THE EPOCH TIMES

Understanding the Skin You Are In A closer look at skin and the vital role it plays in protecting us

Our skin beginner of specialized cells viring in an intricate syring y

JACQUELYN WATERS

he skin is a formidable barrier with attributes far beyond the potential workings of scientists or chemists. It is strong but supple, it fixes itself when damaged, and it changes color to adjust to the climate.

The skin is more active than many people realize; it even synthesizes various compounds, including immunoglobulin A, an antibody important in immune defense systems.

It isn't just a covering, but plays diverse roles in the body—from helping to regulate body temperature to initiating the process of vitamin D production. The skin's absorptive property allows it to take in things from the environment, such as beneficial medicines or harmful toxins.

The dermis has many functions, but of particular importance is the role the dermis plays in regulating body temperature.

Studies have found that the body excretes toxins through the sweat glands, including phthalates, bioaccumulated toxic elements like cadmium and aluminum, and organochlorinated pesticides. The skin even has a secretion function to produce a layer of oil and acid that keeps it supple and protects

it from outside invaders.
Our skin is an impossible harmony of specialized cells working in an intricate synergy. There are likely other functions of the skin we haven't even begun to understand. It's one of our most visible organs, yet few people know much about what skin looks like below the surface or how it functions.

What kinds of cells are found in the skin? What factors contribute to skin color? Why do blisters occur? What is psoriasis? Your skin can tell you a lot about your physical health and can reveal underlying medical

conditions, such as anemia, hepatitis, heart disease, and heavy metal poisoning.

A Quick Overview

The skin is part of the integumentary system, which also includes hair, nails, and certain exocrine glands, such as the sweat glands. It forms a physical barrier between the environment outside our body and our internal body structures, such as muscles, bones, and other organs.

The skin has to have strength and durability but must also be flexible and able to repair itself. Three layers work together to accomplish these goals: the epidermis, the dermis, and the hypodermis. Let's take a closer look at each layer and its specialized functions.

Continued on Page 4

4 WEEKS

This is

RETROCLIPART/SHUTTERSTOCK

how long it takes new keratinocytes to reach the surface of the skin and offer you a new covering of epidermal cells.

The Key to Defeating Procrastination-Induced Stress

When we procrastinate, we betray ourselves and lose self trust, but the cure is simple and small



MIKE DONGHIA

Procrastination is a pervasive human problem.

The more people I've talked to, the more I've realized that nearly every person struggles with it in certain areas or time periods of their life. There are very few exceptions.

For me, it's been a problem that I've struggled with since high school. Depending on how you look at it, I was either for-

tunate (or unfortunate) to be the kind of student that could wait until the very last minute to study for a test or write a paper and still do well. The thrill I experienced and the relative success that followed cemented a pattern of behavior that stuck with me for years.

Without the adrenaline rush of a tight deadline or a pressing challenge, I couldn't find the motivation to start.

This approach worked for a while, but as my responsibilities increased, I could

feel stress mounting in my life. I also had a growing sense that procrastination was robbing me of becoming the person I wanted to be.

I was still getting the job done, but I became increasingly worried about what would happen if I messed it all up—or worse, what people would think if they knew that behind the scenes I was such a procrastinator.

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In 2012, multidistrict litigation was aggregated from more than 1,100 Propecia-related

lawsuits and heard by U.S. District Judge Bri-

an Cogan in Brooklyn federal court. Six years

later, in 2018, Merck agreed to settle most of the cases with \$4.3 million to be divided

among plaintiffs, a surprisingly low settle-

ment compared with Johnson & Johnson's \$2.2 billion settlement for misbranding the

antipsychotic Risperdal and Eli Lilly's \$1.42 billion settlement for false promotion of the

The drug's many risks were hidden from

patients, said the plaintiffs. Neither patients

taking finasteride for hair loss or to treat the

symptoms of an enlarged prostate are necessarily fully warned, said Dr. Steven Belknap,

a dermatologist at Northwestern University

Merck Responses

antipsychotic Zyprexa.

Feinberg School of Medicine.



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The Wherewithal of **Activated Charcoal**

This trendy ingredient and treatment can be useful—in some cases

KRISTEN FISCHER

Activated charcoal continues to pop up in more over-the-counter personal products such as toothpaste, deodorant, and skin cleaners. That leaves many consumers curious about what it is, how it works, and if it lives up to all the hype.

Medically, the carbon-rich material has been used to treat overdoses and poisonings. People have long known about its use as an antidote—it even goes back to the early 1800s.

"The concept of detoxing has become increasingly popular over the past decade," said Daniel Powers, a Chicagoarea researcher and founder of The Botanical Institute.

"With foods and consumer goods products full of harmful chemicals, more and more consumers have turned to natural ingredients, like activated charcoal, to help their body detox," he told The Epoch Times.

But it's not the same stuff as, say, the coals used to grill on or the burned pieces of food that grilling sometimes produces. Activated charcoal is produced by heating carbon-rich materials such as peat, wood, or coconut shells. That "activates" the substance so it can bond to other substances, as it does upon ingestion.

According to Dr. Kelly Johnson-Arbor, a medical toxicologist and co-medical director of the National Capital Poison Center, the activation occurs via a chemical treatment that involves steam, oxygen, and carbon dioxide to form a have added it to their formulations. They substance that is highly porous and has a very

large surface area. "These features allow activated charcoal to adsorb other substances. A drug that can adsorb is within one hour able to bind other substances to its surface," she told The Epoch Times.

Activated **Charcoal Uses**

While it's most effective if used within can absorb smells, harmful gases, and one hour of ingesting toxic substances, excess moisture. it's not a cure-all. It works to treat overdoses of tricyclic antidepressants, acetaminophen, digoxin, digitoxin, and barbiturates. But it's not effective in certain poisonings, such as those that involve strong acids or bases, cyanide, organic solvents, ethanol, methanol, iron, lithium, some cleaning products,

The World Health Organization approves it for the emergency treatment of overdoses or poisonings.

"When a patient comes to a hospital after a drug overdose, a single oral dose of activated charcoal is often given to adsorb the toxin and prevent it from being absorbed by the body, thereby limiting the toxic effects of the poison. Activated charcoal has been used in this manner for decades," Johnson-Arbor said.

Activated charcoal also provides gastrointestinal relief. Researchers have found that activated charcoal can aid with issues such as diarrhea, gas, bloating, stomach cramps, and indigestion. It may benefit people who experience diarrhea as a result of chemotherapy, and bile flow issues in pregnant women. There is some research about it helping liver and kidney issues as irritation, and fatigue. well as skin infections.

Recently, there has been some re- Kristen Fischer is a writer living in search into activated charcoal for more New Jersey.



Activated charcoal may have a wide range of uses, but many products include it with imited evidence it works.

serious conditions such as obesity, insulin resistance, and high cholesterol. You can take it in pill and liquid form (or as an enema), though some people say the liquid form is gritty and may cause you to vomit.

"Since it is used in hospital settings to treat poisonings, some people think that activated charcoal can be used to detoxify different parts of the human body. Unfortunately, there is minimal evidence supporting the use of activated charcoal for this purpose," Johnson-

Activated Charcoal Today

While it's most

effective if used

substances, it's

So, why do you seem to see activated charcoal in so many products nowadays? Notably, many brands of toothpaste

claim it can improve oral health—and even whiten teeth. But studies have gone back and forth over whether or not it can ac-

tually make teeth whiter. It's also in a slew of skin care products, claiming of ingesting toxic that it can draw toxins from the skin and can fight acne and aging.

not a cure-all. Deodorants have added it as an ingredient as it

The claims aren't backed up substan-

"For now, there is no recent research about activated charcoal that expands how it can be used outside of a supervised medical setting," she said.

"People who use activated charcoal for personal use should be aware that manufacturers' claims about activated charcoal's general detoxifying and antiinflammatory benefits are largely unproven, and we currently do not know if activated charcoal is effective when used in personal care products.

"Because it has no known proven benefit when used recreationally or in personal care products, people should be wary about using or consuming products containing activated charcoal, unless directed to do so by a medical professional," Johnson-Arbor added.

Use With Caution

While it's considered relatively safe (inhaling it is risky though), it's a smart idea to ask your doctor before taking it. Some reported side effects are black stools, constipation, abdominal fullness, nausea, headache, vomiting, anal



Many products use activated charcoal



Choosing Between Health and Your Hairline?

A drug marketed for baldness has been linked to sideeffects ranging from impotence to suicide

MARTHA ROSENBERG

ore than half of men older than 50 will experience male pattern baldness, according to the U.S. National Library of Medicine (NLM), and that rate climbs to 80 percent for Caucasian men. Male pattern baldness, medically known as "androgenetic alopecia," begins above both temples, causes thinning at the crown, and often results in partial or complete baldness, states the NLM website, MedlinePlus.

While androgenetic alopecia in men can be linked to insulin resistance, coronary heart disease, and prostate conditions, it also who feel that they may look prematurely old ments such as finasteride, sold under the brand name Propecia, have been lucrative products for drug makers.

Finasteride inhibits 5-alpha-reductase, the enzyme that converts testosterone into the androgen 5-dihydrotestosterone (DHT), which tells hair follicles on the scalp to stop producing hair. Developed by Merck, finasteride was approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), or prostate gland enlargement, in 1992 in a preparation called Proscar—and for treatment of male pattern hair loss in 1997 in a preparation called Propecia. Finasteride is also sometimes prescribed for use in hormone replacement therapy for transgender women.

The year after Propecia's approval, Merck launched a \$60 million print and television ad campaign with the slogan, "Helping make hair loss history." Direct-to-consumer advertising, which began to supplant drug representatives selling to doctors, had just been legalized, and the Propecia campaign was so groundbreaking that it was debated by Harvard Business School alumni for its marketing value.

In 2019, 8 million prescriptions were written for finasteride in the United States, and it was the 86th most commonly prescribed medication in the country.

Concerning Side Effects Emerge

Even before the Propecia launch, serious side effects surfaced. One of the first suggestions of adverse sexual side effects associated with finasteride appeared in 1996 in the peerreviewed journal BJU International before the baldness indication had been approved by the FDA. Impotence, ejaculatory failure, decreased libido, and gynecomastia (swelling of male breasts) were noted by researchers in patients taking finasteride. In 2010, a presents an appearance issue for many men Cochrane Library review found that men on or less virile. Consequently, baldness treatejaculation disorder, and impotence. By 2012, the side effects were so established that the term "post-finasteride syndrome" (PFS) had been coined and thousands of patients had contacted a group called the PFS Foundation.

Research in the Journal of Sexual Medicine in 2012 echoed the findings, noting that patients taking finasteride reported "changes related to the urogenital system in terms of semen quality and decreased ejaculate volume, reduction in penis size, penile curvature or reduced sensation, fewer spontaneous erections, decreased testicular size, testicular pain, and prostatitis. Many subjects also noted changes to their mental abilities, sleeping patterns, and/or depressive

Worse, as early as 2013, research suggested that the sexual and psychological side effects may not go away when the patient stops finasteride, but may be permanent.

Today, medical literature contains almost 800 articles about finasteride's adverse effects, and mainstream media outlets have covered them. Men's Journal published a report, "The (Not So Hard) Truth About Hair Loss Drugs," in which it stated: "Emerging

research and a slew of lawsuits suggest that finasteride may be more dangerous than previously believed, with side effects—inability to orgasm, painful erections, chronic depression, insomnia, brain fog, and suicidal thoughts—that can last long after patients stop taking the pill."

DRAGANA GORDIC/SHUTTERSTOCK

CBS News ran a story about a mother who blamed her 22-year-old son's suicide on Propecia, and last year, Reuters published a story called "Merck anti-baldness drug Propecia has long trail of suicide reports, records show."

Some medical studies draw parallels between post-finasteride syndrome and post-SSRI sexual dysfunction.

In 2010, a Cochrane Library review found that men on finasteride for BPH were at an increased risk for erectile dysfunction, decreased libido, ejaculation disorder, and impotence.

Finasteride's clinical trials raise more concerns. They appear cursory and some had very few participants. One FDA reviewer wrote that "the data on ejaculatory volume are inconclusive," and another reviewer cautioned about drawing conclusions from a trial with only 12 subjects. Still another FDA reviewer noted that those with sexual adverse events may have already "exited from the study," thus skewing results.

The FDA also advises that finasteride patients don't donate blood or plasma for at as a prominent investigative journalist. She least one month after taking their last dose

A Reuters investigation published in 2019 adds to the evidence of hidden risks. It found Merck "knew roughly 20 years ago that sales of the drug would suffer if the public became aware of Propecia's possible long-term effects on men's sexual health," and consequently the drug maker likely buried the side effects

"A redacted section of one plaintiffs' motion, reviewed by Reuters, cites correspondence from a Merck executive in which he objected to what he described as 'misleading' information about the incidence of sexual dysfunction in men taking Propecia," Reuters reported.

"In a statement to Reuters, Merck said it 'stands behind the safety and efficacy of Propecia,' noting that the drug has been prescribed safely to millions of men since the late 1990s. While the drug's label lists erectile dysfunction and other sexual problems as possible side effects among a small percentage of men, the company rejects allegations that Propecia causes those problems to persist after men stop taking it or that it can lead to mental health issues. Merck says the symptoms themselves could be caused by a variety of other factors," reported the news

Last year, U.S. Magistrate Judge Peggy Kuo in Brooklyn ordered Merck documents unsealed. The public's right to access outweighs Merck's arguments for keeping internal documents that might show hidden safety risks secret, she ruled. A patient group has also sued to have Propecia removed from the market.

