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BREATHE WELL

Why nose breathing supports better health, and how

to do it

PATRICK MCKEOWN

f the past two years has taught us anything, it's that our well-being matters. As we head toward the end of 2021, more of us are taking proactive steps to stay well.

At the same time, there's a growing interest in optimization and performance. Across sports, fitness, education, and business, we're looking for new ways to feel better and achieve our potential.

But behind these positive wellness trends, the story is a challenging one. Stress is currently a leading cause of illness worldwide, contributing to between 75 percent and 90 percent of all human diseases. And we're still battling COVID-19 and the anxiety caused by related political and economic considerations.

As stress rises, a familiar adage springs to mind. We all need to "take a nice deep breath."

Or do we?

As I explain in my book, "The Breathing Cure: Develop New Habits for a Healthier, Happier, and Longer Life," the advice to take a deep breath is often misguided if it doesn't talk about how you take that breath. It can perpetuate stress and cause less oxygen to reach vital systems in the body. When told to breathe deeply, many of us take a fast, hard gulp of air through an open mouth and into the upper chest.

Unless you have a respiratory condition, such as asthma, breathing is something that happens in the background.

Continued on Page 4





Can Any Good Come of Our COVID Lockdowns?

For some people, the pandemic has been a chance to realize post-traumatic growth

JILL SUTTIE

The COVID-19 pandemic has wrought havoc around the world. Lives lost, businesses closed, economies in ruins, and a wave of mental health issues. It's hard to imagine that any good could have come of it—and little has for most of us.

Yet, many people have consciously sought out silver linings from their experience,

perhaps helping them to endure during this difficult time. Personally, I've come to value relationships more, reached out to help others, spent more time in nature, and experienced more meaning in life. I've also thought more about how I lived my life before COVID and what might be worth jettisoning in its aftermath.

Continued on Page 6

While no one seeks disaster, we can use it as an impetus for what researchers call post-traumatic growth.



The lockdowns gave many people more time to connect

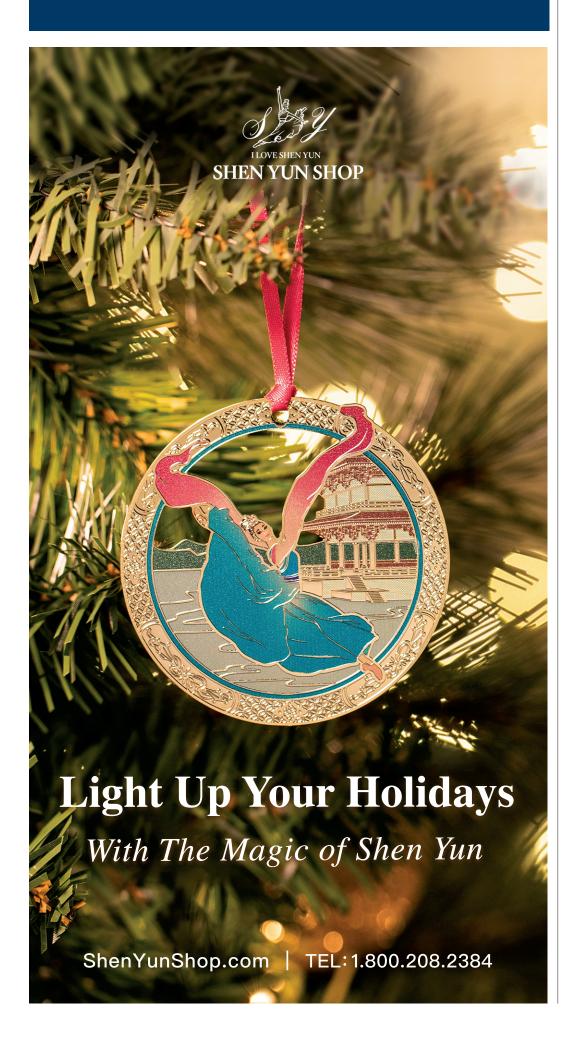
with their neighbors.



TRUTH and TRADITION

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Your body is inevitably going to make some cracking, creaking, or popping noises. Should you be concerned? That depends on what else you might be feeling.

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

What You Need to Know When Your Joints Make Noise

Creaking, cracking, and popping joints aren't usually a concern unless you experience other symptoms

LYNN JAFFEE

A couple of years ago, I had a neck thing going on. Every time I turned my head to the left, I heard a funky, grinding sound. My neck was a little stiff, but not enough to explain the noise it was making. I began to worry that the noises coming from my neck were a sign that something was really wrong.

It turns out that I had something called crepitus, which is a big word to describe any kind of noise coming from a joint. The sounds can be creaky, grinding, crackling, grating, and even popping. Joint noise can be so soft that only you hear it or loud enough to startle a roomful of people.

Crepitus can be caused by a number of structural issues. One of the most common causes of joint noise is air bubbles popping inside the joint. What happens is that gas builds up in the synovial fluid that cushions your joints, and the gas forms bubbles. When a joint is popped or stretched, you can hear the release of these bubbles as a popping sound. An example of this kind of crepitus is when someone cracks their knuckles. It sounds horrible and painful, but it typically doesn't cause pain or long-term damage. Interestingly, if you're a knuckle cracker, you'll have to wait until the gas bubbles reform before you can

crack them again. Another frequent cause for joint noise is when the bones within the joint grind against each other. This can happen from injuries and trauma to the joint, but it's far more common in people with osteoarthritis, especially of the knee. Your joints contain a kind of connective tissue, called cartilage, that acts as a shock absorber and protects the ends of your bones from rubbing together within the joint. Osteoarthritis is a condition in which wear and tear from overuse and aging causes the cartilage to erode and the joint to become inflamed. When your joint's cartilage has worn away, it's not uncommon to hear a grinding or grating noise as the bones rub against each other.

You may also hear crepitus when a ligament or tendon snaps over a bony structure within the joint. This often happens because the ligaments or tendons become inflamed, swell, and don't move as smoothly as they should. Because this kind of joint noise is often associated with inflammation, ligament or tendon crepitus can be painful.

Another structure within your joints that can be the source of noise is the bursa. Your bursae (plural) are pockets of thick fluid that surround your joints to protect them from injury. Trauma or infection can cause inflamed bursae to rub together within the joint, which

you may be able to hear as a grinding, snapping, or popping sound.

Crepitus can occur in any joint. Knees are often some of the noisiest joints. They're a common site of osteoarthritis, but they're also notorious for making a loud crack when an air bubble pops within the knee. The temporomandibular joint (TMJ) that connects your lower jaw to your skull can also be the source of a lot of noise. People with TMJ problems may experience clicking and popping sounds every time they open their mouths. That said, shoulders, wrists, ankles, elbows, fingers, toes, and even your spine can cause crepitus given the right conditions.

Joint noise that's becoming more frequent or accompanied by pain, intlammation, swelling, or loss of function is often a problem.

Is Crepitus a Bad Thing?

If you're hearing noise coming from a joint, you may be wondering if it's a problem. And the answer is that it depends. Cracking your knuckles or a loud knee pop without pain is just the release of gas within the synovial fluid in your joints. However, joint noise that's becoming more frequent or accompanied by pain, inflammation, swelling, or loss of function is often a problem. The noise may be a sign of joint damage, osteoarthritis, tendonitis, or even a chronic disease.

In addition, crepitus accompanied by joint pain or pain that originates in the joint but travels down your leg or arm may also be a sign of nerve compression from narrowing joint spaces. So the short answer is that if you're experiencing joint noise plus any symptoms, it's a good idea to get it checked out.

In the end, the crepitus in my neck stuck with me for several weeks. I did some stretching to loosen up my neck and shoulders, quit carrying a shoulder bag, and the noise went away. Now when I stretch my neck, I hear the faint sounds of my muscles loosening up, but no grinding sounds or pain, so I'm good to go!

Lynn Jaffee is a licensed acupunctur*ist and the author of "Simple Steps: The Chinese Way to Better Health."* This article was originally published on AcupunctureTwinCities.com

Correction

In the article "The Most Important Solar Term of the Year," published in the Dec. 15 edition, incorrectly described the shadow of the sun at midday. Shadows at midday are the longest on the winter solstice. The Epoch Times MEDICALLY CORRECT

The Sometimes Strange History of the X-Ray

Our ability to look inside the body-and understand radiationcontinues to evolve

PETER WEISS

ilhelm Conrad Röntgen discovered the X-ray in Germany in 1895 as he experimented with cathode rays. He used a cathode tube and covered it with a heavy black cloth. Röntgen was astonished to find an incandescent green light projected onto a nearby fluorescent screen.

He called this discovery "X" rays, due to the fact that he had no real idea what these rays were. They were an unknown phenomenon. Intent on his new discovery, he continued to experiment and eventually took a photograph of his wife's hand, revealing her bones. Röntgen won the Nobel Prize in 1901.

The early use of X-rays rapidly became widespread. It was thought to be an exciting discovery with limitless potential. In fact, in the 1930s and '40s, shoe stores offered free X-rays of one's feet so customers could be entertained by seeing the bones in their feet. There were only a few wise scientists who raised some early concerns, such as Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla. That didn't stop anyone, even Edison and Tesla, from experimenting with this new device. Within the first year of the discovery, more than 1,000 articles were written on the subject. This was unheard of at the time.

Studios opened in cities where a bone portrait could be obtained. The medical community quickly adapted the technology for true medical diagnosis such as identifying broken bones. Prior to that, it was only by feeling, or guessing that doctors would diagnose a broken bone, and many fractures were missed. Within a year of its discovery, X-rays were used on the battlefield to find bullets in wounded soldiers.

Soon after the discovery of X-rays, French scientist Henri Becquerel found another source of penetrating rays by using minerals that he found to be naturally phosphorescent. One of the early minerals he worked with was uranium. Marie Curie and her husband Pierre were intrigued by Becquerel's discovery. Marie Curie discovered another similar mineral and named it polonium, after her native Poland. The Curies also worked with yet another mineral: radium. Both polonium and radium were more radioactive than uranium.

Marie Curie promoted the use of radium to alleviate suffering from many ailments. She and her husband shared a Nobel Prize in 1903 with Becquerel. No one really knew at the time the serious consequences of so much radioactive exposure. The symptoms

were gradual and mild at first. In fact, many scientists at the time thought that the exposure to radioactivity may be beneficial. Radium was used at the time to treat numerous medical conditions, including cancer (which actually did some good), lupus, and nervous diseases.

The 1920s and '30s offered a lot of radioactive consumer products that promoted the health benefits of radioactivity. There was Doramad Radioactive Toothpaste, a German brand sold before World War II, which contained small amounts of thorium. The ad for Doramad toothpaste read, "Your teeth will shine with radioactive brilliance."

Another interesting story was that of Radithor, a solution of radium salts, which the developer claimed could provide curative properties to those who ingested it. Industrialist Eben Byers died in 1932 from ingesting it in large quantities throughout 1927 to 1930. As late as the 1950s, Uranium sand houses

were popular in New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah. Patients would sit on benches in a round room where the floor was made of mildly radioactive sand. There were spas that started as early as 1906 in the Czech Republic that had guests bathe in radoninfused water; some of these spas still exist today. Those spas in the early years were known throughout the world, as reported by Matthew Vickery for the BBC.

Radiation spas are still in existence today. There is a spa in Schlema, Germany, in which their bath water contains low levels of radon, which is a radioactive gas formed by the decay of uranium. The belief is that bathing in this "treated" spa water can cure ailments such as rheumatism. Marie Curie died in 1934 from aplastic anemia, most likely caused by her excessive radiation exposure from her work with radium. All of her notebooks are still sealed in a lead-lined box in France due to their radioactivity.

That was then, this is now. The safeguards from current X-ray technology are excellent, however, one must always be aware of what tests are being done and why.

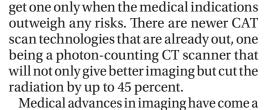
Flying today exposes oneself to natural radiation. A trans-Atlantic flight exposes you to around five times the radiation of a chest X-ray. A mammogram produces about the same as a dozen flights across the Atlantic. CAT scans produce a much greater amount of radiation, which is the simple reason to



Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen called his discovery "X" rays, due to the fact that he had no real idea what these rays were.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

In the 1930s and '40s, shoe stores offered free X-rays of one's feet so customers could be entertained by seeing the bones in their feet.



long way since the radioactive baths in the early 20th century. The future is even more promising, but it's good to always think of the possible unintended consequences of the best intentions.

