# THE EPOCH TIMES NINDES BODDY

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

## Siffing Out This Forgotten Sense

DEAN DROBOT/SHUTTERSTOCK

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

#### **CONAN MILNER**

ur 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 superpower 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.

#### Contiued on Page 6

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



COURTESY OF SEAN BERRY

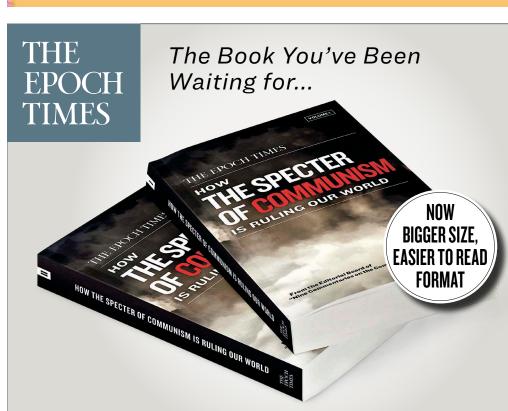
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## HOW THE SPECTER OF COMMUNISM IS RULING OUR WORLD

The specter of communism did not disappear with the disintegration of the Communist Party in Eastern Europe

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#### CHINESE WISDOM FOR SEASONAL LIVING

### Steam Vegetables and Drink Kombucha to Cleanse and Energize

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 cele-

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-meup 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.



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

## Siffing 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.

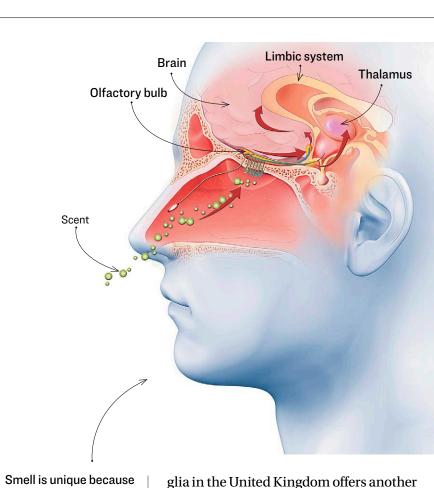
"The thing that bothers me most is the smell of romaine lettuce. It used to be that a little bit of salad dressing was enough, but now, I drown it," Reider said, "because I have to mask that smell."

#### **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-

Correction



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

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 in-

method. The study was conducted months

volves 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 neuro-

plasticity—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

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.



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.



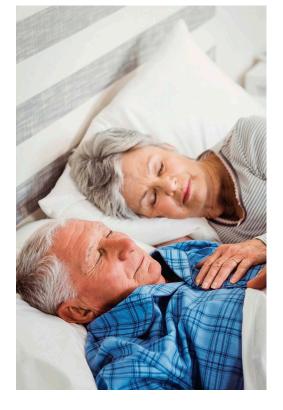
## Healthy Sleep Habits Cut Risk of Heart Failure Nearly in Half

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

#### DIANE FULTON

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

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

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 of all-cause death and 34 percent higher sleep decreases attention and memory pared 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, insomnia, 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 reported that people who took naps of more absenteeism, lower work performance ratthan an hour had a 30 percent greater risk ings, and higher health care costs. Lack of likelihood of cardiovascular disease com- 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.

## 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



cycle of seasons. Sunlight is only one of the essential connections we overlook.

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

aches and pains, feeling energetic or tired, 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 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.



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

**Sleep distur**bances have been associated with metabolic, psychiatric, and neurodegenerative disorders.



#### 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.

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 emeritus 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.

> 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

performance. Blue light use increased the

time to reach melatonin onset by 50 per-

cent, which negatively impacted overall

sleep quality. Smartphone exposure may

cause sleep disorders, headaches, and

In a study of 28 people, those with sleep

issues had late circadian rhythms, slow

build-ups of sleep need, and increased cir-

cadian sensitivity to blue light. In a study of

30 healthy young participants, two hours

of intense evening blue light at 6500K hurt

6. Eliminate Blue Light

In a study of 22 partici-

pants, the use of blue

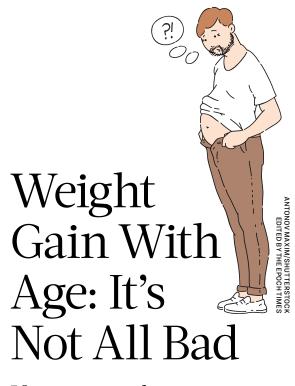
light smartphone de-

vices two hours before

bedtime significantly decreased sleepiness and

reduced insomnia.

heart rate variability.



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

#### MAT LECOMPTE

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

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

can give you the motivation you need to root vegetables cooked for long periods to increase their warming properties are best to preserve our yang or fire energies in this time of ultimate vin.

#### 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 outwards, 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; sub-

tle 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.

## How to Execute a Big Idea on Limited Time

### Giant goals call on us to sacrifice now for future reward

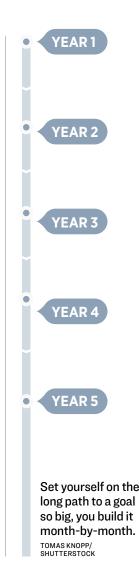
#### **JAY HARRINGTON**

f I was to offer you \$100 today or \$120 a week from now, which would you choose? If you're like most people, you'd choose the hundred bucks now. That's the conclusion of a classic study that found that, when it comes to decision-making, most of us opt for immediate gratification.

Why does this matter? Well, making progress toward our goals is all about balancing short-term and long-term rewards, and clearly prioritizing our time and attention toward what matters most to us. For example, most people understand

the benefits of long-term investing. By leveraging compounding returns, like Warren Buffett, it's possible to build wealth, even if each incremental investment is small. In most cases, the rational thing to do is to adopt a slow and steady approach to investing.

Of course, no one is purely rational, which is why so many of us (myself certainly included) make suboptimal decisions, whether it be what to eat at lunch, or how to invest a windfall of unexpected cash. We're all affected by cognitive biases that lead us astray. While we all prefer big rewards over smaller ones, most of us have an even stronger preference for present rewards over future ones-even when the future ones are much bigge This concept, or cognitive bias, is called





the smaller the immediate motivation to achieve it.

Because it's hard to stay focused on the long term, objectives and transformations that take long periods of time to cultivate often remain out of reach.

#### The Disconnect Between **Goals and Everyday Action**

Preference for short-term rewards over long-term ones isn't the only reason people get stuck. Most of us are flooded with demands, from work, to parenting, to social pressures that cloud and overwhelm our ability to focus on important, but not necessarily urgent, long-term priorities. Like waves crashing on shore, tasks and

"hyperbolic discounting." In short, the not our own. Be it learning a new skill, farther away a reward is in the future, starting a business, reading more books, or merely indulging in a hobby, we keep deferring what we want in the belief that there will be more time later.

But there never is. What is temporary often becomes permanent. Once you expand your boundaries to accommodate the urgency of the moment, it's very hard to redraw them to create space and time to focus on what really matters over the long term. Things will never go "back to normal"-normal just gets redefinedthat is, unless you take back control.

At the root of this problem is the fact that, while most people have long-term goals in mind, they never reduce those goals to everyday action. It isn't nearly enough to want something in the future. obligations flood our minds and our cal- You need to have a clear plan in place and, endars. We find ourselves in a position of most importantly, act on it. A goal without focusing on other people's priorities and action is merely a dream. Goals determine

## How 4 Words Changed My Life Forever

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

#### Continued from Page 1

At 2:00 a.m. on the fourth night, I lay wide awake in the gurney.

