. Start by pausing and realizing that you need to check your commitment level.
2. Look into your heart and ask whether you really want to commit to this. Do you feel a strong desire to commit to this? Does it feel right? Do you have space and energy in your life to uphold this commitment?
3. Ask yourself, "Would I bet \$10,000 on be-

ing able to fulfill this commitment? If not, why not?" Of course, there can be things completely out of your control (a natural disaster, illness, death in the family), but barring those things, would you be willing to bet your home or your life on this commitment?

4. If you are fully committed, then take action now. Commitment comes from action: Tell somebody about it and ask them to hold your commitment. Put a stake in the ground and skin in the game. Tell the world. Make a plan. Take the next step. Create an environment where you won't fail. Set up reminders. Do whatever it takes, so that you won't let yourself or others down.

5. And by the way, start this only with small commitments at first, if you're practicing. Nothing too big. An easily achievable commitment that you're fully committed to, where you would bet your life on it. For example, "I promise myself that I'm going to walk to the end of this block, no matter what." Then, do it. After a while, build trust by doing harder and harder commitments.

6. Then, do whatever it takes to never break a promise to yourself again, and to always show up as fully as you can.

Can you deepen into this practice, dropping shame and self-judgment but shifting how you show up?

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

More specifically, it arises from disgust sensitivity and the need to preserve cleanliness in our environments.

According to one influential 2015 paper on this idea from authors at the University of Warwick, "High levels of infection may lead to ethnocentrism, xenophobia, distrust of different others, and conformity, because such behaviors will reduce the likelihood of exposure to unfamiliar infections to which immunity has not been developed."

In archetypal terms, we cling to order and cleanliness because it keeps us safe from that which is strange and different.

But Peterson points out some even more striking implications of this idea. "Concerns about cleanliness and feelings of disgust have likewise been related to political attitudes ... regions with higher levels of disease prevalence tend to be associated with higher levels of social conformity and autocratic rule."

As another significant paper from researchers at the University of California-Los Angeles and University of British Columbia puts it, "Authoritarian governments are more likely to emerge in regions characterized by a high prevalence of disease-causing pathogens."

Restoring Balance

While we don't know yet if "Beyond Order" specifically addresses the lockdowns, the relevance is clear. Sadly, yet predictably, these excesses of order are exactly what we've seen in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. From business shutdowns to closed borders to gathering limits, people are more isolated than ever, and it's all being done in the name of cleanliness.

But the ideology of cleanliness is a fragmentary mythology because it only presents half of the archetype, namely, the positive side of order and the negative side of chaos. In reality, the other side of the story is just as important: that striving for sterility can go overboard.

Unfortunately, the desire to control our neighbors and dictate their choices reflects a worldview in which the drawbacks of order are considered less consequential than the drawbacks of chaos. This paradigm may be alluring, especially in times of crisis, but for society to truly prosper, it

needs to be called into question.

So while we may be tempted to embrace central planning or even socialism as a source of safety and stability, we need to recognize that such despotic, authoritarian systems are the embodiment of excessive order.

Economists have been talking about this idea for a long time, and many of them have pointed out that "the desire to exercise full control" is one of the chief barriers to prosperity. Ludwig von Mises is one such economist, and in his treatise "Human Action," he draws attention to the problems of trying to impose a rigid, overarching plan for the economy.

"It is customary nowadays to speak of 'social engineering.' Like planning, this term is a synonym for dictatorship and totalitarian tyranny. The idea is to treat human beings in the same way in which the engineer treats the stuff out of which he builds his bridges, roads, and machines. The social engineer's will is to be substituted for the will of the various people he plans to use for the construction of his Utopia. Mankind is to be divided into two classes: the almighty dictator, on the one hand, and the underlings who are to be reduced to the status of mere pawns in his plans and cogs in his machinery, on the other. If this were feasible, then of course the social engineer would not have to bother about understanding other people's actions. He would be free to deal with them as technology deals with lumber and iron."

Mises's point is that the economy shouldn't be viewed as a machine that we can control and direct. It is much more akin to an ecosystem that flourishes best when left to its own devices.

So now, more than ever, as lockdowns and mandates overshadow nearly every aspect of our lives, we need to be wary of clinging to order, control, and security too tightly.

Hopefully, Peterson's new book will bring that message to light.

Patrick Carroll holds a degree in chemical engineering from the University of Waterloo in Canada and is a Eugene S. Thorpe writing fellow at the Foundation for Economic Education. This article was originally published on FEE.org



SERGEY NOVIKOV/SHUTTERSTOCK



ELENA ELISSEVA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Over a period of one year, researchers found that having plants in previously bare front gardens was associated with a six percent drop in residents' perceived stress levels.

Green Front Gardens May Reduce Physiological, Psychological Stress

Study finds front gardens associated with significant drop in reported stress levels, other added benefits

Lauriane Suyin Chalmin-Pui

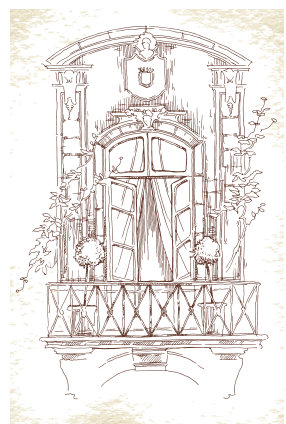
There is growing evidence that being in natural spaces has a positive effect on mental health. Being in nature is also linked to improved cognitive function, greater relaxation, better coping with trauma, and alleviating certain attention deficit disorder symptoms in children.

However, most of these studies have specifically looked at the effect of public green spaces, rather than private gardens. During a time when many people are at home due to COVID-19 restrictions, private garden spaces have been the most accessible green spaces for those who have them. But do these small green spaces have the same benefits for our mental health?

Although conducted prior to the current pandemic, my recently published study has shown that having plants in domestic front gardens (front yards) is associated with lower signs of stress. Given that front gardens are increasingly being paved over by developers, we wanted to look at front gardens specifically to understand what their value and impact are mentally, socially, and culturally. Front gardens are also a bridge between private and public life.

Because they're visible to neighbors and passersby, they may be able to contribute to the well-being of the community, too.

Our experiment evaluated physiological and psychological stress levels before and after adding plants to previously bare front gardens in Salford, Greater Manchester. We took measures of participants' cortisol con-



Attention restoration theory proposes that exposure to natural environments restores our ability to concentrate on tasks that require effort and directed attention.

