

THE EPOCH TIMES

MIND &

BODY

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60 Percent of Americans Will Be Obese by 2030

Ultra-processed foods offer convenience at the expense of our health and waistlines



JOSEPH MERCOLA

In the United States, 42.5 percent of adults 20 and over are obese, while another 31.1 percent are overweight. While these statistics are already alarming, the American Obesity Association suggests that by 2025, 50 percent of Americans may be obese—and this will jump to 60 percent by 2030.

What's behind this ongoing rise in Americans' weight is the burning question—one with a complex answer. Everything from endocrine-disrupting chemicals, known as "obesogens," in the environment, to chronic stress, and lack of sleep affect fat deposition and weight gain in the human body.

However, the consumption of ultra-processed or hyper-processed foods, which make up 57.9 percent of the average American's caloric intake, is an important culprit. The link between processed foods and obesity has taken on new meaning during the pandemic, as even mild obesity may raise the risk of COVID-19.

In fact, COVID-19 patients with mild obesity had a 2.5 times greater risk of re-

The standard American diet is full of foods that contain ultra-processed ingredients, seed oils, sugar, and fat.

Ultra-processed food is a killer of pandemic proportions.



spiratory failure and a five times greater risk of being admitted to an ICU compared to non-obese patients, according to researchers from the Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna in Italy. As such, calls have been made to tackle the pandemic by targeting junk food.

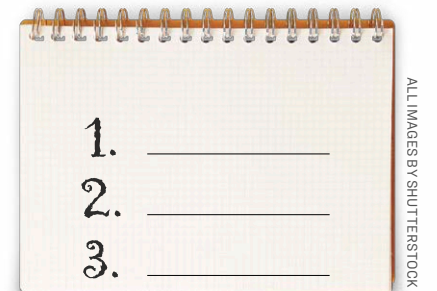
Why Processed Foods Are a Key Obesity Culprit

Ultra-processed foods include items such as breakfast cereals, pizza, chicken nuggets, soda, chips, salty/sweet/savory snacks, packaged baked goods, microwaveable frozen meals, and instant soups and sauces. They're high in sugar, and a high-sugar diet will take a toll on your health by packing on unwanted pounds at a remarkably rapid rate.

As noted in the BBC program "The Truth About Sugar," drinking three cups of tea or coffee per day with two teaspoons of sugar added to each cup can result in a 9.9-pound weight gain (4.5 kilos) in a single year, provided you don't increase your physical activity to burn off the extra calories.

When you consider that most people

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Create a three-item to-do list that will turn your day into an accomplishment.

Daily Habits to Change Your Life Forever

Simple habits can have a profound impact in upgrading your quality of life

JOSHUA BECKER

"You'll never change your life until you change something you do daily. The secret of your success is found in your daily routine." —John C. Maxwell

The direction of our lives is decided more by the daily choices we make than anything else. And these choices are more influential to the person we are becoming than we often realize.

Habits become ingrained, automatic, and often slowly creep into your life so subtly that they become routine. So if you want to change your life, start by changing one thing that you do each day.

But change can be hard. So let me offer a list of seven simple, daily habits that will positively change your life forever.

Most of these habits can be completed in just a few minutes each day. And each of them I have seen personally alter the trajectory of my life.

1. 3-Item To-Do List

The three-item to-do list has revolutionized my life. Every morning, with my cup of coffee, I write down the three most important tasks that I need to complete that day. It is a practice I cannot recommend enough.

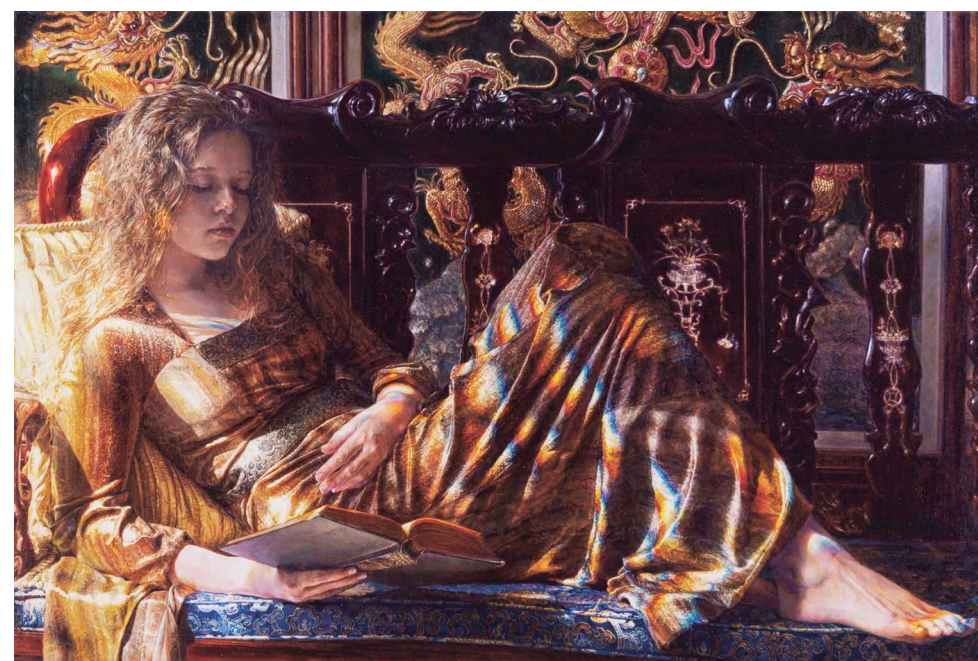
The three-item to-do list will keep you focused on your priorities. But more than that, it will allow you to feel a sense of accomplishment at the end of the day (assuming you accomplish them). It has taken away my feeling of "I never get enough done" and replaced it with "I accomplished my most important work." And that is a beautiful feeling.

2. Exercise

When I lived in Vermont, I had a mentor named Jeff who I looked up to quite a bit (still do actually). Jeff used to ask me and other men an unusual question when we would spend time together.

He'd ask, "So, are you staying physically active?"

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TRUTH AND TRADITION

MADE TO MOVE

Get Healthier With Bite-Sized Exercise Breaks

You are never too busy to exercise, because even a few minutes make a difference

SCOTT LEAR

The new Guidelines on Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour published by the World Health Organization are notable for what is missing: the minimum time for an exercise session.

Similar to previous guidelines, these recognize the importance of regular activity on physical and mental well-being. The guidelines recommend a target of 150 to 300 minutes per week of moderate activity (such as brisk walking) or 75 to 150 minutes per week of vigorous activity (such as running) or a combination of the two.

Gone is the requirement that your exercise minutes need to be conducted in chunks of at least 10 minutes.

My research group investigates the role of regular physical activity on health and disease. Our research indicates the health and fitness benefits from exercise begin from the very first step of movement. These benefits continue to accumulate in a linear fashion up until 300 to 400 minutes per week of moderate activity. Beyond that, benefits continue to occur, but at a reduced rate.

The change in WHO's guideline follows the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd Edition, which removed this minimum requirement in 2018. This change was made because there is no evidence to indicate that exercising for at least 10 minutes is better than bouts of shorter duration.

This is great news for people who find it hard to fit in exercise, and very timely, given the challenges the current pandemic has presented to many people's daily activities. People have seen their step counts decrease by up to 50 percent during COVID-19.

Snack on Exercise Throughout the Day

Supporting these guidelines is research on so-called exercise snacking: short bursts of activity that you "snack" on throughout the day. Exercise snacking has grown out of research on high-intensity interval training (HIIT)—repeated bursts of high-intensity exercise interspersed with active rest (low-intensity exercise, usually of the same activity). Sandwiched between a warm-up and cool-down, a full HIIT session may last 20 to 30 minutes.

Exercise snacking differs from HIIT in both the duration of the activity burst and the time in between. Whereas the exercise bursts in HIIT can range from 30 seconds to four minutes, in exercise snacking, these are reduced to 20 seconds.

The effect of these snacks on fitness was tested in a study of 28 inactive adults. Those randomized to doing three 20-second bike sprints separated by one to four hours of inactivity, three times per day for three days per week experienced a 9 percent improvement in cardiorespiratory fitness. This was comparable to the 13 percent improvement in the group that conducted the three 20-second bike sprints over a 10-minute period.

Now, this doesn't mean going to the gym for a minute several times per day, or needing your own home gym, or ever getting into spandex. The beauty of exercise snacks is that you don't need any equipment. Even climbing three flights of stairs, three times per day, three days per week for six weeks resulted in a modest increase in fitness in non-exercisers. This small amount of activity is enough to improve insulin metabolism in people who are overweight, confirming earlier research indicating two minutes of moderate walking every 20 minutes reduces blood sugar following a high-sugar test drink.

Fitting In Your Daily Snacks

Exercise snacking isn't new, although the research and the term are. If you've ever been sitting at your computer or

watching TV and had the urge to stand up and walk around or stretch, you've had an exercise snack. This type of body and brain break is famous among many writers. Dan Brown, the author of The Da Vinci Code, spends a minute every hour when writing doing push-ups and sit-ups. And why not? Short bursts of exercise can give you an energy boost and improve your productivity.

What makes the exercise snack different from standing up and stretching or walking to the kitchen, is increasing your heart and breathing rates. But you don't need to worry about sweating. Moving about for one to two minutes isn't enough time for you to start. This makes it easy to do in everyday clothes.

Some activities you can do include stair climbing, jogging in place, jumping jacks, and burpees. You can even do a brisk walk or jog around the block. If you have a stationary bike or rowing machine, just jump on that for a minute or so.

Exercising for as little as a couple minutes a few times a day can have noteworthy health benefits.

If you want something of longer duration, there's the Royal Canadian Air Force 11-minute workout plan. Developed in 1959, you can do this program at home without any equipment (although keeping your knees bent during sit-ups is advisable). Researchers recently studied a modified version of this program and found it effective at improving fitness.

It's still ideal to get in your regular meal of exercise as well as your snacks. But exercise snacks are a great way to build activity into your day.

If you think you'll have a hard time remembering to get up every so often, technology can help. From a simple cooking timer to the alarm on your phone, to watches that vibrate reminding you to get up. But perhaps the most effective may be using a screen-time app on your computer, tablet, or phone. Some of these apps lock out your device for a set period of time, giving you the impetus to get up and move.

Scott Lear is a professor of health sciences at Simon Fraser University in Canada. This article was first published on *The Conversation*.



WALTER ANTONI/SHUTTERSTOCK

A New Approach to Traumatic Brain Injury

Doctor successfully treats inflammation resulting from brain injury with hormones

ANDREW THOMAS

Traumatic brain injury, or TBI, is a wound that is difficult to comprehend and impossible to see from the outside, and affects a more diverse set of individuals than one might think.

Active-duty military and veterans are the most obvious population to endure TBI. They most often suffer from the condition as a result of training and combat exposure over time. However, the condition affects athletes and civilians at an alarming rate as well.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1.5 million Americans experience TBI annually. The symptoms of TBI often manifest as anxiety, depression, anger, and cognitive issues. Traditional treatments have sought to address these symptoms with conventional therapy and medication. Unfortunately, this approach often only exacerbates TBI, instead of attacking the underlying cause of the condition. While the medical and scientific literature has been available for years, it hasn't been applied to TBI until now.

Dr. Mark Gordon, a physician who has been practicing endocrinology for the past 20 years, has focused his efforts on TBI. Endocrinology relates to the endocrine system which is responsible for controlling hormones, which are important chemical messengers.

Gordon himself has endured at least six separate head traumas in his lifetime. Years ago, his TBI led to clinical depression. In the course of his own research, he discovered a novel way to treat his injury. After undergoing laboratory tests, he found that he had hormonal deficiencies that were causing his depression. He believed the inflammation in his brain from his multiple head traumas was the underlying cause.

While Gordon was in throes of depression, he read a book on hormones. He had lab tests done, and found that he had deficiencies in testosterone, thyroid, and growth hormone. Once these hormones were restored to healthier levels, he began to feel better.

Gordon's first head trauma occurred when he was 4 years old. At age 13, he was hit by a car while riding his bicycle. Three separate car accidents and eight years of martial arts also took their toll. The minor traumas to the brain add up over time in combination with significant accidents, and all contribute to TBI.

"You can either have 10 dimes or a dollar. They both equal a hundred," Gordon explained.

Inflammation and Hormones

It wasn't until Gordon was in his mid- to late-40s that he started to develop issues. Throughout his research, he discovered that people can develop TBI as late as 17 years after their injury. TBI creates inflammation, which changes brain chemistry; that change can manifest as depression, anxiety, insomnia, or a host of other symptoms.

In 2004, Gordon was preparing a lecture on the brain and hormones. He stumbled upon a couple of articles, one of which was from Turkey. In this specific treatise, researchers found that there were severe hormone deficiencies in boxers that were leading to mood and personality issues. It seemed that inflammation in the brain caused pituitary issues that, in turn, led to anger, anxiety, depression, and other conditions. Originally trained as a family physician, neuroendocrinology now commanded his attention.

"That was my epiphany article or my aha moment," Gordon said. Gordon's orthopedic work as a physician led him to work in the NFL. He treated retired players from 1997 through 2007, and his work drove him to start treating active duty military in 2009. Through the course of his work, he met a Green Beret named Andrew Marr.