It wasn't just worry that kept me up; every two hours, a doctor or a nurse entered my room to make sure my vitals were in check. Typically, their interaction with me was always routine and clinical. But on this night, a physician entered the room and did something different.

She knelt down next to my bed and said, "Chris, look me in the eyes." Thinking back on it now, I remember she was kind of mean about it.

Her voice was direct and commanding. She sounded more like a character from an old-time Western movie than the slender woman in her 60s with short red hair and glasses who knelt beside me.

Our eyes locked and she said, "My name is Georgia. I'm from Wyoming. Do you know anyone from Wyoming?"

I told her no and wondered to myself, "Where is this going?" She continued: "Well, people from Wyoming don't tell lies. I'm here to tell you—you will beat this. You will beat this

She delivered these words with so much conviction, I couldn't help but start to cry. ation stage. A couple of years later, I had Up to this point, I had questioned whether all the time and effort I put into my recovery would ever pay off.

Dr. Georgia didn't say, "You CAN beat this," She told me, "You WILL beat this." Every part of my being believed Dr. Georgia in that moment, and instantly my faith was restored. A day later, when I started physical find out if what we say makes a difference,

therapy, I heard her words echo in my head: "Chris, you will beat this!"

Day by day, I grew stronger and stronger. Dr. Georgia helped me discover just how much impact one person's words can have. Fast forward five weeks: Though my stay in the hospital was far from over, at this point my resolve was unshakeable. I would lie in bed dreaming about one day moving my legs and walking again. I put these dreams into action by working as hard as I could in every physical and occupational therapy session. I decided I needed to do more, so I asked my physical and occupational therapists to write down workouts for me to do out-

side of my scheduled therapy time. I kept reminding myself, "Your future will take care of itself when you take care of today." A few days later, on Thanksgiving Day of all days, with my family by my side, a miracle happened.

I wiggled my left big toe.

Just one week earlier a doctor had said I would never move my legs again. But there, at that moment, I had proved him wrong. And the big left toe was just the start. Over the next several years, I slowly gained strength throughout my legs. Eventually, I was able to walk across my graduenough strength to walk my bride, Emily, down the aisle.

Because of those four little words—"You will beat this"—I never gave up. And five weeks later, I was able to defy my prognosis. Do you think Dr. Georgia has any idea of the impact her words had on me? We rarely



Chris Norton became paralyzed while making a tackle in a college football game

We rarely find out if what we say makes a difference, but I'm here to tell you that it does.

but I'm here to tell you that it does.

When we allow ourselves the realization that our words have the power to hurt or heal, we awaken within us the ability to inspire others. Because the truth is, we all have the same power Dr. Georgia has. She chose to use that power to inspire me, and because of that, my life changed forever.

Ever since I heard those inspiring words, I've committed myself to being a "Dr. Georgia" to everyone I meet in life. This commitment is the reason I became a motivational speaker, it's the reason I became an author to share my story with the world, it's the reason I started a nonprofit, and it's the reason I committed myself to fostering and adopting children in need.

I want to challenge you today. I challenge you to be a Dr. Georgia for others. Our words have the power to hurt or to heal, and evervone is fighting a battle whether we can see it or not.

We all know someone in our lives in need of inspiration. So the next time you interact with them, try replacing a passive statement of "You can beat this" with an emphatic one like "You WILL beat this!"

Not only will you energize and inspire others, you'll feel energized and inspired in your own life. We all have the power to change lives. The only thing left to do is to use it.

*Chris Norton was given a 3 percent chance to* ever move again but has defied the odds. He is a motivational speaker, author, philanthropist, father of 7, and is featured in the documentary "7 Yards: The Chris Norton Story."



the direction you want to head in but action determines your progress.

In 2019, I had the pleasure of having an up-close-and-personal view of someone putting this principle into action. My wife, business partner, and the real brains and muscle behind Life and Whim brought months of strategic planning and concerted action to a splendid conclusion on June 2, 2019, with the execution of Fairy Fest 2019-Believe—an event that brought together thousands of people in our community.

As a mom of three young girls, a partner in our marketing agency, and the designer of all Life and Whim apparel and accessories (including our summer 2019 collection), Heather hardly had time to pull off a

big event such as Fairy Fest—but she did. How did she do it? She got really clear on her goal and then scheduled the time to work toward it. She didn't try to "find" the time—indeed, you can't find time. We all have the same 168 hours in the week to work with. She carved out time with the full understanding that devoting time to her goal would require her to accept the trade-offs.

You can achieve your goals, too, no mat-



they may be. But it won't happen by accident. Achieving big things starts with getting really clear on what you want.

Turn Goals Into Reality To make goal-setting more effective, here are some principles to keep in mind:

Make it specific: To be useful, a goal must be specific. "I want to start a business" is too loose. "I will launch my business in 12 months" is better.

clear goal, your direction is defined. Your actions can all be directed toward achieving a single outcome. Have too many goals and you may find yourself going in circles (or never get started in the first place).

**Understand its component parts:** A big goal in the future is really a series of smaller, interim goals.

By keeping these principles in mind, it will allow you to achieve far more, over the long term, than you ever thought possible through a process called deconstructive goal setting. Deconstructive goal setting, like all goal-setting exercises, involves envisioning a big, ambitious objective. But it doesn't stop there. It forces you to work backward from your goal to determine and define all the steps necessary to get there.

Let's say you want to have a successful, thriving business in five years. Through a process of deconstructive goal setting, you'd first take the time to understand what it takes to have a successful business. In most cases, this means having a compelling product or service that appeals to a specific customer or client base. With this understanding in mind, it's all about deconstructing these objectives into specific action steps within the constraints of the allotted time.

You have five years to work with. This means that to be on track for your fivecertain point in one year. To be where you need to be in one year, you'll have to take action this month. A month passes quickly, so you better have a plan in place Jay Harrington is an author, lawyerthis week. And if you're going to make progress this week, you probably need to be focused on your long-term priorities today.

achieving extraordinary results way out *ful, outdoor-oriented life.* 

ter how big, ambitious, and audacious in the future. But actually doing so is contingent upon taking everyday action. Don't procrastinate. Don't merely plan and hold loosely formed beliefs about what the future holds in your head. Put the work in now to make it happen.

#### Here's How:

1. Define your goal: Think clearly about what you want. Write it down. This will allow you to understand what it takes. Don't fixate on the result (e.g., having a successful business). Focus on the un-**Don't have too many**: If you have one derlying skills, qualities, and attributes that will allow you to achieve the result. There are lots of sacrifices and trade-offs that you'll have to make to achieve what you want, so it's important that you understand them from the start.

> 2. Deconstruct your goal to everyday action: Work backward to understand the component parts of your big goal and set a series of smaller goals that will keep you working on a linear path within the time you have available. You should deconstruct your big goal to the point where you have a clear understanding of the appropriate action you should be taking today to be on the right path.

> **3. Block Time:** You're going to have all kinds of externalities, from urgent work demands to personal issues, attempting to derail you from making progress on your goals. Your calendar, which is likely filled with other people's priorities, will be one of your biggest impediments to progress. But it can be your best friend. If you have the courage and discipline to schedule time with yourself, even if it's just 15 or 30 minutes per day, you'll create the space and time necessary to stay on track. Block time to work on your goals every day—otherwise, you'll never get where you want to go.

Your ideal future depends on what you do today. It's not going to be any easier tomorrow, so just start. You'll be amazed year goal, you will need to progress to a at what you can accomplish if you commit to small, incremental improvement every day.

