

# THE EPOCH TIMES

# MIND &

# BODY

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## Exercise Helps With Postpartum Struggles: Study

Outdoor exercise benefits new moms' mental health during the pandemic

For new moms, there are some problems you really can run away from.



IRIS LESSER & SCOTT LEAR

The extended duration of the COVID-19 pandemic means that more women will give birth during the pandemic, and some will have more than one pregnancy and postpartum experience. As physical activity researchers who advocate for exercise as medicine, we're studying the impact of exercise on the well-being of postpartum women during the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone's day-to-day lives, but mothers have been especially challenged. Women have experienced a negative impact on mental well-being and physical activity behavior, with mothers being especially vulnerable because of increased child care responsibilities. New mothers in the postpartum

phase are at an additional disadvantage due to the heightened challenge of caring for infants.

**Being outside has been shown to increase enjoyment of exercise.**

### Postpartum Challenges

The postpartum phase is often defined as the first six weeks after childbirth, when post-pregnancy physical changes such as uterine shrinking and hormonal fluctuations are the greatest. These changes can also greatly affect the mental health of new mothers—the prevalence of depression is approximately 15 percent. However, it's

possible for new mothers to continue to experience post-partum effects for up to one year.

Since the onset of COVID-19, mental health issues have increased among postpartum women, with 41 percent reporting depression and 72 percent reporting moderate-to-high anxiety (compared to 15 percent and 29 percent pre-pandemic).

Pre-pandemic challenges such as sleep deprivation, lack of self-care, and medically complicated deliveries are now exacerbated. For example, women who gave birth during the pandemic may have experienced reduced direct maternal care, a lack of a home support system due to visiting restrictions, and a lack of in-person breastfeeding support.

*Continued on Page 5*

# 45

minutes

As little as a single group exercise session of 45 minutes can improve anxiety levels in women without a history of mental illness.

Daily routines are a way to invest in yourself and the life you want to create.



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## Keys to Building a Routine

Routines can help you push through resistance and complete your most important tasks

DANAE SMITH

Anyone who has tried to improve themselves will encounter the "routine problem." If you have, you may have asked yourself, "How do I start building a routine, one that actually works for me?"

First, I want you to note the key phrase "for me." Daily routines aren't generic or universal. A daily routine that works for me will likely not work for you because we have different intentions, needs, capacities, and so on.

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# The Power of Being Decisive

Getting quicker with decisions can help you crush procrastination

MIKE DONGHIA

For the past three months, I've had an unopened corkboard sitting on the floor next to my desk.

I bought it with a plan, but then my plan changed, and I procrastinated on returning it. Then, I entered into a period of indecision about what to do with it.

Put it in the attic? No, I would never see it again.

Hang it? Why go through the effort if I didn't need it.

Sell it? It's barely worth it.

It became just another one of those small, but irritating items that never left my to-do list.

Until today.

Today, I finally just decided. I took three minutes and posted it on Facebook Marketplace for less than half of what I paid (something is better than nothing, right?). And if it doesn't sell in two weeks, I'll donate it.

For such a small, insignificant event in my life, I can't tell you how good it feels to have finally made a decision about what to do with that corkboard.

Deciding almost always brings relief, so why do we often avoid it?

## Why We Don't Decide

Indecision is a very common problem. Most people experience it from time to time. But for some of us, it can be a very serious issue.

I've noticed that it's often tied to an emotion that I'm experiencing: Fear over possibly making a bad decision. Let's face it, there's very little that's fun about making a choice in the face of uncertainty. Life is often messier in reality than it is in our daydreams, so it's natural that we try to avoid these situations when we think we can get away with it.

Then there's guilt or regret about a past choice. Part of the reason I avoided making a decision about my corkboard was because thinking about the corkboard made me feel guilty for wasting \$25 on what was probably an impulse purchase.

Sometimes there's also a lack of pressure to decide. Have you ever noticed that it's the small decisions that you procrastinate on the most? The big ones tend to have their own natural deadlines or pressures to decide. But the small choices don't have those deadlines, and for some of us, that allows them to expand far beyond the amount of time they deserve.

## The Cost of Indecision

Of course, avoiding a decision doesn't make anything better. All it does is add complications to your life and make the future decision (that you'll eventually have to make) even harder.

Sometimes we spend hours "researching" about a minor decision. There are few decisions in life that require more than a few minutes of thought. Sometimes when you're "researching," you're really procrastinating, and this is time you don't get back for more meaningful or enjoyable pursuits in your life. The solution is simple: Do the real thing.

But that's not all—indecision isn't even fun. In fact, it's kind of miserable. When we're avoiding decisions in life, we often walk around feeling "scattered" because



When you make a decision, stick with it. An OK decision with firm resolve is much more powerful than a great decision that you're wishy-washy about.