Marr was a Special Forces engineer and



1. Dr. Mark Gordon discusses TBI on The Joe Rogan Experience podcast; 2. Dr. Mark Gordon is a physician who has developed a novel treatment protocol for Traumatic Brain Injury; 3. Andrew Marr was a U.S. Army Special Forces engineer and is the founder of the Warrior Angels Foundation; 4. Andrew Marr with his wife and seven children; 5. Julianna Harpine's concussions as a gymnast led to depression; 6. Julianna Harpine benefited from hormone treatment targeting the inflammation caused by her brain injuries.

had spent a large part of his career detonating and disposing of explosives. On his fourth tour of duty in Afghanistan, a large explosion knocked him unconscious. However, it would be the cumulative effect of small explosions over time that ultimately triggered his TBI.

Marr had undergone a variety of treatments, and at one point was on more than a dozen medications. Furthermore, he was struggling with alcoholism and opioid addiction to cope with the anxiety and depression his TBI had been causing. The two met in 2015, and Gordon ran his bloodwork.

After discovering that Marr had hormone deficiencies, he began a treatment plan based on hormone therapy and natural supplements and showed massive improvement. He and his brother Adam found the experience in their book "Tales From the Blast Factory" and now work to connect other veterans to Gordon and his treatment method at Millennium Health.

The results from Gordon's other patients also have been promising. According to a 2019 summary report on 459 individuals, 78 percent of them considered themselves 50 percent improved by the end of the year, and 4.6 percent were 100 percent better.

The 10 to 20 percent who felt that they hadn't benefited from the protocol were the individuals who had been on the most medications.

Results also showed that age doesn't seem to play a factor in TBI recovery. The oldest patient was an 84-year-old Vietnam veteran who reported feeling 100 percent better following his treatment protocol.

While Marr's TBI was the result of a history of explosions, the condition can occur from certain medications, radiation, and surgery that also can cause brain inflammation. One doesn't have to lose consciousness to develop the condition. Moreover, you don't need to have symptoms of a concussion to have a traumatic

brain injury.

While direct physical blows to the head are the most obvious cause, TBI can also be caused by psychological conditions such as post-traumatic stress.

"That's why you can have a person who has never had any physical trauma, a person who's never been to war, never played sports, but gets into a situation where they're under chronic stress," Gordon said.

Contact Sport

It's not just veterans, pugilists, or NFL players who are suffering. Julianna Harpine, 29, is a physical therapist in Pennsylvania and one of the subjects of "Quiet Explosions: Healing the Brain." For 13 years, she was a competitive gymnast. Concussions weren't discussed in the gymnastics world, and she didn't expect head injuries to be a risk of the sport. However, she would experience several blows to the head.

"I always get, 'Well, gymnastics isn't a contact sport.' People forget gymnastics is a contact sport—with the ground," Harpine said.

While a freshman in high school, she endured her first diagnosed concussion. She was tumbling and flew out of a pass, hitting the back of her head on the floor. She took some ibuprofen, and went back to practice. The next night, she blacked out in midair, and landed flat on her face.

Harpine experienced sensitivity to light and noise for seven months following her concussion. Over time, she had several smaller concussions, and in 2013, she experienced another severe blow to the head in competition.

Following her last concussion, Harpine began experiencing depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. Both the physical and psychological symptoms of TBI had a significant impact on her daily life. She had just been accepted to graduate school, but often missed school and work.

"You can't see it by looking at someone. When people looked at me, they saw a healthy 20-something-year-old girl. What they didn't see were the struggles internally or the struggles behind closed doors. After a while, you just try to do life to the best of your ability, but they don't see what happens outside of you showing up and slapping a smile across your face," Harpine said.

Harpine underwent conventional treatments, and ended up on a plethora of medications, as Marr had. But the meds only worsened her symptoms. In the spring of 2014, a family friend introduced her to Gordon and his treatment protocol, which she responded to with incredible success.

"I got my energy back, my personality back. I wasn't fighting to stay awake anymore. I was able to function again. I was able to go back to work and back to school," Harpine said.

A Wider Audience

My Award-winning director Jerri Sher was contacted by a friend who was working on Marr's book. She knew Sher had a passion for documentaries about socially responsible issues, and urged her to read the book and adapt it into a film. When Sher and Marr met, he gave her the rights to make a movie based on "Tales From the Blast Factory."

Sher agreed to do the movie under one condition: the subjects of the film would be one-third military, one-third athletes, and one-third civilians. She also needed to speak with Gordon. After their discussions, she learned that his successes weren't getting enough public attention.

Sher herself has experience in the world of TBI. Her husband contended with the condition after open heart surgery 24 years ago. During the surgery, his brain was deprived of oxygen. Afterward, he began experiencing many similar symptoms that surface for veterans and athletes with TBI. Her documentary, "Quiet Explosions: Healing the Brain," sheds light on TBI through interviews with 10 individuals including Harpine, Marr, Gordon, and other medical experts. The film offers insights into a diverse array of patients and paints a vivid picture of what TBI looks like.

"I knew that I could make a huge impact by telling this story through the medium of film," Sher said.

60 Percent of Americans Will Be Obese by 2030

Ultra-processed foods offer convenience at the expense of our health and waistlines

Continued from Page 1

consume 5 or 6 times more added sugar than that each day, it's easy to see how obesity has become more the norm than the exception. Yet, sugar is only one problem with processed foods. Another, which may be an even worse offender than sugar, is industrially processed seed oils, often referred to as "vegetable oils."

Nine years of research and investigation have led ophthalmologist Dr. Chris Knobbe to conclude that chronic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, age-related macular degeneration, heart disease, and cancer are being driven by nutrient deficiencies and toxicity caused by processed foods.

The root of the problem lies in mitochondrial dysfunction, which is caused by the excessive consumption of a Westernized diet, including toxic industrially processed seed oils, refined flour, refined added sugars, and trans fats.

In a presentation at the ALDOCS 2020 Annual Meeting, Knobbe cited data that found the obesity rate in the 19th century was 1.2 percent. By 1960, it had already risen to 13 percent—an 11-fold increase. It has continued to climb steadily to this day.

"Obesity is on target to be 50 percent of adults obese in the United States by 2030, half obese," Knobbe said. "So the increase looks something like... a 33-fold increase already in 115 years."

Knobbe said the rise in obesity tracks with unprecedented changes in the Western diet.



Our cellular energy system of mitochondria is sabotaged by processed seed oils, refined flour, added sugars, and trans fats.

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DAVID MCNEW / STAFF/GETTY IMAGES

Long-Term Consumption of Seed Oils Sets Off Obesity Cascade

When you consume an abundance of ultra-processed foods, it's not only a matter of taking in empty calories or that eating too many calories can cause weight gain. Eating these foods actually triggers a catastrophic cascade of health declines rooted in mitochondrial dysfunction and insulin resistance.

Seed oils are a significant factor. At the root of the harmful biochemical reactions triggered by seed oils is linoleic acid. Linoleic acid accounts for about 80 percent of the fatty acid composition of vegetable oils. Omega-6 fats must be balanced with omega-3 fats in order not to be harmful, but this isn't the case for most Americans.

To make matters even worse, most of the omega-6 people eat has been damaged and oxidized through processing. Knobbe warns that excess omega-6 induces nutrient deficiencies and causes a catastrophic lipid peroxidation cascade. This leads to electron transport chain failure which causes mitochondrial failure and dysfunction.

Mitochondria are the powerhouses of your cells and provide most of the chemical energy needed for your cell's biochemical reactions. When they malfunction, they can create reactive oxygen species, warns Dr. Knobbe. These substances are highly reactive chemical

The link between processed foods and obesity has taken on new meaning during the pandemic, as even mild obesity may raise the risk of COVID-19.

molecules, also called free radicals, that wreak havoc in your body.

These free radicals then feed back into peroxidation cascades, which is when those free radicals "steal" electrons from the lipids in cell membranes and start a chain reaction that damages the cell. Lipids are the main constituents of your cells.

"So, you're filling up your fat cells and your mitochondrial membranes with omega-6, and these are going to peroxidize because of the fact that they are polyunsaturated," says Dr. Knobbe.

"All right, the next thing that happens is insulin resistance, which leads to metabolic syndrome, Type 2 diabetes, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. When the mitochondria fail, you get reduced fatty acid and beta oxidation, meaning you can't burn these fats properly for fuel."

If you can't burn fats for fuel, you have to depend on carbohydrates solely. That leaves you feeling tired and gaining weight, warns Dr. Knobbe. "This is a powerful mechanism for obesity," he says.

Refined Sugars and Grains Are Also Driving Obesity

In his most recent book, "The Case for Keto: Rethinking Weight Control and the Science and Practice of Low-Carb/High-Fat Eating," journalist Gary Taubes explains how carbs and fats affect your body, and why replacing unhealthy carbs with healthy fats is so important if you're trying to control your weight or blood sugar.

In our 2021 interview, he also said the obesity epidemic can be linked back to a Western diet rich in refined sugars and refined grains. Whenever sugar and white flour are added to a population's diet, regardless of what their baseline disease rate is, you eventually end up with an epidemic of obesity and diabetes.

The good thing about cutting ultra-processed foods from your diet is that doing so eliminates not only excessive amounts of refined sugars and grains, but also the omega-6 linoleic acid that's abundant in seed oils.

Nearly every fast food restaurant is also guilty of using high levels of these toxic fats, along with high amounts of refined

We're drawn by the sweet and salty flavor of the cheapest, most in-your-face, and unhealthy foods.

42.5%

Adult Americans 20 and over who are now obese

31.1%

Percent of adults 20 and over who are overweight

60%

Adult Americans who may be obese by 2030



JUSTIN SULLIVAN / STAFF/GETTY IMAGES

sugar and grains. This is why it is so important to prepare as much of your food as you can in your home so you can know what you are eating.

Officials Advise Fighting COVID-19 by Targeting Junk Food

Some of the damages caused by processed foods have gone mainstream, as it's become clear that obesity plays a role in COVID-19 deaths. London-based cardiologist Dr. Aseem Malhotra is among those warning that poor diet can increase your risk of dying from COVID-19 via its role in obesity and related conditions.

He wrote on Twitter, "The government and Public Health England are ignorant and grossly negligent for not telling the public they need to change their diet now."

He told BBC that ultra-processed foods make up more than half of the calories consumed by the British, and if you suffer from obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure—all of which are linked to poor diet—your risk of mortality from COVID-19 increases 10-fold. In a paper published in the Journal of Virology agreed, researchers wrote:

"Over the years, humans have adopted sedentary lifestyles and dietary patterns have shifted to excessive food consumption and poor nutrition."

Prime Minister Boris Johnson also believes that his weight made his COVID-19 infection more severe, and announced plans to implement bans on junk food ads online. More than a dozen states in Mexico have also decided to combat the pandemic by banning the sale of junk food to minors.

In an editorial published in the BMJ, three researchers also cited the role of the food industry in driving up rates of obesity and ultimately causing more COVID-19 deaths:

"It is now clear that the food industry shares the blame not only for the obesity pandemic but also for the severity of COVID-19 disease and its devastating consequences."

"During the COVID-19 pandemic an increase in food poverty, disruptions to supply chains, and panic buying may have limited access to fresh foods, thus tilting the balance towards a greater consumption of highly processed foods and those with long shelf lives..."

"Moreover, since the start of the CO-

If you're overweight or obese, taking steps to optimize your weight will have far-reaching benefits on your physical and mental health.

VID-19 pandemic the food industry has launched campaigns and corporate social responsibility initiatives, often with thinly veiled tactics using the outbreak as a marketing opportunity (for example, by offering half a million "smiles" in the form of doughnuts to NHS staff.)

Top Steps to Lose Weight

If you're overweight or obese, taking steps to optimize your weight will have far-reaching benefits on your physical and mental health.

This starts with what you eat, and I recommend adopting a cyclical ketogenic diet, which involves radically limiting carbs (replacing them with healthy fats and moderate amounts of protein) until you're close to or at your ideal weight, ultimately allowing your body to burn fat—not carbohydrates—as its primary fuel.

This includes avoiding all ultra-processed foods and also limiting added sugars to a maximum of 25 grams per day (15 grams a day if you're insulin resistant or diabetic). Regular exercise along with increased physical movement during your waking hours is also important, as are getting sufficient sleep and tending to your emotional health.

Taken together, by addressing the emotional side of eating and swapping out ultra-processed foods for whole foods, while staying active as much as possible, you'll not only naturally lose weight but also propel your overall health in a positive direction.

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

Our world throws the least healthy foods into our path when we have the least time to better fill our bellies.

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

How to Eat a Little Better Right Now

Trying to eat better can be as simple as slowing down and eating the rainbow

LYNN JAFFEE

Let's face it; if you're like most people, you want to be as healthy as you possibly can. Chances are that if you're trying to get healthier, one of the first areas you think about is your diet.

What you eat has a huge impact on your overall health, how you feel, your mood, energy levels, and even your immunity. The link between diet and health is so strong that the Chinese say that if a person isn't feeling well, they should first try healing through their diet, and only if diet doesn't work should they try acupuncture and herbs.

