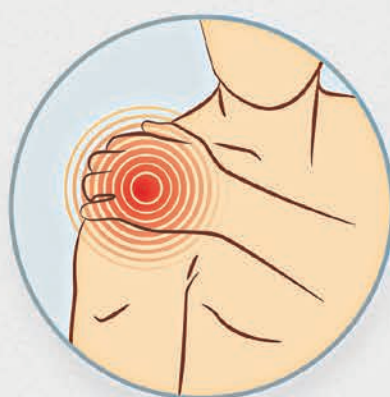


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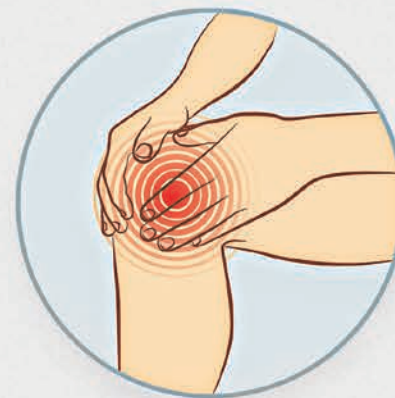
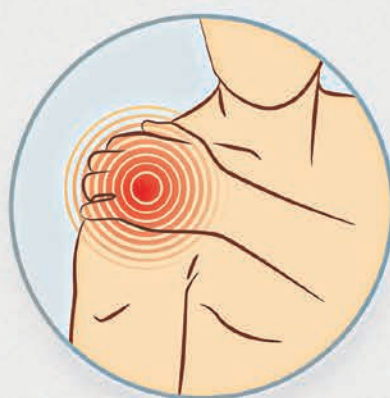
MIND & BODY

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The Body's Best Defense, on Overdrive

When inflammation harms instead of helps—and how to stop it



▲
Inflammation may hurt even as it heals, but sometimes this biochemical mechanism misfires.

CONAN MILNER

When you catch an infection, your body responds with redness, swelling, and pain. This is called inflammation. It's how our immune system gets rid of intruders.

This response is an essential part of the healing process. But inflammation can also work against us—when things go wrong, it can become a major driver of disease.

How can something that heals also make us sick? It depends on how long inflammation lasts.

Stress triggers inflammation. If that stress is an infection, the immune system turns



on the inflammatory response until the invader is thwarted, and the body goes back to normal. But when stress is constant and the immune system can't kill it, inflammation never shuts off, and a process that should be temporary becomes permanent.

Inflammation is regulated by substances called cytokines, which are proteins made by the immune cells to communicate with each other. These inflammatory chemicals are produced in response to a cold or flu, and we feel achy and fatigued for a few

◀ Like a fever, inflammation is one of the ways the body responds to invading pathogens.

PANDUM/SHUTTERSTOCK

days until the immune system prevails. It is believed that an explosion of cytokines, called a cytokine storm, is one of the primary culprits in COVID-19 fatalities. In essence, a misfiring immune response triggered by COVID—and likely a host of other co-morbidities that also undermine the immune system—is killing people.

Cytokines can also be triggered in response to anxiety or depression, but they don't bring help, only hurt. That's why people with chronic inflammation always feel achy and fatigued.

But chronic inflammation is more than just an inconvenience. In recent decades, *Continued on Page 2*

New Research Review Says HCQ Plus Zinc Reduces COVID-19 Deaths

Journal of Medicine paper advises hydroxychloroquine and zinc for early treatment

JOSEPH MERCOLA

Hydroxychloroquine has been one of the most controversial treatments for COVID-19 throughout the pandemic. Now a new research review finds this inexpensive drug offers a safe treatment for many people infected with the virus.

Early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, doctors around the world reported high success rates using an inexpensive treatment protocol of hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) and zinc, typically in combination with an antibiotic to treat secondary bacterial infections.

HCQ is a zinc ionophore, which means

it helps zinc get inside your cells where it can block viruses from replicating. The FDA issued an emergency use authorization in March 2020 that allowed chloroquine phosphate (CQ) and hydroxychloroquine sulfate (HCQ) to be used to treat patients hospitalized with COVID-19. The order did not mention zinc and described using HCQ for its own antiviral properties. The order was based on initial experimental usage in hospitals that showed promising results.

That authorization was with- *Continued on Page 4*



Researchers affirm hydroxychloroquine with zinc as an initial treatment for COVID-19.



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TRUTH AND TRADITION

The Body's Best Defense, on Overdrive

When inflammation
harms instead of helps—
and how to stop it

Continued from Page 1

researchers have discovered that this steady drip of cytokines underlies a host of illnesses such as Alzheimer's disease, rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, certain cancers, diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and osteoporosis, as well as psychiatric disorders such as anxiety, bipolar disorder, depression, schizophrenia, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

This new understanding of inflammation is one of the most important discoveries in health research in recent years, according to Dr. George M. Slavich, director at the Laboratory for Stress Assessment and Research at the University of California-Los Angeles.

"All told, inflammation is involved in at least eight of the top 10 leading causes of death in the United States today. Understanding how inflammation promotes poor health, and how and when we can intervene to reduce inflammation-related disease risk, should thus be a top scientific and public priority," Slavich wrote in a March 2015 article in the journal Brain Behavior Immunity.

when stress doesn't let up, and our ability to recover is diminished, inflammation eventually leads to disease.

"Your heart attack didn't just happen today, it started 20 or 30 years ago with this process," Dr. Malarkey said.

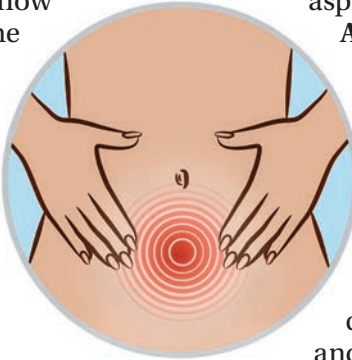
Building Resilience

Stress is a fact of life, but why do some people handle hard times better than others? In studying the stress response, Dr. Malarkey has identified five domains that act as buffers to adversity. He calls the model **REMAP**.

R is for relational engagement: connectedness with family members and friends.

E is for emotional sensibility: a healthy emotional life.

M is for meaningful engagement: satisfaction and meaning in different aspects of life.



A chain reaction triggering or calming inflammation begins in our gut with food. SHIGARU/SHUTTERSTOCK

A is for awareness of self and others: perceptions and reflections that influence how we feel about ourselves and how we relate to others.

P is for physical health behaviors: getting good nutrition, regular exercise, and good-quality sleep, and abstaining from smoking and other harmful substances.

The stronger we are in preserving these domains, the better our resilience to stress, says Dr. Malarkey. If we fail in these domains, our immune system gets activated.

The good news is that change is possible. Research has shown that when patients work to improve in these five domains, they can prevent the effects of chronic stress.

"Just by getting right thinking, you can drop the cytokines in your immune system, and this inflammatory stuff begins to fall," he said. "We were able to lower risk factors for heart disease in inflammatory markers just with some daily practice of mindfulness meditation."

Developing an Anti-Inflammatory Mindset

Growing awareness of this inflamma-

POSITIVE AGING

Do You Have Insomnia?

Good sleep hygiene can help
you avoid drugs

MARILYN MURRAY WILLISON

There used to be an old wives' tale that suggested older people needed a lot less sleep than younger people. But according to The National Institutes of Health, older adults only need one hour less sleep—the recommended amount is 6 1/2 to 7 hours per night. Unfortunately, almost half of adults age 60 and older experience insomnia, a form of sleep deprivation that can last anywhere from days to weeks to months.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, normal sleep is NREM sleep or non-rapid eye movement sleep. There are four stages, beginning with light sleep and progressing to deeper sleep. During REM sleep, or rapid eye movement, our breathing becomes irregular and shallow; our eyes move rapidly; limb muscles become immobile, and vivid dreaming may occur. The entire NREM-REM cycle usually lasts around 90 minutes and can take place four to

five times during a night of normal sleep.

It's important to understand this process because as we age, we tend to spend less time in the all-important restorative REM phase. And as annoying as insomnia can be, it can actually serve as a warning signal of other serious but unrecognized physical problems. In fact, according to Dr. Alon Y. Avidan, the director of the sleep clinic at the University of California—Los Angeles David Geffen School of Medicine, insomnia "is a symptom, not a diagnosis." In older



PHOTOROYALTY/SHUTTERSTOCK

Many hyper-processed foods contain ingredients our body does not recognize as food and treats as invaders, which triggers inflammation.

Two of the biggest complaints among people with chronic inflammation are pain and fatigue. No one wants to move when they're feeling sore and tired, but making even a little effort toward regular exercise can have a big impact in the long run.

Because it puts stress on the body, exercise initially triggers inflammation. But this brief spike falls away once your workout is finished. Over time, this regular burst of activity helps decrease chronic inflammation, as exercise helps the body become better adapted to stress. Experts advise combining light aerobic and weight training or resistance exercises to best reduce inflammation.

If that doesn't get you moving, then consider that an out-of-shape body becomes more efficient at generating inflammation. An abdominal bulge isn't just unsightly—it actually develops into an extra gland, complicating an already dysfunctional endocrine system.

Genetic Fate, Personal Responsibility

As far back as the 1950s, researchers noticed behavioral and endocrine responses to stress.

Although the idea of inflammation as the root cause of chronic disease has been gaining steam in the medical community in recent years, the concept is at odds with the prevailing notion that genetic fate decides who gets sick and who doesn't. But Dr. Malarkey says genes alone don't tell the whole story.

"People get stuck in this thinking: 'My Daddy got this, so therefore I'm going to get it.' Well, it's not the genes. It's the fact that you're all anxious and you all eat the same way. It's your environment. These things alter the way genes get expressed. That's why you're all getting heart disease," he said.

Ancient Medicine, Redefined

Exercise, eat right, make friends, get enough sleep, try not to worry, and fulfill your purpose in life: The lessons of REMAP sound suspiciously similar to the no-nonsense health advice doctors have been giving for ages. But to Dr. Malarkey, this is proof that he's on the right track.

"In my opinion, all the traditional systems of medicine all involve the same processes that I am now putting into contemporary psychology and basic science and biology," he said.

"Each culture has to reinterpret these things in their own language. We have to keep finding this out in light of the contemporary issues that face us, or else we lose the message."



Meditation is a proven way to bring down inflammatory markers and lower risk factors for heart disease. EPOCH TIMES

tory model of disease has given rise to anti-inflammatory supplements to treat it, such as turmeric and fish oil capsules. These interventions have been shown to reduce inflammation, but their impact is tiny compared to the influence of the mind.

"It's unlikely that any single supplement is going to make a big difference when you have this huge tide coming from your brain every day," Dr. Malarkey said. "The greatest intervention is to have something on board that protects us from stress."

Lots of mental factors contribute to our stress adaptability, but having a sense of purpose plays a key role, Dr. Malarkey says. This often includes activities that make us feel we are a part of something bigger: spiritual practices, positive contribution, or helping others in need.

The strength of our relationships is another key factor in how well we handle stress. Loneliness can be particularly damaging and a key factor in bad health or disease, says Dr. Malarkey.

The groundwork for stress resilience (or lack thereof) starts early in life. In a study published in 1999, researchers found that newborn rat pups who were taken from their mothers in the first week of their lives developed different brain chemistry than rats who got to have mom close by.

Within just one week without contact, the rats' levels of the stress hormone cortisol went into overdrive and couldn't shut off. Similar brain chemistry has been found in humans who experienced a dysfunctional childhood and committed suicide later in life—their receptors for glucocorticoid, the hormone that cuts off cortisol production, were silenced.

According to Dr. Malarkey's research, those who adapt to stress best are people with an active social life and solid relationships. These people are emotionally optimistic and are always engaged in learning new things. They sleep well because their worry level is very low, and they participate in some sort of regular exercise.