I like to teach the residents that technology should be used to confirm what you suspect, and not decide what you don't know.

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.

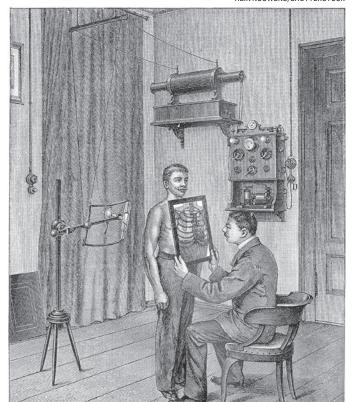
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Early scientists didn't know the risks of radiation, even as they marveled at its potential

Autism Rates Continue to Climb

New research finds 1 in 44 8-year-old kids diagnosed with autism in the US

Autism rates have reached new heights with boys being over four times more likely than girls

PATTI VERBANAS

The autism rate among 8-year-old children in the United States is one in 44, according to a new report.

Researchers used a new method to estimate the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) among children of various ages at 11 sites in 2018. The rate, a jump from the previous estimate of 1 in 54 children, is the highest estimate to date by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network since its inception in 2000.

For the study, published in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, researchers analyzed information from 220,281 children, including 5,058 8-year-olds with ASD in Arizona, Arkansas, California, Georgia, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, Tennessee, Utah, and Wisconsin.

Boys with ASD outnumbered girls by 4.2 to one in the study, and differences in prevalence and median age of ASD diagnosis were evident across

sites. Prevalence ranged from 1.6 percent (Missouri) to 3.9 percent (California), while the median age of diagnosis ranged from 36 months (California) to 63 months (Minnesota).

New Jersey's autism rate (2.8 percent) was higher than the network average (2.3 percent) and higher than the 2016 estimate from New Jersey using the new CDC methodology (2.3 percent).

"The 2018 ADDM autism estimates are based on a new method of case-finding. The overall ADDM numbers are minimum estimates," said report co-author Walter Zahorodny, an associate professor of pediatrics at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School.

"The revised ADDM method is faster but less comprehensive and is likely to underestimate the actual number of true cases and may miss children from underserved communities. If autism already affects 4 to 7 percent of 8-year-old children in many New Jersey areas, as shown in our recent study, and 4 percent in California according to the new ADDM findings, understanding the factors driving the rise in ASD prevalence

should be a public health priority."

New Jersey co-investigator and project coordinator Josephine Shenouda, who also serves as a research study manager at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School noted that race and financial status appear to be becoming less of a factor in ASD diagnoses. "The new findings show that autism

prevalence has not plateaued," Shenouda said "We no longer see as many differences in prevalence by race. Black and Hispanic children have the same ASD prevalence as white children in multiple states, and many ADDM sites show that autism prevalence is no longer highest among children from affluent communities.'

Better strategies to improve early detection of autism are needed, as is new research to identify environmental triggers and risk factors for ASD, according to Zahorodny.

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PAVEL DANILYUK/PEXELS.COM

How to Breathe to Stay Well

Why nose breathing supports better health, and how to do it

Continued from Page 1

Since it carries on without our help, we don't often pay it much attention. But somewhere along the way, the stresses of modern life have created a situation where many of us habitually breathe in more air than our bodies need. Stress perpetuates a fast, shallow breathing pattern that disrupts vital blood gases. Once breathing is out of whack, it's easy to get stuck in a vicious cycle. Your breathing becomes chronically fast and shallow. Your sleep is disrupted and stress sets in, increasing your risk of disease and stopping you short of your potential.

To correct dysfunctional breathing, you must first notice whether you breathe through your mouth or your nose. During the day, this is easy enough to spot. At night, it's a little harder. If you snore or have sleep apnea, your partner may be able to tell you. If you sleep alone, there are signs to look out for.

If you regularly wake up with a dry mouth and bad breath in the morning, it's likely that you mouth-breathe during sleep. After the age of 40 years, you're around six times more likely to spend at least half of the night mouth breathing. Extra weight on the tummy, neck, and tongue also contributes to mouth breathing. And for women going through menopause, the risk of sleep apnea increases by 200 percent.

Nose breathing is vitally important for health and well-being. It improves the quality of inhaled air, filtering, warming, and humidifying it before it reaches the lungs. It provides a first line of defense against viruses, bacteria, and allergens. Your nose protects you against 20 billion particles of foreign matter every day. When it comes to breathing, the mouth really has no purpose except to serve as a backup, whereas the nose performs at least 30 functions on behalf of the body.

Benefits of Nose Breathing

When you breathe through your nose, the extra resistance results in 10 percent to 20 percent better oxygenation of the cells and organs.

Nose breathing is 22 percent more efficient than mouth breathing. This means breathing is easier, and your breathing muscles don't get tired so quickly.

When you breathe through your nose, you breathe in the gas nitric oxide which is produced in sinuses around your nose. Nitric oxide helps sterilize the air as you inhale. It inhibits viral replication in CO-VID-19, and it protects against bacteria, fungi, and other pathogens.

Breathing in and out through your nose helps keep your airways clear. The carbon dioxide and nitric oxide in the nasal airway both act to dilate blood vessels, preventing your nose from becoming blocked. Nitric oxide also works to open the blood vessels in your lungs, allowing more oxygen to get into your blood.

Nose breathing during sleep eliminates mouth snoring and makes sleep apnea symptoms much less severe. During mouth breathing, your tongue can fall back into your airway, essentially choking you. Mouth breathing involves a faster flow of air, which increases the likelihood that your airway will collapse. Scientists have proven that when patients with sleep apnea mouth breathe during sleep, they stop breathing more frequently and experience worse oxygen desaturation.

When you exercise, nose breathing supports the body in several ways. It prevents exercise-induced asthma by protecting the airways from irritation and inflammation. It engages the diaphragm, which, in turn, supports the spine and core, reducing injury risk and improving healthy posture and physical movement. It causes you to exercise at a slower pace until breathing is properly trained, reducing blood pressure and stress and protecting you from over-



training. Nose breathing also improves the oxygenation of your working muscles.

Although we generally think of oxygen as the most important breathing gas, the human body also needs a healthy balance of carbon dioxide to survive. Most of the oxygen you inhale travels around your body in the hemoglobin in red blood cells. Carbon dioxide is important because it's the catalyst that releases this oxygen to your tissues and organs.

When you breathe hard and fast through an open mouth, you'll tend to blow off too much carbon dioxide. That means that, although you're breathing more air, there's less oxygen available to your body. Nasal breathing helps normalize levels of carbon dioxide, and it slows down your breathing, so air spends more time in your lungs. That's one reason why nose breathing provides better whole-body oxygenation.

Nose breathing activates areas of the brain that are essential for focus and concentration. It increases blood flow to your brain and helps you get in the zone. Conversely, mouth breathing can activate your fight-or-flight stress response, which switches off the areas of your brain that are involved in things such as problem-solving and memory. Long-term activation of the stress response kills brain cells, actively shrinking your brain.

By restoring nasal breathing, you'll automatically begin to normalize your breathing volume and reduce the amount of air you breathe into your body. This is important because it promotes good health, keeping you well.

Nasal breathing naturally slows your breathing. If you breathe fast and hard through an open mouth, you're breathing a higher volume of air. A bit like overeating, the body gets used to the excess, leaving you in a constant state of air hunger. When you breathe too much air all of the time, you create sickness in the body. Overbreathing is linked with conditions from cardiovascular disease to sexual dysfunction, chronic pain, dental decay, diabetes, PMS, and every disease in which stress is a contributing factor.

One problem with overbreathing—or to give it its medical name, chronic hyperventilation—is that it disrupts levels of carbon dioxide in your blood. Carbon dioxide has a very important role in keeping us alive. When carbon dioxide levels are low, the bond between the hemoglobin in red blood cells and oxygen becomes stronger. Even if your blood is fully saturated with oxygen, that oxygen can't get to where it's needed in the body. Imagine a delivery driver who's driving to drop off a load of parcels and discovers that the lock on his van is jammed. He can drive to the shipping address, but he can't deliver the package.

Healthy breathing shouldn't be a fleeting trend. The task is to build new, healthy habits. The way you breathe affects your ability to focus on important tasks. It affects your sleep and your stress levels. You can use breathing exercises to enhance your performance in sports and at work and to directly counter stress. Healthy breathing supports your spine and strengthens your breathing muscles. It reduces anxiety and common symptoms such as headaches and back pain. Functional nose breathing improves your circulation and the health of your airways and lungs. It boosts oxygen delivery to your cells, and optimizes vital connections between your breathing sys-

tem, heart, and blood pressure. This runs deeper than integrating a breathing exercise or two into your day. If you want to restore nasal breathing for

better health and longevity, this is a 24/7 commitment. But it doesn't need to be difficult. Don't wait until you get sick. The simple steps below can support your health, performance, longevity, and quality of life.

Techniques to Restore Nose Breathing First, take time to notice when you breathe through an open mouth. It's common to open the mouth to breathe during exer-

cise, but you may also mouth breathe when you're concentrating, whether you're at work, driving, or watching TV. Each time you notice yourself mouth breathing, close your mouth and breathe through

If your nose is blocked, use this nose unblocking exercise: Sit upright in a straight-backed chair.

Calm your breathing. Take a small breath (two seconds) in

through your nose if you can, and a small breath (three seconds) out through your

If you can't breathe in through your nose, take a tiny sip of air in through the corner of your mouth.

After the exhale, pinch your nose to hold your breath. Keep your mouth closed. Gently nod your head up and down or sway your body from side to side until you

can't hold your breath any longer. Let go of your nose and breathe in gently through it. Your breathing should be c and relaxed.

Repeat the exercise until you can breathe fully through both nostrils. If your nose won't completely unblock, wait about a minute, and repeat again.

After the exercise, your nose should be clear. But if you continue to overbreathe, it will block again. As you work with breathing exercises and nasal breathing, this will resolve in time.

When you exercise, train yourself to breathe only through your nose. It takes about six weeks for the body to adapt, but it's worth the effort.

If you have a small nose, a deviated septum, or some other nasal obstruction, try a nasal dilator. This will open your airways and make nose breathing easier.

Integrate breathing exercises into your day. I recommend exercises that reduce breathing volume and normalize tolerance for carbon dioxide. These delay the onset of breathlessness and help restore healthy breathing. You can find these exercises in my books.

Spend 10 or 15 minutes before sleep slowing down and reducing your breathing. This will calm your mind and reduce your susceptibility to snoring and sleep apnea.

You can also tape your mouth at night using a variety of products, including my own patented sleep tape, MYOTAPE. These products go around the mouth rather than sealing the lips. Tape is the only surefire way to keep your mouth closed when you're asleep, and it will help prevent sleep-disordered breathing, snoring, and sleep apnea.

If you regularly notice yourself mouth breathing, you can also wear tape for periods during the day until you've built a new healthy habit of nose breathing.

Patrick McKeown is an internationally renowned breathing coach, author, and speaker. He's the creator of Oxygen Advantage, founder of Buteyko Clinic International, and a fellow of the Royal Society of Biology in the UK. His published works include research in the Journal of Clinical Medicine and books including "The Oxygen Advantage," "The Breathing Cure" and "Atomic Focus."

MADE TO MOVE

Diabetes Skyrockets Amid a Pandemic of Sitting

We need to get moving after COVID-19 left us sedentary and contributed to a 16 percent rise in diabetes over 2 years

CHRISTIAN BRAKENRIDGE & DAVID DUNSTAN

New figures show that global diabetes prevalence has increased by 16 percent in the past two years, with 537 million adults (aged 20–79) now estimated to be living with the chronic condition.

Over this same time period, COVID-19 has stopped us from doing some of the things that help prevent and manage diabetes. One of the ways it has done so is by causing an increase in sedentary behavior (sitting down for long periods of time), which was already at dangerous levels pre-COVID-19. Some estimates indicate that the pandemic added an average of three hours to our sitting time each day.

Now that the lockdowns have eased in many places, it's vital that we get moving again—and in the right way—to change this picture.

Reducing sitting time is a good starting place to help people with diabetes, pre-diabetes, and other chronic conditions to reach healthier levels of physical activity.

A Growing Global Problem

Data from the International Diabetes Federation's 10th Diabetes Atlas, officially launched recently, shows about 10 percent of the world's population aged 20-79 now live with diabetes, and diabetes prevalence is predicted to steadily increase to roughly 784 million adults by 2045.