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 See how this works? You're capable of town and writes about living a purpose-

**WISE HABITS** What I Learned About Fear From a Cold Pool

Misery loves to be let go, and you can let go more easily with some company

#### LEO BABAUTA

For the first 40 days of this year, I jumped into a cold swimming pool with two of my sons, as a practice in facing discomfort and fear.

We never looked forward to it, but it taught me a lot about facing things I don't want to face. The things we don't want to face can look

like a top hits list:

• Overwhelming piles of work

- Our unhealthy habits • Our addictions to social media or online
- browsing
- Finances or taxes
- Difficult conversations

• Projects I've been putting off

- Putting my work out into the world • Piles of stuff in my garage

Does any of that sound familiar? We are inclined to avoid difficulty at an almost instinctual level, and overcoming this "instinct" is important to having the kind of life we want to live.

Cold swimming taught me some important lessons about facing difficult stuff. I will share them here, just in case you don't have a not-quite-frozen pond or pool to jump into.

#### What Avoidance Feels Like

Every day, I noticed myself not wanting to jump in the cold water. Luckily, I had two other people I'd committed to, and they helped me to stick to the commitment.

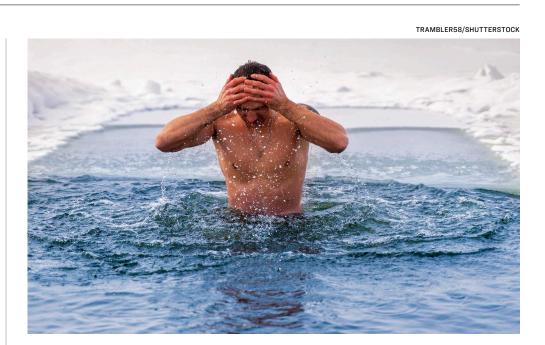
I would pause and notice how my resistance felt. It's a tightness in the chest, an urge to go do something easier or more comfortable, and a resistance to even think about the hard thing. I felt compelled to turn away, to go to the busywork that would fill my time. Imagine having to dive in a pool of icy water right now. OK, some of you masochists would probably enjoy it (Canadians and Finnish!)but most of us could quickly think of other things that need doing. We'd feel that bodily resistance, and maybe a little dread as well. That's how we feel when it comes to tackling an overwhelming project or having a difficult conversation. We would rather scrub the kitchen.

#### **Taking the Plunge**

For 40 days, we faced this resistance. And here's what I learned that helped me face my uncomfortable task:

- 1. Do it with others. Not only did it help keep me accountable, doing this challenge with my sons made it more fun. More meaningful. We were in it together. I highly recommend finding others to face a challenge with.
- 2. Make it meaningful. Find a reason to do it that feels really meaningful to you. For me, it was not just doing it with my sons (though that would have been enough), it was being a model for doing scary stuff in the world for all my clients and readers. That is far greater than my fear of discomfort.
- 3. Don't overthink it. I wouldn't think about the discomfort too much. Thinking too much can easily lead to psyching ourselves out, and finding reasons why we shouldn't do something. I didn't think about it, I just stayed in the moment, and didn't even anticipate the cold until I'd leaped into the air and was headed down into the water. The anticipation is often much worse than the actual difficulty.

4. Find the fun. Every day, we experimented



Thinking too much can easily lead to psyching ourselves out.

with different ways to find fun in the act of diving in the water. We'd dance or yell, laugh or howl. In the water, when the shock of the cold water hit me, I'd find a way to bring joy to that moment. It doesn't have to be miserable just because it's uncomfortable.

- 5. No big deal. The thing that helped us the most was the phrase "No Big Deal." We would act nonchalant, like it wasn't going to be anything to worry about. In the beginning, we'd do a lot of preparation, but toward the end, we adopted the No Big Deal attitude and would just jump in. It was just as uncomfortable, but we found that acting nonchalant about it was very helpful.
- 6. Fall in love with the moment. There is always something to love. I would find wonder in the blue sky above us, in the intensity of the cold, in the aliveness I felt, in the yells and laughter of my sons. The discomfort is only a part of the momentthe actual moment is much bigger, and it is awe inspiring.

These were beautiful lessons for us. I hope to carry them through to my other challenges this year.

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

Don't overthink the discomfort. Jump in like it's no big deal

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

## 

#### JESSE LEE WILDE & DAVID J. A. DOZOIS

or 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 Dortnor

Our sentiments can

blind us to the good

and the bad.

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

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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

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

your partner.

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.

Jesse Lee Wilde is a doctoral student of clinical psychology at Western University in Canada, and David J. A. Dozois is a professor of clinical psychology at Western University. This article was first published on The Conversation.

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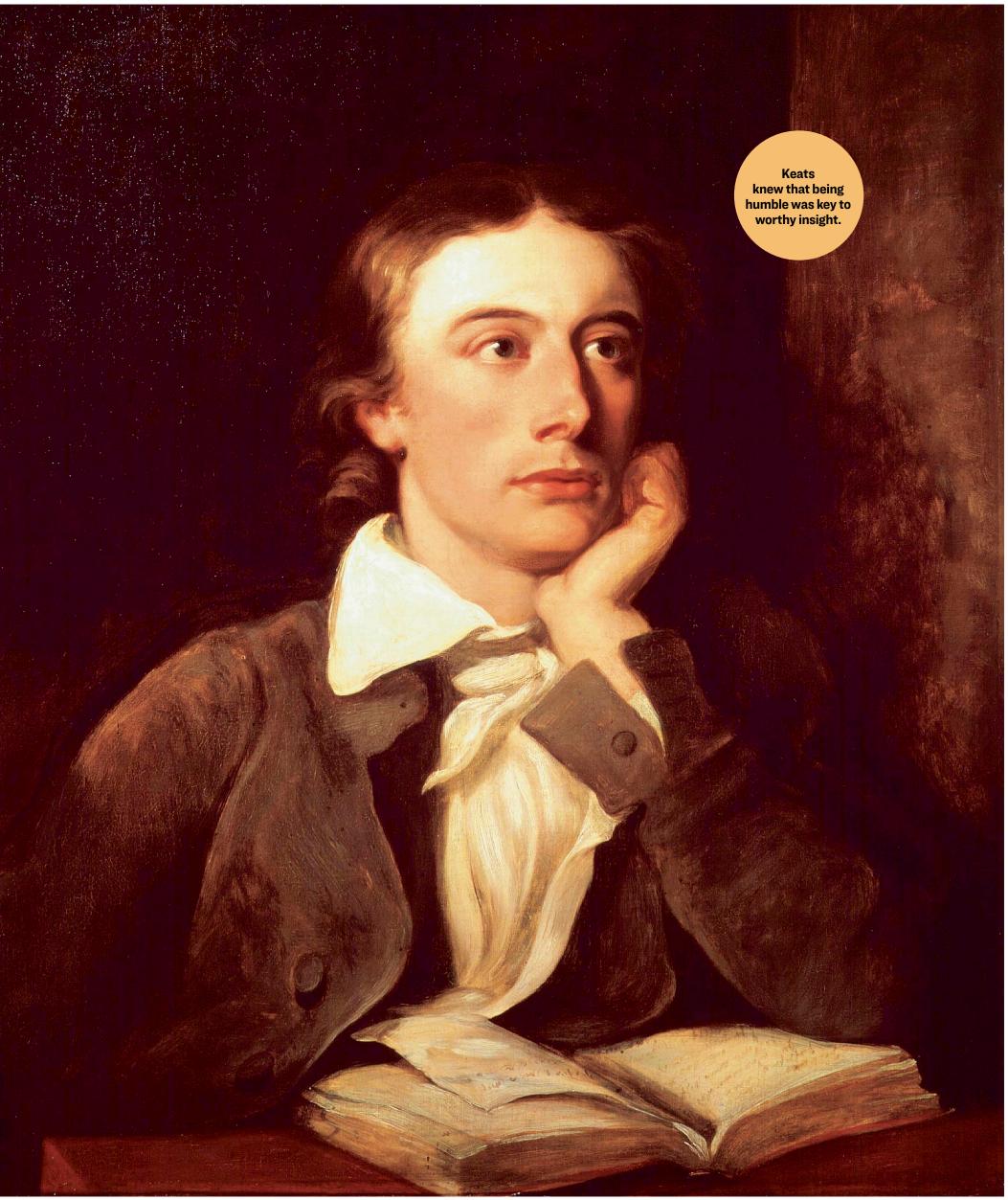
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A portrait of John Keats (1822) by William Hilton, after Joseph Severn. Keats lost most of his family members to tuberculosis, the disease that would eventually take his own life on Feb. 23, 1821.