Sometimes, it can be hard to know what you should eat. You're bombarded with messages about new diets that work wonders and miracle foods that heal everything.

The reality is that the right combination of foods is different for each person. However, while the specific foods that are right for you may be different from that of your best friend, there are some guidelines for eating better that work for everyone.

Here's my best advice based on Chinese food therapy, Western medicine, and my experience in the clinic:

Go slow. Inhaling your food in two minutes between meetings or while you're running out the door isn't healthy. This is all about digestion, and in order to get the most nutrition from your food, you need to digest it fully. This starts with slowing down and taking the time to chew your food. You actually begin the digestive process in your mouth through the breakdown of carbohydrates by chemicals in your saliva. If you're



People who are busy or tired eat what's handy, so plan ahead for health and wellness.

SPAYDER PAUK, 79 / SHUTTERSTOCK

gulping down your food on the run, your digestion is suffering.

Plan your meals and snacks. People who are busy or tired tend to grab what's handy, not what's healthy. If you know that you're going to be too tired to make an elaborate meal when you get home from work, plan ahead and have something nutritious pre-made or easy to heat up, instead of another frozen pizza or dinner from the drive-through.

Stop eating before you're full. It takes a while for your mind to catch up with your stomach. Some experts recommend that you stop eating when you're 80 percent full. Doing so is associated with weighing less and living longer.

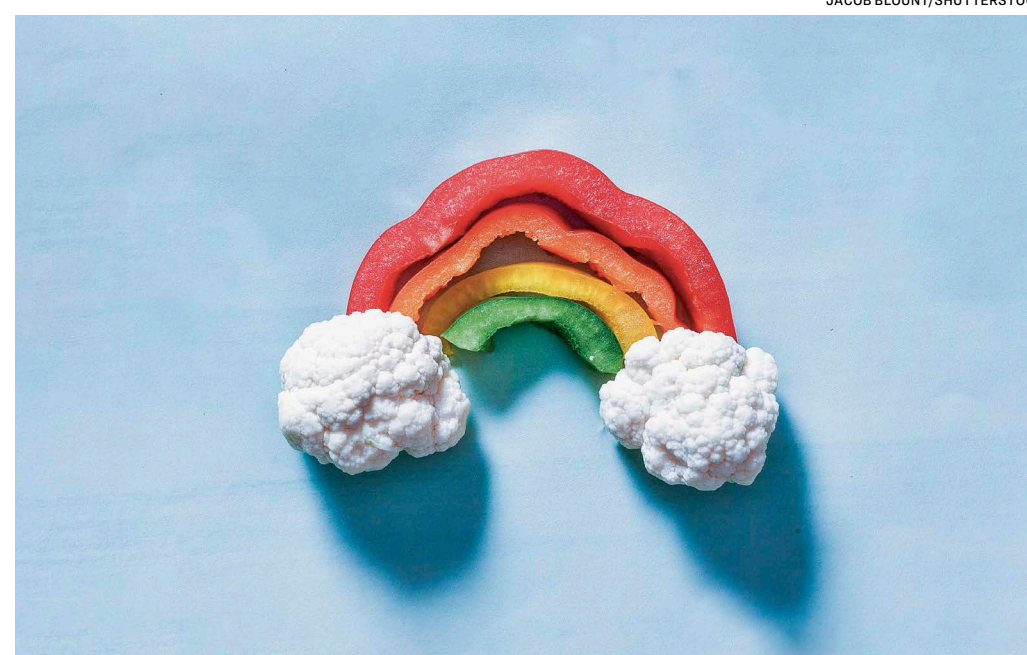
Pay attention to what you're drinking. Soda and fruit juice are full of sugar, but many people don't realize how much. That's because the sugar is dissolved into liquid, so manufacturers can pack a lot of it into your drink without it being visible. A 12 oz. can of cola has about a quarter of a cup of sugar. That's a lot! Why is sugar a problem? Because taking in high levels of sugar promotes inflammation, leads to weight gain, and increases your

risk for diabetes and high blood pressure.

Eat lots of colors. Eating a wide variety of colorful foods, especially in the form of fruits and vegetables, ensures that you're getting a wide range of nutrients. When you're thinking about what to eat, just work your way through the rainbow: red peppers and tomatoes, orange citrus and squash and carrots, yellow beans and onions, all kinds of greens, and blue and purple berries. You get the idea.

Get cooking. This actually means a couple of things. First, by cooking your own food, you're using simple ingredients and have control over what's going into your meal. Second, in Chinese medicine, cooking your food, instead of eating it raw, energetically warms it up and makes it easier to digest. It takes a lot of energy for your body to break down very fibrous foods, but cooking them even just a little breaks down the fibrous cell walls and makes the nutrients more available for you to digest and absorb.

Don't skip breakfast. I know, a lot of people tell me they just aren't hungry first thing in the morning. However, eating just a small amount of food helps to level out your blood sugar, decreases food cravings, and lowers



JACOB BLOUNT/SHUTTERSTOCK

Different colors represent a rich variety of nutrients and phytochemicals that give plants abilities like virus and pest protection—elements that can benefit people as well.

the risk of you grabbing a sugar-laden doughnut mid-morning.

Get clean. When you can, choose local and organic foods. Also, become label-savvy. If you're considering buying a food that has unpronounceable ingredients, put it right back on the shelf. It's full of stuff that's not

exactly food. A better choice is to eat foods in their original form. (e.g., corn on the cob instead of corn chips or corn sweeteners).

Go for the rough stuff. Many years ago, after a colonoscopy, the doctor told me to try to get about 25 grams of fiber a day. At the time I thought I was getting plenty, but that sounded like a lot. However, if you're eating mostly plant-based foods and whole grains, you're probably coming close to that goal. Fiber is important because it moves food along through your intestinal tract. It also helps to lower your cholesterol, blood sugar levels, and your weight. Fiber also feeds the symbiotic microbes in your microbiome.

Whether you struggle with funky digestion, poor energy, or other health issues, your diet is a good first place to start turning things around. If you need a little help determining what specific foods are best for you, a practitioner of Chinese medicine can make recommendations based on your body type, your health history, and the healing traditions of this amazing healing system.

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

Daily Habits to Change Your Life Forever

Simple habits can have a profound impact in upgrading your quality of life

Continued from Page 1

I used to think Jeff was concerned with my physical health—which I'm sure he was. But as I have embraced a daily practice of exercise, I have learned the benefits are not just physical, they are mental and emotional as well.

Jeff knew physical activity was an important key to a healthy and productive life. Don't overthink "exercise daily." This doesn't need to be a three-mile run or tennis match every day. Go for a walk, stretch, mow the lawn, or workout to a YouTube video.

3. Turn Off Television

Not only are the negative effects of TV detrimental to our lives, the opportunity cost is great. There are just better, more life-fulfilling things we could be doing with our lives than watching someone else live theirs.

When we decided to watch less television years ago, we were immediately forced to fill our evenings with something else. Surprisingly, it wasn't that hard to find a more life-giving activity than television.

We spent more time together as a family. We spent more time outdoors. I began to write more. I visited the gym more frequently. I took more control over my life and my decisions.

These are all good things—healthy habits—and cutting out television provided opportunity for me to accomplish them. The same will happen for you.

There is something magical about not dragging yesterday's mess into today—and this practice extends far beyond clutter.

4. Practice Gratitude

Say a prayer. Keep a gratitude journal. Meditate. Or discuss the high points of your day over dinner with your family.

Whatever works best for you, express gratitude at some point every single day.

Gratitude reframes our circumstances. It drives out discontent. It directs our attention to the good things in our lives. It brings attentiveness and intentionality. And it more appropriately positions our attitude in relation to the universe and world around us.

Gratitude, as a habit, is a discipline to practice daily. Because when gratitude is the hardest to find, is when we need it the most.

5. Write Something

Every day, sit down and write something. Anything. It can be a three-sentence post on Instagram, a three-paragraph private journal entry, or a three-page blog post to share with the world.

Where your writing ends up means far less than the impact it will have on your life.

Clean your kitchen every night and wake to a fresh day rather than an old mess.



Take the time to consider what is good in your life and keep your eye on the prizes.

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK



Sharing food is a bonding experience important in every human culture.

The habit of writing will force you to see the world in a more observant way. You will rethink conversations, circumstances, and relationships.

I once heard an old quote by Dawson Trotman, "Thoughts disentangle themselves when they pass through the lips and fingertips." And I cannot tell you how true that it is. Writing helps us think better and interact better with the world around us.

I was recently asked on Twitter, "With the growth of YouTube and video content, do you intend to keep blogging?" My response was: "Yes. I have found that I think and live better when I write—because it forces me to become more observant. I am a better person because I began writing."

6. Reset Your Kitchen

Every night, before you go to bed, clean your kitchen.

In a practical sense, it will help brighten your mood in the morning. After all, there are few things less desirable early in the morning than needing to clean up yesterday's mess.

The habit helps brighten your morning in the kitchen ... and quickly spills over into other daily habits focused on keeping your home tidy. By the way, if resetting your kitchen every evening seems too difficult, you'll find it easier if you own less stuff.

There is something magical about not dragging yesterday's mess into today—and this practice extends far beyond clutter.

7. Eat Together

I realize, of course, if you live alone, this final habit may not apply. But I fear there are too many people living together who are also not applying this habit to their lives.

If you are a parent, or a spouse, or a partner, or a roommate, make every effort to eat one meal together each day. When shared with others, food becomes a



Writing gives you the pace and focus to draw wisdom from your day.

bonding experience that is difficult to replicate anywhere else.

Meals around a table are one of the rare moments in our day where we sit down facing one another. As the food nourishes our physical body, community and relationship feed our soul. It is difficult to be an intentional parent or spouse without sharing meals together with those we love the most.

Again, this daily habit may not be possible for everyone. But if it is, do not neglect to make it a priority—there are many who would gladly switch places with you.

Pick a habit above and begin practicing it daily. Just one—not all seven.

Once you take control of your habits, you begin taking control of your life. Any from this list will lead to positive results.

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

The Wisdom of a Jedi Master

Yoda's Jedi instruction remains relevant, insightful for a galaxy not so far away

TATIANA DENNING

I remember it well. The year was 1977. After months of anticipation, it was finally here.

"A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away ..." [cue music]

I was 9 years old as I read the crawl of those golden-yellow words on the theater screen before they faded into a dark abyss of stars. The stage was set for an epic adventure—and enduring wisdom.

So begins the tale of "Star Wars," and the journey of our hero, Luke Skywalker. Luke finds himself caught in an interplanetary war between the authoritarian regime of the Galactic Empire, and the Rebel Alliance fighting for the Republic's freedom.

At the core of the story lie the Jedi Knights, galactic guardians of peace and justice who harness an energy known as "the Force," the all-encompassing spiritual essence of the universe. Obi-Wan Kenobi, the Jedi who initially trains Luke, explains, "The Force is what gives a Jedi Knight his power."

But as Luke discovers during his Jedi training, while the Force is to be used for good, the dark side always beckons.

"Star Wars" went on to become one of the biggest franchises of all time. My brothers Leo and Chad loved it so much they had every bit of merchandise they could talk my mom into buying, from "Star Wars" bedding, to lunch boxes, to action figures. It seemed everyone had "Star Wars" fever—a fever that has continued over the years.

A Timeless Journey

So just why do we love the "Star Wars" saga so much? Is it the fast-paced action, the captivating creatures (the cantina scene comes to mind), or the galactic starfighters blazing across the screen? Absolutely. But perhaps there's more to our fascination.

Perhaps it's the hero's journey, with its tests and tribulations, trying our flawed hero's soul to determine his ultimate fate. Perhaps it's the timeless plot of good versus evil playing out, in epic and grand fashion, before our eyes. Or perhaps it's the words of wisdom from the Jedi masters, words that resonate deep within us—words that ring of truth.

Of all the characters we encounter, perhaps none better embodies ancient wisdom than Grand Jedi Master Yoda. We're first introduced to the emerald-green, 900-year-old Yoda in the 1980 film "The Empire Strikes Back," the second of the original trilogy. Renowned film critic Roger Ebert said of Yoda, "In his range of wisdom and emotion, Yoda may actually give the best performance in the movie."

The influence Eastern traditions like Buddhism and Taoism had on George Lucas can best be seen in Yoda's attempts to teach Luke Skywalker. Lucas believed there was profound wisdom in Eastern teachings, and sought to share this wisdom with his Western audience. Looking back, I have a deeper appreciation for the words Yoda has to impart.

"Do. Or Do Not. There Is No Try"

Arguably the most well-known of Yoda's words of wisdom, this quote has become a slogan in the self-help, motivational, and business world. It summarizes, in essence, the difference between success and failure.

As Luke offers a half-hearted "I'll try," during his training, Yoda corrects his thinking.

"Always with you what cannot be done. Hear you nothing that I say?"

Luke bemoans that moving his starship is different, harder, than moving a small rock.

"No! No different. Only different in your mind. You must unlearn what you have learned. ...Try not. Do. Or do not. There is no try." Yoda reprimands.

