

MIND & BODY



WIM HOF, also known as the “iceman,” has become famous for his ability to withstand and perform impressive physical feats in freezing temperatures.

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How One Man Turned Pain Into Power

Grief drove Wim Hof on a path of discovery that now challenges beliefs about the limits of the mind and body

EMMA SUTTIE

We’ve all heard stories of that rare person who’s able to do things with their bodies and minds that defy scientific understanding. But they’re the outliers—aren’t they? They must possess something the rest of us don’t.

Wim Hof, also known as the “iceman,” embodies this idea, and has become famous for his ability to tolerate and thrive amid frigid temperatures. He has amassed several Guinness World Records for his feats of endurance and athleticism, mostly in freezing temperatures. He attributes his abilities to deep breathing exercises and cold therapy (exposure to the cold which causes a cascade of health benefits) that he claims tap

into our innate abilities as humans. So, how does he do it? And can we do it as well?

The Wim Hof method is built on three “pillars”: breathing, cold therapy, and commitment. Using his method, Hof has been able to do things that science had previously thought impossible. He holds many world records for his feats of physical prowess.

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of Hof’s abilities, through his discovery and development of these techniques, is that he has been able to master aspects of his physiology. Hof has demonstrated that he can affect his core body temperature regardless of external conditions, voluntarily activate his sympathetic nervous system, and influence his immune response.

Continued on Page 6

This catastrophic death of his wife threw Hof’s life into chaos and the grief he felt almost consumed him.



3 WIM HOF RECORDS

24,000 FEET

Wim Hof was able to climb to the “kill zone” (24,000 feet) of Mount Everest in his shorts—without shoes.



98.6 DEGREES

In 2011, he ran an entire marathon in the Namib Desert with no food or water. Perhaps most notably, Hof kept his core body temperature at 98.6 degrees, which is unheard of in those conditions.



In 2000, he set a record for the longest distance swim under ice—a total of 188.6 feet.

188.6 FEET

JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES



Florida Surgeon General Dr. Joseph Ladapo now recommends that adult men under 40 don’t get vaccinated against COVID-19.

Will the Term ‘Long Flu’ Join ‘Long Covid’?

‘Long’ versions of many ailments have gotten short shrift, but COVID-19 may change that

SUSAN C. OLMSTEAD

Some laypeople, patients, and public health observers have begun using the term “long flu” as a way to describe long-term or chronic symptoms arising after the flu, mirroring the use of the term “long COVID” to describe the lingering effects of that virus.

Uncertainty surrounded COVID-19 in its earliest days, stemming from the fact that it was caused by a novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), and we didn’t know what to expect from it at first. We didn’t know exactly how (or how easily) it was transmitted, how deadly it would be, and if it would have lasting

health effects for people who contracted it.

Concern about the possible long-term effects of COVID infection led sufferers to begin referring to their lingering symptoms as “long COVID” or “long-haul COVID.”

Many viruses may cause sequelae (a secondary condition or symptoms that arise from the original disease) that can last long after the initial acute infection. Medical professionals have always been aware of this, but before the days of COVID, it wasn’t of great concern to most laypeople when they came down with the flu or another illness.

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Shiyu Zhou
PH.D., USA

Zhuangzi is the main text of Falun Gong (also called Falun Dafa). The book expounds upon profound principles of Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance. It addresses the long-forgotten term “cultivation,” the origins of illnesses, karma, the role of moral character on a path to spiritual perfection, and more.

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The association between COVID-19 vaccines and specific harms continues to raise concerns.

VIEWPOINTS

How Much Harm Is Too Much for a Vaccine?

According to well-established criteria, the scientific threshold has been met to link COVID vaccines to specific harms

JENNIFER MARGULIS & JOE WANG

There’s evidence that suggests that aluminum is a neurotoxin. There’s evidence that shows that glyphosate is a cause of infertility. Many vegans contend that a plant-based diet is positively associated with healthy aging. There’s a traditional Chinese belief that sweeping with a broom on New Year’s brings bad luck. But how do we know if these things are

actually linked or if they’re just randomly associated?

How do public health officials, medical doctors, and patients themselves determine if there’s a cause-and-effect relationship between aluminum and brain decline or glyphosate and fertility challenges? This isn’t just a philosophical debate. Figuring out the answers to cause-and-effect questions has the potential to impact many of our health and lifestyle choices.

Correlation or Causation?
Sir Austin Bradford Hill was a medical statis-

tician in Great Britain. In 1965, Hill established a set of nine “viewpoints” to determine when data demonstrated causation.

Hill’s work is still the foundation of showing cause and effect in epidemiology, as well as of showing statistically valid causation across the sciences.

You have heard the caution that “correlation is not causation.” This is a phrase repeated many times over, especially by industry spokespeople trying to defend the safety of pharmaceutical medications or other products.

The idea behind insisting that correlation doesn’t equal causation is that just because two things happen together, it doesn’t mean that one caused the other.

A quick example: Let’s say a lot of people named Ashley drive Priuses. That doesn’t mean that Prius drivers must be named Ashley or that people named Ashley necessarily prefer Priuses. The observation can be true without there being any real connection between the name Ashley and Priuses beyond simple random chance.

However, when data show a correlation of any kind (whether it be sudden deaths among healthy young people who have recently had COVID-19 vaccines or Prius drivers named Ashley), Hill points to nine ways of proving causation.

The Bradford Hill Criteria

In 1965, long before cigarette manufacturers acknowledged there was any connection, Hill applied his criteria to smoking and cancer. While everyone now recognizes the connec-

tion, it’s important to remember that smoking and lung cancer don’t have a 1:1 correlation.

Many people, including Jennifer’s grandfather, are able to smoke like chimneys all their lives without getting lung cancer.

However, the Bradford Hill criteria point to plausible biological mechanisms to explain why the mRNA vaccines are causing heart inflammation.

In April 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) temporarily paused the use of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, after several women developed thrombosis and thrombocytopenia within two weeks of being vaccinated.

Since this specific condition was virtually unheard of before the vaccines, six cases in women between the ages of 18 and 48 were enough to get the attention of the public health authorities. Several Bradford Hill criteria were fulfilled, including temporality and strength.

If any pharmaceutical product—including a prescription or over-the-counter medication or a vaccination—meets even just two of the criteria, caution would suggest that the possibility of causation be vigorously investigated.

Myocarditis in Young Men Post-COVID-19 Injection

Cases of myocarditis in young men who had received mRNA COVID-19 vaccines made UK health officials concerned that the risk of myocarditis may be as great or greater to young men than the risks of COVID-19 itself. Because of a risk-benefit analysis that showed that cases are higher in men who get the Pfizer vaccine, the UK’s National Health Service now recommends young men get the Moderna injection. When Florida public health officials did an extensive review of the existing data, they came to a very different conclusion. Florida Surgeon General Dr. Joseph Ladapo now recommends that adult men under 40 don’t get vaccinated against COVID-19.

In a statement released on Oct. 7, 2022, Ladapo said:

“This analysis found that there is an 84% increase in the relative incidence of cardiac-related death among males 18–39 years old within 28 days following mRNA vaccination. With a high level of global immunity to COVID-19, the benefit of vaccination is likely outweighed by this abnormally high risk of cardiac-related death among men in this age group. Non-mRNA vaccines were not found to have these increased risks.

As such, the State Surgeon General recommends against males aged 18 to 39 from receiving mRNA COVID-19 vaccines. Those with preexisting cardiac conditions, such as myocarditis and pericarditis, should take particular caution when making this decision.”

How does looking at the data lead to rescinding the recommendation that males aged 18 to 39 get vaccinated? The data showed the Bradford Hill criteria of strength—there is an increased incidence of myocarditis in more vaccinated populations; consistency—incidents of myocarditis post-vaccination have been found worldwide; temporality—young

men (and many other people) are developing myocarditis following the COVID-19 vaccines; and perhaps specificity—until the rollout of the vaccination program, myocarditis in young men was extremely rare.

Research is now being done to look at plausible biological mechanisms to explain why the mRNA vaccines are causing heart inflammation.

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Just because two things happen together, it doesn’t mean that one caused the other.

The CDC recommends using other vaccines against COVID-19. As they explain on their website:

“There is a potential cause-and-effect relationship between J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine and a rare and serious adverse event. It is blood clots with low platelets (thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome, or TTS). TTS occurs at a rate of about 4 cases per million Janssen’s Johnson and Johnson doses and has resulted in deaths. Because of this risk, vaccination with COVID-19 vaccines other than J&J/Janssen vaccine is preferred.”

Pharmaceutical Expert Weighs In

A former pharmaceutical executive, Sasha Latypova, spent her career founding several companies focusing on clinical trial reviews.

In a recent interview with UK Column, Latypova pointed to data that show—using the Bradford Hill criteria—it’s clear that the

harms of the COVID-19 injections outweigh the benefits.

Among other things, Latypova pointed to a Pfizer-funded rodent study that showed that pregnant rats had poor health outcomes. Pfizer dismissed the findings of skeletal abnormalities, feeding disturbances, and pregnancy loss in the vaccinated rodents as “incidental.”

But Latypova also mentioned that we know that there have been significantly more miscarriages and stillbirths in countries where large numbers of women have been vaccinated.

“The birth rates have declined in perfect correlation with the vaccination rates” in these countries, she said. “At the same time, we haven’t seen a similar decline in poorer countries where pregnant women have not been getting COVID-19 injections. In those countries, birth rates have risen.

“What else do you need as proof?” Latypova asked rhetorically. “All the Bradford Hill criteria have all been met for all of this.”

There’s a definite correlation between COVID-19 injections and adverse events, including declining birth rates, stillbirths, and other poor health outcomes. In most cases, if a drug is shown to cause harm by meeting just two Bradford Hill criteria, it would no longer be recommended. In this case, all nine Bradford Hill criteria are met.

It’s time for public health officials, along with medical doctors, epidemiologists, and everyone else, to reappraise the contention that these injections are safe.

Jennifer Margulis, Ph.D., is an award-winning journalist and author of “Your Baby, Your Way: Taking Charge of Your Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Parenting Decisions for a Happier, Healthier Family.” A Fulbright award recipient and mother of four, she has worked on a child survival campaign in West Africa, advocated for an end to child slavery in Pakistan on prime-time TV in Paris, and taught post-colonial literature to non-traditional students in inner-city Atlanta. Learn more about her at JenniferMargulis.net

Joe Wang, Ph.D., was a molecular biologist with more than 10 years of experience in the vaccine industry. He is now the president of New Tang Dynasty TV (Canada), and a columnist for The Epoch Times.

The Bradford Hill Criteria

- Strength:** The more two things occur together, the more likely the causality, even for rare events.
- Consistency:** Studies find the same correlation in different places and populations.
- Specificity:** A single cause produces a specific effect. (True of diseases like tuberculosis, for example, which is caused by a bacterium called “Mycobacterium tuberculosis”; not so simple for cancer, which appears to have multiple causes.)

