THE EPOCH TIMES

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Incandescents and Fluorescents

While incandescents use more electricity, they give a warm steady light more similar to sunlight than fluorescent lights, which are devoid of essential, natural frequencies. The color temperature, flicker rate, and light quality of compact fluorescent light bulbs can induce a mild stress response.

JEFF PERKIN

rior to the use of electricity, human beings had an exclusively natural relationship to light. Our options were limited to the sun, a fire, or candlelight; all of which naturally emit red and near-infrared light. That light acts as a nutrient for the human mind and body. Unfortunately modern, indoor lifestyles can lead people to become

chronically depleted of natural light and its

positive biological effects.

A lack of sunlight exposure can lead to a chronic deficiency of vitamin D3. Over time, this deficiency can put people at an "increased risk for many chronic diseases including autoimmune diseases, some cancers, cardiovascular disease, infectious disease, schizophrenia and Type 2 diabetes."

To make matters worse, people have been taught to fear the sun's ultraviolet (UV) A radiation. Many people excessively cover their skin with clothing and sunscreens, many brands of which have recently been found to contain harmful carcinogenic ingredients.

While healthier sunscreen alternatives exist, it's important to remember that UVB radiation from the sun gives our bodies what it needs to produce vitamin D3. Healthful

sun exposure is gradual sun exposure, especially if you are fair-skinned. We need to increase our time in the sun little by little to acquire a protective tan and decrease our susceptibility to burns.

Not All Light Is Created Equal

The sun radiates beneficial wavelengths of red and near-infrared light. Man-made, fluorescent lights that are found in many offices and businesses are not only devoid of these essential frequencies, these manmade lights can also be seriously harmful. The color temperature, flicker rate, and light quality of compact fluorescent light bulbs can induce a stress response.

Writing for Psychology Today, Dr. Victoria Dunkley warns that "the high color (colder/bluer) temperature of fluorescent light stimulates the non-visual pathways from the eye to various parts of the brain that involve biorhythms, stress hormones, emotions, arousal levels, and muscle tension."

Time spent indoors under artificial lighting can have an increasingly detrimental impact on our body's natural rhythms over time. Varying qualities and wavelengths of light stimulate different biological responses.

Continued on Page 4



8 Ways Spike Protein Harms the Body and How to Remove It

The signature protein of COVID-19 and the vaccine can undermine cell function with long-lasting effects

XIAOXU SEAN LIN & HEALTH 1+1

Since the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the world more than two years ago, more than 4.5 billion people worldwide have become fully vaccinated against it.

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Harmonize with this solar term by staying humble and eating cooling foods like melon and citrus fruits.

CHINESE WISDOM FOR SEASONAL LIVING

Humility and Modesty Help the Body Adjust to Heat

Solar Term: Grain Buds (May 21 to June 5)

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 solar term, offering guidance on how to best navigate the season.

Solar Term: 'Grain Buds'

2022 Dates: May 21 to June 5

Looking at the natural world, we see that the grains of summer crops are becoming plump, but aren't yet ripe. As we prepare to enjoy the fruits of our labor, yang is at the extreme on earth and in our bodies, so we must also take care to protect ourselves from the potential negative impacts of this extreme state.

This solar term's name, "Grain Buds," is "xiao man" in Chinese. The meaning of "xiao" is a little bit, while "man" can mean replenishing, full, or contented. Contented can refer to the feeling farmers have after seeing their hard work about to come to fruition. Another meaning is fullness, which refers more directly to

Shennong, one of the three sage rulers of ancient China, was born during Grain Buds, which this year falls on May 21 through June 5.

Shennong was believed to be an overseer of harvests and medicinal herbs. In fact, he left to history the first medicinal herb book, "Shennong's Root and Herbal Classic.'

From this book, we learn that the best time to pick and process herbs is Grain Buds. The ancient Chinese used to make herbal teas and ointments during this time of year.

Watch That Yang Heat

In the Chinese spiritual text "Bagua" (The Eight Trigrams), Grain Buds is purely yang in all six of its trigrams. This reflects that yang is at its zenith and yin is extinguished.

For our health, we are reminded to be careful with our heart, blood vessels, and skin, as they can easily be damaged at

In the Taoist system, it's believed there is both yin and yang in our bodies, regardless of whether we are male or female. Good health is said to come from the balance of yin and yang.

When yang becomes stronger than yin, traditional Chinese medicine doctors regard this person as having "heat" in the body. When yang is far stronger than

yin, one is said to have "fire" in the body. These heat-related conditions are very common during this solar term, leading to skin problems such as dryness and skin irritation.

Living in Harmony With 'Grain Buds'

Going to bed late and getting up early help our body adjust to the temperature more easily during this season. So can humility and modesty in temperament, as well as meditation and gentle exercise. A lot of herbal tea can also help.

For those who have skin irritation, one can make an herbal tea with chamomile, peppermint, comfrey, witch hazel, melon, or peppermint. Soak a clean hand towel in a tea made from these ingredients and place it in a sealed container in the freezer. Whenever you feel itchy skin, use the cold cloth to cool and cleanse it.

Going to bed late and getting up early help our body adjust to the temperature more easily during this season.

Those who are in their first three months of pregnancy need to be careful of getting skin disease, as this may weaken the immune system for both mom and baby.

Seasonal Foods

Artichoke, broccoli, celery, tomato, water chestnut, yam, and all bitter vegetables are good to eat, to bring balance.

Starfruit, lemon, lime, melons, and all citrus fruits are good.

For those suffering from skin problems, do not eat seafood, especially shellfish. Honeysuckle and patchouli can be

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.



Shennong is one of the three sage rulers of ancient China who is associated with the "Grain Buds" solar term. He is said to have taught agriculture and medicine to the ancient Chinese civilization

Blue Zones Teach Us How to

MICHAEL ROTH

n recent years, much research has been conducted on length of life, especially on those cultures that not only live longer on average than _ other peoples, but thrive; having less physical and mental deterioration as they age. Many of these people live in areas dubbed "blue zones."

It's often suggested that improvements in farming, habitation, cooking, sanitation, improved nutrition, etc., have increased human longevity. However, these factors are widespread, yet longevity on a grand scale eludes most cultures. Interestingly, in 1842, M.A. Quetelet reported that the average life span was between 32 and 33 years in Belgium, France, and England; yet he also recorded the presence of 16 centenarians in January 1831 in Belgium. The oldest among them was 111 years old.

Agency's World Factbook, life expectancy currently ranges from 54 in Afghanistan to nearly 90 in Monaco with the United States ranking 46th at just under 81 years. Centenarians, on the other hand, live for 100 to 110 years and supercentenarians for 111 to 122.3 years.

areas that may explain their longevity.

Lifestyles of the Long-Lived

- Food is their medicine and rarely do they take supplements.
- purpose.
- They stop eating when they are 80
- month and in small portions (3 to 4 oz.).
- meals with friends and family.
- families come first.
- who support positive behaviors.
- and regularly attend services.

ucts, including dairy.

modern lifestyles.

People living in blue zones eat a largely

- Beans (all varieties) are eaten daily (1/2 cup).
- Fruits (Avocados, Bananas, Bitter mel-
- Nuts and seeds
- Shiitake mushrooms
- 100 percent whole wheat bread Olive oil
- Oats
- Lean protein

Protect Our Chromosomes

The world's longestliving people show us how to maintain the telomeres that protect our DNA

According to the Central Intelligence

Some examples of areas where living to be 100 is commonplace are Loma Linda, in California; Nicoya Peninsula, in Costa Rica; the island of Sardinia, in Italy; the island of Ikaria, in Greece; and Okinawa, Japan. These areas became known as blue zones after a groundbreaking study into the world's longest-lived peoples. Demographic work by Gianni Pes and Michel Poulain, and later Dan Buettner, looked at the commonalities of people living in these

- They have naturally active lifestyles based on walking, gardening, etc.
- Iney nave a sense of community and
- They are social, spending a lot of time with family and friends who live close by.
- percent full, eat less, and don't count calories. • The majority of their diet is plant based. Meat is only eaten several times a
- Fish is eaten a bit more frequently and is wild-caught. • They drink alcohol in moderation during
- They commit to a life partner and their
- They surround themselves with people
- They belong to a religious community

The basic dietary blue zone fundamentals are simple. The majority of their foods are plant based (95 percent), with the remaining 5 percent consisting of animal prod-

In blue zones, people generally don't watch much TV, go on diets, or work out at gyms. Instead, they socialize with family and friends at least eight hours a day, get their exercise through routinely active lifestyles, and have largely escaped the hyper-busy hustle and processed foods of

Superfoods of Centenarians

plant-based diet with plenty of whole grains. Common foods include:

- ons, Papayas, Plantains, Tomatoes, etc.) Vegetables (Kombu, Wakame, Sweet potatoes, Squash, Yams, etc.)



People in blue zones rarely overeat and instead often eat until they are 80 percent full.



the end of our

chromosomes. Stress

and other factors can

Telomeres and Blue Zones

Bevond their shared lifestyle patterns, researchers believe they may share longer than average telomeres.

Telomeres are the caps at the end of each chromosome strand that protect your DNA from unraveling or fraying. You can think of them as the aglets at the end of shoelaces. Chromosomes are double-stranded, threadlike structures at the end of DNA strands that contain all of your genetic information.

You're constantly gaining and losing cells. Telomeres protect your chromosomes during cell division. But they are known to shorten with age and each subsequent cell division. This is termed the "end replication

Several studies have connected longer telomere length to blue zone lifestyles or populations. In a paper submitted to The Population Association of America 2011 Annual Meeting by researchers at the University of California, and Universidad de Costa Rica, researchers shared a discovery many had already suspected about people living in Nicoya, Costa Rica.

"After controlling for age, telomere length in Nicoya is significantly greater than in other areas, equivalent to more than a 20year advantage in cellular aging in Nicoya, providing further support to the argument that Nicoya is indeed an exceptional longevity area, and offering hints of a biological pathway to which this longevity may

A review of 17 previous studies was published in the European Journal of Clinical Nutrition in 2016. It found that telomere length was associated with many of the dietary habits common among blue zone populations.

"Our systematic review supports the health benefits of adherence to the Mediterranean diet on TL [telomere length]. Except

for the fruits and vegetables, which showed positive association with TL, results were inconsistent for other dietary factors. Also. certain food categories including processed meat, cereals and sugar-sweetened beverages may be associated with shorter TLs." wrote the researchers.

Earlier research published in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition in 2010 had already linked diet to telomere length. A **Cut Calories** study published in the same journal in 2011 didn't find a strong correlation between diet and telomere length, except in the case of eating processed meats, which was linked to shorter telomeres. People in blue zones eat relatively less meat and very little to no processed meat.

A more recent study puba closer look at Costa Ricans and found noteworthy associations between eating rice and beans, as well as eating grains, Telomeres protect and longer telomeres. "Our results suggest that di-

ditional food pattern, are associprematurely shorten our telomeres and ated with telomere length and speed up aging. may contribute to the extended longevity of elderly Costa Ricans." That study looked at 909 participants over

etary factors, in particular a tra-

60 from the Costa Rican Longevity and Healthy Aging Study. In general, longer telomeres are associated with health and longevity. But there's a balance that must be met—an optimal

telomere length—too short or too long can also have negative health consequences. Eventually, telomeres are too short to protect your chromosomes. At that point, the cell either stops dividing, grows weaker, or Michael Roth is a retired doctor of dies through apoptosis, or programmed

People with shorter telomeres compared with their age group have a higher risk for chronic disease or early death from heart disease, muscular dystrophy, diabetes, lung disease, and more. Paradoxically, people

with extremely long telomeres are at greater risk of cancer. Extremely long telomeres can protect cancer cells making them immortal. Longer telomeres are typically related to overexposure to non-natural elements such as chemicals, GMOs, pollution, heavy metals, and synthetics. Thus, it's important to avoid or reduce contaminants as much as possible.

MIND & BODY | 3

An amazing aspect of telomeres is that their length can change. They can regenerate and grow back naturally, essentially slowing down the aging process. Recently, researchers discovered that an RNA molecule called telomeric repeat-containing RNA, better known as TERRA, helps to ensure the repair of extremely short (or damaged) telomeres.

How to Regrow Telomeres Naturally

Within limits, each of us can initiate steps to change our telomere length for better health:

Get Active

Studies show that the more physically active you are the longer your telomeres. One study found that marathon runners and triathletes in their 50s had the chromosomes and telomeres of 20-year-olds. These athletes ran about 50 miles a week for about 35 years. However, you don't necessarily have to run marathons to lengthen telomeres. Even just 10 to 15 minutes of exercise a day has an effect on telomere length.

Of course, you needn't participate in regimented exercise. One of the lessons of blue zones is that a richly active lifestyle provides these same effects.

An interesting study of 400 women found that those placed on a plant-based diet for three months had 29 percent longer telomeres than the control group during the same period. That would align well with the lessons from blue zones.