Food and Exercise

What you eat and how much you move can also have a significant influence on your inflammatory environment.

"Food is a powerful regulator of the gut microbiome, which is a huge inflammatory regulator of the immune system. Nutrition can affect changes in cells," Dr. Malarkey said.

Sugar, fried foods, and vegetable oils high in omega-6 fatty acids are notorious contributors to inflammation, while fresh fruits, vegetables, and foods high in omega-3 fatty acids help turn off the inflammatory response.

Exercise, too, plays a major role in regulating inflammation, but it can also be one of the hardest habits to adopt.

adults, sleep issues can be triggered by conditions ranging from arthritis and asthma to COPD and prostate problems. And if prescription drugs (like diuretics or antidepressants) or behavioral issues (like an inactive lifestyle or late-night eating) are present, then the problem of sleep deprivation needs to be addressed holistically.

In addition to a full physical checkup, it can help to establish a regular bedtime routine that avoids factors that could interfere with falling—and staying—asleep. Taking a hot bath before bed and drinking a glass of warm milk to help induce sleepiness are two options. And many sleep experts feel that it's important to avoid alcohol before bedtime because even though it can make you sleepy at first, it can make it difficult to stay asleep.

Because we are diurnal creatures, the presence of light can directly affect the quality of our sleep. With a price tag of \$24.95, Lighting Science has created a GoodNight light bulb specifically to help induce sleep with a depleted blue spectrum light. The company has an entire line of biological bulbs that are designed to give off light that will complement (rather than disrupt) a person's circadian rhythm. And in 2016, Apple introduced a feature called Night Shift that reduces the amount of blue light that is emitted

from the products' screens. Philips has developed a line of smart bulbs called Hue that can be connected with a wireless network and smart-home systems like Amazon Alexa and Nest.

Peter J. Hauri, a sleep specialist at the Mayo Clinic, urges patients to practice "good sleep hygiene." His suggestions include:

- Limiting naps to less than 30 minutes a day (preferably in the early afternoon)
- Avoiding stimulants and sedatives
- Getting moderate daily exercise (preferably in the morning or early afternoon)
- Avoiding heavy meals and minimizing liquids for 2 to 3 hours before bedtime
- Getting exposure to bright light or sunshine during the day
- Going to bed only when sleepy

It pays to avoid prescription sleep aids (like Ambien, Rozerem and Sonata) because—like all medications—they can have unforeseen side effects.

Mark Zielinski, who teaches psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, has conducted extensive research on the brain signals that tell the body's major systems to shut down each night. Doctors today know that people who suffer



DRAZEN ZIGIC/SHUTTERSTOCK

A sleepless night doesn't just leave you tired the next day, it undermines general health.

from interrupted or reduced sleep are at higher risk of developing a variety of challenging health issues. These include diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and even obesity.

Matthew Walker, professor of neuroscience and psychology at the University of California—Berkeley, told Alice Park at Time magazine, "Sleep is the single most effective thing you can do to reset your brain and body for health." Obviously, Shakespeare really knew what he was talking about when he wrote, "O sleep,/ O gentle sleep,/ Nature's soft nurse."

Marilyn Murray Willison has had a varied career as a six-time nonfiction author, columnist, motivational speaker, and journalist in both the UK and the U.S. She is the author of *The Self-Empowered Woman* blog and the award-winning memoir "One Woman, Four Decades, Eight Wishes." She can be reached at marilynwillison.com. To find out more about Marilyn and read her past columns, please visit the Creators Syndicate webpage at www.creators.com. Copyright2020 Creators.Com

New Research Review Says HCQ Plus Zinc Reduces COVID-19 Deaths

Journal of Medicine paper advises hydroxychloroquine and zinc for early treatment

Continued from Page 1

drawn in June 2020 when the FDA deemed HCQ unlikely to produce a meaningful antiviral effect with potential risks outweighing the benefits.

The change came on the heels of a study by Oxford University in the United Kingdom that found HCQ underperformed its routine treatment protocols.

Unfortunately, problems in research methodologies assessing the effectiveness and risks of HCQ have left lingering doubts. Those problems include questionable dosing and the absence of zinc, arguably the more important element of any HCQ treatment protocol. The new review was published in the January 2021 issue of The American Journal of Medicine. It finds early use of HCQ and zinc can reduce hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19.

While HCQ is a relatively inexpensive generic drug with little major payout for drug makers, hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in other antivirals and vaccines that drug companies hope to see a return on.

Politicizing Medicine Has Grave Consequences

Discussion of HCQ has fallen under a censorship umbrella that captured several other treatments known to help boost the immune system and lessen other viral infections. That happened when Google and its video platform YouTube began filtering search results. YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki made that move public in April 2020 when she told CNN that the video platform would be “removing information that is problematic.”

She said that would include “anything that is medically unsubstantiated.”

“So people saying ‘take vitamin C; take turmeric, we’ll cure you’, those are the examples of things that would be a violation of our policy,” she said.

“Anything that would go against World Health Organization’s recommendations would be a violation of our policy,” she said.

The problem with the policy is that it ended up censoring validated information and politicizing public health.

While alternative medicine practitioners had already seen this type of censorship, for many conventional doctors, it was their first taste of what it’s like. Many have been absolutely floored by it. As just one example among many, in July 23, 2020, Dr. Harvey A. Risch, professor of epidemiology at Yale School of Public Health, published an op-ed in Newsweek in which he expressed his dismay and frustration.

“I have authored over 300 peer-reviewed publications and currently hold senior po-

Both HCQ and quercetin are zinc ionophores, meaning they shuttle zinc into the cell.



It can be difficult for cells to quickly absorb zinc.

The review also supported early use of corticosteroids and looked at other drugs, including antibiotics.



ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

sitions on the editorial boards of several leading journals.

“I am usually accustomed to advocating for positions within the mainstream of medicine, so have been flummoxed to find that, in the midst of a crisis, I am fighting for a treatment that the data fully support but which, for reasons having nothing to do with a correct understanding of the science, has been pushed to the sidelines.

“As a result, tens of thousands of patients with COVID-19 are dying unnecessarily ... I am referring, of course, to the medication hydroxychloroquine.

“When this inexpensive oral medication is given very early in the course of illness, before the virus has had time to multiply beyond control, it has shown to be highly effective, especially when given in combination with the antibiotics azithromycin or doxycycline and the nutritional supplement zinc.”

The medical review published in the American Journal of Medicine finds early use of HCQ and zinc is a safe and effective treatment. The authors include Risch, as well as a long list of medical doctors from hospitals around the world.

The Importance of Early Outpatient Treatment

The review, titled “Pathophysiological Basis and Rationale for Early Outpatient Treatment of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) Infection,” points out:

“In the absence of clinical trial results, physicians must use what has been learned about the pathophysiology of SARS-CoV-2 infection in determining early outpatient treatment of the illness with the aim of preventing hospitalization or death ...

“Therapeutic approaches based on these principles include 1) reduction of reinoculation, 2) combination antiviral therapy, 3) immunomodulation, 4) antiplatelet/antithrombotic therapy, and 5) administration of oxygen, monitoring, and telemedicine.”

The authors stress that “most patients who arrive at the hospital ... with COVID-19 do not initially require forms of advanced medical care,” and that, therefore, “it is conceivable that some, if not a majority, of hospitalizations could be avoided with a treat-at-home first approach.”

They also stress that since it can take up to a week to get PCR test results back, it’s important to start treatment before results are known. “For patients with cardinal features of the syndrome (i.e., fever, body aches, nasal congestion, loss of taste and smell, etc.) ... treatment can be the same as those with confirmed COVID-19,” they say.

Of course, that is only true in cases in which the treatment is safer than the risk of the disease, and they believe that is true for HCQ.

The Case for HCQ and Zinc

In terms of early drug treatment for patients who are quarantining at home, the authors recommend using a combination of HCQ and zinc lozenges, along with several other drugs (depending on your symptoms).

Zinc is a known inhibitor of coronavirus replication.

While I will review those here, keep in mind that I do not necessarily recommend using all of them, as in some cases there are safer alternatives. At the end of this article, I will summarize my personal at-home treatment recommendation, which I believe is among the absolute safest and most effective.

That said, in his paper, Risch and his co-authors explain the rationale for using HCQ and zinc as follows:

“Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) is an antimalarial/anti-inflammatory drug that impairs endosomal transfer of virions within human cells. HCQ is also a zinc ionophore that conveys zinc intracellularly to block the SARS-CoV-2 RNA-dependent RNA polymerase, which is the core enzyme of the virus replication.

“The currently completed retrospective studies and randomized trials have generally shown these findings:

“1. when started late in the hospital course and for short durations of time, antimalarials appear to be ineffective

“2. when started earlier in the hospital course, for progressively longer durations, and in outpatients, antimalarials may reduce the progression of the disease, prevent hospitalization, and are associated with reduced mortality ...

“A typical HCQ regimen is 200 mg bid for 5 days and extended to 30 days for continued symptoms. A minimal sufficient dose of HCQ should be used, because in excessive doses the drug can interfere with early

immune response to the virus ...

“Zinc is a known inhibitor of coronavirus replication ... This readily available nontoxic therapy could be deployed at the first signs of COVID-19. Zinc lozenges can be administered 5 times a day for up to 5 days and extended if needed if symptoms persist.

“The amount of elemental zinc lozenges is <25 percent of that in a single 220-mg zinc sulfate daily tablet. This dose of zinc sulfate has been effectively used in combination with antimalarials in early treatment of high-risk outpatients with COVID-19.”

It’s worth noting that in areas where hydroxychloroquine is hard to get a hold of, the nutritional supplement quercetin may be a useful (and perhaps even better) substitute, as its primary mechanism of action is identical to that of the drug. It also has antiviral activity of its own.

Zinc Is a Crucial Key

While much attention is placed on HCQ, it in and of itself is not the answer. Zinc is. Both HCQ and quercetin are zinc ionophores, meaning they shuttle zinc into the cell and there’s compelling evidence to suggest the primary benefit of the HCQ protocol actually comes from the zinc, which effectively inhibits viral replication.

If given early, zinc along with a zinc ionophore should, at least theoretically, help lower the viral load and prevent the immune system from becoming overloaded. The problem is that zinc does not readily enter cells, which is why a zinc ionophore is needed.

Evidence of this was presented in a September 2020 study in the Journal of Medical Microbiology. In it, they compared outpatients in hospitalized COVID-19 patients treated with 1 of 3 regimens: HCQ alone, Azithromycin alone, or a triplet regimen of hydroxychloroquine, azithromycin, and zinc.

While the addition of zinc had no impact on the length of hospitalization, ICU duration, or duration of ventilation, univariate analyses showed it did:

Doctors are struggling with restrictions on treatments they trust like HCQ and Zinc.

- Increase hospital discharge frequency
- Decrease the need for ventilation
- Decrease ICU admission rates
- Decrease the rate of transfer to hospice for patients who were never admitted to the ICU
- Decrease mortality

As noted by the authors:

“After adjusting for the time at which zinc sulfate was added to our protocol, an increased frequency of being discharged home (OR 1.53 ...) reduction in mortality or transfer to hospice remained significant (OR 0.449 ...). This study provides the first in vivo evidence that zinc sulfate in combination with hydroxychloroquine may play a role in therapeutic management for COVID-19.”

Another paper that addressed the crucial role of zinc was published in the September 2020 issue of Medical Hypotheses:

“Besides direct antiviral effects, CQ/HCQ [chloroquine and/or hydroxychloroquine] specifically target extracellular zinc to intracellular lysosomes where it interferes with RNA-dependent RNA polymerase activity and coronavirus replication.

“As zinc deficiency frequently occurs in elderly patients and in those with cardiovascular disease, chronic pulmonary disease, or diabetes, we hypothesize that CQ/HCQ plus zinc supplementation may be more effective in reducing COVID-19 morbidity and mortality than CQ or HCQ in monotherapy. Therefore, CQ/HCQ in combination with zinc should be considered as an additional study arm for COVID-19 clinical trials.”

