

MIND & BODY

COVID-19

WILL THOSE WITH

Natural Immunity

GET SOME FREEDOM?

Questions remain about the quality of natural versus vaccine-induced antibodies

CONAN MILNER

Millions have rolled up their sleeves to take the COVID-19 vaccination because the jab promises protection against the notorious pathogen. However, millions more remain hesitant. Now, officials are pushing a new incentive: freedom.

A growing number of universities now require that students get vaccinated before they return to campus. Airlines and workplaces are devising apps that allow entry based on inoculation status. And several countries are either set to unveil, or have already rolled out, a vaccine passport program. Details in each system may vary, but they all involve lifting restrictions for those who take the COVID-19 vaccine, and maintaining restrictions for those who haven't.

Most governments haven't tried to mandate the vaccine—a gene therapy released under emergency use authorization in the United States that is still undergoing clinical trials. And even as they promote the idea of vaccine passports, officials maintain that the decision to get the shot is still a matter of personal choice. But, after a year of social restrictions, the promise of any measure of freedom certainly makes taking the jab a bit more tempting.

Critics call such programs manipulative

People are being strongly encouraged to get vaccinated, even if they have natural immunity.

Critics call vaccine-freedom programs manipulative and discriminatory.

and discriminatory. But supporters say these measures are a vital step toward easing the world safely back to normalcy.

On April 2, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that fully vaccinated individuals (those who took their last recommended dosage more than two weeks ago) were permitted to freely travel by bus, train, or plane anywhere in the

United States, provided they remain masked during their trip. Everyone else is still urged to get tested before they depart, and quarantine when they return.

“Vaccines can help us return to the things we love about life, so we encourage every American to get vaccinated as soon as they

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Surprising Ways to Get a Better Night's Sleep

Research suggests that practicing gratitude, forgiveness, mindfulness, and self-compassion may improve our sleep during stressful times

JILL SUTTIE

A lot of us are suffering from lack of sleep these days. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 35 percent of adult Americans regularly get less than seven hours of sleep per night, with African Americans and other minority groups sleeping even less than that.



PRISCILLA DU PREEZ/UNSPLASH

Certain practices that improve your overall quality of life are also unexpectedly helpful in giving you a quality night's rest.

With the pandemic still in full swing, we may have even more sleep problems than usual. Worries about our health and safety, jobs, kids' disrupted education, and more are keeping many of us up at night, creating fatigue and stress the next day. This could also lead to more serious mental health issues such as depression and even suicide.

Improving “sleep hygiene” is a good remedy—including going to bed at the same time every night, making sure your room is dark and quiet at bedtime, forgoing afternoon caffeine, and creating sleep-time rituals (like putting on cozy pajamas and reading a book before bed). But many people still suffer from sleep problems even after making these adjustments.

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COVID-19

Will Those With Natural Immunity Get Some Freedom?

Questions remain about the quality of
natural versus vaccine-induced antibodies

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have the opportunity," CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said in the statement.

The reasoning behind these vaccine-for-freedom programs is that vaccinated individuals are less likely to spread or contract the disease, and therefore deserve to have less restrictions than those at greater risk of transmitting a potentially deadly virus.

Community immunity is the goal, and health officials say the vaccinated earn their freedom by contributing to this goal through their antibodies. The presence of these immune cells are proof that vaccinated individuals possess protection that the unvaccinated do not.

But vaccination isn't the only road to antibody protection. Just like with other viral infections, people who catch COVID-19 can develop some immunity to the disease. And when you consider the number of people who have contracted COVID-19 and recovered, many have likely earned their antibodies naturally.

So if the goal is disease defense, doesn't natural immunity deserve a pass, too? Drugmakers point to evidence of the antibodies produced in subjects who've taken their jabs. In April, Pfizer announced results of a phase 3 clinical trial showing that its vaccine provided more than 91 percent protection for at least six months after the second dose.

But natural immunity against COVID-19 has demonstrated promise as well.

According to research funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and published in January in the journal Science, the immune systems of more than 95 percent of people who recovered from COVID-19 had "durable memories of the virus up to

eight months after infection."

It was clear in vaccine trials that natural immunity was a force to be reckoned with. Drugmaker Merck gave up on both of the vaccines it developed last year to guard against COVID-19. On Jan. 25, Merck researchers announced their decision after they discovered the vaccines offered less protection than just contracting the virus itself and developing antibodies naturally.

Whether or not you recovered from COVID-19, health officials want everyone to take the shot. But the benefit this treatment offers those who have already created their own immunity isn't clear. In December 2020, the CDC stated that the Pfizer vaccine demonstrated benefit for those with evidence of prior COVID-19 infection, but the health agency later admitted the claim was made in error.

Proving Immunity

There has been talk of granting immunity certificates to those who recovered from COVID-19 that would function in much the same way that vaccine passports work. However, when it comes to handing out freedom to the naturally immune folks, there are concerns to consider: How strong is their protection and how long will it last?

These concerns are discussed in a February report from The Royal Society in the UK. The report points to qualitative studies that suggest that antibodies generated by natural infection provide "strong protection against illness"—between 70 and 90 percent efficacy for at least six months. However, researchers are concerned that natural immunity may also be less effective in reducing infectiousness and transmission, particularly against asymptomatic infection.



Vaccines aim to prompt the immune system to form antibodies.
DANIEL SCHLUDU/UNSPASH

COVID-19

Support Your Body in the Fight Against COVID

For people who've been infected, or face lingering symptoms, it's especially important to support their immune system and combat the virus

ASHLEY TURNER

As we continue to face COVID-19, we want to emphasize the importance of proper immune function. Whether you have had COVID-19 and want to facilitate the best recovery possible, desire to avoid triggering an autoimmune condition, or want to bolster your immune system to avoid succumbing to a serious case, you can take steps to strengthen your immune response.

For those that have had COVID and are suffering lingering symptoms—a condition known as post-viral syndrome that can happen to some people after any viral infection—holistic approaches offer a way to help resolve the ailment. Functional medicine emphasizes holistic and integrative supplements, diet, and lifestyle factors that are safe and effective and can help your body recover.

Before we get into some specifics, a reminder: focus on the basics. We often underestimate the power that diet and lifestyle have on the immune system, especially with regard to COVID-19. Ensuring proper sleep, consuming an anti-inflammatory diet, getting adequate movement, and

managing stress are crucial for preventing any viral infection, including COVID-19.

Here are some other approaches that can help you give your body more of what it needs:

Vitamin D

Research indicates that individuals with low levels of vitamin D are more likely to succumb to more serious illness from SAR-CoV-2. Vitamin D has been shown to activate macrophages, stimulate antimicrobial peptides, and modulate TH17 cells. Vitamin D also modulates cytokines. Due to these powerful immune-supporting properties, patients taking vitamin D have seen reduced progression, severity, and duration of illness. Furthermore, symptoms of post-viral syndrome seem to resolve relatively quickly by optimizing vitamin D levels. A note for readers to consider is that vitamin D is a fat soluble vitamin so taking too much can cause toxicity. Therefore knowing your blood levels is important to supplement safely. The safest source of vitamin D is sunlight.

Glutathione

Glutathione is the body's master anti-

Virtually every nasal spray influenza (flu) vaccine for 2020–2021 contains four different flu virus strains in an often difficult battle to anticipate the dominant strain for the year ahead.



CCO/UNSPASH

Another problem is that there is no standard to measure natural antibody protection.

"With regard to developing a satisfactory passporting test, no standard antibody assay yet exists and there are no validated antibody concentrations that correlate with or signify protection, either against illness or infectivity," the report stated.

The issues of testing and standards for antibody levels were also discussed in a 2020 report from the World Health Organization examining the ethical considerations of immunity passports. Not only have these important markers not been scientifically established, but, more importantly, there are several cases of people who catch COVID-19, recover, and then catch it again.

"As such, the World Health Organization (WHO) has advised against the use of immunity certificates at this time as they have the potential to increase the risk of continued transmission," the report stated.

To be fair, the longevity of protection the vaccine offers has also proven unreliable. On April 5, The Detroit News reported that as many as 246 Michigan residents considered fully vaccinated against COVID-19 were later diagnosed with the virus. Three of this group

died following their diagnosis.

Cases were reported between Jan. 1 and March 31. A spokeswoman for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services said the cases are undergoing further review. Similar reports of so-called "breakthrough" cases have appeared in Washington State, Hawaii, New York, and other states.

Conditions for Freedom

The WHO report lists three conditions that would need to be met for immunity certification to be a reasonable policy approach. Two require scientists to establish antibody standards.

First, what are reliable indicators for protection? And second, since declining immunity is common in coronavirus infections, a minimum length of immunity must be established. This duration must be "monitored over time so as to understand whether and when certificate holders need to reassess their immunity status and, possibly, renew their certificate."

The third condition requires the availability of accurate tests to identify immune individuals. However, the technology currently available is time-consuming, and requires

oxidant and serves to protect the body from damage caused by infections. We also know that glutathione plays an important role in supporting the body's immune system, improving insulin sensitivity, decreasing inflammation, and facilitating proper detoxification.

Research shows that glutathione deficiency is linked with serious manifestations of COVID-19. Therefore, optimizing glutathione levels could potentially be a beneficial treatment during illness and throughout recovery. For certain individuals, N-acetyl-cysteine (NAC), will be better tolerated than glutathione. NAC is a precursor to glutathione and can be an effective tool for building up glutathione levels as well.

We often recommend liposomal glutathione supplementation for the best bioavailability. We have seen patients benefit from nebulized glutathione to directly affect the lung tissue in the face of COVID-19. Also, providing glutathione with IV therapy ensures glutathione is delivered directly into the bloodstream.

Immune Support

We believe supporting the immune system is vitally important to protect the body from a COVID-19 illness. This is just as true for recovery. Our doctors personally use and recommend various immune-supporting nutrients and compounds including vitamin C, zinc, vitamin A, curcumin, resveratrol, and more. We also utilize various immune-supporting nutrients and compounds via intravenous nutrition therapy, ensuring these nutrients make their way directly into the bloodstream and therefore are ultimately utilized by the cells. We recommend immune-supporting IV nutrition for preventative care and especially recovery. Another

Viruses don't have their own energy source. When they inhabit a host, they must rely on the host's energy and metabolic function.

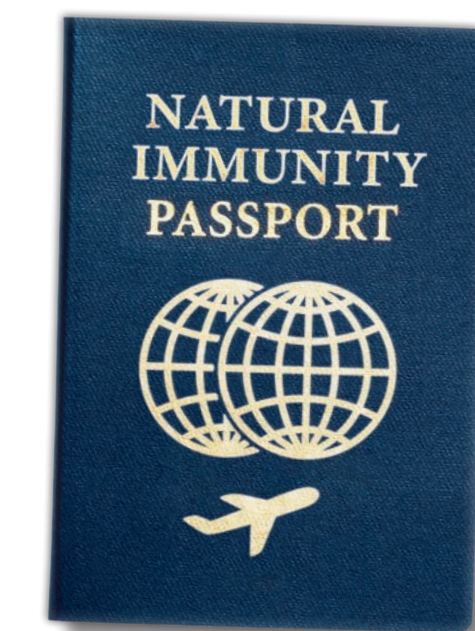
important consideration is that certain nutrients may be beneficial in slowing viral replication. These can include L-lysine, melatonin, and zinc.

