

MIND & BODY

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Why We Need Our Intuition

Our current knowledge affirms it is possible to know something without even ‘thinking’ about it

Intuition is ‘a natural ability or power that makes it possible to know something without any proof or evidence.’

EMMA SUTTIE

We’ve all had that feeling—an instant knowing that something isn’t right. Whether in a business deal or when a friend hasn’t called in a while, somewhere deep inside us we have a knowing, and we can’t explain why.

That is intuition, and it has been with us, buried deep in the limbic system for a very, very long time.

So what is intuition, and where does it come from?

Intuition is “a natural ability or power that makes it possible to know something without any proof or evidence: a feeling that guides a person to act a certain way without fully understanding why,” according to the Britannica dictionary.

We’ve all experienced it, that moment of inclination, when something we have no reason to know seems quite plausible or even certain to us. Some people have described it as the result of previous knowledge and experience culminating in an instantaneous understanding, but there may be more to it than that.

The Science of Intuition

Psychologists sometimes divide our thinking into two categories. The first is intuitive thinking, which some scientists believe is controlled by the right side of the brain. This thinking is quick, instinctual, and happens below the level of our conscious awareness. It comes from a deeper part of the brain, called the limbic system. This part of the brain is responsible for how we respond to threats (our fight-or-flight response) and behaviors needed for survival, like feeding ourselves, reproducing, and caring for offspring.

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Our intuition can come as a gut feeling, but if we're not paying attention, we can miss it.

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Coping With Vaccine Side Effects

Some simple advice can help you deal with side effects from the mandated COVID-19 vaccines



CONAN MILNER

The vaccines promoted to protect against COVID-19 are described as safe. So why are there so many reports of adverse reactions? And just how much harm do these shots cause?

There is no easy metric to answer these questions, but there are a variety of sources to consider.

One source is the Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System (VAERS). Since the 1980s, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been using VAERS to monitor problems with all vaccines administered throughout the population.

But compared to past VAERS reports, the numbers for the COVID-19 shot are off the charts, totaling more adverse events than

all other vaccines combined. Last month, VAERS reported a total of more than 1 million adverse events following COVID injections from Dec. 14, 2020, to Jan. 28, 2022. Over 183,000 serious injuries were reported, and among them over 24,000 deaths.

Some critics have suggested the numbers are inaccurate, a point a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) spokesperson alluded to in a comment to the *The Epoch Times*.

“Because these reports are required to be submitted regardless of the plausibility of the vaccine causing the event, not all of the reports involve an outcome caused by the vaccine,” said the spokesperson. Health care providers, vaccine manufacturers, and the general public can all submit reports to VAERS but do so under penalty of perjury. Other researchers have suggested the

numbers of adverse events are far higher than those reported. An often-cited 2009 Lazarus Report found that less than 1 percent of health care providers report vaccine adverse events.

Everyone agrees these numbers don’t tell the whole story. Beyond criticisms that VAERS is woefully underutilized, the reports that do make it to the database are limited as well.

According to the U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) website, these reports “may contain information that is incomplete, inaccurate, coincidental, or unverifiable.”

“In large part, reports to VAERS are voluntary, which means they are subject to biases.

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CHINESE WISDOM FOR SEASONAL LIVING

Spring Belongs to the Wood Element, and What Does This Mean?

Solar Term: 'Clear and Bright' (April 5 to 19)

MOREEN LIAO

A solar term is a period of about two weeks and is based on the sun's position in the zodiac. Solar terms form the traditional Chinese calendar system. The calendar follows the ancient Chinese belief that living in accordance with nature will enable one to live a harmonious life. This article series explores each of the year's 24 solar terms, offering guidance on how to best navigate the season.

Solar Term: 'Clear and Bright'

2022 Dates: April 5 to 19

As this solar term's moniker, "Clear and Bright," suggests, the weather is often clear and bright during this time as we move into spring, but there's also plenty of rainfall to wash away the dust and dullness of winter.

After the rain inevitably comes rainbows. The ancient Chinese believed rainbows were the product of yin and yang energy meeting in balance and that they couldn't appear if the energy was purely yang or yin. Clear and Bright is when rainbows first start showing up in the sky. Not incidentally, it's also a time of energy balance.

A perfect metaphor for the season, the rainbow's brilliant arc represents balance, potential, and the promise of renewal when fresh sunshine appears.

As the yang energy rises in all living beings during this solar term, the qi energy also becomes clear and bright. This time presents boundless potential for our health if we harness it mindfully.

According to traditional Chinese medicine, the spring season belongs to the wood element. This doesn't refer to the material of wood, nor to trees. Rather, it's the idea of growing upward and of a vaporizing quality. It's the power of improving, and it provides a foundation for the rest of the seasons to come.

This is why spring is the best time to stimulate and encourage well-being. By doing the right things, we can follow the rhythm of nature and get the best results with minimum effort.

Living in Harmony With 'Clear and Bright'

As the yang energy starts to rise and accumulate in one's body, it travels from the inside to the outside of the body. If one eats overly greasy or heat-containing foods, such as hot spices, it may overload the body and cause congestion. The excess heat may also trigger allergic reactions, high blood pressure, or coughs.

During this time of year, people tend

to have good appetites—but try not to overeat, and try to include more outdoor activities in your routine to help you lose any excess weight left over from winter. The sun is very mild and beneficial for health during this time of year, so get outside whenever possible. For elderly people, gentle exercise is best. Be careful not to overdo it.

Dragon well tea, or lonjing tea, a type of green tea, is one of the top ten tea types in China. The premium category among the dragon well tea is called yuqiancha, which means tea before the rain. The tender tea leaves were harvested right before the heavy rains as the rain boosted the growth and delicate aromas of the tea.

A special tea ritual has been followed for a very long time—people blended newly produced dragon well tea with old teas to drink around this solar term. It might be interesting to blend old and new, but more importantly, this balance of aged and fresh flavors from different vintages provides a nice mix of enzymes.

The sun is very mild and beneficial for health during this time of year, so get outside whenever possible.

Seasonal Foods

Beneficial foods include barley, carrot, cucumber, eggs, melon, potato, rice and most grains, spinach, sweet potato, goji berries and their leaves, and yam. They cleanse the blood and tone the liver. Slow-cooked oxtail with plenty of root vegetables is very light, yet replenishing. Avoid mushrooms, wheat, seafood, and plants that grow in water, such as watercress, as the nature of these foods is wet and can cause water retention in the body.

Avoid grilled and deep-fried foods. Slow cooking is best for this time. Avoid foods that are overly hot in temperature or spicy.

Recommended herbs include rose, celery, coriander, wormwood, chamomile, marjoram, calendula, lavender, and rosemary.

Epoch Times contributor Moreen Liao is a descendant of four generations of traditional Chinese medicine doctors. She's also a certified aromatherapist, former dean of an Institute in Sydney, and the founder of Heritage Formulations, a complete solution for TCM professionals. Visit RootsTCM.com for details.



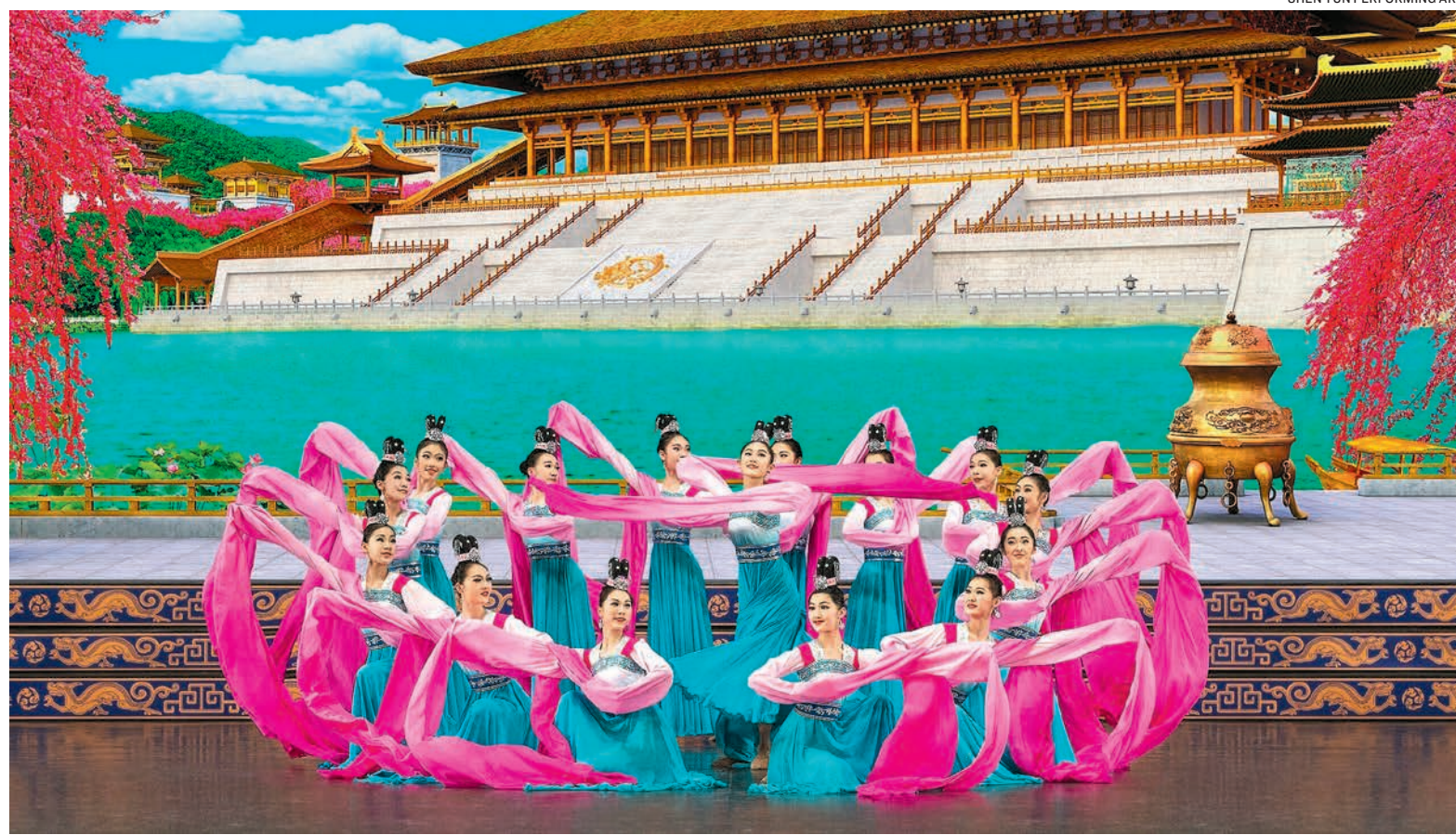
Spring is a perfect time to get outside and enjoy the mild sun.



Spring is a great time to take up new healthy habits like outdoor exercise.



The ancient Chinese believed rainbows were the product of yin and yang energy meeting in balance, something that happens often at this time of year.



It is not just the beauty of Shen Yun performances that enralls audiences but that the dances tell stories that testify to kindness and compassion.

The Profound Healing Effects of Joy, Beauty, and Hope

An attempt to explain reports of healing after watching Shen Yun Performing Arts

YUHONG DONG

Shen Yun Performing Arts is the world's premier classical Chinese dance and music company. According to its website, it was established in New York by elite artists inspired by a shared mission—to bring back the lost world of traditional Chinese culture.

The performance is meant to entertain and uplift audiences, yet many have reported an unexpected reduction in pain or an increase in mobility. The effect has been so dramatic in some cases as to defy explanation, though researchers, doctors, and other experts point to several effects Shen Yun might be having on the mind and body.

I'm an expert in infectious disease and antiviral drug development and have been the chief scientific officer at a Swiss biotech company. More and more, scientists are starting to recognize the incredible interconnection between mind and body. Understanding this connection might help explain why so many Shen Yun audience members report improved physical and mental health after watching the performance.

Shen Yun pairs classical Chinese dance with an orchestra that combines authentic ancient Chinese instruments with orchestral instruments from the West. Shen Yun's performance is filled with bright color, breath-taking music and dance, universal values, and a message of compassion. It's the kind of performance that audience members often say leaves them in tears of joy and filled with hope.

Beauty, as well as the awe it stirs in the human spirit, has a profound impact on how we think and feel. Shen Yun's beauty comes from many aspects of its performance, but it may offer an even deeper resonance for many because of the culture it comes from. Chinese civilization has persisted for 5,000 years, orders of magnitude longer than any other civilization, though it did suffer a catastrophic communist revolution in 1949. Despite that, the culture persists, and within it are profound insights into how to live a dignified and meaningful human life.

The dramatic decrease in pain and disease symptoms some audience members report after seeing the performance is worth looking into.