Antibiotics, Steroids, and Other Treatment Additions

In addition to HCQ and zinc, Risch et.al also recommends using one of two antibiotics—azithromycin or doxycycline—primarily to address secondary bacterial infections. Azithromycin also has antiviral properties and anti-inflammatory effects, while doxycycline has “multiple intracellular effects that may reduce viral replication, cellular damage, and expression of inflammatory factors.”

According to the authors, COVID-19 studies that used azithromycin found “markedly reduced durations of viral shedding, fewer hospitalizations, and reduced mortality combination with HCQ.”

People with known or suspected arrhythmias, and anyone taking a contraindicated medication, should get a thorough work-up and review of baseline electrocardiogram though, before receiving HCQ and/or azithromycin. For those worried about azithromycin’s effects on the heart, doxycycline is a better alternative as it has no ill effects on your heart. On the downside, it can cause gastrointestinal upset and esophagitis instead.

An important side note here is that while not addressed in this paper, all antibiotics have the drawback of disrupting your gut microbiome, and should therefore be used only if absolutely needed.

Risch et.al also recommends using corticosteroids, which have immunomodulating effects and help reduce the effects of cytokine storms. As explained in their paper:

“In COVID-19, some of the first respiratory findings are nasal congestion, cough, and wheezing. These features are due to excess inflammation and cytokine activation.

“Early use of corticosteroids is a rational intervention for patients with COVID-19 with these features as they would be in acute asthma or reactive airways disease ... One potential dosing scheme for outpatients starting on day 5 or the onset of respiratory symptoms is prednisone 1 mg/kg given daily for 5 days with or without a subsequent taper.”

Other treatment additions include:

- Colchicine, a nonsteroidal antimitotic that has been shown to reduce D-dimer levels and improve outcomes in hospitalized COVID-19 patients
- Antiplatelet agents such as aspirin (81 mg daily) or heparin to treat the abnormal blood clotting sometimes seen in COVID-19
- Supplemental oxygen if needed

To reduce the risk of self-reinoculation (since the virus is airborne), they also recommend opening windows and/or spending long periods of time outdoors (away from others) without a face covering.

Hydroxychloroquine Has a Proven Safety Profile

While media headlines have painted HCQ as a life-threatening drug, it actually has a very robust safety profile that goes back decades. In a paper published in the American Journal of Epidemiology, Risch reviewed several large-scale studies demonstrating the safety of the medication.

In his Newsweek article, he also pointed

out that the adverse event reports cited by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration when it warned HCQ might cause cardiac arrhythmia, especially when administered with azithromycin, were from patients who had used HCQ for very long periods of time for the treatment of chronic conditions such as lupus or rheumatoid arthritis. The same risks simply do not apply when you’re taking HCQ for a few days or weeks.

“Even if the true rates of arrhythmia are tenfold higher than those reported, the harms would be minuscule compared to the mortality occurring right now in inadequately treated high-risk COVID-19 patients,” Risch wrote.

“This fact is proven by an Oxford University study of more than 320,000 older patients taking both hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin, who had arrhythmia excess death rates of less than 9/100,000 users ...

A new paper in the American Journal of Medicine by established cardiologists around the world fully agrees with this.”

Indeed, the so-called evidence that HCQ causes lethal heart problems has been shown to be fraudulent. One study was retracted after it was discovered the data had been manufactured, and other large-scale trials were all using toxic doses.

While doctors reporting success with the drug were using standard doses around 200 mg per day for either a few days or maybe a couple of weeks, studies such as the Bill & Melinda Gates-funded 19 Recovery Trial used 2,400 mg of hydroxychloroquine during the first 24 hours—3 to 6 times higher than the daily dosage recommended—followed by 400 mg every 12 hours for nine more days for a cumulative dose of 9,200 mg over 10 days.

Similarly, the Solidarity Trial, led by the World Health Organization, used 2,000 mg on the first day, and a cumulative dose of 8,800 mg over 10 days. These doses are simply too high.

Meanwhile, a July 1, 2020, retrospective analysis of 2,541 patients in Michigan found use of hydroxychloroquine alone cut mortality by more than half, to 13.5 percent from 26.4 percent. Patients received 400 mg of hydroxychloroquine twice on day 1, followed by 200 mg twice a day for the next four days.

No adverse heart-related events were observed. Hydroxychloroquine in combination with azithromycin had a mortality rate of 20.1 percent, and azithromycin alone had a mortality rate of 22.4 percent. The azithromycin was dosed as 500 mg on day 1, followed by 250 mg once a day for the next four days.

According to the authors, “The combination of hydroxychloroquine + azithromycin was reserved for selected patients with severe COVID-19 and with minimal cardiac risk factors.” Unfortunately, zinc was not included in this trial.

“Physicians who have been using these medications in the face of widespread skepticism have been truly heroic,” Risch wrote in Newsweek. “They have done what the science shows is best for their patients, often at great personal risk.

“I myself know of two doctors who have saved the lives of hundreds of patients with these medications but are now fighting state medical boards to save their licenses and reputations. The cases against them are complete without scientific merit ...

“As all know, the medication has become highly politicized. For many, it is viewed as a marker of political identity, on both sides of the political spectrum. Nobody needs me to remind them that this is not how medicine should proceed ... Reality demands a clear, scientific eye on the evidence and where it points.”

With that in mind, evidence that HCQ could be useful against SARS-CoV-2 goes as far back as 2005, when the article “Chloroquine Is a Potent Inhibitor of SARS Coronavirus Infection and Spread” was published in the Virology Journal.

According to this study, “chloroquine has strong antiviral effects on SARS-CoV infection of primate cells. These inhibitory effects are observed when the cells are treated with the drug either before or after exposure to the virus, suggesting both prophylactic and therapeutic advantage.”

In other words, chloroquine functioned as both a prophylactic (prevention) and a treatment against SARS coronavirus. This is precisely what many doctors have found with HCQ as well—a drug that is very similar to chloroquine but has a safer profile—when used against SARS-CoV-2.

Improper dosing fed claims HCQ causes heart problems.



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

Growing Up in a Culture of Empty Cheers

Why Instagram-ready positivity is failing our girls with platitudes that set them up for inadequacy

NANCY COLIER

My babysitter gave my 10-year-old daughter a scrapbook. The sparkly pink binder was filled with adorable photos of the two of them eating ice cream, drinking smoothies, ice skating, wearing rainbow wigs, dancing to TikTok videos, and all the other Instagram-ready photos we're so familiar with these days. In between the photos, my sitter had written and compiled stickers with uplifting memes and positive messages for my daughter to live by.

To name a few: "Live life on your own terms," "Whatever is good for your soul, do that," "Find the magic in every moment," "You only live once, so live it your way," "You're right where you need to be," "No one can make you feel less-than without your consent," "You decide your destiny," "If you're always trying to be normal, you'll never know how amazing you can be," "Own your life," "Everything happens for a reason, you decide the reason," "You go girl," "You be you" ... well, you get the point.

Our empty Instagram culture pumps out platitudes that leave young women with distorted expectations.

While I was touched by my sitter's efforts, and most of all, by the absolute delight and pride in my daughter eyes as she flipped through the book for the hundredth time that night, truth be told, I was also disturbed by what I read on those pages.

Many argue that these uber-positive, social-media-driven messages inspire confidence and power in girls. I'm not so sure. I'm also not sure they're harmless.

At a basic level, most of these aphorisms are simply gobblede-gook. They may feel good to say or hear in the moment, and may offer a fleeting burst of inspiration, but they're not helpful in any real way. They don't change the way someone feels, or provide any lasting confidence, or comfort for that matter.

For that girl who feels insecure and unpopular, telling herself she's crushing it will not change what it feels like to walk into her middle school cafeteria. While these positive mantras may distract her from the deafening negative thoughts in-



There's nothing in these cheerleading fumes that help our girls become confident women.



All photos by Shutterstock

forming her she's not pretty enough, not cool enough, or not (fill in the blank) enough, they're not going to make a dent in her self-doubt or create a boost in her self-esteem. Her inner reality cannot be corrected or soothed with such empty clichés. And yet, she has to pretend they can, and she believes they should.

What's problematic about such vernacular becoming standard speak is that it promotes a way of thinking, imagining, and being with one's own feelings. These sorts of quotes create a climate in which young women believe they "should" feel brave, "should" know their worth, "should" know how to be who they are, "should" be able to "crush it."

This diet of positive platitudes on which our girls are feasting is a set-up for inadequacy. It ends up creating yet another way for a young woman to fail at being the fabulous, Instagram-ready superstar she's supposed to be (and everyone else seems to be).

Furthermore, these snappy sayings, designed to make our girls feel powerful, are disturbingly superficial and inadequate. Being a girl, a teenager, a young woman, heck a grown woman with confidence in this society is hard. Trying to build and hold onto self-esteem in a culture that implores females to be beautiful, have fabulous bodies, blaze a trail, be warriors, and also be kind, selfless, compassionate, brave, and always positive, not to mention, make everyone else feel good in the process, is a daunting task indeed.

True self-esteem, the kind that's personal, reliable, and lasting, the kind that holds up under real challenge, requires more than wearing a "You're braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think" tank top.

Growing up in this social-media madness, our girls need real psychological and spiritual tools, guidance that contains substance and depth. They need support that acknowledges the challenges they face, not only as young people, but young people growing up in this digital carnival.

Sadly, what we offer our girls, as nourishment, protection, and fuel for their journey into womanhood in this society, is woefully deficient. We tell them "You're worth it," but with-

out teaching them why that is, or on what to base their worth. We tell them "you be you," but without teaching them what that means, or what values to base that "you" on. We let our girls down and then leave them to feel ashamed for not being able to make use of such artificial nonsense.

Perhaps the most prevalent message in all these cheerleading memes is that of being the master of our own universe, and the idea that our destiny is in our control, that anything and everything is possible if we set our mind to it. (If you can dream it, you can do it.)

There's no doubt that we need to feel a sense of control in our life, at every age. It's a central aspect of our well-being. We must believe that we can create our reality, that what we do makes a difference in what happens to us. And yet, this social-media-fueled "you control your destiny" message has left out a vitally important aspect of this truth.

Here's the rub: Our destiny is up to us and also not up to us. Sometimes we control what happens to us and sometimes we can only control how we respond to what life decides for us. No matter how much you're crushing it, there are things in life that we just can't control.

We convince our girls that they can control their destiny, but we don't prepare them for the experience of not being in control. Most young people these days are desperately ill-equipped to deal with or soothe themselves when it comes to what they can't control and what they didn't wish for. At the same time, they blame themselves for life taking its own path, as if they had failed in some way because they couldn't make it happen the way it happens on Instagram.

We convince our girls that they can control their destiny, but we don't prepare them for the experience of not being in control.

Our girls are growing up on empty platitudes that are fun to shout at a softball game or write in bubble letters in a scrapbook. But sadly, there's nothing in these cheerleading fumes that help our girls become confident women, trust themselves, or manage life as it is. These useless words quickly disappear into the shallow cultural sea in which our kids are swimming and growing.

There's nothing wrong with a good "You Go Girl" refrigerator magnet. Our happy memes are yummy in the way that cotton candy is yummy. They're pleasurable, but they can also rot our teeth. But whatever we do, let's not mistake these hollow words, this fleeting emotional dust for anything like real nourishment, or real empowerment. They're not that. Our girls deserve that.

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

Parenting in a Pandemic: How to Develop Stronger Family Relationships During COVID-19

TINA MONTREUIL

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly affected us. It has increased our worries and concerns about physical health. COVID-19 has added to the existing challenges parents face and has also created greater awareness surrounding the fragility of mental health.

