WEEK 20, 2021

THE EPOCH TIMES

Eating whole foods is one of the key ways to avoid today's most prolific killers. Real food is the real cure for the rise of chronic disease. **TRUE NUTRITION** THE ANSWER TO MOUNTING HEALTH CRISES Our toxic diet is feeding diseases that can't be cured with drugs that never resolve the underlying problem **JOSEPH MERCOLA** r. Robert Lustig, a pediatric endo-Health insurance

r. Robert Lustig, a pediatric endocrinologist and professor emeritus at the University of California–San Francisco, has written a number of excellent books about health. His latest, "Metabolical: The Lure and the Lies of Processed Food, Nutrition, and Modern Medicine," goes deep into the details of how changes in our food supply have damaged our metabolic health.

The title of his book, "Metabolical," is actually a portmanteau of the words "metabolic" and "diabolical," which captures nicely the essence of his message.

"I wrote it because nothing else has worked," Lustig said. "Part of the problem is, this is such a complicated issue."

Lustig says with so many stakeholders, it is critical they all have the same set of facts so they can start working together to solve the problem. Those stakeholders include patients, doctors, food companies, the insurance industry, Wall Street, and Congress.

"My job was to put all of this in one volume so that everyone had access to the same information, and then we can go from there," he said. "I lay out in the book



Subsidies for corn and sugar provide a perverse incentive to make toxic products. what the argument for fixing the entire food system is, and how everyone can benefit from it, even the food industry."

The 2 Primary Keys

In summary, it boils down to two primary issues or key problems. The first is that the medical establishment doesn't want you to know that drugs were never intended or designed to treat the foundational cause of chronic disease.

"Modern medicine has two factions, two paradigms," Lustig said. "One is treatment of acute disease, and for the most part, they've gotten it reasonably right.

Continued on Page 4



Regular conflict can often be healthy, but not when it becomes "high conflict."

How to Turn a Toxic Conflict Into a Good One

A new book explains why we get stuck in intractable conflicts and how to get out of them

JASON MARSH

We've all been there: Locked in a heated argument, blood pressure rising, fixated on our next point rather than actually listening to what the other person has to say. Even after it ends, it doesn't really end—we keep ruminating on it for hours, days, weeks.

This is what journalist Amanda Ripley refers to as "high conflict"—and these days, we can slip into it when we're simply scanning our social media feed or glancing at the news. It often feels like our entire country is stuck there.

That's why Ripley wrote her new book, "High Conflict: Why We Get Trapped and How We Get Out."

"High Conflict" speaks to the intense social and political polarization that is gripping our nation, yet it also offers timeless lessons for navigating conflict, whether it's interpersonal, professional, or political.

I spoke with Ripley at an event last week that the Greater Good Science Center co-hosted with Berkeley Arts & Letters. Here is an edited version of our conversation.

Jason Marsh: What led you to write a book that's a warning about certain kinds of conflict?

Amanda Ripley: I started out on this quest to find examples of people who had been stuck in really ugly conflict and gotten out, just to find some hope. What were the patterns? I realized pretty quickly that I was asking the wrong question, because it's not about getting out of conflict, because conflict can be good and healthy. It's getting out of high conflict.

High conflict can start small, but it becomes an us-versus-them kind of feud. It becomes all-consuming and takes on a life of its own. Everything you do to get out of high conflict often makes it worse. A sure sign of high conflict is that it doesn't operate according to the normal rules of engagement, and it doesn't go anywhere. There is a feeling of being stuck in high conflict, being frozen, and you just have the same fights over and over.

Continued on Page 7

TRUTH and TRADITION

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FOOD AS MEDICINE

How Garlic Can Help Clogged Arteries

This powerful food does so much more than add flavor to your meal

Garlic is one of the most powerful foods around, and for good reason. Apart from its known antibacterial, antifungal, and antimicrobial properties, garlic has been documented in studies to prevent and treat cardiovascular diseases, high blood pressure, and diabetes, to name a few. It's also famed for helping to unclog arteries.

Atherosclerosis is a complex disease in which plaque, which is made up of fat, cholesterol, calcium, and other substances, builds up inside the arteries. In the long run, plaque hardens and narrows the arteries, limiting the flow of oxygen-rich blood to the organs and the rest of the body.

The condition can lead to serious conditions such as heart attack and stroke. Here are five ways that garlic assists in treating or preventing clogged arteries.

In a 2004 study, garlic successfully inhibited lipoprotein associated arteriosclerotic nanoplaque formation.

1. Inhibits Vascular Calcification Aged garlic extract has been shown to reduce multiple cardiovascular risk factors such as high blood pressure. A 2004 study published in Preventive Medicine evaluated its ability to inhibit vascular calcification, which serves as a marker

of plaque formation in coronary arteries. In the double-blind, small pilot study conducted for a year, aged garlic extract demonstrated the ability to inhibit the rate of coronary calcification in patients on statin therapy compared to placebo.

Finding a three-fold reduced progression in coronary calcification in those taking an aged garlic supplement versus a placebo, researchers wrote that should their findings be confirmed in larger studies, garlic may prove beneficial for patients who are high-risk for future cardiovascu-

lar events.

2. Increases Vascular **Elasticity and Endothelial Function**

A stressful lifestyle is a known risk factor for the presence and worsening of atherosclerosis. A study published in Nutrition (Burbank, Los

Angeles County, California) probed the effect of aged garlic extract in tandem with coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10) on vascular elasticity (how much our blood vessels can expand and contract) in a group of firefighters.

The combination was linked to significant benefits to vascular elasticity as well as endothelial function among the firefighters, who experience high stress at work. The combination emerged as a potential way to prevent atherosclerosis in such individuals.

Separate research published in Journal of Cardiovascular Disease Research evaluated the effects of garlic and CoQ10 on coronary atherosclerosis and inflammatory biomarkers, concluding that

participants taking the combination had significant improvements in their coronary artery calcium as well as Creactive protein levels. The results suggested improved heart health.

3. Inhibits Nanoplaque Formation

In a 2004 study published in Wiener Medizinische Wochenschrift (1946), garlic successfully inhibited lipoprotein associated arteriosclerotic nanoplaque formation. The experiments showed that garlic extract strongly inhibited calcium ions binding to proteoheparan sulfate, resulting in the blunting of the formation of what is responsible for "nanoplaque" composition and ultimately for the arteriosclerotic plaque generation.

4. Protects Against Aortic Stiffness A cross-sectional observational study

published in Circulation evaluated healthy adults taking standardized garlic powder for at least two years and a control group, then measured the elastic properties of their aorta.

Blood pressure levels, heart rate, and plasma lipid levels were similar in the groups. However, chronic garlic powder consumption slowed age-related increases in aortic stiffness, supporting the protective effects of garlic intake.

5. Reduces Atherosclerotic Progression

Aged garlic extract was combined with supplements to check the effects on inflammatory and oxidation biomarkers, vascular function, and the progression of atherosclerosis in a study published in Preventive Medicine.

In the trial, 65 subjects with intermediate risk for the disease were treated with either a placebo or a capsule containing aged garlic extract plus vitamin B12, folic acid, vitamin B6, and l-arginine, given daily for a year. The garlic and supplement mix were associated with improved oxidative biomarkers and vascular health, and a reduced pro-

> gression of atherosclerosis. A related study published in International Journal of Cardiology found aged garlic extract therapy plus supplementation with vitamin B12, folic acid, vitamin B6, and Larginine were associated with a lack of progression in coronary artery calcium, along with increased ratio of brown adipose to white adipose tissue.

These are only some ways to reduce vascular that garlic displays therapeutic properties against calcification problems of the cardiovascular system. Find nearly 800 abstracts with clogged arteries research on the Green-MedInfo.com database.

Aged garlic extract

has been shown

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Can Cell Phone Radiation Damage Your DNA?

When it comes to the effects of low-intensity radiofrequency radiation, the answer may depend on the research funder

MICHAEL GREGER

o mobile phones cause brain tumors? Whenever a trilliondollar industry is involved whether it's Big Food, Big Tobacco, Big Pharma, or Big Telecom—there's so much money that sometimes the science can get manipu-

When it comes to the potential human health effects of cell phone use, certainly, you might end up with a crick in your neck if you text excessively, or even break your neck or the neck of someone you may hit if you text while driving. On the other hand, think of the countless lives that have been saved on the road, because people are now able to so quickly phone in emergencies.

But what about cancer? Since the turn of the century, there have been studies suggesting there is up to double the risk of brain tumors with long-term cell phone use on the side of your head you use to talk. That's important, because the radiation only really penetrates up to a couple of inches into your brain. Views from the back of the head and the top of the head show why you might develop cancer on one side of the head over the other.

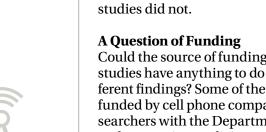
Since it's such a local effect, you can see why there are recommendations for using the speakerphone function or a hands-free headset, which can reduce brain exposure by a factor of 100 or more—and this includes the option of using Bluetooth headsets. This may be particularly important in children, who have thinner skulls. Cell phone radiation isn't like nuclear radiation, though. It doesn't damage

DNA directly, like gamma rays from an atomic bomb. However, it does appear to be able to damage DNA indirectly by generating free radicals. In a review study published in 2015 in Electromagnetic Biology and Medicine, out of 100 studies that looked at this, 93 confirmed there were oxidative effects from the kind of low-intensity radiofrequency radiation that comes out of cell phones. Another review published in Patho physiology in

2009 looked at 101 studies, of which 49 found that this oxidative stress translated into DNA damage, detecting signs of genotoxicity, which is damage to our genes, DNA, or chromosomes. A smaller number of studies, 42, did

But a lot of those studies were done in petri dishes or in lab animals. I'm less interested in whether Mickey or Minnie

not find a genotoxic effect.



Most of the independently funded studies showed an effect while most of the industry-funded

studies did not.

is at risk than I am concerned about brain tumors in people. When it comes to people, some population studies found increased cancer risk, but other

Could the source of funding for those studies have anything to do with the different findings? Some of the studies were funded by cell phone companies. Researchers with the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, at the University of Bern in Switzerland "hypothesized that studies would be less likely to show an effect of the exposure if funded by the telecommunications industry, which has a vested interest in portraying the use of mobile phones as safe." So, they ran the numbers and—surprise, surprise—"found that the studies funded exclusively by industry were indeed substantially less likely to report statistically significant effects..." published in Environmental Health Perspectives in 2009.

