

MIND & BODY

DEAN DROBOT/SHUTTERSTOCK

Smell rarely plays a key role in modern life, but it remains the only sense piped straight to our emotion and memory center.

Smell Sniffing Out This Forgotten Sense

Our sense of smell has a special role and unique connection to the brain

CONAN MILNER

Our ability to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell gives us five different ways to experience the world. But we prioritize some senses over others.

For most of us, sight is primary, then comes hearing. Smell is usually at the bottom of the list.

Our possessions may even top this innate sense. One survey asked 7,000 people between the ages of 16 and 30 to choose only two necessities from among a list of items: cosmetics, a car, passport, their phone, and their own sense of smell. About half chose to sacrifice smell.

Perhaps it's because smell plays a rather minor role in modern life. Unlike our ancestors, few of us would be able to identify or interpret the subtle scents found in the wild.

Wendy Gardner, an aromatherapist in the United Kingdom, says smell may be our most primal sense. For example, newborns use scent to bond with their mothers. But Gardner believes we've lost a lot of the information that smell was meant to provide.

"We used it to find food, find our way home, avoid predators (think how stinky lions are in the zoo, yikes), to know when another human was a threat (fear releases a certain scent), or how to find a mate so that our combined genes had the best chance of survival," Gardner said. "[Now] perfumes and aftershave cover up natural odors, so selecting a mate that way is tricky."

We all have scents we enjoy and others we despise. For our ancestors, this sense was essential for survival. Today, smell has become almost trivial. One frivolous example is a marketing strategy called smell branding. Just as how a logo gives a company visual recognition, smell branding connects to consumers through the nose.

Customers exposed to a company scent have been shown to significantly increase their shopping time.

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How 4 Words Changed My Life Forever

Our words have the power to send someone to despair or lift them from its depths

CHRIS NORTON

Can you think of a moment when someone's words drastically impacted your life? Maybe this moment came from a parent, a teacher, or a mentor. Maybe it came from a doctor, a coach, or a friend. For better or worse, words can have a huge impact on the way we live our lives.

They can make or break someone's day. They have so much power and influence, much more than we often give them credit

for. How you choose to use this super-power can make a profound difference in someone else's world. I've learned this firsthand.

This lesson came to me on the fourth night of my unexpected ICU stay. Four days earlier, I was just a normal, athletic, 18-year-old freshman college football player—until I made a tackle that left me paralyzed from the neck down.

After emergency surgery, I was given a mere 3 percent chance of ever moving be-

low my neck. Let me clarify, not a 3 percent chance to walk but a 3 percent chance just to move. My life had changed forever.

Sleep was nearly impossible. It was so quiet I couldn't hide from my thoughts and fears. Most nights, I cried myself to sleep.

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How you choose to use your super-power—the words you speak—can decide whether you make someone else's day, or break it.

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Solar Term: 'Insects Awaken'
(March 5 to March 19)



MOREEN LIAO

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

Solar Term: 'Insects Awakens'

2021 Dates: March 5 to 19

The first day of spring in Western culture is March 20, which bursts onto the scene at the tail end of the Chinese solar term Insects Awaken, which is characterized by lots of thunder.

In Chinese legend, thunder comes from the god Pangu, the creator of human beings. After he created the space between heaven and earth, his breath turned into wind, his voice into thunder, and his sweat into rain.

During the winter, legend says, the thunder hibernates inside the earth. When spring comes, farmers who begin digging their fields wake up the thunder from hibernation. In turn, the thunder helps to break the ground. The thunderclaps also wake up the insects—hence the term "Insects Awaken."

The majority of Earth's atmosphere (78 percent) is atmospheric nitrogen, making it the largest source of nitrogen. Thunder also causes the chemical reaction between nitrogen and oxygen to create NO₂, which is a very important process in atmospheric chemistry.

At this time, insects and microbes are actively moving under the earth, which helps prepare the land for farming. All farming commences from this time of year.

Underground insects aren't the only ones to awaken—all bugs are starting to move around. This includes airborne insects like bees and butterflies, as well as tiny lifeforms invisible to the naked eye. Bacteria start to repopulate after the humidity buildup from the previous solar term, Rain Water.

The traditional festival of Longtaitou (Lóngtáitóu), or "dragon raising its head," falls on March 14 in 2021. The dragon is regarded in China as the deity in charge of rain, which is an important factor for agriculture.

On this day, beginning in 1046 B.C., the Chinese emperor would go out into the fields and lead his officials in farming. Another ancient practice to celebrate the festival was to fumigate insect pests by burning herbs and sprinkling the ashes around to deter them.

Living in Harmony With 'Insects Awaken'

In traditional Chinese medicine, spring is the season to detox.

During this season, the Chinese recommend avoiding red meat, cutting out alcohol, and reducing sugar intake, as these all cause "heat" in the body, leading to inflammation.

According to the five elements theory from traditional Chinese medicine, red belongs to the element fire. Red meat and red chili should be avoided at this time because they may worsen the symptoms of skin allergies, which are very common spring ailments.

Alcohol speeds up inflammation inside our body, which may cause irritation and disease. Sugar is one step away from alcohol, so having less sugar is good during this term, especially for those who easily get the flu or cough in spring.

Those with weak respiratory systems or allergies to pollen, or who suffer from skin diseases, often feel uncomfortable around this time due to changes in temperature and humidity.

Seasonal Eating

Steaming and boiling are the best cooking methods to mitigate the effects of this term, as foods cooked with these methods are less stimulating or irritating to the body.

In general, avoid deep-fried foods, as they add heat. Fire is one form of oxidation. Oxidation also occurs in the body, and Western researchers now know that eating red meat can contribute to oxidative stress.