Humans have an enzyme called telomerase in the body that builds and maintains telomeres by adding bases to their ends. As cells divide, however, telomerase is depleted causing telomeres to shorten as with age. However, a study funded by the U.S. Department of Defense found that three months of a whole foods plant-based diet, along with exercise and stress management, can significantly boost telomerase activity.

Reduce Stress

Stress shortens telomeres and speeds up the aging process as few things can. One study compared the telomere lengths of mothers of chronically ill children to those of mothers of healthy children. Looking at telomere length, the high-stressed mothers aged about 10 years faster than the low-stress mothers. Ine same ettect was found in those sufferir from severe work exhaustion. Even perceived

stress can shorten your telomeres. One way to reduce stress is through meditation. As little as three minutes can benefit telomere length positively.

People in blue zones regularly participate in religious community and have largely escaped the stress of modern living, in part by avoiding the triggering effects of mass media. They also routinely spend time with friends, one of the most de-stressing activities a person can do.

It's well known that as we age, we don't need as many calories as when we were younger in order to maintain a healthy weight. A 2017 study using data from the Health and Retirement Study found that people 50 and older who were normal weight (and had never smoked and drank alcohol in moderation) lived on average seven years longer. People lished in Nutrients in 2021 took in blue zones rarely overeat and instead often eat until they are 80 percent full.

Avoid Telomere Trimmers

It has been demonstrated that eating too many animal products can shorten telomeres through increased oxidative stress, inflammation, and cholesterol, especially when the meat is processed.

Conclusion

In addition to the foods we eat, lifestyle factors, physiological stress, and exposure to carcinogens have a strong influence on

telomere length and thus longevity. Therefore, if we want to live longer and thrive as we age, the secret doesn't lie with the government, medical doctors, or pharmaceutical companies; it may very well be in living a lifestyle that has a profound and healthy effect on the length of our telomeres.

chiropractic. He has over 35 years of extensive knowledge and experience in nutrition and health coaching. He is dedicated to provide for and educate the public as much as possible regarding the gaining and maintaining of dynamic health and effective supplementation.



Getting outside is important to avoid getting chronically depleted of natural light and its positive biological effects.

The Surprising Science of Infrared Light Therapy

Thousands of studies are documenting a powerful cellular reaction with widespread therapeutic effects

Continued from Page 1

Maintaining a healthy circadian rhythm involves getting blue light early and avoiding it, or filtering it (on the screens of our devices

The good news is that people can supplement their light intake by investing in a device or visiting their local health spa.

We've known for decades that people at high latitudes who struggle with depression related to seasonal affective disorder (SAD) benefit from supplementing with a UVB light therapy device. In a study published in The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease in 2017, researchers noted "a significant but modest improvement was detected after a single active light session" of only one hour.

LED light devices are more accessible and more affordable than ever before. Just make sure to do your research before buying to make sure you're getting one that is right for your particular needs.

How Red and Near-Infrared Light Help Us

Thousands of studies in more than 70 countries have been conducted over the past couple decades demonstrating the promise of red and near-infrared light-related therapies. This vast amount of research suggests that nearly everyone can benefit in one way

Athletes are benefiting from better recovery and performance while celebrities are treating their skin in order to reduce the impacts of aging such as "fine lines, wrinkles, skin roughness and intradermal collagen density increase," according to a 2014 study published in the Journal of Clinical Laser Medicine and Surgery

There is a long list of names for red light therapy. Common names include "phototherapy," and "low-level laser-light therapy." One of the most prominent names in the medical literature is "photobiomodulation," or PBM. This area of study has received significant attention from the scientific and medical community in recent years.

Searching "infrared light therapy" on PubMed Central, a full-text archive of biomedical and life sciences journal literature, produces more than 10,000 results. It doesn't take long to see why. Red or near-infrared light is a generally non-invasive, chemicalfree, and demonstrably safe treatment that can be used for a wide range of ailments. How does it work? "The absorption of red/

near-infrared light energy, a process termed 'photobiomodulation,' enhances mitochondrial ATP production, cell signaling, growth factor synthesis, and attenuates oxidative stress," write researchers in a review published in the Aesthetic Surgery Journal that looked at previous studies on the topic.

Mitochondria are the powerhouses of our cells and ATP is the energy source they create, which is critical for our cells and our overall health. Research found cytochrome c oxidase, an enzyme in the mitochondria, is stimulated by photons of near-infrared light. This triggers the mitochondria to produce more ATP, which then triggers the release of signal molecules that put genes to work protecting the cell in ways that "counteract cell degeneration" by repairing damaged mitochondria and releasing antioxidants. These antioxidants "work to clean up free radicals, highly chemically reactive molecules that can bond to, and alter, other molecules in destructive ways related to aging and cancer," according to the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters.

In an article on the Academy's website, Janis Eells, professor of biomedical sciences at the University of Wisconsin, explains: "They [mitochondria] not only control the life of the cell, they control cell death too. If for example), after dark. Simply put, we need a cell becomes diseased or dysfunctional, a more nuanced and conscious relationship the mitochondria send out signals which tell the cell to self-destruct in an organized fashion—so that it doesn't take out its neighbors at the same time."

> Red or near-infrared light is a generally non invasive, chemical-free, and demonstrably safe treatment that can be used for a wide range of ailments.

Regulating free radicals prevents oxida tive stress in the cell that can cause damage to proteins and DNA. Like plants, our cells absorb light to create the energy needed to make sure all this work is being done throughout our bodies.

Red and Near-Infrared Light as Medicine

For many, the suggestion that light can be used as a treatment might seem too strange or good to be true but using light as medicine is nothing new.

In 1903, Niels Ryberg Finsen was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine "in recognition of his contribution to the treatment of diseases, especially lupus vulgarism, with concentrated light radiation, whereby he has opened a new avenue for medical science." In 1910, John Harvey Kellogg published a book called "Light Therapeutics" which focused on the therapeutic use of incandescent lamps.

Skip ahead more than a century later and light therapies are now finally reaching critical mass. The FDA has already approved certain red light therapy devices for the treatment of acne, muscle and joint pain, arthritis, compromised blood circulation, hair loss, and even whole body pain.

Studies and meta-analyses suggest that red and near-infrared light therapy can be effective for treatment of a whole list of other ailments that aren't yet FDA approved. Athletes can even use red light therapy to enhance performance and to heal and regenerate muscle tissue. The treatment is so effective, it may raise ethical concerns. "We raise the question of whether PBM should be permitted in athletic competition by international regulatory authorities," researchers write in an article published in the Journal of Biophotonics.

Many studies explore red light therapy's potential for diverse uses such as reducing belly fat, increasing bone density, and increasing testosterone. Optimistic areas of research include exploring red light therapy as a potential alternative, or companion, treatment for brain disorders such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's as well as different types of cancers.

Part of the reason red light therapy can be so effective is due to its "pronounced anti-inflammatory effects" with "both local and systemic mechanisms," notes an article published in the American Institute of Mathematical Sciences' journal AIMS Biophysics. This overall inflammation reduction is "particularly important for disorders of the joints, traumatic injuries, lung disorders, and in the brain."

Studies show that red light therapy can benefit the whole body insofar that there "appears to be a systemic effect whereby light delivered to the body can positively benefit distant tissues and organs," notes the AIMS article. This research is extremely promising considering that most chronic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer's, and cardiovascular disease involve sys-

temic inflammation. Longevity is a focus for a growing population of elderly around the world. "Among the non-pharmacological interventions studied for the treatment or prevention of age-related neurocognitive impairment, photobiomodulation (PBM) has gained prominence for its beneficial effects on brain functions relevant to aging brains," notes a 2021 research review published in Aging Research Reviews.

"In animal models, the neuroprotective and neuromodulatory capacity of PBM has been observed. Studies using both animals and humans have shown promising metabolic and hemodynamic effects of PBM on the brain, such as improved mitochondrial and vascular functions. Studies in humans have shown that PBM can improve electrophysiological activity and cognitive functions such as attention, learning, memory and mood in older

people.' Similarly, studies show promise with regard to vision in the elderly population. Near-infrared light of wavelength 780 nanometers (nm) was used to treat age-related macular generation in a group of elderly subjects. "Visual acuity was improved in 95 percent of the subjects; most were able to see two rows lower on an eye chart," reported researchers in their study published in the Journal of Clinical Laser Medicine and Surgery. The results of a two-week treatment lasted from 3 to 36 months with no observed

If you're wondering if there is more research related to a particular condition, search PubMed or another biomedical research database.

Jeff Perkin is a graphic artist and integrative nutrition health coach. He can be reached at WholySelf.com

Getting Started With Red and Near-Infrared Light Therapy

Getting out in the sunshine is a great place to start for people who don't want to invest in a red light device. Just make overdo it. Sunburn is a serious risk factor for skin cancer. For those looking to get a device, it's obviously important to research and make sure vou get something suitable to your needs.

Red light is generally used for skin-level treatment with a therapeutic range of wavelengths from 620 to 700 nm. Near-infrared light a therapeutic range from 700 to 1,000 nm. Different devices will have different focused wavelengths or a combination for different treatments.

Do your own research or contact an expert to find the wavelength and dose that is right for you. Experiment at your own risk, but with the assurance that "to date, there are no reports of major safety issues nor side-effects after near-infrared light treatment," reports a research review published in Frontiers in Neuroscience.

Ari Whitten, author of "The Ultimate Guide to Red Light Therapy," says: "It really matters what device you get. I want to put this caution out there because there are a lot of junk devices. There are a lot of devices that are onefiftieth the power output of the

devices that I recommend, and somebody who isn't savvy to that, isn't knowledgeable about why the power output of these devices matters, might just go on Amazon and buy some \$30 device."

Consult the interview with Ari Whitten on The Epoch Times website to learn more about where to get started with red light therapy.



The FDA has approved certain red light therapy devices for acne, muscle and joint pain, arthritis, compromised blood circulation, and more.



As research into near infrared and infrared light therapy develops, so too do the therapeutic uses. This infrared bed is used for muscle pain treatment.

To find the studies mentioned in this article, please see the article online at TheEpochTimes.com

8 Ways Spike Protein Harms the Body and How to Remove It

The signature protein of COVID-19 and the vaccine can undermine cell function with long-lasting effects

Continued from Page 1

Now more and more people are concerned that the spike proteins used in the vaccines and present in the virus are the cause of long COVID syndrome.

The spike protein, also known as the S protein, is the largest structural protein in the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19. It's a signature structure that protrudes from the surface of the virus, creating the crown-like shape that coronaviruses get their name from. Corona is Latin for "crown" or "wreath."

When the pandemic first started to spread, people's understanding of the spike protein was very limited. It was thought that the spike protein only played the role of invading our cells by binding to the ACE (angiotensin-converting enzyme) receptors on our cell walls. However, scientists have slowly discovered that the effects of this protein are multifaceted, and it interacts with other cellular tissues besides the ACE2 receptors.

8 Ways Spike Protein Harms the Body During more than two years of the CO-

VID-19 pandemic, many studies have analyzed the effects of the spike protein from different aspects and have discovered that it's harmful to the human body in several ways, including:

1. Damaging the lung cells (including the pulmonary alveoli and pulmonary endothelial cells).

2. Damaging the mitochondria and DNA structures. 3. Damaging cardiovascular cells.

4. Increasing the risk of blood clots. 5. Damaging brain cells.

6. Promoting inflammation. 7. Suppressing immunity.

8. Increasing the risk of cancer.

We'll go into the details of each of these points.

S Proteins Can Affect Multiple Organs

When the virus enters the human body, the fferent ways. Studies have shown that many organ cells can be affected by spike proteins, such as those in the heart, brain, and cardiovascular system. In addition, a paper published in 2021 in the bioRxiv preprint repository states that S proteins cause:

- the Type 1 catalytic receptors in the kidneys to increase in kidney cell tissues, and these types of receptors can become hosts for the virus, making the kidneys more susceptible to viral infection.
- cells in the small intestine to stimulate a large amount of L-SIGN (liver/lymph node-specific intracellular adhesion molecules-3 grabbing non-integrin) receptors to defend against pathogens. However, this causes a reaction that eventually makes the small intestine more susceptible to viral infection. A similar situation can also occur in other organs, such as the kidneys and duodenum (the first section of the small intestine).
- the amount of DC-SIGN (Dendritic Cell-Specific Intercellular adhesion molecule-3-Grabbing Non-integrin) receptors in the lungs to increase, which may cause inflammatory symptoms in the lungs.

In addition, spike proteins can cause different degrees of oxidation of the organs, leading to more cells suffering premature death

and putting the body in a hyperoxidized state, which may further increase the risk of cancer.