Manage Stress

Stress. It seems to be ubiquitous with the times. While much of what we discuss in this article are physical or environmental stressors, the mental and emotional burden must also be considered. Utilizing coping skills for mental and emotional stress are critically important for ensuring that the immune system is able to function properly. Helpful strategies include prayer, meditation, mindfulness, cultivating gratitude, various breathing practices, and socializing with loved ones and friends. Maintaining a support system with other people is vital to promoting mental health and decreasing anxiety or depression.

Reduce Exposure to Environmental Toxins

We all face environmental toxin exposure in our world today. Some main culprits of toxin exposure are the air, water, food, cleaning products, personal care products, petrochemicals, plastics, and others. These toxins can accumulate within the body and con-



The quality of natural antibodies may affect any future "natural-immunity" freedoms.
TOPSELLER/SHUTTERSTOCK

expensive lab analysis, making widespread antibody testing not so feasible.

But researchers are already developing solutions to meet these challenges. Earlier this month, a group of Canadian scientists announced a new, inexpensive test that can detect COVID-19 antibodies in less than an hour using one drop of blood. It utilizes a bioluminescent enzyme called luciferase that gives fireflies their glow. The test has proven to be highly accurate. It doesn't require a lab and is easy to read. The more antibodies found, the brighter the test card glows.

Of course, none of this will be necessary in places that don't require vaccines for freedom, and so far at least three states have executive orders that forbid these programs. In a March 29 press conference, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said that it's "completely unacceptable" for the government or the private sector to impose that people show proof of vaccine simply to participate in normal society.

"I think this is something that has huge privacy implications and is not necessary to do," DeSantis said. "[Vaccination] is something we want available for all, but mandated for none."

tribute to an overall toxic burden that impairs the body's ability to function optimally.

We cannot overemphasize the importance of reducing your toxic load by scrutinizing the toxins you are exposed to. Unfortunately, we have collectively employed very toxic compounds to sanitize everything in this season to kill the virus. This contributes to immune system impairment and disruption of the microbiome; not the eradication of illness. We encourage our patients and readers to use safe, non-toxic options for cleaning and sanitation.

Ketogenic: Diet and Fasting

The metabolic state of an individual either hinders or fosters viral replication. Unfortunately, those who are in a constant sugar-burning state are those most susceptible to viral infections. This is a significant reason for why we see individuals with certain comorbidities have more serious outcomes. Switching the host metabolism from a sugar-burning to a fat-burning state has been shown to slow the replication of viruses. Any time blood sugar rises, the body uses sugar as its main energy state. Our bodies were designed to go in and out of sugar- and fat-burning states. Our bodies often thrive when we are in a fat-burning, ketogenic metabolic state.

Viruses don't have their own energy source. When they inhabit a host, they must rely on the host's energy and metabolic function. When the host is in a sugar-burning state, viruses of various kinds are able to replicate very quickly because of the abundance of sugar as a fuel source. What happens in this sugar-burning metabolism is that the coronavirus essentially coats itself in sugar in order to replicate. When the vi-

rus does this, it also camouflages itself from the immune system. This allows the virus to replicate rapidly and take a greater hold on the host who is in a sugar-burning state, has comorbidities, and metabolic dysfunction.

To combat this, we recommend reducing sugar and carbohydrate consumption and focusing on healthy fats and proteins. Additionally, extending your fasting window overnight to at least 12–14 hours and working up to longer intermittent fasts will also help shift the body from burning sugar to burning fat so that the virus can't replicate quickly or efficiently.

Consider Underlying Causes

Oftentimes there are ongoing underlying factors that may lead to someone being more susceptible to symptomatic expression of a viral illness. Other aspects to consider looking at are metabolic dysfunction or altered blood sugar handling, hormone imbalances, food allergies and sensitivities, autoimmune disease, environmental toxin exposure, gut dysbiosis, and other latent or chronic infections. Identifying and uprooting these factors can have a profound impact on the immune system and overall health.

It's important to work with a skilled practitioner to discover what else is contributing to symptoms. The body must be looked at as an interconnected whole for long-term health and wellness to be achieved.

Dr. Ashley Turner is a board-certified doctor of holistic health, traditionally-trained naturopath, author, homesteader, and homeschooling mother of three sweet daughters. You can reach her at Restorative Wellness Center where she practices functional medicine.

Americans Are Getting Quite Plump During Lockdown

Weight gain doesn't have to be a shame, but we do need to take steps in the right direction

JOSEPH MERCOLA

It was about one year ago, in spring 2020, when the jokes about the “quarantine 15” weight gain began making the rounds. But one year later, a longitudinal cohort study by researchers at the University of California shows that we underestimated the problem.

According to the Trust for America's Health State of Obesity 2020 report, 42.4 percent of U.S. adults are obese, which is the first time the national rate has topped 40 percent. To put this into perspective, the overall rate has increased 26 percent from a mere 13 years ago (2008). In 2012, there was no state with a rate above 35 percent. Data from the 2020 report showed there were 12 states with a rate above 35 percent.

Childhood obesity is also growing, with the latest information showing 19.3 percent of young people ages 2 to 19 are obese, as compared to 5.5 percent in the mid-1970s.

Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) showed another 30.7 percent of adults were overweight and 9.2 percent were severely obese (BMI over 40).

This means that 73.1 percent of the population is either overweight, obese, or severely obese.

New data gathered during 2020 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reveals these rates may be even higher in the next NHANES survey, increasing the number of people who experience higher risks of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, sleep apnea, mental illness, and all-cause mortality.

Americans Gained Weight Steadily During 2020

The results of the University of California's longitudinal cohort study, published by researchers at the University of California, found that participants experienced a consistent weight gain of 0.27 kg (0.59 pounds) every 10 days. The results were gathered from 269 participants in the Health eHeart Study.

Participants volunteered to report their weight using their Fitbit or iHealth smart scale. The cohort was not fully representative of the general public, as they resided in 37 states and the District of Columbia, 48.3 percent were men, 77 percent were white, and their mean age was 51.9. At the end of the study, the researchers had 7,444 separate weight measurements spanning Feb. 1, 2020, to June 1, 2020.

This offered data before lockdowns were in place as well as after. Dr. Gregory Marcus, senior author of the study, expressed concern that the trending weight gain, which totaled 1.5 pounds per month, may extend after the lockdown restrictions end.

Over the course of a year, this would have totaled 20 pounds. He noted that many of those being tracked had been losing weight prior to the lockdown orders. Speaking to The New York Times, he said:

“It's reasonable to assume these individuals are more engaged with their health in general, and more disciplined and on top of things. That suggests we could be underestimating—that this is the tip of the iceberg.”

“We know that weight gain is a public health problem in the U.S. already, so anything making it worse is definitely concerning, and shelter-in-place orders are so ubiquitous that the sheer number of people affected by this makes it extremely relevant.”

Marcus went on to hypothesize that the weight gain was likely

Childhood obesity is also growing. The latest information shows 19.3 percent of young people are obese, as compared to 5.5 percent in the mid-1970s.

Jogging is one way to exercise. You can also walk in nature, play sports, or garden.



AFRICA STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Feeling lonely and being stuck at home with ample food can easily lead to weight gain.



VECTORMUM/SHUTTERSTOCK



Childhood obesity can set a metabolic pattern that carries through to adulthood and contributes to a wide variety of diseases.

UFABIZPHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK

related to a lack of physical activity and greater accessibility to food while working from home. Since working remotely may become the new norm after the pandemic is behind us, he suggests a focus on mitigating “work-from-home-related adverse health effects.”

A second survey by the American Psychological Association (APA) was conducted by the Harris poll, providing data for this year's Stress in America survey. Information was gathered from Feb. 19, 2021, to Feb. 24, 2021, among 3,013 adults over 18 who lived in the U.S.

The data revealed that 61 percent of the adults surveyed reported experiencing an undesired weight change, either weight gain or loss, since the start of the pandemic. Overall, 42 percent told the surveyor they had gained more weight than intended, and the average gain was 29 pounds.

When the information was broken down by generation, the results revealed that of those surveyed who reported an undesired weight change, 48 percent of millennials had an average gain of 41 pounds. Baby boomers had reported the least amount gained, 16 pounds, and there wasn't enough sample size of adults over age 76 to report the average amount of unwanted weight gain or loss.

Focus on Health Not Shame

Many health experts are concerned that this growing waistline trend will continue to rise, along with rates of obesity and the negative health effects associated—including poor outcomes from a COVID-19 infection. Others—including health websites such as Healthline—are encouraging people to accept their new weight and the health risks that go along with it with rationalizations such as:

- Dieting is not without risk, as it can lead to eating disorders or nutritional deficiencies
- Your body image struggles are a brain issue, not a body issue
- We need a war on weight stigma, not “obesity”
 - You deserve to experience joy at every size—and you can
 - You shouldn't be ashamed of those extra pounds

Weight is a sensitive topic, and shame is unnecessary and unhelpful. And while you can't control the opinion of others and the unreasonable body image promoted by the model-

ing industry, you can take greater control over your health and wellness.

Unfortunately, governmental initiatives have not focused on the importance of proper nutrition and exercise, which are both foundational to health. Instead, the media and agencies have been focused on COVID-19 “cases,” mask mandates, social distancing, and lockdowns in preparation for massive vaccination programs.

Unfortunately, government initiatives have not focused on the importance of proper nutrition and exercise—both foundational to health.

Health and wellness have taken a back seat to living through chemistry. The researchers from the cohort study published in JAMA concluded:

“It is important to recognize the unintended health consequences SIP [shelter-in-place] can have on a population level. The detrimental health outcomes suggested by these data demonstrate a need to identify concurrent strategies to mitigate weight gain, such as encouraging healthy diets and exploring ways to enhance physical activity, as local governments consider new constraints in response to SARS-CoV-2 and potential future pandemics.”

Strategies to Mitigate Weight Gain Also Help COVID Illness

There are specific health conditions that increase your risk of severe COVID-19, according to the CDC. Heart disease, obesity, severe obesity, Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and cerebrovascular disease all make the list of health conditions that increase your risk of severe illness from the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Many of these are ameliorated by improving your metabolic inflexibility, which British cardiologist and author Dr. Aseem Malhotra believes is another factor that significantly increases your risk of severe illness. Malhotra recognized a clear link between metabolic

inflexibility and worse outcomes from the virus when data were first coming in from China and Italy.

He talked about the link between insulin resistance and cytokine storms in our interview in October 2020. According to Malhotra, the good news is that these lifestyle factors can be modified in as little as 21 days by simply changing your diet.

This focus has been sorely missed from messaging during the pandemic. The central thesis of his book, “The 21-Day Immunity Plan: How to rapidly improve your metabolic health and resilience to fight infection,” is that we had a pandemic of metabolic inflexibility or metabolic ill-health. There are five primary parameters of metabolic ill health, which include having:

- A large waist circumference
- Prediabetes or Type 2 diabetes
- Prehypertension or hypertension (high blood pressure)
- High blood triglycerides
- Low HDL cholesterol

Metabolic syndrome can triple the risk of a fatal COVID-19 infection. While mainstream media have reported that weight gain and the health conditions associated with it increase the risk of severe COVID, it is obvious that much of the focus is on surveillance and behavioral control. In response to the overwhelming attention on vaccinations instead of healthy lifestyle choices, Russian lawyer Jenia Finegan wrote on Twitter in March: “If this is the case, should we not have mandatory weight passports? Mandatory exercise and compulsory weight management programmes? Close all fast food outlets? No job for those refusing to lose weight? What else?”

