

# MIND & BODY

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Direct-to-consumer advertising inflates demand for new and more expensive drugs.

## Selling Drugs and Diseases

Direct-to-consumer drug ads sell people on a cure for a disease they might not even have

66%

of the U.S. population takes at least one prescription drug.

SOURCE: GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

39%

of seniors take five or more prescriptions per day.

SOURCE: AGING CARE

MARTHA ROSENBERG

Many people like direct-to-consumer (DTC) “ask your doctor” drug ads on TV.

They enjoy the drama of the mini “sitcoms,” such as a woman with severe asthma who can finally go out again or a man whose depression lifts, and he starts playing with his puppy again. People can feel empowered by knowing the symptoms of diseases they might have and the treatments available—information that only doctors used to have. Few are dissuaded by the long list of drug side effects, such as “low white blood cell

**Drug ads have become a mainstay for news and entertainment media outlets.**

counts that may cause serious infections and death” or “severe inflammation of the lungs that can lead to death.”

DTC ads have become a mainstay for news and entertainment media outlets, constituting a big part of their advertising revenue. And of course, DTC ads and their related online “symptom checkers” have arguably been the biggest boon for drug makers ever—pharma companies increased their advertising fivefold in the decade after DTC advertising began in the United States in 1997, spending \$5.4 billion in 2007, according to the Boston Globe. Rather than relying solely on sales reps to sell a drug to harried doctors, drug makers

have enlisted suffering patients to “sell” the drug after seeing a DTC ad by asking a doctor for it.

Many drugs that people take daily in the United States—from statins to acid-reducing proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) to SSRI antidepressants—owe their success and name recognition to DTC advertising. No other country except New Zealand allows it. In fact, in 2022, Georgetown University reported that 66 percent of the U.S. population takes prescription drugs, and Aging Care reported that 39 percent of seniors take five or more prescriptions per day.

*Continued on Page 3*

## Critically Important and All but Ignored: Lymphatic Flow

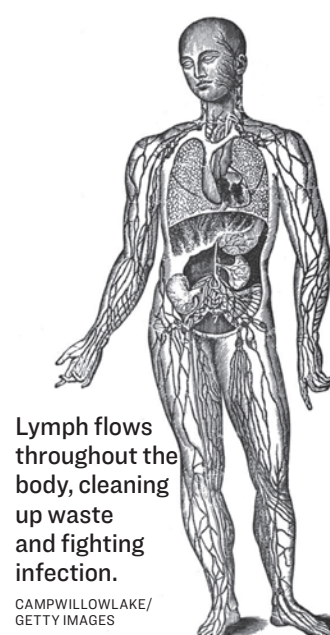
The lymphatic system is profoundly important and barely understood by the vast majority of people

GERALD M. LEMOLE

Evidence is rapidly growing that chronic inflammation plays a large part in causing chronic diseases such as cancer and cardiac, neurologic, and gastroenterological disorders.

Various diets, including vegetarian, low-fat, saturated fat, Paleo, vegan, lectin-free, and others are recommended to reduce inflammation. However, proponents of good health also suggest that in order to minimize the risk of these diseases and optimize one’s health, we must include exercise, stress modification, plenty of green vegetables, and smoking cessation in our lifestyle.

Isn’t it interesting that the same lifestyle changes are beneficial for all the chronic diseases? I believe that if we understood



Lymph flows throughout the body, cleaning up waste and fighting infection.

CAMPWILLOWLAKE/GETTY IMAGES

the how and why of these recommendations, we would more readily use them, and these recommendations would become commandments rather than suggestions.

This is why I wrote “Lymph and Longevity”—to explain how these recommendations help improve lymphatic flow by decreasing inflammation in all systems. I believe that when we understand a process, it’s much more likely to be incorporated into our life. So let’s go with the lymph flow on a short journey to see how it optimizes the health of all of the systems of the body, including the heart and vessels, the immune system, the nervous system, and the gastrointestinal system.

*Continued on Page 4*



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## How Your Neighborhood Affects Your Health

Exercise, diet, and daily habits are all influenced by the community we live in

LYNN JAFFEE

A couple of decades ago, I worked for a nonprofit that promoted girls' and women's health through physical activity. One project in particular still resonates with me, in which a neighborhood alliance contacted us regarding a local park that was being renovated by the city. The alliance wanted to ensure that the park was as accessible to girls and women in the neighborhood as it was for boys and men, and they wanted our help.

In its original form, the park featured several basketball courts, a baseball diamond, and an aging playground. Through our research and feedback from residents living near the park, we recommended a walking trail around the park, more girl-friendly components to the playground, and safety features such as landscaping that was more open, with mature trees rather than thick shrubbery, and better lighting.

The renovation of this park is a great example of how your neighborhood can either support or discourage your efforts to be healthy. In its original condition, the park's basketball courts were used as a hangout and were covered with litter and broken glass. There were few reasons for neighborhood residents to use it.

Beyond clean drinking water and regular trash removal, there are a number of factors related to where you live that have a very real effect on your health.

### Walkability and Heart Health

It's well-known that a lack of exercise can raise your risk for health conditions such as heart disease, obesity, and Type 2 diabetes. However, living in the suburbs, safety issues and the absence of sidewalks can be deterrents to getting outside and walking in your neighborhood—a simple and easy way to be active.

As communities expand outward into the suburbs and beyond, the distances between people's homes, stores, and workplaces make driving or riding public transportation unavoidable. Urban communities without sidewalks or safe places to walk reduce easy opportunities for residents to do physical activity, forcing them to find ways to exercise other than walking in their neighborhood.

### A number of communities are creating mixed-use neighborhoods.

### Green Space and Overall Health

There has been a great deal of research about the health benefits of spending time in green places, such as the woods or a park. Exposure to green space has been associated with decreased blood pressure, improved immunity, and lower levels of stress and the stress-related hormone cortisol. Some doctors now prescribe time in a local park to their patients.

Working out in green space can lower your level of perceived exertion, which means that a hard workout done in a park may feel easier, making your workout more effective. In addition, being active or having access to green or wooded areas feels good—it's more relaxing and enjoyable than being outdoors in areas that are devoid of trees and greenery.

### Health Impact of Blue Space

Living near water can also be a positive when it comes to your health. Whether you live near a pond in a city park, a small creek, a fountain, or the ocean, nearby blue space in the form of water can be good for you.

A research study involving 18,000 participants in 18 countries found that people who live near water report better mental and physical well-being. And other research has found that people who live near water have a lower risk of premature death, a decreased risk of being obese, and better mental health than subjects who don't live near the water.