A new study published in the Journal of the American Heart Association found that spike proteins also have a direct effect on lung func-

When spike proteins are present in the human body, the pulmonary alveolar cell walls in the lungs will begin to thicken and solidify, and lung functions will decline. The pulmonary alveoli are the tiny, balloon-shaped air sacs that expand and shrink in our lungs as we

The spike proteins will also affect the function of cellular mitochondria in the lungs. Mitochondria are the power plants of our cells and hence the body's energy

Coronaviruses

are recognizable

by their crown of

pike proteins that

they use to infect

human cells.

Scientists

have slowly

discovered

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receptors.

Spike Proteins Damage Mitochondria, **Possibly Causing Long COVID**

Under normal circumstances, mitochondria in cells are tubular cellular power stations responsible for synthesizing energy.

When the spike proteins stimulate our pulmonary alveolar cells or endothelial cells (which line our blood vessels and lymphatic vessels), the mitochondrial structure will change dramatically and become heavily fragmented, and the number of tubular mitochondria will be greatly reduced. As the cells in the alveoli or endothelial tissues become damaged, they no longer produce energy efficiently, which is likely to cause the cells to enter a state of premature decline and death.

Scientists have hypothesized that long COVID may be caused by this damage to spike proteins will affect multiple organs the mitochondria. One of the major symptoms of this chronic form of COVID-19 is fatigue. This may be because of the fact that the cellular mitochondria are damaged or dying, resulting in a lack of energy at the most essential level of our body.

> Mitochondrial damage in different cells can also bring about different symptoms. If the mitochondrial function of lung cells are damaged, then the pulmonary alveoli's ability to expand and contract will be weakened, oxygen absorption will be poor, and the body's metabolic level will also be reduced. This also makes one more prone

Damage to the Cardiovascular System and Blood Clots

The cardiac and the myocardial systems of the heart contain a very important type of cell: the pericardial cells, which are outside the endothelial cells of blood vessels and are usually combined with endothelial cells to help blood vessels transmit different signals.

A study published in Clinical Science discovered that when the SARS-CoV-2 virus enters the body, spike proteins will bind to the CD147 receptors on the surface of the pericardial cells, making them more likely to shed from the surface of the endothelial cells. This will affect some of the functions of the endothelial cells and accelerate the death of the vascular wall cells.

In addition, spike proteins themselves can directly stimulate pericardial cells to produce more pro-inflammatory factors that can damage the myocardium and cause blood clots.

Spike proteins can also induce thrombosis, which is when blood clots block veins. Another experiment published in the BioRxiv preprint repository investigated how platelets would change after being

stimulated by spike proteins. The experiment compared the SARS-CoV-2 virus spike protein with another viral protein called

VSV (Vesicular stomatitis virus) and found that more platelets were induced to clot in the presence of the spike

MIND & BODY | 5

Spike Proteins **Impair Immunity**

When the human

body is infected by a coronavirus such as COVID-19, the immune system recognizes the spike protein as an invader and the innate immune system and acquired immune system get to work. Cytokines are released to sig-

nal the area to defend. In short,

the impact of spike proteins on the immune systems is comprehensive. This is also shown in a paper published in the journal Leukemia.

For instance, there are 11 types of toll-like receptors in the innate immune system, and the seventh type of these toll-like receptors can recognize the RNA of single-stranded viruses. The mRNA (messenger RNA) that enters the body after COVID-19 infection or vaccination is also single-stranded, and immune cells will recognize the virus's RNA and attack it. In the presence of spike proteins, the toll-like receptor expression quantity may increase in response to the viral attack and complementary immune cells may release more interferons in response to different viral variants.

If the amount of viral spike proteins in the body is too high, they may over-activate the expression of interferons, which may even induce the body's immune systems to attack its own cells.

Do Vaccine Spike Proteins Stay in the Body?

As we know, the COVID-19 vaccines have incorporated an expression mechanism for the viral spike proteins that triggers our immune systems to respond to the virus. But the question remains: How long do the spike proteins from the vaccines remain in the body?

The spike proteins are divided into two parts: S1 and S2, with S1 remaining in the blood and S2 bound to the cell membranes. A study published in Clinical Infectious Diseases discovered that the S1 proteins would appear in humans soon after the first dose of the Moderna vaccine, and that some people would still have intact spike proteins

two weeks after the first dose of the vaccine. The finding that intact spike proteins were still present in people two weeks after vaccination was beyond expectations.

Another study published in the Journal of Immunology found that S2 proteins could still be detected four months after the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine.

However, the harm of spike proteins is related to their amount. The aforementioned side effects are all based on in vitro studies and animal models, and the relatively serious damage occurred only when the amount of spike proteins was large.

If the viral mRNA in the vaccine only appears in small amounts in the muscles and doesn't enter the blood or organs in large amounts, then these serious side effects won't occur. That means clearing out these spike proteins can limit their potential negative effects on the body.

Xiaoxu Sean Lin, Ph.D., former US Army officer and microbiologist, is a political analyst and commentator.

How to Get Spike Proteins Out of the Body

If someone develops Long COVID-

19 syndrome after infection or vaccination, they may wonder what medicines can be used to expel the spike proteins and

relieve their symptoms. The World Council for Health (WCH) has made several recommendations for nutrients and medications.

1. Nutrients that may help improve symptoms include:

- Vitamin C
- Vitamin D
- Omega 3
- Quercetin Melatonin

Zinc

- These are all nutrients helpful in boosting the immune system, thereby helping the body remove spike proteins.

2. Common medications used to improve symptoms:

- Aspirin
- Antihistamines
- Steroids
- Ivermectin

the body, including: Selfheal extract

BILLION

people worldwide

have become fully

vaccinated against

COVID-19.

- · Colchicine
- · Mast cell stabilizers

Some of these ingredients, such as the shikimic acid contained in pine needles. have antioxidant properties that can reduce oxidized free radicals in the body and provide a detoxifying effect.

3. Plant Extracts The above-suggested medicines aren't cures. Some plant extracts in but they can help boost nature can also help detoxify the body's immunity and balance the body's immune

mechanism, which is helpful in the overall fight against Pine needle extract the virus. · Dandelion leaf extract

· Rheum emodin

It's important to emphasize that everyone's situation is different. So talk to your physician before taking the medications recommended by the WCH to make sure they're suitable.

Staying Positive With a Negative Brain

Our instinctual focus on problems and threats can undermine our health and blind us to blessings

EMMA SUTTIE

t's safe to say nearly everyone has been feeling a bit negative recently, especially in the past two years.

A dramatic rise in depression and anxiety is usually a good indicator that we're collectively not feeling our best. Research from the Boston University School of Public Health showed that the rise in depression during the pandemic first seen in March and April 2020 increased by March and April 2021, climbing to 32.8 percent—affecting 1 in 3 American adults.

But despite what's happening in the world right now, there may be another reason we're all feeling so gloomy, and it's in our brains. Research has shown that our brains react is hugely helpful and will more strongly to adverse events and situations than positive ones, which might explain why it sometimes seems that we fall so easily into negative feelings and find it hard to let them go.

Humans and the Negativity Bias

Why is it that one critical comment from a coworker or someone cutting you off in traffic is enough to ruin your day? We often ruminate on these minor irritations, allowing them to take over our thoughts and taint what might otherwise be a great day. So why good things?

Science suggests that we have a bias. Abundant empirical evidence indicates

ity bias—our tendency to process and remember negative stimuli more than positive stimuli and dwell on adverse events after

Although it may seem strange at first glance, this bias can be helpful. Our notso-distant ancestors lived in a world full of physical danger in which animals, cold, starvation, and war required that we be extravigilant about personal safety as a matter

Changing your environment and stimulus you may be stuck in.

Negativity Bias in the Modern World

Today, we live in a much safer world, and the threats to our health and well-being are generally more insidious than an attack from a ferocious animal.

While there are fewer threats to our personal health and safety, and they are usually less catastrophic, our brains continue to look do our minds seem to focus on and place for new things to worry about. As a result, more importance on bad things instead of we constantly scan for dangerous situations and expend a lot of resources focusing our attention on them.

This safety mechanism in our brains may that humans tend to focus on, learn from, be making the world, and our daily exisand use negative information from their tence, seem more unpleasant than it really environment far more than positive infor- is. Our brains are hardwired to pay more mation. This behavior has a name: negativattention to negativity, which explains why so many of us tend to focus on the negative aspects of our lives and give precious little attention to the positive things—like the relief of knowing that our brains function this way.

Negativity and Health

Many traditional medical practices have long recognized the relationship between our emotions and health, and science continues to explore this connection.

A 1995 study in the Journal of Advancement in Medicine found that an episode of anger suppresses the immune system for up to six hours after the event, and that, conversely, feelings of care and compassion give the immune system a boost for up to six hours afterward.

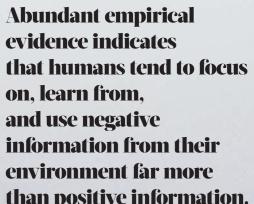
Emotions that we may label as unpleasant can also be destructive to our health.

Take cynicism, for example. A 2014 study published in the journal Neurology linked higher levels of cynicism—a general distrust of people and their motives—later in life to a greater risk of developing dementia; the findings accounted for many other risk factors such as age, sex, smoking, and heart health.

Cynicism may hurt your heart, too. A 2009 study in the journal Circulation collected data from more than 97,000 women and found that the most cynical participants were more likely to have heart disease. The study also noted that the women who were more pessimistic had a higher chance of dying throughout the study than those who were more optimistic.

Your Brain on Positivity

All of this information isn't meant to feed any negativity, but rather can help us understand why we may easily get stuck in negative loops and find them so difficult to escape. The good news is that we can train our brains to be more positive and improve our health in the process.



over a passing comment from a friend or fixating on the latest catastrophic news And this is where all that mindfulness story, tell yourself you need to look for some more positive news. Go outside for a walk or listen to some of your favorite it, focus on it, and cultivate it. music. Do something you know makes you feel good. Changing your environment and stimulus is hugely helpful and will pull • An unsolicited hug from one of my chilyou out of the cycle you may be stuck in.

in the world; you may just not be hearing about them. Bad news dominates the airwaves, but positive stories are out there; you just have to work a little harder to find

Emma Suttie is an acupuncture physi-

amounts of theanine.

To find the studies mentioned in this article, please see the article online at TheEpochTimes.com

Gyokuro isn't always easy to find in the

West, unlike matcha, the tea-ceremony

form of green tea in which the leaves are

ground to a fine powder so that it brews

quickly and thoroughly—and you drink the

powdered leaves themselves, giving you a

concentrated dose of everything in the tea.

Matcha is very trendy now and can be

ordered in coffee shops, tea houses, and

even smoothie bars. How it's brewed or

even whether it's brewed at all doesn't much

matter, because when you drink matcha,

All true teas (made from the leaves of the

tea plant, Camellia sinensis), whether black,

white, green, oolong, or pu-erh, contain

theanine. If you're not a tea drinker, you can

get theanine by adding matcha powder to

foods and desserts: Sprinkle it on fruit salad

or ice cream, use it to make a healthy cake

frosting, or make some matcha-infused

What if you don't like tea at all? Theanine

is also present in some mushrooms, par-

ticularly bay boletes, which you can some-

times buy fresh at farmers markets or find

dried at the grocery store. The theanine in

these mushrooms provides umami flavor

and, perhaps, cognitive benefits. Boletes

don't contain caffeine, however, so you

might want a cup of coffee to go with them.

Jennifer Margulis, a regular contributor to

energy balls.

you're consuming everything in the tea.



The first step is simply being aware that our brains work this way; it's helpful to know that you're more sensitive to negative stimuli from your environment and tend to lock onto it. In "The Power of Bad," co-author Roy Baumeister says that the bulk of their research into the negativity bias shows that bad things have two, three, or four times the impact of good things. He uses the example of a relationship to demonstrate his point: If you have done something to annoy your spouse and want to make it up to them, you will have to do three or perhaps four nice things just to

 Petting the cat • Tending to the plants in my garden This may seem difficult to believe right now, but there are all kinds of wonderful things happening These things make me joyful and feed my heart. As a result, I try to make time for them every day, and I consider them a vital part of my health care regimen. It's worth taking some time to think

> about what brings you joy and to make time for those things as often as you can. The activities that make you happier and them. I've been healthier combat the negativity competinviting the ing for your energy and attention. If we all Good News took the time to do more positive things Network into that bring us joy, it could not only benefit my inbox our lives, but also help our brains see the world as a happier, more positive place.

for years for this very reason. The Epoch

Times Inspired section offers another

Another way to foster a more positive

mindset, suggested by the authors of "The

Power of Bad," is a gratitude journal to counteract our inclination toward gloom

and doom. Seeking out, focusing on, and

writing daily about the positive aspects

of our lives is an excellent way to foster

positivity and can help rewire the brain

Instinctively, we know that negative

things don't feel good and positive ones

do. We can feel the effects when watching

news footage about wars or natural disas-

ters. These are extreme examples, but even

minor negative events can penetrate our

psyche and dominate our mood, taking up

valuable space in our hearts and minds.

comes in. There is beauty, love, and joy in

most of our lives; we only need to identify

For me, everyday positive moments are:

Watching birds at the feeders

away from our negative tendencies.

uplifting source.

