

# THE EPOCH TIMES

# MIND &

# BODY

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## The Blessing of Generosity

We are transformed and fulfilled by what we can give to others

JOSHUA BECKER

Last weekend, I hosted a dinner for the United States-based staff of The Hope Effect. The nonprofit organization that we founded in 2015 to change how the world cares for orphans has now grown to 14 employees—three based in the U.S. and 11 based around the world.

At the dinner, I asked Joe Darago, our executive director, if he wanted to say a few words.

At one point during his comments, he said something that immediately caught my attention.

**People are naturally attracted to others who have an open heart to share with others.**

“We are thankful for the opportunity to invite others to use their financial resources for greater pursuits than material possessions.”

“Indeed we are,” I remember thinking to myself. It was similar to a comment a mentor once said to me, “Don’t ever feel bad asking someone to volunteer with you. You are doing them a favor by providing them an opportunity to serve others.”

It’s a joy to invite others to a cause greater than their personal enrichment.

Clearly, when we give our unneeded stuff, our extra money, and our available time away, we can make life better for others. But in a beautiful way, our generosity is good for us too.

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The transformative power of generosity doesn’t just change those being helped; it’s greatest effect may well be upon the person being generous.

## Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation for Depression

This unique, drug-free treatment stimulates the brain’s neurochemistry and gets results

JENNIFER MARGULIS

A young person I know felt so depressed that she thought about ending her life every day. She planned how and where she would crash her car and fantasized about putting on dark clothing and walking onto the highway at night so a driver would hit her. She felt anxious and hopeless, certain that she knew she would never feel happy again.

The only thing that kept her from dying by suicide, she told me, was the thought of how devastated her mom, dad, and younger brother and sister would be.

She sought help: Under the supervision of a psychiatrist, she tried several different anti-depressants to help alleviate the depression. But while each seemed to work for a little while, after a few short months, the familiar and devastating sense of hope-

lessness would start to overtake her again. Finally, the psychiatrist she was seeing recommended she try transcranial magnetic stimulation to treat her depression. At that point, she was willing to try anything.

### Depression Rising During COVID

According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, depression now affects some 40 million adults in the United States, or 18 percent of the population. While depression was a problem before the global panic about COVID-19, there’s no question that it has gotten worse since. Isolation and loneliness, which have both risen drastically during the pandemic, lead to depression, as do financial difficulties, lack of employment, dealing with loved ones being ill, and death.

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**Transcranial magnetic stimulation uses magnetic impulses to stimulate the brain.**

For those unable to resolve their depression through other means, an electromagnetic coil placed on their head may offer relief.







# Too Many Choices

Endless options and a lack of commitment are a recipe for restlessness

MIKE DONGHIA

Depending on your source, the average American spends nearly 50 hours a week in front of a screen for non-work purposes. Some sources put that number closer to 9 or 10 hours a day. Most of that is spent watching TV, playing video games, and browsing social networks.

About 75 years ago, that number was zero and it has been rising steadily ever since.

I'm not a historian, but I'm fairly confident that no other period in human history has seen such a complete transformation of what daily life looks like for most people on Earth.

One of the interesting byproducts of this sweeping change is that we have never before had such a clear window into the lives of those beyond our immediate sphere. Movies, TV shows, online videos, and social networks have opened our eyes to all of the ways that people are living their lives.

To keep our attention, however, the algorithms behind our social media feeds give us only the most interesting and desirable lifestyle examples. Is this a good or bad thing?

## Fear of Missing Out

One thing is for sure, we're not the same people we were. Multiple studies show that "perfectionism" and self-described "fear of missing out" are on the rise over the past few decades.

These two statistical observations are not unrelated.

Fear of missing out (FOMO) is an emotion that exists on a spectrum.

At one end, we are afraid of wasting our life, which motivates us to do something different or make a change. At the right dose, being exposed to new possibilities can awaken a hunger and desire in us to change ourselves for the better.

At the other end of the spectrum, we can become paralyzed with indecision, unable to take action because we are flailing in a sea of possibilities and options. The paradox of choice is a well-known psychological experience that asserts that "when the number of choices increases, so does the difficulty of knowing what is best."

The perfectionism we see exploding in our population may be a direct result of being exposed to nearly infinite possibilities for what life could look like, and not being able to decide which to pursue.

Instead of increasing our freedom, too many choices end up restricting our abil-



ity to make any choice. The result is one that you might be familiar with—a restless, nagging sense that life is happening all around you, but that your own life is stuck in neutral.

## Embracing Limits

On a population level, fear of missing out will likely continue to grow alongside our lengthening time in front of screens—at least until we decide that the costs are too great and find new ways to live in this modern world.

But the good news is that any one of us can make changes in our own lives that help us to align our actions more closely with our values. We can all make steps toward the good life we desire while still enjoying the benefits that so many of us get from our screens.

I'm still walking this journey myself and trying to be more intentional about what kinds of media I consume and how I fill my days. But I do have a few practices that I'm trying to incorporate into my own life that might be useful to you, wherever you are in your own travels.

