

# THE EPOCH TIMES

# MIND & BODY

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PARENTING

## How Blind Spots and Biases Hurt Our Kids

Our culture pushes us to raise children in certain ways. Sometimes we need to push back.

Your child isn't immune to making poor decisions when it comes to using adult technologies.

MELANIE HEMPE

All parents have strong biases when it comes to managing their children's screen use. What are yours?  
"My child would never send a nude photo. That isn't how she was raised."  
"I don't believe my child is lying to me. I have good kids."  
"Video games aren't that bad. I played as a kid and read that video games are good for hand-eye coordination."  
"I keep an eye on what my kids do online."  
Parents love their kids and all parents

**The sooner you understand the science and warning signs, the less biased you'll be.**

have blind spots when it comes to parenting. Biases are a part of life.  
Most of us can recall the fairytale of "The Emperor's New Clothes." Charlatans come to town and convince the emperor to purchase the most magnificent clothes—clothes that are invisible to the stupid or incompetent. The emperor, unable to see the clothes, but too proud to admit it, struts through the town naked, and everyone goes along with the ruse. It's not until a young child, his voice ringing above the crowd, declares, "But he hasn't got anything on!" that the townspeople finally take notice. Their pre-set bias got in the way and blinded them—the crowd

wanted so badly to believe that something was true that they did.  
In loving their kids, parents can likewise develop blind spots that harm rather than help. These are some early pitfalls when it comes to parenting around screens: confusing physical maturity and intelligence with emotional maturity, believing that love always equals trust, relying too much on parental controls to prevent problems, depending only on conversations to change behavior, and believing common screen myths and seeking to confirm personal biases.

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## Cleaning Indoor Air Can Limit Viral Exposure

Common consumer air purifiers can clear 99 percent of aerosols from a room in minutes

JOSEPH MERCOLA

One strategy to reduce viral illnesses is to lower the concentration of viruses in the air, which may also improve health issues linked with indoor air pollution. Portable air purifiers, also known as portable air cleaners, are one of the easiest ways to accomplish that.  
A recent study published by Cambridge University Press evaluated the use of portable air cleaners to reduce the aerosol transmission of viral disease, specifically COVID-19, in a hospital setting. At the start of 2020, many health experts believed that COVID-19 was spread only

through droplet transmission, in much the same way that influenza is spread.  
When a person with flu coughs, sneezes, or talks, droplets from their respiratory system can spread to others up to 6 feet away. These droplets can land on the mouths or noses of uninfected people, or land on a surface that a person may touch and then infect themselves by touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes.  
In July 2020, a letter from 239 scientists petitioned the World Health Organization (WHO) to recognize the potential that SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes


*Continued on Page 4*

YUTTANA JAOWATTANA/SHUTTERSTOCK



Air purifiers offer an easy and convenient way to immediately improve the quality of indoor air.






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## HOW THE SPECTER OF COMMUNISM IS RULING OUR WORLD

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

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This solar term is a good time for gentle exercise, such as a walk in the early morning.

### CHINESE WISDOM FOR SEASONAL LIVING

## When Yang and Yin Energies Shift

Solar Term: ‘Autumn Equinox’ (Sept. 23–Oct. 7)

**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 series explores each of the year's 24 solar terms, offering guidance on how to best navigate the season.*

**Solar Term: ‘Autumn Equinox’**

**2021 Dates:** Sept. 23–Oct. 7

“Autumn Equinox” is the 16th solar term of the year and the day when the sun crosses the celestial equator, heading southward, creating one of only two days in the year (the other being the spring equinox) when day and night are the same length.

In the Western astronomical calendar, the equinox marks the end of summer and the beginning of autumn in the Northern Hemisphere, while marking the end of winter and the start of spring in the Southern Hemisphere. In the Chinese calendar, the autumn equinox is halfway through autumn.

The Spring and Autumn Annals, also known as Chunqiu, is an ancient Chinese chronicle that has been one of the core Chinese classics since ancient times. The Annals cover a 241-year period from 722 B.C. to 481 B.C. It's the earliest surviving Chinese historical text to be arranged in annals form. It was traditionally regarded as having been compiled by Confucius and was included as one of the Five Classics of Chinese literature.

For ancient Chinese, the beginning of autumn (which fell on Aug. 7, 2021, in the traditional Chinese calendar) was the time when the gods of autumn were ready to descend to earth, so the Chinese people worshipped to heaven and went to the west to welcome them. Those gods would finally arrive on earth on the autumn equinox, and the ancient Chinese would welcome them with a ceremony in the center of the capital city.

This was one of two major such ceremonies that emperors in ancient China held each year in the worship of the divine. The one in spring was to pray for a prosperous year to come and mild weather; the one in autumn was to thank heaven and the gods for a good harvest. If the harvest was poor that year, the fall ceremony was used as an opportunity for the Chinese to offer repentance.

From the day of the autumn equinox, the balance between yin and yang energy starts to shift dramatically, with the warm yang energy fading rapidly. Normally lightning and thunder should have ceased by this time, as the natural quality of thunder is pure yang. If thunder still exists after the autumn equinox, it was believed this indicated an imbalance of yang and yin energy for the year, and the



“Autumn Equinox” is the 16th solar term of the year and the day when the sun crosses the celestial equator.

crops would suffer that season.

**Living in Harmony With ‘Autumn Equinox’**

There are several things you can do to live in harmony with the natural cycle during the solar term of Autumn Equinox.

When eating, avoid deep-fried and grilled food, as well as food that is cold or overly spicy.

Drink lukewarm or room-temperature water and avoid ice water or cold beverages.

Keep your back and belly covered, and avoid cold air, especially when the skin is damp from sweat. That includes cold air from an air conditioner.

This is a good time for gentle exercise, such as a walk in the early morning.

Any food that tastes sour, such as vinegar, kombucha, or yogurt, is particularly beneficial for these two

weeks. It balances the heat in the liver and lungs, and tones our skin to reduce skin irritation.

**Seasonal Foods to Eat**

The following are good foods to eat during this solar term: pears, walnuts, sugar cane, honey, maple syrup, or food naturally sweet in taste; sesame, apples, grapes, mandarins, grapefruit, oranges, tangerines, lemons, buckthorn berries, raspberries, cranberries; and almond milk and coconut milk.

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

**Correction**

In “Heart Drug Shows Promise for COVID-19” published on this page on September 22, cytokines were described incorrectly. These small proteins are pro-inflammatory cell-signaling molecules. The Epoch Times regrets the error.

### MEDICALLY CORRECT

# The Silent Killer: High Blood Pressure

Hypertension can be easy to treat but difficult to notice—unless you look for it

PETER WEISS

“The call was a strange one and I will never forget it. I was seeing patients and was interrupted by my nurse. “The ER wants to talk with you, it’s an emergency.”

I excused myself from the exam room, took the call. I heard the ER doc, who I knew, start mumbling about Dr. Dantzler and “coding.” I was confused, and said he was off today, so how can I help? He repeated himself and then I felt weak and had to sit down.

He was telling me that my friend Dr. Dantzler was the one who was coding—having a cardiac arrest, a major heart attack. Dr. Greg Dantzler, 49 years old, died that day. He was a well-loved, respected, religious man, who always seemed to be in good health. Now, he was dead from a silent killer: hypertension.

That was more than 20 years ago. I miss him every day.

It’s estimated that some 47.3 percent of American adults have hypertension. According to the American Heart Association, 868,000 people died from cardiovascular disease (CVD) in 2017. CVD is the leading cause of death worldwide. Hypertension comprises about 11 percent of all CVD.

Hypertension can damage your body for years before you even know anything is wrong. In many cases, it surprises you like it did my friend.

There are many risk factors for high blood pressure, such as age, obesity, or just being overweight. While a sedentary lifestyle puts you at great risk, it sometimes coexists with being overweight. Family history is a strong risk factor. If your mom or dad has high blood pressure, you are at high risk as well. Race can be a factor as well. A symposium article published in The American Journal of Medical Sciences shows that African Americans generally have higher blood pressure, which is associated with higher rates of stroke, renal disease, and heart failure. Dr. Dantzer happened to be black.

KM, a mother of two teenage daughters and a new patient, was referred to me by her friend for what she thought were menstrual migraines. She was 45 years old, overweight, and was complaining of worsening headaches for the past few months. She only took some over-the-counter supplements.

Her initial blood pressure reading, taken when she arrived, was 185/110. She tried telling me her blood pressure was high because she was waiting for over an hour to see me and she gets nervous when she goes to a new doctor. I asked when was the last time she saw a doctor, and she answered in a low voice, “Maybe 5 to 7 years ago.”

I repeated the blood pressure test myself and got 195/125. This wasn’t going in the direction I had expected. A normal blood pressure reading is roughly 120/80. There is a phenomenon called “white coat hypertension,” that’s temporary hypertension triggered by going to clinical settings such as a hospital, which can be anxiety-inducing for some people.

But this was not that. KM wasn’t liking me at this time. I explained that what she called



GLUGATRON/SHUTTERSTOCK

menstrual migraines weren’t actual menstrual migraines since she had the headache all the time, and not just on her period. I wanted to send her to the emergency room. We took several more blood pressure readings, all extremely high. It was late in the afternoon and I wasn’t going to be able to get her in to see anyone that late in the day anyway.

There are some prescription and over-the-counter medications that can elevate blood pressures into the abnormal range. Oral contraceptive pills, chronic use of NSAIDs (Motrin, Advil, etc), steroids, weight suppressant medications, as well as decongestants. Occasionally elevated blood pressure isn’t usually dangerous, unless it gets to the level of KM’s.

I had KM lay down and rest for five minutes. Her blood pressure remained elevated at 195/120.

I thought I was having a bad day, but KM was having it worse. I told her she had to go to the ER. She was close to stroke range. She really had no other option. Her husband was with her and they drove directly to the hospital. Her blood pressure tested even higher there—in the 200 range. Her electrocardiogram (EKG) at the hospital showed changes consistent with an ischemic heart condition. She was having a heart attack.

Not all cases of hypertension are like my friend Dr. Dantzler or KM’s. Most are much more subtle. Many times I will inform the patient that their blood pressure was mildly elevated. I have them buy a simple-to-use blood pressure monitor from the local drug

**There are some prescription and over-the-counter medications that can elevate blood pressures into the abnormal range.**

store. I have them record the reading twice a day for two weeks. I warn them not to take their blood pressure when watching the news, talking politics, or arguing with their spouse.

KM ended up being lucky. Her heart attack was mild and she was started on blood pressure meds that worked very rapidly. Her headaches resolved. She was lucky because she got a wake-up call and it wasn’t too late to improve her health.

High pressure is really a silent killer. It’s so easy to check and it’s an easy thing to correct for most people. Don’t be afraid to get a check-up, and most importantly don’t be afraid to listen to what you are being told. Finding the right balance in life with exercise, eating well, and not being afraid to do what you have to do to be healthy is the solution. I know, easier said than done.

A few months after KM’s visit, she sent me a poster of the cartoon of Maxine, which had Maxine sitting on an exam table saying: “My doctor is concerned about my high blood pressure. I told him next time don’t leave me sitting in the waiting room for two hours.” So unfair, she only waited an hour!

*Dr. Peter Weiss has been a frequent guest on local and national TV, newspapers, and radio. He was an assistant clinical professor of OB/GYN at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA for 30 years, stepping down so he could provide his clinical services to those in need when the COVID pandemic hit. He was also a national health care adviser for Sen. John McCain’s 2008 presidential campaign.*

It’s estimated that nearly half of all American adults have hypertension.

## Supporting Immune Function With Age

Here’s what to do if you’re worried about your immune system weakening with age

MAT LECOMPTÉ

Kids are back at school, summer vacations are dropping, and before long, people will be headed back inside.