Chronic Pain Disappeared

"You know, when we were coming to the show, I was sitting at the beginning [of the performance], and I was saying, 'Oh, my back hurts,'" Antonio Divine, a nurse who works in a Baptist hospital, said. But after watching the Shen Yun performance at Fort Lauderdale's Au-Rene Theater on Dec. 29, 2021, Divine realized that his back pain had disappeared.

Divine isn't the only person who has ex-

perienced such pain-relieving effects after watching Shen Yun.

Queenie Owl said she had pain in her legs as she was making her way to watch Shen Yun at the Belk Theater in Charlotte, North Carolina, on Jan. 8, 2022. But once she watched the performance, her pain disappeared.

"When I came, I was in pain. I had cramps in my feet, upper thighs, and calves. I had a hard time walking; it was painful to even try. I usually do, and I'm used to it. I need a wheelchair in case I need support. But now I feel better," she said.

"I can't explain the feeling, it's just this 'ooh wow' feeling, and I think the energy had a lot to do with it. ... I looked at that amazing art and beauty, and I forgot about [the pain]."

It's the kind of performance that audience members often say leaves them in tears of joy and filled with hope.

Diane Richter, a retired caregiver who still works at St. Paul's School in Cudahy, Wisconsin, suffered a lot of pain and stiffness in her body and neck due to an accident when she was a teenager. On Jan. 2, she watched Shen Yun at the Marcus Performing Arts Center in Milwaukee, where she experienced the disappearance of pain and stiffness in her body for the first time in 49 years.

"I came in with stiffness in my body and my neck, and I don't know how to explain this, but it's gone," she said. "It's like through the time of watching [Shen Yun], it [was] actually released, and it's not painful right now."

On Feb. 12, 2022, Walter Dixon, a retired business owner who suffers from Parkinson's disease, came with his cane to see Shen Yun perform at the Oncenter Crouse Hinds Theater in Syracuse, New York, and walked out after the performance without it. "I usually use walking sticks. I'm not using them right this minute. I'm standing without them. I have Parkinson's disease. I had trouble getting in here, and after the show, I walked right out of there—I don't know what happened."

Doctor Calls Shen Yun a 'Prescription'

One thing we have learned in recent years, which was widely held in older forms of medicine, is that a poor mental and emotional state is a foundation for illness.

There have been numerous immunological studies showing that if a person is in a state of chronic stress and depression, the release of the stress hormone cortisol increases, which not only suppresses the function of immune cells (including phagocytes, natural killer cells, T cells), but also inhibits their ability

to fight viruses.

Depression also increases the production of pro-inflammatory cytokines and chemokines, leading to a state of chronic inflammation, which in turn can easily trigger or aggravate chronic diseases (such as cardiovascular and neuromuscular disorders) and lead to further deterioration of chronic symptoms, including pain.

These reported cases of pain completely disappearing—even long-term severe pain—may be related to the decrease of stress hormones and increased levels of endorphins and oxytocin while watching Shen Yun.

In August 2021, professor George Slavich from the Center for Psychoneuroimmunology at the University of California-Los Angeles and psychology professor Jamil Zaki from Stanford University published an article in the journal *Anxiety, Stress and Coping*, proposing three evidence-based strategies that could help foster individual and collective recovery, growth, and resilience. Those strategies are cultivating social belonging, practicing compassion, and engaging in kindness.

For many people, a sense of social belonging all but disappeared during the pandemic. "People now are feeling depressed because they feel more isolated and alone," psychologist Howard Berlin said.

Berlin was glad to see people come together for Shen Yun performances in part because of the shared social experience.

"When you come to something like this, you see people coming together and the beauty of community," he said.

Many experiences can provide this sense of community, but not all of them generate compassion and kindness. For many people, these virtues, which are woven throughout Shen Yun's story-based dances, stand out as a powerful medicine.

Dr. Lisa Miller, a doctor of internal medicine, describes Shen Yun as "a perfect prescription for joy." She describes Shen Yun artists as "physicians of beauty and grace and chemistry and electricity."

"Being a physician, I use my hands to get things done and take care of my patients, while these performers use their bodies, their gestures, their fingers—they use every part of their body to heal—as what they did tonight was a form of medicine. It was a perfect prescription for joy and pageantry and beauty and honor, and everything. It is just good and magical," Miller said.

"And we need it. It's the perfect prescription for happiness."

More Than Just Art and Beauty

In the 1970s, Dr. Norman Cousins, a UCLA professor of psychiatric and biobehavioral sciences, tailored for himself a holistic approach that included spirituality and laughing, prescribing himself comedy movies. He eventually recovered from a life-threatening autoimmune disease.

Joy is medicine, but Shen Yun's healing power isn't just based on joy—it also delivers a potent dosage of awe. Shen Yun aims to bring back universal values and deliver a

message of compassion.

One Harvard study quantified the power of compassion with biomedical methods. Students were shown a 50-minute film of Mother Teresa performing acts of kindness, helping the sick and dying poor of Calcutta.

The audience's immune function was enhanced and remained high for an hour afterward. This effect happened even to those who didn't like Mother Teresa; their brains subconsciously resonated with her good deeds and the power of compassion.

This is far from the only study demonstrating a link between kindness and health benefits.

Studies have shown that when people do good deeds, their levels of oxytocin increase. Oxytocin has been shown to promote immunity and help people fight viruses and bacteria. Science has shown that kindness has a biochemical effect; accordingly, kindness can be used as a treatment for pain, depression, and infectious disease.

More interestingly, the oxytocin in the body of those who witness the good deeds will also increase. If performance includes a story of acts of kindness toward others, it has the potential to help increase the audience's oxytocin levels, which in turn can boost immunity and reduce chronic inflammation.

All this is to say we can't discount the importance of the role our thoughts and behaviors play in our health. Any spiritual phenomenon has a material implication, and we can't neglect this.

A study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found that people with different perspectives on well-being (hedonistic versus eudaimonic/altruistic) had two different types of gene-expression profiles for peripheral immune cells. People who had a noble purpose in life had a clear pattern of a much stronger potential for antiviral immunity than those who were more focused on self-gratification. The effect of our thoughts could be as far-reaching and deep as the genetic layer of the human body.

Dr. Yang Jingduan, an expert in neurology and psychiatry who did a research fellowship in clinical psychopharmacology at Oxford University, is also an expert in integrative Chinese and Western medicine. Yang has found that one's behavior has the most direct impact on one's physical health. "And the most powerful influence on our behavior is our emotions. The strongest effect on our emotions are our thoughts. And what determines our thoughts is our belief system," he said.

"Ancient Chinese medicine holds that in each internal organ system exists a soul or spirit, and they are the immortal part of our life, called our 'true self.' What nurtures our spiritual part are the five virtues: compassion, respect, justice, wisdom, and faith."

"The morals of Shen Yun's performances present the best practice of these values. In summary, Shen Yun nourishes our body, mind, and soul."

Shen Yun also describes an ancient yet renewed life-cultivation system, Falun Dafa, which teaches three universal principles: truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance.

"Anyone who practices these values will find themselves much more positive, happier, and relaxed. These minimize their reactions to daily stressors, consequently eliminating one of the most fundamental causes of illness—stress," Yang said.

Audience members who experience unexpected relief from symptoms that are normally difficult to treat have been sharing these stories with friends and family, generating more interest in Shen Yun. Parkinson's disease is not curable, yet Dixon experienced such a miraculous improvement after watching the performance. This kind of result is particularly interesting for medical professionals.

Yuhong Dong is the chief scientific officer for a Swiss biotech company and was previously a senior medical scientific expert for antiviral drug development with Novartis Switzerland and held similar roles at Novartis China. She is a postdoctoral fellow in the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences and a doctor of infectious diseases.

The Epoch Times is a proud sponsor of Shen Yun Performing Arts. For more information please visit ShenYunPerformingArts.org



Shen Yun Performing Arts Global Company's curtain call at FirstOntario Concert Hall in Hamilton, Ont., on March 22, 2022.

Coping With Vaccine Side Effects

Some simple advice can help you deal with side effects from the mandated COVID-19 vaccines

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This creates specific limitations on how the data can be used scientifically. Data from VAERS reports should always be interpreted with these limitations in mind," it states.

Despite these problems, VAERS is the primary government-funded system for reporting vaccine side effects in the United states. Other eyes are watching for adverse events, however. Numerous videos shared and often banned on social media illustrate the tics, seizures, and other debilitating effects that purportedly followed COVID-19 shots. Both the FDA and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are quietly studying reports of neurological issues linked to the vaccine. And hundreds of clinical studies also document the injuries and deaths correlated with these injections.

The understanding that these shots lead to unwanted side effects is nothing new. Both regulators and manufacturers of the COVID mRNA vaccines knew the treatment was linked to health issues. On March 1, the FDA released 10,000 pages of Pfizer clinical trial documents, which detail numerous cases of primary adverse events following COVID vaccines.

These documents show that nearly 1,300 different adverse reactions were linked to Pfizer's COVID shot.

"The list includes acute kidney injury, acute flaccid myelitis, anti-sperm antibody positive, brain stem embolism, brain stem thrombosis, cardiac arrest, cardiac failure, cardiac ventricular thrombosis, cardiogenic shock, central nervous system vasculitis, death neonatal, deep vein thrombosis, encephalitis brain stem, encephalitis hemorrhagic, frontal lobe epilepsy, foaming at mouth, epileptic psychosis, facial paralysis, fetal distress syndrome, gastrointestinal amyloidosis, generalized tonic-clonic seizure, Hashimoto's encephalopathy, hepatic vascular thrombosis, herpes zoster reactivation, immune-mediated hepatitis, interstitial lung disease, jugular vein embolism, juvenile myoclonic epilepsy, liver injury, low birth weight, multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children, myocarditis, neonatal seizure, pancreatitis, pneu-

monia, stillbirth, tachycardia, temporal lobe epilepsy, testicular autoimmunity, thrombotic cerebral infarction, Type 1 diabetes mellitus, venous thrombosis neonatal, and vertebral artery thrombosis among 1,246 other medical conditions following vaccination," an appendix in one document states.

While doctors, nurses, and other experts have raised warnings about the possibility of side effects, people providing care have witnessed phenomena they have never seen before.

Dr. Sean McCaffrey is trained in acupuncture and chiropractic adjustment. Many of his patients have come to him because they believed they suffered reactions from the COVID shots. Some of the cases he has seen defy an explanation that doesn't involve the vaccine.

"One family I see—a young lady, as well as her mother and father—all three developed massive side effects after inoculations, all within 24 hours. All neurologic. One got Bell's palsy. Another had a numbing of the face and tongue. The other one developed a droopy eye, but it wasn't a palsy. It ended up being more of a trigeminal neuralgia," he said.

"To see a family like that was a big eye opener for me. I had a family that all reacted almost immediately and all in different ways. None of them had any of these problems ever before. And here they are, 24 hours later.

McCaffrey allows that there could be another explanation. He's seen many patients come in after a COVID shot and knows that their own stress or fear around the injection could also play a role. But the case of this family was impossible for him to dismiss.

"Could they have all driven through a chemical cloud near a factory? It's possible. Anything is possible," he said. "But then you start looking at the probable. You did this therapy. It induced an immune response—and the body is kicking back at this thing pretty hard.

"Every one of the cases that's come through my door, all of them reported within 24 to 72 hours after inoculation. Do you know it's the vaccine? How could you? Unless you ran large clinical trials and studies and started looking for it. So you can never really see a direct cause/effect link? That's what makes this tricky."

It's a problem that has arisen before. Over the decades, countless breakthrough medical treatments have arrived, and in many cases, it has taken decades for their adverse events to be found. In some cases, it takes over a century. Researchers have only recently found a link between pregnant women who take acetaminophen and later behavioral issues in their children.

Oftentimes, the research is limited or



Adverse reactions to the vaccine can vary widely but the road to health is well-trodden.

“I had a family that all reacted almost immediately and all in different ways. None of them had any of these problems ever before. And here they are 24 hours later.”

Dr. Sean McCaffrey, acupuncturist and chiropractor

it can be difficult to connect a disease to any given cause. That becomes especially true when the cause of a disease affects multiple systems of the body, like smoking.

The diversity of disease makes it harder to diagnose a specific cause, said McCaffrey.

"We all know now that cigarettes lead to lung cancer," he said, "but it's also tied to heart disease, atherosclerosis, kidney issues, circulatory problems, and digestive issues. Before pinning down that cigarettes could cause all of this, it was really tricky for a lot of years."

The COVID-19 vaccine is similarly pervasive, he said.

"You're putting a foreign agent into the body to induce an immune response. So you have to ask, what is the foreign agent? People get hung up on the spike protein, but there is more there. There are preservatives and all kinds of other little things, and each person is unique," he said.

