

THE EPOCH TIMES

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FOOD AS MEDICINE

Eating to Be Cancer Free

Chris Wark was given a brutal diagnosis, but he didn't want to take the chemo path



In many against-the-odds cancer survival stories, food proved to be a healing force.

CONAN MILNER

A cancer diagnosis can be devastating news. But once you get past the shock and fear, you long for guidance and support that can put you on the path to healing. For cancer survivor Chris Wark, his path was paved with faith and food. Wark was only 26 when he was diagnosed with stage 3 colon cancer. He didn't have any science or medical background. He just had a notion that, with the right nutrition, he could heal. "I was a very typical clueless cancer patient, and I did not know what to do," Wark said. "I was operating mostly on instinct,

It's a
24/7
LIFESTYLE,
a self-empowered
mindset, and a long-term
commitment.

intuition, and the belief that there had to be a way to recover, to heal, to increase the odds in my favor." It all started with a dull ache in his abdomen. Wark initially thought it might be an ulcer, but he turned to medical professionals to rule out something more serious. What they found was a golf ball-sized tumor in his large intestine. Doctors called for immediate surgery. When Wark woke up in the hospital after surgery, his guts felt like they were going to explode, and his situation was worse than doctors anticipated. His tumor had spread to his surrounding lymph nodes.

Nutrition is ammunition for your immune system.

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The Upside of Fear

There are some unexpected benefits when we use fear to our advantage

JENNIFER MARGULIS

Fear can be the thing that keeps us from living the life we want, especially in our fear-saturated world today. Fortunately, there are some great insights about fear that can help us get above its gravitational pull—like Frank did. Just the idea of talking to a woman he was interested in scared Frank, a "roll-up-your-sleeves, fix-it sort of guy" whose wife had divorced him two years earlier. Frank, who was middle-aged, wanted to be in a loving relationship. In fact, he was hoping to get married again. But he didn't know how to get over his fear. So he phoned a therapist he

Use the fear as a motivator to make positive change.



PROSTOCK-STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

knew and trusted to help him work through the fear. That therapist was Dr. Harriet Lerner, a clinical psychologist. She recounts Frank's story in "The Dance of Fear: Rising Above Anxiety, Fear, and Shame to Be Your Best and Bravest Self," a 2004 book that's as relevant today as it was when it first came out. At the time, Lerner had recently participated in a fear workshop that was led by a therapist named Cloé Madanes. Inspired by Madanes's workshop, Lerner had an outside-the-box idea for Frank, if he were willing to try it. Lerner explained to Frank that she believed his real problem wasn't what he thought it was. The

real issue, in Lerner's assessment, was that Frank didn't have enough experience being rejected. So Lerner gave him some homework: Actively seek out 75 rejections in one day. **Seeking Rejection?** Seventy-five rejections in one day? Why would anyone want to subject themselves to that much misery and humiliation? But Frank was the kind of person who appreciated a challenge. He was highly motivated to move on with his life after the divorce. And he told Lerner he was game to try.

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The Ins and Outs of IV Nutrition Therapy

Getting nutrients through a needle may not sound appealing, but it's a great way to get what you need

ASHLEY TURNER

We live in a nutrient-depleted world. Despite working hard to make health-promoting choices, it's difficult to achieve optimal levels of the vitamins, minerals, and nutrients our bodies need. Unfortunately, we live in an age of chronic stress, ubiquitous environmental toxins, and nutrient-depleted soil and food. This leads to nagging symptoms and chronic health conditions. Thankfully, intravenous (IV) therapy can offer individualized nutrition that's administered right into the bloodstream.

Recently, IV therapy has become widely utilized in functional and integrative medicine clinics along with being a topic of conversation within health and wellness circles. In the 1960s, Dr. John Myers understood the importance of utilizing IV administration of vitamins and minerals. He's well-known for his "Myers cocktail" that offered his patients numerous health benefits. Since that time, variations of the Myers cocktail have been used by many doctors in practice.

Perhaps you're wondering if you could benefit from IV therapy and what health results you may gain from it. I hope to answer some of these questions for you in this article.

What Is IV Vitamin Infusion Therapy?

Eating a nutrient-dense, anti-inflammatory diet is very helpful for overall health and wellness, right down to the cellular level. We emphasize the healing, medicinal power of food in our practice. When we make poor food choices and consume inflammatory, processed foods, the body can become inflamed and depleted. This hinders the body at the cellular level by starving it of the nutrients it needs to function optimally.

The quality of our foods is greatly affected by the health and vibrance of our soils. In today's world, modern agricultural methods have ravaged and depleted those soils. Industrial treatments have drastically reduced the vitamin, mineral, and microbial content from the soils. This directly affects the foods we eat, as they don't have valuable nutrients in the soil to draw upon. The end result is a nutrient-poor crop. Research shows that various vitamins and minerals have been depleted from our soils. There's also an increasingly widespread use of genetically modified organisms, pesticides, and herbicides in our food supply, which greatly hinder the health of those who consume them.

One way to combat the lack of nutrition in the food system is by taking supplements to boost our nutrient status. While supplements do offer many benefits, sometimes their absorption can be hindered. Various factors, including gut integrity, some chronic illnesses, age, poor quality supplements, and the dosage of the supplements can all affect the body's ability to absorb nutrients.

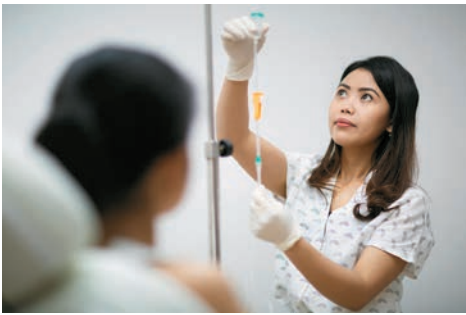
Conversely, with IV therapy, there's no need to be concerned about whether the body is absorbing nutrients. With intravenous administration, the digestive system is avoided, and the nutrients are able to be delivered directly into the bloodstream. This allows for much greater absorption than oral and intramuscular administration. IV nutritional therapy allows for high levels of vitamins and minerals in the blood that will ensure the nutrients are taken in by cells that may be depleted.

Benefits of IV Nutrition Therapy

There are many therapeutic benefits that come with taking nutrients and compounds intravenously. We like to tailor our IVs to meet the patient's needs. Whether you're an athlete wanting to boost performance, someone suffering from autoimmune or chronic illness, or just someone who wants to fortify your health, IV nutrition therapy has a place in your health care.

IV nutrition therapy can boost energy and immune function, combat autoimmunity and chronic illness, improve metabolism, balance electrolytes, and so much more. The results can range from reduced stress and glowing skin to mental clarity and a better overall feeling of well-being.

Common nutrients and compounds found in nutritional IVs include alpha-lipoic acid (ALA), amino acids, biotin, cal-



IV nutrient therapy offers a uniquely effective way to get vitamins and nutrients that can be hard to obtain through food and supplements.

cium, colloidal silver, copper, EDTA, folate, glutathione, hydrogen peroxide, iron, magnesium, manganese, methylcobalamin, molybdenum, N-acetylcysteine, ozone, pantothenic acid, phosphatidylcholine, potassium, pyridoxine, and thiamine.

There are many different compounds that can be used in IV nutritional therapy and innumerable therapeutic combinations to administer. We wanted to highlight a few here.

Vitamin C

The scientific literature is saturated with studies noting the health benefits of vitamin C. Vitamin C is a potent antioxidant and immune system stimulator. It's used for coronary artery disease, autoimmune conditions, fibromyalgia, cancer, detoxification, acute pancreatitis, and bacterial and viral infections.

Vitamin B12

Vitamin B12 is a water-soluble vitamin that's helpful for many aspects of health, including the creation of red blood cells, metabolizing food, maintaining the central nervous system, supporting neurological function, promoting feelings of well-being, reducing anxiety and depression, boosting energy, and supporting immune function. Various forms can be used in IV therapy, including methylcobalamin, hydroxocobalamin, adenosylcobalamin, and cyanocobalamin.

Glutathione

Known as the body's master antioxidant, glutathione has been shown to reduce reactive oxygen species and other oxidative stress in the body. It also helps to regenerate other antioxidants, vitamin C, and vitamin E. Glutathione is beneficial for a multitude of health concerns, including allergies, asthma, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, chronic fatigue syndrome, irritable bowel syndrome, impaired liver function, and many other chronic conditions. Glutathione is also prized for its anti-aging benefits.

NAD

Short for nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide, NAD is derived from vitamin B3, or niacin, and it's an essential coenzyme we can't live without. It enables mitochondrial function and maintains cellular repair and resiliency. Low NAD is associated with several conditions, including anxiety, depression, Parkinson's disease, migraines, fibromyalgia, and many others. Unfortunately, NAD declines with age, so it's touted for its anti-aging benefits. It also has the profound ability to restore cellular energy, increase energy, and relieve mood disturbances, pain, and even addiction.

Magnesium

Most of our population is deficient in magnesium. It's used in many IV nutritional therapies, but has been found to be particularly helpful for those with asthma, arrhythmias, and migraines.

Alpha-Lipoic Acid

ALA is a potent antioxidant that helps to dampen inflammation and oxidative stress. It's a fatty acid found in mitochondria, the powerhouse of the cell. It has been helpful in conditions such as heart disease, liver disease, diabetes, stroke, and neurological decline.

Silver Nanoparticles

Silver nanoparticles are useful in fighting various acute and chronic infections. Silver nanoparticles have been found to be antiseptic to more than 650 compounds, including viruses, bacteria, yeast, and parasites. It's used for those with Lyme disease, chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, pharyngitis, urinary tract infections, upper respiratory infections, candida and fungal infections, and cancer.

Dr. Ashley Turner is a traditionally-trained naturopath and board-certified doctor of holistic health for Restorative Wellness Center. An expert in functional medicine, Turner is the author of the gut-healing guide "Restorative Kitchen and Restorative Traditions," a cookbook comprised of non-inflammatory holiday recipes.



Constipation 101

Many factors can cause this common malady, but there are some effective ways to prevent it

Constipation can be a grueling condition for those who suffer it regularly. There are many causes for this blockage and some practical approaches to prevent it.

PETER WEISS

D.D. was a 49-year-old normally very pleasant woman who came to see me after four days of increasing pelvic, lower abdominal pain. She went to a local urgent care center where they told her she must have an ovarian cyst. Her ultrasound, however, was negative. It wasn't rocket science to figure out what the problem was.

Poor D.D. hadn't had a regular bowel movement in five days. She did have a few small, hard movements, which is what threw off the urgent care doctor. I repeated the ultrasound and was able to show her just how much stool she had in her system that was aching (literally) to come out.

Normally I would suggest some simple natural remedies, but she needed the big guns. She found success with a combination of glycerin suppositories and a good old-fashioned enema. When she returned, I put her on a more natural course to happy bowel movements.

My father once told me when he was old, that the two most important things in an older person's life were a good night's sleep and a good bowel movement. I am sure many can relate.

Constipation is commonly defined as having fewer than three bowel movements in a week, or having hard, dry, lumpy stools that are difficult to pass. Approximately 4 million people in the United States have frequent constipation. It's the most frequent gastrointestinal complaint, resulting in roughly 2.5 million doctor visits each year.

At some point, we have all suffered with the miserable feeling of being constipated. For most of us, simple prevention methods work:

- Eat more fruits, vegetables, and grains that are high in fiber.
- Drink plenty of water or other liquids (not alcohol).
- Exercise regularly to keep things moving.

These strategies to prevent constipation also give insight into some of the wide range of things that can cause it.

Common Causes of Constipation

As food moves through our bowels, the colon (large intestine) absorbs water while forming the stool (waste products). Peristalsis (muscle contractions) of the colon then push the stool toward the rectum. By then, most of the water has been absorbed and the stool is now solid. When the muscle contractions of the colon move too slowly, then too much water may be absorbed, resulting in hard-to-pass stools and constipation.

While this is one explanation for constipation, there are others. There are also several factors that can affect how quickly colon muscles contract. Here are some of the possible causes of constipation.

Medications: Many prescribed medications have the side effect of causing constipation. Heartburn medications with aluminum or calcium are a common cause. Certain antidepressants and diuretics are also common culprits. You really need to check with your doctor or pharmacist about each medication you're taking.

Lack of exercise: This is another very common cause that most people don't realize. Even a good, long walk may be enough to prevent constipation.

Not drinking enough fluids or eating enough fiber: These are common causes. Without enough water and fiber, you simply don't have the required components of a good bowel movement.

Simply "holding it in": Don't ignore your body's signals to have a bowel movement. You'd be surprised how often we find this as a cause.

Medical ailments: One of the reasons constipation is so common is that many medical ailments can cause it.

IBS, also known as irritable bowel syndrome, is a common cause. It may also be a cause of diarrhea. There are two differentiators, IBS-C (constipation) and IBS-D (diarrhea).

Diabetes may affect the nerves of the colon, which can slow down the movement of the stool, which then leads to constipation.

Hypothyroidism is another cause of constipation. So are neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis (MS), Parkinson's disease, and spinal cord injuries.

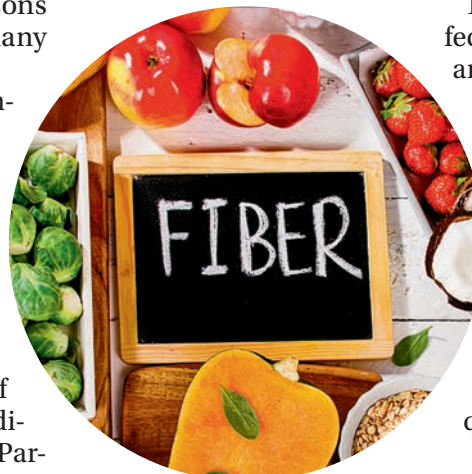
Crohn's disease, while more commonly associated with diarrhea, may also cause constipation.

Traveling, change in diets, and pregnancy are also common causes.