All of that will boost cold, flu, and COVID-19 infections. And of course, if you’re getting on in age, that can be very scary news. Older adults tend to suffer stronger reactions to these types of viral infections, largely due to weakened immune systems.

Like your senses, muscles, and vitality, immunity typically declines with age. It’s just part of the process: The longer you’ve been alive, the less fuel you have left in the tank.

But immune function doesn’t have to decline rapidly, and it’s not entirely up to your chronological age. There are things you can do to boost your immune system, improve your natural ability to limit illness, and potentially prevent infection or severe symptoms.

One of the smartest things you can do for your immune system is to feed it. Vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, fiber, and other valuable nutrients can all help your body stay healthy and provide the tools for a strong and functional immune system.

Whole foods are the best options, so fruits, vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats, and lean proteins are all a must. Zinc, vitamin C, and vitamin D are particularly helpful to bolster immunity.

Exercise is another immune fortifier. There is research to suggest that older adults that exercise show less inflammation and greater numbers of properly functioning immune cells.

Both of these behaviors can help you reach or maintain a healthy weight, another immune booster for people of any age. Being overweight can weaken immunity by taxing your system and increasing inflammation.

Managing stress and emotional health may also help improve immune re-



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sponse. There is some data to show that sadness, loneliness, and depression are linked to poorer immune function. Finding ways to improve mood, such as getting involved in meaningful relationships, may help.

Your immune function doesn’t have to

Immunity typically declines with age, but we can take charge of our immunity at any age with whole foods, exercise, and activities that reduce stress and improve mood.

put your health in jeopardy as you get older. Do what you can to keep your immune function strong so you can stay healthy.

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



# Cleaning Indoor Air Can Limit Viral Exposure

Common consumer air purifiers can clear 99 percent of aerosols from a room in minutes

Continued from Page 1

COVID-19, was also spread through aerosolized particles. The difference between droplets and aerosolized particles isn't only in the size, but also in the potential that aerosol can travel on air currents, whereas droplets fall to Earth within 6 feet of release.

Shortly after the paper was published, the WHO reiterated its position that transmission is primarily from respiratory droplets that are expelled during a cough, sneeze, speech, or while singing. By November 2020, research published in the Journal of Korean Medical Science demonstrated that when there was direct airflow, transmission occurred over distances greater than 2 meters (6.5 feet).

One paper published in The Lancet in May listed 10 evidence-based reasons that the SARS-CoV-2 virus is primarily spread through an airborne route. As of May 7, the CDC states that most infectious sources for COVID-19 are closer than 6 feet.

However, the CDC also states that transmission risk may increase when an infectious person is indoors for more than 15 minutes, thus increasing the concentration of the virus in the air. The recent study from Cambridge University has implications for reducing the risk of transmission of viral respiratory particles in an enclosed space, such as in a hospital room or along hospital corridors.

**The EPA stresses that ventilation and filtration are strategies to help reduce risk, but cannot by themselves stop the virus.**

### Air Purifiers Reduce Aerosol Particles

A paper published in Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology in June 2020 suggested that using air purifiers in a dental office may act as a "supplementary protective measure." ff

The authors cited a previous study published in 2010 that found using air purifiers in specific locations helped to significantly reduce aerosolized particles and reduce the amount of aerosol particles that health care workers were exposed to by up to 95 percent.

The scientists measured the filtration efficiency of two types of air filters and found those with a high-efficiency particulate air filter (HEPA) H12 class removed 83 percent of the aerosol and suggested that for dental procedures that generated a high amount of aerosols, a HEPA filter may help protect the health care workers.

The current study was performed in a tertiary care public hospital in Melbourne, Australia. Tertiary care involves specialized care using advanced and complex procedures, usually by spe-

cialists in a state-of-the-art facility. The researchers didn't use aerosolized viral particles, but instead substituted glycerin-based aerosol to track the transmission from a patient room into the hallway and nurse's station.

The researchers compared the clearance rates measured in the corridors with and without a HEPA filter over time. They found "With two small domestic air cleaners in a single patient room of a hospital ward, 99 percent of aerosols could be cleared within 5.5 minutes."

"Air cleaners may be useful in clinical spaces to help reduce the risk of acquisition of respiratory viruses that are transmitted via aerosols. They are easy to deploy and are likely to be cost-effective in a variety of healthcare settings," they concluded.

### Cleaner Air May Slow Infection

The Environmental Protection Agency has also recommended the use of air cleaners and HVAC filters to help reduce the viral load in indoor areas, such as your home or business, especially when it's difficult to get proper ventilation with outside air to help reduce airborne contaminants. The EPA stresses that ventilation and filtration are strategies to help reduce risk, but cannot by themselves stop the virus.

Portable air cleaners may be helpful when the outdoor air pollution is high, or the temperature and humidity would compromise health and safety. The EPA recommends air filters that can remove particles from 0.1 to 1 microns (micrometer).

To choose the correct unit, select one designed for the space in square footage and a unit with a high clean-air delivery rate (CADR) for smoke.

Some units are designed to remove pollen or dust, which are particles much larger than viruses. The second choice is a central furnace or HVAC filter through which the air in your whole home, office, school, and commercial building can be filtered. These typically are installed by an HVAC professional.

The EPA recommends considering a portable air filter to supplement a whole building filter when it's difficult to achieve adequate ventilation. It's also crucial for the filter to be changed as often as the manufacturer recommends for it to function properly.

### Ventilation Versus Masks

In May, the CDC published a study in Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report that found ventilation could lower the spread of COVID-19 by 39 percent in schools. By contrast, the incidence of COVID-19 was 37 percent lower when teachers and staff members were required to wear masks.

Some of the ventilation strategies used by the school systems included open windows and doors and using fans. When this was combined with HEPA filtration, it lowered the incidence by 48 percent.

Newer homes are airtight and energy-efficient. Higher efficiency comes with lower energy bills and a smaller carbon



YUTTANA JAOWATTANA/SHUTTERSTOCK

footprint. But the flip side of energy efficiency is a lack of ventilation, a danger of moisture buildup, and a greater potential for a buildup of indoor air pollutants.

The EPA has recommended that proper ventilation with outdoor air should be used to help reduce airborne contaminants, such as viruses. Use caution when using fans to help with ventilation around children. Position them out of reach of small children and ensure stability so they don't fall. The EPA and CDC have several suggestions to help improve natural ventilation, including:

- Open windows and screened doors as able.
- Use a whole-house fan or evaporative cooler if you have one.
- Open the outside air intake of the HVAC system if your system has one (not common).
- Operate the bathroom fan when the bathroom is in use.
- Avoid continuous ventilation with outside air when the outdoor air pollution count is high, or the weather is too hot, humid, or cold. Instead, open windows throughout the home for about 15 minutes each day.
- If temperatures inside and outside are similar or there is little wind, you may need to use a fan or open windows on opposite sides of the house for cross ventilation.
- You can improve ventilation by opening windows at different levels. For example, opening windows on different floors at the same time, opening the top sash of a double-hung window on one window and the bottom sash on another window.
- If you don't get enough air movement, consider using multiple fans to draw air in from one window and push air out through another.

### Indoor Air Pollution Raises Health Risks

The clearance rate demonstrated in the featured study for aerosolized particles is encouraging since it has positive implications for protecting indoor air. The EPA finds that indoor air pollution is of-

ten two to five times higher than outdoor pollution, and occasionally is more than 100 times higher than outdoor levels.

Since most people spend 90 percent of their time indoors, it's essential to engage strategies that help ventilate your house. According to the WHO, 90 percent of the world lives in areas where pollution is higher than is deemed safe.

**The researchers compared the clearance rates measured in the corridors with and without a HEPA filter over time. They found 'With two small domestic air cleaners in a single patient room of a hospital ward, 99 percent of aerosols could be cleared within 5.5 minutes.'**

Fine particulate matter that measures less than 2.5 micrograms (PM2.5) is one indicator of air pollution. This type of pollution is one of the most widely studied components and consists of particles that are up to 30 times smaller than the width of your hair.

Fine particulate matter can build indoors, raising your risk for several health problems. In one study of more than 20,000 people living in China, researchers found that exposure to toxic air triggered a reduction in intelligence.

Emerging evidence has shown PM2.5 can play a role in several diseases you may not have associated with air pollution, including diabetes, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism, and sudden infant death syndrome.

Studies published in 2019 have also linked air pollution with mental health risks including psychiatric issues, anxiety, and depression. Using the same strategies of air purification and ventilation may also help reduce your exposure to indoor air pollution and is one strategy to help protect your overall health.

**Tips to Lower Risk of Upper Respiratory Viral Illnesses**  
Beyond cleaning the air in your home, there are several specific strategies you can take to optimize your immune health and reduce your risk of respiratory illnesses and chronic disease.

**Optimize your vitamin D.**  
I am passionate about the importance of vitamin D for your overall health and to strengthen your immune system. I recently published a peer-reviewed paper in Nutrients discussing the data demonstrating the importance of vitamin D to the risk

▲ Your air purifier should be sized to the square footage of your room or home.

of COVID-19. For more information, and links to the article in Nutrients, you can visit StopCovidCold.com.

### Eat all your meals within a compressed window of time.

Compress your eating window to six to eight hours. It may be somewhat challenging initially, but it's a powerful strategy that will improve your immune function and help your body repair and regenerate. Begin slowly compressing the time until you reach six to eight hours, with the last time you eat at least three to four hours before going to bed. This creates a healthier metabolism.

### Eat the right types of fat.

Before processed foods became the norm for our diets, only 1 percent to 2 percent of your diet came from linoleic acid. However, currently, people are getting upward of 20 percent of their diet from linoleic acids, which are associated with damaging your metabolic health by damaging your mitochondria. Your body can store linoleic acid for years. It's found in seed oils, such as sunflower, canola, safflower, and other vegetable oils.

Even healthy olive oil can have up to 20 percent of linoleic acid. However, most olive oils sold on the market today are adulterated and watered down with linoleic acid to lower the cost, which reduces the health benefit. Most restaurants use adulterated olive oil because pure olive oil is very expensive. Most restaurant food is also high in linoleic acid.

### Make time to exercise.

Your body is designed to move. By not providing stimulus, it may begin to decline, and you'll lose muscle mass. This increases your potential for becoming frail. Although cardiovascular exercise is important, resistance training is just as important to building your muscle mass.

### Try making a sauna part of your routine.

Another form of exercise is using a sauna since it's an exercise for your vascular system. Using a sauna is important as it activates your heat-shock proteins, which help to refold damaged proteins in your body.

Interestingly, 30 percent of the proteins in your body, when they are made, are misfolded. This means using a sauna is an important process to reduce your potential for neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.

*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*

# Medicinal Properties of Cucumbers

Here are 17 great reasons to eat these undercover fruit

The humble cucumber can keep your body cool and hydrated, even as it prevents diseases such as diabetes.

Eat them raw and you get a juicy crunch. Pickle them in brine and you have a fermented treat that will keep for months. Cucumbers, however, do more than just serve as a refreshing feature of salads, sandwiches, slaws, and cocktails. This popular produce pick, a member of the Cucurbitaceae family (along with melon, squash, and pumpkins) has been used in traditional medicine since ancient times for its unnumbered health benefits.

Cucumber is rich in polyphenols and cucurbitacins, plant compounds that are known to be antioxidant, anti-carcinogenic, anti-inflammatory, anti-hyperglycemic, diuretic, antimicrobial, and analgesic (pain-relieving), to name a few.

And while you may be used to thinking of cucumbers as a vegetable, the seed-bearing snacks are actually a fruit.

### 17 Health Benefits of Cucumber

1. Keeps you hydrated. Cucumbers are approximately 96 percent water, so they can be particularly effective at promoting hydration and helping you meet your daily fluid needs.

2. Useful for weight loss. Each half-cup serving of cucumber offers just 7.8 calories. In an analysis, consuming high-water, low-calorie foods was linked to a significant reduction in body weight.