Foods that don't contribute to this include vegetables. Steam vegetables or eat salads with vinaigrette dressings to cleanse the blood and trim down extra fat from the winter.

Good foods to eat include asparagus, bitter melon, carrot, celery, green beans, pumpkin, radish, and tomato. The best herbs are cooling peppermint, dandelion, daisy, and yarrow.

Wild-grown vegetables are particularly beneficial to consume right now, as they are full of vitality, enzymes, and trace minerals.

Cultured foods are also important to eat. Fruit vinegar, such as apple cider, or kombucha, with a hint of honey and fresh peppermint leaves in lukewarm or room temperature water, make for a perfect detox or pick-me-up drink for this season.

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

RAMON GROSSO DOLAREA/SHUTTERSTOCK



Eating with the season ensures your body is best fueled for what comes next.

Smell Sniffing Out This Forgotten Sense

Our sense of smell has a special role and unique connection to the brain

Continued from Page 1

But last year, the sense of smell was reconnected to its survival roots. With evidence that smell loss is a reliable sign of having caught COVID-19, many began monitoring this sense more closely.

Smell Loss

COVID-19 isn't the only ailment that leads to smell loss (also known as anosmia). A 2017 study from the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society found that a lack of smell ability in older adults of normal cognition consistently identified those who would suffer from Alzheimer's disease later in life. Researchers are now developing a cheap and reliable diagnostic smell test (the target scent is peanut butter) to identify an early onset of the disease.

Smell loss is also associated with Parkinson's and multiple sclerosis, suggesting a serious link between our smell ability and brain function. For COVID-19, however, loss of smell appears to be a rather minor symptom.

While we've all experienced temporary anosmia due to stuffiness during a cold or allergies, COVID-19 sufferers rarely report sinus congestion. According to an international team of researchers led by neuroscientists at Harvard Medical School, the cause for smell loss due to COVID-19 is complicated, but suggests it's nothing to worry about.

Researchers identified certain cell types in the upper nasal cavity that are most vulnerable to infection by SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The sensory neurons that detect and transmit the sense of smell to the brain aren't among the vulnerable cell types, but they do depend on the vulnerable cells to work.

According to Sandeep Robert Datta, a neurobiology professor at Harvard Medical School, this means that the damage that COVID-induced anosmia has on our body is minimal.

"I think it's good news, because once the infection clears, olfactory neurons don't appear to need to be replaced or rebuilt from scratch," Datta said in a statement.

Thankfully, anosmia is the only symptom of this notorious contagion that many ever experience. For most, smell usually returns in a few weeks. However, a few lose their sense long-term.

For some, smell becomes warped. A large global survey from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem tracking smell and taste issues with COVID-19 from more than 4,000 patients finds that 6 percent of people report phantom smells. Seven percent report distorted smells.

Known as parosmia, smell distortion can make lemons smell like rotting cabbage, or chocolate smell like gasoline.

When Florida resident Beth Reider, 65, caught COVID-19 in June 2020, she experienced all of the above. First, her sense disappeared. Then, she would smell phantom smoke. And finally, things began smelling really off. Reider's sense of taste also became distorted, but she says smells were a bigger bother.

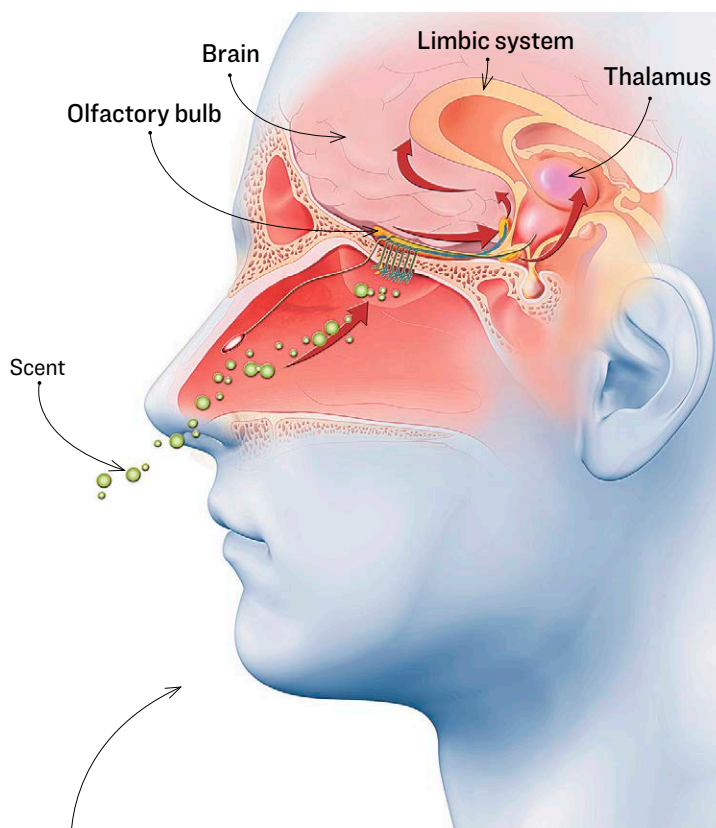
After a month, Reider's sense was mostly back to normal. But she says, even today, two of her favorite foods, peppers and lettuce, still reek.

"The thing that bothers me most is the smell of romaine lettuce. It used to be that a little bit of salad dressing was enough, but now, I drown it," Reider said, "because I have to mask that smell."

Smell Training

If you develop a smell disorder, don't fret. There are things you can do to turn it around. Reider says she got some relief using a popular home remedy from Ayurvedic medicine: placing drops of warm castor oil in her nostrils.