Most of these people live with Type 2 diabetes, a chronic condition that affects the way the body processes blood sugar (glucose) In Type 2 diabetes, repeated fluctuations in Lorys's Story blood glucose levels eventually mean the body doesn't respond properly with insulin the hormone produced that allows glucose to go from blood to cells.

This can progress to common diabetes complications such as blindness, nerve damage, heart disease, and kidney disease. Recent reports point to an even wider range of diabetes effects such as an increased risk of liver disease, dementia, depression, and some cancers.

Our research highlights regular movement as a key way to help manage diabetes and help prevent complications. Getting moving effectively improves glucose control, blood pressure, vascular health, and memory.

Moving Out of Lockdown

As we transition to COVID-19-normal, we must leave lockdown levels of physical inactivity and sedentary behavior behind.

Reducing sitting time is a good "first step," because it appears more achievable for many and less daunting than a new exercise regime, especially for people who have been highly inactive or who live with a chronic health condition.

Simple lifestyle strategies to reduce sitting time and replace it with either standing or, even better, light physical activity improve metabolism, and for people with Type 2 diabetes, it can prevent and help "sponge up" rising blood glucose levels if insulin isn't being produced properly.

Breaking up sitting every hour with just two or three minutes of walking can make a difference to glucose control compared with prolonged and uninterrupted sitting. And some evidence shows that greater time spent doing light activities on a daily basis, such as household chores, playing with pets, or light garden work, can provide greater blood sugar control over 24 hours than structured

We are currently testing how these small changes influence diabetes in a clinical trial. Our goal is to help desk workers with diabetes

One of our trial participants, Lorys, 64, was gutted when he was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes 11 years ago.

Like many people, he was leading a sedentarv lifestyle. A demanding job involving long hours at the computer meant that he was sitting for most of the day, stressed and anxious about his health. Diabetes medication wasn't improving his blood glucose levels as much as he would have liked. Then the pandemic arrived and working from home exacerbated

Getting moving effectively improves glucose control, blood pressure, vascular health, and memory.

the problem, because he was doing fewer everyday activities, such as walking to and around the office.

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As part of the trial, Lorys has started using a sit-stand workstation and an activity tracker to encourage regular short walks throughout the day. He's focused on making gradual lifestyle changes, small steps that feel achievable and have already made a big difference.

Since the start of 2021, Lorys's HbA1c level-a key diabetes health marker-has almost halved. He has lost weight and said his mental outlook is more positive. He also said he no longer thinks of diabetes as a "death sentence."

5 Ways to Quit the Sit

Whether we have Type 2 diabetes, pre-diabetes, or just want to get back to a healthier lifestyle post-lockdowns, most of us can benefit from some simple changes:

- Try using a height-adjustable (sit-to-stand) desk. Start standing for a few minutes each day and gradually scale up to standing or walking for 30 minutes of every hour.
- Use phone meetings or phone calls as a prompt to stand.
- Try walking during work meetings or when catching up with friends.
- After finishing a work task or an episode of your favorite TV show, take a short walk around the block.
- Set a calendar reminder or use a wearable device to prompt you to stand up and move regularly throughout the day.

It's been a tough couple of years, especially for people living which chronic health conditions. But it's not too late to make changes to prevent and manage diabetes and its complications.

Christian Brakenridge is a Ph.D. candidate at the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute in Australia, and David Dunstan is a professor and laboratory head of physical activity at the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute. This article was first published on The Conversation.



Short stints of exercise throughout the day will improve glucose metabolism compared to sitting for long periods of time.

4 Habits That Could Be Accelerating Cognitive Decline

MAT LECOMPTE

By now, you might be aware that a sedentary lifestyle and poor diet can hurt brain function and memory. But there is more to brain health than eating well and being active.

There are several lifestyle habits that may be chipping away at brain health and accelerating cognitive decline. However, the good news is that changing just one habit has the potential to change how your brain works to help you age better. It's also never too late

Here are four habits that could be deteriorating your memory and thinking ability:

Dwelling on the Negative: Holding onto grudges, resentment, and ruminating on negative thoughts won't just put you in a bad mood; it is also associated with cognitive decline and memory loss in people 55 and older.

One study, in the journal Alzheimer's and Dementia, found that people who dwelled on negative thoughts had more amyloid and tau deposits in the brain, which are hallmark indicators of Alzheimer's. You can try to spruce up thinking patterns by writing down things you are grateful for and thinking about them.

OJ. A study from 2017 showed that sugary

beverage consumption was linked to higher episodic memory and lower total brain vol-

The takeaway: avoid sugary soda and sweet tea and replace your morning "fruit drink" with some real, fibrous fruit and a glass

Poor Sleep: Getting high-quality sleep is essential to a productive mind. Sleep scheduling is important. So is going to bed and waking up at consistent times, as well as room temperature and brightness. You want your bedroom to be slightly on the cool side and as dark as possible.

Loud Headphones: If something is bad for your ears, it is bad for your brain, too. A study of 639 adults aged 36 to 90 found that mild hearing loss was associated with roughly double the risk of dementia.

If others can hear your earbuds or headphones, the sound is up too high. One way to test the volume is to hold your bud/headphone at arm's length. If you can hear it, turn

It's also worthwhile to wear foam earplugs to concerts and sporting events.

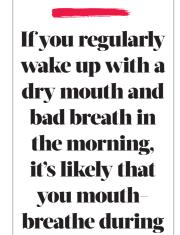
Too Many Sugary Beverages: It might be *Mat Lecompte is a health and wellness* time to reconsider that big glass of morning journalist. This article was first published on BelMarraHealth.com

A study from **2017 showed** that sugary beverage consumption was linked to higher episodic memory and lower total brain volume.



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than mouth

breathing.

AFRICA STUDIOSHUTTERSTOCK

Can Any Good Come of Our COVID Lockdowns?

For some people, the pandemic has been a chance to realize post-traumatic growth

Continued from Page 1

And I'm not the only one. Friends of mine have mentioned that the lockdown has meant more quiet time for self-reflection, new hobbies (such as painting), or time to exercise, which prior commutes made impossible. These life changes have helped make the experience of restricted movement and isolation more tolerable for them.

While no one seeks disaster, we can use it as an impetus for what researchers call post-traumatic growth—not just overcoming hardship, but moving forward from it and finding a "greater sense of personal strength (personal growth), deeper relationships with others (social growth), and a greater appreciation of life (spiritual growth)," researchers from Greece wrote in an article in Psychiatry Research last year. Although some of us have suffered more than others under COVID, how we respond to challenges and setbacks can make a major difference in our outlook on life and leave us better prepared for other adversities that may come our way.

Learning From Post-Traumatic Growth Research

Many of us are familiar with the term "posttraumatic stress disorder" or PTSD-a debilitating condition that can affect people who've experienced extreme trauma (like war, rape, natural disasters, or growing up in a violent household). Post-traumatic stress can leave people with intrusive memories of the trauma, as well as hypervigilance, extreme anxiety, and depression, among other things.

Recent research suggests that the pandemic has caused PTSD-like symptoms in many people. No doubt, experiencing sudden losses or being isolated for months on end is traumatic. But even those of us who haven't suffered as much under quarantine still find it hard to cope with the fear and uncertainty that COVID has wrought. It can leave us feeling edgy, depressed, withdrawn from other people, and unable to sleep at night—all symptoms of PTSD.

The science of post-traumatic growth may offer some guidance on how to cope. Luckily, post-traumatic growth can happen (and often does) when people find a way to make peace with traumatic experiences, find meaning from them, or gain a better understanding of themselves and others. Though many studies have shown us how given people opportunities to grow from

surveyed nearly 1,200 people and found were able to identify silver linings (positive lockdowns. One person said those benefits included "getting to spend more time with my kids and spouse" as a result of quarantining, while another said, "We have also had some really great communication with our next-door neighbors, who we previously knew but not well.'

Both comments suggest people realized that slowing down allowed them to strengthen relationships.

Other respondents found that they'd "learned different ways to work" or noted they were "only shopping for essentials, not wasting money on stuff one wants rather than what one needs." These responses suggest some people were looking at their lives and considering changes that might continue past lockdown.



others;" and "perceived changes regard-

ing themselves, which included personal

growth and increased awareness of the

importance of their health.

The lockdown period

represented a major

lives, and created an

opportunity to stop,

connect, and re-create.

lead us away from PTSD and toward post-

The above studies were all surveys done in

the midst of a viral epidemic. That means

they give us a snapshot in time of what

people are thinking, but don't show us how

they came to think that way. It's likely some

people are naturally prone to seeing the

But it's also possible that in extreme

circumstances we can make a choice to

change our perspective. The question is,

how? Here are a few techniques that might

Look for insights. It's natural to feel

stressed, depressed, or worried during

traumatic events. We may think that the

world is falling apart or that we can't pos-

sibly cope. But trying to repress these

feelings or thoughts won't help us move

forward. Instead, we need to find ways to

One way to do that is through expres-

sive writing—a technique that involves

express them and learn from them.

traumatic growth.

Can We Purposefully

Seek Growth From Adversity?

good and that helps them cope.

take stock, reflect,

New Zealand researchers

flashpoint in people's

In open-ended responses like these, the two overall themes that emerged were that people survived by learning to cope, meeting basic needs, and maintaining their health, and also that they thrived by focusing on self-development, reflection, and growth.

"The lockdown period represented a major flashpoint in people's lives, and created an opportunity to stop, take stock, reflect, connect, and re-create," the authors concluded. Though the researchers didn't try to analyze how doing so affected people's overall well-being, other research suggests that finding silver linings in adversity can help people grow from it and suffer less.

Of course, context matters, too, and New Zealand's swift and cooperative response to the pandemic may have made it easier for its citizens to see silver linings. But people in other countries also found things to honor in their experience.

For example, in one study conducted in much the isolation caused by the COVID Spain, researchers sent online questionpandemic has harmed our mental health, naires to 438 Spaniards (18 to 68 years old) some studies suggest quarantining has also in week two and week five of mandatory quarantining to find out how confinement during COVID affected them emotionally. In a New Zealand study, researchers As expected, people reported feeling many negative feelings, such as depression, anxithat almost two-thirds of the respondents ety, and stress, with some groups experiencing higher levels of these—in particuthings) they'd experienced during COVID lar, women, younger people, people with chronic illnesses or lower incomes, and those living alone.

> rent positive experiences, like gratitude, a sense of greater meaning in life, and resilience. Not surprisingly, having more positive emotions and experiences generally increased people's life satisfaction under quarantine, which, in turn, helped reduce their distress and increase their levels of post-traumatic growth. Similarly, a study in Germany found that while people's ability to experience moments of awe and gratitude didn't relieve them of the burden of the pandemic, it at least helped them appreciate more positive aspects of their lives during this difficult time. Silver linings could even be found among

> > STOCKBAKERY/SHUTTERSTOCK



Expressive writing can be a useful tool to help you gain distance from your emotions and better process what you are experiencing.

However, many also reported concur-While quarantining has meant couples and families have had the added stress of negotiating shared space and reduced privacy, there have also been some positives, like some couples experiencing increased closeness, better communication, and a spirit of teamwork. And, as one past study found, closer relationships may help lower our stress levels and reduce symptoms of post-traumatic stress during a Does this mean we should all just focus on the positive and be better off? Not exactly. But it does suggest that it's possible to find silver linings in quarantine that might

people infected with the virus. In China, for writing freely about something that bothexample, researchers interviewed COVID ers us and stepping back from it to reexpatients and found that many identified amine our lives. Research suggests that expressive writing can help foster postpositive themes emerging from their experience, including a "reevaluation of their traumatic growth, particularly if you gain life priorities, which included a greater distance from your emotions and write about insights gained from exploring your appreciation of being alive and re-evaluating their values and goals;" "improved relationships within their social circles, which included establishing or maintaining closer relationships with family and friends and a greater willingness to help

Aim for self-compassion. We are going through a traumatic time, which means we all need to do what we can to take care of ourselves. Practicing self-compassion may help—and may also lead to more posttraumatic growth.

Self-compassion involves a combination of being mindful of how we are feeling and thinking, sending ourselves kind messages instead of harsh criticism, and recognizing ourselves as connected to the rest of humanity. Research has found that being more self-compassionate can lead to posttraumatic growth after adversity, because it helps people reframe their experience in a more positive way and can increase their sense of meaning.

Seek meaning and purpose. Post-traumatic growth researchers find that often people recover best from trauma when they can find some meaning in their experience. And research conducted during the pandemic also supports this link.