3. Eases osteoarthritis pain. In a study, using 10 milligrams (mg) of an aqueous extract of cucumber twice daily proved effective in reducing pain related to moderate knee osteoarthritis and can be used to address knee pain, stiffness, and physical functions related to the condition.

Osteoarthritis, caused by wear and tear on the joints, presently has no known cure and is conventionally managed through high doses of painkillers and anti-inflammatory drugs that often come with side effects.

4. Helps treat liver damage. Heat-treated cucumber juice showed a significant protective benefit on alcohol detoxification among animal subjects, suggesting a potential use in treating liver injury due to excess alcohol consumption.

5. May lower blood sugar. A number of animal studies show that cucumbers may effectively reduce and control blood sugar levels. Another study induced diabetes in animal subjects, provided them with cucumber peel extract, and found that the peel reversed most of the changes associated with diabetes, causing a reduction in blood sugar levels.

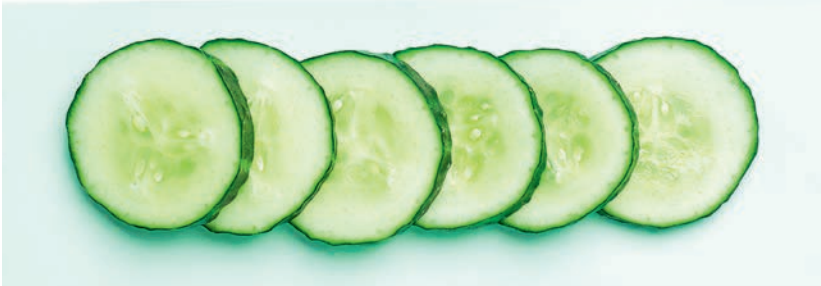
6. Anticancer effects. The aqueous extract of cucumber contains bioactive compounds that exert anticancer activity.

"Our conclusion supports additional in-depth study of this pharmacologic activity as a malignant tumor agent," wrote the researchers in the Saudi Journal of Biological Sciences.

7. Supports brain function. Fresh cucumbers were ground and turned into a paste of varying concentrations. The conclusion, researchers wrote in



ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK



Cucumbers are great for hydration and rich in plant compounds that are known to be antioxidant, antimicrobial, pain relieving, and more.



Cucumber is a delightful addition to drinks and food that can help you cool down and hydrate.

Pharmacognosy Journal: They helped increase cognition in animal models.

8. Promotes regular bowel movement. Cucumbers are water-rich and help prevent dehydration, a major risk factor for constipation. Staying properly hydrated can improve stool consistency, as well as regularity. The seeds, while having a cooling effect on the body, are used to prevent constipation.

9. Soothes skin. Cucumber is known for its soothing effect on skin irritations and its ability to reduce swelling. It also has the power to alleviate pain from sunburns.

10. Helps prevent wrinkles. A clinical trial showed that cucumber juice can be an effective skin care ingredient, as it helps prevent wrinkles by restoring the natural elasticity of skin.

11. Potent anti-inflammatory. An iminosugar amino acid in cucumber, called idoBRI, may function as an anti-inflammatory agent, and its importance in a diet, therefore, warrants further investigation, according to a 2020 study.

12. Supports bone health. A half-cup serving provides 8.53 micrograms of vitamin K. Based on a review of the current literature, supplementing with vitamin K1 (the type found in cucumbers) and K2 can reduce the incidence of fractures among postmenopausal women.

13. Serves as a natural eye mask. Research suggests that applying cucumbers to your eyes can impart a cooling effect on skin, hydrate the eyes and surrounding areas, and help reduce dark circles due to its vitamin K levels.

14. Supports cardiovascular health.

Cucurbitacins in cucumber may prevent atherosclerosis, on top of tested effectiveness against inflammation, cancer, and diabetes.

15. Slashes mortality risk. Beta-carotene, found abundantly in cucumber, is an important pro-vitamin A carotenoid. A meta-analysis showed that dietary or circulating beta-carotene was inversely associated with the risk of all-cause mortality, citing the possibility of extending the human lifespan.

16. Helps combat prostate cancer. Cucurbitacin B, a naturally occurring compound in cucumber and other vegetables, significantly and specifically inhibits prostate cancer cell growth.

17. Protects against diabetes complications. In a study, cucumbers were able to prevent oxidative stress and carbonyl stress, considered a safe and suitable way to protect against the complications typically observed in diabetes.

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

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

# Want to Stay Young?

Then stop obsessing over youthfulness

### MAT LECOMPTÉ

People get obsessed with staying young. They want to find every little thing to make them look younger and feel better—often to the point where it becomes debilitating.

When you're always worried about "getting old" and what that means, you're putting a lot of stress on your body and mind, stress that accelerates aging.

Skin creams and beauty regimens have their place. But they don't really help you stay young. They may make your skin a little plumper and moist, but that's about as surface level as it gets.

Your diet is one thing that can influence your skin and appearance. Nutrients feed your cells what they need so they stay healthy and battle-ready.

Exercise is great for longevity and youthfulness. It encourages physical capability, mobility, lower inflammation, more energy, and better blood flow.

As effective as these things are, attitude may take the cake. Don't underestimate the power of your mind. Yes, lifestyle habits are very important. But if you think little of the idea of "age" and try to live and enjoy life to its fullest without age limitations, you'll probably pass the years a lot better, and live longer, than those that obsess over it.

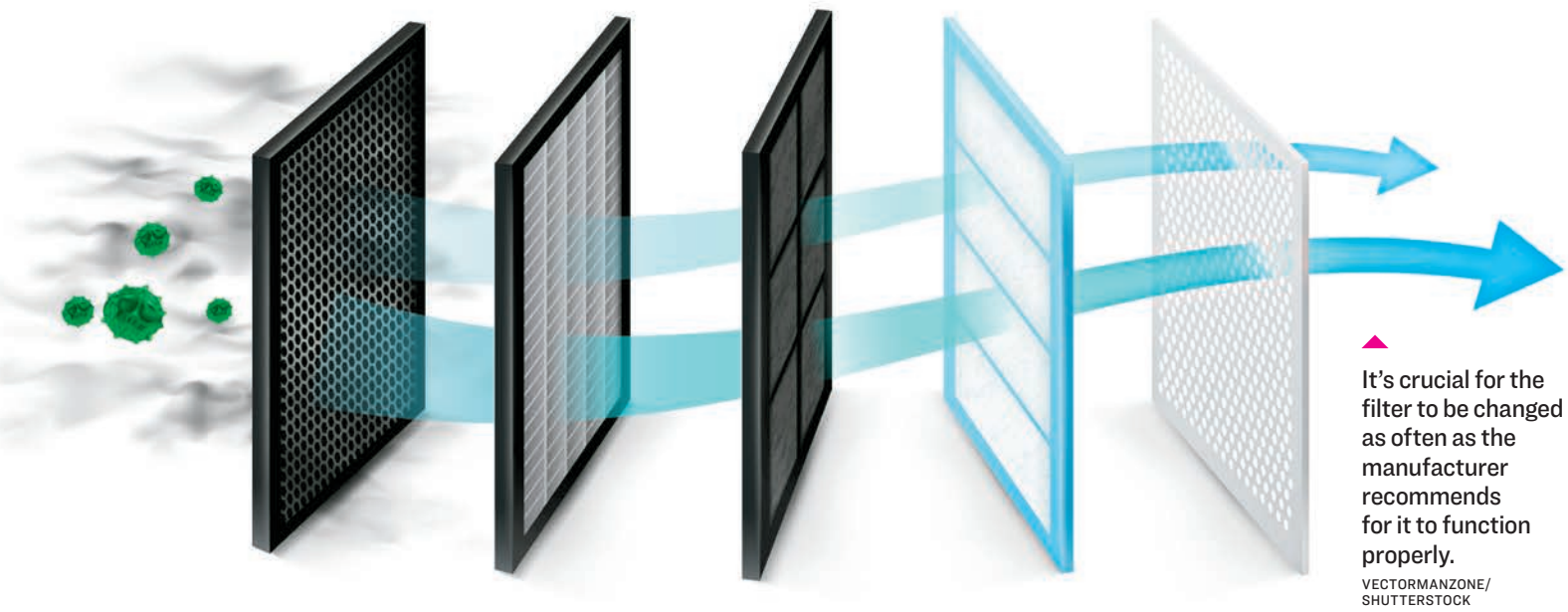
Put simply, don't stress over aging. Don't even think about it. Calendar years don't determine your life. Live happily, take care of yourself, keep up with appointments, and watch the years pass by while you stay the same age.

If you need some help getting over your age, just remember who you might have been or always wanted to be. Take classes, go to a club, play with your grandkids, and start living with a greater zest for life.

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



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# How Blind Spots and Biases Hurt Our Kids

Our culture pushes us to raise children in certain ways. Sometimes we need to push back.

Continued from **Page 1**

Raising kids on screens is no fairytale and ScreenStrong is here to remind everyone that the emperor isn't wearing any clothes.

## What Are Biases?

Biases are necessary in life. They can assist our built-in survival skills and help us save energy. Our executive brain develops certain biases naturally in order to efficiently manage risks and make decisions. We depend on biases to shortcut that process. But those shortcuts can feed assumptions that blind us to early warning signs of potentially dangerous activities.

Here are a few biases that can catch parents off-guard in the screen world.

### The 'Not My Kid' Bias, or 'My Kid Would Never ...'

*"My son is not like his friends. He's mature beyond his years, an old soul, and has really good self-control."*

*"My teen daughter is so smart. She's even more mature than her older brother. She's capable of navigating smartphone distractions. I don't worry about her at all."*

**TRUTH:** It's normal for parents to think that their children are unique. Most of us see our own kids as standing out from the crowd and being more mature than they're truly capable of being. We equate certain mature actions with thinking our kids are wise. But those glimpses of maturity don't signify that our kids are more mature than their peers.

Looking at developmental brain science, we learn that all children and teenagers are immature. We also learn that even our pristine parenting skills can't speed up or force the maturity process. Maturing takes time and isn't complete until we reach our mid-20s, when the frontal cortex has stronger neuronal connections. Your child may be very intelligent, but he or she isn't mature. Your child isn't immune to making poor judgments when it comes to using adult technologies. We hurt our kids when we believe they're immune to making bad decisions.

### The Parental Optimism Bias

*"I believe in my child. I want the best for her, so I trust her."*

*"My child has never lied to me and I know nothing bad will happen to her online. If it does, she'll tell me and we'll handle it together."*

**TRUTH:** It's easier to overestimate the possibility of good things happening and underestimate the possibility of bad things happening than vice versa. We assume that our son will never look at pornography and that our daughter will never sext, but statistics point to a very different story. Those types of activities have risen since the advent of the smartphone, despite our optimistic bias. It's good to have a positive attitude, but that can cause parents to place too much trust in their teens. The decline in a teen's emotional health is in part a result of that bias. The power of positive thinking doesn't apply to screen use.

### The Conversation Bias

*"As long as I tell my kids not to click on certain things, not to give out personal info online, to look away when it comes to porn and violent content, and discuss other directives, they'll be fine."*

*"My kids will tell me if anything is wrong online."*

## Going with the crowd is oftentimes a mistake—the crowd will take the low-effort, easy way out.

If conversations really worked, we would be able to eliminate teen delinquency (such as drug and alcohol use and teen pregnancy) simply by having conversations about it. Conversations are building blocks for a good relationship with your child, but conversations alone don't change behavior. When we depend on conversations about digital safety, we're hurting our kids. Ongoing conversations help establish you as the expert and the go-to person for life advice, but conversations are no golden ticket to screen success.