Uncovering the Cause

As a purely medical condition, constipation is over self-diagnosed. I have had

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Eat more fruits, vegetables and grains which are high in fiber.

patients who complain about being constipated, and yet they have daily bowel movements and no problem eliminating. They just "feel constipated."

But for many people, constipation is a difficult condition that causes severe discomfort. Sometimes it can be difficult to figure out what's causing it.

One way doctors try to uncover the cause of chronic constipation is a barium enema, which evaluates the colon using a radio-opaque material to see what is going on in the colon. There are colon transit studies, as well as a WMC (wireless motility capsule) that measures gastric emptying as well as small and whole gut transit times.

Efforts to figure out the cause of constipation have increased alongside rates of constipation.

Between 1997 and 2010, the number of hospitalizations for patients with a primary discharge diagnosis of constipation increased from 21,190 patients to 48,450, according to research published in The American Journal of Gastroenterology.

The bottom line, constipation has affected all of us at some point in our lives, and many times for many of us. Hopefully, your constipation was only a temporary setback to a full and healthy life. However, for those unfortunate enough to suffer from significant frequent constipation, it's a debilitating disorder that must be recognized and treated.

We all need a good night's sleep and a good bowel movement.

"I wish that being famous helped prevent me from being constipated," quipped Marvin Gaye.

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.



Even a good, long walk may be enough to prevent constipation.

FOOD AS MEDICINE

Eating to Be Cancer Free

Chris Wark was given a brutal diagnosis, but he didn’t want to take the chemo path

Continued from **Page 1**

Lots of this cancerous tissue was removed during surgery, but Wark was told he would need about a year of chemotherapy to address the cancer that still remained in his body.

However, Wark began to doubt this path with his first meal served in the hospital. After having his abdomen sliced open and dozens of lymph nodes removed, he received the worst cafeteria food imaginable: a sloppy Joe.

Gazing at the loose ground meat on an institutional-grade white bun, Wark wondered why he wasn’t getting something healthier, or at least more digestible.

Wark was puzzled by what he saw as an obvious disconnect between health care and healthy food.

He asked his surgeon if he had any nutritional advice to address his abdominal cancer. “Nah, Just don’t lift anything heavier than a beer,” the surgeon replied.

Although medical experts didn’t acknowledge the influence of food, Wark still imagined he could heal his body by simply eating better. But when he shared his ideas with family and friends, they thought he was crazy, so he reluctantly went to see an oncologist.

His oncologist told him he had a 60 percent chance of getting five more years to live if he did chemotherapy. When asked if there were any alternatives, the doctor replied: “There are none. If you don’t do chemotherapy, you are insane.”

Wark committed to trying chemo and scheduled a date to start. But the closer it got to his appointment, the more apprehensive he became.

“I wanted to understand why I was sick. I wanted to get to the bottom of that mystery. I wanted to do everything in my power to help myself heal, and what I found was that the conventional medical system was not offering me any hope,” Wark said. “The idea of poisoning my way back to health made no sense to me.”

So Wark blew off his chemo appointment and prayed for guidance. Two days later, he received a book in the mail from a friend of his father. The author was a man diagnosed with colon cancer in 1976, and his story was about how he opted out of conventional treatment and managed to heal himself through diet and lifestyle. He was still alive and in good health 30 years later, and it made Wark think that the path he imagined could have some merit.

Seeking a community of like-minded individuals, Wark soon sought other books written by cancer survivors and holistic physicians telling similar tales. The common thread in all of these against-the-odds survival stories was that food proved to be a healing force. It inspired Wark to adopt a raw food diet. Just plants. All organic.

“It was back to the Garden of Eden,” Wark said. “I was only eating food straight from the earth in its pure and natural state. I never heard of a raw food diet before, but I was very intrigued and excited by this idea, and I wanted to know what would happen to my body if all I ate was raw fruits and vegetables. It was so strange and foreign and radical to me. I loved it.”

Next, Wark began looking for doctors who also saw food as a tool for healing. His mother introduced him to a clinical nutritionist, and the nutritionist referred him to a seasoned surgical oncologist—a

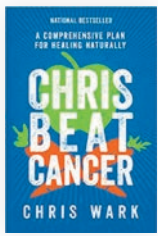


HYEJIN KANG/SHUTTERSTOCK



“I wanted to do everything in my power to help myself heal, and what I found was that the conventional medical system was not offering me any hope.”

Chris Wark, cancer survivor



‘Chris Beat Cancer: A Comprehensive Plan for Healing Naturally’

Author
Chris Wark

Publisher
Hay House Inc.; 2nd edition, Jan. 5, 2021

Edition
Paperback, 312 pages

doctor who had practiced conventional cancer treatment for years but had decided to switch to a more natural and nontoxic approach.

With the help of his team, and his own hard work, he managed to kick cancer. Eighteen years later, he remains cancer free. He recounts his journey and the limitations of conventional cancer treatment in his book “Chris Beat Cancer.”

Wark’s story was featured on the award-winning documentary, “The C Word” and on the “Truth About Cancer” series. But he maintains that he’s neither lucky nor special, he’s just a regular guy who listened to his instincts and took massive action to help his body heal.

“I eliminated everything in my life that may have contributed to my disease,” he said.

One reason a cancer diagnosis can be so scary is the number of deaths associated with the disease. Cancer is the second-leading cause of death in America, and the leading cause of death worldwide.

But cancer wasn’t always such a prevalent killer. In the early 20th century, indoor plumbing and medical advancements did a lot to bring down death rates overall. But by the end of the century, cancer deaths had mostly grown. President Richard Nixon famously called for a War on Cancer in 1970, but for decades, doctors and patients seemed to be losing the battle.

The U.S. cancer death rate peaked in 1991, but has since decreased 27 percent. The American Cancer Society credits improvements in the ways we can prevent, find, and treat cancer, but states that “the decline in the death rate is largely due to fewer people smoking.”

Wark says this detail points toward a path that more cancer patients should be encouraged to take. Those hoping to lower their risk of cancer can benefit from this path as well.

“It’s not because treatments have made these huge strides. It’s because we’ve had a massive decrease in cigarette smoking, and cigarettes are the No. 1 cause of cancer,” Wark said. “My mission is one of prevention. If we could educate the public on the diet and lifestyle choices that are causing chronic disease and the ones that will prevent chronic disease, then we can see a shift in population health.”

Wark’s own path to healing may have been a leap of faith, but he later learned that there’s plenty of science to corroborate his experience. Several years after he healed from cancer, he wanted to understand how exactly his health food path made him well.

“I wondered if my story could be a fluke. Maybe I was just lucky. Was there any science to support natural healing methods, evidenced-based nutrition, and holistic health? I learned that there was more science than I could ever read in a lifetime.”

With each study he read, Wark became increasingly inspired. He learned that the most powerful anti-cancer vegetables were the ones that he was eating every single day: garlic, onions, leeks, broccoli, cauliflower, kale, and mushrooms as well as fermented foods such as sauerkraut

and kimchi, and spices like turmeric, oregano, and cayenne.

Science validates the anti-cancer properties of these foods, but the heart of the concept is common sense.

“You don’t have to have a scientific degree, be a doctor, or even have a high school diploma to understand that eating fruits and vegetables will only do you good. Exercise and forgiveness will only do you good. These are things that are so powerful that most people underestimate their value,” he said.

Wark is inspired to pass on what he’s learned to others and shine a light on the many successes found in a natural approach to cancer treatment. He is a patient advocate and has a blog detailing his journey for more than a decade. It features interviews with other cancer patients who opted for natural medicine to cure their disease and holistic doctors who provide care on this path.

The path to healing Wark describes takes a lot of dedication. Contrary to the magic bullet concept of health care, natural healing is more than one miracle herb, or a few appointments with a functional medicine physician. It’s a 24/7 lifestyle, a self-empowered mindset, and a long-term commitment.

Wark’s book is critical of the modern cancer industry and conventional cancer treatment, but he doesn’t shun patients who choose to take this road. He says the power of food is available to anyone willing to harness it.

“If you improve your immune system, you’re protecting yourself from life-threatening infectious disease and life-threatening debilitating chronic disease,” he said. “Nutrition is the ammunition for your immune system. Without nutrition, you’re fighting with no weapons, with no army.”

In addition to encouraging a better diet, Wark says the mental, emotional, and spiritual side of healing is a big, yet often overlooked, part of the practice. He mentions patients who do everything right, eat all the anti-cancer foods, do all the beneficial routines, but they still can’t seem to get better.

“They don’t address their emotional pain. They’re carrying a lot of anger, bitterness, and resentment toward people in their past. The stress produced by these unresolved emotional conflicts can outweigh anything else you do. It can be the one barrier to healing.”

Unforgiveness can be the block that stops healing, he said.

“I’m constantly encouraging everyone in our community to forgive every person who ever hurt you. Let go of anger and resentment, fear, worry, and anxiety. Embrace life, health, joy, and peace.”

Of course, confronting complex issues like these is often a lot easier said than done. But there are many examples that show it can be done.

“Cancer taught me gratitude,” Wark said. “I had to learn during the process to give my fears and worries to God, release them. To not let the fear consume my mind and my heart.”

Teaching people about diet and lifestyle as a way to prevent chronic disease could have population-wide results.



President Richard Nixon famously called for a War on Cancer in 1970, but for decades, doctors and patients seemed to be losing the battle.

The Veracity of VAERS

The official reporting system for vaccine adverse reactions has become more controversial during COVID-19

JANIS SIEGEL

An escalating information war is pitting the “vaxxed” against the “unvaxxed” over the safety of the three COVID-19 vaccines being administered in the United States. In 2021, a massive spike in reporting was seen in the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS), the main vaccine side effect and injury reporting site in the United States. Vaccine manufacturers and administrators are required to report any adverse events that occur during or after vaccination through VAERS.

“These mandatory requirements proved highly successful,” a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) spokesperson told The Epoch Times. “In 2021, VAERS received over a million reports of adverse events, compared to approximately 50,000 reports received in previous years.”

“However, because these reports are required to be submitted regardless of the plausibility of the vaccine causing the event, not all of the reports involve an outcome caused by the vaccine.”

The 32-year-old vaccine data collection site is co-managed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

A non-believer in the VAERS data, Jonathan Jarry, disputes the reliability of the VAERS reports. Jarry holds a master of science degree and is a molecular biologist and science communicator in McGill University’s Office for Science and Society. He’s an outspoken critic of VAERS.

He claims that VAERS data is circumstantial, doesn’t prove causality, and is used to induce fear. He rejects the accuracy of the high rates of injury and death reported there and claims it only contributes to anti-vaccination fear.

“Don’t fall for the ‘VAERS scare tactic,’ Jarry wrote in an article posted on the school’s website.

The office’s mission articulated there is to “separate sense from nonsense.” He also wants the public to doubt the credibility of VAERS data.

“The Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System, or VAERS, is being misused by antivaxxers to terrify the public,” Jarry wrote. “Scrolling through a VAERS data set does not allow us to conclude anything. VAERS can be used to generate hypotheses but not to test them directly.”

Jarry also believes that the information posted on VAERS is unreliable because reporting is open to the public.

“The reports may contain information that is incomplete, inaccurate, coincidental, or unverifiable,” he wrote. “In large part, reports to VAERS are voluntary, which means they are subject to biases. This creates specific limitations on how the data can be used scientifically.”

The FDA didn’t confirm with The Epoch Times how many medical professionals report to VAERS, as compared to the general population.

“What is being reported in VAERS,” Jarry wrote, “is known as a vaccine adverse event: it is any unfavourable or unintended sign, any abnormal laboratory finding (like a blood test), any symptom or disease (even death) that comes after receiving a vaccine and that could, potentially, have been caused by it.”

Vaccine manufacturers and administrators are required by law to report any adverse vaccine reactions to VAERS, whether they believe they are vaccine-related or not.

Additionally, anyone who intentionally files a misleading or false report on VAERS is subject to federal criminal prosecution that is “punishable by fine or imprisonment,” according to the VAERS site.

VAERS agrees that “reports alone cannot be used to determine if a vaccine caused or contributed to an adverse event or illness,” the disclaimer on the CDC’s website says, but the center told The Epoch Times that the value in the data is that the CDC can be alerted to “safety signals.”

The CDC already has identified critically serious and deadly trends in the health of those vaccinated for COVID-19.

“[VAERS] was used successfully to identify several safety signals related to COVID-19 vaccines, including Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), thrombosis with thrombocytopenia (TTS) following the [Johnson & Johnson] Janssen COVID-19 vaccine, and myocarditis and anaphylaxis following the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines,” the FDA spokesperson reported.

Still, Jarry continues to reject the way the information in the VAERS database is being publicized.

Jarry also believes that the information

While the 2021 reporting on VAERS alerted scientists to serious side effects from the COVID-19 vaccines, an often-cited 2009 Lazarus Report found that less than 1 percent of health care providers report.

25%

The study found that “25 percent of patients have adverse drug reactions,” but only “0.3 of all adverse drug events and 1–13 percent of serious events are reported to the Food and Drug Administration.”

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posted on VAERS is unreliable because reporting is open to the public.

He declined to comment to The Epoch Times about the already identified health risks associated with the three vaccines within the VAERS data.

VAERS reports require patient information, the identity of the person submitting the form, a health provider’s contact information, which vaccine(s) were given, a description of the adverse event, the result or outcome of the event, and any other adverse events the patient might have had from previous vaccines.

The reporting party is held legally responsible.

Both the FDA and the CDC review all VAERS reports and can issue alerts to the public.

They can require the manufacturer to conduct additional studies, change the labeling on a product, issue additional guidelines, and more.

If a safety signal is detected, the data is then passed to the CDC’s Vaccine Safety Datalink and its Clinical Immunization Safety Assessment for further evaluation.

While the 2021 reporting on VAERS alerted scientists to serious side effects from the COVID-19 vaccines, an often-cited 2009 Lazarus Report found that less than 1 percent of health care providers report.