"How your system responds is individual to you. Which is why you see so many unique side effects coming through this. But they all tend to clump back into similar patterns. They'll clump into a circulatory issue that involves edema where the lymphatics get involved. Or you'll see a neurological issue where you're getting numbing, tingling, Bell's palsy, and neuropathies where you can't feel any longer.

"You'll also see musculoskeletal things show up, where you can't move your arm

anymore, or all of a sudden you're not walking. Or you can't breathe, because the diaphragm is a muscle.

"You'll see elimination issues. All of a sudden your bowels quit, or your kidneys aren't releasing urine like they used to. You start to swell, and you notice other symptoms all of a sudden."

But while the complexities of the vaccine are many, as they are with COVID-19 itself, the path to a stronger immune system and overall health is more direct. The same measures that can help you avoid a severe COVID-19 infection can also help you recover if you have had an adverse reaction to the vaccine.

McCaffrey said these measures are captured in the timeless advice of a grandmother.

"Her advice correlates with four physical laws of the human body," he said.

The Law of Nutrients

When it comes to nutrients, the advice is simple: balance.

"Make sure your diet is decent and clean—and you're not loading the body up with a bunch of things that it has to try to get rid of. If you're sitting there eating cupcakes and ho-hos all day long, odds are really good that it's going to tax the body because that is not good fuel," he said.

If you avoid processed foods and foods high in added sugars, you will bring your blood sugar under control, and that will



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On March 1, 2022, the FDA released 10,000 pages of Pfizer clinical trial documents which detail numerous cases of primary adverse events following COVID vaccines.

eliminate the stress response these foods can trigger that taxes your entire body and leads to weight gain and problems with clearing toxins from the body.

Getting a balance of nutrients decreases your likelihood of having symptoms from a foreign invader or being unable to eliminate a toxin that manages to get into your body, McCaffrey said.

"So like grandma always said, eat your fruits and vegetables. Don't spoil your appetite with that cookie."

The Law of Movement

Grandma's second law is equally simple, McCaffrey said: Move.

"Grandma said, 'You can't sit in the house all day. Get outside. Go play. Move the body.'"

Movement does several things, all of them essential. Your lymphatic system, for example, relies on movement to circulate lymph, a fluid that travels through your body clearing out toxins like cellular debris and bacteria. The lymphatic system is also key to your immune responses. Unlike your cardiovascular system, which has the heart to circulate its fluid, blood, the lymphatic system relies on muscle movements to generate flow.

And even though your cardiovascular system has the heart, it relies on movement to keep a healthy flow.

"Moving increases circulation, which means that things that get in you don't

have a chance to sit. They get pushed around through your filters. Blood moves through your kidneys every couple minutes," he said.

"Get that lymphatic system pumping. Get the body moving. The more you move it, the stronger your body gets physically and the more resistant it gets against invaders of any kind: virus, bacteria, poisons, and toxins."

The Law of Recuperation

Grandma's next law is to rest.

"Grandma says, 'It's time to go to bed. You can't stay up until two or three in the morning. You need your rest. You have to sleep.'"

Sleep plays several critical roles in the body, and lack of sleep triggers a chain reaction of responses that can grind your mind and body down.

"If you don't rest the body, we know 100 percent of the time it spikes adrenal function, which spikes blood sugar, which spikes cortisol, which weakens immune function," McCaffrey said.

That means if your body catches a virus or other invader, it lacks the strength to repel it.

And just as our modern processed food industry (including junk food and restaurant food) breaks the law of nutrition and our sedentary lifestyle breaks the law of movement, our tendency to stay up late and our wake up and work patterns contradict the law of recuperation.

"In 1900, before the First World War, the average amount of sleep in the United States was nine hours a night. Today, the average is less than six. So we cut a third of our sleep time out," he said.

"Sleep is the primary time when the brain does an auto-cleaning. It gets rid of toxins and debris. It does all the stuff it's supposed to do when you're not using it.

"If I take a third of my cleaning time away, how clean can my system get?"

Sleeping less leaves you tired, which means you are less likely to move, and mounting research finds we are more tempted to eat unhealthy high-sugar, high-fat foods that trigger a dopamine reaction when we haven't slept enough.

About the only law we haven't been breaking in a fundamental way is the fourth law, but in that case, we have pushed it to an extreme and created other problems.

The Law of Sanitation

Simply put, if you want to avoid many causes of disease, stay clean and keep your environment clean as well. But staying clean has another dimension as well.

"You've got to clean the body physically. Keep it clean. Not sterile, like hand sanitizer and all that stuff. We were never designed for that. We're designed to wash it off with a little soap and water," he said.

"Keep it clean, but not just the body. You also have to keep the mind clean."

What happens in the mind has an immediate effect on the body. Researchers have now linked loneliness to increased mortality and anger to increased pain. And an overwhelming volume of research has detailed hundreds of ways the hormone shifts caused by fear and stress destroy the body even as they foster disease.

"You can't be pumping fear, worry, anger, jealousy, and envy into your head every time you turn on the TV or pop the radio on, or open up a magazine article. It will poison you faster than you can shake a stick," McCaffrey said.

"If you can follow the four laws that your grandmother told you, the body will do really well. It gets healthy, strong, and resistant. If you choose to have your inoculation, a strong, healthy body that's balanced will be less likely to have complications."

There are still many unknowns about the long-term effects of COVID-19 vaccines.



Quick Tips to Spring-Clean Your Diet

Warmer weather and fresh growth beckon you to a healthier lifestyle

MELISSA DIANE SMITH

Spring is a breath of fresh air after the colder, darker days of winter. The snow melts, the days get warmer and brighter, and the flora and fauna of our planet bring forth new growth and new life. It's the perfect time to follow nature's example and breathe new life into your diet, to regenerate your body and revitalize your health.

Try these ways to give your diet a thorough spring cleaning.

Pitch excess baggage in your diet. If you

haven't cut refined foods out of your diet yet, now is the perfect time to start anew by eliminating refined flours, sugars, and oils. These "foods" weigh down the body with nutrient-poor calories and present numerous risks to your health. To shed unwanted pounds and help the body function at its tip-top best, wipe the slate clean on your diet and avoid foods with these processed ingredients.

Get in sync with the season. Chinese medicine teaches that spring is the time to cleanse and rejuvenate the liver and improve the body's detoxification process. To do that, avoid heavy foods (such as red meat and cheese), eat less, and eat lighter. Relish the foods of the season, such as salmon, trout, young chicken, dill, chives, asparagus, and strawberries. Eat artichokes and consider taking milk thistle extract—both of which have liver-protective properties. Take a load off the liver by avoiding alcohol,

If you haven't cut refined foods out of your diet yet, now is the perfect time to start.

a drug the liver has to detoxify.

Make it a very veggie time. Include more green in your diet than brown or tan. Reduce the amount of grains and breads you eat, and eat more non-starchy vegetables, which have considerably fewer carbs and calories per serving. Fun seasonal foods to try include baby vegetables—those young, smaller versions of common vegetables—everything from green beans to zucchini to broccoli. Also include the traditional foods of spring: greens of all sorts, including mixed baby spring greens, baby spinach, dandelion greens, watercress, chervil, and sorrel. According to Judith Benn Hurley, author of "The Good Herb," these greens are European herbalists' prescription for spring rejuvenation. Dress greens lightly with the simplest of dressings—extra virgin olive oil and lemon juice or unrefined apple cider vinegar.

Get fresh. Emphasize foods that are as fresh as possible. When the weather is still cool outside, cook fresh foods and steam, bake, poach, simmer, sauté, or broil them. As the

weather gets warmer, add more raw foods, such as salad greens or raw veggie sticks, to your diet. Eating more raw foods promotes detoxification and renewal, but too many uncooked foods can weaken digestion and trigger excessive cleansing reactions, according to "Healing with Whole Foods," a classic guide on the healing power of Chinese medicine, by Paul Pitchford. So don't add raw foods too quickly, especially if you feel cold, the weather is cold, or your digestion is weak. Other foods appropriate for spring cleaning are sprouted foods, such as flax bars, flax crackers, and sprouted seeds.

This article is an adapted excerpt from Chapter 3 in "Gluten Free Throughout the Year: A Two-Year, Month-to-Month Guide for Healthy Eating" by Melissa Diane Smith.

Melissa Diane Smith is a holistic nutrition counselor and journalist who has been writing about health topics for more than 25 years. She is the author of several nutrition books, including "Syndrome X," "Going Against the Grain," "Gluten Free Throughout the Year," and "Going Against GMOs."

FILET OF SOLE FLORENTINE

With baby spinach and dill, this is a simple springtime meal in one dish.

SERVES 3-4

INGREDIENTS

4 cups baby spinach leaves
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 cup finely chopped onions
grated nutmeg
1 pound sole, flounder, or other mild-tasting fish fillets
1 teaspoon olive oil
the fresh juice of 1 medium to large lemon
2 tablespoons dill weed or Spice Hunter Deliciously Dill seasoning (a combination of dill weed, onion flakes, lemon peel, ginger, garlic, and chives)
Wash the spinach well, then steam it for 3 minutes or until wilted. Place 1 tablespoon



Aim to eat a lot of fresh non-starchy vegetables and fresh fish like tilapia or seasonal fish like salmon and trout.

ELENAMAZUR/SHUTTERSTOCK

oil and onions in a frying pan. Sauté the onions until barely soft, then add the spinach, sprinkle with nutmeg, and stir. Arrange the fish in a single layer over the spinach. Drizzle lightly with lemon juice and 1 teaspoon oil, and sprinkle with seasoning.

Cover the pan, cook on medium-low, and check after 5 to 7 minutes. (Scoop

underneath the fish and spinach mixture once to make sure it isn't drying out or burning.) The fish is done when it's milky in color and flakes easily with a fork. Garnish with lemon slices on top, and sprinkle with extra lemon juice at the table if desired.

* Recipe reprinted from "Gluten Free Throughout the Year" by Melissa Diane Smith.

Why We Need Our Intuition

Our current knowledge affirms it is possible to know something without even ‘thinking’ about it

Continued from Page 1

The second type of thinking is analytic reasoning, which is largely controlled by the left side of the brain. This thinking is slow, deliberate, logical, and conscious. Analytic reasoning happens in the outer part of the brain—the neocortex, which makes up approximately half of the brain’s total volume. It is responsible for attention, thought, perception, and episodic memory (a person’s unique recollection of experiences, events, and situations).

But then there is another ‘brain’ entirely. Scientists have discovered that over a hundred million neurons—which are the cells found in the brain—exist in the human digestive tract. Medical researchers call it the enteric nervous system, or ENS.

“The ENS has been referred to as the ‘second brain,’ based on its size, complexity and similarity—in neurotransmitters and signalling molecules—with the brain,” notes distinguished research professor Emeran Mayer, in an article in the journal *Nature Reviews: Neuroscience*.

Even more interesting is that scientists have discovered that this “second brain” in our guts can act independently of the brain, meaning it can make decisions about our bodies without discussing them with the brain first. This may explain why intuition is often referred to as a “gut feeling,” as it seems our “gut” has a thinking/feeling capacity all its own.

So how can our intuition serve us in a reliable way? It seems someone may have found an answer.

Intuition in Healing

In her book “Radical Remission: Surviving Cancer Against All Odds,” researcher and psychotherapist Kelly Turner documents her findings of over a thousand cases of people who recovered following a severe and often terminal cancer diagnosis. She discovered nine key factors that almost all her research subjects had in common:

1. Radically changing your diet.
2. Taking control of your health.
3. Following your intuition.
4. Using herbs and supplements.
5. Releasing suppressed emotions.
6. Increasing positive emotions.
7. Embracing social support.
8. Deepening your spiritual connection.
9. Having strong reasons for living.

An entire chapter of Turner’s book is dedicated to intuition and gives multiple examples of it in action.

One woman who, in her own words, had lived a healthy physical life, exercised regularly, and had always eaten organic was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. She agreed to a hysterectomy (the uterus and ovaries being surgically removed), but her intuition strongly told her not to do the recommended chemotherapy. She explored other options and, in her search, found a book written by a



HENRIK SORENSEN/GETTY IMAGES

cancer survivor. The book advised sitting with her cancer and asking it why it had come. She said, “The answer screamed back at me: ‘You have no joy in your life!’” For this woman, healing was not so much about the physical body but her emotional health, which had been badly neglected. Her recovery included adding more joy to her life and deepening her connection with spirit. The book states that six months after her diagnosis, her tumor markers were back within normal range, and she remains cancer-free.

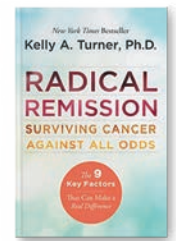
Another woman, about to turn 65, had just received biopsy results showing she had breast cancer. Because her tumor was too big for a lumpectomy (removing just the tumor and not the entire breast), her doctor recommended a full mastectomy (removal of the entire breast), followed by radiation therapy and the estrogen-reducing pill tamoxifen. Her intuition told her to try alternative treatments first, so she politely turned down surgery and all other conventional therapies. Four days after her diagnosis, she had two dreams, which she interpreted as telling her she had everything she needed in her body to heal her cancer. After following a healing plan that included nutritional, herbal, emotional, spiritual, and energetic treatments, as well as physical exercise, she was declared cancer-free by her doctor, 16 months after her diagnosis. She remains cancer-free to this day.