Some Discredit Post-Finasteride Syndrome Some medical voices discredit post-finasteride syndrome and question its existence. The BMJ likened it to "mystery syndromes" such as multiple chemical sensitivity and called PFS "ill-defined and controversial."

Research in the journal Skin Appendage Disorders in 2019 read: "We present the first case of PFS in our 20-year prescription practice of oral finasteride for treatment of male pattern baldness, with circumstantial evidence that PFS may represent a delusional disorder of the somatic type, possibly on a background of a histrionic personality disorder, and with the potential of a mass psychogenic illness due to its media coverage PFS demonstrates analogies to controversial 'mystery syndromes' as amalgam illness, multiple chemical sensitivity, Morgellons disease, and Koro."

Still, with millions of prescriptions written for Propecia every year, documentation of side effects, and evidence of risks hidden by Merck, this anti-baldness preparation should be used with caution if at all. No one should have to choose between their health

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

Martha Rosenberg is a nationally recognized reporter and author whose work has been cited by the Mayo Clinic Proceedings, Public Library of Science Biology, and National Geographic. Rosenberg's FDA exposé, "Born with a Junk Food Deficiency," established her has lectured widely at universities throughout the United States and resides in Chicago.

Coffee May Help You Live Longer–Even With a Little Sugar

MAT LECOMPTE

New data suggest that the health benefits of coffee persist even when a bit of sugar

The research shows that people who drank any amount of unsweetened coffee are 16 percent to 21 percent less likely to die than those who don't drink it, based on data from 171,000 British participants.

Sweetened coffee drinkers who had an average of 1 1/2 to 3 1/2 cups per day were 21 percent to 29 percent less likely to die during a seven-year follow-up period than non-coffee drinkers.

But this doesn't mean that you should

head for a syrupy sugar-bomb of a coffee. The people who benefited tended to add just a little bit of sugar to their coffee.

On average, people put about one teaspoon of sugar in each cup, which only tacks on about 16 extra calories. Specialty syrup sugar coffees, on the other hand, can have hundreds of calories. They're basically liquid cakes.

The study also found that unsweetened coffee drinkers had a lower risk of death regardless of how much they drank, with the greatest overall benefit being in the range of 21/2 to 31/2 cups per day.

Sweetened coffee drinkers also had benefits, but only as long as they drank less than



living longer, even with a teaspoon of sugar. But drink too much coffee with sugar and the gain is lost. SYOMAO/SHUTTERSTOCK

tle sugar, this can be great news for you. Sometimes it's easy to get scared off by any amount of sugar, so knowing that there's

room for a slight indulgence in your daily coffee can be comforting. If you don't drink coffee, you don't need to

four cups per day. Having 41/2 cups seemed

to slightly boost the risk of early death. If you're a coffee drinker and like a lit-

start drinking it for a longer life. There are plenty of other things you can do to live a long and healthy life.

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

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Epidermis

The epidermis is the outermost layer of skin. This is the layer you see when you look at yourself, and it's formed predominantly by special cells called keratinocytes.

Just as the name implies, these cells produce a substance called keratin, a protein that's durable and doesn't dissolve in water. You're familiar with this protein because your hair is made of keratin. Keratinocyte tion. Vitamin D3 is formed when UV radiastem cells, located in the lower epidermis, tion converts 7-dehydrocholesterol into divide and form keratinocytes. The keratinocytes get pushed up toward the surface of made in the epidermis gets transported the skin as new keratinocytes form beneath them. As the keratinocytes mature, they produce lots of keratin and become packed with this protein.

Keratinocytes assemble together tightly. The closer they get to the skin's surface, the tighter they're crammed, forming a seal that creates a waterproof barrier. It takes about four weeks for keratinocytes to move to the surface of the skin from the time they were created deep in the epidermis. This means you have a new covering of epidermal cells every month.

Due to the process of ongoing keratinocyte production, we continually replace the cells that flake off when the skin is rubbed. It's an interesting process that has to be tightly regulated, as the consequence of unregulated keratinocyte creation would be skin that's too thin or too thick.

Increased rubbing triggers epidermal cells to grow faster. If the rubbing doesn't increase the amount of skin flakes that are shed, the cells can build up, resulting in a callus—an area of thickened skin. This is a protective mechanism that allows our bodies to adapt to environmental stimuli to protect us.

Calluses are a form of hyperkeratosis a condition where the outer layer of skin thickens. Hyperkeratosis not only results from normal use, like calluses do, but can also occur in the pathology of eczema, psoriasis, certain autoimmune disorders, and arsenic poisoning.

Keratinocytes synthesize vitamin D when exposed to ultraviolet (UV) radiavitamin D3 in keratinocytes. Vitamin D3 to the liver, where it gets metabolized into the most common circulating form of vitamin D in your body, called 25-hydroxyvitamin D (calcidiol). Your kidneys convert 25-hydroxyvitamin D into a more potent metabolite called 1,25-dihydroxyvitamin D (calcitriol) for use in numerous body functions. One such function of vitamin D is to increase calcium absorption from the gut, making this vitamin critical for proper bone formation.

The epidermis is made up mostly of keratinocytes, but it also contains several other cell types.

One of these other cell types is melanocytes, which produce a black pigment called melanin. Increased exposure to sunlight results in melanocytes producing more melanin, causing the skin to become darker.

This is another example of how our skin responds to environmental stimuli to protect us—in this case, from UV radiation from the sun. The continuum of light brown to dark brown skin color present in our population is due to genetic influences on melanin proYour skin can distinguish between

sensations of pain, temperature, vibration, and

touch.

Collagen is a protein that keeps your joints healthy and your skin elastic. Collagen powder can be added as a daily supplement to any food

Many people assume that individuals with darker skin tones must have more melanocytes; however, if you compare a body region in a dark-skinned person versus a light-skinned person—take the forearm, for instance—the relative concentration of melanocytes in their tissue is remarkably similar. What's different, however, is the number of pigment-containing organelles, called melanosomes.

duction and storage.

In individuals with African ancestry, melanosomes are generally larger in size, more igmented, and more numerous in the ep dermal tissue, as compared to individuals with European ancestry. The melanosomes are created by the melanocytes and then transferred to keratinocytes, giving the skin a specific shade of brown.

Vitiligo is a condition in which melanocytes in an area of skin either die or just stop producing melanin. The skin in this area then looks lighter than the skin around it. This can affect people of all skin types. It's not contagious or life-threatening.

In addition to keratinocytes and melanocytes, the epidermis contains Langerhans cells, which are involved in immune func-

Langerhans cells have a unique shape. They have long, dendritic projections, like arms, that reach way out between keratinocytes and extend toward the surface of the epidermis. You can imagine them as little octopuses that use their long arms to sense what's going on in the tissue around them. The network formed by these cells is dense.

Microbes trying to get into the body through the skin will inevitably encounter these Langerhans cells. When the Lang-

communicate in an ongoing manner to ensure the neighborhood is safe from invaders. As with any neighborhood, things can stretch marks. go wrong in the epidermis when com-

munication goes awry. Psoriasis is one such example. Psoriasis is an autoimmune disorder of the skin. While the etiology, or cause, of psoriasis is not entirely clear, what we do know is that T-lymphocytes in the epidermis are

signaling uncontrollably. When the T-lymphocytes start releasing excessive amounts of cytokines, this initiates an inflammatory process in the skin. In healthy skin, localized inflammation is an important part of the immune response

triggered to become overactive and start

to a microbial threat or damage to the skin, such as a cut.

In an individual with psoriasis, however, this inflammatory response occurs when there is no microbial threat or skin damage. It sets off a cascade of molecular reactions, resulting in dilated blood vessels and an inpouring of immune cells. Keratinocytes respond strongly to the cytokines and begin releasing their own cytokines. The result is further immune amplification, which damages the tissue. Keratinocytes receive messages to multiply rapidly

erhans cells sense microbial activity, they quickly initiate antimicrobial responses. Keratinocytes can alert Langerhans cells to danger by releasing little chemical messengers called cytokines. Other immune cells, called T-lymphocytes, also reside in

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the epidermis and can activate the immune system to protect the body from microbes. The community of cells in the epidermis is like a close-knit neighborhood. The cells

strength and firm structure. Each collagen fiber is formed by three long protein fibers supercoiling into a triple-helix conformation. The collagen fibers in the deep reticular layer extend up into the superficial papillary dermis and down into the hypodermis, making these layers strong and tightly adhered. Collagen also binds water, keeping skin hydrated.

robust appearance.

Two important ways to keep wrinkle formation under control is to protect yourself from lots of UV exposure and eat a low-sugar diet.



keratinocytes.

Just beneath the epidermis is the dermis, the middle layer of skin. The dermis has blood vessels along with lymph vessels, sweat glands, nerves, and hair follicles. It has many functions, but of particular importance is the role it plays in regulating body temperature.

While it typically takes four weeks for

newly formed keratinocytes to reach the

surface of the skin, in psoriasis, this pro-

cess takes only three to five days. The skin

becomes very thick and irritated and sub-

sequently flakes off in silver-hued scales.

Topical corticosteroids are commonly used

to treat this hyperkeratosis in patients with psoriasis. Corticosteroids suppress the immune reaction and have anti-inflammatory and antiproliferative properties, meaning they slow down or stop the proliferation of

Blood vessels in the dermis dilate, or enlarge, when the body starts heating up due to exercise or hot temperatures. This allows a greater volume of blood to circulate near the skin's surface, effectively releasing heat. Cooler temperatures cause the blood vessels to constrict, helping keep heat from being lost.

In addition, the dermis helps to cool the body through releasing sweat. The evaporation of water molecules in sweat pulls heat from the skin, and your body capitalizes on that process to cool you down.

The dermis is divided into the superficial papillary region and the deep reticular region. The superficial (meaning closer to the skin surface) papillary dermis is on top, closer to the epidermis. The papillary dermis has finger-like projections that reach into the epidermis. Collectively they're called dermal papillae, which help create a tight adherence between the epidermis and dermis, and keep the epidermis from being able to slide horizontally across the dermis.

If the skin is rubbed extensively, like when you use a rake for several hours, these fingerlike projections pull away from the epidermis. Extracellular fluid builds up in the gap, forming a blister.

The superficial papillary dermis has some fat cells, called adipocytes, and an abundance of capillary loops—horseshoeshaped blood vessels that supply the tissue with oxygen-rich blood.

This layer also has phagocytes to help protect the skin against microbes.

Underneath the superficial papillary dermis is the deep reticular layer of the dermis. This layer is tough and is made up of a dense network of elastin and collagen fibers.

The elastin fibers give skin its elasticity, so there's some movement and flexibility in skin. If skin is stretched too much—for example, on the abdominal skin of a pregnant woman—the dermis can tear. The result is

The collagen fibers give skin its tensile

Excessive exposure to UV rays from the sun can damage collagen fibers and cause them to break down more quickly than normal. The chemical bonds, called peptide bonds, within the collagen protein actually get broken, creating a much more unstable collagen fiber. The skin then doesn't have the same durability and loses its plump,

In addition, a diet containing a high amount of refined sugars can cause damage to collagen. The mechanism is through glycation, wherein the sugar molecules in the bloodstream—present from eating a highsugar food—attach to proteins, forming advanced glycation end products (AGEs). AGEs are toxic to surrounding proteins and can cause collagen to become damaged. Two important ways to keep wrinkle formation under control are to protect yourself from excessive UV exposure and to eat a diet low in refined sugars.

Hypodermis

The hypodermis is the deepest layer of the skin. It is also referred to as the subcutaneous layer, or subcutis. The hypodermis contains blood and lymph vessels, nerves, oil and sweat glands, hair roots, and lots of adipocytes.

These adipocytes act as an insulator and shock-absorber to protect tissues under-

neath, such as muscles and organs. The hypodermis connects the skin to the

muscles and bones.

Your skin can distinguish between sensations of pain, temperature, vibration, and touch. Nociceptors are nerve cell endings in your skin that can detect painful stimuli. The stimuli can be pressure, temperature, or chemicals. TRPV1 is an ion channel in skin nerve cells that is stimulated by high temperatures and capsaicin—the substance as a brown spot with speckles of a darker that makes chili peppers spicy.

There are four types of mechanoreceptors in the skin that can detect a mechanical stimulus:

- Meissner corpuscles sense movement across the skin.
- Ruffini endings are responsive to stimuli that make the skin stretch.
- Merkel cells are important in defining the spatial location of touch.
- Pacinian corpuscles sense vibration, specifically high-frequency vibration.

Skin color is determined not only by melanin production and storage but also by carotenoids and blood flow dynamics.

Carotenoids can be found throughout the skin, including the epidermis, dermis, and hypodermal adipose tissue. You're familiar with beta carotene—a carotenoid found in certain vegetables, such as carrots. There are many carotenoids; humans eat as many as a slightly yellowish appearance, particularly in the absence of high concentrations of melanosomes.