### Communities that have access to local grocery stores, especially within walking distance, promote good nutrition.

Blue space is beneficial because the sight and sound of water are relaxing, but more importantly, living near a lake or the beach promotes physical activity in the form of walking, swimming, and paddling.

### Grocery Stores and Nutrition

Communities that have access to local grocery stores, especially within walking distance, promote good nutrition. However, many poorer urban communities tend to have more fast-food restaurants and fewer grocery stores, which has a very real effect on the nutritional status and overall health of residents.

A study in Sweden found that when people moved from an area with few fast-food restaurants to one with more, their risk for Type 2 diabetes rose significantly. Communities that lack grocery stores and local food markets also tend to be less walkable and contain fewer parks.

These are just a few examples of how your neighborhood can have an influence on both your physical and mental health. To some extent, cities are responding.

A number of communities are creating mixed-use neighborhoods. Some are building apartments that contain retail space on the ground floor, and others are creating pockets of retail and residential space. Some suburbs and even larger cities are recreating "main streets" that are near homes, but walkable to stores. Bike lanes, walking paths, and local parks are being built; water features are being added; and empty lots are being repurposed into gardens.

Whenever I drive by the city park that I played a small part in renovating, I smile—not because of my role, but because even 25 years ago, there were neighborhood residents who recognized the importance that a patch of green space could have on the health of the people who lived nearby, and they did something about it.

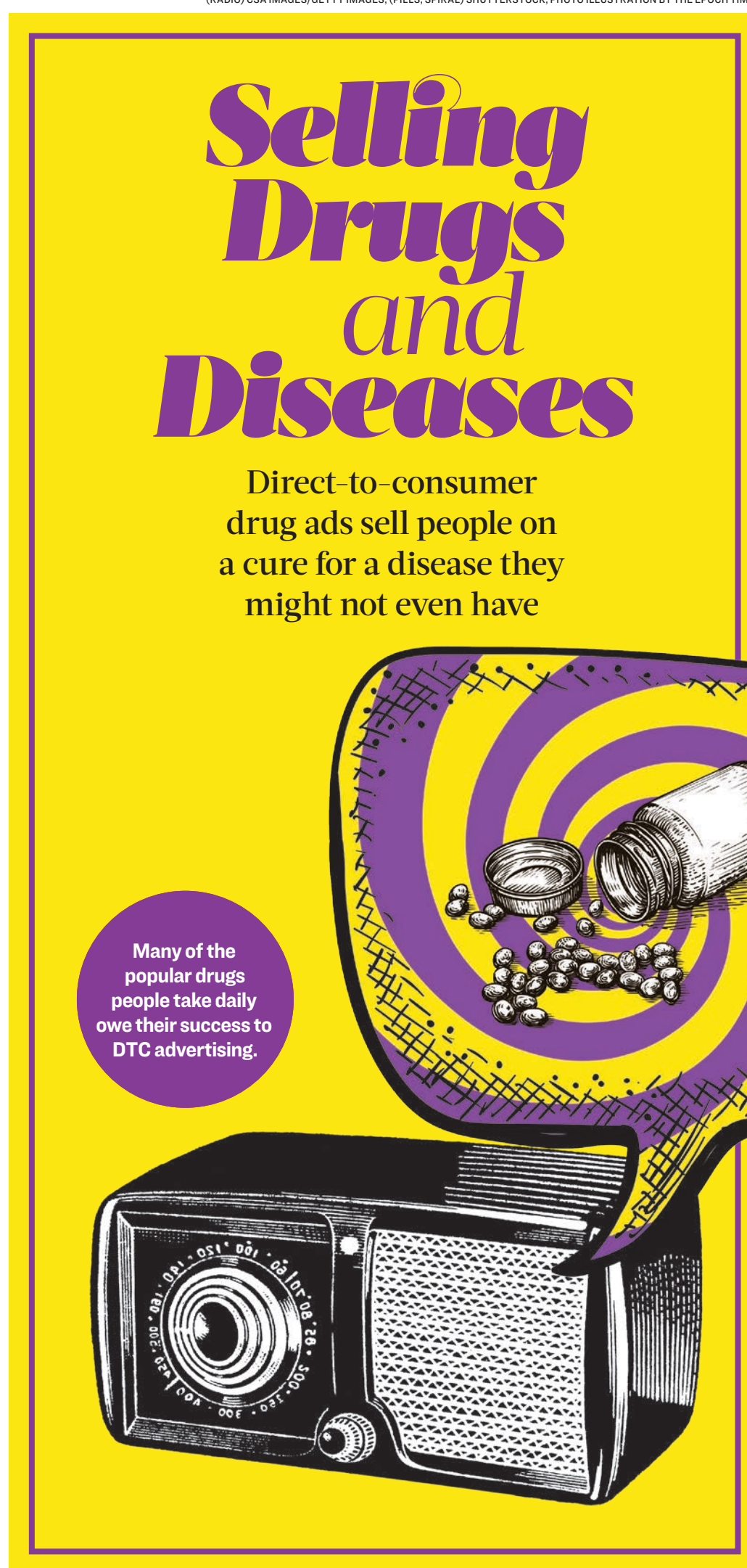
Lynn Jaffee is a licensed acupuncturist and the author of "Simple Steps: The Chinese Way to Better Health." This article was originally published on AcupunctureTwinCities.com

FOTODUETS/SHUTTERSTOCK



Living in a safe neighborhood with wide open spaces and minimal traffic will make it easier for you and your kids to get outside.

(RADIO) CSA IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES; (PILLS, SPIRAL) SHUTTERSTOCK; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY THE EPOCH TIMES



**Direct-to-consumer drug ads tell a hopeful story of a life reborn, and the grim warnings of possible side effects hardly seem to matter.**

no tell-tale markers exist, there is a huge gray zone between the normal and the abnormal. Bipolar disease, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, restless-leg syndrome, erectile dysfunction, and premenstrual dysphoric disorder are good examples of "diseases" ... [that are] fair game for pharmaceutical hucksterism to persuade people with barely a suggestion of one of those disorders to demand a prescription for the advertised drug."

Lipman served as chief medical adviser for Consumer Reports for 51 years.

Some have objected to the changed dynamics between a doctor and patient that DTC advertising creates—sometimes reducing a doctor to an "order taker" or "gatekeeper" despite his or her superior knowledge compared to the patient.

DTC advertising also creates pressure on doctors to comply with patient demands because they—and the institutions they work for—want to keep patients and make them happy. Thanks to DTC ads, some medical schools have had to offer "refusal skills" training for practitioners to cope with self-diagnosing patients who demand a drug on the basis of a TV commercial, sometimes clutching a coupon.