It's not that failure is unacceptable, but not giving our all is. The attitude of "I'll try" gives us an out, allowing for the possibility of failure. In effect, we've undermined our own success by making room for self-doubt.

We may be conditioned to thinking this way without even realizing it. Our own experiences and notions also color our view of things, preventing us from seeing things as they really are.

"Many of the truths that we cling to depend on our point of view," Yoda cautions. Becoming a Jedi master requires great effort and a solemn mind. Yoda tells Luke, "A Jedi must have the deepest commitment, the most serious mind." Once our minds are committed, there is no room

for "try"—we know we must "do."

But, distractions are everywhere. Yoda says of Luke: "This one a long time have I watched. All his life has he looked away ... to the future, to the horizon. Never his mind on where he was. Hmm? What he was doing? Hmpf. Adventure, heh? Excitement, heh? A Jedi craves not these things."

Being in the present is an important concept in Eastern thought. If our minds are elsewhere, looking to the future or the past, we can't give the task at hand our all. Our intentions also matter. If our starting point isn't right, and our motives are self-serving, our foundation will be unstable.

Patience, focus, faith—these things are imperative, but certainly not easy. In fact, Obi-Wan warns, "Your eyes can deceive you; don't trust them." It takes faith to break through the illusion created by the

Lucas believed there was profound wisdom in Eastern teachings, and sought to share this wisdom with his Western audience.

eyes and believe in that which we cannot see. This is why Yoda tells Luke, "Luminous beings are we, not this crude matter."

This also serves as a reminder to look beyond the physical reality of the eyes.

Of course, despite our best efforts, we're bound to have failures, and they have their reasons—but therein lie our lessons. In "The Last Jedi," Yoda reminds us, "The greatest teacher, failure is." It's in hardship that we can look in our hearts for the why, uncover our role in things, and improve.

Ultimately, it is our thinking that's key. After Yoda uses the Force to lift Luke's starship from the murky swamp, Luke exclaims, "I don't believe it!" to which Yoda replies, "That is why you fail."

"Let Go of Everything You Fear to Lose"

Yoda talks of fear many times, a clue that eliminating it is an important part of Jedi training.

"Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering," Yoda tells a young Anakin Skywalker in "The Phantom Menace." In Buddhist thought, things such as fear, anger, lust, jealousy, wealth, and fame are attachments. Attachments are said to be the root of all suffering, and thus, must be given up. As Yoda warns, attachments are fraught with peril and lead to the dark side.

"Yes, a Jedi's strength flows from the Force. But beware of the dark side. Anger, fear, aggression—the dark side of the Force, are they. Easily they flow, quick to join you in a fight. If once you start down the dark path, forever will it dominate your destiny. Consume you, it will, as it did Obi-Wan's apprentice," Yoda warns Luke.

Obi-Wan's apprentice was, we later learn, Anakin Skywalker. In a foreshadowing of what's to come, in the prequel "Revenge of the Sith," Yoda tells Anakin, "The fear of loss is a path to the dark side." Yoda warns that every fear must be relinquished, including that of death—whether it be our own death, or that of someone we love.

"Death is a natural part of life. Rejoice for those around you who transform into the Force. Mourn them do not. Miss them do not. Attachment leads to jealousy. The shadow of greed that is."

When Anakin asks what he needs to do, Yoda replies, "Train yourself to let go of everything you fear to lose."

Of course, Anakin doesn't heed Yoda's words. He chooses the dark side and comes to embody evil, in the form of Darth Vader. This serves as a reminder that the dark side is always inviting us, tempting us down its bewitching path.

"You Will Know When You Are Calm" "Is the dark side stronger?" Luke asks. No, Yoda assures him, but the dark side is "quicker, easier, more seductive."



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A 2015 UK stamp featuring Luke Skywalker testifies to the lasting impact of Star Wars.

Jedi Master Yoda is immortalized in wax at Madame Tussauds museum in Germany.

The dark side can lure a Jedi, gradually contaminating him in ways he may not even realize, altering his thoughts and behavior. As Buddha said, "What we think, we become." What we're exposed to shapes our thoughts, and thus, who we are. Especially today, there are so many things we'd be better off not seeing or hearing, things that blur the line between right and wrong.

When Luke asks how he will know good from bad, Yoda replies: "You will know when you are calm, at peace ... passive. A Jedi uses the Force for knowledge and defense, never for attack." This teaching would change the course of the universe, for when Luke eventually has the chance to destroy Darth Vader, he instead shows him compassion.

To maintain a state of calm requires self-control. We can then come from a place of compassion, our true nature, rather than vengeance or greed. When we're angry,

agitated, fearful, or overly excited, we are no longer calm, and we are no longer rational.

A calm state of self-control allows us to look inside, to see what is driving us, and what is truly important to us. This introspection is critical to living a complete human life. This is not possible when we are only doing what others tell us, or force us, to do.

In fact, Luke never tells Darth Vader what he should do. Rather, he directs Vader to search within himself to uncover the truth, and extricate himself from the dark side. Aligning with good or evil is always a choice. It can never be forced upon another. This is the way of the Jedi, and in Eastern thought, this is the way of the Dharma.

Applying It to Our Lives

When we apply this wisdom to ourselves, we may find our lives transformed. Research has revealed that remaining calm has a profound effect on our biochemis-

try and long-term health. Yoda's Eastern-inspired wisdom has the real potential to affect our mental and physical health. A clear and tranquil mind can relieve anxiety and depression, lower blood pressure, and reduce heart rate. This state of mind brings out the best in us.

So how can we apply some of this wisdom? In my view, it begins with our thoughts. If our thoughts are not aligning with who we want to be, those thoughts are not us and should be ignored and eliminated. Remember, we don't have to believe everything we think.

With whatever we do, we should ask ourselves some questions: Are we giving our best effort? Are our motives pure, or are we trying to benefit ourselves? Is our focus on doing the right thing? Are we operating from a place of fear or compassion? Reflecting within is important, because no matter what our justification may be, we are always responsible for our thoughts and actions.

"Star Wars" remains a part of popular culture, despite the passage of time. Roger Ebert summed up our intrigue with "Star Wars" quite nicely.

"The characters are not themselves—they are us. ... We are on a quest, on a journey, on a mythological expedition. The story elements in the 'Star Wars' trilogy are as deep and universal as storytelling itself. Watching these movies, we're in a receptive state like that of a child—our eyes and ears are open, we're paying attention, and we are amazed."

The strength of the Jedi comes from selflessness, letting go, and becoming one with all that's around them. This requires self-examination, for that's how growth and learning occur. Like the Jedi, we should make the most of each day, striving always to improve, in our quest to be our best selves.

May the Force be with you!

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



Many efforts to stop the spread of COVID have become "sacred values" that cannot be questioned—even by scientists.

Moralization of COVID-19 Clouds Human Judgment

A distorted view of COVID control measures has become an obstacle for quality science, researchers reveal

Researchers have found that preventing COVID-19 deaths has been elevated to a "sacred value" in society, such that those who question pandemic restrictions are morally condemned. Meanwhile deaths, abuses of power, and public shaming that occur in the name of "preventing COVID" are deemed acceptable.

The unprecedented restrictions placed upon Western civilizations in 2020 would likely have been met with protest a year earlier. But, when issued in the name of COVID-19 mitigation, people are more likely to accept what otherwise might be regarded as abuses of power, even when it leads to death, according to a team of researchers from the United States and New Zealand.

COVID-19 has become a highly visible, politicized, and publicized event, such that efforts to combat it have become moralized. Once something is elevated to the level of a sacred value, even questioning anything that goes against it can "elicit moral outrage, disapproval, and a desire to reaffirm one's moral commitments," write the researchers in their paper, "Moralization of Covid-19 health response: Asymmetry in tolerance for human costs," in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*.

This is certainly what's been seen with COVID-19 policy, in which people have been shamed, threatened, and physically assaulted over their choices to not wear a mask or refuse to shutter their business.

Others have faced outrage over questioning whether the restrictions put in place to slow the spread of the virus cause more harm than good.

The researchers predicted that when

COVID-19 efforts become moralized, it would generate asymmetries in judgment that make people more accepting of harms generated as a result. After conducting two experimental studies, their prediction was confirmed.

People More Tolerant of Public Shaming and 'Deaths of Despair'

Lockdowns, business closures and social distancing enforced to combat COVID-19 involve trade-offs that researchers described as collateral damage:

"Those costs include unemployment or underemployment, extreme stress and substance abuse, and delayed cancer diagnoses, among others. Left unaddressed, these forces may generate 'deaths of despair,' whereby individuals perish from behaviors or worsened illnesses as a result of perceived bleak prospects.

Other costs include the public shaming of those who violate or question health-based policies, abuse of law-enforcement and government power, and deterioration of human rights."

Yet, because "fighting COVID-19" has been turned into a moral issue, people tend to be more accepting of the very real harms induced as a result—including deaths, abuses of power, and mental illness—than they are of harms they attribute to COVID-19, the illness, researchers found.

In the first study example, Americans were asked to evaluate human costs, including public shaming, deaths, illnesses, and police abuse of power, that resulted either from efforts to minimize COVID-19's health impact or from non-COVID efforts, such as for economic purposes. In another example, participants were asked to evaluate the

harms caused by a police officer abusing authority to enforce either COVID-19 restrictions or speed limits.

"In both cases, the degree of human suffering or cost was held constant, such that the officer cited and detained the same number of people to reduce the same number of deaths," study author Fan Xuan Chen said in a news release. Yet, the participants' tolerance of human suffering was not constant; deaths, public shaming, and abuse of power were deemed more acceptable when they occurred as a result of minimizing COVID-19.

The second study presented New Zealanders with the chance to evaluate two research proposals. Both proposals had the same amount of methodology information and were equally valid. One proposal looked at abandoning a COVID-19 elimination strategy, the other looked at continuing it. New Zealanders were less favorable toward the strategy that questioned the value of continuing an elimination strategy.

According to Chen, "New Zealanders were more favorably disposed to a research proposal that supported COVID-19-elimination efforts than to one that challenged those efforts, even when the methodological information and evidence supporting both proposals were equivalent."

Questioning COVID-19 Restrictions Is 'Morally Condemned'

The study's findings suggest that questioning efforts to eliminate COVID-19 is a "morally condemned" behavior in today's society and highlights a double-standard that has emerged, such that deaths from COVID-19 restrictions are acceptable while those said

to be from COVID-19 are not.

Not only were the study participants more likely to accept social shaming, illnesses, deaths, and human rights violations when they resulted from measures to control COVID-19, but they expressed stronger negativity when human costs were associated with measures not related to COVID-19 control.

Some people have faced outrage over questioning whether restrictions used to slow the spread of COVID cause more harm than good.

Researchers found respondents expressed significantly greater moral outrage; stronger punitive intentions toward those responsible; and diminished evaluations of the competence of those involved when deaths were unrelated to COVID-19. In other words, if a person died because of a COVID control measure, it was more tolerable.

Those who were most concerned about COVID-19 risks personally were especially likely to overlook the harms caused by COVID-19 restrictions and express greater moral outrage. Media depictions of COVID-19 may also amplify moralization, the researchers noted, "such as by activating disgust."

Harms of COVID-19 Restrictions 'Under-Acknowledged'

The ideology of "fighting COVID-19" (C19) has been elevated to the level of sacred value while many are turning a blind eye to the suffering that's resulted from lockdowns, unemployment, economic crisis, and isolation, among other resulting human costs of COVID restrictions.

As a result, the researchers suggested that "potential human costs beyond C19's direct health effects may be relatively under-acknowledged, deprioritized, or granted less moral weight."

The loss of human lives is now being given different moral weight depending on their cause, and even scientific research that could delve into the true human costs of COVID-19 restrictions is likely to be "discouraged, unfunded, or dismissed." The researchers revealed that when it came to researching the consequences of COVID control measures, moral outrage had become "a prominent obstacle in evaluating those costs dispassionately or through empirical scrutiny."

There's still time to take a step back from this altered reality and view the COVID-19 pandemic objectively, without allowing an ambiguity imposed, and media-driven, measure of morality to cloud your judgment. If you want to learn more, QuestioningCovid.com is a great place to find open-minded discussion. And if you're looking to get involved and take action, Stand for Health Freedom is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting human, constitutional, and parental rights.

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Napping Your Way to Success

An afternoon snooze isn't popular in American business culture—yet

Think of the body like an electric car. You can turn it off, but you have to plug it in to recharge. That's what we do when we sleep.

CONAN MILNER

If there are any upsides to the lockdown conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the chance to adopt a siesta culture has to be counted among them.

North Americans take a grim pride in not getting enough sleep, but in our pursuit of productivity, we may be sacrificing our best selves.

Research suggests staying awake to get more done is a false economy. Sleep can seem like a waste of time when you have things to get done, but sleep science finds the opposite to be true. Those who cheat on sleep also undermine their productivity.

The findings of a 2019 study published in the *Journal of the National Sleep Foundation* strongly suggest that even slightly shortening your sleep routine during the workweek interferes with job performance. Researchers from the University of South Florida, Pennsylvania State University, Harvard Medical School, and others contributed to the study. It found that those who sacrifice as little as 16 minutes of sleep

a night are more likely to be distracted and use poor judgment during their workday.