Yet, the second wave has also paved the way for a larger discussion on ways to promote mental well-being.

As a researcher and a clinical psychologist, I lead a research group that investigates how emotion regulation, values, and beliefs affect the development and inter-generational transmission of mental or behavioral disorders, and how these problems can impact educational achievement.

The Childhood Anxiety and Regulation of Emotions Research Group has developed a school-based program as well as a parenting program, both of which teach core coping skills that have been associated with resilience. Resilience is the capacity for an individual to remain engaged, available, and optimistic instead of withdrawn, overwhelmed, and defeated when faced with hardship and adversity.

Our research group believes that when parents are aware of their own emotional self-regulation, and when they can find space to structure meaningful family activities that promote mutual bonding, both they and their children are in a better position to learn core coping skills that will benefit individuals and family relationships.

Supportive parental practices contribute to children's long-term healthy emotional and psychological development.

Impact of the Pandemic on Family Life
A recent report by the Australian Human Rights Commission investigated COVID-19-related concerns experienced by children aged five and older and emerging adults from January to April 2020. The report suggested that "mental health concerns resulting from COVID-19" and "impacts on family life" were among the

top five concerns endorsed by youth.

Similarly, a July 2020 Statistics Canada report revealed 3 out of 4 parents experienced concerns and worries about balancing child care, their child's schooling, and their own professional work irrespective of the child's age. More than half of parents surveyed reported greater difficulty managing their child's emotions as well as their own.

In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that hospitals across the United States saw a 24 percent increase in the proportion of mental health emergency visits for children ages 5 to 11, from April to October 2020, and a 31 percent increase for children ages 12 to 17.

The arising parenting challenges surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic may represent an opportune time for us to improve our resilience and model more adaptive strategies and skills. In turn, such skills can promote the development of resilient behaviors in our children.

Not everyone reacts in the same way to a given situation. The ability to manage strong negative emotions and shift our mindset to a more adaptive perspective can be developed at any age. Since our brain is most adept at performing a new task early in life, it's most beneficial for people to become socialized in these fundamental life skills early. This will help children to become self-regulated, adaptive, and thriving adults.

Parental Emotions

Findings from our research group's recent study, conducted with mothers, suggest that parents' abilities to regulate their own emotions predicted how frequently and effectively they rely on supportive parenting practices. Supportive practices are things such as comforting children when they experience negative emotions; engaging in problem-solving strategies aimed to reduce children's distress, and discussing children's emotional experiences with them. As such, these results suggest that supportive parenting is associated with children who are better at managing difficult emotions.

We also found that invalidating chil-

dren's emotional expression or ignoring or dismissing the child's emotions contributed to poorer emotion regulation skills in children and that such less-supportive parenting practices were linked to anxiety in adulthood. When parents themselves match or exceed their child's emotions, they also offer less adaptive emotional coaching.

Parents may have heard the airplane safety tip to always don one's own oxygen mask before helping a child: the same applies to emotional regulation. As parents, when we prioritize managing our own stress, tolerating greater uncertainty, and engaging in self-care activities such as exercise, good sleep hygiene, and relaxation, this expands our capacity to respond calmly. This teaches our children that they too can cope and manage stress and related threats.

Supportive parenting is best achieved when a connected, caring, and responsive relationship with children is fostered early on. Supportive parenting that builds resilience is comparable to an early investment that grows with time. It is key to create as many early positive and reinforcing experiences as possible.

Failure: An Opportunity for Growth
Parenting is difficult and striving for perfection is unrealistic and unattainable. We can instead

choose to model that mistakes and failures can be a renewed opportunity for growth. Raising resilient children means that we value teaching them self-compassion, gratitude, delayed gratification, and self-worth to leverage life experiences that facilitate the development of their sense of purpose. It is as critical for parents to value teaching children these core social-emotional skills, just as much as we might encourage them to become expert swimmers or gifted mathematicians.

When supportive parenting and strong family relationships consistently provide opportunities to strengthen coping skills and the ability to regulate emotions, these are also opportunities for children to become skilled at accepting hardship and remaining committed toward achieve-



Parents model emotional self-regulation for their children every day.



However long the road, each step brings you goal closer.

The Long, Slow Path to Progress

JAY HARRINGTON

I stopped writing for nearly two years. I had intended to return to my Life and Whim blog long ago, but various circumstances too mundane and uninteresting to recount got in the way. At least that's how I rationalize things in my mind. Certainly, the COVID-19 crisis didn't help, but my departure long predates the pandemic. In fact, there is no good reason why I stopped doing this thing that once brought me great joy. One important lesson I've learned from the experience is that the hardest part about stopping something you love is learning to start over.

It's Never Too Late

You can likely relate to the pain of starting over. Remember how hard it was to drag yourself to the gym after a long break from exercising? Can you still recall the aches and pains from the day after? Despite the soreness, you may also have kicked yourself for having taken so long to get back at it. It's not so bad to start again—once you've started. The resistance we feel is mostly a mental construct that can easily be overcome when we will ourselves to act.

Many of us have had to make major adjustments over the course of the pandemic given the challenging circumstances, from homeschooling to health concerns to economic uncertainty. Priorities pushed aside. Projects shelved. Expectations lowered.

Perhaps you had that book you wanted to write or business you wanted to start, but couldn't seem to make progress. That's completely understandable, as the mental stresses brought on by the pandemic have been crippling. I don't know about

you, but for me, all that chatter at the onset of COVID-19 about how productive people were during lockdown couldn't end soon enough.

For most, this has been a period during which dreams have been, out of necessity, deferred. And we can certainly relate. In late 2019, my wife, Heather, began taking Life and Whim's business in an entirely new and exciting direction. She began moving beyond our product line and started hosting workshops with other artisans teaching attendees how to tap into their creative spirits. From pottery to weaving, Heather's workshops were well-attended and well-received by those in our community. Almost all quickly sold out. There was lots of momentum.

And then, of course, it all came to a grinding halt in March. But all was not lost. And Heather will soon begin anew, this time with virtual workshops, with a return to in-person gatherings when it's safe to do so.

The point is, no matter how long it's been, it's possible to pick up where you left off. You simply need to start again. It may not be easy—but it is simple. It's just a matter of summoning the will. As George Eliot once said, "It's never too late to be who you might have been."

What Waits to Blossom Within?

Who do you want to be? What do you want to achieve? What suppressed desire is gnawing at you? Fear, procrastination, and self-doubt are thieves of progress. Hard work in pursuit of a worthwhile goal is the sweat equity through which bright futures are built.

But don't expect immediate returns on

ment. Supportive parental practices contribute to children's long-term healthy emotional and psychological development. Parents can help their children develop these key social-emotional abilities in a variety of ways.

1. As a first step, parents should evaluate whether their own emotional and psychological needs are met and do their best to find, advocate for, or create structures or supports to meet these. In return, they may gain the capacity to model these adaptive behaviors.
2. Parents can learn more about core coping skills like emotional regulation. This includes the ability to pay attention to and accept (not judge) our emotions, to label and differentiate emotions. It also means understanding varying levels of emotional intensity, learning how to tolerate and be open to the experience of distressing emotions, and controlling our emotions by changing how we think about the situation at hand. Mindfulness and problem solving can also be easily taught through interactive read-along activities and lessons.
3. Regardless of a family's structure, parents can improve family relationships and connectedness. They can do this by dedicating common time for the family members to congregate and bond with one another through activities like mealtime, game or movie night, and outdoor or sports activities.
4. Parents can work on identifying mutual family values through activities like developing a values coat of arms. Identifying mutual values can be useful when seeking to carve out time spent together based on identified commonalities and shared interests.

Adversity creates accidental opportunities to build skills to endure ongoing or future hardship. This is the essence of resilience: accepting that a door has closed behind us, and being optimistic about what awaits. By being more emotionally and mentally grounded as parents, parents can lead collectively stronger families. Let's stay strong together!

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your investment. Our society has conditioned us to believe in the promise of quick wins and overnight success. The true path to progress is long and slow.

Here's how Maria Papova, author of the Brain Pickings blog, puts it:

"The flower doesn't go from bud to blossom in one spritely burst and yet, as a culture, we're disinterested in the tedium of the blossoming. But that's where all the real magic unfolds in the making of one's character and destiny."

Papova reminds us that it's the journey, not the destination, that matters. If there's one thing I've learned through the process of writing books, building businesses, and trying to make an impact, it's that the outcome of any sustained effort is largely out of your hands. Some things stick, and others don't. But there's always some benefit to be gained from the effort. When you try, you can't help but grow.

Accordingly, no matter how hard the road ahead may seem, you can incrementally—step by step—move toward your destination. The only thing that may be stopping you is a limiting belief about your potential.

What's waiting to blossom inside of you? Don't allow your dreams to wither and die. The world needs the beauty of your unique contribution.

Jay Harrington is an author, lawyer-turned-entrepreneur, and runs a northern Michigan-inspired lifestyle brand called *Life and Whim*. He lives with his wife and three young girls in a small town and writes about living a purposeful, outdoor-oriented life.

CONNECT TO LEAD

How Change Affects Mindset



SCOTT MANN

After the pandemic struck, change became a commonality spreading across the world like wildfire. “Change management” has been a buzzword as long as I’ve been working in organizational leadership, but it took on an epic level after the pandemic started.

You were probably faced with some really tough decisions in 2020, weren’t you? Business leaders, parents, coaches, teachers, you name it, we all had to rapidly adapt to change in our environment just to survive. And that’s not easy, that’s the stuff that keeps us up at night.

I went through it, too. I went through it as a leader in combat, as a leader in special forces, and in 2020 as a small-business owner, as a nonprofit founder, as a father, as a husband. I get it. And it’s something we’re still going to wrestle with in 2021. Pick a crisis, any crisis, there’ll be another one. There will always be another issue, another change, that we have to get through.

Frankly, change can really freak people out. One thing I consistently see working with leaders at different levels in different industries is that we have all become so far removed from our primal human nature. We don’t understand and we disregard what’s below the waterline of our emotions.

We do that at our peril, because in reality, we are just well-dressed Neanderthals. When we experience change, we get primal ... and so do the people around you. It goes back to the most basic elements of human nature that we learned as Green Berets working in trust-depleted villages all over the world.

There are three main reasons why we react this way to change. One is the resource-scarcity mindset. We navigate the world by acquiring and maintaining resources for survival. We’re wired for it. If change is invoked, particularly in a time of fear, then you better know that the primal mindset of resource scarcity will kick in full-force.

We live in a land of abundance, but that disappears the second we think we’re going to lose a paycheck. Do I have enough? Can I feed my family? You have to consider how change will affect your mindset and the mindset of the people around you. Understand that when your family, your students, or the people you work with are freaking out over a change that they’re reacting from a mindset of resource scarcity.

When your family or the people you work with are freaking out over a change, they’re reacting from a mindset of resource scarcity.



How we evaluate change can be affected by our concerns over status and scarce resources.

The status mindset is another reason why we respond negatively to change. We are status creatures. We survive and thrive by developing a social skillset. Therefore, we worry about our status with our in-group, but we also worry about people outside our in-group and how we are perceived by them. It’s a survival thing. How we group is a big deal. When change happens, the first thing we do is worry about how that change will affect our status in the presence of other people in our arena. How will people perceive me? Will I lose their respect?

The most primal mindset we have to be aware of when it comes to change is safety. There’s a primal fear attached to change that makes us feel unsafe, unsettled. It is important to hold space and learn how to create psychological safety for yourself and those around you through nonverbal interpersonal skills. What do I mean by holding space? Simply ask yourself if you, or the people you care about, feel safe. If the answer is no, then take the actions necessary to create a safe environment. That’s holding space.

Change is necessary to thrive, so how do we overcome those primal fear-based mindsets?