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

Theanine Calms Your Brain, Gives Your Heart a Boost

A compound found in tea and mushrooms sharpens our mind and supports our organs

JENNIFER MARGULIS

Anxiety was on the rise even before CO-VID-19 pushed us all into even more pronounced panic. So anything that can help us humans feel calmer and more centered is particularly welcome right now.

Several fascinating studies have shown that theanine, a compound found in tea and some mushrooms, is connected to better brain and heart health and to longevity.

Some of theanine's biggest fans are the parents of children with autism. Children in the United States and across the globe are suffering from anxiety, and children with autism often suffer from higher rates of anxiety than neurotypical youngsters, levels in the brains of people struggling according to 2015 research published in Current Opinion in Psychiatry.

Terri Hirning, a motivational speaker and health advocate, said that for more treatment for her son to help him recover a relaxed state. from autism.

"Some also find theanine helpful for night wakeups where your mind just won't shut off," Hirning said.

While calming anxiety is a wonderful benefit, a growing body of scientific literature suggests that theanine does a lot more.

What Is Theanine?

Theanine is an amino acid found in tea
In nature, theanine nearly always comes plants and certain mushrooms. It's simi-

lar in structure to glutamic acid and gluta- in the highest concentrations in green tea, mine, compounds essential to many bodily functions, including protein synthesis and neurotransmission. Theanine comes in two forms, L-theanine

and D-theanine. They're identical in composition, containing the same number of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, and oxygen atoms (C7H14N2O3), but they differ in the placement of the OH group (composed of one oxygen atom bonded to one hydrogen atom). The L form is most common in nature and is the form that's biologically available, so when we talk about theanine, we're most often talking about L-theanine.

Theanine's Benefits

Theanine has been shown to be neuroprotective by reducing excitatory glutamate, delaying neuron death following stroke, and promoting neurogenesis (the creation of new brain cells).

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, which are intended to increase serotonin with depression, have extensive negative side effects. So it's particularly noteworthy that research done in the Netherlands has found that theanine increases alpha wave than a decade, she has used theanine as a activity in the brain, which is indicative of

> GABA signaling is a big issue in children with neurodevelopmental disorders and reduced executive function, according to research done in 2012, and theanine has been credited with helping to normalize dopamine, serotonin, and GABA signaling disturbances.

Positive Synergy With Caffeine

packaged with caffeine. Theanine is found

especially shade-grown green tea, which has higher levels of both theanine and caffeine. In laboratory experiments, it appears that theanine is most beneficial when paired with caffeine.

For example, in an interesting experiment published in March 2015, a team of neuroscientists at Northumbria University in the UK gave 24 people—12 habitual caffeine consumers and 12 non-consumers—in random order, over four visits, just caffeine, just theanine, both theanine and caffeine together, and a placebo.

Afterward, participants were tested on a range of mental tasks.

Those who were given caffeine alone reported fewer headaches and mental fatigue than when they were tested before the dose and likewise demonstrated improved reaction time and a better ability to process visual information quickly.

Participants given just theanine reported having more headaches during the testing. Where the people given caffeine had improved scores on the mental math component of the test (counting backward in increments of seven), those given theanine alone didn't.

However, the study participants who took the caffeine and theanine together enjoyed all the benefits of caffeine and none of the downsides of theanine alone and did even better than the caffeine-only group on mental math, as well as on language skills.

Because the combination of caffeine and theanine works to improve cognition, this suggests that green tea (and matcha powdered shade-grown green tea) may be the perfect enhancement for long-term brain function.

Help With Cognition

Scientists believe that some of the brain ef-



(made from the leaves of the tea plant, Camellia sinensis), whether black, white, green, oolong, or pu-erh, contain theanine

All true teas

fects associated with theanine stem from its resemblance to glutamine, a powerful excitatory neurotransmitter. Recent research has shown that theanine can occupy glutamate receptors and that it's able to pass through the blood-brain barrier to exert its relaxation effect.

In a 2021 study, Japanese researchers focused on theanine's cognitive effects in men and women between the ages of 50 and 69, who are at risk of cognitive decline. The scientists wanted to distinguish shortterm effects from long-term effects, so they measured cognitive functions—attention, working memory, and executive function after a single dose of theanine (100 milligrams, about four times the amount found in a cup of green tea) and after daily doses for 12 weeks.

The study was a randomized double-blind, placebo-controlled trial, which means that neither the researchers nor the subjects knew whether they were taking theanine or a placebo. This is considered the gold standard for obtaining high-quality evidence, although the study didn't limit the subjects' normal intake of tea, which means that the overall intake of both theanine and caffeine wasn't strictly controlled.

The Japanese researchers found that theanine had a very positive effect on the brain: "A single dose of L-theanine reduced reaction time in the attention task and increased correct answers and decreased the number of omission errors in the working memory task, which suggests L-theanine may improve working memory and executive function."

Counteracting Negative Effects on the Brain

Although the use of cannabis is controversial, 37 states have legalized medical marijuana and 18 states have legalized its recreational use. Chronic cannabis use in

effects on brain development, which may be a trigger for schizophrenia and may cause anxiety, paranoia, and other cognitive impairments.

According to a January 2021 study in the Journal of Neuroscience, that's what inspired Canadian researchers to investigate theanine's potential to mitigate the negative effects of cannabis on the developing brain. These scientists fed young rats two doses of theanine daily before injecting them with increasingly higher doses of THC, the mindaltering ingredient in cannabis.

Theanine had a positive effect on the young rats' brains, the researchers found. "The range of neuroprotective effects induced by L-theanine were remarkable not only for their persistence beyond the adolescent THC exposure period, but for the comprehensive nature of its protective effects," the study reads.

Good for Your Heart

There's also some evidence that theanine has beneficial cardiovascular effects. In one 2012 study, Japanese researchers found that high-stress-response participants (those whose blood pressure tended to rise when facing stress) given 200 milligrams of Ltheanine and then asked to perform highstress tasks not only experienced less anxiety, but also had lower blood-pressure readings than high-stress-response participants who were given a placebo. Theanine, the researchers wrote, "attenuates the bloodpressure increase in highstress-response adults."

Best Ways to Get Theanine

Theanine was originally identified by a Japanese scientist interested in why gyokuro (shade-grown, rolled-leaf) tea was so rich in umami (deep flavor), almost like a savory soup. Sure enough, adolescence is associated with negative gyokuro was found to contain abundant

Some of theanine's biggest fans are the parents of children with autism.

Because the combination of caffeine and theanine works to improve

cognition, this suggests that green tea (and matcha) may be the perfect enhancement for long-term brain function.

> The Epoch Times, is an award-winning science journalist and a sought-after speaker. Learn more at her website, JenniferMargulis.net, and follow her on Substack at Jennifer-Margulis.substack.com

> > *To find the studies mentioned in* this article, please see the article online at TheEpochTimes.com

Is Your Mental Health under Your Control?

ZIGGI IVAN SANTINI. CHARLOTTE **MEILSTRUP, LINE NIELSEN, ROB DONOVAN & VIBEKE JENNY KOUSHEDE**

he number of people struggling with poor mental health and mental disorders has been rising around the world over the past few decades. Those who are struggling are increasingly facing difficulties accessing the kind of support they need—leaving many waiting months for help, if they even qualify for treatment.

While it's clear that more needs to be done to improve access to treatment, that doesn't mean people inevitably have to struggle with their mental health as a result. In fact, there are many things people can do on their own to maintain good mental health—and even prevent mental health problems from developing in the first place. According to our recent research, one of the steps you can take to improve your mental well-being may be as simple as believing that you can.

People who have an internal well-being locus of control believe that their own attitudes and behavior control their well-being.

In our recent study, we asked 3,015 Danish adults to fill out a survey that asked questions about mental health—such as whether they believe they can do something to keep mentally healthy, whether they had done something in the past two weeks to support their mental health, and also whether they were currently struggling with a mental health problem. We then assessed their level of mental well-being using the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale, which is widely used by health care professionals and researchers to measure mental well-being.

As you'd expect, we found that mental wellbeing was highest among those who had done things to improve their mental health compared with the other participants.

Interestingly however, we found that being—people who believed they could do being locus of control believe that their own This concept may explain why partici-

New study finds believing you can improve your mental health is linked with higher mental well-being



something to keep mentally healthy tended to have higher mental well-being than those who didn't have this belief.

So while it's most beneficial to take steps to improve your mental health, even just believing you can improve it is associated with better overall mental well-being.

Though our study didn't look at the reasons for this link between belief and better mental health, it could be explained by a psychological concept known as the "welltaken action to improve their mental well- concept, people who have an internal well- of depression, anxiety, and stress.

Using your

energizing and

body is

attitudes and behavior control their wellbeing. On the other hand, people with an external well-being locus of control think their mental well-being is largely controlled by factors or circumstances outside their con-

trol (such as by other people or by chance). It's possible that having an internal wellbeing locus of control may subconsciously influence one's outlook, lifestyle, or coping mechanisms. This in turn may also affect mental health—and previous research has whether or not our respondents had actually being locus of control." According to this linked this type of belief to fewer symptoms

pants who believe they can do something to change their mental health are also more likely to have a high level of mental wellbeing. And this finding in itself has enormous preventative potential, as a high level of mental well-being is associated with a 69 to 90 percent lower risk of developing a common mental disorder.

Week 21, 2022 THE EPOCH TIMES

Keep Mentally Healthy

We know from a large body of research that there are simple things people can do to support and improve their mental health. This is why we developed the Act-Belong-Commit campaign, which encourages people to be active, social, and do something meaningful. This research-based mental health "ABC" can be used by everyone, regardless of whether they're struggling with a mental health problem or not.

All three of these domains are fundamental to good mental health and are associated with a range of well-being benefits, including higher life satisfaction, and lower risk of mental disorders, problematic alcohol use, and even cognitive impairment. Feeling active, socially connected, and engaged in meaningful activities is generally linked with better health and a longer lifespan.

As part of our study, we were able to show that among those who knew about these principles, about 80 percent said that the ABCs had given them new knowledge about what they can do to support their mental health, and about 15 percent said they had also taken action to enhance it.

We should view the current mental health crisis as a wake-up call about how critically important it is that people be equipped with tools that may help them to support and maintain good mental health. The results of our study may serve to remind us just how much of an impact we can have ourselves when it comes to looking after our own mental well-being—even if it's just

Ziggi Ivan Santini, mental health researcher, University of Southern Denmark; Charlotte Meilstrup, postdoctoral fellow, University of Copenhagen; Line Nielsen, postdoctoral research fellow, University of Copenhagen; Rob Donovan, adjunct professor, The University of Western Australia, and Vibeke Jenny Koushede, professor and head of the department of psychology, University of Copenhagen. This article was originally published on The Conversation.

ALL PHOTOS BY PEYELS LINLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

Using the Latest Tests, Treatments to Treat

Chronic Illness

A new breed of doctor is expanding beyond drugs and surgery to offer a wider range of treatments

JOSEPH MERCOLA

r. David Minkoff is a pioneer in natural medicine, with an active practice in Clearwater, Florida. In this interview, we dive deep into some of his best strategies to optimize your health and resolve common challenges that conventional medicine is incapable of resolving.

Like me, he's passionate about exercise and has been an avid athlete since his youth. So far, he's participated in 43 Ironman competitions and will be doing ano"Most of my practice is chronically ill people, but I have worked with some very high-end athletes, and I can really help them because I understand what kind of metabolism you need to do to be able to perform consistently at a high level," Minkoff says. "I've sort of been in the laboratory myself, and that's been very helpful."

Minkoff's Journey

Minkoff has had a rather eclectic medical training, including adult and pediatric infectious disease. In 1995, his wife, a regis tered nurse, took him to a series of lectures by Jeffrey Bland, a pioneer in nutritional biochemistry, and the rest, as they say, is

"My lights just went on," Minkoff says "It was just like, 'Holy smokes, this guy is smart, and it makes sense, and I want to learn this.' So, I started going to courses. I went to ACAM [American College for Advancement in Medicine and learned how to do chelation."

After that, he trained with Dr. Dietrich Klinghardt, a pioneering physician in

Continued on Page 12



Half the problem is things in the body that shouldn't be there, and the other half is things missing from the body that should be there.