## 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

hen 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 capa-

bility." 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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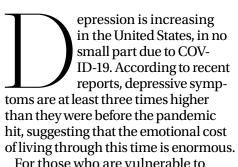
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#### JILL SUTTIE



For those who are vulnerable to depression already, this time is even more fraught.

Al (whose name has been changed for privacy) suffered bouts of depression on and off for years, but had made the decision to go off of his medications near the end of 2019. Then COVID hit, and it was hard to keep his mood from plummeting.

"I have more depressive symptoms than I did a year ago—more negative feelings about my relationship, about friends, in general," he says. "If your imagination runs to the negative, this apocalyptic scenario just confirms your negative bias about how things are and how things turn out."

Similarly, Michelle was already going through relationship struggles and worrying about her child's mental health before COVID hit. All of the changes the pandemic wrought exacerbated these stressors, making her feel depressed.

"Whatever else felt stable in my life got knocked out from under me, and there was nothing left that I felt I could count on," she says. "My social life disappeared or changed beyond recognition, and I didn't know what the future of my job was, either. I felt completely rudderless."

To some extent, all of us may be at risk for depression during the pandemic, says Nancy Liu, clinical professor at the University of California-Berkeley.

"You're going to feel down. You're going to feel a little hopeless or helpless," she says. "You're not going to be as eager to connect with people and are going to withdraw." We should expect to feel anxious and depressed, as we would in any kind of disaster.

While we are all prone to feeling down these days, depression differs from normal sorrow or anxiety and is far more debilitating, says psychologist Shelby Harris, author of the book "The Women's Guide to Overcoming Insomnia." It can persist, unrelenting, for weeks at a time and leads to an inability to function normally. Problems with sleep, significant weight loss or gain, not being able to get out of bed, lacking motivation or a sense of self-worth, and finding no enjoyment from everyday activities—these are signs that you may be entering a depressive state.

#### Signs of depression include trouble getting out of bed, a loss of motivation, and finding no enjoyment from everyday activities.

"If you find you have trouble focusing, concentrating, or doing what you need to do in life because of these issues, consider having it assessed further," she says.

Depression can also be life-threatening when it becomes a precursor to suicide. Given the high price of depression, it's important to understand what causes it, how to identify it, and the steps we can take to counter it. Here are some of the things we can do until the pandemic ends to look out for one another and stay healthier.

#### **1. Get Professional Help**

When Michelle started feeling deeply depressed, she knew she should be concerned, having experienced suicidal thoughts in the past. After her partner expressed concern, she called a therapist.

"That was step one," she says. "I needed that outlet, to be able to





Exercise triggers biochemical changes that give us an emotional boost, and just the act of moving is an affirmation that we can get up and go.

talk to someone who I didn't have to worry about burdening with my depressive thoughts."

Liu encourages people to turn to therapy if depressed, because it can be very effective for overcoming mood disorders. But she bemoans the fact that many community clinics are overwhelmed right now, and some people lack the means to reach help.

"There's just a huge need, but not everybody has access to secure Wi-Fi and Zoom to get remote treatment," she says. "I worry that only a certain subset of the population is getting the services they need."

If you don't have ready access to a therapist, you may want to contact your health care provider, if you have one. See what they have to offer and if you're eligible for services. Or you can simply ask friends or family if they can recommend any therapists. In many areas, there are sites that specialize in helping people find local therapists, or you can turn to the Psychologist Locator, a site operated by the American Psychological Association.

2. Add Small, Good Things to Your Life While professional treatment is ideal, what else can people do when they see their mood sinking?

Harris says it's important to start adding small things to your life that you enjoy, to fight off feelings of helplessness that often come with depression.

"Plan small activities daily that allow for a moderate amount of pleasure and accomplishment (e.g., reading, cleaning out your office, painting a picture, styling your hair)," she says. "Activity scheduling is very effective at

the outset with depression." Of course, it's not always easy to do that now that many of our usual pleasurable activities have been curtailed during the pandemic. Still, it's possible to adjust our expectations and try new things.

Michelle tried several ways to help



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THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH AND TRADITION

## Ways to Manage Coronavirus Depression

Recognizing depression and learning to manage it can keep you from slipping into dark moods



Meditation can also

soothe difficult emotions,

helping us focus less on

ourselves and be more

available for others-

another depression

reliever, says Liu.

Combat depression by doing small things you enjoy-like hobbies, writing, or hikes.

snap her out of her funk. One of the most actful for her was adopting a kitten, whom she came to love.

"That kitten saved my life, because when nothing else was interesting or could grab my attention, the kitten was the one thing in my life that made me happy," she says.

Michelle also found it helpful to pursue creative self-expression by trying to do short writing exercises based on prompts she found in a book—such as, "What is a time in your life when you said 'no'?" or "What do you think you're destined to do in this life?"

"This was something I could do that gets me doing some kind of creativity but isn't a big commitment, and I didn't have to think it up myself," she says. Plus, it brought her a little joy, which helped alleviate her difficult moods.

**3. Find Ways to Exercise Your Body** One of the best treatments for depression is getting physical exercise, while not getting exercise can induce depressive symptoms. Especially during this difficult time, it's important

to take care of your body. Al is aware of how his physical health affects his mood, so he's made sure to maintain routines of self-care, like getting enough sleep, eating well, and getting outside when possible—all of which have been tied to preventing depression. Though adjustments to his exercise routines were needed because of the pandemic, some of those changes were positive, he found. "It may be less fun, but it's more flexible at the same time," he says. "You don't have to coordinate with other people or take

other people's schedules into account." When the pandemic ended Michelle's in-person yoga class, she tried the Zoom version of the class but found it wanting. So, she made it a point to find other

exercise outlets-like taking walks and bicycling—which made her feel better. "I don't do big bicycle trips yet. But even if I just pedal across the street and around the neighborhood, I've at least gotten out there," she says. "It definitely helps."

4. Foster a Sense of Agency

For Al, it was imp on personal goals, like improving his piano playing or his golf game. While it was sometimes difficult to find the motivation and energy when depressed, he found ways to trick himself into getting started, which not only helped him get closer to his goals but improved his mood.

"Just taking small steps, consciously having low expectations, and telling myself, 'Don't make a big deal out of it,' helped me to go through the motions—to get to the range or to the piano," he says. "Sometimes it's less about the actual thing you're doing than the fact that you are trying something—that you are taking control and taking action of some kind—that helps."

