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suffering long-haul COVID may need additional support in the form of lifestyle changes to help them recover.



Holistic Ways to Fight Lasting **COVID-19 Symptoms**

Long-haul symptoms mimic fibromyalgia. Here are some things that can help.

JAYA JAYA MYRA

Many people who have endured COVID-19 have found themselves dealing with lasting symptoms, even months after testing negative for active infection. Some of these symptoms include tiredness or fatigue, difficulty thinking or concentrating, dizziness, headaches, and joint or muscle pain. Some COVID-19 survivors also find themselves

Continued on Page 4



"Extremely well researched and true." "The Truth, as horrifying as it is, shall set us free. This should be on this country's academia's list of required reading."

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Although the summer heat continues to build, Summer Solstice marks the turn of the year with yang energy retreating and yin growing.

CHINESE WISDOM FOR SEASONAL LIVING

Release Summer Heat With a Hand or Foot Massage

Solar Term: 'Summer Solstice' (June 20 to July 5)

MOREEN LIAO

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

Solar Term: 'Summer Solstice'

2021 Dates: June 20 to July 5

In the Northern Hemisphere, the "Summer Solstice" falls on June 21 in 2021. According to traditional Chinese solar terms, the summer solstice marks the turning point in the balance of yin and yang.

The Summer Solstice term refers to when the days slowly grow shorter and from the summer sun is still building up and the earth is getting warmer, the season has begun to shift, and yin energy is now building.

A plant called the crow-dipper, native to China, Japan, and Korea, exemplifies this emerging yin phenomenon. This poisonous medicinal plant grows in wet and shady environments, and it only starts to grow after Summer Solstice—a time when most plants are already peaking.

Kennin-ji, the oldest Zen temple in Kyoto, Japan, holds an annual flower festival for the crow-dipper to mark the change in the balance of yin and yang.

Another manifestation of increasing yin during this time concerns the common deer. In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), deer are classified as yang in nature because their horns grow forward.

As the yin energy becomes stronger from Summer Solstice onward, deer begin to A foot massage can moose, on the other hand, are considered yin, as their horns

grow slanted and toward the back. Elk shed their horns when the yang energy is growing stronger, in the winter.

In Chinese history, the Summer Solstice was considered a public holiday. Everyone got time off for one to three days. During the Liao Dynasty, women would give each other colorful fans and aromatic pouches filled with fragrant herbs. They used the fans to repel the heat, and the herbal pouches to repel insects and cover bad odors.

Living in Harmony

With 'Summer Solstice' TCM doctors say that when the yang energy reaches the extreme, it's a good time to treat winter diseases. Since winter diseases tend to appear when one's yang energy dips to its lowest point, one can draw on the abundant yang energy of summer to try to reverse the disease

in advance of the coming winter.

In TCM, the roots of winter diseases are often treated by identifying the proper acupuncture points, or by using the correct herbs to push the disease out of the body. This is especially helpful for those with a weak respiratory system, weak digestive system, or joint

If one tends to cough or feel pain on cold days, that shows this person may have a weaker or infected respiratory system. It is highly recommended to direct a hairdryer on low heat and a low speed toward the center of one's chest. Keep a safe distance so you don't get burned. The Tan Chong acupuncture point is here, in the middle of our lungs, and it can strengthen our respiratory system as well as boost our immunity.

As the vin energy becomes stronger from Summer Solstice onward, deer begin to shed their horns.

Traditionally, it's considered a good idea to visit a reputable TCM doctor during this time, especially if you experienced health problems during the recent winter. Many Chinese people go for a checkup at this time of year.

For those who were healthy and happy last winter but are still having trouble adjusting to the summer heat, you can practice "earthing"

or "grounding." This involves walking with bare feet in nature or gently pressing the ground with the palms of the hands. For maximum benefit, wear only natural

For those who are still feeling excess heat and sweating a lot, you can massage the center of each palm with your shed their horns. Elk and relax tensed muscles. knuckles, or the center of the soles of your feet. This reduces tensed muscles and opens the

energy channels. Regular massage enhances Qi circulations and improves skin quality as a bonus.

Seasonal Foods

At this time, beneficial foods include almonds, asparagus, bitter foods, broad beans, goose and goose eggs, duck and duck eggs, hawthorn berries, oolong tea, parsley, peas, pumpkins, red beans, seaweed, tomatoes, watercress, and wa-

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

How to Diagnose Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth

This problem in the small intestine can lead to a variety of symptoms and disrupt digestion

ASHLEY TURNER

In part one of this series (published on this page last week), we gave an overview of small intestinal bacterial overgrowth—otherwise known as SIBO. It can be an insidious disease because so many of its symptoms overlap with other gut ailments. Misdiagnosis, or missing a diagnosis altogether, is very common. Yet the longer SIBO goes untreated, the

more difficult it can be to resolve. Furthermore, its treatment is specific and must be handled in the right way in order to achieve full recovery. That makes an accurate diagnosis all the more imperative. This article will cover the various kinds of SIBO, as well as the tests used to reveal them.

A Quick Refresher

Your digestive system has several sections with specific roles. After food is chewed and broken down by digestive juices, it lands in your small intestine. This is where the work of drawing nutrients from your food really takes place. Then, what's left passes into your large intestine, where a host of microbes help finish the job, and waste products make their way out of your body.

While those bacteria are essential in the large intestine, they can wreak havoc in the small intestine. When bacteria proliferate in the small intestine, that is the condition known as SIBO.

SIBO Variations

It's important to note that there are three types of SIBO. This is because multiple bacteria—as well as microorganisms contribute to overgrowth in the small intestine. The way they combine can produce a buildup of three different gases in your gut: methane, hydrogen, or sulfide. While there are foundational aspects to treating SIBO as a whole, it's essential to determine the type of SIBO you have, as it could determine the treatment you

Hydrogen-dominant SIBO occurs when food lingers in your small intestine for too long and begins to ferment before it can be broken down. This creates excess hydrogen gas in your gut and can cause symptoms unique to this kind of SIBO: diarrhea and flatulence that smells like rotten eggs.

Methane-dominant SIBO occurs when the normal digestion process is slowed and excess methane accumulates, causing abdominal pain, bloating, and constipation. While essential at nor-



roles in digestion—when they stay in the right places.

Bacteria play important

KATERYNA KON/SHUTTERSTOCK

Small intestinal bacterial overgrowth can lead to pain, nausea,



bowels, straining, or will go extended periods of time without a bowel movement. Hydrogen sulfide-dominant SIBO is when there's an overproduction of hydrogen sulfide in the small intestine. In a balanced body, hydrogen sulfide is a beneficial gasotransmitter, which is a gaseous molecule that acts as a neurotransmitter. At balanced levels, hydrogen sulfide is a protective antiinflammatory agent with antioxidant

and immune-supporting properties. If

mal levels for regulating hydrogen and

carbon dioxide in the gut, an excess of

methane produced by archaea in the

small intestine slows down intestinal

motility and increases the transit time of

food going through the gastrointestinal

tract. Sometimes people with this form

of SIBO feel inadequate evacuation of the

hydrogen sulfide levels proliferate, this can cause damage to the gut, immune system, and cells along with initiating systemic inflammation. There's also a condition called small intestinal fungal overgrowth (SIFO). This is when high levels of fungi are found in the small intestine, which contributes to various symptoms similar to SIBO. Oftentimes, those with unexplained gas-

Diagnosing SIBO

Currently, the most commonly used

trointestinal symptoms who test nega-

tive for SIBO actually have SIFO.



and least invasive way to test for SIBO is a breath test.

Preparation for the test can begin 2 to 4 weeks beforehand if you're on certain medications or probiotics. Usually, about 48 hours before the test, a strict diet and the elimination of nonessential medications are required to reduce baseline gases in your small intestine and produce a more accurate result. Restrictions on smoking, alcohol, and exercise are also recommended just prior to the test.

It's essential to determine the type of SIBO you have, as it could determine the treatment you receive.

During the testing process, patients will consume a sugar solution—such as glucose or lactulose—and then, at various intervals over a several-hour span, blow into a special vial. If bacteria are fermenting in your small intestine—that is to say, the sugar isn't being properly metabolized by your system—elevated levels of hydrogen, methane, or hydrogen sulfide will be detected. This indicates the likelihood of SIBO. In the past, hydrogen sulfide gas wasn't able to be found with breath testing. Thankfully, reliable breath testing for hydrogen sulfide-dominant SIBO is now available.

Although this method of breath testing is widely available and relatively easy, false negative and positive results are common. If results are unexpected or symptoms persist, it may be recommended to test further or repeat testing. Small bowel aspiration procedures can be done, but these are incredibly invasive and usually utilized for research purposes only.

At-home breath test kits are available through many functional and integrative medicine doctors. It's highly recommended to not only test for SIBO, but also work to resolve SIBO with the supervision of your physician.

In the third and final part of our SIBO sewell as dietary and lifestyle changes you can make today to avoid developing SIBO in the future.

For links to studies mentioned in this article, please see the article online at TheEpochTimes.com

Dr. Ashley Turner is a traditionallytrained naturopath and board-certified doctor of holistic health for Restorative Wellness Center. An expert in functional medicine, Turner is the author of the gut-healing guide "Restorative Kitchen and Restorative Traditions," a cookbook comprised of non-inflammatory holiday

Research Links the Western Diet to Inflammatory Bowel Disease

MAT LECOMPTE

Inflammatory bowel disease, or IBD, is a historically Western occurrence. Although mainly a problem in the United States, as the standard American diet has gone global, IBD has become more common across

All that fast food, fat, and sugar could be promoting the proliferation of IBD. A recent study has found that eating a

Western diet can harm the immune system in the gut and may boost the risk of infections or inflammatory bowel disease. One of the ways a high fat, high sugar diet may influence immunity is its effect on Paneth cells. Paneth cells are immune cells

in the gut that are responsible for keeping

When these cells become impaired, the gut becomes more prone to inflammation, and the risk for IBD increases. Poorly, or non-functioning Paneth cells, for example, are a key feature of Crohn's disease.

inflammation in check.

Researchers looked at data on 400 people and assessed their Paneth cells. They found that body mass index (BMI) played a factor on BelMarraHealth.com

in the cells. The higher a person's BMI, the worse their Paneth cells looked.

Researchers then fed healthy mice a Western diet to see if it changed Paneth cell activity. It did, causing the researchers to suggest that it wasn't obesity, per se, that led to problems, but a high-sugar and fat diet. Paneth cells in mice returned to normal after being fed a healthy diet for a couple

There could be several factors that contribute to gut inflammation and IBD, but this data sends a strong signal that diet is part of the problem. Eating a Western-style diet, rich in processed foods, fat, and sugar, may impair the immune system and increase the risk for IBD.

The best defense is a healthier diet. Cutting back on unhealthy fats and sugar, and eating more fiber, fruits, vegetables, healthy fats, and whole grains may be the best way to reduce the risk of IBD and potentially aid in treating the condition.