Indeed, most of the independently funded studies showed an effect while most of the industry-funded studies did not. In fact, industry-funded studies had about 10 times fewer odds of finding an adverse effect from cell phone use. That's even worse than a similar phenomena observed in the drug industry. Studies sponsored by Big Pharma about their own products only had about four times the odds of favoring the drug compared to independent researchers according to a review published in the British Medical Journal in 2003. Big Tobacco still reigns supreme when it comes to Big Bias,

Why do research articles on the health effects of second-hand smoke reach different conclusions? Well, it turns out that studies funded by the tobacco industry itself had

a whopping 88 times the odds of concluding it was cording to a metaanalysis published in JAMA (Journal of the American Medical Association). So at about 10 times more for telecom puts it more towards the drug industry end of the bias spectrum. There are conflicts of interest on both sides of the debate, though. If it's

not financial conflict, then it may be intellectual, as it can be human nature to show bias towards evidence that supports your personal position. As such, you'll see flimsy science published, like a study published in the Journal of Neuro-Oncol-

ogy in 2011 that appears to find a "disturbing" and "very linear relationship" between the states with the most brain tumors and the states with the most cell phone subscriptions. Okay, but one could think of lots of reasons why states like New York and Texas might have more brain tumors and more cell phones than the Dakotas, and those reasons have

nothing to do with cell phone radiation. Sometimes, you might even see outright fraud with allegations that the academic researchers who authored two of those genotoxicity papers and the very review I mentioned earlier were involved in scientific misconduct—allegations they deny, pointing out that their lead accuser turned out to be a lawyer working for the telecom industry.

Since it's such a local effect, you can see why there are recommendations for using the speakerphone function or a hands free headset, which can reduce brain exposure by a factor of 100 or more.

Whenever there's a trillion-dollar industry involved, whether it's the food industry, tobacco industry, drug industry, or telecom industry, there's so much money involved that the science can get manipulated. Take the nuclear energy industry for example. An article in the International Journal of Health Services notes there was for decades "a highlevel, institutional ... coverup" about the health consequences of Chernobyl. The official estimates of resulting healt problems were 100 or even 1,000 times lower than estimates from independent researchers.

Did only 4,000 people eventually die from it or nearly a million? It depends on who you ask and who happens to be funding whomever you're asking.

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

Lifestyle Tips to Help Boost Testosterone at Any Age

MAT LECOMPTE

You may not have thought much about testosterone in your younger years, particularly if you're a woman. But as age advances, it can move closer to the top of your mind, particularly if you're a man.

Often regarded as the male sex hormone, testosterone is also essential to female health. Women have a lot less testosterone than men, but it helps all genders with disease risk, body composition, sexual function, and more.

Testosterone is vital for aging and elderly individuals, mainly because it naturally decreases. Here are some lifestyle techniques to help optimize testosterone.

Get Exercise Exercise is one of the best ways to reduce the chances of disease and potentially boost testosterone. Studies have shown that people who exercise regularly, at any age, have higher testosterone. A mix of resistance

training and aerobic exercise is best.

Eat a Balanced Diet

Getting adequate levels of macronutrient like protein, carbohydrates, and fat can significantly impact hormone levels. Both food choices and total calories can influence testosterone.

Regularly dieting or overeating can disrupt testosterone levels, so a consistent, long-term approach to eating is the best way to optimize levels.

Eating a diverse array of lean proteins, healthy carbohydrates like fruits and whole grains, and healthy fats can help optimize testosterone levels.

Limit Stress

Finding ways to cut down on stress and get better sleep can also help with testosterone. Long-term stress that elevates cortisol levels can reduce testosterone and lead to behavior like overeating, weight gain, and fat storage.

Get Enough Vitamin D



Mat Lecompte is a health and wellness

TRUE NUTRITION

Food as Medicine: The Answer to Mounting Health Crises

Our toxic diet is feeding diseases that can't be cured with drugs that never resolve the underlying problem

Continued from Page 1

I was part of that system for 40 years and was comfortable within it.

"But for chronic disease, Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, lipid problems, cardiovascular disease, cancer, dementia, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, polycystic ovarian disease—all of which are chronic metabolic diseases, all of which are mitochondrial diseases—we don't have anything. We have symptomatic relief only."

He gives LDL lowering agents as an example. LDL (low-density lipoproteins) is sometimes referred to as the "bad cholesterol." But drugs that help lower LDL levels don't treat the metabolic dysfunction that caused them to rise in the first place. He says the same is true with hyperglycemia, hypertension, osteoporosis, and autoimmune disease.

"All of these, we have symptomatic treatments. We don't cure or reverse the disease; we just treat the symptoms. And so the disease gets worse," he said.

"It's like giving an aspirin to a patient with a brain tumor because they have a headache." The result is treatments that

> never cure the illness but do cost the patient a lot

> > The other problem is that the food industry doesn't Real ingrewant you to know that virtually all foods are intrinsically good for you until they're processed—and processed foods make up a majority of the foods people eat.

"Just because they call it processed food, doesn't make it food," Lustig said.

"Calling it a processed food suggests that it is a subset of food. Michael Pollan [calls it] palatable food-like substances. The fact of the matter is, processed food is poison. Food is medicine, but processed food is poison, and there's no medicine that can undo the damage of processed food."

It is a fairly straightforward problem once you understand that the human body is a biochemical entity that relies on an amazing variety of chain reactions to turn the food we eat, the air we breath, and the sunshine that lands on our skin into different molecules, enzymes, proteins and so on. And that's why people don't get well without feeding their biochemistry.

The History of Medicine

Many med-

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In his book, Lustig does an excellent job of presenting the history of our food and that led us down the path to where we are today. For example, a significant part of why medical doctors are so clueless about health today is because Big Pharma was placed in charge of their education. The drug industry, in turn, was a distinct profit-making scheme from its inception.

In 1910, Abraham Flexner, an educator, wrote the Flexner Report, which turned out to be a turning point in terms of creating evidence-based modern medicine, while simultaneously ignoring and eliminating many health-related factors, including nutrition and preventive medicine. His brother, Simon Flexner, a pathologist and pharmacist, was the first president of Rockefeller University.

One of the reasons the Flexner Report eliminated certain aspects of medicine was because John D. Rockefeller, president of Standard Oil, was also in the

pharmaceutical business. He was trying to sell coal tar, a byproduct of oil refining, as a treatment for a range of ailments.

So, Rockefeller was seeking

new profit avenues. "He basically said we have to get drugs and especially coal tar into the hands of physicians who can prescribe it," Lustig said. The only way to do that was by overhauling

the medical system and shifting the focus to pharmaceuticals.

"So that was the start of Big Pharma. That's not the story they want to tell, but that is in tact the case.

"Same thing with dentistry. Weston Price, perhaps the most famous of all dentists, knew this back in the 1920s and '30s and actually said that sugar was the primary driver of chronic oral disease, whether it be periodontitis or dental caries.

"Everything was going in that direction until 1945 with the advent of fluoride, and then promptly everything Weston Price had developed up to that point got deep-sixed. In fact, the dentists even said that if we got rid of dental caries, how are we going to make money? So his work was basically forgotten."

Why You Shouldn't Focus on Food Labels

By now, you've probably trained yourself

medical systems, and the various pressures liver; and (2) it feeds your gut. A food that

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does neither is poison, and any food that does only one or the other, but not both, is somewhere in the middle. Real food, because it has fiber, protects your liver and nourishes your gut. Processed food is often fiberless because fiber decreases shelf life. By removing the fiber from the food, it prevents it from going rancid, but it also makes it inherently unhealthy.

"In an attempt to try to increase availability, decrease wastage, we turned our entire food supply on its head in order to create commodities rather than make food available," Lustig said.

Then, in the 1970s, Richard Nixon told the U.S. agriculture secretary, Earl Butts, to come up with a plan to decrease food prices, as fluctuating food prices were causing olitical unrest. The result was the start of monoculture and chemical-driven farming.

"Now, we have nitrogen runoff destroying our environment and antibiotics in the feed in order to keep the animals alive, but basically killing off their own bacteria and ours, and also creating chronic disease and destroying the environment as well," Lustig

"It's basically built into our Western food system. And we're not going to solve health care, we're not going to solve chronic disease, we're not going to solve the economics [or] the environmental problems until we recognize what the problem is."

Refinement Ruins Food

to cause DNA damage. Studies have shown there's a definite correlation between elevated levels of 4HNE and heart failure. LA breaks down into 4HNE even faster when the oil is heated, which is why cardiologists recommend avoiding fried foods. LA intake and the subsequent ALEs and OXLAMs produced also play a significant role in cancer.

HNE and other ALEs are extraordinarily harmful even in exceedingly small quantities. While excess sugar is certainly bad for your health and should typically be limited to 25 grams per day or less, I believe LA is far more damaging overall.

These substances increase oxidative stress and our levels of reactive oxygen species. Lustig explained the risk.

"We have a metabolic burden of reactive oxygen species (ROS) that are doing damage if you can't quench them. That's why we have antioxidants in our body—glutathione, vitamin E—[they're] basically the sink for those reactive oxygen species," he said.

You can almost think of ROS as fire that your body can use for various important functions, including immune response. But that fire poses a problem when you can't put it out.

"[ROS] is a normal byproduct of metabolism. The point is we're supposed to be able to quench them. You can only quench them The best way to ensure you are getting proper nutrition is to cook at home using unprocessed ingredients.

Corn and sugar

ingredients.

are at the top of a

deadly food pyramid

of disease-causing

from multiple sources including our own mitochondria."

The best way is to get your antioxidants from your food, and real food not only provides antioxidants, but also doesn't create excessive ROS, so you get help from both ends. As for the type of diet you choose, any diet can work, provided it's right for your metabolism. The only diet that does not work for anyone is a processed food diet.

Now that you know the root problems, what solutions does Lustig suggest? For starters, education alone is not enough, he says. We need education plus implementation. And that requires a different societal response.

"The way I describe it is that there's personal intervention, which for the lack of a better word we can call rehab, and societal intervention, which for lack of a better word we can call laws. Rehab and laws for everything that is a hedonic substance—you need both," he said.

The first step of personal intervention is figuring out if you're sick. "And don't ask your doctor because they don't know how to figure it out," Lustig said. In Chapter 9 of his book, he lists clues that can help you

"The subsidies are the single biggest blockade," Lustig said. "They're the single biggest obstacle to being able to fix the food supply because that's what's making processed food cheap. The Giannini Foundation at UC Berkeley did a back of envelope calculation

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

self-diagnose.

not have an option.

and pharma.

stakeholders benefit.

food industry.

they can benefit," Lustig said.

do you do this?" he said.

In terms of addressing your health problems, your primary "treatment" will be

to make possibly significant changes to how you shop and eat. As a general, easyto-follow rule, if it has a label, don't buy it. Real food does not have ingredient labels.

Lustig's book also includes guidance on how to read food labels in cases where you might

"We also need societal intervention. The problem is the food industry doesn't want

any societal intervention because this is their gravy train. So, the question is, how

Normally we would do it through legisla-

tion, but the food industry has completely co-opted the entire legislative branch; 338 out of 535 congressmen take money from the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), and agriculture is their fourth [largest] contributor after petroleum, tobacco,

Barring legislative success, we're left with litigation. Already, there are a number of

lawsuits in the works, several of which Lustig is a part of. Ultimately, we must re-

structure the entire food system so that all

"And we have to demonstrate to them how

Subsidies Are the Biggest Hindrance to

Can the food industry make money selling

real food? Lustig believes the answer is yes, and in his book, he details how real food

makes both financial and ecological sense.