EKATERINA KOLCHENKO/SHUTTERSTOCK

centrations (sometimes referred to as "the stress hormone") in their saliva, as well as self-reported perceived stress. Participants ranged in age from 21 to 86, and 64 percent of them were women.

We added two planters with ornamental plants, including petunias, violas, rosemary, lavender, azaleas, clematis, and either an Amelanchier (snowy Mespilus) tree or a dwarf juniper tree. These were chosen for their ease of maintenance and familiarity to most people in the United Kingdom.

We also provided the 42 residents with compost, self-watering containers, a watering can, and a trellis. The research team did all the planting to ensure that all the gardens were similar. Participants were given advice on how to maintain and water their plants and were permitted to add further plants or features. The new additions were as low maintenance as possible.

Lower stress

Over a period of one year, we found that having plants in previously bare front gardens was associated with a 6 percent drop in residents' perceived stress levels. This scale measures the degree to which situations in life are considered to be stressful by taking into account feelings of control and the ability to cope with stressors.

We also found statistically significant changes in participants' salivary cortisol patterns. Cortisol is the body's main stress response hormone, which can activate our "fight-or-flight" response, and can regulate sleep and energy levels. We need cortisol ev-

ery day to be healthy, and typically concentrations peak as we wake up, and taper down to their lowest level at night. Disturbances to this pattern indicate that our bodies are under stress. We found that 24 percent of residents had a healthy daily cortisol pattern at the beginning of the study. This increased to 53 percent three months after adding the plants, suggesting better mental health in these participants.

Stress reduction theory proposes that natural environments provoke instantaneous emotional responses and fewer negative feelings than nonnatural environments.

Reasons for these changes can be explained by what participants told us during interviews. Residents found that the gardens had a positive influence on their outlook on life, with strong themes developing around more positive attitudes in general, a sense of pride, and greater motivation to improve the local environment. The gardens were also valued as a place to relax.

A small addition of a few plants in the front garden was a positive change to their home environment and the street.

All these well-being benefits of green spaces are understood to be based on two environmental psychology theories: attention restoration theory and stress reduction theory. Both theories are based on Wilson's biophilia hypothesis that humans have an innate affinity with the natural environment.

Attention restoration theory proposes that exposure to natural environments restores our ability to concentrate on tasks that require effort and directed attention. Spending time in natural environments demands less "brain power" so to speak, as we don't need to focus as much on specific stimuli or tasks nor on suppressing distractions. Nature also provides us opportunities for reflection. Stress reduction theory proposes that natural environments provoke instantaneous emotional responses and fewer negative feelings than nonnatural environments.

Our study's results show the importance of even small green spaces for reducing stress, and may be important considerations in local planning, urban development, and health and social care. Integrated thinking between the built environment, environmental and health sectors is necessary.

The findings from this project also support the social case for more street-facing gardens and green spaces. For example, biophilic building standards, environmentally focused urban strategies, and walkable street initiatives could be significant ways of achieving this. Importantly for landscape architects and other professionals working with designed green spaces, there is scope for considerable impact on human perceptions, health, and well-being.

For residents who have a front garden space, planting designs can be low maintenance without taking up too much space. Container plantings may be most appealing for renters. But for those without access to an outdoor space, there is some evidence that indoor houseplants also provide mental health benefits.

Lauriane Suyin Chalmin-Pui is a well-being postdoctoral fellow with the Royal Horticultural Society, University of Sheffield in the UK. This article was first published on *The Conversation*.



Intentional Ways to Reduce Holiday Stress

We induce stress with certain thoughts and behaviors that are within our power to change

JOSHUA BECKER

Relieving stress any time of the year is worth the effort. But during the holidays, with the extra rush, hurry, and expectations, reducing stress is even more important.

Statistically speaking, people are more likely to feel their stress increase rather than decrease during the holidays. Let's change that.

Stress increases when our attention is fixated on our problems or worries.

Intentional Ideas to Reduce Holiday Stress

1. Don't expect (or even pursue) perfection.

There is no such thing as perfect: the perfect tree, the perfect outdoor decoration, the perfect play, the perfect dinner, the perfect gift, the perfect Christmas morning, etc. They do not exist.

If you want to cut down your holiday stress, remove the pursuit of perfection, and replace it with "my best effort."

2. Don't overspend.

Some 77 percent of us expect to exceed our holiday budget this year (and only 37 percent will put a post-holiday budget plan in place to recover). Overspending your budget adds stress during the holiday and after—a double dose. Say "no" to holiday overspending. Choose to spend within your means instead.

3. Set boundaries if necessary.

Relationships can be difficult and unhealthy family relationships can be extra strained during the holiday season. There are times, certainly, when it's best to stay away entirely. But oftentimes, families want to be together during the holidays.

If the idea of spending time with family causes stress in your life, make decisions about setting healthy boundaries. There are many ways to do that, including clearly communicating your needs and valuing yourself and your time.

4. Set healthy expectations for your kids.

"Maybe you'll get it for Christmas" are some of the most dangerous words we can use during this season with our children. It sets an unhealthy expectation that the number of gifts under the tree will be limitless.

Continued on Page 10

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Ease your way through the holidays with more reasonable expectations.

Intentional Ways to Reduce Holiday Stress

We induce stress with certain thoughts and behaviors that are within our power to change

Continued from Page 9

But we all know that's not going to be the case. And when it comes time to open the presents, our anxiety level is through the roof.

Instead, be sure to set reasonable expectations throughout the season.

5. Appreciate the simple and free. Holidays don't have to be expensive, rushed, and stressful. One important key to accomplishing this reality is to appreciate and find joy in the simple and free. Keep your tastes simple and enjoy the magical moments.

There is as much joy to be found in a conversation with your grandparent, a quiet snowfall, or baking cookies with your kids as you can find flying halfway around the world to a beach in the Caribbean or spending thousands of dollars on gifts.

Enjoy the simple and you'll never run out of joy—because your holiday season is full of moments to enjoy.

6. Embrace a 'less is more' mentality. In almost every case, less is more, if you can begin to see it.

You don't need to spend days decorating the home with countless Christmas decorations when one box of meaningful decorations would suffice. You don't need to make commitments every night of the week when a few strategic outings will fill your calendar enough. And you don't need an entire tree stuffed with presents when a few thought-out gifts will be more appreciated anyway.

If you want to reduce stress during the holiday seasons, notice how less is more. And then embrace it fully.