**Anchoring Bias: The First Idea Sticks**  
*"I trust my child on her screen. When she*



*was only 8, she told me about something bad she saw on her iPad and showed me. I'm so proud of her because she's so mature. We have a close relationship and I have no reason to believe that she won't keep being open and honest with me."*

*"My kids have been watching cartoons on YouTube for years, and they're fine."*

**TRUTH:** The anchoring bias says that we're strongly influenced by the first impression we have about a topic or person. But that first impression can incorrectly influence our judgment for future assessments. Just because your child seemed mature for her age in the first grade doesn't mean that she'll be mature in seventh grade. In the same vein, her telling you something once doesn't mean that she'll tell you everything.

When we have an anchoring bias, we aren't open to hearing new information. We tend to get stuck referring back to a single positive incident, rather than assessing our kids at their different developmental stages. What an 8-year-old does could be very different from what they do at age 12. Being open-minded to new facts and ideas will help us hold our ground with screen decisions.

### Confirmation Bias:

**Seeking Facts That Confirm Beliefs**  
*"Video games and social media are OK for my kids because contemporary culture, the education system, and all my friends believe that they're fine. Plus, we have no choice! We don't want our kids to get left behind in learning how to use modern technology."*

*"Every kid in their class has a smartphone, and they seem to be OK. I don't want my kids to be left out socially."*

**TRUTH:** We typically seek out and read the information that confirms what we already believe. If we want to believe that social media and gaming are good for our kids, there are plenty of platforms that we can seek out to support that bias. We do that in part because it takes less energy to follow the crowd and because we want our kids to love us, so we allow them to do everything their peers are doing. But going with the crowd is oftentimes a mistake—the crowd will take the low-effort, easy way out. Our culture will also lean toward the most financially profitable path, not the path that's best for our kids.

It takes much more energy to step away from the crowd, study the facts, and swim upstream against the predominant culture. But before you pick a crowd to join, always do your due diligence and research first. If you have a gut feeling that your child is being harmed by his screen use, step away and do

## If you find yourself searching for more support or excuses to keep your kids on their screens when there are signs of trouble, that's a red flag.

your own fact-finding. It just may save your child. Remember, you care more about your kids than the crowd does. When we refuse to look at other options we may hurt our kids.

### Status Quo Bias:

**Change Is Harder Than Stasis**  
*"My teen already has a phone. I can't take it away now."*

*"My son has been gaming for years. He'll lose it if I take his system away."*

We're all creatures of habit, and habits are hard to break because it takes a lot of energy and effort—we lean toward keeping things the same because we perceive any change as a loss. That's especially true when it comes to removing toxic screens. We think that since our kids already have access, it's easier to keep them. It becomes too overwhelming to think about making the change.

**TRUTH:** Change is hard. Doing the right thing is hard. Implementing screen changes is one of the hardest decisions to make because it's one of the most deeply rooted habits in our culture today. The truth is that generally, anything worth doing is hard to do, and this is no exception. Many kids get hurt because parents aren't willing to make the hard changes to break them of their screen dependencies.

### Availability Bias:

**Out-of-Context Examples**  
*"I know a friend whose son was never allowed to drink alcohol before he went to college, so he binge drank and ended up with alcohol poisoning as a freshman."*

*"I knew a girl who hated her mom for years because she wasn't allowed to have a smartphone."*

**TRUTH:** This mental shortcut relies on examples that come to mind when a certain subject is brought up. If we remember it quickly, then it must be more true. You think of a friend who experiences a similar situation and jump to the same conclusion without context. The fact that you remember a particular story when you're discussing a topic makes it feel important and true, but generally, we don't recall the whole story.

It's never productive for kids to spend more time on leisure screens than they spend on life skills or time with people.



## Trust your gut: if it feels like something is wrong, don't ignore it.

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# How to Be Likable

It isn't difficult to be someone people want to be around

## MIKE DONGHIA

Have you ever met someone with a magnetic personality?

Their presence in a room is enough to lift your mood and maybe even draw out parts of your personality that rarely come out otherwise. You will recognize those likable individuals by the way you feel better after having been around them.

In our success-driven society, maybe you've heard the message that becoming likable is a great way to grow your network, gain influence, or build wealth. I won't argue with that. Likable people are at a true advantage in so many areas of life.

But rarely discussed is the fact that likable people are a gift to those around them. They elevate the spirits of others. They draw individuals together. And they pull people into conversation. The result is that likable people tend to have a lot of close friends.

## As a boy, my dad used to take me to Walmart and teach me how to strike up conversations with strangers.

If you agree that friendship is one of life's true pleasures and you're looking for a way to serve your fellow man, then perhaps you'll agree that working to become a more likable person yourself is one of the best investments you can make.

Below are a few tips I've picked up by observing some of the most likable people that I know.

### Tips for Being Likable

#### Be in a Good Mood

It's true that life can be challenging at times, but your mood is something that you can directly influence. Do you enjoy being around people who regularly complain about their problems or are pessimistic about the future? Of course not. So do your best to bring a cheerful and positive attitude wherever you go, and



Sharing stories with others invites them to open up about their own life.

people will want to have you around. That doesn't mean that you should be overly bubbly and happy—that can get old after a while, too. Just be in a pleasant mood that suggests that you're pleased to be wherever you are.

### Tell Good Stories

When people ask you how your weekend was, are you the type of person who says: "It was good. How was yours?" You might think you're being generous by quickly deflecting the conversation away from yourself and back to the other person. But in reality, you aren't carrying any of the conversational weight.

People like talking about themselves (see the next item on this list), but they also like to be around someone who's funny or interesting. One simple way to be more likable is to be a collector of intriguing stories. You don't have to be a professional storyteller either, just share stories with some enthusiasm and a smile on your face. You'll be surprised at how much doing so puts others at ease and invites them to open up themselves.

### Ask Good Questions

I've saved the best for last. Probably the easiest way to be a more likable person is to ask good questions. Get people talking

about themselves and sharing their own stories, experiences, and thoughts. The key is to be genuinely curious.

A curious attitude is something that you can cultivate with practice, especially when you consider that everyone's life experiences have left them with a unique set of interests, skills, and opinions. You may find as much pleasure in getting to know a person as they do in sharing and being known.

As a boy, my dad used to take me to Walmart and teach me how to strike up conversations with strangers. Seeing how much people seemed to enjoy the interruption to their shopping experience taught me a very valuable lesson in life: People love being the object of your genuine interest.

"You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you."—Dale Carnegie

*Mike (and his wife, Mollie) blog at This Evergreen Home where they share their experience with living simply, intentionally, and relationally in this modern world. You can follow along by subscribing to their twice-weekly newsletter. This article was originally published on This Evergreen Home*

# Practicing With the Complaining Habit

## LEO BABAUTA

We can often spot complainers—when it's other people. They're the kind of people who always seem to be complaining, negative, stuck in victimhood.

It's harder to see it when we're the ones who are often complaining. And in fact, in my experience, most of us are in the habit of complaining, either out loud or to ourselves.

Myself included.

I've seen people who have gone on a "complaining diet"—when they don't let themselves complain for a month. This is an incredible practice. However, if we simply try to stop the complaining, we miss a wonderful opportunity to bring mindfulness to the process.

For example: If we are complaining, what's the emotion underneath the complaint? Could we practice being with that? Could we be with the fear that is at the root of the emotion?

With this kind of mindfulness practice, the complaint becomes an opportunity to be with our experience, with our fears and emotions, instead of simply shutting down a part of ourselves.

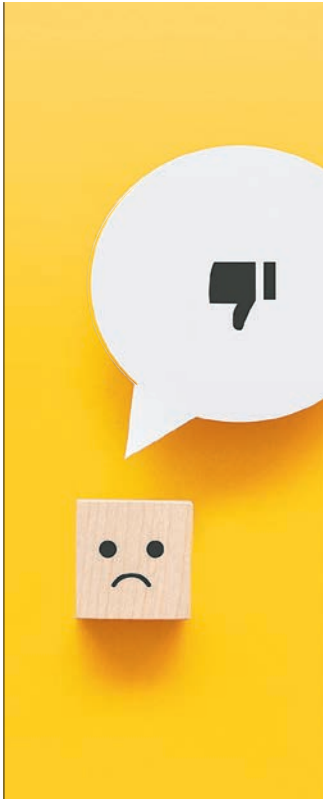
Let's take a look.

### Why We Complain

We complain when we don't like things the way they are. This is essentially saying: "Things are not the way I want them. I want things my way!" So the complaint is an expression of frustration, irritation, or anger that we're not getting our way.

What's wrong with not getting our way? Are we so entitled? In fact, there's nothing wrong with things not going our way—but there's often a fear that we won't be OK if things aren't the way we want them. We fear not having control over things. So we feel this fear of a lack of control,

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## When we feel the urge to complain, we can be with the feeling of not liking things the way they are.

a fear that we won't be OK if we don't get our way. We then feel frustration, irritation, anger.

Then, we create a narrative about how things shouldn't be this way, they should be some other way.

"They shouldn't act that way, why do they always do that?" "I should be better, I shouldn't be this way."

In fact, this is what's happening when we try to get rid of our complaining—we feel that there's something wrong with us when we complain. So we need to change, because we shouldn't be this way.

Getting rid of complaint is essentially a form of complaint.

### The Opportunity to Practice

So the practice is simply to be with what is.

That means that when we feel the urge to complain, we can be with the feeling of not liking things the way they are. We can be with our irritation, frustration, anger. We can be with our fear underneath all of that, the fear that we won't be OK if we don't have control.

We can be with our narrative about how the other person should act differently, or that we should be different than we are.

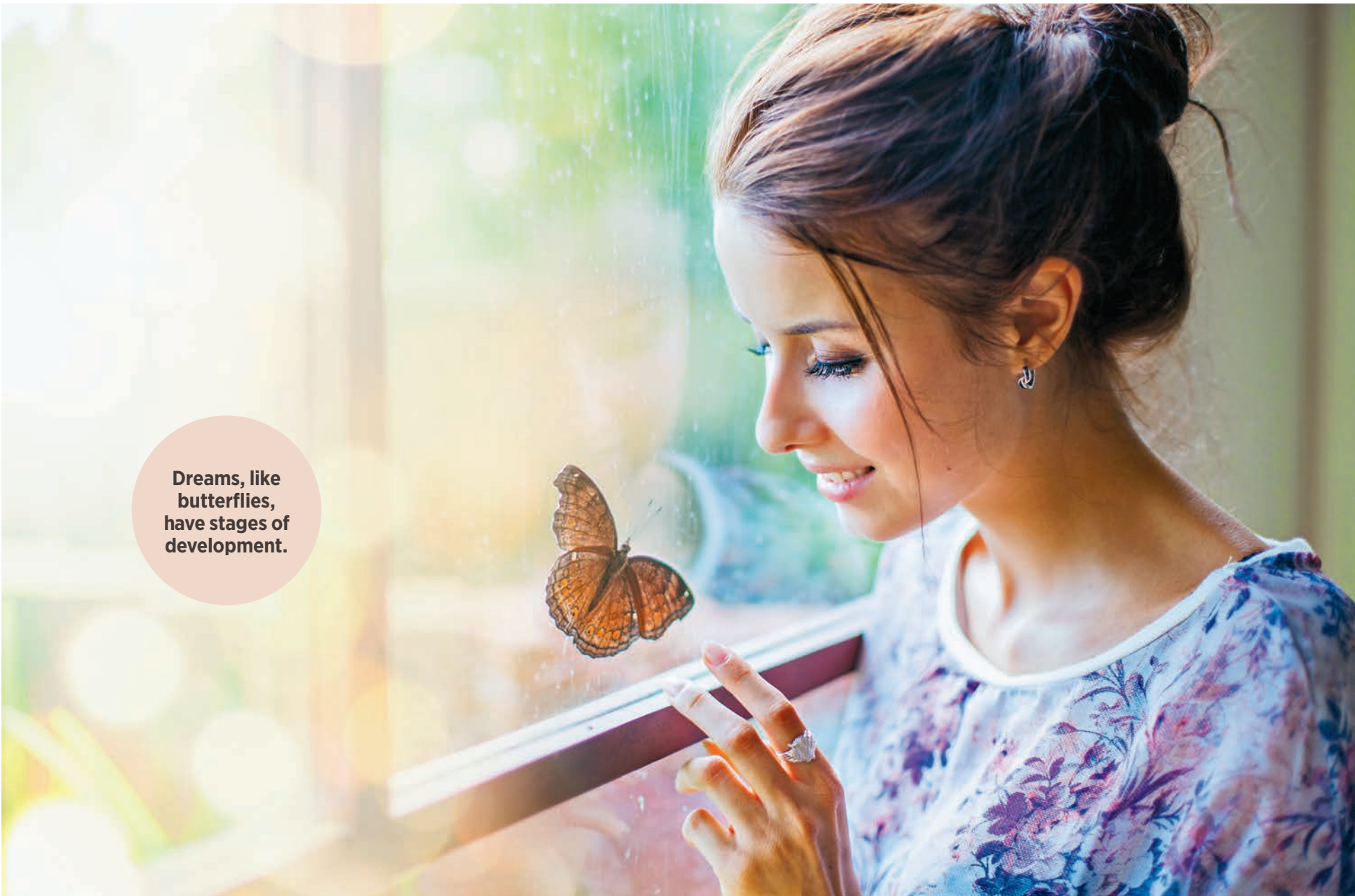
Once we've done all of that, we can then be with the person or the situation, just as they are or just as it is.