The key is to remove subsidies, which cur-

rently grease the wheels of the processed

if you get the antioxidants into you," he said. "The problem is as soon as you've taken the germ out of the grain kernel, you've basically reduced your antioxidant consumption by tenfold. So, we are antioxidant deficient because of food processing, which then leaves us vulnerable to the ravages of ROS that would reduce consumption of the pri-

Real Food Is the Answer

The key, then, is to eat whole food, which is naturally rich in fiber and low in sugar. On a side note, free radicals are not all bad. They're also biological signaling molecules, and if you indiscriminately suppress them, which is the danger you run into when using very high amounts of antioxidant supplements, it can backfire.

Solutions, Solutions

several years ago. "What would the price of food look like if we got rid of all food subsidies? It turns out that the price of food would not change. People say it would go up. No, it wouldn't. It would not change except for two items. Two items would go up: Sugar and corn [used for high-fructose corn syrup]. So, basically,

> mary toxin in our diet that's causing the most trouble.

> "The food industry ... can make more money doing the right thing provided we get rid of the subsidies or make the subsidies for real food so that they can make money selling the right thing. This requires the government. There's no way around it. That's why this book is complete. It's laid out for all the stakeholders, including government, as to what has to happen and why.

> "I wrote this book for everyone to under stand the same principles all at once, so that we can actually have an argument and a debate and hopefully come to the table about the facts, because until we do that, there will be no solving this problem. If everyone comes to the table, honestly, and admits to what the issue is, what the problem is, we can, in fact, solve it."

> To learn more, be sure to pick up a copy of Lustig's book, "Metabolical: The Lure and the Lies of Processed Food, Nutrition, and Modern Medicine." You can also find a wealth of information on his website, RobertLustig.com, including media appearances, audio recordings, video lectures, books, articles, and upcoming events where you can hear him speak.

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

Subsidized corn and essential to the profitability of the processed food industry.





Around 23 percent of male teens have tried—and failed—to break a pornography habit.

Innocence Lost: Our Children and Pornography

We must protect our children from pornographers and safeguard romance and respect

JEFF MINICK

hough I've practiced several vices in my time, pornography was not one of them. I grew up in a town and a time when I didn't even know the meaning of that word. At the private school I attended in seventh and eighth grade, 200 miles from home, one kid used to smuggle Playboy magazines into the dormitory, and boys would look with giddy wonderment at the women in those pages.

Maybe I never developed this desire or addiction because of the innocence of my childhood.

Unless we take some sort of action, we will be paying for this grim circumstance for decades, if not generations.

Things are different now.

Deacon Robert Silva writes about teens and even younger boys and girls and their predilection for pornography in "Pandemic feeds an epidemic" which appeared in the Arlington Catholic Herald. As he points out, many of the parents he meets when he speaks on this topic deny their children watch online pornography. But Silva then offers statistics such as

- 93 percent of young men under the age of 18 have seen porn, along with 62 percent of young women of the same age.
- 89 percent of youth admit to receiving sexual solicitation in chat rooms. • 20 percent of teens have sent or posted
- nude or seminude photographs or videos of themselves.
- The prime consumers of pornography in the United States are those aged 12

Although I find that last figure difficult to believe, an organization aimed to make the internet safer for children and families, "Enough Is Enough," backs up Silva's other data. In "Statistics: Youth & Porn," we learn that 51 percent of 11- to 13-yearolds have at some point seen porn, that only 12 percent of parents of teens know their children are watching pornography, and that 23 percent of male teens have tried to break this habit but find themselves unable to stop.

A large majority of 18-year-olds believe porn is too readily available and easy to

Not surprisingly, as Silva notes, the pandemic has brought a sharp increase in the consumption of online pornography, which already accounts for 35 percent of internet downloads.

I already knew that pornography costs business billions of dollars annually beby watching it, but reading through these pornography.

of young men

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of 11- to 13-

year-olds have at some point seen porn but only

of parents of

teens know their children are watching pornography. statistics about our young people was a sad awakening. How, I wondered, will this exposure to pornography affect the future of marriage, relationships, and dating?

Will those most severely affected by pornography, those who are addicted to taking their own pleasures from a screen and watching others having sex, be able to participate in a stable marriage? It's quite possible they won't, especially as the 17-year-old kid watching that screen may come to think of sex as some sort of mechanical act, without the presence of love or romance.

In fact, romance itself may simply fade away, as may the excitement of meeting someone who knocks you off your feet. Furthermore, will the idea of wooing and courting a woman, or being courted by a man, die in a miasmatic swamp of unreal sexuality? Will we cease to look at others as fully human and instead view them as machines to be used?

As I looked at some of the sites noted above, I found that, to paraphrase Silva, kids don't find porn as often as the porn finds them. In some way, then, pornographers seek out—through advertisements or by some other means—an audience of children.

I'm too technologically ignorant and inept to make recommendations regarding control of the pornography industry, but it doesn't take a genius to see the disasters coming down the pike. Unless we take some sort of action, we will be paying for this grim circumstance for decades, if not generations.

As parents and guardians of the young, however, we can all take action right now. We can add programs and limitations to our children's phones and laptops to prevent them from seeing this smut. Even more importantly, we can sit them down and explain the personal costs of pornography in terms of self-respect and degradation. We can tell them how this "industry" makes billions of dollars a year, how it demeans both women and men, and how it has the power to destroy love. And while we're at it, we can remind ourselves of the same things.

This article was originally published on Intellectual Takeout.



cause of employees who waste work time Parents can add restrictions to their children's computers to protect them from



Week 20, 2021. THE EPOCH TIMES

Choosing a new path can be painful, but it's

Escaping the Insufferable Status Quo

We are far more likely to regret the things we didn't do than the things we did

JAY HARRINGTON

In the past decade, my wife, Heather, and I have made some significant changes in

Nine years ago, I stopped practicing law. Eight years ago, we ditched our bricksand-mortar office and shifted to a virtual business model.

Six years ago, we moved our family from a suburb of a large city to a small town in northern Michigan.

Each decision was excruciatingly hard to make. I conjured up all types of reasons not to make them. Fear is a powerful form of resistance.

What if I can't support my family? What if we don't make any friends? What if we come to regret our decision. What if?

But looking back, I can see that those fears were totally unfounded and each change we made was almost universally positive. The events of the past 12 months have served as a reinforcing exclamation point. When COVID-19 hit, we were already set up to work remotely from a location, Traverse City, Michigan, that has been a hot spot for pandemic relocation because of its low density and beautiful natural surroundings.

There's no way we could have known how things would play out when we made our decisions. But we now know with certainty that our worst fears didn't materialize. Just the opposite, in fact.

With the benefit of hindsight, it's also clear what caused me such trepidation in my decision-making. I was influenced by the tendency, shared by most of us, to prefer that things stay the way they are despite the possibility of a brighter future.

This is known as "status quo bias," and it's a big impediment to positive change. It's tempting to avoid the discomfort of change even if we're not satisfied with the status quo.

Status quo bias is pervasive. It's what stops us from pursuing new job opportunities and keeps us in unfulfilling relationships, among other things. We perceive the fear of the unknown, no matter how unlikely the worst-case scenario might be, as less tolerable than the insufferable status quo. According to Seneca the Younger, "We suffer more often in imagination than in reality."

Fear causes discomfort, so we avoid it. And our brains, which seek to protect us from fear, amplify the potential negative ramifications of taking action and minimize its benefits.

To overcome the fear and start taking action, grab a pen and a pad and write

- 1. What you're worried about
- 2. The potential benefits of taking action 3. The consequences of inaction

It's only by getting what we fear out of our heads and down on paper, and analyzing them rationally, that we can do a proper cost-benefit analysis of the actions we intend and the changes we seek.

The alternative is to look back with regret. After all, it's well documented that, at the end of their lives, few people feel remorseful about the actions they took, even if they didn't turn out as intended. In most cases, they rue having never taken action in the first place.

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



How to Turn a Toxic Conflict Into a Good One

A new book explains why we get stuck in intractable conflicts and how to get out of them

Continued from Page 1

Any time you divide humans into two oppositional camps, it really brings out our worst conflict instincts. But maybe the most chilling pattern I've seen in every high conflict is eventually everybody involved starts to mimic the behavior of their enemies. They start doing the thing they got into the fight to stop, almost always without realizing at first. There's something really diabolical about that paradox.

There are a few conditions that seem to reliably create high conflict. One of them is the presence of what I call "conflict entrepreneurs." That's basically a person or a company that exploits conflict for their own ends. It's someone who just delights

in every twist and turn, who finds meaning and camaraderie and connection in the conflict.

With good conflict, you can still get really angry and frustrated it can be intense and heated—but there's a feeling that it's going somewhere. I know this sounds

Any time you divide humans into two oppositional camps, it really brings out our worst conflict instincts.

Amanda Ripley, author, journalist

a little squishy, but I have no trouble telling the difference now. In good conflict, there are flashes of curiosity, more questions get asked, and people tend to leave the conflict more satisfied, even if they don't agree (that's not actually the only goal of conflict). I think we need much more good conflict in the United States and around the world, and much less high conflict.

Mr. Marsh: What questions can we ask ourselves to understand whether we are trapped in high conflict or good conflict? **Ms. Ripley:** Some of the questions to ask yourself are: Am I losing sleep over this conflict? Do I feel happy when the other person or the other side suffers in some way, even if it doesn't benefit me? Do I find that when I discuss this conflict [even] with people who agree with me, I leave that conversation more frustrated, like nobody's illuminating or enlightening each other at this point?

Mr. Marsh: In a book about conflict, I never thought I'd read so much about crockpots. Tell me about the crockpot metaphor in **Ms. Ripley:** As a storyteller, for me, one of the most fascinating things to realize is that most conflicts aren't about what they seem to be about. They're about that, but they're also about something else, which I call the "understory": the thing underneath the conflict that nobody's talking about.

For example, I talk about a couple who was going to war about who was going to get the crockpot as they divvied up their possessions in their divorce. Eventually, if you ask the right questions, you find out that when the wife was a kid, her parents would have a pot roast going every Sunday in the crockpot. To her, that felt like a good home, and the couple had gotten it off their wedding registry, and they'd never used it. For her, it meant something she hadn't yet achieved but wanted to. The husband, meanwhile, wanted it because she wanted it so badly. He didn't even want the divorce, but she did, so this was one thing he could go to the mat on.

A lot of this isn't even conscious, it's important to note. Sometimes you get so wrapped up trying to win the fight that you don't ask yourself—and no one asks you these questions.

Now, if I'm in an argument with my husband, we literally talk about the crockpot we can skip some steps and be like, what are we actually arguing about? That's helpful because you don't spend all this time going back and forth about the crockpot and you can hopefully get to [the real issue] faster.

Mr. Marsh: What has been the biggest takeaway from your reporting that you've And it just acknowledged the truth, which applied to your personal life?

Ms. Ripley: The thing that has changed what I do every single day is a technique called "looping for understanding," which is a form of active listening that [mediator Gary Friedman taught me through an organization he cofounded in the San Francisco Bay Area called The Center for Understanding in Conflict. I went into this training thinking I know how to listen— I've professionally interviewed people for many years. But it turned out acting like you're listening and nodding and smiling and going, "Mmm, I hear you," is not listening, and people can tell the difference.