7. Reflect on the positives often and regularly. Stress increases when our attention is fixated on our problems or worries. Of course, life is never perfect and some problems or issues tend to be extra apparent during the holiday season.

To counteract this, it is wise to be intentional and consistent with reflecting on the positives.

Maybe your extended family relationships aren't perfect, but they are still better than other families. Maybe you didn't get every gift you wanted for Christmas, but you certainly got some good ones. Or maybe your travel plans weren't pulled off flawlessly, but at least you arrived at your destination.

Keep your attention on the positives in all situations.

8. Hire some help. While not available for everyone, hiring some extra help during the holiday

seasons is a great way to reduce some stress. Hire the neighbor boy to shovel your driveway throughout December, or hire a housekeeper to do some cleaning before your family arrives. Even if you're not incredibly wealthy, it might be worth looking into your local pricing for such options. They might be more affordable than you think.

And since buying extra time is one of the three ways researchers have found you can spend money to increase happiness, it might just be worth the investment.

(The other two are spending money on others or spending money on experiences.)

In almost every case, less is more, if you can begin to see it.

9. Don't cross the same bridge twice. There's an old saying that goes like this, "We'll cross that bridge when we get to it." The point of the saying is this: Don't worry about a situation until that situation is actually in front of you. When you get to the bridge, cross it. You can't cross it before you arrive at it anyway.

One reason the holidays can become stressful for us is we begin worrying about all the countless unhealthy and unhappy circumstances we might encounter. We worry about family, or travel, or plans, or the meal, etc. But worrying about a problem that may or may not arise in the future requires you to cross the bridge twice—once before it arrives and once when it arrives.

Determine this holiday season to not cross the bridge twice. Don't let worry get the best of you. Rather than wasting energy imagining countless unenjoyable circumstances, decide to wait to see if they even arise. When they do, cross the bridge—once.

10. Practice moderation. Moderation, in so many ways, is the key to reducing stress during the holidays. Moderation in your diet, spending, commitments, alcohol, responsibilities, etc. From A to Z, embrace moderation throughout the holiday season. You'll be glad you did—and so will everyone else.

A less stressed holiday season? Sounds lovely. And totally possible.

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

Why Is COVID-19 Pandemic So Hard on Young People?

Research suggests that young people are more stressed, anxious, and depressed than other age groups

SOPHIE MCMULLEN

Hello, it's me, a college graduate representing the class of 2020! During the pandemic, I had my last semester of college partially online, then searched for jobs in a struggling economy, all from the comfort and isolation of my childhood home.

Many of my peers have had similar challenges, and others have been cut off from loved ones, laid off, or watched a family member suffer from COVID-19.

Of course, people of all age groups are struggling right now. Young parents are contending with child care and work at the same time, while the elderly are more isolated than ever. And yet research across several countries suggests that across the age spectrum, younger people are faring the worst, with greater stress, anxiety, and depression.

"The COVID-19 outbreak represents an extraordinarily stressful experience for youths, including how necessary public health measures may also threaten personal and collective meaning-making, and disrupt family dynamics and youths' usual social environment," Cécile Rousseau and Diana Miconi of McGill University wrote in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*.

Why are youth especially vulnerable during this time, and what we can do about it? Although scientists are only beginning to explore these questions in the context of COVID-19, research on well-being across the lifespan can give us some clues about what might be occurring.

Young People in the Pandemic

The evidence that young people are struggling continues to grow. For example, in a study of more than 7,000 Chinese people in February, people under 35 reported higher levels of anxiety and more depressive symptoms compared to other age groups.

In Spain, just as the pandemic began to affect the country, 48 percent of people ages 18 to 25 were experiencing moderate depression, according to a survey study. In contrast, this was true of only 21 percent of their 26- to 60-year-old counterparts, and 6 percent of those older than 61. According to the researchers, the elevated rates of stress, anxiety, and depression for young people could have been partially due to the additional stress they were experiencing as they tried to adapt to online education.

In a survey study in Slovenia, younger participants noted worse stress and mental health compared to their older counterparts. Here, one major factor that seemed to contribute to mental health was people's resilience: their ability to handle painful feelings, deal with whatever life throws at them, and bounce back from hardship.

Not only was resilience important for protecting against elevated stress and worse mental health, but it also reduced the negative impact of risk factors, such as pre-existing health conditions, on mental health.

Few of these studies offered any clear explanations for this pattern, though. Why do young people seem to be struggling so much more than older adults right now?

How Emotions Change as We Age

Research on how our emotions change across the lifespan offers a clue. According to Stanford psychologist Laura L. Carstensen's socioemotional selectivity theory, young people tend to have different goals and relationship behaviors because of the way they perceive time. When time remaining in life seems expansive, as it does for most younger adults, we tend to focus on knowledge-seeking goals, like investing in a long-term purpose or project. These types of commitments tend to be more emotionally taxing.

On the flip side, when older adults perceive their time as limited, they tend to focus on emotion-related goals, such as savoring positive moments and engaging in activities that make them feel good, with a focus on more immediate payoffs.

In other words, even outside of a pandemic, older adults put more attention and effort into regulating their emotions, and actually tend to be higher in well-being.

But add a pandemic to the equation,



Young people expect certain key rites of passage that are being delayed by COVID-19.

Young people have been hit particularly hard during the pandemic. Fortunately, being aware of this can allow many of them to take steps to tend to their well-being.

and young people are at an even bigger disadvantage. The goals we tend to focus on—such as gaining new skills or succeeding at our jobs—are being thwarted, as school is disrupted and employment hard to find. Meanwhile, while their lives may certainly be restricted, older adults are more practiced at finding contentment in the little things.

According to Carstensen's theory, these differences extend to people's social lives, as well. Younger people want to maximize their social connections and connectivity overall; they prefer novel social interactions that could have potential payoffs in the future, so they tend to build a larger network. This contrasts with older people, who become more selective and undergo a pruning process that leaves them with a more intimate circle of friends—a habit much more suited to the days of social distancing and pandemic bubbles.

The loss of rituals like graduation may be another reason why young people are struggling.

In other words, the conditions of life under this pandemic make it harder for young people to capitalize on social connections, and act according to our instinct of exploring a vast array of social opportunities. We miss out on letting loose with friends at a concert, experiencing the dating scene and seeking a lifelong mate, and attending networking events to help advance our careers.

The Loss of Rituals

As part of the University of California-Berkeley Class of 2020, I attended graduation on Minecraft, an online game that lets you create the game space. In this case, the game space was used to create a virtual ceremony on a virtual Berkeley campus.