Researchers followed more than 376,000 vaccinated subjects for three years, and monitored all adverse drug events while recording the frequency of provider reporting.

The researchers found that adverse drug events, in general, were common but underreported.

The study found that “25 percent of patients have adverse drug reactions,” but only “0.3 of all adverse drug events and 1–13 percent of serious events are reported to the Food and Drug Administration.”

The most relevant reported result researchers found from the study is that less than 1 percent of serious vaccine adverse events were reported.

Within the study results, several factors led to the lack of reporting by clinicians, including not knowing about the reporting option or requirement, not having the time to report, and confusion about what and when to report.

“Vaccine manufacturers and vaccine administrators are required to report to VAERS any adverse event following COVID-19 vaccination that involved hospitalization, prolongation of existing hospitalization, life-threatening illness, permanent disability, congenital deformity, or death,” the FDA spokesperson told The Epoch Times.

“The strengths of VAERS are that it is national in scope and can quickly provide an early warning of a safety problem with a vaccine,” the VAERS website says. “VAERS is designed to rapidly detect unusual or unexpected patterns of adverse events, also known as ‘safety signals.’”

“If a safety signal is found in VAERS, further studies will be done.”

According to OpenVAERS, a website that pulls data from VAERS and presents it in a more accessible format, as of Feb. 1, 2022, there are now 1,071,854 reports of adverse events related to COVID-19 vaccines, with 739,999 of those reports originating from the United States and U.S. territories.

Janis Siegel is an independent news journalist that has covered health news for SELF Magazine, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, and launched an international, award-winning health research column.



Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System

VAERS reports require reporters to include patient information, the identity of the person submitting the form, a health provider’s contact information, which vaccine(s) were given, a description of the adverse event, the result or outcome of the event, and any other adverse events the patient might have had from previous vaccines.

Tensions over vaccine mandates are fueled in part by reports of adverse reactions. Unfortunately, the system to track those adverse events remains controversial.



Detect new, unusual, or rare vaccine adverse events



Monitor increases in known adverse events



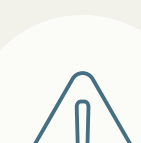
Identify potential patient risk factors for particular types of adverse events



Asses the safety of newly licensed vaccines



Recognize persistent safe-use problems and administration errors



Detect new, unusual, or rare vaccine adverse events



Provide a national safety monitoring system



You don’t need a degree to understand that eating fruits and vegetables is good for you.

WESTENDEL/GETTY IMAGES

ALL IMAGES BY SHUTTERSTOCK; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY THE EPOCH TIMES

The Upside of Fear

There are some unexpected benefits when we use fear to our advantage

Continued from Page 1

This all happened before the #MeToo movement raised awareness about unwanted sexual attention and harassment, but Frank developed a non-threatening script that read something like: “My name is Frank. I hope you don’t think I’m being too forward, but would you be willing to have coffee with me?” With Lerner’s input, Frank also adopted a cautious and polite approach so he wouldn’t be seen as acting inappropriately.

The crazy idea worked. Frank’s goal was to get rejected, of course, not to get a date. But, much to his surprise, even though most of them said no, some of the women he approached said, sure, they would be glad to have a cup of coffee with him. So Frank’s first lesson was that it wasn’t as easy to get rejected as he had feared.

More notably, during the experiment, Frank’s extreme fear of being rejected went off so quickly that halfway into the assignment he pulled out his cellphone and called a female friend from work whom he had been wanting to ask out on a date. His work colleague said “no.” It turned out she was already in a relationship with someone else. But, after trying to get so many rejections, adding one more rejection feather to his cap didn’t upset him. He also wasn’t sorry he had called her. Instead, he was inspired. Lerner had helped him flip the script and now he was able to see that last “failure” as a success.

We All Feel Afraid

Especially now, two years into worldwide concerns about COVID-19, every human on the planet can relate to feeling fear.

A new study by scientists at the University of Essex showed that COVID-19 concerns have caused a spike in anxiety and depression among pregnant women in the United Kingdom. Published in the journal BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth, the researchers found that 60 percent of the pregnant moms surveyed were experiencing symptoms of anxiety.

Other recent studies have similarly shown that Canadians are experiencing anxiety levels at the highest rates since March 2020, according to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health’s ninth survey of Canadians’ pandemic health and substance use. And other reports suggest that COVID fatigue has led Americans, like so many people around the world, to feel fearful, burned out, and stressed.

But even pre-pandemic, physicians and psychologists were seeing an increase in fear levels among their patients. A few years ago, Dr. Stefan Topolski, a medical doctor based in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts, told me he was seeing several patients a day who said they were suffering from fear.

“Anxiety affects every part of someone’s life,” Topolski said, explaining that mental fear can cause or exacerbate several physiological problems. High anxiety leads to elevated levels of stress hormones in the body, including cortisol and adrenaline. These stress hormones in turn can weaken the immune system, according to the American Psychological Association.

Topolski agreed: Fear “leads to a weakened immune system, which means white blood cells work slower and weaker, and the body can’t mount a fever the way it should. It also means increased fat placed around the waist, which is a risk for heart disease, and general weakening in ligaments and tendons.”

The Protective Nature of Fear

We know fear is bad for our health. At the same time, however, there’s no question that fear can protect us from bad outcomes and even save our lives. According to Lerner, fear is the mind’s way of protecting us from our own stupidity and keeping us safe. When my teenage son looked over the edge of a rock and into the water while



“You want to feel comfortable, so you avoid doing the thing that will evoke fear and other disquieting emotions.”

Dr. Harriet Lerner, clinical psychologist

on a camping trip with his friends, he felt too afraid to jump off. His fear, arguably, helped him make a life-saving decision. When his older sister didn’t feel the same fear and jumped into a different body of water without first making sure it was deep enough, she ended up with a huge gash in her leg that subsequently got infected. In that instance, her lack of fear could very well have killed her.

In small bursts, Topolski also agreed that fear can be helpful. The problem is when we are bombarded with anxious feelings and stress 24/7 in a way that compromises our health, something we have seen throughout the pandemic.

“It’s normal to have fear,” Topolski said. “But fear [should] occur for small moments—the fight-or-flight response—[and] within an hour or two, you should be back to your normal self.”

Take Charge of Your Fear

Fear, like any other emotion, is information. When we pay attention to our feelings of fear—and become interested in what they are trying to teach us—we can reap powerful benefits.

Frank’s bold approach to feeling fearful, according to Lerner, was that it enabled him to be “squarely in charge of his own symptom. Rather than being a passive victim of his greatest fear—rejection—he became actively engaged in making rejection happen,” she wrote.

Feeling fearful and working through it can help you improve your life. Some of the take-away lessons from Frank’s experience and from Lerner’s book include:

Actions Matter

We humans learn by doing. Sometimes our thoughts are more worrisome than our actual experiences. When we take the leap of faith and act—approaching someone we are hoping to be friends with, saying “yes” to a public speaking engagement even though the idea of speaking in public is so terrifying it gives us hives, trying a new activity like journaling or painting or a sport we’ve never played before—life becomes richer and more interesting. And even if we “fail” (whatever that means), we reap the benefit of having felt the fear but tried anyway.

Feelings Are OK

It’s OK to be nervous, shy, uncomfortable, or afraid. All feelings can teach us powerful lessons. While it may seem easier not to feel, we become better adjusted and more mature humans when we treat our feelings with curiosity, give ourselves some grace, and allow ourselves to feel. When we feel

fear appropriately, we keep ourselves safe from physical harm.

But sometimes we feel fear for no reason: We become afraid of things that are not actually threatening. But this inappropriate fear can also be a teacher. Pay attention to what is going on at a deeper level. Perhaps someone is trying to manipulate us; a company is trying to sell us a product we don’t want or need; or we are afraid of being vulnerable because we don’t want to risk getting hurt.

When we tune in at a deeper level, we become psychologically healthier. We can end an unhealthy relationship, say “no thank you” to people who are trying to keep us afraid, or take a risk of rejection in order to reap the reward of being accepted.

When we feel fear inappropriately but we pay attention to what is actually going on at a deeper level, we become psychologically healthier and improve our lives immeasurably.

Invite Fear Into Your Life

Instead of shying away from it, be open to your fears. Invite them in and learn from them. Fear isn’t something to overcome or conquer, Lerner insisted. Instead, she advised her clients like Frank to pay attention to their fears and act in spite of them.

“If you pay attention, you may find that it is not fear that stops you from doing the brave and true thing in your daily life. Rather, the problem is avoidance. You want to feel comfortable, so you avoid doing the thing that will evoke fear and other disquieting emotions,” Lerner said. “Avoidance will make you feel less vulnerable in the short run, but it will never make you less afraid.”

Motivation Matters

When you’re highly motivated to overcome a challenge, even if you aren’t sure how, you will find a way. Don’t let fear keep you from acting. Instead, use the fear as a motivator to make positive change. Even if that change is simply to find the help you need to figure out what is driving your fear, that is the right first step.

Practice Relaxation Techniques

If feeling fearful is causing you physical distress, use that information to improve your health. To learn relaxation techniques that you can implement throughout the day, take a meditation or a yoga class (or both). Increase your daily movement and activity levels. This can be as simple as getting up every 20 minutes from your desk if your job involves sitting and walking around your office, house, or apartment.

Dedicated daily exercise is also a highly effective relaxation technique—a great way to feel better if you find yourself overrun with anxiety.

In fact, a study by Swedish researchers published in January in the Journal of Affective Disorders found that the anxiety levels of participants in a 12-week group exercise program were reduced as a result of both high-intensity and low-intensity workouts. Since humans thrive when we are social, group exercise can be especially beneficial for improving your mood and your fitness levels.

Be Grateful

When the world’s worries are weighing you down, experts suggest you count your blessings. “Something else that can help you climb out of fear and back into the light of purpose is gratitude,” said Rick Kirschner, a naturopathic physician based in Sandpoint, Idaho, and co-author of the book “Dealing With People You Can’t Stand.”

“Maybe counting your blessings is already something you do. It is for me, but sometimes I forget. Sometimes it’s not easy to notice those blessings,” Kirschner said. “In that case, you can be like the optimist. The pessimist says, ‘I can’t get worse!’ The optimist says, ‘Sure it can!’ Which means there’s something to be grateful for right now.”

Reading “The Dance of Fear,” a book full of wisdom and unconventional, sometimes surprising ideas, as well as watching documentary films about people who found courage in the face of fear, will also inspire you to better understand the upside to feeling afraid.

Instead of shying away from it, be open to your fears. Invite them in and learn from them.

“In a country with so much wealth and food and shelter, it’s odd that we suffer from so much more anxiety than our ancestors,” Topolski told me. While the collective anxiety of the world has been feeling has proved crippling for some, Lerner challenges readers in her epilogue to act with compassion even in the face of fear.

We “needn’t let anxiety and shame silence our authentic voices, or stop us from acting with clarity, compassion, and courage. In today’s world, no challenge is more important than that,” she wrote.

Jennifer Margulis, Ph.D., is an award-winning journalist and author of “Your Baby, Your Way: Taking Charge of Your Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Parenting Decisions for a Happier, Healthier Family.” A Fulbright awardee and mother of four, she has worked on a child survival campaign in Niger, West Africa, advocated for an end to child slavery in Pakistan on prime-time TV in Paris, and taught post-colonial literature to nontraditional students in inner-city Atlanta. Learn more about her at JenniferMargulis.net

Why Worry Affects Your Digestion

In Eastern medicine, the body and mind are closely tied

EMMA SUTTIE

Anyone who is a chronic worrier can tell you where they feel it in their bodies. Always in the stomach. If you have ever had a challenging presentation at work, a major paper due at school, or perhaps a root canal appointment, you know where those feelings of stress manifest—in the gut. And the more intense the feelings of worry, the more of your digestive system is affected, from eating all the way to elimination.

In a clinic, problems with digestion are commonplace. Most patients I’ve seen in past clinical work have digestive concerns, but interestingly, that wasn’t the reason they came to get treated. It’s surprising how many people live with digestive issues when they can be improved with a little awareness, nutritional therapy, and a change in behavior.

The Spleen in the Eastern View

When digestive issues are present in Eastern medicine, there’s always one organ involved, the spleen. It sounds odd to us in the West, I mean who talks about the spleen? The spleen is rarely discussed in Western medicine, and most people aren’t even sure what it does. So let’s start there.

The spleen is part of the immune system and the largest organ in the lymphatic system. The spleen is where red blood cells are recycled and white blood cells, or leukocytes, are stored. It’s possible to live without a spleen, and some people have to have theirs removed. Removal of the spleen usually happens because it ruptures or has been lacerated due to an accident or severe injury. The removal procedure is called a splenectomy. Living without a spleen makes a person more susceptible to infections because of its connection to the immune system. Thankfully, most other functions are politely taken over by the other organs so that a person can live quite well without a spleen.

So what, you may wonder, does worry have to do with the spleen? To understand that, you need a little background in Eastern medicine. Having a healthy and balanced emotional life is vital to having a healthy body and being a happy human. As a holistic system, Eastern medicine looks at the entirety of the human experience and knows that each part is essential to our health and well-being. While Western medicine is still coming to terms with the interplay between mind and body, Eastern medicine has long delved into this union. In the Eastern tradition, many organs are associated with an emotion, which works in two ways. The feeling affects its associated organ, which can affect its corresponding emotion. And the emotion of the spleen is worry and overthinking.

Worry and the Spleen

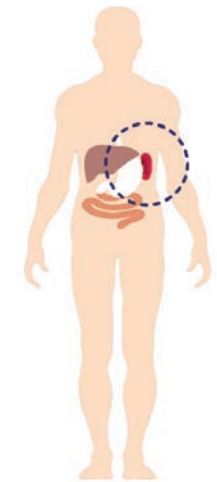
The spleen is directly related to our capacity for thinking. The spleen’s strength depends on how well we manage our thoughts, concentrate, exercise discernment, and form intentions. Excessive worry and overthinking damage the spleen,



While Western medicine is still coming to terms with the interplay between mind and body, Eastern medicine has long delved into this union.