Looping means to really listen to the person, and you try to distill what they're saying into the most elegant language you can muster. You don't literally need to repeat it verbatim, but you're trying to get the crux of what's important to them, not to you. And then—this is important, I used to forget this in the beginning—you have to check if you got it right. You have to say, "So it sounds like you feel like this crockpot is really important to your idea of what a happy home looks like, is that right?" Ask with curiosity.

Curiosity is the key to the kingdom, but it has to be genuine. As soon as you do this, even if you get it wrong, people will correct you and you keep getting deeper and deeper. Their whole expression and posture change, even if it's not that emotional of an interview. They're just so grateful to feel like you're trying to get them, and it's poignant because it reveals how rarely it actually happens.

There's a ton of cool research on this: As soon as people feel heard, they open up, they say more nuanced, complicated things, less exaggerated and extreme things, and they're more likely to take in information they don't want to hear.

I do it with my kid all the time. It's great for parenting because it gets you out of that trap of thinking you have to fix everything or win the argument. Mostly what people want is to be heard, so you can give them that and move on.

Mr. Marsh: You write about how acknowledging the complexity of issues can help mitigate conflict, too. Could you share some of those findings?

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high conflict

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only-anger

Ms. Ripley: Peter Coleman and his colleagues run something called the Difficult Conversations Lab at Columbia where they pair up people who disagree strongly on really controversial subjects, whether it's abortion or gun control. They have a 20-minute recorded conversation in which they try to come up with a statement they could both publicly put their

Sometimes this goes badly, and they have to end the conversation before the 20 minutes are up, but other times it goes well. People do experience anger and frustration, but they also experience flashes of curiosity, of humor, of understanding; they ask more questions. In the data analysis of these recordings, you can literally see good conflict and high conflict. In high conflict, it's the same two emotions over and over and over: anger, frustration, anger, frustration. In good conflict, it's like a galaxy of emotions.

What they found is they could actually induce good-conflict conversations by having people (before they went in) read a short news story that was about some other big controversy but acknowledged complexity explicitly. It said there are more than two sides to this debate; if you ask the polling questions a different way, you get a different answer, sometimes people have internal ambivalence about this subject is you can't divide millions of people into two buckets; humans don't work that way. Acknowledging that seemed to be contagious, and then that complexity was carried into the conversation.

Mr. Marsh: How can we have good conflict with someone who has more authority and power than we do, who isn't responding to looping or promoting productive dis-

Ms. Ripley: There are people who, at any given point in their life, do not want to have good conflict. There are people who want to have high conflict. They're getting a lot out of it—maybe a sense of power, maybe profit, maybe camaraderie, maybe meaning (often it's meaning, attention). Especially when there's a power difference, that's a problem you can't fix sometimes.

In any conflict, you can change what you do—you can set boundaries, you can try to distance yourself from high-conflict people and conflict entrepreneurs—but you can't shift to good conflict with someone who doesn't want something different. That's a painful thing.

The good news, what I've found, is that people change. People can be really in high conflict or totally bewitched by conspiracy theories or even extremist ideology, and then they change. So part of the challenge is: How long can I stay in this person's life, if I care about them, in the hopes that one day there will be an

I went into [writing this book] pretty skeptical—I was not someone who's super into dialogue and peace—and I came out the other side totally bought into the idea that there is a way to do good conflict. I've not only seen it, I've been part of it, and it is almost a transcendent feeling, to be challenged and to challenge other people without losing your dignity and your sense of humanity.

Jason Marsh is the editor-in-chief of Greater Good, which first published this article.

PERFECT WAVE/SHUTTERSTOCK

Do You Like the Person You Are Becoming?

It is never too late to work on becoming the person we want to be

JOSHUA BECKER

Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher, is credited as first saying, "Change is the only constant in life."

And I think he's right. Change happens all around us, all the time. The weather changes, leadership changes, culture changes, our jobs change, our families change—and we change.

Sometimes quickly, but often slowly, we change.

Our worldview changes, our attitudes change, our goals change, our habits change, our hobbies change, our fears change, our relationships change, even our bodies change.

With that in mind, I have a question for you today:

Do you like the person you are becom-

If we're moving further and further away from the person we want to be, it is wise to notice that as soon as possible.

We ask a lot of questions of ourselves and each other, but one of the most selfreflective and most helpful questions we could ever ask ourselves focuses less on what we are doing, and more on who we are becoming.

Because if something is changing, there are only three possibilities:

It is getting better. It is getting worse. Or the change is neutral.

The same is true of you and true of me. We are changing. And we are either become more like the people we want to

are heading.

I once had a friend who was very excitlife. They weren't changes of employment or external circumstances necessarily, they were deeper, heart changes about the way she saw the world and the way she began interacting with people. She was excited to share with me the things she had been learning and who she was becoming.

Amidst our conversation, she asked me about some accomplishments she had seen in my life (the blog, books, the YouTube channel, etc.). And she inquired how I felt about them. She was anxious to hear how my view on life had changed over the past 3 to 4 years.

cited about the work I'm doing. But I pinpoint the pursuit drawing you away, don't think I always like the person I you have two options: 1. remove it, or 2.

am becoming. In fact, if I'm being honest, I think I'm a little less patient than I was 10 years ago. I think I'm a little more prideful—maybe even less kind. I also sometimes wonder if I was a little more fun to be around a decade ago."

I don't think she was expecting that answer. But her question gave me the opportunity to articulate some rumblings in my heart that I'd been feeling for awhile. Not all change is good, and I can see some changes in my life moving me away from the person I most want to be.

Either we are becoming more like the person we want to be, we are becoming less like the person we want to be, or the changes in our life are neutral in this re-

But if we're moving further and further away from the person we want to be, it is wise to notice that as soon as possible so the course correction can be easier, more efficient, and more effective.

Of course, this isn't always an easy question to answer. In most cases, it's not a simple yes or no. We may look at our trajectory and be proud of some of the changes, but regret others.

We may be excelling at work but becoming more demanding along the way.

We may be getting ahead financially but spending less time at home than we used to. We may be losing weight but becoming more prideful or focused

on outward appearances because We may be excited about specific accomplishments but worried about the ways we are coping with the stress of

We may be making great strides in some habits but faltering in oth-

In each scenario, we should ask ourselves: "Do I have to be giving up positive progress in one area of my Sometimes it is helpful to stop and life just to succeed in another? When I get evaluate and see which direction we down to the heart of the matter, do I like the person I am becoming?"

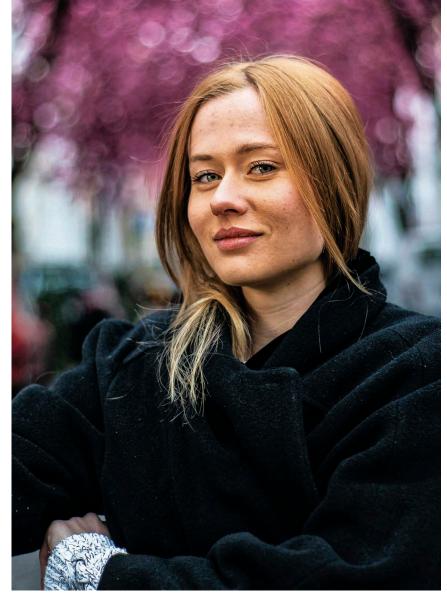
If you are not happy with the person you ed about the changes taking place in her are becoming, here are some thoughts to help you change course:

1. You can always change.

Nobody can take away your right to change. No employer, no spouse, no toxic relationship. Positive change is always possible. You are the only person who gets to decide who you are going to be-

2. Don't change your goals, change your habits.

Often the goals we pursue, when they are new, bring about these unexpected changes that move us away from who we I responded to her question: "I'm ex- want to be. If that is the case, and you can



There is perhaps nothing as essential to our contentment as knowing we are becoming the person we aspire to be.

has passed,

but as long

as a minute

we can still

remains.

improve

ourselves.

alter how you chase it.

Maybe you are striving to start a new business but are beginning to notice that it's taking more time away from your family than you imagined—and you can see that is not who you want to become. Maybe the answer is to stop pursuing the new business venture. Or maybe there is a different approach that you need to adopt in chasing it.

3. We love to see people trying to change for the better.

Our world loves to cheer people making positive changes. Oh, some get jealous and envious, and they might even try to keep you down. But for the most part, we are a society that cheers for the underdog. Take comfort in that and know that many will see your changes and cheer for you to

4. It's never too late to change.

The best time to change for the positive may have been yesterday or 10 years ago, but the second-best time is right now. If you're still living (which I assume you are), ou've got time to change. And while you can't change the past, you can redeem it. And no matter how much time you have left, you can set an example for others.

5. People are remembered most for who they were, not what they accomplished.

If the accomplishments you are pursuing are resulting in negative changes in your life (which is often the case), remind yourself that who you are is more important. The people who know you best will always remember your character and values more than your personal accomplishments. May we all be changing for the better.

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

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MELANIE HEMPE

teenager just woke up, walked into the kitchen, and said, "Mom, what day is it?" The days are run-_ ning together, kids are staying up too late, we're trying to get out of our PJ's before lunch, we're eating too much and not exercising enough, and everyone needs a haircut. We've lost structure, schedules, and routines, but, believe it or not, our teens need to lose their smartphones too.

I know your kids are telling you they need smartphones for distance learning, to keep up with their friends, and to fill downtime because they're so bored. They also want to eat ice cream sandwiches all day and have popcorn for dinner. These phone excuses are as empty as the calories in their quarantine diet. Their teen brains are attracted the endless possibilities of learning new skills and hobbies. They have no idea how rare and valuable this gift of time really is. But you know. Which is why it's time to figure out what day it is: the day we put those phones on a vacation.

to the endless Instagram scroll, but not

If you thought your teen was wasting time on her phone before the quarantine, she will waste even more time on it now. (Note: This is written with a girl in mind, but that's not to say that boys aren't also over-using their phones.) Teens have a hard enough time managing smartphone use when they have structure and a full schedule packed with school commitments, sports, and extracurricular. But with unstructured days and hundreds of hours of free time, we're asking them to manage more than their teen brains are capable of doing.

Here are five great reasons to help your teen ditch their smartphone—especially during the quarantine.

Distraction during virtual class.

If your teen tries to tell you smartphones are necessary for learning, think again! Your teen doesn't need a smartphone for school in a normal setting and he certainly doesn't need one now. Texting and gaming during class are more prevalent with distance learning. We already know that teens can't manage phones during school, but now it's even harder for parents and teachers to set up necessary accountability to keep them focused. It's difficult to pay attention in class when you are playing Fortnite, talking with your friends, or shopping for shoes on Amazon.

Too much idle time.

With the shelter-in-place orders, our schedules went out the window and so did what was left of our teens' self-control.