Dr. David Minkoff

This common

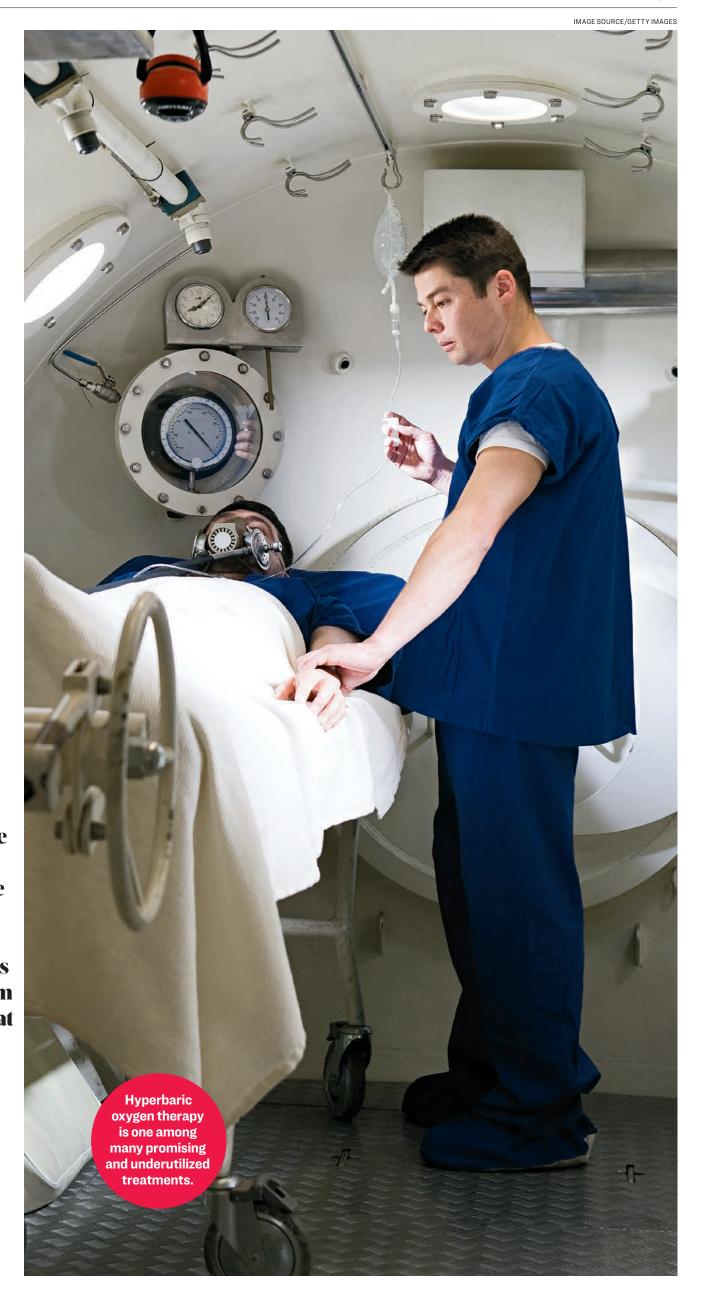
can interfere

with normal

lead to side

effects

hormones and



ALL IMAGES BY SHUTTERSTOCK

The ABCs of Better **Mental Health**

Keep physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually active. Do something—such as going for walks, reading, playing games, or taking up a hobby. An active mind and body can foster well-being and help quell overthinking or worrying about things that may be outside of your control.

Keep up friendships and close social ties, engage in group activities, and participate in community events. Do something with someone-whether that's going to dinner with friends or joining a recreational sports league. Spending time with people can help you feel more connected and build a sense of identity.



Few things like time with friends.

activities that provide meaning and purpose in life, including taking up causes and volunteering to help others. Do something meaningful. This can help you build a sense of meaning, mattering, and self

Set goals and challenges, engage in

Helping others is one of the best ways to





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JENNIFER MARGULIS

medical practice Some 14 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 are currently taking hormonal birth control pills in America, according to government data. That's more than 10 million people, about the equivalent of the entire population of Portugal.

Young Girls Are Over-Prescribed Birth Control Pills

According to a 2019 United Nations rea full deep breath and she felt a pain in her port, about 151 million women take the arm. She knew something was seriously pill worldwide.

Kristin, a mom of two, was one of them. She was prescribed birth control pills when she was still in high school. While her doc- Continued on Page 13

tor told her the pills would help with her headaches and irregular and heavy periods, no one talked to her about the risks associated with taking them.

However, when she was 20 years old, she had an elective surgery. Although Kristin had no complications from the surgery itself, a few days later, she was unable to take wrong, but she had no idea that she was having a pulmonary embolism.



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We can't control every factor that will help us maximize absorption, but doing what we can

How to Maximize Nutrient Absorption

Get more from your food with these six tips for better nutrition

LISA ROTH COLLINS

You just purchased a bunch of organic bananas from the market. You get home, peel one, and sit back as you savor the flavor and reflect on all the nutrients your body will enjoy from this treat. Or will it?

According to the USDA food data chart, that banana you just ate provided you with (approximately) 326 milligrams (mg) of potassium, 28 mg of magnesium, 5 mg of calcium, and 144 micrograms of folate. But how much of it will your body actually absorb and utilize?

We know that soil health, growing environment, processing, transportation, storage, and other elements can all affect the nutritional value of our food, fresh or processed. Yet, at the end of the day—or the moment of truth when you are ingesting the food—how much influence do you have over how many nutrients your body will effectively ab sorb from that food and use?

Even if you eat the most nutritious foods, you may not be adequately absorbing all the nutrients from them. Adopting a few lifestyle tips can improve the nutritional value you get from your food choices.

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

When you give your body a wide variety of nutrients at every meal, you are much less likely to experience a deficiency of certain nutrients.

Here Are 6 Tips That Can Improve Your Body's Ability to Absorb the Maximum Amount of Nutrients From Food

Follow This Motto: Variety Is the Spice of Life

When you give your body a wide variety of nutrients at every meal, you are much less likely to experience a deficiency of certain nutrients. Insufficient levels of specific nutrients can have a negative effect on biochemical reactions and, in turn, cell and organ function.

Supplement With Aloe Vera

You may know aloe vera as a natural remedy for burns and other skin irritations, but it also increases the bioavailability of vitamins, especially vitamins B12 and C.

In a study appearing in Phytomedicine, experts tested aloe in two different forms-whole leaf extract and inner leaf gel—in volunteers. They found that both forms of aloe slowed the absorption of vitamins C and E and lengthened the amount of time they lasted in the plasma. Aloe helps with nutrient absorption by regulating stomach acids to ensure optimal digestion of nutrients and caring for the intestinal tract so it is better able to absorb nutrients. Aloe vera supplements can be taken as a juice, gel, powder, or pill.

Pair Up Your Food

Certain food and supplement pairs work to boost nutrient absorption. Vitamin D, for example, helps capture more calcium from both foods and supplements. That's because vitamin D triggers the activity that boosts the absorption of dietary calcium in the

To ensure that you are getting all the essential amino acids you need, you should eat a variety of foods with protein. Complete proteins are often obtained from animal sources, soy foods, guinoa, and amaranth. Proteins from plant sources are incomplete but can be paired

together to make a complete protein source. For example, beans and rice, nut butter and whole wheat, and lentils and barley.

Fat-soluble vitamins (vitamins A, D, E, K) need a fat source to be absorbed in your intestine. The preferred fat source should be primarily unsaturated fat such as seeds, avocado, nuts, or olive oil. The vitamins A and K in kale and spinach, for example, will be better absorbed if you drizzle olive oil on them and add a few hemp or pumpkin seeds as well.

Chew, Chew, Chew

Digestion begins in the mouth, and a healthy start can help ensure more thorough absorption. Many people don't take the time to chew their food until it's in a liquid form, which may take chewing up to 30 times or more depending on the food.

Watch Coffee and Tea Intake

The caffeine in coffee and tea can interfere with the absorption of calcium, iron, magnesium, and the B vitamins, as well as cause depletion of vitamin B6. To help avoid this, don't drink these beverages with your meals. Coffee and tea are also diuretics, which can reduce the number of digestive enzymes and interfere with digestion and nutrient

Reduce Stress

Unmanaged stress, especially chronic stress, increases your body's need for certain nutrients, including B vitamins, vitamin C, and magnesium. Therefore, practicing stress reduction activities daily, such as meditation, yoga, progressive relaxation, deep breathing, and tai chi, is an essential part of improving nutrient absorption. Sufficient sleep, 7 to 8 hours a night, is also an important part of stress reduction.

Fluoride Exposure Linked to Less Sleep, Lower IQ

Water fluoridation programs across the United States may have widespread unintended consequences

our pineal gland, a pea-sized neuroendocrine organ located near your brain's center, has been revered as the primary "seat of the soul" for centuries—and has held a unique place in several cultures.

Due to its location outside of the bloodbrain barrier—a necessary phenomenon since it secretes hormones into blood circulation—it has little protection against exposure to toxins such as fluoride, making it prone to mineralization.

Hydroxyapatite, which is found in teeth and bones, is common in calcifications found in the pineal gland, which is also known to accumulate high levels of fluoride. Even low levels of fluoride consumption may lead to high levels of fluoride in the pineal gland according to research published in Environmental Health, "due to fluoride's high affinity for hydroxyapatite."

In fact, in older adults, fluoride accumulation in the pineal gland has been measured at amounts similar to those found in teeth. Not only does this increase the risk of fluoride toxicity in the pineal gland, but the study revealed a distinct association between fluoride exposure and sleep—another clue that fluoride could be wreaking havoc on the very locus of the soul.

Fluoride Exposure May Interfere

Dozens of studies have highlighted fluoride's role as a neurotoxin, particularly its link to lower IQ in children, but only two studies to date have looked into its connection to sleep. The first, published in Environmental

Health in 2019, found that a median increase in water fluoride concentrations was associated with nearly twice the risk of symptoms suggestive of sleep apnea, along with later bedtimes (by 24 minutes) and later morning wake times (by 26 minutes) among adolescents.

"Fluoride exposure may contribute to changes in sleep cycle regulation and sleep behaviors among older adolescents in the US.," the researchers concluded. The second study, published in 2021, analyzed the role of fluoride exposure and sleep in adults, using population-based data from the Canadian Health Measures Survey.

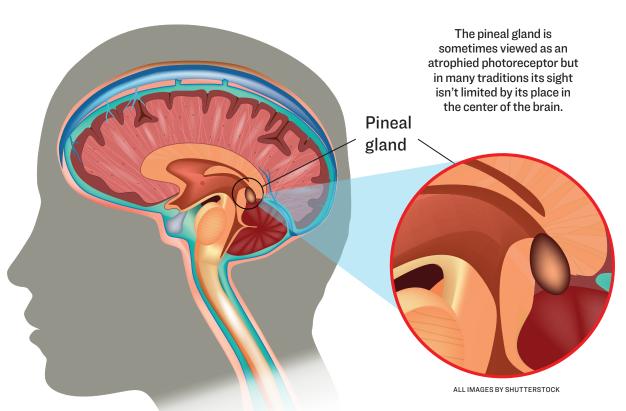
A connection was again found. Specifically, a 0.5 milligram (mg) per liter higher water fluoride level was "associated with a 34 percent higher relative risk of reporting sleeping less than the recommended duration for age." The finding is a signal that fluoride is affecting the pineal gland, which is best known for synthesizing the hormone melatonin.

Is Fluoride 'Calcifying the Soul'? The pineal gland plays a crucial role in

your body's circadian rhythm and sleepwake cycle. Lying deep within the human brain, the pineal gland is stimulated by exposure to light from the retina. When you see daylight, a signal is sent through your optic nerve to the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN) in your brain's hypothalamus, triggering the release of cortisol and other hormones that help you wake up.

At night, as darkness ascends, the SCN signals your pineal gland to release melatonin, which helps you fall asleep. Higher fluoride exposure, however, could mean that concerning amounts of fluoride are





HIGHER

A 0.5 milligram

(mg) per liter higher water fluoride level was 'associated with a 34 percent higher relative risk of reporting sleeping less than the recommended duration for age.'

One of more popular theories of the pineal gland at the end of the 19th century is that it is a vestigial third eye.

To find the this article, please see the article online at TheEpochTimes com

accumulating in the pineal gland, altering sleep cycles.

According to the Environmental Health

"The deposition of fluoride in calcified tissues, such as the pineal gland, bones, and teeth, may represent a defense mechanism against potential fluoride toxicity (in other tissues), which may begin in the prenatal period.

"Fluoride deposition in the pineal gland and its calcification would most likely exert effects on sleep via changes to pinealocytes and subsequently melatonin output. The pineal gland is composed primarily of pinealocytes, which synthesize melatonin.

But sleep is just one variable that's affected when the pineal gland is altered. There's a link between fluoride and calcium in the pineal gland, such that older people have been found to have a greater fluoride to calcium ratio in their pineal gland than in their bones. The implications—that fluoride could be, quite literally, turning the pineal gland to stone—are alarming when you consider the metaphysical nature of the pineal gland and its ancient ties to the spiritual realm. As noted by New World Encyclopedia:

"[T]he importance and role of the pineal gland is not clearly understood, and this mystery has historically led to various metaphysical theories. Rene Descartes called it the "seat of the soul," and others have attributed importance to it in terms of "spiritual vision" or "intuition."