Research from the University of East An-



Smell is unique because the olfactory organs have a direct line to the limbic system, where the brain processes emotion and memory. Other senses must first be processed by the thalamus before the sense signals are sent to be interpreted by other parts of the brain.

AXEL_KOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK

glia in the United Kingdom offers another method. The study was conducted months before the pandemic, but it suggests that the disease's smell malfunctions may also benefit from a sniffing exercise.

Professor Carl Philpott from UEA's medical school explains that the training involves smelling at least four different odors twice a day every day for several months. He says it's a simple, side-effect-free treatment option for various causes of smell loss.

"It aims to help recovery based on neuroplasticity—the brain's ability to reorganize itself to compensate for a change or injury," Philpott said in a statement.

In the study, participants with post-viral smell disorders were given smell training kits—a collection of scents that included eucalyptus, lemon, rose, cinnamon, chocolate, coffee, lavender, honey, strawberry, and thyme. After six months of training, participants showed clinically significant recovery in smell function.

"We also found that older people, in particular, were more likely to start to recover their sense of smell," Philpott said. "And

that the biggest improvements happened in those that had lost the most amount of smell function in the first place."

A Special Sense

You don't have to lose your sense of smell to appreciate it. But it can help to consider what kind of information can be gleaned from this special sense.

While dogs and elephants are known for their super-smelling abilities, human capacity for scent is still enormous. A study published in the journal Science found that humans can distinguish among 1 trillion different scents.

Smell gives color to our perception of taste. The tongue, of course, can sense flavors on its own. But if you've ever eaten anything during a sinus infection, you'll recognize just how much scent brings to the table.

An even more profound feature of scent is how it can reach deep into our psyche. Sniff a crayon and you may suddenly be transported back to childhood. Or catch a whiff of a particular brand of laundry detergent and it could conjure a memory from more than 20 years ago.

People have noticed since ancient times that scent is tied to memory. Neuroscientists say it's because the olfactory organs have a direct line to the limbic system, the part of the brain that processes emotion and memory. Smell is special because all the other senses must first be processed by the thalamus before the stimuli are sent to other parts of the brain for further interpretation.

These mechanics suggest that scent must be more than just a pleasure or a bother. We may no longer use it to find food or avoid predators, but Gardner says we still depend on this sense for healing and to keep us safe.

For example, the smells of nature have been shown to reduce psychological stress—think of the fresh smell of pine, the sleepy scent of lavender, or the calming aroma of a rainfall. And when it comes to survival—whether it be mold, a gas leak, or rancid peanuts—the ability to sniff out and identify these poisonous problems can protect the rest of the body from harm.

A lack of ability to smell in older adults is a warning sign for Alzheimer's disease later in life.

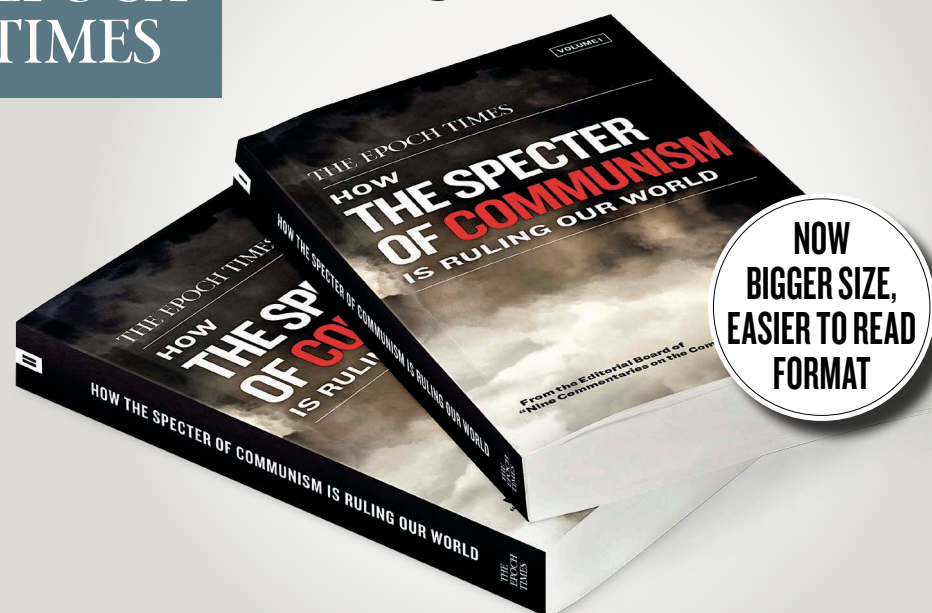


Our sense of smell is closely tied to memory and can also predict how our brain will hold up as we age.

MATTHEW SHUTTERSTOCK

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Correction

The article, "Feelings Make People Pass Up Perfectly Tasty Brown Fruit," published on Feb. 17, 2021, contained an incorrect weight conversion. The article should have read that approximately 716,000 tonnes (about 789,000 tons) of food are tossed out in Denmark every year. The Epoch Times regrets the error.



People who sleep seven to eight hours a night live longer.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

Weight Gain With Age: It's Not All Bad

If you were skinny in your 40s, gaining a few pounds can be healthy in your 50s and on

MAT LECOMPTÉ

Gaining weight could extend your life.

You read that correctly.

New research suggests racking up some additional pounds in your 50s and beyond may increase your lifespan and reduce the risk of early death.

Stop yourself before you head to the pantry because there are a couple of caveats.

The first is that the benefits only apply to those who started with normal weight and don't gain so much that they become obese. Second, participants who were overweight or obese at the beginning of the trial and continued to gain weight had the highest risk of early death.