In her book, Turner discovered that people accessed their intuition in different ways. For some, their intuition came to them from an inner voice “of deep knowing,” a physical feeling in their bodies, or messages or symbolism in dreams. For others, intuition comes in meditations, journals, or serendipitous coincidences, such as “bumping into a friend who told them exactly the information they needed to hear at exactly the right time.”

Dr. Judith Orloff, a psychiatrist and member of the UCLA Psychiatric Clinical Faculty, is also an empath and intuitive healer. While those credentials don’t usually go together, Orloff’s journey

Journaling, meditation, paying attention to our dreams, becoming sensitive to physical sensations, and simply asking for inner guidance can help connect us to our intuition.

Intuition might be a powerhouse of wisdom lurking deep beneath the surface that can help us in all kinds of ways if we tap into it.



In her book, psychotherapist Kelly Turner gives many intriguing examples on how people used intuition to heal or avoid danger.

of accepting and opening to her intuition led her to integrate them into her clinical practice. She has written several bestselling books on the subject and is considered a pioneer in the field of energy psychiatry, which she defines as a combination of conventional medicine, intuition, spirituality, and energy.

Orloff says that she believes that everyone has an intuitive sense, but not all of us realize we can access it. She describes intuition as “that still, small voice inside of you—it’s your inner wisdom that can help you deal with anything, from health issues to relationships to death and dying.” Orloff also works with health care professionals around the country, teaching them to listen to their patients. She says physicians need to not only listen to what their patients say, but to be open to images, sensations, or dreams that come up for them, which can offer information about their situation, and aid in their healing.

Intuition might be a powerhouse of wisdom lurking deep beneath the surface that can help us in all kinds of ways if we tap into it. Turner and Orloff recommend different ways of accessing our intuition. Some examples are meditation, paying attention to our dreams, becoming sensitive to physical sensations (like a feeling in the gut), and simply asking for inner guidance. These are all ways our intuition may speak to us. So the next time you have something come up in your meditation, have a dream you can’t shake, or get a strong feeling about something, pay attention—something deep inside might be trying to tell you something, helping you to move in the right direction.

Emma Suttie is an acupuncture practitioner and founder of Chinese Medicine Living, a website dedicated to sharing how to use traditional wisdom to live a healthy lifestyle in the modern world. She has lived and practiced in 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.

Castor Oil Packs: A Useful Natural Remedy

The ancient folk remedy is gathering some research to support its traditional uses

ASHLEY TURNER

For centuries, folk medicine has recommended the internal or topical use of castor oil to address various health complaints. Naturopaths and other holistic practitioners utilize this therapy to foster health in individuals under their care. An age-old holistic remedy, therapeutic castor oil packs, also known as poultices, can provide relief from symptoms, promote healing, and even affect various blood markers.

Castor oil is a vegetable oil made from *Ricinus communis*, the castor bean. This plant is native to India, with 90 percent of the world’s oil production being in Brazil and India. Records show that castor oil was used in ancient Egypt for laxative properties and to stimulate labor in pregnant mothers. While people often think of castor oil as a laxative, various holistic practitioners tout other benefits from the internal use of castor oil, such as promoting lipid metabolism, uterine contractions, and antimicrobial activity.

The exact biochemical pathways aren’t clearly understood, but there’s still ample research documenting their efficacy. After several weeks of using this modality, the ricinoleic acid found within castor oil works to:

- Gently detoxify the body and various organs
- Encourage lymphatic flow; relieve gas, bloating, and constipation
- Decrease pain, swelling, and inflammation; promote skin health
- Boost immune function; support breast and reproductive health
- Reduce stress and promote relaxation

Castor oil packs have been used for hundreds of years with great success. While more research in this field is needed, there are some intriguing studies to help validate this ancient remedy as a simple, inexpensive, and low-risk remedy. Castor oil packs can be applied to various parts of the body for a multitude of therapeutic uses that can easily be performed at home. Let’s discuss a few particularly helpful applications of castor oil packs.

Immune Support and Liver Function

A 1998 double-blind study published in the *Journal of Naturopathic Medicine* looks at the effects of castor oil packs among 36 individuals. During the study, castor oil packs were applied over the liver and abdomen with heat for two hours. Blood markers were run before the castor oil pack, at the two-hour mark, seven-hour mark, and 24-hour mark. Researchers evaluated serum total lymphocytes, T11 cells, T4 cells, T8 cells, liver function markers, and cholesterol levels. The results show an increase in total lymphocytes and T11 at seven hours. At 24 hours, lymphocytes came back to normal. This indicates a potential short-term increase in immune function as a result of a castor oil pack.

Another study published in the *International Journal of Naturopathic Medicine* looks at the long-term use of castor oil packs by following 17 participants that complained of fatigue. These participants applied castor oil packs over their livers for 90 minutes per day, five days per week, for two weeks. Blood work



JUANAMARIGONZALEZ/GETTY IMAGES

Our skin is a porous membrane, which means the topical application of therapeutic substances like castor oil can have widespread effects.



Castor oil packs are recognized as a gentle therapy that is safe to do at home.

DAMIRIUCIUCI/GETTY IMAGES

Records reveal castor oil was used in ancient Egypt for laxative properties and to stimulate labor in pregnant mothers.

was performed on days zero, eight, 15, and 22, and it assessed total lymphocytes, T11 cells, T4 cells, T8 cells, liver function markers, and cholesterol levels. The study found that participants that had elevated liver enzymes and cholesterol levels normalized by the end of the study. Additionally, those with out-of-range lymphocytes were brought back into range.

Castor Oil Packs for Constipation

Castor oil packs can offer relief for those suffering from constipation. A study published in *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice* followed 35 nursing home residents aged 65 and older for 14 days. Eighty percent of study subjects had been constipated for 10 years or longer. The castor oil packs were applied to the abdomen for 60 minutes on days eight, nine, and 10, of the study. The study shows that the administration of castor oil packs decreased straining and promoted the feeling of complete evacuation after a bowel movement, thus decreasing the symptoms of constipation.

Castor Oil Packs for Reproductive Health

One of the traditional uses of castor oil packs is to support fertility. Castor oil packs have been used for hundreds of years to promote fertility. Some evidence suggests that castor oil directly interacts with the uterine muscle along with its anti-inflammatory properties and its ability to promote detoxification.

Castor Oil Packs and Vagal Tone

The vagus nerve runs from the cranium, through the length of our torso to our intestines, branching throughout the abdominal organs. The activity of this nerve is described as tone, and the application of castor oil packs may improve vagal tone by improving proper signaling between the gut and the nervous system, particularly the parasympathetic nervous system.

Are There Any Drawbacks to Castor Oil Packs?

Castor oil packs are recognized as a gentle therapy that’s safe to do at home. In fact, anecdotally, I’ve seen castor oil packs only be beneficial for clients. Although very rare, a skin rash or allergic reaction can occur while using a castor oil pack. While not the focus of this article, castor oil can be ingested in other therapies, which can cause abdominal cramping, nausea, diarrhea, and electrolyte imbalance. Castor oil packs are not advised for open wounds, high fevers, or during menstruation or pregnancy.

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

How to Prepare a Castor Oil Pack

Tools needed:

- Cold-pressed hexane-free castor oil
- Hot water bottle or heating pad (optional)
- Two pieces of organic wool flannel, roughly 12 by 24 inches
- Baking soda or arrowroot powder
- An old sheet or towel

How to use a castor oil pack:

- Lay down in a comfortable spot and relax
- Bear in mind that the castor oil can drip from the pack, so you may want to lay on top of an old sheet or towel
- Use the time to breathe deeply, meditate, pray, listen to music, or read
- Pour about 3 tablespoons of castor oil on one piece of wool flannel and evenly distribute; it should be saturated but not dripping
- Place the castor oil pack on the area of concern
- Place the other piece of dry flannel in a single layer over the other to protect the hot water bottle or heating pad from the oil
- Place the hot water bottle or heating pad set to a comfortable setting on top of the pack
- Rest in this position for up to 90 minutes
- Remove the castor oil pack and discard or wash for another use
- Use baking soda or arrowroot and a splash of water to gently remove the castor oil from the skin

Some notes on the application of castor oil packs:

- Aim to perform castor oil packs three to four times per week for 30 to 40 minutes
- If you are sensitive to EMF, avoid using a heating pad
- If using castor oil packs for overall detoxification, rotate sessions between the liver, kidneys, and colon
- To decongest the liver, place the castor oil pack on the right side of the lower rib cage and upper abdomen
- Use a castor oil pack on the shoulders or back of the neck to relieve tension headaches
- Castor oil packs placed over the lower abdomen may help relieve menstrual cramps as well as symptoms of endometriosis, uterine fibroids, and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)
- Use castor oil packs over the abdomen for constipation relief
- Castor oil packs can be used postpartum for stretch marks and to heal scarring from a cesarean section once the incision is fully closed
- Use castor oil packs over the breast to provide relief from fibrocystic breast tissue

How to Create a Healthy Home to Reduce Your Anxiety

Ease your mental burden with a cleaner, brighter, healthier space that encourages your best life

LISA ROTH COLLINS

We can’t ignore how our homes affect our minds and bodies. Our mental and physical well-being are inevitably affected by the environment we live in. A lack of natural light or an overly cluttered space can make you anxious or even depressed. We want a home that makes us feel safe, in control, and calm. The tips that follow can help us make a home that’s healthy and harmonious and one that gives us peace of mind.

Declutter

Clutter creates chaos in our minds and contributes to stress and anxiety. How can you relax if clutter greets you in every room? Decluttering creates a more calming environment. Tidiness makes you feel more relaxed,

happier, and in control of your life. Orderly homes are linked to healthier choices, promote productivity, and enhance physical and mental well-being. Besides, getting rid of stuff that you don’t use or that doesn’t fit in your home makes you feel empowered. Make the process less stressful by starting with small spaces. You can begin by clearing your cabinets or drawers. Don’t do it with perfection in mind. Do it gradually and tuck away or donate items that you don’t use.

Get a Water Purifier

Your city treats the water pumped to your home, but you still want to be sure it’s clean and free of contaminants, including substances such as chlorine introduced to keep it free of bacteria. You can add a water filter to your home’s water supply (or a specific tap used

Water filters eliminate substances like chlorine and lead that find their way into municipal water systems.

for drinking and cooking water) to eliminate any unwelcome contaminants. Water filters eliminate substances such as chlorine and lead that find their way into municipal water systems and wells. You can relax and enjoy pure and safe drinking, bathing, and cleaning water by installing water filters in your home.

Use Natural Paints

The wall and ceiling paint you choose could affect your physical and mental health. Most paints contain hazardous chemicals, although many companies have significantly improved their formulas. However, some still have volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that turn to gases at room temperature and can cause health issues. The most dangerous time is during the actual painting process, when the drying paint is emitting vapors that may give you a headache or runny eyes. These VOCs may cause hormone, central nervous system, respiratory, or kidney issues. Minimize VOCs in your home by switching to



PORNETP LAKKHANAWIMON / EYEEM/GETTY IMAGES

natural paints. While you’re at it, consider painting your walls with colors that make you calm or happy. Paint your walls with lighter and cheerful colors to create an environment that radiates a happier mood.

Lighten Up

Consider upgrades that shower your home with natural light. Keep your windows clean to let as much natural light in as possible. A

1. Anything you can do to let more sunlight into your house, like cleaning your windows or moving a piece of furniture, is a good idea.

2. A tidy home welcomes you toward healthy habits and overall wellness.



PHOTODRAPHEE EU/SHUTTERSTOCK

brightly lit home can make you feel more energetic without tiring your eyes. On top of that, brightly lit spaces stimulate our brains by increasing serotonin levels. Our bodies respond particularly well to natural daylight. Remember to also balance out the lighting in your home. As much as our bodies benefit from natural light, we need darkness to relax and sleep. Create reflective surfaces to bounce as much natural light as possible.

Make a Workout Area

Our lives may be fast-paced, but our bodies are not. Our sedentary lifestyles and physical inactivity seem to increase year by year. Creating a workout area can help inspire physical activity. You don’t need a lot of money or space to style a home gym. Some of the exercises that keep your heart revved up require a little less space than a doormat. Defining a workout area is a trigger to move, and it can help keep you motivated. You can add plants, candle lights, or a stand to watch YouTube workout videos to make it more inviting and inspiring. Add a mirror to your workout space to help you monitor your form when using weights or doing yoga poses.