UV light from the sun can cause oxidative damage to the skin. Carotenoids in the skin are particularly adept at protecting the skin from this kind of damage Another contributor to skin color is blood

flow. The reddish color of skin is caused by oxygenated blood flowing through blood vessels in the dermis and hypodermis. In the absence of a high concentration of melanin and carotenoids, the skin will have a slightly red, or pink appearance.

Skin Color and Disease

Specific skin colors can indicate disease sometimes very serious disease.

Pale skin (pallor) can be indicative of reduced blood flow, as in Raynaud's syndrome, or a reduced number of red blood cells, as occurs in anemia.

Blue skin, or cyanosis, can be caused by an overabundance of deoxygenated hemoglobin in the blood. Cyanosis can be a symptom of severe heart or lung disease.

Yellow skin can be indicative of jaundice, caused by liver cancer or viral infections of the liver, such as hepatitis. Jaundice can also be caused by Ascaris lumbricoides, a parasite which can block parts of the liver.

Patches of brown skin from hyperpigmentation can indicate Addison's disease, a condition where the body doesn't produce enough cortisol.

Finally, areas of abnormal skin color may indicate skin cancer.

There are three main types of skin cancer: squamous cell carcinoma, basal cell carcinoma, and melanoma. Often, these cancers occur in parts of the body that receive a high level of UV exposure; however, these cancers can occur on areas of your skin that receive little sun exposure.

Squamous cell carcinomas may appear as a flat area with a scaly, crusty surface, or as a red nodule. Basal cell carcinomas can appear as a waxy, shiny bump. They can look flat and scar-like or they can present as a bleeding sore that scabs but doesn't heal. Melanoma may appear as a mole that has changed in color, shape, or size. The mole may also bleed. Melanoma may also appear pigment, or portions that appear red, white, or pink.

Getting regular full-body skin exams by a dermatologist is important for ensuring that skin cancer doesn't grow unnoticed.

Jacquelyn Waters writes about health, science, and medicine. She has a particular interest in all things neuroscience—from molecular neuroscience to psychology. She has eight years of experience teaching college biology and received her master's in biomedical sciences, with a specialization in neuroscience, from Vanderbilt University.

The number of pigment-containing organelles called melanosomes gives us our skin color.



3 Main Layers of the Skin Our skin is made up of three layers, each with diverse and important

roles in protecting us and keeping

us well.

Epidermis

Subcutaneous

PAULYNN/SHUTTERSTOO Look for natural, organic ingredients to protect yourself from the damaging ingredients commonly used in commercial products.

Understanding Organic Skin Care Ingredients

Natural ways to get cleaner, brighter, healthier-looking skin

ANNIE DODSON

If you want to have noticeably clear and eventoned skin, you should establish a good skin care regimen with organic skin care ingredients. A good beauty care routine begins with understanding and purchasing quality skin care products that are good for you.

The products should be natural, yet effective, and contain no harsh sulfates or harmful chemical by-products. These chemicals may dry out the skin as well as increase the visibility of wrinkles and fine lines, which can make you look older than your actual age.

While some people are OK with buying nonorganic skin care products, those who choose natural skin care brands find and enjoy more benefits of using organic products. People use natural skin care products to stop using products that are formulated with harmful and unsafe ingredients such as parabens, petrochemicals, and other skin-irritating scents.

Cleansers

Cleansing is the initial step in any skin care regimen. It's imperative to find a mild cleanser

to lift and eliminate pore-clogging debris and dirt from the skin. Those who regularly wear cosmetics should make sure to pick a cleanser that is good enough to take away make-up as

Organic cleansers commonly use a blend of nut or fruit oils along with some other botanical ingredients. The following are some natural ingredients used in formulating cleansers and the benefits they can provide include:

- Apple juice (softens skin)
- Coconut, sunflower, jojoba, and sesame oil

drates wrinkled skin)

- (moisturizes the skin) Green tea (antioxidant properties)
- Aloe vera (balances skin's pH) Gotu kola extract (relieves inflammation) Geranium and patchouli essentials (rehy-
- Horsetail extracts (heals wounds) Yucca schidigera (replaces lost nutrients)
- Sweet orange oil and chamomile (aroma

Moisturizers

moisturizers aid the skin to attract and preserve moisture.

which include the following:

- Cupuacu butter, shea butter, and cucumber
- extract (moisturizes the skin) Acai oil (antioxidant properties)

therapeutic benefits)

After washing, you have to apply a gentle facial moisturizer to your skin. Most facial cleansers are formulated with a facial moisturizer. This helps hydrate the skin and increase firmness and elasticity. Organic

Common ingredients in natural moisturizing products include nut and fruit oils, essential oils, and other nourishing plants

- Calendula oil (relieves inflammation) • Rice bran, sweet almond oil, watercress extract, and aloe vera juice (supply vitamins and minerals)

Exfoliants

Exfoliants eradicate the top and dead skin cells that can block pores and result in the develop-

Be certain to only use the exfoliants twice a week to avoid damaging the skin. You also need to make sure that the brand you buy is not too abrasive. Scrubs that are too abrasive can produce fine tears on your facial skin. Here are some exfoliants and their benefits:

- Sesame seed oil, olive oil, shea butter, and cucumber extract (remove signs of aging)
- Raw cane sugar (cleanses and exfoliates
- Jojoba oil and watercress extract (nourishes the skin) • Sweet orange oil (aromatherapeutic benefits)
- Alluvial garnet (removes dead skin cells) Lemon and bergamot essential oils (adds
- Jojoba beads (remove skin cells)

natural fragrance)

• Sclerotium rolfsii gum (natural polysaccharide thickener)

If you wish to protect your skin and body from the damaging ingredients used in most commercial brands, then you should consider using organic skin care products. Everyone is concerned about their well-being and health, which means that we should be proactive and careful in selecting which skin care products to use.

Annie Dodson is a blogger and cosmetologist from Australia. Her main area of expertise is research based on finding new, organic skin care ingredients. She also blogs about skin care tips and health and wellness subjects. She is currently working as a treatment consultant at Cosmos Clinic. In her spare time, she enjoys yoga, cycling, and spending time with friends. This article was originally published on NaturallySavvy.com



DOROTHY PEDERSEN

ave you ever heard of vision therapy? Not the eye muscle-building type, but the professionally administered vision therapy that actually makes changes in the brain? The individualized progressive treatment that uses optical devices such as prisms, filters, and lights, and integrates For instance, after having several concusmotor and cognitive skills? You've never heard of it? Then read on.

neurons are connected to vision, yet few until after I'd gone through vision therapy at trauma centers, are aware of the subtle could read easily again. Then I realized the but significant visual problems that often accompany brain injuries, concussions, or strokes. Even an age-related decline in vision can cost a senior his or her independence. But the benefits of vision therapy aren't limited to the damaged or aged brain. Children who are doing poorly in school, or have behavioral problems, may also benefit from it. Let's look at damaged brains first.

"Eighty-five percent of concussions are considered mild, and look normal on CT imaging," says Debbie Luk, team optometrist for the Calgary Flames and member of the medical team at the Benson Concussion Institute, where she works with Olympic athletes. "That's why most of them are missed. People don't realize vision is such a big part of the brain and most people have a problem after concussion."

For this reason, Luk performs eye-tracking tests with professional hockey players and establishes baseline times for eye tracking. "When they've been hit, they're taken off the ice and we redo the test. If the test takes four seconds longer than the baseline, we know there's a serious problem," she said.

So, even when the emergency room doctor deems a concussion to be mild, getting assessed by an optometrist with advanced training, specifically in vision therapy, is prudent.

Brain injury (including from strokes) can prevent the brain's ability to process information accurately. Common treatments, such as rest or antidepressives, are often ineffective. But using computerized and optical instruments such as prisms, colored lights, lenses, string devices, therapeutic games, and other devices, vision therapists can (over a period of two to six months) create remedial programs that are individually tailored to the needs of the patient's brain, and which are progressive in nature. These therapies are proven, by research and imaging, to be highly effective for athletes, children, or geriatrics who have suffered some kind of assault

"Damaged axons don't show up in one

area of the brain in a diagnostic image because they may be damaged throughout the brain," said Dr. Rick Thompson, a Brampton, Ontario, optometrist and vision therapist. "There's no relationship between the severity of the injury and the severity of the symptoms.'

A large number of people with brain injuries or concussions are unable to identify or articulate, the problems they're having. sions, I didn't realize that words and lines of text were vibrating, making reading an More than 50 percent of the brain's exhausting undertaking for me. It wasn't jarring textual movement I'd been battling. Children can have unrecognized difficulties too, and they sometimes manifest

as behavioral issues or poor academic performance. "After a concussion, a child might say the letters on the eye chart, but if asked to read a book for, say 15 or 20 minutes, it might be

overwhelming," Luk said. "They might lose their place when reading, or have double vision, or a headache." Our eyes are meant to work together. They look at the same point, and should follow that moving point together, but if they don't, or if there is a problem with

depth perception (directly related to sports performance), visual memory, balance, difficulty seeing clearly up close or at a distance, or low-contrast issues are present (more on low contrast coming up), then safety and quality of life can become major issues.

"If the binocular vision is out of whack, with vision therapy you can re-learn how to track," says Thompson. "Peripheral vision can also be lost with concussions, but regained through vision therapy." And recent studies have shown that lowcontrast issues, which can render a flight of stairs life-threatening to a senior, can also be improved.

Optometrist and vision therapist Dr. Greg Thompson (yes, the son of Rick, in

People don't realize vision is such a

big part of the brain and most people have a problem after concussion.

Debbie Luk, team optometrist, Calgary Flames

More than of the brain's neurons are

connected to

Children can have unrecognized difficulties due to head injuries that manifest as behavioral issues or poor academic performance.



a four-generation family of optometrists), said: "We've done quite a few stroke and peripheral vision loss cases. They can't judge where the curb or stairs are." The inability to determine where one stair ends and the next begins has caused countless numbers of falls and hospitalizations, but vision therapy helps patients determine the sharp edges of stairs by changing brain structure and increasing white matter at the visual processing center of the brain. These changes are actually visible on functional MRIs.

Week 25, 2022 THE EPOCH TIMES

Greg Thompson hears the same plea repeated from many of his patients: Can I get my driver's license back?

"People are desperate and grasp at anything to be able to drive again. They'll self-diagnose and come in desperate for treatment," he said. Nerves need to fire together, and with some injuries or assaults on the brain, some circuits shut down so the brain can focus on other tasks.

"As we age, the brain prunes parts that aren't needed," he said. "Neuroplasticity is behind the effectiveness of vision therapy. It allows things to keep getting better."

So how is it possible that your emergency room doctor doesn't know about vision therapy and its benefits?

"We're the only profession that is trained to diagnose and treat these conditions," said Dr. Mitchell Scheiman, dean of research at Salus University. "The visual assessment the school nurse does on a chart is totally irrelevant." A good vision test is much more than the wall chart we're all familiar with.

"Twenty or 30 years ago, it was reasonable to think vision therapy didn't work, but this is no longer the case," Scheiman said.

"We've done the highest level of research, and much of it. We've done so much evidence-based research nobody can say vision therapy doesn't work. We're actually making changes in the brain that are visible on before-and-after (f)MRIs."

However, Scheiman notes that vision therapy itself won't improve reading or learning directly. It's similar to how medications for ADHD work. Such medications allow the patient to concentrate, and through that, learn better. Vision therapy allows people's brains to "see" better, hence they have the opportunity to perform better, whether catching a ball, passing a driver's test, descending a flight of stairs, or any number of other activities.

For those considering vision therapy, look for an optometrist in your area who specializes in the practice. Some offer vision therapy via Zoom sessions.

Dorothy Pedersen is a registered psychotherapist in private practice, and an award-winning writer. She has almost completed her memoir, "No One Came

Slow Beauty in a Fast World

Shel Pink's approach to beauty and spa rituals draws on ancient wisdom

TARA MACISAAC

Shel Pink sat mesmerized, watching a tortoise on his slow-somehow selfsatisfied—walk across her kitchen floor. Step by deliberate step, he seemed in a constant state of meditative calm. Pink's son had brought home his class pet Torti, and what a contrast he provided to Pink's own fast-paced life.

That was about 10 years ago, and "it was just the beginning of all these social media platforms," Pink said. "I was beginning to feel the stress of checking these multiple voicemails and multiple emails and the smartphone, and I knew things were just going to keep speeding up."

Torti inspired her to create "Slow Beauty." Slow Beauty is a philosophy and a regi-

men. It's about slowing down just a little each day, about establishing daily rituals that nourish the body and mind. Her book, "Slow Beauty," outlines the

thought behind it all. Her product line Sparitual, provides oils, lotions, and more for daily rituals; the recipes are inspired by ancient spa traditions and tap into nature's healing power.

"It's more intentional than just getting a lotion at the drugstore and putting it on," Pink said. Her products were sustainably sourced long before that was something people thought much about. Pink takes pride in being green.

Traditional wisdom and the beauty business have blended naturally in her life. Her mother was into alternative healing methods and an organic way of life. Pink's father-in-law, Jeff Pink, is the founder of the well-known nail polish maker Orly. Pink joined the family business and began to see how she could weave her wellness-focused upbringing into the beauty industry.

important it is to slow down. You almost need to have courage to do it," she said. "Taking this time out is vitally important to showing up more in life, to being productive in a more productive way." All the go-go-go, "I'm so busy, I'm so busy" is an addictive behavior, Pink said.