When you’re experiencing change, consider this advice from Dr. Kendall Haven: “Rather than talk about all the change you’re going to do in the beginning, talk about what you’re fighting to protect, talk

about what you’re fighting to preserve, and involve your people in that. Once you get on the same page and lower the emotional temperature around the white-hot topic of change, then you can start to pivot the conversation toward meaningful change in order to preserve the things that matter.”

This approach co-creates, rather than mandates, solutions with the people who matter to you. This works because it’s a mindset shift that takes us away from primal fear and anchors us to something inclusive, something real. As an example, when discussing things like household budgets, don’t focus on the change or what you have to let go of, but focus on what you are fighting to protect with that budget.

When you talk about what you’re fighting to protect, ask thoughtful, open-ended questions like, what’s keeping you up at night? Better if they can be “we” questions. What do we stand for? How do we protect this? How do we preserve this? Let those questions guide you.

Orienting everything you do on what you’re fighting to protect will allow you to manage change in a meaningful way.

Scott Mann is a former Green Beret who specialized in unconventional, high-impact missions and relationship building. He is the founder of Rooftop Leadership and appears frequently on TV and many syndicated radio programs. For more information, visit RooftopLeadership.com



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Preventing Alzheimer’s: A Mind and Body Approach



Research has found that in order to keep a healthy mind, you have to move your body.

Diet, exercise, and mind care are key to staving off an illness that drugs can do little to stop

More than 5 million Americans suffer from Alzheimer’s disease—and that number is expected to triple in the next 30 years.

Given the staggering costs and impacts of patient care, medical researchers are keen to head off this statistic. But so far, pharmaceutical drugs can only slow the onset of Alzheimer’s, and those that have been approved perform only modestly better than a placebo. The drugs are also expensive and are only effective for some patients. For those who do see their symptoms improve, the effects are usually temporary.

In an effort to find a better treatment, dozens of medications engineered to treat Alzheimer’s are under investigation. The most promising candidate in the pipeline is called Aducanumab. The drug is designed to stick to amyloid molecules linked to the brain plaques that develop Alzheimer’s patients. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will decide in March 2021 if the drug performs well enough to meet approval.

So far, progress on new drugs has been slow. Harvard Medical School’s blog notes it’s been more than 17 years since the FDA last approved an Alzheimer’s drug. Drug companies Merck and Eli Lilly and Co. have both terminated trials of highly anticipated Alzheimer’s drugs.

Polyphenol-rich dark chocolate is increasingly recognized as a health food. Studies show that refined cocoa polyphenols significantly improve brain function and volume in people with slight cognition problems.

Continued on Page 12



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Could a Too-Clean Society Trigger a Rise in Food Allergies

Systems in our body that protect us from toxic food may be involved in the dramatic rise in food allergies, say researchers

JOSEPH MERCOLA

Rising rates of food allergies may be the result of environmental factors and a misfiring protection system, propose four immunobiologists from Yale University. A paper published by the scientists in the journal Cell suggests an exaggerated activation of the body's toxic food protection system in response to environmental factors is behind the increase. They write that as many as 8 percent of children in the United States have a potentially deadly response to what are classified as the major eight food allergens.

These are often referred to as the "Big 8" and include milk, eggs, wheat, soybeans, fish, crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, and peanuts. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported a rising rate of food allergies in children from data gathered from 1997 to 2011. Researchers found that over a 14-year period, the rate of food allergies increased to 5.1 percent from 3.4 percent. According to the most recent data from 2016, that rate may have jumped again to 7.6 percent, which means the rate has more than doubled in 19 years. The Yale immunobiologists propose this trajectory may be the result of an increasing amount of unnatural substances or environmental chemicals.

Your Body Has a Food Quality Control System Physicians and researchers are concerned about this increasing prevalence of food allergies. The Yale researchers point toward the multiple sensory mechanisms your body uses to monitor what is consumed and how these affect allergies.

These systems include smell, taste, and chemosensory processes established in the gut and impacted by your gut microbiome. The researchers argue that allergic responses play a role in the body's food quality control system. The system includes identifying and responding to food antigens, which can result in a lethal food allergy. One prevailing theory for the rise in food allergies has been a "too clean" environment—called the hygiene hypothesis—in which children and adults are no longer exposed to natural pathogens in the environment, triggering the immune system to become hypersensitive. Writing in Clinical & Experimental Immunology in 2010, scientists expanded the explanation to include the presence of processed foods, dishwashing detergent, and other environmental chemicals, as well as

a "too clean" environment with the absence of natural microbial exposure. The Yale immunobiologists argue these all play a role in disrupting the internal food quality control system, designed to help protect your body from noxious chemicals and harmful substances. The group believes this theory may lay the groundwork for future research, treatment, or prevention. In a press release from Yale University, one of the authors of the new paper highlighted the problem researchers were facing.

Food preservatives and chemicals like dishwashing detergents bring novel elements for immune systems to monitor.

"We can't devise ways to prevent or treat food allergies until we fully understand the underlying biology. You can't be a good car mechanic if you don't know how a normal car works," said co-author Ruslan Medzhitov, Sterling professor of immunobiology and investigator for the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

"One factor is increased use of hygiene products and overuse of antibiotics and, secondly, a change in diet and the increased consumption of processed food with reduced exposure to naturally grown food and changed composition of the gut microbiome," Medzhitov said. "Finally, the introduction of food preservatives and environmental chemicals such as dishwashing detergents introduced novel elements for immune systems to monitor." When your body detects toxins have been consumed, it also activates the parasympathetic nervous system, intended to help neutralize the health threat. This response can trigger food allergies and a lack of natural threats can make the system hypersensitive.

The team believes the collective changes to the food supply and environment have effectively made the immune system respond to food proteins in the same way they would to protect against toxins.

Other Food Allergy Factors Other theories that have been proposed for increased food allergies include overuse of medications used to reduce stomach acid, as these can alter your gastrointestinal-

nal microbiome. Research from King's College London also proposed that when parents avoid introducing young children to foods known to produce an allergy, there was an increased potential the child would have a reaction later. The study selected children who had a known allergic reaction to eggs or had eczema to evaluate if avoiding an allergen would increase or decrease a food allergy. The data showed when parents avoided feeding their children peanuts, 13.7 percent developed an allergy by the time they were 5 years as compared to 1.9 percent who were introduced to peanuts earlier. Researchers are also questioning if food allergy rates are rising because we spend more time indoors, thus contributing to the fact that 40 percent of the population is vitamin D deficient. Vitamin D plays an important role in regulating an effective immune response. Research published in the Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology analyzing EpiPen use in the United States found a strong north-south gradient, where more were used in the northern states, suggesting there were "important etiological clues (vitamin D status)" that merit further investigation. Similar data was found in Australia two years later when it was revealed EpiPen use and anaphylaxis admissions were more common in areas receiving less sunshine, providing "additional support for a possible role of vitamin D in the pathogenesis of anaphylaxis," read the Annals of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology article.

Researchers believe the increased use of hygiene products is one factor contributing to a rise in allergies.

Food Allergy or Intolerance? There is a difference between a food sensitivity or reaction and a food allergy. A true food allergy is mediated by the immune system and triggered by a reaction to proteins found in a specific food or drink. Food sensitivities, also called food intolerance, is usually an unpleasant gastrointestinal reaction to something you've consumed but isn't mediated by your immune system. For example, a true milk allergy is different from lactose intolerance. The first triggers an immune response and the second triggers gastrointestinal symptoms from an inability to digest milk proteins. Type 1 food allergies involve immunoglobulin-E (IgE), which is an antibody found in the blood and mast cells in all body tissues.

After you've eaten the food the first time, cells produce IgE for the food protein that triggered the reaction, called an allergen. IgE is released and attaches to the surface of mast cells. This sets the stage for the next time you eat the food that contains the specific allergen. The protein interacts with the IgE on the mast cells and triggers a release of histamine. IgE reactions sometimes start with itchiness in your mouth, followed by vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach pain. Some protein allergens can cross immediately into your bloodstream and trigger a body-wide reaction including dizziness or feeling faint, repetitive coughing, tight, hoarse throat, and a weak pulse. It can also activate an anaphylactic reaction resulting in a drop in blood pressure, hives, and wheezing. A Type 1 food allergy can take anywhere from a few minutes to a couple of hours to develop. A second type of food allergy, Type 3, is mediated by immunoglobulin-G (IgG). This is a delayed food allergy that happens 4 to 28 hours after exposure.

Adult-Onset Food Allergies Not Uncommon

Although most food allergies develop in childhood, it isn't unheard of for adults to develop food allergies. Data from a cross-sectional survey of adults living in the United States suggest at least 10.8 percent of adults are allergic to food. Information was gathered from October 2015 to September 2016. There were 40,443 adults who completed the survey, and while 19 percent reported some type of food allergy, only 10.8 percent reported symptoms concurrent with an IgE reaction. The study was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in a collaboration between Stanford food allergy expert Dr. Kari Nadeau and scientists at Northwestern University. The researchers believe this contradicts a long-held belief that most allergies develop in childhood. Past data had estimated 9 percent of adults had true food allergic responses. In the cohort, researchers found 38 percent of those they determined to have food allergies had experienced a reaction that sent them to the emergency room and 48 percent reported at least one food allergy was triggered after age 18. Some food allergies developed as an adult can be severe, such as the reactions that graduate student Amy Barbuto experienced in a Thai restaurant. In an interview with a writer from the Texas Medical Center, Barbuto recounted her first allergic response at the restaurant. Before that day she had a food intolerance to gluten, but in 2011 she suffered an anaphylactic reaction when the wrong soy sauce was used in her food. Since then she was hospitalized 25 times from 2011 to 2020 for allergic reactions. She told the Texas Medical Center about the difficulty of avoiding gluten. "It's a hard one to avoid, even when you work your hardest to avoid it. My allergy is so severe that I could get exposed and not even know it. My food can look gluten-free, look normal ... but all it would take is somebody having touched bread and then touched my plate," Barbuto said in an article on the center's website.

Reduce Your Potential Risk for Food Allergies As Barbuto's story demonstrates, food allergies can develop well into adulthood and become potentially lethal. Your gut microbiome is vital to the health and optimal functioning of your immune system, which mediates an allergic response to food. By caring for your gut microbiome, you help protect your health. Fortunately, there are several ways you can care for these trillions of symbiotic microbial cells living inside and upon you.

Eat fermented foods. These help repopulate your gut with healthy bacteria.

Avoid antacids. They change your stomach acid and damage your gut microbiome.

Steer clear of antibiotics, including in your food. Antibiotics are dangerously overprescribed and you should not request them from your doctor or take them unless absolutely necessary. When you do, and take a quality probiotic to rebuild your microbiome.

Reduce or eliminate processed foods. These foods are high in sugar that feed harmful bacteria in your gut.

Optimize your vitamin D levels. Get outside and make some vitamin D through sensible sun exposure or use supplements if you live in areas with little sun.

Dogs: The New Probiotic There is also another, less obvious way to care for your microbiome. As veterinarian Dr. Karen Becker recently covered in one of her Healthy Pets articles, pets are good for your



Food allergies are increasing at a dramatic rate and researchers are trying to unravel the causes. Current views point to a collision of factors.

microbial health. Exposure to dogs can influence the developing immune system of children. Two studies were presented at the American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology in 2017 demonstrating children born in homes with a dog had a lower risk of allergic eczema and asthma, supporting earlier research. The exposure to diverse bacteria and other microbes from dogs has led to them being called "the new probiotic." Dieter Steklis, a professor of psychology and anthropology at the University of Arizona, has studied the physical and microbiome relationship in humans and pets. He spoke about the topic with a journalist from the Tucson Sentinel.

Toxic exposures in our food and environment are affecting the body's natural responses.