Bottom Line

A tidy home and one focused on enhancing a healthy lifestyle keeps worries at bay and helps you live the life you want to live.

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

WISE HABITS

My Simple, High-Impact Productivity Protocol

This 3-step process helps you get the big jobs done without slipping on daily responsibilities

LEO BABAUTA

Much of our days are spent with busywork or distractions. That's not necessarily a bad thing, busywork and distractions can be lovely ways to spend our time. But sometimes we want to use our time powerfully and effectively.

Let's look at ways to work with increased impact.

Imagine a protocol that you followed that would have you do less each day, but have a bigger impact. Ask yourself if you'd be willing to face some discomfort for this.

So we want to focus on doing less, but on having a higher impact. And of course, we still need to take care of the smaller things in our lives so everything doesn't become a mess.

Here's the simple protocol I try to follow:

1. Choose high-impact tasks.
2. Unlock those tasks with focus sessions.
3. Create rituals for smaller but important things that need caring for.

This gives me more space in the day, less feeling of overwhelm, and a feeling that I'm making a meaningful impact with the time I do spend working.

Let's look at each of the three items in the protocol.

1. Choose High Impact Tasks

This starts at the beginning of the week, and the beginning of each day. Intentionally choose the high-impact tasks before you start the week or day.

So each week, I think about what I want to accomplish. What high-impact tasks will I focus on? Then I do the same at the beginning of each day: What high-impact tasks

If you find yourself putting off a high-impact task more than once, schedule a focus session with at least one other person.

Would you be willing to face some discomfort to do less but have a greater impact?

do I want to accomplish today?

To decide if something is a high impact task, I ask myself:

- Does this align with what I want to create long-term?
- Will this make a big impact on my life and the lives of others?
- Will I care about this at the end of this year? Will it move the needle in an important way?

The answer is likely to be either yes or no for all three questions. It would be rare to be a yes for one question and no for the others. But these questions help train the mind on the high-impact tasks, so after a while, you don't even have to ask them—you can just tell.

Put one to three of these tasks at the top of your list each day (depending on how much time you have).

2. Unlock High Impact Tasks With Focus Sessions

These high-impact tasks are likely to come with resistance. So people put them off, and you'll see them pushed back week after week.

So how do we unlock these tasks and get them done?

The way to do that is with focus sessions. I will create a focus session for myself each day where I intentionally face the discomfort of these tasks and remind myself why they matter.

Even better: If you find yourself putting off a high-impact task more than once, schedule a focus session with at least one other person. Get on a



Turn small, routine tasks into rituals to get the little jobs done one after another.

video call for an hour, tell each other what you're going to focus on, and then go on mute. Get the task done, and report at the end of the hour how it went. This works every single time.

If you follow this part of the protocol, you'll unlock hidden powers in your life!

3. Create Rituals to Take Care of Smaller, Important Things

Focusing on the big things is amazing, but what a lot of people find is that if you focus exclusively on the big things, the small things start to fall between the cracks. Your emails pile up, people start to get frustrated, you start to let people down.

So how do we balance the big things with the small things that need taking care of?

Rituals. Create a ritual for each type of small thing, and put it on your calendar.

For example, you might have rituals for:

- Email and messages each day
- Laundry, household cleaning, errands
- Cooking dinner, meal prep, grocery shopping
- Workouts, meditations, walks
- Finances, taxes, administrative stuff

You could have "admin and finances Fridays" (spend the whole day, or half a day). You could have 30 minutes twice a day for emails/messages. You could have family cooking and eating hour, and morning meditations and workout.

With these rituals (and do turn them into actual rituals), the small important things get taken care of without taking time away from your high-impact tasks.

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



Is Loneliness the New Smoking?

An epidemic of loneliness is hurting our health

Human beings need social connection the way we need sunshine and nutritious food. We might survive if deprived, but we won't be well.



JENNIFER MARGULIS

When Canadian pop icon Justin Bieber released his song "Lonely" in October of 2020, the 28-year-old star sang about the crushing loneliness he felt after becoming so famous at such an early age. Bieber's song quickly topped the charts in Canada, as well as in countries as diverse as Hungary, Malaysia, and Norway.

I'm not in the right age demographic to be a Justin Bieber fan,

Ongoing loneliness is associated with anxiety, depression, and stress.

but I found myself listening to his deeply heartfelt song over and over again. Whatever your opinion of pop music and R&B, so many of us in the modern world—young and old—have been feeling such deep loneliness, especially in the past two years.

Here's the thing about loneliness: Social isolation can cause feelings of loneliness. But you can also be lonely—feeling like you have no one in your life to protect, understand, and support you—even when you're surrounded by family, friends, or adoring fans.

Who Feels Most Lonely?

What age group is most affected by loneliness is a subject of ongoing debate. Pre-pandemic research from the United Kingdom's Office for National Statistics found that nearly ten percent of teenagers and young adults ages 16 to 24 "always or often" felt lonely, more than three times more than adults ages 65 and older. That same report found that women admit to being lonely more than men.

Continued on Page 14

What Is a Vaccine-Friendly Plan?

People want medicine tailored to their religious beliefs, health history, and other circumstances

JENNIFER MARGULIS

When my children were 7, 5, and almost 3, our family moved to West Africa for a year. I'd been awarded a Fulbright grant to teach 19th-century American literature to English majors at the University of Abdou Moumouni in Niamey, Niger, as well as to do research

on small-scale development projects.

We went to our local health clinic to undergo the extensive physicals required by the United States government and get prescriptions for anti-malarial prophylaxis.

We also talked to the doctor about the extra shots we needed, and rolled up our sleeves for vaccines. For one, we were heading to a country where polio was still endemic, so my husband and I needed a booster, which typically isn't given to adults. For another, we needed yellow fever vaccines and, as we were going to the meningococcal belt, vaccines to protect us against that disease.

I was grateful for these vaccines to help us be as safe and healthy as possible overseas. After all, I knew that vaccines were a tremendous medical achievement and an important tool in the medical toolbox.

Vaccine-Friendly Doctors

Vaccine-friendly doctors are doctors who understand that individualized medicine tailored to the needs of the patient results in the best health of the individual as well as of the community.

Continued on Page 13



A vaccine-friendly plan gives a child vaccines on a schedule better suited to their needs.

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Studies suggest eyedrops with N-acetyl-L-carnosine may be an effective non-surgical treatment for cataracts.

Cataracts: Causes, Costs, and Possible Cures

While surgery is the default treatment for cataracts, research suggests other therapies

JANIS SIEGEL

Cataracts, the progressive clouding of the eye's outer lens, are the leading cause of blindness worldwide, according to the World Health Organization's 2019 World Report on Vision. Their surgical removal, typically an in-office procedure and one of the most frequently performed surgeries in the world, is and has been the only remedy approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to date. Globally, over 2 billion people are affected by cataracts. Some 88.17 percent of people over 60 will develop some form of cataract, according to a research review published in *Eye* in 2020, with a study published in *PLoS Medicine* in 2008 showing "a significant relationship between poverty and visual impairment from cataract."

After the age of 40, the risk of developing cataracts increases by the decade, and by age 80, a majority of Americans will have had a cataract or cataract surgery.

The average out-of-pocket cost per eye

for cataract surgery in the U.S. in 2022 is \$3,500 to \$7,000, depending on the type of lens used to replace your own, the technology and equipment used in the procedure, the pricing of the individual doctor, and whether you need a hospital stay, among other factors.

The procedure is often covered by Medicare and private insurance, although the patient is typically left with a 20 percent out-of-pocket expense.

Cataract surgery isn't inevitable, however. Early detection, access to proper healthcare, lifestyle choices, and nutritional supplementation are showing great promise in slowing cataract formation, and may even reverse the condition, leading natural health doctors say.

"Nutrients play an enormous role in preventing and treating the leading causes of impaired vision in North America—cataracts and macular degeneration," writes Dr. Michael Murray, N.D., an expert in natural medicine for over 40 years and the author of over 20 books.

"In both conditions, the eye's normal protective mechanisms are unable to prevent damage to the lens and mac-

Why You Should Treat Yourself to Regular Saunas

Saunas offer some remarkable benefits that are surprisingly similar to exercise

Want to enjoy many of the same benefits as a bout of vigorous exercise, extend your "healthspan" and protect your brain and heart health—all while relaxing in warm comfort? Treat yourself to a sauna!

Could a treat as luxurious as a sauna really be good for your health? It sounds too good to be true, but this is one instance where you can indulge guilt-free because sauna bathing is an excellent addition to your healthy lifestyle. Enjoyed for thousands of years in Finland for both pleasure and relaxation, modern research shows sauna usage is beneficial for circulation, heart health, immune system function, and more.

The temperatures in a sauna typically range from 113 degrees F to 212 F (45 C to 100 C), and it's this short-term, intermittent exposure to heat that yields so many benefits to human health. Since ancient times, people have been "bathing" in heat for cleansing and healing purposes.

The practice induces mild hyperthermia, and this temporary heat stress increases your body's core temperature, leading to a thermoregulatory response that ultimately helps restore homeostasis while strengthening your body against future stressors.

Extend Your Healthspan
Healthspan refers to the number of years in your life that you're healthy, and sauna

bathing may help extend it. When your body is exposed to the heat stress of a sauna, it activates the expression of beneficial heat shock proteins (HSPs), which promote the regrowth of muscle and are associated with human longevity.

HSPs play a role in immune function, cell signaling, and cell-cycle regulation, while also promoting proteome homeostasis, the loss of which is a hallmark of aging. Sauna usage is also beneficial because, like exercise, it induces hormesis—a term that describes the positive effects of short exposures to environmental stressors.

Large, population-based cohort studies, notably the Kuopio Ischemic Heart Disease (KIHD) Risk Factor Study of 2300 middle-aged men from eastern Finland, have shown that sauna usage reduces morbidity and mortality in a dose-dependent manner, meaning the more subjects used a sauna, the lower their risk of mortality became.

For instance, the KIHD study found that men who used a sauna two to three times per week had a 27 percent lower risk of cardiovascular disease than men who only used it once a week, while those who enjoyed a sauna four to seven times per week lowered their risk of cardiovascular disease by 50 percent. Even the risk of all-cause mortality declined by 40 percent among frequent sauna users

ula, respectively."

Murray is a graduate and former faculty member of Bastyr University in Seattle, where he currently serves on the school's Board of Regents.

According to Murray, the risk factors for developing cataracts include "excessive ultraviolet sunlight exposure, tobacco use, diabetes, high blood pressure, and certain medications, such as long-term use of oral corticosteroids (prednisone). Excessive alcohol intake also predisposes one to develop cataracts."

The National Institutes of Health's National Eye Institute (NEI) echoes those causes and also points to serious eye injuries, glaucoma, or other eye conditions.

In a healthy eye, the clear outer lens of the eye receives light and directs it into the eye and onto the retina, which then converts the light into nerve signals that are transmitted to the brain.

If the lens of the eye is clear, it transmits a sharp image to the retina and our vision is good. If the eye's lens is cloudy, as it is with a cataract, our vision will be blurry.

Left untreated, cataracts can severely affect a person's ability to live independently and, in the worst case, they can cause total blindness.

"Nutritional antioxidants like beta-carotene, vitamin C, vitamin E, zinc, copper, and selenium are extremely important for eye health," Murray says. "Zinc is perhaps the most important mineral for eye health, as it plays an essential role in the metabolism of the retina and the visual process. Levels of zinc have been shown to be greatly reduced in over 90 percent of cataract cases."

If you can proactively increase your antioxidant load before a cataract begins to form, you may be able to prevent a cataract from forming or delay its development.

"Even something as simple as taking vitamin C or zinc can produce dramatic effects in preserving eye health," writes Murray. "In one study, the use of vitamin C supplements for greater than 10 years was associated with a 77 percent lower rate of cataract formation compared to those who did not take a vitamin C supplement."

Murray recommends supplements and minerals such as lutein, zeaxanthin, pine bark extract, quercetin, resveratrol, selenium, spirulina, vitamin C, and fish oil, as well as a quality multivitamin.

Dr. Ronald Grisanti, who runs Functional Medicine University, shares his own guidance on recognizing the symptoms of a cataract.

Some of the signs of a developing cataract in one or both of your eyes, Grisanti says, are your vision becoming cloudy or blurry, or one eye having brighter and clearer vision than the other. Or you may experience a greater sensitivity to light, particularly from oncoming vehicle headlights. Your color perception may be inaccurate or you may need brighter lighting in your environment to complete tasks. Some people find it more



Globally, over 2 billion people are affected by cataracts.



A cataract is a cloudy area in the lens of the eye that decreases vision.

difficult to see in the dark.

Grisanti is quite optimistic about the use of natural supplements in treating cataracts. He cites several studies in his piece, "How to Reverse Cataracts."