Having a sense of agency—the sense that you have some control over what happens to you—is important for staving off depression, says Liu. But that can be hard now when so many people are working from home and finding blurred boundaries between their job hours, home life, and time for self-care. She suggests it's a good idea to create structure in your day, to make sure you schedule things that are important for your well-being.

"You should be making time to read that book, cook, ride your bike, or go for a walk—all the little things that make you happy," she says.

5. Try Meditation and Self-Compassion Sometimes, though, negative thoughts get in the way. Maybe you feel you don't deserve to do nice things for yourself or you aren't good enough to reach your goals. For that, Liu suggests practicing self-compassion. After all, she says, we are going through a global pandemic and are not going to be the best, most productive versions of ourselves ... and that's OK. "Getting a little bit of extra help or do-

ing some things to be kind to yourself and take care of yourself is important right now," she says.

It can also be extremely useful for people to consider doing daily meditation

practice, to ward off negative thoughts, says Harris.

"Start small, even a minute or two, and do it during times when you're not necessarily highly stressed or anxious," she says. "The more you practice, the more you'll be able to notice your thoughts and be able to let them go, getting more distance from them."

Meditation can also soothe difficult emotions, helping us focus less on ourselves and be more available for othersanother depression reliever, says Liu. "Giving to others is an antidote to the

sense of helplessness that we're all experiencing right now, and it gives us a larger sense of connectedness," she says. "It's definitely something that helps us even as it helps others."

#### 6. Reach Out to Other People

Both Harris and Liu emphasize the importance of connecting with others for preventing depression. Liu encourages people who are depressed to make an effort to call old friends or family members, take company on your walks (if you can take walks), or engage in other ways with people you care about.

"Social support goes such a long way, even in the face of natural disasters, because experiencing something together creates connection and understanding," Liu says.

Michelle definitely feels that interacting with other people helps her. But she worries about asking people who are already overwhelmed to spend time with her-and then finding herself turned down or ignored.

"It's a little disheartening to feel like I reach out a lot and don't always hear back from people," she says.

#### **Depression is far** more debilitating than normal sorrow or anxiety.

Al also questions socializing as a good strategy for himself.

"I have trouble reaching out," he says. "I often think, accurately or inaccurately, that it's asking for trouble."

This is where Liu thinks friends, families, and communities could step up more to help. Checking in with those who may be isolated or depressed can be hard, especially if they are a bit crankier than normal or even actively block your efforts. Still, it's good to let people know you are thinking of them and to be willing to listen with empathy if they open up, she says. And, she adds, you don't have to be pushy.

"Making the space to be a listening, gentle presence and validating someone's experience—that can go a long way," she says. "Even leaving unimposing messages of support and understanding makes people feel less alone and that someone cares about them, which is a protective factor."

While there is no guarantee that we can stop someone from sinking into depression, or that they can stop themselves, it's important to try. After all, when someone is depressed, it affects everyone.

"Depression doesn't just impact the person with depression. It frequently has a domino effect that then touches family, friends, employers, etc., in varying ways," says Harris. "By recognizing it in others, we can be better equipped to help them at a time when they might be suffering in silence and just going through the motions."

That's why it's good to be alert to signs of depression in ourselves and in others. Not only are there things that depressed people can do to help themselves, but we all can make a difference if we show up for each other and express care.

"On the rare occasions that I ask someone, 'Hey, can we have a chat? Can we have tea? Can we go for a walk?,' it would be nice to have people commit to that and make it happen," says Michelle. "If I were to ask anything of my family or community, I would ask for that." Hopefully, we will all take note.

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

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#### **BECOMING MINIMALIST**

### 'Hang Your Coat' and 20 Other 1-Minute Habits for a Clutterfree Home

Clothes go in the hampe or get put away. N cluttering.

etting clutterfree is more than driving a clutterfree vehicle! a project, it's a process. It's one thing to declut-

ter your home one time. But keeping it clutterfree requires healthy habits going forward. One of the most simple and effective rules for getting your life under control and keeping your home clutterfree is the "one-minute rule" introduced by Gretchen Rubin.

Complete any task that can be finished in one minute immediately.

Followed consistently, this rule will make an amazing difference in your home and life. It has for me. Here's a list of places where you can begin implementing this rule right away—I call them one-minute clutterfree habits.

21 1-Minute Clutterfree Habits These micro-habits will definitely help keep your home clutterfree.

1. Make Your Bed First thing, right away, as soon as you get up.

2. Put away your coat and shoes. Also scarves and gloves and hats. In the

3. Recycle the junk mail. row it into the recycle bin in the **16. Fold your blanket after use.** 

coat closet where they belong.

4. Put clean dishes away. Don't leave them out—on the counter, in the sink, or in the dishwasher.

5. Don't leave clothes on the floor or

furniture. Dirty clothes in the laundry pile. Clean clothes back in the closet or drawer.

6. Put away your keys and change. Wherever your drop-zone is (ours is a drawer), use it always. Bonus: You'll always know where your keys are.

#### 7. Don't leave out

your bathroom toiletries. In the morning after getting ready and at night before going to bed. Twice a day. Keep your bathroom counter clear.

8. Put kids' school items away. Teach and show your kids where their backpacks belong and get them trained early.

9. Empty the car entirely when you arrive home Whatever you brought into the car that day,

take out when you return home. You'll love

#### 10. Wash your snack dishes and cups immediately.

Pots and pans can take longer than one minute. But the bowl you used for ice cream won't. Wash snack dishes quickly with a dish wand.

#### 11. Store those kitchen appliances.

Toaster, coffee pot, blender ... store them all out of sight (even if you use them every day). Trust me, you'll love it.

#### 12. Pick up toys.

There is no age too early to teach your children how to clean up after themselves.

#### 13. Tear down cardboard boxes. Even if you're going to keep them, flatten and free up space.

14. Put away the remote controls. Don't leave remote controls scattered all over the living room. Put them back where they belong after each use.

#### 15. Return chargers

and cords to drawers. Especially if you charge electronics in shared spaces.

garage and don't even let it enter my home. Wadded up on the couch or folded nicely? Choose folded every time.

#### 17. Empty full trash cans and bins.

Someone has to take out the trash. If the bin is full, remember the "one-minute" rule and get it done.

#### 18. Return reading materials to their designated home.

Magazines, newspapers, books, Sudoku, whatever.

19. Throw out any expired leftovers. Clear up the space in your fridge or pantry.

20. Put away your tools. You know who you are ...

#### 21. File those papers.

Few things clutter a room quicker than piles of paper. Followed consistently, these micro-

habits will make an amazing difference in your home. And who doesn't love a clutterfree home?

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



**MINDSET MATTERS** 

## When We Are Alone Together

How to reconnect with your partner after the bridge has been lost

#### **NANCY COLIER**

Many couples come to my office because they don't feel deeply connected. Often, one of them is lonely in the relationship because they feel like they can't bridge the distance.

These couples describe their relationships as containing little intimacy. But something recently reminded me of the divine ingredients of connection and how simple—but not easy—it can be to (re)connect.

During a recent appointment, John, an educated man, was vigorously questioning the #MeToo movement. He spoke about issues of race and gender, and how identity politics has become negative and destructive.

When he paused, I suggested that the identity movement made him feel defensive and angry.

He denied feeling defensive but shared that, as a teacher, the new politics forced him to be hypervigilant about his words and actions with students, lest he be wrongly accused.

I empathized with his experience and how hard it must be to be a teacher today. He then went back to his well-constructed case about the movement's faults.