- Temporality:** The cause must come before (precede) the effect.
- Biological gradient:** More exposure leads to more frequent consequences.
- Plausibility:** Is there a plausible mechanism for how one thing causes the other?
- Coherence:** Is the same effect found in both epidemiological studies of the population and in laboratory work?
- Experiment:** Can the correlation observed in the population be reproduced in a laboratory experiment?
- Analogy:** Is this cause-effect relationship similar to others we already understand?

Will the Term ‘Long Flu’ Join ‘Long Covid’?

Continued from Page 1

In the absence of a label connecting acute illness and chronic conditions, patients suffering the effects of the flu may have thought of their long-term symptoms as unrelated to their initial infection.

Now, some health officials and patient advocates are attaching the label “long” (or sometimes “long-haul”) to other illnesses, including the flu, when referring to possible chronic or long-term complications arising from them. The moniker may be new, but the phenomenon isn’t.

Did Patients Invent Long COVID?

Elisa Perego, an honorary research fellow of archeology at University College London, claims to be the first person ever to use the term “long COVID.”

In May 2020, Perego posted on Twitter, “The #LongCovid #COVID19 is starting to be addressed on major newspapers in Italy too: ~20% of tested patients remain covid+ for at least 40 days.” This may have been the first time the #LongCovid hashtag was used on Twitter.

Perego and coauthor Felicity Callard, who both claim to have long COVID, wrote about how long COVID became a “patient-led experience” in the article “How and Why Patients Made Long Covid,” which appeared in the journal *Social Science & Medicine* in January 2021. “Patients collectively made Long Co-

vid—and cognate term ‘Long-haul Covid’—in the first months of the pandemic,” they wrote.

“Long Covid has a strong claim to be the first illness created through patients finding one another on Twitter: it moved from patients, through various media, to formal clinical and policy channels in just a few months.”

Perego, Callard, and others in an October 2020 opinion in the *British Medical Journal* urged continued use of what they called the “grassroots” term “long COVID.” They said, “Following intense advocacy by patients across the world, this patient-made term has been taken up by powerful actors, including the World Health Organization.”

They argued that the term is useful because it avoids the words “chronic,” “post,” and “syndrome,” words they believe can “delegitimize people’s suffering,” especially “when a syndrome or chronicity becomes associated with women and/or minoritized people.”

Increased Awareness of Long-Term Effects

In an email to The Epoch Times, Perego said she thinks it makes sense to use the descriptor “long” when referring to illnesses other than COVID infection.

“It’s an easy and effective way to communicate that many infectious agents, like viruses or bacteria, can have long-

term, long-lasting effects on human health,” she said.

Recognizing that long COVID has brought attention to other diseases that may cause complications and chronic conditions, the authors of a June 2022 *Epic Research* study titled “Long Covid? Long Flu? Long Pneumonia? Yes. They All Happen” wrote, “The intense focus on understanding COVID-19 has created increased awareness of chronic, post-viral symptoms around COVID-19 infections.

“Patients who contract other respiratory infections and their doctors should also be aware of the potential for—and be prepared to treat—similar chronic symptoms.”

The authors found that following acute infection with COVID or viral pneumonia, 9 percent of patients reported new long-term symptoms. This reflected the finding of their July 2021 study that 9.4 percent of COVID patients seek treatment for what they then called “long-haul COVID.”

Among patients infected with the flu, 6 percent reported new long-term symptoms. Among patients with pneumonia

caused by another virus, the figure was 11 percent.

Symptoms of the flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue, vomiting, and diarrhea, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) flu website.

It also lists complications of the flu, including sinus infections, ear infections, pneumonia, myocarditis, encephalitis, muscle inflammation (myositis, rhabdomyolysis), kidney failure, and sepsis. Flu also can exacerbate chronic medical problems such as asthma and heart disease, it states. The site does not use the term “long flu” to describe these complications.

Study: Patients With Lingering Flu Show Long COVID Symptoms

Researchers at the University of Oxford in England performed a study of long COVID that was published on Sept. 28, 2021, on *PLOS Medicine*. Titled “Incidence, co-occurrence, and evolution of long-COVID features: A 6-month retrospective cohort study of 273,618 survivors of COVID-19,” the study compared long COVID symptoms to flu sequelae but didn’t use the term “long flu.”

Among the 273,618 COVID-19 survivors studied, 57 percent had one or more long COVID symptoms or symptoms in the 6 months after infection. The patients’ average age was 46, and 56 percent were women.

The most common long-term symptoms reported were anxiety/depression (23 percent), abnormal breathing (19 percent), abdominal symptoms (16 percent), fatigue/malaise (13 percent), and chest/throat pain (13 percent).

Other reported symptoms included “other pain” (12 percent), headache (9 percent),

cognitive symptoms (8 percent), and myalgia (i.e., muscle pain) (3 percent).

A stated goal of the Oxford study was to compare the prevalence of long COVID symptoms to the prevalence of lingering symptoms after the flu. However, the study authors did not use the term “long flu” to describe post-flu symptoms, instead calling them “long-COVID symptoms.”

They noted, “long-COVID symptoms were found to occur after influenza, but were 1.5 times more common after COVID-19.”

This word choice may show a reluctance among these researchers to attach the “long” label to sequelae of viruses other than COVID.

Many viruses can cause secondary conditions and symptoms that can last long after the initial acute infection.

Lyme Disease, Multiple Sclerosis May Also Deserve ‘Long’ Labels

Lyme disease, caused by tick-borne borrelia bacteria, can be treated with antibiotics if caught early. But some patients may develop chronic symptoms and develop what the CDC calls “Post-Treatment Lyme Disease Syndrome.”

Lyme disease should be referred to as “long Lyme,” argues Holly Ahern, an associate professor of microbiology at State University of New York-Adirondack, on Oct. 25 before the federal Tick-Borne Disease Working Group.

She implied that the name would help Lyme disease patients receive some of the attention and funding that now go to long COVID.

While long COVID is now the focus of a “well-funded federal initiative” (RECOVER: Researching COVID to Enhance Recovery) to investigate its long-term effects, the issues facing patients with “post-acute sequelae” of Lyme disease “continue to be largely ignored,” Ahern said.

“The medical gaslighting of chronic Lyme disease patients is as bad as it ever was,” she said.

An article on the American Council on Science and Health website asks the question “Is multiple sclerosis ‘long’ Epstein-Barr infection?” The answer, says author Chuck Dinerstein, is likely yes, based on a new study published January in *Science* magazine. Studying health data on millions of U.S. military recruits over a 20-year period, the researchers determined that Epstein-Barr virus infection greatly increased the risk of subsequent multiple sclerosis.

Perego told The Epoch Times that she believes the moniker “has been instrumental in triggering a lot of research on the long-term health effects from SARS-CoV-2, and in reinforcing awareness of other diseases associated with infections. Recognition and research are critical to get treatment, care, and support.”

She added, “I truly hope more will come.”

Susan C. Olmstead writes about health and medicine, food, social issues, culture, and children’s literature. Her work has appeared in *The Epoch Times*, *The Defender*, *Salvo Magazine*, and many other publications. She lives in northern Ohio on the shore of Lake Erie.

TERRY VINE/GETTY IMAGES



WHAT IS IN A LABEL? COVID-19 gave birth to a new concept in disease terminology—length. Long COVID created a label that affected funding and patients lives.



EECP is an extremely effective treatment, but you can reproduce its effects with just a bit of exercise.

MADE TO MOVE

Leg-Raising Exercises Can Improve Cardiac Microvascular Circulation

If you can still move well, you can mimic and even outdo one of the most effective cardiac treatments available

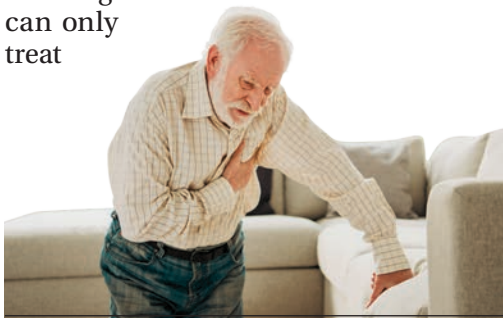
CAMILLE SU

A patient in his 50s underwent three cardiac catheterizations and had six stents placed in his coronary arteries, yet still felt heart discomfort after his surgery. The patient even felt chest pain when crossing the road. However, his surgery was a success—the stent was fully functional, and his aorta was also unobstructed. Later, it was discovered that the problem was poor microvascular circulation in the patient's heart. Finally, the patient underwent 10 sessions of enhanced external counterpulsation (EECP). His chest pain has healed and he can now run 10 laps without any discomfort. EECP is a non-invasive treatment that improves blood circulation throughout the

body. There's also a simple exercise that can promote cardiovascular health, so as to achieve the therapeutic effect of EECP. **Coronary Microcirculation Is Often Overlooked** The official journal of the American College of Cardiology recently pointed out that symptoms of heart discomfort that can't be relieved after surgery and drug treatment in many heart disease patients may be related to cardiac microvascular dysfunction. People tend to pay more attention to the coronary arteries in the treatment of cardiovascular diseases. However, the heart still has many small blood vessels, and their circulatory function has been mostly neglected; it wasn't noticed until recent years.

The heart has many small blood vessels, and their circulatory function has been mostly neglected.

Liu Chungpin, a cardiologist and director of the Taiwan-based Yupin Clinic, pointed out that in some patients, the heart's aorta isn't significantly narrowed and the stent inserted in surgery is normal, but the cardiac muscle at the end doesn't receive sufficient blood supply due to blockage of the small blood vessels. As a result, angina pectoris or poor heart function may occur even after treatment. All factors that cause stiffening of the large vessels also affect the small vessels. For example, smoking, high blood sugar, high cholesterol, changing weather, excessive stress, staying up late, bad mood, and lack of exercise can all cause microvascular thrombosis, hardening, or spasms. However, current surgeries can only treat **Current surgeries can only treat problems with large blood vessels, but many heart issues develop in the smaller vessels.**



problems with large blood vessels. For example, for patients with myocardial infarction (heart attack), medical devices can enter large blood vessels to remove thrombi, but they can't reach small blood vessels. Thrombolytic drugs and anticoagulants are also unable to completely dissolve the thrombi in some small blood vessels. In such cases, EECP can be used, which can increase cardiac blood flow without increasing cardiac workload, thereby improving myocardial metabolism and function. The method involves compressing and relaxing the legs with compression pants in sync with the heartbeat; while the heart is in its relaxed phase and its chambers are re-filling with blood, the blood is squeezed back to the heart from the calf and thigh, thereby increasing venous circulation and reducing arterial resistance. It increases coronary blood flow, thus relieving angina.

Good Coronary Microcirculation Can Improve Heart Disease Improving the microcirculation of the heart is also beneficial for other heart diseases.