"This is what's leading to stress, anxiety, disease, burnout, and adrenal fa-

The Daily Ritual

Pink's daily ritual includes dry body brushing before her shower, a selfmassage with nourishing oils after her shower, spending time in nature, and moving her body. Much of her ritual is inspired by the ancient Indian approach to wellness called Ayurveda.

"Trends will come and go," Pink said. "But I think the [practices] that are most beneficial are the ones that are ancient traditions. ... They're proven. They've been around for thousands of years."

practice, exfoliates the skin and promotes circulation. It's invigorating because it stimulates the nervous system. It's said by some to detoxify the body by stimulating the lymphatic system and unclogging pores for sweat to carry toxins out more easily, though some experts say these benefits are unproven. Pink's post-shower oil massage is

called abhyanga in Ayurveda. "When we apply touch and nourishing ingredients to our body daily, it has a cumulative effect," she said. Touch is good for the body, she said. The oils also make for healthy skin, and "when our skin feels healthy, we feel healthier."

In the traditional practice, sesame "We live in this hyper-productive oil is used because it's so nourishin world, but we have to remember how and you even rub it into your hair. Pink gets an ayurvedic practitioner to do the whole shebang for her every once in a while, but she does it herself a little differently on a daily basis. She rubs the oil only up to her neck and she has developed a different massage oil because sesame tends to stain clothes. Her oil includes jojoba, shea, and cacao because they also nourish but absorb more easily.

> Pink takes daily walks on nature trails near her home.

"It's so important to immerse yourself in nature. There are so many benefits to helping with stress and anxiety and regulating your nervous system. It increases your vitamin D levels to have that exposure to natural sunlight which helps regulate your moods."

Meditation and yoga also help her. She recalled her college years, in the late



Dry body brushing, an Ayurvedic We live in this hyper-productive world, but we have to remember how important it is to

slow down. **You almost** need to have courage to do it.

Shel Pink, author

Dry body brushing is a traditional practice to nurture healthy skin.

1980s, when she had to seek a yoga studio far off campus because "there weren't yoga studios ... on every corner like there are now." Pink's mother raised her to be ahead of her time.

Ahead of Her Time

ALL PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGE

As a child, Pink learned to consider the ingredients in home and beauty products. Her mother taught her how to check labels. Her mother distrusted plastic, fearing health effects from leaching, so she had milk delivered in glass bottles. She was concerned about the pesticides used in their Michigan neighborhood a worry confirmed, Pink said, in Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring," a seminal book for environmental science.

"Everyone thought my mom was eccentric at the time, but it turned out she was just several steps ahead of the world at large," Pink said.

When Pink started putting together her organic, sustainably sourced line of beauty products to sell to spas about 16 years ago, she was also ahead of the world at large.

"In the beginning, it was so niche and so many people thought with these cleaner ingredients it wasn't going to work," Pink said. Yet the few who were on board were very enthusiastic.

Now, it's common for companies to make sustainability pledges, and the beauty industry has more ethically sourced, natural products. "This is a wonderful thing," Pink said. But she suggests consumers remain wary and favor brands that are truly transparent about their ingredients and sources. "I'm really happy to be a legacy brand," she said. Sparitual has earned trust over the years, she said.

More spas have gotten on board with incorporating traditional practices, including Ayurveda, Pink said. She is also interested in traditions from Japan, including wabi sabi, which is the idea that the "imperfections" of nature are beautiful. Pink cites this idea in her book as a way for people to love themselves and see their own beauty, a way we can create a new standard of beauty.

She also likes the idea of kintsugi, the Japanese art of putting broken pottery pieces back together with gold seams. It's often seen as a metaphor for making broken things even more beautiful than they were whole, even the broken parts of oneself.

'Beauty Is Inherently Spiritual'

Pink's approach to beauty includes, and even sees as most important, working on inner beauty. Mind and body are one, she said, and "beauty is inherently spiritual."

She speaks of being present, not dwelling on the past or dreaming of the future. She speaks of not seeing failures, but only lessons. She speaks of the courage to walk one's own path and not sign onto something just because others do.

In her book, she helps the reader design his or her own map to wellness. It includes spa rituals and seasonal recipes, but also considerations of what music one listens to and what one surrounds oneself with and fills oneself with. It's about "designing your inner home," she said, choosing the furnishings and decor. She is intentional about what she puts into her "inner home" and also what comes out.

"What if each word we spoke was a blessing we put into the world?" she wrote. "Speak poetically about yourself and others. When you speak, you are concretizing ideas. You are giving them a form that lives in the world, in someone's ear, settles in their mind, and that may one day flow from their lips. Choose your words wisely.'

Try This Bladder Workout to Get a Handle on Incontinence

Extend the time you can go without a bathroom break little by little with some habits and exercises

MAT LECOMPTE

The sudden urge to urinate can be debili tating. It can keep you from leaving home and enjoying your life, with the fear of a potential accident always looming.

Sometimes an overactive bladder is urge to go when your bladder isn't full. It might be possible to use a bladder workout to strengthen the bladder and regain some control over urges and when you go to the bathroom.

Here is a bladder training technique for you to try:

Keep Track: Track the times you urinate or leak urine during the course of two days. Write it down in a journal.

Assess Patterns: Calculate how many hours you wait, on average, between visits to the bathroom.

called urge incontinence, creating the **Select an Interval:** Based on your general bathroom trip timing, start your training by extending your regular interval by

15 minutes. For instance, if you generally go an hour between bathroom visits, extend it to one hour and 15 minutes.

It might be possible to use a bladder workout to strengthen the bladder and regain some control over urges and when you go to the bathroom.

Don't Rush: On the first day of training, empty your bladder first thing in the morning and don't go again until your target interval time. If the time arrives

before you have the urge, go anyway. If the urge hits first, remember that your bladder isn't yet full and use whatever techniques you can to hold off. Pelvic floor exercises like Kegels can help. So can distracting yourself to help you wait another five minutes.

Extend the Interval: Once you can easily meet your interval time, extend it by another 15 minutes and continue to do so. Over the course of weeks or months, you might find that you don't have the same urge as before. If you've noticed an improvement in

> the 4-to-8-week range, write down the new info in a journal and compare the

Mat Lecompte is a health and wellness reporter for Bel Marra Health, where this article was first published.

Ginger is a

flavor that lends

itself to several

want to do something when you don't feel

The solution is clear: You need to get your

emotions working for you by making progress. It turns out that when you sense you're

making progress, no matter how small, you feel empowered and motivated to continue.

Even a small bit of progress increases your

sense of control and brings you back to the

This is exactly the opposite of what hap-

This might sound like circular reasoning:

How can the solution to procrastination be

But the part that isn't intuitive is realizing

that it really doesn't matter how small your

progress is at first. Nearly any amount will

begin the positive feedback loop that you

A wonderful book on this subject is "The

Progress Principle" by Teresa Amabile and

Steven Kramer. The book is focused on how

to increase engagement at work, but the

Mike (and his wife, Mollie) blog at This

Evergreen Home where they share their ex-

perience with living simply, intentionally,

can follow along by subscribing to their

and relationally in this modern world. You

like doing it.

present moment.

pens when you procrastinate.

as simple as making progress?

lessons apply to any area of life.

The Key to Defeating Procrastination-Induced Stress

When we procrastinate, we betray ourselves and lose self trust, but the cure is simple and small

Continued from Page 1

Procrastination and Stress

I discovered that as I matured, procrastination had transitioned from a questionable time management strategy to the primary source of stress in my life.

Research supports what I was feeling: Procrastination contributes to both perceived stress and measurable increases in biomarkers that are prevalent under conditions of stress.

This happens for two powerful reasons: Procrastination reduces your sense of personal autonomy. When you procrastinate, you're delaying the start of something you know you should be doing. By definition, you're fighting against yourself and losing the battle.

Do this enough times and slowly you begin to lose trust in yourself. Instead of having a strong, internal locus of control, you begin to feel that you are at the mercy of your emotions and impulses. Not feeling in control of a situation is a recipe for internal stress.

Procrastination pulls you away from the **Turning Procrastination Into** present moment. Being able to stay present in the moment you're in and savor what you're currently doing are two habits that are strongly correlated with positive dayto-day emotions.

Procrastination undermines these abilities by causing you to feel guilty when you aren't working and then regretful when you finally do get started. This combination leaves you susceptible to stress.

Stress Consumes Our Health

There was a time in college when I was studying abroad, that I attempted to (and

was hard, exhausting, and stressful work. It was no surprise when I came down with a nasty head cold at the end of the week.

We've all been there, right? After a stressful period at work or a string of bad sleep, your immune system is suppressed and you become ill. But have you ever stopped to consider the implications? If stress can cause that degree of harm that quickly, what's the impact of a lifetime of stress on other long-term health outcomes?

Well, the results aren't pretty. It turns out that long-term stress can indeed damage your health and influence the course of chronic disease. And the effect isn't just a small one. One particular meta-analysis of 228 studies shows that having a high-stress job raises the odds of having a physiciandiagnosed illness by 35 percent.

I'm used to seeing this strong of a correlation in health studies about diet, exercise, and smoking cessation—lifestyle factors that have incredibly high evidence to back them up—but I had no idea stress could potentially be in the same league.

Motivation

Realizing that my health was at stake turned out to be just the motivator I needed to get serious about my procrastination problem.

Over the years, I've spent countless hours learning about the causes and cures for procrastination—often doing so while avoiding other more urgent work. I have come to the conclusion that there are many techniques that work in the short-term, but most don't lead to sustainable change.

The reason so many of them fail is that they treat procrastination as a time management or laziness problem. While it may succeeded in) doing the vast majority of a have components of those, it is at its heart a semester's assignments in a single week. It problem of emotional regulation. You don't When people

sense that they're making progress, no matter how small, they feel empowered and motivated to continue.

3 Steps to Progress

twice-weekly newsletter.

Don't be fooled by the simplicity of this idea. It works. In fact, it's the only thing that has ever moved the needle for me in a sustainable way.

The key is in the execution of the idea, not in being more complicated or sophisticated than other ideas you may have heard. I'll leave you with three pieces of advice that I've walked away with after many personal experiments:

Start smaller than you think. When you are feeling behind the

ball after a bout of procrastination, there's a temptation to go big and change your life all at once. Remember, the motivation you feel in this moment won't last. The key is to develop the muscle memory of action, not to make huge progress in

Make it visual. Don't rely on your memory to do the thing you've committed to. Create a big, visual chart to track your progress. Best of all, you'll get a boost of motivation from checking your progress off each day and seeing how far you've come. These positive emotions are reinforcing the behavior you want to continue and counteracting the years of procrastination.

Don't have a 'zero' day. One of the most dangerous patterns of thought I see in procrastinators is one I call "throwing the baby out with the bath water." Maybe you had a bad morning, and now you feel thrown off course or discouraged, and you tell yourself that today is wasted and you'll just get started tomorrow. Avoid this line of thinking at all costs! Make progress today-no

Don't allow a single day to pass with zero progress toward your goal, and by the end of a week or month, you will have a track record of progress you can feel proud of.

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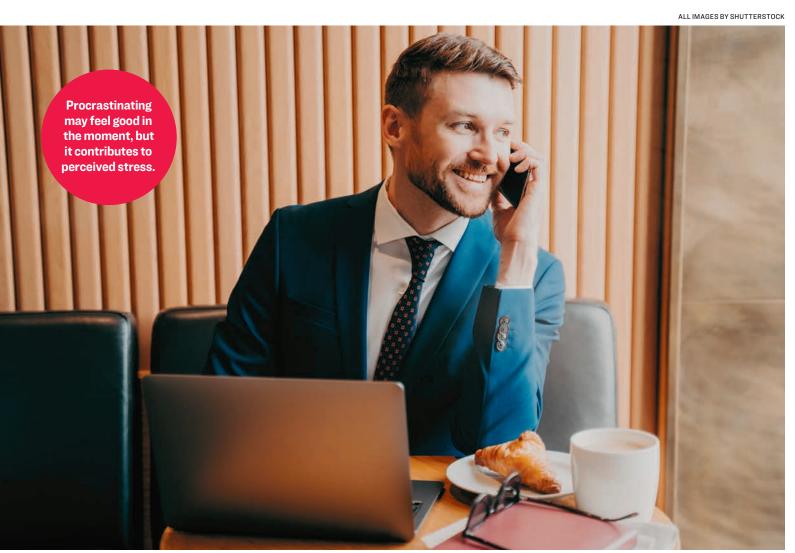
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The Pungent Potency of Ginger The incredible benefits of this long-revered herb can be enjoyed in several ways

Cooking for Healing:

SINA MCCULLOUGH

THE EPOCH TIMES Week 25, 2022

Herbs and spices were used by ancient cultures to heal the body, mind, and spirit. While the Western world has largely replaced these natural remedies with pharmaceuticals, roughly 80 percent of people worldwide still use traditional or ancient medicine. This isn't surprising considering that more than 80 percent of pharmaceuticals are derived or developed from natural products, including plants. In this series, we will explore the healing power of herbs and spices while learning how to incorporate these ancient remedies into our daily diet.

id you know that ginger was used to ward off the plague in the Middle Ages? In fact, ginger was so highly revered, it was placed on the table like

Ginger (Zingiber officinale Roscoe) is an herbaceous plant with annual leafy stems that has been used as an herbal medicine for over 5,000 years and a flavoring agent in food long before recorded history. It has been used by Chinese and Ayurvedic practitioners for at least 3,000 years for its anti-inflammatory properties. Ginger was also used by ancient Greeks and Romans for its medicinal properties.