Eastern medicine connects our emotions to certain organs. This connection is why your heart can feel warm in new love, or your chest heavy during times of grief.



The spleen is part of the immune system and the largest organ in the lymphatic system.

and a deficient spleen can weaken the mind and our capacity to think clearly and focus, leaving us susceptible to worry.

Overstimulation is a major issue for modern people. We’re bombarded with information, and even our food, with all its complex additives and processing, is more stimulating and complicated. All this stimulus input can overwhelm the spleen and weaken digestion.

Our culture also values doing many things at once, and many of us are involved in long days engaging in heavy cognitive work. We tend to overload our brains because we have so much on our proverbial plates, and worry is a natural byproduct.

This is hard on the spleen because, in Eastern medicine, the spleen, paired with the stomach, are the body’s digestive organs. The difference, though, is in addition to digesting and extracting nutrients from what we eat and drink, they are responsible for processing stimuli—everything coming in from the outside world. And that is a massive job, as you can imagine. The more information we take in, the more the spleen has to work, and inevitably, digestion suffers.

It’s interesting to look at digestive problems with a different lens and see them in a new way. When I explain this to patients, they’re usually elated, as they can see the connections right away between what they’re doing and their digestive upsets. And this is the part I love, bringing a practical application to people in the real world drawn from thousands of years of deep wisdom. I am continually humbled by it.

In that vein, here are some simple ways to improve digestive upsets with this new knowledge of the spleen and what it does.

Practical Things to Help the Spleen

There are many things you can do to make sure your spleen can do its job well.

Avoid Ice and Cold Foods

The spleen is responsible for digestive work, which is fueled by heat or “digestive fire.” Therefore, the spleen loathes cold, which extinguishes the heat needed to do its job. This concept may sound strange. If so, it may help to remember that Western science first came to understand the energy value of food by burning it to measure its output. This was a practical and accurate way to measure a food’s energy impact (calories) in the body.

We can help maintain that “fire” by not putting ice in our drinks or eating cold foods, especially ones that come directly out of the freezer, like ice cream. Many raw foods are also considered cooling in Chinese medicine. When we eat cold foods, the spleen has to work harder to warm itself up again, enabling its essential work of digesting and processing.

Chew Your Food Well

This one is simple yet incredibly impactful. When we eat, especially when we’re distracted or in a hurry, we tend not to chew our food thoroughly. Chewing breaks our food down into smaller, more manageable pieces and releases enzymes

that further break it down, meaning the spleen needs less energy to digest. This step goes hand in hand with being mindful.

Be Mindful

The first step and probably the most important thing you can do to improve your digestion is simply to be aware. Just an awareness that the spleen is doing all that work and that we can do something to decrease its burden is an excellent start. But the other thing is to do one thing at a time and do that thing with mindful intention.

For example, we often do many things at once without even realizing it. Start with eating. When you eat, just eat. Don’t eat while reading, watching TV, or working. That’s taking in more information and making your spleen work a lot harder than it has to. When possible, take time out for meals. Prepare them yourself, infuse them with your good energy and intention, and sit down and enjoy feeding your body with something delicious. You’ll feel the difference.

Eat Soups

Eating soups is a great way to strengthen the spleen. Soups are warming—and the longer and slower they’re cooked, the more warming they become. Soups are cooked until soft and easy to digest, which is one of the reasons we eat them when we’re sick. Your body needs all its energy to fight invading pathogens to get you well. Eating soup means the spleen can save its energy for other things, like that presentation you have tomorrow morning.

Take Breaks

Take lots of breaks. If you think of the spleen processing the barrage of information and food we take into our bodies, it changes how we feel about things. Working fewer hours or cutting stressful activities out of our lives isn’t always possible (but is highly recommended!). Doing one thing at a time and taking frequent breaks allows the spleen some time to breathe.

From the Eastern perspective, we live in a culture that puts a heavy burden on the spleen. But when we look at digestion in this new way, we can see that there are simple things we can all do that can improve digestive difficulties. When the spleen functions optimally, a person will feel energetic; their digestion will be robust, and bowel movements will be regular and firm. Thinking will be clear, and the ability to focus and concentrate comes easily. Giving your spleen a little bit of love goes a long way, and your spleen will love you for it.

Emma Suttie is an acupuncture physician and founder of Chinese Medicine Living—a website dedicated to sharing how to use traditional wisdom to live a healthy lifestyle in the modern world. She has lived and practiced in 4 countries and now works through her practice Thrive Consulting. She is a lover of the natural world, martial arts, and a good cup of tea.



When possible, take time out for meals. Prepare them yourself, infuse them with your good energy and intention, and sit down and enjoy feeding your body with something delicious.

Changing the Things I Can

In Eastern medicine, the body and mind are closely tied—in health and illness

CHERYL SMITH

One of my favorite quotes of all time is the Serenity Prayer, written by Reinhold Niebuhr. “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.”

Identifying the difference is often the biggest part of the battle for me.

At the start of each new year, I think a lot about the year that has just gone by. I count my blessings as they come to mind, and I ask myself some hard questions like, “How could I have handled things better this year?” “How could I have made a bigger positive difference in my circle of influence?” “What memories from this year bring anxiety?” and “What needs to change going into the new year?”

This contemplation always brings me to the same conclusion: There is very little in this life over which I have any control, and most of life’s events fall into the “things I cannot change” category. Instead of incessantly and futilely agonizing over the things I can’t change, I turn my thoughts to the things I can. Then I pray for the necessary courage to make it happen.

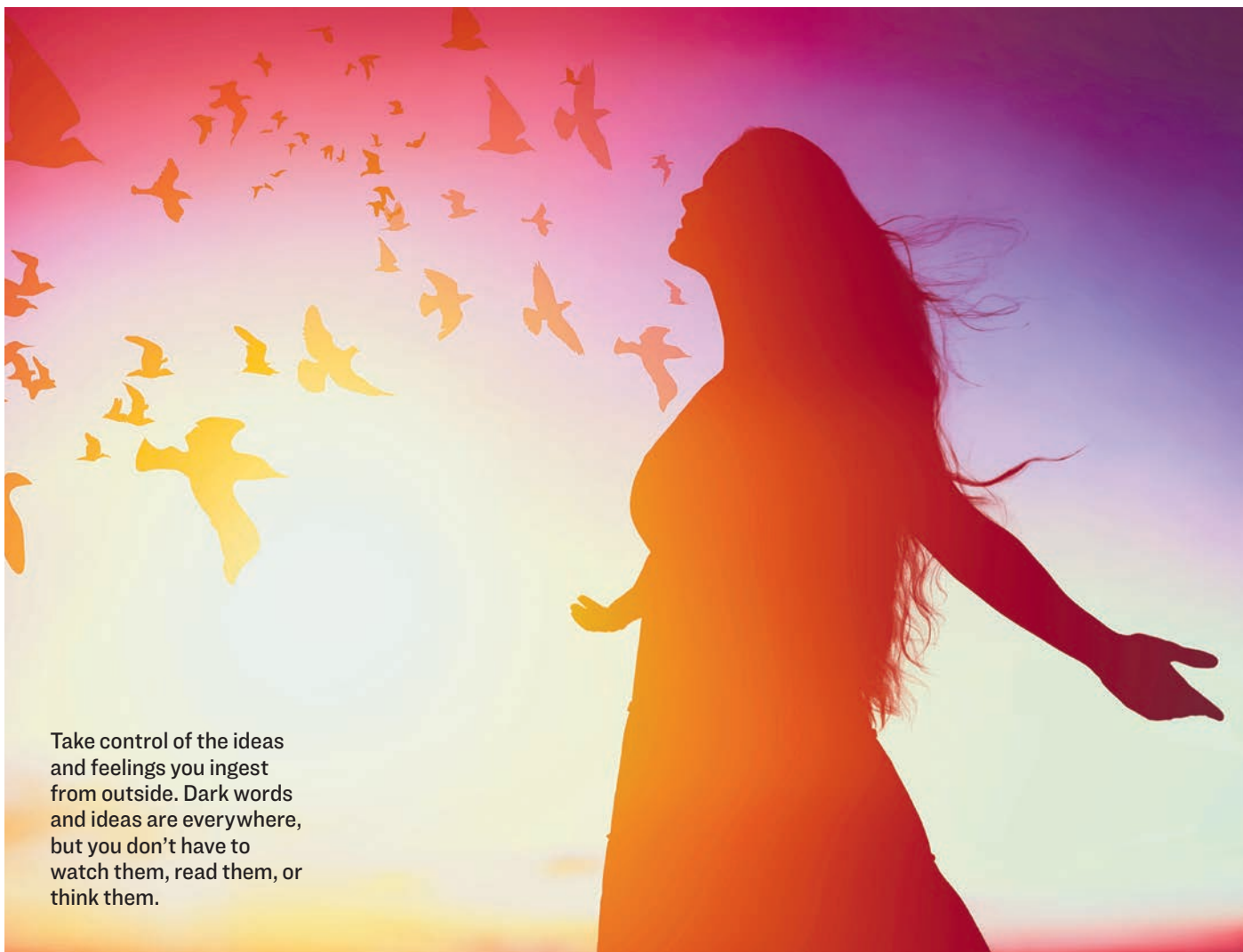
We live in unsettling times, and walking forward into 2022 can be viewed through a lens of fear and anxiety, or we can approach it with a determination to “change the things we can.” Here are some things all of us can control and choose to make better for ourselves in the year ahead.

Be Your Own Positive Influence

When I was a little girl, a traveling minister named Ostis Wilson used to come to our church. I will never forget one of the things he most often said. “If you want to see an example, be an example.” In my words, “Be the example you wish to see.” In a world that’s turned upside down and charged with negativity, fear, and uncertainty, it can be hard to find someone who is rising above the fray and maintaining a sense of faith and hope. If you find yourself in such an environment, be the positive change you are searching for in others. You never know who around you may be in desperate need of their own positive role model.

Be a Selective Watcher and Listener

I have found that I’m much happier and better equipped to stay positive if I’m intentional about what I listen to and watch. Spoken words and images wield an extraordinary measure of power, and once we see or hear something, we automatically begin to process it. It’s hard to “unhear” or “unsee” things once they’ve traveled from our ears and eyes to our brains. So be intentional about who and what you hear and see. It isn’t necessary to know every single thing that’s happening in the world, nor is it healthy to feed on a steady diet of 24/7 news cycles. Don’t allow yourself to be drawn into fear-mongering and gloom. I’m not suggesting we bury our heads in the sand and pretend we live in a utopia. I’m saying we have control over whom we choose to allow in our inner circle; what we listen to, watch, and read; where we go; and how we spend our time.

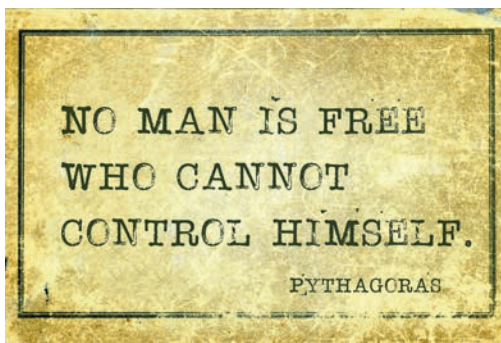


Take control of the ideas and feelings you ingest from outside. Dark words and ideas are everywhere, but you don’t have to watch them, read them, or think them.

Speak Life

Just as it’s important to filter what enters our eyes and ears, it’s equally crucial to speak life-giving words—not only for the sake of those around us, but for our own sake as well. We are first-hand listeners to the words we speak, and they have a dramatic impact on our thoughts. Voicing inner fear feeds and magnifies it. Giving voice to anxious thoughts makes them seem more real. Writing for Psychology Today, psychiatrist Neel Burton advises, “Our language reflects and at the same time shapes our thoughts.”

Have you ever noticed how your response to being asked, “How are you?” affects your mood? I have known those whose response to this question is “blessed.” Regardless of what they were going through or how they were feeling physically, they chose to focus on the blessings they were experiencing instead of the trials. I took note that those same people seemed genuinely happy most of the time. Speaking genuine words of affirmation, encouragement, and peace is life-giving to all who hear them. If you find yourself engaged in a life-draining conversation and see that your attempts to change the tenor are in vain, politely walk away before it takes a toll on you. Then shake off the dust and move on. Strangely enough, not everyone wants to be cheered up, and some thrive on negativity. Don’t waste your time or energy on fruitless endeavors.



Spoken words and images wield an extraordinary measure of power, and once we see or hear something, we automatically begin to process it. It’s hard to ‘unhear’ or ‘unsee’ things once they’ve traveled from our ears and eyes to our brains.

Take Control of Your Thoughts

When disquieting thoughts begin to pervade your mind, take those thoughts captive, and immediately replace them with thoughts of their polar opposite. When fear over what might be infiltrates your thinking, resist the fear and envision the best possible outcome you can imagine. When regret over the past pulls a gloomy shroud over today, resist dwelling on what cannot be changed and rejoice that you’ve been given a new day to make better choices. Do your best to screen what externally influences your thoughts by removing outside influences that inject anything injurious and take control over internal thoughts by using the “resist and replace” method.

I have found that if I plan out my replacement thoughts ahead of time and have them always at the ready, it’s very easy to make the transfer. For example, there is a particular song I find to be especially soothing for anxious thoughts that seem to always come at night when I’m trying to sleep. When they begin to flood my mind, I transition from these nagging, fearful thoughts by mentally “singing” the lyrics of that beautiful song. It isn’t long before fear subsides and sleep takes over.

Changing the things we can is empowering. It sets into motion the betterment of the few things we are able to control in this life. And there is no time like now to begin.

Cheryl Smith blogs at [Biblical Minimalism.com](#). Her family sold their home, released 90 percent of their physical possessions, got out of debt, and now share their story and their Christian faith on their blog. Her new book, “Biblical Minimalism,” is now available. In it, she approaches minimalism from a biblical perspective.