We can be with what is. It's as simple as that: open our awareness and simply rest in what we can perceive, just as it is, relaxing with it. Maybe even finding gratitude in it.

This is a beautiful practice. A lifetime practice.

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





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# Metamorphosis: The Birth of a Dream

A dream takes a process of development that transforms the dreamer

DONNA MARTELLI

What is your dream? Do you know at what stage it is? What do you need to do next?

In the past several years of my earth life, I have seen many of my dreams come to pass, and there are many more on the horizon. They are all at different stages of development and preparation, but I expect they will each be complete someday.

Lately, I've been thinking a great deal about dreams, as in the desires of our hearts. All of us have a passion that determines and fuels our dreams. Dreams endure and beckon us to contemplate them often. What is your dream? Let's see how it will develop.

Our dreams take preparation before they can be realized. There is a perfect analogy to the development of our dream in the development of a butterfly.

Think of what must transpire for a lovely butterfly to emerge strong and free from its former not-so-beautiful state. It all starts with the egg. The embryo is formed from cells of the parents and incased in the egg. Our dream begins the same way: with the egg. This is our infant thought-dream: a contemplation of what we want, that thing that makes us feel completely alive and gives us much joy: our dream. It also aligns with our gifts and talents, and it involves something we want to do. But in this stage, we are immature dreamers. The dream, and our grasp of it, is unformed.

All that the egg does is sit in its shell and grow. Over the pre-determined time, the tiny embryo expands and becomes stronger until it is ready to break the eggshell with its increased strength and volume. It's the same



After a period of incubation, our goal will become something we can bring into reality.

with the first thought-dream that we have. It will grow and become stronger until we are ready to move it beyond the thought-dream stage to its next level of development.

After some days, a caterpillar breaks open its shell and sheds the egg. What does the caterpillar do once out of the egg? It eats! With a voracious appetite, it consumes mass quantities of food as its whole job now is to grow. Likewise, when our thought-dream develops to the next stage of growth, we must feed it with all the knowledge and training we can acquire. We must read books, take classes, attend seminars, study, study, and study some more. Just like that little caterpillar, as we eat, we grow and gain new stature.

Finally, when the well-fed and fat caterpillar has gained sufficient size and strength, it spins a cocoon all around itself where it will incubate safely for a while, secure from any outside harm or influence. Dreams too need a time of solitude. Some people won't understand your dream or doubt your ability to realize it. This is a time to grow, but often in a private way.

While in the cocoon stage, the caterpillar undergoes a major transformation, and a metamorphosis occurs. It becomes something completely new and different as everything in its life up to this point blends together to form the final result.

Our dream self develops in us the same way. All our gifts, talents, desires, knowledge, and training come into play to make us new persons capable of manifesting our dreams.

We know what comes next. The gossamer butterfly, long known as the symbol of resurrection, emerges from its temporary cocoon-home and gracefully wafts its way heavenward.

These newfound wings are our new capability to begin the journey toward a destination that was once impossible. Our dream, that part of us that hopes and seeks to realize itself in the world, has reached a new stage. Consider the migration of the monarch butterfly, which travels from its summer grounds as far north as Canada to its wintering grounds as far south as Mexico. This annual migration can reach 3,000 miles—twice a year. No caterpillar, no matter how well-fed and how determined, could cover even a tiny fraction of that distance.

The dream must grow and transform the dreamer.

With some dreams, it can take years before we are sufficiently developed and ready for incubation. This incubation period may take months or years, but it can't be rushed. After a period of incubation, our goal will become something we can bring into reality. It's God's design, and it assures the birth of our dream at the proper time, well prepared and ready to advance.

So, I ask you again: What is your dream? Do you know at what stage it is? What do you need to do next? Be encouraged and go after it with gusto.

Donna Martelli, formerly a professional dancer with the Harkness Ballet of New York, served on the dance faculty at Butler University in Indianapolis, and is now also a certified personal trainer, and certified Pilates instructor in Indianapolis. She conducts classes, seminars, and workshops in the U.S. and Europe. She is the author of "When God Says Drop It" and "Why the Dance," available on Amazon and wherever books are sold.

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VITAL NUTRITION

# The Critical Importance of Vitamin D

Make sure you know the signs of vitamin D deficiency

JOSEPH MERCOLA

The importance of maintaining optimal levels of vitamin D can't be overstated.

Vitamin D regulates the expression of hundreds of genes and is integral to biological functions that affect every bodily system. Vitamin D insufficiency or deficiency can trigger several generalized symptoms that you may have associated with other health conditions.

It's also called the sunshine vitamin since your skin makes vitamin D when exposed to ultraviolet light from the sun. Vitamin D performs many functions within the body, including maintaining adequate levels

of calcium and phosphate, essential for normal bone mineralization.

It helps reduce inflammation, which is necessary for the modulation of cell growth and immune function. Vitamin D also affects genes that help regulate cell differentiation and apoptosis (programmed cell death).

The main indicator of your vitamin D level is 25-hydroxyvitamin D (25OHD). Data collected from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey in 2005-2006 showed a deficiency prevalence of 41.6 percent in the United States' population. However, as I discuss later in this article, today as many as 80 percent of people may be deficient in vitamin D.

It's important to note that how the measurement of insufficiency and deficiency is defined depends on the serum concentrations used. Some researchers use a level of 20 nanograms per milliliter (ng/mL) or 50 nanomoles per liter (nmol/L); the ng/mL is used most frequently in the United States and nmol/L is the standard in Europe.

However, Grassroots Health Nutrient Research Institute recommends vitamin D serum concentration levels from 40 ng/mL to 60 ng/mL or 100 nmol/L to 150 nmol/L. At this level, the number of people who are likely deficient in vitamin D would be significantly higher.

Human beings are tied tightly to this planet, and sunshine isn't nearly as dangerous as it is essential to our well-being.

Continued on Page 15



While you may think it's helpful to offer a suffering friend useful advice, responding to their painful experience this way isn't all that wise nor helpful.

NANCY COLIER

When in the midst of great sadness or grief, people really want someone to be with them in their pain.

It may be necessary to refrain from turning a friend's painful experience into an idea or an opportunity to be helpful or wise.

Try to keep a suffering friend company in their truth, however messy it is.

Have you ever told a friend about a deeply upsetting experience and then had the friend tell you all the reasons why that experience won't be upsetting at some point in the future? Have you ever been that friend who offers that advice?

If we're no longer a child, we probably already know that our feelings are going to change over time. We've had enough life experience to trust this truth. So, when we are reminded that what feels terrible now will eventually feel less terrible, and maybe even normal, we don't actually feel any better. We don't feel comforted or supported, not really. But it's not just because we already know that our feelings will eventually change that this kind of "you won't always feel this way" reassurance is unhelpful and sometimes actually feels even more painful.

When we're in the midst of great sadness or grief, what we really want is someone to be with us in our pain, to essentially, keep us company in our grief.

When someone tells us that we'll grow accustomed to what feels terrible right now, the result is that we feel even more alone in our pain.

When we're suffering, counter-intuitively, we don't actually want advice or someone to remind us that we will feel better in some future now. What we long for is another human being who's willing to be with us in this now ... to let our suffering be what it is. Someone who has the courage to let us suffer and not try or need to change our grief into something better or more tolerable.

We share our pain so that we're not so alone in it, so that we can have company in our present moment with the pain that's here.



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NICOLETA IONESCU/SHUTTERSTOCK

Feeling gassy and bloated on a regular basis is uncomfortable. But there are some simple things that you can do to prevent this unsettling situation.

## How to Relieve Intestinal Gas—Naturally

If you feel often feel bloated after meals, it’s time to look at what you eat and how you eat it

IAN KANE

You’ve probably been privy to all manner of jokes (and attempted jokes) about emitting burps from your mouth or gas from your other end. In reality, everyone passes gas multiple times per day—it’s a natural, healthy bodily function after all. But the laughs all come to an end when someone realizes that there is something abnormal and beyond their usual daily gaseous emissions. To be frank, when you go from occasional bloat and release of gas to acute, lengthy periods of feeling bloated (and extra gassy), there could be something more than meets the nose going on.

One way to tell if you may have a gas problem is if your stomach feels extraordinarily swollen after you’ve finished eating. While it’s good to feel full after a meal, if your stomach feels too tight on a regular basis, you may be producing inordinate amounts of gas. While this is typically due to something in your normal, everyday diet, there can be other factors at play as well.

What Causes All That Gassiness?

Dehydration, a high-fiber or fatty diet, and chewing gum can contribute to digestive symptoms such as bloating and gas. However, the most common way that gas enters our bodies is through the inhalation of air.

As we’re eating or drinking, we take in air. We take in even more air when we eat too fast, chew gum (because our mouths are typically open a lot), and drink carbonated drinks (especially if you use straws). While some of this air intake is burped out through your mouth and nose, what ever doesn’t will inevitably travel down through your system and eventually end up in your bowels.

Also, your large intestine is where you break down carbohydrates such as fiber, starches, and sugars. But sometimes, yeast and bacteria can build up over time—both the good and bad varieties. While the good bacteria will try to break down as much of the undigested carbs in your system as possible (a process known as fermentation), bad forms of bacteria can lead to excessive gas build-up and eventually, bloating.

This build-up of bad bacteria in your gut can cause the gas they produce to accumulate and lead to issues such as small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO), as well as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

All-Natural Ways to Reduce Gas

**Modify Your Diet**  
If you’re trying to find out what is causing all of your bloating and gas issues, you should know that your food intake is typically the No. 1 culprit. But the good news is that a simple shift in your diet can usually be enough to decrease, or even prevent, your digestive ills.

Foods that produce gaseous carbs include many kinds of vegetables (such as broccoli, garlic, asparagus, cauliflower, and onion), fruits (like peaches, pears, and apricots), certain grains (such as oats, po-

lenta, and quinoa), dairy, and legumes. Eliminating these foods from your diet can help to reduce your digestive issues.

If that doesn’t work, these foods can help solve your digestive woes:

**Yogurt**  
Yogurt is the go-to food choice for people with digestive issues because it contains probiotics, which help to promote gut health.

“Yogurt that contains live active cultures helps keep the good bacteria balanced in the digestive tract,” said Heidi McIndoo, co-author of “The Complete Idiot’s Guide to 200-300-400 Calorie Meals.”