Therefore, if you were at a normal weight in your younger years, a bit of moderate weight gain may help you live longer. If you weren't, you should focus on weight loss instead of weight gain.

But if you were at a normal weight in your 30s and 40s, you might want to start gaining instead of staying where you are.

Researchers from Ohio State University used the Body Mass Index (BMI) scale to classify participants as normal weight (BMI 18.5–24.9), overweight (25–29.9), or obese (30 or higher).

They looked at two generations of participants of the Framingham Heart Study, which began in 1948, to reach their conclusions.

The team found that when they looked at BMIs of people between age 31 and 80, those who started at an average weight and gradually added weight were more likely to live longer than those who maintained their younger, normal weight for their entire life.

Hui Zheng, lead author of the study, said, "Modest extra body weight in old age, including lean tissue mass and fat mass, might provide protection against nutritional and energy deficiencies, metabolic stresses, the development of wasting and frailty, and loss of muscle and bone density caused by chronic diseases such as heart failure."

If you've been fighting hard to keep the weight and figure of your 40s, it might be in your best interest to pack on a little weight by eating more or doing some resistance training. A combination of both is likely best.

Of course, you don't want to go overboard and gain too much. How do you know if you're gaining too much? The simple answer is that key health markers begin to trend in the wrong direction. Blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, and joint pain may increase.

If that stuff starts happening, then you might want to try to lose a little weight. The most important thing to remember here is moderate, gradual weight gain. We're likely talking about a couple of pounds per year, if that, and only if you start at an average weight.

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

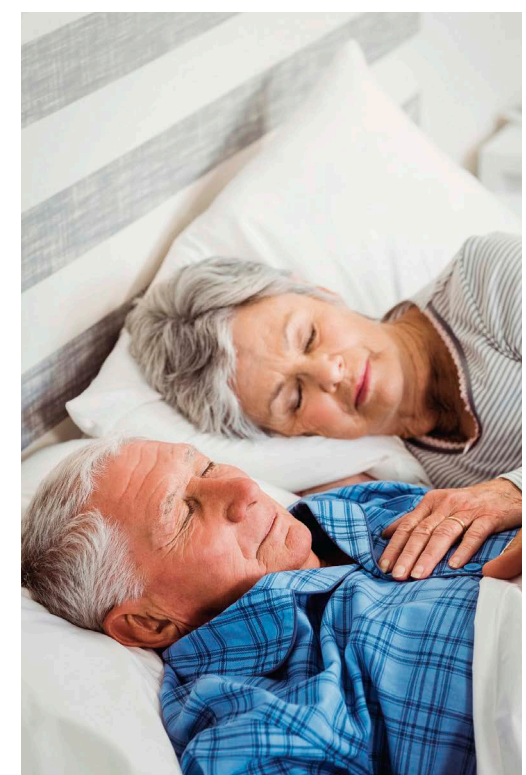
Healthy Sleep Habits Cut Risk of Heart Failure Nearly in Half

Disturbed sleep is linked with psychiatric and neurodegenerative disorders while poor sleep exacerbates obesity, diabetes, and depression

DIANE FULTON

Making small changes to promote healthy sleep can dramatically improve your health and longevity, including leading to a 42 percent lower risk of heart failure, finds a new study.

The new findings add to growing research linking sleep habits with heart health. A healthy sleep pattern for most people, at least in terms of heart health, means seven to nine hours of sleep, little or no insomnia, no snoring, early-bird rising,



Sleep is like a magical food for the body and brain. It is nourishing and essential. And when you don't get enough of it, disease and despair can follow.

Sleep, long overlooked, is now recognized as the 'third pillar' of good health after nutrition and exercise.

and little or no daytime sleepiness.

Researchers from the United States looked at data from 408,802 UK Biobank participants ages 37 to 73. Those with the healthiest sleep pattern had a 42 percent lower risk of heart failure overall. Heart failure risks decreased in early risers by 8 percent, seven- to eight-hour sleepers by 12 percent, infrequent insomniacs by 17 percent, and infrequent nappers by 34 percent.

In another meta-analysis of 474,684 patients, sleeping fewer than six hours or more than eight hours was tied to a higher risk of developing or dying from coronary heart disease and stroke, and those who slept more than eight hours also had higher total cardiovascular disease risks.

Napping once or twice a week actually helped reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease by 48 percent in a sample of 3,462 Swiss subjects, but the benefits decreased with frequent naps.

A meta-analysis of 313,651 participants reported that people who took naps of more than an hour had a 30 percent greater risk of all-cause death and 34 percent higher likelihood of cardiovascular disease compared to those who took no naps.

In one study of 935 diabetic women published in *Diabetes Care*, long and short sleeping, as well as snoring, were biomarkers of cardiovascular disease.

Benefits of Sleep
A good night's rest is an elusive goal for many, but people live the longest when they sleep seven to eight hours a night. Sleep is restorative and necessary for your body's functional processes.

Maintaining good sleep quality, at least in young adulthood and middle age, promotes better cognitive functioning and serves to protect against age-related cognitive decline. Sleep, long overlooked, is now recognized as the "third pillar" of good health after nutrition and exercise.

Poor Sleep Impacts
Sleep disturbances have been associated with metabolic, psychiatric, and neurodegenerative disorders. Sleep apnea, insom-

nia, dementia, and restless leg syndrome often disrupt sleep. Poor sleep exacerbates obesity, diabetes, inflammation, depression, Parkinson's disease, and Alzheimer's.

In a longitudinal study of 8,992 people between the ages of 32 and 86, scientists found that sleeping five or fewer hours was associated with diabetes risk and that obesity and high blood pressure both acted as mediators of this relationship.