... The pineal gland is occasionally associated with the sixth chakra (also called Ajna or the third eye chakra in yoga). It is believed by some to be a dormant organ that can be awakened to enable "telepathic" communication. One of more popular theories of the pineal gland at the end of the 19th century is that it is a vestigial third eye. A modified form of this theory is still accepted today.

How to Avoid Toxic Fluoride

Fluoride has dozens of adverse effects on human health. Aside from its role in altering sleep and the pineal gland, fluoride is neurotoxic and may harm heart health, fertility and the brain. Conditions linked to fluoride

include cognitive dysfunction, low and impaired IQ, cancer, kidney disease, diabetes, endocrine disruption, thyroid disease, heart disease and fluoride toxicity.

In the United States, more than 70 percent of water supplies are fluoridated, which means you're exposed every time you drink from the tap. About 39 percent of Canadians also receive fluoridated water. If you live in an area with fluoridated water, install a filter that removes fluoride, which include:

- Reverse osmosis
- Activated alumina
- Deionizers that use ion-exchange resin

Alternatively, spring water also tends to be very low in fluoride. Other common sources of fluoride to watch out for include:

- Nonstick cookware that contains chemicals such as perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA)
- and polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) • Infant formula mixed with fluoridated tap
- Foods and beverages produced with fluoridated tap water
- Fluoride-containing drugs such as many
- antidepressants and statins • Grape juice and wine made from conven-
- tionally grown grapes, which are often
- treated with the fluoride pesticide cryolite Fluoridated toothpaste and fluoride gel
- treatments at the dentist

Your body has no inherent need for fluoride it's far from an essential nutrient. So the lower your exposure, the better your overall health

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A Guide for Healthy Eyes

MAT LECOMPTE

Eye health can seem a little basic at times. Sure, you shouldn't stare directly into the sun, but is that really it?

Of course not. Your eyes, just like the rest of your body, need to be taken care of. Different eye conditions can appear over time, however many are treatable and avoidable. Some common eye conditions are presbyopia which occurs when the eye's lenses

lose the ability to change shape and focus up close. It affects an estimated 90-percent of people over 45. Cataract symptoms can appear in the 60s, and dry eye can impact anyone at any age.

How can you minimize the likelihood or

these conditions and others? Try these tips to help you hold on to healthy eyes.

Eat Well: Your eyes do better, just like the rest of your body, when they get the nutrients they need. No single food holds the power, but tying to include food like eggs, which are rich in zinc, lutein, and zeaxanthin, is a good place to start.

Foods like almonds or spinach, that are packed with vitamin E, as well as foods with vitamin C can all help protect your eyes.

Exercise: There is research to suggest that cardiovascular exercise can lower the risk of ocular disease, likely because it improves

Sunglasses: Sunglasses do more than making it easier to see on bright days. Extended exposure to bright light waves can burn your corneas and lead to a condition called photokeratitis, or snow blindness.



You can practice good habits to preserve eye health-and the rest of your body will benefit

NAKARIDORE/SHUTTERSTOCK



surface of the eye. UV rays also damage eye tissue, so getting 100-percent UV blocking glasses is recom-

People who spend a lot of time in the sun

are also at increased risk for pterygium, a

growth of a gritty, fleshy pink tissue on the

conjunctiva, which is clear matter on the

Good Hygiene: Your eyes are great at cleaning themselves, but they still require some effort on your part. If you wear contacts, make sure you change them daily and don't sleep in them. Use solution and not water to store

Also, be sure to use cosmetics properly and always wipe them off before bed. Check expiration dates and application directions to limit the chance of infections.

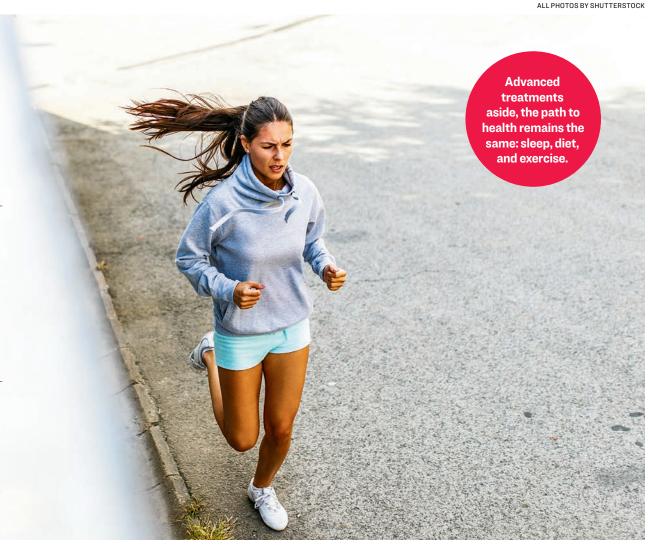
and clean them.

Mat Lecompte is a health and wellness journalist for Bel Marra Health, which first published this article.

Week 21, 2022 THE EPOCH TIMES

Chronic Illness

A new breed of doctor is expanding beyond drugs and surgery to offer a wider range of treatments



Continued from Page 9

alternative medicine and Lyme disease specialist; Dr. Yoshiaki Omura, a general practitioner, cardiologist, and president of the International College of Acupuncture and Electro-Therapeutics; and Dr. Thomas Rau, a Swiss doctor specializing in biological medicine.

"As I got into it, I just sought out the best people that I could find to help me learn how I could do this better," Minkoff says. "That's been 25 years. So, I left the emergency room in 2002, and we've been going gangbusters

"We have a very big practice now, and it's so much fun because there are so many new ways to help people get better that actually solve the problem with their bodies.

"... If you have a chronic illness—high blood pressure, high cholesterol, rheumatoid arthritis, Parkinson's disease—the repertoire of standard medicine is not very good. They might help you with symptoms, which is fine for a while, but you are headed toward an endpoint, which isn't going to be what you want.

"We have seven hyperbaric chambers. We've been doing it for years. It's a wonderful treatment ... We've been doing methylene blue for about five years ... Then, I learned about intranasal NAD—fascinating. The field oming up with things that help people and have practically zero downside."

2 Key Root Causes

Chronic illness is typically caused by some underlying cellular dysfunction, and two of the primary reasons for that are toxicity and/ or poor gut health.

"Half the problem is things in the body that shouldn't be there, and the other half is things missing from the body that should be there," Minkoff says.

Sometimes, the problem is more mechanical, such as a pulled muscle or spinal issue.

"We need chiropractors, acupuncturists, massage therapists, or things like this because there's a joint out of place, or their cervical vertebrae are out of place. Sometimes, they might even need surgical intervention."

"But the big two are: you're toxic and you're depleted. My approach to people then is: What are those things, and then, what is the priority or the order of dealing with those things?"

When it comes to detoxification, many things can go wrong, so it needs to be done Benefits of Extra Corporeal Oxygen, under the supervision of a skilled practitioner. The use of a chelation agent known as DMPS, for example, can be very rough on your kidneys, and if your body isn't capable of excreting the toxins, releasing them from have to start slowly and work their way up to the tissues where they're trapped will make it. I became fascinated with this treatment you far worse rather than better.

Making a Diagnosis

When Minkoff sees a new patient, he has them fill out an extensive and detailed medical history, including dental history. Then, he performs a detailed physical exam, followed by autonomic response testing, which allows him to identify various triggers, such as toxins and infections.

"The body is so sophisticated that it will give you a sort of readout of 'Here's my priority levels. Do the root canals first. Handle the cavitations. Oh, yes, there's a parasite there. There's autoimmune there. I've got chronic Epstein-Barr virus or herpes Type 6," he explains.

Autonomic response testing also will identify specific pathogens that are causing problems. In the interview, Minkoff gives a number of examples of patients whose health problems were resolved once the specific pathogen was identified and treated.

Often, an infected root canal is found to be the offender. Minkoff has a biological dentist nearby. If a dental problem is suspected, he'll send the patient there for a three-dimensional cone beam CT scan, which can clearly identify any problem areas that aren't visible using a two-dimensional X-ray. Another really helpful diagnostic is darkfield blood analysis (aka, live-cell microscopy), which Minkoff learned to use under Rau.

"I find that it's very helpful because sick people have bad-looking blood," he says. "Their physical examination is often fine, their reflexes are fine, their heart sounds fine and their liver and kidney are fine [but they feel terrible] ... We throw the blood up on there and look at it and we're like, 'Holy smokes.' There are bio-films all over, there's fibrin deposits and there's organisms.

"Two months later, 'Hey, look at this blood. This blood's looking better.' And two months later, 'This blood is really looking normal' ... That's a complete picture where we are restoring healthy physiology to this person and that's what health is."

Available Treatment Modalities

When it comes to treatment, Minkoff has a number of interesting modalities at his disis exploding with amazing people who are posal, including prolotherapy, ozone therapy, and ozone), hyperbarics, chelation, UVBI (ultraviolet blood irradiation), EBOO (extracorporeal blood oxygenation), photobiomodulation, and much more.

> Minkoff also offers VSELs [very small embryonic-like stem cell treatment, and it too has potent effects. Minkoff uses it himself and attributes gaining 7 pounds of lean body mass without change in his training to VSELs. He was trained in the use of VSELs by Dr. Todd Ovokaitys in San Diego.

> Dr. Frank Shallenberger is the physician who trained him in ozone administration. Interestingly, Minkoff and I are both scheduled to speak during Shallenberger's 2022 ozone certification course at the Peppermill Resort and Casino in Denver.

The course is for medical professionals only, not for laypeople. If you know any clinicians who are interested in this important modality, please encourage them to attend. Minkoff and I would look forward to connecting with them.

Ozone (EBOO) Therapy

EBOO is the newest and most potent way to administer ozone. It is even more effective than 10-pass ozone therapy, but most people last year and encouraged Tom Lowe to make the units available commercially in the U.S.

Chronic illness is typically caused by some underlying cellular dysfunction, and two of the primary reasons for that are toxicity and or poor gut

health.



Saunas offer similar benefits to exercise, including helping us sweat out toxins.

EBOO is a way to deliver oxygen and ozone to the body in a setup that's

like dialysis. Dr. David Minkoff



Hyperbaric chambers help get more oxygen into the body for several benefits.

"EBOO is a way to deliver oxygen and ozone to the body in a setup that's like dialysis. One IV goes into one arm, it goes through a machine that has a pump, so it can pull the blood out of the body. It goes through a system where the blood is exposed to oxygen in very high concentrations and ozone in low concentrations, and then it's recycled back to the body," Minkoff said.

"Some of the new machines also expose the blood to ultraviolet light. For about an hour, the blood circulates through this machine and is highly oxygenated. It isn't really filtered like dialysis would be, but it's exposed to this high oxygen concentration.

Sauna therapy is another excellent intervention with powerful therapeutic benefits.

Plasmalogen and Iron Testing

Minkoff also uses a lipid test developed by lipid biochemist Dayan Goodenowe, the author of "Breaking Alzheimer's."

"I've learned a ton from him, and we do his test on everybody," Minkoff says.

"He's got a lab now that can measure levels of plasmalogens. They're very integral pieces of cell membranes, and he's got some very nice data about people with APOE4 on a track of memory loss.'

Patients with low plasmalogen levels can be given supplements such as fossil lipids to prevent further deterioration of their neurologiand iron binding on all patients, and if their hemoglobin is high, he prescribes blood donation to lower their stored iron. Stored iron is incredibly destructive, as it causes oxidative stress, and is a commonly overlooked factor in deteriorating health.

Dr. Joseph Mercola is the founder of Mercola. com. An osteopathic physician, best-selling author, and recipient of multiple awards in the field of natural health, his primary vision is to change the modern health paradigm by providing people with a valuable resource to help them take control of their health.

Basic Health Guidance

While getting a full workup is the best way forward if you have a chronic health problem, three basic recommendations that can improve your health include:

Cleaning up your diet—Focus on whole organic foods, and avoid any and all processed foods, including restaurant fare. Minkoff typically starts patients out on some blend of an autoimmune, paleo, or keto diet.

This means no grains or dairy (butter is OK), beans, or nitrate vegetables. Typically, most gut problems will resolve in about six weeks and energy will improve when eating a diet of meat, fish, eggs, fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds. (Carbohydrates from fruit will be based on their metabolic health.)

Optimize your sleep—A sleep tracker can be very useful to ensure you're getting good sleep.

Getting regular exercise—While cardio is important, strength training should be at the top of your list, especially as you get older, as having muscle mass optimizes you for longevity and reduces your risk of insulin resistance and diabetes.

Young Girls Are Over-Prescribed Birth Control Pills

This common medical practice can interfere with normal hormones and lead to side effects

Continued from Page 9

A pulmonary embolism, which can be lethal, happens when a blood clot gets logged in an artery in the lungs.

This medical crisis, which kept her hospitalized for six days and on medication for six months afterward, was from taking hormonal birth control pills as a teen, Kristin told me.

"Everyone has been in agreement that it was from the birth control," said Kristin, who asked not to use her last name because she's currently part of a classaction lawsuit.