"It's always surprised me how many diseases and disorders are linked to inflammatory processes that link back to your immune system. If having a dog actually tames your immune system, which is what it seems to do, then elderly who have a dog may have a lower chance of depressive illnesses," said Steklis. While getting a dog may be fun and games, allergies remain serious business. The furor generated by soaring prices for an EpiPen, a life-saving treatment for the potentially lethal anaphylactic allergic reaction, has made it evident there is a lot of money at stake in the medical treatment of allergies. Taking steps to resolve this problem through diet and lifestyle as much as possible will save you discomfort—and money.

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

Researchers believe we are over-cleaning, leaving our surroundings devoid of normal microbial exposures that our body and immune system depend on.



NEW AFRICA/SHUTTERSTOCK



CHRISTOPHER BROWN/SHUTTERSTOCK

PROSTOCK-STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

SHARDOMKA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Preventing Alzheimer's: A Mind and Body Approach

Diet, exercise, and mind care are key to staying off an illness that drugs can do little to stop

Continued from Page 9

Merck ended its trial after an external monitoring committee found that it had "virtually no chance of finding a positive clinical effect."

Like all types of dementia, Alzheimer's is caused by the death of brain cells, leading to a reduction in brain volume. The disease is characterized by deteriorating cognitive function, including memory loss, due to toxic protein build-ups in the brain, called amyloid plaques and tangles. These are linked to several uncontrollable factors, such as age and genetic predisposition, but also lifestyle. This is why some doctors believe that making lifestyle changes, rather than finding a new drug, may be our best chance to prevent Alzheimer's.

Here are some proven steps we can take to keep the mind sharp as we age.

Many doctors recommend whole grains as part of an eating plan to prevent Alzheimer's.

A Diet for a Healthy Brain

A growing number of studies show that what we eat plays a profound role in cognitive health. Researchers are particularly interested in the positive effects of the Mediterranean diet, which consists primarily of fish, fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes, whole grains, and olive oil.

A study published in the journal *Neurology* found that adults in their 70s who ate a Mediterranean diet were less likely to lose brain volume as they aged.

Another study, from the Rush University Medical Center, found that people who stuck to a Mediterranean-type diet lowered their risk of developing Alzheimer's by 53 percent. Even participants who only partially stuck to this diet were able to cut their risk of the disease by 35 percent.

Dr. Barry Sears, biochemist and creator of the Zone Diet, which aims to reduce inflammation, based his famous eating program on the Mediterranean diet. What makes the Mediterranean diet so special, he says, is its high levels of omega-3 fatty acids.

According to Sears, the underlying cause of cognitive decline is increased inflammation in the brain. This makes omega-3s, which are anti-inflammatory, ideal for promoting brain health. Unlike most drugs, fat can easily pass through the blood-brain barrier.

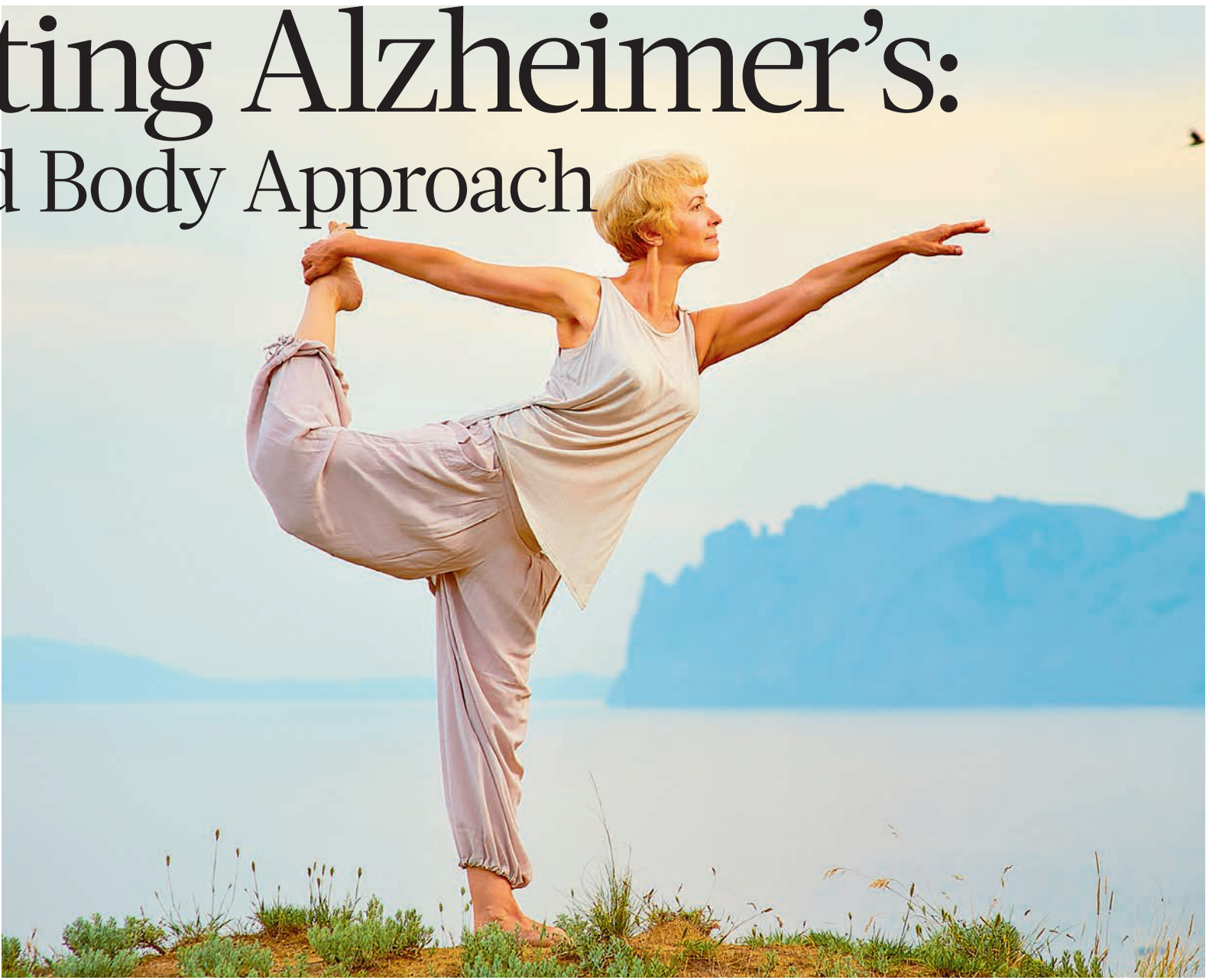
"Once omega-3 fatty acids transfer from the blood into the brain, they become building blocks for a powerful group of hormones that resolve the inflammation that causes various neurological disorders," he said.

Unfortunately, most of the fats in the modern American diet (such as soybean oil, corn oil, and margarine) are rich in omega-6 fatty acids, which boost inflammation.

Some of the best sources of omega-3s are sardines, albacore tuna, and salmon. That's why the Alzheimer's Association recommends that people include fish in their diet.

Fish has been considered a brain food for centuries. But Sears warns that we have to be mindful of the fish we choose, because some of them contain mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), which can make inflammation worse. At high levels, mercury and PCBs can also be toxic.

"The levels of PCBs of farm-raised salmon are five times higher than wild salmon," Sears said. "The problem is [that] 95 percent of salmon is farm-raised."



Researchers from the University of California–Los Angeles reported that a three-month course of yoga and meditation helped minimize the cognitive and emotional problems that often precede Alzheimer's.

There are also chemicals in plants, called polyphenols, that contribute to brain health. Polyphenols give fruits and vegetables their color, and like omega-3s, they help reduce inflammation in the body. Herbs, nuts, berries, artichokes, and olive oil are all great sources of these anti-inflammatory plant compounds.

This is why polyphenol-rich dark chocolate is increasingly recognized as a health food. Studies show that refined cocoa polyphenols significantly improve brain function and volume in people with slight cognition problems. To reap the benefits, the chocolate must have a high cocoa content (above 80 percent). The higher percentage means there are more polyphenols and less sugar—one of the most significant dietary causes of inflammation.

Grains such as rice and bread are also part of a traditional Mediterranean diet, and many doctors recommend whole grains as part of an eating plan to prevent Alzheimer's. But Sears says that when we swap out the starches for more polyphenol-rich plants, we can make our meals even more effective. Dark leafy greens, avocados, and cruciferous vegetables, such as broccoli and cabbage, have all been linked to better cognitive function.

"Eating more fruits and vegetables gives rise to dramatic hormonal changes, especially relative to controlling inflammation," Sears said.

Exercise helps maintain brain volume ... and promotes neuroplasticity.

Dr. Jennie Ann Freiman

Active Body, Sound Mind

Research has found that in order to keep a healthy mind, you have to move your body. One meta-analysis published in 2009 found that physical exercise reduced the relative risk of dementia by 28 percent.

According to Dr. Jennie Ann Freiman, an obstetrician-gynecologist and author of "The SEEDS Plan: Prevent And Reverse Alzheimer's Disease," physical activity is one of the most effective and proven interventions to help prevent and delay the disease.

"Exercise helps maintain brain volume (which shrinks in Alzheimer's) and promotes neuroplasticity, the forming of new brain connections," Freiman wrote in an email. "Social dance is one of the activities shown to successfully help avert Alzheimer's."

Sears recommends interval training (short bursts of activity followed by 90 seconds of rest), as well as lifting weights. He says these types of exercises reduce the impact of inflammation in other organs, resulting in better blood flow to the brain.

In animal studies, sustained aerobic exercises, such as running, have been shown to increase nerve growth factors in parts of the brain related to memory and learning.

But exercise doesn't have to be strenuous to benefit the brain. In fact, the slow, low-impact nature of exercises like tai chi may be perfect for older adults who want a gentler way to bring more movement into their life.

A study published in 2014 examining this ancient Chinese exercise found that "tai chi shows potential to enhance cognitive function in older adults, particularly in the realm of executive functioning and in those individuals without significant impairment."

The study's authors concluded that the movements of tai chi may impact cognitive function via unique neurophysiological pathways. Those who practice tai chi learn choreographed movements that may support visual-spatial processing and episodic memory—both of which deteriorate in people who have Alzheimer's.

Intellectual Stimulation

In addition to exercises for the body, exercises for the mind—such as crossword puzzles and chess—may also help us to keep our mind healthy as we age.

In an effort to investigate the "use it or lose it" theory of cognitive decline, a large observational study by the National Institute on Aging examined 700 nuns and priests aged 65 and over. Researchers looked at the time subjects spent doing puzzles and games, reading the newspaper, visiting museums, and other mind activities. Over a seven-year period, researchers found a correlation between the frequency of cognitive activity and the risk of developing Alzheimer's. For each one-point increase in a subject's score on the scale of intellectual activities, the risk decreased by 33 percent.

Research suggests that people who frequently challenge their brain keep their wits longer, even if they develop Alzheimer's. In a report published in the July 2015 edition of the journal *Neurology*, researchers found that people at risk of developing Alzheimer's who played brain games had better cognitive performance, even if plaques formed on the brain. Studies suggest that people who can converse in two or more languages have better cognitive functioning in old age, which may delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease.

Playing music or singing also has a noticeable influence on cognitive function. A 2013 study published in the journal *PLOS One* looked at adults aged 50 to 77 and matched them by age, education, vocabulary, and general health. Despite these similarities, those who played music showed significantly better cognitive functioning than those who did not.

Scans of professional musicians' brains have also revealed that the areas responsible for motor control, auditory processing, and spatial coordination are remarkably larger than in non-musicians'

brains. In addition, their brains demonstrate a stronger connection between the right and left hemispheres.

Other research shows that music therapy can even help bring back some spark to a brain in decline when nothing else can. The Alzheimer's Foundation of America endorses music therapy for its power to change a person's mood, manage stress and agitation, stimulate positive interactions, and coordinate motor movements.