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



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battling anxiety and depression, as well as symptoms that get worse after either physical or mental exertion.

Research published in The Lancet Psychiatry reported that one out of every three COVID-19 survivors has lasting mental health issues.

Allopathic The first thing I thought when learning this was: **medicine is** "Wow. All these people are great for some experiencing near identical symptoms to people who things and suffer from fibromyalgia. terrible for And with the numbers being up to one out of every others. three people, that's profound and scary given what

so many others and I have gone through. I previously suffered from fibromyalgia and am one of the few who found a way to beat it completely through holistic strategies. That was no easy feat, by the way, especially with doctors trying to attach a label to me saying I'd never be cured and might as well fight for permanent disability status.



sympathetic and nervous systems.

between the

Meditation can

reset the balance



Fibromyalgia devastated my life. It was so debilitating that I couldn't lift a threepound pot to boil water. I lost my job, my marriage, and my family home to foreclosure. I ended up declaring bankruptcy and was separated from my children in the process because I ended up at complete rock bottom. Dealing with fibromyalgia—and the painful situations that went along with it—caused anxiety and depression, both of which I also beat completely.

I learned two key things from dealing with—and then healing completely from an "incurable" disease that doctors didn't know how to address, much like these lasting, nearly identical COVID-19 symptoms.

The first is that God doesn't give you anything you can't handle. If there's an obstacle in your path, there's a way to overcome it if you're willing to think outside of the box. Realizing this meant I had to apply a spiritual and faith-based way of thinking to a physical situation, and doing so was

game-changing great for some things and terrible for others, especially dealing with chronic conditions that impact mind, body, and soul. That should come as no surprise, because to deal with something that impacts the mind, body, and soul, you need strategies that work with mind, body, and soul, and

not just your physical body. By using spiritual principles as my foundation, applied in a practical way in day-today life, I was able to find holistic ways to heal completely from fibromyalgia, anxiety, and depression. And not surprising to me, I haven't gotten COVID-19. In fact, I haven't been sick at all in years. Here are some key, holistic ways that people can fight those lasting COVID-19 long-haul symptoms and also chronic pain conditions like fibromyalgia.

Adopt a Daily Meditation Practice.

Adopting a daily mindfulness and meditation practice was a major key in my recovery. In fact, it was meditation that completely healed me from anxiety and depression, long before the rest of my fibromyalgia symptoms were gone.

Meditation helps to balance the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, and I believe this is the key to its

Chronic conditions can kick the sympathetic nervous system—responsible for fight or flight—into overdrive, preventing the parasympathetic nervous system responsible for rest, recovery, and heal-The second is that allopathic medicine is ing—from doing its job. Imagine if you were in fight-or-flight mode all the time, what that would do to the well-being of your mind, body, and soul. Well, you don't have to imagine: This is exactly what we see in people suffering from fibromyalgia and lasting long-haul COVID-19 symptoms. They're worn down and unable to rest and heal.

Meditation can reset the balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, so the body's own healing mechanisms can kick in and start healing

Some activities, like walking in nature and creating art, can sup-



and herbs that can help your body better deal with the various stresses of life.

port the health of your mind, body, and spirit.



Adaptogens are foods

the body and mind. Once your body is able to repair and regenerate itself, everything else you do will be more effective.

Cultivate Daily Practices That Create Mind, Body, and Soul Synergy. For me, this is a huge part of mind, body, and soul well-being.

Pick one activity with effects that compound to accomplish several outcomes. One of my daily routines is having a cup of tea. This single action has six beneficial outcomes. First, tea contains theanine, which promotes calmness and stress reduction. Second, theanine can improve focus and mental clarity. Third, tea gives a boost of energy in the morning, and combined with the increased focus, makes it easy to start the day productive and clear. Fourth, tea has antiviral and antimicrobial qualities that boost the immune system, keeping the physical body healthy. Fifth, the act of creating a daily routine helps the mind to feel stable and happy. Sixth, it's a daily act of self-care, and consistent self-care promotes enhanced self-worth and confidence.

There are many things that act synergistically to promote mind, body, and soul wellbeing. Walking is another simple one. Art and creative endeavors do as well. Maybe you find this synergy in cooking or baking. Find the activities that speak to you and give one a try, consistently, every single day.

Try Some Adaptogenic Herbs.

Whenever the body is in a slump and you need to find a way to rejuvenate, try adding some adaptogenic herbs, also known in Ayurveda as a Rasayana, to your daily

Adaptogens find your weak point, whatever that may be, and work to bring it into balance by enhancing vitality. Feeling low on energy and tired is one of the most common complaints people have after having battled an illness or when dealing with fibromyalgia. Adaptogens can help the body heal itself while improving mood, energy, and even promoting a better night's sleep. Ashwagandha is one of my favorite adaptogens. It helps fight adrenal fatigue and gives you vitality. It also helps you sleep better, which may seem counterintuitive, but since sleep is where regeneration happens, it actually makes perfect sense. Reishi is another great option if you're looking for something from Traditional Chinese

These three key things are holistic strategies that can help you reclaim or maintain health and well-being. For me, they were the difference between being debilitated and in constant pain and being completely healthy. When you take the well-being of your mind, body, and soul into account, you make keeping the physical body healthy much easier

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Older adults that reduce

their sitting time and

walk more experience

significantly improved

physical function, and

cognitive function,

quality of life.



Green teas like matcha, and dark chocolate (at least 70 percent cocoa) are great sources of polyphenols, which act as antioxidants and neutralize free radicals.

Natural Substances to Fight a Big Belly

Adding these 6 substances to your diet can help you eat your way to a smaller belly

may offer some sensible solutions. From coconut oil and green tea to dark chocolate and vitamin D, there are great natural substances worth looking into.

That's especially true when you consider that carrying excess weight around your midsection puts you at increased risk of heart attack, raising the risk by 10 percent to 20 percent compared to carrying excess weight that's more evenly distributed throughout your body.

Clinically known as central adiposity or central obesity, even people with a normal body mass index (BMI) who carried a "spare tire" were at greater risk of dying from all causes and had the worst long-term survival rates in one study. For reference, a man with excess belly fat—defined by waist-to-hip ratio—who is otherwise normal weight has twice the mortality risk of a man who is overweight or obese These foods have but doesn't carry the weight pri-

marily in his midsection. reduce waist What makes belly fat so dancircumference. gerous? It's a sign of visceral fat accumulation, which is a type of fat that can wrap around your internal organs, promoting inflammation

and metabolic disorders. Visceral fat is associated with insulin resistance, high triglycerides, higher glucose levels, and increased cardiovascular risk, along with diabetes, high blood pressure, and atherosclerosis. An overall healthy diet and lifestyle, includ-

ing regular intentional movement, is best for maintaining a healthy weight, but when it comes to targeting belly fat specifically, research suggests that dietary changes alone

As you work toward focusing your diet on whole, unprocessed foods, the natural substances that follow should make a regular appearance, as they're impressive for their belly-fat-busting prowess.

1. Coconut Oil

Coconut oil, with its rich content of mediumchain fatty acids, has been described as an "ideal food source for weight reduction." When 20 obese, but otherwise healthy, adults added virgin coconut oil to their diet for four weeks, waist circumference was significantly reduced, by a mean of 2.86 centimeters.

"All the participants in this study were instructed to continue their normal daily diet and physical activities to minimize possible weight reduction," the researchers noted, which means just adding coconut oil was beneficial, even without further dietary or activity changes.

In another example, 40 women between the ages of 20 and 40 years followed a balanced diet, walked for 50 minutes a day, and took either a soybean oil or coconut oil supplement for 12 weeks. While both groups had reductions in BMI, only the coconut oil group had a reduction in waist circumference and the soybean oil group had a negative change in cholesterol, with LDL-to-HDL ratio increasing while beneficial HDL decreased.

2. Turmeric (Curcumin)

The spice turmeric, known for its active phytocompound curcumin, is a powerful anti-inflammatory. Research suggests curcumin may increase basal metabolic rate, thereby increasing energy expenditure and improving weight and metabolic status. In fact, a meta-analysis of 21 studies revealed that curcumin intake significantly reduced not only BMI and weight but also waist circumference.

3. Grapefruit

Grapefruit, rich in antioxidants and fiber, has anti-inflammatory effects—along with at least 15 other beneficial pharmacological actions. Folklore has long suggested that grapefruit is useful for weight loss, and when 74 overweight adults ate half of a fresh red grapefruit with each meal for six weeks,

If a big belly is weighing you down, nature modest weight loss was indeed confirmed along with a significant reduction in waist circumference.

> Even using grapefruit seed oil topically may be beneficial. In one study, participants received a whole-body aromatherapy massage daily for six weeks, receiving either massage oil containing 3 percent grapefruit, cypress, and other aromatherapy oils or a placebo oil (grapeseed oil).

> They also massaged their abdomen with the oil twice daily (five days a week) for six weeks. The group receiving grapefruit seed oil had a significant reduction in abdominal subcutaneous fat and waist circumference.

4. Green Tea

Green tea contains beneficial polyphenols known as catechins, which have shown promise for influencing energy metabolism, weight, and body fat-

especially abdominal fat and fat surrounding the abdominal been shown to organs. In a study of 182 moderately overweight adults in China, those who consumed two daily servings of extra-high-catechin green tea for 90 days had significant reductions in intra-abdominal fat and

> waist circumference. The amount of catechins in tea varies widely,

> but one study found that Korean and Japanese green tea contained the highest amounts of catechins while green tea from Nepal, India, and China contained the lowest.

5. Dark Chocolate

Cocoa-rich dark chocolate (containing at least 70 percent cocoa) is rich in beneficial polyphenolic compounds such as flavanols epicatechin, and procyanidins. Researchers investigated its effects on women with normal weight obese syndrome, which refers to people who are normal weight but have a high percentage of total body fat.

The women consumed dark chocolate containing 70 percent cocoa for seven days, which led to a reduction in abdomen circumference, along with other benefits such as increased HDL cholesterol.

6. Vitamin D

If you're deficient in vitamin D, you may be more likely to have higher levels of visceral obesity. Several studies have confirmed that vitamin D deficiency is associated with greater visceral fat thickness, and even after adjusting for other factors like physical activity, chronic disease, and alcohol intake, "In all cases, the greater the amount of belly fat, the lower the levels of detected vitamin D."

It's unclear whether lack of vitamin D accelerates visceral fat accumulation or if visceral fat is reducing vitamin D levels, but either way, if you're struggling with belly fat, getting your vitamin D levels checked, and ensuring you're getting enough, makes sense.

Because the accumulation of belly fat can occur for many reasons, a comprehensive approach will work best. In addition to the six substances mentioned here, at least 41 other natural substances may also be useful for targeting belly fat, while others—like sugar-sweetened beverages and monosodium glutamate (MSG)—may promote it.