Here's what I'm working on:

## Consuming Less

Even a pure hedonist would acknowledge that blindly pursuing as much pleasure as you can get is not the way to optimize for pleasurable experiences in the long run. The same is true of consuming information, media, and online content.

When you adopt reasonable limits on how much you consume, you add much-needed space in your life for other pursuits. The time away from consuming will give you a new perspective and perhaps a renewed enjoyment for what you do choose to (thoughtfully) consume.

One way to define boredom is as a desire for desires. When we bombard ourselves with a limitless stream of novelty and possibilities, we risk deadening our senses to the wonder that is already in our lives. The cure for boredom, ironically, is to step back from the very thing we use to drown away our boredom.

## Closing Doors

Old-fashioned values like responsibility and commitment have certainly fallen out

Make space in your life for meaningful pursuits by adopting reasonable limits on how much you consume.

**Instead of increasing our freedom, too many choices ends up restricting our ability to make any choice.**

With the flick of a thumb, we can find a million ways our life is drab and boring, but why would we want to do that?



of favor. The media we consume and the way we consume it reinforce a new priority: dreaming big and imagining the best possible life for ourselves.

I'm no killjoy. I think it's great that the internet has opened our imagination to the possibilities that exist for any particular individual.

But lasting happiness doesn't come from endlessly pondering or expanding the options in front of you. At some point you have to walk through a door and close it behind you. This includes, but is not limited to things like getting married, having children, and joining formal communities—all of which we as a society are doing at drastically lower rates.

We need to use our imaginations once again to discover the goodness of accepting responsibility and the sense of fulfillment it can bring into our lives.

## Creating More

The ultimate rebellion against a consumerist culture (one that has lulled you to sleep with infinite future possibilities) is to enter the arena of life and create something yourself. That, in part, is why my wife and I share and shape ideas on our blog.

It's easy for a fear of missing out to turn into a fear of making the wrong choice. When you fill your mind with all that is possible, and all the cool things that others are doing, it's difficult to watch your own awkward, imperfect steps toward creating—which is how all of us begin.

There's no easy way past this stage. You have to fight through it. To an extent, you have to become numb to the opinion of others while you learn to crawl. But soon enough, you will enjoy some of the sweetest rewards of all—the joy of progress toward a meaningful goal and the sense that new horizons really do exist when you choose a path and begin walking.

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

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For achievable resolutions that make a difference, try doing a little more of the good things you already do, and less of the things that work against your goals.

# More-or-Less Resolutions

Start with these flexible resolutions today and improve your life forever

JOSHUA BECKER

Over the past 12 years, I've made quite a few changes in my life. Some of those changes were small, while others were big. Some of them I kept, others I discarded.

Very few lasting changes involved the immediate addition or removal of a new habit. Most of the changes that stuck in the long run were simply slight adjustments to my life.

I know some people debate the usefulness of New Year's resolutions. This is often because people simply attempt too much. Rather than adopting an approach of "1 percent better," they think resolving to change 100 percent is the way to go. But that rarely works.

A better approach is to start where you are, with the life you are living, and make slight adjustments.

**Rather than saying, 'I am going to exercise every day this month,' try, 'I am going to exercise more than I do now.'**

For example, rather than saying "I'm going to exercise every day this month," try saying "I'm going to exercise more than I do now." You get to decide exactly what that "more" looks like. Your improvement doesn't have to be drastic to begin moving your habits in a positive direction. And getting just 1 percent better every week adds up quickly.

To that end, here are 12 "more-or-less resolutions" you could start today to improve your life forever.

**Own less stuff.** I can't begin to explain how much my life changed when I decided to own less stuff. Owning fewer possessions freed up time, money, space, and energy in my life—in both the short run and the long run.

Make this the year that you decide to own less and recognize that your life is too valuable to waste chasing and accumulating material possessions.

You don't have to own nothing to experience the benefits. Begin by owning less in some intentional ways, and see the effect that it can have.

**Watch less television.** Want to make an immediate positive change in your life? Turn off one television series, watch one less hour of tv each week, or designate one evening for no television. You don't need to cut television entirely or even give up your favorite show. Just watch a little bit less.

What will you do instead? Especially if you're home alone? I'm not sure—and maybe you aren't either. But you'll never know how much greater of an impact you can make with your life until you stop spending your days watching others live theirs.

This resolution could also apply to YouTube, Facebook, or social media.

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# The Role of Magnesium for Cognitive Function in Older Adults

Taking advantage of this natural synergy is one way to maximize your vitamin D status, especially for improving brain elasticity and resisting COVID-19

JOSEPH MERCOLA

The synergy between magnesium and vitamin D is critical for optimal immune function and overall health—especially as it pertains to lowering your risk of COVID-19. Previous studies have also highlighted the role this duo plays in cognitive function among older adults, as well as overall mortality.

Those findings are important, especially as the link between low vitamin D levels and various diseases, including severe CO-

VID, continue to grow. In fact, people taking vitamin D, or doing what they can to raise their vitamin D levels, may not be getting the benefits they seek because they are not also ensuring adequate magnesium intake.

