

THE EPOCH TIMES

MIND &

BODY

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Complaining about our woes might make us feel better for a moment, but if we overdo it, we'll feel worse—and so will the people that listen to us.

Does Venting Your Feelings Actually Help?

While letting your negative emotions out may feel good in the moment, science suggests it might make matters worse in the long run

BY JILL SUTTIE

We all get upset from time to time—some of us more than others. Whether we're sad about the loss of a loved one, angry at friends or family, or fearful about the state of the world, it often feels good to let it all out.

That's because sharing our emotions reduces our stress while making us feel closer to the people with which we share and providing a sense of belonging. When we open up our inner selves and people respond with sympathy, we feel seen, understood, and supported.

But "sharing" covers a lot of different modes of communication. Are some modes healthier than others in the long run? Science suggests that it depends, in part, on how you share and how people respond to you. Expressing our emotions often to others may actually make us feel worse, especially if we don't find a way to gain some perspective on why we feel the way we do and take steps to soothe ourselves.

Why We Vent

Our emotions are valuable sources of information,

alerting us that something is wrong in our thinking or environment and needs our attention. Whether we need to confront someone who is abusing us, hide to avoid danger, or seek comfort from friends, feelings like anger, fear, and sadness help us prepare to meet the moment.

But if feelings are internal signals, why do we share them with others?

"We want to connect with other people who can help validate what we're going through, and venting really does a pretty good job at fulfilling that need," said researcher Ethan Kross, author of the book "Chatter." "It feels good to know there's someone there to rely on who cares enough to take time to listen."

Sharing also provides an opportunity to gain insight into what's causing our difficult feelings and avert them in the future. Sometimes, just verbalizing what's bothering us to another person helps to clarify the situation and name the emotions involved. Or, if we get caught in emotional whirlwinds, our confidants can provide new perspectives and offer sound advice, Kross explained.

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FOOD AS MEDICINE

Why Mushrooms Increase Longevity

These unique organisms offer unique compounds and especially high amounts of critical antioxidants

JOSEPH MERCOLA

A recently published literature review found that eating 18 grams of any type of mushroom contributes to reducing your potential risk of cancer. Mushrooms aren't plants or animals. They are umbrella-shaped fruiting bodies of a fungus that typically grows above ground.

Mushrooms produce millions of microscopic spores that are spread by animals or the wind. Once these have germinated in wood or soil, they send out a network of rooting threads called mycelium that can persist for many years.

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Researchers think the high amounts of glutathione and ergothioneine in mushrooms give them anti-aging potential.

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TRUTH and TRADITION

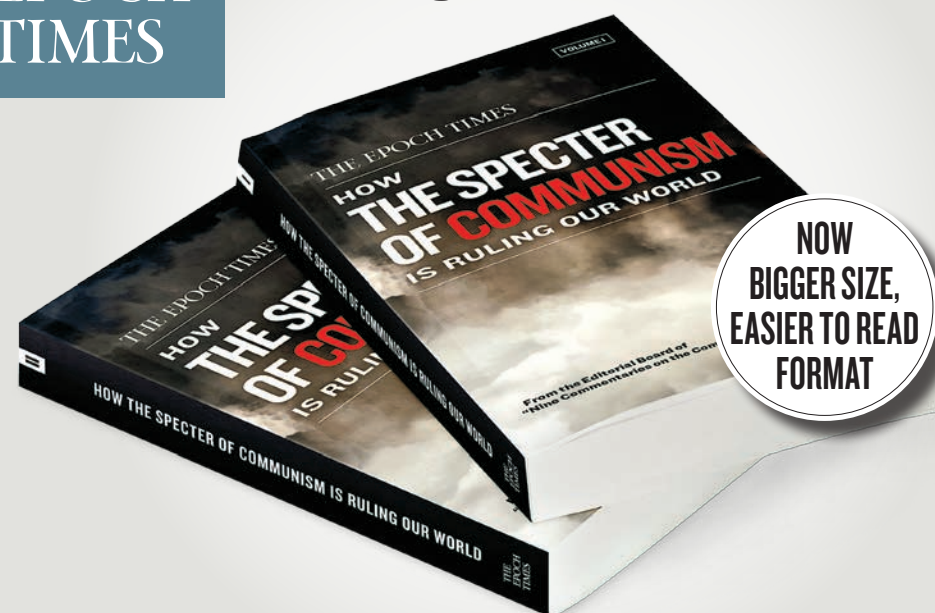
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CHINESE WISDOM FOR SEASONAL LIVING

Summer Vacation Is Almost Here, and It's Time for Fresh Garden Herbs

Exploring Solar Terms: 'Minor Heat' (July 7 to July 21)

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: 'Minor Heat'
2021 Dates: July 7 to July 21

Summer is already well underway, and this means that you should savor the remaining cooler evenings and mornings, because they won't last. After "Minor Heat" passes, even a breeze will feel hot.

As the weather is often very hot and humid during this solar term, most people will take time off from work for a vacation to rest and recuperate.

There are five seasons and five elements recognized in Chinese traditional medicine, and each season has a corresponding element. Spring is associated with wood, summer with fire, late summer with earth, autumn with metal, and winter with water.

Among the five elements, wood generates fire, fire generates earth, earth generates metal, metal generates water, and water generates wood.

Thus the transitions between most of the seasons, such as from spring to wood and from summer to fire, are smooth and natural. But the transition from summer's fire to autumn's metal is unnatural, as fire conquers metal by melting it and forging it.

This unnatural transition is an opportunity. Just as the proper application of fire can purify metal and make it stronger, if we care for our health and follow the correct habits through these hot days, then our bodies can stay healthy well into winter.

Sweat comes easily, and the skin's pores are open at this time, so sweat stays on the surface of our skin, and some people may get cold very easily. The young and the elderly should be careful to stay hydrated and avoid the heat when possible.

Gion Festival is one of the largest festivals in Japan, and it takes place every July, usually between July 17 and July 24. But in recent years, there were events across the whole month of July. The main idea behind the festival is for the purification and the pacification of epidemic diseases or plagues. Some private gardens or houses, especially near

the garment business district, may be opened to the public during the festival. It's a great opportunity to have a look at these beautiful settings and enjoy classical Japanese culture.

The largest amount of rainfall among 24 solar terms is during Minor Heat. It isn't so comfortable because the weather is both hot and humid.

8 Ways to Live in Harmony With 'Minor Heat'

1. Use fresh herbs in the diet, such as salad, slow-cooked meat and vegetables, or tea. Fresh garden herbs such as peppermint, rosemary, cilantro, basil, perilla, chives, etc., are all good to improve digestion, clean your blood, and keep your energy balanced.
2. Drink natural spring water regularly, but not too much at one time.
3. Don't eat very cold or chilled foods, as these reduce the yang energy that the body needs to get through the coming autumn and winter.
4. Regulate the amount of food you consume. Too much or too little can burden the body.
5. Coffee, a diuretic, can help to flush out heat and excess water retention.
6. A foot massage or meditation can help to adjust and rebalance the body.
7. For those who often have cold hands in the winter, add some organic ginger to your tea, or enjoy ginger with your food.
8. Don't avoid sweating, and especially don't keep yourself inside air-conditioned rooms all the time. Sweating will cleanse your body and pores, and reduce heat from inside-out naturally. Too strong or too sudden of a temperature change closes your pores and seals all the humidity and heat inside your organs and channels. That's one of the major reasons for disease according to traditional Chinese medicine.



For those who often have cold hands in the winter, add some organic ginger to your tea, or enjoy ginger with your food.

Seasonal Foods

At this time, beneficial foods include cucumber, zucchini, watermelon, rockmelon, honey melon, dew melon, bitter melon, winter melon, plum, cherry, green bean, Job's tears, green tea, peppermint, lotus seed, white fish, tofu, honeysuckle, and chamomile tea.

Epoch Times contributor Moreen Liao is a descendant of four generations of traditional Chinese medicine doctors. She's 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. Visit LiaoMoreen.com



Fresh garden herbs such as peppermint, rosemary, cilantro, basil, perilla, and chives are all good to improve digestion, clean the blood, and keep the energy balanced.



Singing has profound therapeutic benefits. It can bring people together, calm anxiety, and exercise the lungs to help people recover from respiratory illness.

A Break From Breathlessness

How singing helped me through long COVID

LYDIA ZURAW

Singing was the only time I felt in control of my lungs and, paradoxically, able to forget about them.

It was October, and my shortness of breath had worsened after weeks of teasing improvement. I felt breathless walking or resting, lying down or sitting, working or watching Netflix, talking or silently meditating—but not while singing.

Since my likely COVID-19 infection last June, I've grown familiar with the discomfort and frustration of feeling as if my body isn't getting all the air that it needs. I've also come to deeply appreciate the moments when my breathing returns to its autonomous function and takes up no portion of my consciousness.

My early symptoms a year ago were fairly typical for COVID-19: sore throat, headache, fatigue, and shortness of breath.

Although I never tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, some of my doctors believe that I was infected. I also suspect it, given that I'm still dealing with symptoms a year later.

Music has always been part of my life, including through the pandemic. I began classical violin lessons at age 5, leaving them behind for folk music six years later. I

longed to be part of the various folk music traditions that my older sister was playing on the piano and hammered dulcimer. I joined my first choir at age 12, which spoiled me with a repertoire of songs ranging from the world over. As an adult, I've done my best to satisfy ethnomusical proclivities with workshops, song-sharing events, and jam sessions, but I haven't regularly sung with a choir since college. The pandemic provided a new opportunity: a "cross-countries" virtual choir. From September 2020 through April 2021, we met one weekend per month to learn a Yoruba play song from Nigeria, a song from the Sevdalinka tradition in Bosnia and Herzegovina, an Appalachian standard, a folksong from the Gilan province of Iran, and many more.

Quebec was



Music helps combat the anxiety and stress caused by a lack of socialization. RAOUL CROES/UNSPASH

Music therapists say it's difficult to separate the entwined physical and psychological benefits of their work because of how connected the mind and body are.



one of our "destinations" in October, and all of the stress melted from my body the first time I heard "Mes chers amis, je vous invite." The dissonant harmonies of the mournful French Canadian drinking song may not relax everybody, but they resonated with me so strongly that I started spending much of my free time learning its tricky middle harmony.

I was surprised by how much relief it gave—both physically and emotionally. Even after I'd mastered the notes and memorized the words of that Québécois song, I'd sing through it anytime I needed a break from the shortness of breath.

Longer Breaths, Lower Stress

Long before COVID-19, music therapists had used singing and wind instruments to help patients with respiratory issues like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and asthma.

Longer breaths can help promote relaxation and reduce the body's stress response, said Seneca Block, who oversees most of the music and art therapy programs at University Hospitals health system in northeastern Ohio. This is why practices like yoga and meditation focus so much on breathwork. And the controlled breathing required for singing or playing the harmonica can help a person fully grasp what it means to lengthen exhalation.

"When you breathe into a harmonica ... you're hearing a pitch," said Block, whose team has led harmonica groups for COPD patients. "That's teaching them that that's the marker, so they're doing it right."

People with respiratory issues are sometimes given an "incentive spirometer," a medical device to help them exercise their lungs. Singing therapy works in a similar, but less technical way, with notes that replace a rising and falling ball as the incentive, Block noted.

Breathing incentives with singing and wind instruments have been linked to better sleep, less shortness of breath, and brighter mood, said Joanne Loewy, director of the Louis Armstrong Center for Music and Medicine at Mount Sinai Health System in New York.

Loewy leads a choir of patients recovering from strokes. It can look like any other choir at certain moments.

"But in between the songs, we might focus on the memory," she said. "We're constantly seeking ways to help people stay well with music."

Researchers are beginning to study whether these same therapies can help patients recover from COVID-19 as well.

In early August, about a month into my recovery, I heard about one such program being developed in England called ENO Breathe. In the pilot program, 12 participants learned breathing and singing exercises based on the techniques of professional singers. By the end of the trial, most

participants had reported improvement in their breathlessness and a drop in anxiety.

Having first experienced breathing exercises in choirs, I thought ENO Breathe made sense. Singing warmups can help prepare the body for sustained exhalations. Breathing from the diaphragm—a muscle separating the chest and abdomen—is how singers get more air into their lungs to support the power and length of their notes.