- Coronary heart disease: For those who suffer from chest tightness and pain due to stenosis (abnormal narrowing) of large blood vessels, the symptoms will also be relieved after the improvement of coronary microcirculation.
- Heart failure: This is associated with the heart muscles' lack of strength and their inability to pump blood effectively. Liu Chungpin pointed out that one-third of heart muscle weakness is caused by insufficient blood flow. Therefore, when microcirculation is improved, heart failure caused by myocardial weakness can naturally be improved.
- Myocarditis: This is an acute inflammatory reaction of the heart muscles. Good cardiac microcirculation can help the recovery of myocarditis. If the heart muscles are deprived of oxygen during myocarditis, the patient's heart recovery will be poor.

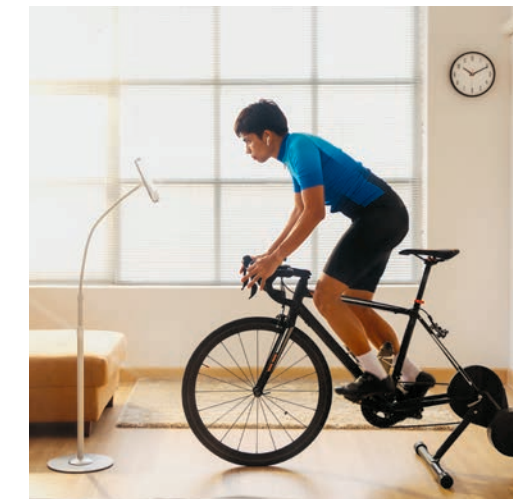
Cardiac microvascular circulation plays an important role in the heart diseases mentioned above, and one of the ways to improve it is through EECP. Hung added that EECP can also treat many diseases clinically, such as stroke, sudden deafness, sudden blindness, vascular dementia, intestinal ischemia, diabetic nephropathy, and restless legs syndrome. He mentioned that post-stroke EECP treatment can substantially reduce the damage caused by a stroke. This is because EECP also improves blood circulation in the whole body. Alongside the formation of collateral vessels, it can also improve the conditions caused by a vascular obstruction in the long term.

Improve Blood Circulation With Leg-Raising Exercises The duration of the effect of EECP also depends on whether the patient has implemented good lifestyle habits: exercise, smoking cessation, weight control, and keeping the blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels normal. EECP treatment requires the use of equipment to passively improve leg circulation and heart function. Usually, EECP is needed when the patient's physical strength and heart are not yet capable of high-intensity exercise. Liu pointed out that if the patient is not too seriously ill and can still move around, it's recommended for him/her to do "leg raising exercises" including walking, running, cycling, and riding an exercise bike. He explained that one-third of the blood flow in the human body is in the lower body, and strengthening the circulation of the legs can promote the circulation of the entire body. Contraction exercises, in which the feet are raised to increase the contraction of the thighs and calves, can send blood flow from the legs back to the heart, improving the microcirculation of the heart. People with cold feet can also improve blood circulation by exercising. However, the quality of exercise is just as important. The heartbeat must reach more than 120 beats per minute in order for the heart to circulate adequately. Hung said that the effect of jogging for one hour is

One third of the blood flow in the human body is in the lower body, and strengthening the circulation of the legs can promote the circulation of the entire body.



More attention is paid to clogs in major arteries, but clogs in smaller arterioles are also critical.



Exercising the legs, as well as cardiovascular exercises, have a profound effect on heart health.

equivalent to EECP treatment; and exercise intensity, duration, and the formation of exercise habits are the key points. On top of that, controlling blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels is also very important. High blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels can cause arteriosclerosis, resulting in vascular stenosis and aforementioned various diseases caused by poor blood circulation. Hung drew a conclusion: Regardless of whether the blood vessels are large or small, it's necessary to maintain cardiovascular health; in addition to exercising and controlling the blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels, it's beneficial to minimize anger, sleeping late, and anxiety.

EECP's 3 Main Mechanisms

- 1. Improved Blood Circulation** EECP can promote the blood circulation of the whole body and improve the microcirculation of the heart. Hwei-Fong Hung, the attending physician of the Division of Cardiology of Shin-Kong Wu Ho-Su Memorial Hospital in Taiwan, pointed out that the use of EECP can increase nitric oxide and decrease endothelin in the body in a short period of time. Nitric oxide relaxes blood vessels, while endothelin constricts them. These two changes lead to the dilation of blood vessels, thus improving the circulation of small blood vessels.
- 2. Increased Angiogenesis** Just like an alternative road can be used as a detour during a traffic jam, after the use of EECP in patients with vascular stenosis, an

"alternative path" can be grown. This promotes the formation of collateral blood vessels, a process called angiogenesis. Why can new blood vessels form? Liu explained that when the cells on the vascular endothelium and heart muscle are dying due to insufficient blood, the increased blood flow and oxygen supply can increase the activating factors of the heart vessels, enhancing their cell regeneration ability.

only relaxes and dilates blood vessels, but also promotes the repair of vascular endothelial cells and prevents the hardening of blood vessels. Hwei-Fong Hung said that the improvement of blood circulation and the stabilization of blood vessel walls depend on endothelin and nitric oxide. However, the indicators of these two factors will gradually decrease after two to three months after completing EECP and return to the initial state after half a year. The only permanent effect is angiogenesis—once the collateral circulation is formed, it will remain there.



Enhanced external counterpulsation is a non-invasive treatment that improves blood circulation throughout the body.

Natural Remedies for IBS

This common and uncomfortable condition is felt in the gut but often starts in the mind

ZRINKA PETERS

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) may not crop up much in day-to-day conversation, but for the millions who suffer from it, the condition is impossible to ignore. Not only can it be uncomfortable or painful, but IBS symptoms can seriously impinge on ordinary social interactions and lifestyle, as well. Fortunately, there are treatments for the condition and a dietary investigation that can help sufferers figure out what foods may be triggering their symptoms. **Common and Uncomfortable** IBS is very common. According to Cleveland Clinic, between 10 and 15 percent of the adult U.S. population has IBS, but only about half are actually diagnosed. IBS is a gastrointestinal (GI) disorder that affects the stomach and intestines and manifests itself through a variety of symptoms that can include abdominal pain or cramping, excess gas or bloating, and changes in bowel movements resulting in either diarrhea or constipation. For those who suffer from it, IBS is usually a chronic problem that doesn't have a cure but must be managed long-term. Unfortunately, medical experts aren't clear on what exactly causes IBS. The Mayo Clinic reports that early life stress, severe infection, or bacterial changes or overgrowth in the intestines are all likely contributors to the development of IBS symptoms. Also, people with IBS often have unusual activity in the muscles that line the walls of the intestines, resulting in irregular contractions that are

either too strong or too weak. Because of this, there's speculation that IBS could also be caused by problems within the nervous system, a result of poor signaling between the brain and the muscles of the intestinal walls. Certain groups of people are more prone to developing IBS than others. Women are almost twice as likely as men to develop IBS, and those under age 50 are more likely to develop it than older adults. It's also possible that anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues, and even genetics, play a role. **Treatments and Triggers** For severe cases of IBS, your doctor may prescribe medications, such as laxatives or anti-diarrheal drugs, to help manage symptoms, and may even recommend mental health counseling. Prescription IBS medications may help reduce uncomfortable symptoms, but they can carry unwanted side effects and normally do nothing to identify or address the underlying causes of the problem.

Irritable bowel syndrome is a gastrointestinal disorder that affects the stomach and intestines and manifests itself through a variety of symptoms.

Since the precise causes of IBS can be varied and are unclear, and no test exists that can accurately diagnose IBS, treatment in most cases comes down to trying to identify factors that could trigger symptoms, and addressing those directly. For most, the first line of treatment will be diet and lifestyle modifications. What triggers IBS flare-ups can vary from person to person, so it's important for each individual to closely monitor symptoms and anything that seems to worsen them. A study in the June 7, 2017, issue of the World Journal of Gastroenterology reported that at least two-thirds of patients with IBS associated their symptoms with the consumption of specific foods. Being aware of what you're eating and which foods may trigger uncomfortable symptoms is a very important step toward managing IBS. While there's no one-size-fits-all nutritional strategy for managing IBS, there are some common offenders among the food groups that offer a starting place for dietary recommendations. Many IBS patients have reported that foods high in fat and caffeine, spicy foods, gluten, and dairy products tend

to exacerbate symptoms. Through observation and a process of trial and error, identifying and avoiding what triggers symptoms is the first step toward relief. **A Dietary Investigation** Another dietary approach to IBS that has been growing in acceptance in recent years is the low-FODMAP diet. This diet was developed based on the understanding that certain non-digestible short-chain carbohydrates actually ferment in the gut and tend to trigger or exacerbate IBS symptoms. FODMAP stands for "fermentable oligo-, di-, and monosaccharides and polyols." These carbohydrates are found in different combinations in a wide variety of foods but, according to an article in the journal *Nutrients*, are largely found in wheat, legumes, nuts, onions, dairy products, fructose-containing food like fruits and sweeteners, as well as cauliflower, mushrooms and low-calorie sweeteners like xylitol. Functional Dietitian Nutritionist Adair M. Anderson, MS, RDN, LDN, explains "FODMAPs are sugars that not only pull water into your gut causing diarrhea, but are also rapidly fermented by your gut bacteria, resulting in gas and bloating." A growing body of studies, including a meta-analysis published in the journal *Nutrients* in September 2017, have found that following a low-FODMAP diet is an effective way to manage IBS symptoms in a majority of patients. As the Cleveland Clinic explains, a low-FODMAP diet is more than just a simple dietary plan, it's actually an elimination diet with a phased approach. During the first phase, all FODMAP foods are eliminated from the diet temporarily, usually for two to four weeks. This gives symptoms a chance to subside (if they have a dietary basis), and gives the gastrointestinal tract a chance to rest. Phase two includes a systematic reintroduction of one FODMAP food at a time, and observing carefully to see if there is an uncomfortable GI reaction to that particular

food. Phase three is the maintenance phase. Hopefully phases one and two identified a specific food or foods that are problematic; phase three is about avoiding just those foods, and keeping everything else. Because the low-FODMAP diet involves eliminating a large number of healthy foods at first, in order to find out which ones are causing GI distress, this isn't a lifestyle diet that should be kept up long-term.