### Unbranded Ads—Selling a Disease Not a Drug

All advertising relies on subliminal messages and innuendo, but selling prescription drugs is a lot more consequential than selling shampoo—it can lead to overdiagnosis, overutilization of the health care system, and overtreatment. Ads that "raise awareness" of a disease are especially problematic; called "unbranded" advertising, they don't mention the name of the drug being marketed and can appear to be important messages from the government, perhaps the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Patients may "not be able to attribute that this information is coming from a company with a clear profit motive," according to Ameet Sarpatwari, an epidemiologist at Brigham and Women's Hospital and, since no drug is mentioned, neither are the drug risks and side effects outlined.

One example of a well-funded unbranded drug campaign is the drug company AbbVie's promotion of awareness for exocrine pancreatic insufficiency, which it dubs "EPI." No doctor I've interviewed has treated someone with EPI, yet the ads imply that the condition is a major public health issue.

After many radio ads—including one with a man and woman suggestively asking in unison "Could I have EPI?"—a drug that treats EPI was rolled out. This is commensurate with the unbranded advertising game plan of establishing "demand" prior to marketing the related drug. Creon, the EPI drug that contains pancreatic enzymes, can cost "upward of \$1,000 per refill," according to SingleCare, a price comparison site.

Unbranded drug ads can also use scare tactics. To sell a heart drug, an unbranded Novartis TV ad depicts a man with rising waters around his armchair and the narrator saying, "With heart failure, danger is always on the rise. ... About 50 percent of people die within five years of getting diagnosed."

### The Celebrity Sell

Drugmakers have hired many celebrities as pitch people, and the campaigns are also often unbranded. Tennis star Monica Seles raised awareness for "binge eating disorder," Marcia Cross has done so for migraine headaches, and race car driver Danica Patrick has done so for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Other endorsers have included singer LeAnn Rimes raising awareness of eczema, Paula Deen doing so for diabetes, and Adam Levine, the lead singer of Maroon 5, doing so for ADHD.

Sarah Jessica Parker stumped for Mylan's EpiPen in an unbranded "Anaphylaxis: for Reel" awareness campaign, CBS news reported (though the actress resigned the account when the pen's price went from \$100 for a package of two to around \$600 in 2016). Kathleen Turner, star of the movie Body Heat, plugged the arthritis drug Enbrel on CNN, not disclosing that she was actually a paid spokesperson.

Because DTC advertising is a cash cow for media outlets and drugmakers, it's not likely to go away anytime soon—despite the concerns of doctors and the AMA itself. However, the many people now taking prescription drugs for diseases that they weren't aware of before DTC advertising shouldn't blind us to the significant effects of this powerful mode of advertising.

Martha Rosenberg is a nationally recognized reporter and author whose work has been cited by the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, Mayo Clinic Proceedings, Public Library of Science Biology, National Geographic, and Wikipedia. Rosenberg's FDA exposé, "Born with a Junk Food Deficiency," was widely praised and established her as a prominent investigative journalist. She has lectured widely at universities throughout the United States and resides in Chicago.

Continued from Page 1

Some doctors and medical groups oppose DTC advertising. In 2015, the American Medical Association (AMA) called for a ban on consumer ads. The vote at the Interim Meeting of the AMA reflected "concerns among physicians about the negative impact of commercially driven promotions, and the role that marketing costs play in fueling escalating drug prices," AMA Board Chair-elect Dr. Patrice A. Harris said.

"Direct-to-consumer advertising also inflates demand for new and more expensive drugs, even when these drugs may not be appropriate," Harris said.

Drug prices have gotten so high that in 2019, the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform launched an investigation into the pricing practices of 12 drug companies that sell the most costly meds. In 2021, the committee zeroed in on AbbVie's blockbuster Humira, as its price has been raised 27 times, costing \$2,984 per syringe this past May, or \$77,586 per year. AbbVie also did well during the COVID-19 pandemic—making \$1.3

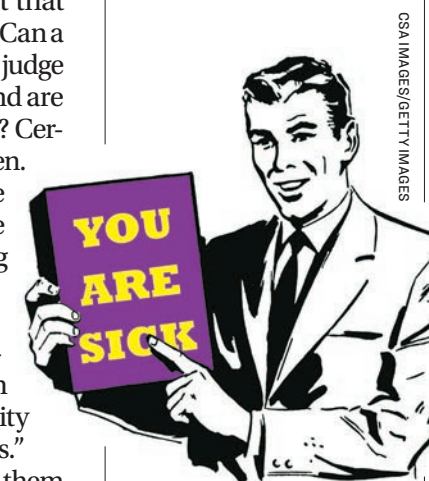
billion in the second quarter from COVID-19 test sales.

### Questions Beyond Cost

There are other reasons besides cost that make some question DTC advertising. Can a public that lacks medical training really judge the appropriateness of a treatment? And are the ads, so full of "spin," even truthful? Certainly exaggeration and untruths happen. In the four years after DTC started, the Food and Drug Administration wrote 564 letters to drug makers charging them with "false, misleading, or unsubstantiated drug claims; inadequate, incorrect, or inconsistent labeling information; omission or minimization of side effects; unsupported superiority claims; and promotion of off-label uses."

Other critics of DTC ads have accused them of "disease mongering"—that drug makers are expanding markets for new products by extending the boundaries of treatable illness.

In a Hofstra University law school paper, Dr. Marvin M. Lipman wrote: "We all know that, for many illnesses, especially those for which



Critics of direct-to-consumer drug ads have accused them of "disease mongering" to expand markets for new products.

GEORGE MARKS/GETTY IMAGES



It used to be that patients learned about the medications they needed from doctors and pharmacists.



# Moving Forward in a Pandemic

Our lives can get caught in a loop and recovering takes a mindful watch on what's going on inside us

EMMA SUTTIE

Before a few years ago, a worldwide pandemic seemed more likely to be the plot of a best-selling novel than the dystopian reality it has become.

COVID-19 and all its variants have become an uncomfortable part of life. Just as things seem to settle down and we get back to living normally, another variant comes along and the disruption begins again. This time of massive upheaval has spurred us to reevaluate how we do things as a community and a country. For instance, we've realized that having food, medical supplies, and essential goods come from halfway around the globe is risky, and there has been a surge in local production as a result. Producing essential goods in our local communities fortifies us, making us more resilient and self-reliant.