Yogurt can relieve bloating and gas pains almost immediately—as long as you aren’t lactose intolerant. And be aware, not all yogurt is created equal. Look for brands with live probiotics.

A simple shift in your diet can usually be enough to decrease, or even prevent, your digestive ills.

**Fresh Citrus Juice**  
Citrus fruit juices, such as those derived from lemons and oranges, are generally great low-gas options to consume. Adding some fresh lemon or lime juice to water will also help to improve your overall digestion.

The citric acid found in fresh fruit juices helps to break down gas-causing foods when they enter your digestive tract. Just make sure to brush your teeth (or at least rinse your mouth out) after their consumption since their acids can erode your teeth’s enamel.

**Ginger**  
Either eating some raw ginger root or drinking it in a cup of tea can help relieve bloating and gas. Ginger is a natural carminative—an agent that relieves gas.

**Chew Your Food**  
Try taking your time to eat your food slowly. Also, drinking liquids slowly will help to reduce the amount of air that goes down your throat with it. A functional way to get used to this is to set your eating utensil down between bites of food (or glass if drinking liquid).

**Exercise**  
Simply put, engaging in a regular exercise routine can help to move the muscles of your core, and therefore, those of your gastrointestinal tract as well. Working out is also an excellent way to help your body purge itself of gas more efficiently and reduce any pain associated with it.

Ian Kane is an U.S. Army veteran, author, filmmaker, and actor. He is dedicated to the development and production of innovative, thought-provoking, character-driven films and books of the highest quality. You can check out his health blog at [IanKaneHealthNut.com](http://IanKaneHealthNut.com)

# Did We Catch You Napping?

The right kind of nap can make all the difference

DEBORAH MITCHELL

According to a 2009 survey, one-third of U.S. adults manage to nap on any given day of the week. If you’re among that percentage, are you taking the best nap that you can? Are naps beneficial? If you don’t take naps, should you? Why?

A nap is an intentional or unintentional period of sleep for a short period of time, typically taken during daylight hours. Scientists have done quite a bit of investigation into napping and developed a list of different types or categories of naps based on their function.

**Types of Naps**  
Not all naps are created equal or provide the same benefits. For example:  
**Appetitive:** Naps you take to enjoy the experience. These naps are relaxing and can result in an improved mood and greater energy  
**Essential:** When we’re sick, we tend to nap more. Naps taken when we’re ill are considered essential for recovery.  
**Fulfillment:** Remember when you had nap time as a child? Children need more sleep than adults. Fulfillment naps are typically scheduled, but can be spontaneous naps for infants, toddlers, and older children.

**Prophylactic:** Naps you take when you know you’ll be losing sleep. For example, if you work the night shift, you may benefit from a nap before and during your shift. A “during work” nap may be possible if you bring an alarm clock and nap during a break.  
**Recovery:** Did you party into the wee hours of the morning or miss out on sleep because of a sick child? If you take a recovery nap the next day, that might help make up the sleep deficit.

**How Long Should You Nap?**  
When you nap, you begin to go through the various stages of sleep. Knowing how long each stage lasts can help explain how long you should nap and what effects each length of nap time can have on you.  
There are three stages of non-REM (rapid



DASHA PETRENKO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Napping can be a great boost for your energy level, creativity, memory, focus, and mood. The wrong nap, however, can make you feel worse.

eye movement) sleep and one of REM. Stage one is when your eyes are closed and it’s easy to wake you up. It lasts five to 10 minutes. Stage two is light sleep and preparation for deep sleep. It lasts for 10 to 25 minutes. During stage three, your body is in deep sleep. It repairs tissues, builds muscle and bone, and enhances your immune system. REM sleep typically begins 90 minutes after you fall asleep. It’s when you dream and when the brain is stimulated to learn.

With that in mind, here are the effects of different nap times:  
**Power nap (10 to 15 minutes):** This nap can boost your energy and alertness. A power nap is ideal to take during your afternoon coffee break.  
**Short-term (30 minutes):** You can expect to feel groggy if you take a 30-minute snooze.

The grogginess can last for about one hour, a state sometimes referred to as sleep inertia.  
**Short-term (60 minutes):** This nap time is ideal if you need or want to remember what you were reading or studying before taking the nap. Going to school, taking a test, or learning a new language? Then this nap may be for you.  
**REM (90 minutes):** Need a creativity boost? Then it’s dream time and some REM sleep for you.

**Pros and Cons of Napping**  
Depending on the type and length of nap you take, as well as your age, the time you take your nap, and why you are napping, you can expect to reap the following benefits: feelings of restfulness, reduced sleepiness, help with forming memories, stabilized emotions, im-

## Managing Diabetes With Diet

MAT LECOMPTÉ

Diabetes should change the way you eat. Managing blood sugar can become a life or death situation, and diabetics have a much higher risk for heart disease and other heart-related risks than the general population.  
Tack on the risk of losing vision and limbs, and you can imagine why controlling the condition is so important.  
But a healthy eating plan for diabetics isn’t as complex as you might think. In fact, it looks almost exactly like one for people without diabetes.  
The American Diabetes Association (ADA) repeats the dietary guidelines suggested

for everybody else: build your diet around fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and low-fat dairy products.  
Of course, there is one thing you’ll need to do that the general population might not: pay attention to total carbohydrate intake. But even then, your intake won’t vary too much from recommendations for the general population.  
Most diabetics should keep carbohydrate intake to around 45 to 55 percent of total daily calories. Those carbs should be coming from the sources listed above, not refined grains, sugary snacks or beverages, white bread, or pasta.  
Choosing fiber-rich carbohydrates is the best move for people hoping to manage blood sugar.  
Why? Because it has big benefits for blood sugar and your heart.  
Research suggests that soluble fiber, the kind found in fruit, oats, beans, and dried peas, may be effective in lowering blood sugar by improving insulin sensitivity. This could mean you need less medicine to manage your condition.  
Insoluble fiber, the kind in whole grains, may help manage cholesterol levels, which

Choosing fiber-rich carbohydrates is the best move for people hoping to manage blood sugar.



YUGANOV KONSTANTIN/SHUTTERSTOCK

can lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of heart trouble.  
So, what would a daily diet look like?  
Unsweetened oats with nuts and berries for breakfast, a piece of fruit for a mid-morning snack, and maybe some plain non-fat yogurt. Lunch can be a chicken or tuna salad, or a sandwich on whole-grain bread, with nuts and carrot sticks as a mid-afternoon snack. Dinner could be some meat or fish with sides of green beans and sweet potato.

A healthy eating plan for diabetics isn’t as complex as you might think. In fact, it looks almost exactly like one for people without diabetes.

## Commissioner Suggests Health as Defense Against COVID-19

JOSEPH MERCOLA

In a recent opinion piece for the LaCross Tribune, Frank Edelblut, commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Education, posed what some vaccine-focused health officials on the COVID-19 front lines might call a radical idea: Why not work on getting healthy to fight COVID-19?  
“It’s not an anti-vaccination statement to say, vaccinating Americans will not make Americans healthy,” Edelblut wrote.  
He cited studies showing that COVID-19 patients with a range of comorbidities are more at risk for getting COVID-19, having a severe case of it, and even dying.  
And most of the comorbidities are diseases directly connected with poor lifestyle choices, beginning with obesity, which he said is “the top health condition contributing to death with a 30 percent higher chance of death.”  
Diabetes with complications came with a



WILLIAM NICHOLS/GETTY IMAGES

Frank Edelblut, commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Education, suggests: Why not focus on health as a way to fight COVID?

Diabetes with complications came with a 26 percent higher chance of death, noted Edelblut.

The commissioner noted that the media has spent the past 18 months focused on the “risks, dangers, and tragic outcomes of the pandemic, possibly compounding anxiety levels.”  
“Little, if any, coverage has focused on the efficacy of making healthy choices as a COVID-19 health strategy,” Edelblut wrote.  
Healthy choices could make a substantial difference, however.  
“If ever you needed a reason to make a commitment to get healthy, a global pandemic could be just the ticket,” he wrote.

Dr. Joseph Mercola is the founder of [Mercola.com](http://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](http://Mercola.com)



VITAL NUTRITION

# The Critical Importance of Vitamin D

Make sure you know the signs of vitamin D deficiency

Continued from Page 9

**Signs of Deficiency**

It is essential to maintain healthy levels of vitamin D to help reduce your risk of viral and bacterial illness during cold and flu season when respiratory illnesses are prevalent, or if you're immune-compromised and want to build up your natural defenses against other infections. A blood test is the best way to determine your vitamin D levels, but here are some symptoms that may indicate your levels are low:

**Aching Muscles**

Nearly half of all adults are affected by muscle pain. Researchers believe most of those adults are deficient in vitamin D. Some studies have suggested that nerves have vitamin D receptors that affect the perception of pain. In one animal study, research demonstrated a vitamin D-deficient diet can induce deep muscle hypersensitivity that was not connected to low levels of calcium.

**Painful bones**

Vitamin D regulates the level of calcium in your body, necessary to protect bone health. Vitamin D deficiency can cause your bones to soften, called osteomalacia. This may be a precursor to osteoporosis.

**Fatigue**

This is a common symptom of a variety of different health conditions, including sleep deprivation. Researchers have found that supplementing cancer patients suffering from fatigue with vitamin D can improve their symptoms.

In one study using 174 adults with fatigue and stable medical conditions, the researchers found 77.2 percent were deficient in vitamin D. After normalizing their level, the fatigue symptoms improved significantly.

**Reduced Muscle Performance**

Vitamin D deficiency is as common in athletes as in others. Vitamin D is crucial for muscle development, strength, and performance. Older adults taking a vitamin D supplement have a reduced risk of falls and improved muscle performance.

Correction through oral supplementation or sensible sun exposure may reduce symptoms of stress fractures, musculoskeletal pain, and frequent illness. Vitamin D also has a direct effect on muscle performance. In one paper from the Journal of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, the author wrote: "Higher serum levels of vitamin D are associated with reduced injury rates and improved sports performance. In a subset of the population, vitamin D appears to play a role in muscle strength, injury prevention, and sports performance."

**Brain Health**

Vitamin D is also essential for your brain health. Symptoms of deficiency can include dementia caused by an increase of soluble and insoluble beta-amyloid, a factor in Alzheimer's disease. Research has also found an association with depression that may be associated with the function of vitamin D buffering higher levels of calcium in the brain.

Vitamin D deficiency in pregnant women can increase the risk of autism and schizophrenic-like disorders in the baby. One study of people with fibromyalgia found a vitamin D deficiency was more common in those who had anxiety and depression. Another looked at vitamin D deficiency in obese subjects and found a relationship between low levels of vitamin D and depression.

**Poor Sleep**

The mechanism linking vitamin D and poor sleep quality has not been identified. But research has found people with low levels of vitamin D have poor quality sleep and a higher risk of sleep disorders.

**Sweaty Head**

Excessive sweating, especially on your head, or a change in your pattern of sweating, can indicate a vitamin D deficiency.

**Hair Loss**

Vitamin D is crucial to the proliferation of keratinocytes and plays an important role



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Vitamin D is essential to virtually every system in your body, which may be why your body can produce it by exposing your skin to sunlight.

in your hair cycle. The vitamin D receptor appears to play a role in the anagen phase of hair growth, leading researchers to conclude that "treatments that upregulate the vitamin D receptor may be successful in treating hair disorders and are a potential area of further study."

**Slow-Healing Wounds**

Chronic wounds are a major public health challenge. In the United States, 2 percent of the population is affected by chronic wounds and it is estimated to account for 5.5 percent of the cost of health care in the United Kingdom's National Health Service. Vitamin D promotes wound healing and the creation of cathelicidin, a peptide that fights wound infections.

**Dizziness**

Evidence from animal studies suggests that vitamin D is critical in the development of the inner ear, which affects balance and coordination. Analysis of people with vestibular neuritis, characterized by vertigo, showed lower serum vitamin D levels than in people without vestibular neuritis.