How can we find meaning at this time? We may turn to our religious or spiritual practices for understanding and solace. We may engage in meaningful activities, like creating art, experiencing awe in nature, or connecting deeply with our loved ones. Or we may reconsider our life's purpose and decide to dedicate ourselves to helping others in need. Any of these could help us to grow through a focus on evaluating the meaning of what we went through.

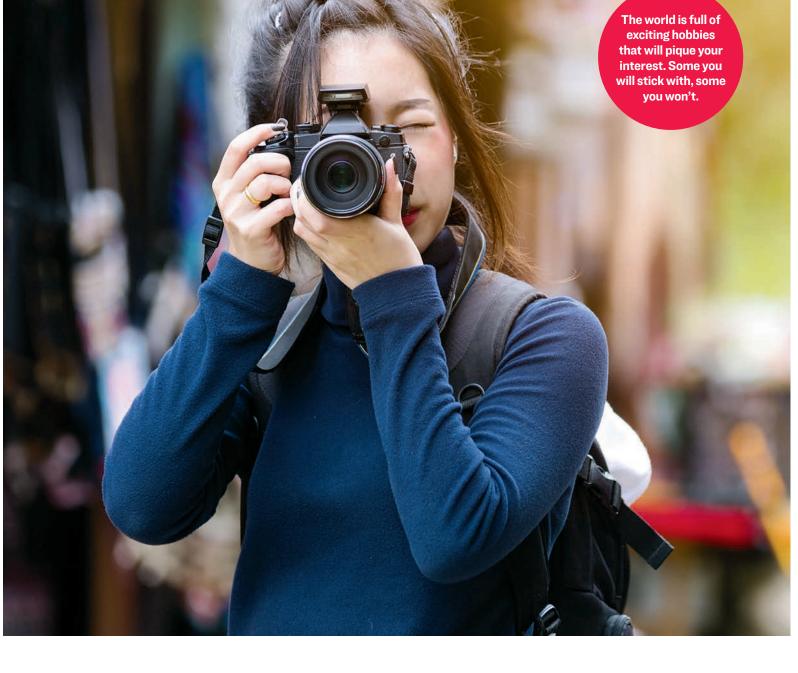
Practice gratitude. Research suggests that grateful people suffer less from PTSD and that practicing gratitude may help alleviate symptoms of PTSD and improve wellbeing. That suggests that taking stock of even small things in our lives that we can be grateful for may help us move forward from trauma.

When Greater Good surveyed people using our online gratitude platform, Thnx4, during the pandemic, we found that it helped them feel more resilient, less lonely, and more satisfied with life.

This doesn't mean we should feel grateful for the pandemic. Nor should we put on rose-colored glasses or ignore profound losses. But it does mean we might want to balance those difficulties by remembering to do the things that bring us happiness or

Post-traumatic growth is not inevitable, but it is possible, even in these dire circumstances. If we practice self-compassion and gratitude, and look for meaning and insight, we may get through the trauma of this pandemic better equipped to face what lies ahead.

Jill Suttie, Psy.D., is Greater Good's former book review editor and now serves as a staff writer and contributing editor for the magazine. This article was first published on the Greater Good online magazine.





JEANDUM/SHUTTERSTOCK



we are very motivated to learn as much as possible, but this can fade.

WISE HABITS

The Simplicity Cycle

How to find your true needs by taking stock and paring down

LEO BABAUTA

nd be done with; it's actually a continuous cycle.

At least that's what I've found in my many years of simple living. I've downsized numerous times, in all areas of life, and I keep coming back to the process of simplifying.

The simplicity cycle usually goes something like this:

Inspiration Phase: You find something that sparks an interest, and start exploring it (reading about a new topic, learning a new skill, exploring a new activity, or starting a new project). This is the inspiration phase.

Addition Phase: As you explore, this leads you to more complexity—to buying things, reading more and more, or finding new inspiration and ideas. This is the addition phase.

Contemplation Phase: At some point, you might pause to consider the bigger picture of what you're doing. Is it really important? If it is, what's the essential part of it? Can you pare down? Many people skip this phase and just keep cycling through the first two phases.

Paring Down Phase: If you decided to pare down, this is where you start to let go of things. You figure out what's essential to your learning, and if you don't scrap the entire venture completely, you might keep just a few things. For example, if you start learning about chess, you might buy a chess set and a bunch of books and apps. But in the paring down phase, you might keep only one book or a few apps or decide that chess isn't important enough to keep in your life at all.

If you're into simplifying and figuring out what's essential, you'll do the last two phases. If you're like most people, you'll just keep doing phases one and two, which leads to a growing amount of clutter and complexity.

Life Lessons and Simplicity As you might guess, I find the last two phases to be really important. But the first two are also important because they're about continual learning, curiosity, growth, creativity, and more. I haven't been able to stop myself from doing the first two phases, so I continue to repeat this simplicity cycle several times each year.

The first two phases are where you get excited about something and are motivated to find out as much as you can. This is an essential human drive, and I would implifying your life isn't a one-never want to suppress it. But here's what time project that you can finish I've learned about managing it well:

> Practice self-control. I have to hold myself back from acquiring in the addition phase. I do this by reminding myself how much I wasted in the past when I bought too many things early on. It's really hard to hold back when you're excited, but it's important to remember that following your every urge isn't usually very

Going through the simplicity cycle helps you practice letting go of the things that you don't really need.

Don't believe the fantasy. The inspiration phase can be a wonderful thing, but sometimes it's just a fantasy that grips us. There's nothing wrong with fantasy. But the reality of taking on a new challenge will be quite different once we dive into it. That's not to say we shouldn't go after it, but we should realize that it will be very different than how we picture it—and probably not as exciting. And when it grips us and takes us to the addition phase, it can lead us to spend too much time or money on unimportant

Identify the true need. Often the inspiration phase starts when we think we really want something, or even need it. But it's not always a true need. We rarely explore how to get our true needs met without the addition phase, and it's something worth considering as we think about the big picture of our lives. What are true needs? More on that in the next section.

Take a step back. The contemplation phase can come at any time—maybe even before you start the addition phase. Right after you start the addition phase, you can pause to think about whether it's

worth pursuing. Take a step back and **Trendy Gear:** Survival gear, travel gear, look at the big picture. Why are you doing this? Is it meaningful to you? Does it meet your true needs? Is the reality going to be anywhere close to the fantasy? What can you get rid of? What's truly essential?

Learn by paring down. The paring down phase can be very liberating. Once you've had the realization that you want to simplify, it can be a huge burden to needs—they were all extraneous, even let things go. At the same time, it can be though they seemed important at the to hope or fantasy. There's also the painful regret of buying too much and being wasteful. But it's not wasteful if you've learned something from it or improved yourself. So give thanks, learn from the experience, and let go.

In this whole process, I find that real learning is about true needs. It's hard to understand true needs until you've • Learning and exploration gone through this process a few times. Here are a few ideas about how to identify the difference between true needs and wants.

Finding Your True Needs

Going through the simplicity cycle helps you practice letting go of the things that you don't really need. Often, they might actually be a burden that you don't want, and letting go can be very liberating.

If you go through the cycle many times with consciousness, you can start to figure out the kinds of things you crave and that excite you, but that aren't really true needs. They seem great at first, but they don't really satisfy anything deep within you.

Here are a few examples of things that didn't satisfy a real need for me:

Chess: I really enjoyed learning about chess, but the competitive aspect and the thousands of hours you need to spend on practice to get good at it weren't Leo Babauta is the author and the writer worth it for me. Getting really good at of "Zen Habits," a blog with more than 2 chess didn't hold real meaning. The true need was learning, and I can do that for free in many areas of life.

Gourmet Food: When I moved to San Francisco, I discovered some amazing restaurants, from neighborhood gems to Michelin-starred, world-class gourmet spots. I went crazy for about a year, going to as many as I could afford. It caused me to gain weight, lose a lot of money, and get tired of rich food. I did the same kind of deep dive with pizza, coffee, wine, and beer at different times. To be honest, it was all a waste, and I'm glad I'm over it. The true need was exploration, and I can do that without going broke or getting fat.

tech gear, hiking gear—every now and then, I really get into a topic and decide I want the best gear in that area. At times, I've caved in to the craving and ended up with a lot of gear that I don't use. None of it has really mattered to me in the long term; they've all been short-term lusts. The true need is to get outdoors and explore.

None of these activities met my true difficult to let go if you're still holding on time. In the end, going through the pro-Here are some things I now see as true

- Food, water, clothing, heat, shelter, and basic safety
- Love and connection
- Play, inspiration, and creative outlets Getting outdoors, being active, and experiencing nature

• Stillness and peace

There might be more. Beyond the basic survival needs, the others are about connection and nourishment in some way.

And when I remember these needs, I remember that they can be met in a variety of ways, not only in the way that I'm fantasizing about. I can meet my needs by simply going outside for a walk, talking with a loved one or an interesting stranger, reading something online, or meditating and finding stillness.

These are simple things that cost nothing, simple things that nourish me and require no additions to what I already have. Simple things that allow me to let go of the rest. Simple things that are available all around us, in beautiful abundance.

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While some hobbies are passing pleasures,

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

Open Hearts Have Open Hands

Generosity doesn't require material riches, but rather a rich heart

When we give of

ourselves there

is an immediate

eward to our health

and happiness.

DONNA MARTELLI

When we're generous, it's generally something we do to benefit another's well-being, but paradoxically, it increases our well-being as well. Being generous significantly boosts our mental health and sense of accomplishment in life.

Besides all that, it feels terrific.

Generosity Is a Lifestyle

The Cambridge English Dictionary defines generous as "willing to give help or support, especially more than is usual or expected."

A generous person will give what they can to others, whether in time, resources, or encouragement. Genuinely interested in others, their mindset is one of giving and helping. A generous person has a noble character.

Within our human nature lies the tendency to close our hearts and therefore our hands to the needs of those around us. We may have excess that we enjoy but don't need while we see others who lack the things we enjoy. It can test our hearts to open ourselves to sharing our abundance, but it almost always leaves us with a deeper satisfaction.

How can we be generous people, especially now that many of us are out of work and prices are skyrocketing on everything from food to gasoline to home repairs? It's not a material issue; it's a heart issue.

The Rewards of Generosity

Research, including a study published in the Journal of Positive Psychology in June, has found we are happier when we give to someone else than when we spend money on ourselves. Our generosity lights up regions of our brains associated with pleasure, trust, and social connection. That's part of the reason why being generous feels fantastic. We have many opportunities to develop meaningful relationships because our generosity means we are likable people. Thankfulness is a way of life for the open-hearted. Generosity breeds efits, including improved cardiovascular it comes, but it will come. and immune function.

Our sincere and joyful giving encour- I think so.

ages others to do the same. Even a simple "thank you" can inspire both us and the one we are thanking to be more generous. Anyone who might be watching or listening could also be encouraged to be more giving and thankful. Generosity keeps on going, helping us and those in our lives to feel happier and less lonely.

When we give something of our time or our resources, it's all but inevitable the blessing will return back to us. It's a system that always works, like gravity. I have seen this principle at work many times in my own life. Of course, one could refuse gratitude, which also gives us health benthe blessing or pay no attention to it when

Is it miraculous? Perhaps. Is it spiritual?

Our generosity lights up regions of our brains associated with pleasure, trust, and social connection.



Generosity and Relationships

Generosity is necessary to truly healthy relationships. If we genuinely care for someone, our heart is open to them. We want to compliment them not only materially but intellectually and spiritually. What do they need? What do they like? How can we make life better for them?

As iron sharpens iron, we sharpen each other when we share thoughts, ideas, and opinions within our relationships. Our friend's or spouse's interpretation of an issue or situation may be quite different from ours. Still, by openly sharing, each of us will gain more knowledge and perhaps be able to see more possibilities than we would have seen without the other person's viewpoints.

At the heart of all our relationships should be this basic principle: Treat them the way you want them to treat you.

Imagine how relationships would flourish if everyone applied that one principle. Issues arise when one or both parties forget to be generous with the other and aren't treating the other person like they would like to be treated.

Giving is rewarding, and we need to train our brains to focus on it. We can give in ways that provide a positive effect on someone else's life. We need to be thoughtful and intentional in our giving, knowing that we are making a difference, not only in someone else's life, but in ours as well.

Formerly a professional dancer with the Harkness Ballet of New York, Donna Martelli has written three books, as well as course manuals, book summaries, blogs, articles, and devotionals. She lives in Indianapolis, Ind., and is married with five children and 12 grandchildren. She is the author of "When God Says Drop It" and "Why the Dance."