The Stress Factor Another major factor that may trigger IBS symptoms or make them worse is stress. Medical experts have known for years that psychological stress can result in physical symptoms, but recent research published by researchers from the Tokyo University of Science in the journal *Frontiers in Neuroscience* added another layer of confirmation to this finding. They showed that exposing mice to repeated psychological stress over 10 consecutive days resulted in gastrointestinal symptoms similar to those typical of IBS. Dr. Gary Spink, a New York-based psychologist focusing on chronic pain and illness, including IBS, points to research that finds IBS is linked to stress and the traumatic stress caused by childhood trauma and maltreatment. "Essentially, the more severe your trauma, the more severe IBS symptoms you experience. This association, as well as the association of stress with IBS symptoms, is believed to be the result of the gut-brain axis." That axis is made up of the many neurological connections between your gut and brain, which are in close and constant communication with each other. "Your gut provides information to your brain necessary for energy regulation, and your brain regulates your gut," Spink explains. "When people experience stress, they can have a range of symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, stomach pain, constipation, etc. An additional layer of complexity for people with IBS, their symptoms are a source of their stress, which leads to an endless cycle of stress-symptoms-stress and so on."

For most, the first line of treatment will be diet and lifestyle modifications.



Intermittent fasting and dietary approaches may help alleviate IBS.



Peppermint oil and other natural remedies can sometimes help.

Managing Stress to Treat IBS For those experiencing IBS symptoms, managing stress can play a significant role in alleviating symptoms. One of the most effective ways to do this is through regular exercise. Physical exercise is good for both mind and body, reducing stress and anxiety, as well as stimulating regular bowel movements. Multiple studies have shown a positive association between moderate, regular exercise and a decrease in IBS symptoms. Other stress-reducing practices, like enjoying time outdoors in nature or participating in an engaging hobby, can help. Spending time in prayer, deep breathing, or meditation, can also be calming. Anything that helps a person relax and de-stress is beneficial for a gut suffering from IBS. Some health practitioners prescribe counseling as an important part of IBS treatment because of this.

Other Treatments Aside from dietary changes, exercise, and stress reduction, there are also several other treatment options that have shown promise for some patients. Supplementation with probiotics, soluble fiber, or peppermint oil, intermittent fasting, and acupuncture have also been used effectively to improve IBS symptoms in many patients. IBS is a complex disorder that can have as many different causes and symptom combinations as there are individuals. Doing some investigative work into possible food triggers, managing stress, and working with a knowledgeable health care provider if needed can be important first steps in managing this condition.

Zrinka Peters is a freelance writer focussing on health, wellness, and education topics. She has a BA in English Literature from Simon Fraser University in Canada and has been published in a wide variety of print and online publications including Health Digest, Parent.com, Today's Catholic Teacher, and Education.com

10% to 15% of the adult U.S. population has irritable bowel syndrome but only about half are diagnosed.

SOURCE: CLEVELAND CLINIC



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Stress, including the stress from past trauma, has been more clearly linked to IBS, providing additional avenues for treatment.



ICEMAN

Wim Hof has shown he can voluntarily affect his core body temperature, activate his sympathetic nervous system, and influence his immune response.

The Wim Hof Method

Hof states that by using his methods, practitioners can achieve various health benefits, including:

- increasing energy
- increasing performance
- relieving symptoms of autoimmune diseases and fibromyalgia
- lowering blood pressure
- improving sleep
- boosting the immune system
- improving mental health
- helping symptoms of depression
- improving creativity
- increasing willpower

riage. By the time their four children arrived, her depression seemed to get worse, and, as he describes it, it was like a “shadow came into their lives, and she began drifting away because the darkness was taking over.” Olaya was eventually diagnosed with schizophrenia. Hof explains that doctors and psychiatrists using various medications and treatments couldn’t help her, and her mental state worsened.

Early one morning in 1995, at the age of 35, Olaya kissed her four children—then ages seven to twelve—and jumped from the eighth story, ending her life.

This catastrophic event threw Hof’s life into chaos and the grief he felt almost consumed him. But, as he explains in several interviews on the subject, he did not have time to grieve or deal with the emotional pain he was in, as he was now alone with very little money and four young children to take care of.

Years before at the age of seventeen he had discovered the cold and cold water in particular, but it was only after his wife’s death that he began to realize its therapeutic potential. One day while walking through a park he says he was drawn to a natural pool with a thin sheet of ice covering it, and he got into the water. He says that he went deeply inside himself, and that it “silenced” him. He says he later realized that what was happening was a connection with the deeper parts of his brain, the more primitive aspects. He says it made him feel really good, that he didn’t feel the cold and that he felt powerful.

After his wife’s suicide, his cold plunges achieved something he wasn’t expecting. When submerged in the icy waters, the grief that had been tormenting him went away and he felt a sense of peace. He says that the cold water led him to stillness, and the stillness in his mind gave his heart a chance to rest, restore, and rehabilitate. He credits the cold water with helping him heal his broken heart.

Hof said it was at this point that he understood the profound benefits of the strategies he was using—cold water, breathing techniques, and a positive mindset. His eldest son Enahm is the one who encouraged his father to turn his insights into a business, and, wanting to help others, he agreed. The rest is history.

Hof heartbreakingly states in interviews that he was not able to help his wife, that he didn’t have the tools then. But, if he had known then what he knows now, he could have helped her. Now, he—a self-proclaimed “simple man”—is teaching psychiatrists, doctors and professors to do as he has done, sharing his techniques around the world and healing hearts and minds.

It seems that Hof, through years of practice and development, has gained an almost superhuman control over his mind and body and discovered something the field of psychiatry and medicine have not—a natural way out of the pain of grief and an avenue to develop new human abilities.

While many are astounded at the dedication and discomfort involved in achieving these tremendous physical and mental feats under icy conditions, Hof said that suffering is nothing compared to the pain of a grieving heart.

Although most may know him as “the iceman” for his superhuman abilities to control his mind and body, Hof offers lessons beyond temperature and breath control. We will all have tragedy in our lives. We will all face adversity, and when that happens, we have a choice. We can let those experiences break us down and destroy us, or we can channel them into something beautiful.

In Wim’s case, he did just that. What he has created is expanding scientific understanding of the human body and mind and showing us the resilience of the human spirit.

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

INTENTIONAL LIVING

7 Reasons to Lead a Focused Life

Gain freedom from distraction by meditating on what drives you to be more focused

MIKE DONGHIA

Almost every good result in life requires the ability to maintain focus.

But if you’re like me, your track record at focusing leaves plenty of room for improvement. During the course of the day, I know what I should be working on, but easy distractions compete for my attention.

Over the timespan of months and years, I know that focusing is the key to personal growth, but I jump from one opportunity to the next chasing whatever method or strategy promises to be better, faster, or easier.

Thankfully, there’s a way to break the cycle of distraction and make real headway.

Although I’m still not as focused as I’d like to be—and I’m not even among the most focused people I know—I’ve made meaningful progress in this area and I think what I’ve learned could be helpful to others.

My breakthrough came when I realized that my lack of focus wasn’t just a personal

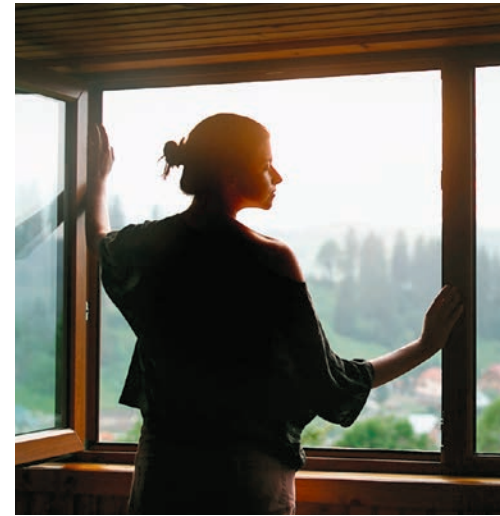
problem, but that my choices were having a ripple effect in my relationships and my work for others.

Each day, I began meditating on the benefits of a focused life and looking for examples to emulate. Simply holding up this mirror to my life produced a strong inner desire to close the gap between the person I was and the person I wanted to be. It was the fuel I needed to finally break the inner resistance to change.

If you’re ready to change, consider ruminating on the following reasons to live a more focused life. Find the ones that speak most strongly to you and make them part of your inner dialogue.

A life of focus is one you must choose, it’s never the default in this busy, modern world. But the reasons for pruning away the non-essential to focus on what matters most are strong ones. I hope this article reminds you of their benefits and encourages you towards a less stressful, more impactful existence.

7 Reasons to Stay Focused



1 Life feels less hurried and chaotic. Do you feel stretched thin or pulled in too many directions? I can relate. There have been periods of my life, because of a desire to change or grow quickly, that I’d take on too many goals at one time. Even when I was making progress, I’d wake up each day feeling stressed about dropping one of the many balls I was juggling. Avoiding chronic stress is another great reason to choose focus. A 2017 research review in EXCLJ Journal connected a high-stress lifestyle to a host of negative effects ranging from memory loss and slower cognition to a suppressed immune system and gastrointestinal complications.



2 Progress is more satisfying than novelty. Besides not being any faster, constantly jumping from one idea to another is less satisfying. After the initial thrill of imagining a better future fades, you’re left at the start of a long journey. In my experience, the most satisfying aspect of doing hard things is the moment when you see progress. When my writing reaches a few new readers or my professional work makes someone’s day easier or I catch my children in the act of being kind to one another, all of these things bring me great satisfaction and provide motivation to continue focusing on what really matters.



3 Live a life with no regrets. It has long been an ambition of mine to live my life so that I’d have no regrets at the end of it. Ironically, it’s partially because of that drive that I’ve been so tempted to seize every opportunity that comes my way and jump from one exciting thing to another. I’ve never wanted to settle into what I considered a mundane life. But experience and maybe even a bit of wisdom has helped me to see that my biggest regrets wouldn’t be from missing out on certain experiences, but in not committing seriously to the few things that really matter. This change in outlook has been revolutionary in shaping what motivates me.



Few things can help you maximize your time on this Earth as powerfully as the ability to truly focus on what you are doing.

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Mike (and his wife, Mollie) blog at This Evergreen Home where they share their experience with living simply, intentional-

ly, and relationally in this modern world. You can follow along by subscribing to their twice-weekly newsletter.



4 Reinforce perseverance over impulsiveness. I was talking to a friend this week who mentioned how connected his good habits were with each other. For example, when he exercised, he found it easier to eat healthy. And when he ate healthier, he found himself being more proactive in other areas, too. Unfortunately, the same thing happens in reverse. Every decision you make on whether to focus or give in to distraction sets you in motion in a particular direction. And, of course, a body in motion tends to stay in motion—so choose wisely!



5 Long-term results grow exponentially. This realization came late to me, and it’s one that I wish I’d internalized sooner. At the start of many important changes, it feels like you’re barely making any progress. Results are slower than expected. This is the point when almost everyone loses focus and gives up. But if you can stick it out, suddenly you’ll find that that results come much faster than expected. Most of life’s benefits accrue exponentially in this manner—slowly at first, and then all of a sudden rapidly.



6 The grass isn’t greener on the other side. Most of the time when we lose focus, it’s because something else more attractive catches our eye. Maybe it seems to be a quicker or easier way to achieve your goal. Don’t fall for it! Compared to the path you’re on, a new path will always look better. That’s because our brain focuses on the novelty and the promise but completely discounts the mundane work that goes along with it.