But beyond issues with our supply chain, there are grand patterns in daily life that erode our well-being, from what we fill our minds with to how we spend our days. While most of us are more aware than ever of how important diet and exercise are to our overall health, there are several other factors that also play a major role. Tending to the issues that follow below will help you be more resilient in the face of an ongoing pandemic and all the disruptions that come with it.

## Fear

Fear, particularly when prolonged, damages the immune system, making us more susceptible to illness. Fear is a natural human emotion and a primary survival mechanism. It's a reaction to a perceived threat. Fear serves an essential function in the moment by keeping us away from danger, but living in a state of fear for weeks, months—or years—has consequences. In Eastern medicine, fear corresponds to the kidneys, which are the source of our body's constitutional energy, similar to our genetic makeup in Western science. The kidneys are also responsible for our willpower: our ability to focus on goals and pursue them with

single-minded action. Prolonged fear damages the kidneys and can cause us to lose focus, our sense of direction, and the desire to move forward in life. Therefore, living in a perpetual state of fear can also be a precursor to many types of mental depression in the Eastern view.

In Western medicine, chronic fear impairs the immune system, affects memory, interrupts brain processing abilities, and contributes to fatigue, clinical depression, and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder).

An article published by the American Psychological Association discusses the connection between stress and decreased immune response. Two pioneering researchers in the early 1980s were intrigued by the link they observed between stress and infection in animal studies. This finding caused an explosion of research into the connection between stress and the immune system. There's even a field of psychology dedicated to how the state of mind affects one's health and resistance to disease called psychoneuroimmunology.

## Limiting Negativity

Sometimes it's difficult to see the positive when we seem to be drowning in bad news.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, consider taking a break from the news. Put your social media accounts on pause and go outside. It's easy to get stuck in a loop of negativity when it's being pushed on us from every direction. If you need a boost in morale, call a trusted friend or, even better, have coffee with them. Read a book with your children or take your dog for a walk.

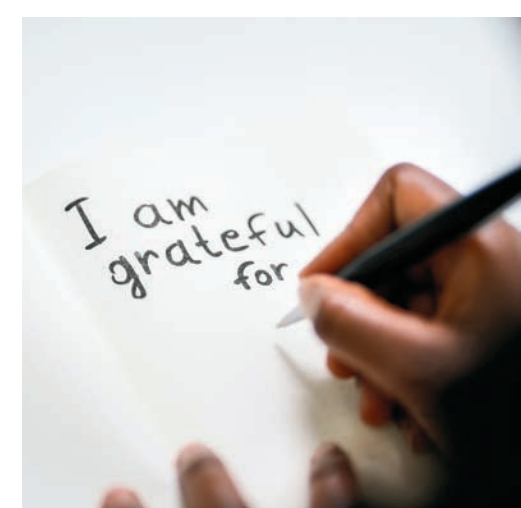
One of the ways I foster positivity is by being mindful about my interactions with people when I'm out in the world. When I interact with someone, I make eye contact and smile. People are usually on autopilot, their heads down, lost in thought. When I smile and make eye



Sometimes it's difficult to see the positive when we seem to be drowning in bad news.



Don't let fear dampen your spirits. Take control of your life and plant the seeds of the future you want today.



Make time every day to acknowledge how you feel, and then allow yourself to feel it.



Baking bread, planting a garden, and making things you would typically buy are all ways to bring power back into our lives, improve our sense of loss, and alleviate stress and anxiety.



One of the ways to foster positivity is by being mindful about your interactions and presence in the world.

## Prolonged fear damages the kidneys and can cause us to lose focus, our sense of direction, and the desire to move forward in life.

contact, they're often surprised. I usually get a smile in return, and the gesture gives me a boost, and them as well, I suspect. We each get to enjoy a tiny boost of endorphins (the feel-good hormones). It's a small act of positivity, but it can be contagious.

## Fostering Positive Relationships

Scientific studies have demonstrated that the number and quality of healthy relationships in our lives keep us healthy, happy, and living longer. The pandemic has made maintaining those connections more challenging, but they're vital for our health. Focusing on nurturing, loving, supportive relationships strengthens us and helps us be more resilient when faced with adversity. You'll recognize positive, loving relationships because they're the ones that make you feel joyful, replenished, and grateful instead of depleted and depressed. These

healthy relationships are the ones you want to nourish, especially now.

## Becoming More Self-Sufficient

Many of us have felt the impact of the pandemic as a loss in different aspects of life. This loss has manifested in different ways, such as losing contact with loved ones, losing the ability to move about freely, and losing a sense of safety and security due to uncertainty about the future.

One way to combat this feeling is to become more self-sufficient. Self-reliance brings us back into control of our lives. Baking bread, planting a garden, and making things you would typically buy are all ways to bring power back into our lives, improve our sense of loss, and alleviate stress and anxiety. Interestingly, these activities have all surged during the pandemic. Having extra food and water tucked away is another good way to ease concerns over food security and

feel like you're in control of your life.

## Eating, Sleeping, and Exercising

Eating well, exercising, and getting enough sleep are the fundamentals when it comes to keeping our bodies resilient. When life becomes unpredictable, as it has throughout the pandemic, getting back to basics is an excellent way to stay strong. Eating a healthy, varied diet of fresh, natural foods, going outside every day to move your body, and getting restful, rejuvenating sleep will help us cope with whatever life throws at us. With a fit body, satiated belly, and good night's sleep, there's little you can't accomplish.

## Processing Your Emotions

In Eastern medicine, attending to our emotions is considered vital to our overall health. Emotions are a normal part of the human experience, but in the Eastern view, unacknowledged or unexpressed

emotions can make us sick. Because of the all-encompassing nature of the pandemic and how it has affected every part of life, it can be hard to know where to start when it comes to dealing with our feelings. Emotional intelligence—the ability to perceive, control, and evaluate our emotions—is an important skill and something we all need in order to navigate the complex world of feelings. This need is amplified during the current upheaval. That said, try to keep it simple. Make time every day to acknowledge how you feel, and then allow yourself to feel it. Completely. This practice gives your feelings a place to go—simply by allowing them to be felt. Once felt, they can dissipate because they have served their purpose and no longer need to take up space.

## A Shared Journey

The pandemic has been onerous. Our whole world changed almost overnight,

and nothing has been the same since. The good thing is that you're not alone. We're all going through it together. Our unified experience is easy to forget sometimes because we've been so isolated. You're not alone. Be kind to yourself. Take care of yourself and the people around you. There is love, goodness, and kindness in the world. It's all around you. Acknowledge and process what you're feeling and find joy wherever you can. We will all get through this, and the first step is to begin healing.