Most of the fats in the modern American diet are rich in fats that cause inflammation, increasing the risk of Alzheimer's.

Stress Reduction

In addition to diet and exercise, stress also contributes significantly to chronic inflammatory diseases such as Alzheimer's.

When the body experiences chronic stress, it increases production of the hormone cortisol. A little cortisol gets us in gear when we're faced with fight-or-flight circumstances. But if cortisol is constantly being triggered, it leads to illness, says Sears.

"Cortisol makes you fatter because it causes insulin resistance. It makes you sicker, because it suppresses the immune system. And it makes you dumber because it too can cross the blood-brain barrier and destroy the memory cells in the hippocampus," he said.

Many people watch television to unwind, but this may be a poor long-term strategy to deal with stress. A 2015 study from the Northern California Institute for Research and Education in San Francisco tracked more than 3,200 people for 25 years. Researchers found that participants who watched a lot of TV had significantly worse cognitive function at the end of the 25 years. Those who watched a lot of TV and got little physical activity were the most likely to have poor cognitive function in midlife.

Meditation, however, may offer real benefits for a stressed-out mind. Last year, researchers from the University of California–Los Angeles reported that a three-month course of yoga and meditation helped minimize the cognitive and emotional problems that often precede Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. This meditation course was even more effective than memory enhancement exercises because it also improved participants' mood, anxiety, and coping skills.

Sears offers a simple, yet deceptively challenging, meditation technique: Sit in a comfortable chair and try to think of nothing for 20 minutes.

"It's really hard work, but it's a proven way to reduce stress," he said.

Comprehensive Study Finds Omega-3 Reduces Heart Risks

A heart-healthy diet can also have other 'side effects' including improved mood, studies reveal

The most in-depth analysis to date confirms the importance of consuming sufficient quantities of omega-3 fats to prevent cardiovascular disease.

The meta-analysis, published in the peer-reviewed journal *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, reviewed 40 clinical trials, and the multi-disciplinary team of researchers delivered an authoritative rallying cry for including more EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) omega-3 fats in your diet, citing their significant cardioprotective effects.

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The new research corroborates a 2019 meta-analysis by Harvard School of Public Health researchers and represents all of the research to date, encompassing more than 135,000 study participants. Study co-author Aldo Bernasconi, Ph.D., stated:

"When separate analyses arrive at similar results, that's not only validating, it also underscores the science base needed to inform future intake recommendations. Because this paper included more studies and all dosages, the estimates for a dose-response are more precise and the conclusions stronger."

Omega-3 Fats: Are You Getting Enough?

This expanded review of a previously published meta-analysis analyzed the observed effects of all randomized control trials with EPA/DHA supplementation and cardiovascular outcomes published before August 2019. Examined outcomes included myocardial infarction (MI)—commonly called a heart attack—coronary heart disease (CHD) events, CVD events (a composite of MI, angina, stroke, heart failure, peripheral arterial disease, sudden death, and non-scheduled cardiovascular surgical interventions), CHD mortality and fatal MI.

The study found that EPA and DHA supplementation is associated with significantly reduced risks of having a cardiovascular event and reduced risks of dying from such an event. The risk reduction broke down as follows:

- Fatal myocardial infarction—35 percent lower risk.
- Myocardial infarction—13 percent lower risk.
- CHD events—10 percent lower risk.
- CHD mortality—9 percent lower risk.
- According to the World Health Organization, cardiovascular disease is responsible for nearly 18 million deaths each year and is the No. 1 cause of death globally.

Benefits of Omega-3s Are Dose-Dependent

Study authors noted that whatever amount of EPA and DHA you are getting in your normal diet, supplementation is likely required to receive maximum cardioprotective benefits. A 1,000-milligram increase in daily omega-3 consumption decreased the risk of cardiovascular disease events by 5.8 percent and heart attack by 9 percent. The study examined dosages of up to 5,500 milligrams (mg) per day and discovered that benefits are dose-dependent.

Foods such as anchovies, sardines, and wild-caught salmon are highly nutritious options for getting these heart-healthy fats into your diet

Supplemental Omega-3s Protect Against Heart Disease
EPA and DHA are the primary omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids of marine origin. Foods such as anchovies, sardines, and wild-caught salmon are highly nutritious options for getting these heart-healthy fats into your diet, however, study co-author Dr. Carl Lavie suggests that any patient with CVD should consider supplementing as well.

Lavie suggests omega-3 supplementation at doses of 1,000 to 2,000 mg per day—far higher than what is typical, even among people who regularly eat fish, adding:

Nuts, seeds, and fatty fish are some of the best sources of omega-3 fatty acids.

Cardiovascular disease is responsible for nearly 18 million deaths each year and is the No. 1 cause of death globally.



Some Drugs Can Become a Cancer-Causing Chemical in the Body

Trace amounts of NDMA in drugs can increase even as the pills sit on the store shelf or are digested after being swallowed

C. MICHAEL WHITE

When consumers get a prescription drug from the pharmacy, they assume that it's been tested and is safe to use. But what if a drug changes in harmful ways as it sits on the shelf or in the body?

One dangerous result has been the creation of N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA), a probable carcinogen, in certain drugs. NDMA is found in chlorinated water, food, and drugs in trace amounts. To minimize exposure, the Food and Drug Administration has set an acceptable level of NDMA in each pill at less than 96 nanograms.

But over the past few years, the FDA has found excessive amounts of NDMA in several drugs for hypertension, diabetes, and heartburn. As a result, the agency has initiated recalls to protect the public. These products were contaminated with NDMA during the manufacturing process. The FDA recommended best practices for manufacturers to minimize this risk going forward.

Unfortunately for the buying public,

emerging evidence suggests that NDMA can also be created as some pills sit on the store shelf or medicine cabinet, or even after the patient swallows it. Thus, there is no way to test for its presence in the factory.

I am a pharmacist and distinguished professor who has written extensively about manufacturing issues and FDA oversight associated with both drugs and dietary supplements in the past, including the issue of NDMA contamination. In a new article, I discuss how NDMA can end up in a patient's medication if it wasn't put there during its manufacture.

NDMA Levels Creep Up After Manufacture

Ranitidine (Zantac) was a commonly used heartburn and ulcer prescription for decades before being recalled for NDMA.

In one study, investigators found that ranitidine contained only 18 nanograms of NDMA after it was manufactured. However, when stored at 158°F for 12 days—as if the drug had been left in a hot car—NDMA dosages rose above 140 ng. This

is only slightly above the 96 ng limit the FDA has deemed safe, but this was only 12 days later.

In another study, storing ranitidine where it was exposed to higher temperatures or high humidity enhanced the creation of NDMA over time. This suggests that some medications can leave the factory with a safe amount of NDMA but if kept for too long at home or on the store shelf can exceed known acceptable limits by the time patients use them.

In a new study in *JAMA Network Open*, investigators simulated the stomach environment and found that when ranitidine was exposed to an acidic environment with a nitrite source, these chemicals could create more than 10,000 ng of NDMA.

These results support a clinical study in which urine samples were collected from 10 adults both before and after using ranitidine. After people swallowed ranitidine, the urinary NDMA doses rose from about 100 ng to more than 40,000 ng over the next day.

Other Drugs Need Closer Investigation
In another study, investigators added chloramine, a disinfectant routinely added to

sterilize drinking water, to water samples that contained one of several medications that are structurally similar to ranitidine. They found that several commonly used drugs, including antihistamines (doxylamine and chlorpheniramine), a migraine drug (sumatriptan), another heartburn drug (nizatidine), and a blood pressure drug (diltiazem) all generated NDMA.

Higher temperatures or high humidity enhanced the creation of NDMA over time.

It's unclear whether the amount of NDMA created by these drugs when stored in hot and humid environments or after a patient swallows them is dangerous, as with ranitidine. I believe that more studies need to be done right away to find out. It is always better to be safe than sorry, particularly when dealing with a possible carcinogen.

C. Michael White is a distinguished professor and head of the department of pharmacy practice at the University of Connecticut. This article was first published on *The Conversation*.

MINDSET MATTERS

Can a Relationship Recover From Resentment?

A rational dialogue can help us heal resentment and rediscover empathy

NANCY COLIER

As a relationship therapist, I am often asked, “What’s the biggest problem couples face?” The easy answers are money and sex, but neither would be exactly true, or at least not what I’ve observed in my office or in life.

The most common problem I see in intimate partnerships is, what I call, the battle for empathy.

For instance, Paula tells Jon that she’s upset and hurt by something he said—the way he responded to her opinion on a family matter. She asks if, in the future, he could speak with more kindness and not be so critical simply because his opinion differs.

Jon reacts to Paula’s request by aggressively inquiring why he should offer her kindness when just last month she shut down his experience over a different family matter and treated him unkindly.

Paula then attacks back, explaining why she deserved to behave the way she did last month, and why it was a reaction to what he did two months ago, which she believes was unkind and aggressive. Jon then barks that he was entitled to his behavior because of the unkind thing she did three months ago. And back and forth it goes, reaching back to a seemingly un-findable time before the hurting began.

Couples do this all the time. They fight over who’s deserving of empathy, whose experience should get to matter, whose hurt should be taken care of, and whose experience should be validated.

Resentment is poisonous to a relationship. It kills off the best part of intimacy, namely, empathy.

Often partners refuse to offer each other empathy because they feel that it would mean admitting that they are to blame, and are thus giving up the chance to receive empathy and validation themselves. In essence, “empathy for you cancels out empathy for me.”

As hurt and resentment accumulate, it becomes harder and harder to empathize with your partner’s experience, because you have so much unheard pain of your own. When too much unattended pain is allowed to cement between two people, it can be nearly impossible to listen to, much less care, about the other’s experience.

Over time, unhealed wounds create a relationship with no space left to be heard, and this chokes off kindness and support—the essential components of intimacy. For this reason and many others, resentment is the most toxic of all emotions in an intimate relationship.

Healing Resentment

So, what can be done if you’re in a relationship where hurt has built up into resentment, unresolved anger, and pain? Is there hope for empathy to regain a foothold so that true intimacy can flourish once again? If the past is a minefield, can the present become peaceful ground?

If you asked me if it’s possible, my answer would be, “Probably.” But if you asked me whether there are ways to rebuild the empathic bond in a relationship, I would answer with a resounding “yes.”

The only way you can know what’s possible is to first name the problem and give it your best effort. If you don’t try to address the resentment, it certainly won’t go away by itself. Resentment is a cancer that metastasizes and eventually makes it impossible for a healthy relationship to survive.

So, what to do?

STEP 1 Set an intention.

First, I suggest couples set an intention together, to recreate empathy in the relationship. It helps to start with a conscious decision that’s named. Perhaps both of you want to deepen the intimacy or trust, or just ease the resentment. The intention can be different for each of you, but what’s important is that there’s an agreed upon



VINCELEMING/UNSPLASH

Couples can make a deal to officially press the reset button on their relationship. They get to declare a dropping of their grievances and each one agrees to forgive the “debts” of the other.

desire and willingness to bring attention to this issue in the relationship.

Sometimes one partner is not willing to set such an intention, often precisely because of the resentment that’s being addressed. If that’s the case, you can still set an intention on your own; while it’s not ideal, it can nonetheless bring positive results.

STEP 2 Push the reset button.

Once an intention has been named, I recommend making a deal to officially press the reset button on your relationship. You can celebrate this relationship restart date as perhaps a new anniversary, the day you committed to begin again without the poisons of the past. It’s important that you mark this restart date in some tangible way that makes it real and sacred.

A restart date means exactly that—you are beginning again. So now when you express your feelings to your partner, those feelings matter simply because they exist and cannot be invalidated by past events. Pressing the restart button means you get a clean slate in which you are both innocent and entitled to kindness and support. This step can open up a brand new space in which to meet and take care of each other again.

STEP 3 Try taking turns.

