

# THE EPOCH TIMES

# MIND &

# BODY

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## How to Heal

When the Doctor Says  
There's Nothing Left to Try

# 10

Here are 10 inexpensive and free ways to take control of your own health, starting with step one: finding the desire to live and believing that the body can heal itself.



When pills and surgeries can't stem the progress of an illness, alternative options offer hope

**BETH GIUFFRE**

**T**eresa, a fit and healthy mother of four, showed up at her spinning class with some bad news. Her forehead had broken out in blemishes and her muscles had turned soft after missing months of classes. Teresa wasn't ill, but she was sick with worry over her sister, who lived across the country. Her sister, who had begun chemotherapy for colorectal cancer nine months earlier, was due for her "last treatment," but decided not to go through with it.

"She's giving up," Teresa said, falling behind on the bicycle workout. Her sister is a single mom who had to move out of her house to be closer to their parents. No one in the family could convince her to make important lifestyle changes that would support her own healing, such as eating healthy, organic food, drinking more water, and getting some exercise and fresh air once in a while.

*Continued on Page 6*

Find something that gives you joy and make it a part of your healing journey, whether it's spending more time holding your grandchild or walking barefoot at the beach or park.

## Do You Have Thin Privilege?

Movements to stop fat-shaming shouldn't let junk food makers off the hook

A movement that takes aim at "thin privilege" is ignoring the industry and culture that feeds our obesity epidemic.

**MARTHA ROSENBERG**

In the past few years, "weight bias" has gained awareness as a form of discrimination. Doctors are attacked for mentioning weight, and there's even a "don't weigh me" card that patients can hand to medical professionals during an office visit. The card says, "If you really need my weight, please tell me why so I can give you my informed consent."

On the other side, the card says "most health conditions can be addressed without knowing my weight," and constant weigh-

ing contributes to "weight stigma." So far, 73,384 people have requested the cards.

It's certainly true that people with excess weight are discriminated against on many levels. Moreover, the United States and many other nations have levels of obesity not seen before, which no doubt drives the anti-weight-discrimination movements. Still, the ire of anti-weight bias and "sizism" websites rarely seems to be directed at one clear cause of adult and childhood obesity: junk, processed, and fast-food producers.

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MEDICALLY CORRECT

# Laughter as Medicine

Administering a chuckle  
can be an important part of  
helping a patient heal

PETER WEISS

Saturday nights were a very special night in our house when I was 16. It was a difficult time; my mother was dying of breast cancer, and there was very little laughter or humor during that last summer in 1973—except for Saturday nights at 9 pm.

That's when the Mary Tyler Moore show was on. We would all gather around the TV and forget about all the pain and trouble. Ted Knight was our star. He played Ted Baxter, the bungling, buffoon of a news-caster whose comic genius played off the incredible writing to deliver rarely seen humor. His performance demanded that all who watch him forget about their problems, if only for a few moments.

Laughter releases nitric oxide, which relaxes blood vessels and can reduce blood pressure. A Japanese study in the Journal of Epidemiology in 2020 showed that cardiovascular events (such as heart attacks and strokes) were fewer in people who laughed more than those who laughed less.

Another fascinating report from Norway also showed the importance of good humor on longevity. An article published in Psychosomatic Medicine in 2016 concluded that "the cognitive component of the sense of humor is positively associated with survival from mortality related to cardiovascular disease and infections

Sometimes the best thing we can do in the face of life's inevitable tragedies is laugh.

in women and with infection-related mortality in men. The findings indicate that a sense of humor is a health-protecting cognitive coping resource."

Charlie Chaplin once said, "In order to truly laugh, you need to be able to take your pain and play with it." It seems so many comedians have a lot of hidden (and not-so-hidden) pain.

Having a good sense of humor is a lot more than just laughing at a joke; it's a very effective way of coping with stress. It also can significantly help cognition as well as memory.

Dr. Gurinder Singh Bains of Loma Linda University found that elderly patients who watch a funny video can improve their short-term memory and improve their ability to learn. A study he led, which was published in Advances in Mind-Body Medicine in 2014, found that humor therapies can be developed to help age-associated memory deficiencies.

Has anyone else noticed that during many eulogies, the person speaking may tell a funny story about the recently deceased? Light humor can help alleviate so much pain.

I had been living in Los Angeles for several years, and coming off call one very early morning in 1986, I went into Zucky's deli in Santa Monica. I was still in scrubs, exhausted, but wanted my french toast (I was still skinny back then). I noticed a man sitting alone, directly across from me, and realized it was Ted Knight. I didn't want to bother him, but said to myself, if he is still there when I'm finished, I'll walk over and say "hi." Needless to say, he was still there. I quickly relayed the story of how much his comedy helped us

Having a good sense of humor is a lot more than just laughing at a joke, it's a very effective way of coping with stress.

Humor has an effervescent effect that we can recognize when we hear a child's laughter.

through those tough times. He was very cordial, polite, and smiled. He said that he really appreciated me telling him that story, and it meant the world to him to hear it—he even became teary-eyed. I shook his hand and left. Ted Knight died several months after that encounter, from colon cancer.