Consider These Tips to Eat Healthy and Start Moving

The pandemic and subsequent lockdown changed many people's activity levels. While it may not have seemed like much, walking up and down the stairs, going to meetings and grabbing coffee with a friend all meant being slightly more active than sitting in front of a computer at home all day.

Even those small steps can add up to big results. Added to a lack of activity is a rising level of anxiety, greater access to food just steps away in the kitchen, and increasing boredom.

If you need to lose weight, I recommend adopting a cyclical ketogenic diet, which involves radically limiting carbs (replacing them with healthy fats and moderate amounts of protein) until you're close to

or at your ideal weight, ultimately allowing your body to burn fat—not carbohydrates—as its primary fuel.

Consider using the accompanying tips to begin making healthier choices:

Create a daily routine. It's important to get up at the same time each morning, and work to get seven to nine hours of quality sleep each night. Plan your meals for the day, including the timing of your meals and any healthy snacks.

Get dressed every day. Loose-fitting sweats or shorts make it easier to ignore weight gain.

Include exercise in your daily routine and avoid sitting for long periods. If you work at a computer, stand instead of sitting for the majority of your day. If your favorite gym is closed, consider other forms of activity such as walking, hiking, biking, dancing, or an exercise tape.

Incorporate a high-intensity interval training regime. Doing a quick but intense workout two to three times a day can raise your activity level.

Manage your stress. Unfortunately, many use food as comfort during times of stress. This only increases the difficulty in maintaining a healthy weight. Instead, consider exercise, yoga, meditation, connecting with friends or Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT). You'll find a library of demonstrations at this link, including EFT for stress and anxiety.

Be mindful. It's easy to overeat and over-snack when you're watching television or visiting with friends. Avoid eating or grabbing a snack while you're driving, watching television, or working. When you're busy, it's also easy to underestimate how much you're eating each day.

Change your routine. Steer clear of settings or situations you associate with overeating. After a stress-filled day, avoid the gallon of ice cream in the freezer or the six-pack in the refrigerator. Instead, consider meditating, a soak in a hot tub, or a walk with the dog.

Dr. Joseph Mercola is the founder of Mercola.com. An osteopathic physician, best-selling author, and recipient of multiple awards in the field of natural health, his primary vision is to change the modern health paradigm by providing people with a valuable resource to help them take control of their health. This article was originally published on Mercola.com

CHINESE WISDOM FOR SEASONAL LIVING

Tips for Relieving Late Spring Blues for a Smooth Transition to Summer

‘Grain Rain’ (April 20–May 4)

MOREEN LIAO

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

Solar Term: ‘Grain Rain’

2021 Dates: April 20–May 4

As spring progresses, the rains and humidity also increase. This moisture supports life. “Grain Rain” means it's time for a lot of rain to nourish all grains. It puts pressure on grain stalks to produce, on flowers to bloom, and on humans to get outdoors and release uncomfortable feelings.

Heat and humidity are both high within our bodies during Grain Rain (April 20–May 4), which can lead to nerve pain, joint pain, and a sense of pressure, as well as feelings of anxiety and anger. People who are prone to water retention may feel lower body muscle tightness, sore joints, and swelling during this time.

It is important to pay attention to our physical and mental health and to manage any negative emotions. The change of season and allergies can be very hard on some people. There is a widespread misconception that rates of suicide spike around Christmas time, but historically the rates are actually higher around mid-April to early May—a stark reminder to take extra care of ourselves and others at this time.

Grain Rain is the last of the six spring solar terms.

Take Time for Tea

Grain Rain is not only the time when grains ripen; it's also when tea growers enjoy their first harvest—a healthy reward for their hard work. Enjoying freshly brewed tea from the tea gardens is a popular activity throughout Southeast Asia at this time.

However, a large amount of rainfall is not good for growing tea, as it can damage the plant's delicate leaves. Warm temperatures and excess rainfall make the plants grow too fast, which affects the taste of fine and premium teas—much like grapes for wine.

Tea harvested before Grain Rain is called yu qian cha, which means “tea before the heavy rain.” Teas from this time are most beneficial for

hydrating and preventing inflammation in the body, and are believed to enhance health and longevity.

The Peony Rebellion

Most flowering plants have shown their best blooms before this solar term, with the exception of the peony, which is the flower associated with Grain Rain.

According to Chinese legend, in the deep of winter, Empress Wu Zetian of the Tang Dynasty once ordered that all of the flowers in her royal garden in the ancient capital city of Chang'an were to bloom.

The flowers, afraid of the power of the empress, all bloomed, except for the peony. This enraged the empress, who ordered that the peony be moved to the city Luoyang. Since then, the plant has flourished there.

4 Tips for Living in Harmony With ‘Grain Rain’

- Visit open spaces with grand views to help relax the eyes and the mind.
- Get exercise and sweat a bit, which are good for improving blood circulation and reducing pressure.
- Avoid going out in the rain, to protect yourself against catching a cold.
- Massage or stimulate the tips of the fingers to help yourself stay calm. Using the nail of one thumb, press hard on the fingertips of the opposite hand. These 10 points are called shi xuan xue, which means “10 relief valve points.” This can bring immediate relief when one feels upset, angry, or depressed.

Seasonal Foods

Beneficial foods at this time include fish, asparagus, black sesame seeds, pear, red beans, tofu, tempeh, wheat germ, and vegetables with white-colored roots, such as radishes.

Getting lots of vitamin B and zinc can relieve the uncomfortable feelings of this season and boost energy levels. To protect the liver, avoid sour-tasting foods. Avoid spicy and deep-fried foods as well.

Ginger, vanilla, and citrus peel are helpful herbs to consume. Green and floral teas—such as calendula, rose, jasmine, and chrysanthemum—are very beneficial.

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.



NATIN/SHUTTERSTOCK

‘Grain Rain’ is when tea growers enjoy their first harvest. These tea leaves are best suited to hydrate and prevent inflammation.

BECOMING MINIMALIST

What Growing Up ‘Poor’ Taught Me About Minimalism

A life of hard work and few possessions can be a life of deep meaning with an important legacy

CHERYL SMITH

I was raised in a household with an income that fell below the poverty line. Dad’s upbringing was in a home with an even lower income. He only achieved an eighth-grade education, and because of that, he had to be one of the hardest workers I have ever known. Mom was a dedicated stay-at-home wife and mother.

We had only one vehicle, so Mom and I usually drove Dad to and from work. One of the images engraved most indelibly in my mind is Dad walking toward our car, his clothes soaked with sweat from an honest-to-goodness hard day’s work. On payday, his wages seemed so meager and unequal to the amount of himself he poured into earning them.

Seeing Mom and Dad constantly worry about making ends meet no matter how hard Dad tried to provide for us lit a fire of dogged determination inside of me. I made up my mind that when I grew up, I would do anything I had to do to rise above such intense struggle to survive, even if that meant living above my means and financing everything I owned. That strong-willed sense of resolve to avoid “poverty” was alive and well when I met the man of my dreams, fell in love, and got married at the age of 21.

For the first several years of our marriage, my husband and I successfully accumulated the stuff that makes up the American dream. We both worked hard to meet the demands and expectations of what that “dream” should look like—home ownership, two jobs, two cars, lots of physical possessions, and a lavish amount of available credit to make it all come true. All along, it seemed so important to me to have the things I thought my parents “lacked.”

Then, while we weren’t looking, those long days turned into short years, and life had progressed to middle age. Dad, who had always been strong and stout and the hardest worker I ever knew, passed away long before his

Teaching your children how to live is much more important than anything money can buy.



Parents can bestow a much richer legacy to their children than anything defined by luxuries of material wealth.

time. I watched as the ensuing sadness of widowhood consumed Mom’s heart and life. And then, after nearly 12 years of profound loneliness and health issues, she, too, passed away.

Standing beside both of my parents’ bedsides as their earthly lives came to an end, knowing they would no longer be part of my everyday life, and feeling that sense of finality forced me to face my own mortality. It was the most sobering thing I have ever experienced.

Suddenly, the fact that my parents lived their entire lives being “poor” didn’t seem so important. It didn’t seem so sad that they owned very little because they weren’t able to take one single thing with them from earth to heaven anyway. They left this world just like they entered it. They brought nothing into it, and they carried nothing out. As their final breaths were breathed and their last feeble goodbyes were spoken, the fact that they were poor was the farthest thing from our minds. It meant nothing.

What did matter and what firmly remained was the strong foundation of faith they had so thoughtfully laid and upon which they had taught me to build, the value of hard work they had instilled in me, and the deep bond of love that even death will never be able to sever.

After Mom died, it took us only one day

to go through her tiny apartment and pack up what was left of her and Dad’s belongings. There was no cause for beneficiary rivalry or squabbling over their possessions because living a life of necessitated minimalism removed that prospect. At that point, the fact that Mom and Dad were poor brought a great sense of relief.

Not long after Mom passed away, my little family and I felt an impassioned call toward a simple, minimal life. We sold what we had to pay what we owed, and with reckless abandon, gratefully released the “American dream” and all it demanded of us. We are now three years into this amazing adventure, 100 percent debt-free, and have never been happier or more at peace.

The nuggets of wisdom I gleaned from being raised in a low-income family are countless, and I wouldn’t trade those life lessons for anything.

- Here are 10 of them.
1. People are worth immeasurably more than things.
 2. Teaching your children how to live is much more important than anything money can buy.
 3. It’s amazing how little it takes to survive if you learn to “make do” and improvise.
 4. You don’t have to own something to love and enjoy it.
 5. Experiences with the ones you love create the most precious memories, and most of the time cost nothing. Memories are lightweight, take up zero space, cannot be stolen, don’t have to

be maintained, and never cause worry. To invest in them is infinitely wiser than accumulating stuff.

6. It’s smart to rent a home if “ownership” requires going into debt and living above your means.
7. Holding a clear title to one car is wiser than incurring debt to have two.
8. Grieving loved ones shouldn’t be laden with the added burden of dealing with excess, left-behind possessions.
9. Working hard never hurt anyone. In fact, there are few things more gratifying than the completion of a hard day’s work.
10. When you die, you take nothing from earth with you, and the main thing you should leave behind is the legacy of a life well-lived.

The other day, it occurred to me that we are, by choice, living a life that looks very similar to the life my parents lived by necessity. It seems that I have come full circle in my way of thinking, and those childhood lessons weren’t lost after all. I finally fully appreciate their wisdom for what it’s truly worth.

Cheryl Smith blogs at Biblical Minimalism. Her family sold their home, released 90 percent of their physical possessions, got out of debt, and now share their story and their Christian faith on their blog. Her book, “Biblical Minimalism,” is now available. In it, she approaches minimalism from a biblical perspective. This article was republished from BecomingMinimalist.com

WISE HABITS

The First 2 Steps to Creating Resilience

Our world can be overwhelming, which makes resilience all the more important

LEO BABAUTA

When life is shaking us up and we’re feeling stressed, it can be tough to feel resilient.

Resilience helps us to deal with chaos and overwhelm. But how do we create it when we feel like we’re underwater?

The first step is to remove things that are adding unnecessary stress. The second step is to do things that help us feel replenished.

Those two steps won’t get us all the way to full resilience, but they’re a huge huge start.

Remove Extra Stress

Some stress is inevitable. Wishing for a life where we feel zero stress is just going to add more stress.