Loewy's team and Mount Sinai's Center for Post-COVID Care plan to launch a year-long study of how weekly virtual group music therapy might improve respiratory symptoms, depression, anxiety, quality of life, fatigue, sleep, and resilience in long-COVID patients with continuing respiratory issues.

The University of Limerick in Ireland is running a similar study, with the aim of retraining the muscles used in breathing.

'Peace in the Chaos'

I turned to music for help in a less clinical capacity, but I'm not the only person with persistent COVID-19 symptoms to do so.

When Danielle Rees, 34, of Tucson, Arizona, learned about a breathwork program used by many other "long haulers," it reminded her of singing. So, she dug out CDs of her high school choir and started singing along, "because it's way more fun than just trying to breathe in and out for 10 minutes."

Singing through an entire song again makes her feel accomplished, as does playing piano, something she hadn't done since grade school.

"When I felt like I wanted to practice piano, I was able to sit down and make that happen," Rees said. "That, for me, was a big sign that my brain was functioning again."

I've heard from other long haulers struggling with cognitive challenges, often referred to as "brain fog," who hope that teaching themselves to play a new musical instrument will help them out of it. Others sing, play instruments, or just listen to music to bring some normalcy back into their lives and help them find solace from the anger and anguish of long COVID.

Music therapists say it's difficult to separate the entwined physical and psychological benefits of their work due to how connected the mind and body are.

Long before COVID-19, music therapists used singing and wind instruments to help patients with respiratory issues.

I don't know whether singing through my shortness of breath last October simply soothed me or actually improved how my lungs functioned. I suspect it helped on both fronts.

Music helps combat the anxiety and stress caused by a lack of socialization, Block said.

"Music, historically, was something that was just always really amazing at bringing people together and kind of creating a social context in and of itself," he said.

Because of internet latencies, syncing voices or musical instruments is practically impossible over Zoom. I spent my virtual choir rehearsals on mute, singing along with an instructor or recording, unable to hear anyone else in the choir doing the same in their own homes.

Over the course of eight months, we recorded ourselves singing what we learned and sent those recordings to the choir leaders, who edited them together. During our last gathering in April, we listened to all of the collaborations in a Zoom concert.

I miss the feeling of first learning a song, when my vocal cords finally notch into the right note and hearing it in the context of the harmonies all around me. I miss the energy you give and take with people around you during a performance.

A virtual choir may not have been the same as an in-person one, but through the isolation, stress, and physical limitation, I was deeply grateful to have had it.

"During these times of great stress and great anxiety, things like music and the arts become even more important to people," Block said. "It helps retain a sense of hope and a sense of peace in the chaos."

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FOOD AS MEDICINE

Why Mushrooms Increase Longevity

These unique organisms offer unique compounds and especially high amounts of critical antioxidants

Continued from Page 1

Mycelium digests the surrounding nutrients externally and then absorbs those nutrients.

Scientists don't believe that all mushroom species have been identified. Neither do they agree on how many species there may be, with estimates ranging from a low of 45,000 cataloged species in 2015 to a high of 1.5 million to 5.1 million yet to be discovered and named. According to a paper in the American Society for Microbiology, in 2017, there were 120,000 identified species, which the researchers estimated may be just 3 percent to 8 percent of the actual total.

In ancient Egypt, mushrooms were thought to bring long life. They have also been used for centuries by Chinese medicine practitioners. The Greek physician Hippocrates used the amadou mushroom for cauterizing wounds and as a potent anti-inflammatory. The first people populating North America used puffball mushrooms to heal wounds.

Despite a long history of medicinal use, Western medicine has only just begun exploring the depth of benefits available from fungi. As people develop methods to test individual compounds, they have discovered that "mushrooms are nature's miniature pharmaceutical factories, rich in a vast array of novel constituents and wide open for exploration," two such researchers wrote in the journal Integrative Medicine.

2 Mushrooms a Day May Lower Your Risk of Cancer

Researchers from Pennsylvania State University performed a literature review and meta-analysis seeking to assess an association between the risk of any type of cancer and mushroom intake. They pulled data gathered from Jan. 1, 1966, to October 31, 2020, and found 17 out of 841 identified studies that met the criteria for inclusion.

Analysis of data from more than 19,500 cancer patients revealed individuals with the highest consumption of mushrooms had the lowest risk of any type of cancer. Importantly, there was substantial variation in the results between studies.

However, researchers also found that the higher consumption of mushrooms was consistently associated with a reduction in risk in cohort studies and case-control studies when compared against those eating the least number of mushrooms.

Interestingly, the scientists found a specific link between high mushroom consumption and low risk of breast cancer, which they wrote may be "due to the small number of studies which examined associations of mushroom intake with other site-specific cancers."

The scientists reported in a statement that those who consumed 18 grams of mushrooms, or about one-eighth to one-fourth cup, daily had a 45 percent reduced risk of cancer. John Richie, one of the researchers at Penn State, commented on the results: "Overall, these findings provide important evidence for the protective effects of mushrooms against cancer. Future studies are needed to better pinpoint the mechanisms involved and specific cancers that may be impacted," he said in a press release.

Another researcher on the team pointed out: "Mushrooms are the highest dietary source of ergothioneine, which is a unique and potent antioxidant and cellular protector. Replenishing antioxidants in the body may help protect against oxidative stress and lower the risk of cancer."

Ergothioneine and Glutathione

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, on average, people eat about three pounds of fresh mushrooms every year and 87 percent of those are grown domestically. Mushrooms have a high nutrient content, providing essential minerals such as manganese, copper, zinc, selenium, calcium, magnesium, and iron.

Compared to their size and weight, they are a rich source of protein and fiber. They are high in potassium and sulfur, as well as many of the B vitamins such as riboflavin, niacin, and pantothenic acid.

Mushroom varieties have antioxidants that other plants or fungi don't possess, such as ergothioneine. One paper in the journal *Molecules* says, "ET [ergothioneine] is concentrated in mitochondria, suggesting a specific role in protecting mitochondrial components, such as DNA, from oxidative damage."

Mushrooms also contain unusually high levels of glutathione, important for the detoxification of heavy metals and other con-

Researchers think mushrooms may be anti-aging because they have so much glutathione and ergothioneine.



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taminants. Glutathione is often described as the "master antioxidant" as it plays a powerful role in reactivating other antioxidants.

Researchers at Penn State University think the high amounts of glutathione and ergothioneine in mushrooms give them anti-aging potential. These two antioxidants can help combat many of the diseases of aging, including cancer, coronary heart disease, and Alzheimer's, they said.

One of those researchers expanded on that point in a release following the publication of a paper in *Food Chemistry*.

"What we found is that, without a doubt, mushrooms are the highest dietary source of these two antioxidants [ergothioneine and glutathione] taken together, and that some types are really packed with both of them," said Robert Beelman, professor emeritus of food science and director of the Penn State Center for Plant and Mushroom Products for Health.

"There's a theory—the free radical theory of aging—that's been around for a long time that says when we oxidize our food to produce energy there's a number of free radicals that are produced that are side products of that action and many of these are quite toxic."

Beelman said the body uses mechanisms such as ergothioneine and glutathione to control these free radicals, but eventually, free radicals accrue and cause damage associated with diseases such as cancer and Alzheimer's.

The current study analyzed the potential relationship between mushrooms and cancer. However, Beelman has focused on the relationship with neurodegenerative conditions, pointing out that in countries such as France and Italy, where people have more ergothioneine in their diet, they have lower incidences of neurodegenerative diseases. Meanwhile, in the United States, where people have less ergothioneine in their diet, there are higher rates of diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

"Now, whether that's just a correlation or causative, we don't know. But, it's something to look into, especially because the difference between the countries with low rates of neurodegenerative diseases is about three milligrams per day, which is about five button mushrooms each day," said Beelman.

Shiitake Mushrooms

One way many people get those health-promoting benefits is from consuming shiitake mushrooms. These are popular and versatile, a great addition in a variety of dishes. They have a rich buttery flavor, which becomes smoky when the mushrooms are dried. They're loaded with vitamins, minerals, and compounds that are remarkably beneficial for your health, even though they are close to 90 percent water.

When dried, mushrooms offer the greatest nutritional value as they are more concentrated. One nutrient is lentinan, which is an active polysaccharide that appears to enhance T helper cell function and stimulate interferon, interleukin, and normal killer cells.

One study in 2015 revealed that whole dried shiitake mushrooms could improve human immune function. The researchers engaged 52 healthy adults who ate up to 10 grams of mushrooms each day for four weeks.

At the end of the study, the scientists found an increase in the proliferation of T-cells and natural killer cells and a greater ability to activate receptors. Biomarkers suggested the mushrooms improved gut immunity and reduced inflammation.

Compounds in shiitake mushrooms have been found to effectively treat or protect against cancer, infectious diseases, inflammation, and heart and liver problems.

Another study published in *Nutrition Reviews* showed that the lentinan and several beta-glucans in shiitake mushrooms exhibited "marked anticarcinogenic activity, immunity-stimulating effects and may participate in physiological processes related to the metabolism of fats in the human body."

Mushrooms Fight Cognitive Decline

Including mushrooms in your daily diet may also help keep your cognitive functioning intact. Research published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* found adults who routinely ate two portions or more of mushrooms a week reduced their odds of mild cognitive impairment by 43 percent.

This was independent of confounding factors such as heart disease, high blood pressure, age, and alcohol and cigarette consumption. The researchers defined one portion as three-quarters of a cup of cooked mushrooms. This was meant as a guideline since the results demonstrated that even a small portion each week could be beneficial.

Ultimately, the researchers concluded the reason the participants who ate two servings of mushrooms each week had a reduction in mild cognitive impairment was the result of ergothioneine, found in each of the varieties of mushrooms included in the study.

Choose Organic or Grow Your Own

I highly recommend adding mushrooms to your diet as they are an excellent addition to any salad and go great with all kinds of grass-fed meat and wild-caught fish. However, it is important to choose organically grown mushrooms as the fungi easily absorb air and soil contaminants.

Growing your own mushrooms is an excellent option and likely a far safer alternative than foraging for wild mushrooms. Although foraging may sound like fun, it's vital to recognize the need for caution. Unfortunately, there are no simple rules to distinguish the difference between toxic and edible mushrooms. And, in more than 95 percent of cases in which toxicities were reported, amateur mushroom hunters had misidentified a poisonous mushroom.

The severity of the poisoning can vary, but the most toxic effects come from mushrooms containing Amanita phalloides. There's no antidote for amatoxin poisoning, so it's essential if you have any reason to suspect someone has ingested an amatoxin-containing mushroom you don't wait for symptoms but seek immediate emergency treatment.

There are some medications that may help lessen the severity of the poison, but they aren't always successful. The most famous of the Amanita mushrooms is the lethal death cap mushroom, which may kill more people each year than any other type of mushroom.

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 health, his primary vision is to change the modern health paradigm by providing people with a valuable resource to help them take control of their health. This article was originally published on [Mercola.com](#)

MADE TO MOVE

Train Your Hips for Lifelong Continence

Kegel exercises are not the best way to avoid adult diapers

EILEEN KOPSAFTIS

"Requiring disposable underwear as I age is my personal goal," said no one ever!

For those over the age of 65 and still living at home, more than 50 percent of women and 25 percent of men report urinary incontinence—and this matter is much more serious than just buying disposable underwear. Urinary incontinence has a profound impact on the quality of life of older people, their subjective health status, and levels of depression.

Incontinence also intimately affects the need for care as family members can be challenged to provide proper skin hygiene. That can put them in a situation where they feel they need to put loved ones in facilities.

No one ever set a goal to go to a nursing home either! Just sayin'.

Is incontinence really a rite of passage as you age? Can you not go below ground without having experienced the embarrassment of leaking when you cough? Since we all want to avoid the need for disposable underwear, it is critical to gain an understanding of true pelvic floor function to address this problem effectively.

Kegel Is Just the Beginning of the Story

Many have heard of Kegel exercises.

The main premise of performing Kegel exercises is to consciously squeeze your "bathroom" muscles with the intention of strengthening the sphincter muscles, so unwanted urine leakage doesn't happen. We must be thankful to Dr. Arnold Kegel for bringing much-needed attention to this very private issue that impacts countless lives; yet, these exercises are just the beginning of the story.