A very hard to read, but fascinating study, "Context Matters: The Benefits and Costs of Expressing Positive Emotion Among Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse" by Dr. George Bonanno out of Columbia University, found, "Those who managed to laugh or smile at moments during their interview were more likely to be doing better two years later than those who had not," he said. "Humor keeps negative emotions in check and gives us a different perspective, allowing us to see some of the bad things that happen to us as a challenge rather than a threat."

Humor is a very strong and positive tool for all of us. Finding the right place and time is critical. Many physicians and nurses rec-

ognize the importance of humor in taking care of their patients, and the critical importance in helping the elderly cope with illness, loneliness, and stress. Telling a funny story, or better yet, getting a patient to relate a funny story themselves can be therapeutic.

Red Skelton, one of the great comedic minds of our time, once said: "I live by this credo: Have a little laugh at life and look around you for happiness instead of sadness. Laughter has always brought me out of unhappy situations. Even in your darkest moment, you usually can find something to laugh about if you try hard enough."

Now if my adult kids would only learn to laugh at my dad jokes.

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.



## Do You Have Thin Privilege?

Movements to stop fat-shaming shouldn't let junk food makers off the hook

Continued from Page 1

Junk, processed, and fast food is not only brimming with unhealthy ingredients such as high fructose corn syrup and salt, it's arguably the most advertised and available food in urbanized Western cultures. Some Epoch Times readers will remember that there was a time when "food courts" didn't exist in malls, and junk food wasn't readily available in banks, bookstores, car washes, hardware stores, train stations, and yes, hospitals. An overweight 30-year-old woman who didn't want her name used, shed more than 40 pounds with no effort when she studied in an African country that didn't have a "snack culture" of junk, processed, and fast food.

In a Los Angeles Times editorial, Michael Moss, author of "Hooked: Food, Free Will, and How the Food Giants Exploit Our Addictions," observes that the \$1-trillion junk, processed, and fast food industry, often called Big Food, has created products so addictive that people can't resist them, and then convinces people the excess weight is their fault.

How is such food made irresistible and addictive? There are food technology labs dedicated to just that goal, says Moss, with \$40,000 devices that simulate a chewing mouth to, for example, perfect how a potato chip behaves in the mouth.

"People like a chip that snaps with about four pounds of pressure per square inch," he said.

The actual time it takes to chew food has also been modified by food technologists, according to the website Experience Life.

"In the [45 years] that I have been in the food business, we used to have foods that we chewed 15 times and 20 times and 30 times before we swallowed," said Gail Vance Civile of the consumer research firm Sensory Spectrum. Now, most foods only have to be chewed 12 times and "you're in for the next hit to get more pleasure."

### Questions About Goals, Tactics, and 'Thin Privilege'

No one could disagree that weight bias—sizism—is wrong and that people shouldn't be judged for their weight, height, shape, beauty, and skin color. But most medical professionals don't agree with the corollary that excess fat is medically inconsequential (or, as the "Don't Weigh Me" card says, "most health conditions can be addressed without knowing my weight.")

The truth is that obesity invites a host of health problems, from diabetes, respiratory conditions, and hypertension to stroke risk, as well as colorectal, uterine corpus, gallbladder, kidney, and pancreatic cancers. The claim of "fit but fat"

is not supported by science and is largely wishful thinking.

Nonetheless, the concept of "thin privilege" has somehow emerged from the anti-weight-bias movement charging that, like "white privilege" and "male privilege," some have unfair advantages in society making them de facto oppressors.

According to an article last year called "What Is Thin Privilege?" in Good Housekeeping: "Like all forms of privilege, the person who has it [thin privilege] may not realize they have any advantage, because it's simply normal for them to, say, not have to think about whether they can fit between tables in a tiny bistro [or] whether their size clothing will be readily available.

"Public spaces and furniture—chairs, benches, tables, bus, and theater seats—are designed with smaller people in mind."

Many, including those who carry excess weight, may find the statements jolting. If someone can no longer use traditional seating, it's society's fault for catering to "thin privilege"? Not the person's lifestyle, choices, and especially eating habits? Society is to blame if someone can't fit into a chair?

The Good Housekeeping article adds "intersectionality" to the issue—the conviction that all victim groups (fat, black, brown, female, trans, gay, non-binary, disabled, Asian, Muslim) are oppressed by the same system and the same oppressors. It quotes a book that suggests that Anglo-Saxons are "taller and slenderer than other races," and opines that "racism, sexism, and fatphobia often go hand in hand." But is

The claim of 'fit but fat' is not supported by science and largely wishful thinking.

Excess weight creates a market for drugs to treat cholesterol, blood pressure, diabetes, and acid reflux.



that really true? Instead of dealing with the root of the problem and the myriad health issues that go with it, such thinking divides society while it obscures the causes.

### What Is Disordered Eating?

Some "thin privilege" devotees call dieting and calorie consciousness "disordered eating" and an "eating disorder" while they ignore the snacking/overeating culture that Big Food has created. Worse, thin privilege devotees frequently allow no wiggle room (pun intended) between anorexia and health-impacting obesity. For example, when the singer Jessica Simpson sported a noticeable weight gain at a 2009 concert, she defended it as a "decision not to make myself anorexic"—as if there were no healthy area between being overweight and having an eating disorder.