In one study, he writes, researchers looked at the antioxidant carnosine, and the acetylated form of it, called N-acetyl-L-carnosine, which can penetrate both the water-based and fat or lipid-based parts of the eye, thereby improving DNA repair and ultimately, vision.

Grisanti lauds N-acetyl-L-carnosine and believes it has shown that it can prevent and even reverse cataracts.

"In one of the studies," writes Grisanti, "people in their 60s suffering with cataracts for 2 to 21 years used drops of carnosine solution three or four times a day for a few months. Carnosine improved their sight making the lenses become more transparent or clear. Basically, it reversed the effects of cataracts."

In another study that Grisanti documents, two subject groups that were diagnosed as needing cataract surgery within two years received eye drops. One group took the N-acetylcarnosine drops and the other got a placebo.

"After six months, 90 percent of the eyes treated with N-acetylcarnosine showed improvements in visual acuity anywhere from

7 to 100 percent," he writes. "Glare sensitivity improved 27 to 100 percent in 88 percent of people. And there was no worsening of vision, as there should have been with time."

However, while the National Eye Institute (NEI) agrees that cataracts can be related to health habits and preexisting diseases, they firmly assert that cataracts are generally part of the natural aging process and therefore inevitable for many.

"By age 75, half of white Americans have a cataract," the NEI says on its website. "By age 80, 70 percent of whites have a cataract compared with 53 percent of blacks and 61 percent of Hispanic Americans."

Additionally, it reports, in 2010, women were shown to be more prone to developing a cataract. Sixty-one percent of Americans with a cataract were women and 39 percent were men.

According to the NEI, "no matter what type of cataract you have, the treatment is always surgery."

Janis Siegel is an award-winning news journalist and columnist that has covered international health research for SELF Magazine, The Times of Israel, the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, and others. Ms. Siegel launched a health column featuring cutting edge research from world-class academic institutions.

Eating plenty of zinc and antioxidant-rich foods can help you prevent the formation of cataracts.

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In Finland, where saunas are a cultural cornerstone, a large study has found some remarkable associations between sauna use and lower disease risk.

compared to infrequent users.

Frequent sauna baths may also reduce the risk of both acute and chronic respiratory diseases while lowering blood pressure. Sauna baths lead to a significant increase in nitric oxide metabolites, with researchers suggesting that this increased production of nitric oxide may lead to improved vascular relaxation and blood flow.

Other research supports these findings, showing a 46 percent lower risk of high blood pressure among men who used a sauna four to seven times per week, and a 24 percent lower risk among those who used a sauna two to three times weekly.

Even one sauna session is enough to lower blood pressure, with the benefit extending at least 30 minutes afterward, leading researchers to suggest, "Sauna use may serve as a non-pharmacological means to address, or even prevent, hypertension," in a 2021 article published in *Experimental Gerontology*. Overall, sauna therapy may be useful for

at least 29 conditions, while regular sauna users may enjoy:

- Reductions in oxidative stress and inflammation
- Beneficial modulation of the autonomic nervous system
- Improved lipid profile
- Improvements to the cardiorespiratory system
- Lower risk of pulmonary diseases
- Improvements in headaches and flu
- Improvements in arthritis
- Enhanced detoxification, including removal of toxic elements from the body

Anti-Aging, Brain-Boosting Potential

Relaxing in a sauna has the added benefit of protecting brain health, also in a dose-dependent manner. Among men who used a sauna four to seven times per week, the risk of dementia decreased by 66 percent—and the risk of Alzheimer's disease by 65 percent—

compared to men who used a sauna just once a week, the KIHD study revealed.

Mental health benefits are also apparent, with frequent sauna users (four to seven times per week) experiencing a 77 percent reduced risk of developing psychotic disorders, the KIHD study found. In terms of healthy aging, markers of inflammation are known to increase as you get older, but sauna usage helps reduce inflammation, including lowering levels of C-reactive protein.

The risk of all-cause mortality declined by 40 percent among frequent sauna users, compared to infrequent users.

The heat stress from sauna usage also increases the expression of brain-derived neurotrophic factor, which promotes the growth of new neurons. A review in *Experimental Gerontology* highlighted many additional benefits of regular or frequent sauna use, which include protection against:

- Cardiovascular disease
- Neurodegenerative disease
- Sarcopenia
- Age-related impairments
- Metabolic dysfunction
- Immunological decline
- Sudden cardiac death
- Coronary artery disease

Mimic the Effects of Exercise

While sitting in a sauna can't give you all the same benefits as a bout of vigorous exercise, there are many similar benefits, notes the *Experimental Gerontology* review.

"Interestingly, many of the physiological responses to sauna use ... are remarkably similar to those experienced during moderate-to-vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise, and sauna use has been proposed as an alternative to aerobic exercise for people who are unable to engage in physical activity due to chronic disease or physical limitations."

In a comparison of 45 minutes of infrared sauna use or 45 minutes of indoor bicycling among healthy women, similar responses were seen for blood pressure, arterial stiffness—a biomarker of vascular aging—and heart rate variability, higher levels of which are associated with a greater capacity of the cardiovascular system to respond to stress.

In another example, which compared a 25-minute sauna session to an exercise session, researchers concluded that the acute heat exposure was comparable to moderate physical exercise, and the resulting sustained decrease in blood pressure that occurred after sauna usage "suggests that the sauna bath will have a beneficial effect on the cardiovascular system."

Ideally, however, rather than replacing exercise with sauna usage, your best bet may be to enjoy a sauna after you exercise. The combination of both regular exercise and frequent sauna bathing has even more health benefits—and more protection against mortality risk—than either exercise or sauna usage alone.

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The Cycles of Aging

Chinese medicine gives distinct insight into how we age and what can affect it

Our life moves through stages and anticipating these stages can ease our transition from one to the next.

EMMA SUTTIE

All of us move through life in a series of stages, each with its own unique characteristics. When we are young, we go through phases of intense growth and development until we reach maturity, and then there is a gradual state of decline as we get older.

These stages were clearly defined thousands of years ago and documented in the classic Chinese medical text, “The Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine.” It was written in the third century B.C. and is one of the oldest and most seminal works in the history of Chinese medicine.

While civilizations normally last only a few centuries, the Chinese civilization is unique in the world, having persisted for 5,000 years. Because of its long history, Eastern medicine has had millennia to observe human beings and gather evidence about what happens to men and women as they age. There is a distinction between the cycles for men and women. Women move through life in seven-year cycles, and it is eight years for men. How health is maintained through each phase is largely due to something described in Chinese medicine as “jing.”

In the simplest terms, jing is a person’s essence. If I had to make a comparison, I would say that jing is similar to the strength of the genes we inherit from our parents. In

the Eastern view, jing is given to us by our parents at the moment of conception. If your parents were young, vital, and healthy, your jing would be strong and ensure you would grow and develop with the relative strength your parents had given you.

However, if your parents were older, had chronic diseases or health problems, and were exhausted from a long life of hard work and lack of sleep, the jing you inherited would reflect this deficit. This whole idea may sound strange, but I have seen it repeatedly in my life and work. Simply put, your health (at least the baseline) is a direct manifestation of the health of both of your parents at the moment you were conceived.

For example, if you are strong and robust, your body can handle a little more punishment and bounce back from things like sleepless nights, partying, and drinking. But if you were born with less than optimal jing, you will have to work harder to remain in good health, and your body will not be as forgiving.

Awareness is the key. Are you that person who catches every cold and flu no matter how hard you try to avoid them? If so, make sure you get lots of sleep, eat well, and take care of yourself. This will help fortify the jing you have. Perhaps you are the one who can sail through unscathed while everyone around you is suffering from the latest virus? If so, appreciate your strong constitution, but try to take care of yourself anyway.

The amount of jing given to us at conception is supposed to be finite. Still, there are ways that we can protect and conserve our

jing throughout our lifetime. Eastern medicine believes in moderation in all aspects of life. Staying away from extremes is not only a good life philosophy; it’s essential to preserving your jing. Some examples of activities and behaviors that deplete jing are; overwork, not sleeping enough, abusing drugs and alcohol, too much sex, and having too many children too close together. Jing is like a person’s life force—you only have so much. Certain activities can burn it up too, like partying and living hard and fast. You can see this reflected in people who have these types of lifestyles (rock stars are one example) who often look older than their years.

They have been spending their jing. The takeaway is that depleting jing literally ages us. On the other hand, someone who has lived in a healthy, balanced way often looks younger and more vibrant than their years. There are many ways to support and take care of our jing. Taking care of our bodies, practicing self-awareness, and tending to our emotions are all ways to protect and preserve jing so we can keep it going for the long haul.

There is something else I want to mention about jing. If you feel like maybe you weren’t blessed with as much jing as you might like, this doesn’t mean you can’t live a long, healthy life free of sickness and disease. It simply means a little awareness and work are needed to stay healthy and balanced. This concept isn’t meant to be discouraging or to give someone license to abdicate their responsibility to live a healthy lifestyle. It’s simply one way of looking at our relative

strengths and weaknesses so we can adjust our outlook and behaviors to live the best lives possible. Knowledge is power.

Self-Knowledge Is Self-Power

These cycles are ways to bring awareness to the way men and women move through the different stages of life.

For women, knowledge of, these stages can help them navigate significant events, such as if and when to have children and how to move through menopause without anxiety or physical symptoms. The emotional and spiritual aspects also need to be cared for, just as our bodies do.

For men too, these stages act as a kind of guide, letting us know what to expect and helping us move through each of the cycles smoothly. Sometimes, these transitions are not easy, so having a guidebook can help us deal with the anxieties, stressors, and questions that come up as we move into and out of each phase. Chinese medicine offers us many tools to help us more easily move through life.

I am continually humbled by Chinese medicine’s beauty, complexity, and wisdom. Its deep understanding of human beings on many levels is a testament to its effectiveness and one of the reasons it’s still being used to treat health problems in the modern world.

Emma Suttie is an acupuncture physician and founder of Chinese Medicine Living, a website dedicated to sharing how to use traditional wisdom to live a healthy lifestyle in the modern world. She has lived and practiced in 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.



Jing is similar to the strength of the genes we inherit from our parents. Jing is given to us by our parents at the moment of conception.

The Cycles for Women and Men

(The description for each phase has been simplified from the original text in the Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine).



Women’s Cycles (7 years)

7 Years Old

At the age of 7, a woman’s reproductive system begins developing.

14 Years Old

At 14, her menstruation appears, and she can have a child. In Chinese Medicine, the age of menarche (the first period) is a factor in understanding overall health, particularly the reproductive system.

21 Years Old

A woman’s energy, especially fertility, is completely developed at 21.

28 Years Old

At the age of 28, a woman’s fertility reaches its peak. 28 is considered the best age to have children in the Eastern view.

35 Years Old

From 35 onward, the body and overall fertility begin declining. Women are still, however, able to have children.

42 Years Old

From 42 onward, physical energy and fertility decline, and conceiving becomes more difficult.

49 Years Old

At 49 (or thereabouts) is when many women begin to experience menopause and can no longer have children. Leaving the reproductive phase is a significant shift in a woman’s life, not just physically but psychologically, and spiritually.

56 Years Old

Due to a decline in kidney and liver energies, the body begins losing flexibility, movement can become difficult, and stiffness and pain may begin to set in.

64 Years Old

Men’s vital energy weakens, bones become more brittle, flexibility declines, and teeth begin to deteriorate.



Development in all systems continues, and the body, muscles, and teeth grow strong.

8 Years Old

A man’s reproductive system begins developing. Hair and teeth are strong.

14 Years Old

Kidney energy is developed, the extremities are strong.

24 Years Old

This is the age where the body is at its peak physically, and all systems are robust and vital.

32 Years Old

Physical decline continues. Wrinkles appear, hair turns gray, and there is less energy overall.

40 Years Old

From 40 is when the body begins a gradual decline. Yang (or fire) energy diminishes, hair turns gray, and teeth become weaker.

48 Years Old

Physical decline continues. Wrinkles appear, hair turns gray, and there is less energy overall.

What Is a Vaccine-Friendly Plan?

People want medicine tailored to their religious beliefs, health history, and other circumstances

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These are doctors who accept patients who want to follow the CDC vaccination schedule as well as patients who choose to do some but not all vaccines, and patients who decide to forgo all vaccines.

The term was coined by Dr. Robert Sears, author of “The Vaccine Book.” Sears, a pediatrician based in southern California, hails from a highly educated medical family. His father, Dr. William Sears, is the 82-year-old celebrity doctor and bestselling author known for promoting attachment parenting.

According to Leonard Hayflick, a biologist at the University of California—San Francisco whose work helped make vaccines more widely available, vaccines have saved at least 10.3 million lives.