Are These Toxic Chemicals Making You Fat?

If you are finding it hard to lose weight, it may be time to look at obesogens

JENNIFER MARGULIS

It was after midnight. I was visiting my aunt and uncle and had wandered into the kitchen for something to eat. Always a night owl, my aunt sat at the kitchen table with me. She watched enviously as I chomped on a bagel smeared with cream cheese and piled with vegetables.

“I wish I could eat like,” my aunt sighed.

“Like what?” I mumbled, looking at her quizzically. I was in my early 20s and I ate when I was hungry, which was pretty much all the time. I worried a little about my weight, not wanting to get too plump, but besides that, I didn’t think much about food. I bicycled to school every day and was active enough and young enough that I could get away with stuffing my face with pretty much any kind of food at odd hours.

My aunt, in contrast, had always been unhappy with her weight. She’d counted every calorie since her 20s and was always on a diet. She even did Weight Watchers. She tried to be careful about what she ate—I watched her throw half a muffin into the trash before she sat down to breakfast—but she’s struggled with her weight all of her adult life.

Scientists have long wondered why some people have so much trouble maintaining a healthy weight and other people can eat whatever they like, a phenomenon that can even happen with siblings.

When we are exposed to obesogens, even if we eat a moderate number of calories, exercise daily, and maintain an active lifestyle, it’s very difficult, if not impossible, for our bodies to maintain a healthy weight.

Obesity: A Global Problem

Europeans visiting the United States are often shocked by the wide waistlines and enormous servings in restaurants (a practice so common it even has a name: “portion distortion.”) But while America is ahead of many other countries, the World Health Organization reports that obesity is on the rise globally. In fact, obesity has become a growing problem even for children and young adults.

Continued on Page 13



Obesity has become a growing problem even for children and young adults.

OBESOGENS

Obesogens are chemicals that interfere with our metabolism and lead to weight gain. They can be found in food packaging, cosmetics, and more. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to limit your exposure.



Replace plastic food storage containers with glass containers



Do not microwave any food that has a plastic film or is in a plastic container.



Try to buy fresh food that is organically grown.



Replace your non-stick cookware with stainless steel and cast iron.



Filter drinking water using reverse osmosis or activated carbon.



Audit your beauty products, shampoos, and soaps for toxic chemicals.

A Book That Has Inspired The World



I have indeed experienced all the miracles. No matter what your experience or what background you have or what country you are born in, you will benefit from Falun Dafa.

Martin Rubenis
OLYMPIC ATHLETE

Zhuan Falun is the main text of Falun Gong (also called Falun Dafa). The book expounds upon profound principles of Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance. It addresses the long-forgotten term “cultivation,” the origins of illnesses, karma, the role of moral character on a path to spiritual perfection, and more.

The book was a national bestseller in China in the 1990s, and has been translated into over 40 languages. Find out why it has captured the hearts and minds of tens of millions of people in over 100 countries worldwide!

What made Falun Gong stand out from other qigong exercises and meditation practices was a moral system—compassion, truthfulness, and forbearance—unmistakably Buddhist in origin.

Arthur Waldron
LAUDER PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Falun Gong has taught me how to be considerate of others and how to improve my relationships by handling conflicts constructively. [...] It has given me incredible relaxation, mental clarity, and freedom from stress.

Shiyu Zhou
PH.D., USA

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We all get old, but nature offers some plant compounds that can help us weather the years with more youthful skin.

Nature’s Best Remedies for Aging Skin

Skip the expensive creams and chemical peels until you’ve nurtured your skin naturally

Even those who may have won the genetic lottery or have unlimited amounts of money to spend on skin-care aren’t exempt from the natural effects of aging.

But while the beauty industry is bent on spending a fortune trying to convince people of the supreme wonders of chemical peels, Botox injections, and serums, there’s an entire world of natural solutions to slow the effects of aging.

Ditch the expensive creams and peels for now and explore these natural remedies that may help you delay or manage the signs of aging skin.

Aloe Vera
Aloe vera is an established topical skin remedy but is also often added to fruit juice or smoothies in gel form. A 2009 study found that taking aloe orally reduced facial wrinkles. Thirty healthy women over age 45 took aloe vera gel as a supplement, with one group taking a low dose of 1,200 milligrams (mg) a day and another taking a high dose of 3,600 mg a day.

The researchers concluded that aloe gel significantly improved wrinkles in both groups after just 90 days. Additionally, the lower-dose group had improved skin elasticity. How? Aloe increased collagen production, leading to enhanced structural support of skin and fewer wrinkles.

A separate study suggested that continued intake of aloe sterol contributed to maintaining healthy skin, as shown in “statistical differences” in areas such as skin moisture, skin elasticity, and collagen score.

Red Ginseng
Red ginseng contains bioactive compounds that include antioxidants and anti-aging agents. It’s available in various forms such as tinctures, powders, liquid extracts, and capsules.

In Korea, 82 healthy women over age 40 took part in a double-blind, placebo-controlled study. Every day, they received either a placebo or 3 grams (g) of an herbal mixture with red ginseng extract.

After measuring facial wrinkles, elasticity, water content, red patches, and pigmentation, the researchers found that facial wrinkles significantly improved in the red ginseng extract group. A number of biochemical markers of wrinkle damage also improved. “These results substantiate the alleged beneficial effects of red ginseng on photoaging and support its use as an effective ‘beauty food,’” the authors wrote.

Korean red ginseng also proved to be an excellent antiaging product in a separate study. On human skin, ginseng cream increased skin resilience and skin moisture as well as enhanced skin tone.

Soy
Soy extract appears to rejuvenate the structure of mature skin. In a placebo-controlled in vivo study, topically applying an iso-

flavone-containing emulsion significantly flattened the dermal-epidermal junction, considered the most reproducible structural change in aged skin.

Data from separate research seemed to confirm the findings above, indicating that orally taking 40 mg of soy isoflavone aglycones per day improved the aged skin of middle-aged women.

In a 2007 double-blind, 12-week study, a moisturizer containing compounds found in soy was found to be safe and effective in preventing photoaging. The moisturizer with stabilized soy extracts can be used to ameliorate overall skin tone and texture attributed to photoaging, the authors noted.

Pine Bark
A 2012 study comprising 112 women found pine bark extract to be safe and effective in substantially improving skin color and decreasing pigmentation of age spots caused by mild to moderate photoaging.

Japanese researchers divided the subjects into two groups, the first receiving 100 mg of pine bark extract each day and the second getting only 40 mg. The subjects received the standardized extracts known as Pycnogenol, found to significantly improve hydration and elasticity of the participants’ skin.

Pycnogenol also significantly increased the activity of an enzyme that’s important in the synthesis of hyaluronic acid, which then increases skin moisture and minimizes the appearance of wrinkles. It also affected genes involved in creating new collagen.

Astaxanthin
Astaxanthin is a carotenoid derived from microalgae, found in studies to mitigate skin photoaging and age-related skin diseases through its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. A meta-analysis found that ingesting or topically using astaxanthin may be effective in reducing skin aging and improving moisture and elasticity, therefore providing promising cosmetic applications.

In a 2018 review, the carotenoid was also found to prevent UV-induced inflammation, wrinkling, and skin pigmentation after exposure to ultraviolet radiation, which can cause significant damage to skin tissue.

Visit the GreenMedInfo.com database on skin aging to find nearly 200 studies on natural skin health and antiaging boosters and remedies.

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THE EPOCH TIMES Week 7, 2022

A Holistic Approach to a Dilation and Curettage

Recovering from this common female procedure can be difficult but there are natural aids

ASHLEY TURNER

A dilate and curettage (D and C) is a surgical procedure that is sometimes needed after a miscarriage. It can also be performed to remove polyps or tumors from the uterus. Oftentimes, it’s done in the operating room, but can also be done in a doctor’s office.

During surgery, an OB/GYN dilates (opens) the cervix to be able access the uterus. They use a curettage to remove any products of conception that might remain in the uterus. This could be placental or fetal tissue. Sometimes, hysteroscopy is utilized by inserting a small, thin camera into the uterus to better visualize the area. A D and C can also be used to diagnose other uterine problems.

Why Is a D and C Needed After Miscarriage?
Usually, women are able to miscarry on their own naturally and the body is able to pass all of the products of conception without a problem. In some circumstances, these products are retained in the uterus. This can make a woman highly susceptible to infection along with preventing another pregnancy and disrupting hormone function. Retained products of conception should be dealt with swiftly to ensure proper recovery from miscarriage.

What Are the Risks Involved With a D and C?
While significant risks and complications with a D and C are rare, sometimes they do occur. These include:

- Perforation of the uterus
- Damage to the cervix
- Reactions to anesthesia
- Heavy bleeding
- Scar tissue development in the uterus, known as Asherman’s syndrome
- Infection

How to Prepare Your Body for a D and C
Oftentimes, D and Cs happen directly after a miscarriage. The procedure is usually scheduled relatively soon after the loss and there isn’t a lot of time for extended preparation. Focusing on a nutrient-dense, non-inflammatory diet is crucial. I recommend drinking collagen-rich bone broth to provide essential, easily assimilated nutrition for the body.

Probiotics: Because a D and C is pretty invasive surgery, the vaginal microbiota can be compromised. Consider taking a therapeutic soil or spore-based probiotic to restore and protect the flora in the vaginal and pelvic area. Fermented food such as sauerkraut and kimchi also offer beneficial microbes. Consuming probiotics will strengthen the immune system and the flora in the genital region to avoid yeast infections or other infections from the procedure.

The Day of Surgery
There are a few things to keep in mind on the day of a D and C procedure. Depending on what your doctor tells you, you will likely need to abstain from food for a period of time before surgery. If you are able, consume beverages that are high in electrolytes such as coconut water and bone broth.

Keeping yourself grounded is vitally important. While the conventional medical system offers many wonderful, life-saving treatments to our modern lives, it’s important to remember that surgery is a significant medical intervention. Taking time for gratitude and prayer or meditation will help to foster emotional well-being as you enter into the procedure. If possible, walk barefoot on the grass to bolster yourself with grounding energy before arriving at the hospital.

Recovery
Most of the time, recovery is fairly smooth after a D and C. For the first couple weeks after a D and C, you should prioritize rest and recovery. You will likely feel tired after surgery, so listen to your body and rest as needed. Furthermore, sexual intercourse should be avoided along with anything else being inserted into the vagina such as tampons or menstrual cups. Light bleeding and spotting should be expected, so have quality, organic pads and pantyliners on hand. Bleeding should subside within two weeks.

Diet
Consuming a nutrient-dense, non-inflammatory diet is crucial when recovering from

surgery to manage inflammation and provide the necessary nutrients for the body to restore. Focus on quality fats, proteins, fiber, fruits, and vegetables.

Continue to take probiotics and eat fermented foods to nourish the vaginal microbiota.

Sipping on red raspberry and stinging nettle tea or bone broth can help rebuild the body. Stinging nettle and red raspberry tea help tone the uterus and provide necessary nutrients to nourish the body and uterus. Bone broth is particularly healing due to its rich amino acid profile to calm inflammation and support tissue recovery.

If you lost a lot of blood due to miscarriage or surgery, rebuilding the blood is primary importance. Iron-rich foods such as grass-fed and pasture-raised meats, liver, free-range egg yolks, figs, dates, dark leafy greens, and blackstrap molasses can help to restore iron levels in the blood.

Folate
Folate is a crucial vitamin for after a miscarriage and surgery. It’s also important if you hope to pursue a healthy pregnancy. It promotes egg quality, methylation, normal follicle degradation, corpus luteal degradation, normal endometrial shedding, fertilization, embryo development, and implantation.

Essential Fatty Acids
DHA and EPA are required for the developing baby, especially for the development of the brain. Be sure to augment essential fatty acids status by eating wild-caught oily fish, avocados, coconut oil, flaxseed, chia seeds, and walnuts.

Additionally, many turn to quality fish oils to calm inflammation after surgery. In fact, fish oils have been shown to reduce inflammatory cytokines and modulate the immune system postoperatively.

Anti Inflammatories
Anti-inflammatory compounds such as curcumin and resveratrol help to calm inflammation within the body. Reducing inflammation may help to prevent scar tissue and adhesion after surgery. Not only that, these compounds help bolster the immune system.

Vitamin C
The body needs vitamin C to make collagen needed for skin, blood vessels, bones, muscles, tendons, ligaments, teeth, and hair. It’s helpful for your body to rebuild after surgery. Not only that, vitamin C is a potent antioxidant that helps the body clear free radicals that can accumulate due to surgery. Taking 1,000 mg twice a day leading up to surgery and after can help speed recovery.

Arnica Montana
If you experience significant cramping, the homeopathic remedy Arnica Montana can help ease pain. Use a 30c potency for the first 48 hours after surgery. Take 4 to 5 tablets every 2 to 4 hours.

2 Weeks After Surgery
After two weeks or you have been cleared by your doctor, there are some other strategies to promote healing to the reproductive system.

Castor Oil Packs
Utilizing castor oil packs therapeutically after a D and C can help optimize uterine function. In fact, castor oil packs have been used for centuries to promote wellness within the body, especially within the reproductive system.

Soak a piece of organic cotton flannel with a few tablespoons of castor oil and place it over the uterus. Use a hot water bottle or heating pad over the fabric. Sometimes it’s nice to have another layer of cloth of a piece of unbleached wax paper to protect the heating device from castor oil.

As the castor oil is absorbed into the skin, it enhances circulation to the area and promotes healing of the uterus (and any other gland or organ beneath). When performed specifically for fertility, castor oil packs can promote the health of the uterus, ovaries, and fallopian tubes. They also foster detoxification and egg quality. Castor oils packs are done

Taking time for gratitude and prayer or meditation will help to foster emotional well-being as you enter into the procedure.

Manage inflammation with good fats, protein, fruits, and vegetables.

Fish oils can calm inflammation and modulate the immune system.