Some thin privilege devotees suggest that eating that doesn't produce obesity is not "natural," as if the "natural" human state is to overeat and carry excess weight. Certainly, food tastes good and gives us pleasure; certainly, some bodies are stocky and will never be svelte, but does that mean all nutritional self-discipline should be thrown out the window? Cleaning our homes, washing our cars, and mowing our lawns is also not "natural," easy, or fun, but we do it for the payoffs.

There Is Money in Obesity Moss notes that the industries that hook us on addictive junk food also want us to blame ourselves—not them. Nor are they the only beneficiaries of a hi-

jacked eating system. The diet food industry, valued at \$71 billion, and fitness industry, valued at \$87 billion, also appreciate our easily gained excessive weight.

Then, there's Big Pharma. Excess weight creates a market for drugs to treat cholesterol, blood pressure, diabetes, and acid reflux. It sells drugs for aching backs, hips, and knees. And then there's the business of surgery and prosthetic implants such as hip and knee replacements. Leniently prescribed psychiatric drugs for depression and mood problems—with their notorious weight-gaining actions—add to obesity.

Our obesity epidemic is a complicated problem with far-reaching consequences. We're addicted to easy, cheap, unhealthy food, and the makers and distributors of these foods are addicted to the profits that come from using cheap ingredients that have excellent shelf-life, such as salt, sugar, and government-subsidized high-fructose corn syrup.

While we can't put all the blame on food makers, since our choices drive their profits, we also shouldn't put all the blame on ourselves. And for those that suffer from obesity, blaming thin people makes no sense at all.

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.



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# Positive, Personal Traits Made Possible Through Minimalism

JOSHUA BECKER

"Happiness resides not in possessions, and not in gold." —Democritus

Thirteen years ago, I was introduced to minimalism and immediately drawn to it. At the time, the decision was based purely on a felt need: I was tired of all the cleaning and organizing required to care for our stuff. The more we owned, the more we cleaned.

I was also a bit tired of living paycheck to paycheck. But many of the financial benefits were revealed to me later.

Minimalism provided benefit for my family in both areas. Almost immediately, it freed us to spend less time and money chasing and accumulating material possessions.

But the benefits in my life have gone well beyond those felt needs. The outward journey has offered opportunity for inward change as well. It has allowed my heart to change and discover some positive traits I always desired.

Here are 10 positive, personal traits made possible through minimalism:

**1) Contentment:** being mentally or emotionally satisfied with things as they are. Not all, but most of the discontent in our lives revolves around physical possessions and comparing our things to others. An intentional decision to live with less allows that discontent to slowly fade.

**2) Generosity:** willingness and liberality in giving away one's money, time, and so on. When the mentality of always needing to own more is removed from our thinking, we are free to use our resources for other purposes. We are allowed (and have more opportunity) to redirect our energy, time, and money elsewhere.

**3) Gratitude:** a feeling of thankfulness or appreciation. One of the most significant steps we can take toward experiencing gratitude in life is to focus less on the things we don't have and more on the things we do. Minimalism makes that possible.

**4) Self-Control:** the ability to exercise restraint or control over one's feelings, emotions, reactions, etc. One of the most important character traits anyone can develop is self-control. And minimalism provides opportunity for it in greater degrees than ever before. Minimalism forces us to take back control. It forces us to take back control of the things we own, the things we purchase, and the things we choose to pursue. Rejecting society's notions of consumerism and happiness is an almost daily exercise in self-control.



Rejecting society's notions of consumerism and happiness is a daily exercise in self-control.

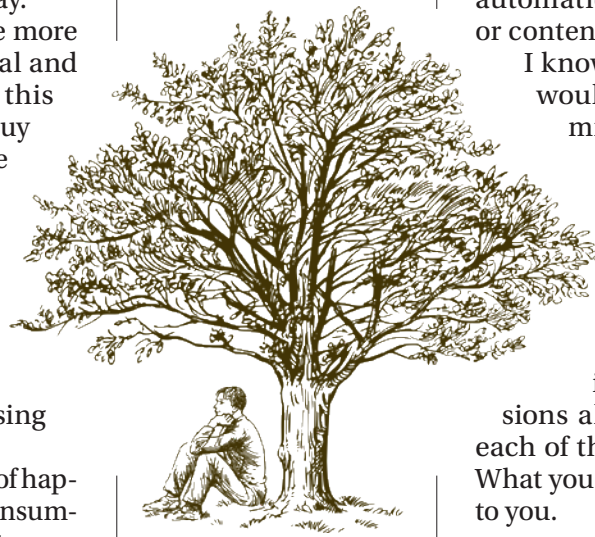
**5) Honesty:** being honorable in principles, intentions, and actions; being upright and fair. Not all, but many of the lies and mistruths that are told in our society are based on a desire to get ahead and possess more. Finding contentment with your things (even wanting less of them) reduces the need to be dishonest for financial gain. Not every minimalist becomes more honest, of course. But minimalism does make it more possible for those who desire it.