While this was a thoughtful way of adapting to the situation, it certainly didn't evoke the sense of ritual and sentimentality that my peers and I would have felt in gathering together in person.

Besides, what's a graduation ceremony without all of the sobbing parents? This day reminded me that graduation is less about the ceremony itself and more about the feelings that are shared with your friends, family, and community.

The loss of rituals like this may be another reason for the current struggles of young

people, says Betty Ray, the founder of the Center for Ritual Design, who works to help people navigate personally meaningful life transitions.

Whether it's moving to college, graduating, or getting your first apartment, rituals are very important to young people, marking the journey into adulthood. Rituals, no matter how big or small, also provide a sense of belonging and meaning. They represent growth and signify the end of one chapter and the start of another.

As Ray explains, coming of age has always been important for young people. Graduation, for example, is a paramount experience when a young person is launched into the world. These milestones help to create critical family bonding and personal growth.

"Having an authentic rite of passage, focused on purpose, designed for the young person to grapple with the most important questions... is invaluable," says Ray.

Those important questions include "What is my purpose?" "What do I care about?" "What am I good at?" and "What does the world need?"

Rituals give us time to reflect on where we came from and where we're going. And crafting this solid sense of identity has huge mental health upsides.

To foster a sense of purpose for young people in this rocky time, Ray suggests finding ways to reclaim our rituals. It's best if our rituals are action-oriented and embodied in a way that goes beyond just thinking. For example, on a small scale, we could take a walk in nature to experience beauty, or commit to a daily journal to get beyond a typical to-do list and reflect more deeply on life.

Ray notes the importance of our mindset and a sense of receptivity, which can help us find meaning even in simple ritual practices.

How Young People Can Cope

Besides reclaiming ritual, researchers are already exploring other ways that young people (and others) can cope with the isolation and stress of the pandemic.

For example, Japanese researchers argue that one way young people can combat mental health struggles is to try to deliberately savor ordinary, everyday experiences by using the five senses to amplify positive emotions and promote a sense of calm.

In practice, this might look like bringing attention to your breathing and the sensation of each of your fingertips as a grounding practice in an overwhelming moment.

Similarly, a study with 282 Belgian college students showed that positive rumination, or focusing prolonged attention on pleas-

ant aspects of the present moment (such as the awe of watching a sunset or reveling in the joy of a good phone call with a friend), promoted positive emotion—and telling others about these feelings was even more beneficial. This is pretty much the opposite of what some of us are doing when we spend hours a day consuming COVID-19 news, which can hurt our mental health.

When we are struggling, researchers from Slovenia suggest a few approaches that can be helpful for young people. For one, they recommend practicing psychological coping strategies that can help us solve problems, deal with difficult emotions, and find meaning in our lives.

For example, we can try looking at the situation from a different perspective to find the silver lining, such as the improved relationships with others or greater strength or competence that we are building through adversity. We could also adapt to the situation by shifting our goals or re-prioritizing our life values.

Based on research about natural disasters and trauma, the researchers also highlight the crucial role of human connection and social support. Finding ways to stay connected and give and receive support can help combat the traumatic experiences many are facing due to this global pandemic.

As young people try to grapple with online learning, search for jobs in a struggling economy, and cope while cut off from our support systems, it's clear that our age group is struggling. Although our minds might be drawn to pursuing big future goals and meeting new people, in this world today it is critical to put effort into our emotional wellness and our close connections.

I hope to practice savoring the positive emotions that arrive and nurturing them to the best of my ability, all while doing everything I can to stay socially connected. On the ritual side, I plan to keep up my surfing practice, which centers me in providing a space for quiet reflection.

And I'll continue to ponder my answer to Ray's questions of "What does the world need right now?" and "How can I contribute?"

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WISE HABITS

Create a More Spacious Life

Putting space into our schedule can be essential to replenish ourselves



We live in a time of endless business. That can be addictive and draining.

LEO BABAUTA

Contemplating how I want to live, I became clear in the last few months that I needed to create more space in my life.

My life is full, which is a wonderful thing—I have lots of people in my life who care about me, who want to spend time with me, or want to work with me. Amazing!

And yet, it's become clear to me that in order to show up fully for everyone I'm serving, I need to also have space to replenish. To fill up my tank.

So I set out to create that space. Here's how it looks for me at the moment:

I'm taking Decembers and June off, mostly.

I had to talk with all of my clients and shift my programs so that I could do this, but it's happening. It also means I did a bunch of writing ahead of time. I am still doing some work, including creating a new course and setting intentions for 2021, but I'm not doing client calls, webinars, or meetings. This month is the first time I've ever taken off a full month!

I cleared Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

I used to have meetings on Fridays and Saturdays, but now I keep those days clear. I still do some work, but it's much more spacious and I can take the days completely off if I feel like it.

I'm leaving the other days more spacious as well.

I only do about three calls a day (down from

5 to 6 calls a day at my peak) and I don't block off every hour anymore, so that I can have a greater sense of spaciousness.

What do I do in those spaces?
Anything I feel like!

Here are some of my more common ways to use the space:

- Rest
- Head out to nature and spend some time in solitude
- Listen to a podcast
- Read with my kids
- Hang with my wife
- Call my mom, grandma, or siblings to catch up
- Read a book
- Reflect on bigger picture stuff
- Take care of chores
- Write a book about my grandmother
- Or do whatever work I feel like



I've found that this kind of space is incredibly nurturing, replenishing, and life-giving. And so few of us take it for ourselves.

I know that not everyone has this kind of freedom, and I am grateful that I can do it. But I challenge you to see where you're cutting this possibility off for yourself, and see if you could create it. It might take a few months to create, but if you stand for this possibility for yourself, you might surprise yourself.

Leaving ourselves more free time can ensure we can keep serving the people we care about.

MONKEY BUSINESS IMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK

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

Intimate Partner Violence Has Increased During Pandemic, Research Suggests

Stress, economic hardship, lack of social support, and drug or alcohol abuse are risk factors

MEGAN STUBBS-RICHARDSON & H. COLLEEN SINCLAIR

As we face rising COVID infection rates, the possibility of additional quarantines rises. Although stay-at-home orders might protect individuals from the virus, home isn't safe for everyone.

Studies show that domestic violence calls to police and shelters in the United States have risen 6 percent to 21 percent (variation depending on the data source) since the start of the pandemic, with the largest increase occurring in the first five weeks of quarantine.