But if we are flooded with stress, removing some of it can help us to clear the space

Wishing for a life where we feel zero stress is just going to add more stress.

to create more resilience. If we don’t remove the extra stress, we’ll never do the things we need to take care of ourselves or to train our minds to be more resilient. So removing unnecessary stress is the first step.

Some examples:

- If you’re drinking a lot, reduce it to 1 to 2 glasses of wine a night. Zero might be even better for some, but it’s useless to ask someone to quit alcohol when they’re flooded with stress.
- Similarly, reducing smoking or other narcotics or drugs would be a big help.
- If you’re working late into the night, creating a stopping point earlier would be a big help, if possible.
- Cut back on your workload a bit, if you’re able to.
- Stop saying yes to everything, and take fewer meetings.
- If you’re fighting a lot with someone, refrain for a bit. Take a breather and let yourself settle.
- If you’re watching things or playing games late into the night and getting little sleep, cut back on that.
- If you’re watching news or reading things online that really get you angry, stop that for a while.
- Cut out social media if that gets you anxious.



And so on.

Removing these stressors will help you catch your breath.

Then Replenish Yourself

I don’t mean that you have to take a spa weekend, though that would be great! I

mean doing little things that help you feel more recharged and settled.

These things fill you up, so that you can better take on the world.

For example:

- Go for walks out in nature.
- Create space for reading, having tea, taking a bath, journaling.
- Talk with someone regularly, in person or over the phone.
- Take naps.
- Get better sleep.
- Take a weekend off.
- Get some sunshine, if there’s any where you are.
- Take moments of stillness and deep breathing during your day.

These little things can make a huge difference.

You won’t get all the way to resilience with these two steps—but you’ll have given yourself what you need to take the further steps of shifting your thinking patterns and practicing resilience.

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

Surprising Ways to Get a Better Night’s Sleep

Continued from Page 1

And, though turning to sleeping pills can be effective, they can also be addictive, or they can disrupt our dreaming, which leads to lower-quality sleep.

Fortunately, there may be other things worth trying to help us sleep that have more to do with our minds than our bodies. Recent research suggests that many of the well-being practices we can do to be happier also have a positive effect on sleep. Here are some of those practices.

Mindfulness Meditation

A recent analysis of several high-quality studies (randomized controlled trials) concluded that mindfulness meditation programs help people fall asleep more easily and experience better-quality sleep overall.

One study conducted in Wuhan, China, actually looked at how mindfulness might be useful for sleeping better during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the study, people spent 10 days using an app that either guided them through mindfulness meditation or induced mind wandering (unfocused attention). They then reported how mindful they were and how much sleep they got the next day.

After taking into account other factors influencing sleep (such as how much caffeine people drank, their age, or prior anxiety levels), the researchers analyzed how long people slept as the virus spread and deaths proliferated in their community. Those who practiced mindfulness and became more mindful didn’t lose as much sleep as those in the other group, likely because mindfulness protected them from worry and rumination. Mindfulness helps people recognize and accept negative thoughts and feelings without fighting them, reducing their intensity and preventing them from spiraling out of control.

If you’ve not already tried mindfulness meditation, you can find many online resources to give it a go—including apps, which seem to be at least somewhat effective. You can also go to Greater Good in Action and try our practices—including a body scan, mindful breathing, or common humanity meditation. These exercises, besides potentially helping with sleep, have been found to reduce stress and depression and increase happiness and satisfaction with life, too.

Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is something all of us could use right now, especially as lockdowns drag on and we find ourselves feeling more tired, unhappy, and unproductive than usual. Getting down on ourselves for perceived mistakes and flaws could exacerbate low-grade depression, which many of us already feel. Self-compassion helps us to be kinder to ourselves as we go through



Gratitude strengthens relationships, improves happiness, and improves the quality of our sleep.

the ups and downs of life. According to researcher Kristin Neff, self-compassion involves paying attention to our internal and external experiences (mindfulness), recognizing when we are suffering, sending kind messages to ourselves, and keeping in mind our common humanity—that we aren’t alone in our imperfections or suffering.

Studies have found that more self-compassionate people have better sleep, including less trouble falling asleep after a stressful day. In that study, people who were more self-compassionate were also in a better mood and felt more alert upon awakening than those with little self-compassion.

Self-compassion can be strengthened with practice, and that improves sleep, too. In one study, participants were asked to think about personal mistakes they’d made before going to bed and assigned to do a self-compassion meditation, a self-compassion writing exercise, or neither of those (as a comparison). Based on their reports the next morning, those who did a self-compassion exercise slept significantly better and ruminated less than those who didn’t try self-compassion. These practices even helped people who started out more depressed, which is good to know, given how many of us are ruminating more these days.

A new paper analyzing the results of several studies found there was “a significant association between self-compassion and self-reported sleep quality.” Though more rigorous studies could be done to confirm this, we can always benefit from practices such as writing ourselves a self-compassion letter or taking a self-compassion break.

Gratitude

Feeling grateful is a good way to feel happier and strengthen our relationships. Now, it appears to help with sleep, too.

In one study, 119 young women were randomly selected to write about people and things they were grateful for each day, things that happened each

day, or nothing at all. After two weeks, people’s sleep quality improved significantly in the gratitude group, and this helped improve their well-being and optimism and reduce blood pressure, too. In a recent review of gratitude exercises and their effects on physical health, researchers found that one of the strongest impacts of gratitude was on sleep quality.

One reason gratitude may affect sleep is that a grateful mindset seems to help us embrace more positive thoughts and let go of more negative ones before we go to bed. This means that it doesn’t take as long for us to fall asleep at night.

To try gratitude practices yourself, you might consider keeping a gratitude journal (or use the GGSC’s Thnx4 online journal) or writing a gratitude letter. These are designed to increase your positive thoughts and feelings, which may be key to better sleep.

Forgiveness

For some people, forgiving others is hard—especially if you equate forgiveness with letting someone “off the hook” and condoning their harmful actions. But those who study forgiveness consider it to be not necessarily about healing relationships between people, but mostly important for ourselves, helping us to let go of grudges that decrease our personal well-being.

If what’s keeping you up at night is holding on to grudges—pandemic-related or not—it could be worth considering practicing forgiveness. Though there is little or no direct research on how forgiving someone affects sleep directly, there is at least one study that found forgiving types were more likely to sleep better at night than others.

Additionally, those who were more self-forgiving in the study also slept better because they were able to let go of mistakes they’d made more easily.

Forgiving someone can make us feel happier, more hopeful, less depressed and anxious, and less vulnerable to stress. And it can improve our relationships with others, especially our closest ones, which is important when so many of us have limited ability to interact with others right now. Each of these benefits is also tied to better sleep, which is all the more reason to try practicing forgiveness.

The nice thing about all of these practices is that they can be used alone or in tandem, and they don’t have undesirable side effects. Not only that, practicing these keys to happiness can have the desirable side effect of helping you become a happier, healthier person. That’s something we can all cheer about in these dark times. Just don’t try cheering right before you want to fall asleep!

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

Long Work Hours Linked to High Rate of Repeat Heart Attack

MAT LECOMPTÉ

The whole idea of working long hours never made sense to me. Why put so much emphasis on one thing at the expense of so many others?

A new study by researchers at Université Laval published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology is showing that those long hours don’t make sense to your heart, either.

Life, of course, is expensive. People need to earn a living. But pulling long work hours could be earning them a death, too. New research is showing that working 55 hours per week or more is linked to double the risk of a repeat heart attack for those who have had one.

The additional risk is compared to those who work between 35 and 40 hours per week.

It’s been repeated ad nauseum, but a healthy lifestyle is all about balance. A balanced diet, some exercise, and what is termed as “work-life balance.” Of course, this is more achievable for some than others, as many North Americans work long hours simply to make ends meet.

But if you are working long hours and putting your health at risk because you don’t know what else to do with your time, it’s worthwhile (especially

for your heart) to take your foot off the gas to slow down and look around.

Those long hours on the job are potentially putting your life at risk. So, really, does the extra money it may result in really have any value?

There are several factors in working long hours that may contribute to the risk for repeat heart attacks. Stress, exposure to on-the-job pollution or chemicals, physical exertion, or excessive heat and cold can all wear the body down and challenge your heart.

Unfortunately, working fewer hours isn’t an option for everybody. A high cost of living and low-paying jobs are a reality of the North American economy.

If you can find ways to cut costs in a way that allows you to work less, try it. It could be the best investment for your future.

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

Those long hours on the job are potentially putting your life at risk. So, really, does the extra money it may result in really have any value?



Mother's Day is just one opportunity to share our appreciation.



ALL IMAGES BY SHUTTERSTOCK

The Goodness and Gifts of Gratitude

Our acts of appreciation can lift others and leave us with fewer regrets

JEFF MINICK

A young man I know drives to work from Front Royal to the traffic-tangled roads of Northern Virginia. He recently told a mutual acquaintance that he uses the hour-long trek to prepare his mind for the day's tasks.

On the way home, however, he spends that same drive decompressing from work and readying himself to cheerfully greet his wife and young children. When he arrives home, his first act is to tell his wife how much he appreciates all she has done for their family that day.

I wish I'd possessed his wisdom when I was his age.

In the movie "Cool Hand Luke," the warden of a prison strikes an inmate, Luke, with his club and then utters one of the film's best-known lines: "What we've got here is failure to communicate."

Today we often have a failure to appreciate. Most of us, myself included, often fail to express our gratitude for the gifts bestowed on us by others.

An employee goes above and beyond the call of duty putting together a special report for her boss, delivering vital information well ahead of a deadline, but she receives no more recognition than a nod of the head. The wife who has spent all day with the children hands them over to her husband as soon as he steps through the door without asking one question about his day. The grown children who receive money or gifts for their birthdays forget all about writing a thank you note or making a phone call of appreciation.

I have wished many times that I would have thanked my wife more often.



Our gestures of appreciation can take any form, from a thoughtful gift to an email to a childhood teacher.

In my case, I've frequently failed to say "thank you" for good deeds and gifts I have received at the hands of others. I have wished many times that I would have thanked my wife more often for her love and care for me and our children. I wish I had told my mother before she died how grateful I was that she had taught me the values of hard work, perseverance, tender love, and forgiveness. I hope that others who have influenced me—teachers, employers, friends, and even family members—know of my gratitude for the lessons they imparted and the help they provided.

There are two things I've learned about gratitude. First, when our loved ones die and you wish you'd told them how much they'd done for you, it's too late. As I write these words, I am thinking of an old college professor and good friend who surely knew of his powerful impact on my life, but I never directly expressed my thanks to him before he died.

Second, while those who have helped us are still alive, it's never too late to express our appreciation for them. In my ninth-grade year at Southwest Junior High School in Forsyth County, North Carolina, Mr. Darden taught us a block class of literature and geography. He was an excellent teacher, and 30 years later, when I began teaching, I recreated some of his projects in my own classes. After another 10 years of teaching, I wrote him a note of thanks for all he had done for us. He replied with a kind letter, happily surprised, I think, that someone had remembered his efforts, and he also encouraged me in my own teaching.

Expressing our gratitude for a job well done

or for a gift is really quite simple.

Suppose that employee I mentioned above works overtime to get you the information you need. Pay your compliments on her hard work with a personal note or even some flowers as well as a spoken thank you. When a spouse returns at the end of a long day, offer them a word of appreciation. If Grandma, Uncle John, or anyone else sends you a gift, take the five minutes needed to write out a thank-you note, address an envelope, slap on a stamp, and put it in the mailbox.