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How to Improve Health and Quality of Life for Long-Term Care Residents

Adding some assistance to get residents moving in assisted living facilities can lead to improvements in well-being

KIRSTEN DILLON

INSIDE CREATIVE HOUSE/SHUTTERSTOCK

Sitting around is a known risk factor for disease and disability. Yet, when older adults start to lose independence—becoming less functional physically or showing signs of cognitive impairment—they move into residences that may allow them to sit for 85 percent of their waking hours.

As the baby boomer population ages, older people are starting to outnumber younger people. It's not surprising that admissions into assisted living facilities are growing each year. People are also living longer, which makes it important to ensure that those added years have a high

New research is indicating that reducing sitting time could preserve or even improve quality of life, physical functioning, and cognition for residents in these facilities. This study was completed prior to the cri-

Too much sitting is linked to a higher risk of diabetes, cancer, and all–cause mortality.

sis in long-term care during the COVID-19 pandemic. With attention now on ways to improve care and quality of life in care homes, one positive change would be to reduce sedentary behavior.

Move More, Sit Less!

Our exercise and health psychology laboratory is examining how reducing sedentary behavior (sitting) and replacing it with short bouts of light-intensity physical activity (walking) can improve several aspects

of health. Based on one of our most recent studies, how much of residents' waking time is spent sitting should be the new dealbreaker when deciding on an assisted liv-

It's well established that physical activity can help reduce the risk of cognitive decline while preserving physical function. What's not as well known is that sitting too much is a separate problem from not getting enough physical activity. Previous work in this field has indicated that sitting too much could be accelerating cognitive

Why Exercise Alone Isn't Enough

Physical inactivity is defined as not meeting the recommended 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each week. Sitting, otherwise known as sedentary behavior, uses very little energy. Too much sitting, separate from being physically inactive, has been associated with an increased risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and all-cause mortality in other words, early death.

Sedentary behavior is becoming more recognized as a health risk factor. It was recently added as a concern to the Canadian Society of Exercise Physiology's 24-hour movement guidelines (advocating for less daily sedentary behavior).

This creates a two-pronged problem for older adults residing in assisted living facilities. First, they have the lowest adherence to the physical activity guidelines. On top of this, they are also the most sedentary population.

Less Sitting, More Walking

In our study, we examined what would happen to older adults with mild to moderate cognitive impairment if we simply replaced 10 minutes of sitting after each meal with 10 minutes of light walking. By comparing two groups—one that reduced their sitting and one that didn't—we were able to investigate the effects of this behavior on the residents' cognition, physical functioning, and their overall quality of life.

First, we showed that reducing sitting time and replacing it with this level of physical activity was feasible for this population. Second, the results indicated that not only was the intervention group able to reduce their sitting, but they significantly improved their cognitive function, physical function, and quality of life compared to the other group.

This has ramifications for these types of facilities moving forward, as it shows that just a little bit of movement can go a long way. The important takeaway message is that people need to interrupt their sitting as often as they can. Previous studies have shown other positive health outcomes when interrupting sitting time every 20 minutes with just two to three minutes of

Make Assisted Living More Assisted

What if assisted living facilities became more active communities, where the residents were less sedentary? This could potentially allow them to gain more independence—and not lose it. As the majority of residents in these facilities have some form

make the transition into these residences for the 24-hour supervision, personal care services, social activities, and some healthrelated services (such as medication management).

Our study used an alarm from a sport watch, creating gentle vibration reminders for participants to get up and move at certain times of the day. Building on the results of this study could identify more ways to get this population up and moving more often. This can potentially protect them from further decline, and add more

Western University in Canada. This article was first published on The Conversation.



of cognitive impairment, many people

quality years to their life.

Kirsten Dillon is a doctoral student at

Reflect on What You Truly Need and You'll Make Your Wants Few

We are compelled to constantly want, and those wants start to feel like needs-but only if we let them

Continued from Page 1

We are learning what it means to be satisfied with what we need. It's a beautiful thing to find now that the things we want and the things we need are harmoniously one and

There is enormous freedom to be found, if

Identify Your Greatest Need

What is it that you really need? For the moment, let's lay aside the necessities of food, shelter, clothing, and good health, and let's talk about the internal part of you. What is that one need that when left unmet throws every other part of your life out of balance? Identifying this is of utmost importance because no matter how much stuff you accumulate, how many avenues you explore, or to what extremes you go, you will never be fully happy until you identify and fill that one, basic, greatest need.

One of the first necessary steps to uncover this is to reconnect to your childhood self. Remember that person? For me, it's a little brown-haired girl with ponytails, hazelgreen eyes, and a heart full of hope that learned early on to rely heavily upon prayer and a connection to God that was authentic and integral. I personally found that my most pressing need was and continues to be a spiritual one. One of my earliest childhood memories is kneeling beside my bed to pray and finding a rare sense of comfort and deep-seated peace. That basic, deepest need as a 3-year-old is still my greatest need today. So simple, yet so profound.

Identify Your 2nd-Greatest Need

For me, it's to live in peace and spend as much time as possible with the ones I love. The older I get, the more I see the brevity of life and feel a deep need to make the most of every precious moment. I find that I can't function well when I am at odds with anyone in my inner circle, and it's important to me to keep communication lines open and do whatever it takes to make them a priority.

Identify Subsequent Needs

Perhaps you feel an intense longing to serve others, create, travel, explore, learn, or teach. Think about what fulfills you and makes you feel complete, and identify what is preventing you from doing these things. What stands in your way?

As you identify your greatest needs, are you seeing a pattern? Are you noticing that true needs aren't "things" at all? Authentic needs are matters of the heart, the inside of

You will never be fully happy until you identify and fulfill

your basic,

greatest

need.

to focus on what is internal, you realize that to fill those needs, you will find it necessary to eliminate much that is external.

Just a few years ago, my family and I "owned" a four-bedroom, three-bath home, with an oversized two-car garage on two the brim, we were up to our eyeballs in debt, the continual upkeep and maintenance of physical possessions robbed time and energy needed to nurture our spirituality, and our lifestyle required my husband to keep his nose to the grindstone bound to a job he detested.

My husband felt a deep sense of nagging guilt over watching our only son grow up too quickly and not being able to spend enough time with him. We didn't need much of what



If we don't uncover our true needs, we can end up trying to purchase our way to a sense of joy and contentment but it doesn't work.

you. As your thought process is transformed we wanted, and our wants got in the way of fulfilling our hearts' needs. Our epiphany came when our identity was stolen, and we were forced to face the reality of all we owed and the toll we were allowing excess to take

We sold our home, released about 90 peracres of land. Our house, garage, attic, clos- cent of what we owned, became 100 percent debt-free, and moved to the moun switched from the fast lane to a slow-moving pace that is conducive to the nourishing of our souls. Instead of going back into debt, we made the choice to rent a small, furnished home that someone else is responsible to

> Several months after our move, my husband's job was outsourced, and he took time off to help finish our 13-year homeschool journey. There was a time we would have been devastated and lost everything we "owned" because of the unexpected job loss. Fortunately, by making our needs our wants and our needs very few ahead of time, we were able to rejoice over being set free from such bondage. My husband was able to be completely involved and become the hands-on father he always wanted to be. During his time of unemployment, we were free to explore and do things together that we could never have experienced otherwise.

> Life has a way of blurring the lines and injecting unwanted, uninvited distraction that keeps us from fulfilling our deepest needs. It may take some hard work, intense soul-searching, and deep digging to find what your greatest needs are, but there is great wisdom in seeking your true self. It's there, though probably buried under a heap of cheap substitutes, insufficient fillers, and the inadequacy of excess possessions.

> It all comes down to what matters most and the choices you are willing to make.

> Cheryl Smith blogs at Biblical Minimalism. com. Her family sold their home, released 90 percent of their physical possessions, got out of debt, and now share their story on their blog. Her new book, "Biblical Minimalism," is now available. In it, she approaches minimalism from a biblical perspective.



More than money, you need a true sense of yourself and the things that truly matter.

WISE HABITS

Best Laid Plans: Why They Often Fall Short

How to overcome productivity drains and finish what you start

LEO BABAUTA

We've all been there: We get a new gym membership, sign up for a class, buy an ebook—and then don't use it.

Or we have the best intentions—at the start of the day—to be productive and kick some butt. And then our plans fall apart. We fail to live up to our hopes.

Why is that? What's wrong with us? In my experience, there are a few key obstacles:

We're Overly Optimistic. We think we're going to be able

to do much more than we can realistically manage. We only have so much capacity, energy, and time in the day, and we're not very good at estimating any of it. When we underestimate the time each thing takes, it adds up to a lot of disappointment and missed goals.

We Don't Account for the Little Things.

This goes hand in hand with the unrealistic optimism mentioned above. When we're thinking about our plans, we don't consider all the tiny micro-tasks that need to get done in order to accomplish projects—or even just to live. We don't think about showering, brushing our teeth, getting dressed, cooking, eating, cleaning up, doing laundry, driving, getting gas, answering countless emails, taking phone calls, using the bathroom, and so on. We just aren't wired to calculate all of that.

When we have the choice of either focusing on what's most important or doing some easier busy work, resistance often leads us astray. Our habitual, conditioned response is to shy away from the resistance. Sometimes we have the motivation to overcome it, but most times we put things off or allow ourselves to get distracted. Beating the resistance isn't easy, and it can be a huge time waster.

A big part of whether we succeed is havwhat can realistically be don't want to let them down.

procrastinate for an entire day—we're less likely to get things done. Accountability, supportive people, the presence of distractions—these are key parts of whatever environment we're in.

These obstacles are things we all succumb to from time to time. There isn't a person among us who is immune to these problems—certainly not me, nor anyone I know. So what can we do? It turns out there are a few key habits we can form to help with

ing an environment that's conducive to staying on task and holding us accountable. For example, if we're part of a team, and they're counting on us to get a project done by the end of the day, we'll be more motivated because we But let's say no one will know if we

Solutions to Key Obstacles

If you want to actually put that class or gym pass to use, get that project done, or finally read that e-book, here are some suggestions

We Fail in the Face of Resistance.

We Don't Have the Right Environment.

Now cut out half of those activities. The things you want to do are going to take twice as long as you think they will. If you have some time left over, consider it a bonus! Use that time not on distractions, but on the tasks you cut out. • If you want more productive time, cut out

some distractions, such as TV watching time or internet surfing. But you'll probably only be able to add another hour each

• Set up a good environment for each project

If you want to accomplish a big goal in a set amount of time, you'll need to account for all the

I've found that can help in achieving goals:

- Know that you probably only have 3 to 4 hours per day of productive time to get important work finished. The rest of the time is spent on sleeping, eating, personal maintenance, transportation, meetings, calls, emails, distractions, errands, shopping, cooking, taking care of kids, and
- Estimate what you can do in that limited window of time—exercise, writing, reading, learning, or maybe a few important tasks.
- day by doing so.

to practice with online. Set deadlines and have people count on you to get your project done. Go someplace where you won't have any distractions. When you're ready to focus on the thing you hoped to get done, face the resistance instead of running from it. Stare it in the

you want to complete—if you want to learn

guitar, have some accountability and sup-

port, even if that means finding someone

face. See that it's not that bad. Know your deeper reason for wanting to get this done, and remember that it's worth pushing on despite that discomfort.