1,000 MG
Taking 1,000 mg of vitamin C twice a day leading up to surgery and after can help speed recovery.

in 60- to 90-minute increments up to four times a week.

Fertility Massage
Fertility massage is a non-invasive therapy designed to bring the organs within the abdominal area back into alignment, releasing pressure and strengthening the surrounding muscles and ligaments. Similar to castor oil packs, fertility massage can increase circulation to the reproductive organs and therefore optimize their function. Not only can this form of deep, yet gentle massage support fertility, it can also be used to regulate menstrual cycles.

You can learn how to perform a self-massage to promote optimal fertility. Furthermore, there are various therapists that do womb and fertility massage.

Symptoms of Concern After a D and C
Typically, your doctor will want to see you within two weeks of having a D and C. While fatigue and light bleeding and spotting are normal after this procedure, there are symptoms to watch out for. If you experience any of the following, contact your doctor immediately.

- Fever over 100.4 degrees
- Chills
- Dizziness
- Heavy bleeding
- Bleeding that lasts over two weeks
- Prolonged or severe cramping
- Unusual or foul-smelling discharge

Your Menstrual Cycle After a D and C
After a D and C, the uterine lining will build up in the uterus, just as it does after a normal menstrual cycle. Your cycle may arrive early, as expected, or late. Usually, women experience their first cycle within the first 2 to 6 weeks.

Bleeding may be heavier than normal and you may experience clotting for the first cycle or two after a D and C. If you hope to conceive another baby, the standard recommendation is to wait two menstrual cycles after a D and C before trying to give the body a chance to restore.

Hope
If you have had a D and C due to a miscarriage, be encouraged that it is highly unlikely to impact your future fertility. In fact, after a couple months, many women go on to have healthy, full-term pregnancies.

While many of the causes of miscarriage are unknown, sometimes underlying factors can contribute to the likelihood of having a miscarriage. Factors such as hormone imbalance, thyroid concerns, infections, and inflammation can impact fertility. If you suspect this to be the case for your body, reach out to a skilled functional medicine practitioner to help you restore optimal fertility.

Dr. Ashley Turner is a traditionally-trained naturopath and board-certified doctor of holistic health for Restorative Wellness Center. An expert in functional medicine, Turner is the author of the gut-healing guide “Restorative Kitchen and Restorative Traditions,” a cookbook comprised of non-inflammatory holiday recipes.

While a D and C is a generally safe procedure, there are things you can do to prepare well and recover quicker.

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FOOD AS MEDICINE

The Healing Power of Papaya

This tropical fruit's healing properties are a beautiful expression of nature's wisdom

EMMA SUTTIE

When my children were little, we lived in the mountains of Costa Rica. Papayas, mangoes, and bananas grew in the wild, and we could walk outside and eat them off the nearest tree. The people there used local plants to remedy common conditions and were always happy to share their knowledge with a new mother hungry for their wisdom. Learning about Chinese herbs and the healing power of food in school was one thing, but putting it into practice in one of the most biodiverse places on Earth was quite another. It was a dream come true. I went for many walks with a local medicine man who showed me the healing properties of every plant, tree, fruit, and berry. I discovered that Costa Rica is a place where people have a deep reverence for nature; they cherish and nurture it. In return, it feeds and supports them. Nature isn't something people "visit" on the weekends; it's intrinsic to their life. And having an intimate knowledge of the natural world around you isn't just healthy; it can be a matter of life and death.

Knowledge Is Power
Dengue fever is common in Central America and occurs mainly at lower altitudes (below 7,500 feet) throughout the rainy season, which spans from May to November. Dengue is a disease caused by a virus transmitted via the female mosquito. Because Costa Rica has so much water and an almost biblical rainy season, diseases transmitted via mosquitoes are common. Dengue can be asymptomatic, but it also presents with flu-like symptoms, such as a sudden high fever; pain behind the eyes; muscle, joint, and bone pain; severe headaches; and rashes with red spots. There's a dangerous and terrifying Dengue hemorrhagic fever that I remember learning about in school. You don't want to get that one. It's symptoms include severe abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, convulsions, a high fever, and uncontrolled bleeding. It can be excruciating and fatal. But, there's a remedy for Dengue fever: papaya—the ubiquitous tropical fruit. Leaves from the papaya plant are made into a tea to treat Dengue fever.



Papaya is a fruit with multiple missions: to nourish, heal, and cleanse.



Papayas are famous for the digestive enzyme papain, which breaks down proteins and helps promote a robust digestive system.

Papaya has powerful healing abilities and, in Chinese medicine, benefits the lungs, spleen, and stomach in particular.

If you have high energy babies and children to feed, fresh or mashed papaya is a good staple.

Studies show that papaya leaf extract increases platelet levels and white blood cell count while reducing fever duration and incidences of progression into the hemorrhagic variety, making papaya leaves an excellent treatment for viral pathogens. Those findings are included in a BMJ discussion of Dengue fever. "A large amount of biomedical research has been done on this subject, including three [randomized] control clinical trials," the BMJ article reads. When you are more than an hour away from the closest clinic, these things matter. Knowing what plants do can lessen the severity and duration of an illness and, in some cases, save your life. Of course, you might not have fresh papaya growing on nearby trees, and you might not have any concerns about Dengue fever, either. But having a papaya around might still come in handy. Papaya is famous for its wound-healing capabilities, another bit of wisdom that's important when living remotely, and infections can be dangerous. Papaya skin can be applied directly to wounds to help them heal more quickly. Papayas are rich in vitamin A—a fat-soluble vitamin essential for healthy skin, mucus membranes, and vision. Papayas are also abundant in vitamin C, containing one and a half times the recommended daily amount per serving, allowing them to fight infections and serve as a powerful antioxidant, accelerating the healing process.

Papaya in Chinese Medicine
In Chinese medicine, foods and herbs have a thermal temperature, which affects the body once ingested. Papaya is considered neutral, and its flavors are both sweet and sour. Sour foods are considered slightly astringent, while sweet ones generally strengthen the body. Papaya has powerful healing abilities and, in Chinese medicine, benefits the lungs, spleen, and stomach in particular. In Eastern medicine, papaya is used as a general tonic to improve digestion and stimulate the appetite. During my years in Costa Rica, I had high-energy babies to feed, and one of my staple baby foods was fresh mashed papaya. In Eastern philosophy, papayas benefit digestion, which is often sensitive in babies because they're still developing. Both parent and child appreciate anything that can calm an upset stomach or stave off a bout of diarrhea or constipation. Papayas also boost the immune system, which is helpful when you have two babies running around in remote mountain jungles. Papayas' ability to increase milk production for lactating mothers meant that I ate my share of them as well. They're an incredibly versatile fruit. Here's a list of papayas healing properties in Chinese medicine: heals skin lesions, lubricates the lungs, cleans the intestines, supports the eyes, benefits the skin, treats cough, aids digestion, kills intestinal worms, strengthen the

bones, boosts the immune system, and increases milk production in lactating women.

Papaya skin is applied topically in wound healing, and its seeds are used to expel parasites. Papayas are spicy enough to substitute for black pepper, and its bark and stems make rope. Papayas are famous for the digestive enzyme papain, which breaks down proteins and helps promote a robust digestive system. This digestive enzyme also helps calm inflammatory conditions, such as asthma and arthritis, and cleans the intestines. Papain also breaks down deposits on the teeth, clears mucus from the body, and is a potent anti-parasitic.

Papain is so powerful at breaking down proteins that it's extracted and sold to tenderize meat. Papaya moistens the lungs, alleviates coughing, and remedies asthma. In Chinese medicine, the lungs and skin share a connection, so it's interesting that papaya is beneficial for many skin conditions and moisturizes and beautifies the entire body's skin.

Papaya also contains carpine, a compound known for its anti-tumor properties. Tumors in Chinese medicine are considered abnormal accumulations caused by an excess of dampness in the body. Papaya is known for "draining damp" and treats many diseases resulting from excess internal moisture, such as candida overgrowth, parasites, growths, tumors, cysts, and obesity. Living in hot, damp climates makes one more susceptible to these conditions. I learned that the locals did parasite cleanses about twice per year when I lived in Central America. In that part of the world, parasites are a normal part of life. A saying goes, "If you have a pulse, you have parasites." In these types of climates, because of the heat and moisture, parasites thrive, and doing regular cleanses keeps your immune system strong and fends off foreign invaders. The digestive enzyme papain found in papayas is a powerful vermicide capable of killing most intestinal worms, including tapeworms. Papaya seeds are also an extremely effective treatment for cleansing the body of parasites.

The versatility of papaya still astounds me. It's so beautifully poetic that the conditions that flourish in hot damp climates can be treated and cured by something that grows there. That isn't an accident: It's the beauty of nature and its infinite wisdom. The local people's deep knowledge about the healing gifts the environment provides was humbling and a blessing to experience. My time spent in Costa Rica was a powerful lesson that people were practicing all of the learning I had done from books and many years of practice.

Emma Suttie is an acupuncture physician and founder of Chinese Medicine Living—a website dedicated to sharing how to use traditional wisdom to live a healthy lifestyle in the modern world. She has lived in four countries and now works through her practice Thrive Consulting. She's a lover of the natural world, martial arts, and a good cup of tea.

It's so beautifully poetic that the conditions that flourish in hot damp climates can be treated and cured by something that grows there.

Papaya is famous for its wound-healing capabilities, a bit of wisdom that's important when living remotely, and infections can be dangerous.

Are These Toxic Chemicals Making You Fat?

If you are finding it hard to lose weight, it may be time to look at obesogens

Continued from Page 9

According to the WHO, in 2016, nearly 2 billion adults over the age of 18 were overweight or obese worldwide, a number that has tripled in the past 40 years. And this trend seems to be getting worse: Since the end of 2019, global public health policies that have encouraged people to "stay home to stay safe" have exacerbated the problem. Indeed, data collected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed that the obesity rates in 16 states are at 35 percent or higher. A fear of going outside, a reduction in activity levels, financial concerns, and emotional stress may all be partly to blame for America's burgeoning waistlines. "Eat my emotions," confessed one friend in explanation of his rapid weight gain. While many who are overweight enjoy good health, being overweight or obese can impair fertility, cause back and joint pain, and even interfere with proper lung functioning. According to Harvard School of Public Health, people who are obese are at increased risk of arthritis, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, depression, and other mood disorders. There are also several studies that link obesity with poor health outcomes from COVID-19.

Obesogens May Be Making You Fat
Weight questions are notoriously complicated. Cultural differences and cultural preferences, food choices, along with genetics, lifestyle, psychological disorders, a history of trauma, childhood attachment issues, and exposure to advertising all seem to play a role. But there is another factor to weight gain and obesity that medical doctors and research scientists have identified more recently: Certain toxic chemicals can be so disruptive to human health that they actually promote obesity. These chemicals, called obesogens, are thought to disrupt our hormones and change the way we make, store, and metabolize fat. When we are exposed to obesogens, even if we eat a moderate number of calories, exercise daily, and maintain an active lifestyle, it's very difficult, if not impossible, for our bodies to maintain a healthy weight. In laboratory experiments, researchers have been able to take genetically identical animals, such as rats, that also have identical "lifestyles," feed them identical food, and change their weight gain depending on the substances they are exposed to, such as antibiotics. Antibiotics are a known obesogen, used by cattle ranchers and farmers to make their animals gain weight.

Obesogens You May Be Exposed To
There is a long list of these chemicals in your environment, but the ones listed below are relatively more common.

Atrazine: A widely used herbicide in the United States, atrazine was banned in Italy and Germany in 1991. In 2003, the European Union announced it would no longer be allowed because of "ubiquitous and unpreventable water contamination." Atrazine isn't only dangerous to plants, it has been linked to birth defects and endocrine disruption. In 2009, a team of Korean scientists uncovered that atrazine damages the mitochondria (the organelles in our cells that are responsible for giving us energy), decreases metabolism, and increases insulin resistance and abdominal obesity. Another widely publicized study that was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in 2010 found that atrazine exposure leads to chemical castration in male frogs.

Bisphenol-A: BPA is a chemical used in plastics that is known to be an estrogen disruptor. Several scientific studies—in both humans and mammals—have linked BPA exposure with obesity and unwanted weight gain. This ubiquitous chemical has also been associated with a variety of other health problems,



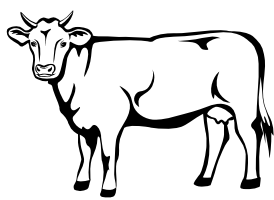
Check your beauty products, shampoos, and soaps for toxic chemicals. It's better to use natural alternatives with real ingredients.

including thyroid disorders, diabetes, and cancer. The kicker: Many of the compounds used to replace BPA have turned out to be even more problematic. When a research team tested BPA alternatives, it found "some of the BPA alternatives were actually more potent than BPA itself in activating the estrogen receptor," notes the Environmental Protection Agency's summary of the research. Another good reason to use glass whenever possible.

Glyphosate: The main ingredient in the herbicide Roundup, glyphosate has been found to be responsible for a host of health issues. Most notably, it increases the risk of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a cancer of the blood. Several studies have also linked glyphosate to obesity, both directly and indirectly. In one particularly interesting study, published in the journal Nature in 2019, scientists at Washington State University found that pregnant rats that were exposed to very low doses of glyphosate had grandpups and even great-grandpups with severe health problems, including damaged ovaries and testes, malformed kidneys, and high rates of obesity. According to Pamela Coleman, a farm and food policy analyst at The Cornucopia Institute, "Glyphosate interferes with fundamental biochemical reactions and may predispose humans to obesity, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and other health problems." Coleman explained that glyphosate compromises the integrity of the bacteria in the human gastrointestinal tract, depleting the body of essential amino acids, including tyrosine, tryptophan, and phenylalanine.