*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 is a lover of the natural world, martial arts, and a good cup of tea.*

# You Have Permission to Like Yourself

There comes a time in your life when you can decline other people's efforts to fix you

NANCY COLIER

Is there someone in your life who frequently critiques you, and often points out what you're doing or have done wrong, and how you should improve? Is there someone close to you who gives you the feeling that maybe they don't quite like you as you are?

We all know people who seem to know how we should behave—better than we do—people we feel constantly judge us, who don't seem to approve of who we are.

As human beings, we're a fairly judgmental lot. We have a lot to say about each other, and a lot of it is critical. We come up with a lot of thinking about what other people shouldn't be doing, and should behave and feel. We tend to do this within our families more than anywhere else. In fact, families are a place where criticism and judgment can be a way of life. Often there's a running commentary on what's wrong with everyone and much of

it is shared, all in the name of good fun and wanting "what's best for you." When you're raised in a judgmental family, you get used to being criticized; it feels normal to be perpetually told what's wrong with you, how others perceive you negatively, and of course, how you should change.

No matter how much this judgment stings, you may feel reluctant to ignore or reject it. To do so would be to stop listening to those who know you the best, whose approval matters, and who, more than anyone else, want what's best for you. And furthermore, these people may see issues that you can't or refuse to see. Turning away from criticism and judgment from your familial jury would imply you think you're perfect or have no interest in improving yourself. It may feel akin to saying "This is who I am, take it or leave it." It could even be narcissistic, a declaration that you only want to be with fans, people who think you're great. Sure, it could be all of those things, but it's far more likely that none of this is true.

## We can deeply care about another's person's experience and at the same time, not be terribly interested in fixing ourselves so they'll approve of us.

The fact is, sometimes even people who respect us, trust our judgment, and know that we're good tell us things about ourselves that are difficult to hear. But when people who are genuinely on our side, who like and respect us, offer such comments, their words land differently: kindly, gently. Criticism that comes from love, even when the words are hard to hear, feels loving.

This kind of feedback or advice usually contains a willingness to include us in the conversation, a curiosity about our experience. There is an effort to understand why we're doing what we're doing, and what our intention is. Such comments are offered with respect and contain a flavor of helping not harming, including not rejecting.

In truth, what we tend to consider "criticism" actually includes many different things: from advice to guidance to condemnation. If we check in with our own experience and intuition, we can almost always tell when a comment or commentary (on us) comes from kindness and a desire to help us. We know if the person sharing it wants to create more closeness and honesty in the relationship and intends to maintain our dignity and respect even as they point toward our shortcomings. We can also sense when a critique is

a condemnation, a blaming or shaming of us, and when the speaker is convinced they know how we should be different. We feel the difference when someone offers an opinion on us but owns it as their experience as opposed to some universal truth about who we are.

Judgments of this latter sort tend to be riddled with shoulds and also noticeably absent of curiosity.

But here's the thing, and the point of this article: It's OK to stop being interested in what other people think is wrong with you, and furthermore, to stop taking in their ideas about who and how you should be. It's OK to stop making yourself available to everyone's ideas about the validity and rightness of your choices and behavior, and the quality of you.

It's OK to turn away from judgment and criticism—in any form you choose—even when it's being presented as in your best interest. There comes a time in your life when you're allowed to stop being available and present for what everyone else thinks of you.

Even if we stop taking on other's people's judgments and criticisms and decline to fix whatever behavior they think is wrong, it doesn't mean we pull the covers over our eyes or declare that we don't care how we come across in the world. We're not

saying we know everything and we're always right. It doesn't mean we're now bulls in a china shop, insensitive and immune to other people's feelings or experiences. What we are saying, however, with dignity and power, is that we are OK with our choices and who we are. We like ourselves. In reality, we can deeply care about another's person's experience and at the same time, not be terribly interested in fixing ourselves so they'll approve of us. We can, in fact, take ourselves off their list of those looking to be fixed.

This article is a permission slip of sorts: I'm offering you

There comes a time in your life when you're allowed to stop being available and present for what everyone else thinks of you.



pany of people who appreciate you. To do so is not a cop-out, nor a free pass to ignore your own weak spots.

Starting today, you can decide that you want to be with people who are, at a core level, on your team.

This is your life and it's OK if it feels good. When it comes to the company you keep, it's OK to take the road of ease, of inviting in what actually feels good and loving, and rejecting what doesn't. Just because something is hard to hear doesn't mean it's good for you; it may be hard to hear because it's not good for you. To take yourself out of the company of people who disapprove, judge, and criticize you can be an act of supreme self-kindness and intentionality, which is good for you. We're not taught this, but it's actually OK to feel good about yourself, and also, to choose and keep company with people who also feel good about you.

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

# The Contending Forces Within

Cultivating virtue gives us a path toward happiness and self regard

DONNA MARTELLI

There's a crazy conflict within our souls. Everything can be going well, and then out of nowhere, we want to do the wrong thing, whatever that might be. You know your weaknesses, and I know mine. That error could be any thought or action that would harm another person or deliver a sinful pleasure that lowers our self-opinion.

An underlying principle of life in our mortal bodies is this: When we want to do what's right, we inevitably, at some point, will want to do something wrong. In some cases, it seems the body itself wants things that our mind does not.

This internal dissension is precisely why we must pursue and nurture virtue in ourselves. Doing so gives us the power to disregard any thought or heart matter that challenges our virtuous living.

If we commit to the virtuous path, we will watch our contentment grow as our self-image lifts. As kindness, honesty, and other virtues guide our thoughts and actions, a sense of well-being eases in around us. Few things make us as truly content as knowing we did the right thing—especially when it was difficult.

Choosing virtue even has the power to banish the depression that comes from an unproductive and self-centered life. Our anxious thoughts about other people's opinions become light when we know we've based our actions on the well-being of those around us. Stress about what may come decreases when we rest assured that despite whatever life holds, we have our dignity and self-regard.

**Virtue will not just happen to us; we have to nurture it in our hearts and minds.**

## What Is Virtue?

Virtue is the quality or practice of moral excellence. It includes character traits such as tolerance, faithfulness, compassion, integrity, and sincerity.

When we think of a virtuous person, we think of one with high moral standards and humility. We see them as honest, compassionate, and courageous. Virtue is a high calling, and it's a quality that we respect and admire in others.

## How Can We Cultivate Virtue?

Once we decide to live virtuously, we need to nurture and support virtue in ourselves.

Virtue will not just happen to us; we have to nurture it in our hearts and minds. Knowing there will be roadblocks, we also know that we have the power to avoid and overcome the obstacles that would derail us. There are several habits and ideas that can help us on the path to virtue:

- Realize that virtuous living is a choice and decide to follow righteous living.