Most of life's decisions are not nearly as important as they feel in the moment.

When we're avoiding decisions in life, we often walk around feeling "scattered" because of so many open loops.



of so many open loops. Or we feel guilty because we know we're avoiding decisions and making things worse, but a small step seems insignificant, so we don't even bother.

## The Power of Choosing

Every single time I've climbed out of a hole that I dug from indecision, I've been amazed at how good I felt after just the smallest bit of progress.

Making just two or three small, quick decisions fuels me to want to make more. Pretty soon, after getting back into the groove of being decisive, I begin to feel good about myself. I'm not talking egotistical pride, but rather the good kind of pride that comes when your actions are aligning with your values.

There's another thing that I've discovered about making decisions: I learn so much more by simply making a decision than I do by analyzing it from a million angles. I've become convinced that knowledge gained from experience is massively underrated, especially compared to knowledge gained from "researching." Making more and faster decisions is the way to supercharge your experience.

## Simple Rules for Deciding

The process of becoming a decisive person isn't magic. As with any challenge in life, you just need a good system and a commitment to stick with the process until it becomes second nature. I think a lot of people assume that change is more complicated than that. Sure, it can be hard, but the difficulty comes from slugging it out day after day, not in trying to discover some unknown secret.

OK, fine, if you're looking for a secret

it's this: Decide right now to follow the system described below for three months and not "research" anything else. You'll be amazed at how much progress you can make in just 12 weeks.

My simple system with just three rules:

Decide once. When you make a decision, stick with it. An OK decision with firm resolve is much more powerful than a great decision that you're wishy-washy about. Just decide and don't look back unless the facts on the ground change significantly.

Decide fast. When faced with a decision, your goal is to decide as quickly as is reasonably possible. Obviously there's some nuance that I can't get into here, but my main suggestion is that most decisions can be made much faster than we usually make them.

Learn as you go. The reason the first two rules work is that most of life's decisions aren't nearly as important as they feel in the moment. Deciding what to do with my corkboard is a perfect case in point. The best way to get better at making decisions is simply to make more decisions and learn from them—not by overanalyzing and tormenting yourself to make the perfect one.

"In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing. The worst thing you can do is nothing."—Teddy Roosevelt

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*.

# How to Prescribe Controversial Alzheimer's Drug?

New drug raises challenge of targeting those with mild cognitive impairment



An FDA advisory committee strongly recommended against Aduhelm's approval because the drug didn't test well.

JUDITH GRAHAM

The approval of a controversial new drug for Alzheimer's disease, Aduhelm, is shining a spotlight on mild cognitive impairment—problems with memory, attention, language, or other cognitive tasks that exceed changes expected with normal aging.

After initially indicating that Aduhelm could be prescribed to anyone with dementia, the Food and Drug Administration now specifies that the prescription drug be given to individuals with mild cognitive impairment or early-stage Alzheimer's, the groups in which the medication was studied.

Yet this narrower recommendation raises questions. What does a diagnosis of mild cognitive impairment mean? Is Aduhelm appropriate for all people with mild cognitive impairment, or only some? And who should decide which patients qualify for treatment: dementia specialists or primary care physicians?

Controversy surrounds Aduhelm because its effectiveness hasn't been proved, its cost is high (an estimated \$56,000 a

year, not including expenses for imaging and monthly infusions), and its potential side effects are significant (41 percent of patients in the drug's clinical trials experienced brain swelling and bleeding).

Furthermore, an FDA advisory committee strongly recommended against Aduhelm's approval, and Congress is investigating the process leading to the FDA's decision. Medicare is studying whether it should cover the medication, and the Department of Veterans Affairs has declined to do so under most circumstances.

Clinical trials for Aduhelm excluded people over age 85; those taking blood thinners; those who had experienced a stroke; and those with cardiovascular disease or impaired kidney or liver function, among other conditions. If those criteria were broadly applied, 85 percent of people with mild cognitive impairment wouldn't qualify to take the medication, according to a new research letter in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Given these considerations, carefully selecting patients with mild cognitive impairment who might respond to Aduhelm is "becoming a priority," said Dr. Kenneth Langa, a professor of medicine, health

Only people with mild cognitive impairment associated with Alzheimer's should be considered for treatment with Aduhelm, experts agreed.

management, and policy at the University of Michigan.

Dr. Ronald Petersen, who directs the Mayo Clinic's Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, said, "One of the biggest issues we're dealing with since Aduhelm's approval is, 'Are appropriate patients going to be given this drug?'"

Here's what people should know about mild cognitive impairment, based on a review of research studies and conversations with leading experts.