There are plenty of websites explaining the great blessings of bestowing such appreciation, not just for the recipient of your appreciation but for you as well. Expressing gratitude doesn't just help the receiver, it also makes the givers healthier and happier. It deepens our relationships and even affects our physical health, allowing us to sleep better and increasing our energy levels.

When we sincerely offer such appreciation, we strengthen the bonds of our families, our enterprises, our communities, and even our country.

Even more importantly, it's the right thing to do.

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



(Top, above, and left) Taking the time to show our appreciation is as rewarding for us as the people we acknowledge.

Perhaps the Most Effective Weapon Against Viral Infections

Nebulized hydrogen peroxide offers an immediate and direct supplement to the body's natural immune response



When viruses first invade our body, we have a short window to respond before they start replicating inside us.

JOSEPH MERCOLA

Nebulized hydrogen peroxide is a safe, inexpensive, and incredibly effective way to help prevent and treat viral illnesses of all kinds.

That's the conclusion of many, including Dr. Thomas Levy, a board-certified cardiologist perhaps best known for his work with vitamin C. Levy is an expert on nebulized hydrogen peroxide, which has become my favorite intervention for viral illnesses, including COVID-19. In his latest book, "Rapid Virus Recovery," Levy details this treatment. He's giving the e-book away for free, and the 321-page physical book will be available soon

If treatment begins early enough, patients almost always fully recover.

online. It's also available in Spanish.

Levy suffered with lifelong sinus problems. About a year and a half ago, while doing research for his book on magnesium, he came across nebulization with magnesium chloride, which sparked his interest.

As a result of his research, he began nebulizing with hydrogen peroxide and noticed incredible changes in his health almost immediately, including the reversal of his chronic sinus problems. So, after finishing his magnesium book, he took a deep dive into nebulization, and "Rapid Virus Recovery" was the result of that journey.

Levy's research and direct observation led him to a startling conclusion—that

nebulizing hydrogen peroxide is so effective it can stop virtually any cold or flu infection in its tracks if used quickly enough, and help those already infected to recover more quickly.

Levy also points out that if you can easily prevent or cure a viral infection, then vaccination becomes irrelevant. "Why vaccinate for a disease that you can prevent or easily cure after you have it?" he asks.

"Nebulized hydrogen peroxide is not only simple to administer to yourself and universally effective, but it's also inexpensive and readily available around the entire world."

Continued on Page 12

Why 'Zoom Fatigue' Is Worse for Women

Making some meetings mandatory 'no video' can help alleviate some of the side effects of too many video conference calls

MELISSA DE WITTE

Women report feeling more exhausted than men do after video calls, according to the first large-scale study on Zoom fatigue. The researchers say the "self-view" display may be to blame for that exhausted feeling after a day

of back-to-back online meetings.

The research shows that overall, 1 in 7 women—13.8 percent—compared with 1 in 20 men—5.5 percent—reported feeling "very" to "extremely" fatigued after Zoom calls.

These new findings build on a paper the same researchers

recently published in the journal Technology, Mind and Behavior that explored why people might feel exhausted following video conference calls. Now, they have the data to show who is feeling the strain.

Continued on Page 15



Video calls can feel like being under an uncomfortable spotlight.

KATE KETTER/SHUTTERSTOCK

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Onions are an antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anticancer, and pro-heart powerhouse that come in various colors and types.

FOOD AS MEDICINE

The Therapeutic Benefits of Onions

Modern research has begun to affirm the healing potential of these delicious vegetables

Vegetables are a crucial source of health and nutrition. There are, however, a few standout veggies and onions—a staple in many North American kitchens and cuisines worldwide—are one of them.

Onions are an antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anticancer, and pro-heart powerhouse that come in various colors and types. They are a culinary essential that has offered people outstanding health benefits for many generations.

The type of onion may clue you in on its specific benefits. Red onions are known to be particularly rich in quercetin, a plant pigment or flavonoid present in many fruits, vegetables, and grains. Found in a great variety of foods as well as beverages like tea and wine, flavonoids have antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and anti-carcinogenic properties, along with the ability to modulate cellular enzyme function.

Other varieties such as green, brown, and white boast their own sets of health benefits. For example, green onions, also commonly known as scallions, are traditionally used to treat colds, flu, abdominal pain, headache, and heart disease. Let's have a look at another five impressive health benefits of onions.

Onion extract gel may be useful for wound healing, showing promise in improving the cosmetic appearance of post-surgical scars.

Heart Health

Onions contain antioxidants that may support healthy cholesterol levels as well as help manage blood pressure, both of which may lower the risk of heart disease.

A study involving 70 overweight individuals with high blood pressure found that quercetin-rich onion extract, 162 milligrams (mg) per day in particular, notably pushed down systolic blood pressure by 3 to 6 mmHg versus a placebo.

Another study conducted in 54 patients with polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) concluded that eating about 40 to 50 grams (g) per day of raw red onions (if overweight) and 50 to 60 g a day (if obese) for an eight-week period slashed total and LDL cholesterol, compared to a control group, which ate smaller amounts of onions.

Oxidative Stress

Onions are an excellent antioxidant source, and, in fact, offer more than 25 different varieties of flavonoid antioxidants.

Specifically, anthocyanins, which are special plant pigments that give red onions their color, have been associated with a lower likelihood of heart attacks. This was found in a study of 93,600 women with the highest intake of anthocyanin-filled foods. Addition-

ally, anthocyanins offer protective effects against certain kinds of cancer.

In a 2012 study, quercetin displayed a protective effect against sodium fluoride-induced oxidative stress in the heart in an animal model. Consuming onion peel itself, found to contain quercetin in abundance, may also benefit obese individuals as a way to reduce oxidative stress to help prevent the onset of chronic disease.

Skin and Hair Health

Onion extract gel may be useful for wound healing, showing promise in improving the cosmetic appearance of post-surgical scars. A study showed that it significantly improved scar softness, redness, texture, as well as appearance at the site at weeks four, six, and 10 during the research.

Applied topically, crude onion juice may assist in hair regrowth compared to tap water, potentially serving as an effective topical therapy for patchy alopecia areata.

Anticancer Benefits

Again, the benefit here comes from the flavonoid antioxidant quercetin, which may inhibit the growth of tumors. In a 2006 study, a uniquely large data set from southern European populations showed an inverse association between the frequent consumption of the family of allium vegetables, particularly onions and garlic, and the risk of several common cancers.

Allium vegetables also surfaced in an analysis of a Northeast Chinese population and were linked to a reduced risk of colorectal cancer in both men and women.

Diabetes

Consuming onions may also help diabetics by lowering blood sugar levels. A study of 42 Type 2 diabetics, for instance, showed that consuming 3.5 ounces of fresh red onion decreased fasting blood sugar levels by 40 mg/dl after four hours.

Quercetin, combined with hesperidin, may also play an effective role in the regulation of insulin metabolism in diabetics. Justifying their strong antioxidant properties, garlic, white onion, and purple onion display antidiabetic as well as antihypertensive properties.

Quercetin also shows promise for preventing neurodegeneration in diabetic retinopathy, a severe complication of the disease and a leading cause of blindness in adults worldwide. Discover additional onion health benefits and quercetin wellness benefits on GreenMedInfo.com

The GMI Research Group is dedicated to investigating the most important health and environmental issues of the day. Special emphasis will be placed on environmental health. Our focused and deep research will explore the many ways in which the present condition of the human body directly reflects the true state of the ambient environment. This work is reproduced and distributed with the permission of GreenMed-Info LLC. Sign up for the newsletter at www.GreenMedInfo.com

MADE TO MOVE

Walking Workouts Are Great for Heart, Bone, and Muscle Health

Our most essential form of movement, walking offers exercise that nearly anyone can enjoy

BRADLEY ELLIOTT

Pandemic restrictions have led many people to start walking more, often because they've had few other things to do or just as a way to get moving. Walking workouts have even become popular, with plenty of "challenges" and exercise videos to be found online.

Walking is good for you, there's not much doubt about this. As a way of adding physical activity into your life, it has many advantages. There's a very low barrier to entry, meaning almost everyone, regardless of age or ability, can start walking regularly as a form of exercise.

Walking outside is also associated with mental health benefits, particularly if you're able to walk in parks or green spaces.

Walking has clear benefits on keeping our bodies functioning as we get older, improving cardiovascular health, helping lose fat mass and maintain muscle mass, and helping to maintain bone density as well. And these benefits are true for people of all ages. It seems that the more active you are as a young adult can affect overall health and (in rats, at least) bone and muscle physical function in later life.

Walking outside is also associated with mental health benefits, particularly if you're able to walk in parks or green spaces. Such "green exercise" can improve mental health and wellbeing, reduce symptoms of depression, and lower blood pressure to a greater degree than similar urban exercise.

These effects are so strong that walking on a treadmill in a sterile laboratory environment while watching a TV showing green spaces can improve stress responses and improve self-esteem and mood when compared to watching scenes of urban built environments.

How Many Steps?

But how many steps are required? Although we're often told to aim for 10,000 steps a day, this number is not really evidence-based. In a study of 16,741 older women (average age 72 years), people who walked fewer than 2,000 steps a day were shown as having the highest risk of



ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

There's a very low barrier to entry, meaning almost everyone, regardless of age or ability, can start walking regularly as a form of exercise.

Exercising while you're younger isn't just good for you now, but could help your health and function decades later.



death from many different causes, such as cancer or cardiovascular disease. People who walked more were less likely to die from any cause.

This effect plateaued at about 7,500 steps, suggesting (at least in this population of older women) that activity beyond this didn't impart further benefit in terms of mortality. Simply put, walking more likely helps you live longer, but 10,000 steps wasn't any different than 8,000 steps. Similar results were seen in adults over 40, with a plateau in effectiveness of increasing step counts somewhere between 8,000 and 10,000 steps.

Another factor to consider is walking pace. As intuitive as it may seem, it's worth pointing out that walking faster is better for you than walking slowly. In a recent randomized control trial, 12 months of walking five times a week for 50 minutes at low speed didn't improve measures of fitness, while walking at a faster speed did. (The researchers used a personalized measure for each person, so "fast" versus "slow" depended on each individual.)

Walking speed is also a predictor of mortality in older people. People who walked slower were much more likely to die over the next 14 years of all causes than those who walked at a faster pace.

Is Walking Enough?

But while walking is good for you, it's not a magic cure for everything. To gain even further benefits, consider adding in both higher-intensity exercises and strengthening exercises, as recommended by the World Health Organization and NHS England.

This should include vigorous, challenging, quick movements that get your heart beating faster and make you out of breath, such as running or cycling up hills, sports games, or walking up stairs. Again, intensity is at play here. So although walking is

good for cardiovascular fitness, running is better, even if you still only use similar amounts of calories on a short run versus a longer walk.

Muscle-strengthening exercises, such as weightlifting, are also great for building muscle mass and strength at all ages. These will help maintain muscle mass and function with older age and are associated with reduced incidence of chronic diseases.

Importantly, losses in muscle mass and function start in your 30s or 40s. So exercising while you're younger isn't just good for you now, but could help your health and function decades later.

In place of step counts, the World Health Organization suggests people think of "minutes of activity," and that people should achieve at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week, or at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise, if you prefer. Moderate-intensity activity is about a six out of ten on your personal intensity scale; things such as light sports, walking briskly, or dancing.

Activity trackers can also help you keep an eye on how many minutes you're active daily. Most smartphones have apps built in, and many are freely available to download.