Oral Contraceptives Increase Risk of

Indeed, in 2018 a team of researchers, led by Dr. Lynn Keenan, M.D., at the University of California-San Francisco's Fresno campus, found that women who use oral contraceptive are between three and nine times more likely to have of blood clots in the lungs, legs, and brain than women who don't take oral contraceptives.

They also face a much higher risk of death because of blood clots. The same study found that between 300 and 400 healthy young women die unnecessarily every year due to hormonal birth control.

"Women should be informed of these

Pill Linked to Depression, Bloating

risks," the researchers concluded.

Taking hormonal birth control is also associated with a host of other negative health outcomes.

For example, a 2016 study of a million women in Denmark found that taking hormonal contraception was associated with depression, especially in teenagers. Oral contraceptives have also been

linked to lower levels of the steroid hormone DHEA in the blood and a decreased ability to gain muscle during exercise, according to a 2009 study.

Another older study, from 2008, found that these pills can cause bloating, while an earlier study found that oral contraceptives lead to women having more subcutaneous fat and other changes in the way the body stores fat.

Though many women report gaining weight while taking the pill, the peerreviewed literature on this seems to be inconclusive, according to a 2014 Co-

It's clear from the scientific literature, however, that oral birth control use also increases a woman's risk of developing everything. You've got a quote 'lady prob-

Routinely Prescribed, Not for Birth

"Neither of my daughters can menstruate on their own," a mom of two young adults, ages 21 and 23, told me recently. "They've both been on the pill since they

While girls in the United States usually begin menstruating around age 11 or 12, the onset of menses is widely variable and precocious puberty (before age 8) is becoming more common. Recent research from Italy has found that precocious puberty has increased during COVID-19. One team of researchers hypothesized that this may be due to stress, lack of sunlight, lack of exercise, and exposure to a higher number of environmental toxins, especially endocrine disruptors.

Doctors routinely prescribe birth control pills to tweens, teens, and young adults who are menstruating but not sexually active to treat the following conditions:

- Amenorrhea (lack of menstruation)
- Cramps and other menstrual pain
- Endometriosis Heavy periods
- Headaches
- Migraines PMS and mood swings

I found this out when my oldest daughter,

who is 22 now, was still in middle school. "Mom," she said to me one day, "I think I should take the pill to help me with my acne. That's what my friends are doing and they say it works."

Harms of Hormonal Birth Control

Birth control pills disrupt the endocrine system, essentially fooling the body into believing it is pregnant, in order to stop

We know we should try to avoid disrupting children's hormones. As Joseph Braun, Ph.D., an associate professor of epidemiology at Brown University, explained in a 2017 peer-reviewed article, endocrine-



Physicians often use the pill as an "easy fix" for female ailments but fail to carry out a more thorough and holistic examination.

Oral birth

control use

increases a

woman's risk

of developing

breast cancer

and cervical

cancer.

Synthetic

hormones

disorders,

depression,

anxiety,

and sleep

disorders,

among other

things, all of

documented.

Nathan Riley, M.D.

this is well

lead to mood

disrupting chemicals increase the risk of childhood diseases "by disrupting hormonally mediated processes critical for growth and development," and may be contributing to obesity and neurodevelopmental problems.

"In residency, you learn to use birth control like you learn to wash your hands," said Nathan Riley, M.D., who is unabashedly critical of the practice of prescribing contraceptives to young woman to treat menstrual problems.

"You bring it out anytime that anyone has an issue," Riley said. "We use it for lem'? Let's put you on birth controi.

Then, he said, if the birth control pills themselves cause side effects, doctors add more prescription medications to the mix.

"Synthetic hormones lead to mood disorders, depression, anxiety, and sleep disorders, among other things, all of this is well documented," Riley said. "Women have complained about everything under the sun. But their doctors say it's not the birth control. And instead of stopping the medication that started the problem, their doctor gives them an antidepressant."

He believes this is harmful, arguing that the practice of rushing patients through appointments and writing prescriptions for the pill makes the pharmaceutical industry richer, while making female patients sicker.

Hormonal birth control alleviates symptoms without treating the underlying problems, he said. The key, he insisted when we spoke, is to treat the root cause of the menstrual irregularities.

For instance, a woman's periods may be irregular because she's severely anemic, either because she is not eating iron-rich foods or suffering



from malabsorption.

Thyroid malfunction can also be at the root of menstrual irregularities, Riley said. As can poor liver function and disrupted

control pills

are being handed

and that presents

risks for young

All of these health problems are treatable, he said. While prescription medications can help for the short-term, the goal is to get the body back in balance. To do so, he talks to his patients about making lifestyle changes, including dietary improvements, engaging in daily movement and exercise, getting adequate and high quality hydration, improving sleep, limiting exposure to electromagnetic fields, learning to do breathwork, and improving both your attitude and your emotional intelligence.

"Sometimes you do need a temporizing measure like birth control," Riley said. "But it shouldn't be used for long."

Marie (her middle name) is a 32-yearold lawyer based on the East Coast. She was first prescribed birth control pills for endometriosis when she was 15, and it seemed to help.

Besides, she really liked taking the pill: It made her breasts bigger and cleared up her acne. So when her periods suddenly became more painful, even on the pill, and her doctor told her to start taking it continuously (so she would not menstruate at all), she didn't think to question it.

Her doctors said taking the pill would help her avoid surgery for endometriosis. But she ended up having surgery anyway, in 2018, to cauterize tissue in her pelvic cavity.

It wasn't until Marie had a miscarriage at age 27 and it took 15 months to get pregnant again—and only with the help of fertility drugs—that she started to regret taking hormonal birth control for so many years.

The science is inconclusive about whether the pill negatively affects fertility. In fact, some studies, such as one published in 2002 in Human Reproduction, show it may increase the odds of getting pregnant after quitting the pill.

But when I interviewed the late science writer Barbara Seaman, who had written several books about women and hormones, several years ago, she insisted that hormonal birth control is a causative factor in infertility and that it can take women as long as 12 to 24 months after taking the pill to become pregnant without assistance.

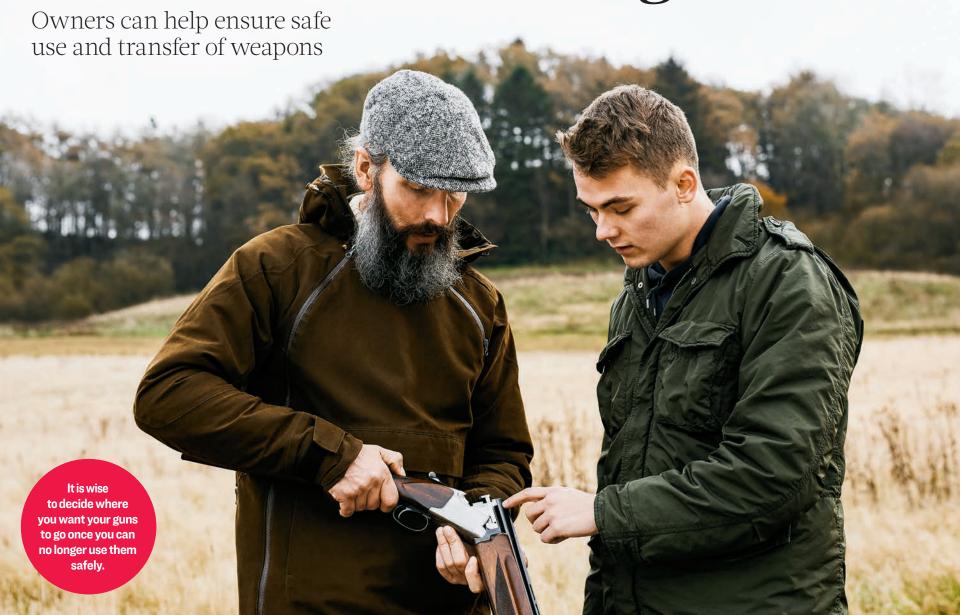
Marie, like many other women, is convinced her long-term use of birth control for endometriosis contributed to some of her continuing health challenges, including fertility issues.

"I was just not healthy as a teenager," she confessed.

For Kristin, the decision to go on birth control as a teenager and subsequent pulmonary embolism made her two pregnancies more dangerous. She was considered high-risk and had to inject herself with anti-coagulants during the pregnancy and for one month afterward.

"I will never be on any hormones ever again," Kristin told me. "I really wish I knew of alternate, more natural ways to have treated my adolescent issues. The psychological damage it's caused is irreversible. I hate how doctors are so quick to take out that pen and pad and throw meds at teenagers."

Jennifer Margulis, Ph.D., a regular contributor to The Epoch Times, is an awardwinning science journalist and a soughtafter speaker. Learn more at her website, JenniferMargulis.net, and follow her on Substack at JenniferMargulis.substack.com Week 21 2022 THE EPOCH TIMES



JUDITH GRAHAM

erri Raissian didn't know what to do about her father's guns when he died of COVID-19 in December 2021 at age 86 and left her executor of his estate.

Her father, Max McGaughey, hadn't left a complete list of his firearms and where they were stored, and he hadn't prepared a realistic plan for responsibly transferring them to fam-

What's more, McGaughey had lived alone for at least a year at his home in Weimar, Texas, after being diagnosed with dementia in October 2020—a situation Raissian realized was potentially unsafe but didn't know how to address.

Now, a new tool can help gun owners and family members plan ahead for safe firearm use and transfers in the event of disability or important to me." death: The Firearm Life Plan, created by re-

guns—a way for someone to describe what a couple of them that haven't gone particuthey want to have happen to their firearms should they die or become physically or cognitively disabled and unable to use them re-

The goal is to prevent accidental injuries that can result if older gun owners forget to store firearms safely, their hearing and vision are impaired, they become seriously depressed, or a medical condition such as arthritis prevents them from handling firearms adeptly. Another goal is to ensure that firearms are transferred safely to responsible new owners when the need arises.

This is a real concern because 42 percent of Americans 65 and older live in households with guns, according to the Pew Research Center, and more than 100 people die of firearm injuries in the United States each day. Among the most straightforward. It calls for people adults ages 50 and older, 84 percent of firearmrelated deaths are suicides.

The Firearm Life Plan has four parts. First, there's a list of warning signs (physical, cognitive, behavioral, and emotional) that might cause a gun owner to use a gun inappropriately. Among them are symptoms associated with dementia, whose dangerous nexus with firearm ownership was the topic of a KHN investigation in 2018.

Up to 60 percent of people with dementia live in homes with a firearm, according to an overview of gun-related injury and death published in 2019.

The Firearm Life Plan kit stresses personal responsibility, safety, and the importance of being prepared, themes that older owners and family members emphasized in focus groups conducted by researchers.

Key messages for owners are "this is your decision" and "it's voluntary," said Dr. Emmy Betz, co-founder of the Colorado Firearm Safety Coalition and a University of Colorado researcher who led the project. Also, the kit notes that people's plans may change over time and the worksheets gun owners fill out aren't legally binding.

"We talk a lot about safe gun storage. This are handled appropriately when an owner injuries in the United States each day.

dies or experiences health declines," said Cassandra Crifasi, director of research and policy at the Center for Gun Violence Solutions at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

A second part of the guide features conversation prompts for family members and friends who might be concerned about an older gun owner and for older adults who recognize the value of planning ahead. Among them:

"You always taught me about firearm safety. That's why I wanted to talk about some changes I've noticed lately."

"Do you think it's time to have someone give

you an honest assessment about how you're handling your firearms these days?" "If I'm ever incapacitated or die, I need to

make sure my firearms are taken proper care of. Having a conversation about what to do is Conversations of this sort are bound to be dif-

ficult since they touch on fundamental issues Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center of identity, autonomy, safety, and mortality.

"I've seen several people that I've really been Think of it as advance care planning for worried about and had conversations with larly well," said Richard Abramson, founder of Colorado's Centennial Gun Club and a former board member of NSSF, a firearm industry

> "In my opinion, it's much harder to get someone to relinquish their firearms than their car keys because of this strong feeling that I need to protect myself and my loved ones."

> "I would ask, 'Who is the person you trust the most to come to you and tell you you're beginning to lose it?" said Dr. Michael Victoroff, 72, a physician who is a competitive shooter and firearms safety instructor. "You've got to tell that person you want him to be straight with you when the time comes, even though it's a horrible thing to talk about."

> The third piece of the Firearm Life Plan is to create an inventory of their firearms, where they're stored (including codes to lockboxes, storage sheds, and gun safes), who should get the firearms when the owner dies or is willing to relinquish them, and when transfers should occur.

> Khalil Spencer, 68, a retired scientist from Los Alamos National Laboratory and a member of the board of directors of the Los Alamos Sportsmen's Club, is among the legions of gun owners who haven't assembled this kind of

In my opinion, it's much harder to get someone to relinguish their firearms than their car keys because of this strong feeling that I need to protect myself and my loved ones.