A generous person will give what they can to others, whether in time, resources, or encouragement.



RELATIONSHIPS

How Deep Listening Will Transform Your Life



Listening is critical to understanding other people and having fulfilling lives

n a world saturated with information, nonstop noise, smartphones, and endless workplace productivity tools, the art of listening is truly on the decline. How can we stop and pay attention to one thing at a time when a waterfall of "noise" is cascading into our minds every second? Our phones, notifications, emails, and texts in the present moment can seem more urgent than the person standing in front of us.

Here's a startling statistic for you: Af- When we interact with other people, ter the average person listens to some- no matter how much we care about

one speak, he or she remembers only half of what the other person said.

Listening is critical to not only understanding other people, but also to having fulfilling work and personal

Below are three ways that deep, intentional listening will transform your life.

1. Change Your **Dynamics With Other People**

them or how close we are, it's so easy to "listen" while we think about what we're going to say next. For some, this is even a default state when they're around others. It can take conscious, present moment awareness to fully focus on what the other person is saying to us without thinking of ourselves.

You'll find that the deeper you listen to others, the more non-verbal cues you pick up from what they're

Continued on Page 14

Florida Surgeon General Promotes Nutraceuticals for COVID

There's an increasing amount of research showing the potential effects of vitamin D on COVID-19 outcomes

JOSEPH MERCOLA

Florida's new surgeon general, Dr. Joseph Ladapo, has issued a statewide public service announcement in support of commonsense COVID prevention strategies such as

optimizing your vitamin D, staying active, eating nutrient-dense foods, and boosting your immune system with supplements. Florida Health's HealthierYouFL.org website now urges Floridians to "Talk to your health care provider about how certain supplements or foods containing vitamins and minerals might help boost your immune system, such as zinc, vitamin D, vitamin C and quercetin." These are all well-known supplements that have been shown to have a positive impact on your COVID-19 risk.

The surgeon general also supports the Continued on Page 12

use of monoclonal antibodies in acute cases, and as prevention in high-risk patients who have been exposed to CO-VID-19. Available treatment locations can be found on FloridaHealthCOVID19.gov.

'Physicians Should

Use Clinical Judgment' Florida Health even highlights emerging treatments such as fluvoxamine and inhaled budesonide. Importantly, Florida Health now states that:



With low vitamin D levels, your immune system will be impaired, making you more susceptible to all kinds of infections, including COVID-19.



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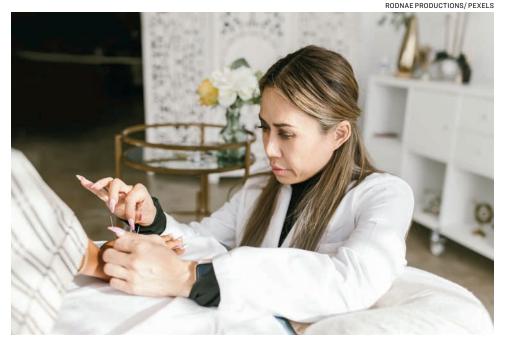
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Acupuncturists are required have training in Western and Asian medicine, pharmacology, and a long list of other topics, as well as a master's degree.

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

What Does Your Acupuncturist Really Know?

Few people know the training and education requirements acupuncturists must fulfill

LYNN JAFFEE

There is a lot of outrage and unkindness in our country, today more than ever. I get it. The polarization in the United States has come down to people not being able to have a meal with family members who share a different political viewpoint, while others are in an uproar about wearing or not wearing a mask or the fight over vaccine mandates intended to bring this pandemic under control.

It's disheartening. Some of the articles I post on my website are reprinted by other outlets, including national news organizations, where there is an opportunity for online comments. Lately, I've seen what has morphed from helpful comments on my posts to online screeds about vaccines, the pandemic hoax, and pro-sought out care. Weeks later, I received fanities about our current president. a call from the patient's family thanking Recently, a pretty innocuous post about me, as their loved one had been having nutrition received the usual comments about vaccines, etc., but the comments also went on to question whether being an acupuncturist qualifies one to write

such an article.

In many states, acupuncturists are considered to be primary care providers. and in several states, they can order lab tests for the purpose of functional medicine diagnostics.

I usually ignore these kinds of snarky comments, but this last batch on whether an acupuncturist is qualified to write about nutrition made me realize that the general public likely doesn't know much about how an acupuncturist is trained and what they really know. So let me fill you in.

Your acupuncturist has a master's degree or a doctorate and has passed several licensing exams. Along with learning about Chinese medical theory, needling techniques, accessory therapies, herbal medicine, and acupuncture clinical medicine, your acupuncturist also studied Western medicine at the same time. They have spent thousands of hours in the classroom and several hundred hours in the teaching clinic. Their Western medical education includes:

- Anatomy
- Physiology
- Pathophysiology
- Emergency medicine
- Western medical screening Western medical terminology
- Nutrition

- Pharmacology
- Drug and herb interactions
- Asepsis (working in a germ-free space) Western blood-borne diseases

Week 52, 2021 THE EPOCH TIMES

Your acupuncturist learned two medical systems side-by-side; Western and Asian medicine. They are able to recognize a medical emergency and when to refer their patient to a Western health provider. In fact, one of my most rewarding moments as a practitioner was when I convinced a patient to seek emergency care for what I thought were alarming symptoms. This patient had been ignoring and minimizing their symptoms for days, despite family members' urging them to go to the doctor. Based on my concern, this patient immediately

a heart attack and survived. When your acupuncturist is also trained as an herbal practitioner (and most are), then they probably know more about herb and drug interactions than your Western doctor. And because many herbs are also foods, they know a lot about the properties of food, nutrition, and healing illness through food therapy. In many states, acupuncturists are considered to be primary care providers, and in several states, they can order lab tests for the purpose of functional medicine diagnostics.

The bottom line is that your acupuncturist knows more than you think. And while I don't usually respond to online comments that are meant to be hurtful, I believe that it's important for the public to understand just how much education and clinical experience your licensed acupuncturist (LAc) has to have in order to practice acupuncture. I also don't respond to snarky online comments because it just inflames peoples' misplaced outrage. And let's face it; outrage is exhausting and not good for your health.

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



Along with learning about Chinese medical theory, needling techniques, accessory therapies, herbal medicine, and acupuncture clinical medicine, your acupuncturist also studied Western medicine at the same time.

5 Ways to Fight Fatty Liver

Beyond lifestyle changes, you can combat fatty liver with these natural substances



There are natural therapies you can use to help protect against non-alcoholic fatty liver disease and other forms of fatty liver.

That's important given the rise of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease and the importance of the liver. The liver is the second largest organ and it helps store energy, digest food, and get rid of toxins. If we eat poorly or have other dietary or lifestyle issues, fat builds up in the liver, leading to fatty liver disease. Liver diseases are considered the second leading cause of mortality among all digestive disorders in the United States, as well as the fifthmost-common cause of death.

Fatty liver diseases include non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) and nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH). These two are the most common liver disorders in the industrialized world, accounting for 10 percent to 46 percent in the United States. alone. According to systematic reviews, the prevalence of NAFLD in adults is around 25 percent to 33 percent.

The liver is the second largest organ and it helps store energy, digest food, and get rid of toxins.

NAFLD is of particular interest as the most common chronic liver disease in children and young people in industrialized nations, mainly due to obesity. It's often diagnosed with abnormal liver tests or an ultrasound. This liver condition can silently progress and remain asymptom atic, so early detection is key.

NAFLD is also present in more than half of adults with Type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome. Untreated, the disease can progress to fibrosis, cirrhosis, and hepatocellular cancer.

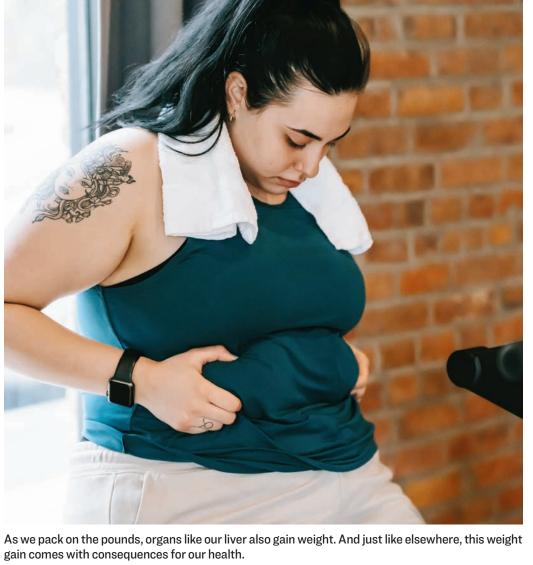
5 Ways to Combat Fatty Liver **Naturally**

Fortunately, despite all the problems associated with fatty liver, there are natural ways to combat it. The most fundamental solution is to stop the dietary or lifestyle patterns that **2. Probiotics** created it. Beyond that, there are things you Probiotics are deemed a potential therapy for diator, which is linked to lower systemic can do to help combat the condition.

1. Curcumin

Curcumin is an anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antidiabetic, and antihyperlipidemic agent, traditionally used for treating liver diseases. It is the main natural polyphenol found in turmeric, used for thousands of years for its multiple health benefits.

A 2020 study found that supplementing with curcumin favorably affected metabolic



markers in patients with NAFLD. Results of the meta-analysis indicated a significant decrease in total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, fasting blood sugar, and waist circumference.

A separate review evaluated the efficacy of curcumin supplementation on liver enzymes in NAFLD patients. The team found a favorable effect with a higher dosage, suggesting "further high-quality studies with large scale and higher dosage" need

NAFLD. A 2019 systematic review found probiotics are superior to placebo in patients with NAFLD and could serve as a complementary therapy.

Combined with omega-3 fats, a live multistrain probiotic mixture taken daily for eight weeks by NAFLD patients reduced liver fat, improved serum lipids and metabolic profile, and reduced systemic inflammation. Paired with cholesterol-lowering drugs, probiotics also helped treat atherogenic dyslipidemia linked to NAFLD.

3. Coffee

Inflammation is believed to be a contributor to non-alcoholic fatty liver disease and other chronic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Coffee, with its strong antioxidant profile, is often used to address the inflammatory conditions underlying

One study on green coffee bean extract showed that the supplement weakened research on GreenMedInfo.com. a circulating inflammatory marker meinflammation.

In Korean men, increasing coffee intake was linked to a lower incidence of fatty liver, suggesting that increased consumption may protect the organ. The researchers obtained data from 91,436 male and female subjects, with a mean follow-up period of 2.8 years.

Among animal models (tests using animals), coffee prevented fatty liver disease induced by an unhealthy diet through modulating pathways of the gut and liv-

er. "The hepatic and metabolic benefits induced by coffee were accompanied by changes in the gut microbiota," the researchers wrote in the study published in the Journal of Nutritional Science.

4. Silymarin

Silymarin is an active extract of milk thistle, an ancient medicinal plant used for treating various liver diseases for centuries. It has been found in studies to effectively reduce disease markers in patients with NAFLD, even exceeding the benefits of drugs such as metformin.

In a randomized trial involving 99 subjects, silymarin (700 milligrams given three times a day for 48 weeks) appeared to reduce liver fibrosis, warranting confirmation in a larger trial. It was safe and well-tolerated among the patients, the study concluded.

5. Vitamins D and E

Vitamin D, obtained directly from the sun or via supplementation, may be a good therapeutic option for NAFLD due to its insulin-sensitizing and anti-inflammatory properties. A 2019 study showed that vitamin D supplementation significantly ameliorated metabolic, chemical, and inflammatory parameters in NAFLD patients. That suggests it deserves to be treated as an adjunctive therapy.

Low vitamin D levels, too, were associated with the presence of fatty liver disease independent of metabolic syndrome, diabetes, and insulin resistance.

Vitamin E is also often used in treating NAFLD and non-alcoholic steatohepatitis. In an analysis of five studies, it significantly improved liver function and histologic changes in patients with NAFLD/NASH. Short term, it was found to significantly enhance abnormal liver enzyme levels in NAFLD patients with metabolic syndrome.

It can also work synergistically with other therapeutic approaches. Among pediatric NAFLD patients, the antioxidant action of hydroxytyrosol and vitamin E slashed systemic inflammation. A 2015 study combined silymarin and vitamin E, concluding that, along with a low-calorie diet, they can positively affect NAFLD.