Kegel exercises focus on strengthening the urethral sphincter muscles. The urethra is a tube (with an internal and external sphincter) whereby urine exits the body. The internal sphincter is involuntary, which means you have no control over its function. The external sphincter is voluntary, which means it provides conscious control over urine flow and that's the goal with Kegel exercises; to improve this conscious control by strengthening the ability to contract this sphincter.

Your Pelvic Floor Is More Than a Sphincter

A healthy pelvic floor is designed to successfully support the organs positioned above it (bladder, prostate for men, uterus for women, and bowel). A healthy pelvic floor will support a full, heavy bladder without leaking, even when there is no bathroom in sight. The major player providing this support is the levator ani muscle group, which is made up of the puborectalis, pubococcygeus, and iliococcygeus. This muscle group is designed to provide a force forward and upward to support those organs. I won't veer off into the topic of organ prolapse but know this issue is often created by the same impairment, weak pelvic floor muscles.

The main reason Kegel exercises fail to fully restore strength to the pelvic floor is because you can't think about squeezing your levator ani muscle and improve its ability to support all those organs including a full, heavy bladder. It is designed to work subconsciously, without thinking about it.

The bottom line is you can consciously squeeze your external sphincter till the cows come home but if your levator ani muscle isn't strong enough to support the weight of your bladder as it fills with urine, you will be buying disposable underwear.

How Your Hips Work to Strengthen Your Pelvic Floor

Being sedentary is directly related to increased prevalence of incontinence because sitting on our backsides for hours will weaken our hips and, ultimately, our pelvic floor. This is a main reason being wheelchair-bound leads to incontinence. Yes, a person can have incontinence because of nerve damage or trauma, a chronic degenerative or neurological disease, or a medication side effect; yet, weak pelvic floor muscles are a very common culprit.

If you look at the muscles in the pel-



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If you want to avoid leaks as you age, you need to move your body to stimulate the muscles that keep your bladder in check, without you even thinking about it.

vic floor, you will see the levator ani is connected to a hip muscle called the obturator internus. When it comes to human function, everything is connected to everything else. This hip muscle isn't just responsible for rotating your leg and helping to stabilize your hip joint, but it also stimulates levator ani activity.

Guess what happens if your hips weaken due to injury, or being non-weightbearing from a knee or ankle issue, or from years of prolonged sitting? Your obturator internus stops stimulating your levator ani muscle, and strength in the pelvic floor decreases slowly and steadily. Then one day, without warning, you cough or sneeze or jump down a step and wham—you leak. Or one day, you feel the urge to go to the bathroom and shockingly leak on the way there.

The Best Exercise to Strengthen Your Pelvic Floor

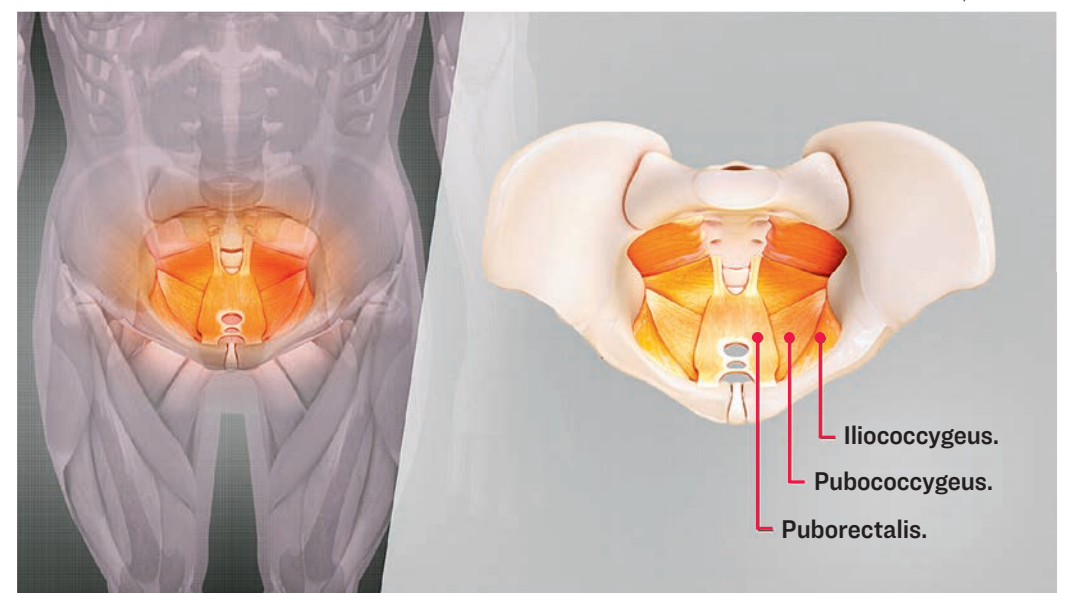
The best exercise to stimulate and strengthen the levator ani muscles is to work the hip rotation muscles in weight bearing. That weight can be your own body. Weight bearing allows you to benefit from something called ground reaction force and gravity as you naturally restore strength in the levator ani muscles. When doing the right training for these muscles, improvements are often seen in just a few weeks. Since the pelvic floor is an important part of the pelvic core, sports performance is also enhanced with this type of focused training.

Of course, it is always a good idea to seek out an expert to be sure you don't hurt yourself or aggravate an existing condition before embarking on a new exercise routine.

Restoring optimal strength to the pelvic floor muscles is necessary to resolve pelvic floor issues. This can't be done with Kegel exercises because these exercises don't account for the truths in human movement. These human movement truths, when followed, provide authentic function that:

- Is natural. We don't lay on a table (as many do with Kegel exercises) when we live real life. We walk, run, climb stairs, and get in and out of cars, etc.
- Complies with gravity and ground reaction force.

Being sedentary is directly related to increased prevalence of incontinence because sitting on our backsides for hours will weaken our hips and, ultimately, our pelvic floor.



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Does Venting Your Feelings Actually Help?

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Unfortunately, this latter part of the equation often gets lost in the shuffle, he noted. “When we get stuck in a venting session, it feels good in the moment, because we’re connecting with other people,” Kross said. “But if all we do is vent, we don’t address our cognitive needs, too. We aren’t able to make sense of what we’re experiencing, to make meaning of it.”

So, while venting may be good for building supportive relationships and provide a positive feeling in the moment, it’s not enough to help us through. If others simply listen and empathize, they may inadvertently extend our emotional difficulties.

The Dark Side of Venting

For many years, psychologists believed that dark emotions, like anger, needed to be released physically. This led to a movement to “let it all out,” with psychologists literally telling people to hit soft objects, like pillows or punching bags, to release pent-up feelings.

However, it turns out that this type of emotional venting likely doesn’t soothe anger as much as augment it. That’s because encouraging people to act out their anger makes them relive it in their bodies, strengthening the neural pathways for anger and making it easier to get angry the next time around. Studies on venting anger—without effective feedback—whether online or verbally, have also found it to be generally unhelpful.

The same is true of grief or anxiety following trauma. While we should, of course, seek support from those around us during difficult times of loss and pain, if we simply

relive our experience without finding some way to soothe ourselves or find meaning, it could extend our suffering.

For some time, people who worked with trauma victims encouraged them to “debrief” afterward, having them talk through what happened to them to ward off post-traumatic stress. But a randomized controlled study found that this didn’t help much, likely because debriefing doesn’t help distance people from their trauma. Similarly, students who vented their anxiety following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks suffered from more anxiety up to four months later than those who didn’t. As the study authors write, their “focus on and venting of emotions was found to be uniquely predictive of longer-term anxiety.”

Venting through social media can do the same thing. In one study, researchers surveyed students attending Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University after mass shootings occurred at each campus to see how venting their grief over social media helped them recover. While students thought that venting was beneficial, their post-traumatic stress and depression scores actually went up the more they vented.

Talking and Listening With Care

Besides making us feel worse, venting can also have a negative effect on our audience.

While supportive friends and family hopefully care enough to listen and sympathize with us, it can be frustrating to sit with someone who vents frequently when that person seems to be wallowing in emotion without learning from their experience. And being around someone stuck

in anger, fear, or sadness cycles can be overwhelming for listeners who may end up “catching” the emotions themselves.

“Repeatedly venting over and over and over again, can create friction in social relationships,” Kross said. “There’s often a limit to how much listeners, your friends, can actually hear.”

I know that I’m guilty of wanting someone to listen to me when I’m upset—and not wanting advice right off the bat. If I’m in the midst of pain, trying to talk me out of my feelings or to offer solutions seems insensitive or even patronizing.

However, Kross doesn’t advocate for that. Instead, there’s an art to being a listener, he said. It takes a combination of empathy or sympathy—and waiting for the right moment before offering perspective.

“People are going to differ, depending on what they’re dealing with, how intense their experiences are,” he said. “Being sensitive to the fact that some people may need more time before they’re ready to transition from venting to thinking is really important.”

Skillful Venting

There is a healthier way to vent, Kross noted. He suggests these guidelines:

Be selective about when you vent. There are a lot of ways to deal with difficult emotions, and not all of them involve other people. Some people can gain perspective on their own, by writing their thoughts down or gaining distance from them through meditation. Kross recommends changing your environment, by adding plants or going outside to beautiful spaces, to help you process emotions and tamp down rumination that might otherwise keep you stuck in an emotional whirlwind.

When you vent to others, prompt them to offer perspective. If you find yourself venting to someone without your emotions dissipating—or possibly getting worse—you may be caught in a cycle of “co-rumination,” a rehashing that can keep you stuck. To get out of that, you can ask the person to step back and help you reframe your experience by asking: “How should I think about this differently?” or “What should I do in this situation?” This will cue them to offer perspective and assure them that you’re looking for something more than a listening ear.

Consider to whom you vent. Before venting to someone, ask yourself, “Did this person really help me the last time I talked to them, or did they just make me feel worse?” If someone is there for you, but doesn’t tend to broaden your perspective, you may just get more stirred up emotionally. Being more deliberate about who you vent to could help you in the long run.

Be careful around online venting. While sharing our emotions online can help us feel better in the moment and identify supportive allies, results can be mixed. For one thing, negative emotions easily spread online, which may create a herd mentality, resulting in bullying or trolling—especially if you identify a particular person as responsible for your feelings. While it’s unclear if venting online is an overall good or bad thing, it may not help you gain the perspective you need to move forward.

Still, all in all, Kross said that venting is a good thing, helping us to cope with difficult feelings. If we can get past the letting off steam part, we can feel better in the long run and keep our relationships strong as well.

“Venting serves some function,” he said. “It has benefits for the self in terms of satisfying our social and emotional needs. We just need to find out what the correct dosage is and make sure to offer to supplement that with cognitive reframing.”



While venting may be good for building supportive relationships and feel good in the moment, it’s not enough to help us through.

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

Does Being Fair Mean Giving Siblings Identical Treatment?

ANTHONY RAO

A mom of two boys recently asked: “I have one son in private school and the other isn’t. Should I explore private schools for the other son, even though, he’s doing great in public school? I want to be fair and offer them equal opportunities for success.”

This question really gets at key issues:

When a child is doing well, thriving, has friends, grades are solid, and most importantly, seems happy, don’t change schools. Think of that old expression, “If it ain’t broke don’t fix it.” In medicine and diagnosing we say it more formally, “First, do no harm.” The more we intervene with good intention, the greater the risk of messing things up.

As your children get older, approaching middle school and beyond, you should wholeheartedly adopt the following definition of fairness: What’s fair isn’t giving them all the same things, but what each of them needs when they need it.

In other words, when kids are very young, it makes sense to break every cookie in two, measure each scoop of ice cream, and buy everybody sneakers at the same time. Once they’re older, their individual differences and individual needs branch out and move on different paths of growth and that’s what should dictate your decisions for giving them what they need to assure them opportunities.

Go with your intuition more as your kids get older, treat them more as the individuals that they are.

Anthony Rao is a nationally known child psychologist. For more than 20 years, he was a psychologist at Boston’s Children’s Hospital and an instructor at Harvard Medical School. He is the co-author of “The Power of Agency: The 7 Principles to Conquer Obstacles, Make Effective Decisions & Create a Life on Your Own Terms.” This article was first published on AnthonyRao.com



PAVEL KOBYS/SHUTTERSTOCK

When kids are very young, it makes sense to break every cookie in two, measure each scoop of ice cream, buy everybody sneakers at same time.