So, is walking good for you? Yes. Do you need to walk 10,000 steps a day? Probably not, but it's not going to do you harm if you do. If you're trying to maximize your gain in health benefits through being more active, consider adding in other types of exercises that challenge your fitness and strength alongside lighter activities such as walking.

Bradley Elliott is a senior lecturer in physiology at the University of Westminster in the UK. This article was first published on The Conversation.

MADE TO MOVE

How the Pandemic Might Be Affecting Your Vascular Health

OLENA YAKOBCHUK/SHUTTERSTOCK



With little to do and nowhere to go, it makes sense that more and more people are spending time in their house.

MAT LECOMPTÉ

You'd be hard-pressed to find anybody who has gone unaffected by the pandemic. Even if you think you're doing alright, you're probably wrong.

For example, have you been as active as you were before the lockdowns? And even if you've boosted your activity to exercise for 45 minutes per day, what are you doing the rest of the time?

Most people are sitting more than they ever have. With little to do and nowhere to go, it makes sense that more and more people are spending time in their house on the sofa.

That's not great for your veins.

The pressure and lack of blood flow your veins experience while sitting for extended periods can put them at risk. For starters, the veins at the back of your legs are compressed between your body and the chair.

Next, it's harder for the blood in your lower body to flow back up to your heart when you're sitting. This could mean your heart has to work harder, but it can also

Sitting for extended periods is also a risk factor for varicose veins, which are swollen, twisted veins just beneath the skin.

result in poor circulation.

Sitting for extended periods is also a risk factor for varicose veins, which are swollen, twisted veins just beneath the skin. Sometimes, they look purple. These veins are caused by damaged vein walls and valves and can boost blood pressure.

There are a number of ways you can keep your veins healthy during the pandemic. One of the best is to take breaks from sitting. Get up for a short walk for every hour or so of sitting.

Staying well-hydrated is another step you can take to help blood flow. Having enough fluids in your system helps dilute the blood, so it flows easier through your veins.

It's easy to forget about the little things in the pandemic and the various ways it can influence your health. Take a proactive approach to help offset these risks that are easily overlooked.

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

What People Are Saying



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

SEAN HANNITY
Talk show host



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

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



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

LARRY ELDER
Best-selling author, attorney, and talk show host



The Epoch Times is a great place where you can understand traditional values in a way and in a tone and through content that is accessible. It's smart.

CARRIE SHEFFIELD
Columnist and broadcaster



It's our favorite paper. It's the first one we read. Thank you so much for your reporting of the news.

PAUL GOSAR
U.S. representative for Arizona

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THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH AND TRADITION

FOOD AS MEDICINE

More Fruits and Veggies Can Improve Sleep for Young People

NARDY BAEZA BICKEL

Eating more fruits and vegetables can help young adults, especially young women, sleep better, a new study shows.

Young adults who reported eating less than five servings of fruits and vegetables per day reported a high prevalence of chronic insomnia symptoms, with over one-third reporting difficulties in falling asleep or maintaining sleep at least three times per week for three months or longer.

Women who increased their fruit and vegetable intake by three or more servings over a three-month period were more than twice as likely to experience an improvement in insomnia symptoms, according to the study in the *Sleep Health Journal*.

"We were very excited to see that a fairly simple dietary intervention, such as encouraging an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption, could make such an impact on sleep," said lead author Erica Jansen, research assistant professor of nutritional sciences at the University of Michigan's School of Public Health.

"We know from other literature that improving sleep improves overall quality of life and many other health outcomes, so the benefits likely extend beyond the

As fruit and vegetable intake changed, insomnia-related sleep characteristics also changed.

Erica Jansen, research assistant professor of nutritional sciences, University of Michigan's School of Public Health

sleep changes."

Jansen and senior author Gwen Alexander, a researcher in the public health sciences department at Henry Ford Health System, and colleagues analyzed data of more than 1,400 participants compiled by Detroit-based Henry Ford and the more rural Geisinger Health System headquartered in Danville, Pennsylvania.

"From my health educator perspective, our study shows a link between dietary choices and improved sleep for young people who wish to improve their overall health and well-being," Alexander said.

"Our study was unique in that it investigated an understudied population of generally healthy young adults. Future research designed for this population has great potential to lead to better health habits."

Eligible young adults included those ages 21 to 30, who received any medical care at the centers and who reported eating less than five servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Researchers randomized the participants into one of three groups: one had an untailored web-based program to encourage higher fruits and vegetables consumption; the second had an age-targeted tailored web-based program; the third group also included personalized e-coaching support.

Young adults who increased their fruit and vegetable consumption by at least three servings experienced modest improvements in sleep latency (time to fall asleep) and insomnia over a three-month period, compared to participants with no change or smaller increases in fruits and vegetable intake, although there were no differences in sleep duration.

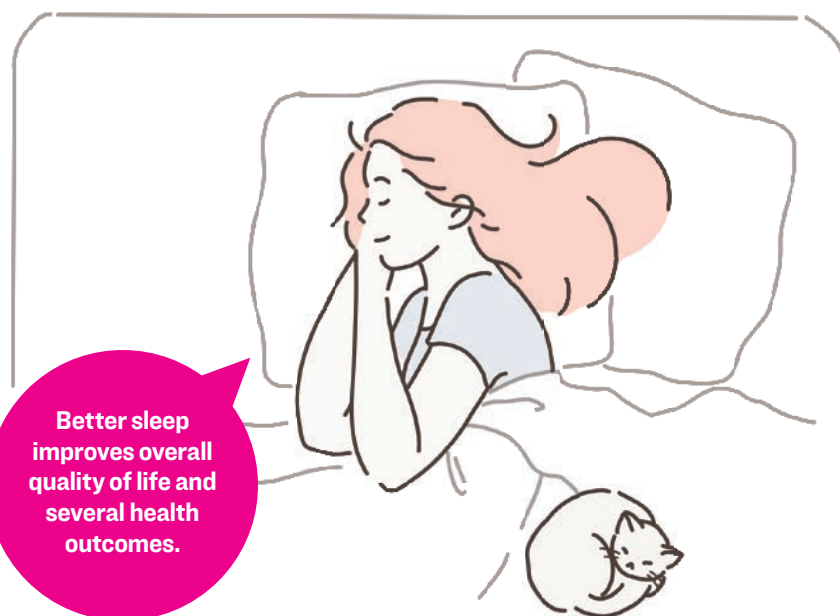
Women who increased their fruit and vegetable intake by three or more servings reported a four-minute shorter time, on average, to fall asleep at follow-up, and twofold higher odds of improvement in insomnia symptoms.

"What is unique about our study is that we were able to see that as fruit and vegetable intake changed, insomnia-related sleep characteristics also changed," Jansen said.

"We still cannot rule out that sleep characteristics changed first, which, in turn,



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Perhaps the Most Effective Weapon Against Viral Infections

Nebulized hydrogen peroxide offers an immediate and direct supplement to the body's natural immune response

Continued from Page 9

It is important to only nebulize food-grade hydrogen peroxide that is free of additives.

Early Treatment Virtually Eliminates Complications

So far, medical doctors who have treated COVID-19 patients agree that if treatment begins early enough, patients almost always fully recover and have no long-standing side effects from the infection.

The reason for this is because the virus replicates wildly during the first few days of infection, and this is when it can cause longstanding damage. So, it's important to be prepared.

Buy the required supplies before you need them, so you have everything and can treat yourself at the first signs of symptoms. Levy said same-day resolution of the infection is common, which is almost unheard of in clinical medicine.

My personal experience with friends and family also mirrors these types of dramatic results. In all my years of practicing medicine, I have never seen such an effective intervention

To benefit from the efficacy of nebulizing, it is important to have the supplies on hand.

In all my years of practicing medicine, I have never seen such an effective intervention.



ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

for the nearly immediate resolution of viral illnesses, so long as it's implemented shortly after the symptoms start.

If you miss that early window and start developing more pronounced symptoms of infection, nebulized peroxide is still an excellent adjunct to any other treatment you may be doing.

"I want to emphasize that because to the best of my knowledge, and I've done quite a bit of research on this, I see no circumstance in which hydrogen peroxide nebulization interferes with or lessens the impact of any other positive intervention," Levy said.

One such intervention is vitamin C, which Levy described as "the perfect physiological partner" with hydrogen peroxide, as they have powerful synergistic effects that facilitate rapid resolution of the infection.

Part of Your Body's Natural Defenses Hydrogen peroxide is part of your body's natural defense against pathogens and is found in virtually all cells. Your body requires it. It's a powerful signaling molecule, and there are organelles in your cells that use it to kill pathogens directly. So, when you nebulize hydrogen peroxide, you're really just augmenting your body's natural defense system.

"Up to 5 percent of the oxygen you inhale gets incorporated into producing new hydrogen peroxide inside your body."

This hydrogen peroxide also serves as an oxygen reserve for your body, Levy said. "This is what makes peroxide a perfect therapeutic agent. It not only kills pathogens extremely efficiently—virus, fungus, protozoa, bacteria, you name it—but it also leaves behind, as metabolic

byproducts, water and oxygen." Once the infection is resolved, the water and oxygen will both help heal any tissue damage caused by the pathogen. The water will also help dilute the acidity introduced by the infection. "So, it's very clear, at least to me, that the best way to refer to hydrogen peroxide is as nature's naturally designed antibiotic," Levy said.

The researchers hope the findings will be incorporated into other sleep hygiene principles, which include things like maintaining a consistent bedtime and rise time,

eliminating screens prior to going to bed, sleeping in a dark, cool environment, and not drinking caffeine or alcohol before bed.

Additional co-authors are from the University of South Carolina School of Medicine and the Henry Ford Health System.

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These may be the best available treatment for autism.

FOOD AS MEDICINE

Broccoli Compound Has Dramatic Effect on People With Autism

A double-blind, placebo-controlled study finds dramatic effect from 2 tablespoons worth of broccoli sprouts

MICHAEL GREGER

Sulforaphane, a compound found in broccoli sprouts, has been shown to benefit autism in a way no drug ever has in a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study.

In previous articles, we explored how autism may be due to synaptic dysfunction. This view suggests the condition can be treated and reversed. This possibility has enticed parents and researchers who observed how fever could decrease symptoms of autism.

Researchers have explored the potential of sulforaphane as a treatment for autism because of its effects on four other factors in autism: oxidative stress, lower antioxidant capacity, mitochondrial dysfunction, and brain inflammation. What's more, this doesn't only occur in a petri dish. Sulforaphane has been found to cross the blood-brain barrier, so when you eat broccoli, sulforaphane quickly reaches your brain and exerts its protective effects—at least it does in theory. You don't know, of course, until you put it to the test.

You can understand why such a study could attract researchers from such leading institutions as Harvard and Johns Hopkins, and get published in one of our most prestigious journals, the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. What did they find? First, what did they do? In a placebo-controlled, double-blind, randomized trial, young men (aged 13-27) with moderate to severe ASD [autism] received sulforaphane from broccoli sprouts or an indistinguishable sugar pill. They were dosed according to body weight: Those under 100 pounds got about a tablespoon of broccoli sprouts' worth of sulforaphane a day, which is about a cup's worth of broccoli, those weighing between 100 and 200 pounds got about the equivalent of two cups of broccoli or two tablespoons of fresh broccoli sprouts, and those over 200 pounds got three cups' worth a day or a little under a quarter cup of broccoli sprouts.