In 2017, Hayflick was second author of a paper with epidemiologist and biostatistician Stuart Jay Olshansky, a professor at the University of Illinois. Their peer-reviewed scientific study analyzed the death rates for ten common viral infections prior to 1960 in order to estimate the number of infections that might have developed if no vaccines had been available. They concluded that 4.5 billion virus cases were averted, and 6.2 million lives in Asia alone were saved.

Why Pick and Choose Vaccines?

What that study failed to mention, however, is that the cell strain that Hayflick developed for vaccines for humans, WI-38, was derived from the lung tissue of a 3-month-old fetus, according to the company that sells them by the vial (for \$520.00).

That baby had been legally aborted in Sweden. Her body was not incinerated or thrown away. Instead, it was wrapped in sterile cloth and sent to northwest Stockholm, to the Karolinska Institute, without the mom’s knowledge or permission, according to Meredith Waldman, author of “The Vaccine Race,” as quoted by the BBC.

The official position of the Vatican is that the good that results from vaccination outweighs the harm of abortion. Pope Francis has tweeted his support for vaccines. But some who adhere to religions that believe abortion is murder make the difficult and controversial choice not to give their children vaccines made with cell lines that were grown on aborted fetal tissue.

These include vaccines to protect against chickenpox, measles, mumps, rubella, and hepatitis A, among others, according to the CDC’s “Vaccine Excipient List,” which lists most of the ingredients in each brand of the recommended vaccines.

Nina Martinov is the founder of Slavic Voice, a political action group that, she told me, has over a thousand members who advocate for the concerns of immigrants from Eastern Europe.

Martinov says members are not anti-vaccine. But many are part of the Slavic Christian Community who choose not to use vaccines grown in human fetal fibroblast cells, because these cells were originally obtained via abortion.

“We object to vaccines made with cells from aborted baby fetuses. We are pro-life,” Martinov, who is based in Happy Valley, Oregon, said.

Similarly, some who belong to the Old Believers, and the Church of Christ, Scientist also choose to avoid certain, or even all, vaccines.

While Christian Scientists are deeply concerned with public health and individual responsibility, many choose to maintain the sanctity of their bodies and put their faith in the power of prayer instead of in vaccines.

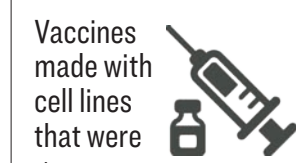


Vaccines can be a life-saving tool, but adverse events and controversial cell lines have some parents picking and choosing which vaccines to get and when to get them.



“The Vaccine-Friendly Plan: Dr. Paul’s Safe and Effective Approach to Immunity and Health—From Pregnancy Through Your Child’s Teen Years” (2016).

Families that forego some or all vaccines tend to be well educated, well informed, and more affluent.



Vaccines made with cell lines that were grown on aborted fetal tissues include those to protect against chickenpox, measles, mumps, rubella, and hepatitis A, among others, according to the CDC’s “Vaccine Excipient List.”



Some disagree with the current CDC schedule and feel that there are too many vaccines given too soon.

Nonreligious Reasons to Forgo Some Vaccines

There are also several nonreligious reasons that some decide to forgo some or even all vaccines. People who are against animal cruelty and lead a vegan lifestyle object to the bovine serum albumin, Madin-Darby canine kidney cell protein, hydrolyzed porcine gelatin, and egg products found in some of the most common vaccines.

Others have had a severe adverse reaction to vaccines in the past, as Dr. Sylvia Fogel, a Harvard-affiliated psychiatrist who specializes in autism, pointed out in a 2019 article.

These parents have done a careful risk-benefit analysis with the help of their medical providers and have decided they would rather take the risk of catching certain diseases and dying from them than the risk of having another serious adverse event.

Still others disagree with the current CDC schedule and feel that there are too many vaccines given too soon (a sentiment recently echoed by European health officials in regards to COVID boosters, as reported by Voice of America).

These people want to say “no, thank you,” to certain vaccines—like chickenpox (which is usually a mild illness) and the birth and infant series of the hepatitis B vaccine (which protects against a sexually transmitted disease)—and “yes, please” to others.

In general, according to over a dozen peer-reviewed scientific studies, including a 2012 study by researchers in Colorado and a 2008 study by researchers in the United Kingdom, as well as testimony from medical doctors and researchers, the families that forego some or all vaccines tend to be well-educated, well-informed, and more affluent than parents who adhere to the government’s vaccination schedule without any modifications.

The Vaccine-Friendly Plan

Paul Thomas is a vaccine-friendly doctor who has a thriving pediatric practice in Portland, Oregon. In 2016, we co-wrote a book together called “The Vaccine-Friendly Plan.”

The book is based on data from the over 13,000 children (which represent about 7,000 families) in Dr. Paul’s practice and a thorough review of the scientific literature.

Dr. Paul graduated from Dartmouth’s Geisel School of Medicine. A conventional doctor when he first started practicing, he began noticing that many children in his care were experiencing bad outcomes.

His colleagues told him the encephalopathy and other chronic developmental disorders he was seeing were “normal.” But the families in his care whose children were being diagnosed with autism, autoimmune conditions despite having no genetic predisposition, and

other problems begged for answers.

Dr. Paul started to research the current CDC vaccination schedule. He learned that the United States has one of the most aggressive schedules in the world but that children from other countries with gentler schedules enjoyed better health outcomes.

He also found that when parents in his practice made judicious evidence-based modifications to the current schedule, including not giving their children acetaminophen, and avoiding over-exposure to toxins, their children thrived.

The vaccine-friendly plan is designed to keep children protected from communicable diseases but also keep their brains and immune systems healthy and intact. Several key parts of the plan are:

- Avoiding vaccines during pregnancy
- Spacing out aluminum-containing shots so a child only gets one per visit in order to minimize a child’s exposure to this known-neurotoxin
- Delaying the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine until 36 months, which results in excellent uptake (based on antibody testing) but many fewer cases of adverse reactions
- Exclusive breastfeeding, when possible, for as long as mutually desirable for the mom and the baby
- No acetaminophen, as this common drug has been associated with both brain and lung damage in many studies

Since our book was published in 2016, Dr. Paul has also published two peer-reviewed scientific papers that share his data with the public, one in March of 2020 in the Journal of Trace Elements in Medicine and Biology and one in November 2020 in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health.

Even though he gives vaccines in his office every day and I chose to vaccinate my children, Dr. Paul and I have both been accused of being “anti-vaccine.”

Our book’s recommendations are informed by both Dr. Paul’s clinical experience and over 300 scientific citations that readers can review in the endnotes. Yet CNN wrote an article in 2019, “Anti-vaccination conspiracy theories thrive on Amazon,” that accused the book of peddling “misinformation” disguised as being neutral. Dr. Paul’s license has been under almost continual scrutiny by Oregon’s medical board.

It should be the case that medical practices where patients are enjoying better outcomes than average citizens lead the way to better public health policy. Instead of vilifying vaccine choice or falsely labeling doctors or journalists as “anti-vaccine,” we should celebrate the good outcomes, figure out what empowered patients are doing right, and encourage others to follow suit.

Jennifer Margulis, Ph.D., worked for Africa/Niger from 1992 to 1993 where she directed a project to build a hangar for handicapped artisans, provided support for rural farmers to garden in the off-season, and worked on the literacy component of a child survival campaign. She returned to Niger as a Fulbright grantee from 2006 to 2007. An award-winning science writer, she is also the author of “Your Baby, Your Way” and co-author of “The Vaccine-Friendly Plan: Dr. Paul Thomas’s Safe and Effective Approach to Immunity and Health—From Pregnancy Through Your Child’s Teen Years,” among other books. Find out more at www.JenniferMargulis.net

Is Loneliness the New Smoking?

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While the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and countless studies find nearly four times more men than women die by suicide each year, the ONS research suggests that women may actually be more prone to loneliness than men. But scientists don't know if that's because women tend to be more open about their emotional challenges or because they actually suffer more.

The WHO reports that loneliness and social isolation affect one in three older adults in some countries, and a recent meta-analysis published in the journal PLOS One found that loneliness affected a quarter of adults over age 60 in high-income countries. This study looked at loneliness among older people in Australia, Europe, Singapore, and the United States, and found that almost 26 percent suffered from moderate loneliness while nearly 8 percent reported feeling severe loneliness.

Worse During COVID

A recent report from Harvard indicates that the COVID epidemic seriously worsened loneliness for many. The survey of 950 Americans found that 36 percent reported experiencing loneliness frequently or almost all the time and 61 percent of young adults (ages 18 to 25) and 51 percent of mothers with young children reported serious loneliness.

The report also found that 43 percent of young adults said their loneliness increased during the pandemic. Sadly, half these young people said no one in the past several weeks had taken more than a few minutes to ask after their welfare in a way that made them feel the person "genuinely cared."

Loneliness can be particularly acute for people who find themselves unexpectedly alone. I know that being at odds with friends and loved ones because of our differences of opinions on how to understand and react to COVID-19 has led to me to feeling lonely in a way I never have before. The death of a partner or loved one, reduction in mobility due to illness, as well as lack of transportation can also be strong triggers for loneliness, according to the National Institute on Aging.

Living Alone but Not Lonely

At the same time, however, living alone does not always result in loneliness. As the NIA reports, in the United States, about 28 percent of older adults live alone—some 13.8 million people—but many don't feel lonely or suffer from social isolation.

My husband's grandmother lived alone for nearly 20 years after her husband died of a

One report found that loneliness and social isolation can be as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.



STEFAN BALAZ/SHUTTERSTOCK

“While loneliness engenders despair and ever more isolation, togetherness raises optimism and creativity.”

Vivek Murthy, U.S. surgeon general



Social connection is best thought of as an essential nutrient necessary for health and well-being.

heart attack, but she wasn't lonely. Once she overcame the overwhelming grief of losing the love of her life, she enjoyed a rich social life and good health.

Gigi, as we called her (which stood for great grandma), visited with her children and grandchildren regularly, went to lunch with her cadre of female friends at least twice a week, never turned down an invitation to go somewhere, played golf regularly, talked to people she didn't know everywhere from the beauty parlor to the country club, and went to mass every Sunday. Despite having six children, eleven grandchildren, and several great grands (or maybe because of it), she never missed sending a birthday gift and card.

Loneliness Is Bad for Your Health

According to researchers in Spain, ongoing loneliness is associated with anxiety, depression, and stress. Which makes sense. But what is less well known is that being lonely also increases our risk of cognitive decline, hypertension, and other heart problems, frailty, stroke, and even early death, according to several studies.

The health impact of being lonely is sometimes so severe, in fact, that one report found that loneliness and social isolation can be as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Like smoking, lacking social connections and strong friendships sometimes has life-threatening consequences, according to the U.S. Health Resources & Service Administration.

Among the health issues that arise from loneliness, the most concerning may be cognitive decline. People who are isolated and alone tend to perform worse on tests of memory and cognitive function and are more likely to experience progression of Alzheimer's disease, according to scholars at the Center for Healthy Aging at Penn State.

Researchers believe this is because feelings of loneliness can alter cellular function, cause changes within the immune system, and increase inflammation, which in turn increases the likelihood of disease.

Yet despite the devastating health impacts of loneliness, it's a problem that has been in large part neglected. Perhaps because it's so difficult to remediate.

After all, while anti-depressant use has been rising, we don't have a pill for loneliness.

How to Fix the Loneliness Problem

In 2018, in order to address the loneliness epidemic head-on, Teresa May, Britain's prime minister, appointed a minister of loneliness. In 2021, Japan, which has seen an uptick in suicide rates for the first time in eleven years, followed suit, appointing its first minister of loneliness.

U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy also agrees that loneliness is a serious public health problem. In fact, Murthy wrote a book about loneliness: "Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World," which was published (rather presciently)

in April of 2020.

"While loneliness engenders despair and ever more isolation, togetherness raises optimism and creativity," Murthy wrote. "When people feel they belong to one another, their lives are stronger, richer, and more joyful."

Unfortunately, much of the loneliness people now suffer comes from larger trends in how people live. Social isolation was increasing before COVID arrived. One factor is people moving more, thereby leaving behind multi-generational social networks, and increased time at home. The addictive quality of social media and our access to an ever-growing list of on-demand entertainment has taken up time we previously spent in face-to-face contact with others. Even online shopping has reduced our social network and relationships we used to form with local shopkeepers or familiar faces in our community. The problem has grown severe for young children, who no longer roam freely in their neighborhood and instead spend free time playing with their phones and gaming systems.

Despite all that, if you're someone who has been feeling lonely, there are certainly things you can do to rebuild your social network. The obvious and essential cures to loneliness are to tap into your social network and spend more time with friends and family. Many of these relationships may have wilted slightly if you haven't maintained them, but the good news is that our long-term relationships have deep roots and easily come back to life with a little attention.

If you find yourself neglecting social connection because you are "too busy," remind yourself that this is essential to your well-being. If you feel a bit reluctant, find a way to lend a hand. Is their flower bed a little overgrown? Call them up and tell them you want to hang out and get your hands in the dirt.