Some companies have taken sleep research to heart. Ben and Jerry's, Cisco, and other companies have policies that encourage employees to nap. Some offer nap rooms. Tech giants provide weary workers with nap pods, some complete with a zero-gravity bed, soothing music, and a sleep-inducing light show. One online shoe retailer provides massage chairs that sit under an arching overhead fish tank that immerses them in an underwater vista when they recline.

Until employees see the executive team taking naps, they're going to be leery of napping at work.

But for most people, taking a nap in the middle of the workday is just not an option. Or at least that was the case when we were all reporting to the office or job site. For those now working from home, this may be the perfect chance to experiment with an afternoon nap.

If we do, we might find this apparent luxury transforms our afternoons. According to Jamie Gruman, a business professor and senior research fellow at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, productivity and work quality can improve when we nap.

In his book, "Boost: The Science of Recharging Yourself in an Age of Unrelenting Demands," Gruman devotes an entire chapter to the restorative power of sleep. While he was writing, he came across a wealth of research showing that naps can improve vigilance, math skills, and logical reasoning. Naps can also make people more alert and improve their reaction time. "There is evidence for this. It's not just somebody's idea," Gruman said. "It solidified in my mind that sleeping on the job is

a good thing to do."

Gruman is careful not to directly encourage individuals to sleep at work, because they still run a real risk of getting fired in workplaces that haven't yet caught on to the value of naps. But he's found that many workers already do it on the sly. That gets all the easier with many of us now telecommuting.

When Gruman gives a presentation, he often asks for a show of hands to identify the nappers in the room. Few if any hands are raised in public, but people always confess their nap habit later in private.

"People confide in me all the time that they sleep at work. They will come up to me and say, 'I don't want anyone to know but I sleep on the job,'" Gruman said. "Usually at around two o'clock or so people get fatigued and they want to take a nap. And if they do, they're going to get better at what they do."

Continued on Page 11

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This 'Deadly Carrot' Has Major Antiviral Treatment Potential

Experimental cancer drug could fight many viruses by supporting the body's own immune response

JOSEPH MERCOLA

Researchers from the UK's University of Nottingham revealed that an experimental cancer drug showed promising lab results against viral infections, and specifically against COVID-19.

News about how to control or combat the SARS-CoV-2 virus has overtaken media outlets and public debate, to the detriment of addressing other public health issues. For example, during 2020 the rates of suicides, especially among young people, and drug overdoses have risen dramatically.

Recently, one focus of media reports has been debunking potential treatments that aren't developed or manufactured by the pharmaceutical industry while encouraging the public to keep their eyes squarely on the COVID-19 vaccine. News stories abound about where to get the vaccine, when and where the drug is being shipped, and assurances that the side effects are minimal.

Recent research published in the journal *Viruses*, however, revealed the drug thapsigargin may have broad-spectrum antiviral activity, including against coronaviruses such as SARS-CoV-2.

Experimental Cancer Pill Shows Antiviral Activity

In a press release, the researchers stressed the significance of improving the clinical management of a variety of viruses since it is often impossible to distinguish one from another upon presentation. The lab results demonstrated thapsigargin was highly effective against SARS-CoV-2 as well as respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), influenza A, and the common cold coronavirus OC43. During the study, the researchers found that thapsigargin's "performance was significantly better than remdesivir and ribavirin in their respective inhibition of OC43 and RSV."

In the same study, researchers tested thapsigargin in mice against a lethal influenza strain. It appeared to protect the animals during the challenge and had the ability to inhibit "different viruses before or during active infection." The researchers concluded thapsigargin or its derivatives are a promising inhibitor of the viruses tested.

Thapsigargin is derived from the "deadly carrot" thapsia plant, also known as villosus deadly carrot for its white carrot-like root. The drug has previously been tested against prostate cancer and the scientists found that in small doses it had antiviral properties.

In the press release, the researcher listed some of the key features from other cell and animal studies they believe make thapsigargin a promising antiviral option. This included effectiveness when it was used preventively or during an active infection, stability in an acidic pH so it could be administered orally, and greater effectiveness than current antiviral pharmaceutical options.

Thapsigargin appeared to trigger an effective immune response in the body as opposed to fighting the virus directly.

Another of the benefits the researchers believe thapsigargin has compared to other antiviral medications is that the viruses tested didn't appear to develop resistance to the compound's actions.

Thapsigargin appeared to trigger an effective immune response in the body as opposed to fighting the virus directly. These responses help disrupt viral replication and mean the drug is potentially valuable against mutant strains since effectiveness is not dependent on direct interaction with the virus.

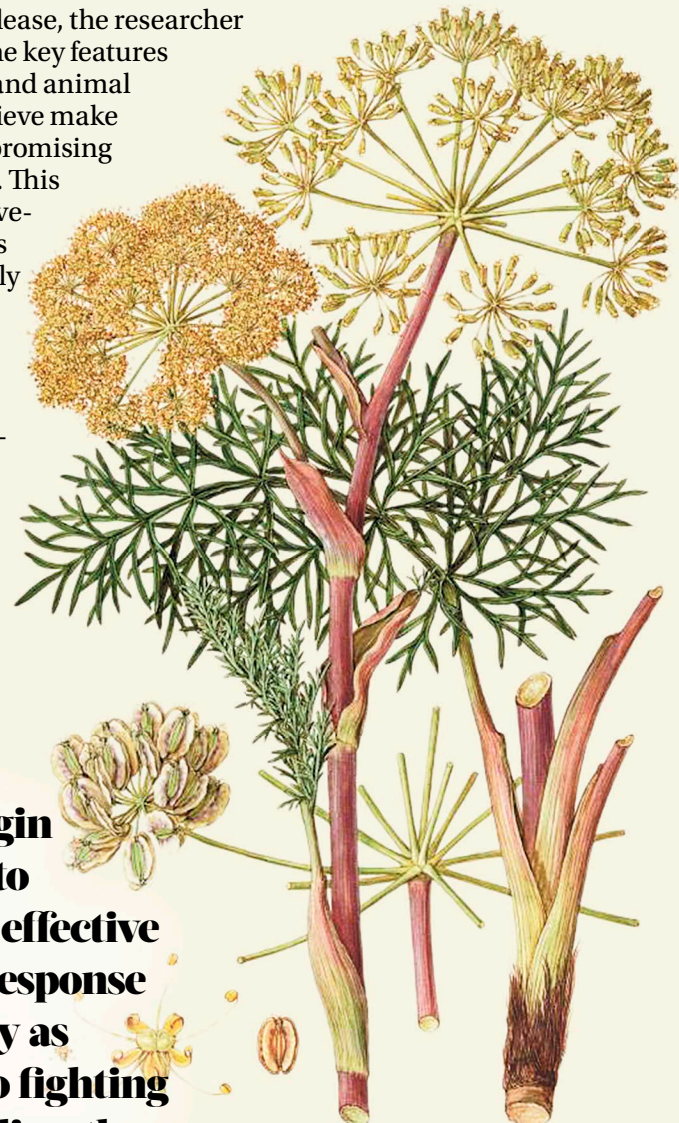
Kin-Chow Chang, a scientist on the research team, is quoted in the *Daily Mail* as saying: "Given that future pandemics are likely to be of animal origin, where animal to human (zoonotic) and reverse zoonotic (human to animal) spread take place, a new generation of antivirals, such as thapsigargin, could play a key role in the control and treatment of important viral infections in both humans and animals."

“Thapsigargin, could play a key role in the control and treatment of important viral infections in both humans and animals.”

Kin-Chow Chang, Ph.D., scientist on the research team

When considering the financial end of it, the *Daily Mail* reports that thapsigargin could be expensive, as it costs \$104 per 1 milligram (mg) dose when used in experimental research. However, the cost may be reduced if it were brought into full production, which would be necessary for the drug to have wide application, as it was estimated doses may range from 200 mg to 800 mg as a flu antiviral.

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



PHILIP CHOWMAN

Napping Your Way to Success

An afternoon snooze isn't popular in American business culture—yet

Continued from Page 9

Napping Is Natural

Nobody disputes our need for a nightly sleep. But for many people, sleeping for a short period during the day has an ugly stigma attached to it. It reeks of laziness and indulgence—an activity reserved exclusively for babies, the ill, and the elderly.

But this stigma is found only in the modern Western world. Look at many older cultures, and you'll find that napping is a common practice very much in line with the rhythm of a day.

Dr. Alon Avidan, a neurology professor at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, and director of UCLA's Sleep Disorders Center says napping is a natural response to that dip in alertness that typically occurs a few hours after lunch.

"In other cultures, napping is socially acceptable. It has been a strategy to get rid of that temporary sensation of fatigue and sleepiness," Avidan said. "If you go to Spain, Italy, and Portugal in the early afternoon, you're lucky to find a shop open. Here in the U.S., of course, we have abandoned that idea and instead rely on working through using a cup of coffee."

Even in Japan, a country known for its strong work ethic and company devotion, naps get social respect.

According to Alexandra Kenny from information website *Tourist Japan*, napping is a common practice and a part of daily life. Kenny says that in Japan, it is common to see people snoozing in cafes, on the train, in shops, and even in offices. The practice is known as *inemuri*, which means "sleeping on duty."

Inemuri is even encouraged in some workplaces because it allows workers time to restore their focus while on the job.

"In fact, taking a nap is often a symbol of the success of a hard worker who is entitled to the rest," Kenny said. "It is part of the work/life balance in Japan. In turn, the workforce is more productive, efficient, and ultimately happier."

According to certified pediatric sleep consultant Riki Taubenblat, we are biologically wired to want an afternoon nap. It's just that our culture pushes stimulants rather than sleep to get over that midday slump.

"In reality, they'd be much better served with a short nap. Naps can improve mental focus, emotional state, and physical health," said Taubenblat.

It's clear that sleep, in general, is essential for health, but there is also evidence that nappers may be healthier than non-nappers. Taubenblat points to a Harvard University study that tracked more than 23,000 Greek men and women. This was in the 1990s, as parts of Greece started pulling away from the traditional siesta culture to embrace the no-nap rhythm of the modern world.

Over the course of six years, researchers found that those who had abandoned their afternoon slumber showed a significantly higher risk of heart disease compared to those who still took regular naps.

Naps may also influence the length of our lives. On the Greek island of Ikaria, where the culture is still siesta-oriented, men are found to be four times more likely to live to the age of 90 than men from the United States.

Taubenblat believes a big reason why people have negative feelings toward naps is that their culture doesn't respect sleep.

"We live in a society where you get credit for bragging that you only slept four hours last night. Nobody pats you on the back for getting eight or nine," she said.

Gruman thinks this sense of toughness via sleep deprivation stems from a notion that the ideal worker is one who can best emulate a machine.

"You get the most out of your machinery if you run it 24/7, because your variable costs are reduced and it's more efficient. So we have this idea that we have to be driving people like machines, 24/7," he said. "But that's an ignorant way to think about



North Americans tend to battle their afternoon drowsiness with stimulants like coffee, tea, or caffeinated sodas.

people, because we're not allowing them to nap in conjunction with the natural process of being human."

Strategizing Your Sleep

One way to conserve your energy is simply by taking a break. Going for a walk, listening to some music, or just taking a few moments to clear your head can all help give your mind a rest so that it can better handle the next few hours on the job.

But Avidan says nothing replenishes the body like sleep.

"Think of it like an electric car. Even if you sit it idle and let it rest, it doesn't expend any energy. But if you plug it in, it's going to allow the current to recharge," Avidan said. "That's what we're doing when we're asleep. We're allowing the brain to refuel and recharge in a way that no other state would allow."

To get the most out of your nap, however, you have to use this power strategically. Sleep for too long, or too late in the afternoon, and you may run the risk of insomnia—and reduce the amount of sleep you get at night.

"If an individual takes a nap at 5, 6, 7, or 8 in the evening, it can impair the ability to fall asleep at night, because they have partially restored their sleepiness, so the sleep drive at night is not going to be as strong," Avidan said.

According to Avidan, the ideal nap takes place within our natural, post-lunch energy dip—generally a 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. window. As for duration, we have two choices: a 20-minute power nap to relieve drowsiness, or a 45-minute to one-hour nap to fully restore cognitive function.

"Beyond that, we run the risk of waking up more groggy as we go through deeper stages of sleep, and we don't get the most from the strategic nature of the nap," Avidan said.

Perhaps if sleep research was better pub-

lized, it would help erase some of the cultural stigmas we hold about napping. But Gruman says this knowledge alone will not be enough. He says it will take a few more steps for the corporate culture to fully embrace sleeping on the job.

"The way you get it implemented, and this is key, is you have to have the senior people in the organization modeling the behavior," he said. "You could set up nap rooms and buy expensive nap pods, and implement HR policies that approve it. But until they see the executive team occasionally taking naps, employees are going to be leery."

Of course, everyone's sleep needs vary. Some do better with a daily power nap, while others only need one every once in a while. Gruman says he only naps about once or twice a month on average. But that quick recharge makes a big difference in the quality of his work when he's hit by midday fatigue.

"After 15 minutes, I'm back to my best, and thoughts that weren't coming to me previously now come to me. Ideas and arguments that I couldn't make previously I can now make with ease," he said. "It's really a dramatic difference."