Ginger was an important article of trade throughout history because of its medicinal and flavoring qualities. It was exported from India to the Roman Empire over 2,000 years ago. Even after the fall of the Roman Empire, ginger continued to be highly sought after. In fact, in the 13th and 14th centuries, one pound of ginger cost the same as one sheep.

Today, ginger is perhaps best known as a digestive tonic in ginger ales, as well as the essential ingredient in gingerbread men, which Queen Elizabeth I of England is credited with inventing.

Modern Science Catches Up to Ancient Wisdom

While the healing power of ginger has been harnessed among ancient cultures for thousands of years, modern medicine has been slow to recognize its benefits. However, the perception of ginger is changing as scientists have begun validating the improved the ability to defend against oxi wisdom of the ancients through studies dative stress caused by the heart attack. that demonstrate numerous healing abili-

Protects the Heart

In a 2015 study, rats were supplemented with ginger for 28 days followed by induction of myocardial infarction i.e., heart attack. Compared with controls, the structural and functional integrity of the heart muscle was largely preserved in ginger supplemented rats. In fact, at higher doses of ginger, the heart tissue was reportedly almost "normal" even after the heart attack.

In addition, ginger supplementation resulted in an increase in antioxidant enzymes, which suggests that ginger may have prevented damage to the heart and

Continued on Page 12

Getting Beyond the Habit Honeymoon

Starting a new habit can be exciting, but how do you keep going once it's become tough and boring?

MOLLIE DONGHIA

Habits. It's the small decisions we make every hour of the day that predict how great or little our success, productivity, and focus

I choose to wake up an hour before anyone else in my house so I can have peace and quiet to start my day. I track my daily exercise on a simple chart so that I can maintain a healthy, active lifestyle. We have a set time each day when the lights turn out in our kids' bedrooms so that my husband and I can have uninterrupted time for conversation and productivity.

My regular habits are the driving force that fuels me toward something greater less stress, more intentionality with work, and greater overall well-being. I've learned how to perform certain habits regularly, not just because I've done them over and Continued on Page 15

over again, but because of the results those actions deliver.

Humans have recognized

ginger's effects and used

it as an herbal medicine

for at least 5,000 years.

When we develop healthy habits (particularly in the categories of exercise, diet, and sleep), we're able to create and sustain a healthier lifestyle, which has been a personal motivator for me.

Even though I've developed a bank of healthy habits that I do regularly, I've found that beginning a new habit isn't the hard part—maintaining it is.

Habits often have a 21-day honeymoon period. This is when the habit is fresh, we've never missed it, and we are excited about realizing our goal.

But then life happens, challenges arise, motivation dwindles, and the honeymoon stage ends—leaving us uncertain whether we can stick to our new habit.



Habits are the automatic activities that keep us productive and healthy without too much thinking. They can keep us on track even when we aren't motivated



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Pregnancy, birth

trauma, being

overweight and

chronic constipation can all contribute to

TENESHA L. CURTIS

You may have been eating meat every meal of your life, but there are some financial and medical problems that can be influenced—or even caused—by this constant consumption of meat. Cutting back on eating animals like cows, pigs, and chickens has benefits you may have never thought of. Though some people choose to eliminate meat from their diet completely, even simply reducing how much meat you consume is an opportunity to save some money and become healthier. Here are seven benefits of eating less meat.

Save Money

Meat has consistently been one of the most expensive kinds of food you can purchase, according to a study from the National Institutes of Health that examined data from the 17th century through the 21st century. Vegetables, fruits, and grains are normally cheaper and end up providing more nutritional value since they are often less processed than meats like

beef, pork, and poultry. For example, the USDA reports that the average cost of beef is around \$7.00 per pound, while the average cost of a nonmeat product such as potatoes is about \$0.77 per pound. Since the average person living in the United States consumes 144 pounds of meat annually, that's \$1,008 spent just on this one type of grocery item. For a family of four, this amount would be closer to \$4,000. Reducing how much meat you buy could keep most of that money in your pocket to be used for things like vacations, paying down debt, or investing.

Lose Weight Obesity plagues most developed countries around the world. Meat is a major contributor to that, especially processed meats like hot dogs, sausages, and bologna. Meanwhile, people who don't eat meat have a BMI just over 3 points lower than omnivores (people who eat meat in addition to plants). This translates into about an 11 percent reduction in body fat. For someone who weighs 300 pounds, that means as much as 33 pounds lost without doing any extra exercise, taking extra medications, or undergoing any surgical procedures. The benefits are available by simply reducing or eliminating the amount

Reduce Cancer Risk While there are many factors that come into play regarding when someone will develop cancer (genetics, lifestyle, drug use, occupational hazards, and so on), processed meats are specifically noted by the American Cancer Society to be carcinogenic. If you believe your family history or other factors may put you at increased risk for develop-

of meat normally consumed.

ing cancer, reducing how much processed meat you eat could help lower your risk.

blood pressure is regularly well above the healthy range. The risk for people who eat meat is up to 14 percent higher than the risk for vegetarians and vegans, according to the National Institutes of Health. Hypertension can lead to heart disease and stroke if left untreated. Ratcheting down how much meat you eat could decrease your risk of developing this condition. **Lower Blood Sugar**

oping hypertension. This means their

People who consume meat have a higher risk of devel-

Hand in hand with the obesity epidemic goes Type 2 diabetes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that about 35 million people in the United States have Type 2 diabetes. This means they've developed the condition due mainly to lifestyle choices, including diet. People who refrain from eating meat are a whopping 74 percent less likely to develop Type 2

Sleep Better Higher quality sleep means being able to sleep for less time with fewer disturbances (snoring, waking, etc.), but having more energy and alertness when you wake up to start your day. Studies have shown that habitual meat consumption is linked to getting less sleep and having lower-quality sleep that doesn't recharge your body well.

Increase Fertility Because of the benefits mentioned above, reducing your meat intake can mean that your

body functions better overall. This includes improved fertility in females. A woman's ovaries and womb function better when she reduces her meat intake, according to a study published by Frontiers in Public Health. If you or a loved one have been attempting to get pregnant, working with a physician to review and adjust how much meat you eat could prove beneficial.

Less Meat, More Health

Cutting down on your meat intake doesn't have to be drastic. You could start by designating one day per week as a "no meat" day. Pay attention to how the lack of meat affects you on those days (no need for a nap, better memory, elevated mood, spending less money on food, and so on). It may feel like a big change at first, but that discomfort is a small price to pay for an overall

Tenesha L. Curtis is formally trained as a psychotherapist specializing in addictions counseling. She was born and raised in Louisville, Kv., before moving to her current home just outside Atlanta. She is the publishing manager at Volo Press Books. Connect with her online at TeneshaLCurtis.com



MEDICALLY CORRECT

Uterine Prolapse: When Your **Insides Fall Out**

Treatments for this unsettling condition have come a long way since the time of using 'bad odors'

PETER WEISS

.G. was a 54-year-old mother of three. All three of her children had been natural, vaginal deliveries. Her youngest is now 14. She had been complaining of increasing pelvic pressure for the past six or seven years, but since menopause (at age 52), her symptoms had been getting worse.

She had some leaking of urine, again worsening the past few years. P.G. could no longer play tennis, which she loved, let alone do any real physical activity without discomfort. She scheduled an urgent appointment since she felt that something was "falling out."

I had a suspicion about what I would find when she showed up for her exam. She had a grade three uterine prolapse, which is pretty significant. We grade them from one to four, with three being the uterus peeking out of the vagina. At 4, the whole uterus is hanging outside the vagina.

Uterine prolapses have been affecting women for thousands of years. An ancient Egyptian papyrus mentions "of a woman whose posterior, belly, and branching of her thighs are painful, say thou as to it, it is the falling of the womb," notes J. S. McKay in "The History of Ancient Gynaecology."

Over time, the recommended treatments have included rubbing petroleum (oil of earth), manure and honey on it, applying bad odors near the womb to chase it back in, or using astringents to dry up the womb. One treatment used a halved

Today, one of the oldest and still-in- their vagina. They all are doing very well. practice ways to treat a uterine prolapse is that of the pessary.

A pessary is basically a soft, rubber, removable prosthetic device that keeps the uterus well in the vagina and prevents it from prolapsing, or falling out. The pessary became the treatment of choice starting in the late 16th century with the use of lint balls, brass, waxed cork, wood, even silver and gold. They would have a string attached for easier removal. In the mid-19th century, Hugh Hodge of Philadelphia developed the first rubber pessary after the invention of vulcanized rubber by Charles Goodyear.

her kids were over eight pounds at delivery and they did some damage to her pelvic floor. The weakness or defect in her pelvis is similar to a hernia, and allows for her uterus, as well as her bladder, rectum, and even bowel to begin falling out, all behind the uterus. The options for P.G. today are numerous, but they all come down to pelvic floor physical therapy, the use of a pessary, or having surgery to repair the damage. Some risks for developing prolapse of any

degree include pregnancy, birth trauma, delivering a large baby, being overweight or obese, menopause (low estrogen state), chronic constipation (straining with bowel movements), as well as repeated heavy lifting.

Uterine prolapses have been affecting women for thousands upon thousands of years.

I have many patients for whom I fit a pessary, but P.G. was not one of them. Her defect was too large, and a pessary would not be the best solution for someone who was still young and wanted to be very active. Most pessaries are placed in women much older or with significant medical issues to make surgery a high risk proposition. I have several women in their 70s and 80s in which I successfully fitted different shaped pessaries. They have to see pomegranate as a precursor to one of the me every three months to remove, clean and properly place their pessary back in

The first vaginal hysterectomy was done in 1861 by a Dr. Choppin in New Orleans. The surgery was performed using chloroform. The patient survived and "A little more than a month after the surgery, Choppin presented the patient to the class of the New Orleans School of Medicine, the patient holding the specimen in hand," recounts an article in the Southern Journal of the Medical Sciences from 1866. We have come a very long way since then. Treatment plans for uterine prolapse and other related pelvic floor defects vary depending on what organs are involved.

P.G. was referred to a specialist who was beneath her urethra to prevent inadvertent leaking of urine. P.G. was back to playing tennis six weeks after her surgery.

Dr. Peter Weiss is a nationally known physician and health care thought leader who has advised CEO's, and political leaders on current and future health care trends affecting our country. He was a national health care advisor for senator John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign and was an Assistant Clinical Professor of OB/GYN at UCLA School of Medicine for 30 years. Dr. Weiss is the co-founder of the Rodeo Drive Women's Health Center in Beverly Hills, Calif., and remains in private practice. He also spends part of his time writing and lecturing on health care in America.







The cervix of uterus) protrudes outside the



The uterus is completely outside the vagina

Snacking Isn't Bad for You When You Do It Like This

MAT LECOMPTE

Everyone snacks. It's even easy to argue that people need a little nibble between meals: It's the perfect way to keep the energy up, fill in nutritional holes, and manage blood sugar.

But snacking gets a bad rep. Why? Generally, most people think of snack food as junk food. Don't get me wrong, there's room for the occasional chocolate bar or bowl of chips, but those aren't the kind of snacks you want to be choosing.

Healthy snacks are tasty, versatile, and **Satiating Snacks** easy to eat on the go. Here are some of the Here are some options that can help fill best snacks to help keep you feeling good.

Crunchy Stuff

Texture is a big part of snacking, so here are some healthy foods that can offer some crunch while you munch:

- · Carrots and celery
- Apples and pears

- Bell pepper slices
- Roasted chickpeas • Zucchini/cucumber slices
- Popcorn
- Rice cakes • Nuts and Seeds

Wash It Down

Enjoy your snack, and make it more filling with a drink. Get rid of high-sugar sodas and energy drinks and try replacing them with:

- Plain or sparkling water (add fruit or herbs for a little more)
- Milk
- Unsweetened coffee or tea—a little bit of sweetness may be OK
- A small glass of 100 percent fruit juice • Low sodium tomato or mixed vegetable

- Whole grain toast topped with peanut or almond butter
- Cherry tomatoes with hummus
- Low-fat cheese
- Plain low-fat yogurt (pair with some fruit, nuts, nut butter, or seeds)
- · Fruit and veggie smoothie



Healthy snacks are tasty, versatile, and easy to eat on the go.

Snacks to Satisfy A Sweet Tooth • Canned fruit (in natural juice or light

- · A thin slice of angel food cake or homemade banana nut bread Baked apple
 - Raisins, dates, figs, and other unsweetened dried fruits
 - Frozen grapes
 - · Fresh fruit salad
 - Watermelon

You can play around with this stuff and combine flavors and textures, too. There are a lot more heart-healthy snack options than what's listed here!

Mat Lecompte is a health and wellness reporter for Bel Marra Health, where this article was first published.

don't settle for junk.

snacks.





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REGISTER



The incredible benefits of this long-revered herb can be enjoyed in several ways

Continued from Page 9

Ginger may also reduce inflammation of the heart by regulating genes involved in the development of diabetes-induced car-

For example, a study published in 2020 reported a reduction in serum glucose levels in rats following supplementation with ginger. In addition, inflammation was decreased and cardiac tissue showed structural improvements (i.e., less scarring) compared with controls.