## Basics

Mild cognitive impairment is often referred to as a borderline state between normal cognition and dementia. But this can be misleading. Although a significant number of people with mild cognitive impairment eventually develop dementia—usually Alzheimer's disease—many do not.

Cognitive symptoms—for instance, difficulties with short-term memory or planning—are often subtle but they persist and represent a decline from previous functioning.

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# Unexpected Side Effects of Ultrasound Gel

This widely used endocrine disruptor may be harming your unborn baby

JENNIFER MARGULIS

In 2017, Emalee Morem was 40 weeks pregnant with her first child. At the urging of her providers, she had an extra ultrasound, just to make sure the baby was OK. After the scan, Morem and her husband went out for lunch. But sitting in the sunshine on the patio at the restaurant in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Morem started to feel uncomfortable. "My belly felt very hot while we were eating," Morem says, "and when I got home, I looked at my belly and saw this horrible red, patchy rash."

Though the rash wasn't painful, Morem was concerned.

"It didn't hurt, but it obviously wasn't normal," she says. "And I'm sure it was from the ultrasound gel. After the ultrasound they just wiped my belly with a dry paper towel or cloth, so my belly didn't get washed off well. But still smell the gel on my skin, and the rash was exactly where they'd had the gel and doppler."

The discomfort, Morem says, was short-lived.

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Omega-3s are essential to a healthy brain and body.

## Omega-3 Levels Linked to Longevity: Studies

Being low on omega-3s could be as serious a risk for early death as smoking

JOEL FUHRMAN

A recent study published in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition spanning 11 years and more than 2,000 participants yielded a startling finding: When comparing omega-3 index to conventional cardiovascular risk factors in older adults, it shows that having a low blood omega-3 index is as strong a predictor of mortality as smoking.

The average age of the participants at the beginning of the study was 65. Their blood fatty acids were measured, and they were followed for 11 years. There were 2,240 participants and 384 deaths over that time.

### Comparing Omega-3s and Smoking

The omega-3 index is a measurement of the two types of omega-3s—eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA)—as a percentage of the total fatty acids in red blood cell membranes. The higher the index, the more omega-3 there is in a person's blood.

The average omega-3 index in the study was 5.8 percent, the lowest fifth had an omega-3 index of less than 4.2 percent, and the highest fifth had levels greater than 6.8 percent.

Using mathematical modeling, the researchers estimated that the participants who were in the highest fifth of the omega-3 index at age 65 gained 4.74 years of life compared to those in the lowest fifth. This was similar to the difference between smokers and non-smokers at age 65, where the smokers lost 4.73 years of life, according to the model.

Over the 11-year follow-up, of participants in both of the low-risk categories—non-smokers who had a high omega-3 index—85 percent survived. This is compared to only 47 percent of those in the high-risk categories—smokers with a low omega-3 index. The loss of years of life was similar between low-omega-3 plus non-smoking and high-omega-3 plus smoking.

The study, "Using an erythrocyte fatty acid fingerprint to predict risk of all-cause mortality: the Framingham Offspring Cohort," was published in June.

### More Evidence Connecting Omega-3 Levels With Longevity

This research comes a few months after a meta-analysis of 17 prospective cohort studies was published in Nature Communications. The analysis linked higher circulating omega-3 fatty acid levels to longevity. In a pooled analysis of the studies, participants in the highest fifth of combined blood DHA and EPA were 15 to 18 percent less likely to die from any cause over the follow-up

period (median follow-up time is 16 years in these studies). Higher blood omega-3s were also associated with a reduced risk for death from cardiovascular disease and cancer.

**The Importance of DHA and EPA**  
DHA and EPA are important structural and functional components of brain and retinal cell membranes. They also have triglyceride-lowering, anti-inflammatory, anti-platelet, and anti-hypertensive properties, plus beneficial effects on cell membranes that may also contribute to better health and a longer life.

Previous studies have linked a low omega-3 index (below approximately 5 percent) with an increased risk of cognitive decline in older adults. All the above studies corroborate the prior studies linking a low omega index to brain shrinkage and cognitive impairment, and they reinforce how critical it is to properly address this issue.

**Previous studies have linked a low omega-3 index (below approximately 5 percent) with an increased risk of cognitive decline in older adults.**

### The Bottom Line

DHA and EPA supplementation is important for anyone who doesn't eat fatty fish frequently. These appear to be more crucial forms of omega-3s compared to the plant-based omega-3—alpha-linolenic acid (ALA).

Omega-3 index is low in vegans—approximately 4 percent when measured in studies—and the research suggests that adding ALA from flax seeds and walnuts doesn't significantly raise the omega-3 index in most people. Most of the ALA in our diet is burned for energy, not converted to EPA and DHA. Consuming pre-formed DHA and EPA is the most reliable way to increase omega-3 levels in the blood.