Gruman knows he's lucky. Since much of his work is done from home, he has the luxury of organizing his schedule to fit his own needs. But he argues that if the modern workplace also adopts a rhythm more in line with the human body, we will all be better off.

"It's about respecting your body and mind, and working in harmony with the signals that you're being given and not suppressing them or denying them," he said.

"There are times we have to show we're tough, but on a day-to-day basis, we don't have to do that. We should embrace our intuitive side—the one that's more in tune with the cycles of nature. Then we would, in fact, be more effective."

YOSHIKAZU TSUNO/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



What People Are Saying



I read *The Epoch Times* daily. I still like hard papers [...] and I still like to grab that paper in my hand, but I get more printed versions of stories than ever before. You guys have done an amazing job, and really—I think there's such a void in media, especially newspapers. They slant so solidly one way that there are very few papers that I can really feel that I can rely on, and *The Epoch Times* is one.

SEAN HANNITY
Talk show host



I congratulate you and *The Epoch Times* for the work you are doing, especially with regard to keeping the menace of the communist threat in front of us.

DR. SEBASTIAN GORKA
Military and intelligence analyst and former deputy assistant to the president



I rely on *The Epoch Times* newspaper for factual and unbiased news coverage.

LARRY ELDER
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Columnist and broadcaster



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Nursing Schools See Enrollment Bump Amid Pandemic

Media coverage, job security, and urgent needs of COVID-19 patients drive students toward nursing

MICHELLE ANDREWS

Last December, Mirande Gross graduated from Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky, with a bachelor's degree in communications. But Gross has changed her mind and is heading back to school in May for a one-year accelerated nursing degree program.

The pandemic that has sickened more than 28.2 million people in the United States and killed more than 500,000 helped convince her she wanted to become a nurse.

"I was excited about working during the pandemic," Gross, 22, said. "It didn't scare me away."

Enrollment in baccalaureate nursing programs increased nearly 6 percent in 2020, to 250,856, according to preliminary results from an annual survey of 900 nursing schools by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

"In the pandemic, we saw an increased visibility of nurses, and I think that's been inspirational to many people," said Deb Trautman, president and CEO of the association, whose members represent nursing programs at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. "It's a profession where you can make a difference."

Two-year associate nursing degree programs seem to be experiencing a similar bump, although hard numbers are unavailable, said Laura Schmidt, president of the Organization for Associate Degree Nursing.

There's no way to know exactly what is propelling the new applications. But medical schools also saw an 18 percent boost in applications last year, a jump partly attributed to the pandemic and the high profile of key doctors, such as Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, during the crisis.

It's possible that the media stories, social media accounts, and front-line medical workers' personal accounts of battling the novel coronavirus have played a role. "Nurse" was the No. 1 term that people queried "how to become" on Google in 2020, according to Google trends data.

For Gross, it was a return to an initial career choice. When she started college, nursing was her chosen path. But after fainting twice while shadowing a nurse at the hospital, she switched to a major that didn't involve needles or blood. For the past two years, she's worked as a newborn photographer at a hospital near her Louisville home, and she no longer gets squeamish at the sight of IVs or injuries.

Meeting the demand for nurses is hampered by long-standing capacity issues at nursing schools.

"When I saw on the news nurses being so overworked, I thought, 'Gosh, I wish I could be in there helping,'" said Gross.

Demand for nurses was strong even before the pandemic hit. There are about 3 million registered nurses in the United States, but employment is expected to grow 7 percent between 2019 and 2029, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, faster than the 4 percent average for all occupations. Many hospital medical staffs are stretched to the breaking point as they deal with a surge of COVID-19 patients and at the same time cope with staff shortages as medical personnel have become ill with COVID-19 or had to quarantine.

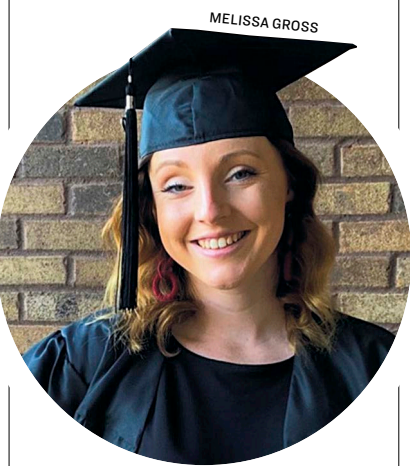
Meeting the demand for nurses is hampered by long-standing capacity issues at nursing schools. According to a report by



Enrollment in baccalaureate nursing programs increased nearly 6 percent in 2020.



David Namnath is finishing a two-year associate nursing degree at the College of Marin in Kentfield, Calif. When his clinical rotation at the local hospital was canceled because of COVID-19 last spring, he and other students took on a telenursing project instead.



Mirande Gross recently graduated from Bellarmine University in Louisville, Ky., with a bachelor's degree in communications, but she's heading back to school in May for a one-year accelerated nursing degree program. "When I saw on the news nurses being so overworked, I thought, 'Gosh, I wish I could be in there helping,'" she says.

the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, programs at the bachelor's and graduate degree levels turned away more than 80,000 qualified applicants in 2019. The reasons included not having enough faculty, clinical training sites and supervisors, or classroom space, as well as budget constraints, the report found.

"The people who are prepared to teach are at least master's degree level and frequently have doctorate degrees," said Beverly Malone, president, and CEO of the National League for Nursing. "They can work at hospitals or community care centers for [significantly] more money." Malone and others also noted that it can be difficult to ensure access to the clinical training slots that nursing students need. This problem was exacerbated during the pandemic when many hospitals sent nursing students home to avoid their getting sick and to conserve scarce personal protective equipment for staffers treating COVID patients.

For some nursing students, the pandemic has opened their eyes to new possibilities for patient care. David Namnath is finishing a two-year associate nursing degree at the College of Marin in Kentfield, California. He learned last spring that his clinical rotation at the local hospital would be canceled because of COVID-19.

Instead, he and other students took on a telenursing project, in which he made regular wellness check-ins and provided health education related to chronic conditions such as diabetes and back pain with eight patients over video and phone.

"It was really helpful for me," said Namnath, 29, who has a bachelor's degree in biochemistry and worked in a lab before starting nursing school. "It's not something you normally learn. I think we became more three-dimensional because of it."

Some people who got nursing degrees in years past but didn't practice also may be taking a fresh look at the profession, said David Benton, CEO of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing. More than 222,000 nurses who were educated in the U.S. took the National Council Licensure Examination last year, a figure that was 5 percent higher than the year before, he said.

The economic downturn that has shuttered thousands of businesses may have made nursing more attractive, he said. "We know that, nationally, services like the restaurant industry have shut down," Benton said. "But one thing that hasn't shut down is demand for health care."

Nurses who worked in hospitals made \$79,400 a year on average in 2019, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. But as the COVID crisis hit and hospitals scrambled to find staff last year, nurses who were willing to travel to COVID hot spots could make many times that amount, in some cases up to \$10,000 a week.

There are many paths to becoming a nurse. A growing proportion of nurses get a bachelor of science degree in nursing at a four-year college. But many still

go to community colleges for two-year associate degrees in nursing. These programs are more affordable and may appeal to older students who are parents or going back for a second degree, said Schmidt.

Both types of graduates can take the nurse licensing exam and become registered nurses. But nurses with bachelor's degrees may be better positioned for higher-level jobs or supervisory roles. They may also earn more money. According to the association of nursing colleges' annual survey, 41 percent of hospitals and other health care facilities require new nursing hires to have a bachelor's degree in nursing.

“In the pandemic, we saw an increased visibility of nurses, and I think that's been inspirational to many people.”

Deb Trautman, president and CEO of American Association of Colleges of Nursing

Many nursing schools have "RN to BSN" programs that enable registered nurses with associate degrees to get the additional training they need for their bachelor of nursing degrees. And numerous accelerated programs, like the one that Gross will start in May, allow people to fill in their nursing education gaps in a compressed time frame.

Not every nursing student sees the pandemic as an opportunity, however. Steven Bemben worked as a paramedic in Uvalde County, Texas, west of San Antonio, during the first frightening months of the pandemic last year. Personal protective equipment was hard to come by, and sometimes, the calls to transport very sick COVID-19 patients came nonstop.

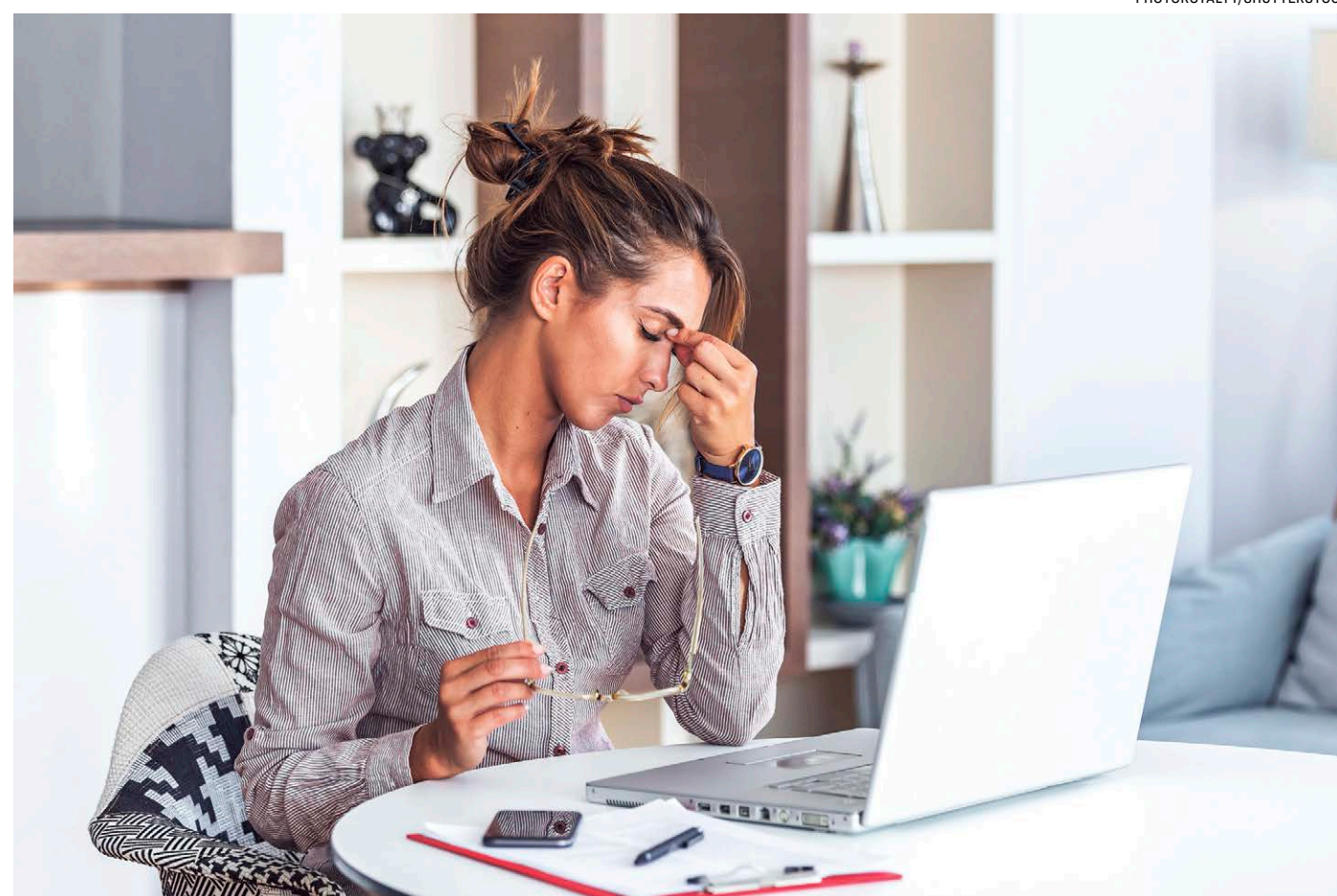
"It was extremely stressful, and people were getting fatigued and burned out," said Bemben, 33, who had been on the job for nine years.

Last October, he quit his paramedic job, and in January he started a two-year bachelor's nursing program at the University of Texas-San Antonio. (He already has an associate degree, although not in nursing.)

When Bemben finishes school, he hopes, the pandemic will be in our collective rearview mirror.

"By the time I graduate, I'm trying to stay optimistic that we'll be past all this stuff," he said.

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



One type of headache, the tension headache, can arise when we try to take on too much and then suffer from the stress of it all.

Headaches: 3 Tips on How to Get Rid of Them

Understanding the root of your headache is the first step in alleviating it, neuroscientist says

AMANDA ELLISON

Everyone experiences headaches. From dull throbbing dehydration headaches to incapacitating migraines, a sore head is an extremely common complaint. This is perhaps especially true at the moment.

COVID-19 can cause them, as can sitting at desks for too long, and not getting out of the house enough.

When headaches strike, many people's reaction is to reach for a painkiller. And these can do the job. But a better solution is often to probe the reasons behind the pain—especially if you get similar types of headaches a lot.