**6) Appreciation:** the act of estimating the qualities of things and giving them their proper value. As we focus less on comparing our possessions to those of other people, we can begin appreciating people's accomplishments, their successes, and the beauty they bring to the world. Life becomes less about competition and more about encouragement.

We can fully appreciate others without being jealous of them (or worse, hoping for their downfall). **7) Self-Awareness:** conscious knowledge of one's own character, feelings, motives, and desires. Many people go through life having no clear sense of their true values. Instead, desires are molded by culture and advertisements that bombard us each day. Minimalism forces us to become more self-aware as it compels behavioral and psychological questions: Why is this hard for me to get rid of? Why did I buy all this stuff in the first place? Where did I get these ideas of happiness? Learning about ourselves isn't easy, but it's always worth the effort.

**8) Joy:** the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires. Minimalism removes the pursuit of happiness and joy from never-ending consumerism. Possessions promise joy, but never deliver in the long-term—which is why we always accumulate more. I would never say that people automatically find joy when the pursuit of physical possessions is removed. But it certainly

One of the most significant steps we can take toward experiencing gratitude in life is to focus less on the things we don't have and more on the things we do.



We must take the time to contemplate who we are and what we value.

frees us to find it in things that matter.

**9) Optimism:** hopefulness and confidence about the future or the successful outcome of something. "You'll never change your life until you change something you do daily," John Maxwell once said.

How about changing everything about your every day? How about changing how much of every day goes into cleaning and organizing? How about changing how much of your income goes toward buying things you don't need? That intentional change in behavior would offer opportunity to craft the life you desire going forward. And it provides optimism about what can be.

**10) Self-Confidence:** a feeling of trust in one's abilities, qualities, and judgment. Minimalism allows us to stop comparing ourselves to others. It allows us to celebrate our uniqueness, focus on the positives, and chart our own path forward.

Each of these actions, by themselves, would spark self-confidence. But taking all of them together almost guarantees it. Owning less requires us to stop living the life sold to us by culture every day. And forces us to gain confidence charting our own. Now, please don't misread me. I am not contending that all minimalists are automatically more honest, generous, or content.

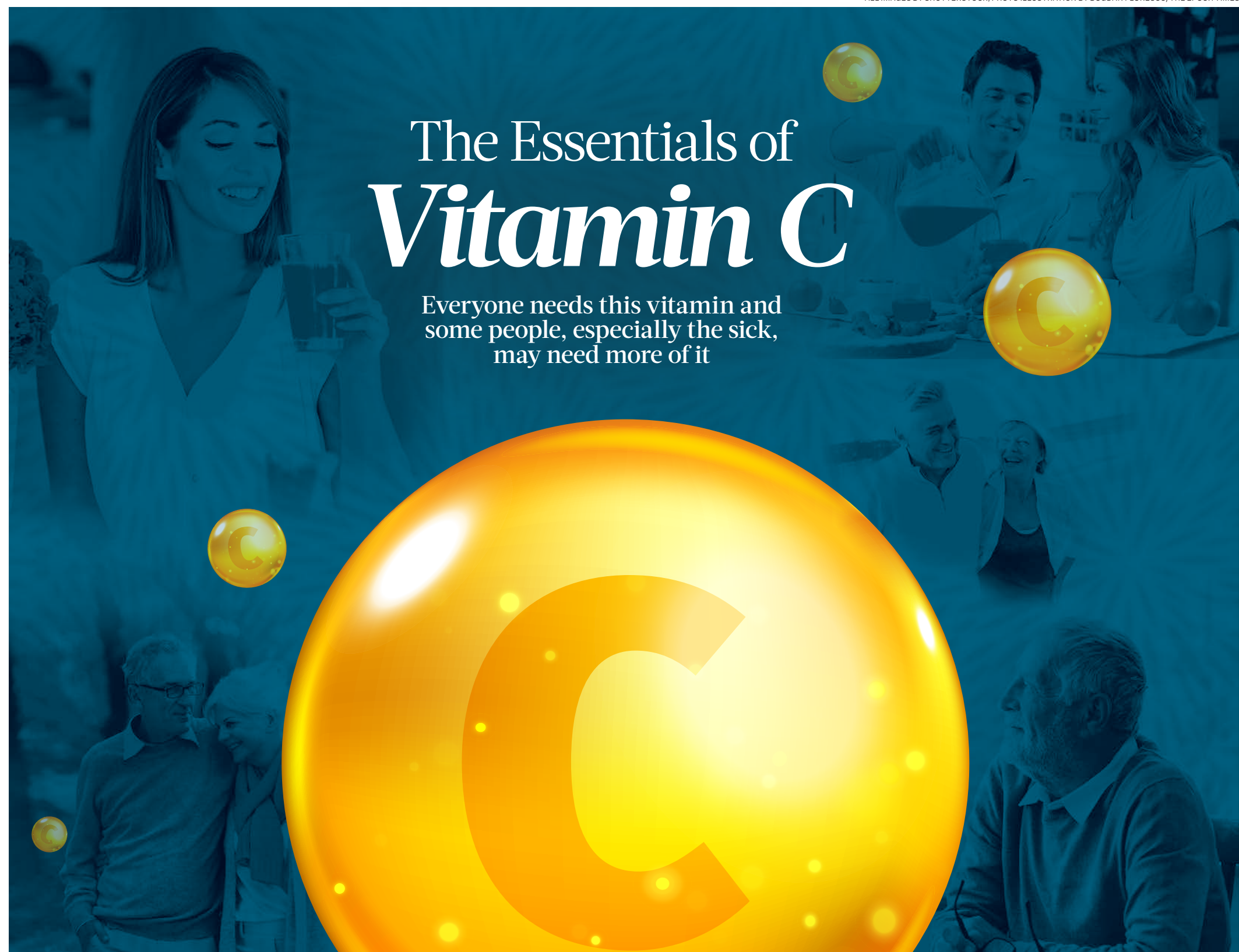
I know many generous people who would not describe themselves as minimalist. And I'm sure there are some self-defined minimalists who chart obnoxiously high on the selfishness meter.