Organotins: These chemicals are used in industry to preserve wood, inhibit the growth of organisms on the hulls of ships, and as industrial fungicides. Because of the widespread use of organotins such as tributyltin in the shipping industry, many waterways are contaminated with it. It was found to have "severe effects on marine life including inducing imposex, which resulted in reproductive deficiencies," notes an article in Toxicoeigenetics. Identified as an obesogen by a scientist at The Center for Complex Biological Systems at the University of California—Irvine in 2014, tributyltin is believed to be toxic to humans and an obesogen because it mimics the body's naturally occurring hormones. Because it has persisted in the ocean, it's found in fish prepared for human consumption. Other studies have associated organotins with fatty liver disease, increased fat cells during gestation, and kidney problems.

PFOA: That sauté pan that is so easy to clean because of its non-stick surface? It contains perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), a chemical found in Teflon pans and also in microwave popcorn and many other packaged foods. PFOA and other chemicals like it are also found in drinking water. In November 2021, the Environmental Protection Agency announced that PFOA likely causes cancer and that harm to human health can occur at much lower



Antibiotics are a known obesogen, used by cattle ranchers and farmers to make their animals gain weight.

These chemicals, called obesogens, are thought to disrupt our hormones and change the way we make, store, and metabolize fat.

According to the WHO, in 2016, nearly 2 billion adults over the age of 18 were overweight or obese worldwide, a number that has tripled in the past 40 years.

Replace plastic food storage containers with glass containers.



levels than previously believed. Unfortunately, a study done in 2007 by scientists based in Atlanta found that more than 98 percent of Americans tested had these chemicals in their blood.

Phthalates: These chemicals are plasticizers, used to soften plastic and make it more pliable. Phthalates are used in many different consumer products including food storage containers, pharmaceuticals, paint, shower curtains, and even make-up and other cosmetics. Your conventional antiperspirant, hair spray, lotion, nail polish, and shampoo are all likely to contain phthalates. As does some plastic flooring. These chemicals, especially when they are heated, can seep out of plastic and into our food and water. A 2012 study done by researchers in Sweden also found that infants can absorb phthalates through their skin and lungs. Phthalates, like other obesogens, can disrupt your hormones, affect your metabolism, and cause unwanted weight gain. Several studies, including some done of pregnant women and children, have found that the higher levels of phthalates you have in your body the more likely you are to be obese.

How to Avoid Obesogens
If you are struggling to lose excess weight, it may be that your metabolism has been impaired by toxic exposures. Because we are living in a world full of obesogens, if you want to lose weight, it may not be enough to exercise more and eat less. That conventional advice often doesn't work. If this is your experience, you should consciously and deliberately avoid endocrine-disrupting chemicals in your food, water, medicine cabinet, and beauty products.

Pillage Your Plastic
Replace plastic food storage containers with glass containers. Change out plastic sandwich bags for cloth or paper sandwich bags. Buy nut butters and jams, preferably organic, in glass jars instead of in plastic. You can also bring your own glass container to many natural food stores and grind the peanuts or almonds into butter on demand. Since heating plastic causes it to release more toxic chemicals, don't microwave any food that has a plastic film or is in a plastic container; and never clean plastic dishware or cutlery in the dishwasher. When you buy fresh fruits and vegetables, skip the plastic bags. Use cloth mesh bags instead or put the food on the conveyer belt and then directly into your reusable non-plastic grocery bag. If you have little ones, stop using plastic diapers. Finally, don't drink water or other beverages from plastic bottles. Bring your own beverage in a stainless steel container or buy drinks in glass bottles instead.

Eat Real Food
Eat only real, whole, healthy, fresh food. Try to buy fresh food that is organically grown, even if it is more expensive, as much as you can. Alternately, get your food directly from local farmers who don't spray their fields with obesogens or other toxic chemicals.

Clean Out Your Cabinets
Audit your beauty products, shampoos, and soaps for toxic chemicals. Use natural alternatives—read the ingredient lists!—or try making your own. Keep in mind that even your toothpaste and dental floss may contain endocrine-disrupting chemicals and obesogens. You can solve this problem by brushing your teeth with baking soda, using natural home remedies for teeth-whitening, or buying an organic tooth paste or tooth powder.

Filter Your Water
Given how ubiquitous obesogens are, toxicologists say that it is important to filter drinking water. Choose a water filtration system that removes PFOA and other chemicals like it. The Environmental Working Group recommends using a reverse osmosis filter for drinking water as a first choice and an activated carbon filter as a second, less expensive remedy.

Throw Away Non-Stick Pans
Replace your non-stick cookware with stainless steel and cast iron. While you're at it, liberate your kitchen from any plastic utensils. The last thing you want is to heat up plastic and have the toxic chemicals leaching into your food.

Jennifer Margulis, Ph.D., an award-winning science journalist and book author, is a frequent contributor to the Epoch Times. A sought-after speaker, she has worked on a child survival campaign in Niger, West Africa; spoken out against child slavery on prime time television in Paris; and taught post-colonial literature to non-traditional college students in Atlanta. Learn more at JenniferMargulis.net



An experience of beauty can change who we are and what we do with our lives.

Beauty: The Forgotten Part of Wellness

Beauty is balm to our souls and an uplifting force in our world

DONNA MARTELLI

When I was a little girl of about 10 years of age, my dad took me to see a performance by The National Ballet of Canada, a professional company that visited our town. When we arrived at the theater, we showed our tickets to an usher, who directed us to the row where our seats were located.

We climbed over several pairs of legs before collapsing in our seats. An atmosphere of elegant expectation amid the hum of human voices surrounded us. Soon the lights dimmed, the crowd hushed, and the orchestra began to play. The color of the costumes and scenery, the sound of the majestic music, and the art of human expression carried me away into a magical land of perfection. Sheer beauty flooded my soul. That evening of beauty changed the direction of my life.

When we behold beauty, if only in our eyes as the “beholder,” we experience a balm to our souls. I realize that my ballet experience may do nothing for you, but you have your own beauty needs. I believe that’s a fundamental component of our well-being.

“Art and beauty can serve as counterstrike forces against the darkening despair of decay, destruction, and death,” said Randall Flinn, my friend and director of Ad Deum Dance Company, which is located in Houston. “These gifts can serve as signposts of redemptive hope and healing as we wait for the ultimate renewal of all creation.”

Do we not long in the depths of our souls for our world to be redeemed, for all of cre-

ation to be restored to its original beauty?

I discovered an exciting insight into beauty by John-Mark L. Miravalle, professor of Systematic and Moral Theology at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary in Maryland. He’s the author, most recently, of “How To Feel Good and How Not To” (Sophia Institute Press, 2020).

In an article for Crisis Magazine, he wrote that beauty has two components: order and surprise.

“Order is the metaphysical part of beauty,” Miravalle wrote. “It is historically expressed by such terms as ‘regularity,’ ‘symmetry,’ ‘perfection,’ ‘integrity,’ and ‘proportion.’ It occurs when a thing is and acts in accord with its own nature.”

“Surprise is the psychological part of beauty and is historically expressed by such terms as ‘newness,’ ‘freshness,’ ‘marvelousness,’ and ‘brilliance.’ Surprise happens when the attention of the human mind is arrested by something it does not find obvious.

“Put these two parts together, and you have an aesthetic experience. You are startled by the goodness of reality, astonished by things working the way they’re supposed to, and delighted by the truth.”

In my childhood experience of the ballet, everything about it was regular, symmetrical, orderly, and in accord with its nature. Additionally, the element of surprise took my breath away.

Joy Comes from Beauty

Beholding what’s beautiful to us causes joy to blossom in our hearts. Joy delights us as it gives us new outlooks and perspectives. It encourages us to go onward with the new ideas flooding our brains. We see that thing that we thought was out of reach is indeed attainable. It gives us the courage to step out into new adventures.

This can have a direct effect on our well-being.

“The aim of aesthetics is to bring pleasure, joy, comfort, hope, and beauty and, in addition to all this, to strengthen self-experience of a human being.”

L. Kilvensalmi

Discussing the importance of aesthetics in nursing, L. Kilvensalmi wrote, “The aim of aesthetics is to bring pleasure, joy, comfort, hope, and beauty and, in addition to all this, to strengthen self-experience of a human being.”

“Aesthetics can promote health of a human being and improve the quality of life.”

Strength Comes From Beauty

The joy of beauty brings us strength. When we think of the word “strength,” we usually think of physical strength, and indeed, joy brings that to us. But there’s more. Strength isn’t only in the body, it’s also in the mind and in the soul. Strength can be resilience, patience, courage, integrity, and fidelity.

Beauty lightens our hearts even as it emboldens us to persevere. Beauty uplifts us and gives us a reason to strive forward. The joy it brings reminds us of the inherent value of this life.

When our strength comes from beauty and joy rather than ugliness and hatred, we have creative power. That other

strength feeds our destructive capacity, but strength inspired by beauty and joy promises that our creative potential will bring delight to others.

And when our hearts are light and inspired by beauty, our mind is calm and our soul is enlivened. Could there be a more healthful state than this?



Beauty emboldens us to persevere. It reminds of the inherent value of this life.

Donna Martelli is formerly a professional dancer with the Harkness Ballet of New York. She lives in Indianapolis and is married with five children and 12 grandchildren. She is the author of three books, including “When God Says Drop It” and “Why the Dance.”

Where Does Motivation Come From?

Context is key when it comes to staying motivated toward long-term goals

MIKE DONGHIA

One cool thing about being a parent is that your children occasionally help you to see something in an entirely new light.

This happened to me not long ago, when our daughter became quite upset after I asked her to clean up. She wanted to keep playing, so she got angry at me and said a few unkind words.

After dishing out a mild consequence, we sat and talked about it. I asked her one of those “parent” questions that may or may not be helpful, but you know, sometimes you’re genuinely curious.

I asked her if she acted that way at school when the teacher asked her to clean up. And, without intending an ounce of disrespect toward me, she said, “Of course not, that would be embarrassing.”

It’s not that I had never considered how contextual motivation could be, I had just never heard it said so clearly and without any pretense.

My Personal Contradictions

When it comes to motivation, I’ve long found the topic to be a bit mysterious, and I’ve observed two contradictions in my own life.

I have big goals, but no motivation. How is it that I can have such a strong desire to achieve some future goal, but so little motivation to work on it today?

For most of my adult life, I’ve lived with the assumption that my distant desires and goals would automatically translate into short-term motivation, eventually. I thought motivation came from my goals and trickled down into some emotional state I called “motivated.”

But with my own behavior, it was as if I woke up each morning as an entirely new version of myself. “Today Mike” is pretty clever and recognizes that he can have the best of both worlds: I can have the satisfaction of dreaming that I will (someday) achieve my goal, while not having to deal with any actual work or discomfort today. “Future Mike” would take care of that.

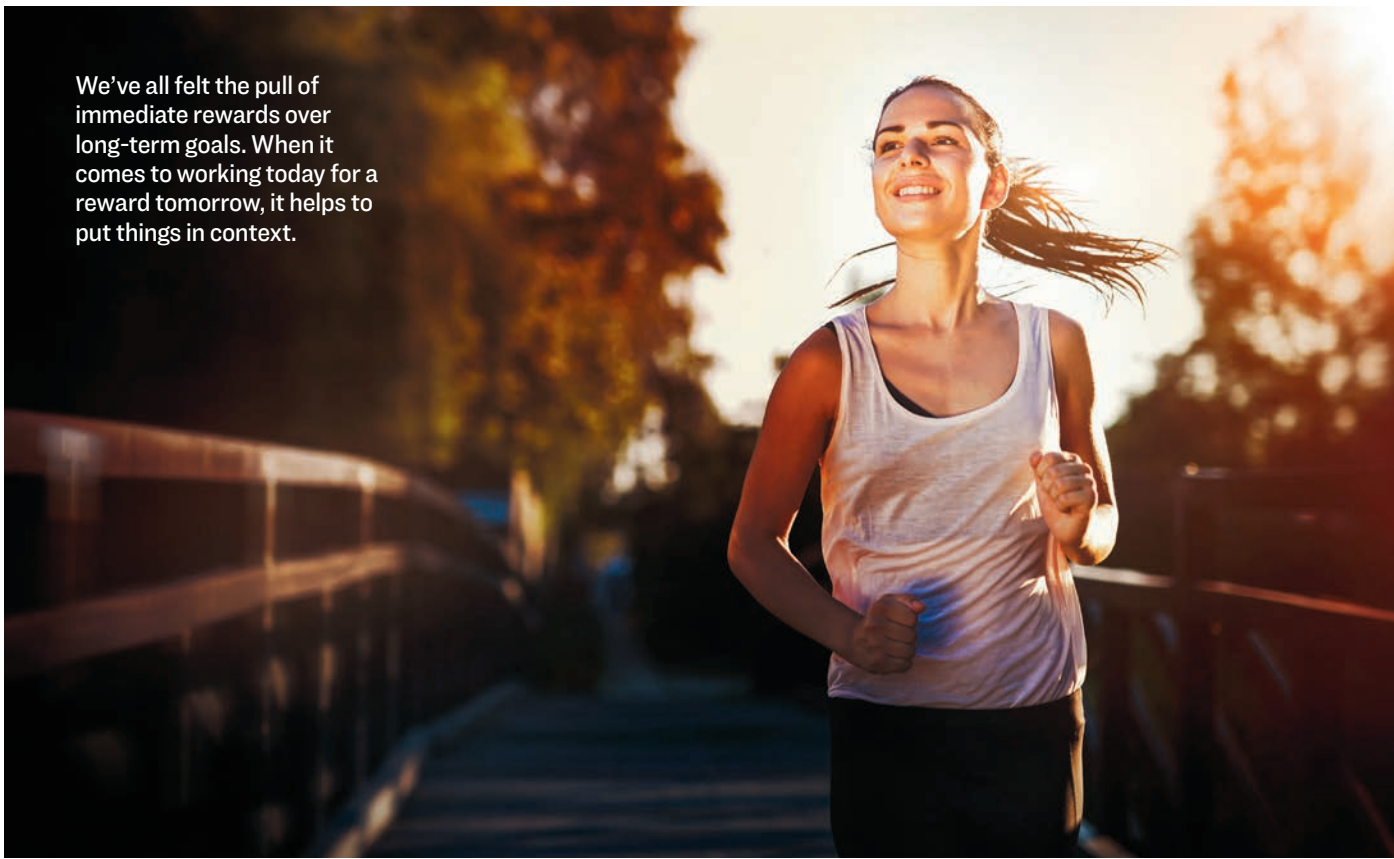
Of course, on any one day, this is a perfectly rational position to hold. My actions today don’t matter in the grand scheme. But if I held this position every day, I would never reach my goal.