As children grow, their own unique interests and personalities emerge more and more. Responding to those differences is the best way to ensure they thrive.

How to Manage Emotional Eating During the Pandemic

When we use food to distract ourselves from difficult feelings, we overlook the real solution

KATIE PAPO

If you’ve been finding yourself visiting the refrigerator too often during the pandemic, there’s a reason why you’re turning to food—even when you’re not hungry. Eating disorders have surged since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even those without diagnosed eating disorders have noticed that they’re engaging in more frequent emotional eating since the start of the pandemic.

To rid yourself of this destructive habit, it’s important to see emotional eating not as the root problem, but rather as a symptom that will go away on its own once the root problem is resolved.

The root of emotional eating is our inability to properly process emotions. You may have tried common suggestions to resist emotional eating, like taking a relaxing bath, doing an activity to distract yourself, or calling a friend.

While none of this advice is wrong, there’s a deeper layer that’s often missing for people who keep returning to the cookie cupboard. Perhaps you’ve experienced the urge to emotionally eat, and then tried to distract yourself with a walk, only to find that the cravings returned as soon as you got home or even later that night. Why?

When you try to distract yourself from emotional eating without dealing with the emotions themselves, you’re avoiding the problem rather than fixing it. In the example of taking a walk, even if it serves as a temporary distraction, bear in mind that the food itself is already a distraction from your emotions. By adding in yet another distraction—the walk—without addressing the emotions that drove the food cravings in the first place, you’re only adding in more layers of distance from the actual problem.

Emotional eaters heal best when they stop trying to distract themselves or numb their emotions, and instead learn to relate to their emotions more effectively. While on the outside, it may look like the problem is with food, since that’s the coping mechanism you use, it’s important to remember that emotional eating is a result of a mis-handling of emotions.

When you work with your emotions directly and successfully, it eliminates the root desire for emotional eating—as well as other types of numbing. There are many techniques used to deal with emotions without getting consumed by them. Many of these techniques include a core of similar simple steps.

STEP 1 Cultivate Non-Judgmental Awareness

We can’t change the things we don’t notice, which means awareness is always the first step in changing a habit. Have you ever found yourself looking in the refrigerator without realizing how you got there? Or have you eaten cookie after cookie, while barely tasting them because you were thinking about something else?

Mindlessness in our day-to-day behaviors can very easily translate into mindless eating. Awareness is one of the main ingredients of mindfulness, which is the exact antidote to mindlessness.

When you can practice mindful aware-



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Trying to eat our way to comfort is a recipe for ongoing suffering. To move past emotional eating, we need to look inward.

When you can work with your emotions in a productive way, the need to repress, fight, or avoid those emotions disappears—as does emotional eating.

Emotional eating has little to do with food itself, and far more to do with how you handle emotions.



ness toward your behaviors, you’re already well on your way to behavior change—especially when you can observe your behaviors through a non-judgmental lens. You’re then more likely to approach your habits more objectively, rather than emotionally. This will allow you to make changes in a more peaceful manner.

STEP 2 Allow Emotions and Feelings to Exist

As the old saying goes: “What you resist persists.” The more energy we give to our emotions, the more powerful they feel. If you’re afraid of your emotions, you’ll exert energy to avoid them or push them away. But those are the exact habits that’ll make your emotions feel even more powerful and overwhelming. When you can approach them with a peaceful mind—without fear—they become easier to deal with.

The next time you notice yourself feeling emotional, label the emotion that you’re experiencing. Practice allowing it to be there, knowing that it will change eventually. Practice being calm by relaxing your body and breathing, even in the presence of an unpleasant emotion. The more you can become comfortable feeling uncomfortable, the less you’ll try to avoid your emotions by eating.

STEP 3 Determine Your True Need

Emotional eaters have a tremendous advantage, because the moment you feel yourself wanting to emotionally eat, that’s the signal that you have a need that isn’t being met. This means you can use that signal to your advantage, by asking yourself what you really need in that moment, and then helping yourself meet that need in any amount.

One of our clients experienced this recently. After a stressful afternoon at work, she found herself mindlessly eating a bag of chips. As soon as she became aware of what she was doing, she took a moment to pause, so that she could determine her true need. Without judging herself for

turning to food, she paused to bring herself back to the present moment. Once she felt calm, she asked herself: “What do I truly need right now?”

She quickly discovered that she needed a break from work, and was using eating as that break, even though she wasn’t hungry. She decided that a walk would serve her better, so she stepped outside to truly enjoy the fresh air and get herself out of her head and into her body. During her walk, she focused on her breathing and body first, to relax herself. Then she enjoyed the scenery, and let it truly be the break from her workday that she needed.

When she listened to her emotions and gave herself what she needed, the desire to emotionally eat naturally fell away.

Notice how even though her conclusion was to go for a walk, it wasn’t the walk itself that solved the problem. Rather, it was her ability to become aware, pause, and ask herself what she truly needed. If someone were to ignore those three steps and just use a walk as a distraction, they may not get the same promising results that she did.

Emotional eating has little to do with food itself, and far more to do with how you handle emotions. When you can work with your emotions in a productive way, the need to repress, fight, or avoid those emotions disappears—as does emotional eating.

Today, if you have a craving to emotionally eat, let it be an opportunity to practice healing your relationship with your emotions. Once you master this, it won’t matter if there’s a hard day at work or a pandemic—you’ll have the tools to handle it and emerge victoriously.

Katie Papo has helped people from around the world end decades of disordered eating and heal their relationship with food, and specializes in compulsive binge eating and food addiction. Join her email list for support, follow her podcast for weekly talks, or visit her website for more information at katiepapo.com

Can Fish Oil Help Improve Your Mood?

Study participants given Omega-3 supplements reported fewer symptoms associated with low mood.

Diets high in omega-3 are associated with a host of health benefits

MAT LECOMPTE

New research led by King’s College London has found that supplementing with omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA may be able to alleviate depression and improve mood.

Mental health and heart health are associated, so this finding has the potential to provide a multitude of health benefits. Poor mood is associated with heart disease in several ways, and the two conditions can feed into each other in a harmful manner. The new study examined omega-3’s impact on inflammation. Previous work has indicated that people with depression have elevated levels of inflammation.

This small study focused on 22 people. Participants were given one of two omega-3 supplements once per day for 12 weeks. They got either three grams of EPA or 1.4 grams of DHA.

Receiving each omega-3 fatty acid was associated with less inflammation and significant improvements in low mood symptoms. The EPA group reported a 64 percent drop in symptoms, while the

DHA group reported 71 percent fewer symptoms.

The results, however, don’t prove cause and effect.

Omega-3 fatty acids DHA and EPA are found in fatty fish like salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring, and sardines. The amount used in the study, however, could only be reached by taking high-concentration supplements. Eating fish alone won’t have the same effect.

Taking care of your mental health can have major benefits for physical health, and vice versa. Although the study doesn’t definitively draw a connection between omega-3 fatty acids and inflammation, the theory of managing inflammation is associated with a host of health benefits.

Diets high in omega-3 are associated with several health benefits, as indicated by numerous studies highlighting Mediterranean-style diets.

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

CDC Reports 51 Percent Increase in Suicide Attempts Among Teen Girls

Newly released data reveals surge in self-harm and mental health hospitalizations among teens in 2020

BRETT COOPER

Beth Palmer was 17 and dreaming of becoming a singer in March 2020 when the United Kingdom went into lockdown because of COVID-19. One month later, she was dead.

"She was a wonderful, wonderful daughter. She was just funny, she lit up the room," said Mike Palmer, Beth's father. "She was so affectionate and loving as well. She basically had the world at her feet. She had everything, everything to live for."

Palmer didn't die of COVID-19. She took her own life.

An aspiring singer and vocal student at the Access Creative College in Manchester, Palmer crumbled in isolation. Her family states that she had previously shown no signs of struggling with her mental health. However, she claimed the mandated stay-at-home order felt like centuries.

"She couldn't finish college, she couldn't go out and see her friends. She felt as though this three-month lockdown was to her 300 years," her father said in a video that went viral last year.

Unable to finish college, see her friends, or pursue her passion, the usually vivacious and affectionate Palmer became obsessive in her fear that the lockdown would never end.

In the weeks following her death, Palmer's family spoke out on the implications of the stay-at-home order and to warn parents of the struggles their children might be facing, saying "no one should feel isolated enough to do this."

Tragically, new government data show Palmer's death is part of a global trend of teens seeking to escape the toll of government lockdown.

Troubling CDC Data

Newly released data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reveal a surge in self-harm and hospitalizations from poor mental health among teens in 2020.

Overall, the number of psychiatric-related hospital visits among young people increased 31 percent last year. For young women like Palmer, this number was far more grievous. Suspected suicide attempts in girls increased 50.6 percent, compared to a 3.7 percent increase in young men.

As the report concludes, the implications of lockdowns, such as "physical distancing; barriers to mental health treatment; increases in substance use;

In light of alarming numbers, California public-health officials are finally beginning to speak out about suicide.

In California, teenage suicide increased

24

PERCENT

leading to

134 deaths

IN 2020.

In contrast, only 23

California minors

died of COVID-19.



Children may be particularly affected by the consequences of lockdowns.

and anxiety about family health and economic problems" all particularly affected children, contributing to a widespread increase in suicidal thoughts.

A recent Wall Street Journal article completes the picture painted by the CDC by revealing that in California, teenage suicide increased 24 percent, leading to 134 deaths in 2020. In contrast, only 23 California minors died of COVID-19.

Specifically, in Oakland, hospitals saw a 66 percent increase in teenagers screening positive for suicidal ideation between March and October 2020.

In light of these alarming numbers, California public-health officials are finally beginning to speak out about this issue.

For more than a year, while mental illness and suicides skyrocketed, these same politicians and health experts continuously disregarded valid concerns over the dire implications of lockdowns.

It's clear that though they weren't generally at risk for COVID-19, young people such as Palmer were a high suicide risk group, and the government failed to pay attention.

A Brutal Teacher

"Experience," the French economist Frédéric Bastiat (1801-1850) once wrote, "teaches effectually, but brutally." Tragically, this seems to be the case with the unintended consequences of COVID-19 lockdowns.

The surge in teen suicide is just one example of collateral damage from lockdowns—others include surges in child poverty, drug overdoses, and unemploy-

ment, as well as a sharp decline in cancer screenings—and should come as no surprise.

In April 2020, JAMA Psychiatry published a report on the possible consequences of quarantine orders, stating that while they might help quell new infections, "the potential for adverse outcomes on suicide risk is high."

Amid the warnings, public health officials pressed on, believing their policies would protect people from COVID-19. An abundance of empirical evidence, however, suggests these efforts failed.

The road to hell, they say, is paved with good intentions. And for good reason. The world is complex, and efforts to reshape it often achieve results other than that which was intended. That's precisely why Bastiat taught about the importance of exercising restraint and foresight while implementing policy, so that we don't pursue "a small present good, which will be followed by a great evil to come."

This was something governments didn't do in 2020.

Beth Palmer had a promising life ahead of her. She and the other teenagers who struggled to cope with state-enforced isolation deserved better. So let's at least learn something from the brutal experience of lockdowns.

Brett Cooper is a professional actress and a libertarian-conservative writer. She's an ambassador for PragerU and TurningPoint USA and content manager at Unwoke Narrative. This article was originally published on FEE.org

Summer: The Perfect Time for a Digital Detox



Screen-free means time for friends, nature, and adventures that create memories worth cherishing.

Set your child on a real summer of fun and relaxation by canceling the empty hours of screen time

MELANIE HEMPE

"My kids have already watched three hours of TV today and it is only 9:30 in the morning."

"It's lunchtime and my tween daughter is still in her PJs. She has been glued to social media since she got out of bed—no, since she woke up and before she even got out of bed."

"My teen son was up till the wee hours of the morning playing video games—in fact, I'm not sure he even went to sleep!"

Summer has started and parents are already struggling with screens. It seems that the minute those school backpacks are put away and virtual classrooms are shut down, video games and smartphones come out to play. Families have a long summer ahead of them if they don't get their screen limits figured out now.