In a study of 1,666 men and 2,329 women aged 20 or older, women with both short—less than five hours—and long sleep—eight or more hours—had poorer lipid profiles whereas only men who were long sleepers had a cholesterol imbalance. Over an hour of daytime napping was associated with a greater risk of all-cause mortality compared with non-nappers in a review of seven studies involving 98,163 Chinese participants.

Sleep also impacts your job, life, and health. In a study of 11,698 workers, those experiencing sleep disturbances had more absenteeism, lower work performance ratings, and higher health care costs. Lack of sleep decreases attention and memory, heightens negative emotions, and impairs learning.

6 Tips for Healthier Sleep

1. Acupressure
In a study of 36 participants with an average age of 32, those using acupressure increased sleep quality scores by 26 percent. Both sleep quality and quality of life

were improved with acupressure in research of 62 nursing home residents. In a comprehensive review, acupressure significantly enhanced sleep quality.

2. Aromatherapy
In a meta-analysis of 12 studies, aromatherapy effectively improved sleep quality. [24] Lavender oil helped with insomnia and sleep quality.

Lavender aromatherapy increased sleep quality and quality of life in a study of 57 sleep-deprived menopausal women. In a trial of 15 healthy Japanese students, lavender produced less sleepiness upon waking compared to no lavender.

Three groups of 120 cancer patients received lavender, peppermint, or a placebo, and the essential oil groups had higher sleep quality scores than the control group. Chamomile treatment significantly improved sleep quality and general anxiety disorders.

3. Melatonin
Taking melatonin lowered the time to fall asleep and increased total sleep time in an analysis of 205 patients, and is recommended for secondary sleep disorders caused by depression, thyroid problems, stroke, arthritis, or asthma. Meta-analysis of five trials of 91 adults and four trials of 226 children showed that melatonin treatment improved the body's ability to realign the sleep-wake rhythms and decreased time to fall asleep.

4. Yoga/Exercise
Nineteen studies of 1,832 participants were meta-analyzed and showed that yoga significantly improved sleep overall. In a study of 413 non-exercises or non-meditators, exercise significantly improved sleep quality and meditation decreased daytime sleepiness. In 43 adults ages 56 to 73 with moderate sleep complaints, moderate exercise increased the quality of sleep scores. Tai chi also improved sleep quality.

5. Relaxation/Meditation
A review of 37 treatment studies based on treating insomnia with psychological and behavioral therapies found

Sleep disturbances have been associated with metabolic, psychiatric, and neurodegenerative disorders.

48%
REDUCED RISK

Napping once or twice a week actually helped reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease by 48 percent in a sample of 3,462 Swiss subjects, but the benefits decreased with frequent naps.

relaxation produced improvements in sleep quality ratings as well as 20- to 30-minute improvements in self-reported sleep onset latency, wake time after sleep onset, and total sleep time. Another study found mindfulness meditation effectively reduced insomnia.

6. Eliminate Blue Light
In a study of 22 participants, the use of blue light smartphone devices two hours before bedtime significantly

decreased sleepiness and heart rate variability. In a study of 28 people, those with sleep issues had late circadian rhythms, slow build-ups of sleep need, and increased circadian sensitivity to blue light. In a study of 30 healthy young participants, two hours of intense evening blue light at 6500K hurt sleep regulation and quality.

Sleep Well
Sleep quality is essential for your health, and natural treatments such as acupressure, melatonin, meditation, aromatherapy, and limiting blue light before bedtime can help. Please see GreenMedInfo.com's research on sleep disorders for more information.

Diane Fulton is an emerita professor at Clayton State University. She holds a doctorate and an MBA (University of Tennessee-Knoxville) and bachelor's of science in math and secondary education majors (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee). She has authored 10 books and more than 50 articles, and is now writing children's books about the body, mindfulness, and cross-cultural awareness. This article was republished from GreenMedInfo.com. Please visit The Epoch Times online version for the complete reference list.

How to Get Healthy in 2021 With Chinese Medicine

Tune into yourself and the cycles of your world to best harmonize with the conditions that move you

EMMA SUTTIE

Chinese medicine, with its long history, has many ways that we can stay healthy in these uncertain times.

An important concept in Chinese medicine is awareness—awareness of your environment as well as your internal world. One form of this internal awareness is attunement to our own bodies. Our bodies speak a language that we have largely forgotten. Our bodies communicate through



Humans are tied to the cycle of seasons. Sunlight is only one of the essential connections we overlook.

aches and pains, feeling energetic or tired, or a bad feeling in the pit of our stomach. Becoming sensitive to our bodies and what they are trying to tell us will take us a long way toward knowing when something isn't right. This knowing will give us the opportunity to change things and give our bodies what we need to keep them healthy.

Another element of our internal world is our emotions. Emotions can disappear in the background as our busy minds deal with matters of the day. But just as tuning into our physical feelings can tell us if something needs attention, tuning into our emotions can make us aware of other issues.

How?
One of the ways we can tune into ourselves is to take some time—every day—to

check in and listen. How are you feeling? How are you doing emotionally? Does anything hurt? How is your sleep? Have you eaten today? This simple act may seem small, but it can have a big impact. Once you start working it into your daily routine, you will begin to sense small things and be able to make adjustments before they become big things that can potentially make you sick. You are remembering how to listen, and your body will love you for it.

This simple act can be transformative because it helps you recognize the cause and effect of certain aspects of your life. You will notice how your body responds to certain foods, how your mood can shift with the weather, or how exercise can lift your spirits. This self-awareness

can give you the motivation you need to make healthy changes and do things that make you feel more alive.