The other contradiction is no more helpful.

I can be motivated in one area, but not another. How can I be so extremely motivated in some areas of my life, but not in others—even when both areas are important to me.

In high school and college, I was on my school’s cross country team. As part of the team, I was running anywhere from 50 to 60 miles per week for most of the year. During that period, I was also an avid reader, frequently reading between two and four books per month.

If that’s all you knew about me, you might assume that I was super disciplined across all areas of my life. And while I was very motivated and disciplined about running and personal reading, I would routinely procrastinate on school work and have to pull



We’ve all felt the pull of immediate rewards over long-term goals. When it comes to working today for a reward tomorrow, it helps to put things in context.

all-nighters to get my work done.

And the thing was, I wanted to get good grades and to succeed in school, but somewhere along the way, I learned that I could get good grades and procrastinate most of the time. That realization made it nearly impossible to become motivated to work on schoolwork until a deadline was imminent—and then I was motivated again.

Unfortunately, I carried some of this habit with me into my adulthood, and I’ve been working on making progress ever since.

The example of my daughter is just another way of looking at this same problem. Why did she have the self-control to clean up at school, but not at home?

Context Matters

Ever since my daughter made that comment, I keep returning to this idea of motivation being contextual.

My daughter knows that if she doesn’t clean up when we ask her, there’s almost always a consequence. Usually this means losing something that she enjoys, such as dessert or screen time.

So it’s not as if there was nothing in place at home to motivate her to clean up.

But apparently at school, there was something even stronger motivating her to clean up—fear of embarrassment. She didn’t want to look bad in front of her friends.

Same task, but with vastly different outcomes depending on the motivation of each context.

The same experience could be seen in my school work in college. When a paper wasn’t due for several weeks, I had no motivation to work on it. When the paper was due the next day, I was suddenly able to pull an all-nighter.

Same task, but with a vastly different response due to a changing context.

A Path Beyond Trying Harder

I’ll be the first to admit that motivation is

For most of my adult life, I’ve lived with the assumption that my distant desires and goals would automatically translate into short-term motivation, eventually.

still a puzzle that I’m working to solve—if solve is even the right word for something so complex. I’m writing about this topic, even as I’m learning it.

But one thing I have learned, which I think holds the key to even more understanding, is this: motivation is contextual. It’s produced by some combination of my inner beliefs, values, goals, and the environment I find myself in.

I no longer think it’s helpful to think of myself as a motivated or unmotivated person, but rather as someone who’s motivated by some contexts and not others.

When you think of the puzzle of motivation with this framework, it’s easy to see that simply trying harder is rarely the solution to not feeling motivated by a task—at least not in the long run.

Instead, you need to find the things that already motivate you and use them to fuel actions that move you toward your long-term goals.

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



While we may be diligent in one area of our life, like reading, we may be slack in others, like actually studying for school tests.

Green Buildings, Healthier People

Green buildings can boost productivity, well-being, and the health of workers



People love to be surrounded by plants, so it shouldn’t surprise us that green buildings make us happier and healthier.

MD SAZAN RAHMAN

Most people now recognize the energy savings benefits of green buildings. These buildings use less water, energy, and other natural resources. In some cases, they can increase biodiversity, produce their own energy, and reduce the urban heat island effect.

Recent research shows that green buildings can also improve the health and productivity of those who live or work inside them. In some cases, green buildings can produce the same benefits as spending time in nature, which can benefit people living in cold climates.

Green buildings cost 5 percent to 10 percent more than conventional buildings. But detailed analyses show that the small increase in building costs has noticeable benefits on the health and wellness of those working or living inside—or even just near—such buildings.

Energy Savings

Buildings with green roofs, green walls, green interior decoration, or those surrounded by green infrastructure are all considered to be green buildings. These buildings usually contain algae, grass, herbs, vegetables, or other leafy green or micro-green plants on

Studies show that people working or living in areas with high proportions of green roofs have better mental health, heal more quickly after an illness, and are more productive at work.

their interior or exterior surfaces.

Covering the roof of an uninsulated building with plants reduces the amount of energy used in heating by up to 5 percent in the winter and cooling by as much as 33 percent in the summer, which saves money. It also reduces daytime indoor temperature fluctuations in the absence of air conditioning.

Cities often have warmer air temperatures than the rural areas around them because their dark surfaces absorb the sun’s rays and radiate the heat. Green buildings can help reduce this urban heat island effect.

Computer modeling has shown that summer temperatures can be reduced by 2 Celsius if 7 percent of urban rooftops are green.

This dip in temperature comes with numerous benefits. Studies show that people working or living in areas with high proportions of green roofs have better mental health, heal more quickly after an illness, and are more productive at work.

Improved Air Quality

Indoor air pollution is one of the top five environmental risks to public health, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. High levels of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, PM10 (particulate matter with a diameter of 10 microns or less), and airborne microbes can contribute to serious respiratory illnesses.

A 20 percent increase in the surface area of green roofs and walls in downtown Toronto could meaningfully reduce the air levels of nitrogen dioxide, ozone, sulfur dioxide, and

PM10 and generate a savings of \$190,000 annually in terms of pollution removal.

One study shows that there were fewer mold spores and microbes in a room where houseplants covered a third of the floor space compared to a room with no houseplants. Plants also increase indoor humidity levels in dry climates, reducing the likelihood of dry eyes, itchy or scratchy throat, or chapped lips.

Faster Recoveries

Recent research has also shown that plants can help hospitalized patients heal faster.

A report by the Green Building Council of Australia found that hospitals with green infrastructure, such as an ornamental green wall, plants on every balcony, and large trees around the building, were linked to an 8.5 percent reduction in average hospital stays, a 15 percent acceleration in recovery time, an 11 percent reduction in the rate of secondary infections, and a 22 percent decrease in the need for pain medication.

Not only do buildings with plants help patients heal faster, but they also energize the doctors, nurses, and other staff who work there, and they provide aesthetic, acoustic, and air quality benefits.

Lower Emissions

Interior spaces with green walls, vertical gardens, or potted plants can reduce noise levels, which helps occupants concentrate on their work. Outdoor permeable surfaces, such as soil, rock wool, and vermiculite, as well as plants on buildings’ roofs and

Plants increase indoor humidity levels in dry climates, reducing the likelihood of dry eyes, itchy or scratchy throat, or chapped lips.

courtyards, reduce echos.

Green workplaces meet all the criteria of the “triple bottom line,” summarized as “people, planet, and profit.” These improve the health and well-being of people, improve energy efficiency, and boost productivity.

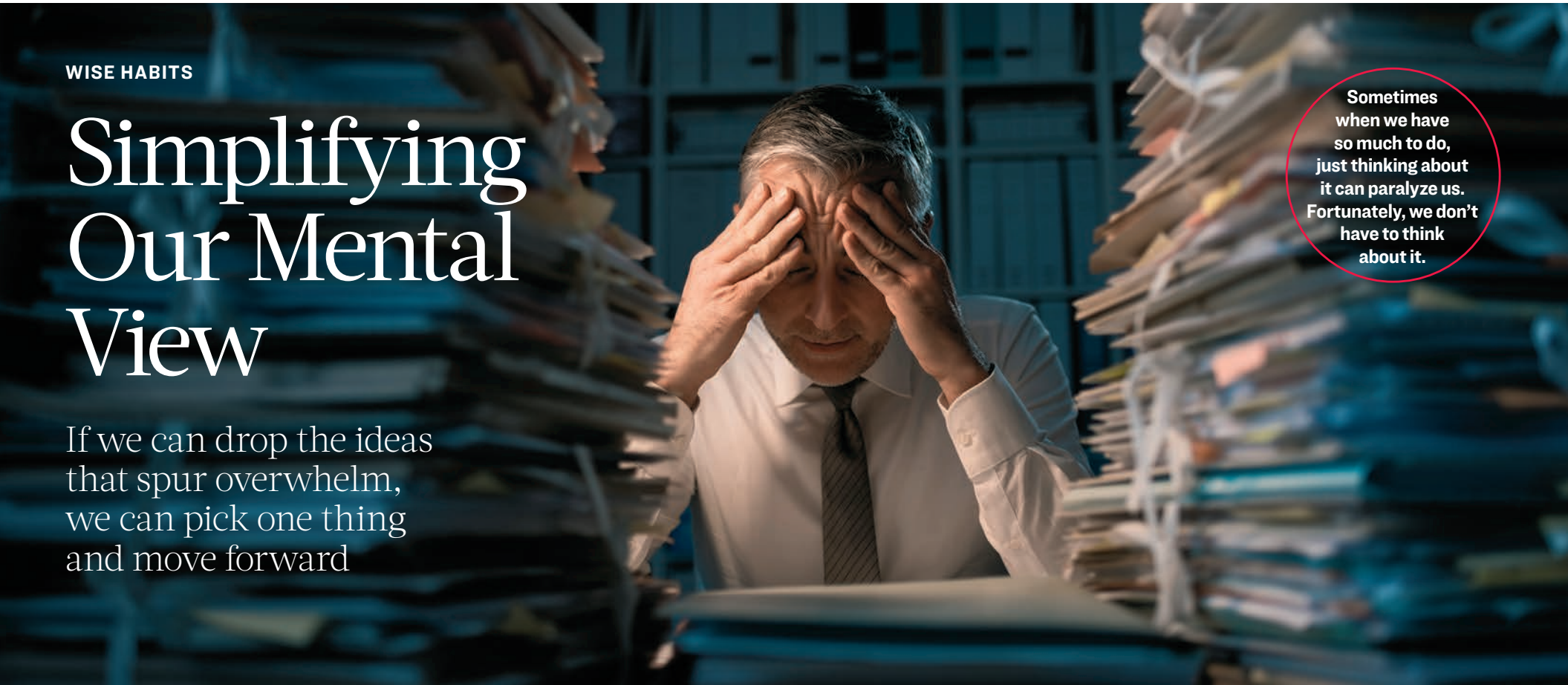
Green infrastructure has clear pollution benefits too. A study by the Green Building Council of Australia found that by adding green walls, roofs, and other low-energy interventions, such as using LED lights, adding more windows to increase the amount of daylight, and modifying ventilation systems to recover heat rather than expelling it outside, a green-certified building produces 62 percent fewer greenhouse gas emissions than an average Australian building.

It’s high time green buildings became the norm to improve well-being, air quality, and carbon emissions.

MD Sazan Rahman is a doctoral candidate in bioresource engineering at McGill University in Canada. This article was first published on The Conversation.



Interior spaces with green walls, vertical gardens, or potted plants can reduce noise levels, which helps occupants concentrate on their work.



WISE HABITS

Simplifying Our Mental View

If we can drop the ideas that spur overwhelm, we can pick one thing and move forward

Sometimes when we have so much to do, just thinking about it can paralyze us. Fortunately, we don't have to think about it.

LEO BABAUTA

I've found that nearly all of us make things harder and more complicated by adding a mental layer of difficulty.

We make simple things complicated with some of the following unhelpful tendencies.

Overwhelm: Doing one task at a time is pretty simple, but we get overwhelmed by all the things. We think about an entire list of things that we haven't done yet, and we feel stressed about it and end up feeling like we can't do any of it.

Beating ourselves up: If we didn't do what we thought we should do, we feel like we did things wrong, and we chastise ourselves for not doing things right. This discourages us from just simply starting again.

Frustration with another person: If people don't behave the way we want them to, we can get frustrated. That can then derail us from our intentions.

Fear about what might happen: Let's say you need to have a conversation with someone, but you're afraid of how they might react. You might put off that conversation because of that fear, instead of simply talking to them.

There's nothing wrong with doing all of

this—it's human. This is how our minds work.

However, if we bring awareness to our added mental layer, we can simplify it by letting go of that extra layer.

It's about doing things as simply as possible. Here are some areas where simplifying makes it easier to get past our mental barriers.

Decluttering: Most people overcomplicate it because they feel overwhelmed by how much there is to declutter in their house or office. What would it be like to let go of this layer of "there's so much!" and just start with one small area? Pick up one thing at a time in that area. Ask yourself if you use/love it or want to get rid of it, and put it in one of two piles. Repeat.

Email and messages: Like clutter, the idea of "there's so much!" can overwhelm us and stop us from simply acting. What if we let go of that mental layer and just spend 20 minutes taking messages and emails one at a time? Deal with each message before moving on. Repeat.

Tasks: We have so many things to do that it overwhelms us and stresses us out. This makes acting on things more difficult. Letting go of the idea of "there's too much," we can simply pick the most important thing

If we bring awareness to our added mental layer, we can simplify it by letting go of that extra layer.

to work on right now and focus only on that.

Habits such as exercise or meditation: We have a lot of ideas about how hard the exercise is or how we haven't been meditating as much as we "should" have been, and it creates extra stress. This adds an obstacle to just doing the exercise or meditation. What if we let all of that go and simply go out for a walk or did some pushups? What if we let all of that go and simply sat down to meditate for a few minutes? Habits can be that simple, without all of the extra mental layers.

I know it's not as simple as that, because letting go of the mental layers isn't always easy. But the point is that it could be simple. It could be much easier if we could let go of those layers.

So the practice is to repeatedly let go of the layers. Do things as simply as possible, not worrying about all of the usual thoughts about "shoulds" and "too much" and "it shouldn't be this way." By removing these extra mental layers, we can simplify our lives greatly.

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



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