7 Enjoy the freedom of having made up your mind. As someone who occasionally struggles with indecision, I can say personally that having made up your mind is a wonderful feeling. When you commit to a path and close other doors, your motivation and excitement about the opportunity in front of you have space to grow. Instead of feeling like you have limited yourself, you feel released to take action and be a participant in the adventure of life.

How One Man Turned Pain Into Power

Continued from Page 1

Hof has also learned to master his breathing. In just a couple of months of training and practice, he could draw so much oxygen into his body that he could remain under the ice for five to seven minutes without breathing.

In a study at Radboud University in Holland that was published in PNAS in 2014, 12 young men were trained in Hof’s techniques and injected with an endotoxin from the cell wall of a bacteria. Twelve different young men not trained in his techniques were injected with the same dead bacterial component and served as the control. This endotoxin typically causes an immune response and subjects develop symptoms such as fever and headache. The scientists running the experiment said that in the trained subjects, they observed that the release of inflammatory proteins was significantly decreased and that they experienced far fewer flu-like symptoms than the men in the control group.

Unfortunately, the men in the control group suffered the intense and unpleasant side effects that the endotoxin would elicit in normal circumstances—overall body weakness, fever, chills, and headache.

Hof’s breathing techniques can also produce an abundance of the hormone epinephrine (also known as adrenaline). Apparently, using his breathing techniques, Hof is able to produce double the amount of epinephrine than someone doing a bungee jump for the first time. Trained participants in the study above were able to produce two times the usual amount of epinephrine at the precise time they were injected with the endotoxin, coinciding with when they began practicing their breathing techniques.

Epinephrine is a stress hormone released when the sympathetic nervous system is activated—when we are afraid or in danger. When the sympathetic nervous system is activated, it suppresses the immune response, which is why the trained individuals in the experiment were able to decrease the release of inflammatory proteins and why they experienced fewer flu-like symptoms.

The results the study participants were able to achieve are significant because there is a general consensus in the scientific community that there are certain functions the human body performs that we cannot control. The immune system and nervous system are two examples. Wim Hof is proving, in this and other experiments, that this isn’t the case.

Hof attests that using his methods, he can teach others to control their bodies and minds the way he can, and he has been teaching his techniques to individuals and professionals worldwide for many years. So, can we really learn how to control our autonomic nervous system and immune response? Hof seems to think so and has shown in experiments that he can.

For a bit of a refresher, below is a brief description of both the immune system and the

autonomic nervous system, its two branches and how they work.

The Innate Immune System

The immune system is a complex network of cells, organs, and tissues that work together to protect the body from invading pathogens and internal disease. There are two main types of immunity, the innate immune system, and the adaptive immune system.

The innate immune system is the one we are born with and is our body’s first line of defense against invading pathogens. Its main components are physical barriers like the skin and mucous membranes that prevent microbes from getting into the body, where they can make us sick.

The adaptive immune system is the learning immune system. It builds up a knowledge base of germs or antigens to recognize and release antibodies against them. Adaptive immune responses are slow to develop with the first exposure to a new pathogen and we rely on the innate immune system to protect us from infection. The strength of our adaptive immune system grows over time as it encounters more and more pathogens and develops antibodies against them, making it more effective over time.

The Autonomic Nervous System

The autonomic nervous system, too, is thought to be beyond our conscious control. Until recently, it was thought to operate beneath the level of our conscious awareness and function in the background, keeping us safe from perceived dangers and ensuring we react suitably to external stimuli without us having to think about it.

The word autonomic in fact, suggests that the nervous system is outside of our voluntary control and is defined as automatic or unconscious.

The autonomic nervous system has two branches: the sympathetic and parasympathetic.

The parasympathetic nervous system is also sometimes called the ‘rest and digest system’, which is active when we’re at rest and acts to conserve the body’s energies and recover after a dangerous encounter or emergency situation—when the sympathetic nervous system is operational.

The sympathetic nervous system is also called our ‘fight or flight’ response and is activated when there’s a perceived threat to our health and well-being. These systems were vital when our ancestors faced being eaten by ferocious animals and needed to be vigilant about personal safety. Today, the threats to our welfare are less dramatic, although no less significant. We can activate the sympathetic nervous system by worrying about a work meeting or almost re-arranging someone in rush hour traffic. Stress is the trigger and a common problem in our fast-paced, high-pressure society.

Research has shown that ongoing, long-term stress can lead to various physical and mental consequences and contributes to developing diseases like Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease.

The fact that Hof is able to affect these systems almost at will is something that science is still trying to understand. Hof has been very willing to work with scientists

eager to study how he is able to do the things he does, and there are multiple scientific studies on Wim Hof’s website.

Lessons From Grief

What some may not know about Wim Hof is why he ‘discovered’ this ability in himself (that he says we all possess).

Hof met a beautiful Spanish woman named Olaya when he was 22 and living a bohemian lifestyle in his native Amsterdam. He fell in love with her, and they had four children together. Hof says he called her “butterfly” because of her vivid, outgoing personality and ability to talk to anyone. But he says she struggled with what he thought was mild depression early on in their mar-



Cold temperatures can often be therapeutic.

VALENTYN VOLKOV / SHUTTERSTOCK



Swimming in icy water has become an annual ritual for many people, and research finds there are some therapeutic benefits.



Wim Hof has made a point of demonstrating his abilities in public and also under scientific observation.

AVANTA / SHUTTERSTOCK

AAD VILLERIS CC BY SA 2.0



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Being overwhelmed is the new normal but you can only do what you can do—so make sure you are doing what matters most to you.

WISE HABITS

Working Effectively When You're Overwhelmed

Life throws a lot at us, but that's fine as long as we know our priorities



LEO BABAUTA

I've noticed that so many people are feeling overwhelmed, scattered, and stressed—so much so that focus and effective work become incredibly difficult.

So what can we do to be more effective in the midst of this scattered, overwhelmed state?

Today, I'm going to share the top three things I do to help myself find focus and effectiveness even when I'm at my most scattered.

- If you answer an email, pause—do you want to keep answering emails or is there something more important you'd like to do?
- If you finish working on a task, pause—would you like to take a break or choose the next task from your list to focus on?
- If you notice yourself automatically opening an app or website that's a distraction, pause—is there something more important you'd like to focus on?
- If you've just been given a bunch of messages and tasks, pause—add them to your list, and prioritize, choosing one thing to focus on (more on that below).
- If you've been working for a while, pause—would you like to stretch your

One of the biggest challenges when we're feeling overwhelmed is that we're often drained and our ability to focus is lowered.



Instead of switching from one task to the next, I recommend a pause.

legs, get some water, clear your head?

This pause helps us navigate chaotic waters, and helps us to be more intentional about our day.

The Flexible Focus Method
This is a simple, time-tested method for finding effectiveness when things are chaotic:

- **Make a Short List:** This is a list of 3–5 things you'd like to focus on for the day. Choose three things if they're big ones, or if you have a day that's full of meetings. Choose five things if they're medium tasks. If you're feeling optimistic, choose six things. Put them in order of importance.
- **Make a Long List:** This is the list of everything else you'd like to do. Put things that are more urgent near the top. This long list is a "would be nice to do" list but you aren't going to focus on it. Focus instead on the short list.
- **Focus on the Top Task:** Each day, focus on the top task on your short list. Only on that. Nothing else. When you're done with that, focus on the next item.
- **Dealing With Interruptions:** The beauty of this method is that it's flexible. If you're interrupted, you can simply return to the important task you were working on when you were interrupted, or pause and find something more important to focus on. If you have incoming tasks and messages, you can simply add them to your long list. If they're important enough, put them on the short list and knock something else onto the long list. Be flexible and allow yourself to adjust to a changing landscape.

- **At the End of Each Day:** Take a moment to check things off and celebrate your accomplishments—then simply take the unfinished items on the short list and add them to tomorrow's short list. Make your new list for tomorrow, so you know what to focus on when you get started.

Refilling Your Capacity
One of the biggest challenges when we're feeling overwhelmed is that we're often drained and our ability to focus is lowered. We can't take on hard tasks because we just don't have the mental energy.

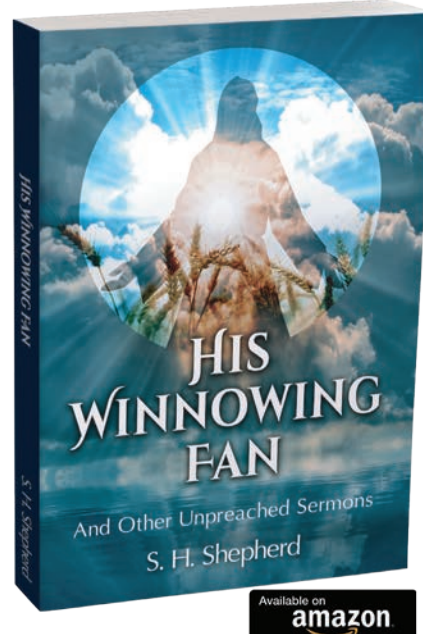
The practice to take on here is committing yourself to making self-care a priority. What do you need to do to get your mental energy where you want it to be in order to be effective and focus? If we can't get this fundamental thing down, then we can't create what we want to create in the world. For me, this means prioritizing:

- Rest and recovery
- Exercise
- Eating well
- Something comforting, such as a hot shower, hot tea, or hugs from a loved one
- Practicing self-compassion

If I can do those things, then I can be effective and focus on what matters. What would you need to do to get your capacity to the level you need it to be?

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

His Winnowing Fan



Only a portion of the many messages of the Bible are being heard today. Hardly any are on eschatology, the subject of heaven and hell. Instead, we hear only an abbreviated form of Christianity that consists of Jesus's teachings on love, mercy, forgiveness and compassion. While crucial to our understanding of salvation, they do little to startle or influence behavior, but are preached because they are easier to hear.

Messages that concern God's wrath and man's eternal future should be preached more often, for they alert us to be more watchful of what we say and do, and help us to act more naturally with honesty, integrity and truthfulness. In addition, important aspects of Christian life are seldom if ever taught today, such as how should evil be treated—should it be tolerated or opposed, and how should Christians view the tolerant world?

Each chapter of this book discusses an important sermon topic that is seldom if ever elucidated. They tell us that the purposes of God are not the purposes of man, that God's purposes transcend man's, and also man, himself. Were the full teachings of the Bible faithfully given to the world, the problems of the church would be solved and attendance would take care of itself.

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KESENIA GOROVA/SHUTTERSTOCK

A healthy mouth can be a sign of a healthy body—but the opposite is also true.