Why didn't the researchers use actual broccoli or actual sprouts? If they had, it wouldn't have been a blinded study. The patients, doctors, and parents would know who was and who wasn't getting the special treatment, which could introduce bias through the placebo effect. Instead, with this study set-up, no one knew until the end who got the sulforaphane and who got the placebo.

The researchers chose dietary sulforaphane because of its capacity to reverse oxidation, synaptic dysfunction, and inflammation, but when put to the test, did it actually work? The placebo didn't. Give people with autism nothing, and nothing much happens. But effectively secretly sneak them some broccoli, and substantial improvements in behavior, social interaction, and verbal communication occurred.

However, it all disappeared once the broccoli was stopped. On the Aberrant Behavior Checklist, which includes things such as repetitive behaviors, there was no big change in the placebo group, which is what you'd expect. But the abnormal behaviors associated

with autism plunged in the sulforaphane group—the group who got the sulforaphane found in only about five cents' worth of broccoli sprouts a day. The study ended in week 18, however, and a month later, things were heading back to where they started.

There were similar findings on a Social Responsiveness Scale: significant improvements were seen until the treatment was stopped, and then the participants went right back to functioning as poorly as those in the placebo group had continued to function. And these weren't just scores on a page. "The substantial improvements... were conspicuous"—the doctors, parents, and caregivers could see the improvements. No drug has ever been shown to have these kinds of effects. What's more, these were young men, starting at age 13. One could imagine it working as well or even better with younger children because their brains are still developing. And, is there a downside? Not likely. Broccoli sprouts are eaten all over the world without any reports of adverse effects. But remember, we're talking about whole foods, not sulforaphane supplements.

Indeed, broccoli sprouts work, but commercial broccoli sprout supplements hardly work at all. Broccoli has sulforaphane, with the florets more so than the stems, and broccoli sprouts have about 10 times more sulforaphane. In comparison, broccoli pills, powders, and supplements have little or none. So, broccoli and other cruciferous vegetables are for all kids, whether they have autism or not, and they may be for pregnant women as well for the potential prenatal prevention of autism in the first place.

This article covers the big finale to my initial three-part video series on autism. For the background that led researchers down this path of clues, check out "Fever Benefits for Autism in a Food" and "Fighting Autism Brain Inflammation with Food." You can also check out: "Flashback Friday: The Best Foods for Fighting Autism and Brain Inflammation" on NutritionFacts.org.

We understand there may be a variety of challenges pertaining to catering to picky palates, sensory and food texture sensitivities, or kids who are reluctant to try new foods. We hope this evidence-based article can provide some helpful health information to parents and health practitioners.

For more tips and tricks, check out "How to Get Kids to Eat Their Vegetables," on NutritionFacts.org.

Michael Greger, MD, FACLM, is a physician, *New York Times* bestselling author, and internationally recognized professional speaker on a number of important public health issues. He has lectured at the *Conference on World Affairs*, the *National Institutes of Health*, and the *International Bird Flu Summit*, testified before Congress, appeared on "The Dr. Oz Show" and "The Colbert Report," and was invited as an expert witness in defense of Oprah Winfrey at the infamous "meat defamation" trial. This article was originally published on NutritionFacts.org

Google and Its Rabbit Hole of Choice

Why you should stop asking the internet what to do with your life

NANCY COLIER

One day my afternoon meeting was canceled. I was unexpectedly presented with the gift of unscheduled time—five hours of open, unfilled space to do whatever I wanted. I immediately flipped open my laptop and started researching. I researched everything, anything; something that would interest me, something to do. Something to fill the space.

After distractedly surfing through movie schedules and museum exhibits, I bumped into a link for the “10 hardest workouts” in New York. Wouldn’t that be a great idea, I thought, and so I flitted

through a whole host of kettlebell, circuit training, and boot camp options—none of which sounded remotely like anything I would do.

But then I remembered that I needed a new pair of sneakers. And so I sped over to the Nike website and discovered that there were so many new styles, all of which were so fabulous that I couldn’t decide. At this point, I went back to movies, because I had a documentary in mind, but it turned out the film was only playing way downtown.

What then followed was a speed train through hot yoga studios, great city walks, dog parks for shy dogs, independent bookstores, places to buy cooking supplies, and kirtan performances—

Algorithms designed to hold our attention can end up devouring our time and ruining our day.



The Benefits of Minimalism

Here are 10 great reasons to clear out some clutter, in all its various forms

ALLISON FALLON

Anyone who has embraced minimalism, in any sense of the word, knows the benefits go far beyond what you could explain in a single blog post.

Of course there are the obvious upsides of having less clutter—such as fewer opportunities for your possessions to jump out of the hall closet at you next time you open the door to find your coat. But the real benefits of minimalism stretch much deeper—and wider—than that.

The Benefits of Minimalism

Here are 10 major benefits a minimalist attitude could bring to your life.

1. Clarity of mind

We don’t think of our physical possessions being linked to mental and emotional health, but the connection between the two is undeniable.

Studies show when we clear out our closets, it has a massive impact on our mental clarity and peace of mind. Think about it. It makes sense.

When was the last time you took the time to go through your storage shed or extra bedroom and sort through all of the things you forgot were hiding in there? It may have been awhile, but how did you feel when you finally did it?

My guess is it felt like a relief. Even though you probably spent very little energy on a day-to-day basis thinking about those things, something about clearing them out calmed your mind. That good feeling you get when you take a load of clothes to Goodwill or finally go through that junk drawer in your kitchen is backed by research. If you don’t need it, love it, or use it, get rid of it.

2. Better health

You might feel hesitant to consider that getting rid of a few physical possessions might change your health but consider this: What about clearing the things from your schedule that are unnecessary or

unimportant?

Too many of us are overcommitted in our lives, and if we really begin to ask ourselves why we haven’t scaled back already, we’ll find the answer is we’re afraid of disappointing someone—a terrible reason to overload our schedules. Would you be able to rest more? Take better care of yourself and your family?

Minimalism takes many forms and whether you’re clearing things from your closet, your calendar, or your commitments, your body will thank you.

3. More freedom

If you really spent some time thinking about it, I bet you would be shocked to think of how many physical possessions you own, desire to own, or work hard to own that you don’t even want—all to impress someone at your office, or even in your family.

Dave Ramsey, financial adviser and New York Times bestselling author says, “We buy things we don’t need with money we don’t have to impress people we don’t like.”

Imagine the freedom you would experience if you could let go of that pressure and just do what you want to do. You’d have more freedom to travel, to take a day off, to work for yourself, or, hey, to take a job doing work you actually like.

4. Less stress

Imagine a world where you didn’t have to come home to a cluttered house, didn’t have to wake up early on a Saturday morning for something you didn’t really want to do in the first place, and didn’t have to show up at the office every day for a job that made you feel like your soul was dying.

Ahhhh. Yes. You can feel it already. So much less stress.

5. More time

In a world where opportunities are coming at us faster than the speed of light,

it can be hard to say “no” for a couple of reasons.

One of them is the fear of missing out. We’re afraid if we say no, we’ll miss an opportunity to be part of something really great. The second is a fear of being bored. What will we do? Just sit around and watch Netflix all night?

Try this for one week: Clear your calendar at night. Work during the day but don’t make any commitments in the evenings. Then, with that extra time, prepare dinners with the people you love, go for walks, read books.

Amazing opportunities will always be there. They’ll never run out. And I promise you’ll find a way to fill your extra time.

Studies show when we clear out our closets, it has a massive impact on our mental clarity and peace of mind.

6. Self-confidence

You may think you need to have the latest and greatest style of clothes, or that brand-new boat, or this year’s model of a luxury vehicle to feel good about yourself. But imagine how freeing it would be to feel good about yourself without those things. This is an unexpected benefit of living with less. You start to feel good about yourself, not because of what you own but just because of who you are.

7. Greater purpose

When you clear out the unnecessary activities and items from your life, something unexpected happens. A clear sense of purpose returns. You feel motivated to do what you’ve set out to do because your

direction is clear and there is no confusion. When you only have a few commitments, you can take them seriously.

8. Extra money

It shouldn’t surprise anyone that buying less and doing less would mean having a little extra cash on hand. Fewer birthday parties to attend, meals out because you’re “too tired to cook,” fewer impulse purchases, etc. Then, when you find something you really do want, you have the money to buy it.

9. Better relationships

Ultimately, when you can stop competing with your friends and your family to have the nicest car or biggest house; when you can stop trying to impress people and just begin to connect with them; when you can give up your people-pleasing and just be yourself, it shouldn’t surprise you that your relationships will improve.

Great relationships are not built on guilt or competition. They’re built on shared experiences and great memories.

10. Lifetime memories

I have a friend who doesn’t do a ton of Christmas gifts for his kids but he always takes them on a fun family vacation. His kids don’t go back to school after break bragging about their Christmas spoils, but when he asks them about last Christmas’ vacation, they can always recount fun memories.

When you begin to move the focus from possessions to memories, you might not only have more space in your closet, you’ll have enough great memories to keep you smiling for a lifetime. This is the stuff a great life is made of.

Allison Fallon blogs at *Find Your Voice where she helps people use writing as a tool for their own personal growth. She is also the author of a wonderful book, “Packing Light.” This article was originally published on BecomingMinimalist.com*

which is when I woke up.

I shut my computer and took a deep breath, pulling the air down into my body. “Stop,” I said to myself. “Just stop.”

I looked at my watch: I had been down the rabbit hole for two hours. Two of my five free hours were gone. I felt agitated, anxious, paralyzed, and overwhelmed with possibilities, but unable to move on any of them. I was “twired”—tired and wired at the same time.

I put my hand on my heart and felt the simplicity of stillness. “Be here,” I said to myself. I then unhooked from all the ideas of what I should or could do with my time and just felt my own physical presence. I took a few conscious breaths and invited myself to relax and land where I was.

What I felt next was an immediate sense of relief and peace, allowed to be where I was and to not do anything at all—nothing other than pay attention to what I was actually experiencing.

I became aware of a longing to call a particular friend. I also felt the desire to take a walk, be with myself, and be outside. That’s what came to me, organically, when I dropped into my body and the moment.

The Paradox of Choice

One of the problems that technology is creating for us is a feeling that we should be constantly taking advantage of every available opportunity—and if we’re not, that we are missing out on life.

We believe that there is something, somewhere inside Google, that will make this moment complete. Someplace else that is better than where we are. Something more that we ought to be doing.

We no longer ask ourselves or let ourselves discover what we want to do. Rather, we ask Google what’s possible, or what we can do. The thing is, what we can do is often very different from what we want to do. We frequently find that what we want to do is much simpler.

When we listen in to what we actually want, from the body, the answer is clear.



I looked at my watch: I had been down the rabbit hole for hours. Two of my five free hours were gone. I felt agitated, anxious, paralyzed.

It’s without ambivalence or confusion; it has a sense of “Oh yes, that’s right.” On the other hand, the “can’s” and “should do’s” leave us feeling murky, lacking the clarity that comes with truth.

Technology has created an infinite number of choices. We can do anything at any time. And yet, while we may delight in the idea of choice, research shows that when we have too many choices to make, we actually end up unhappy, deadened, overwhelmed, and immobilized.

With unlimited options, we frequently end up making no choice at all. And if we are able to make a decision, we generally feel less satisfied with our choice and concerned that another option would have served us better.

Unlimited choice also causes us to shut down our creative thinking. When presented with too many options, we often default to the simplest one, or consider only one variable. The more technology beckons with possibilities, the more we pull the covers over our heads and find

With unlimited options, we frequently end up making no choice at all.

ourselves frozen in a perpetual state of both too much and not enough.