Likewise, a study published in Diabetes & **Promotes a Healthy Gut Microbiome** Metabolism Journal concluded that ginger Ginger can boost the diversity and abun-"significantly reduces heart structural abnormalities in diabetic rats." The researchers theorized that the heart-protective effect of and acute disease. ginger may be due, in part, to its antioxidant properties. Taken collectively, available reheart from damage caused by a heart attack.

Protects Against Aging

Oxidative stress and inflammation play a key role in the aging process. Consequently, ginger has been widely studied as an antiaging agent due to its ability to protect against both oxidative stress and inflammation.

For example, ginger consists of two major active components, 6-gingerol and 6-shogaol, which exhibit antiaging effects due to their potent ability to decrease oxidative stress and inflammation.

Remedies Pain

Supplementing with ginger for three months decreased proinflammatory cytokines in patients with osteoarthritis, according to a study published in 2016. The researchers concluded that ginger supplementation may benefit osteoarthritis of the knee.

Likewise, ginger was reported to reduce disease activity and inflammation in patients with rheumatoid arthritis following daily supplementation with ginger for 12 intestinal repair, and prevented chronic coliweeks, according to a study published in tis and colitis-associated cancer" in mice.

primary dysmenorrhea, according to a study signs of toxicity. iblished in 2009. In fact, ginger was as efand ibuprofen.

Fights Chronic Diseases

Ginger was shown to contain numerous anti-inflammatory compounds, according to a study published in 2015. The researchers concluded that the healing compounds contained within ginger "might be used as [a] potential natural drug against oxidative stress and inflammatory related diseases."

In addition, ginger contains significant antioxidant activity, according a study published in Industrial Crops and Products. By lowering inflammation and boosting antioxidant capacity, ginger may help prevent and reverse chronic diseases.

Fights Cancer

Ginger "can prevent various cancers," according to a study published in the International Journal of Preventative Medicine.

A comprehensive review published in Phytotherapy Research suggested that ginger may fight cancer because it exhibits "antiproliferative, antitumor, invasive, and antiinflammatory activities."

The researchers concluded that ginger exerts these healing actions through cell signaling, and well as regulation of oxidative and inflammatory processes associated

with cancer. Furthermore, a study published in 2021 concluded that ginger may help prevent colon cancer. Ginger has also been shown to decrease the development and progression of breast cancer, lung cancer, prostate cancer, and skin cancer without any detectable toxicity in normal tissues.

intestinal tract, which helps stave off chronic For instance, 16 weeks of ginger supplemen-

dance of beneficial microbes in the gastro-

tation improved the microbiome in mice, acsearch suggests that ginger may protect the cording to a study published in 2020. Specifically, supplementation resulted in an increase in species of the Bifidobacterium genus.

> Bifidobacteria are a group of beneficial bacteria that are normally present in parts of the gastrointestinal tract. Low levels of Bifidobacteria have been associated with numerous diseases, such as rheumatic disease, metabolic syndrome, obesity, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, gastrointestinal infections, colorectal cancer, irritable bowel syndrome, allergies, asthma, and cystic fibrosis.

> In fact, Bifidobacterium have such a powerful impact on human health that certain strains are commonly used in probiotic supplements. Since the levels of Bifidobacterium tend to decrease with age, and ginger has been shown to boost those levels, ginger may be useful in combating the age-related loss of these powerful probiotics.

Prevents and Treats Inflammatory Bowel

According to a study published in Biomaterials, ginger "reduced acute colitis, enhanced

Furthermore, ginger reduced inflammation Ginger also alleviated pain in women with and promoted a healing effect without any **Antibacterial**

with an added benefit of overcoming limitations such as potential toxicity."

Neurodegenerative Disease In a study published in Food Chemistry in 2013, ginger was shown to decrease neuroinflammation, which is inflammation within

Furthermore, a study in Neuropharmacology concluded that ginger "is an effective therapeutic agent for treating neurodegenera-

Ginger was shown to inhibit inflammation by decreasing the production of proinflammatory cytokines and prostaglandin E(2), as well as suppress the inflammatory response (i.e., microglial activation) normally induced when exposed to a neurotoxin. Thus, ginger exhibited significant neuroprotective effects.

Supplementing with ginger daily for 12 weeks resulted in weight loss, decreased serum insulin, and decreased insulin resistance along with improvement in insulin sensitivity compared to the placebo group, according to a study published in the European Journal of Nutrition.

cluded that ginger "has potential in managing obesity." Following 12 weeks of daily supplementation with ginger, body weight, body mass index, and appetite decreased compared with the placebo group.

Supplementing with ginger for 10 weeks was To find the studies mentioned in this reported to decrease fasting blood glucose and hemoglobin A1c in patients with Type 2 diabetes, according to a study published in the International Journal of Endocrinology and Metabolism.

ported improved fasting blood glucose and hemoglobin A1c in Type 2 diabetic patients following daily ginger supplementation

Protects the Liver From

the liver tissue.

Since more than 90 percent of Americans have detectable levels of pesticide biomarkers in their body, ginger may be a beneficial addition to the diet to help protect the liver

The researchers concluded that ginger reptivity of ginger against numerous microbes, fective in relieving pain as mefenamic acid resents "a novel, natural delivery mechanism such as: Staphylococcus aureus and Streptofor improving IBD prevention and treatment coccus pyogenes, as well as Escherichia coli



Helps Prevent

Insecticide Damage

A study published in 2021 concluded that ginger protected the liver of rats from insecticideinduced injury following 30 days of ginger supplementation.

Compared with the control group, ginger reduced the level of oxidative stress caused by the insecticide and prevented damage to



and Salmonella typhi.

the brain or spinal cord.

Likewise, a study published in 2015 con-

Likewise, a study published in 2015 refor 12 weeks.

Studies have confirmed the antibacterial ac-



Finding more ways to include ginger in your diet can improve your gut health, slow aging, and lower

Ginger has also been reported to inhibit growth of Pseudomonas aeruginosa, which is a bacterium that can form biofilms in the human body and is becoming more difficult to treat with antibiotics due to increasing antibiotic resistance. Therefore, ginger may be a viable alternative.

Decreases Nausea and Vomiting

Ginger was shown to be more effective than vitamin B6 for relieving nausea and equally effective for decreasing vomiting during early pregnancy, according to a study published in Midwifery in 2009.

Decreases Nausea, Vomiting and Fatigue

associated with Chemotherapy Ginger can be an "effective adjuvant treatment for chemotherapy-induced nausea," according to a study published in Nutrients in 2017.

Patients who received ginger during three cycles of chemotherapy reported better quality of life as well as less nausea, vomiting, and fatigue compared with the placebo group. No adverse effects were reported.

Precautions and Possible Interactions

Pregnant or breastfeeding women should consult their health care provider before consuming ginger. While adverse effects to ginger are not common, the following have been reported: heartburn, nausea, diarrhea, abdominal pain, bloating, and gas.

article, please see the article online at TheEpochTimes.com

Dr. Sina McCullough is the creator of "Go Wild: How I Reverse Chronic & Autoimmune Disease," and author of "Hands Off My Food" and "Beyond Labels." She holds a doctorate in nutrition from the University of California-Davis. She is a master herbalist, Gluten Free Society certified practitioner, and homeschool mom of three.



GRAIN-FREE SOFT GINGERBREAD COOKIES

Let's be honest, sometimes you just want a cookie! So, why not make it a healthier version by adding ginger? Below is my family's favorite recipe for gingerbread cookies. They are grainfree and dairy-free but delicious!

MAKES 20 COOKIES

(choose organic when possible) 1 cup tigernut flour

1/4 cup arrowroot powde

1 tablespoon coconut flour 2 teaspoons ground ginger

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1 tablespoon gelatin from grass-finished cows or 1 egg

1/4 cup unsulphured blackstrap molasses

1/4 cup maple syrup

1 tablespoon maple sugar 2 tablespoons palm shortening or butter from

A2/A2, 100 percent grass-fed cows The recipe is no longer dairy-free when adding butter

instead of palm shortening.

COOKING THE CHICKEN

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. 2. Using an electric mixer, add all ingredients to the mixing bowl. Mix on medium speed until thoroughly combined; roughly 20 seconds.

3. Scoop by spoonful onto cookie sheet. Optional: Roll cookies in maple sugar to coat the outside. This increases the sugar content of the cookie, but also provides a more "typical" gingerbread cookie taste. 4. Bake 6 to 7 minutes. If you can wait until they cool, which I usually can't, allow them to come to room temperature because they taste better.

ALL IMAGES BY SHUTTERSTOCK

Salads or sauces: Chop, grate, mince or slice fresh, peeled ginger directly into your salads and sauces, such as marinades. Stir-fry: Grate or mince peeled

When purchasing fresh ginger, always choose organic and make sure the root is firm and moist. Avoid shriveled roots because they contain less juice.

resulting in some waste. However, it's often a faster and easier method of removal. If the skin is difficult to peel, soak the ginger in warm water for a few minutes to soften the skin

Simple ways to incorporate ginger

into your diet:

the last two minutes of cooking. fresh ginger (peeled and thinly sliced) to 2 cups boiling water.

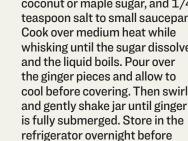


ginger to your stir-fry.

Pickled Ginger: Using a peeler, remove and discard the peel from 6 ounces of ginger. Continue to peel the ginger into large pieces. Add the large pieces to a clean Mason jar and set aside. Combine



It's easy to make homemade pickled ginger.





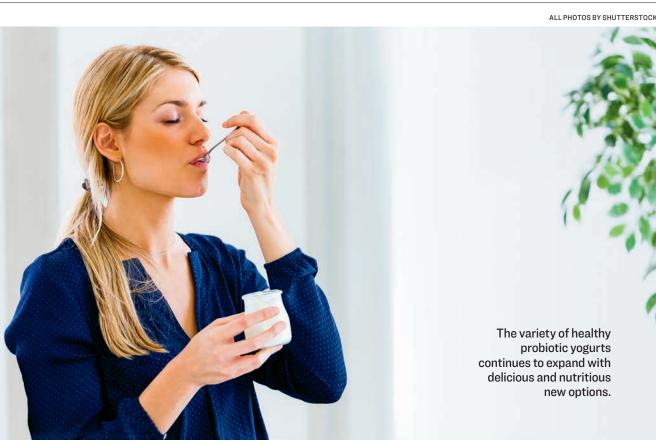
Ginger tea is a quick and tasty healing tonic.



consuming. Serve cold on sushi or salad, or eat raw.

Ginger Syrup: Bring equal amounts of organic maple sugar and water to a boil. Next, add freshly grated ginger (peel removed), let steep for 10 minutes, and then strain. Add the syrup to smoothies or homemade lemonade. Syrup keeps well for up to two weeks in the refrigerator.





Cultural Immersion: Choosing the Right Yogurt

People have been turning milk and other substances into an endless variety of yogurts for centuries

STEPHEN SOWULEWSKI

The yogurt section seems to be taking on a life of its own, whether those cultures are "live" or not. Shoppers can expect to find numerous brands with a plethora of varieties. If traditional yogurt was an acquired taste before or if it seems too passé now, you may be pleasantly surprised by this newer world of fermented options.

Health Benefits of Yogurt: Probiotics

Your gastrointestinal tract (GI) tract is teeming with trillions of helpful bacteria that can impact your digestive health, which is why many health experts are suggesting we eat live, active bacteria—probiotics. A new study led by researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health found that eating more yogurt was associated with a reduced risk of Type 2 diabetes. Researchers posit that this may be linked to probiotics in yogurt leading to improvement in insulin sensitivity and reduced Plant-Based Options which prevent harmful bacterial growth and are replete with calcium and vitamin D. Soy diarrhea-producing Clostridioides difficile or (C. diff.) according to Nature Reviews Mi-

crobiology. Athletic Performance

and Recovery Beneficial bacteria may also improve athletic performance, according to a 2019 position statement from the International Society for Sports Nutrition on probiotics. "A person who exercises has a varying gut that regulates bacterial composition as compared to sedentary

people," it states. Differences were linked primarily to the



If you're not a fan of yogurt, there are other fermented food options that include probiotics, like sauerkraut and fermented vegetables.

eaten. Researchers contend that in athletic populations, "certain probiotic strains can increase absorption of key nutrients such as amino acids from protein, which can affect the properties in food." Finally, the position statement reports that taking certain anti-inflammatory probiotic strains has been linked to improved recovery after exercise. Yogurt's Evolution:

What Kind of Yogurt to Buy

Overall, it's best to choose low-fat or fat-free yogurt as recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Don't be duped; fruit on the bottom and flavored yogurts may sound appealing, but added sugar is lurking in these varieties of yogurt. When you read the Nutrition Facts label on plain yogurt, you'll see that it lists "sugar," but this is because it contains lactose, the natural sugar

inflammation. Yogurts labeled with the "Live If you opt for a nondairy alternative, try one of & Active Cultures" seal are guaranteed to the plant-based yogurt options that are availcontain beneficial bacteria like those from able. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics the Lactobacillus and Bifidobacteria families, suggests that consumers look for brands that help to counter the acidity (pH) of the gut by based yogurt is equivalent to standard dairydoing battle with bacterial villains such as based yogurt in terms of protein content as compared to a brand that uses almond milk as its base, which typically contains just one gram of protein.