The Whole Body Influence of Your Mouth Microbiome

The type of bacteria in your mouth can play a pivotal role in your overall health

CONAN MILNER

Health starts in the mouth, experts say, and there are many layers to this idea. According to a 2021 report on "Oral Health in America," by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the condition of your mouth plays a vital role in your physical, mental, and even financial health. According to the Mayo Clinic, your mouth provides "a window to your overall health." Studies suggest that when the mouth shows signs of illness and inflammation due to an infection, organs and tissues deeper inside the body can soon suffer a similar fate. In tra-

The human oral cavity hosts the second most plentiful and diverse microbiota in the body after the gastrointestinal tract.

ditional Chinese medicine, examining the mouth is seen as a critical part of diagnosing disease or evaluating a person's well-being.

This window of the mouth can be seen at the microscopic level with bacteria and other disease-causing microbes the mouth is able to spread.

For example, if mouth bacteria from gum disease (periodontitis) move to the heart, it can lead to endocarditis (an infection in the lining of your heart). If these infectious mouth microbes move to the lungs, they may trigger respiratory disease. If you're pregnant, it can cause problems for your baby.

It's clear that bacterial overgrowth can spread disease, but keep in mind that not all bacteria are bad. Just think about the observations researchers have made into the body's microbiome.

As scientists have come to understand the microbiome more deeply over the past few decades, it has given rise to a new understanding in modern medicine. We now know that people are more than just cells living in an impossibly complex symmetry; we're also teeming with a variety of bacterial and microbial life.

It may sound a little unsettling at first, but our health depends on these symbiotes. The microbiome, as it's called, trains our immune system, aids in our digestion and assimilation of food, and keeps potentially dangerous microbes at bay.

Continued on Page 13

How to Harness the Healthy Function of Anxiety

Anxiety offers a boost of energy and focus that can be used to powerful effect

CHLOE CARMICHAEL

Amid the recession, pandemic stress, political tensions, and global unrest, Americans are experiencing record levels of stress. Many of us know this intuitively, but it has also been confirmed according to a recent poll by the American Psychological Association.

Unsurprisingly, studies also show record levels of anxiety disorders in the United States. The mental health industry can barely keep up with the demand. Many therapists are booked to the maximum, and prescriptions for antidepressants (often used for anxiety as well as depression) are at an all-time high.

As a clinical psychologist, I'm glad people are getting the care they need, but I'm also a bit concerned that my field may be medicalizing (and thereby monetizing) what's actually a normal part of the human experience and potentially shunting public interest away from more constructive ways to approach certain forms of anxiety.

I'm not denying that pathological anxiety exists, but I think it's important to consider that we're more prone to disordered outbursts of anxiety if we don't understand how to use anxiety in a healthy way.

We're more prone to disordered outbursts of anxiety if we don't understand how to use anxiety in a healthy way.


While many people tend to assume anxiety is an enemy to be fought or something to be "blissed away" through relaxation techniques, it's important to understand that anxiety actually has a healthy function: to stimulate preparation behaviors. Once we know how to use anxiety constructively, it actually becomes a friend rather than a foe.

Continued on Page 14



Anxiety can feel like a curse but it is supposed to help alert us to danger so we can take effective action.

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Solar Term: 'The Extreme of Winter' (Dec. 21 to Jan. 5)

EMMA SUTTIE

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

Solar Term: Dong Zhi—"The Extreme of Winter"

Dates: Dec. 22 to Jan. 5

This is a very special time of year and one of the most important traditional Chinese festivals.

If you are in the Northern Hemisphere, you will experience the shortest day and longest night of the year, also known as the winter solstice, during this solar term. The winter solstice occurs when the Earth's poles reach their maximum tilt away from the sun. Winter solstices happen twice a year, once in each hemisphere at opposite times of the year (as winter and summer are reversed in the Northern and Southern hemispheres). The winter solstice signifies the beginning of longer days and shorter nights—a move into summer.

Many cultures worldwide celebrate the winter and summer solstices with festivals, family gatherings, feasts, singing, and dancing.

Dong Zhi: The Winter Solstice Festival

The date for the Dong Zhi festival changes slightly every year as it's based on the lunar calendar and not the solar or Gregorian calendar used in the West. Dongzhi always falls on either Dec. 21, 22, or 23. This year, Dongzhi will fall on Dec. 22.

Dong Zhi means "Winter's Arrival" and is a very important festival to the Chinese people. It's celebrated on the winter solstice. Before the Chinese Communist Party came to power, this

There's wisdom in grandmother's chicken soup. Warming soups and bone broths are perfect for this time of year.



festival was much more significant in China. Traditionally, it involved worshipping heaven, though that aspect was repressed after the communist takeover. People had been worshipping heaven during the Dong Zhi festival since the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), and many temples in China had been built for this reason. The belief is that worshipping heaven will bring favorable weather, a successful harvest, and good health for the year ahead.

Honoring ancestors is also an important tradition during the Dong Zhi festival. People often go to their ancestors' tombs, cleaning and sweeping as well as leaving offerings of food and burning incense to pay their respects.

The winter solstice signifies the beginning of longer days and shorter nights—a move into summer.

Impact on People

Winter is the season when we want to naturally slow down and turn inward. It's the time of year to become more introspective and consolidate our energies in preparation for the long winter ahead. Feeding ourselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually with activities such as journaling, meditation, prayer, and yoga are perfect at this time of year as they help us slow down and cultivate the more internal aspects of ourselves.

As the weather gets colder and there is less sunlight, we should go to bed earlier and wake later, following the sun's natural cycles, ensuring we get adequate rest. Dressing warmly is especially important while also being mindful to keep the kidneys covered, so they don't catch a chill.

Cooking foods for longer on lower heat imbues them with more warming properties, feeding our inner fire and helping to keep us healthy during the colder months.

Winter is associated with the kidneys in Chinese medicine, making winter the best time to strengthen and support them. The kidneys are responsible for our deepest, most fundamental energies, so eating foods that nourish the kidneys and making sure they stay warm are important for overall health.

Seasonal Foods

Warming soups and bone broths are beneficial at this time of year and act as

tonics for the whole body and the kidneys in particular. Eating dark-colored foods benefits the kidneys as they are high in antioxidants, protecting our bodies from the damaging effects of free radicals that can contribute to diseases and accelerate aging. The color associated with winter and the kidneys is black, so most black foods are thought to benefit the kidneys.

Beneficial Foods for the Kidneys

These foods are considered well-suited to support the kidneys at this time of year.

- Black beans
- Black garlic
- Black rice
- Black sesame seeds
- Blackberries
- Lamb
- Chicken
- Dark leafy greens
- Plums
- Purple grapes
- Eggplant
- Soups and stews
- Bone broths

Seasonal Herbs and Essential Oils

Because we are in the coldest time of the year, we want to balance the external cold with warming herbs that we can add to what we cook, take as supplements, or make into tea.

Ginger, cinnamon, turmeric, black pepper, and fenugreek seed are excellent warming herbs and perfect to incorporate into your diet during Winter, increasing your inner fire and helping to offset the external cold.

Adding essential oils to a bath or diffuser can positively affect your mood, making you more relaxed or energized, depending on what you feel you need. Essential oils also have a host of medicinal benefits and can help a variety of ailments.

Lavender essential oil is one of the most popular and versatile. Lavender is excellent for improving mood, reducing stress, and calming the body before sleep. Lavender oil can be put into a diffuser, an essential oil burner, or a bath, or you can add a drop or two on your pillow or bed sheets to help calm your body and have a more restful sleep. Lavender essential oil is also helpful in treating minor skin conditions because of its antimicrobial properties, promotes healthy skin and hair, and is an excellent remedy for headaches. Applying a drop to your temples will soothe a headache and help your entire body relax.

While we are all forced inside to stay warm, it also offers us the opportunity to slow down, turn inward, and reflect.



A preliminary study in Taiwan found that compounds extracted from medicinal plants may help prevent COVID-19 infection.

Medicinal Herb May Prevent COVID Infection

A compound found in a traditional Chinese medicine may block the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein, study finds

AMBER YANG, ALICE ZHU, & HARRY MCKENNY

Although many vaccines have been put into use in the effort to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, our resistance to different virus variants is still low. An overlooked study may offer us an avenue to improve that situation.

A study by Taiwan China Medical University in Taiwan found that peimine, extracted from the herb *Fritillaria*, can block SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, from infecting human cells through its spike protein. The extract shows a significant preventive effect and has the potential to be developed as a drug or health food. The research results were published in the *Journal of Food Biochemistry* in July.

Wang Weijian, assistant professor of the Department of Biotechnology of Taiwan China Medical University, who participated in the research, said that there are two ways that the COVID-19 coronavirus can infect the human body.

One is that the virus uses the spike protein on its surface to bind to the angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) receptor on the surface of human cells to invade cells. Another occurs when the ability of the spike protein to bind the ACE2 is weak. When that happens, two proteases (TMPRSS2 and furin) on the cell membrane will edit and modify the fragments above the spike protein to enhance the binding force of the spike protein to ACE2, thus allowing the virus to invade human cells.

Peimine Inhibits Variants of SARS-CoV-2 From Invading Cells

Wang said that the research team conducted individual cellular experiments on 126 single compounds contained in the natural compound drug library and found that peimine extracted from *Fritillaria cirrhosa* or *Fritillaria thunbergii*, sciadopitysin extracted from ginkgo biloba, and many other plants contain compounds that have inhibitory effects on the invasion of SARS-CoV-2. Vanillic acid from the vanilla plant was also found to have this effect.

Since COVID-19 can infect different cells via different mechanisms, the team did further research and found that peimine exhibits multiple effects in preventing a variety of cells from being infected by SARS-CoV-2.

The results of the study found that peimine has the potential to bind to the spike protein and ACE2, and can thus act as a blocker between the spike protein and ACE2, preventing the two from combining. Then, the virus can find no way to enter the cell.

Facing rapidly changing mutant viruses, the research team conducted research on different virus strains, specifically Alpha, Beta, Delta, Gamma, Omicron, and their variants BA.4 and BA.5. It was found that peimine can bind to the spike proteins of different variants of viruses, blocking their binding to ACE2, and inhibiting viral invasion.

Because of these results, Wang believes that peimine has a high potential to prevent viral infection for re-mutant viruses that may appear in the future.

In addition, although furin can promote viral infection, studies have found that peimine also has an inhibitory effect on furin, and it's believed that peimine is a potential antiviral drug or health food in the future.

Application of *Fritillaria* in TCM

Peimine is extracted from the Liliaceae family plant *Fritillaria*. The more well-known species of *Fritillaria* include *Frit-*



With COVID-19 vaccines proving to have limited effectiveness, other measures to combat the virus are being looked at.

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Peimine exhibits multiple effects in preventing a variety of cells from being infected by SARS-CoV-2.

illaria cirrhosa and *Fritillaria thunbergii*. The bulb of *Fritillaria* is usually used as a component in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). It has the functions of moistening the lungs, resolving phlegm, and relieving cough, and has anti-inflammatory, anti-cancer, and anti-pulmonary fibrosis properties.