I hope you find these useful. I've used them to learn things, to get projects done, to stick to exercise programs, and to do things with my kids. I'm far from perfect; I forget these things all the time. But when I remember to do them, I'm much better at living up to my hopes and dreams.

Leo Babauta is the author of six books and the writer of Zen Habits, a blog with over 2 million subscribers. Visit ZenHabits.net

Why Developing a Fun Habit Is Better Than Pursuing Happiness

Becoming aware of how you spend your time is the first step to reconnecting with the things you enjoy

MIKE RUCKER

We all want to be happy, and the idea of happiness as a learned skill has never been more popular. Searching for happiness offers us all a glimmer of hope—from Baby Boomers pining for the joys of the past, to young adults experiencing record levels of loneliness, anxiety, and burnout. Who doesn't want a reprieve from our collective malaise as we slowly emerge from the pandemic?

In part, these desires to live happier are being fueled by a constant stream of wellintended messages trying to inspire positivity in a time of crisis.

Next weekend, really try to live up to the prompt 'treat the weekend like a vacation.

If only reacquainting ourselves with happiness were that simple. In the words of fellow author Rupi Kaur, "Happiness grew old waiting for me, and I grew old searching for happiness in places it did not live." Many of us fall into the trap of thinking we'd be better off if we could just activate our "happiness switch," but research by Dr. Iris Mauss and her colleagues highlights that being overly concerned with happiness is generally counterproductive—often leading us to be less happy. So, if we cannot simply will ourselves into being happy, what can be done? As an alternative, try tabling your concerns regarding happiness and instead apply that energy into taking an action-oriented approach based on creating a fun habit. Direct your actions toward increasing joy in your life—developing an approach that is on your terms, and at a speed that suits your preferences. This is not a preconceived happiness

prescription, but a plan you create by explor-

ing your interests and reacquainting your-

self with the personal agency taken from you during the pandemic.

This novel approach, one of creating a fun habit, is about incorporating less 'think' and more 'do.' This method reframes your pursuit and helps you prioritize time in your calendar for pleasurable experiences.

A New Perspective on Fun

It will take a bit of practice for you to rediscover the value of fun, but there are some tangible ways to approach this revival. A first step is to create a personal time audit to become more self-aware of how you are spending the 168 hours in your week. Using this information, reflect on how you are spending your time using the "PLAY Model."

The PLAY model provides you a framework to sort the activities in your week based on the level of enjoyment you will likely garner from engaging in them. Utilizing the PLAY model helps by bringing awareness to agonizing activities you might be able to alter, as well as discovering opportunities where you can implement more pleasing

To use the PLAY model, start by organizing the hours recorded from your time log into four categories:

- Pleasing activities: These are everyday opportunities that invite more fun into your life that easily fit into your routine. Only you will know what these are (from your own experience) but could include: time spent catching up with a friend or other forms of prosocial behavior, unstructured play with your kids or pets, or personal hobbies you really enjoy.
- Living activities: These are fun yet challenging activities such as traveling somewhere exotic, learning a new skill, or stepping out of your comfort zone in some way, shape, or form. These types of activities feed our curiosity and often lead to moments of awe and wonder.
- Agonizing activities: Agonizing activities are challenging to execute in some significant way and bring us little or no

joy. It's fair to say life is not meant to be all fun. In other words, all of us will need to perform agonizing activities from time to time. These activities include things like housework, commuting, doing your taxes, or unrewarding work tasks.

 Yielding activities: These activities are easy for us to execute, so we do them mindlessly. However, when examined critically, these activities don't do much for us except move time along. A common phone to pass the time, or "doom scrolling" on social media.

To have more fun, evaluate your activities using the framework above and see where they fall within each category. As you go through the exercise, ideas will inevitably emerge about which of your activities maximize your opportunities for fun and which activities are most likely squandering your Moving Forward With Fun time and can be eliminated or improved

For instance, you might always turn on the news in the If you want to be happy, evening because take an action-oriented that's part of approach and do your habitual things you really routine. But after evaluation, you realize you don't really enjoy that block of time, and the news has little impact on your life. To improve, you swap your time watching the news for dedicated time to check in with friends. In contrast to being fed a continued course of negative information, you instead feast on the latest updates from people you really care about. This new prosocial activity

(catching up with friends) in the "Pleasing" category replaces the "Yielding" activity (of news consumption) and over time increases the number of opportunities you have to experience and broaden your positive emotions.

Weekend Workaround If you find yourself stuck after

your initial audit and in need of a nudge to get you started, a simple reframing trick can go a long way. Go into your next week-

end with a vacation mindset where the only thing needed is to make an honest attempt to live

up to the prompt "treat the weekend like a vacation." Using this approach, I wager that you'll be pleasantly surprised by the results. Research from Dr. Cassie Holmes and her colleagues showed that people that engage in treating their weekend as a vacation tend to have more fun, live more in the present moment, and start their next week significantly happier when compared to a

control group. Fun for fun's sake is important, but proculpritis media consumption—examples social activities that you are comfortable could be mindlessly watching the news, with—such as having a meal with family playing a downloaded game on your members you haven't seen in a while or meeting a friend for a hike—are especially vital right now considering the huge deficit of human interaction we have all faced the past year. While you begin the process of reorganizing your week for more fun, if you can find fun opportunities to share with others who consider making these activities a priority.

Applying time and effort towards having fun comes in many shapes and sizes, so take time to experiment and find what works for you. Remember to enjoy the process along the way. Being more fun doesn't

> mean ignoring the reality of obligations, but instead finding those things you can do more habitually that unlock passages to joyful opportunities. This practice helps broaden the spectrum of your positive emotions, and may even lead to more happiness by proxy. Make it less about a goal-oriented

nect with what has been waiting for you all along—the things unique to you that you find fun, and the activities and people in your life that bring you authentic joy. In this way, we can find that we never needed to 'arrive' at

happiness; it was actu-

ally within us all along.

endeavor and

instead recon-

Dr. Mike Rucker is the author of "The Fun Habit," a book offering a practical reframing of positive psychology, making the case we should cultivate the habit of fun to bring a greater

sense of happiness and joy to our lives. "The Fun Habit" is set to release in late 2021.

CONNECT TO LEAD

How Do We Trust Each Other Again?

Bridging trust is key to building a society of abundance and individual freedom

SCOTT MANN

Tow do we learn to trust each other again? That question has been on ■ my mind a lot lately and it's probably been on yours, too. There's been so much damage to the fabric of our society over the past year that it's hard to imagine how we're going to bring it back together.

It's part of the social tension between us and everyone else that interferes with our higher purpose and goal to maintain a society of abundance and individual freedom. It's really pronounced right now—and it could get even tougher.

There's been so much damage to the fabric of our society over the last year that it's hard to imagine how we're going to bring it back together.

There are three components to this tension: distraction, disengagement, and distrust. Distrust is by far the worst. I've seen this play out all over the world as a Green Beret working in low-trust societies, and I've developed a very specific mindset and perspective on it that I want to share with you.

In Afghanistan in 2010, a Special Forces team was working to empower locals to fight back against Taliban insurgents. There was a split between the two tribes in this village. The larger tribe, the Alikozai, had a lot of land and wealth. The smaller tribe, the Kakars, were sharecroppers who lived on the outskirts of town and didn't own any land.

There was fierce distrust and resentment between these two groups. The Green Berets who worked with these tribes knew they were going to have to overcome this tension. Those two tribes had to learn how to trust each other, overcoming a mindset of visceral hatred. This was a primal feeling growing from resource scarcity and ongoing feuds that drew in issues of status, honor, and revenge dating back hundreds of years.

each tribe. They focused on creating a vision trust where we are driven by scarcity and as and purpose that was bigger than any single tribe. In this case, that vision and purpose the people who are like us. That's a very was water and arable land. The Green Berets were able to soften the emotional temperature and bring folks together around that vision. Common goals helped the tribe reach beyond entrenched grievances and start to restore trust. In less than a year, those tribes were working together on a hydrology project that's still in place to this day.

I equate what was happening in that dusty village then to what is happening in our country right now.

Sebastian Junger, in his book, "Tribe," writes: "People speak with incredible contempt about, depending on their views, the rich, the poor, the educated, the foreign born, the president, or the entire U.S. government. It's a level of contempt that is usually reserved for enemies in wartime, except that it's now applied to our fellow citizens." It's the same contempt I saw between the



Alikozai and the Kakar, and we're getting caught up in it, too. As a result, we're losing our bridging-trust society. We're losing the social capital that values abundance and The Green Berets worked individually with the individual. We're reverting to bonding a result, only trust people in our in-grou dangerous place for us to go.

Junger goes on to say: "Contempt, unlike criticism, is particularly toxic because it assumes moral superiority in the speaker. It's often directed at people who have been excluded from a group or declared unworthy of its benefits. People who speak with contempt for one another will probably not remain united for long."

Are you demonstrating contempt for people who wear masks or don't wear masks? Are you demonstrating contempt in how you speak of people for one political party or another? No matter how justified you think you are, if you hold contempt toward the other party, you're pushing down a dangerous path that only ends one way: tribal blood feuds and deep conflict. Contempt makes it impossible to bridge trust and experience abundance.

No matter how justified you think you are, if vou hold contempt toward the other party, you are pushing down a dangerous path that only ends one way: tribal blood feuds and deep conflict.

Here are three things you can do to develop a bridging-trust mindset and leave this world better than you found it. First, make a conscious decision to

bridge with other groups. Rise above your primal instincts. Get outside of your in-group and bridge beyond it.

Second, listen as if your life depended on it. Ask thoughtful, open-ended questions of people who are different than you. Allow them to respond to you in story and tell you about their journey. Try to find some common ground between their story and your own.

Third, be curious and pursue discovery. Even though it feels uncertain, entering these divided territories with curiosit and openness is one of the most powerful things you can do. And it costs you nothing. The Green Beret team figured this out, and they helped a divided village develop a shared perspective. Former rivals gained mutual respect for each other and that led to reciprocity and a willingness to take a chance on the other party without knowing what would hap-

Those are the leaders we need in this world, and it starts with learning how to

Scott Mann is a former Green Beret who specialized in unconventional, high-impact missions and relationship building. *He is the founder of Rooftop Leadership* and appears frequently on TV and many syndicated radio programs. For more information, visit RooftopLeadership.com.