Going Greek

The Greeks are certainly no stranger to firsts, after all, they hosted the very first Olympic Games in Athens over 125 years ago. In the mid-2000s, shoppers began to see Greek style yogurt lining the shelves as the trend for thicker yogurt was beginning to take hold. Greek yogurt is strained, which means liquid (whey) has been taken out to yield a

vogurt. It also has double the protein of traditional yogurt. In both traditional and Greek yogurts, bacteria cultures help break down lactose, making it ideal for those who are lactose intolerant. As an added plus, Greek yogurt has

smoother taste as compared to traditional

less lactose than traditional yogurt.

Icelandic Skyr A few summers ago I traveled to "the land of fire and ice" and tried Icelandic yogurt for the first time at the hotel restaurant—I was hooked! Icelandic yogurt (skyr) is even more strained than Greek, leading to an ultra-thick

and much creamier taste. Icelandic-style skyr contains little sugar

n probiotics.

Middle Eastern Labneh is a popular dairy food of the Middle East—a sort of hybrid between yogurt and cheese. Although it doesn't have the spotlight of Greek yogurt or Icelandic yogurt, it's even more strained, which leads to its unique consistency. Due to its savory taste, it pairs well with bread and crackers as a dip or a spread.

and offers a more tart taste. It typically comes

from grass-fed cow's milk. Skyr is also high

Unlike Greek and Icelandic yogurt, Australian yogurt is unstrained. However, it's still a bit richer and creamier than traditional yogurt. Some brands use only whole milk to achieve this, while others use nonfat milk.

Although yogurt packaging has changed over time, it was originally packaged in glass containers, which can still be seen today. The French refer to this as "pot set." This yogurt is cultured and placed into individual glass jars. It's unstrained but still has a creamy texture because it typically comes from whole milk.

East European (Kefir and Quark)

Kefir is a fermented milk product that's akin to a drinkable yogurt and has a creamy texture. One of the most notable things is that kefir can have three times the amount of probiotics as compared to other yogurts.

Seen in Germanic countries, quark falls between the texture of traditional yogurt and cottage cheese, without any added sugars. It's often described as an acid-set cheese and has a less sour taste as compared to Greek yogurt, but is similar in consistency.

Not a Fan of Yogurt? Try Other

Fermented Foods If you're not fond of yogurt, there are certainly other fermented food options that include probiotics, such as sauerkraut (fermented cabbage), the Korean staple known as kimchi (pickled and fermented cabbage), kombucha (fermented black tea with sugar, fruit, or honey), apple cider vinegar (fermented apples), or pickles (cu-

cumbers fermented in lactic acid). Try this simple test: Take the lid off of your next jar of pickles, and you should see bubbles. This test signifies that the cultures are

alive and well.

Check Food Labels In addition to looking for words like "live cultures," double check those food labels for other key words such as "unpasteurized," "raw" or "naturally fermented," as these words signify optimal probiotic

A diet rich in probiotics not only keeps the gut healthy, but also helps fight age-related chronic inflammation as noted in the journal

Frontiers in Immunology. One of the great things about fermented foods is the bioavailability of some nutrients. Many fermented foods confer more bioavailability of certain nutrients, which allows our body to use more of the nutrients. For example, vitamin C is more bioavailable in

sauerkraut than in cabbage.

Yogurt in All Its Guises As suggested by the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, yogurt is one of the

most versatile foods around. You can flavor it to use as a sweet dip for fruit, or savory topping for vegetables. You can mix it with fruit, nuts, and grains for a delicious meal, or add it to any number of dishes. You can freeze it for treats, use it as a topping on baked potatoes, or add it to smoothies for extra protein. It's great in dressings, sauces, baking, soups, and pastas, and can even be

Dr. Stephen Sowulewski is a professor in the School of Health Professions at Reynolds Community College, an adjunct professor in Virginia Commonwealth University's Honors College and the University of Richmond's School of Continuing Studies. He also serves on the board of directors at the Men's Health

Network in Washington, D.C.

used as a face cleanser or hair conditioner.

What Can You Do About Dry Eyes?

MAT LECOMPTE

When your eyes feel scratchy and irritated, the pain and discomfort can make even the most relaxing activity feel like a struggle. Itchy, scratchy, dry eyes can have several causes, from seasonal allergies to a dry environment. They could also be caused by Certain medications

dry eye syndrome, a problem caused by declining tear production. If eyes can't produce enough tears, they

don't get the natural lubrication needed to stay moist. The result can be irritation, light sensitivity, or blurry vision. Dry eye may even result in a sticky feeling or fewer tears while crying. Dry eye syndrome Dry eyes have becomes more com-

mon with age and

can also be caused

by hormonal chang-

es, for example dur-

ing menopause.

there are several ways to help them.

a number of

causes and

can also be contributing factors. A few strategies and treatments may help to relieve the symptoms.

Avoid all the extra sugar

added to "fruit bottom"

to plain yogurt.

Don't be

yogurts

duped; fruit

on the bottom

and flavored

may sound

added sugar

is lurking in

of yogurt.

these varieties

appealing, but

yogurts and add fresh fruit

If you spend a lot of time in front of screens, try taking frequent breaks. The 20/20/20 rule may help: every 20 minutes, focus

> also try minimizing screen time. Keeping a humidifier

on something 20 feet away

for 20 seconds. You could

such as antihistamines or decongestants to a more comfortable environment for

> Several drops and ointments are available that can either directly add lubrication or stimulate natural tear production. Although these products are not a cure, they have the potential to ease symptoms. The first step is visiting a doctor to get to

> the root of why your eyes are dry. If the doc-

tor can determine why your eyes are dry,

he or she will be able to set you up with the

running in your home Mat Lecompte is a health and wellness reporter for Bel Marra Health, which first

best treatment for your condition.

can help reduce drypublished this article. ness and contribute



To remove the outer skin, use a peeler or the back of a spoon. The peeler removes a thicker layer,

ginger and add to stir-fry during Ginger Tea: Add 1/2 inch piece of

Add grated or minced peeled

Cover and boil for 5 minutes. Remove ginger and add a drop of raw, local honey (optional) along with the juice of one organic lemon wedge. Enjoy warm.

cider vinegar, 3 tablespoons coconut or maple sugar, and 1/4 teaspoon salt to small saucepan. whisking until the sugar dissolves cool before covering. Then swirl and gently shake jar until ginger

1/2 cup water, 1/3 cup apple



desserts and drinks.

use are also employed in trauma therapy.

We can learn from experts in these dis-

ciplines how to improve our own mental

health in ways that influence our physi-

Bouncing back after the collective

trauma of the pandemic is likely going

to require additional tools to help cope

with anxiety as we work through our in-

dividual and collective fears and trig-

gers, some that are just surfacing and

There's a lot of agreement about tips

and techniques that can improve vagal

tone and bring the nervous system into

balance. Much of that centers around

heart rate variability, HRV, as an accu-

nervous system, which comprises the

sympathetic (fight or flight) and para-

The more heart rate variability or HRV

a person has, the more adaptable they

sympathetic (rest and digest).

are and the better able they are

to recover from stress, gener-

At-home devices can

measure HRV, and

they are often used

by athletes who want

to improve perfor-

mance and recov-

ery. Tracking HRV

can help avoid

track progress

over time, reveal

trends, and gen-

erally help some-

one make better

decisions about

well-being while

still working

A heart rate

of 60 beats per

one beat per sec-

ond. However,

beyond just heart rate.

some beats might be less than

though, that adaptability goes

A healthy heart isn't necessarily

reacts and recovers from stressors

quickly causing varying rates is

considered healthiest. That's where

and risk of chronic disease.

that involve the vagus nerve.

high HRV scores come from, and they

indicate longevity, resilience, fitness,

and even strong mental health. Low HRV

scores correspond with inflammation

HRV and the vagus nerve are linked,

because the 10th cranial nerve helps the

heart function, as well as all the diges-

tive organs, starting with the throat. It's

also involved in breathing, as it wanders

throughout the torso as a long commu-

nication highway between the organs

and the brain. Using the breath to slow

the heart rate is one of many techniques

Leah Lagos, a licensed clinical psy-

chologist and author of "Heart, Breath,

Mind," specializes in health and per-

formance psychology and HRV bio-

feedback. She's published studies and

articles on the effect of HRV biofeedback

on traumatic brain injury, boosting

confidence, post-concussion syndrome,

and athletic performance. Her stance is

that stress resides in the body, not the

brain, and that addressing the body can

a consistent one; rather a heart that

toward fitness

overtraining,

ally speaking.

others that are persisting.

cal healing.

Maximizing mental and physical wellness by tapping into the power of the vagus nerve

AMY DENNEY

o you know which group of people studies and applies practices based on the intricacies of the nervous system?

Athletes, especially professional and elite athletes who are at the forefront in biohacking, are quite curious and knowledgeable about improving their

Vagal tone refers to the activity of the vagus nerve. This nerve is the key element of the parasympathetic nervous system. This is the rest-and-digest system, the one you want engaged most of the time. Its counter is the sympathetic rate measure of the body's autonomic nervous system, responsible for the fightor-flight state.

Vagal tone is measured through the different things it affects, such as heart rate and heart rate variability. A slower heart rate and a greater heart rate variability indicate a healthier vagal tone and a better functioning vagus nerve. Your vagus nerve affects many many other systems and functions in the body.

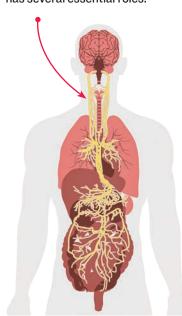
A healthy heart isn't necessarily a consistent one; rather a heart that reacts and recovers from stressors quickly causing varying rates is considered healthiest.

If you switch into a fight-or-flight state and then back into a rest-and-digest state goals. quickly, that's good. It means your body can gear up to deal with a threat and gear down to maintain itself. It means you can minute suggests get in and out of a stress state effectively.

How quickly someone bounces back after stress—and enters relaxation through the parasympathetic nervous a second apart and others more system—is believed to be a factor in aththan a second apart. Recognize, letic performance.

person is that by using the same strategies, I could improve my response to my own stressors, which are not nearly as extreme as someone pushing their body to the very limit in a high-stakes competition with thousands watching. In fact, many of the techniques athletes

> The vagus nerve (yellow) is the longest nerve in the body and has several essential roles.



state for overall better health.

soothe anxiety, according to the National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine. Simply talking about symptoms and understanding that your own trauma responses are normal within the context of what you have experienced can offer relief.

2. Audible exhales: Jonnie Trainings suggests adding a sigh, humming, or singing to the exhale to enhance the parasympathetic

4. Loving-kindness meditation: Studies show this particular meditation alters neural systems important for empathy and compassion and appears to aid in emotional regulation.

5. Consistent yoga: One study found that 10 weeks of yoga practice significantly reduced the PTSD symptoms of patients who had failed to respond to any medication or to any other

6. Perform any activity mindfully: Goodmanson suggests making dinner in a mindful way. approaching it the same way as a yoga pose. Mindfulness has been found to improve dissociation, a

enhance cognitive capabilities.

One case study she's participated in, Heart Rate Variability Biofeedback as a Strategy for Dealing with Competitive Anxiety: A Case Study, published in Biofeedback in 2008 followed a 14-year-old golfer who received only biofeedback training leading up to a com-

petition and no golf instruction. In addition to **Athletes** once-a-week sessions learn that of breathing exercises recovering from and HRV measuretress is an importan ments over 10 weeks, part of future he also did sessions

at home for 20 minutes

twice daily. Data suggest it may have enhanced his ability to cope with stress and improve his performance, as his autonomic regula-

tion normalized As powerful as vagal tone is, it's important to also recognize the nerve is just one part of a masterful system that has many components, according to Jonnie Goodmanson, founder of Live Free Trainings, which offers online courses for ordinary people to learn body intelligence and anatomy and physiology

The vagus nerve "is doing a lot of things, but it's calming you down. It works on its own," she said. "Any-

thing you mindfully do with intention and taking your time, you're going to stimulate that vagus nerve. It's not like you're just stimulating the vagus nerve."

Other nerves may also be stimulated that control vision, olfactory, taste, and hearing. The vagus nerve is one part of the entire autonomic nervous system, which also includes neurotransmitters enhancing communication within the system. Understanding the vagal nerve in its context helps foster appre-

ciation for the body and its inner workings, Goodmanson says. The autonomic nervous system has

a defensive mechanism designed to protect us. The brain stem and retina work in concert to determine potential threats, and if the threat becomes imminent, the sympathetic nervous system is activated. Heart rate, blood pressure, and circulation all increase. Pupils dilate. And when fight or flee is not an option, the parasympathetic nervous system engages and the person freezes muscles and breath.

None of these decisions are cognitive. It's simply the job of the nervous system. That's why "hacking" the nervous system might be able to undo an imbalance if a person gets stuck in the adaptive state. Biohacking is a broad term for manipulating the body or brain without using traditional medicine to improve health or longevity.

There are basic things you can do to improve vagal tone, such as eating healthy, getting adequate sleep, drinking enough water, meditating, and doing breathing exercises.