Tuning into the environment is an extension of tuning into yourself. Have you ever noticed how good you feel going for a walk in a forest? That is you reconnecting with the natural world, a connection people have had for thousands of years. That connection has been severed in many ways as we've come to spend ever more of our time indoors and working in jobs that are disconnected from the cycle of seasons and the outside world.

Chinese medicine teaches us about the beauty and practicality of living in harmony with the seasons.

As the seasons ebb and flow throughout the year, so should our diets and behaviors to be more in harmony with our natural environment.

In winter, energies slow down and go inward. Warming soups and stews using

root vegetables cooked for long periods can give your warming properties are best to preserve our yang or fire energies in this time of ultimate yin.

Our bodies communicate through aches and pains, feeling energetic or tired, or a bad feeling in the pit of our stomach.

Spring energies begin to come to the surface and expand outward, like the new plants pushing their way out of the ground, hungry for the sun. Green foods that cleanse the liver are best eaten in the spring to "clear out" the system of all that has been accumulated over the winter.

Summer represents the outward expression of energy and is about growth, expansion, and abundance. Summer is a time to wake up early and go to bed later to profit from the longer days and abundant sunshine.

And fall is when energies begin to move inward again and we find ourselves starting to go to bed a little earlier. This is the time to finish up projects, clean out our closets, and process old emotions that are taking up space. Fall energy teaches us the beauty of letting go.

What Can I Do?
Become aware of the seasons and change your behavior and diet accordingly. This, in addition to helping you to stay healthy, will also help to reconnect you to the natural rhythms that we have evolved to follow. You don't need to make big changes; subtle shifts can help to gently transition us from one season to another. For example,

while the Western world has the tradition of setting a New Year's resolution at the peak of winter, Chinese tradition teaches that you are far better off to start a new habit in the spring when the expansive energies of the season encourage you to expend new energy.

Tuning into yourself and tuning into the season can help you become more aware of how you are connected to the natural world and its major cycles. This is insight you can apply in your daily life.

Emma is an acupuncture physician who has been in practice since 2006. She has a consulting practice called Thrive Consulting and runs a website called Chinese Medicine Living where she writes about how to use Chinese medicine principles to live a healthy lifestyle in the modern world. She is a lover of martial arts, the natural world and a good cup of tea. To learn more visit @ThriveConsulting.

'Relationship Glasses' Shape How We See Romantic Partners

Our perception of the good, the bad, and the ugly in our partner can change with the tint of one notion



JESSE LEE WILDE & DAVID J. A. DOZOIS

For some, the COVID-19 pandemic has offered an opportunity to spend more time and reconnect with romantic partners. For others, love on lockdown has magnified relationship difficulties that couples were experiencing before the pandemic, leading to increased relationship stress and dissatisfaction.

Break-ups, divorces, and even domestic violence have been on the rise since the pandemic began.

Given that stable and satisfying relationships are critical for both mental and physical health, it's necessary to understand what contributes to relationship distress, and how to fix it. That's one of the goals of the "Breaking Sad" lab at Western University. Our lab focuses on how negative thinking contributes to depression and how these beliefs impact relationships.

Recent research from our lab suggests that the beliefs we hold about our romantic partners may be especially important in understanding dysfunctional relationship patterns.

The Importance of Beliefs About Partners

In a recent study, we found that individuals in relationships create sophisticated mental representations of their romantic partners. What's more, these mental representations are stored in our memory and are thought to influence the way that we understand, interpret, and respond to the things our partners say and do. In a sense, they act like a pair of tinted glasses that color our experience of our partner.

If you hold a generally positive representation of your partner in your mind (for example, "He is a caring, thoughtful, and well-intentioned person"), it is akin to wearing a pair of rose-tinted glasses. You might be more inclined to interpret some things your partner does in a more positive or benign light, such as, "He didn't reply to my text because he was busy in a meeting, I know he isn't just ignoring me and will answer as soon as

he has the chance."

On the flip side, if you hold a generally negative representation of your partner in your mind ("She is selfish and does not care about my needs"), you may tend to see your partner's actions through a pair of glasses that are far less rosy. You may think: "She did not reply to my text because she is ignoring me and does not care about what I have to say."

The more we continue to see a partner's actions in a less-forgiving light, the more consolidated our negative representations of them become—and the darker our "tinted glasses" come to be.

In this way, negative beliefs about our partners may lead us to feel angry or depressed and cause us to respond to them in a less-helpful way, such as becoming critical or withdrawing from them. This ultimately results in both partners feeling less satisfied and supported in the relationship.

Unfortunately for many, positive beliefs about a partner that are prominent in the early stages of a relationship tend to become more negative over time. What once drew us to our partner often becomes the thing that irks us the most. Exciting spontaneity becomes poor planning and unreliability.

Changing Unhelpful Thinking About a Partner

So what can you do if you have an overly negative representation of your romantic partner? How can you see through your "relationship glasses" a little more clearly?

For one, you can make an active effort to be more evidence-based in your thinking about your partner.

Research shows that evidence-based thinking is an important contributor to psychological well-being. In order to be more evidence-based in your thinking about a partner, remember to check the facts rather than rely on the negative explanations that may automatically come to mind.

Instead of jumping to conclusions and thinking that your partner is selfish and doesn't care about you because they didn't bring home the milk you asked

for, take a pause and ask yourself: What evidence do I have to support the idea that my partner is selfish and doesn't care about me? What evidence do I have that doesn't support this idea?

Not only can this help you to feel better in the moment, it will allow you to see things a little more clearly and respond to your partner in a healthier way.