Also, I would never profess to have arrived fully in any of the categories listed above. But I do believe that the intentional rejection of possessions allows greater opportunity for each of these positive traits to emerge. What you do with that opportunity is up to you.

Joshua Becker is an author, public speaker, and the founder and editor of *Becoming Minimalist*, where he inspires others to live more by owning less. Visit [BecomingMinimalist.com](http://BecomingMinimalist.com)

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## The Essentials of Vitamin C

Everyone needs this vitamin and some people, especially the sick, may need more of it

Vitamin C has earned superstar status among many nutritionists.

BETH GIUFFRE

Vitamin C gets a lot of love from nutritionists. PubMed lists some 70,000-plus studies into this essential vitamin, looking at everything from its effect on sepsis to how it affects nanoparticle additives in food.

When it comes to its potential as a disease fighter, those who study these things are pretty enthusiastic about it. "Vitamin C is the world's best natural antibiotic, antiviral, antitoxin and antihistamine," write Andrew W. Saul, Ph.D., author of "Doctor Yourself: Natural Healing That Works" and editor-in-chief of Orthomolecular Medicine News Service.

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molecular Medicine News Service.

"As English literature concentrates on Shakespeare, so orthomolecular (megavitamin) therapy concentrates on vitamin C. Let the greats be given their due. The importance of vitamin C cannot be overemphasized."

But just because vitamin C is well-regarded, doesn't mean it is simply a matter of taking more. There are different kinds of vitamin C and different ways that people need it or can better use it. Some people absorb all the nutrients they need from eating fruits and vegetables high in vitamin C. Others with health challenges process vitamin C more efficiently with high-dose infusions or daily supplementation.

Dr. Henry Ealy, founder and executive community director of the Energetic Health Institute said that for more than 20 years he has been teaching his students one inescapable truth of disease: "When a person comes to you for help, you know exactly one thing...you know that that person is nutrient deficient."

He said he tells his students who are studying the pathology of chronic and infectious disease that the most common symptom to look for is fatigue.

A well-nourished and nutrient-dense body produces higher amounts of energy and therefore has more energy to optimize cellular function, said Ealy. In the case of

well-nourished immune cells, the body's susceptibility to infection plummets dramatically. If they are deficient in vitamin C, they are more susceptible to an exposure turning into an infection.

"If they are nutrient-dense, then they are less susceptible to an exposure turning into an infection. It's that simple," he said. It sounds easy enough, but most doctors aren't sure how to dose supplements such as vitamin C. Some doctors rarely even mention nutrition.

"There is a strategy for effective dosing of nutraceuticals that often eludes medical professionals that lack training in clinical nutrition. According to the National Academy of Sciences, the average M.D. only receives about 19.6 hours of nutritional training, or what amounts to a weekend workshop...if they receive any nutritional education at all."

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TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

## Chinese Medicine and the Causes of Disease

This ancient medical system has some insightful—and unexpected—views on what can lead to illness

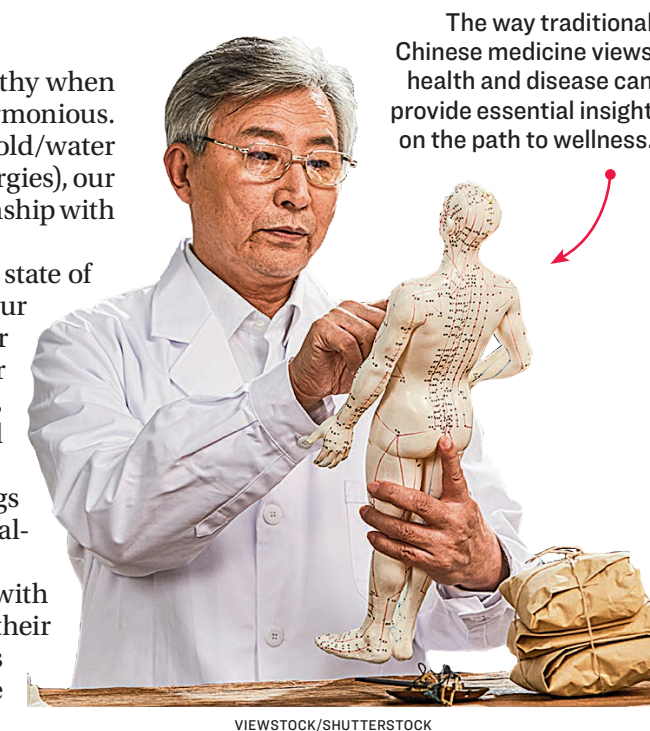
EMMA SUTTIE

In the Eastern view, we're healthy when our bodies are balanced and harmonious. This balance is between yin (cold/water energies) and yang (hot/fire energies), our internal organs, and our relationship with the external environment.