Continued on Page 14

Glutathione Deficiency and Risk of Severe COVID-19

Researchers suggest low levels of 'master antioxidant' could be key to understanding severe COVID

JOSEPH MERCOLA

Glutathione is an antioxidant made from three amino acids in your body. It's produced by your liver and plays an important role in combating reactive oxygen species that can damage your cells.

Now, researchers have linked glutathione deficiency with more severe COVID infections. Data shows that people who are deficient in glutathione can experience some of the more serious symptoms of COVID-19, according to an article published in ACS Infectious Diseases.

A previous study published in Nature in January, evaluated the differences in the blood clotting potential between COVID-19 and other respiratory viral infections not Continued on Page 12

triggered by a coronavirus.

It found blood clotting rates weren't different between the two groups in mild disease. However, they found hypercoagulability, an increased tendency to produce blood clots, in COVID-19 was a dynamic process and the highest risk occurred in severely ill people. The complications of hypercoagulability include shortness of breath and severe lung complications.

Severe cases of COVID-19 frequently include hypercoagulability. While the physiology of this abnormal state isn't completely understood, researchers have found anticoagulant therapy helps improve health outcomes.



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



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



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



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

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Nuts and Berries for the Fiber Win

Great snack foods can help keep your digestive tract in good health

LYNN JAFFEE

OK, nobody wants to talk about this, but it's important. The word for today is fiber. That's right—roughage—nuts, berries, and whole grains, and why they're good for you. Fiber is the indigestible part of the plant foods you eat, and it's your digestive tract's best friend.

I didn't give fiber much thought until after my first colonoscopy more than 15 years ago. As the doctor was giving me the lowdown on how healthy my gut was, he said that I should try to eat 25 grams of fiber a day. What? I remember thinking if I did that I'd be eating nothing but fiber. In hindsight, I realize that 25 grams is a goal, just like eating five fruits and vegetables a day—some days you do and other days, you almost do. And really, if you eat right, 25 grams of fiber

Why should fiber be on your "must eat" list? There are some good reasons:

For anyone watching their weight, fiber is your pal because it helps you feel full and curbs your appetite. Essentially, you feel like you've eaten more when you eat highfiber foods.

Fiber also aids the digestive process by helping food move through your gut.

Fiber gives bulk to your stools and decreases the risk of polyps, colon cancer, and diverticulitis (little pockets in your colon where food can get trapped).

Fiber can also increase your levels of good cholesterol and decrease your bad cholesterol. As you digest fiber, it helps increase the amount of good bacteria in your gut.

Fiber is also beneficial because it binds to stuff, such as carcinogens, heavy metals, and pesticides in the foods you eat. However, fiber also binds to the minerals in your food. This means that you may want to separate the time between a high fiber meal and one that is rich in calcium, magnesium, or when you take vitamin supplements.

There are two different kinds of fiber, one of which is called soluble fiber. This means that it can take on water and bulk up your stool. Soluble fiber is the kind that's really good for decreasing cholesterol and improving heart health. Oat bran is a really good source of soluble fiber, but it's also found in high amounts in apples, spinach, almonds, and cruciferous vegetables, such as broccoli.

The other kind of fiber is insoluble. Insoluble fiber doesn't degrade as much in the gut as soluble fiber, but you need it for digestion. It helps move food through your gut and helps "scrub" clean your intestinal tract. Good sources of insoluble fiber are wheat bran, nuts, and beans.

As a way to work toward a daily goal of 25 grams, eat plenty of real foods. An apple contains about four grams, a cup of mashed potatoes is about two grams, and a cup of oatmeals is about five grams, as is broccoli. Processed foods list fiber content on the label, but often include unhealthy additives and overprocessed grains and fats.

If you want a high fiber snack, a half cup of almonds contains about 6 grams of fiber and a cup of blackberries has more than seven

As you increase the amount of fiber in your diet, take it easy at first. Give your body some time to get used to the extra roughage. You may experience some bloating and gas until you get used to the increase, but you will get

I only have one tip when it comes to fiber: Get enough. Your body will thank you!

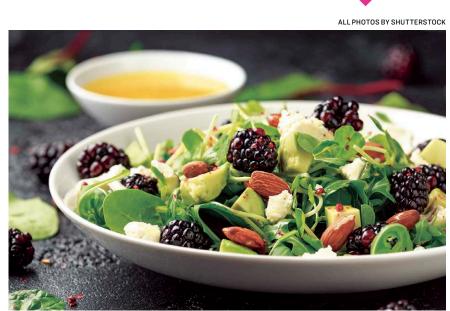
Lynn Jaffee is a licensed acupuncturist and the author of "Simple Steps: The Chinese Way to Better Health." This article was originally published on AcupunctureFiber feeds the good bacteria in your gut.



Fiber is the indigestible part of the plant foods you eat, and it's your digestive tract's best friend.

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> A half cup of almonds contains about six grams of fiber and a cup of black berries has over seven grams.





FOOD AS MEDICINE

What to Eat to Defend Your Heart

You can better protect yourself from heart disease with the help of these foods

> eart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, responsible for around 1 in 4 deaths each year. But fear not—you can greatly reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease through diet and lifestyle changes such as getting regular exercise and eating heart-healthy foods.

> All five of the following superfoods are easy to incorporate into your meal plan and have been validated by peer-reviewed science to help protect your body's most important muscle. By selecting foods and supplements that support heart health, you lock in a critical piece of the longevity puzzle that can keep your heart happy for decades to come.

1. Omega-3 Fats

The health benefits of consuming a diet rich lished, including the boost these healthy fats provide to your heart. Omega-3 fats are so important to heart health that being deficient is associated with higher risk of cardiac mortality.

Conversely, eating foods that are high in omega-3 fats can help protect the heart from disease. A 2018 study found that consuming a diet with a 1:1 ratio of omega-3 and omega-6 fats rapidly changes the fat composition of cardiac tissue, resulting in cardiac protection. For most people, this would mean cutting down on omega-6s while increasing omega-3s.

To ensure that your diet contains enough of these heart-healthy fats, include wildcaught cold-water fish such as salmon, tuna, herring, and sardines 2 to 3 times per week.

Nuts such as almonds and walnuts (be sure to eat the paper-like skin around them, which has high concentrations of polyphenols) and flax and chia seeds provide

vegetarian sources of these essential fats, as do organic soybeans. You can also find omega-3 fats in supplement form.

2. Turmeric

Curcumin is the primary polyphenol found in turmeric, the bright-orange spice that is a staple in many South Asian dishes. A member of the ginger family of plants, turmeric has long been studied for its beneficial effects on human health, particularly its anti-inflammatory properties and, more recently, its potential to benefit the heart.

Diabetics have a particular need to safeguard heart health, and curcumin may be a key ally in its defense. A study published in the Journal of Nutritional Biochemistry showed that supplementing with curcumin conferred protection from atherosclerotic heart disease to patients with Type 2 diabetes.

Another study revealed that regular ingestion of curcumin provided human trial participants, made up of 32 postmenopausal women, with the same cardiac health benefits as regular aerobic exercise.

At least some of curcumin's amazing health benefits come from its ability to thin the blood and expand the arteries. Cooking with this pungent spice is easy and flavorful, with numerous Indian and Southeast Asian dishes calling for the bright orange aromatic. Aim for around two tablespoons per day in your recipes, or supplement with a high-quality, preferably organic, supplement in liquid or capsule form.

3. Green Tea

You might not think of your heart when you sip a relaxing cup of tea, but science has been considering the numerous ways that green tea can benefit your well-being. Don't stop at just one cup—when it comes to protecting your heart, the more green tea you drink, the better.

A study of more than 40,530 Japanese adults found that individuals who consumed five or more cups of green tea each day had a 26 percent lower risk of death from heart attack than people who do not drink green tea.



Chocolate made with at least 70 percent cocoa is rich in flavanols, making it a tasty and hearthealthy snack.



People who drank five or more cups of green tea each day had a 26 percent lower risk of death from heart attack.

A 2015 meta-analysis arrived at similar findings, determining that just one cup of green tea per day was associated with a 5 percent lower risk of cardiovascular disease and 4 percent lower risk of all-cause

Catechins, the potent natural flavanols that impart much of green tea's antioxidant punch, are credited with providing some of green tea's beneficial effects on cardiovascular health. Catechins' antioxidant power has been shown to reduce LDL oxidation, effectively reducing heart disease risk from associated oxidative stress.

4. Magnesium-Rich Foods

Protecting your heart begins by ensuring that you consume adequate amounts of essential daily nutrients. Magnesium, a mineral involved in hundreds of biochemical functions in your body, helps maintain healthy heart function by normalizing blood pressure and keeping your heart's rhythm beating steadily. Conversely, magnesium deficits are linked to clogged arteries and sudden cardiac arrest.

A 2010 study published in the Journal of Biomedical Science found that individuals with higher dietary intakes of magnesium and the amino acid taurine had significantly lower incidences of heart disease mortality. Foods that are rich in magnesium include dark leafy greens, nuts and seeds, beans and legumes, and avocados.

Supporting your body with a high-quality magnesium supplement has also proven beneficial to the heart. A 2005 study on the clinical and metabolic effects of oral magnesium supplementation found that doses of 300 mg daily for 30 days were effective in achieving cardioprotective effects in some

5. Chocolate

You may not think of chocolate as a health food, but when it comes to dark chocolate, there's a growing body of evidence showing that it not only makes your Valentine smile, it can help keep your heart happy, too. Rich in flavanols, which are found in high concentrations in grapes, dark berries, tea, and cocoa, chocolate made with at least 70 percent cocoa is a tasty and hearthealthy snack.

A research team from the University of Cambridge evaluated the association of chocolate consumption with the risk of developing cardiometabolic disorders. They conducted a systematic review and metaanalysis of randomized controlled trials and observational studies and found that levels of chocolate consumption seem to be associated with a substantial reduction in the risk of cardiometabolic disorders.

It's never too late to add a few large squares of decadent dark chocolate to your diet. A 2012 study of patients with congestive heart flavanol-rich chocolate bars per day acutely improved vascular function, an effect that was sustained after daily consumption over a four-week period.

There are more than 1,600 abstracts with cardioprotective research on Green-MedInfo.com, the world's most widely referenced, evidence-based natural medical

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 GreenMedInfo LLC. Sign up for the newsletter at GreenmedInfo.health

Drink Your Way to a Boost in Energy

If you are feeling down, tired, or hungry, a glass of water can be just the pickup you need

MAT LECOMPTE

If you're feeling a little down right now, the boostyou need could be a lot closer than you think. In fact, it may

be as simple as turning on the tap. Dehydration may be the reason you lack the energy and outlook you're after. There is plenty of data to support hydration's impact on mood, energy, and brain function.

Let's put things in perspective: Your body is made up of roughly 60 percent water—more than half of your weight. This fact alone can help illuminate just how important and far-reaching its role can be.