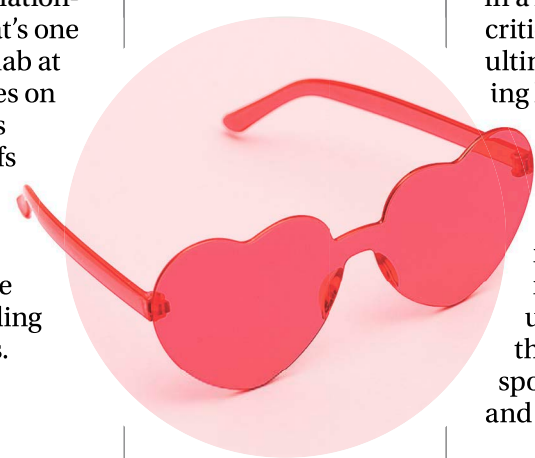
In addition to changing the way you think about your partner, it's important to change the interactions you have with your partner.

Changing how you respond to your partner, such as offering a hug instead of criticism when they forget the milk, can change the way you see them.

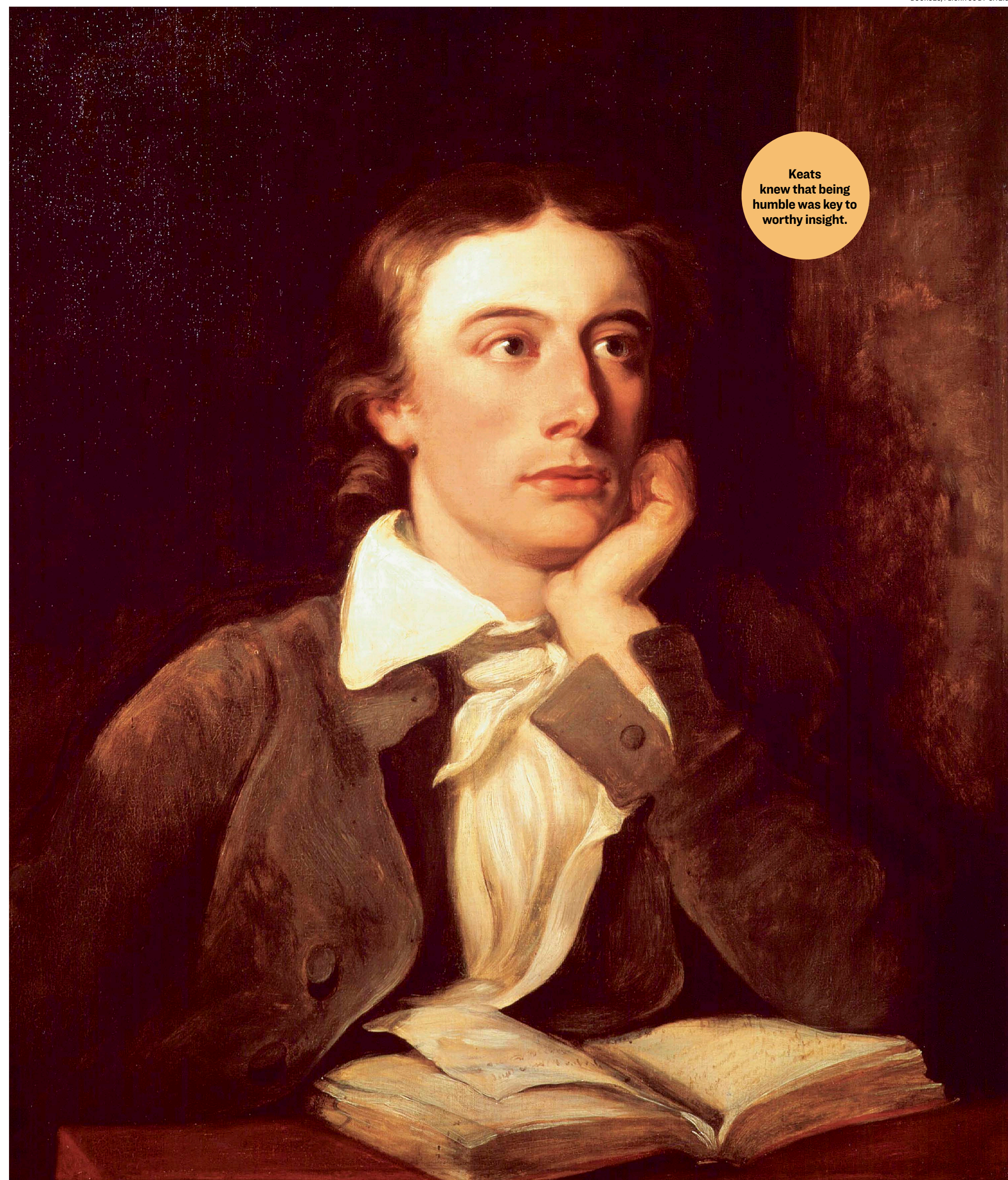
Believe it or not, changing the way you respond to your partner, such as opting for a hug instead of offering criticism when they arrive home without your milk, can actually change the way you feel and think about them. Putting in the extra effort to create positive interactions with your partner can help to change negative partner representations over time or prevent them from developing in the first place.

Now more than ever, with stresses running high and romantic relationships under pressure during the pandemic, it's important to do what is needed to nurture our closest connections.

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Our sentiments can blind us to the good and the bad.



Keats knew that being humble was key to worthy insight.

A portrait of John Keats (1822) by William Hilton, after Joseph Severn. Keats lost most of his family members to tuberculosis, the disease that would eventually take his own life on Feb. 23, 1821.

John Keats's Concept of 'Negative Capability' Is Needed Now More Than Ever

Keats understood the importance of humility, which he described as a 'capability of submission'

RICHARD GUNDERMAN

When John Keats died 200 years ago, on Feb. 23, 1821, he was just 25 years old. Despite his short life, he's still considered one of the finest poets in the English language.