ROB MULLALLY/SHUTTERSTOCK

Few things make us as truly content as knowing we did the right thing—especially when it was difficult.

- Seeing a need, we do what we can to meet it.
- Always treat people with kindness, no matter who they are or what they do.
- Think of others before ourselves.
- Express gratitude wherever and whenever appropriate.
- Volunteer time to a worthy cause.
- Give of our resources to help others.

- Work on life-giving goals.
- Maintain a policy of constant honesty.
- Act only with integrity.
- Seek always to deepen our compassion.
- See our own relief in easing the suffering of others.
- Speak only what will be helpful to others.
- Share our hope and levity through a genuine smile.

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

## As COVID-19 Slogs On, Seniors Suffer Growing Malaise

Many older adults report their fortitude is waning while others find new sources of support and determination

JUDITH GRAHAM

Late one night in January, Jonathan Coffino, 78, turned to his wife as they sat in bed. "I don't know how much longer I can do this," he said.

Coffino was referring to the caution that has come to define his life during the COVID-19 pandemic. After two years of mostly staying at home and avoiding people, his patience is frayed and his distress is growing.

"There's a terrible fear that I'll never get back my normal life," Coffino said, describing the feelings he tries to keep at bay. "And there's an awful sense of purposelessness."

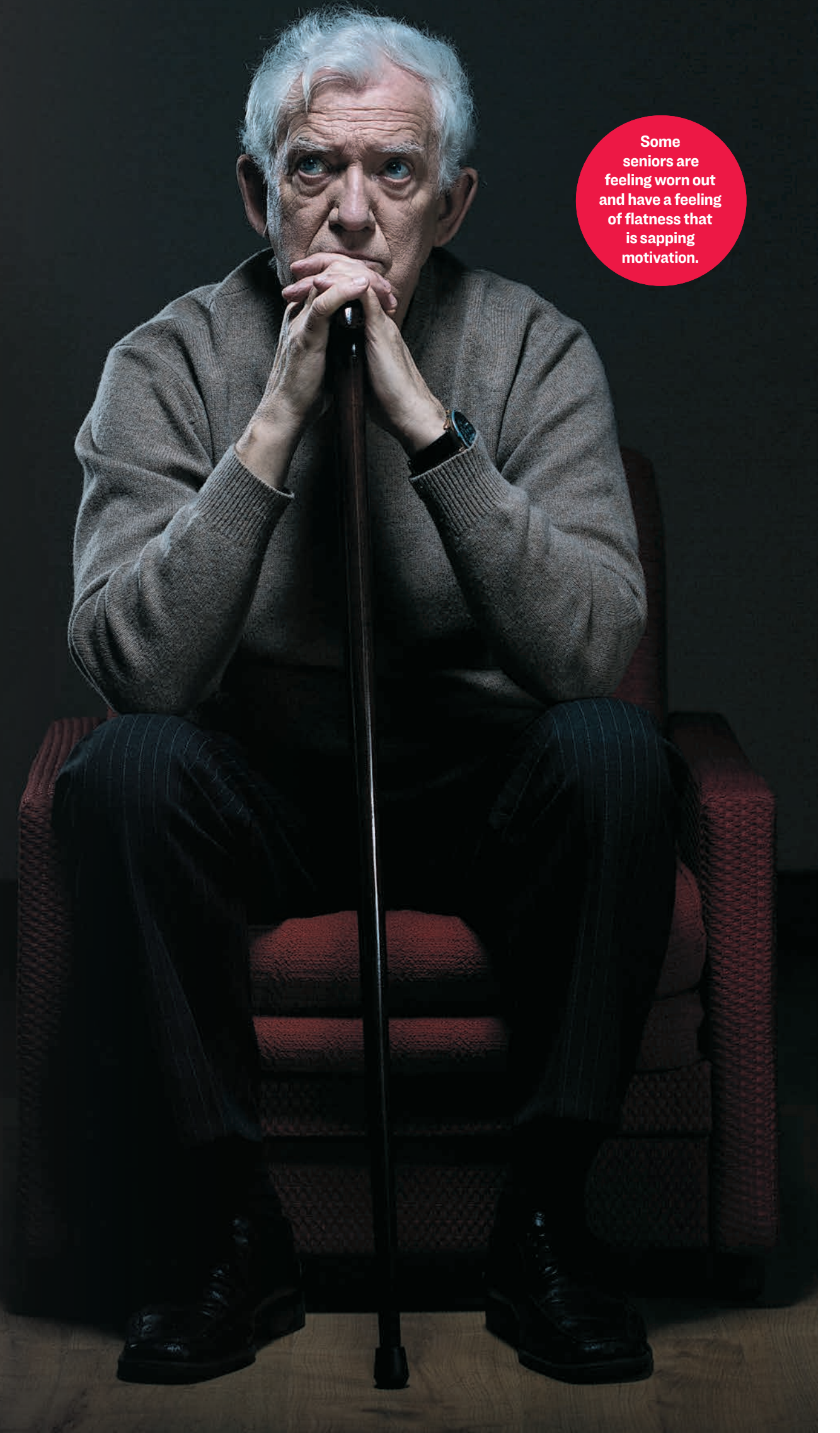
Despite recent signals that COVID-19's grip on the country may be easing, many older adults are struggling with persistent malaise, heightened by the spread of the highly contagious Omicron coronavirus variant. Even those who adapted well initially are saying that their fortitude is waning or wearing thin.

Like younger people, they're beset by uncertainty about what the future may bring. But added to that is an especially painful feeling that opportunities that will never come again are being squandered. Time is running out, and death is drawing ever nearer.

Continued on Page 15

“There's a lot of times I feel I'm just letting the clock run out.”

Fred Axelrod, 66



Some seniors are feeling worn out and have a feeling of flatness that is sapping motivation.

Eat two servings of cruciferous vegetables among the recommended daily intake to optimize vascular health benefits.

TATEVOSIAN YANA /SHUTTERSTOCK



## FOOD AS MEDICINE

### Best Vegetables for Your Heart

Promote healthy arteries and prevent plaque buildup by eating these delicious foods

JOSEPH MERCOLA

Research has shown that the more vegetables you eat, the lower your risk of heart disease, with different types of vegetables protecting your heart through different mechanisms.

Leafy greens, for example, have high amounts of nitrates that naturally boost your nitric oxide (NO) level. Cruciferous veggies, on the other hand, lower your risk of stroke and heart attack by promoting more supple neck arteries and preventing the buildup of arterial plaque.