## Protecting Cognitive Health

One such study, "Association of Vitamin D and Magnesium Status with Cognitive Function in Older Adults: Results from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) 2011 to 2014," points

out that vitamin D not only protects neuronal structures and plays a role in neuronal calcium regulation, but also appears to lower your risk for neurodegeneration as you grow older.

Magnesium, meanwhile, aside from being required for converting vitamin D to its active form, also plays a role in cognitive health. Magnesium deficiency has been implicated in several neurological disorders.

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Magnesium is a critical player in the activation of nerve channels.



DMITRIY KHIVAN/SHUTTERSTOCK

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# 5 Ways to Fight the Winter Blues

Short days may get you down, but these strategies can help you stay upbeat

When the winter blues get severe, they might be better identified as seasonal affective disorder (SAD), which can sap you of energy and leave your mind and body feeling down.

This seasonally recurrent kind of major depression is likely worse for many people due to our modern indoor lifestyles.

About 10 percent to 20 percent of cases of recurrent depression follow a seasonal pattern. While a summer pattern isn't entirely ruled out, the predominant trend involves fall-winter depression with spring-summer remission.

SAD is distributed across the general population. Young adults and women, however, are most likely to experience it, with the reported gender difference following a 2:1 to 9:1 range. It has also been identified in children and teens. Here are some ways to combat SAD, and its less severe cousin "the winter blues," naturally.



Light therapy is widely investigated for its potential to treat seasonal affective disorder.

Melatonin supplementation alone has yielded mixed results in clinical trials in winter depression. In a study, for instance, evening melatonin was no more effective than placebo in sustaining a desired antidepressant effect. Yet some people may respond to 2 to 3 mg of melatonin at bedtime and to support the resetting of their body clock.

#### 4. Cannabidiol (CBD)

CBD, a constituent of Cannabis sativa that doesn't have the psychoactivity of THC, has drawn much interest in recent years for fending off a range of neuropsychiatric disorders as well as depression and anxiety-related disorders.

CBD can be incorporated into one's diet through the winter months, particularly in cooking and creating CBD-infused ingredients to be used in common recipes. Other common forms of CBD include CBD oil, capsules, paste, drops, crystals, and food supplements.

#### 5. Regular Exercise

Aerobic exercises have been demonstrated to be beneficial in treating nonseasonal major depression. Thus, they have been explored for SAD.

In a study, supervised physical exercise paired with bright light exposure appeared to be effective in enhancing mood and certain aspects of health in wintertime. In healthy subjects, exercise in bright light led to greater symptom relief than in ordinary room light and led to improvements in both depressive symptoms and vitality rather than just the latter.

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#### 1. Vitamin D

A 2015 study probed the relationship between 25-hydroxy vitamin D (25(OH)D) and depressive and anxiety disorders in a population of Finnish men and women ages 30 to 79. The study sample involved 5,371 subjects, of which 354 were diagnosed with depression and 222 with anxiety.

Subjects with higher vitamin D3 levels showed a reduced risk of depression. Higher serum concentrations of the nutrients were linked to a lower prevalence of depression particularly among men, younger people, divorcees, and those who had an unhealthy lifestyle or metabolic syndrome.

"These results support the hypothesis that higher serum 25(OH)D concentrations protect against depression even after adjustment for a large number of sociodemographic, lifestyle, and metabolic factors," the authors wrote.

#### 2. Light Therapy

Widely investigated for treating SAD is light therapy, or daily exposure to a box containing fluorescent lamps during symptomatic months. The standard and optimal dosing is 10,000 lux of full-

spectrum or cool-white fluorescent lights behind an ultraviolet shield with a recommended duration of 30 minutes to two hours per day for 2 to 4 weeks.

**In healthy subjects, exercise in bright light led to greater symptom relief than in ordinary room light.**

Bright light therapy has been deemed effective for seasonal depression as well as non-seasonal depression. Evidence also shows that it may improve responsiveness to antidepressant treatments.

While light therapy and antidepressants previously showed comparable effectiveness in treating SAD, few studies directly compared them. A 2006 double-blind randomized trial, conducted in four Canadian centers across three winters, randomly

assigned 96 patients to eight weeks of treatment: 10,000 lux light treatment and a placebo capsule, or placebo light and 20 milligrams (mg) of fluoxetine (brand name Prozac) a day.

Findings showed that while there were no significant differences in results between light therapy and antidepressant treatment, the former led to earlier response onset and lower rate of adverse events relative to fluoxetine. Fluoxetine was linked with side effects such as agitation and sleep disturbance as well as palpitations, although both treatments were generally well-tolerated by the subjects.

#### 3. Melatonin

In a 1986 study, researchers tested the hypothesis that melatonin mediated the effects of shortening days on SAD symptoms in the winter. Based on the results of three different studies, they found that melatonin secretion may be abnormal in SAD. It may play some role in the symptoms and the effects of light therapy, but was claimed unable to account for the phenomena all by itself.

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