As tempting as it may be to indulge, summer is the perfect time for a digital detox and a bad season to depend on screen entertainment.

Why is summer such a challenge?

The simple answer is the lack of schedule and large quantities of downtime.

The school year is challenging because kids often genuinely need to be on screens for their classes, especially this past year when many schools used remote learning or limited the number of children on their campuses. During the school year, kids reach their recommended screen limits quickly, and between scheduled activities, evening chores, and homework, they stay busy.

Continued on Page 14

Nearly Half of US Cosmetics Contain This Toxic Chemical

Chemicals common in personal care products persist in the environment and jeopardize long-term health

JOSEPH MERCOLA

Cosmetics and personal care products have often tested positive for toxic chemicals. Now, a new study conducted by researchers at the University of Notre Dame has found that more than half of common U.S. cosmetics tested contain high levels of industrial compounds associated with various health conditions, including cancer. One chemical found in an "alarming"

Fluorine is a PFAS chemical that contaminates the water supply and can bioaccumulate in the body.

number of products from popular stores such as Target, Ulta, Sephora, and Bed, Bath and Beyond was fluorine, which is part of the alphabet soup known as perfluorinated chemicals, historically abbreviated as PFC. Perfluorinated chemicals include perfluorocarbons and other per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, collectively known as PFAS, but also referred to as PFOA and PFOS.

Continued on Page 12

The problem of PFAS chemicals in makeup is an ongoing issue, including a lack of labeling.



Analysis of national and world problems must include a spiritual perspective in order to arrive at a balanced understanding of root causes and their respective solutions.

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FOOD AS MEDICINE

6 Reasons Why Potatoes Are Good for You

Some take a dim view of humble potato, but put it in aluminum foil instead of oil and it becomes the ultimate side dish

DUANE MELLOR

The humble potato has been given a bad rap. What was once a cheap staple of many countries' diets has instead been branded in recent years as an "unhealthy" food best avoided.

Eating too much of any type or group of food (like carbohydrates) isn't healthy, and some research suggests eating too many potato products in particular might be associated with higher blood pressure. But it's typically the way we prepare and consume potatoes (like frying them) that causes negative effects.

In fact, potatoes contain a lot of vitamins and other nutrients that are important for health. Here are six reasons potatoes are good for you.

1. Vitamin C

People typically associate vitamin C with oranges and citrus fruit. But an important source of vitamin C in British diets for most of the 20th century actually came from potatoes. On average, a small (150g) potato provides us with about 15 percent of our daily vitamin C.

Vitamin C is important because not only does it support immune function and contain antioxidants, it plays an essential role in forming connective tissue, which helps our joints work—and holds our teeth in place. This is why vitamin C deficiency (scurvy) is linked to teeth falling out.

2. Vitamin B6

Vitamin B6 is an essential co-factor (a small molecule) in the body. It helps over 100 enzymes in the body function properly, allowing them to break down proteins—a process key to good nerve function. This may also be why B6 is linked to good mental health.

On average, a small (150g) potato provides us with about 15 percent of our daily vitamin C.



Boiled or steamed potatoes are a low-calorie, nutrient-dense, and filling food.



Potatoes are packed with important nutrients—but how they're prepared makes all the difference.

Typically, a small potato will contain around a quarter of an adult's recommended daily intake of B6.

3. Potassium

Having potassium in our cells is important for regulating the electrical signaling in muscles and nerves. So if potassium gets too high or low, it can stop our heart from working.

Roasted, baked, and fried potatoes contain higher levels of potassium than boiled or mashed potatoes, with a baked potato containing around a third of the recommended daily intake. This is because boiling diced potatoes can cause around half of the potassium to leak out into the water.

However, people with kidney disease—which can limit the ability to remove excess potassium from the body—may need to limit the number of potatoes they eat. And

if you do roast or fry your potatoes, be careful how much oil you use.

4. Choline

Choline is a small compound that attaches to fat to make phospholipids, the building blocks of cell walls, as well as the neurotransmitter acetylcholine (which helps us contract muscles, dilate blood vessels, and slow our heart rate). Potatoes contain the second-highest levels of choline, next to protein-rich foods like meat and soya.

It's vital to consume enough choline as it's essential for a healthy brain, nerves, and muscles. And subtle differences in our genes may mean some of us are naturally more deficient in making choline. A baked potato contains around 10 percent of a person's daily choline requirements. Choline is particularly important in pregnancy, as

A typical boiled potato is only about 130 calories, which is actually fewer calories than a banana of the same size.

the growing baby is making lots of new cells and organs.

5. Good for Our Stomach

Cooking and cooling potatoes before eating them allows resistant starch to form. This healthy starch helps our bodies in many ways, including by acting as a prebiotic (important for a healthy gut microbiome).

The cooling of fluffy, cooked starches causes them to collapse. While this actually makes them harder to digest, this means that the bacteria in our colon then ferment them, producing compounds similar to vinegar called short-chain fatty acids. These fatty acids nourish our gut and keep it healthy.

Short-chain fatty acids can also alter our metabolism in a good way, helping lower blood fat and blood sugar levels. This—along with their high water and low-fat content—makes boiled and steamed potatoes a low-calorie, nutrient-dense, and filling food.

6. Naturally Gluten Free

Potatoes are also naturally gluten free, so are a great option for people with coeliac disease or who need to avoid gluten.

The same is true for sweet potatoes, which also have a lower glycaemic index—which means they don't cause a sharp spike in blood sugar, which may help control weight and appetite. However, sweet potatoes are slightly higher in calories and carbohydrates than regular potatoes—though they contain more beta carotene (a form of vitamin A).

Potatoes on Your Plate

Some people may choose to avoid potatoes due to concerns about weight gain—but a typical boiled potato is only about 130 calories, which is actually fewer calories than a banana of the same size. But it's important to remember how potatoes are prepared and what they're eaten with.

Boiling or steaming (possibly with cooling to increase the resistant starch) is the best way to keep the number of calories per gram low. Baking will increase calories per gram (as water is lost), as can mashing with butter or cream. The least healthy way to eat potatoes is as fries or chips, as they soak up oil like a sponge.

You'll also want to avoid green potatoes. This happens when the potato has been stored in light and produces a toxin that can irritate our gut. Otherwise, for most people, including potatoes as part of a healthy and varied diet can be a good thing.

And alongside being healthy, potatoes also have environmental advantages. They require less water than rice to produce, and less greenhouse gases than both rice and wheat—which may be yet another good reason to include potatoes in your diet.

Duane Mellor is the associate dean of education (quality enhancement) at Aston University in the United Kingdom. This article was first published on The Conversation.



Several factors, including foods, can affect a supplement's effect.



Best Time to Take Your Supplements

Your body uses vitamins and minerals in different ways—and timing makes a difference

LISA ROTH COLLINS

If you are taking supplements, two things are critical to get the most out of them: quality and timing. You need to start with quality products made by reputable manufacturers, and you need to know the best time to take your supplements, including which ones should and shouldn't be taken along with others.

We're not going to talk about quality and reputation here. Instead, let's discuss the timing of your supplement use and how you can optimize the rewards from each of your choices. One approach to supplement use is to consider which ones to take during three main parts of the day: morning, afternoon, and evening.

If you take multivitamins, you can help prevent nausea by taking them with a meal.

Morning Supplements

Here's a tip: two of the morning supplements—vitamins E and CoQ10—should be taken with healthy fats. We suggest avocado toast or a green smoothie with avocado or coconut oil as a breakfast choice containing healthy fats!

- **B vitamins:** These are your energy boosters for the day and include thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid, pyridoxine, biotin, folic acid, and cobalamin. A quality B complex will give you the entire spectrum of B vitamins in balanced doses. If your B complex contains vitamin B12, take this supplement two hours before or after taking vitamin C, as vitamin C interferes with your body's ability to absorb B12. B vitamins can be taken with or without food.
- **Coenzyme Q10:** This supplement is heart-healthy and should be taken with healthy fats. If you have diabetes or low blood pressure, be aware that CoQ10 can reduce blood sugar levels and blood pressure, so do not take it without your health care provider's guidance.
- **Iron:** Take this mineral on an empty stomach and never with calcium. However, if it makes you nauseous, then take it with food, but not with coffee or foods high in calcium. If you have a high-calcium breakfast (e.g., milk, dairy yogurt, leafy greens), take your iron later in the day with food. That's when you can take it along with vitamin C, which can improve absorption.
- **Vitamin E:** You should take this fat-soluble vitamin with healthy fats.
- **Vitamin C:** Now is the time to take the first of your two vitamin C doses for the day. Taking iron along with vitamin C helps with absorption.

Afternoon Supplements

Several of these supplements should be taken with food, so immediately after lunch is a convenient and easy-to-remember time to take them.

To get the most benefit from your nutritional supplements, it's essential to adjust the timing of your dosing and know which supplements you should take in combination with others.

- **Fish oil:** Taking fish oil with food significantly improves the absorption of these essential fatty acids. Here's a trick: Freeze your fish oil supplements; they go down faster when frozen, and it helps avoid belching.
- **Iodine:** This mineral can provide you with a midday energy boost.
- **Vitamin D:** Take with healthy fats such as avocado, eggs, olive oil, or coconut oil. Vitamin D operates in sync with vitamin K, and it improves absorption of both vitamin D and calcium when these two are taken together.
- **Vitamin K:** This heart-friendly vitamin works hand-in-hand with vitamin D and is also best taken with a healthy fat. If you are deficient in vitamin K and need to take a separate supplement, take it a few hours before or after any other fat-soluble vitamins (i.e., A, D, and E).
- **Vitamin C:** Time for your second dose!
- **Zinc:** Take this mineral with food, but never with calcium or iron. Zinc also can interfere with the absorption of copper and other minerals, so be sure to take zinc at least two hours apart from these supplements.

Evening Supplements

- **Calcium:** Your body best utilizes calcium when you take it at night. Do not take high doses of calcium along with high amounts of zinc or magnesium, as they all compete for absorption.
- **Magnesium:** One of the best supplements to help you relax and fall asleep, so before retiring is best. Avoid taking high doses along with high amounts of calcium or zinc because they all compete for absorption.
- **Probiotics:** Beneficial bacteria work best in your gut if you take them in the absence of digestive enzymes, which can break them down, so right before you retire is suggested. However, if you are taking probiotics to help manage specific health conditions (e.g., diarrhea, irritable bowel), follow your health care provider's recommendations.



Lisa Roth Collins is a registered holistic nutritionist and the marketing manager at NaturallySavvy.com, which first published this article.

Nearly Half of US Cosmetics Contain This Toxic Chemical

Chemicals common in personal care products persist in the environment and jeopardize long-term health

Continued from Page 9

PFAS are sometimes referred to as “the Teflon chemicals” or “forever chemicals” since they do not break down in the environment. They are used by manufacturers to make products water-, oil-, grease- and stain-resistant. They are also found in firefighting foam.

According to the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, there are more than 4,700 PFAS chemicals in existence and the number continues to rise as the industry invents new forms. Prompted by pressure from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), DuPont and 3M voluntarily phased out two of the thousands of PFAS chemicals, PFOS and PFOA, in the early 2000s.

While these two chemicals are no longer manufactured in the United States, documentation from the FDA reveals that “phased out” doesn’t necessarily mean “not being used” anywhere. In fact, there are limited ongoing uses of PFOS, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says:

“Although PFOA and PFOS are no longer manufactured in the United States, they are still produced internationally and can be imported into the United States in consumer goods such as carpet, leather and apparel, textiles, paper and packaging, coatings, rubber, and plastics.”

This means that although the manufacture of these toxic chemicals may have stopped in the United States, they still can arrive back in the country via products made elsewhere. And, when it comes to cosmetics, the three-year study at Notre Dame, published in *Environmental Science & Technology Letters*, clearly indicates that the problem of PFAS chemicals in makeup is an ongoing issue, including a lack of labeling.

‘Forever Chemicals’ Found in Nearly Half of Cosmetics Tested

To assess the potential environmental burden of PFAS in makeup, researchers from the university purchased 231 cosmetic products in eight categories commonly purchased throughout the United States and Canada. The categories included lip, eye, face, and eyebrow products and foundations, mascaras, and concealers.