**Heart Problems**

Clinical studies have shown that vitamin D3 improves circulation and can help improve high blood pressure. In one study, researchers discovered that vitamin D3 also has a significant effect on the endothelial cells that line your cardiovascular system. They found that it helped balance concentrations of nitric oxide and peroxynitrite, which improved endothelial function.

**Excess Weight**

How vitamin D affects obesity has not been identified. However, data does show there is a high probability of deficiency in people who are obese.

**Recurring Infections**

There have been multiple epidemiological studies that show vitamin D deficiency can increase the risk and severity of infection, particularly in respiratory tract infections. Multiple studies have demonstrated that vitamin D deficiency increases the potential risk for severe disease and mortality, especially in those who are critically ill.

**Reduced Cognitive Function**

Data show that vitamin D deficiency increases your risk of dementia twofold and raises your risk of impaired cognitive function.

**80 Percent of People With COVID-19 Are Deficient in Vitamin D**

Vitamin D plays an important role in the development and severity of many diseases. This is why, from the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, I suspected that optimizing vitamin D levels would significantly lower the incidence of infection and death in the general population.

Since then, mounting evidence has revealed that higher levels of vitamin D may reduce the rate of positive tests, hospitalizations, and mortality related to this infection. One study, released in late 2020, assessed the serum 25OHD levels

of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 to evaluate the influence it might have on the severity of the disease. The researchers found 82.2 percent of those with COVID-19 were vitamin D deficient (levels lower than 20 ng/mL).

Interestingly, they also found those who were deficient had a greater prevalence of cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, high iron levels, and longer hospital stays. A second study found similar results for people who only tested positive for COVID-19.

In another study published in August 2021 in the American Journal of Physiology, Endocrinology and Metabolism, data showed that the vitamin's metabolites can inhibit replication and expansion of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

It's important to remember the data showing people who are deficient in vitamin D have a higher risk of severe disease was available long before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Added to this, the studies on vitamin D have demonstrated insufficiency and deficiency are associated with a number of health conditions.

**Vitamins That Boost Vitamin D3**

It's important to take vitamin K2 MK-7 and magnesium with your vitamin D3 supplement. Both play an important role in your overall health and in the bio-availability and application of vitamin D in your body. If you're not using magnesium and vitamin K2, you could need nearly 2.5 times more vitamin D, a discovery made by GrassrootsHealth in its D'action project.

In this project, more than 10,000 individuals have provided information about supplement use and overall health status to GrassrootsHealth since they began conducting large-scale population-based nutrient research in 2007.

That information has led to the recommendation that vitamin D blood levels between 40 ng/ml and 60 ng/ml (100 nmol/L to 150 nmol/L) are safe, effective, and lower overall disease incidence and health care costs. As reported by GrassrootsHealth from their data: "244 percent more supplemental vitamin D was needed for 50 percent of the population to achieve 40 ng/ml (100 nmol/L) for those not taking supplemental magnesium or vitamin K2 compared to those who usually took both supplemental magnesium and vitamin K2."

In practical terms, this means when you take vitamin K2 and magnesium with vitamin D, you need far less vitamin D to achieve a healthy level.

*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*

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

FOOD AS MEDICINE

# Healthiest Produce That's in Season

Tune your body in to fall with these delicious and nutritious foods

These seven nutrient-packed fruits and vegetables are ready to fall into your plans for optimal health and well-being. Keep this list of the freshest produce available this season handy and make sure to take advantage of their unique benefits.

**Apples and Their Anticancer Potential**

It's easy to take apples for granted for their availability all year round—this is their real season—but their healing properties stand out. In a study using aged mice, apples were found to prevent oxidative damage and impaired maze performance, as well as reduced cognitive performance.

Consuming apples has also been linked by a few studies to cancer risk reduction, including the risk of colorectal cancer.

In one study published in Reviews on Environmental Health, that type of cancer was inversely correlated with the daily number of apple servings, with the most significant reductions observed for an intake of one or more servings of the fruit daily. In liver cancer, the peel was experimentally confirmed to kill cancer cells, likely due to its high content of phenolic compounds, antioxidants, and antiproliferative action. In breast cancer, the fruit was seen to inhibit mammary tumors in animal subjects.

**Plums for Bone Health and Constipation**

You can consume plums either fresh or in their dried form, commonly known as prunes. Plums can be enjoyed as sauces, jams, and chutneys. They can also add a nice sweet touch to meat dishes or turnovers.

Prunus domestica L. is believed to promote bone health, effectively preventing and reversing bone loss. To test this, researchers recruited 236 women, one to 10 years postmenopausal, for a trial and found that dried plum significantly reduced the blood levels of bone turnover markers in the subjects.

For everyday wellness, consuming prunes may also help treat constipation. People who ate 2 ounces, or 50 grams (g), of prunes every day for three weeks reported having better stool consistency, as well as frequency versus the psyllium group. However, it's important not to eat too many prunes in order to prevent unwanted effects such as diarrhea.

**Artichokes Offer Pro-Liver Action**

Known by the names French artichoke and green artichoke in the United States, the artichoke is part of the species of thistle that's been cultivated as food. The plant's edible portion is made up of flower buds before the flower fully blooms.

In studies, artichoke has been found to have antioxidant, choleretic, bile-enhancing, and lipid-lowering effects,



These fruits and vegetables are ready to fall into your plans for optimal health.



along with standout benefits for the liver. In animal findings, the leaves and roots' liquid extracts have exhibited an ability to protect the liver and potentially help liver cells regenerate.

In healthy subjects, boiled wild artichoke also appeared to reduce postprandial glycemic and insulin responses, although no effect was seen on metabolic syndrome patients.

**Okra's Beneficial Mucilage**

An economically valued vegetable in tropical and subtropical areas, okra has immature fruits that are used as a vegetable in soups, stews, or salads

whether fresh, dried, or boiled.

Okra is known to be mucilaginous (gelatinous) after it's cooked. The mucilage has a number of medicinal uses, including binding cholesterol and bile acid-carrying toxins dumped into it by the liver. Okra also offers fiber and protein consisting

of lysine and tryptophan amino acids.

Okra has a number of potential health benefits, from helping to prevent cardiovascular disease and Type 2 diabetes to supporting digestion and fighting some forms of cancer.

**Cauliflower Lends Weight Management**

Cauliflower belongs to the Brassica species, known for their health-promoting phytochemicals such as vitamin C, minerals, and phenolic compounds.

Some of the properties of cauliflower may aid in weight loss: It's low-calorie, with only 25 calories in every cup, and often serves as a substitute for less nutrient-dense foods, such as rice.

Its dietary fiber helps slow digestion, as well as promote satiety, which may reduce the number of calories consumed throughout the day.

In cooking cauliflower, boiling and blanching it damaged nutrient composition and lead to significant losses of protein, minerals, and phytochemicals. The good news is that steaming and stir-frying showed the lowest nutrient reduction.

Keep this list of the freshest produce available this season handy and make sure to take advantage of their unique benefits.



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Preclinical and clinical studies hail mushrooms' benefits on cognition, weight loss, oral health, and even cancer prevention.



Pears are a rich source of flavonoid antioxidants, which can combat inflammation and help reduce disease risk.

**Pears Are an Inflammation Fighter**

This sweet, bell-shaped fruit is chock-full of health benefits. For one, it contains antioxidants and offers 27 to 41 milligrams of phenolics for every 100 grams. According to animal studies, pears may regulate alcohol metabolism, prevent ulcers, and lower cholesterol levels.

Pears aren't just a juicy fall treat, but also a potent inflammation fighter. They're a rich source of flavonoid antioxidants, which can combat inflammation and help reduce disease risk. In a large study involving more than 200,000 subjects, eating five or more weekly servings of fruits such as pears, which are rich in anthocyanins, was linked with a lower risk of Type 2 diabetes.

**Mushrooms Reduce Mortality Risk**

Mushrooms have a long history as a health-promoting food, dating back to their cultivation in ancient China. These fungi contain the same form of vitamin B12 found in meat, albeit in very low quantity, as well as fiber, selenium, and other vitamins and minerals.

Preclinical and clinical studies have hailed the benefit of mushrooms on cognition, weight loss, oral health, and even cancer prevention. They're thought to support healthy immune and inflammatory responses through their effects on gut microbiota.

Investigating the ties between mushroom intake and all-cause and cause-specific mortality risk, a 2021 study concluded that consuming mushrooms was associated with a lower risk of total mortality in a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults.

Several different types of mushrooms are available in the market, with the common button mushroom as the most popular in the United States. It can be eaten raw or cooked. Other varieties include enoki, which has long and thin white stems with small white caps, and oyster mushrooms, a fan-shaped delicate cap.

Portobello, a large brown thick cap with a rich, juicy flavor, is often used as a meat substitute. There are even mushrooms that taste like chicken, sometimes known as chicken of the woods.

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Research has found people with low levels of vitamin D have poor quality sleep and a higher risk of sleep disorders.





# A Simple Detox From Technology

If tech is disrupting your best life, take a break from it



Gather a big stack of books and read to your children instead of turning on the TV.

MOLLIE DONGHIA

I remember when our first computer made its grand entrance into my life. It was 1997. I was 8 years old and was thrilled to have this (very large) piece of technology at my fingertips—eager to play games, explore the internet, and print out random clipart to hang around my bedroom.

My sister and I were mesmerized at the possibilities of this giant box. It was unlike anything we had ever experienced, opening up a world of possibilities in both academics and leisure.

Technology has since exploded, creating opportunities and providing ways to spend our time that no decade prior to the millennium knew.

Technology has allowed us to stay more connected with those near and far through social media, chat apps, and more.

It's become much more portable. In 2000, the average desktop computer and monitor weighed 33 pounds combined. No one dreamed of toting it around for the day. Today we can carry a smartphone comfortably in our pocket.

Cloud-based storage allows us to save everything we could possibly want. A far stretch from those floppy disks I remember backing my research papers onto.

We're able to track just about everything in our lives, from the calories we eat to the steps we take to our REM sleep cycles.

Artificial intelligence (Hey Siri) has even opened the door to having our own virtual assistants anywhere we could possibly need them.

Technology has undoubtedly increased measures of productivity, health care advances, space exploration, and more. For that, we should be thankful.

But this article isn't a love letter about how technology has improved our lives. It's a reminder that sometimes we need to step away from it. Unplugging from technology with regular gadget fasts—and embracing habits of simplicity—can be a life-enhancing practice.



Go outside for a walk, but leave your phone at home. Listen to the sounds around you as you walk, focus on your posture, and take big, deep breaths.

One of technology's greatest gifts is efficiency. But when we care too much about efficiency and productivity, we can forget about life's simple pleasures.

Taking a tech detox for any amount of time not only allows you to become more present with those around you, it also reminds you of wonderful ways to pass the time.

## Why a Simple Tech Detox Might Be Necessary

One of technology's greatest gifts is efficiency.

But when efficiency and productivity are at the forefront of our lives, we often forget to leave room for life's simple pleasures, for slowing down, or even for taking time to reflect on what's most important in a given moment.

Sometimes taking a fast, or an intentional break, from something good is a smart way to maintain balance and preserve the enjoyment of it—and life.

When we place a conscious limit on an area in our life, we choose to give our minds and bodies a rest from that particular activity. Consider what it would look like if you took a tech fast from your smartphone, specific apps, or everything technological for half a day, a week, or even a month. What benefits might you gain from it?

One way I've used this practice is by placing my phone somewhere else when I want focused time with those close to me.

I regularly leave my phone inside when I play in the backyard with my kids. This simple habit allows me to avoid the temptation of scrolling through social media or checking my email.

With no phone, I'm more engaged and more enjoy our time together. I'm more focused on our conversations and less likely to become inattentive to the playfulness that's going on around me.