Your metabolism works constantly to turn the air you breathe, the food you eat, and the sun landing on

your skin into all kinds of specialized molecules, proteins, enzymes, and cellular mechanisms. Water is essential to many of these pro-

There is research showing that even mild dehydration, as low as 1 to 3 percent of body weight, can impair mood and concentration while increasing the likelihood of headaches. Hydration also helps keep energy

up. If you're running a little ragged, it makes more sense to think about how much water you've consumed during the day than to just reach for a coffee, cola, or a sugary snack. Those options may offer some

quick relief, but more than likely,

you'll find yourself feeling worse

Dehydration may be the reason you lack the energy and mood you're after.

than you did before. The best way to stay hydrated is

to sip water throughout the day. Drink more water—and more often—in warm weather or during periods of physical exertion. But, generally speaking, just try to keep a water bottle within arm's reach.

You may have heard of the eight glasses per day guideline. That isn't set in stone, but it does offer a helpful reference point.

Being mindful of when you drink water, a hydration schedule of sorts, can also help you stay on top of it. Drinking a glass of water immediately upon waking can set you on the right path, and having one with each meal can help you automate water

intake. Sipping between meals and snacks can help ensure you're getting a steady supply each day.

Make that process easier by keeping a glass or metal water bottle full and handy. Plastic containers often contain hormone-disrupting chemicals, but some don't.

If your energy is low and your mood is off, water may be the fastest and most effective fix. Do your best to stay hydrated and reap the rewards. And as a bonus, drinking more water can help you lose weight. Often when we think we are hungry, we just need a glass of water.

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

Glutathione Deficiency and Risk of Severe COVID-19

Researchers suggest low levels of 'master antioxidant' could be key to understanding severe COVID

Continued from Page 9

In one study published in Thrombosis and Haemostasis in June 2020, patients admitted to Padova University Hospital in Italy for acute respiratory failure showed "markedly hypercoagulable thromboelastometry profiles," which "correlated with a worse

It appears one of the differences between those who have a mild illness and severe illness is related to the body's ability to reduce the hyperimmune response that leads to a cytokine storm and the hypercoagulability that often accompanies it. Glutathione plays a role in the fight against the severe inflammatory response triggered by SARS-CoV-2.

The research published in ACS Infectious Disease called a glutathione deficiency

"most likely cause of serious manifestations and deaths in COVID-19 patients."

In that study, they theorized the higher infection rate in older individuals and those with comorbidities suggest these groups are sensitive to environmental factors. Certain medical conditions have been identified that increase the risk of severe illness from CO-VID-19. These include chronic lung disease, Type 2 diabetes, heart conditions, obesity, and smoking, which all add oxidative stress that depletes glutathione.

Glutathione plays a crucial role in keeping the inflammatory response in check, which the researchers theorize is a feasible means in the treatment and prevention of COVID-19.

"The hypothesis that glutathione deficiency is the most plausible explanation for serious manifestation and death in COVID-19 patients was proposed on the basis of an exhaustive literature analysis and observations," they wrote.

"The hypothesis unravels the mysteries of epidemiological data on the risk factors determining serious manifestations of CO-VID-19 infection and the high risk of death and opens real opportunities for effective treatment and prevention of the disease."

A paper published in Antioxidants in July 2020 also proposed glutathione may be "critical in extinguishing the exacerbated inflammation that triggers organ failure in COVID-19."

In the paper, the scientists presented a review of biochemical mechanisms that are counterbalanced by glutathione and the pathways that may explain endogenous (made in the body) glutathione depletion in older people and those with comorbidities known to increase the risk of severe illness.

Glutathione Mediates Reduction in Lung Inflammation

One medical student put this theory to the test when his 48-year-old mother was diag-

nosed with pneumonia. She was prescribed hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin, which helped to improve some symptoms, but her breathing remained labored. When she developed severe respiratory problems, her son contacted Dr. Richard Horowitz, a specialist who was treating his sister for

The powerful antioxidant function in glutathione has earned it the nickname **'master** antioxidant.

lieves glutathione deficiency is a plausible

Type 2 diabetes, heart conditions, obesity, and smoking add oxidative stress that depletes glutathione.

STUDIOMOLEKUUL/SHUTTERSTOCK

dogenous glutathione deficiency as a result of decreased biosynthesis and/or increased depletion of GSH is the most probable cause of increased oxidative damage of the lung, regardless which of the factors aging, chronic disease comorbidity, smoking or some others were responsible for this deficit." In a couple of YouTube videos, pulmonologist Dr. Roger Seheult explains how

reason for serious illness from COVID-19.

per-inflammation of the lung leading to

adverse disease outcomes such as acute

respiratory distress syndrome, multiorgan

"(2) poor antioxidant defense due to en-

failure, and death;

"(1) oxidative stress contributes to hy-

COVID-19 sets the stage for significantly increased oxidative stress by raising levels of superoxide, a damaging reactive oxygen species (ROS).

Glutathione: A Master Antioxidant This increase in superoxide occurs in peo-

ple who have high levels due to chronic

INSIDE CREATIVE HOUSE/SHUTTERSTOCK

diseases that are comorbidities for COV-He suggested adding glutathione to help reduce inflammation and protect lung tis-ID-19. These include heart disease, Type 2 sue. The results were dramatic. Within one diabetes, and high blood pressure. The powerful antioxidant function in hour after receiving a 2,000-milligram dose of glutathione, her breathing had improved. glutathione has earned it the nickname She continued taking the glutathione for "master antioxidant." Antioxidants help

an illness, Polonikov postulates

that glutathione may be used

as a preventive agent. Based

on an exhaustive literature

analysis, he later gave an

explanation for why he be-

five days and didn't relapse. Horowitz pubkeep other molecules from oxidizing. lished two case studies, documenting the One function of glutathione is to recycle results of oral and IV glutathione. other antioxidants. This helps increase Around a year ago, Dr. Alexi Polonikov their effectiveness. Deficiencies in certain from Kursk State Medical University in vitamins such as C, E, and A can cause a Russia published papers proposing gluglutathione deficiency. tathione plays a crucial role in the body's

ability to respond to a COVID-19 infection. **Comorbid Risk Factors** In addition to using glutathione during **Linked to Glutathione Deficiency**

In a review of the literature evaluating the effect of lung disease in COVID-19 that was published in 2020 in the Journal of Infectious Diseases and Epidemiology, researchers wrote that, in 2002, data showed glutathione protected against chronic inflammation during respiratory disease. They postulated that directly increasing glutathione levels in the lungs "would be a logical approach to protection against chronic inflammation and oxidant-mediated injury in lung disease."

Low levels of this master oxidant raises the risk of fatal COVID.

In addition to protecting lung tissue, glutathione has been studied in many of the comorbid conditions associated with severe COVID-19. For over a decade, researchers have noted that people with obesity, heart disease, and Type 2 diabetes, and who are elderly, have a higher incidence of glutathione deficiency associated with those conditions.

Improve Glutathione Production

Those looking to boost glutathione levels produced by their body can practice dietary and lifestyle habits shown to help. Foods that have a positive impact on glutathione production include cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, green tea, curcumin, rosemary, and milk thistle. Getting quality sleep may also help.

Different types of exercise can influence your levels as well. In one study published in the European Journal of Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation, researchers enrolled 80 healthy but sedentary volunteers to measure the type of exercise that may have the greatest effect. They found that aerobic training in combination with circuit weight training showed the greatest benefit.

Dr. Joseph Mercola is the founder of Mercola.com. An osteopathic physician, bestselling 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

Cruciferous abbage, kale, an glutathione

originally published on Mercola.com

Ways to Stop That Ringing in Your Ears

Tinnitus can be an aggravating condition but sometimes you can alleviate or ignore it

MAT LECOMPTE

Lyme disease.

Constant ringing in your ears can send you to the brink. Not only does it impair hearing and make it tough to focus, it can interrupt various aspects of daily life.

Medically known as tinnitus, there are a number of potential reasons you're experiencing ringing in your ears. The most common is exposure to loud sounds.

Although COVID-19 has taken away plenty of opportunity for such exposure—no concerts, limited sports crowds, etc.—threats still exist. Nearby construction, proximity to traffic, or even a limited-capacity event has the potential to put stress on the delicate structures that allow you to hear.

After exposure to loud sounds, the tiny hair cells that transmit sound to your brain become damaged. The ringing is edly, it can become permanent and lead to long-term hearing loss.

methods you can try.

Once these inner ear hair cells (called silica) are destroyed, they are lost forever. Long story short: Protect your ears with earplugs, closed windows, moderate volumes, and protective headwear when operating loud machinery like leaf blowers. Short-term tinnitus may be treated with natural measures. This is the type of tinnitus that may last a few days after an acute

Distraction: If you only notice ringing in your ears when there are no other sounds, distracting yourself may help. Listening to music, a podcast, or something else could help dull the ringing. Meditation or yoga may also help clear it up.

exposure to loud sounds. Here are a few

often temporary and may go away in a White Noise: When tinnitus hits at night, few days. However, if it happens repeat- some background noise may help drown it out. A fan, a little fountain, or recordings of ocean waves or rain drops can help relieve the ringing to help you get some shuteye.

Head Tapping: Head tapping is another strategy you can try to fight back against tinnitus. Place your palms over your ears, resting fingers at the base of your skull at the back of your head. With palms still over ears, lightly tap the back of your head with your index fingers. Do about 50 taps and repeat a few times per day, if needed.

Of course, the best strategy to avoid tinnitus is to take care of your ears and avoid loud sounds. But when it's unavoidable, these strategies may help you restore your ability to hear.

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



Covid Testing: A Financial Windfall for Hospitals and Other Providers

Exorbitant fees charged on the huge volume of COVID tests could lead to an increase in insurance premiums

JAY HANCOCK & HANNAH NORMAN

amela Valfer needed multiple COVID-19 tests after repeatedly visiting the hospital last fall to see her mother, who was being treated for cancer. Beds there were filling with COVID patients. Valfer heard the tests would be free.

So, she was surprised when the testing company billed her insurer \$250 for each swab. She feared she might receive a bill herself. And that amount is toward the low end of what some hospitals and doctors have collected.

Hospitals are charging up to \$650 for a simple, molecular COVID test that costs \$50 or less to run, according to Medicare claims analyzed for KHN by Hospital Pricing Specialists (HPS). Charges by large health systems range from \$20 to \$1,419 per test, a new national survey by KFF shows. And some free-standing emergency rooms are charging more than \$1,000 per test.

Authorities were saying "get tested, no one's going to be charged, and it turns out that's not true," said Valfer, a professor of visual arts who lives in Pasadena, California. "Now on the back end, it's being passed onto the consumer" through high charges to insurers, she said. The insurance company passes on its higher costs to consumers in higher premiums.

As the pandemic enters its second year, no procedure has been more frequent than tests for the virus causing it. Gargantuan volume—400 million tests and counting, for one type—combined with loose rules on prices have made the service a bonanza for hospitals and clinics, new data shows.

Lab companies have been booking record profits by charging \$100 per test. Even in-network prices negotiated and paid by insurance companies often run much more than that and, according to one measure, have been rising on average in recent months.

Insurers and other payers "have no bargaining power in this game" because there is no price cap in some situations, said Ge Bai, an associate professor at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health who has studied test economics. When charges run far beyond the cost of the tests "it's predatory," she said. "It's price gouging

The data shows that COVID tests continue to generate high charges from hospitals and clinics despite alarms raised by insurers, anecdotal reports of high prices, and pushback from state regulators.