Fritillaria cirrhosa is also one of the ingredients in the traditional cough remedy known as chuanbei loquat paste.

Wang said that this study also used the decoction of *Fritillaria cirrhosa* and *Fritillaria thunbergii*, as well as the diluted chuanbei loquat paste for experiments. He found these remedies also inhibited the virus.

However, since chuanbei loquat paste also contains other ingredients of TCM, further research is needed to determine whether the efficacy comes from *Fritillaria*.

Wang added that compared with vaccines, which allow people to first generate antibodies inside the body to block the virus, the research team hopes to use these small molecule drugs to block the invasion of the virus so that people can use common medicinal materials to prevent the virus from infecting them in daily life.

With the threats posed by long COVID and the ability of the parasitic SARS-CoV-2 virus to quickly replicate in the body, Wang and others hope *Fritillaria* can be used to prevent more people from catching the virus. And for the infected, it also appears it can help uninfected cells better ward off the virus, thereby preventing the virus from spreading to other cells.

Wang hopes that in the future, *Fritillaria* can be used to prevent and treat the upper respiratory tract, where viruses are most likely to invade. One potential treatment would be nose sprays.

The experiments were conducted in human cell lines using pseudotyped lentiviral particles that contain the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein. Since these lab conditions are far from a perfect replication of an actual infection, Wang said that the effect of the treatments on a real infection should be observed first and only with proof of success can it be further used in clinical trials.

Peimine is an effective treatment for COVID-19, the hope is that it can also be used to prevent it.





FOOD AS MEDICINE

Why Pomegranate Juice Is ‘Roto-Router’ for the Arteries

Pomegranate juice can reverse cardiovascular pathologies that lead to bypass surgeries and heart attacks

SAYER JI

One of the most amazing clinical studies ever performed has been hidden away behind a paywall for more than a decade. When I first stumbled upon this clinical pearl two years ago, in the form of the publicly indexed abstract on pubmed.gov, my jaw nearly dropped.

“Pomegranate juice consumption resulted in a significant IMT [intima-media thickness] reduction, by up to 30 percent, after 1 year,” reads the most eye-opening line in the study’s abstract.

But what does this pomegranate-induced reduction in the intima-media thickness of the arteries mean?

Reversing Atherosclerosis

The intima media is the middle portion of the arteries that becomes inflamed and fills with plaque comprised of oxidized fats, immune cells, and their debris, in the condition known colloquially as “blocked arteries,” or clinically as “atherosclerosis.” As the intima media grows thicker, less space is available for the blood contents to move through the opening (lumen) of the arteries. When the arteries eventually close or are blocked, catastrophic injury or death may follow.

Therefore, anything that can safely reduce, or better, reverse intima media thickening is the holy grail as far as obtaining a root cause resolution of atherosclerosis, and by implication would profoundly reduce deaths linked to cardiovascular mortality.

Indeed, in a world where the top cause of death is cardiovascular disease, and where we preemptively medicate millions more with drugs that only reduce surrogate markers for cardiovascular disease risk—i.e. lipoproteins carrying cholesterol—without showing any convincing evidence that it’s reducing cardiovascular disease or all-cause mortality, how could something as simple and powerful as pomegranate be overlooked?

In fact, if a simple daily dietary intervention is capable of regressing or reversing the underlying disease process in millions of fatal cardiac cases, it would seem highly unethical not to use it.

Here, we wish to bring some of the finer details of this clinical trial to light, to further substantiate the value of botanical and food-based interventions—not only in preventing but treating major chronic disease processes such as cardiovascular disease, the developed world’s most deadly disease.

The Pomegranate ‘Artery-Cleaning’ Clinical Trial

Published in *Clinical Nutrition* in 2004 and titled “Pomegranate juice consumption for 3 years by patients with carotid artery stenosis reduces common carotid intima-media thickness, blood pressure and LDL oxidation,” Israeli researchers discovered pomegranate, administered in juice form over the course of a year, reversed plaque ac-

cumulation in the carotid arteries of patients with severe, though symptomless, carotid artery stenosis (defined as 70 to 90 percent blockage in the internal carotid arteries).

The study consisted of 19 patients, five women and 14 men, aged 65 to 75, who were non-smokers. They were randomized to receive either pomegranate juice or a placebo. Ten patients were in the pomegranate juice treatment group and nine patients who didn’t consume pomegranate juice were in the control group. Both groups were matched with similar blood lipid and glucose concentrations, blood pressure, and with similar medication regimens, which consisted of blood-pressure-lowering (e.g. ACE inhibitors, beta-blockers, or calcium channel blockers) and lipid-lowering drugs (e.g. statins).

The 10 patients in the treatment group received 8.11 ounces (240 ml) of pomegranate juice per day, for a period of one year, and five out of them agreed to continue for up to three years.

The remarkable results were reported as follows:

“The mean intima media thickness of the left and right common carotid arteries in severe carotid artery stenosis patients that consumed pomegranate juice for up to 1 year was reduced after 3, 6, 9 and 12 months of pomegranate juice consumption by 13 percent, 22 percent, 26 percent, and 35 percent, respectively, in comparison to baseline values.”

You can only imagine what would happen if a pharmaceutical drug was shown to reverse plaque buildup in the carotid arteries by 13 percent in just three months! This drug would be lauded as a life-saving miracle drug, and not only would be promoted and sold successfully as a multi-billion dollar blockbuster, but discussion would inevitably follow as to why it should be mandated.

While these results are impressive, if not altogether groundbreaking for the field of cardiology, they may be even better than revealed in the stated therapeutic outcomes above.

When one factors in that the carotid artery stenosis increased 9 percent within one

Opening Up Our Arteries

Israeli researchers found pomegranate juice reversed plaque accumulation in the carotid arteries of patients with severe blockages.



Fresh pomegranates are a little tricky to eat, but packed with disease-fighting nutrients.

heart-disease-promoting effects of oxidative stress.

Blood Pressure Lowering Properties

The intervention resulted in significant improvement in blood pressure: the patient’s systolic blood pressure was reduced by 7 percent, 11 percent, 10 percent, 10 percent, and 12 percent after 1, 3, 6, 9, and 12 months of pomegranate consumption, respectively, compared to values obtained before treatment.

Pomegranate’s ability to reduce systolic blood pressure indicates it has a healing effect on the endothelium, or the inner lining of the artery which fails to relax fully in heart disease; a condition known as endothelial dysfunction.

Plaque Lesion Stabilization

Because two of the 10 patients on pomegranate juice (after three and 12 months) experienced clinical deterioration, carotid surgery was performed and the lesions were analyzed to determine the difference in their composition to those who didn’t receive pomegranate. The researchers noticed four distinct positive differences in the composition of the pomegranate-treated lesions:

1. Reduced Cholesterol Content: “The cholesterol content in carotid lesions from the two patients that consumed pomegranate juice (PJ) was lower by 58 percent and 20 percent, respectively, in comparison to lesions obtained from CAS patients that did not consume PJ.”

2. Reduced Lipid Peroxides: “The lipid peroxides content in lesions obtained from the patients after PJ consumption for 3 or 12 months was significantly reduced by 61 percent or 44 percent, respectively, as compared to lesions from patients that did not consume PJ.”

3. Increased Reduced Glutathione Content: “A substantial increase in the lesion reduced glutathione (GSH) content, (GSH is a major cellular antioxidant) by 2.5-fold, was observed after PJ consumption for 3 or 12 months.”

4. Reduced LDL Oxidation: “LDL oxidation by lesions derived from the patients after PJ consumption for 3 or 12 months, was significantly (Po0.01) decreased by 43 percent or 32 percent, respectively, in comparison to LDL oxidation rates obtained by lesions from CAS patients that did not consume PJ.”

Essentially, these results reveal that not only does pomegranate reduce the lesion size in the carotid arteries, but “the lesion itself may be considered less atherogenic after PJ consumption, as its cholesterol and oxidized lipid content decreased, and since its ability to oxidize LDL was significantly reduced.”

This finding is quite revolutionary, as presently, the dangers of carotid artery stenosis are understood primarily through the lesion size and not by assessing the quality of that lesion.

This dovetails with the concept that the sheer quantity of lipoproteins (i.e. “cholesterol”) in the blood can not accurately reveal whether those lipoproteins are actually harmful (atherogenic); rather, if lipoproteins are oxidized (e.g. ox-LDL) they can be harmful (or representative of a more systemic bodily imbalance), whereas non-oxidized low-density lipoprotein may be considered entirely benign, if not indispensable for cardiovascular and body-wide health.

Indeed, in this study the researchers found the pomegranate group had increased levels of triglycerides and very low-density lipoprotein, again, underscoring that the anti-atherosclerotic properties likely have more to do with the improved quality of the physiological milieu within which all our lipoproteins operate than the number of them, in and of itself.

Finally, it should be pointed out that all the patients in this study were undergoing conventional, drug-based care for cardiovascular disease, e.g. cholesterol- and blood pressure-lowering agents. Not only did the pomegranate treatment not appear to interfere with their drugs, making it a suitable complementary/adjunct therapy for those on pharmaceuticals, but it should be pointed out that the control group’s condition got progressively worse (e.g. the mean IMT increased 9 percent within one year), speaking to just how ineffective drugs are, or how they may even contribute to the acceleration of the disease process itself.

Pomegranate’s 100-Plus Health Benefits Believe it or not, pomegranate has many other ways in which it can help to heal the cardiovascular system, as well as other organ systems. Our research project has identified more than 100 distinct health benefits of pomegranate.

Sayer Ji is founder of Greenmedinfo.com, a reviewer at the International Journal of Human Nutrition and Functional Medicine, co-founder and CEO of Systome Biomed, vice chairman of the Board of the National Health Federation, steering committee member of the Global Non-GMO Foundation.



If your dentist is finding problems in your mouth, it could indicate problems in other parts of your body as well.

Mouth Microbiome Plays Pivotal Role in Overall Health

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Traveling Mouth Microbes

These “friendly” microbes are found all over our bodies. However, the heart of it lies in our gut.

But keep in mind that we also have a pretty sizable microbiome in our mouths, as well. The human oral cavity hosts the second-most plentiful and diverse microbiota in the body after the gastrointestinal tract. And many of the bacterial strains found in the mouth can also benefit the rest of the body.

For years, researchers recognized the presence of mouth microbes, but the colony was primarily believed to be its own little universe, having little influence or exchange with our gut flora.

The rationale for this belief was that mouth microbes were considered to be too weak to make the trip because stomach acid and bile would destroy them on the way down.

If microbes were able to make it past these acidic barriers, doctors and scientists thought it was a sign of trouble, manifesting in diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease, and colon cancer.

But the National Library of Medicine



Protecting Your Mouth Microbiome

Sugar, antibiotics, farmed animal meats, high sugar dairy products, refined vegetable oils, and processed grains have a bad effect on the oral microbiome.

highlighted a study published in 2019 that tells a different story—one in which friendly microbes are much heartier than scientists previously believed.