Along with the reset, I recommend trying a new way of communicating that I call “taking turns.” Taking turns means when one partner brings upset feelings to the other, he is heard and understood fully, without rebuttal. The experience of the other partner, what we might say caused her to behave in the way she did (that created the upset), is then held for the next day.

The next day, if she desires, she expresses her experience of what her partner presented, or something else entirely. And once again, she presents her experience without receiving a rebuttal on his part.

While I am suggesting an imposed way of communicating around difficult issues (which can feel cumbersome), this process can encourage nondefensive listening and even empathy. It is designed to address resentments in a safe way, as soon as they arise, to prevent them from crystallizing.

One way to practice good dialogue is to take turns discussing sharing experiences when one partner upset the other—without rebuttal. The other partner then holds their response until the next day.

Since you know that your time to tell “your side of the story” is not coming until tomorrow, you are more able to listen to, truly hear, and be present for your partner’s experience. In a strange way, you can relax, because you don’t need to try to win the argument. You can also try repeating back to your partner what you are hearing them say and feel, and doing this mirroring until

they feel you have correctly “gotten” their experience.

Being able to hear your partner without defending yourself can lessen the chances that the exchange will end up feeding new resentments. Taking turns and knowing that there will be a guaranteed safe place for your experience to be heard will ease your anxiety, anger, desperation, and despair. It will also vastly improve the possibility of building a newly empathic bond.

By communicating one at a time (with a break for reflection in between), you are creating a garden for kindness, curiosity, and support—the defining aspects of intimacy—to have a chance to take root and hopefully grow.

Resentment is poisonous to a relationship. It kills off the best part of intimacy, namely, empathy. The most satisfying part of a partnership, as I have witnessed, is the opportunity to give and receive empathy, to really feel its exchange. So, if your relationship is suffering from resentment, you might try these suggestions. It certainly can’t hurt, and might truly help. Even the process of trying will contain its own riches.

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

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Get Ready for the Next Chapter in Your Life

The struggles we’re enduring can be a call to retreat—or encouragement to push forward

JAY HARRINGTON

In screenplay and novel writing, the inciting incident is the event that gets the story rolling. It’s the action or decision that introduces the problem that the story’s main character must overcome.

In “Jerry Maguire,” it’s the moment that Jerry writes his manifesto about the need to put people first in the sports agency business. It leads to his firing and he walks away from his power job to start over.

In movies and books, the inciting incident is unmistakable. It’s the moment that calls the protagonist to action and changes their life irrevocably. That’s the thing about fiction—almost every story follows the same arc. There’s background, struggle, and ultimately triumph, with twists and turns along the way. But the story almost always gets resolved, wrapped up in a pretty bow. More often than not the protagonist lives happily ever after, having defeated the villain, gotten the girl, or defused the bomb, just in the nick of time.

Art may imitate life, but real life is, of course, far different. And messier (at least the ending). We’re all characters in a narrative, but unlike in most books and movies, our stories don’t always result in

happy endings. Inciting incidents occur all around us but rarely do they lead to real change. Often we miss their meaning altogether.

Other times we recognize their significance but we are unable or unwilling to leverage their transformational power. We have a health scare but do little to improve our lifestyle. We struggle at work but instead of taking the time to understand the cause of our struggles, we plow forward with no real plan to make the future different than the past.

I don’t know about you, but I can’t help

The routine patterns of life can be interrupted by an unexpected crisis. That can be hard to deal with. It can also be a rare chance to step up.

Life is often spent on autopilot.



but think we’re all in the midst of an unmistakable inciting incident. And in many ways, the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with recent social and political unrest, has been far stranger than fiction.

There are two ways to view the struggles we’re enduring: as a call to retreat or to push forward. At some point, in the not too distant future (let’s hope), the fog will lift and we can get back to living life. The question is: Will it be more of the same or something new?

I, like many of you (I’m sure), have struggled in myriad ways during the months of lockdown. I’ve withdrawn more than I should have. I’ve lamented circumstances outside of my control. I’ve relinquished control in ways I didn’t need to.

And I’m ready to turn the chapter. Are you?

The Catalyst for Change Is Upon Us

As the old saying goes, with crisis comes opportunity, and the best way to seize the opportunity of this moment is to use it as fuel to shape a new future.

Life is often spent on autopilot. We often desire change but never make it happen because we wait for some catalyst, some external stimulus to spur us to action. The catalyst has arrived. Will we recognize it for what it is?

The next step is straightforward but not easy. Meaningful change is made possible through clarity of purpose. What do you want out of your post-pandemic life? It’s OK if you don’t have clarity yet. These things take time. And it’s OK if you’re feeling resistance to change—from yourself or others. We all are. Change is hard.

It’s easy to assume that everyone else has it all figured out, and that you’re the only one struggling, grasping, trying to figure out who you are and what you should be doing with your life. It’s OK if today you feel like a bystander in your own life, with someone else setting the agenda. What’s not OK is never retaking control of your circumstances.

Life moves quickly, and risk lurks around every corner. There are lots of valid excuses to not take bold action, to not rewrite your story. So it’s easy to wait. The problem is the excuses won’t go away until you start taking action. Be courageous, because no one is going to grant you permission to live boldly.

And remember this: Courage isn’t the absence of fear, it’s doing what needs to be done despite the fear. So when you’re struggling, and you get to the point where circumstances feel unbearable, recognize the moment for what it is: a wake-up call wrapped in a bow. A chance to begin anew.

As Confucius explained more than 2,500 years ago: “We all have two lives. The second one starts when we realize that we only have one.”

That gnawing feeling inside of you? That’s the real you waiting to come out. When you’re ready—and hopefully you’re ready now—your new life will be waiting for you.

Jay Harrington is an author, lawyer-turned-entrepreneur, and runs a northern Michigan-inspired lifestyle brand called Life and Whim. He lives with his wife and three young girls in a small town and writes about living a purposeful, outdoor-oriented life.

BECOMING MINIMALIST

Lightbulbs Always Need Changing

Every item we own requires maintenance but we don’t have to surrender that time

JOSHUA BECKER

The other day, while brewing coffee in the morning, a lightbulb went out in my kitchen. Not an uncommon occurrence, I suppose.

But for some reason, on this particular morning, the common event bothered me more than usual. Maybe because my coffee hadn’t finished brewing...

I remember looking up at the now-darkened lightbulb and thinking to myself in a frustrated tone: “Why can’t everything just work for once? Can I ever escape constantly needing to maintain and fix the stuff I own?”

I caught myself mid-paragraph. Because the obvious answer is “No.” And I know that.

I mean, I’m in my mid-40’s. A handsome and youthful-looking mid-40s, sure. But I still know how life works.

All the things we own perish, spoil, or fade. Everything physical needs to be maintained to some extent.

Clothes need to be washed. Carpets need to be vacuumed. Beds need to be made. Oil needs to be changed. Shelves need to be dusted. Batteries need to be replaced.

CEGLI/SHUTTERSTOCK



Life comes with chores and buying more stuff brings more of them.

Showers need to be scrubbed.

And lightbulbs need to be changed.

That is the reality of the physical possessions we own. Nothing lasts forever. Everything needs to be maintained.

Every little thing.

This is why I chose minimalism as a lifestyle in the first place. Rather than being frustrated at a lightbulb that needs to be changed, I should find some joy in the fact that I need to change less of them than ever before.

When I speak about minimalism, I often make a joke about lightbulbs, in fact. I talk about my past desire to own a larger home (despite the fact that we didn’t even use all the rooms in our existing house).

But as I began minimizing possessions, I noticed the emptiness of always wanting a bigger house—and I began seeing big houses differently.

As I like to say, “Now I drive by neighborhoods with big houses and think to myself, ‘Who changes the lightbulbs in that thing?’”

Being freed from the unquenchable desire for more, bigger, and better is a wonderful feeling. It’s wonderful to not be constantly comparing my things to others’ things.

All possessions require maintenance. Every lightbulb, plate, shirt, bed, fire alarm, and electronic device require our attention and maintenance.

The fewer possessions we own, the less we need to maintain. And the more we can focus our attention on the things that matter most.

Do we ever escape that reality? Nope. Lightbulbs always burn out—sometimes early in the morning.

But the fewer possessions we own, the less we need to maintain. And the more we can focus our attention on the things that matter most.

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 Becoming-Minimalist.com

COVID-19 Through the Eyes of a Child

Children have unique perspectives and valid insights on our pandemic and how we deal with it

JEFF MINICK

“COVID is where you die.”

So said my 3-year-old grandson, John Henry, when I asked him what he knew about COVID-19.

Like many people, I come across online articles warning of the negative effects of the virus on young people nearly every day. While only a tiny number of them have died from COVID-19, and most of them are either asymptomatic or don’t contract the bug at all, these reports address the other consequences of this pandemic: closed schools, distance learning, the cancellation of sports and other extracurricular activities, separation from friends. These measures have left many children and teenagers depressed, fearful, and in some cases, suicidal.

I know of these consequences via the internet, but I decided to take an anecdotal tack and ask some of my grandchildren about their experiences, thoughts, and feelings now that we have lived for months with social distancing, masks, and other restrictions.

The oldest of this crew attends a small Catholic preparatory high school in Pennsylvania. The other children are home educated. We gathered around the dining room table, and I asked a few questions. Here’s what they had to say.

13-year-old Maggie: “I think no one should wear masks unless they want to and that old people should be given help with groceries so they wouldn’t have to go out. Gran gets hers delivered from Aldi’s. I also think more kids are going to be dumber because they’re watching TV at home instead of studying or playing sports. And lots of people are going to get fatter.”

“The most depressing thing about COVID is wearing masks,” she added.

Her twin sister Annie: “We still get together with some friends here because they don’t really worry about COVID. My Aunt Terry is a nurse, and she’s had COVID, and so did our friends the Hickeys, who got it from Father Carr. Everyone was fine.”



MIRACLETWENTYONE/UNSPLASH

How children perceive the pandemic and the global response provides a unique barometer we should pay attention to.

“The most depressing thing for me about COVID,” Annie said, “is everyone seems meaner and grumpier.”

10-year-old William: “It’s a big change. Everything’s shut down. I can’t go anywhere.”

6-year-old Daniel: “COVID is when you get sick and then throw up a lot.”

15-year-old Michael had the most developed thoughts on the matter: “It’s prevented our connection to the outside world. Our sports seasons have been affected, and we don’t get to make any outside field trips. I think COVID is going to affect some people’s ability to stand up for themselves. Right now everyone’s being told to go into a shell and wear a mask and do what you’re told. It’s just obeying

orders instead of thinking for yourself.”

Michael noted that one of his dorm fathers caught COVID over the summer and came through just fine.

“Americans for two centuries have prided themselves for standing up for their rights,” he said. “Now they believe everything they hear, and they’re just kind of scared by everything. Two hundred and fifty years ago they were fighting the biggest empire in the world as a tiny little group of colonies and now they’re being scared by a bad flu.”

Some of these opinions they receive via their parents and friends. Others are formed by direct observation.

Afterward, I wondered: Will these restrictions leave emotional scars on my grandchildren?

Right now, I have no idea.

But I do know these directives and edicts have made skeptics out of them. They no longer believe closing parks, schools, libraries, churches, and sports programs has helped battle COVID-19.

In other words, they no longer trust our “experts” or believe our government authorities know what they’re doing. Given the falsehoods, confusion, and errors of some of our governors and mayors, perhaps that distrust is healthy, and a valuable lesson for the future.

When John Henry kicked off our discussion by saying, “COVID is where you die,” the rest of us burst out laughing.

But as I look around at the wreckage and ugly mess we have made of our society and culture this last year, I think the kid nailed it.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. He is the author of two novels, “Amanda Bell” and “Dust on Their Wings,” and two works of non-fiction, “Learning as I Go” and “Movies Make the Man.” Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.

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