As the conversation continued, I kept an eye on his partner, Nel, whose expression had glossed over. She had checked out. It seemed the possibility for connection was gone.

But I had seen an opening just before; a little piece of John had emerged when he was talking about the difficulties for teachers nowadays. Hoping that I could get a little further than John's teacher experience, I inquired, "What does it trigger in you personally, having to be in the thick of it, required to participate in this dialogue and all the forms and training sessions you probably have to participate in?"

With that very simple invitation, within the safety of our relationship, John showed up. In an instant, his entire facial expression shifted. Suddenly, he was there—the person, not the narrative.

John then expressed how toxic the whole thing felt—how he was forced to be in a conversation that wasn't his life, not valuable to him—and that he wasn't interested in any of it.

He felt put upon and trapped by the environment of identity politics, in a constant fight about issues that he didn't resonate with. He felt he had to prove he wasn't guilty of something that didn't, in any way, belong to him.

The specifics of what he felt were less important than what was inspired from the fresh truth that John shared.

Suddenly, Nel was there in the room. A palpable energy moved through the room, and she reentered the space behind her eyes. In that moment, for the first time, I could see real empathy for her husband spread across her brow. They were sharing the same space, perhaps, for the first time in a decade. Nel was looking at John with an entirely different expression. She was really looking at John. Tears welled up in Nel's eyes; connection was happening.

At last, what had been separating them all these years-all her husband's ideaswere out of the way and she could feel him; be with him.

John had been honing his ideas and intellect all his life, using arguments to validate his experience. He was skilled at proving his rightness, but his ideas came at the cost of connection. John didn't get to feel connected to anyone or, for that matter, to allow anyone else to connect with him. He was an island surrounded by an ocean of mind.

Many people remain stuck in the land of contents-with the context underneath the contents rarely reached. Men particularly seem to get locked in their thoughts, information, and ideas. This can shut them out from their own hearts and shut everyone else out in the process.

Being with such individuals feels like being trapped in a corridor with no door, no way to be together, and no way to touch them. Loved ones are held at bay by the thoughts, opinions, and arguments that make up the armor that protects these individuals from vulnerability.

#### When you respond with loving acceptance, you encourage steps in this direction and invite a deeper connection.

Since it isn't possible to join their experience, developing empathy for them must happen from a distance. You can get an idea of what they're experiencing, but can't feel it with them. For the partners of such individuals, being together is an experience of loneliness and separation. Hearts can't touch; life can't be profoundly shared.

When John expressed his personal experience-not his narrative, his justification, or his knowledge—his truth came through in its raw, real, and live form. Nel could see and feel her husband. She was finally with him.

They were together in the same now. His intellectual defenses were out of the way for a brief and blessed moment. Nel could then experience the sensation of being in true company—not being alone



It can be difficult to bear when our partner often repeats a certain narrative of passionate viewpoint.

together. She later confirmed this to me in an individual session.

Couples spend decades trapped, like flies in spider webs, inside the arguments of content, of who's right and of who's justified in feeling the way they feel about the contents.

They get caught, sometimes for good, in a battle for whose experience deserves empathy. This happens for many reasons.

One is that we mistakenly believe that we are our thoughts and opinions. Proving our rightness is, thus, a life and death struggle to ensure survival.

If you're feeling that you can't reach your partner, like you're alone when you're together, check to see if the both of you are trapped in the land of contentsof mind—with no access to each other's hearts.

Is your communication stuck in the land of opinions and ideas? Is your relationship waylaid in the purgatory of commentary, an airless box of comments on life that keeps each of you forever a step away from shared experience?

If that resonates, consider asking questions to reach your partner's heart—that unknown territory of real, felt experience-and offer yourself the same invitation, to deepen the connection with yourself as well.

Here are questions that invite feelings

- What is your experience in that situa-
- tion? What does that situation trigger in you?
- What does it feel like when you're in that situation?
- What makes it so hard, for you, when you're in that situation?

And, when you describe your own experience, try modeling the communication style you want to receive from your partner. For example, "For me, when that happens, I feel ..." "What makes it so hard for me is ..."

Actively model talking about your feelings and experience, rather than your narrative about the situation. Maybe, even name that distinction so that your partner can hear the difference. When your partner is able to express his or her direct experience or a newly discovered feeling, remember to offer him or her a supportive response.

Don't correct or dismiss the experience, no matter what it contains. Each time your partner moves from the known storyline to the unknown felt experience, he or she is growing.

When you respond with loving acceptance, you encourage steps in this direction and invite a deeper connection.

True connection happens when we communicate from our vulnerable hearts, not the protective stories in our heads. The most important journey we take in a relationship, and in life, is from our heads to our hearts.

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

### 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'

#### Continued from Page 9

Keats coined the term negative capability in a letter he wrote to his brothers George and Tom in 1817. Inspired by Shakespeare's work, he describes it as "being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."

Negative here isn't pejorative. Instead, it implies the ability to resist explaining away what we don't understand.

Rather than coming to an immediate conclusion about an event, idea, or person, Keats advises resting in doubt and continuing to pay attention and probe in order to understand it more completely. In this, he anticipates the work of Nobel laureate economist Daniel Kahneman, who cautions against the naive view that "what you see is all there is."

It's also a good idea to take the time to look at matters from multiple perspectives. Shakespeare's comedies are full of mistaken identities and misconceptions, including mixed-up genders. Keats reminds us that we are most likely to gain new insights if we can stop assuming that we know everything we need to know about people by neatly shoehorning them into preconceived boxes.

Negative capability also testifies to the importance of humility, which Keats described as a "capability of submission." As Socrates indicates in Plato's "Apology," the people least likely to learn anything new are those who think they already know it all. By contrast, those who are willing to question their own assumptions and adopt new perspectives are in the best position to arrive at new insights.

#### Human beings are always more complex than any demographic category or party affiliation.

Keats believed that the world could never be fully understood, let alone controlled. In his view, pride and arrogance must be avoided at all costs, an especially apt warning as the world confronts challenges such as COVID-19.

At the same time, information technology seems to give everyone instant access to all human knowledge. To be sure, the internet is one gateway to knowledge. But it also indiscriminately spreads misinformation and propaganda, often fueled by algorithms that profit off division.

This, it goes without saying, can cloud understanding with false certainty.

And so our age is often described as polarized—women versus men, blacks versus whites, liberals versus conservatives, religion versus science—and it's easy to automatically lapse into the facile assumption that all human beings can be divided into two camps. The underlying view seems to be that if only it can be determined which side of an issue a person lines up on, there's no need to look any further.

Against this tendency, Keats suggests that human beings are always more complex than any demographic category or party affiliation. He anticipates another Nobel laureate, writer, and philosopher Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who wrote that instead of

good guys and bad guys, the world is made up of wonderfully complex and sometimes even self-contradictory people, each capable of both good and bad:

"If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"

Uncertainty can be uncomfortable. It's often quite tempting to stop pondering complex questions and jump to conclusions. But Keats counsels otherwise. By resisting the temptation to dismiss and despise others, it's possible to open the door to discovering traits in people who are worthy of sympathy or admiration.

They may, with time, even come to be regarded as friends.

Richard Gunderman is a chancellor's professor of medicine, liberal arts, and philanthropy at Indiana University. This article was first published on The Conversation









## Compounds and Strategies to Get Brain Cells

#### **JOSEPH MERCOLA**

ur brains are subject to aging, just like the rest of our bodies. They are also subject to it later. disease, which is unique in

stranger. It can claim memories, personal- emotion and cognition. ity, and relationships, leaving family members of the afflicted with a haunting echo

of someone that once knew them. Fortunately, even as the disease grows in destroy brain function. prevalence, researchers are also learning more about factors that put us at risk, and habits we can cultivate to keep our brains healthy.