I recommend checking the omega-3 index with a blood test if you have a concern that your levels are low. A good way vegans and others can make sure to get enough DHA and EPA is by taking an algae-based supplement (refrigerated if possible).

*Joel Fuhrman, M.D., is a board-certified family physician, best-selling author, and nutritional researcher specializing in preventing and reversing disease through nutritional and natural methods. This article was originally published on DrFuhrman.com*

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

# Unexpected Side Effects of Ultrasound Gel

This widely used endocrine disruptor may be harming your unborn baby

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"It went away after a few hours, but it freaked me out at the time. I was afraid of getting more ultrasounds, too." Two weeks later, Morem gave birth to a healthy 7-pound 14-ounce baby girl.

### An Endocrine Disruptor?

Could the gel that caused a topical rash on Morem's abdomen be problematic for another reason? Our bodies use hormones—chemical signals—to regulate many different processes. Endocrine disruptors are chemicals that alter our normal hormone levels. Phthalates and triclosan—are considered endocrine-disrupting chemicals.

Because pregnancy, like puberty and menopause, is a time of enormous hormonal changes, it's especially important to steer clear of hormone disruptors. Indeed, studies have shown that unnatural changes in hormone levels can contribute to many negative health effects—especially when it comes to reproduction and fetal development.

While each formulation varies by brand, research suggests that some of the gels used to conduct prenatal ultrasound scans may be causing hormone disruption. These thick gels are slathered over a woman's abdomen to provide a continuous liquid medium for the sound to pass through, without air bubbles that would disrupt the signal. They contain a variety of fragrances and dyes, as well as a chemical called propylparaben, which is a phenol—a chemical compound extracted from coal tar. Ultrasound gels may also contain phthalates, used to bind the fragrance and the color.

Dr. Carmen Messerlian and her colleagues in the Department of Environmental Health at Harvard University sought to uncover whether exposure to ultrasound gel disrupts the endocrine system. They published their results, "Ultrasound gel as an unrecognized source of exposure to phthalates and phenols among pregnant women undergoing routine scan," in the International Journal of Environmental Health in 2017.

Teaming up with clinicians from Massachusetts General Hospital, Messerlian's team analyzed the urine of a dozen pregnant women who were already participating in a fertility study. As part of the fertility study, the women were all undergoing one routine ultrasound in the second trimester.

So the Harvard scientists took three urine samples from each woman: One before the scan, a second sample one to two hours after the scan, and a third urine sample 7 to 12 hours later.

Each urine sample was then sent to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention where CDC scientists then analyzed them for the presence and quantity of 19 different phthalates and 11 different phenols.

### Phthalates Peak 7 to 12 Hours After Ultrasound Scans

The analysis found that phthalates reached peak concentrations in the pregnant women's urine at approximately 7 to 12 hours after exposure to ultrasound gel. In addition, the concentration of almost all the chemicals tested in the women's urine was highest in the third urine samples, nearly eight hours after the scans.

Since all of the pregnant women tested reportedly ate something or used some kind of personal care products (which often contain endocrine-disrupting chemicals), this may have affected the results.

However, the consistency in timing across all 12 study participants suggests that high phthalate concentrations in the women's urine were due to ultrasound gel exposure.

"While additional research is needed, this pilot study potentially identifies a previously unknown source of phthalate and paraben exposure among pregnant women undergoing routine ultrasound examination," the researchers concluded.

### How Does Ultrasound Work?

Prenatal ultrasound uses sound waves to create an image of a pregnant woman's



▲ If concerned about the risks of a needed ultrasound, you can ask your doctor or technician to have the ultrasound done at the least possible exposure for the shortest amount of time, which are actually the current guidelines.

growing baby while the baby is still inside the womb.

"Ultrasound is super high-frequency sound waves we cannot actually hear; it's basically based on the same principle as radar or echolocation," said Dr. Lise Eliot, a neuroscientist at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, when I interviewed her several years ago.

"You put out a sound and if there's something in the environment, it will reflect back on that. They reflect the sound waves through the mother's abdomen and the baby is the structure that reflects the sound waves. With the technology, you can take the reflected sound waves and create a two- or three-dimensional image of the child."

### A Routine Part of Prenatal Care

Ultrasounds are used to find out the baby's gender and positioning and to look for any anomalies, some of which can sometimes be surgically repaired before the baby is born. The most severe form of spina bifida, myelomeningocele, can be operated on during gestation, for example. At the same time, if an ultrasound uncovers that a fetus has a severe medical condition or a genetic anomaly that is not compatible with life, doctors will often recommend terminating the pregnancy.