The researchers purchased cosmetics from stores in Indiana and Michigan and tested them for fl uorine. Although the ingredients lists didn’t show PFAS by name, the scientists found that a number of products had precursors of the harmful chemicals in them, including fl uorine:

- 56 percent of foundations and eye products
- 48 percent of lip products
- 47 percent of mascaras

Many of the products that tested positive were also labeled “long-lasting” or “wear-resistant.” The researchers didn’t name the specific cosmetic companies, instead calling the issue “widespread.”

Fluorine is a PFAS chemical that contaminates the water supply and can bioaccumulate in the body. The researchers also found that the products tested positive for alcohol, methacrylate, and phosphate esters that are precursors to PFAS, also known to be harmful to human health.

The presence and amount of these chemi-

icals was concerning. Just as important was the revelation that only one of the products tested listed PFAS chemicals on the ingredient label. Graham Peaslee was the principal investigator. He told a journalist from *The Washington Post*:

“We were shocked to see how much is in some of these products. ... There’s no way for an average consumer to read a label and understand what’s in the product they just purchased. They can’t trust the label and that can be fixed.”

Senate Bill Proposed to Ban PFAS in Makeup

In June 2021, Sens. Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) introduced a bipartisan bill that would require the FDA to ban all PFAS chemicals in cosmetic products. The bill is called the No PFAS in Cosmetics Act. Collins and Blumenthal believe that “Americans should be able to trust that the products they are applying to their hair or skin are safe.”

The act is intended to direct the FDA to issue a rule that bans the intentional addition of PFAS in cosmetics. Scott Faber, senior vice president of government affairs for the Environmental Working Group (EWG) said in a press release from Collins:

“Toxic forever chemicals have no place in personal care products. PFAS have been linked to serious health problems, including cancer and harm to the reproductive and immune systems. EWG applauds Senator Collins for introducing the No PFAS in Cosmetics Act. Once again, Senator Collins is making the safety of cosmetics and other personal care products a top priority.”

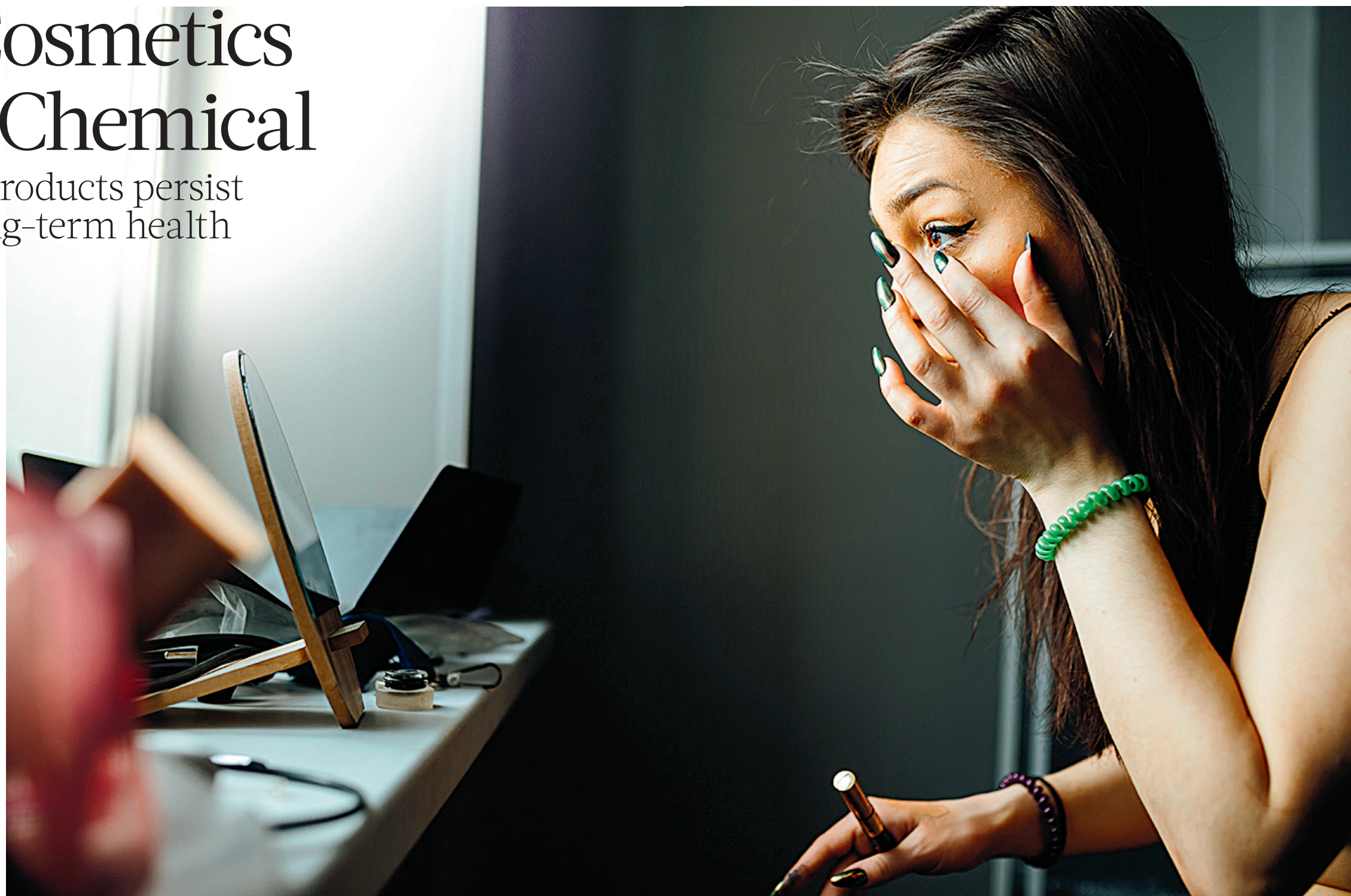
Collins has introduced other legislation in the past alongside Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.). Together, they have championed the Personal Care Products Safety Act, which was introduced in the Senate over four terms.

The act was a sweeping bill written to reform the regulation of personal care products and empower the FDA to review ingredients. The FDA would have been given authority to inspect factories and records and to require recalls of dangerous products. Cosmetic companies would also have been charged with providing \$20.6 million annually in fee revenue.

The first time it was introduced in the House in 2013–2014, Rep. Janice Schakowsky (D-Ill.), sponsored the legislation. The most recent reintroduction to Congress was during the 2019–2020 term. In each term, the bill was defeated.

The new No PFAS in Cosmetics Act has a more finite mandate to ban a specific chemical in cosmetic products. Without the added fee structure and additional power given to the FDA in past legislation, this may be the inroad needed to start protecting consumers.

Janet Nudelman, director of the Breast Cancer Prevention Partners’ Campaign for Safe Cosmetics, said, “It is beyond outrageous that PFAS chemicals that are contaminating our drinking water and threatening human health because of their links to breast and other cancers, reproductive harm, and endocrine disruption are hiding in the beauty and personal care products women use every day.”



ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

The forever chemical fluorine was found in an alarming amount of everyday cosmetics from popular stores.



PFAS may be present in the inner coating of microwave popcorn bags and may migrate to the oil from the packaging during heating. Instead, use “old-fashioned” stovetop non-GMO popcorn.

Analysis showed that of the 120 water samples, 118 had high levels of PFAS or arsenic, as well as detectable levels of lead.

Unfortunately, one common belief is that if a product is released on the market and sold to the public, it must be safe.

Food Packaging and Drinking Water Are Contaminated

Unfortunately, one common belief is that if a product is released on the market and sold to the public it must be safe. In 2020, 33 scientists signed a consensus statement to plead with lawmakers to take “swift action to reduce exposure” to plastics in food packaging. In it, they included 1,200 peer-reviewed studies to support their statement. One of those plastics is PFAS.

Nearly 10 years ago there were 6,000 authorized chemicals that could be used in food packaging. Jane Muncke of the Food Packaging Forum, and one of the consensus statement contributors, states that the latest number is nearly 12,000.

The Environmental Defense Fund has written about the FDA process that led to the acceptance of plastics in contact with food. They have clarified a few misconceptions:

- “Manufacturers’ claims that anything in contact with food, such as PFAS, must be reviewed before being marketed and sold.” In fact, manufacturers use a loophole in the Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) rule meant to exempt common ingredients such as vinegar and baking soda, to bypass FDA review of their chemicals.
- “The FDA requires in-depth toxicology studies before allowing chemicals in contact with foods on the market.” In reality, all a company has to do is provide the chemical, toxicological, and environmental data it has.
- “Manufacturers’ data sheets are clear and concise.” On the contrary, in an EDF review of 31 applications accepted by the FDA, the amount of information varied, but the toxicity data were consistently poor.
- “The FDA continually reviews product safety.” The truth is once a food contact substance is allowed, there is no process to evaluate further evidence the chemical may be dangerous, and the agency has no duty to reassess the decision.

These dangers are also reaching your drinking water. The EWG commissioned a test in dozens of U.S. cities which showed contamination had been dramatically underestimated. EWG scientists believe the family of PFAS chemicals may be “detectable in all major water supplies in the U.S., almost certainly in all that use surface water.”

“EWG’s tests also found chemicals from the PFAS family that are not commonly tested for in drinking water,” they wrote.

A collaboration between Consumer Reports and *The Guardian* analyzed the water supply of 120 people who volunteered to send in water samples from around the United States. The group represented a cross-section of each of the EPA’s 10 jurisdictional regions. The analysis showed

that of the 120 water samples, 118 had high levels of PFAS or arsenic, as well as detectable levels of lead.

According to the report from Consumer Reports, filtration systems exist that can clean the contaminants, and yet, “they are not being uniformly used by community water systems.”

An analysis published by the EWG showed there were 2,337 sites in 49 states with known PFAS contamination. Unfortunately, while evidence continues to mount demonstrating forever chemicals are hazardous, the EPA is unwilling to protect consumer health. According to the EWG: “[The EPA] recently released a so-called PFAS action plan, but it is woefully inadequate. The EPA plan will not address ongoing sources of PFAS pollution, will not clean up legacy pollution, and will not even require reporting of toxic PFAS releases.”

Frightening Levels of Forever Chemicals Found in Breast Milk

In one study published in *Environmental Science & Technology*, researchers analyzed PFAS in a group of breastfeeding women in the United States. The data were gathered from a cross-section of socio-economically and geographically diverse groups of women and yet showed PFAS contamination in all samples.

The samples showed levels ranging from 50 parts per trillion (ppt) to more than 1,850 ppt in women’s breast milk. Even though there are no set standards for breast milk yet, as a comparison, the Environmental Working Group advises a target for drinking water at 1 ppt and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) recommends 14 ppt for PFOS (a component of PFAS) in children’s drinking water.

Evaluating the effects on infants is difficult. Dr. Sheela Sathyanarayana, a co-author of the study and pediatrician with the University of Washington, told a reporter from *The Guardian* that studies in older children and adults have shown these chemicals damage the immune system and create hormonal disruption. This is particularly problematic for infants as their immune system is not yet mature.

Evidence from the study also suggested the challenge with PFAS bioaccumulating in people is getting worse. As reported in *The Guardian*, when data from the current study were compared to one spearheaded by the family of PFAS chemicals may be “detectable in all major water supplies in the U.S., almost certainly in all that use surface water.”

How to Avoid Toxic PFAS Chemicals

In May 2015, more than 200 scientists from 40 countries signed another consensus statement called the Madrid Statement. The scientists warned about the potential harmful effects of PFAS, including associations with liver toxicity, adverse neurobehavioral effects, hypothyroidism, and obesity.

They recommended avoiding all products containing PFAS. You’ll find more addi-

tional helpful tips in the Environmental Working Group’s “Guide to Avoiding PFCS.” Here are several items to avoid:

Pretreated or stain-repellant treatments:

Opt out of treatments on clothing, furniture, and carpeting. Clothing advertised as “breathable” is typically treated with polytetrafluoroethylene, a synthetic fluoropolymer.

Products treated with flame retardant chemicals:

This includes furniture, carpet, mattresses, and baby items. Instead, opt for naturally less flammable materials such as leather, wool, and cotton.

Fast food and carry out foods:

The containers are typically treated.

Microwave popcorn:

PFAS may be present in the inner coating of the bag and may migrate to the oil from the packaging during heating. Instead, use “old-fashioned” stovetop non-GMO popcorn.