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The Emotional Side of Money



How stress, fear, and denial can hurt our health and our

bottom line

AFRICA STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

CONAN MILNER

oney is basically a unit of measurement, but it covers a lot of ground. Strictly speaking, money measures the market value of goods, services, and investments. But for some, it can also function as a measure of our self-worth. It can reveal fears about not having enough, resentment for having less than you feel you deserve, or guilt for not being able to provide the standard of living you want.

It's hard to translate these emotional reactions to money into dollars and cents. But left unresolved, these thoughts and feelings may have an even bigger impact on the stability of our personal finances Continued on Page 14

than how much we earn. CPA and personal finance coach Ben

Watson has seen clients from a wide range of ages and incomes. He also works for a personal finance blog geared toward the particular money issues millennials face. Watson previously worked at an accounting firm, but he left that job because he noticed his clients needed more than

what traditional financial services could "People keep sinking deeper and deeper into debt, but they can't figure out why they

can't stop spending," Watson said. "It's the emotions, the stress, and the lack of sleep that really drives people to ask for help. Not because they can't get another credit card."

We're advised to save, and vet we're constantly urged to spend.

FOOD AS MEDICINE

Costly Spice Surprisingly Effective for Alzheimer's

This tiny stigma, collected from thousands of flowers for only one week of the year, may hold multiple therapeutic uses

JOSEPH MERCOLA

Saffron is one of the most expensive spices in the world, and for good reason. Evidence suggests this unique and costly spice may have a significant impact on the development and progression of Alzheimer's disease.

Saffron is harvested from the stigma of Crocus sativus, a perennial plant belonging to the iris family. The flower has three stigmas of saffron that must be harvested while the flowers are still closed, during the one week every year when the plant

It's believed that saffron is native to Greece, but today most of the spice is grown in Iran, Greece, Morocco, and India. The spice has a complex flavor profile that is difficult to describe. On its own, saffron smells woody with an earthy scent.

To buy the real deal, saffron can cost up to \$13 per gram, or about \$365 per ounce. To produce one ounce of saffron takes 3,000 stigmas, or 1,000 flowers. When you're buying saffron, look for a dark red or red-orange color, in which you should be able to see individual threads.

Continued on **Page 12**



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What People Are Saying



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



Talk show host





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

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



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LARRY ELDER Best-selling author, attorney,



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

PAUL GOSAR U.S. representative for Arizona

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Hiking Workouts Are Good for the Body and Great for the Mind

There are important differences between a walk around your neighborhood and a hike amid the beauty of nature

LINDSAY BOTTOMS

Before COVID-19, the popularity of hiking was on a downward slope among both adults and children. But its popularity has climbed during the pandemic, as more people take to the trails. Hiking is a great way to experience nature and offers those who do it several physical and mental health benefits.

Hiking differs in many ways from taking a regular stroll around your neighborhood. Unlike a sidewalk, the terrain on many hiking routes is uneven or rocky. There's typically also some change in elevation as the trail winds up or down hills. People also tend to wear different footwear—such as hiking boots—which can be heavier than what they're used to wearing.

These differences in terrain and footwear mean that hiking has a higher energy expenditure—and more calories burned—than walking on flat ground. We also need to use additional muscles to stabilize ourselves on uneven terrain—muscles that are nor-

mally unused when walking on flat, even ground.

While brisk walking at a speed of around 3 miles per hour (5 km/h) uses up to four times as much energy as sitting down and resting, hiking through fields and hills uses more than five times that energy. This means you can achieve the recommended 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity without going for a run or heading to the gym.

The benefits of getting enough exercise are clear: It improves your physical health, sleep quality, and stress manement. It also reduces your chances of developing certain chronic diseases, such as dementia, Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, depression, and certain cancers. In older adults, some research suggests hiking may be able to improve hypertension.

While brisk walking at a speed of around 3 miles per hour (5 km/h) uses up to four times as much energy as sitting down and resting, hiking through fields and hills uses over five times.

Hiking is also beneficial for those with pre-existing health conditions. Research shows hiking leads to weight loss and improves cardiovascular health in pre-diabetic adults, likely reducing their risk of getting Type 2 diabetes. It's also been shown to improve other aspects of health, including muscle strength, balance, and flexibility in older adults with obesity. Even those

to reduce the load on the legs. A popular form of hiking called Nordic walking—in which participants use trekking poles to help them along—is

who suffer from balance issues or joint problems can hike using trekking poles

also shown to engage the upper body and increase the intensity of their stride. Research shows this form of hiking increases cardiovascular health, weight loss, and muscle strength in peo-

> ple without any pre-existing health conditions, as well as those with chronic conditions, such as Parkinson's disease. A further health ben-

efit of hiking is that it's classified as "green exercise." This refers to the added health benefit that doing physical activity in nature has on us. Research shows that green

exercise decreases blood pressure and boosts mental well-being by improving mood and reducing depression to a greater extent than exercising indoors can.

This research suggests health care professionals should recommend hiking

to patients as a low-cost way of improving health when possible. In the UK, there's even an initiative being piloted by the National Health Service to assess the health impacts of green prescribing—where patients are being prescribed outdoor activities, such as hiking or gardening—to improve their mental and physical health.

Get Outdoors

If you have a young

want to make hiking

more interesting), a

more interactive way

of getting out into

nature is geocaching.

Even if vou've never hiked before, it's easy to get started. There are plenty of apps you can download on your phone to help you navigate and find routes. Inese usually work with your GPS and are easy to follow for those who have a poor sense of direction.

You can also try the 1,000 mile challenge if you want to start hiking. This encourages people to walk 1,000 miles in a year. This has helped many people including my own parents—to be more active, especially during COVID-19.

If you have a young family—or simply want to make hiking more interesting a more interactive way of getting out into nature is geocaching. This is where you following a GPS route to a location where someone has hidden a box or trinket of some kind. You can also record what you've found using an app. Geocaching s a worldwide phenomenon, so it can be done almost anywhere in the world.

Hiking is a great way to get active and improve mental and physical well-being. And with many of us still likely to be vacationing locally this year, it can be a great way to get away from home and explore new sights.

Lindsay Bottoms is a reader in exercise and health physiology at the University of Hertfordshire in the UK. This article was

first published by Hiking is also The Conbeneficial even for those





Nutritional Yeast to

Help Prevent Common Childhood Infections

he amount of beta-glucan fiber in just a dusting of nutritional is a need for yeast each day may be enough to change the course of our effective, immune response to various pathogens, according to a study that put safe, and this substance to the test in a randomized, inexpensive double-blind, placebo-controlled trial for the prevention of common childhood illtreatment ... and beta-

The findings reflect an understanding of immunity that began in 1989, when the late Charles Janeway gave a presentation that revolutionized our understanding of the immune system. Janeway had correctly theorized and described the workings of the innate immune system.

Series of studies affirm

the immune-stimulating

action of one of nature's

helpful forms of fungus

He proposed that the way our immune cells discriminate between self and "nonself"—that is, our own cells versus invading microbes—may arise from pattern recognition receptors. In other words, he proposed that we're born with the ability to "recognize patterns of microbial structure."

MICHAEL GREGER

This is where nutritional yeast—a type There's a unique component of fungal cell walls called beta-glucan that naturally stimulates our immune system. Our own cells don't produce beta-glucan, but fungal pathogens such as candida do. Candida is a type of yeast that can cause serious blood infections, so it's good if our immune system recognizes it right off the bat. Of course, you could stimulate the immune system by injecting candida into your veins, but then you also might die.

Luckily for us, non-disease-causing yeasts such as Saccharomyces cerevisiae, which is used to make baker's yeast, brewer's yeast, and nutritional yeast, have the same molecular signature as beta-glucan. The drug industry is capitalizing on this "powerful immunostimulatory response" to develop new anti-infection, anticancer therapies, and you don't need to inject them to get the benefits.

glucan can be to protect against infection. just the right

Study authors

solution.

Nutritional yeast can be a tasty alternative when you want a healthier way to season popcorn.



Our digestive tract is our largest point of contact with the outside world. All the food from outside travels through this system, which has more surface area exposed than our lungs and skin put together. So it's not surprising that most of our immune cells are concentrated along the intestinal wall. They don't just stay there, though. Once they're aware of what's happening in the gut, they can go defend other parts of the body. That's why you can give an oral cholera vaccine and end up with cholera-fighting immune cells in your salivary glands, pumping antibodies out into your saliva

What if we sprinkled some nutritional yeast on our kids' popcorn for a snack? Might that help marshal defenses throughout their bodies? Adults tend to get just a few colds a year, but the average schoolchild can come down with a cold every other month—and what can we really do about it? Modern medicine has little to offer for run-of-the-mill common colds. Nevertheless, doctors still commonly prescribe antibiotics, which can do more harm than good.

"Clearly, there is a need for effective, safe, and inexpensive treatment ... [and] betaglucan can be just the right solution," wrote the authors of a study published in 2013.

The researchers of that study performed a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial using about half a teaspoon of nutritional yeast's worth of beta-glucan in children who suffered from repeated respiratory infections. They reported in the Annals of Translational Medicine that after a month, they found a significant increase in salivary lysozyme levels compared with controls. Lysozyme is an important protective immune component of our eyes, nose, and mouth.

However, alarger follow-up study published in the same journal in 2014 reported the opposite findings, an apparent drop in salivary lysozyme levels. And, although the researchers claimed this was "accompanied by pronounced improvements in the general physical health

of tested individuals," no such

data was provided. The only reason we cared about the lysozyme levels, though, was that we were hoping it would result in fewer infections, but there had never been any such studies ... until 2016.

That's when researchers published their findings in the Journal of Nutrition & Food Sciences. They conducted a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial to see whether the beta-glucan in just a dusting of nutritional yeast each day would reduce the number of episodes of common childhood illnesses.

"During the 12-week course of the study 85 percent of children in the placebo group experienced one or more episodes of infectious illness," the study stated. Eighty-five percent became ill in the sugar pill group, but taking just an eighth of a teaspoon of nutritional yeast's worth of beta-glucans or even just a 16th of a teaspoon's worth appeared to cut illness rates in half. And those on the yeast who did come down with a cold only suffered for roughly three days, compared to the closer to nine days suffered in the placebo group.

The researchers concluded that by giving kids these yeast beta-glucans, we could "decrease the incidence and severity of infectious illness during the cold/flu season, alleviating some of the burden on parents of caring for sick children."

Nutritional yeast has also been found to be beneficial for marathon runners, stressinduced immune suppression, and even for cancer, but that's an article all on its own.

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

The 3 Things You Can Do Today to Lower Blood Pressure Tomorrow

MAT LECOMPTE

If you've got high blood pressure or are concerned about it getting high, take a bit of comfort in knowing that blood pressure is not permanent. High blood pressure today can be low in the future if you're willing to put in some work.

The three essential parts to managing or reducing high blood pressure are not particularly complex. However, they can be challenging.