One recent example comes out of a collaboration between researchers from the University of Queensland and the German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases. They discovered that a phytochemical in apple peels can stimulate the growth of new neurons (neurogenesis).

This phytochemical is called quercetin. While the researchers found this compound didn't help the brain grow neurons **Quercetin Stimulates Proneurogenic** when used at high concentrations, it was pro-neurogenic at low concentrations, which means it led to the creation of new neurons, specifically in the hippocampus region of the brain.

#### Aerobic training could increase the volume of the hippocampus in older women who had mild cognitive impairment.

The brain has a hippocampus within each of the temporal lobes (which are just above the ears). The hippocampus is part of the limbic system. This is a part of the brain where behavioral and emotional responses are generated. These responses are central to survival and include reproduction, caring for babies, feeding, and the natural food. fight-or-flight response. Other parts of the limbic system include the thalamus, hypothalamus, basal ganglia, and amygdala.

of the brain, which takes its name from examination of quercetin, which is the most the shape that resembles a seahorse. This abundant flavonoid in the apple's peel. area plays a crucial role in memory con-

solidation, coding, and learning. Another of its major functions is forming a cognitive map, which is related to your ability to acquire new knowledge, store it, and recall

Your behavior is affected by this constant the sense that it can change accumulation of knowledge, and damage the very essence of who we think we are. to the thalamus can produce maladaptive Alzheimer's can turn a loved one into a behaviors because of its broad effects on

The hippocampus is also the area that takes the initial damage when the plaques and tangled fibers of Alzheimer's start to

According to the Alzheimer's Association, the number of people living in the United States who have Alzheimer's disease is growing. There were an estimated 5.8 million people diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2020. Nearly two-thirds are women. Experts estimate that as the population of people over 65 continues to grow, the number of people with Alzheimer's will also rapidly increase.

By 2050, it's projected 13.8 million Americans will have Alzheimer's disease.

Activity

The new study looked at how quercetin, a plant flavonol found in the apple peel, spurred neuron growth. Flavonols are a type of flavonoid, a compound with many functions in plants, including being an essential pigment for bright colors in fruit and vegetables.

Flavonoids are also powerful antioxidants, which help the immune system work better by neutralizing free radicals. The study was published in Stem Cell Reports and was built on past studies that have demonstrated the benefits of phyto-

chemicals found in plant foods. The researchers noted that plant com-

pounds were vital for maintaining cognitive function by growing new neurons (neurogenesis). That's what makes the new findings encouraging. This ability of the brain to reshape and grow itself is critical to our cognitive agility. The fact that a compound in apple peel—and another in its flesh—can help the brain do that is a testament to the benefits we receive from

The researchers said they chose apples as they are widely consumed across the globe resulting in a generalized exposure. The The hippocampus is a well-studied part study began with an in vitro (within glass)

The second half of the study was an in

In addition to apple peel, you can find quercetin in foods such as plums, red grapes, green tea, elderflower, and onions.

vivo (within the living) study using an animal model. After their data analysis, the researchers ultimately found that apples contained compounds in the peel and the flesh that helped promote neurogenesis. Quercetin from the peel and another active compound from the apple flesh, Dihydroxybenzoic acid (DHBA), demonstrated the ability to increase precursor cell proliferation and neurogenesis.

The researchers measured the effect on neural precursor cells, which are stem cells that can generate neural cell types within the brain. They found the effect was like that reported in past studies for other compounds such as resveratrol and epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG), which is found in green tea.

During the lab portion of the study, the researchers found that stem cells generated from a mouse brain were protected and exhibited more neurogenesis when quercetin and DHBA were added to the cell cultures. During the animal study, they found structures in the brain that were as sociated with learning and memory had more neurons when the mice were given doses of quercetin or DHBA.

**Exercise Also Stimulates Brain Growth** Another thing we can do that promotes neurogenesis is exercise. One study from the University of British Columbia discovered that aerobic training could increase the volume of the hippocampus in older women who had mild cognitive impairment.

The scientists engaged 86 women ages 70 to 80 years and assigned them to a twice-weekly program over six months. The women engaged in aerobic activity, resistance training, or balance and tone training. Those enrolled in the aerobic training showed significant improvement in hippocampal volume.

As reported in Science magazine, neurogenesis without exercise may not be enough to protect memory and learning. One animal model demonstrated that increasing levels of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) were required before the animals could outperform the control mice on testing.

BDNF is a key molecule produced in the brain with exercise and may help to explain the neuroprotective and cognitive benefits people experience with exercise. Much less



By 2050, it's projected 13.8 million mericans will hav Alzheimer's disease.

Another nutrient found in fatty fish that helps protect your brain health is

omega-3 fatty acids.

is known about the interaction between hippocampal volume and people with exercise, BDNF, and neurogenesis in the human brain as it's all but impossible to study living human brain tissue.

More is known about the benefits from animal models, while indirect measurements of neurogenesis are used in human participants. Rudolph Tanzi, senior author of the paper published in Science, commented on the results of chemically induced neurogenesis with exercise:

"In our study we showed that exercise is one of the best ways to turn on neurogenesis and then, by figuring out the molecular and genetic events involved, we determined how to mimic the beneficial effects of exercise through gene therapy and pharmacological agents.

"Although exercise-induced AHN [adult hippocampal neurogenesis] improved cognition in Alzheimer's mice by turning on neurogenesis, trying to achieve that result by using gene therapy and drugs did not help.

"That was because newly born neurons, induced by drugs and gene therapy, were not able to survive in brain regions already ravaged by Alzheimer's pathology, particularly neuroinflammation. So, we asked how neurogenesis induced by exercise differs.

"The lesson learned was that it is not enough just to turn on the birth of new nerve cells, you must simultaneously 'clean up' the neighborhood in which they are being born to make sure the new cells survive and thrive. Exercise can achieve that."

More Strategies to Protect Brain Health There are additional strategies you can use to help promote brain health. Astaxanthin is one. This powerful antioxidant is a naturally occurring carotenoid responsible for the pink or red color found in salmon, trout, lobster, and other seafood.

It's often referred to as the "king of antioxidants" and is derived from the microscopic algae haematococcus that produce it as a protective mechanism to shield it from ultraviolet light. In your body, it helps protect against reactive oxygen species and oxidation that play a role in heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and aging.

In one review of the literature, scientists identified several pathways astaxanthin may take to help slow brain aging. They also found it increases BDNF levels and reduces oxidative damage to DNA, lipids, and proteins. Another nutrient found in fatty fish that helps protect your brain health is omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3 fats are long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids that include EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid).

These nutrients are crucial for cell membranes and play an anti-inflammatory role in the body. DHA is especially crucial for While the new study highlights quercebrain health as it is an essential structural tin's role in neurogenesis, the medical component that is found in high levels in literature has highlighted its capacity as the neurons

As I have written before, and covered in my book "Superfuel," co-written with James DiNicolantonio, when there is an inadequate amount of omega-3, the nerve cells become stiff and are prone to inflammation. This reduces proper neurotransmission from cell to cell and the cells become compromised.

#### The hippocampus is the area that takes the initial damage when the plaques and tangled fibers of Alzheimer's start to destroy brain function.