Social media outlets could offer innovative ways to make reporting violence easier.

Calls to hotlines have also increased. Google searches for information about domestic violence hotlines have also gone up, with spikes in April, a time when most of the United States was under stay-at-home orders.

This isn't surprising to those of us who study domestic violence. With COVID-19 came higher unemployment and financial strain, both correlated with domestic violence. As quarantines and social distancing continue, isolation increases, social support lessens, mobility decreases, access to resources is strained, and stress from the

changes in routine, like work and school closures, rises. Life is turned upside down.

As researchers who study intimate partner violence, we know the pandemic has only exacerbated many of the risk factors for the escalation of violence. One example: Partners' spending more time together than usual, such as during the holidays, increases risks of family violence.

Stress, economic hardship, a lack of social support, gun ownership, lower educational status, and drug or alcohol abuse are risk factors for intimate partner violence. All of these factors are exacerbated during a pandemic.

Getting Reliable Data

All of these factors are red flags, indicating that victims may be at heightened risk during these trying times. However, getting data during a pandemic is particularly difficult. Under the best of circumstances, data must be collected, processed, and analyzed before numbers can be presented to the public. That always takes time. A pandemic complicates things even more.

Right now, we do not have updated national statistics on victim reports of domestic violence during the pandemic. That's why, to get immediate numbers, we rely largely on the police call or shelter call data.

But that 6 percent to 21 percent jump in calls likely underestimates the problem. Interactions with police officers are down overall, in part, because of social distancing policies and practices. However, even before the outbreak,



Quarantine conditions worsen nearly every risk factor for domestic violence.

domestic violence was an underreported crime.

The increase in calls appears to be coming largely from households where police haven't made contact before and those in rental complexes, perhaps a result of neighbors reporting because, in spending more time at home, they are more likely to be witnesses. In contrast, incidents in rural communities where housing is spaced far apart are likely underrepresented in our current data.

Even before COVID-19, the severity of domestic physical abuse was worse in rural areas compared with urban environs. The lack of public transportation in rural areas adds to the problem because it is more difficult for victims to escape or reach shelters that are often in urban locations. These issues have only been heightened by the pandemic.

What Can Help

One possible way to improve response is to let victims report abuse in nontraditional spaces, like pharmacies. This approach has been used successfully in France and Spain. For instance, in Spain, victims use a code word—"Mask 19"—when speaking to pharmacists to identify the need for help. Traditional sources, such as hotlines and 911, could allow for coded reporting also. With shelters less available during the pandemic, hotels have been used to house victims.

Social media outlets could offer innovative ways to make reporting easier; for instance, private features, such as hidden "customer service" chat rooms on platforms that link to the national hotline, could benefit victims trying to reach out while their abuser is nearby. Shortening the hotline number to three digits—a more memorable, quicker dial—could also help. All of these changes, particularly now, can help victims find the privacy they need so they can safely report the abuse.

If you need help in a domestic violence case, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233); text LOVEIS at 22522; or visit thehotline.org

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Exercise can enhance overall health and improve immune system response, which is critical to surviving COVID-19.

MADE TO MOVE

At-Home Exercises Can Help Older People Boost Their Immune Systems

Research suggests older people can significantly reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection by keeping active

MARK A. GLUCK, BERNADETTE A. FAUSTO & LISA CHARLES

Older adults, especially those over 65, have five times the risk of hospitalization and 90 times the risk of death from COVID-19 compared with younger adults.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 78 percent of the more than 114,000 COVID-19 related deaths between May and August were people age 65 and older. Many of those individuals had compromised immune systems due, in part, to a variety of other health conditions that include obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, respiratory disease, and hypertension.

The CDC suggests these additional health problems could lead to increased severity of COVID-19.

The good news, however, is that regular exercise and cardiorespiratory fitness can significantly reduce the risk COVID-19 poses to older adults by improving overall health and boosting the immune system.

Now Isn't the Time to Stop Moving

Staying active can be challenging, as many older adults are remaining at home most, if not all, of the time to avoid the novel coronavirus. As a result, the very changes in lifestyle that keep people safe from exposure can also result in their adopting sedentary habits—which leave people vulnerable to serious health consequences should they get COVID-19.

Exercise, especially aerobic exercise, which gets the heart pumping hard and improves cardiorespiratory fitness, has multiple health benefits, including reduced risk for stroke, heart attack, depression, and age-related cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that older adults get at least 150 minutes a week of moderate- to vigorous-intensity exercise. That means three 50-minute sessions each week, or a little over 20 minutes per day.

Firing Up the Immune System

Not only can exercise enhance overall health, it can also specifically improve immune system response, which is critical to surviving COVID-19.

As humans age, the immune system becomes progressively less effective at responding to new viruses because of an age-related weakening of the immune system, also known as "immunosenescence."

The good news is that exercise improves the efficiency of the immune system in people of all ages. Every session of exercise mo-

As humans age, the immune system becomes progressively less effective at responding to new viruses.

bilizes billions of immune cells throughout the body. The more immune cells circulate, the better they are at spotting and attacking potential pathogens.

Although there is no data yet on how exercise and cardiorespiratory fitness can reduce the risk of hospitalization or death from COVID-19, previous studies show that regular exercise improves the immune response to other viral infections. Regular exercise has also been shown to lower the risk of death from viral and respiratory illnesses. Furthermore, increased physical activity is known to improve and prolong the immune response from the flu shot.

Working Out at Home

How can older adults safely exercise and keep aerobically fit while stuck mostly at home without access to a gym? At the Aging & Brain Health Alliance at Rutgers University–Newark, we have been offering virtual exercise classes, by video conference or phone, for seniors using materials they can easily find around the home.

Here are a few suggested exercises from our fitness classes you can do safely on your own at home.

One of the best exercises to get you started on your fitness journey is to walk the floors of your home. Whether in a house or an apartment, take time every hour to get up and just walk. Set aside 5 to 10 minutes with the goal of increasing your daily step count and improving your overall cardiorespiratory health. Challenge a family member to join you and make it fun.

Finally, use a chair. Sit at the edge of a solid chair focusing on maintaining good posture. Plant your feet hip-distance apart; take a big inhale and, on the exhale, slowly lift one knee toward your chest. This is a seated crunch and it will engage your deep core muscles. Complete five of these knee lifts on each side, making sure to do each knee lift on the exhalation.

Exercise habits developed during this period of COVID-19—and maintained after the threat has passed—will support your immune health for years to come.