Yet in addition to masterpieces such as "Ode to a Nightingale" and "To Autumn," Keats's legacy includes a remarkable concept: what he called "negative capability."

The idea—which centers on suspending judgment about something in order to learn more about it—remains as vital today as when he first wrote about it.

Keats lost most of his family members to an infectious disease, tuberculosis, that would take his own life. In the same way the COVID-19 pandemic turned the worlds of many people upside down, the

John Keats' idea of 'negative capability' centers on suspending judgment about something in order to learn more about it.

poet had developed a deep sense of life's uncertainties.

Keats was born in London in 1795. His father died in a horse-riding accident when Keats was 8 years old, and his mother died of tuberculosis when he was 14. As a teenager, he commenced medical studies, first as an apprentice to a local surgeon and later as a medical student at Guy's Hospital, where he assisted with surgeries and cared for all kinds of people.

After completing his studies, however, Keats decided to pursue poetry. In 1819, he composed many of his greatest poems, though they didn't receive widespread acclaim during his lifetime. By 1820, he had contracted tuberculosis and relocated to Rome, where he hoped the warmer climate would help him recover. He ended up dying a year later.

Continued on Page 13

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Dieting May Slow Metabolism—but It Doesn't Ruin It

Our body undergoes a major upgrade after going through a calorie-restricted diet

ADAM COLLINS & AOIFE EGAN

When it comes to dieting, research shows the majority of people will regain some—if not most—of the weight they've lost. While there are many reasons why this weight regain may happen, some popular claims online are that it's because dieting permanently wrecks your metabolism. But while it's true that dieting slows your metabolism, it also improves your metabolism in many positive ways.

When we talk about metabolism, we're typically referring to your metabolic rate. This is the number of calories your body burns at rest. Of course, the more activity we do, the more calories we burn. In order to lose weight through dieting, you need to consume fewer calories than you're using. This forces the body to use its energy stores—such as fat—to meet the shortfall. Your metabolic rate will also change as a result.

The loss of lean tissue (muscle) when you diet—which burns around 15 to 25 calories per kilogram each day—lowers resting metabolic rate, meaning you need fewer calories than you previously did. But the body also deliberately slows down the metabolism to preserve energy stores and minimize weight loss.

When the body senses depleted fat stores, it triggers adaptive thermogenesis, a process which further reduces resting metabolic rate—and may stunt weight loss despite strict dieting. Adaptive thermogenesis can kick in within three days of starting a diet and is suggested to persist way beyond dieting—even hampering weight maintenance and favoring weight regain.

One example of adaptive thermogenesis's effect was seen in a widely publicized 2016 study which looked at former contestants of U.S. reality TV show "The Biggest Loser." It showed that participants had a significant decrease in their metabolic rate, even several years after initial weight loss. Participants needed to eat up to 500 calories less than expected daily.

Other studies have also shown metabolic slowing with weight loss, but with much smaller decreases (around 100 calories fewer a day to maintain weight). However, there's less certainty whether this slowing persists once people are weight stable.

Research seems to show that most adaptive thermogenesis happens in the actual dieting phase as a temporary response to the amount of weight being lost. Overall, we don't have conclusive evidence to support the notion that metabolic rate remains slowed over the long term (more than a year post-diet).

It's worth noting many factors can affect metabolic rate, so changes to it after dieting may vary between people. For example, one study on fasting diets showed metabolic rate indeed decreases as a result—but those who had the greatest decrease in metabolic rate already had a higher metabolic rate to begin with. Overestimating metabolic rates at the start of a study or errors in predicting metabolic rate after weight loss could also affect study results.

It's agreed that metabolic rate slows because of weight loss, due to both decreasing body size, and as a way of preserving key tissues and fuel reserves. But there's currently no consensus on how much it slows by. Quantifying and predicting this slowing is something we're currently researching at the University of Surrey.

Metabolic Changes

A decrease in metabolic rate is just one change that occurs with weight loss, however.

When we lose weight, the main change we see is a decrease in body fat. This decrease is actually our fat cells shrinking in size—they don't actually disappear. This shrinking of fat cells signals the body's fuel stores are emptying, causing a drop in the hormone leptin. Ordinarily, leptin inhibits appetite and increases metabolic rate—but when leptin levels plummet, metabolic rate

slow, and hunger increases.

The gut also releases fewer incretins (hormones that regulate appetite) when we lose weight, which could persist beyond dieting. Less leptin and fewer incretins may make us feel hungrier and can lead to overeating.

When fat cells shrink, they're able to take up glucose and store fat more efficiently to help restore lost fuel. Your body also creates more fat cells so that you can store more fat in the future to better cope with this calorie "crisis" the next time it happens.

But as contradictory as it sounds, all these changes actually result in a more efficient and ultimately healthier metabolism. For example, smaller fat cells are better for our health, as over-inflated "sick" fat cells don't work as well in getting rid of surplus sugar and fat. This can lead to high levels of sugar and fat in the blood, increasing the risk of insulin resistance, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

So dieting doesn't technically ruin your metabolism but rather improves it by helping it work better. But without care, this metabolic improvement can conspire against you to regain the weight, and even overshoot your original weight.

Studies show exercise (or simply physical activity) may be one way to prevent weight regain, by improving our ability to maintain our weight and can potentially minimize metabolic slowing. Exercise can also help regulate appetite and fuel burning in

the short term and may make weight loss more sustainable in the long term.

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Adaptive thermogenesis may stunt weight loss—even if you follow a strict diet.

Adaptive thermogenesis reduces our resting metabolic rate when we eat less.

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