Find nearly 800 abstracts with fatty liver

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

Deadly Bugs Found in 9 of 10 Makeup Bags

Microbial growth in cosmetics is common, comes with health risks

AMREEN BASHIR & PETER LAMBERT

We recently tested 467 makeup products, donated to our study by people in the United Kingdom, for bacterial and fungal contamination and found that 90 percent contained potentially deadly germs. These products, which included lipstick and mascara, could pose a significant health threat.

We found E. coli and Staphylococci in used eyeliner and mascara. These bacteria can cause irritation and conjunctivitis (pink eye). Although the symptoms of conjunctivitis tend to be mild—itchy, watery eyes—in extreme cases, it can lead to sight loss. The germs causing conjunctivitis also can spread to other parts of the body, which can trigger a more serious secondary infection.

The lipsticks and lip gloss in our sample contained Staphylococci and various bacteria associated with fecal matter. These bacteria could cause redness, swelling, and inflammation of the lips, which can be treated with antibiotics or antibacterial creams. But if the germs spread to the blood or deeper tissues of the body, the infection can become life-threatening.

Also, some strains of Staphylococci, such as Staphylococcus aureus, have become more resistant to antibiotics. S. aureus is fairly contagious and can cause skin infections, including impetigo.

The makeup products we examined (lipstick, lip gloss, eyeliners, mascaras, and beauty blenders) had 100 to 1,000 individual bacteria, except for beauty blenders, which had an average of a million bacteria. As few as 100 cells of some bacteria can cause infection.

Beware the Beauty Blender

Previous studies have investigated microbial contamination in makeup in other countries, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Italy. They have reported high levels of diseasecausing bacteria, including E. coli, salmonella, Klebsiella, and Citrobacter, but little research has been conducted in the United Kingdom, which has a situation more similar to countries like the United States.

Our research is the first to look at beauty blenders—a popular foundation blending and contouring sponge. (Over 6.5 million beauty blenders have been sold worldwide.)

We found that these products are particularly susceptible to contamination as they are often left damp after use, which creates an ideal breeding ground for harmful bacteria. Most (93 percent) of the beauty blenders we tested had never been cleaned, despite two-thirds (64 percent) of

those we surveyed admitting that they'd dropped them on the floor.

It's actually easy to avoid germs from cosmetics. Beauty blenders can be cleaned with warm, soapy water. For lipstick, simply turn the lipstick tube up slightly and wipe off the top layer of lipstick with a tissue, then pour a small amount of rubbing alcohol and dip the exposed lipstick into the alcohol for 30 seconds. Remove it and gently dab the alcohol off and allow it to dry. This won't affect the lipstick but will keep it clean.

Mascara pots can harbor bacteria, but they can't be cleaned, so it's best to replace your mascara monthly or use disposable wands.

Check Expiry Dates

All cosmetics are made under strict conditions to control the growth and accumulation of microbes during use. Preservatives are used to stop bacteria from growing, but they have a finite shelf life. All cosmetics have expiry dates, which are calculated based on the length of time the preservatives in the product are able to control contamination.

If the expiry date is printed on the packaging, it is displayed in the form of a symbol resembling an opened pot with either 3M, 6M, 12M, 18M, 24M, or 36M printed in the middle, corresponding to the number



When researchers asked people to donate their makeup to test it for bacteria, they revealed a problem few people have likely considered.

of months the product can be used. Most products have an expiry date of three to 12 months, providing the user hasn't had an infection, such as conjunctivitis. However, our latest study shows that people are using products beyond the expiry dates and allowing microbial contamination to build up.

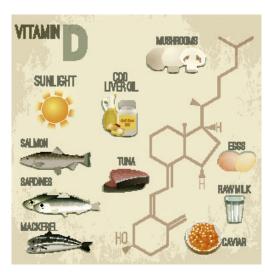
To avoid contamination, make sure you discard makeup that has passed the expiry period, don't apply makeup if you have an infection or broken skin, never share cosmetics with friends, and definitely avoid using makeup samples in stores.

Amreen Bashir is a lecturer in biomedical science at Aston University in the United Kingdom, and Peter Lambert is a professor of microbial chemistry at Aston University. This article was first published on The



Florida Surgeon General Promotes Nutraceuticals for COVID

There's an increasing amount of research showing the potential effects of vitamin D on COVID-19 outcomes



Florida Health's HealthierYouFL.org website now urges Floridians to "Talk to your health care provider about how certain supplements or foods containing vitamins and minerals might help boost your immune system

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"Physicians should use their clinical judg ment when recommending treatment options for patients' individualized health care needs. This may include emerging treatment options with appropriate patient informed consent, including off-label use or as part of a clinical trial."

Well, no one could be happier about this than I. I've been calling for vitamin D recommendations since the earliest days of the pandemic—ideally nationwide, but statewide is at least a start, especially considering that Florida is the sunshine state.

Ladapo was appointed Florida surgeon general and secretary of the Florida Department of Health by Gov. Ron DeSantis on Sept. 21, 2021, and it's refreshing to finally see COVID guidance that makes sense. In his acceptance speech, Ladapo

"I am honored to have been chosen by Governor DeSantis to serve as Florida's next Surgeon General. We must make health policy decisions rooted in data and not in

"I have observed the different approaches taken by governors across the country, and I have been impressed by Governor DeSantis' leadership and determination to ensure that Floridians are afforded all opportunities to maintain their health and wellness while preserving their freedoms as Americans."

Physicians should use their clinical judgment when recommending treatment options for patients' individualized health care needs.

Dr. Joseph Ladapo, Florida's new surgeon

Vitamin D Papers Top List of Most Popular Studies of the Year

On Oct. 31, 2020, I published a scientific review in the journal Nutrients, co-written with William Grant, Ph.D., and Dr. Carol Wagner, both of whom are part of the GrassrootsHealth expert vitamin D panel.

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As of Oct. 31, 2021, our paper, "Evidence Regarding Vitamin D and Risk of COVID-19 and Its Severity"—which you can download and read for free-was the second most downloaded study from this journal in the past 12 months. It was also No. 2 in citations and No. 4 for views

The study with the most downloads in the past year and the all-time highest number of views was another vitamin D paper by Bhat toa et al., which found that vitamin D supplementation reduced the risk of influenza and COVID-19 infections and deaths.

A third vitamin D paper, by Gaëlle Annweiler et al., also nabbed the No. 1 spot for most-cited study in the past 12 months. This study found that vitamin D supplementation improved survival in frail elderly patients hospitalized with COVID-19.

Clearly, vitamin D has been at the forefront of many minds, and I'm glad the Florida surgeon general recognizes its importance as well. While mainstream media and many health authorities still refuse to recognize the scientific basis for the recommendation of vitamin D for COVID, the tide may be changing.

As early as the end of September 2020, data from 14 observational studies—summarized in Table 1 of our paper—showed that vitamin D blood levels are inversely correlated with the incidence and/or severity of COVID-19. Many critics of vitamin D will claim that these associations are not causal. However, there are statistical tools such as the Bradford Hill criteria that can actually prove causation when these associations are strong enough.

The Bradford Hill criteria are a group of nine principles (i.e., strength of association, consistency of evidence, temporality, biological gradient, plausibility or mechanism of action, and coherence, although coherence still needs to be verified experimentally) that can be useful in establishing epidemiologic evidence of a causal relationship between a presumed cause and an observed effect.

Hill's criteria have been widely used in public health research. When it comes to whether vitamin Dinsufficiency is a risk factor for CO-VID-19, Hill's criteria have largely been satisfied, meaning responsible clinicians should not overlook it.

How Vitamin D

Protects Against COVID

It's important to realize that your body is wellequipped to handle just about any infection, provided your immune system is working properly, as that's your body's first line of defense. Vitamin D receptors are found in a large number of different tissues and cells, including your immune cells. This means vitamin D plays an important role in your immune function specifically.

If vitamin D is lacking, your immune system will be impaired, which in turn makes you more susceptible to infections of all kinds, including COVID-19. As explained in our paper, having sufficient vitamin D in your system can reduce your risk of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections through several different mechanisms, including but not limited to the following:

- Reducing the survival of viruses. • Inhibiting the replication of viruses.
- Reducing inflammatory cytokine production.
- Maintaining endothelial integrity (endo thelial dysfunction contributes to vascular inflammation and impaired blood clotting, two hallmarks of severe COVID-19).
- Increasing angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) concentrations. Angiotensin II is a natural peptide hormone that increases blood pressure by stimulating aldosterone. ACE2 normally consumes angiotensin I, thereby lowering the concentration of angiotensin II. However, SARS-CoV-2 infection downregulates ACE2, resulting in excessive accumulation of angiotensin II, which worsens the infection.
- Boosting your overall immune function by modulating your innate and adaptive immune responses.
- Reducing respiratory distress.
- Improving overall lung function.
- Helping produce surfactants in your lungs
- an important role in your body's defense against viral and bacterial infections. When vitamin D signaling is impaired, it significantly impacts the quantity, quality, breadth, and location of CD8 T cell immunity, resulting in more severe viral and bacterial infections. According to a Dec. 11, 2020, paper published in Vaccine: X, high-quality T cell response actually appears to be far more important than antibodies when it comes to providing protective immunity against SARS-CoV-2 specifically.
- Increasing expression of antimicrobial peptides in your monocytes and neutrophils—both of which are cell types that help fight infections and play important roles in COVID-19.
- Enhancing expression of an antimicrobial



peptide called human cathelicidin, which helps defend respiratory tract pathogens.

From my perspective, vitamin D optimization is one of the easiest, least expensive, and most impactful strategies to reduce your risk of serious SARS-CoV-2 infection and other respiratory infections.

Vitamin D optimization is particularly important for dark-skinned individuals (who tend to have lower levels than Caucasians unless they spend extended time in the sun), the elderly, and those with preexisting chronic health conditions. All of these are also risk factors for COVID-19, so population-wide optimization of vitamin D levels could significantly improve COVID outcomes among the most vulnerable.

How Vitamin D **Influences Your COVID Risks**

At this point, there's no shortage of studies showing that higher vitamin D levels ben-

eficially impact all stages of COVID-19. Having sufficient vitamin D has the following

Lowers your risk of testing positive for CO-**VID:** The largest observational study to date, which looked at data for 191,779 American patients, found that of those with a vitamin D level below 20 ng/ml (deficiency), 12.5 percent tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, compared to just 5.9 percent of those who had an optimal vitamin D level of 55 ng/ml or higher. This inverse relationship persisted across latitudes, races/ethnicities, sexes, and age ranges.

Reduces your risk of symptomatic illness: SARS-CoV-2-specific investigations have found that COVID-19 is far more common in vitamin D deficient individuals.

In one such study, 82.2 percent of COVID-19 patients tested were deficient in vitamin D, compared to 47.2 percent of population-based controls. (Mean vitamin D levels were 13.8 ± 7.2 ng/ml, compared to 20.9 ± 7.4 ng/ml in

D were inversely correlated to D-dimer lev-• Boosting T cell immunity, which plays els (a measure of blood coagulation). Many COVID-19 patients have elevated D-dimer levels, which are associated with blood clots. This was particularly true with the original SARS-CoV-2 virus. While less common with subsequent variants, some blood clotting, just less intense, can still occur.

> **Reduces infection severity:** Our vitamin D paper also lists data from 14 observational studies that show that vitamin D blood levels are inversely correlated with the incidence and/or severity of COVID-19. This is quite logical, considering that vitamin D regulates inflammatory cytokine production—a lethal hallmark of COVID-19—and is an important regulator of your immune system.

> Reduces your risk of hospitalization: Reduced severity would translate into a lower

risk for hospitalization, and that's precisely what researchers have found.

A Spanish study found baseline vitamin D levels inversely correlated with the risk of ICU admission, and that giving supplemental vitamin D3 calcifediol at 532 micrograms to a hospitalized patient on their first day of admission, followed by 266 mcg on days 3, 7, 15 and 30 reduced ICU admissions by 82 percent.

Reduces your risk of death: COVID-19 patients with a vitamin D level between 21 ng/ mL (50 nmol/L) and 29 ng/mL (75 nmol/L) had a 12.55 times higher risk of death than those with a level above 30 ng/mL, an Indonesian study found. Having a level below 20 ng/mL was associated with a 19.12 times higher risk of death.

Another study by researchers in the United Kingdom found that the risk of severe CO-VID-19 and related deaths virtually disappeared when vitamin D levels were above 30 ng/mL (75 nmol/L).