Mark A. Gluck is a professor at the Center for Molecular and Behavioral Neuroscience at Rutgers University–Newark. Bernadette A. Fausto is a postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Molecular and Behavioral Neuroscience at Rutgers University–Newark. Lisa Charles is a fitness/wellness research coordinator for the Rutgers Aging Brain Health Alliance at Rutgers University–Newark. This article was first published on The Conversation.

Eating Fat to Stay Healthy?

Some fats can boost immunity while others can deplete it

MOHAN GARIKIPARITHI

Fat and immune health have an interesting relationship. Sometimes fat can work against immune strength—other times, it can bolster it.

The first part of understanding how fat can influence health is distinguishing between body fat and dietary fat. High levels of body fat can cause inflammation and tax the immune system, making you more susceptible to illness.

Dietary fat is a completely different thing, and depending on what type you eat, you could be helping or working against immune strength.

Unhealthy fats such as trans fats or high levels of saturated fats can cause inflammation and weaken your immune system. The most dangerous sources of these fats are those found in processed foods like microwave popcorn, potato chips, lunch meats, and other processed meat.

On the other hand, healthy fats such as those found in olive oil, salmon, avocado, and a selection of nuts and seeds can have immune-strengthening effects. They might help your body's immune response by lowering inflammation.

Olive oil is a rich source of monounsaturated fats, which are associated with a host of health benefits. It is highly anti-inflammatory and is linked with a decreased risk of inflammatory chronic health conditions such as heart disease and type-2 diabetes.

A number of factors play into immune strength. Diet is a major one.

These anti-inflammatory effects help to curb chronic inflammation that can have immunosuppressant effects.

These effects can help in the long and short term. People with existing inflammatory health conditions are at higher risk for cold, flu, and COVID-19. Their bodies are not prepared to fight off illness, and infection could lead to severe outcomes.

A stronger immune system might help you avoid illness in the first place and make your body more efficient at relieving illness. In the long-term, it can help your immune system stay stronger and more functional.

A number of factors play into immune strength. Diet is a major one. Focusing on boosting healthy fat intake and limiting unhealthy dietary fats may help lower your risk of illness. Fat intake is just one part of a dietary approach to stronger immunity.

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.



Healthy fats like those found in olive oil, salmon, avocado, and a selection of nuts and seeds can have immune-strengthening effects.

Early Cancer Screening Not Beneficial for Women in Their 40s

A recent study has reignited the controversy stemming from the consequences of over-screening

JOSEPH MERCOLA

In a study published in *The Lancet Oncology*, scientists analyzed the effectiveness of breast cancer screening in Great Britain. The researchers concluded that mammograms beginning at age 40 or 41, as opposed to the recommended age 50 by the NHS, were associated with a relative reduction in breast cancer mortality.

They noted that a 2010 study found that early screening in ages 40 or 41 to 48 resulted in an 18.1 percent false positive rate which resulted in cytology and surgical and nonsurgical biopsies in women who ended up not actually having cancer. Even so, they still reported that their own study showed a statistical reduction of mortality in the first 10 years.

Other experts found the data from this study showed no statistical differences, and even the study's researchers noted that "the absolute reduction remained constant." They also admitted that "after more than 10 years of follow-up, no significant reduction was observed" and that "overall, there was no significant difference" in breast cancer deaths—just as their critics said.

According to the American Cancer Society, 73 percent of women over 45 had a screening mammogram within the past two years. In the United States, these percentages add up to an overwhelming number of women. There were 61.91 million women from age 40 to 70 in July 2019.

Assuming a woman stops having mammograms at age 70, there may have been 45.19 million women who have had a mammogram in the past two years. When you consider the average cost of a mammogram is \$100, the total revenue generated may be close to \$4.5 billion. Although your out-of-pocket expense may not be \$100 per test, someone is paying the charges.

This may be one explanation for why women continue to get recommendations for screening mammograms, despite a lack of evidence these tests can reduce mortality and mounting evidence they may in fact cause harm.

No Answers From New Study About Early Mammograms

The UK Age trial was designed to compare annual mammograms in women who begin getting the test at age 40 to those beginning at age 50, against cancer mortality. The first results of the trial were published in *The Lancet* in 2015 after 17 years of follow-up.

The study enrolled 160,921 women from October 1990 to September 1997. Of these women, 53,883 joined the intervention group in which they received a mammogram nearly every year until age 48. Another 106,953 women were in a control group who received usual medical care, in which they didn't receive their first mammogram until at least age 50.

False-positive mammograms cost the United States \$4 billion each year when treatment has started after a misdiagnosis.



False positive mammograms can trigger chemotherapy and mastectomies, only to find the tumor is benign.

Mammograms use radiation in relatively high doses.



The results published after a median follow-up of 17 years were similar to those published five years later in the final results. While the participants were randomly assigned to the intervention or control group, the researchers chose to include 33.5 percent in the intervention group and 66.5 percent in the control group.

From the start of the study until February 28, 2017, the women were followed for a median of 22.8 years. During this time, the researchers believe their statistics showed a reduction in breast cancer mortality at 10 years of follow-up but no significant reduction after age 50.

Yet, not every expert interpreted the results the same. One paper, titled "Breast Cancer: Study Claiming That Screening Women in Their 40s Saves Lives 'Found the Opposite,' Say Critics," was published in the *BMJ*. A second opinion was published in *The Lancet*, in which the author said:

"No difference in mortality from breast cancer was found between the group that began yearly mammography screening at age 39-41 years until they entered the National Health Service (NHS) Breast Screening Programme at age 50-52 years and a group that did not begin mammography screening until they entered the NHS Breast Screening Programme."

"... overall there was no mortality reduction in the intervention group compared to the control group by the end of follow-up."

"One surprising aspect of the report by Duffy and colleagues is the conclusion that no overdiagnosis of breast cancer occurred in either group beyond that which would occur when screening those aged 50 years and older. Because overdiagnosis appears to increase with age, it is possible that overdiagnosis occurred in both groups after the age of 50 years, but could not be detected because of the design of the trial."

Data Show Screening Asymptomatic Women Isn't Saving Lives

The third response to this research paper, also published in the *BMJ*, was written by Hazel Thornton, honorary visiting fellow, department of health sciences at the University of Leicester. In it, she also finds the statistics don't support the conclusion reached. She has been a long-term critic of over-screening and explained why in her testimony before the United Kingdom's House of Commons Health Committee on breast cancer services as a witness in 1995.