Taking a tech detox for any amount of time not only allows you to become more present with those around you, it also reminds you of wonderful ways to pass the time, such as reading a book instead of a Kindle or playing a board game on the floor with your kids instead of watching TV.

My family and I still enjoy technology every day, but we find it important to take breaks when needed and be mindful about filling our time with ways that bring us contentment and joy. Keep in mind as you read that this isn't a prescriptive technique or a one-size-fits-all approach. What simplicity means to me might be different for you.

But I would encourage you to try a fast from the technologies that limit you from living a meaningful life, and add them back in when you feel refreshed and focused—if at all.

## 12 Simple Ways to Detox From Technology

Read a book, rather than something on your Kindle or phone.

Avoid the temptation of scrolling social

media before bed by keeping your phone out of the bedroom.

Gather a big stack of books and read to your children instead of turning on the TV. Turn off your air conditioning and open the windows and doors for some clean, fresh air.

Sit and watch the sunrise instead of turning on the news when you wake up.

Place your phone in a different room when you want to have focused time with those you love.

Play a game or have a good conversation with your spouse in the evening instead of flipping on Netflix.

Begin a gratitude journal by starting your day writing three to five things you're grateful for, rather than opening up social media as soon as you wake up.

Turn off notifications on social media. I've done this for years, and I've never regretted missing a message or comment the second it comes in.

Go outside for a walk, but leave your phone at home. Listen to the sounds around you as you walk, focus on your posture, and take big, deep breaths.

Do a decluttering spree by deleting any apps on your devices that you no longer use.

Seeing fewer apps on my screen is always less distracting and allows me to more easily see the ones I still use.

Take a fast from social media. I've done this for several week-long stretches (even deleting the app on my phone), and it's always a meaningful time for me to focus on other areas of life while not feeling that I'm missing out.

## Make a Tech Detox Work for You

In life, there are few hard and fast rules, but there are adjustments that can make life more enjoyable and meaningful.

I'd encourage you to take a fast from the areas of technology that have resulted in less connection and eroded your ability to be present.

A tech detox gives you a renewed appreciation for life's free pleasures, creates a healthy balance between stimulation and boredom, and instills a realization that living more simply results in less stress and more happiness.

Mollie (and her husband Mike) blog at *This Evergreen Home* where they share their experience with living simply, intentionally, and relationally in this modern world. You can follow along by subscribing to their twice-weekly newsletter.



Begin a gratitude journal by starting your day writing three to five things you're grateful for, rather than opening up social media as soon as you wake up.

# We're All Connected

Each of us has something to give, and it is essential we do so

DONNA MARTELLI

Every one of us is gifted in some manner and that gift or talent enables us to help others. Some people are great at giving wise advice, while others have unique knowledge and insight into various situations. Some people have so much faith that they always expect the best, and others have healing souls. Some of us are great readers of people, and we know if what they say is true or false.

There are those who seem to always live a life of miracles. I know of a family who may have a low income, but travel all over the world singing and dancing. They live in a creepy old house, but their parents passed it on to them mortgage-free. They lack nothing. Their four children are the same: They do all sorts of travel and activities that the average middle-class person can't afford. I don't know how that's possible other than to say it must be miraculous.

Though we have different abilities, we all contribute to the whole. People thrive through cooperation and sharing their unique talents. If any of those talents were missing, everyone would be lacking some degree of wholeness.

We fit together, yet no two of us are alike. People are diverse, yet the whole of humanity needs each one of us. It's like our physical body: It has many parts, and each part has its particular function, essential to the whole.

What if your foot told your hand that it's not part of your body because it isn't a hand? What if your ear said, "I don't belong to the body because I'm not an eye?" If your whole body was an eye, how would you hear anything, and if your entire body was an ear, how could you see, smell, walk, or use your hands? That whole analogy

We are all connected, and each of us is a part of the other.



Our minor differences can make a world of difference in our ability to help others.

sounds ludicrous, but it illustrates that we're all connected.

Some parts of our body seem obscure, but they have significant importance. For example, we don't think much about our many internal organs. We generally take them for granted and expect them to carry out their work behind the scenes. However, if one of them should malfunction, we give it our full attention. We do what we need to do to fix it and get it back to doing its regular job again. We care for all our body parts because each one is crucial.

If one part of your body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it. Have you ever had a muscle spasm in your back? It makes your legs hurt, while your neck and shoulders tighten as they try to help the situation. It can even make you feel nauseous.

If one part is powerful, the others benefit from it. When your back is strong and aligned as it should be, your digestive system, lungs, heart, and nerves are free and able to function with joy and peace.

We're all connected, and each of us is a part of the other. Some of us are leaders, and others are valuable assistants who

can see what needs to be done next. Many of us are excellent followers. Many of us can teach others the truth and direct them in the right way.

We must operate in the abilities and talents that we have and not try to do the work that somebody else is supposed to do.

Be assured that your part is essential to the whole. If you don't already know what your talents are, search for your gifts and be yourself as you use them to contribute to society. It's vital, so I say again, "Be yourself!" The world needs what you have to offer.

Donna Martelli, formerly a professional dancer with the Harkness Ballet of New York, served on the dance faculty at Butler University in Indianapolis, and is now also a certified personal trainer, and certified Pilates instructor in Indianapolis, Ind. She conducts classes, seminars, and workshops in the United States and Europe. She is the author of "When God Says Drop It" and "Why the Dance," available on Amazon and wherever books are sold.

People are diverse, yet the whole of humanity needs each one of us.

# Do You Have the Courage to Be a Real Friend?

Our friends don't need to hear their suffering will pass, they need us to acknowledge their experience

Continued from Page 9

But when someone tells us that we'll grow accustomed to what feels terrible right now, the result is that we feel even more alone in our pain. In being pointed toward an imaginary future, we feel abandoned in this now, and this moment's grief. The reassurance of a better tomorrow leaves us without comfort, company, or support today.

So too, when something terrible has happened in our life, the point is, we don't ever want it to feel normal or OK again. That's what grief is all about. After a friend lost her son in a car accident, she said the thing that scared her the most was that her life without him would ever seem OK or normal again. The normalizing of this new reality is what she was most afraid of. The idea that this new unbearable truth would become something bearable was the most horrifying part of all of it. That would mean that her son's life and death were actually

over, and a new reality had begun.

My friend needed to know that this moment's grief was infinite in its magnitude. To know that it was forever and would never feel OK was paradoxically comforting. In contrast, when we are reassured that a time will come when we won't mind this new dreadful reality so much, it feels as if we are being asked to minimize our current pain and thus betray our aching hearts.

Finally, when we receive "this too will feel OK" comfort, it can feel like the other person has offered assurance that allows them to feel better about our suffering, but at our expense. They can now sleep at night because they know we won't have to feel so bad forever. But in making it all OK for themselves, we who are suffering are left feeling even lonelier in our grief. The other person has rejected our invitation to be with us in the messy, hard, unknown of our real truth. Our suffering has been wrapped up with a bow and presented back to us, kept



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Notice what happens inside when you let another person reside in their real experience, without demanding that it or they change.

When we're in the midst of great sadness or grief, what we really want is someone to be with us in our pain, to essentially, keep us company in our grief.

at a distance from their heart, safely understood and intellectualized, but without ever having been held or shared. We get back an idea and a theory on our pain, in place of the real company and understanding we need.

The next time someone close to you, or not even close to you, trusts you enough to share something painful and present, see what it feels like—for you—to refrain from giving them advice or making their suffering OK. Refrain from turning their experience into an idea or an opportunity to be helpful or wise. Rather, just as an exercise, let your job be to try to understand their experience and just allow it to be what it is. Set your intention to try to keep them company in their truth, however bumpy it is. Notice what happens inside when you let another person reside in their real experience, without demanding that it or they change.

In those rare moments when someone has the courage or desperation to be truly vulnerable with you, to show you their living pain, trust that advice and guidance aren't what they long for or want. Know that most of the time, that person wants company, and someone to be with them where they are and with what they're feeling. You can be that person, that friend—real company—for another human being. And, what a gift it is to be able to offer your presence in this way. When those remarkable opportunities to be a real friend appear, which isn't often, recognize them and rise to the challenge!

Nancy Colier is a psychotherapist, interfaith minister, public speaker, workshop leader, and author of "Can't Stop Thinking: How to Let Go of Anxiety and Free Yourself from Obsessive Rumination" and "The Power of Off: The Mindful Way to Stay Sane in a Virtual World." For more information, visit [NancyColier.com](http://NancyColier.com)





# The Challenges of Daily Routines

Life can always come up with something unexpected, but that doesn't have to wreck your routine

DANAE SMITH

There was a moment when I first started adopting daily routines when I got really frustrated. It was toward the end of my morning routine. I found myself feeling frantic and rushed. I hadn't done everything I felt was important to the routine and now had to get ready for work and head out the door. In the swirl of that frustration, it hit me—what was meant to be a respite, a moment of pause, grounding, and fulfillment were becoming burdensome. It had no rhythm, no flow. This couldn't be how it was meant to be. Thus began my ongoing journey with daily routines. It hasn't always been easy or simple, and there have definitely been challenges. That's what I want to unpack today. Daily routines are amazing and important but also have their challenges. I don't want to dive into this practice without acknowledging that it can be difficult. We're pulled and tugged in various directions—daily. What I've learned—and am learning—is that things in life can

and likely will impact your daily routine, but they don't have to derail it. Starting and Focusing My Daily Routine Because a daily routine for me is about doing what brings joy, grounds me, and fills me up, I felt like I had to do everything that hit that mark within a certain timeframe. I believed that a daily routine was a schedule and that everything had to happen at an exact time and all of that. Only when I released that and remembered that it wasn't about doing everything, but doing what mattered, was I able to lean into the beauty daily routines offer. How to combat not starting or overloading your routine: Start small and build from there. Remember that it's not about doing everything but doing what matters for you in a given season. Release the expectation that your routine needs to be elaborate. If there's only one thing that grounds you daily, that one thing is enough. Restarting an Interrupted Routine Starting up a routine again after going through transitions and changes

is a challenge I've recently had to face. Life happens—some of it we can control, most of it we can't. We move, change jobs or careers, get in and out of a relationship, and so on. There's an endless list of the ways life can shift. All these transitions and changes will likely affect your daily routine, but they don't have to derail it. How to not let life transitions and changes derail your daily routine: Have at least one core tenet, one ritual or practice in your daily routine, that can ebb and flow with you as you navigate transition and change. It should be a ritual or practice that isn't a huge lift but does ground you. Also, extend grace and compassion to yourself. Lots of things are up in the air when you shift life seasons or go through different transitions. In the words of a friend of mine—it's OK if the daily routine gets a little messy. Giving Yourself Permission to Change Your Routine This challenge could also count as a way to combat challenge No. 2. This is something I feel I'm constantly facing: giving myself permission. As I said, we go through many chap-

If there's only one thing that grounds you daily, that one thing is enough.

Danae Smith is the founder of This Wondrous Life, a lifestyle blog rooted in pursuing a life lived simply, slowly, and with community. She believes there is more to the mundane than meets the eye. This article was originally published on This Wondrous Life.

ters in our life. Even on a day-to-day level, things come up unexpectedly or your needs and plans shift as the day unravels. Learning to give ourselves permission for things to look different and be different is hard but necessary. How to start giving yourself permission for your daily routine to look different: Hold your daily routine loosely. Meaning don't get married to the routine, but be deeply connected to the why and intention of your daily routine. When you're connected to your why and intention, how it looks can ebb and flow so long as what it encompasses aligns. Also, check in with yourself often to know what you're needing. Checking in can help inform what you need or want from your daily routine—especially if you find yourself in a new season of life. Daily routines are powerful. I believe they're an important piece to showing up intentionally in our daily lives. They're a holistic investment in our personhood. Even so, they come with challenges. So remember—many things can affect your daily routine, but they don't have to derail it.



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