Once used sparingly, ultrasound has now become a routine, unquestioned part of standard medical prenatal care. In fact, ultrasounds during pregnancy are considered such an essential component of modern maternity care that the majority of obstetricians believe it would be "impossible" to provide high-quality maternity care without doing them.

A woman who chooses not to get any ultrasounds—either because she would never choose abortion or because she has concerns over the safety, necessity, and reliability of the procedure—is often met with unabashed astonishment and push-back from her providers.

American women enjoying healthy pregnancies will routinely have four to five ultrasounds per pregnancy, regardless of risk. Pregnant women who are considered "high risk," can expect to be told they need an ultrasound scan at every appointment.

I interviewed one New Jersey mom, Jen Simon, who had 30 ultrasounds during her first pregnancy. Even though she was only 5 feet 3 inches tall and her husband just 5 feet 6 inches, their New York City-based doctors told the Simons they needed so many ultrasounds because the baby was too small. "I was told I was lucky I wasn't getting three a week," Simon said.

But are these scans even necessary in the first place? Consider this: One study, published in 1993, of more than 15,000 pregnant women revealed that ultrasound scans don't improve fetal outcomes. Another study, of more than 2,800 women, showed that pregnant women who received five ultrasound scans were more likely to have growth-restricted babies than pregnant women who received only one, suggesting that the ultrasound scan itself

may be partially causing the very condition it is seeking to monitor.

"If you're low-risk, there's honestly very little justification for doing more than one," says my colleague and co-author, Dr. Paul Thomas, a pediatrician based in Portland, Oregon. "Even one ultrasound may not be necessary, unless your plan would be to abort a non-viable fetus."

### Reasons to Be Cautious

At the same time, there is a growing body of scientific evidence linking exposure to ultrasounds in utero to brain challenges and other health problems in young children.

For example, a 2016 study published in the journal Autism Research by scientists from the University of Washington examined the records of 2,644 children with autism. These scientists found that boys exposed to ultrasound in the first trimester had more severe autism symptoms, including decreased IQ and increased repetitive behaviors, than babies who hadn't been exposed.

Research conducted by Dr. Manuel Casanova, professor of biomedical sciences at the University of South Carolina, has also shown that early exposure to ultrasounds can trigger ill-timed migration of brain cells that can lead to brain disruption and autism.

### Alternatives to Ultrasound Gel

One way to avoid exposure to endocrine-disrupting ultrasound gel is to tell the ultrasound technician that you don't want to use the standard ultrasound gel. Bring some organic coconut oil with you to your appointment and ask the technician to use that instead. Some technicians will also simply use water to make the transducer move more easily instead of the gel provided. Problem solved.

And Thomas says you can take some simple steps to make an ultrasound scan less risky for your growing baby. Many technicians may not be aware that obstetric guidelines stipulate that ultrasounds should be done for the least amount of time at the lowest possible setting. This is called "ALARA" or "As Low As Reasonably Achievable."

"If you want to have an ultrasound or your doctor's really insistent, make sure you ask the technician to check that their machine is set as low as it can be to get the needed image," Thomas suggests. "Tell your doctor and the tech that you want the ultrasound done at the least possible exposure for the shortest amount of time. These are actually the current guidelines, but most doctors don't follow them."

*Jennifer Margulis, Ph.D., is an investigative health journalist and science writer and a frequent contributor to The Epoch Times. She is also the author of "Your Baby, Your Way: Taking Charge of Your Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Parenting Decisions for a Happier, Healthier Family" (Scribner 2015), which includes a chapter on ultrasounds. Find out more at JenniferMargulis.net*

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# Correct Me, Please!

Correction can elevate us if the words come with the right intent

**DONNA MARTELLI**

Andrea believed she had done her best in today's ballet class. Even so, she couldn't keep a warm tear from sliding down her cheek because she felt rejected and unnoticed among the twirling hopefuls.

She looked pale and troubled as she gathered her paraphernalia and rushed out the studio door. That one little tear led to a deluge of waterworks as she ran to catch up with Emilia, a fellow student, who was a few feet ahead of her. Between gasps and sobs, she wailed, "Oh no, Mr. Fokine didn't give me any corrections today!"

She felt her world was collapsing because she didn't get a correction in class! While that reaction is a bit extreme, it points out that correction is desirable when it is given for the right reasons.

Can you relate? Correction from an instructor or mentor indicates that they notice you and want you to do better next time. Indeed, proper correction is necessary for your growth. It keeps you on the right path and helps you avoid distractions.

Even when your teachers tell you that you are doing something wrong, they correct you to help you get it right. You thrive on

those words of correction because they give you hope and encouragement to press on. You receive such correction with gratitude and joy.

That being said, a correction can be contaminated.