Richard Abramson, founder of Colorado's Centennial Gun Club

of Americans 65 and older live in households



really challenges us to make sure that guns According to the Pew Research Center, more than 100 people die of firearm

information. When I asked him how many guns he had, he responded, "At least a dozen, I've lost track."

In some ways, Spencer is well prepared: After a "mini-stroke" eight years ago, he talked to his family and asked a former colleague to help his wife dispose of his firearms should he become incapacitated or die. Spencer wants the colleague to take some guns, give others to Spencer's two younger brothers, and sell whatever is left behind.

Still, Spencer acknowledged, he hasn't inventoried his firearms or included plans for them in his will. "At this point, it's all been done verbally and via email," he said.

Similarly, David Yamane, 53, a professor of sociology at Wake Forest University who has written extensively about America's gun culture, hadn't thought about describing what should happen to his guns in his will before he reviewed the Firearm Life Plan. Altogether, he and his wife have 18 firearms

Because gun owners care deeply about personal protection (two-thirds of owners cite this as a major reason for having firearms), it might be hard for them to give up guns as they grow older, Yamane said. "There would have to be some way of compensating for that feeling of vulnerability," he suggested. Possibilities include installing a home alarm system, buying a dog, and moving in with someone else or to a senior living complex.

Barriers to using the plan might also arise because gun owners are "incredibly resistant to being told they shouldn't be doing what they're doing," Victoroff said. He plans to transfer ownership of all his firearms to a "gun trust" and name himself, his wife, and his children as joint trustees with equal rights. Altogether, Victoroff estimates he owns "more than 20, less than 30" firearms.

The fourth component of the guide is a "legacy" section that asks gun owners to share memories and stories about their firearms and what they've meant to them.

"This becomes a plan for transferring family knowledge, and I think that's really lovely," said Raissian, a third-generation Texan who now researches gun violence prevention at the University of Connecticut. "Some of the guns in my dad's estate are my grandfather's, and I'm pretty sure dad would have told me the stories if I'd asked, which I didn't, unfortunately."

As for disseminating the Firearm Life Plan, Betz hopes that gun shops, shooting ranges, gun industry groups, and aging organizations will make copies available. She's in discussion with several groups, but none have publicly endorsed the plan yet.

We're eager to hear from readers about questions you'd like answered, problems you've been having with your care, and advice you need in dealing with the health care system. Visit khn.org/columnists to submit your requests or tips.

udith Graham is a contributing columnist for Kaiser Health News, which originally published this article. KHN's coverage of these topics is supported by The John A. Hartford Foundation, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, and The SCAN Foundation.

WISE HABITS

Become Your New Habit

Changing a habit is easier if you make it part of who you are

LEO BABAUTA

Quitting an old habit or forming a new habit is fairly simple when it comes to the steps needed: find your trigger and do a new habit at that trigger over and over. Remind yourself to do it. Make it rewarding.

For example, if you are triggered to snack on junk food every time you feel bored or lonely, call a friend to chat instead, or go outside and work on a project

The simplicity is deceptive, though: there are some physical urges and even more mental habits that keep us stuck in our old patterns.

The physical urges are not so hard: if you stay away from an old habit (like cigarettes) for a week, the urges die down. It's the mental habits that trip us up. We have a way of seeing ourselves include how we see our old habits like smoking, eating a certain way, etc. As a result, we form a bunch of mental habits that keep us stuck in that version of ourselves.

Here's a method that will change everything for you: become your new habit. Let's take a concrete example:

1. You want to quit smoking (or quit

scrolling on your phone, etc). 2.It's hard because when you feel stress, you want to smoke. It's your coping mechanism. This is how you see yourself.

3. Instead, you tell yourself: "I'm a person who meditates or goes for a walk when I'm stressed." You visualize this new version of yourself, and how

healthy and alive they'll feel. 4. When you get stressed and have an urge to smoke, simply remind yourself of who you are now. You deal with stress by meditating or going for a walk.

How you

can be a

view yourself

transformative

element when

building better

it comes to

habits.

5. Become that person by meditating and going for walks whenever you're stressed. Your mental image of yourself will change, and smoking won't even be an option.

This is how it worked for me with smoking. I stopped seeing myself as a smoker,



and for the last 16 years I haven't even considered smoking when I've gotten

The same thing happened when I changed my diet. I see myself as someone who is active, who eats whole plant foods, who meditates, who is a loving father and husband, who creates meaningful things.

Change your self-image. Obliterate your old ideas. Become the new version of yourself.

Clinging to Old Mental Patterns

The mental patterns that keep us stuck in old habits are tied to our old image of ourselves.

Some examples:

- I'm stressed so it's OK to smoke this one time, I'll quit later.
- I have visitors so it's OK to eat this
- junk, it's a special occasion. • This writing is not that important right now, I can do it tomorrow, I

have urgent things to deal with.

- This is all their fault, they are making my life frustrating. • I'll meditate in a little while, I'm
- going to scroll on my phone for a
 - I haven't done the habit in a few days, I don't want to think about it right now.

Nothing is wrong with any of these mental patterns. But we can notice that they'll keep us stuck in the old way of doing

If we want to let go of them, we can obliterate our old image of ourselves.

And create a new one.

Create a New Version of Yourself

If you believe you are someone who exercises every day, then being sedentary for days in a row is not really an option. You get up and move.

If you believe that you are kind, then yelling at your kids isn't an option. You give them love.

What's the new version of yourself you'd like to become? Visualize that new version of you. Feel

what it would feel like. It's an act of creativity, an act of imagination.

Create that new version of yourself. How do they feel, how do they act, what do they do when they are stressed, how do they react to difficult situations?

Now become that person. Become the new being you conjured up.

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

So What If Everybody Else Is Doing It?

Following the crowd might be easy but it can lead to terrible decisions

JOSHUA BECKER

Our self image

includes ideas

eat. Changing the

first is often key

to changing the

second.

The age-old parenting wisdom goes something like this, "If all of your friends jumped off a bridge, would you jump too?"

The classic cliché, utilized by parents everywhere since the invention of bridges, is meant to motivate young minds to think for themselves.

As teenagers, most of us simply shrugged it off as stupid advice. "Obviously I'm thinking for myself.

How insulting to say that I'm only following along with the crowd," is probably what we said to ourselves (or your kids thought when you tried it with The older we get, the less it seems we

remember this advice as we make our decisions. But that's okay: The older we get, the less likely we are to be persuaded by

We're just as likely to follow the crowd. In fact, there is a term for this tendency

others into foolish decisions ... right?

to follow the crowd: groupthink. According to Psychology Today, groupthink is a phenomenon that occurs when a group of well-intentioned people makes irrational or nonoptimal decisions spurred by the urge

Non-optimal decisions spurred by the urge to conform.

I think we all need to be reminded, from time to time, that just because everyone around us may be making non-optimal decisions, we don't need to as well.

Conformity isn't a value to be pursued if the group is moving in the wrong di-

Consumer debt in the United States has now reached \$15.31 trillion. Americans spend 3.1 hours per The desire to conform is not leading us, as individuals, in the best direction for our lives and families.

I stopped

seeing myself

as a smoker,

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to conform or the belief that dissent is Conformity isn't a value to be pursued if the group is moving in the wrong direction.

day watching television, 2.5 hours per day on social media, and 2.4 hours per day playing video games.

According to the Mayo Clinic, 97.3 percent of Americans live an unhealthy lifestyle.

The average American home contains 300,000 items, 10.6 percent of us rent an offsite storage unit, and yet we continue to spend, on average, \$1,497 per month on nonessential items.

66 percent of the American workforce is disengaged at work.

85 percent of Americans suffer from low self-esteem.

And 77 percent of us admit spending time and resources on less important pursuits at the expense of things that matter the most to us.

The desire to conform is not leading us, as individuals, in the best direction for our lives and families.

But there's good news: Just because everyone else is jumping off a bridge doesn't mean you have to. You get to choose the best path for your

You don't have to watch the same

shows as everyone else, you don't have to buy the same things or shop the same sales. You don't have to eat unhealthy, endlessly scroll social media, or hate

You never have to sacrifice your greatest values and passions for the purpose of conformity.

So what if everybody else is doing it? We get to choose our own life.

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

Week 21, 2022 THE EPOCH TIMES

Science-Backed Reasons to Smile

Turning that frown upside down can do wonders for your health

Smiling has a physiological echo that releases endorphins and happens to be contagious.

ZRINKA PETERS

You've probably heard the expressions "grin and bear it," and "turn that frown upside down." Urging someone to "put on a happy face"—or smile—is so common that these expressions reflect an intuitive understanding that donning a smile is good for us—and those around us.

Decades of research into the science of smiling also supports what so many have sensed is true—the simple act of putting on a smile—is beneficial for both our physical and mental health. The bigger the better.

Could something as simple as smiling actually lower stress levels? A study conducted by Tara L. Kraft and Sarah D. Pressman from the University of Kansas Psychology Department, and published in the September 2012 issue of Psychological Science had participants hold a chopstick in their mouths in such a way as to produce a 'Duchenne' (aka 'real') smile, a standard smile, or a neutral expression.

Among the 'smiling' groups, half were also asked to smile intentionally. Each

participant then completed two different stressful tasks. The researchers found that those in each of the 'smiling' groups had a lower heart rate during the stress recovery period than those who kept neutral facial expressions, and that this effect was observed whether the participants were consciously trying to smile or not. These results showed that the simple act of smiling when under stress had a positive, stress-reducing physiological impact.

Smiling is also known to benefit overall health and longevity. Researchers from Wayne State University examined 230 photos of Major League players from the 1952 baseball register, and categorized them into three groups according to smile intensity: no smile, partial smile, or full smile. After controlling for other factors related to longevity, like body mass index and marital status, the results showed that those players with the biggest smiles lived an average of seven years longer than their nonsmiling counterparts—79.9 years versus 72.9 years. Want to raise your odds of living longer? Smiling more just might help.

Aside from its benefits to physical health,

The benefits to both mind and body of smiling are possible even when the smile is forced, rather than spontaneous.

RIDO/SHUTTERSTOCK

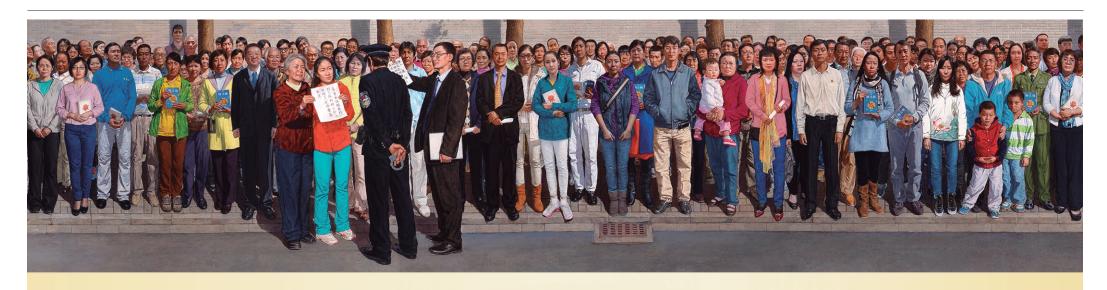
smiling regularly is a tonic for our mental health as well. Putting on a smile has been shown to improve mood, almost like a natural antidepressant. Smiling triggers a release of endorphins, dopamine, and serotonin, the 'feel good' neurotransmitters that work to relieve pain and lift moods—all without the negative side effects of antidepressant medications or pain-relieving drugs.

Smiling has benefits that go beyond the individual, too. A Swedish study reproduced in Science Direct, confirmed what so many have suspected all along—that smiling is actually contagious. Researchers had study participants look at pictures of people showing different emotional expressions: joy, anger, fear, and surprise. They then asked the participants to frown, and found that the subject's facial expressions generally mimicked the pictures that they saw, in a process dubbed "emotional contagion." It was especially difficult for subjects to frown when faced with a cheerful, smiling face. The takeaway? Smiling really is contagious, and it's an easy, free way to spread positivity and cheer to those around us.

Interestingly, the benefits to both mind and body of smiling are possible even when the smile is forced, rather than spontaneous. In what scientists call the "facial feedback hypothesis," not only do we smile when we feel happy, but the very act of smiling can actually lift our moods and cause us to feel happier. The University of South Australia's Dr. Fernando Marmolejo-Ramos, a research fellow in human and artificial cognition at the Centre for Change and Complexity in Learning, said in a press release that "In our research we found that when you forcefully practise smiling, it stimulates the amygdala—the emotional center of the brain-which releases neurotransmitters to encourage an emotionally positive state. ... A 'fake it 'til you make it' approach could have more credit than we expect."

After two years of being surrounded by masked faces during the COVID-19 pandemic, it's time to put on a happy face and spread some cheer.

Zrinka Peters has been writing professionally for over a decade. She has a BA in English Literature from Simon Fraser University and has been published in several publications including Health Digest, Parent.com, Today's Catholic Teacher, and Education.com



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