Even though they all entail pain, where the pain is can clue us into what type of headache we are experiencing. Pain in the face and forehead are markers of sinus-related headache while the sensation of a pneumatic drill somewhere in our cranium is often migraine.

But ultimately, all headaches are caused by vasodilation in the head—the widening of blood vessels near the brain. This stretches sensory receptors in the vessel wall and we feel that sensation as pain.

To understand why we feel this pain, we need to think about the constraints that the contents of our heads are working under.

Blood is toxic to brain tissue and so is kept separate through the blood-brain barrier. If a blood vessel leaks or breaks, this results in a hemorrhage and the death of the brain tissue the blood seeps into. So, if our blood vessels dilate beyond comfortable limits, the sensory receptors will fire off signals to the brain, which we interpret as pain.

Headaches are an early warning system. The best way to counteract them is to work out what they are warning us about.

1. Think Beyond Your Head

It's a two-way street. The cause of our headaches can sometimes come from our bodies or our behavior. And of course, headaches affect both our body and our behavior. If we see headache as something isolated to our cranium, we will never truly understand its cause, our experience of it, or how we can best mitigate it. This means thinking beyond your head. Yes, headache pain is generated somewhere in our head and we feel it in our head and that is why it is called a headache. But the headache is so much more than that—which is why I'm fascinated by them, have studied them for the past 20 years, and recently published a book on the subject.

Frequent migraine sufferers intimately understand this and often religiously track their food intake, their activities, and the weather in order to work out what triggers them. But the normal headache sufferer is often less in tune with the causes of their pain.

Tension headache is a really good example of how this works. It feels like a tight band squeezing around your head with a weight sitting on top for good measure. We are all aware of their occurrence at times of great emotional stress (lockdown homeschooling anyone?) but they can equally be caused by the stress we put on our body, with bad posture for example, or recovery from injury.

Where the pain is can clue us into what type of headache we are experiencing.



Tune in when a headache begins. This will help you figure out the cause—like stress or dehydration—and make changes to stay headache free.

Prioritizing Balance Is an Essential Component of Bone Health

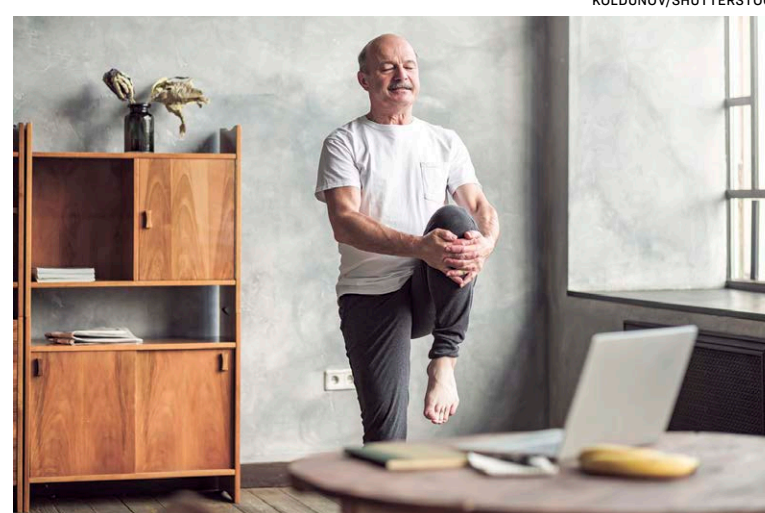
An active lifestyle is your best defense but several exercises can be done safely with social distancing

MAT LECOMPTÉ

You might think you're doing the most for your bones if you're getting enough calcium and vitamin D. And while it's a great start, there is still a lot more to do.

Several conditions can influence balance. Age is one of them; medication another.

Nutrition helps feed bones and prevent bone loss. But even strong bones can break. That's why working on balance is one of the best things you can do to keep bones healthy.



When you're stable on your feet and can stay upright, mobile, and agile, there's less of a chance you'll take a tumble. This can save your arms, wrists, shoulders, legs, ankles, and hips from a potentially

There are many exercises that can help you maintain good balance, including yoga, tai chi, and stretching exercises.

life-threatening injury.

Several conditions can influence balance. Age is one of them. As can medications or conditions like arthritis, Parkinson's disease, or multiple sclerosis.

Sharpening balance may help reduce the risk for further injury and help you get more out of life. Thankfully, there are several activities designed to improve balance, and many can be practiced independently or in safe, socially distanced settings.

If you're already living an active life, you're certainly working on balance. Walking, running, climbing stairs, and cycling can promote better balance by strengthening lower-body muscles.

Of course, if you're not doing these things, you can safely start. You won't want to hit the ground running, however. It might be

Both entail overactivity of the musculature around the head and neck, which sets up an inflammatory response involving prostaglandins and nitric oxide, both of which are chemicals that act to widen blood vessels. Inflammatory chemicals also directly activate the trigeminal nerve—the most complex of the cranial nerves and the one responsible for sensation and movement in the face.

Taking too many things on, rushing around trying to get things done in a negative time, and trying to be all things to all people are common behavioral markers that will predict a tension headache. That and the actions we take when the pain begins.

2. Listen to The Pain

If you have a pain in your leg, it might stop you from playing in that tennis match or turning up for five-a-side football. You know that if you play on it, you might do more damage and your recovery will take longer. But we don't tend to do that with a headache. We take a painkiller or an anti-inflammatory and carry on as normal even though our pain receptors are screaming at us that there's something wrong.

Taking paracetamol or ibuprofen will act to avert the danger, reducing the inflammation, the dilation, and the perception of pain, but the headache will reoccur unless we can address the cause. Sometimes it's obvious—if you have a sinus headache you're just going to have to wait for your sinuses to clear, so taking a painkiller or a decongestant may be a good approach—but sometimes our coping strategy can make things worse.

We may decide a bottle of wine and a takeaway dinner is just the kind of treat we need to relax and de-stress. But both lead to dehydration, another ubiquitous cause of headache. With your brain made of more than 70 percent water, if your kidneys need to borrow some to dilute alcohol or salts and spices, it usually comes from this oasis. The brain loses water such that it literally shrinks in volume, tugging on the membranes covering the brain and triggering pain.

3. Use The Brain's Natural Painkillers

So what else can we do? One way is to lean into the brain's natural painkiller system and to boost neurochemicals associated with happiness (such as serotonin and oxytocin) and reward (dopamine). Having a laugh at a comedy, enjoying a good friend's company, or indulging in some intimacy with a partner will all boost these hormones to various degrees.

Each block pain signals coming from the body, not only helping you get a handle on your headache but also redressing the balance of neurochemicals that were the mechanism of your upset emotional state.

The knowledge that we can leverage our behavior and our body to keep our brain's neurochemicals in balance gives us a way to break the headache cycle. So next time you have a headache for which the causes aren't glaringly obvious—you're not otherwise sick and you've been keeping hydrated—take a look at your life and see what you can change there.

The pain, after all, is trying to tell you something.

Amanda Ellison is a professor of neuroscience at the Durham University in the UK. This article was first published on The Conversation.

worthwhile to look into purchasing a stair climber or recumbent bike to exercise at home. Both of these devices can help with balance.

Stretching a few times per week, if not daily, can also help with balance. It helps loosen muscles to improve posture and balance while also promoting better mobility.

Yoga and Tai chi are specific types of stretching exercises that can aid balance to reduce the risk of falls and fractures.

Nutrition is essential for healthy bones, but exercise and better balance can offer further protection. Take the next step in bone health by building better balance.

Mat Lecompte is a freelance health and wellness journalist. This article was first published on Bel Marra Health.

Lack of Sleep Makes It Harder to Stop Unpleasant Thoughts

Research study suggests sleep plays an important role in our ability to control our thoughts

Feeling more stressed than usual? If so, getting enough sleep is essential for keeping unwanted thoughts from hijacking your mind.

Insufficient sleep can significantly reduce your ability to keep unwanted thoughts at bay, according to a study out of the United Kingdom.

In a collaborative effort, researchers from the department of psychology at the University of York and the Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit at University of Cambridge, determined that individuals who are deprived of sleep are significantly less able to stop the intrusion of negative memories than those who are well-rested.

The study, published in the journal *Clinical Psychological Science*, suggests that poor sleep habits and emotional disturbances can create a vicious cycle that exacerbates itself, highlighting the importance of sleep in recovery from emotional distress.

Your Body Remembers Trauma

Unpleasant thoughts and associated physiological responses, like nervousness and sweating, may occur as the result of a triggering encounter. For example, someone who was robbed may become uncomfortable when they return to the scene of the crime, or a person who has experienced a car accident may become nervous and start to sweat when they are being driven too fast in a car.

If you are confronted with a reminder of a traumatic event, it's normal for negative thoughts and feelings to arise. However, an individual's ability to suppress unwanted thoughts varies greatly, along with the ability to regulate emotions once a negative thought has been triggered.

Now, researchers have identified a clear association between the amount of sleep you get and your ability to stop unpleasant thoughts and associated negative feelings, a faculty linked to mental health and overall well-being.

Memory Control Linked to Well-Being

Researchers recruited 60 healthy young adults to test the hypothesis that successful memory control requires adequate sleep. The study participants were assigned to either the "sleep" or "no sleep" group and asked to refrain from consuming both alcohol and caffeine for 24 hours before the experiment.

The study employed a widely used test method called the "think/no-think" (TNT) paradigm, wherein participants were asked to actively engage (think) or suppress (no-think) thoughts associated with a specific visual image called a "reminder cue."

Reminder cues consisted of 48 emotionally neutral face images. These were randomly paired with an equal number of "target" images selected from an international picture database, depicting both negative (a war zone) and neutral (a cityscape) scenes. So each face-scene pair included a randomly assigned face cue with a specific target scene.

In phase one, participants provided emotional-affect rankings for scenes using a scale that ranged from a sad face with a numeric value of "1" (far-left side of scale) to a smiling face with a value of "9" (far-right of scale).

Sad face/1 was used to rank scenes that made them feel completely unhappy, annoyed, unsatisfied, melancholic, despaired or bored. Smiling face/9 was for scenes that made them feel completely happy, pleased, satisfied, contented and hopeful.

Participants completed two emotion-ranking sessions that were divided by an overnight delay containing either sleep or no sleep. During each session, subjects were instructed to focus on a screen that presented a scene image for a few seconds, followed by a few seconds of a blank screen. They were asked to provide an emotion-rank from 1 to 9 for each scene. A session was complete after all 48 scenes had been viewed and ranked.

Reminders Can Stimulate Unwanted Thoughts

Phase two of the trial was a learning-and-testing phase in which the face-scene pairs were fully memorized by the participants. Phase two was completed after each of the 48 face-scene pairs had been correctly identified by each subject at least once.

A second identical test was administered



Thoughts drive our feelings and lack of sleep can take both in an unwelcome direction.

Poor sleep habits and emotional disturbances can create a vicious cycle that exacerbates itself.

No-sleep subjects reported nearly 50 percent more thought intrusions than well-rested individuals.

to reinforce learning through "overtraining," which ensured each participant would have trouble preventing scenes from intruding into their consciousness during the later "no-think" assessment phase.

Finally, the intrusiveness of thoughts was ranked by participants in the TNT assessment phase by pressing a key corresponding to one of three options—never, briefly, and often—after each face cue was presented. This rating represented the subject's ability to suppress thoughts of the associated scene after seeing each face cue.

Sleep group participants were given an eight-hour sleep opportunity during the overnight delay, while no-sleep group subjects remained awake in a university seminar room under the supervision of at least one researcher. At the time of the second affect-evaluation session, no-sleep subjects had been awake for more than 24 hours.

Fatigued Body = Tired Mind

While those who had slept found it easier with practice, the no-sleep participants had a consistently difficult time keeping unwanted thoughts about the negative and neutral scenes out of their minds. No-sleep subjects reported nearly 50 percent more thought intrusions than well-rested individuals, demonstrating that sleep deprivation significantly impairs memory control.

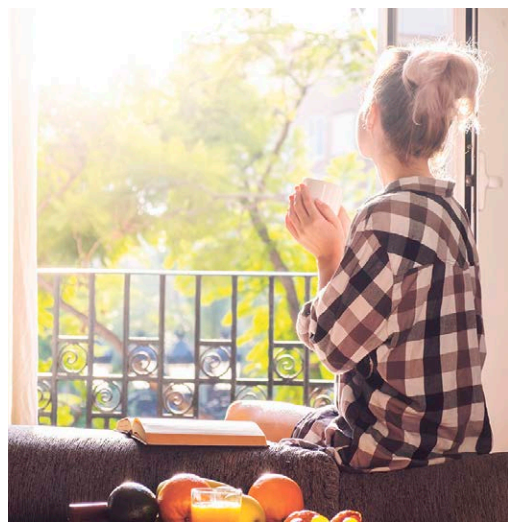
Sleep-deprived participants also had significantly higher negative thought relapses than those who had slept, indicating that initial control over thoughts gave way to uncontrolled negative thoughts when reminders were later encountered. In summary, a fatigued body correlated to less thought control overall.

Researchers also tested whether sleep deprivation affected the relationship between thought suppression and resultant emotions and found that subjects who were able to effectively suppress negative thoughts also felt less negative emotion when those scenes were subsequently encountered.