Exercise, a better diet, and good sleep are the things you can do almost immediately that will start to lower blood pressure.

More exercise is one of the main things you need. It's a completely relative term, but it is true. If you are able-bodied and spend-

ing too much time sitting or lying down, create a movement schedule.

Focus on moving for at least five minutes out of every hour during the day in addition to 30 minutes of dedicated exercise time. If you're unable to go for a 30-minute walk, or dance for half an hour, split it into manageable chunks throughout the day.

Eating better will do wonders. Toss your processed food and you will have taken a big step toward lower blood pressure. Refined and processed food—which is usually packaged or comes from a drive-through window—is some of the worst stuff for blood pressure. It's packed with salt, sugar, and fats that make arteries slim and stiff. Replace those foods with heart-healthy

options such as fruit, vegetables, whole

If you are able-bodied and spending too much time sitting or lying down, create a movement schedule.

grains, nuts and seeds, beans, lean protein, and fatty fish.

Several diet styles can help you reduce blood pressure without restricting calories or entire food groups. The Mediterranean and DASH diets are great places to start.

Lastly, you'll want to take a look at sleep patterns. Poor quality sleep, generally lasting less than six hours per night, is associ-

ated with higher blood pressure. Taking some time to assess your sleeping conditions and pre-sleep routine can help you get on a better path. If that makes no difference, consider booking an appoint-

ment at a sleep clinic. These three factors are not substitutes for prescribed blood pressure treatments. However, they are all proven to reduce blood pressure. Including them in your life may lead to lower blood pressure and no longer needing medicine.

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

Costly Spice Surprisingly Effective for Alzheimer's

This tiny stigma, collected from thousands of flowers for only one week of the year, may hold multiple therapeutic uses

Continued from Page 9

If you've found a cheaper saffron, it's likely fake. The stigmas from safflower plants are sometimes substituted and sold less expensively. They do not add the same color or flavor profile to foods, although they smell a little like saffron. Real saffron is sometimes adulterated by grinding up and mixing safflower stigmas to stretch the product.

Saffron as Effective as Drug Against Severe Alzheimer's

Saffron has historically been used in Persian traditional medicine for the treatment of memory problems. Multiple animal studies have looked at the antioxidant protection that saffron may offer along with its protection against cognitive decline and memory deficits.

In one animal study, researchers used morphine to induce memory loss and found the administration of saffron attenuated the impairment. In another study, researchers found that animals injected with saffron extract, including the active ingredient crocin, and subsequently subjected to stress, exhibited:

"Significantly higher activities of antioxidant enzymes including glutathione peroxidase, glutathione reductase and superoxide dismutase and significantly lower total antioxidant reactivity capacity. Finally, crocin significantly decreased plasma levels of corticosterone, as measured after the end of stress.

"These observations indicate that saffron and its active constituent crocin can prevent the impairment of learning and memory as well as the oxidative stress damage to the hippocampus induced by chronic stress.

The main compound, crocin, is a water-soluble carotenoid that has demonstrated potential to protect brain cells in animal and lab studies. Saffron extract was tested against memantine, a commonly prescribed medication for the symptoms of moderate-to-severe Alzheimer's disease. Memantine is an NMDA receptor antagonist that has demonstrated the ability to slow the loss of cognitive abilities.

Like most medications, memantine has a list of side effects, including vomiting, loss of appetite, unusual weakness, anxiety, and aggression. Some of these side effects are also common symptoms of moderate-to-severe Alzheimer's disease, including anxiety and aggression.

Researchers engaged 68 people with a diagnosis of moderate-to-severe Alzheimer's disease. The group was split into a treatment group and a control group. The control group received memantine at a dose of 20 milligrams (mg) per day while the intervention group received 30 mg per day of saffron capsules for 12 months.

If you found

a cheaper

saffron, it's

likely fake.

Adverse events related to the intervention or medication were recorded and the participants' cognitive skills were evaluated every month. The researchers found no statistically significant difference between the two groups. They concluded the saffron extract capsules were "comparable with memantine in reducing cognitive decline in patients with moderate to severe AD."

Researchers have been looking at the mechanism of action that crocin may take in the brain. During the development and progression of Alzheimer's disease, tangles and amyloid plaques aggregate in the brain and destroy brain nerve cell function. One lab study demonstrated crocin has a protective effect on the development of amyloid plaque commonly found with Alzheimer's

It not only inhibits the formation but disrupts current aggregates of amyloid in the brain. Other hallmarks of the disease are the fibril tangles made of tau protein. Another lab study demonstrated crocin had an inhibitory effect on the formation and aggregation of tau protein filaments.

Alzheimer's Disease Linked to Insulin Resistance

The Alzheimer's Association estimates there are more than 6 million people living in the United States who currently have a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. The number is projected to more than double to nearly 13 million by 2050. During 2020, the association estimated Alzheimer's and dementia deaths increased by 16 percent, with one in three seniors dying with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia.

This is estimated to cost the United States \$355 billion in 2021 and may rise as high as \$1.1 trillion by 2050. Besides Alzheimer's disease, diseases such as cardiovascular disease, obesity, and Type 2 diabetes have also been growing significantly in the past several decades.

The interaction between aging and insulin resistance may increase the risk of Alzheimer's disease. Scientists began

looking at Alzheimer's over a decade ago as a form of diabetes that selectively involves the brain. Writing in the Journal of Diabetes Science and Technology, researchers made the case that Alzheimer's could be thought of as Type 3 diabetes.

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"Alzheimer's disease represents a form of diabetes that selectively involves the brain and has molecular and biochemical features that overlap with both Type 1 diabetes mellitus and T2DM [Type 2 diabetes]," they wrote.

By 2015, researchers from Iowa State University found a strong association between an individual's memory function decline and insulin resistance, which added to the growing body of evidence that preventing insulin resistance is an important means of preventing Alzheimer's disease. Auriel Willette, one of the research scientists from the department of food science and human nutrition at Iowa State involved in the study, commented in a press release: "We are terrible at adjusting our behavior based on what might happen in the future."

"That's why people need to know that insulin resistance or related problems with metabolism can have an effect in the here and now on how they think, and it's important to treat."

"For Alzheimer's, it's not just people with Type 2 diabetes. Even people with mild or moderate insulin resistance who don't have Type 2 diabetes might have an increased risk for Alzheimer's disease because they're showing many of the same sorts of brain and memory rela-

In the following years, more evidence has emerged linking insulin resistance with Alzheimer's disease. It's now well established that Type 2 diabetes substantially increases the risk of neurodegenerative dementia—especially Alzheimer's

Scientists continue to analyze the way insulin affects the brain and find it increases the turnover of neurotransmitters and influences the clearance of the hallmarks of Alzheimer's disease—amyloid beta

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Scientists began looking at Alzheimer's as a form of diabetes that selectively involves the brain over a decade ago.

peptide and phosphorylation of tau. Insulin is thought to have an effect on multiple pathways that contribute to neurodegeneration.

Saffron Aids Insulin Sensitivity, **Lowers Blood Glucose**

Saffron contributes to reducing the development and progression of Alzheimer's disease through reducing insulin resistance. In one review of the literature, researchers identified animal studies in which the bioactive compound crocin helps reduce insulin resistance. This happened when the animals were administered dexamethasone or a high fructose diet to induce high blood sugar. One laboratory study suggested saffron may help glucose uptake into the muscle, and when administered with insulin,

also improved insulin sensitivity. Evidence from the cell study suggested that AMP-activated protein kinase (AMPK) is a mechanism

that plays a major role in the effect saffron has on insulin sensitivity in skeletal muscle cells.

Animal studies have also demonstrated that saffron extract can lower blood glucose levels and have a positive effect on complications that result from hyperglycemia. Finally, a paper published in 2018 discussed how it exerted a hypoglycemic effect by "improving

insulin signaling and preventing

Saffron Works as Well as a Drug to Treat ADHD

beta-cell failure."

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a commonly diagnosed neuropsychiatric disorder that affects 5 percent to 10 percent of school-age children, though it remains controversial, with some researchers suggesting there is overdiagnosis, particularly among boys. The children experience a mix of symptoms, from difficulty concentrating and hyperactivity, to mood swings and short attention span.

The standard medical approach is a central nervous system stimulant drug such as methylphenidate (Ritalin). However, as with many medications, it causes significant side effects that impact the child's ability to function, including difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, and

Some children and adults aren't responsive to central nervous system stimulants to treat their symptoms of ADHD. In a six-week, randomized double-blind study, researchers engaged 50 children from age 6 to 17 years who completed the study. They were randomly assigned to receive methylphenidate or saffron capsules to treat their symptoms of ADHD.

The children's behavior was monitored using the Teacher & Parent ADHD Rating Scale, and the researchers found that methylphenidate and saffron had the same effect on ADHD symptoms. In their article published in the Journal of Child

and Adolescent Psychopharmacology, the researchers noted that "short-term therapy with saffron showed the same efficacy compared with methylphenidate," adding that the frequency of the adverse effects was also similar.

They continued: "Taken together, since saffron is a 'putative' antidepressant and antidepressant agents are acceptable for treatment of ADHD, we hypothesized that saffron intake would be of benefit in these patients. In addition, having the ability to affect both monoaminergic and glutamatergic systems also qualify saffron as a possible candidate for the treatment

of ADHD due to malfunction of these

Protective Strategies

circuits in this disorder."

Against Alzheimer's Disease Research evidence has demonstrated there are several factors that impact the development and progression of Alzheimer's disease. This means there are several different strategies you can use to help protect your brain health and reduce your risk. I have written about many of these strategies, and many of them involve your nutritional habits.

As discussed earlier, there is a significant link between insulin resistance in the brain, (Type 3 diabetes), and the development of Alzheimer's disease. You can reduce your risk by avoiding net carbohydrates, processed foods, and sugars that spike your blood glucose and negatively impact your mitochondrial function. Following a cyclical ketogenic diet with intermittent fasting also has a powerful effect on your metabolism.

Impact of Single Dietary Changes Research studies have looked at the effect a singular dietary change has on the development of Alzheimer's disease. One of those is the neuroprotective effect that long-term coffee drinkers experience. In a previous article—"Can Coffee Reduce Your Risk of Alzheimer's Disease?"—I discussed evidence suggesting that

drinking coffee can lower your risk and

reduce your overall cognitive decline.

Another dietary change looked at is the impact of sulforaphane, an important compound found in cruciferous vegetables, especially broccoli and broccoli sprouts. Sulforaphane has a significantly beneficial effect on the brain as demonstrated in an initial study in patients with schizophrenia and an Alzheimer's animal study. Evidence from animal models demonstrates that sulforaphane clears the accumulation of amyloid-beta and tau

and improves memory deficits.