**No, Not This Way!**

There exists a perverted type of correction that accomplishes the absolute opposite effect. It's probably not right to call it a "correction," but perhaps rather a "crushing" (my word) as its goal isn't to build you up but to tear you down.

Has anyone ever told you that you aren't good enough, not strong enough, or too stupid to do what you are attempting? They can tell you all the reasons why your ideas won't work. When you hear this over and over, you begin to believe it.

Even though you spend a great deal of energy trying not to internalize the rejection, if unchecked, it ultimately crushes you and causes you to withdraw and stop trying.

**Has anyone ever told you that you aren't good enough, not strong enough, or too stupid to do what you are attempting?**



If you truly wish to give life-giving correction, it must be done with a heart of patience, kindness, and good intentions.

**Why?**

People speak what is in their heart. When those crushing words are spoken, they defile both the speaker and the listener. The spewing of poison from one person to another is verbal abuse. The person delivering the toxin is likely doing it because of some past hurt or unforgiven event lodged deeply in their heart. They may feel inferior and need to bring the other person down to their level. Harboring these hurts causes them to rot, and then frustration grows and expresses itself in verbal violence.

**Is It You?**

If that describes you, it's imperative that you go back and deal with any underlying issues before attempting to correct someone else, such as your child or your spouse. Otherwise, you risk allowing your internal disquiet to amplify itself upon those around you. If you don't resolve this, you will infect them with the illness of your own heart.

If you truly wish to give life-giving correction, it must be done with a heart of patience, kindness, and good intentions. If there is anger, grievance, or disappointment, your correction is contaminated and will produce "side effects." Please take inventory of yourself. If you find any such issue, resolve to correct that before attempting to deliver correction to anyone.

If you need counseling to do this, by all means, pursue it.

*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.*

Correcting	Crushing
Encourages	Discourages
Motivated by love/care	Motivated by wrath/unforgiveness
Helps	Harms
Lifts up	Puts down
Builds confidence	Destroys self-esteem
Breeds respect	Breeds hatred
Builds bridges	Destroys connection

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Keep your correction free of anger, grievance, or disappointment so it does not produce unwanted "side effects."

# The Science of Cold Showers

Several studies have documented the varied health benefits of cold showers

**LINDSAY BOTTOMS**

A cold shower in the morning is a pretty unpleasant way to start the day. Yet many have been tempted to take up the habit because being immersed in cold water has many purported health benefits, both physical and mental.

Cold showers were first administered for health reasons in the early 19th century when doctors designed them for use on asylum and prison inmates to "cool hot, inflamed brains, and to instill fear to tame impetuous wills."

By the mid-19th century, the Victorians realized that the shower had other uses, namely washing people—and it would be better if the water was warm. So the shower went from being a device used to inflict unpleasantness for an hour and a half to one that was very pleasant and lasted about five minutes.

And yet the practice of taking a cold shower for health benefits never truly went away, and, indeed, seems to be enjoying a resurgence, especially among Silicon Valley types.

**What's the Evidence?**

A large study from the Netherlands found

**Cold water also appears to activate the sympathetic nervous system, the part of the nervous system that governs the fight-or-flight response.**



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There is a fair amount of evidence that cold-water immersion or having a cold shower is good for your health—even if the reasons why are still a little unclear.

that people who took a cold shower were less likely than those who took a warm shower to take time off work due to sickness.

A group of more than 3,000 people was split into four groups and asked to have a warm shower every day. But one group was asked to end it with 30 seconds of

cold water, another with 60 seconds of cold water, another with 90 seconds of cold water, while the control group could merely enjoy a warm shower. The participants were asked to follow this protocol for a month. (Sixty-four percent continued with the cold-water regimen because

HALFPOINTS/SHUTTERSTOCK



Control gives us a sense of calm, but when circumstances are out of our hands, some simple strategies may help.

# How to Let Go of Control and Focus on Today

We can better navigate life's hardships by being realistically optimistic

**MOLLIE DONGHIA**

Letting go of control over situations that are outside of my authority is a hard tightrope for me to balance. For decades, I've had a natural tendency toward anxiety. When things were beyond my control, my mind would automatically fear something uncomfortable.

An uncertain health concern resulted in days of wondering whether it would turn into something difficult. An overwhelming season of motherhood resulted in me worrying my children might not be thriving. A big evaluation (back when I was an elementary teacher) resulted in me questioning whether I would disappoint my boss and have to undergo more guidance.

I had a fear of coming hardship. Many times when I expressed my difficulty with a situation to a friend or my husband, I was told "just let it go" or "don't worry about it."

If you've ever been given those common words of guidance in an anxious situation, you know that it's easier said than done, unfortunately.