Researchers concluded by raising the possibility that sleep deprivation disrupts control over those parts of the brain that support memory and emotional regulation. Chronic sleep disturbance is a formal symptom of most psychiatric conditions, particularly those disorders that are characterized by intrusive thoughts, such as PTSD, schizophrenia, and major depressive disorder.

Sound, consistent sleep is a pillar of good health. If you or someone you love is having difficulty with sleep, consult the research on sleep disorders on GreenMedInfo.com, the world's most widely referenced, evidence-based natural medical resource.

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Take in some sunshine with your morning coffee to boost your mood and recharge your vitamin D stores.

Connect With the Sun to Combat Depression

If the season's short days have you down, this is the time to recharge

MAT LECOMPTÉ

If winter may have left you feeling drained and down, the pending spring makes this an opportune time to recharge.

Like nearly all living things, you are bound to the sun in a special biochemical relationship that extends from your immune system, to what you eat, to how you feel through the cycle of the seasons. One example is seasonal affective disorder, or SAD, a form of depression brought by the short days and grey skies of winter. Those who experience SAD have the additional weight of this year's pandemic as well.

Stress, anxiety, and sadness can make it challenging to muster up energy or enthusiasm. This can lead to more sedentary time, overeating, and social isolation.

Getting sunlight and social connection is an important way to get out of this state. Just as the sun draws plants from seeds buried in the ground, it can nurture something inside of you that only needs a bit more energy and warmth to come alive.

Do your best to get outside for a walk each day, as both the light and the movement can increase your energy.

For many people, increasing light exposure boosts energy and for some it will also relieve depressive symptoms.

Getting as much sunlight as possible, even through a window, has been shown to help people with SAD. So, when you wake up each day, open curtains and blinds to let natural light flood in. Even if it's a cloudy day, the natural light can help. This practice can also help settle your circadian rhythm and support a healthy sleep-wake cycle.

Sit near the windows as much as possible to get direct exposure. Do your best to get outside for a walk each day, as both the light and the movement can increase your energy.

If more light is required, you can try a lightbox. These are specially designed lights that emit a soft, steady spectrum of light that mimics the sun and can help treat SAD.

Other things you can do to help cope with dark, short days of the season include:

- Finding ways to boost physical activity. Dancing at home, walks, snowshoeing, etc., can all help improve energy levels.
- Set a consistent schedule. Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day and get into a routine.
- Ensure you're getting adequate nutrition each day to keep your energy up.
- Dedicate time each day to relax and do things you enjoy.
- Talk to friends and family to stay socially connected. Try booking virtual chats/phone calls in advance, so you have something to look forward to.

Mat Lecompté is a freelance health and wellness journalist. This article was first published on Bel Marra Health.

WISE HABITS

Positive Feedback Loops

Set up a system that rewards you for staying with your intention

LEO BABAUTA

If you want to be more disciplined about your day, you might tell yourself, "I'm going to wake every morning, meditate for 15 minutes, plan my Most Important Tasks, and then get started and follow the plan. No doubts about it."

And then your plan gets hit by distraction or interruption, and you feel bad about it.

You try again the next day, start out well, but then at some point, you get off track and feel discouraged.

Three days into this attempt, and you feel like you are completely undisciplined, and you give up the effort.

What went wrong?

The problem is that the plan was set up to fail at some point, and then you'd feel failure, feel bad about it, feel discouraged. You might be able to withstand this discouragement and negative feedback for a little while, but no one withstands it forever.

Negative feedback loops will cause us to not do the activity.

Positive feedback loops will cause us to stay with it for much longer.

Think about the design of your plan to change your behavior: Is it designed to give you positive feedback or negative feedback? Most people ignore this component entirely.

What Positive Feedback Looks Like

What we want is to design a plan that gives us some kind of reward or positive feeling, some kind of encouragement. And we want it to give us this encouragement regularly.

Some examples of positive feedback:

- I do the habit and get a checkmark and a ding! from my habit app
- I exercise and get to tell my friends about it
- I successfully complete a language lesson and feel a sense of accomplishment
- I have a coach who gives me encouragement
- I get a positive grade for a quiz
- I feel gratitude toward myself for meditating
- I get a high five from my friend after our hard run together
- My team gets praise for our accomplishment in the company
- I check off something from my task list

Notice also that many of these examples will have negative feedback built into them as well: I get a bad grade, my habit app streak ends, I feel embarrassed that my friends know I haven't exercised for a week, I forgot to do the language lesson and feel bad about it.

So if most systems have both positive and negative feedback built-in, what can we do?

We have to design a better system.

A More Positive Design

We need a system that will always encourage us to go in the right direction.

When we go in the right direction, we feel accomplishment.

When we go in the wrong direction, we get encouraged to turn it around.

A key principle: There is zero wrongness and judgment associated with this—when we judge ourselves or beat ourselves up, it's discouragement or negative feedback. Instead, we never make ourselves wrong. We always have compassion.

Here's an example. Let's say I want to write every day. I might design a plan like this:

- I only have to write one sentence a day for the first three days. It's so easy I can't say no. I am practically guaranteed success.
- After I write my one sentence for the day, I acknowledge myself for the effort and give myself gratitude for showing up and practicing.
- When that becomes super easy, I change it to two sentences a day. If I feel like writing more, I can. Same thing: acknowledgment and gratitude.
- I focus on small victories—encourage myself for any possible positive action! I am also encouraged to share any victory at all with others who might be encouraging (like my Sea Change Program or Fearless Training Program).
- If I get off track, my plan is to catch myself after a "slip-up" and give myself compassion for whatever resistance or discouragement I felt and pick a small victory by doing something related to the task. Any possible small victory will do, maybe just opening my document and

Think about the design of your plan to change your behavior: Is it designed to give you positive feedback or negative feedback?

writing one word. I can acknowledge myself and give myself gratitude for catching this and choosing a small victory to aim for. Find something to learn, and get back on track.

This system is designed to give me encouragement no matter what: victories, gratitude, acknowledgment, learning, and practicing getting back on track.

Principles of Positive Feedback Design

As you can see above, there are some simple principles we can incorporate into our design:

1. Try to not make yourself wrong, judge yourself, discourage yourself. You probably will (most of us do), but catch yourself and give yourself compassion, and see if you can remove this wrong-making.
2. Aim for small victories. As small as possible.
3. Encourage, acknowledge, give gratitude.
4. Scale as needed; scale up if you're really feeling it, scale down by doing less if you're feeling too busy or tired.
5. Have a way to encourage yourself if you start to get off track. Compassion, learning, finding the smallest possible victory to start getting back on track.
6. Use others for positive encouragement if it's helpful.

I encourage you to redesign your habit changes, your attempts to get more disciplined and focused, or any kind of change you'd like to make. Encourage, encourage, encourage!

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

Put some wind in your sails by making sure you have something to celebrate.

We Are All Cats, Aren't We?

We've all had moments that could launch a thousand memes

JAY HARRINGTON

We are all cats.

You know what I mean?

Perhaps not, if you were quarantined from social media and missed the video of the lawyer in Texas who joined a virtual court hearing via Zoom using a kitten filter. The lawyer couldn't figure out how to turn off the filter, the judge tried to help, and hilarity ensued. The lasting punchline was the lawyer trying to reassure everyone by saying, "I am not a cat."

In our increasingly digital age, we're only one click away from internet infamy. It's not like we're making more mistakes as a species. They just have a greater chance of being captured and amplified. In this sense, the most remarkable thing about the video is how unremarkable it is.

We are all cats. We all make mistakes that would be great fodder for internet memes. Fortunately, most of our mistakes aren't live-streamed and tweeted out by a judge. Hence, we've never experienced 15 minutes—or in the case of the kitten lawyer, a week's worth—of international fame for our foibles.

I could have easily been the "cat" during my years practicing law. I took myself way too seriously as a young lawyer. It didn't take long before I made a bunch of mistakes and was brought back to earth.

- I once wore two different shoes to court.
- I talked about a case in an elevator when I shouldn't have.
- I drafted pleadings with obvious typos I didn't notice until the moment after I hit submit.
- I had one too many drinks at more than one firm function.
- I made jokes I wished I could take back.
- I showed up at an all-office, suit-and-tie dinner in business casual attire.

And I've made a bunch more mistakes in the years since.

And yet everything has turned out fine. There were times when I wished I could take back the mistakes. But I've come to realize that my mistakes

are integral to who I am. They were the building blocks of my experience. They led me to be who I am and where I am today. And I wouldn't trade that for anything.

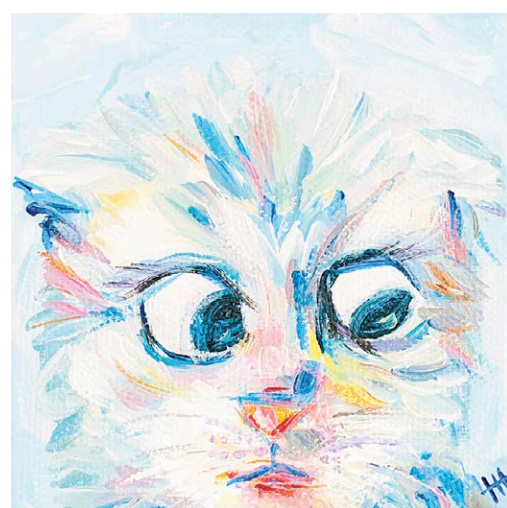
During these difficult days of the pandemic, we should give ourselves more grace for the mistakes that we make.

Most mistakes aren't fatal. They don't define us. Sometimes, as we learned last week, they have delightful, unintended consequences.

No one wants to be a cat. But we all are. Nobody's purr-fect.

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.

In our increasingly digital age, we're only one click away from internet infamy.



A lawyer who got caught behind an animated cat filter in a teleconference meeting inspired the painting "I'm Not a Cat!" Acrylic on stretched mini canvas by Heather Harrington.

We all make mistakes that would be great fodder for internet memes.

Connect by Creating Art With Your Children

Art opens a unique form of nonverbal communication between parent and child



Creating art calls on something unique inside of us. Creating art with a child allows us to share that experience with them.

LIGHTFIELD STUDIOS/SHUTTERSTOCK

When young children make art together with their caregivers, they share a bonding experience.

VICKY ARMSTRONG

Many of us are using art activities to keep children busy at home. Art can help children improve communication, strengthen motor skills, and develop a sense of self. That's why it's important to encourage creativity from infancy and place art alongside home learning and as an extension of their play.

When young children make art together with their caregivers, they share a bonding experience. Creativity is an extension of babies' natural desire to share and communicate. My research, in collaboration with Dundee Contemporary Arts, found that in art therapy, the art-making process encouraged behaviors that build strong relationships, such as eye contact, pleasant touch, shared goals, and responsiveness. You may notice during art making that there is lots of joint attention—where you both look at the same thing together. This helps babies learn social skills, such as language and perspective taking, and feel connected to others.

There are further developmental benefits from experiencing new sensations and practicing motor skills. Young children also see how they can make choices and communicate these to the grown-ups around them. Even something as simple as choosing a color or making a mark lets them see the physical outcome of their choices. This builds their feeling of agency and their sense of self.

Art Making for Children

These benefits continue through childhood. Art helps children to think in new ways and explore ideas. As art and education academic John Matthews tells us, scribbles are a process of investigation, not just random marks.

When you make art together with your children, you share feelings and ideas. Art is communication without the need to be verbal, which may allow children to express themselves more honestly than through speech.

I advocate joining in the art making with your child wherever possible. So, where to begin? The best creative activities are those which invite children to play and explore without set outcomes. Your role is to create the right conditions

for them to engage and then to follow their lead. You may be surprised by their ideas. An invitation can be as simple as offering interesting material and suggesting that they see what it feels like.

If you have small babies, you can start with a couple of blobs of paint on a large sheet of paper on the floor. Try homemade edible paints. Keep it short and have a nice bath ready!

Here are more ideas for creative invitations for all ages that use simple materials.

Printing

Printing transfers an image from one surface to another. Younger children can spread paint across the back of a baking tray, mixing to their fancy, then press a sheet of paper on top, making a print. Try the back of cupcake tins to get nice circular images.

Offer older children tools such as cotton buds or a blunt pencil to draw into the paint on the baking tray, then print to transfer the design. Or they could add paper shapes or leaves on top of the paint before printing, like a stencil.

Stamping

Stamping uses an object to transfer paint to paper. Dundee Contemporary Arts has a nice video for children to create their own stamps from scrap card or sponges. For smaller children, try using things from around the house as stamps. Anything that can be dipped in paint will work—potato mashers, cardboard tubes, spatulas, toy animals, or cars.

Light and Shadows

If you want some non-messy creativity, try drawing with shadows. Spread a sheet between chairs, shine a light and let children experiment with their hands or holding up objects to see the shadow they cast. Older children may like to cut out figures or animals, tape them to cutlery or a pencil and use them to create an animation.

Remember, it's not about producing perfection but allowing children to enjoy the process and sharing that with them. And it's important to have fun.

Vicky Armstrong is a postgraduate researcher in psychology and art therapist at the University of Dundee in Scotland. This article was first published by The Conversation.

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