While scientists still have a lot to learn about the central nervous system and neurodegenerative diseases, it's apparent from recent evidence that the decisions you make today can have a significant effect on your potential risk for developing diseases. I encourage you to take simple steps that can have long-term results and to share the information you learn here with your friends and family.



Saffron has historically been used in Persian traditional medicine for the treatment of memory problems

For links to studies mentioned in this article, please see the article online at TheEpochTimes.com

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 iealth, 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

Foods that Calm Your Nerves

Eat and drink yourself to a better state of mind with these healthy helpers

DEBORAH MITCHELL

Many of us operate in high gear much of the day, putting out small (and large) fires, juggling schedules, dealing with traffic, and generally trying to keep our lives (and that of our families) in order. Even when our days and nights aren't speeding along at a high pitch, levels of the stress hormone cortisol can remain elevated because we fail to effectively manage stress and return to a state of tranquility.

High cortisol levels raise the risk of several health dangers. One is that it triggers Asparagus food cravings, which can send us dashing to the pantry for chips and cookies. That same cortisol can also prompt an enzyme in fat cells to transform cortisone into more cortisol. The fat cells in the abdomen have more cortisol receptors than do regular fat cells, which means high cortisol can Avocados translate into more belly fat, which, in turn, raises the risk of diabetes and heart

Certain foods can help restore calm in your life. I'm not talking about comfort foods, which we turn to when we need emotional numbing and that provide only a fleeting sense of peace. In fact, we often feel guilty or angry with ourselves after cell-damaging free

downing a pint of ice cream, so it's hardly worth the calories.

What I'm talking about are foods that have the ability to calm you because of their nutritional content (e.g., folate, which is a super stress reducer) or the steady energy they provide. These are balancing foods that can assist in relieving stress and restoring internal equilibrium.

So if you're looking for some extra calm, eat these foods as often as possible and find some creative ways to enjoy them even more.

These noble stalks are rich in folate. A study of 2608 adults found that people who ate the most foods high in folate had a lower risk of depression than those who consumed the least amount.

Not only do avocados have more folate than any other fruit, but they also contain healthy fats and potent antioxidants such as glutathione, lutein, beta-carotene, and vitamin E, which fight

Berries are a super source of vitamin C, which has a long history as a stress reducer.

radicals. Alas, they are also a bit high in calories, but even a few slices in a salad (leafy greens—more calming foods!) or in a sandwich are all you need.

Berries

Berries are a super source of vitamin C, which has a long history as a stress reducer. In one double-blind, placebo-controlled study, 500 mg of vitamin C was found to reduce anxiety in high school students. Another study found that vitamin C was effective in reducing anxiety in people with Type 2 diabetes.

Chamomile Tea

This herbal tea is a tried, true, and tested way to help achieve a sense of calm. Two studies from the University of Pennsylvania study help illustrate this benefit. In the original 2009 study, 57 adults with anxiety or anxiety and depression were given either

> for eight weeks, and there was a clear anti-anxiety benefit seen in those who took the chamomile. In a 2012 follow-up study, researchers determined that chamomile also pro-

chamomile extract or placebo

reducing anxiety. You can enjoy chamomile tea by pouring eight ounces of boiling water over two to

vided an antidepressant benefit along with

three heaping tablespoons of dried chamomile (or buy chamomile in tea bags) and steep for 10 minutes. Chamomile tea is also great served over ice.

Enjoy a bowl of oatmeal with a handful of berries and you'll have double the soothing power.

Dark Chocolate You may have breathed a sigh of relief when

you came to this food. It turns out that dark chocolate is more than a comfort food; it can boost serotonin levels as well as reduce blood pressure and provide a significant amount of antioxidants in the form of flavonols and polyphenols. Moderation is the key when it comes to chocolate, however, so be sure to indulge in small amounts infrequently.

Fermented Foods

A healthy gut can mean a healthier and calmer brain. That's because there's a direct connection (brain-gut axis) between these two regions of the body. Therefore, fermented foods that contain reliable sources of beneficial bacteria (probiotics)

can have a direct impact on brain chemistry via your vagus nerve. In fact, a September 2016 review from Canada noted "apparent psychological benefits from probiotic supplementation." Be sure to choose foods with verifiable amounts of probiotics or even better, make your own fermented veggies, kefir, sauerkraut, and yogurt.

Leafy Greens

Kale, spinach, Swiss chard, mustard greens, and other leafy greens are excellent sources of folate and magnesium, both calming nutrients. If you make a salad with leafy greens, asparagus, and a few slices of avocado, you'll have a super stress-reducing entree on your hands.

Oatmeal

One might say that oatmeal reduces stress in two ways. First, it's inexpensive and easy to make, so you don't spend a lot of prep time. Second, it prompts your brain to make the calming neurotransmitter called serotonin. Enjoy a bowl of oatmeal with a handful of berries and you'll have double the soothing power.

Nuts and Seeds

Chia, sunflower, flax, hemp, and sesame seeds provide lots of magnesium, which is a precursor for serotonin. Research also shows that a magnesium deficiency is associated with anxiety, depression, and panic attacks. For example, a study in Nutrition



Chamomile tea is also great served over ice.

Neuroscience found that taking magnesium was associated with lower symptoms of depression. Another study among 5,708 adults showed a relationship between magnesium intake and depression. Toss some seeds into your leafy greens salad, stir them into your oatmeal, blend them in your smoothie, and enjoy them as a snack. Nuts also contain magnesium and healthy fats that can help maintain calm as well.

For links to studies mentioned in this article, please see the article online at TheEpochTimes.com

Deborah Mitchell is a freelance health writer who is passionate about animals and the environment. She has authored, co-authored, and written more than 50 books and thousands of articles on a wide range of topics. This article was originally published on NaturallySavvy.com

How stress, fear, and denial can hurt our health and our bottom line

Continued from Page 9

While some of Watson's clients lack basic financial literacy, several come from a background in finance. But this knowledge still doesn't save them from compulsive overspending.

"It doesn't matter if you make 30 grand a year or 500 grand a year," Watson said. "If you're spending more than you earn, it's never going to get better. It's only going to spiral further and further out of control."

According to Watson, the vast majority of the financial problems people struggle with stem not from numbers, but from emotions. It can be hard to make ends meet, but it becomes even harder when so much of your income goes toward things like stress relief or maintaining an image.

"I have clients who live in very nice apartments, but in everything else, they're living way below what they think they deserve," Watson said. "They can't afford to go out to eat or take a vacation. They can't go to a friend's wedding without putting it on a card."

Like most of our stubborn, ingrained behaviors, people often develop dysfunctional ideas about money in their childhood. For some, it comes from growing up poor and feeling deprived. For others who got anything they wanted as a child, they may end up with an inflated sense of selfworth, or develop a notion that material objects are a stand-in for love. Whatever the financial backstory, many of these individuals turn into adults who spend way beyond their means in an attempt to feel better about themselves.

Like most of our stubborn, ingrained behaviors, people often develop dysfunctional ideas about money in their childhood.

"Especially for fathers or men who are in relationships, it's almost as if they view finances as a scorecard," Watson said. "They think that if you can't give the things to your wife and kids that you want to, it feels like they're losing the game."

Driven to Spend

Part of our relationship with money is formed by watching how our parents handled their finances. Another part is shaped by the conflicting cultural messages we

confront. The love of money is said to be the root of all evil, and yet we celebrate and yearn for wealth. We're advised to save, and yet we're constantly urged to spend. Add all these aspects together, and it's

clear why finances can be such a huge stress. According to the American Psychological Association's annual Stress in America surveys, money is a longstanding source of stress. Pandemic aside, in 2020, 64 percent of Americans said they money was a significant source of stress in their life. Ironically, many of us combat this stress with retail therapy: buying things we don't need with money we don't have in order to

Financial adviser Amy Keller says most of us seek an occasional treat. The problem comes when we don't realize how close those intervals are. Doing something nice for yourself every once in a while can be part of good self-care, but splurging several times a month as a way to cope with life really adds up.

lift our spirits.

Keller says that if there is a sale or deal attached to the treat, we feel even more justified in taking it, despite looming financial burdens just over the horizon.

"A young woman was just telling me that she and her husband want to have a baby soon, and they want to buy a house," Keller said. "Her friend offered her a great trip opportunity to Italy. She said, 'It's just so



To avoid the emotional impulses that creep into our spending decisions, it is important to look inside and become self aware.

We are compelled to shop by a mix of messages that bombard us daily, but the relief we seek isn't on store



cheap. How can I say no?' I said, 'Because you just told me two things that are more important than the trip to Italy. I don't care what a deal it is."

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It's fun to imagine how nice life would be if money was no object. But in reality, it's a hassle to get, and you always require a steady supply of it coming in.

"Somebody else has to give it to you, which can make it a little unsettling because you have to hope that it comes through," Keller said. "You're at the mercy of this, and if it doesn't come through, it's a big deal." People have been forced to face these

concerns since the currency was invented. But Keller says that today we must face two relatively new forces that constantly beckon us to give up the money we work so hard to make.

The first is easy credit. Today, you can casually blow through thousands of borrowed dollars. But if you can't pay it off right away, the immediate consequences don't seem so bad.

"This wasn't true in our grandparents' generation," Keller said. "Today, when people have credit card debt, there is no repo man who comes to the door with a rifle. It's a far-away punishment. It's not fun, but you have a lot of time to pay it off." The other force that urges us to buy like never before is the consumerist paradise we inhabit. At no point in human history has there been so many spending oppor-

tunities in such close reach.

Credit

the illusion that

Online shopping takes these forces to the next level. Our favorite stores send texts and emails alerting us to their latest sales and reminding us that we need to treat ourselves. Once we click our way to the site, the purchase is virtually painless. Combine that with data tracking and collusion between tech giants and retailers, and the algorithms sending you those prompts are

"They make it so easy," said Keller. "Websites save your credit card information. You don't have to feel the pain of having to decide. You don't have to pull out your credit card and go through the work of typing it all in. Amazon has a one-click feature."

Compare this to the not-so-distant past, where what you bought was strictly limited to how much cash you carried. If something cost more than what you had on hand, you were forced to get more, or simply decide it wasn't worth the trouble and go without.

A lot of those barriers have nearly evapo-

rated today, and for people who have little money or financial experience, it can spell big trouble. Watson says that students who take out loans to pay for college essentially sign up for a mortgage, but they have no idea what they're getting into until it's too

"It used to be when you were going to buy

a house, it would take a few months to get the closing. You would go through all this paperwork to make sure you could afford it," Watson said. "With college loans, a lot of people didn't really know what it was going to cost until after they graduated." There is no shortage of student debt horeven more able to trigger an impulse buy. ror stories, but Watson believes some have

a bright side. He says the experience can give many millennials a financial wake-up call to get their act together. "Some stick their head in the sand further

and get in more trouble, but a lot of them are starting to wake up and realize: I was never taught this. I need to figure out how to do this," Watson said.