This harmony is in a constant state of flux because of the activities of our daily lives, how we manage our emotions, the way we treat our bodies, the changing weather, stress, environmental factors, and the unpredictability of life itself.

In the Eastern model, the things that cause the body to lose its balance are the causes of disease.

People have always struggled with external and internal threats to their health. External factors such as the weather don't usually cause



The way traditional Chinese medicine views health and disease can provide essential insight on the path to wellness.

disease, but when the body is weak or the weather changes too quickly for us to adjust, it can make us sick. For example, being out in the rain and then going into an air-conditioned shop can cause cold to get "inside" the body, making us unwell. The following day, we may wake up feeling achy and congested and know that we've come down with something.

The amount of food and how frequently we eat are also significant.

Other illnesses are brought about by internal factors, such as emotional upsets and excessive sexual activity.

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THE EPOCH TIMES



Poor glycaemic control is associated with impaired bone turnover, making your bones weaker and more prone to fractures.

## How Blood Glucose Damages Bone Health

The same foods that elevate your risk for Type 2 diabetes also undermine bone regeneration

JOEL FUHRMAN

In addition to following a diet that is made up of whole plant foods, it's important to keep the glycaemic load of your diet in mind. Using more beans, nuts, and seeds as major calorie sources, instead of grains and potatoes, reduces the overall glycaemic load of the diet. As more and more research is conducted, we are learning that blood glucose levels are relevant to most chronic illnesses, not just diabetes.

### Type 2 Diabetes

**Increases Fracture Risk**  
Evidence suggests that patients with Type 2 diabetes are at greater risk of bone fractures. Among patients with Type 2 diabetes, poorer glycaemic control is associated with impaired bone turnover, meaning slower replacement of old bone tissue with new bone tissue. This suggests that elevated blood glucose could weaken bone.

**We are learning that blood glucose levels are relevant to most chronic illnesses, not just diabetes.**

### Hyperglycemia Harms Bones

Bone tissue constantly rebuilds itself. Bone-building cells called osteoblasts and bone-resorbing cells called osteoclasts work together to maintain bone mass and bone strength, striking a balance between building new bone and breaking down old bone.

Elevated blood glucose impairs the bone-building effects of osteoblasts. A study in healthy women found that a single bout of hyperglycemia resulted in measurable decreases in markers of osteoblast activity. This impaired building of bone structurally compromises bone, leading to elevated fracture risk. For example, another study found that patients with inadequately controlled Type 2 diabetes had higher fracture risk (compared to healthy people and those with adequately controlled Type 2 diabetes) and altered bone architecture in the femur—thinning in the middle and thickening at the ends—which suggests susceptibility to fracture.

In addition to compromising bone turnover, elevated blood glucose accelerates the production of advanced glycation end products (AGEs), which drive oxidative stress and damage collagen in bone tissue. Production of the bone-derived hormone osteocalcin is also diminished in Type 2 diabetes and in response to hyperglycemia. In addition to its bone-building activities, osteocalcin is involved in metabolism; a form of osteocalcin prompts insulin release and increases insulin

sensitivity in muscle and fat tissue. Hyperglycemia also promotes calcium loss via the kidneys and reduces osteoblasts' responsiveness to vitamin D.

### Nuts, Seeds, and Beans Can Help

In a vegan or near-vegan diet, when high-glycaemic foods like potatoes, rice, and white flour products are used as the staple calorie sources, the glycaemic load of the diet can get excessively high. Lower-glycaemic calorie sources like beans, nuts, and seeds help shift the glycaemic load of the diet lower, which, as mentioned earlier, affects many aspects of health, including bone health.

### How Almonds May Promote Bone Health

Nuts may contain additional phytochemicals that promote bone turnover, according to an interesting study. Healthy volunteers consumed three different meals, each containing the same number of calories; the meals were made up primarily of almonds, potatoes, or rice. Cultured osteoclast precursor cells were then treated with serum from the volunteers. Serum taken after the almond meals reduced the number of osteoclasts formed and osteoclast-specific gene expression and reduced calcium release from bone cells. No effects of the potato or rice meals were detected. This suggests that phytochemicals derived from almonds help to keep the balance between osteoblast and osteoclast activity, leading to bone loss.

A focus on high-nutrient foods, including lots of green vegetables, beans, nuts, and seeds, keeps glucose and insulin favorable while providing nutrients crucial to bone health.

*Joel Fuhrman, M.D. is a board-certified family physician, seven-time New York Times best-selling author and internationally recognized expert on nutrition and natural healing. He specializes in preventing and reversing disease through nutritional methods.*



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### TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

## Chinese Medicine and the Causes of Disease

This ancient medical system has some insightful—and unexpected—views on what can lead to illness



In the Eastern view, emotions and the physical body share a deep connection, each affecting the other.