If letting go means being indifferent and not caring as much, how was I supposed to do that? As a more sensitive human being, I consciously carried the weight of others' emotions. I felt deeply when those around me were sad or hurt. I became upset when I didn't get the approval of others. I'm a common "people pleaser."

So how was I supposed to just let it go? I didn't want to be disconnected from my

emotions, but instead, I craved a way to live life by letting go of my deeply rooted desire for control.

**When Control Makes You Powerless**

Fast forward to about six years ago, when my anxiety grew with each child, but also triggered growth, wisdom, and learning. Each postpartum season seemed to send me into a heightened state of anxiety. Hormonal changes, the addition of a new baby, and life's constant demands produced a formula for uncertainty, leading to anxiety.

As humans, we desire control. It feels easy to remain inside our comfort zone. It produces a sense of calm when our days are structured and routine.

**As a more sensitive human being, I consciously carried the weight of others' emotions.**

In our minds, it goes something like this: We make a plan. The plan follows suit. We reap the benefits of success and enjoy the outcome.

However, that's not always the reality of life. When events happen that are outside my control (a sleepless baby, a health scare, an unexpected home repair), I often feel powerless.

What can I do in this moment to control the outcome? Sometimes, not much. But through these moments, I've discovered two powerful truths—truths that I have to remind myself of each time my mind seeks control over a situation.

**Truth #1: Adjust My Expectations**

If I adjust my expectations about the way things should turn out, I'll have a more realistic mindset. Life has abundant blessings, but also many struggles. I don't want to live with rose-colored glasses on, but instead, I want to prepare myself for the fact that in this life, we'll have troubles. It's up to me how I'll let those troubles affect my overall well-being each day.

If I live with an expectation and need for good outcomes, I'll constantly be disappointed and anxious when something goes wrong. When my expectations become a healthy balance of positivity and realism, the hardships of life—and the circumstances I can't control—are easier to handle.

**Truth #2: Don't Over-Focus on the Long-Term**

I like to set goals. Both Mike and I are idealists, so when we implement a new routine or element of parenting, we look toward the long-term benefits it will produce. But the funny thing about making plans for the future is that they have a high likelihood of changing. That's the reality of life. After all, we're not a bunch of programmed robots

running around a factory floor.

If we sit around thinking of all the long-term outcomes, we'll miss the opportunity to be present in the moment. For me, this means not allowing myself to dwell on scenarios that may or may not ever happen. Instead, I remind myself of this simple question: "What can I do today to make healthier choices for tomorrow?"

When my mindset is focused on the present, I'm less likely to feel overwhelmed and fearful of future events and more likely to feel gratitude by focusing on today. My mind isn't taken up with thoughts about results or consequences down the road, but instead with making conscious, well-thought-out decisions to live for today.

**Focus on Today**

So how do we lessen our sights on the future and focus more on the present? Planning has its place (mainly in finances, career, and family planning), but I believe that placing the majority of my thoughts on what I can control today is a much healthier way to live.

The 90/10 rule is a common principle that can be used in many areas of life. Consider how you could use this rule to lessen your control of the future.

Allow yourself to make plans and think about the days/months/years ahead for just 10 percent of your time. That's roughly 1.5 hours during our normal waking time. Use the other 14.5 hours thinking about and being proactive today.

Invest in relationships with those around you, practice healthy eating habits, exercise and stay active, enjoy life's free pleasures, make wise choices with your money, laugh and embrace loved ones, slow down and make time to reflect on what you're most grateful for.

For me, instead of worrying about how my kids will turn out when they're teenagers, I'll spend more time laughing, playing, and teaching them each day.

Instead of dreading future expenses or what might break down the road, I'll spend within my means and limit my desires for impulse buying.

Instead of fearing a health concern with a family member, I'll make a 15-minute phone call to talk, make plans to visit them, or go out of my way to show that I care.

Instead of wondering how anxiety will sneak up on me if hardships occur, I'll focus on what I can control today without letting my mind wander to the worst-case scenario.

**Ride Life's Roller Coaster With Ease**

Life will always come with the ups and downs, the blessings and struggles of circumstance. But if you learn to adjust your expectations with a healthy dose of positivity and realism—and focus on what you can control today—your days will be filled with more joy and less anxiety.

This isn't a prescriptive way for everyone to live—what's worked for me may also benefit you, too, but do what makes you feel supported and able to thrive.