Low levels of DHA have been linked to both memory loss and Alzheimer's disease, and some studies have suggested degenerative brain diseases may potentially be reversible when sufficient DHA is provided. However, it's important to choose wildcaught Alaskan salmon, krill oil, or other sources of safe fish, such as sardines, to meet these nutritional requirements. There are also many benefits to nutritional ketosis, only one of which is providing adequate fuel to your brain for optimal functioning. That's an article all on its own.

There are strategies you can use to improve brain function and others you should avoid as they can harm your brain.

#### **Avoid Processed Food**

To protect your brain, you should avoid processed foods and sugar.

Regular consumption of high-sugar foods is linked to a higher risk of Type 2 diabetes, and Type 2 diabetes is associated with a 60 percent higher risk for any type of dementia

One study found that even without a diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes, participants with higher blood sugar levels had lower was originally published on Mercola.com

higher hemoglobin A1c and glucose measurements had significantly lower scores on memory testing.

That memory finding could be significant. In two separate studies, researchers at the Alzheimer's Disease Research Center at the Mayo Clinic and the Center for Demographic and Aging Research found poor memory performance predicted a higher risk of dementia.

#### **Drink Less Alcohol**

Chronic excessive alcohol consumption causes dysfunction of neuronal dysfunction and brain damage. Yet, even moderate alcohol consumption can reduce brain volume and is associated with neuronal changes.

In a large study evaluating brain aging and alcohol, researchers from the University of Southern California examined 17,308 brain scans of cognitively normal participants.

They found that for every gram of alcohol consumed each day, the participants' brain aged 0.02 years, which is equivalent to 7.3 days. To put this in perspective, 12 ounces of regular beer have approximately 14 grams of alcohol.

#### DHA is especially crucial for brain health as it's an essential structural component that is found in high levels in the neurons.

#### Sleep Well

Chronic sleep deprivation is another lifestyle component that can trigger poor brain health. When you don't get enough sleep, your brain can't do the necessary housekeeping.

One small 2018 study by the National Institutes of Health found even going one night without sleep increased the amount of beta-amyloid protein in the brain. This is the protein that creates the plaque linked to cognitive decline among Alzheimer's patients.

Researchers from Marche Polytechnic University in Italy show that astrocytes, which are a type of glial cells in the brain, normally get rid of unnecessary nerve connections. Their study of sleep-deprived mice suggests that these astrocytes start to break down healthy nerve synapses when chronically sleep-deprived.

#### Quercetin's Other Job

a zinc ionophore, helping move zinc into the cells where it can halt viral replication. Research has also found it is a synergistic partner with vitamin C. On its own, quercetin acts as a natural antihistamine and anti-inflammatory that can also lower your risk for viral illnesses.

The body is an ever-unfolding chain reaction and researchers have found that quercetin can improve one of them by inhibiting the expression of casein kinase II (CK2), which down-regulates the ability of the cell to generate type 1 interferon when it's attacked by a virus. This means that by inhibiting the expression of CK2, quercetin may help slow the replication of RNA viruses.

In addition to apple peel, you can find quercetin in foods such as plums, red grapes, green tea, elderflower, and onions. Considering its wide-ranging benefits, quercetin may also be a useful supplement, either acutely, for times you feel you're coming down with something, or more long term, for metabolic health and, potentially, brain health.

If you choose to supplement, I believe that quercetin is best taken at night (with zinc) before you go to bed, and you haven't eaten for at least 3 to 4 hours. You will sleep for eight hours, and if you are metabolically flexible, this is the time that you will dive into nutritional ketosis.

Another benefit of taking quercetin at night is to take advantage of its senolytic action. This helps to remove senescent cells, which are similar to nonreplicating cancer cells that secrete powerful proinflammatory cytokines. You can optimize quercetin's senolytic properties if you take it while you are fasting.

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

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Most of the plastics that come in con tact with our food leach chemicals that disrupt hormones



Phthalates make plastic more flexible and harder to break but can harm pregnant women and

## How Do Phthalates Put Children's Health at Risk?

Chemicals common in household plastics disrupt one of our body's hormone system

#### **STEPHANIE EICK**

You may not realize it, but you likely encounter phthalates every day. These chemicals are found in many plastics, including food packaging, and they can migrate into food products during processing. They're in personal care products such as shampoos, soaps, and laundry detergents, and in the vinyl flooring in many homes.

They're also in the news again after an editorial by scientists in the American Journal of Public Health included an urgent call for better federal regulation of the chemicals.

In particular, scientists are urgeliminate phthalates (pronounced THAL-ates) from products used by pregnant women and children. Despite evidence of the harm these chemicals can cause, federal regulation in the United States has been minimal beyond children's toys. A recent move by the General Millsowned food brand Annie's to eliminate phthalates from its macaroni and cheese suggests stricter rules are feasible.

So, what's the risk, and what can you do about it? I'm an environmental epidemi-

ologist who studies the impact of pregnant women's exposure to environmental chemicals. Here are answers to three important questions about phthalates.

#### Who's At Risk?

Ortho-phthalates, commonly referred to as phthalates, are synthetic chemicals that are used to manufacture plastic. They help make plastic more flexible and harder to break.

Despite their abundance in many products, phthalates can be harmful to pregnant women and their children. These chemicals can disrupt the endocrine system, the glands that release hormones as the body's chemical messengers.

Studies suggest that can then lead to pregnant women delivering their babies early. Other studies have found that children born to mothers exposed to high levels of phthalates can have a lower IQ and poorer social communication development and that these children are also more likely to develop ADHD and behavior problems. Researchers have also found effects on the genital development of male infants born to mothers exposed to phthalates during pregnancy.

While phthalates can be found in nearly everyone, minority women have been found to be especially burdened. Studies show that

many beauty products targeted at these communities contain high levels of chemicals.

Infants and young children may experience high phthalate levels because they often put plastic products in their mouths as they explore the world.

Phthalates can enter food at many places in the supply chain, including through plastic tubing for liquids during production, plastic storage containers, and even food preparation gloves. Foods that are high in fat in particular can absorb phthalates through exposure during processing. Eating out may worsen the risk. A study of U.S. children and adults showed that ing state and federal agencies to those who ate food outside of their homes had higher phthalate levels.

#### How Do I Know If a Product Has Phthalates?

Figuring out which products have high levels of phthalates isn't always easy. While phthalates are required to be listed on ingredients labels, they are sometimes included instead as part of the fragrance, which allows them to be excluded from the ingredients list.

Many companies have voluntarily removed phthalates, and many consumer products are now labeled "phthalate free." The Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep website also offers a way to search for details about chemicals in cleaning and personal care products.

How Do I Keep My Family Safe? Phthalates are rapidly metabolized and generally removed from the body once exposure stops. Until there is better regulation, a few simple changes can make a big difference in promoting health and reducing phthalate levels in the home.

One easy change is to swap out all plastic food packaging containers with glass containers. If that's not possible, it's best to let food cool to room temperature before placing it in plastic food storage containers.

Don't microwave anything in plastic, because phthalates can migrate from food storage containers into food.

You can also reduce phthalate exposure by checking labels to avoid using products that include phthalates, by eating less processed food that might have absorbed phthalates during production, and by cooking more meals at home.

Stephanie Eick is a postdoctoral researcher in reproductive health at the University of California-San Francisco. This article was first published on The Conversation.

### 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**

hen 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

41

91

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

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

Adam Collins is a principal teaching fellow of nutrition at the University of Surrey in Canada, and Aoife Egan is a Ph.D. researcher in mathematical modeling of weight loss at the University of Surrey. This article was first published on The Conversation.

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

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