She was asked why she thought the NHS Breast Screening Programme was "a costly trawl of an asymptomatic public group ... creating huge costly psychological and physical morbidity." To which part of her answer was because it "focuses on the women who benefit, in other words, the one life that is saved, and it overlooks the hundreds of women that go through the

process and in some cases suffer psychological harm for that one. It is unbalanced and disproportionate and should be reviewed, in my opinion, at the moment."

There are critics who claim arguments such as Thornton's overestimate the potential harm associated with over-screening for breast cancer. Yet their arguments have no answer for the numerous studies that demonstrate over-screening and overdiagnosis of breast cancer is a significant emotional and financial issue.

In 2014, the *BMJ* published a 25-year follow up from the Canadian National Breast Screening Study in which the researchers found 22 percent of the screening-detected invasive breast cancers were overdiagnosed. "Annual mammography in women aged 40-59 does not reduce mortality from breast cancer beyond that of physical examination or usual care when adjuvant therapy for breast cancer is freely available," they concluded.

In a Cochrane review of the literature to analyze the efficacy of screening mammograms, researchers found eight trials that met the review criteria, which included 600,000 women from ages 39 to 74. After an analysis of the data, they discovered that—as Thornton testified—for every 2,000 women screened over 10 years, one avoids dying of breast cancer, and 10 will be treated unnecessarily.

Additionally, more than 200 women will undergo psychological distress and uncertainty for years after receiving false-positive findings. A cohort study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* engaged participants in Denmark from 1980 to 2010.

A 2010 study found early screening in ages 40 to 48 resulted in an 18.1 percent false positive rate which resulted in surgical and nonsurgical biopsies.

They also found screening didn't lower the incidence of advanced tumors and concluded it was likely "that 1 in every 3 invasive tumors and cases of DCIS [ductal carcinoma in situ] diagnosed in women offered screening represent overdiagnosis (incidence increase of 48.3 percent)."

Overdiagnosis, Overtreatment, and Overexposure

In 2012, *The New England Journal of Medicine* published a research paper by two scientists who examined more than 30

years of data trends looking at the incidence of early- and late-stage breast cancer in women 40 years and older. What they found caused some controversy, which led one of the authors to produce a short video explaining the results.

The expectation that doctors would find a greater number of early-stage cancers should have been accompanied by a comparable reduction in the number of women who presented with advanced cancer. This wasn't the case, suggesting there is a substantial number of women who are overdiagnosed, and that "screening is having, at best, only a small effect on the rate of death from breast cancer."

In this video, the presenter makes the point that nearly "half of screen-detected breast cancer now represent overdiagnosis." The harm from overdiagnosis doesn't stop with the psychological distress it causes a woman and her family. It also leads to overtreatment, and treatment often begins with a biopsy.

The most common type of biopsy for breast cancer is a needle biopsy. The doctor has a choice between a fine needle aspiration (FNA) or a core needle biopsy of the breast tissue. According to the American Cancer Society, a core needle biopsy is the preferred type when breast cancer is suspected since it removes more tissue than an FNA without needing surgery.

However, research published in their journal in 2017 concluded that core needle biopsies increase the risk of distant metastasis (the spread of cancer to other organs) 5 to 15 years after breast cancer had been diagnosed. This happened at higher rates than in women undergoing an FNA. A second study published earlier concluded both types of biopsies put a woman at risk for metastasis, concluding:

"Manipulation of an intact tumor by FNA or large-gauge needle core biopsy is associated with an increase in the incidence of SN [sentinel node] metastases, perhaps due in part to the mechanical disruption of the tumor by the needle."

False-positive mammograms cost the United States \$4 billion each year when treatment has started after a misdiagnosis, including chemotherapy and mastectomies, only to find the tumor is benign. This places an extraordinary emotional, mental, and financial burden on the woman and her family.

The mammogram itself doesn't come without risk. Mammograms use ionizing radiation in relatively high doses, which contributes to the development of breast cancer. In a 2016 study, the authors write, "Ionizing radiation as used in low-dose X-ray mammography may be associated with a risk of radiation-induced carcinogenesis."

According to one study, annual screening using digital or screen-film mammography

on women aged 40 to 80 years is associated with a lifetime risk of increased induced cancer and a fatal breast cancer rate of 20 to 25 cases per 100,000 mammograms. In other words, for every 100,000 women who get an annual mammogram, there will be 20 to 25 cases of fatal cancer in their lifetimes as a result.

Some critics claim other researchers overestimate the potential harm associated with over-screening for breast cancer.

You Have Choices

Although mammography is most often recommended, women have choices for diagnostic tests that don't use radiation. Women should be provided with information to make informed decisions and be allowed to use their choice. Other potentially safer options include self and clinical breast exams, thermography, ultrasound, and MRI. Thermography and ultrasound use no radiation and can detect abnormalities that mammograms may miss, especially in women who have dense breast tissue. While effective, these tests can be difficult to access in the United States.

It's also important to understand that screening doesn't prevent breast cancer. Instead, prevention involves healthy lifestyle choices, avoiding toxins, and paying attention to certain nutritional factors. Vitamin D is a vital nutritional factor that can radically reduce your risk of breast cancer.

It's crucial you know your vitamin D level, which is vital to several health conditions and optimizes it to protect your health. Conventional medicine may have led women to believe that simply getting an annual test will protect them from breast cancer. However, leading a healthy lifestyle and getting informed of your screening options can help you avoid this potentially deadly pitfall.

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, please visit for study links.

3-Spice Combo Improves Chronic Knee Osteoarthritis

Studies show other natural alternatives to common painkillers can be effective without the side effects



Turmeric extract, when combined with gingerols in ginger and piperine in black pepper, shows promise for addressing osteoarthritis, with results similar to those achieved by a common anti-inflammatory medication.

Osteoarthritis is a degenerative joint disorder that is the leading cause of disability in the elderly and a major contributor to chronic, debilitating pain. It is a challenging disease with limited treatment options.

While medications such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), acetaminophen, and opioids are widely used to relieve osteoarthritis pain, they usually come with side effects and are unable to reverse the cartilage damage that underlies this condition. This has positioned curcumin, the active ingredient in the spice turmeric, as a strategic way to address the inflammation and protect the joints.

A study further investigated curcumin and its effectiveness for knee osteoarthritis when paired with beneficial ingredients in ginger and black pepper, with promising results.