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But first, let's talk about how Eastern medicine describes the body, health, and disease.

Chinese medicine is a philosophy drawn from insight into the nature of life and creation. It uses the language of nature to describe the causes for disease and diagnosis: an excess of summer heat, external wind, or internal dampness. These terms may sound strange to our ears, but they describe the causes of common ailments in the Eastern view. It's simply the language used to describe what has been observed over thousands of years.

### Emotional Factors

It may seem strange to think of our emotions as a potential cause of disease. In the West, emotions aren't considered when evaluating the etiology of disease, but that does seem to be changing as the widespread effects of loneliness, stress, and depression become recognized as major factors in disease. However, in the Eastern view, emotions and the physical body share a deep connection, each affecting the other. In the Eastern model, many organs have a corresponding emotion. Each emotion affects the whole body, but does so for its respective organ in particular.

### Organs and Their Associated Emotions

Joy is associated with the heart, while anger and frustration are associated with the liver, sadness and grief with the lungs, worry and overthinking with the spleen, and fear with the kidneys.

Consider that someone has suddenly lost a loved one. Their grief can manifest in the lungs as a shortness of breath, asthma, and a cough. It also works in reverse. Someone who has a chronic cough can find themselves feeling more melancholy than usual. The cough has weakened the lungs, predisposing them to grief. It's a constant cycle of interaction.

Another example is someone prone to worrying, which is perhaps heightened because of a public speaking engagement they have coming up. These feelings can manifest as problems with digestion, such as bloating, gas, pain, and diarrhea. And again, the reverse is true. When we have prolonged digestive issues, it can make us more prone to worry and overthinking.

### Diet and Eating Habits

Eating a healthy variety of clean, nutrient-rich foods is vital to maintaining a healthy body, mind, and spirit. It also supports the essential functions of our internal organs and all of the body's physiological processes. What we eat is actually a vital part of treating disease in Eastern philosophy.

The amount of food and how frequently we eat are also significant. Smaller, more frequent meals are better for you and easier to digest than one or two big ones. Of course, everybody is different, but we live in a culture with larger than necessary portions and never enough time to sit down and eat a meal properly, which explains why digestive problems are so prevalent. Just remember, the body loves consistency, and moderation is key.

One thing that's unique to Chinese medicine about eating, in particular, is being mindful. Western culture values productivity and multitasking (which isn't good for us), but the Eastern perspective has always valued doing one thing at a time, which significantly benefits the digestive system. Mindfully preparing and eating a meal will increase its health benefits, as it allows the body to focus on digestion and assimilation.

### Stress

Stress, as we are all acutely aware, is part of life. Many health professionals believe that it's at the root of countless illnesses. One of the reasons stress can be so detrimental to our health isn't that it exists, but how we deal with it. Unpleasant situations are unavoidable, but how we process them is the key to managing stress in a healthy way. When stress overwhelms us, especially on an ongoing basis, it can wreak havoc on the immune system, making us more susceptible to illness. Thankfully, Chinese medicine offers some tools to help us manage stress in life.

**MEDITATION.** Meditation, simply put, pulls us out of the chaos of life and allows us to quiet the mind and become centered. There are a few ways that we can do this: taking a walk in nature, sitting quietly, or lying down. It's incredible how beneficial

taking 20 minutes to sit quietly can be to the body, mind, and spirit. Meditation is a simple yet powerful way to manage stress if you have a tough day or feel like you need a boost.

**TAI CHI.** Tai chi is another excellent exercise and a way to calm the mind, body, and spirit with forms of graceful movements, also with an emphasis on the breath. Both tai chi and qi gong are best practiced outside, as nature has a calming, grounding effect on the body, mind, and spirit.

**QI GONG.** Qi gong is a gentle, meditative exercise system similar to tai chi. Some forms are considered internal martial arts, while others are more spiritual in nature. Qi gong has been practiced for thousands of years in China, and it's an ideal way to calm the mind and body with its fluid movements and emphasis on breathing.



If we think about health representing a state of equilibrium, anything that throws it out of whack can contribute to disease.

### Fatigue

Fatigue is a common problem in the modern world. So many of us are overworked, overstressed, and underslept. Sleep is the way that our bodies heal, detoxify, and repair. Getting restful sleep is vital for a healthy immune system and clear cognition. The intense nature of our lifestyles makes insomnia a common problem. Sleeping in a dark room without electronics, not eating at least four hours before bed, and making sure that you aren't holding on to emotions are some excellent ways to ensure a good night's sleep.

### Excess Sexual Activity

This one always catches people off-guard. Yes, you read that right—excess sexual activity can cause disease. But, before panic sets in, let me explain how that works. All of us are born with "jing," which our parents give us at birth. We only have a finite amount, so preserving it is essential for health and vitality throughout life. There are ways that we can supplement and support our jing, and we do that by living well and taking care of ourselves. There are ways we "spend" our jing, like money in a bank account, and there's a direct correlation between spending our jing and aging. For men, sexual activity

often ends in ejaculation, which directly represents their jing or essence. Ejaculation is considered to be a loss of jing, but only when done excessively, without allowing the body to recover. Jing is consumed when women have children (which is normal), but having too many babies without time to rest and regain strength in between diminishes jing and accelerates aging.