Make Money Real Again

When money worries weigh us down, we dream of striking it rich. But a bigger bank account is no guarantee that our money worries weigh us down, we dream of striking it rich. But a bigger bank account is no guarantee that our money

When money

problems will

lope full of cash, it won't do much if you don't change your mindset around money.

problems will vanish.

NDAB CREATIVITY/SHUTTERSTOCK

Why do a third of lottery winners end up declaring bankruptcy within just a few years of their windfall? Perhaps it's because, in addition to all the mandatory bills we have to pay, we're also trying to buy off a void inside us.

This is why it can be so hard to help someone cut back on their spending. Even if they're flat broke, they're more likely to be insulted than inspired if you tell them they need better financial management skills.

According to Watson, the first step in putting your finances in order is to take an honest, sober look at what you're working with: What do you make? What do you owe? What sacrifices do you need to make to pay off your debt or reach some other financial goal? Unresolved emotions interfere with this process.

"When you're confused, angry, and scared, you're not really thinking rationally. Get to a point where you can refocus. Sit down and really see your financial situation," he said.

To combat the impulse to buy the treats and trinkets that can set us back, Keller urges that we learn to make money more tangible. Give more thought than a click or a card swipe to the purchases you make. Insist on only using cash if you have to. Do whatever it takes to make the consequences of spending more clear.

"When people have trouble with money I tell them to go the old fashioned route of putting cash in envelopes: One for groceries, another for utilities, another for mortgage or rent, another for fun," Keller said "When you see the cash dwindling you'll think, 'Oh my gosh, I only have 25 dollars to last until Friday. How will I make this happen?"

To avoid the emotional impulses that creep into our spending decisions, it is important to look inside and become self

Finally, learn to set goals that bring real prosperity. Once you can see a solid financial future over the horizon, you won't be so tempted by the frivolous purchases that sabotage it. You'll also be more likely to keep track of where your money is going. Instead of chasing fantasies about be-

coming rich overnight, aim for making the most of what you have right now. See the value of the money you make, and save what you can for the future.

"What happens with life after debt? Once the student loans are paid up, what are you going to do with that extra 300 bucks a month?" Watson asks. "You're building that goal and desire. It's not that you want to be a millionaire. It's that you want to get better at this, and feel confident in yourself about your finances."



ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

Even if you are given an enve-

One Tiny Life Adjustment Can Reduce Depression Risk

Researchers found there's an easy step we can all take to help prevent depression

HANNAH COX

In any given year, one in five Americans will have a diagnosable mental health condition, and 2020 and 2021 were anything but "any given years."

Research continues to pour in showing an increase in mental health problems from the COVID-19 pandemic (and government policies resulting from it). One medical study found that depression symptoms were three times higher than before the pandemic. A separate survey conducted by the CDC and Census Bureau found that one-third of Americans now show symptoms of anxiety, depression, or both.

Left untreated, depression exacts a severe toll on our communities, economy, and daily lives. In some ways, it's as costly as heart disease or AIDS, costing over \$51 billion in work absenteeism and lost productivity, and another \$26 billion in direct treatment.

Fortunately, new research shows there's an easy step we can all take to help prevent depression. Go to sleep and wake an hour earlier.

That's right, just one hour of sleep re-

duces a person's risk of major depression by a whopping 23 percent.

The study, conducted by researchers from Harvard, MIT, and the University of Colorado Boulder, studied 840,000 individuals, and its findings are some of the strongest evidence that a person's sleep schedule influences depression risk.

"We have known for some time that there is a relationship between sleep timing and mood, but a question we often hear from clinicians is: How much earlier do we need to shift people to see a benefit?" said Celine Vetter, assistant professor of integrative physiology at CU Boulder. "We found that even one-hour earlier sleep timing is associated with significantly lower risk of depression."

The discovery is especially important as the increase in remote-working schedules has led many to sleep in later, which could have important implications for their mental health.

It's also important because sleep shifting is a cheap and readily accessible option for treatment.

Americans face many barriers to mental health care. First and foremost, it's expensive. An hour-long therapy session



Seek a sunrise to brighten your mood.

costs between \$65 and \$250 per session without insurance. Government policies affecting the insurance market have led to many therapists not accepting insurance at all. Furthermore, a more severe mental health diagnosis can be even more costly. Patients with severe depression who receive medical care spend nearly \$11,000 a year on average, according to the nonprofit One Mind at Work.

The expense, coupled with a shortage in providers as well as medical "deserts" throughout large parts of the United States, lead many to forgo treatment altogether. According to the National Council on Behavioral Health, 56 percent of patients want to access a mental health provider but face barriers.

Those barriers were increased during the pandemic as facilities were shut down and non-COVID-19 patients were denied care. The numbers have already begun emerging that show that lockdowns have led to greater drug use, youth suicides, and increases in depression and anxiety.

When one is struggling with depression, it's especially hard to overcome external barriers to care. Making a

phone call can feel like climbing a mountain, and if you're rejected, it can be all but impossible to summon the energy to keep looking and asking for help. But this new research shows that individuals have the ability to take charge of their own circumstances by making small, daily changes that can help them fight their disease.

Yes, you may face additional burdens in your daily life that others don't. But it's still your responsibility to confront them, work through them, and move forward.

Alice Walker, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel "The Color Purple," famously said, "People give up their power by thinking they don't have any." People often forget that they have power within themselves to confront their problems and in turn, seek protection from other external, earthly things—namely

the government or their leaders. But this cycle produces dependency, not empowerment, which is not the life we as individuals were intended for.

In the 1850 book "The Law," by Frédéric Bastiat, he says, "Life, faculties, production—in other words, individuality, liberty, property—this is man. And in spite of the cunning of artful political leaders, these three gifts from God precede all human legislation, and are superior to it."

When dealing with mental health issues as-full disclosure-I do, an important guiding principle is self-responsibility. Yes, you may face additional burdens in your daily life that others don't. But it's still your responsibility to confront them, work through them, and move forward. Ultimately, your mental health is your responsibility, and no one can do that work for you.

This same principle can be applied more broadly to those without mental health issues too. Yes, there may be circumstances that are unjust or unpleasant, yes we may have barriers placed on our paths that are outside our control (especially by the government). But we can control how we face (and hopefully overcome) those circumstances.

We can't turn back the clocks on all that has happened over the past year and a half, but if we turn the alarm clock one hour back, we just might be a step closer to regaining control of our health.



WISE HABITS

Undone: How to Change Our Procrastination Patterns

Get comfortable being uncomfortable and you will be able to unravel your procrastination pattern

LEO BABAUTA

rocrastination starts from avoiding something out of fear. Then it becomes a pattern that hardens into a habit. We reinforce this procrastination habit through years of practice—and it hurts us in so

The procrastination habit can affect all areas of life, leading us to avoid taking concrete actions that improve our situation:

- Dealing with our finances head-on
- Establishing healthy habits (exercise, diet, regular checkups)
- Maintaining healthy relationships (avoiding difficult conversations)
- Creating meaningful work
- Decluttering and simplifying
- Getting to places on time
- Learning new things

Getting perspective on your old patterns is hugely valuable in itself.

And much more. Those are some of the most obvious examples, but we procrastinate all day long in smaller ways—by checking our phones, email, and favorite websites, by watching the news or TV shows, or by playing games. There's no limit to the number of ways we try to avoid difficulty.

So the question becomes, how do we stop hurting ourselves? How do we start to break down our hardened procrastination habits and create more helpful patterns?

The answer is to start thinking of these hardened patterns as grooves.

The Grooves of Our Habits

When you first procrastinated, you didn't have a hardened pattern. You had a choice. You could do your homework, for example, or you could put it off and do something more fun.

You felt fear or resistance to one task and that made other options more appealing. You chose the easy route, and that felt good in the moment. There was an immediate reward. There would be difficulty later, but that was something to deal with in the future.

Easier choices are usually rewarded with immediate gratification. So by repeating this choice over and over, you start to wear a groove, a familiar pattern, in your mind. After a while, the reward isn't even needed, and the groove becomes so deep that the choice is automatic. And breaking the pattern is much harder.

How do you get out of the grooves you've made? Conscious effort. We have to be willing.

How to Change Your Patterns

The steps to breaking out of a groove are simple, but they require taking action:

Decide That You're Tired of the Groove. The first step is recognizing the old groove isn't serving you. It's hurting you. When you decide you're tired of hurting yourself with

these patterns, you're ready to change. As-

sess whether you're ready right now.

Commit to Conscious Change. When you're ready to stop hurting yourself with the old pattern, make a commitment to practice, and be very conscious about, changing your groove. Making the commitment to someone else, or a small group of friends or family, **Observe the** urges, without judgment.

At any given moment, we can be tempted to pause and distract ourselves.

acting on them, but also without

hardest or most uncomfortable task, to start with. Commit to doing that task for just five minutes. Let Yourself Do Nothing Else, and Watch **Your Patterns**. Sit there and do nothing but that task, or do nothing at all. Notice when you have the urge to switch to something else, to get up and get away. Getting perspective on your old patterns is hugely valuable in itself. Observe the urges, without acting on

these things better.

is a powerful way to commit.

Set Aside Time for Deliberate Practice. You're not going to change your groove haphazardly. You have to practice consciously and with deliberate effort. Set aside a small practice period each dayjust five minutes to start with. I recommend scheduling it for first thing in the morning before you check email or start work. Set up

a reminder to hold yourself accountable.

Set an Intention for Your Practice. Before you start, tap into your reason by remembering why you're practicing. In what ways

is this old habit hurting you in your life? Is

it hurting your career, health, happiness,

relationships, or finances? Is it preventing

you from doing more meaningful work? Set

an intention to practice in order to make

Set Yourself a Task. Pick something you've

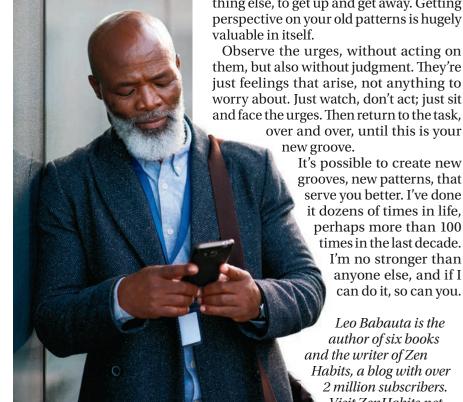
been putting off, but perhaps not your

just feelings that arise, not anything to worry about. Just watch, don't act; just sit and face the urges. Then return to the task, over and over, until this is your new groove. It's possible to create new

> it dozens of times in life, perhaps more than 100 times in the last decade. I'm no stronger than anyone else, and if I

> > can do it, so can you.

Leo Babauta is the author of six books and the writer of Zen Habits, a blog with over 2 million subscribers. Visit ZenHabits.net



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- "When things are chaotic to the extreme, order must be restored."
- "The four books" by Zhu Xi



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