If you're new to an area or have few social ties, it may be time to make some new friends. Your local church or synagogue may have a weekly meet-and-greet, you can search web-based apps like Meetup to find people who enjoy the same hobbies you do, and you can also take a class at your local community center to find like-minded people.

Participating in clubs, sports, and volunteer efforts can be great ways to make new friends, as are volunteering, participating in local clubs, or joining local sports leagues. The main thing is to get out and connect with people.

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The 3 Traits Warren Buffett Looks for in an Employee

Young job seekers could learn a lot from the Sage of Omaha—and Ayn Rand

JON MILTIMORE

From time to time I speak to young professionals trying to make their mark on the world in politics, academia, or journalism.

The question I encounter the most is this: "What's the best career advice you give to young people trying to make it?"

My answer often touches on the importance of perseverance, because it's easy to get discouraged by setbacks and rejection. Landing your dream job isn't easy when you don't have a lot of work experience, and sometimes keeping it is even harder if you approach your work with the wrong mindset. And many people seem only vaguely aware of this.

A stunning percentage of Americans live in fear of being fired, data show, and this is particularly true for younger workers. According to one recent Harris Poll, 61 percent of American workers between 18 and 34 suffer anxiety over losing their job, compared to 41 percent of workers over 35.

'We Look for Integrity'

One of the keys to a long and successful career is having the skills and mindset employers desire. While different employers desire different qualities, the financial wizard Warren Buffet has offered useful insights on what employers often look for in workers.

"We look for three things when we hire people. We look for intelligence, we look for initiative or energy, and we look for integrity," the Sage of Omaha has said. "And if they don't have the latter, the first two will kill you, because if you're going to get someone without integrity, you want them lazy and dumb."

What Buffett is saying, essentially, is that intelligence and initiative are important, but integrity is essential. But what is integrity?

The word is defined as "the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness." This definition is helpful but it's also a bit limited, and it doesn't quite tell us what Buffett is getting at.

What Buffett is saying, I think, is that he wants employees he can trust to do right and get things done.

In about 30 years of working jobs high and low, the one thing I've noticed above all else is there are people who know how to show up on time, meet deadlines, and complete the tasks they say they'll complete, and there are people who know how to make excuses and avoid taking responsibility.

I once had a writer who begged to write a story. I gave him the assignment, and the first thing he did was say he couldn't meet the deadline he had proposed. I don't remember the excuse he gave, but I do remember telling myself I'd never use that writer again.

Leaning Into Responsibility

When Warren Buffett says he wants workers with integrity, I think part of what



Taking responsibility for your tasks and failures is one of the dividing lines between a child and an adult.

he's saying is that he wants workers he can trust to complete the tasks they say they'll complete, and people who take responsibility.

This last part is key, because there will be times when we don't get the job done; we come up short. When this happens, many people will be tempted to point fingers at people or externalities that frustrated completion of the task.

This is the wrong approach. A worker with integrity will look at the situation and instead of blaming others ask, "What could I have done differently? How could I have helped us achieve a better outcome?"

This might sound simple, but the reality is it's hard for humans to do this. We want to blame others. We want to find excuses. We want to pass the buck. It's a trait we see in the powerful and the weak; in our children and politicians; in our families, co-workers, and (yes) even ourselves.

"There is a logic to the desire to avoid punishment, and since so many people grow up in similar circumstances, the habit runs deep," Ryan Ferguson, co-host of The World Wanderers Podcast, has noted. "But as you make the transition from childhood to adulthood, it is a habit you have to learn to leave behind."

In her classic work "Atlas Shrugged," Ayn Rand uses the villain James Taggart to show how corrosive and ugly this tendency is. Taggart, the president of Taggart Transcontinental and older brother to heroine Dagny Taggart, can't take responsibility for anything. He can make no decisions, just excuses; and his indecision and weakness have paralyzed the company.

Dagny is a stark contrast. She is responsible for making sure the railroad operates, and assumes responsibility at every turn. Consider this exchange early in the novel, when Dagny tells her brother she intends to rebuild the struggling Rio Norte Line with new metal produced by industrialist Hank Rearden.

"The consensus of the best metallurgical authorities," [James Taggart] said, "seems to be highly skeptical about Rearden Metal, contending—"

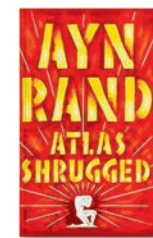
"Drop it, Jim," [his sister replied]. "Well, whose opinion did you take?" "I don't ask for opinions." "What do you go by?" "Judgment." "Well, whose judgment did you take?" "Mine." "But whom did you consult about it?" "Nobody."

What Buffett is saying, essentially, is that intelligence and initiative are important, but integrity is essential.



Warren Buffet is an American businessman, investor, and philanthropist.

PUBLIC DOMAIN



"Atlas Shrugged" is the fourth novel by Ayn Rand and considered to be her magnum opus.

"Then what on earth do you know about Rearden Metal?"

"That it's the greatest thing ever put on the market."

"Why?"

"Because it's tougher than steel, cheaper than steel and will outlast any hunk of metal in existence."

"But who says so?"

"Jim, I studied engineering in college. When I see things, I see them."

"What did you see?"

"Rearden's formula and the tests he showed me."

"Well, if it were any good, somebody would have used it, and nobody has."

He saw the flash of anger, and went on nervously: "How can you know it's good? How can you be sure? How can you decide?"

"Somebody decides such things, Jim. Who?"

James Taggart eventually gives way to his sister, but he makes it very clear he is not responsible for the decision.

"Are you taking the responsibility for it?"

"I am."

"Go ahead," he said, and added, "but at your own risk. I won't cancel it, but I won't commit myself as to what I'll say to the Board."

"Say anything you wish."

How to Build Trust With Others

Now, I have no idea if Warren Buffett has read Atlas Shrugged. I'm not implying he did or that he's a fan of her work or Objectivism.

What I am saying is that an employee with integrity is one who accepts responsibility. She's the employee you can rely on to get the job done when she says she's going to, not the employee who's already making excuses or passing the task on to someone else. This is a quality employers desire.

"Taking responsibility when things go wrong is crucially important to building trust with others and learning from your mistakes," writes Ferguson. "It is one of the most important parts of creating a satisfying life, but a lot of people learn the opposite growing up."

James Taggart is one of the people who learned the opposite lesson growing up.

My advice to young people? Approach life as a Dagny Taggart.

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Ways Out of Loneliness

There are several things you can do if you're suffering from loneliness.



AMILI/SHUTTERSTOCK

Clubs People of various passions and interests gather in every community. They encourage each other in their shared hobby, craft, or interest and gain a sense of belonging from this unity of purpose. Clubs can range from quilting to rock hunting, from gardening to reading books. The great thing about joining a club is you can also find an activity that you continue to pursue outside of club gatherings that may help keep your mind calm and your attention occupied. Researchers have even looked into the benefits of these activities and have found crochet, knitting, and other repetitive, creative crafts and tasks have a therapeutic effect in and of themselves.

Sports There are few things that can lift the spirit and create a sense of self-empowerment as quickly as physical activity. The body requires movement for basic health, and some systems, like the lymphatic system, even require muscle contractions in order to carry out their essential functions. Exercise is linked to improved well-being across countless studies, and for those that are lonely, there is an additional benefit: Joining a local sports league is a great way to interact with people in a casual way. While a certain amount of camaraderie is expected, the greater focus is on the game itself.

Volunteer The world is beset by problems, and countless people are trying to help solve them. These activities range from keeping the elderly company to organizing local litter cleanup. There are never enough hands, so volunteers are often highly valued. And while television may tell us the good life is had in hedonic pleasures, research tells us truly happy people live lives of meaning and service. So find a cause you care about and look for people that share that mission. If the coordinator asks you to collect phone numbers for a spreadsheet at home on your computer, tell them that social connection is important to your motivation to volunteer.

Find Support If you're depressed, it can be uncomfortable to even be around people. The same is true if loneliness is a side effect of anxiety or social discomfort. Just as malnutrition leads to disease that requires a doctor, loneliness can lead to a state we need help to resolve. There are many kinds of therapy and some are more effective than others. What works best for you may differ from someone else. Some therapies, like cognitive behavior therapy, can help you address inaccurate or negative thinking that's having a corrosive effect on your life.



Forget about how your body looks and focus on the adventures and experiences it makes possible.

The Body as a Vessel for Living

When we focus on the 'unappealing' parts of our body, we miss out on what the body offers

LEO BABAUTA

Something I've noticed is that we spend a lot of our lives wrapping our identity in our bodies. If our body is something we're proud of, we feel really good about ourselves, but more often we carry a sense that something is wrong with us because our body isn't somehow ideal. I'm not immune. When there's a part of

my body that I like, I feel good about myself, but more often I see the "flaws" that prompt other feelings.

This focus on appearance seems irrational, though. It is a lot like wrapping our identity in the coffee mug we drink from. It's putting our self-worth in the vehicle of experience.

Our bodies are a vehicle for living. They have nothing to do with our worth as a person.

Another good metaphor is driving a car. We could spend so much time polishing the car, putting stickers on it, painting it, modifying it, trying to get it to be perfect. And this is fine, even fun. But it's a vehicle for getting us somewhere, a vehicle for experiencing a journey. The car is not the destination.

Our bodies are not us, nor are they the experience. They're a part of the experience, but focusing on our bodies is like focusing on the car instead of the scenery.

What would it be like to think of the body not as who we are or some kind of indicator of our worth or identity but simply as a vehicle for living? A vessel for experience?

This might relax any concern about how we look. Even better, it could inspire us to take care of the vessel or get it stronger and healthier so we can better enjoy the journey of life—without worrying about a breakdown.

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

Just Because You Use It Doesn't Mean You Need to Keep It

JOSHUA BECKER

Earlier this week I posted a quote on Facebook, without commentary, and the crowd went wild:

"Just because you use an item doesn't mean you need to keep it."

Some people told me I was absolutely crazy:

- "Are you dim?"
- "That's illogical."
- "Probably the worst decluttering tip ever."

Others found the idea liberating:

- "This is fantastic."
- "This is actually so true."
- "I need to do this exact thing!"

Personally, I find the thought so incredibly freeing—especially when actively working to own less—that I wanted to repeat it again here.

It seems to me that a lot of people took the quote to mean that I was telling people to get rid of every item they use. "This is terrible advice. If I got rid of my comb, I'd have to brush my hair with my fingers." "Why would I ever get rid of something that I use?"

But I'm not encouraging us to get rid of everything we use just because we use it.

"Just because you use an item doesn't mean you need to keep it" is different from "Get rid of every item you use."

In reality, our homes are filled with a whole bunch of things we think we need just because we occasionally use them.

"I can't declutter this item because I use it," is a thinking trap we fall into that can keep us stuck and keep us from making progress freeing up space, time, and money.

As an example: When we first started minimizing our possessions, we had six spatulas in our kitchen, and from time to time, we used each of them. But that didn't mean we needed all six. I only used them because they were there. Our kitchen functions way better, and I love cooking more,

I find the thought so incredibly freeing—especially when actively working to own less.

Make mornings easier by giving away some of the clothes you only wear from time to time.



now that we only own two, and I've never needed more than that.

Likewise, before minimalism, I probably owned twenty pairs of pants. And from time to time, I wore all of them. But I didn't need to own all of them, and I learned that through a Project 333 Experiment. Today, I find getting ready in the morning easier and more enjoyable now that I only own five pairs.

And don't get me started on all the kitchen gadgets that I used (a George Foreman grill comes to mind). Most of them were taking up more space than they were worth in terms of use.

I once helped a lady declutter her kitchen. She knew there was too much stuff but was struggling to remove items. I stumbled upon a red Santa Claus platter in an already overstuffed cabinet.

Hoping I had discovered an item that could quickly get donated, I asked, "What about this platter? Do you use this?"

"Oh yes," she replied, "I put cookies on it every Christmas Eve."

Sensing hesitation, I asked a follow-up question, "Well, what

would you use if you didn't have it?"

Within seconds she was able to answer, "I'd probably just use one of the red platters from that other drawer." That answer was a lightbulb moment for her (and me). Just because you use an item doesn't mean you need to keep it—especially if you have something else in your home that already accomplishes the same purpose.

Minimalist principles will always look different from one family to another. If you're a minimalist living in a tiny home with only 100 possessions, for instance, this decluttering tip may not be particularly helpful.

But for those of you reading this who are struggling to declutter, remind yourself that just because you use something doesn't mean you need to keep it.

There are life-giving benefits to owning less. And there's freedom to be found in realizing you don't need to keep everything you use.

In my opinion, "What would I use if I didn't own this item?" is a much more helpful question to ask than "Do I use it?"

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

In reality, our homes are filled with a whole bunch of things we think we need just because we occasionally use them.



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