The issue, too, is that we are looking outside of ourselves for our own truth. When we have a free afternoon, we look to the internet, hoping to find something that will excite us. When we cook dinner, we go to Instagram to tell us what we want to eat. When something happens in our life, we post the experience online to find out from others what it should (and likely will) mean to us.

Changing Your Mind

We have forgotten that we can know things through our own experience. We have forgotten that the process of knowing can happen from the inside out, not the outside in.

The next time you find yourself with a chunk of unscheduled time, even just a little (while standing in line, or riding public transportation), try living it in a new way and creating a new habit. Instead of immediately searching outside yourself, on your phone or computer, instead drop into yourself, into now. Feel your body, the sensations arising, and how you are at that exact moment.

Pay attention inside; notice if there is a natural longing or interest already present. If nothing comes, that’s fine; just stay still and keep attending. Practice not doing, not filling the time, not habitually forcing something into every open space as soon as it appears. In so doing, you are, in fact, turning yourself into a destination, and a place to be.

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

Why ‘Zoom Fatigue’ Is Worse for Women

Making some meetings mandatory ‘no video’ can help alleviate some of the side effects of too many video conference calls

Continued from Page 9

For their follow-up study, the researchers surveyed 10,322 participants in February and March using their “Zoom Exhaustion and Fatigue Scale” to better understand the individual differences of burnout from the extended use of video conferencing technologies during the past year.

These findings add to a growing understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately affecting certain groups of people, said Jeffrey Hancock, professor of communication at Stanford University and co-author of the new paper, available online via the Social Science Research Network.

Prolonged self-focus can produce negative emotions, including ‘mirror anxiety.’

That Little Self-View Window

“We’ve all heard stories about Zoom fatigue and anecdotal evidence that women are affected more, but now we have quantitative data that Zoom fatigue is worse for women, and more importantly, we know why,” Hancock said.

The researchers found that what contributed most to the feeling of exhaustion among women was an increase in what social psychologists describe as “self-focused attention” triggered by the self-view in video conferencing.

“Self-focused attention refers to a heightened awareness of how one comes across or how one appears in a conversation,” Hancock said.

To measure this effect, the researchers asked participants questions such as: “During a video conference, how concerned do you feel about seeing yourself?” and “During a video conference, how distracting is it to see yourself?”

The researchers found that women answered these questions at higher rates than men—a finding that is consistent with existing research that shows women have a greater propensity to self-focus than men when they are in the presence of a mirror. That prolonged self-focus can produce negative emotions, or what the researchers call “mirror anxiety,” Hancock explains.

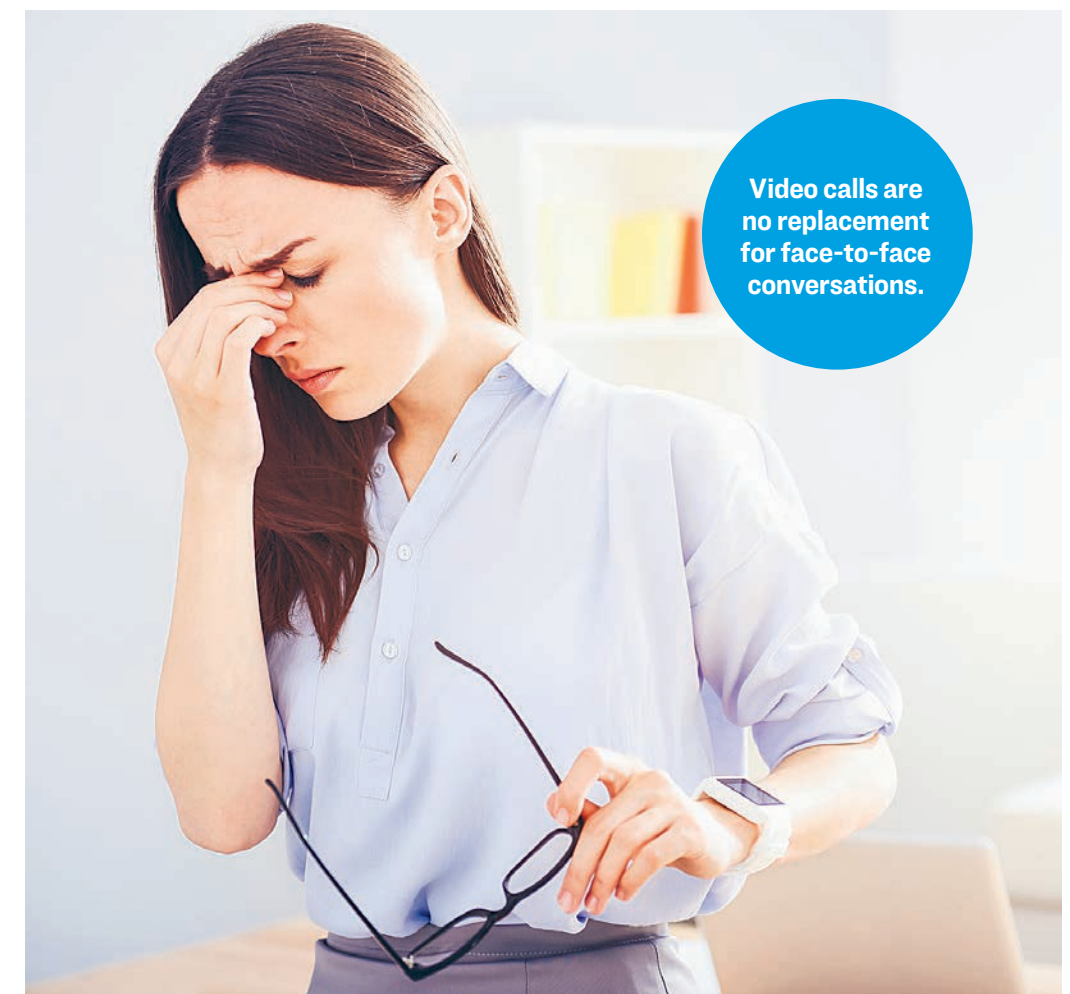
A simple solution may be to change the default display settings and turn off “self-view.”

Could This Have Been an Email?

Also contributing to an increase in Zoom fatigue among women were feelings of being physically trapped by the need to stay centered in the camera’s field of view. Unlike face-to-face meetings where people can move around, pace, or stretch, video conferencing limits movement. Another way to address this is to move farther away from the screen or to turn off one’s video during parts of calls.

The researchers found that while women have the same number of meetings per day as men, their meetings tend to run longer. Women were also less likely to take breaks between meetings—all factors that contributed to increased weariness.

The pattern of women being more burned out from videoconferencing than men appears to be robust. “We see this gender



Video calls do more than strain our eyes, they leave us feeling overly concerned about our appearance.

effect across multiple different studies, and even after taking into account other factors. It’s a really consistent finding,” Hancock said.

How to Ease Zoom Fatigue

Organizations can reduce Zoom fatigue in several ways:

- Implement no-video meeting days. Have a day each week that doesn’t require any video meetings.
- If video isn’t necessary for a meeting, make “video off” mandatory for that meeting. People should think hard about whether video is necessary for a meeting, and if it isn’t, make video-off mandatory so that no one feels the pressure to keep it on.
- Find out if your employees or colleagues are fatigued. Have your employees take the Stanford ZEF scale to measure their

fatigue and find solutions to help reduce it.

Personality types are also associated with Zoom fatigue. Extraverts reported lower levels of exhaustion following video conferencing than introverts. Calm, emotionally stable people also reported less exhaustion than more anxious individuals, who may also have been affected by the self-attention triggered by the digital mirror.

Age mattered as well: Younger individuals reported higher levels of tiredness compared with older survey participants.

While individuals can make changes to their own work habits to avoid burnout, the researchers urge organizations to rethink how they manage their remote workforce.

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WISE HABITS

The Key to Unconventional Productivity

Sometimes the most important thing to completing a task is to take a pause

LEO BABAUTA

There isn't a productivity guide in the world that will solve the problems that pretty much all of us face daily.

We all face similar obstacles getting stuff done: doing busy work instead of important work, getting distracted instead of doing difficult work, or feeling tired and not wanting to tackle hard tasks.

These are all really the same problem: When you have important but difficult tasks to do, you run to distractions or do busy work, or just goof off, because you don't have the energy.

I deal with this every day, and I don't always solve it. But what if we could dive into this problem and figure out what's going on with us? We'd be masters of the universe (or at least the universe inside of us).

Pause Training

In truth, we face this problem of running from discomfort all the time, but we normally don't notice it as it's happening. This is why meditation is such a great training ground for the mind—you sit there and have nothing to do but notice the mind running from the discomfort of the present moment. Over and over. And in time, you learn how to work with this.

So I suggest you use your important tasks as meditation training, so you'll learn to work with the discomfort that arises.

Here's how:

1. Pick one important task you really should get done today.
2. Clear space in front of you to do this task. Close the browser, or all browser tabs except the one you need to deal with this. Shut off the phone, clear everything else away, and focus your mind on this one task.
3. Sit there and do the task.
4. Watch your mind try to run.

Now we're going to do "pause training,"



It is easy to avoid difficult, important tasks by doing busy work such as checking emails or the easier items on our to-do list.

where instead of running from the discomfort, you pause. Breathe. Turn your attention to this discomfort—it might be fear, frustration, uncertainty, self-doubt, or fatigue. Drop your story about this discomfort, and just notice how it feels physically in your body. Where is this feeling of discomfort located? What quality does it have?

You'll notice that the discomfort actually doesn't feel that bad, even though you habitually want to run from it. It's just energy. It's not actually good or bad, but just energy that's in your body, one that you normally don't want to have and normally judge as "bad."

Try this pause training for yourself. It won't work to just read about it, you have to work with it. Get to know it and become intimate with it.

Unconventional Productivity

Once you've started to work with the discomfort, you'll see that it's no big deal. Nothing to worry about. It's just a feeling, just energy. You'll relax a little around it. Try to develop a friendly attitude toward it,

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instead of being harsh on yourself. Just notice, just smile, just breathe, just be gentle.

How do you turn this into productivity? Here's a system to try:

5. Set Your Three Most Important Tasks (MITs). Do this every morning, first thing when you start work. List a few other "should do's" after that, but focus on the MITs first.
6. Pick One of the MITs. Clear space to do it. Before you check your email.
7. Do Some Pause Training. Notice when you want to run from this task, and instead pause and investigate the physical feeling of discomfort with an attitude of gentleness, friendliness, and curiosity.
8. Set a Heart Intention. When you relax into the discomfort, and see it's not a big deal, set an intention around the task. Are you doing it to improve your life, or to do something good for someone else, or to help the world? Find the heart in your intention—it's ultimately coming out of love. Say to yourself, "It is my intention to do this task out of love for ___" (fill in the blank: yourself, someone else, the world, etc.).
9. Work With Love. Open your heart and do this task with the love that comes out of your intention. Notice when you're feeling discomfort and want to switch to something else. Relax and do pause training if you need to, then start again.
10. Take Breaks. Every 10 to 15 minutes, get up and walk around. Stretch. Drink water. Check in with yourself and see how you're doing. Then return to the task or pick another MIT.

You won't be perfect at this, so don't expect perfection. Just work with it, gently, and you'll get better and better with practice.

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



Try this pause training for yourself. It won't work to just read about it.

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