A third paper published in Alimentary Pharmacology and Therapeutics found a marked variation in mortality depending on whether the patients lived above or below 35 degrees North latitude. As noted by the authors, having adequate vitamin D "could be very important in preventing the cytokine storm and subsequent acute respiratory distress syndrome that is commonly the cause of mortality."

Speeds viral clearance: While having enough vitamin D in your system will reduce your odds of infection and serious illness, taking oral vitamin D once infected can still help you recover faster.

Research published by BMJ's Postgraduate Medical Journal in November 2020 found oral vitamin D supplementation in SARS-CoV-2-positive individuals with mild symptoms who also had low vitamin D, helped speed up viral clearance.

Participants were randomly assigned to receive either 60,000 IUs of oral cholecalciferol (nano-liquid droplets) or a placebo for seven days. The target blood level was 50 ng/ They also found that blood levels of vitamin mL. Anyone who had not achieved a blood nmol/L) if they weren't concurrently also level of 50 ng/mL after the first seven days continued to receive the supplement until they reached the target level.

Periodically, all participants were tested for SARS-CoV-2 as well as fibrinogen, D-dimer, procalcitonin, and CRP, all of which are inflammatory markers. The primary outcome measure of the study was the proportion of patients testing negative for COVID-19 before day 21 of the study, as well as changes in inflammatory markers.

Of the 16 patients in the intervention group, 10 (62.5 percent) tested negative by Day 21, Dr. Joseph Mercola is the founder of Mercompared to just five of the 24 controls (20.8 percent). Fibrinogen levels were also significantly decreased in the treatment group, indicating lower levels of clotting.

How to Optimize Your Vitamin D Level For optimal health, immune function, and disease prevention, you want a vitamin D

blood level between 60 ng/mL and 80 ng/ mL year-round. In Europe, the measurements you're looking for are 150 nmol/L and 200 nmol/L.

If you live in a sunny locale like Florida and practice sensible sun exposure year-round, you might not need any supplements. The DMinder app is a helpful tool to see how much vitamin D your body can make depending on your location and other indi-

vidual factors. Many, unfortunately, don't get enough sun exposure for one reason or another, and in these cases, an oral vitamin D supplement may be required. Just remember that the most important factor here is your blood level, not the dose, so before you start, get tested so you know your baseline.

How to Ensure Ideal Vitamin D Dosage

First, measure your vitamin D level: One of the easiest and most cost-effective ways of measuring your vitamin D level is to participate in the GrassrootsHealth's personalized nutrition project, which includes a vitamin D testing kit. Once you know what your blood level is, you can assess the dose needed to maintain or improve your level.

Assess your individualized vitamin D dosage: To do that, you can either use the chart below, or use GrassrootsHealth's Vitamin D calculator. (To convert ng/mL into the European measurement (nmol/L), simply multiply the ng/mL measurement by 2.5.) To calculate how much vitamin D you may be getting from regular sun exposure in addition to your supplemental intake, use the DMinder app.

Factors that can influence your vitamin D absorption include your magnesium and vitamin K2 intake. Magnesium is required for the conversion of vitamin D into its active form. If your magnesium level is insufficient, the vitamin D you ingest orally may simply get stored in its inactive form.

Research by GrassrootsHealth shows you need 146 percent more vitamin D to achieve a blood level of 40 ng/ml (100 nmol/L) if you don't take supplemental magnesium, compared to taking your vitamin D with at least 400 mg of magnesium per day.

Your best bet is to take your vitamin D with both magnesium and K2. According to GrassrootsHealth, "combined intake of both supplemental magnesium and vitamin K2 has a greater effect on vitamin D levels than either individually," and "those taking both supplemental magnesium and vitamin K2 have a higher vitamin D level for any given vitamin D intake amount than those taking either supplemental magnesium or vitamin K2 or neither."

Data from nearly 3,000 individuals revealed 244 percent more oral vitamin D was required to get 50 percent of the population to achieve a vitamin D level of 40 ng/ml (100

Retest in three to six months: Remeasure your vitamin D level in three to six months, to evaluate how your sun exposure and/or supplement dose is working for you.

Take activated vitamin D (calcitriol) if your level is low and you come down with an acute infection such as COVID-19. The dose is 0.5 mcg on day one and then 0.25 mcg daily for seven days.

cola.com. An osteopathic physician, bestselling author, and recipient of multiple awards in the field of natural health, his primary vision is to change the modern health paradigm by providing people with a valuable resource to help them take control of their health. This article was originally published on Mercola.com

Adaptogens: Restoring Balance to Your Body

Stress can push your body out of kilter but adaptogens can help level it out



Our body is constantly working to achieve a state of homeostasis, when everything is just right. Stress makes that difficult

LISA ROTH COLLINS

Amid several major health concerns and the stress so many are feeling, the human body needs support, and adaptogens can

What Are Adaptogens?

A hint is in the name: They're herbs that help the body adapt to stressors in our lives by restoring balance. In the process, they can help the immune system function more efficiently and enhance overall health.

The American Botanical Council explains that adaptogens "have the capacity to normalize body functions and strengthen systems compromised by stress."

Not all adaptogens work toward this goal in the same way. We are fortunate that nature has provided us with dozens of adaptogens from which to choose. Let's take a look at seven of the more popular

This Ayurvedic herbal remedy has been used for more than three millennia for various ailments. It can reduce stress by helping lower cortisol levels, as demonstrated in a study using 300 mg daily for one month. Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera) is also useful for easing problems with sleep.

Bacopa Monnieri

You can find this perennial herb in India, Australia, Europe, Africa, Asia, and both North and South America. You may know

it better as water hyssop or brahmi, but regardless of what you call it, it's a traditional Ayurvedic herbal remedy that may help prevent stress and anxiety and their negative effects on the body.

For example, evidence suggests Bacopa monnieri reduces cortisol levels and thus elevates mood. In particular, two studies—one in the elderly and one among healthy adults—found that individuals who took 300 mg of Bacopa monnieri every day for 12 weeks had significantly lower anxiety and depression scores when compared with placebo groups.





Cordyceps is an unusual adaptogen because it is composed of "a composite of a genus of fungus that grows on the larva of insects." Although more than 350 Cordyceps-related species have been identified, the one officially considered to be an herbal drug in Chinese medicine is C. sinensis, also known as Ophiocordyceps sinensis.

A variety of compounds, including ergosterol, cordycepin, and polysaccharides, have deliver the health benefits in cordyceps. Among those benefits are its anti-inflammatory actions, which help fight heart disease, diabetes, and Alzheimer's disease. They can also enhance physical performance.

The term "holy" gives it away: This Ayurvedic

herb is sacred in this medical tradition. Research suggests it can protect tissues and organs against chemical and physical stressors, including excessive cold, heavy metals, environmental pollutants, and prolonged physical exertion. There's also evidence it can help normalize blood sugar, lipids, and blood pressure.

This Peruvian herb has a reputation for helping with sexual issues, but it also has adaptogen powers. It is sometimes referred to as "Peruvian ginseng," likening it to another potent adaptogen, Siberian ginseng.

Similar to some other adaptogens, maca enhances the immune system and balances hormones. It can provide support for your adrenal glands and energy levels.

Rhodiola rosea is an herb indigenous to Siberia, which is why it is considered to be one of the hardiest herbs on the planet. Evidence of the herb's ability to help with mental fatigue has been shown in three out of five studies. This traditional herb may also help decrease fatigue and enhance your energy.

Siberian Ginseng

Also known as Eleutherococcus senticosus, devil's bush, and devil's shrub, this herb is native to northeastern Asia. It is well known for its ability to improve one's ability to cope with environmental stress and to enhance overall health, concentration, and immune system function.

The authors of an in-depth examination of E. senticosus noted six compounds that

had antioxidant activity, four had anti-cancer properties, three could help lower cholesterol, two could stimulate the immune system, and one each had anti-inflammatory, anti-fever, and antibacterial activity. The suggested dosage was 200 mg daily.

If you are searching for a natural way to not only reduce stress but aid your body in managing it, then adaptogens may be for you. These and other options are available overthe-counter in pill, tea, powder, and extract forms, depending on the product.

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







Our image of ourselves and how we hold ourselves are intimately linked

DONNA MARTELLI

I walked by a shop window, and when I realized that the reflection in the glass was me, I was stunned. I had to do a double-take. Who was that woman with rounded shoulders?

I spend hours at my computer, constantly bending forward to read or write something. I have done extensive study, through the Harkness Ballet of New York, about imagery and alignment, and I realized that somewhere along the way, my posture—and how I see myself—had gone astray.

Once the feeling of a posture has been firmly established in our brains, we only have to recall the sensation and our body will automatically respond by reproducing the posture. The firmer the image or memory of this posture, the more mental pathways we have to improve our alignment. This is how postural image, that is, a picture of ourselves in a certain posture and the memory of that posture, is intimately linked with our actual posture.

Where Do We Get the Image of Our Posture?

The formation of our postural image comes from both inside and outside influences and how we choose to react to them. Our many thoughts and emotions affect how we see ourselves, and this is reflected in our pos-

Our posture is fluid rather than static. Every day is different, depending on what we did the day before, how we slept, what we think and feel, and what shapes we've held ourselves in for what lengths of time. As a result of those varying factors, we need to make subtle adjustments to our posture every day. Daily posture habits accumuimprovements.

What Do We Do All Day?

As a dancer, I know that body awareness comes first. While it's true that our posture comes from genetic and social heritage, our accumulated mental and physical habits enforce it. For example, my posture was quite



good when I was an athlete: My alignment was constantly growing toward correctness. Then my life changed to one that involved sitting at a computer for hours every day.

Babies naturally sit up straight. That big head balances perfectly over their shoulders because of their exceptionally straight spine and the way the building blocks of their bodies are stacked one on top of the other. However, we can all grow into bad postural habits over time. Sometimes it's a result of seeing siblings and parents exhibit poor alignment. Sometimes it's a result of emotional or physical tendencies.

In cultures where everyday tasks involve a lot of movement, we're likely to find that the people have good posture. Sitting on floors, carrying baskets on their heads, and running all support good posture. Meanwhile, the sedentary lives, excessive screen time, and plush furniture that we have in the United States do the opposite.

Our comfortable chairs, lounges, and sofas late and become more visible as we age. promote bad alignment by encouraging us That's why we should think of posture as to lie around with lax muscles. Hanging out an ongoing effort and always seek to make on this "comfortable" furniture reduces the body tone necessary to have our body support itself well and ensure proper alignment. All of that sitting causes the hip joints to lose flexibility, which forces other body parts to strain to compensate for it.

To fix this problem, it helps to understand that just as our posture can change how we see ourselves, how we see ourselves can

The most complex problems we

face require cooperation and

cooperation requires listening.

affect our posture. Having a thought or holding a picture in our mind sends a message through the nervous system because thoughts and the nervous system are connected. When we attempt a new physical task, our brains create new neural pathways to figure out how to accomplish this unique feat. Like how a dancer or athlete will imagine themselves performing a physical feat to improve their execution, we can do the

same with how well our spine aligns with

our head, neck, and hips.

Having a thought or holding a picture in our mind sends a message through the nervous system because thoughts and the nervous system are connected.

What Do We Need to Do to Create

Correct Postural Alignment? Going back to the shocking image I saw in the window glass of the woman with rounded shoulders, I realized that my posture needed drastic correction. It required something far beyond just a physical change. As a professional ballet dancer

and fitness instructor, I knew that two essential ingredients were necessary to correct my alignment.

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First, I had to physically correct my alignment by pulling my belly button in and up, putting my shoulder blades down and back, and lifting my chin so that my head was directly over my shoulders.

Second, I had to visualize my correct alignment. My body responded, and my brain learned. Because our bodies like to find the easy way out and revert to familiar patterns, I used a picture of myself when I was athletically in top shape to help my self-image. (You can use any image of yourself or someone else that looks like you want to look.) I put it on my bathroom mirror where I would see it every morning, first thing.

That woman with the rounded shoulders has since vanished. May my experience give you a fresh perspective on how mental imagery works to create great posture that can support whatever adventure life has in store for you.

Formerly a professional dancer with the

Harkness Ballet of New York, Donna Martelli has written three books, as well as course manuals, book summaries, blogs, articles, and devotionals. She lives in Indianapolis, Ind., and is married with five children and 12 grandchildren. She is the author of "When God Says Drop It" and "Why the Dance."

RELATIONSHIPS

How Deep Listening Will Transform Your Life

Listening is critical to understanding other people and having fulfilling lives

Continued from Page 9

Everything from body language to specific words they're using can tell you what their attitude is, how they're feeling, and inform more thoughtful responses on your end. All of this ends up deepening our relationship with those who matter to us.