The focus for this idea of jing is that there be ample time between the activities that cause loss (sexual activity for men and childbearing for women) so the body is able to recover, and jing is maintained. Our bodies have innate healing and regenerating capabilities, but must be given the time and resources to do so.

### Parasites

Parasites are as old as time, and most of us have them. An estimated 80 percent of both adults and children have parasites in their gut. Although many people believe that they're a problem in parts of the world with poor sanitation and not enough access to clean water, parasites exist worldwide. Symptoms of parasites are pain in the abdomen, poor appetite, diarrhea, gas, itchy anus (especially at night), bloating, emaciation, and exhaustion. Parasites have a profound effect on the body, draining it of essential nutrition, leading to deficiencies and weight loss.

There are various factors contributing to disease, internal and external. In the Eastern approach, some may be new to us. If we think about health representing a state of equilibrium, anything that throws it out of whack can contribute to disease. Chinese medicine is a medicine that teaches us to listen to our bodies, so that we know when things are out of balance. We can then make small changes to bring us back to a healthy state. Temperance is another. Being moderate in work, play, food, drink, and our emotions are all ways that we can stay healthy now and long into the future.

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







# The Power of Routines

What you do every day matters and routines help you do it

MEGAN EDGELOW

The word “routine” can bring to mind words such as mundane or ordinary.

During the COVID-19 pandemic’s disruptions to daily life, routines may have felt boring and restrictive. However, as an occupational therapist and researcher of the effect of activity and participation on mental health, I know that routines can be powerful tools. They can support cognitive function, boost health, and provide meaningful activities and social opportunities.

Early in the pandemic, researchers pointed to the value of daily routines to cope with change. As the two-year anniversary of the pandemic coincides with the relaxation of public health measures across the country, reflecting on routines and their value is useful when moving toward a “new normal.”

## Routines Support Cognitive Function

First, having a daily routine and regular habits supports cognitive function and may even free people up to be more creative. Research has found that having regular work processes allows workers to spend less cognitive energy on recurring tasks. This can support focus and creativity for more complex tasks.

Think of typical morning routines that existed before the pandemic: helping family members get on their way, taking a usual route to work, grabbing a warm beverage along the way, saying hello to coworkers, flipping on a computer, or opening a calendar. Having habits such as these can set the stage for a productive workday.

A review of the daily rituals of influential artists found that many artists have well-defined work routines that may support their creativity rather than constrain it. Memory research shows that regular routines and habits can support older adults to function better in their home environments.

If taking medications at the same time and putting the keys in their spot is part of a daily routine, less energy will be spent looking for lost objects and worrying about maintaining one’s health, freeing up time for other things that people want to do in their day.

## Routines Promote Health

Regular routines can also help people feel like they have control over their daily lives and that they can take positive steps in managing their health. Making time for exercise within routines can help meet recommended daily activity levels. This is especially relevant now, as research shows that people who reduced their activity levels during the pandemic could experience enduring health effects.

As people increase activity outside of their homes, they might consider taking transit to school and work, returning to organized fitness activities and the gym, and finding opportunities to include movement throughout the day. Other ways that routines can support health include regular meal preparation and getting enough sleep, activities that seem simple, but can pay dividends in healthy aging over a lifetime.

## Routines Provide Meaning

Regular routines can also go beyond the streamlining of daily tasks and add some spice to life. Evidence indicates that a health-promoting activity such as walking can offer chances to enjoy nature, explore new places, and socialize.

Research on the concept of flow, a state of full absorption in the present moment, shows that activities such as sports, games, fine arts, and music can be fulfilling and reinforcing. Regular participation in meaningful and engaging activities can also contribute positively to mental health.

## Small Steps to Build Routines

If you think your daily routines could use a tune-up, consider some small steps:



If you make a time to do something and stick with it, like jogging in the morning, you’ll find it easier to maintain the habit.

CHANDER R/UNSPLASH



**A daily routine and regular habits supports cognitive function and may even free people up to be more creative.**

Use a day-timer or smartphone app to organize your activities and put the things that you want to do in your schedule.

Choose a regular time to wake up and to go to bed, and try to stick to it most days of the week.

Make physical activity manageable with neighborhood walks or bike rides a few times per week.

Start a new hobby or reengage in a past one, such as playing sports or games, making arts and crafts, playing an instrument, or singing.

Keep an eye out for meaningful activities that may be popping up in your community, such as a book club at the library or a social walking group.

Routines have the power to help us manage our health and our work, home, and community lives. Two years after the pandemic changed everyone’s lives, people now have an opportunity to consider the routines they want to keep and the meaningful things they need in their daily lives to stay productive, happy, and healthy.

*Megan Edgelow is an assistant professor in health sciences at Queen’s University in Ontario, Canada. This article was first published on The Conversation.*

Local groups and clubs may offer meaningful activities that will upgrade your daily routine.



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