The listed charge for a basic PCR COVID test at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles is \$480. NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital lists \$440 as the gross charge as well as the cash price. Those amounts are far above the \$159 national average for the diagnostic test, which predominated during the first year of the pandemic, at more than 3,000 hospitals checked by HPS.

That's the amount billed to insurance companies, not what patients pay, Cedars spokesperson Cara Martinez said in an

"Patients themselves do not face any costs" for the tests, she said. "The amounts we charge [insurers] for medical care are set to cover our operating costs," capital needs and other items, she said.

Likewise at NewYork-Presbyterian, charges not covered by insurance "are not passed along to patients," the hospital said. Many hospitals and labs follow the Medi-

care reimbursement rate, \$100 for results within two days from high-volume tests. But there are outliers. Insurers oftentimes negotiate lower prices within their networks, although not for labs and testing options outside their purview.

Billing by hospitals and clinics from outside insurance company networks can be especially lucrative because the government requires insurers to pay their posted COVID-test price with no limit. Regulation for out-of-network vaccine charges, by contrast, is stricter. Charges for vaccines must be "reasonable," according to federal regulations, with relatively low Medicare prices as a possible guideline.

"There's a problem with the federal law" on test prices, said Sabrina Corlette, codirector of the Center on Health Insurance Reforms at Georgetown University. "The CARES Act requires insurers to pay the full billed charge to the provider. Unless they've negotiated, their hands are tied."



DO NOT OPEN

(Above) A BinaxNOW antigen test sells for \$23.99.

(Left) Pamela Valfer, in her home art studio in Pasadena. Calif. She was tested three times for COVID-19.

But even in-network payments can be highly profitable

Optim Medical Center in Tattnall, Georgia, part of a chain of orthopedic practices and medical centers, collects \$308 per CO-VID test from two insurers, its price list shows. Yale New Haven Hospital collects \$182 from one insurer and \$173 from an-

Yale New Haven's prices resulted from existing insurer agreements addressing unspecified new procedures such as the COVID test, said Patrick McCabe, senior vice president of finance for Yale New Ha-

As the pandemic enters its second year, no procedure has been more frequent than tests for the virus causing it—400 million tests and counting, for one type.

"We didn't negotiate" specifically on CO-VID tests, he said. "We're not trying to take advantage of a crisis here."

Officials from Optim Medical Center didn't respond to queries from KHN.

Castlight Health, which provides benefits and health care guidance to more than 60 Fortune 500 companies, analyzed for KHN the costs of 1.1 million COVID tests billed to insurers from March 2020 through this February. The analysis found an average charge of \$90, with less than 1 percent of bills passing any cost along to the patient. Since March 2020, the average cost has gone up from \$63 to as high as \$97 per test in December 2020 before declining to \$89 in

February, the most recent results available. In some cases, hospitals and clinics have supplemented revenue from COVID tests with extra charges that go far beyond those for a simple swab. Warren Goldstein was surprised when

Austin Emergency Center, in Texas, charged him and his wife \$494 upfront for two COVID tests. He was shocked when the center billed insurance \$1,978 for his test, which he expected would cost \$100. His insurer paid \$325 for "emergency services" for him, even though there was no emergency.

"It seemed like highway robbery," said Goldstein, a New York professor who was visiting his daughter and grandchild in Texas at the time.

Austin Emergency Center has been the subject of previous reports of high COVID-

The center provides "high-quality health care emergency services" and "our charges are set at the price that we believe reflects this quality of care," said Heather Neale, AEC's chief operating officer. The law requires the center to examine every patient "to determine whether or not an emergency medical condition exists," she said.

Curative, the lab company that billed \$250 for Valfer's PCR tests, said through a spokesperson that its operating costs are higher than those of other providers and that consumers will never be billed for charges insurance doesn't cover. Valfer's insurer paid \$125 for each test, claims documents show.

Even at relatively low prices, testing companies are reaping high profits. COVID PCR tests sold for \$100 apiece helped Quest Diagnostics increase revenue by 49 percent in the first quarter of 2021 and quadruple its profits compared with the same period

"We are expecting ... to still do quite well in terms of reimbursement in the near term," Quest CFO Mark Guinan said during a recent earnings call.

Hospitals and clinics do pay tens of thousands of dollars upfront when purchasing analyzer machines, plus costs for chemi-

cal reagents, swabs and other collection materials, maintenance, and training and compensating staff members. But the more tests completed, the more cost-effective they are, said Marlene Sautter, director of laboratory services at Premier Inc., a group purchasing organization that works with 4,000 U.S. hospitals and health systems.

CRYPTOGRAPHER/SHUTTERSTOCK

A World Health Organization cost assessment of running 5,000 COVID tests on Roche and Abbott analyzers—not including that initial equipment price, labor, or shipping costs—came to \$17 and \$21 per test, respectively.

Unlike earlier in the pandemic, lab-based PCR tests no longer dominate the market. Cheaper, rapid options can now be purchased online or in stores. In mid-April, some CVS, Walmart, and Walgreens stores began selling a two-pack of Abbott Laboratories' BinaxNOW antigen test for \$23.99.

Regulations require insurers to cover COVID testing administered or referred by a health care provider at no cost to the patient. But exceptions are made for public health surveillance and work- or schoolrelated testing.

Claire Lemcke, who works for a Flagstaff, Arizona, nonprofit, was tested at a mall in January and received a statement from an out-of-state lab company saying that the price was \$737, that it was performed out-of-network, and that she would be responsible for paying. She's working with her insurer, which has already paid \$400, to try to get it settled.

Sticker shock from COVID tests has gotten bad enough that Medicare set up a hotline for insurance companies to report bad actors, and states across the country are taking action.

Free-standing emergency centers across Texas, like the one Goldstein visited, have charged particularly exorbitant prices, propelling the Texas Association of Health Plans to write a formal complaint in late January. The 19-page letter details how many of these operations violate state disclosure requirements, charge over \$1,000 per COVID test and add thousands more in facility fees associated with the visit.

These free-standing ERs are "among the worst offenders when it comes to price gouging, egregious billing, and providing unnecessary care and tests," the letter says.

In December 2020, the Kansas Insurance Department investigated a lab whose cash price was listed at nearly \$1,000. State legislatures in both Minnesota and Connecticut have introduced bills to crack down on price gouging since the pandemic began.

"If these astronomical costs charged by unscrupulous providers are borne by the health plans and insurers without recompense, consumers will ultimately pay more for their health care as health insurance costs will rise," Justin McFarland, Kansas Insurance Department's general counsel, wrote in a Dec. 16, 2020, letter.

Jay Hancock is a senior correspondent for Kaiser Health News, and Hannah Norman is a digital producer for Kaiser Health News, which originally published

Why You Should Disable Your Teen's Smartphone

Quarantine is the perfect—and essential-time to wean teens off smartphones

Continued from Page 9

Teen brains are wired to crave the dopamine release found in low-effort/highreward smartphone activities. This activity is not all bad, but the more hours your teen spends mindlessly scrolling, the less motivated she'll be for other activities. As idle time increases, so do temptations of drifting into risky online activities.

More anxiety.

While you may not feel the same urgency as your teen to instantly respond to texts or posts, your teen is paralyzed with fear of rejection by peers who expect instant responses. Your daughter may feel constantly stressed and judged when she doesn't answer a text or comment fast enough. She may experience anxiety and feel like the clock starts ticking every time she receives a text. This is a problem in everyday situations, but is magnified during quarantine. Without a schedule or routine, there's an



Exposure to risky content.

Safety is the most popular reason parents give their kids a phone in the first place. Parents want to stay in touch with their kids and constantly know where they are. But right now, we know exactly where our kids are. It's not physical safety we need to be concerned with, but online safety. Your teen's smartphone is the most unsafe place they can be right now. With so many kids staying home on their devices, there has been a spike in online predators and free access to porn sites during the quarantine. Access to smaller screens means more exposure to risky content. So move screen time to larger screens because it's harder to feel comfortable surfing risky content on the TV in the family room or on the kitchen laptop in front of everyone.

Unreliable parental controls.

The endless Instagram pursue, like new hobbies

> Your teen may be paralyzed with fear of rejection by peers who expect instant



Smartphones

scroll comes at the expense of

your teen could and more substantial human

connection.



multiple children at home, it's near impossible to police all their devices.

Additionally, most video games have mobile platforms. So even when parents set console limits, gamers can sneak away and game on their smartphones. Gaming is listed as the second highest grossing business since the quarantine (second only to groceries), and much of that gaming is occurring on phones.

Common questions:

How will my kids stay in touch with friends?

Your teen doesn't need a smartphone to stay in touch with friends. In general, smartphones are an inefficient way for your kids to build friendships. Texting is good for scheduling get-togethers and quick responses to questions, but not good for strengthening genuine friendships.

Your teen can video chat, voice call, and ger screens are easier for you to manage. If she wants to text, she can install your cellular provider's message program on her laptop or you can get her a non-data phone for voice calling and texting. Be aware that all social media is still unfortunately available on her computer. She really doesn't need a private phone in her

JACOB LUND/SHUTTERSTOCK

pocket for anything. Now is a perfect time to transition to a text/talk only phone.

What will she do with her extra time?

Smartphones are a terrible waste of time for a teen. When your teen spends hours hidden in her room, scrolling on a phone, she'll lose her motivation to read a book, do chores, hang out with family, or even take a shower. The reward center in her brain stays awake and all the other areas go to sleep. Your child will seem lazy. As a parent, you must provide some structure to get her going with some productive activities. The key in the beginning is to spend time with her doing activities. It will be hard for her to get remotivated at first. The Instagram scroll is endless, but so is the list of hobbies and life skills.

How do I take it away?

One way to get a break is to start by taking a week off. We've designed our ScreenStrong Challenge, a free 7-day program, to help you reset screen habits in your home. Our experience has shown that even a week off from recreational screens is very beneficial for your kids. They'll experience less stress and anxi-

ety, and more time enjoying other things. Here are a few positive reports we hear from teens who remove their phone for even just a week:

More time talking with parents

- Less time needed for homework
- More time for sleep Fewer distractions
- More time reading for pleasure
- Fewer arguments with younger siblings

The quarantine is the perfect time to take The ScreenStrong Challenge because you have more time now to focus on jumpstarting other interests.

At the end of this quarantine, what will your teens have to show for their time? Make these extra hours count for something! Will it be hundreds of hours on Instagram or hundreds of hours invested in a new piano piece, new novels, or a new life skill like changing the oil in the car or planting a garden? The answer is up to you.

Melanie Hempe, BSN, is the founder and executive director of ScreenStrong, a national nonprofit organization that offers childhood screen dependency. Her three books can be found on Amazon: "Will Your Gamer Survive College?," "Can Your Teen Survive—and Thrive—Without a Smartphone?," and "The ScreenStrong Solution: How to free your child from addictive screen habits." This article was originally published on ScreenStrong.com

This notion may not sit well with some.