Nonstick cookware and other treated kitchen utensils:

Healthier options include ceramic and enameled cast iron cookware, both of which are durable, easy to clean, and completely inert, which means they won’t release any harmful chemicals into your home.

Personal care products containing PTFE or ‘fluoro’ or ‘perfluoro’ ingredients:

The EWG Skin Deep database is an excellent source to search for healthier personal care options.

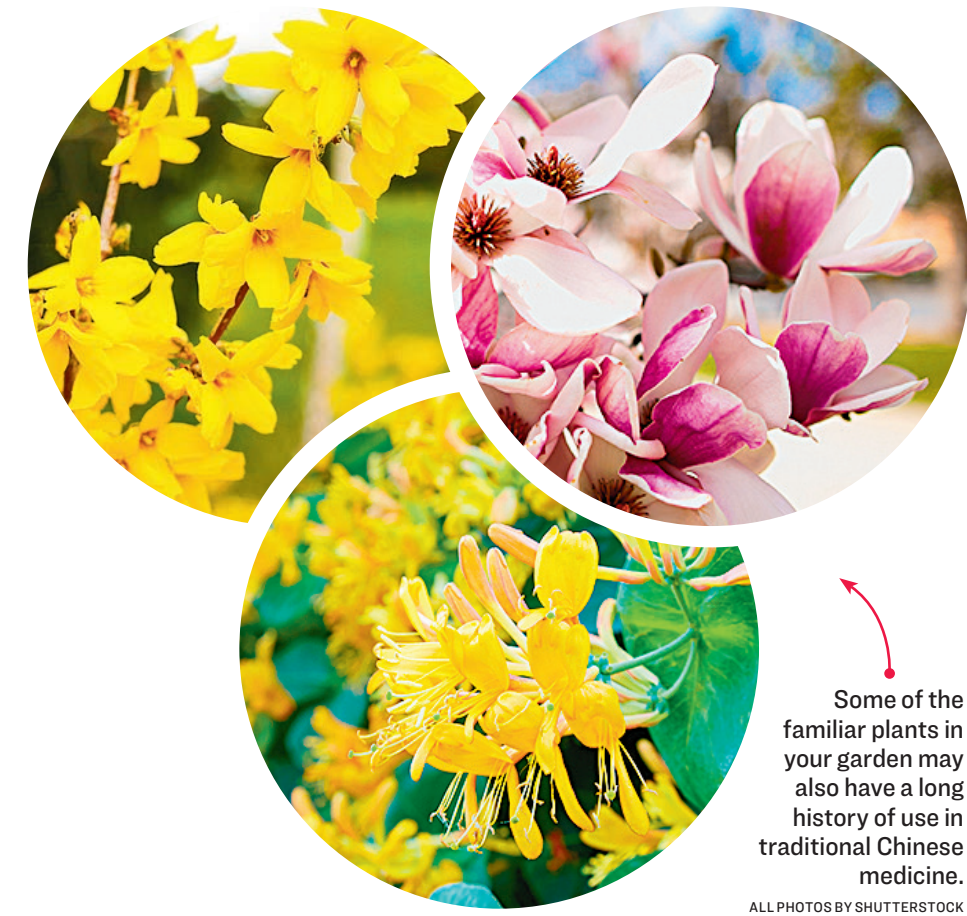
Unfiltered tap water:

Unfortunately, your choices are limited when it comes to avoiding PFAS in drinking water. Either you must filter your water or get water from a clean source. Although you may think that opting for bottled water is safe, it’s important to realize that PFAS are not regulated in bottled water, so there’s absolutely no guarantee that it’ll be free of these or other chemicals.

Bottled water also increases your risk of exposure to hazardous plastic chemicals such as bisphenol A, which has its own set of health risks. Most common water filters available in supermarkets will not remove PFAS. You really need a high-quality carbon filtration system.

For links to studies mentioned in this article, please see the article online at [TheEpochTimes.com](https://www.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 health, his primary vision is to change the modern health paradigm by providing people with a valuable resource to help them take control of their health. This article was originally published on Mercola.com



Some of the familiar plants in your garden may also have a long history of use in traditional Chinese medicine.

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TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Chinese Herbs or Landscaping?

These plants offer beautiful sights, pleasing aromas, and specific healing properties

LYNN JAFFEE

The house I grew up in had a small kitchen garden. Throughout the spring and summer, we could walk right out the kitchen door and pick basil, mint, or parsley. Our pets liked the garden too, and on warm summer days, we would find one of the cats passed out under the catnip plant. Our little garden was quaint and attractive, enclosed by a stone wall and bordered by peony plants and shaded by a golden chain tree.

The plant I remember the best, however, was the forsythia bush that grew outside the kitchen door, right against the house. During the cold days of March when spring was something we still dreamt about, the forsythia would begin to bloom. It could be gray and snowy out, but we knew spring was coming, because right outside the door there was a sign. Small, bright yellow flowers began to show themselves, reassuring us that the cold weather wouldn’t last forever.

Years later when I began to study Chinese herbs, I was delighted to find that the tiny forsythia fruits that appear in the fall were actually a useful herb, called lian qiao. In Chinese medicine, the fruit of the forsythia bush is used to clear something called toxic heat, which is essentially a hot, swollen infection. The antimicrobial effect of this herb makes it a good choice to include in formulas to treat a high fever, sore throat, and throat infections.

Later in the spring, the honeysuckle would bloom along our driveway and on the edges of the meadow in front of the house. We kids would pick the flowers, pull off the ends and eat the tiny drop of sweet nectar that came from each flower. Called jin yin hua in Chinese, or golden silver flower, honeysuckle is harvested for herbal purposes in May and June, just before the flowers bloom. Like forsythia, honeysuckle acts as an antimicrobial, especially against salmonella and strep infections. It’s best used in formulas to treat hot and painful sores and infections, colds and flu accompanied by a high fever and very sore throat, and conditions such as dysentery and urinary tract infections.

While we didn’t have magnolia trees in our yard growing up, I am amazed that the delicate blooms of this tree emerge in the spring before any leaves come out. This gives the leafless trees the appearance of being covered with thousands of white or pink stars. Called xin yi hua in Chinese, magnolia is considered to be aromatic and warm. Like honeysuckle, it’s harvested early in the spring before the flower buds open. Xin yi hua is used for colds and flu that don’t spike a high fever,

because the herb itself is warming in nature. This herb is best known for its ability to open stuffed nasal passages, and is used in formulas to treat sinus problems and nasal congestion.

A second herb derived from the magnolia tree is called hou po, which comes from the bark of mature trees. Known as a moving and transforming herb, hou po is used in formulas to move qi, transform phlegm and dampness, and treat food stagnation (symptoms include abdominal distention, loss of appetite, vomiting, etc.) When I want an herbal formula that has a strong action of moving things along, hou po is one of my go-to herbs.

If you have any of these plants growing in your yard, you may be thinking that anytime you have a cold, flu, or infection that you can go outside, pick the flowers, and be on your way to good health. However, that would be wrong. All Chinese herbs go through a process called pao zhi, which prepares the herbs for human consumption. The study of pao zhi takes many years, and is considered an important profession in and of itself. Pao zhi involves processes such as roasting, boiling, or frying the herb with other ingredients (e.g. honey, wine, vinegar) to reduce any toxicity from the plant and turn it into a form that can be used therapeutically.

Called jin yin hua in Chinese, or golden silver flower, honeysuckle is harvested for herbal purposes in May and June, just before the flowers bloom.

While you may not be able to use the herbs growing in your yard, you do have a couple of choices. First, if you’re having health concerns you can talk to your practitioner of Chinese medicine regarding herbal medicine. Second, you can do like I do, which is to simply appreciate the fact that these beautiful flowering shrubs are also powerful Chinese herbs and know that Mother Nature is on your side.

Lynn Jaffee is a licensed acupuncturist and the author of “Simple Steps: The Chinese Way to Better Health.” This article was originally published on AcupunctureTwinCities.com



Summer: The Perfect Time for a Digital Detox

Set your child on a real summer of fun and relaxation by canceling the empty hours of screen time

Continued from Page 9

But summer has its own set of challenges. Unless they're signed up for back-to-back camps, play dates, and vacations for almost three full months, most kids have a lot less structure to their time than they do from August to May. Friends may be less available due to their own vacations and camp schedules, most moms and dads are still working as usual, and screens are the cheapest babysitter around.

Additionally, parents tend to think of summer as necessary downtime for kids who might feel rushed and overscheduled during the year. And this isn't wrong. Kids need free time to explore new interests, daydream, read, create art, and exercise their imaginations.

Where parents go wrong is in the mistaken belief that screen time is a legitimate form of relaxation. It simply isn't. As an adult, you may have noticed this paradox in your own life. You "take a break" from work to scroll Instagram or look at Facebook. But after 10 minutes (or 30, or 60), you go back to your tasks feeling even more harried and stressed than you did before those moments of "relaxation." This is because screens stimulate us, especially when they're interactive and especially when the additional social pressure we encounter on social media.

All too often, kids' "relaxing" time on their devices is a source of stress from FOMO (fear of missing out), bullying, or simply game addiction. After a while, no amount of time on the screen feels like enough, and screen battles arise in our homes.

Parents should keep in mind that they can either "pay now or pay later" this summer when it comes to cracking down on screen time. Imposing limits at the start of summer might cause some short-lived whining and resistance. But the start of the school year, when kids must put their screens away to attend class and play sports, will be much easier.

Summer is the time of year when kids are on screens the most, but need them the least. Screens might be legitimate tools during school, but they shouldn't be treated as toys all summer long. Video games and social media qualify as toxic for kids.

So how can you go about making positive changes in your kids' summer screen time?

How-To: The Summer Digital Detox

Fire the TV babysitter.

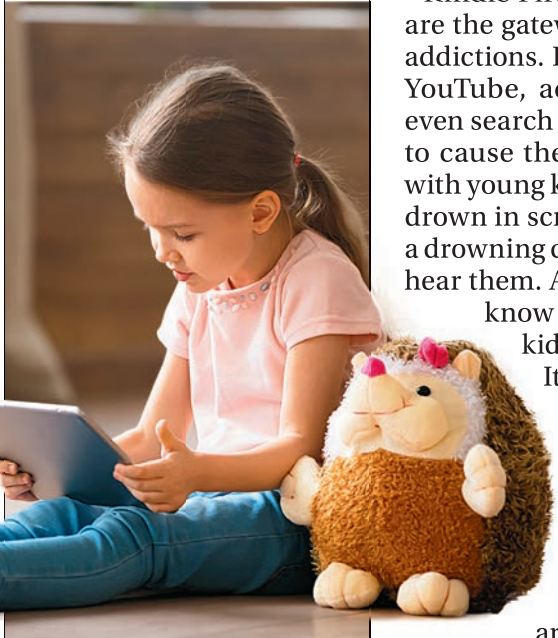
This is easier than you think. Make a point to only watch TV on purpose this summer. This means that you don't leave it on in the background all day, and never start the day with a TV activity. How you spend the first hour in the morning will set the tone for the rest of the day. TV time early (or any time) will put your kids in a bad mood when the TV is turned off. My theory for this is that we all get in a bad mood when we feel like we haven't been productive, have had a sluggish start to the day, or have wasted our time with nothing to show for it.

STAY STRONG TIP Keep the remote control in a hidden place that is hard to get so it isn't an easy go-to activity. Make a rule that as long as the sun is out, the TV is off. Replace with music. See what happens if you remove all but one TV in your home to be used for family movie night only.



Instead of a tablet, put books in your kids hands this summer (they are about the same size.)

Many parents give young kids tablets before they give them phones, not realizing that these days, tablets are just huge smartphones.



Send your kid's smartphone on vacation.

If you are already a ScreenStrong family (and have committed to limited screen use), chances are that your kids don't have smartphones. If your kids still have smartphones and social media, summer is the perfect time to hit the pause button—and we can help you do just that. With little ones this will be easy. If you have teens, you can replace their smartphone with a talk/text-only phone for the summer or even for the next school year. This could be the best parenting decision you ever make! Summer is the perfect time for a digital detox but your kids will not be able to do it alone—they need your help.

STAY STRONG TIP Everything is more fun with a friend, so gather a few friends to do a summer digital detox with you. Make it a competition challenge and see how long they go.