Think about times you've been around great listeners in your own life. They have a special charm that's hard to put your finger on. They make you feel heard and understood. Often, they have the most thoughtful responses and ask questions that really make you think.

Why is that? It's not complicated they're actually listening to you!

2. Improve Your Ability to Solve Tough Challenges

In the workplace, we all have to listen to others to some degree. Our livelihoods depend on it. We're all familiar with the boring, seemingly endless meeting that has no obvious purpose. It can dissuade us from wanting to listen and turn us off from listening to certain people altogether if we deem them unworthy of our attention.

Yet, it's more critical than ever to listen to our colleagues when they're

communicating with us. Tools such as Slack, Teams, and email mean that most workplace communication takes place in the written form, with us reading it. That means fewer opportunities to practice empathetic listening, despite it being the "highest form of listening," according to famed author Stephen Covey.

The toughest challenges in the workplace still require trust, serious coordination, and teamwork. We need to practice listening to others to fill knowledge gaps, strategize, and execute on challenges and obstacles that'll move the needle on our business.

3. Become More

Connected to the World

Listening is so magical because it connects us to others, and through others, to the larger world around us. We can get so good at listening that we can vividly imagine ourselves in the scenarios that other people are describing to us. True listening gives us a richer, deeper life.

If you're running a business or even working as an employee, listening is likely the most critical factor in your success or failure. Most people never realize this. The most complex problems we face require cooperation and cooperation requires listening.

So how do you get started on practicing better listening daily?

It all starts with moment-to-moment attention to what someone else is saying. Turn down distractions, quiet the chatter in your mind, and set your intention on really understanding the other person. It shifts the spotlight from the relentless self-listening we do to putting someone else first.

Over time and with repetition, listening deeply to others will come more naturally. You'll begin to see personal and professional relationships transform as you earn the title of a "great listener." People will be attracted to you because they know you'll take the time to truly understand them. That's what listening is all about.

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The Real Cause of the 'Runner's High'

The pleasant feelings that follow exercise may come from cannabinoids-not endorphins

HILARY A. MARUSAK

Many people have experienced reductions in stress, pain, and anxiety-and sometimes even euphoria—after exercise. What's behind this so-called "runner's high"? New research on the neuroscience of exercise may surprise you

The "runner's high" has long been attributed to endorphins. These are chemicals produced naturally in the bodies of humans and other animals after exercise and in response to pain or stress.

However, new research from my lab summarizes nearly two decades of work on this topic. We found that exercise reliably increases levels of the body's endocannabinoids—which are molecules that work to maintain homeostasis, the essential physiological balance in the brain and body. This natural chemical boost may better explain some of the beneficial effects of exercise on brain and body.

I am a neuroscientist at the Wayne State University School of Medicine. My lab studies brain development and mental health, as well as the role of the endocannabinoid system in stress regulation and anxiety disorders in children and adolescents.

This research has implications for everyone who exercises with the aim of reducing stress and should serve as a motivator for those who don't regularly exercise.

Health Benefits of Exercise

Several decades of research have shown that exercise is beneficial for physical health. These studies find a consistent link between varying amounts of physical activity and reduced risk of premature death and dozens of chronic health conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, cancer, and heart disease.

More recently—over about the past two decades-mounting research shows that exercise is also highly beneficial for mental health. In fact, regular exercise is associated with lower symptoms of anxiety, depression, Parkinson's disease, and other common mental health or neurological problems. Consistent exercise is also linked to better cognitive performance, improved mood, lower stress, and higher self-esteem

It's not yet clear what's behind these mental health boosts. We do know that exercise has a variety of effects on the brain, including raising metabolism and blood flow, promoting the formation of new brain cells—a process called neurogenesis—and increasing the release of several chemicals

Some of these chemicals are called neurotrophic factors, such as brain-derived neurotrophic factor. BDNF is intricately involved in brain "plasticity," or changes in the activity of brain cells, including those related to learning and memory.

Scientists have also shown that exercise increases blood levels of endorphins, one of the body's natural opioids. Opioids are chemicals that work in the brain and have a variety of effects, including helping to relieve pain. Some early research in the 1980s contributed to the long-standing popular belief that this endorphin release is related to the euphoric feeling known as the runner's high.

However, scientists have long questioned the role of endorphins in the runner's high sensation, in part because endorphins can't cross into the brain through the blood-brain barrier, which protects the brain from toxins and pathogens. So endorphins aren't likely to be the main driver for the beneficial effects of exercise on mood and mental state.

This is where our research and that of others points to the role of our body's natural versions of cannabinoids, called endocan-

The Surprising Role of **Endocannabinoids** Many people You may be familiar with cannabinoids don't realize

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such as tetrahydrocannabinol—better known as THC—the psychoactive compound in cannabis (from the Cannabis sativa L. plant) that causes people to feel high. Or you may have heard of cannabidiol, commonly known as CBD, an extract of cannabis that is infused in some foods, medicines, oils, and many other products.

But many people don't realize that humans also create their own versions of these chemicals, called endocannabinoids. These are tiny molecules made of lipids, or fats, that circulate in the brain and body; "endo" refers to those produced in the body rather than from a plant or in a lab.

Endocannabinoids work on cannabinoid receptors throughout the brain and body. run or cycle—with the effects of "chronic" They cause a variety of effects, including pain relief, reduction of anxiety and stress, and enhanced learning and memory. They also affect hunger, inflammation, and immune function. Endocannabinoid levels can be influenced by food, time of day, exercise, obesity, injury, inflammation, and stress.

It's worth noting that one should not be tempted to forgo a run or bike ride and resort to smoking or ingesting cannabis instead. Endocannabinoids lack the unwanted effects that come with getting high, such as mental impairment.

Understanding the Runner's High

Studies in humans and in animal models are pointing to endocannabinoids—not endorphins—as the star players in the runner's high.

These elegant studies demonstrate that when opioid receptors are blocked—in one example by a drug called naltrexone—people still experienced euphoria and reduced pain and anxiety after exercise. On the flip side, the studies showed that blocking the effects of cannabinoid receptors reduced the beneficial effects of exercise on euphoria, pain, and anxiety.

While several studies have shown that

exercise increases the levels of endocannabinoids circulating in the blood, some have reported inconsistent findings, or that different endocannabinoids produce varying effects. We also don't know yet if all types of exercise, such as cycling, running, or resistance exercise like weightlifting, produce similar results. And it's an open question whether people with and without preexisting health conditions like depression, PTSD, or fibromyalgia experience the same endocannabinoid boosts.

To address these questions, an undergraduate student in my lab, Shreva Desai, led a systematic review and meta-analysis of 33 published studies on the impact of exercise on endocannabinoid levels. We compared the effects of an "acute" exercise session—like going for a 30-minute programs, such as a 10-week running of weightlifting program. We separated them out because different levels and patterns of exertion could have very distinct effects on endocannabinoid responses.

We found that acute exercise consistently boosted endocannabinoid levels across studies. The effects were most consistent for a chemical messenger known as anandamide—the so-called "bliss" molecule, which was named, in part, for its positive effects on mood.

Interestingly, we observed this exerciserelated boost in endocannabinoids across different types of exercise, including running, swimming, and weightlifting, and across individuals with and without preexisting health conditions. Although only a few studies looked at intensity and duration of exercise, it appears that moderate levels of exercise intensity—such as cycling or running—are more effective than lowerintensity exercise—like walking at slow speeds or low incline—when it comes to raising endocannabinoid levels. This suggests that it's important to keep your heart rate elevated—that is, between about 70 percent and 80 percent of age-adjusted maximum heart rate—for at least 30 minutes to reap the full benefits.

There are still a lot of questions about the $links\,between\,endocannabinoids\,and\,the$ beneficial effects of exercise. For example, we didn't see consistent effects for how an ongoing exercise regimen, such as a sixweek cycling program, might affect resting endocannabinoid levels. Likewise, it isn't yet clear what the minimum amount of exercise is to get a boost in endocannabinoids, and how long these compounds remain elevated after acute exercise.

Despite these open questions, these findings bring researchers one step closer to understanding how exercise benefits brain and body. And they offer an important motivator for making time for exercise during the rush of the holidays.

Hilary A. Marusak is the assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral neurosciences at Wayne State University School of Medicine. This article was first published on The Conversation.



Exercise increases levels

of the body's endocan-

nabinoids—which are

molecules that work to

maintain homeostasis.



WISE HABITS

The Power of Courage

Face the pain and expand your range so you can do your meaningful work

LEO BABAUTA

Imagine a woman who has a powerful gift to give to the world, a song to sing that will lift others up. Now imagine she only lets herself give that gift when the sun is shining and she's happy and the moon is in perfect alignment with Jupiter.

The world would be robbed of her song. Her narrow range of when she's willing to offer her gift would be a devastating loss to those she could uplift.

If we can step outside our experience just enough to see ourselves at that moment, it can lead to a breakthrough.

Imagine a man who serves everyone around him deeply, so powerfully that they are all filled with their own sense of purpose. But he only does this when he's in the right mood, when he's not distracted by online articles, when he's not tired or lonely, when he's not criticized by those around him, and when his house and office are perfectly clean.

Those he fills with a sense of their own purpose would be less filled. Those he would give his love to would be deprived because he has such a narrow range of when he's willing to push himself to offer his gift to others.

This is how most of us live our lives.

Shrinking from the challenge of focusing on our purpose-filled work because we're tired, sad, anxious, stressed, or because we allow ourselves to be distracted and pulled in thousands of directions.

This is our failing, and it's our opportunity for growth.

When we're "not feeling it," and procrastinate or don't focus on our purpose, it's time to notice how we feel. If we can step outside our experience just enough to see ourselves at that moment, it can lead to a breakthrough. We can expand ourselves. You expand by:

- Opening up your heart in the middle of pain or stress and allowing yourself to fully feel. Don't shrink away, but find the courage to be incredibly present with whatever you're feeling.
- Feeling love for your experience, for whatever is causing you stress or pain, and not rejecting it. Seeing it as your teacher, your training ground.
- Reminding yourself of the gift you need to offer the world. Reminding yourself of your purpose—bringing your open heart to that work.
- Pushing yourself into the discomfort of focusing on that purpose, even if you're feeling sad or hurt or frustrated or distracted. Pushing yourself into the discomfort of saying no to all the distractions and busywork, and just doing what you need to do to offer your gift.

This is your challenge, in every moment. Expand your range by not needing conditions to be perfect; not needing everything to be in order; not needing to have all your messages responded to, all your inboxes and social media checked, all your articles read, all your crumbs swept up before you dive into your purpose.

Expand your range by not allowing yourself to shrink. It's like putting yourself in arctic conditions, in desert conditions, and practicing your art despite the unhappiness.

In fact, you can use the unhappiness and chaos to offer your gift. You take that stress and pain, and you turn it into love. That



We're all here with a mission, though some of us have long forgotten it. For those who haven't, it's time to upgrade your capacity to execute.

brilliance is a part of your gift.

Let's look at some specific practices for expanding your range of conditions so that you're no longer robbing the world of what you have to offer.

Practices to Expand Yourself

Once a day (to start with), create a space for practicing. Set yourself some purposefilled work to do. Then try these practices:

- 1. Notice what you're feeling. Are you tired, stressed, frustrated, angry, sad, lonely, distracted, hurt, anxious? Then fully feel it. Forget about everything else in the world and just be fully present with whatever you're feeling. Not the narrative in your head about what you're feeling, but the actual physical feeling in your chest, stomach, head.
- 2. Open your heart to that feeling. Love it. Don't reject it or wish it would go away or try to get rid of it. Just love it. And love what caused it—the work stressing you out, the person who criticized you, the unhappy situation in your life. Love it as if it were the most beautiful thing on

Earth. Which it is.

- 3. Open your heart in the middle of this discomfort, and then take the first step in doing your work. Do the first small action, the tiniest movement, in the middle of these arctic conditions. See it as training for your heart. Courage training. Hold your heart open as you do it, keeping in mind who you're serving.
- 4. Love even fiercer as you do the next small step. Don't let your people down. Imagine that you would die for them, do anything to serve them, and that you hold them powerfully in your heart.

Repeat these practices every day. See your range grow. See your gift grow out into the world, unhindered by life's impediments. Sing your song powerfully and courageously, lifting up every soul around you. Then bow in gratitude to your practice.

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

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