But cutting-edge research demonstrates

that the decision to engage in pro-social

behaviors stems primarily from intu-

ition. When we cooperate, it's not because we engaged in a deep analysis and

calculated it as worthwhile. It's actually

because of feelings. Without eye contact,

we need to boost these relational feelings

Designed to Part You From Your Money

Our world bombards you with messages you may not even notice

JOSHUA BECKER

IAKOV FILIMONOV/SHUTTERSTOCK

When I was younger, I worked at a small department store in North Dakota. It was my first job. I remember, specifically, my first day stocking soda in the

At the time, I didn't think much of it. I headed over to the refrigerated case and started loading cans into the

Before I got too far in the job, the manager who hired me walked up and gave me more detailed instructions: "When you stock shelves, always put the label facing out. It looks nicer and neater, and customers are more likely to buy if they can see the name

of the product." It was a simple selling technique. So simple, that even a first-day, minimum-wage

Earlier this week,

high school student could figure it out. And yet, it was designed for one reason: to From the smallest detail make a sale to the highest executive

happened to walk past a designed to part you large clothing store. On from your money. the window of the store, in as large a print as pos-

decision, stores are

sible, the store was advertising their semi-annual clearance sale (60 percent off every item in the store).

When I entered another store down the street, I was immediately met with soft music and shelves upon shelves of color-matched items with smaller signs announcing the sale price on each of them.

And now, in the age of big data, tech giants collate hundreds of data points to better anticipate what ads are more likely to trigger you to click.

And I was reminded, in that moment, almost everything in this world is designed to sell you something. From the smallest detail to the highest executive decision, stores are designed to part you from your money.

No detail is overlooked. The signage on the outside and the inside of the building—designed to get

you to buy. The original price, the sale price, the limited time offer—designed to get you

The smells, the sounds, the colors, the free samples—designed to get you to buy. The items placed at eye level, the

items displayed on mannequins, the items placed at the very back of the grocery store—all designed intentionally to get you to buy. Even the exact layout of your local mall.

Even the refund policy is designed to get you to spend more.

The brand credit card, the rewards card, the loyalty punch card—designed to get you to buy.

The payment options, the financing, the warranty—designed to get you to buy. And the list continues.

Even worse, these strategies are utilized by far more than retail brick-and mortar stores. Restaurants use them. Grocery stores use them. Gas stations, service technicians, your favorite

> sports team, podcasts, streaming services, even your favorite free-to-download As do websites

of every size. Just vesterday I received several emails inviting me to attend an "Amazing One-Hour Webinar on the Small Tweaks your Website Needs to Become a Money-Making Machine." Something tells me even that webinar intended

to sell me something. Everywhere we go, it seems, is designed to sell us something and get us to part with our money.

I fear, however, we don't even need to enter these stores to be bombarded with their strategies anymore.

Billboards, junk mail, and email newsletters contribute volume to the already noisy world of ads we see every day. Each designed to encourage your purchase, or get you into their store where their other sales techniques can

further the work and persuasion. And now, in the age of big data, tech giants collate hundreds of data points to better anticipate what ads are more likely to trigger you to click.

There are some practical steps we can take to be sold to less, such as not walking into these stores or visiting these websites unless necessary, I suppose.

gether—and we're probably not going to change society to the point where

this no longer exists. However, we can become more aware of it. We can get better at recognizing when it is happening. And we can learn the tactics retailers employ to sell us

something so we don't fall so easily into

the temptation. In so doing, we can keep some of that money around for more important pur-

suits than buying stuff we don't need.

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

of your off-screen, in-real-life interactions. Second, compensate for the loss of this tool with an effort to project trustworthiness. Jay Barney, a professor in strategic management at the University of Utah, defines trustworthiness as the attribute of being worthy of the trust of others in not exploiting any adverse

What's the difference, then, between trust

Third, normalize friendship in spaces that need trust. Viewing friendship as, for example, a meaningful work resource may seem strange. But as social beings, we con stantly engage in efforts to influence others to collaborate or co-operate.

What motivates cooperation? Sometimes I cooperate with you because I believe that doing so is consistent with my principles,

But sometimes cooperation is born of a relational motivation, based on the need for identification through social relationships. This means that I choose to cooperate with you because I want and expect to establish or maintain a satisfying relationship with you, usually based on reciprocity. Here, trust looms large. And if I can't stimulate it with eye contact, I can compensate with

dealing with the mind of another person looking at us, and shapes our perception of that other who meets our gaze.

Eye contact forces

tough. But projecting trustworthiness and friendship in places where we are used to being more transactional can help.

David Weitzner is an assistant professor of in Canada. This article was first pub-



world of ads we see every day.

selection or moral hazard.

and trustworthiness? Trust is a mutual effort allowing an existing relationship to operate with minimal stress. Seeking to be seen as trustworthy, on the other hand, is an individual initiative directed at those who we have yet to meet. It need not be reciprocated to be valuable. And it will enable us to partially compensate for the trust deficit in the post-Zoom era as we reenter the world to try to build connections.

so trust is a secondary consideration.

the language of friendship.

us to make sense of the fact that we are

with words.

Bottom line? Trust after Zoom will be

administrative studies at York University lished on The Conversation.

After a Year of Zoom Meetings, We'll Need to Rebuild Trust Through Eye Contact

There's no replacement for face-to-face eye contact when it comes to building the connections that sustain a healthy society

DAVID WEITZNER

The pandemic has exacerbated an already troubling trust deficit across political, economic, and other demographic divides. Research shared just before the pandemic's onset uncovered that millennials

are reluctant to trust government, business leaders, corporations, social and mass media, or even traditional social Meanwhile, a recent Canadian survey

found that half of respondents believe business leaders are purposely trying to mislead them, and just under half believe the same about government. The decline in trust is understandable, a predictable consequence of very real failures in leadership. But something else is happening as well.

The pandemic has forced most of us to move our lives onto screens. And as we get more comfortable hiding behind screens, rarely receiving and making eye contact, we are also handicapping our ability to trust.

Trust is the bedrock of civilization, and living through screens is taking a significant psychological toll. Researchers have found that real and direct eye contact holds our attention.

As psychologist Christian Jarrett says, eye contact forces us to make sense of the fact that we are dealing with the mind of another person looking at us, and shapes our perception of that other who meets our gaze. Perhaps most importantly for this context, direct eye contact promotes trust when folks are saying things that we're not so sure about.

Trust and Puppetry

Announcements of a Zoom-infused future—like recent news that Ontario schools boards must offer virtual learning as an option for the entire 2021-22 school year, or that certain businesses are selling off their real estate and making a permanent shift to remote work—are very worrisome.

joy of real human In researching my book, technology. "Connected Capitalism," I watched award-winning pup-

peteer Ronnie Burkett not only delight an audience, but call on them to perform essential tasks in the show, such as adjust the lighting, music, and act out supporting roles as amateur puppeteers.

When I asked Burkett how he got a diverse crowd of strangers to trust one another enough to work together in this unexpected manner, he attributed it to eye contact. He said we declare ourselves with eye contact. A gaze is like saying "I disagree with you but keep talking to me."

Burkett's eye contact invited attachment

and a feeling of safety for the audience. But feeling safe doesn't mean we aren't expected to be active. It simply enforces the sense that we can trust our cooperative partners; that they have our best interests at heart even as we're challenged to push ourselves to do something novel.

Reestablishing Trust

And now, in the age of Zoom, it's challenging to find and maintain eye contact. This single most powerful tool for fostering trust and strengthening relationships has largely gone missing. So what can we do to fix it?

First, knowing all this, make an extra effort to engage in and receive eye contact in all **WISE HABITS**

A Well-Lived Life of Purpose

Finding meaningful ways to contribute offers many people their best life

LEO BABAUTA

ost of the people I know and work with want a life of meaning and purpose. Just getting by is not sufficient.

But this isn't taught in schools, and most of us feel unsure of how to move toward this meaningful life.

This article won't be a complete answer to living a life of purpose, but it will try to help you move in that direction.

Commitment

The first thing you might consider is committing yourself to finding a life of purpose. How important is that to you? Are you willing to move into uncertainty for this, or are comfort and safety more important to you at the moment?

To commit, you have to commit in the gut. To tell yourself that this is important enough to devote yourself to, to dedicate time to, to practice pushing through the discomfort and uncertainty that will inevitably arise. Commit to yourself clearly by putting it on paper. Then share your commitment with others.

Exploration

If you don't already have a good sense of what your purpose may be, the second thing to consider is embarking on an adventure of exploring your purpose. It's not as simple as asking, "What would I like to do?" or doing a web search for the answer. You have to explore it, and bringing a sense of adventure might be just the right approach.

Here's how I usually recommend exploring purpose:

1. Make a list of things you think might be meaningful to you—helping children in need, helping people reduce stress, traveling to help communities in need, and so forth. Put anything on the list that's even remotely possible or inter-

esting, don't limit yourself here. Hint: I've found that the most meaningful things are when you're helping other people with something you care about.

2. Ask yourself which three to five of these potential purposes would be most meaningful. If one really stands out—maybe it's the thing you've been wanting to do for years—then that's where to start. But maybe you're not sure, so pick three to five. This is your short list.

3. Of those, let your gut choose the top one. If you absolutely don't know, either choose randomly or ask a friend. This isn't your final answer, but just the one you're going to start with.

4. Choose a two-week version of this top possibility. For example, if you want to help people with stress, could you help one person over video calls and email for two weeks? This is the mini-version of your possible purpose. Explore this for two weeks, really pouring yourself into it.

5. If this really resonates, make a one-month version of it and continue to explore. If it doesn't, pick the next thing on your short list. Do a two-week version of that. Repeat until you find something to explore for a month or longer.

This is the iterative method of purpose exploration. You try a mini-version of something for a couple weeks. Maybe longer. And keep doing this until you hit on something.

Notice if you feel like avoiding this process, or a part of the process. This is your uncertainty showing up as fear. That's completely OK, but you might ask whether you'd like to get support with that uncer-

Make a list of things you think might be meaningful to you.

HALFPOINT/SHUTTERSTOCK

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make their lives better in

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tainty, so you don't have to be stopped. This is where friends and loved ones can come in, or supportive communities of like-minded people.

A Well-Lived Life

There are an infinite number of possibilities for what a well-lived life can be for each person. You might meditate on a mountain for years, or enjoy the simple things. You might enjoy time with loved ones, or explore culinary pleasures. You might read all day, or listen to music. You might get your work done, and come home satisfied from a job well done.

For me, one of the biggest components of a well-lived life—other than loved ones and a profound appreciation of life—is doing

something that feels meaningful. And that has usually been helping others with something that's meaningful to them.

If you can serve others, make their lives better in some small way (or a big way), it feels incredibly meaningful. Much more than simply traveling or building up wealth or enjoying good food or having fun. Those are all great, but they don't feel as meaningful to me. If you can hit on something like that, that feels meaningful, then a

well-lived life becomes simple. Take care of yourself.

Find profound appreciation for the joy

And serve others in a meaningful way. It's simple, but not always easy. And that makes it even richer.

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