In fermented cabbage, it's the fiber content that helps lower blood pressure and improve blood sugar control, thereby lowering your risk of heart problems. Phytonu-

trients in sauerkraut also help promote easy blood flow and flexible blood vessels, while veggies rich in magnesium and quercetin also provide important heart benefits.

The following is a summary of some of the top vegetable types for maintaining healthy heart function well into old age.

**Nitrate-Rich Veggies Boost Heart Health** Nitric oxide (NO) is an important biological signaling molecule that supports normal endothelial function and protects your mitochondria. A potent vasodilator, it also helps relax and widen your blood vessels, which improves blood flow.

Continued on Page 12

**The best way to maintain healthy magnesium levels is to make sure you're eating plenty of dark green leafy vegetables.**

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THE EPOCH TIMES



Gout, you came in the night and kept me in agony. I didn't invite you the way many people do, so why did you come?

## A Breakup Letter to Gout

I've looked at my life Gout, and it's time to make a change

LYNN JAFFEE

Dear Gout,
I'm breaking up with you. I appreciate the time we had together and everything I've learned from you, but it's over; I don't want you in my life anymore.

the body. I know I don't drink enough to flush it out, and when you came, I had been pretty dehydrated for a couple of days.

I'll drink less alcohol. While I'm not a big drinker, I like a cocktail now and then. OK, maybe a little more frequently than every now and then. When you showed up, my defenses were down.

### Wherever you decide to roost and cause your own kind of hell, there's also stagnation.

I used to think you were kind of a joke, Gout. You really should change your name—bring it out of medieval times.

Somewhere during those two long nights that you made my life miserable, I began to think about where you fit in Chinese medicine. After all, it's what I do.

Interestingly, the way you affected me was damp, as there was swelling, but it was more cold—there was no redness, and I wanted to put heat on where it hurt.

So, Gout, I'm writing this letter to thank you for what you've taught me. I now understand that you're not just a stereotype.

I will make sure I am better hydrated. I understand that you visit only when there is a build-up of uric acid in

Let's talk about purines, Gout. I know that purines are chemicals that are part of the structure of our genes. Unfortunately, they're found in high concentrations in certain foods, such as organ meats, oily fish, shellfish, yeast, beer, and even lentils.

We also need to talk about the sweet stuff, Gout. I know sugar may not be a trigger for you, but high fructose corn syrup is. While I never drink pop, my occasional margarita or vodka gimlet has that lime juice that's mostly green high fructose corn syrup.

And yes, I will be a little more regular with my acupuncture treatments. I know I've fallen off recently, and I know how much acupuncture and herbs can help keep

you away, so I'm back on board with regular sessions on the table. Finally, Gout, why me? I don't have any risk factors for you.

I'd like to think that our relationship was just a brief encounter, Gout. Just a flirtation caused by an unusual combination of circumstances.

Lynn Jaffee is a licensed acupuncturist and the author of "Simple Steps: The Chinese Way to Better Health."

# The Gallbladder Flush

Removing gallstones and clearing the biliary tract of biliary sludge

ASHLEY TURNER

When it comes to gallbladder health, many people are looking for a specific strategy to remove gallstones and clear the biliary tract.

### What Are Gallstones?

Gallstones are crystallized deposits of cholesterol and other bile constituents that are formed in the bile ducts and the gallbladder. When the gallbladder and bile ducts are congested with gallstones and biliary sludge, appropriate bile flow is hindered.

Women are far more likely to suffer problems with gallstones and biliary issues. Other factors that contribute to gallstone formation and biliary problems include obesity; pregnancy; standard American diet (SAD) high in refined sugars, carbohydrates, oils, and low fiber; gluten consumption; insufficient methylation; hormone replacement therapy (HRT); oral contraceptives; underlying liver disease; rapid weight loss; diabetes or metabolic syndrome; family history of gallstones; inflammatory bowel syndrome; being 60 years old or older; mold and biotoxin illness; leaky gut; and environmental toxins.

### Identifying Gallstones

While there are many symptoms that arise because of gallstone formation, identifying them requires imaging through ultrasound or CT scans. While we usually recommend specific herbs and nutrients to shrink larger gallstones before a flush, imaging can be helpful in understanding gallstone status and monitoring progress in their removal.

There are various markers on blood work that can indicate poor gallbladder function, liver impairment, and risk factors for gallstones. Some of these include high ALT, AST, bilirubin, LDH, GGT, ALP, and 5'-nucleotidase.

If you're experiencing gallbladder symptoms or have known gallstones, it's important to facilitate the proper gallbladder function. Compounds including beetroot, taurine, phosphatidylcholine, lemon, peppermint, and vitamin C have all been shown to reduce the repercussions of gallstones and help shrink and dissolve them.

To flush out the gallbladder, you'll need to gather a few ingredients.

### Healing Ingredients

Tart Cherry Juice Tart cherry juice is high in malic acid. Malic acid is a helpful compound for softening and breaking down gallstones.

### Magnesium Sulfate Capsules

Magnesium sulfate (Epsom salt) draws water into the intestines and has laxative effects. Additionally, it helps to dilate bile ducts for safe and effective gallstone removal.

### Extra-Virgin Olive Oil

Be sure to source pure extra-virgin olive oil; you will need 1/2 cup. When consumed, this will cause the gallbladder to speedily release bile.

### Organic Grapefruit

Six ounces of freshly-squeezed grapefruit juice combined with the extra-virgin olive oil helps to aid the flush. If your body has an aversion to grapefruit, you can use equal parts of freshly squeezed orange and lemon juice instead.

### Preparing for the Flush

One week before the flush, take two table-



ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

Doctors can sometimes be too quick to remove the gallbladder. Take steps if you are at higher risk of gallstones and want to help your body remove them.

spoons of tart cherry juice concentrate daily. The malic acid in tart cherry juice helps to soften gallstones. It's delicious stirred into mineral water. Some people drink 32 ounces of organic apple juice in preparation because of its high malic acid content.

The gallbladder flush is best done over a weekend or at a time when you're able to rest and easily access the bathroom.

### The Flush

On the day of the flush, eat a complex carbohydrate breakfast with no fat. Oatmeal with fruit is a good choice. It's important to not eat fat, as that affects bile flow and could hinder the passing of gallstones.

Don't take supplements the day of the flush, except for those indicated below. Consult with your doctor prior to the flush, especially if you're on prescription medication.

It's advised to take part in colon hydrotherapy or complete several water enemas to clear the colon the morning before the flush. While this isn't always necessary, any affected stool could hinder the success of the flush, lead to pain during the flush, and/or contribute to toxin exposure from gallstones stuck in the intestines.