Hide the video game consoles.

If gaming equipment is visible in your house, your kids won't be able to resist it. One dad told me that he packed up his son's gaming gear and put it in the trunk of his car for the summer. (Just remember to hide the car keys, too!) Removing access is the first step in prevention for all addictions. Get your kids outside for real games instead.

STAY STRONG TIP Sell your video game equipment and let your kids use the money to purchase something at a sports store or other hobby store.

Trash the tablets (or donate them, or hide them in the attic).

I believe that tablets are the biggest screen villains in the lives of our young kids. Parents think their kids are learning on them, and these screens are small, quiet, and easy to hide. Many parents give young kids tablets before they give them phones, not realizing that these days, tablets are just huge smartphones. We would never give our 5-year-old a smartphone, but we are giving them tablets—which are the same thing, or worse.

Kindle Fires, iPads, and other tablets are the gateway drugs for future screen addictions. Kids can use them to watch YouTube, access chat functions, and even search the open web. Tablets seem to cause the most problems in homes with young kids. They cause your kids to drown in screen activity, and much like a drowning child in water, you don't even hear them. After raising four children, I know that when we can't hear our kids, they are usually in trouble. It's almost impossible to manage a tablet, especially in the summer when your kids are running in all directions.

STAY STRONG TIP Instead of a tablet, put books in your kids' hands this summer (they are about the same size.)

Focus on real play, family connection, tech-free hobbies, and jobs.

Summer is the perfect time to focus on what matters most and have some real-life fun. Don't waste another minute on the empty calories of leisure screens. Kids can pour their time into a job or volunteer position at any age. They can enjoy a pet (old or new), or build a dog house, a raised garden bed, or a go-kart. Your kids can explore new ways of making art or music. They can exercise, or start a new book series. These are the things that prove to be much better investments than logged on entertainment screens. Build good habits and not screen addictions this summer.

STAY STRONG TIP Plan each day the night before (or the weekend before). Without a plan, the screen gremlins will eat up all your precious summer hours.

Don't put the kids in charge.

If you let your kids and teens decide all of their summer activities, they will lean toward screens. Your daughters will beg for more social media time and your sons will lobby that video gaming is a hobby to be pursued. But social media will cause your daughter to be more anxious than she already is, and you will need to determine if video gaming is really a good hobby for your son. Remember, gambling is a hobby, too.

STAY STRONG TIP Let your kids have choices only for the things that will not hurt them or cause addictions.

Summer is a perfect time for a screen detox.

Transitional times like summer are good seasons to make big screen changes. Decide to start with a screen-free week and take the ScreenStrong Challenge. For seven days, you will dive into real life and your kids will get a chance to reset their brains and activities. We provide the instructions and tips to make this process successful. After that first week, you can keep going! Summer is an easy time to break the routine: plan family vacations, take trips to visit family, enjoy new experiences like summer camps. Continue your low-tech habits and when school starts again your kids will be better off. You will find it easier and easier to continue the good habits that you set this summer.

Melanie Hempe, BSN, is the founder of ScreenStrong, an organization that empowers parents to help their children to gain the benefits of screen media without the toxic consequences of overuse that threaten healthy mental and physical development. The ScreenStrong Solution promotes a strong parenting style that proactively replaces harmful screen use with healthy activities, life skills development, and family connection. This article was originally published on ScreenStrong.com

WISE HABITS

The Practice of Truly Enjoying Time Off

If you struggle to let go of 'being productive' and enjoy downtime, you might need to work on it

LEO BABAUTA

So I took the whole month of June off, just as I did in December.

It wasn't easy to take this month off. I had to make arrangements, sell it to my team and clients, get a bunch of work and content done ahead of time, and really stand my ground when people asked for my time. But I was clear that I wanted this time off. During this month, we had family get-togethers, a family trip, an anniversary getaway, and plenty of relaxing and physical activity.

I took December off too, and that was a powerful experience for me. What I found is that I am not used to taking time off, and tend to be either in a work-hard-nonstop mode... or in a kind of malaise where I don't feel like doing anything and am not fully enjoying life. It's almost as if life has trained me not to enjoy time off!

So this month I'm practicing. I'm practicing fully enjoying this space. Not just so I can enjoy vacation but so that I can enjoy the times during non-vacation when I decide not to work, like weekends and evenings and family quality time and time with friends. I would love to have a different experience of these spaces, really fully appreciating them.

So I'm practicing. Practicing fully enjoying this time off—which sounds like it should be easy, but it isn't always so!

Here's what I've been learning:

Set clear boundaries.

A lot of times, our work lives spill into our personal lives so that we're checking email or messages while spending time with family, or we're out on a walk and making calls. This isn't wrong, but it doesn't allow for full enjoyment of the time off. So it can help if we set an intentional boundary: "I'm cutting off at 6 p.m.," or "I don't work on weekends except for 30 minutes of email in the morning." I've decided to take Junes and Decembers off (inspired by work with my coach), and so when I've entered the month off, it's very clear to me that this is non-work space. That doesn't mean I can't ever do work, but I've entered into this time intentionally.

Fully embrace it.

Often we will do something but not be 100 percent into it; we feel guilty, our mind is somewhere else, we feel we should be doing other things. That's how I often experience my time off, like I should be doing something else. This month, I've been practicing choosing to fully embrace the time off. I've been giving myself full permission and fully empowering myself to take the time off. I don't always succeed, but it's a prac-



▲ We're told to value productivity, but sooner or later, we all need a break.

A lot of times, our work lives spill into our personal lives so that we're checking email or messages while spending time with family, or we're out on a walk and making calls.

See if you can fully choose to embrace it and let go of the guilt.

Slow down.

Our lives are spent rushing from one task to the next, one message to the next, with little space for breathing. What would it be like if we could slow down, at least in our time off, and really let ourselves unwind? (We can bring that same kind of mindset to work as well—but this article isn't about that.) So slow down, decompress, and start to breathe.

Be in the moment.

Our minds will naturally start thinking about so many things we're not doing. This is why we rarely let ourselves have intentional space for ourselves, because we're stressed about what isn't getting done. What helps me is to bring my attention to something in the present moment. I take note of what the trees look like outside my window, how the air feels on my skin, what my breath and body feel like. The more I can do this, the more I can fully enjoy this time.

Practice full appreciation.

We're often looking for reasons to not like something—all the reasons this situation

or person isn't right. What if we could fully appreciate this moment, each person, every activity, just as they are? See the beauty and joy contained in every moment? See the incredible heart in every person? We can practice this during our time off (and during work).

Let out the energy.

Stress and frustration and anxiety can build up in us, like unreleased energy. I've found it helpful to do things that spend this energy, like a long walk, a swim, or some work around the house. This spends the energy that I've been storing so that I can be fully free of it and really be present for the world.

Allow yourself play.

Time off can be about doing nothing and slowing down, but it can also be about fun, adventure, and laughter. These are amazing experiences we don't always allow ourselves to have. So why not give yourself full permission? In just about any activity, you can make it into play, you can experience joy, and you can have an uplifting experience.

I have to admit, this stuff can be a challenge to me. I didn't always feel joy during my month off. I had my struggles. But I absolutely practiced with all of the above, and it was a beautiful experience. I encourage you to try it in any free time you have!

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



MINDSET MATTERS

Embrace Life's Limitations to Unlock Life's Promise

If we live for meaning rather than pleasure, our hardships become opportunities

JAY HARRINGTON

In 1944, a 39-year-old Austrian man named Victor Frankl and his wife Tilly were processed into the Auschwitz concentration camp.

He spent approximately 18 months in the shackles of the Nazis being shuttled from one camp to another before being liberated by American soldiers. Frankl survived the Holocaust, but his wife, mother, and brother did not.

Despite suffering such great trauma, Frankl went on to become one of the most influential neurologists and psychiatrists of the 20th century.

In fact, spending time in captivity, experiencing suffering and deprivation, and watching some prisoners transcend their circumstances while others succumbed to them, is what inspired Frankl to explore life's meaning and develop a renowned technique called "logotherapy."

Frankl gained his most important insight during his lowest moment by observing human resilience. He then taught others how to find meaning in life even in the harshest conditions.

Find Meaning Through Limitations

"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way," wrote Frankl. The search for meaning, Frankl believed, is humanity's primary motivator.

Frankl, of course, is not the first to explore life's big question: Why are we here? For thousands of years, religious and secular scholars have attempted to answer this question. As Frankl observed, "Religion is the ultimate search for meaning."

Victor Frankl

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“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.”



For a child, digging a hole in the sand can be fun. For an adult, it can be a chore. Fortunately, the line between play and work exists almost entirely inside our own minds.

MINDSET MATTERS

Embrace Life's Limitations to Unlock Life's Promise

If we live for meaning rather than pleasure, our hardships become opportunities

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Frankl noted that finding the “ultimate meaning” of life “necessarily exceeds and surpasses the finite intellectual capacities of man.” But, as he observed, the struggle to make sense of it all is what makes life meaningful. Sigmund Freud believed that humans are motivated by their desire for pleasure. Frankl disagreed with Freud—he believed that life’s purpose is derived not from pleasure but from meaning.

Discover Purpose in the Struggle

The Buddha described suffering as the most enduring of human conditions. This suffering comes from limitations—in terms of health, happiness, relationships, and basic needs. Humans suffer, at times intolerably.

But in the face of these limitations, we can discover meaning.

We find meaning in the struggle, not in spite of it. As philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche said, “To live is to suffer, to survive is to find some meaning in the suffering.” In other words, the darker the shadows we experience, the brighter the sun on the other side.

We are “meant” to struggle because it’s what leads us to learn and grow if we seek meaning rather than lament our lack of pleasure.

Self-awareness of our own limitations can give us insight and empathy. If our limitations aren’t as severe as those of others, or if we’ve been fortunate enough to overcome them, we find the need to be of service.

“The world is full of suffering. It is also full of overcoming it,” noted Helen Keller.

Turn Lemons Into Lemonade

A life without struggle, without a challenge, feels empty. Challenge is the resistance that makes us stronger, forces us to grow. It is the weight we curl to strengthen our mental biceps. A life without this is doomed to self-indulgence. Frankl observed that as societies increase their material comfort,



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Challenge is the resistance that makes us stronger, forces us to grow.

they experience a deterioration of the mental and emotional state of their members. Frankl coined the term “existential vacuum,” which he described as “the feeling of the total and ultimate meaningless,” to describe this condition.

If we define ourselves by what we have and not by who we are and what we do, we become trapped by our limitations, not set free by them.

Stoic philosopher Epictetus counseled us to “live so that our happiness depends as little as possible on external causes.” To the extent that we suffer hardship, Epictetus urged us to look back, find the positives, and make use of what happened.

“Every difficulty in life presents us with an opportunity to turn inward and to invoke our own inner resources. The trials we endure can and should introduce us to our strengths,” he said.

Frankl, in his seminal book “Man’s Search for Meaning,” wrote, “When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.”

A Happy Life

Cognizance of limitations is what drives us to seek out new experiences.

There’s a concept in psychology called the “mere exposure effect” that biases us toward familiarity. It’s a survival mechanism built into us. Our ancestors were more likely to survive if they approached people and engaged in experiences that they perceived as non-life-threatening, so they stuck with what they knew.

Mere survival is far less a concern in our modern world, but we still tend toward familiarity. It’s what gets us stuck in the rut of routine, especially as we get older.

By recognizing these limitations, however, we can break free of them and pursue new and novel experiences that lead to a rich and rewarding life.

First moments provide the fuel for an interesting and happy life. If we recognize our tendencies toward the familiar, we then have the power to pursue the extraordinary.

“Life is the art of drawing without an eraser,” said John Gardner.

Understanding and appreciating limitations is an important component of a happy life. It’s important to dream big, but equally important to find as much contentment in the pursuit of dreams as you do in the realization of them.

Things rarely go as planned, so if you get too caught up in your vision of what an idyllic life should look like, you’ll often find yourself trapped in a sticky web of unrealistically high expectations.

In other words, you need to learn to love the process of life—which is full of struggles and marked by obstacles—as much as you love dreaming up ideas about what an ideal life might look like. Happiness is found in life’s journey, not necessarily in its destination.

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

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Helen Keller



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