Both curcumin and NSAID drugs relieved arthritis but curcumin users reported fewer side effects.

Spice Combo Works as Well as Drug Treatment

An August study investigated curcumin when combined with gingerols in ginger and piperine in black pepper, which may enhance and sustain its effect against the disorder, compared with the drug Naproxen.

The study subjects were randomly assigned to receive turmeric extract, ginger, and black pepper together or Naproxen for four weeks. The results indicate that taking the three-spice combo twice daily for four weeks improved prostaglandin E2 (PGE2), a primary inflammatory mediator in osteoarthritis, levels similar to Naproxen. PGE2 decreased significantly in both groups, without any substantial difference between them.

Previous studies have also explored the role of curcumin in treating osteoarthritis. In

one study involving patients with moderately severe symptoms that required treatment with an NSAID, the subjects were given the NSAID diclofenac—50 milligrams (mg) twice daily—or curcumin, 500 mg three times daily. Both treatments relieved arthritis symptoms and helped to a similar degree, with curcumin users reporting fewer side effects.

Sound Alternatives to Painkillers

There has been growing public awareness of research revealing adverse effects linked to synthetic painkillers. This awareness drives a demand for natural and evidence-based alternatives. Here are four clinically validated, natural alternatives that are worth considering for osteoarthritis and other sources of chronic pain:

Arnica: In a 2007 study, topically applied arnica was found to be as effective as ibuprofen for relieving symptoms due to osteoarthritis of the wrist. It also led to fewer side effects.

Thyme: A 2004 study found that thyme extract worked as effectively as ibuprofen in decreasing pain and spasm symptoms associated with dysmenorrhea, or menstrual cramps.

Omega-3 fatty acids: In a 2006 study, omega-3 supplementation reduced neck and back pain patients' need for pain medications, along with improving their overall pain and joint pain. The subjects saw results consistent with previous research, indicating outcomes at least as effective as ibuprofen.

Cinnamon: A 2015 study concluded that cinnamon was as effective as ibuprofen for menstrual pain.

The GreenMedInfo.com database offers more than 3,000 abstracts related to turmeric research, as well as databases on natural anti-inflammatories and analgesics.

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Chinese Food Therapy: 6 Different Ways to Look at What You Eat

Before we mangled foods with chemical additives, Chinese culture viewed food as medicine

LYNN JAFFEE

During my first class in the study of Chinese medicine, I was told that the Chinese way of thinking was different from everything that I had grown up knowing.

The difference between the two cultures is readily apparent when we talk about food. It's hard not to notice how differently we Westerners think about what we eat when compared to the principles of Chinese food therapy. Here are a few disparities between the two cultures in how we view food.

1. Good Food Versus Bad Food

In Western culture, we like to make foods the good guy or the bad guy. A decade ago, fats were the villain, today it's carbohydrates and gluten. This faddish way of eliminating whole food groups is crazy and often unhealthy. That said, eliminating hyper-processed foods and foods full of denatured ingredients is another matter entirely.

2. Raw Versus Cooked

In our Western culture, raw foods are king, and the more the better. However, a principle of Chinese food therapy is that it takes more energy, or digestive fire, to break down and digest raw foods than those that are cooked. This understanding has been affirmed by western research, including that cooking can raise the calories absorbed from food.

It's important to understand, this view

was developed before our age of hyper-processed, calorie-dense foods. In those times, all food was relatively healthy, and getting more energy from food was generally a good idea. Now many foods are stuff with sugars and oils that need to be considered differently. These types of foods fall into the category of "wrecked foods." More on that shortly.

In the Chinese view, if you're ill, your body is depleted or you're having digestive problems, and eating raw food may aggravate your condition.

Cooking your food is a way of "predigesting" it, and a way to get more energy from each meal, because you're not using that energy to break down raw food and fiber.

3. Calories and Energy

In general, the Western perspective is that we should control or at least keep track of the calories that we are eating. However, in Chinese medicine, you derive your energy from the food you eat, and you need enough to function. In other words, calories are qi, or energy, and are needed to perform a whole host of functions including digestion, immunity, healing, movement, and temperature regulation to name a few. The reason for these differences has much to do with the volume of processed and unhealthy foods present in the Western diet.

4. Too Many Calories Equals Fat ... or Not
We have long believed that if you eat too many calories you will get fat, which may be true.

However, in Chinese medicine, the underlying cause of obesity is something called dampness. Caused by eating too much of the wrong food and poor digestion, dampness is an accumulation of moisture, which puddles in various places in your body.

This concept does mimic the action of calorie-dense junk foods in the body. These foods can't be properly digested and the body can be stirred to inflammation by



In traditional Chinese culture, food is viewed as having the potential to heal and harm.

these foods. And those foods that have too much fat do accumulate in the body.

Edema, yeast, athlete's foot, weepy rashes, and adipose (fat) tissue are also considered boggy accumulations of dampness.

5. Food Groups

Our Western diets are grouped according to carbohydrates, fats, and proteins. Ideally, we try to get a good balance of each, according to ever-changing research and food pyramids.

In Chinese food therapy, foods are categorized by their actions and their inherent temperatures.

Foods eaten can impact your body to build up vital substances like qi or blood, or they can boost circulation or drain dampness. The temperature of a food is a way to describe the post-digestive thermal effect on your body—not how spicy or hot it is when you eat it, but how warm or cool you feel later. For example, ginger and cinnamon are considered to be warming foods, while the effect of mint is cooling.

In Chinese food therapy, food choices are recommended for you based on how they will act on your body based on your unique needs. For an excellent resource on the properties of food and Chinese food

therapy, check out "Healing With Whole Foods: Asian Traditions and Modern Nutrition" by Paul Pitchford.

6. Additives and Preservatives

If you push your cart through the center of any Western large chain grocery store, you will find aisles and aisles of products that have been chemically altered with additives to enhance flavor and shelf life.

In Chinese medicine, something called wrecked food is considered to be a source of illness. This originally meant food that has spoiled, however, today food that has been chemically altered beyond recognition as food is also considered wrecked.

Chinese food therapy offers up a few simple ways that we Westerners can eat a little better—and happier.

Choose what's right for you; don't get caught up in food fads or the good food-bad food dichotomy. Eat real food, cook most of it, pay attention to your digestion, and enjoy what you eat.

Lynn Jaffee is a licensed acupuncturist and the author of "Simple Steps: The Chinese Way to Better Health." This article was originally published on Acupuncture-TwinCities.com

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