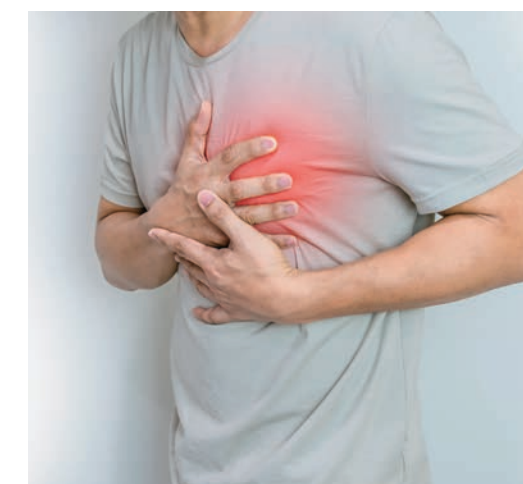
*Mollie (and her husband, Mike) blog at This Evergreen Home where they share their experience with living simply, intentionally, and relationally in this modern world. You can follow along by subscribing to their twice-weekly newsletter. This article was originally published on This Evergreen Home.*

**A cold shower sends an overwhelming amount of electrical impulses from peripheral nerve endings to the brain, which may have an anti-depressive effect.**

But before you start turning the cold tap on toward the end of your shower, you should know that there are some risks to a cold shower. Because a sudden gush of cold water shocks the body, it can be dangerous for people with heart disease and could precipitate a heart attack or heart-rhythm irregularities.

*Lindsay Bottoms is a reader in exercise and health physiology at the University of Hertfordshire in the UK. This article was first published on The Conversation.*

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



**Warning:** Cold showers can be dangerous for people with heart disease and could precipitate a heart attack or heart-rhythm irregularities.



# Helping Others to Help Ourselves

Old wisdom and new science affirm the benefits of altruism

IAN KANE

Let's face it—we live in some pretty turbulent times. The world is going through some serious cultural, economic, and political upheavals, not to mention a pandemic (that we're constantly reminded about) that has introduced requirements for freedoms we once took for granted.

Understandably, people can feel a little overwhelmed, but there's something we can all do that's good for both our mental and physical well-being—be of service to others.

Whether those selfless actions entail helping a neighbor, donating some clothing, or giving your time to a worthy cause or charity, there can be many health benefits for those who choose to invest themselves in altruistic objectives. Some of these benefits include:

- Experiencing less depression
- Having lower levels of stress
- Living longer
- Having increased confidence and self-esteem
- Having an increased sense of purpose and meaning
- Experiencing more overall happiness and well-being

Sounds like a pretty good trade-off, doesn't it? As American religious leader and author, Gordon B. Hinckley (from his book "Standing for Something: 10 Neglected Virtues That Will Heal Our Hearts and Homes"), stated: "The best antidote I know for worry is work. The best cure for weariness is the challenge of helping someone who is even more tired. One of the great ironies of life is this: He or she who serves almost always benefits more than he or she who is served."

U.S. Army veteran and author John Holmes had a more succinct, but no less insightful, thing to say about helping others: "There is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up."

But as wise as these words are, and as much as some of us already know them to be true, it



DAISY DAISY/SHUTTERSTOCK

Being of assistance to others helps us feel more connected, and therefore less susceptible to depression and loneliness—factors that especially impact seniors today.

will help some readers to hear some science to back them up.

## Giving Can Be Healthy for Your Heart

Hypertension (high blood pressure) is a widespread health problem that, according to the World Health Organization, affects 1.28 billion adults between 30 and 79 years of age globally. It's a serious condition and, if it isn't remedied, it can lead to a plethora of health problems—including brain, heart, and kidney disease—and a shorter life.

This insidious condition is widely regarded by the medical community as the "silent killer" because most people who have it aren't aware that they do. Symptoms of hypertension include frequent nosebleeds, headaches (especially in the morning), buzzing in the ears, and heartbeat fibrillations/spasms. Individuals who think they might have hypertension should seek professional medical assistance and have their blood pressure checked.

But there's also something you can do to prevent hypertension from becoming an issue in the first place (or lower it if already afflicted) and that's to provide social support for others.

“**He or she who serves almost always benefits more than he or she who is served.**”

*American religious leader and author, Gordon B. Hinckley*

*Ian Kane is a 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)*

In a study conducted by Carnegie Mellon University (first published in the American Psychological Association journal Psychology and Aging), being of service to others was associated with a longer lifespan, as well as a decrease in blood pressure levels.

Research has shown that volunteering and being of assistance to others actually helps those who invest their time to feel more socially connected, and therefore less susceptible to depression and loneliness—factors that especially impact the older folks of our societies.

As psychologist and author Seth J. Gillihan points out in Psychology Today, purposeful activities such as helping others can improve a person's mood, overall outlook, and self-esteem, which are all invaluable intangibles that are crucial to mental health.

The benefits of such activities are particularly important for elderly people, who may be facing physical and mental decline. Activities such as volunteering keep them both mentally and physically busy. As a John Hopkins study indicates, elderly folks who volunteer benefit from moving and thinking simultaneously, which is great for their overall health.



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