At this point, stop eating and drinking anything other than water. A light lunch of steamed rice and vegetables with unrefined salt is acceptable.

Take the first dose of 15 magnesium sulfate capsules with at least eight ounces of water. Alternatively, you can drink six ounces of the Epsom salt solution mentioned above.

Take the second dose of 15 magnesium sulfate capsules or six ounces of the Epsom salt solution. It's important to take it easy and rest throughout the evening. You may feel some movement in the gastrointestinal tract as water is drawn into the intestines because of the magnesium sulfate.

Prepare the fat solution. Cut grapefruits in half and juice them. You'll need four to six ounces. Alternatively, you can use four ounces of freshly squeezed lemon juice. Combine the fruit juice and four ounces of extra-virgin olive oil in a pint jar with a tightly fitting lid.

You can prepare a castor oil pack to facilitate gallstone removal, if desired. This isn't necessary, but some people say it helps. Simply apply a couple of tablespoons of cas-

If you're experiencing gallbladder symptoms or have known gallstones, it's important to facilitate the proper gallbladder function.



Gallstones will move through the ducts then through the intestines.



Be sure to source pure extra-virgin olive oil for the gallbladder flush.

tor oil to organic cotton flannel and place it over the liver and gallbladder area, under the ribcage on the right side of the body.

If you have trouble sleeping, you may take 2,000 milligrams (mg) to 4,000 mg of L-Ornithine with this solution. Sometimes people take anti-parasitic compounds, such as black walnut, to flush the liver and gallbladder.

Drink the solution. Some people find it helpful to drink it through a straw. Lay down in bed immediately. The flush won't work unless you lie down in bed on your back. You must stay completely still for a minimum of 30 minutes. Ideally, you'll fall asleep for the night.

While you rest, gallstones will move through the dilated ducts and pass through the small and large intestine. If you feel the urge to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night, that's perfectly fine.

Between 6 a.m. and 6:30 a.m., or upon waking, take the third dose of magnesium sulfate capsules or the Epsom salt solution. Go to the bathroom throughout the morning as needed. Observe what you're passing. Be sure to stay hydrated, drinking clean, filtered water throughout the morning. Plan to rest throughout the morning as the body is working hard to pass gallstones and detox.

Take the fourth dose of magnesium sulfate capsules or the Epsom salt solution. You'll continue to need to use the bathroom and pass gallstones.

Drink a small glass of tart cherry concentrate and mineral water, apple juice, or bone broth, if you're feeling up to it.

A light lunch can be eaten; fresh fruit is usually best tolerated at this point. If digestion still feels a little off, most people are back to eating normally by dinner. We recommend avoiding gluten and dairy for people with gallbladder concerns, but they should especially be avoided for the next several days. If you have known food sensitivities, please continue to avoid them.

### Safety

Working with a practitioner to shrink and flush gallstones can be an important part of achieving overall health. Many people successfully flush gallstones with no problem when gallbladder flush instructions are followed precisely. Those with underlying medical conditions, young children, and pregnant and nursing mothers shouldn't do a gallbladder flush.

It's wise to work with a skilled clinician to assess underlying factors that could be contributing to gallstones and facilitating the body for proper removal.

Dr. Ashley Turner is a traditionally trained naturopath and board-certified doctor of holistic health for Restorative Wellness Center. As 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.







# Using Stress to Your Advantage

Athletes use stress to boost their well-being—and you can too

PAUL MANSELL

Almost everyone wants to know how to reduce stress. After all, stress can have many negative effects on both our physical and mental health. An increasing body of evidence shows that changing the way we think about stress might actually better help us manage it. Not only can this improve our well-being, including our mental health, it can also make us better able to thrive in stressful situations in the future. And the way you can learn to do this is from athletes.

The way a person thinks about stress in general is called a “stress mindset.” Some people see stress as something negative and think that it should be avoided completely. Others see stress more positively and think it will have benefits for their health, performance, or productivity.

Studies in the United States and Australia have shown that people who see stress as enhancing can experience greater productivity at work, better mental health, and academic performance. There are also links between a positive mindset and how people view stressful situations—such as seeing difficult tasks as a challenge instead of a threat.

But until now, little was known about stress mindsets and athletes. Given that athletes encounter stressful situations that they often have little control over every day—such as from the media, or during a race or match—our research team wanted to investigate how their beliefs about stress impact their mental health.

We collected data from more than 400 athletes from around the world. Participants came from a variety of different sports and ranged from recreational to elite athletes. We used questionnaires to measure athletes’ stress mindset and their mental health. We then analyzed how these two



Visualize your stressful situation and how you will respond to it, similar to what an athlete might do.

**We found that athletes who saw stress as positive or enhancing were more likely to see stressful situations as a challenge.**

related to each other, alongside whether age, gender, and competitive level factored in.

We found that athletes who saw stress as positive or enhancing were more likely to see stressful situations as a challenge. This was also linked to better mental health on average, including more energy and fewer depressive symptoms.

Of course, chronic stress is linked to a whole host of negative health conditions so it’s important not to depict stress as only being a positive thing. But if we highlight that responses to acute stress can actually be helpful, athletes are more likely to see better performance and mental health. For example, if an athlete sees the stress of competition as useful, it might lead them to have better focus and motivation to succeed.

#### Stress Mindset

Of course, athletes are a bit different from the average person. But that doesn’t mean we can’t also learn to change our own stress mindset to boost our mental health. Studies have shown that in the average person, watching videos that explain the positive effects of stress and why stress happens can help them to change their stress mindset.

Studies have even shown that watching such videos can help people perform better when faced with a mock job interview and have better focus. Another study has

also shown that thinking about your responses to stress as a positive (rather than negative) reaction can improve well-being and academic performance. This might involve a person thinking of their nervous stomach as a sign that they’re excited instead of stressed.

The best way to put this into practice is to visualize your stressful situation and how you will respond to it, similar to what an athlete might do. For example, imagine you’re about to give a presentation at work. First, acknowledge any symptoms of stress you might be feeling—such as an increased heart rate. Second, welcome these feelings, recognizing they’re designed to help you focus and increase your energy.

Finally, visualize yourself making the choice to see stress as helpful and use these responses to thrive under pressure. This may seem difficult at first, but with practice, we can all learn to use visualization to reinterpret stress as being helpful.

Stress isn’t always distress. If we choose to accept and embrace the upsides of stress, it can improve our mental health, performance, and productivity.

*Paul Mansell is a doctoral candidate in stress in sport at the University of Birmingham in the UK. This article was first published on The Conversation.*



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