Approaching your body as an ally rather than an enemy is a good first step in noticing the effects of anxiety and trauma. Integrating mind and body can foster a grace-filled empathy for your experience as you begin the process of undoing damage done by trauma.

Amy Denney is an award-winning journalist, certified Holy Yoga instructor and light therapy specialist. She works with clients looking for natural, side-effect-free solutions to pain and

Getting Beyond the

Starting a new habit can be exciting, but how do you keep going once it's become tough and boring?

Continued from Page 9

So why do we put forth this Herculean effort when starting a habit, to find ourselves giving up once those first few weeks are over?

Failing Points of a New Habit

I've had success with making certain daily habits a regular part of my life. Several years ago, after having my sec-

So I tried to change two small things: wake up an hour before my children and get myself dressed for the day. I'm going on nearly 5 years of these habits and can say that I've done them about 98 percent of the time. These two small changes have had a cascade effect on this time in my life and have become automatic.

started countless other habits only to end up failing after a month.

main failing points: When there's no immediate reward, the habit loses its luster, and when we take on too much too soon, we set an unrealistic goal.

No Immediate Reward

easy. We set a goal. The benefits of the goal fuel us with motivation to begin. But many of the habits we begin (like eating well or flossing) don't offer instant gratification. The reward is more long-term and only as great as the time invested in the habit.

doesn't give an immediate reward, just

it's through the constant persistence of performing the habit that the reward

Too Much Too Soon

Another reason habits fail is that we try to take on too much too soon. It's a classic case of biting off more than we can chew. The key with forming habits is to develop the muscle memory of action, not to make huge progress in one week.

I'm constantly telling my children, "slow and steady wins the race, fast and sloppy makes mistakes." The same is true when we begin new habits. If we're too quick to add another new habit before one is mastered, we become overloaded and increase our risk of defeat.

In the first few days and weeks of a new habit, we're fueled by the excitement of change. It's easy to overcommit when you're in this honeymoon period.

Even though I've developed a bank of healthy habits that I do regularly, I've found that beginning a new habit isn't the hard part maintaining it is.

4 Tips to Making a Habit

Starting a new habit and getting it stick long enough to become automatic takes some determination—and a few simple tips.

Start Small

It's easy to think that beginning a handful of new habits will magically transform your life from chaotic to tranquil and sometimes they do. James Clear, flossing my teeth. It's a tedious task that author of the #1 New York Times bestselling book "Atomic Habits," says that sore gums. So whatever the task may be, in order to make habits stick, you need to

Rather than setting a goal of doing 50 pushups, aim for doing 5 a day. More motivation isn't what's going to make the habit stick, it's the consistency of it's no surprise that adults are the same learning how to perform a task until it's automatic.

A new habit, like practicing music,

That's where visual tracking can help.

can be motivating at first, but

become discouraging over time.

Be Realistic

with a glorified account of other people's success—minus all the hardships and failures. Research and studies that investigate the legitimacy and reality of **Prepare for Challenges** social media have found that much of Have a plan for the inevitable challenges what women perceive, from Instagram to come. For me, if I miss a day of exerin particular, leads to social comparison cising and can't color in that day's box and body dissatisfaction.

It's no wonder we come up with unrealistic goals for ourselves. Instead, take time to think about the season of life you're currently in. What small change would likely make a big impact if done well? For me, during that season your attitude, schedule, or circumstancof motherhood with a baby and toddler, it was having an hour of quiet time before beginning the busyness of the day. What works for others may not be the

found to make a new habit successful

start small, so small that you can't say no. is by using a visual tracker to measure my progress. Research shows that children in a classroom are more motivated when they can see their progress, and way. Our brains release the feel-good chemical dopamine when we see advancement toward our goals being met. Why else do many people make to-do Social media has saturated our lives lists and write down even the simplest of tasks just for the sheer enjoyment of crossing something off?

on my visual chart, it motivates me to make sure I don't miss two days in a row. Having one off day doesn't mean your habit has failed. It's important to learn to recognize what caused you to skip that habit, and determine to change es so you have more success tomorrow.

simply, intentionally, and relationally in this modern world. You can follow along by subscribing to their twice-

Use Story to Change Your Life

What you tell yourself about your experiences becomes what you experience

LEO BABAUTA

Most of us don't realize how powerful stories are in our lives. We don't even notice that we're very often telling ourselves a story and that these stories shape everything we believe about our reality.

For example, the stories you tell yourself is the reason you feel:

- Resentment toward a loved one or co-Guilty about what you haven't done
- Overwhelmed by all that you need to do • Anxious about the uncertainty of the
- Stuck in your old habits
- Avoidant of your difficult tasks
- Bored or lonely

Nothing in the basic reality of life makes us feel these things. It's our stories about our reality that create the feelings.

Let's look at how this works in our lives, then how we can use the power of story to change things we want to change.

How Story Shapes Our Lives

For example, what kind of reaction would you have if someone asked you, "Would you like some of this salad I'm making?" It depends on how you view the situation, what your narrative or story about it is:

If you see this as a generous act of kind-

ness and this person is contributing to you getting in your life right now, and how your healthy life, then you might feel

• If this question is seen as a part of a nar-

rative of hundreds of times this person has criticized your weight or diet, then you might feel hurt or annoyed. • Or maybe you have a narrative that salad

is terrible, and you might feel disappointed it's not a hamburger and fries.

These are three very different reactions to the same act. And they're determined by your view of things, your narrative or story. It's our stories Every day, our lives are

about our reality that shaped by the story we have create the feelings of ourselves, of others, and of we have. the reality around us. We have feelings about politics, world crises, our community, social media, our work, an upcoming meeting, a conversation we had this morning, or how good we've been at keeping up with new habits.

If you miss a day of meditation or exercise, depending on your story about yourself, you might feel that this is no big deal and just start again the next day, or you might feel that you're terrible at this and you'll never get it right and your life is meaningless. Very different reactions and results from the same act, and it's all dependent on story.

I invite you to reflect: What results are

are they shaped by your stories? What is your relationship with others in your life like right now, including yourself, and how is that shaped by your stories? What is your relationship to food, exercise, meditation, self-care, rest, work, and play, and how are those relationships shaped by your stories?

Once we can become aware of our stories and how they shape our lives, through the kind of reflection I'm inviting you to do right now, then we can start to reshape things through new

Take a few minutes to reflect.

How to Use Story as a Change Tool

You can completely change how you feel, change the results you're getting, and change your relationship to anything, by changing your story.

You definitely don't have to change anything if you don't want to. If you want to keep resenting someone, want to keep feeling guilty or powerless or overwhelmed, you can keep your usual story and there

But if you'd like to change, consider using story as a tool for that change. Here's how it could work:

1. Identify the feeling, result, or way of relating to something that you'd like to

> You can completely change how you feel, change the results you're getting, and change your relationship to anything, by changing your story.

change. Examples: I eat a lot of junk food I'm constantly frustrated by people; I can't stop looking at social media. 2. See if you can identify the story that's re-

shouldn't act that way; I need social media apps on my phone to stay connected. 3. Identify a new result, feeling or way of relating to something that you'd like instead. Examples: I want to eat more vegetables and to love healthy food; I

cial media. 4. Draft a new story that will help you get that. Examples: Veggies and fruit nourish my body and make me feel amazing; there's a loving heart behind every

5. Remind yourself to tell yourself this new story every time it would help. This takes a lot of practice, so also create the story that you don't need to be perfect at this, but that you'll be persistent because you care deeply about this.

Create a New Story for Yourself,

Here are some examples of stories that have helped me recently:

· Every moment is sacred and has some-

- thing to teach me.
- I look for the light in each person.
- I need only simple, nourishing foods.
- I can be with any fear or emotion. I am deeply committed to the results I want to create.
- Movement and the outdoors light me up. • I care for my life by tending to finances, my health, and messages to people I care
- I savor stillness and quiet.

What stories would cause a powerful shift

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



1. Join a community: Being in a

Goodmanson, founder of Live Free effect of breathing.

3. Add eye movement to breath: Take deep, long breaths while alternating bringing the gaze all the way up to the left and then to the right. Goodmanson said this is more effective because the optic and vagal nerves are working

persistent symptom of trauma.



ond baby and transitioning to staying at home, I felt the rising stress of demands from my two very small children. I knew that staying in bed until one of them woke me up and only getting out of my pajamas by mid-morning was a big factor in how the rest of my

But despite success in some habits, I've

So why do habits fail? There are two

Starting a new habit can be relatively

I've never been great at the habit of

magic ticket for you.

One of the most effective ways I've

Mollie (and her husband, Mike) blog at This Evergreen Home where they share their experience with living

sponsible for that. Examples: Junk food comforts me when I'm stressed; people

want to see the good in people and be more accepting; I want to read books whenever I would normally look at so-

person's actions; when I have downtime, I treat myself to reading a good book.

Model Contentment for Your Kids Today

6 practical ways you can show your children how to be satisfied

JOSHUA BECKER

"How do I keep my kids from always wanting more stuff?"

I've been asked this question countless times. And understandably so. In fact, I often find myself asking the same question.

It's a hard one to answer—mostly because the answer includes something we don't always like to think about: our own actions.

But the simple truth is this: We can't expect our kids to stop constantly wanting new things until we ourselves stop constantly wanting new things. If we're always chasing the latest and greatest new thing, our kids are going to do the same.

When we model contentment for them, however, our kids will learn it from us.

Our kids always take their cues from us. We hear it when they repeat a catchphrase or joke we use. Harder to see are the worries or desires kids acquire from their parents. We might be unable to see it, but our children pick up on our stress and our joy.

The same goes for contentment. Our kids can tell if we're content or not. They hear our complaints, they see our unnecessary upgrades, and they take note of our gratitude. When we start to be content with what we have, our kids will notice and begin to be content as well.

In teaching about financial literacy, Sam X Renick reminds us: "If you want your children to develop good spending and saving habits, they need to see you making smart spending and saving choices. In short, practice what you preach."

There are studies behind this advice. Behavior formation through modeling is so strong that researchers have been writing about it for years, and there's even a theory based on the reality of imitating the behaviors of others.

Social learning theory states that we learn from the models of what others around us are doing. Learning takes place in a social context, and we make changes in our knowledge or behavior based on the positive or negative experiences we witness in others' behavior.

So, if we want kids who are content, pursuing a meaningful life of purpose, we must begin by modeling contentment ourselves.

Equally, we shouldn't be surprised that our kids want stuff they don't need when our homes are filled with stuff we don't need—we're modeling the behavior for them, and they're fast learners.

Simply put, it's hard to convince our kids they have too many toys in their toy room when we can't park in our own garage.

When it comes to our children, life lessons are always caught more than taught. Fortunately, there are several ways we can model contentment for our children:

1. We can be content with our mode of transportation.

Whether we bike, walk, drive, or take public transportation, we can be grateful for the ability to get from here to there. Our car may not be the latest and greatest; our walk to work may mean we need to build more time into our routine; or the bus might sometimes be late.

But think about the purpose of your transportation, and be grateful that it gets you where you need to go. Voice that gratitude instead of your wishes for a different car.

2. We can be content with our food.

There are those who like variety in their meals, others who prefer the ease of repetition, and still others who have no choice.

Learn to be content with the food you have to nourish your body each day.

What's the purpose of food? To sustain the body, to give us energy to tackle our purpose every day, and to share as a means of friendship or service. Whether it's dinner with a flair or leftovers again, be grateful for the food you have.

3. We can be content with our entertainment and toys.

Recreation is a good thing. We need time to play and relax—time to connect with others over sports or games or movies.

Think through your choices of entertain-



When we start to be content with what we have, our kids will notice and begin to be content as well.

ment. Can you be content with a hike through the woods or a picnic at a local park, instead of front-row seats at the stadium?

There are times for extravagant trips and events, but if we're always looking for the next big adventure, our children will learn that it's more important to spend a lot of money than to spend time together. And be especially careful at displaying discontent when talking about someone else's vacation.

4. We can be content with our exercise.

Another area where we can model contentment is in our opportunities to exercise the body.

Instead of adding one more machine to your home gym, lace up your running shoes and take your kid to the high school track for a few laps in the sun. Parkyour car farther away from the store, so everyday errands become a simple form of extra movement for your body.

See the limits on your resources as opportunities to get creative.

5. We can be content with our relationships.

Relationships are essential, and they take work

Show your kids contentment by investing in the relationships you already have—even the tough ones.

Instead of going through relationships like some of us go through new sweaters, take time and energy for the relationships already in place. Voice your gratitude for those relationships so your kids can hear it.

6. We can be content with our possessions.

We can model contentment for our kids when we find contentment in our possessions, no matter how many or how few we may have.

Next time you want to buy an unnecessary item, ask yourself how you'd answer if your child asked, "Why did you buy that?"

In addition, model contentment with your possessions by practicing generosity. When your child sees you holding things lightly and giving freely to others, they learn that you're not defined by your possessions.

Ultimately, as parents we have to accept the fact that our children will make their own choices. Embracing a life of contentment with fewer possessions, however, models for them the important truth that we aren't defined by our possessions, our vehicles, or our gym memberships.

Celebrate with your kids what you already have, and teach them through your actions the values of both gratitude and contentment.

This is how we keep our kids from constantly wanting more stuff.

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



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