Instead of reinforcing the notion that oral microbes traveling to the intestines intact was a rare event and a hallmark of disease, these researchers found that microbes regularly made the trip unscathed. In fact, successful journeys were found to be pretty normal. Researchers looked at hundreds of microbe strains (both salivary and fecal) from 470 individuals in five countries and found evidence for a vast majority of oral species to be transferable.

Instead of the mouth being a lone microbial island meant to be separate from the rest of the body, scientists concluded that the mouth was “an endogenous reservoir for gut microbial strains.”

So your mouth shares bacteria with your gut, but both regions are also meant to be unique microbial environments. Researchers found that disease-causing bacteria showed a higher rate of crossover between oral and gut microbes. Compared to healthy individuals, colon cancer patients showed increased levels of microbe transmission, particularly among the strains associated with colon cancer.

Ancient Diets, Better Microbes

It’s estimated that between 50 billion and 100 billion bacteria reside inside your mouth, both good and bad. Some strains work in favor of your health, and some can run you down.

The ratio between health-promoting and disease-causing bacteria depends on several factors, but your daily decisions play an enormous role in determining which bacteria proliferate in your mouth (and possibly make their way into the rest of your body.)

Of course, good oral hygiene can play a significant part in reducing periodontal disease and improving the overall health of our mouth microbiome. But scientists have also shown that the quality of our oral-bacterial landscape is largely dictated by what we eat.

Our collective oral landscape has certainly degraded with time. Everyone is familiar with the notion that the modern diet has had a detrimental effect on public health. But consider the damage from a microscopic level.

A 2013 study published in *Nature Genetics* showed that our ancient prehistoric ancestors had a far better composition of oral bacteria than modern folks.

Researchers looked at the teeth of 34 prehistoric human skeletons and found that as mankind went from the hunting and gathering lifestyle to agriculture, disease-causing bacteria began to spread. The trend only worsened when our diets became more dependent on great quantities of processed flour and sugar in the modern era.

Researchers concluded that moving from a diet of vegetables and game to one of increasingly simpler carbs and processed meat shifted the composition of our mouth microbiome for the worse. The study showed that the modern diet has conspired to create an ecosystem low in microbe diversity, and it caters to those strains related to opportunistic pathogens.

A 2015 study arrived at a similar conclusion. Scientists ran CT scans on the plaster casts of Pompeii residents who died in the ash of the legendary Mt. Vesuvius erup-

tion 1900 years ago. Researchers remarked on the fine teeth found in the mouths of these ancient individuals, both rich and poor. Regardless of their position in society, subjects were found to have diets rich in vegetables. They possessed none of the benefits of modern dentistry.

Feeding A Good Colony

So what should we be eating to ensure our mouth (and our health in general) has a health-promoting microbiome, and what foods should we avoid?

A 2022 study in the journal *Nutrients* offers some insight. Scientists looked at the influence of diet on the oral environment, particularly in regard to the development of periodontal disease. They noted that things such as excess sugar consumption and antibiotic use are major culprits, but that the foods with

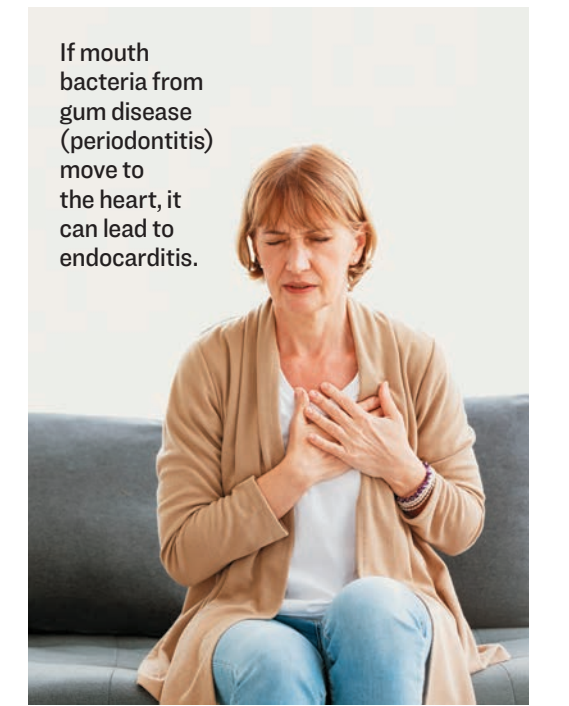
the greatest impact on disease turn out to be those found in abundance in the modern diet: farmed animal meats, high-sugar dairy products, refined vegetable oils, and processed grains.

Excesses in these foods led to extremes in the microenvironment of the mouth. Too much animal protein was found to contribute to a mouth with an exceedingly acidic pH, and simple carbs contributed to inflammation. It’s this acidified environment that best supports the microbial strains that leads to periodontal disease.

The quality of our oral bacterial landscape is largely dictated by what we eat.

For a healthier mix of mouth microbes, scientists showed support for wild foods, such as game, berries, and uncultivated root vegetables. However, for those who don’t have the time or opportunity to hunt and gather, researchers pointed to a large, cross-sectional study looking at the association between diet and periodontitis.

“That study found that a dietary pattern rich in fruits, vegetables, salad, water, and tea and with limited intake of fermentable carbohydrates, fatty acids, protein, and sugar-rich beverages had a lower extent of periodontal disease,” researchers wrote. “This is attributable to reduced expression of periodontal bacteria in the oral microenvironment.”



If mouth bacteria from gum disease (periodontitis) move to the heart, it can lead to endocarditis.

Eating 5–6 Prunes Per Day May Help Prevent Bone Loss and Retain Bone Strength

SARAH COWNLEY

If you want to protect yourself from bone loss and preserve your strength as you age, you may want to grab a handful of prunes! Prunes, also known as dried plums, are a delicious sweet snack and incredibly nutritious food that can provide numerous benefits for bone health. A recent study published in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* suggests that consuming prunes in moderation daily could help keep your bones strong and healthy long into adulthood.

In the United States, about 10 million adults over the age of 50 have osteoporosis. According to previous research,

women are four times more likely to be diagnosed with the condition. This may be partly due to a decline in estrogen levels at the onset of menopause that often results in the loss of bone density. However, new research from Pennsylvania State University shows that eating prunes daily may help women preserve bone density.

The study included 235 postmenopausal women, some of whom were assigned to eat 50 grams (approximately 5–6 prunes) each day for a year. The researchers measured the women’s bone mineral density, bone strength, and bone geometry and found that prunes may be beneficial. “Consuming five to six prunes a day for

12 months resulted in the preservation of bone at the hip, a finding that was observable at six months and persisted through month 12. In another study, 3D imaging of bone provided additional information about the response of bone to consuming prunes daily,” lead author Mary Jane De Souza said.

Knowing about diet and food facts, including which can help keep bones strong and healthy, can help to prevent bone fractures as you age. Prunes make a great snack that isn’t only full of fiber but great for bone health, as well.

Sarah Cownley earned a diploma in Nutritional Therapy from Health Sciences Academy in London, and she enjoys helping others by teaching healthy lifestyle changes through her personal consultations and with her regular contributions to the Doctors Health Press. This article was originally published on Bel Marra Health.

Dried plums offer a nutritional boost for bones that may be particularly helpful for postmenopausal women.



KRASULA/SHUTTERSTOCK

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

Countering the Killer Influence of Inflammation

Your mind, habits, and food can trigger cytokines that fire up inflammation—but you can change that



Difficult situations at home can trigger stress that leads to a rise in inflammatory cytokines.

MARTHA ROSENBERG

Chances are, you never heard of cytokines until the COVID-19 pandemic gripped the world. That's when most of us learned that these important signaling molecules can set our immune system on a fatal overdrive.

Dr. David Hanscom and 10 co-authors discuss this problem—and its many criti-

cal dimensions—in a white paper called “Lowering Inflammation Lengthens Life.” Among other points in the paper, they highlight that the main danger with COVID-19 wasn't the rate of infection, but its “high potential to trigger a fatal, inflammatory response.” That response came in the form of a cytokine storm.

Cytokines are small proteins used for cell signaling. They play a variety of roles in the body, but one of the most important—and

Cytokines are small proteins used for cell signaling.

problematic—is their role in activating an immune response.

In this role, you can think of cytokines as little signal flares that are sent out to tell other elements of the immune system where to fire. In a cytokine storm, too many of these little proteins congregate and set off a fatal immune reaction.

The problem is, you don't need an infection to set cytokines off, nor to have a self-defeating immune response.

The body and mind are inseparable, and thoughts and feelings tell our bodies how to respond. When you perceive a threat and get stressed, that tells your body there is trouble brewing and it should get ready to fight or flee. Along with a shift in hormones, cytokines are spread out and stand ready to fire up the immune response.

You can think of your immune response like a fire that burns out the invaders but causes a certain amount of collateral damage along the way. That collateral damage is worth it when you face a real pathogen or physical threat, but isn't worth it when you are just being triggered by incendiary news programs, fear mongers, and conflict entrepreneurs, not to mention financial distress, toxic food, and any number of other common stress triggers.

That fire is called inflammation, and when it runs overtime, it contributes to virtually every disease, physical as well as mental. Of particular note is autoimmunity, which is when the immune system attacks the body instead of any kind of invader.

The link between stress and inflammation has been known for decades and was highlighted in a research review on autoimmunity published in the journal *Autoimmunity Reviews* in 2007.

“Many retrospective studies found that a high proportion (up to 80 percent) of patients reported uncommon emotional stress before disease onset. Unfortunately, not only does stress cause disease, but the disease itself also causes significant stress in the patients, creating a vicious cycle.”

That vicious cycle is common with stress and illness generally. Stress leads to disease and disease leads to stress. The only cure is to resolve the root cause: stress. That requires taking a holistic look at our patterns of daily living, our internal reactions, and ways we can change ourselves and our lives to limit or resolve causes of stress.

Few events in recent decades have been as universally stressful as COVID-19. We also learned, at a new level, the problem of out-of-control cytokines, which can cause “failure of multiple organs,” wrote Hanscom et al.

“This is the cause of ARDS [adult respiratory distress syndrome], the most common cause of death from coronavirus, which impedes the lungs from providing oxygen to the blood,” they noted.

Inflammation is also a contributing factor to cancer, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or ALS, asthma, rheumatoid arthritis (RA), and even depression.

Medical experts often offer valuable nutritional and lifestyle advice to minimize inflammation and the conditions it can cause. For example, Harvard Health warns that inflammation-causing foods should be avoided for optimal health.

How to Harness the Healthy Function of Anxiety

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This is empowering on a personal level, and it gives us alternatives to Big Pharma prescriptions and the host of unwanted side effects they often carry.

This article contains three practical techniques to use anxiety constructively, illustrated with common examples of everyday stressors. The general idea is that anxiety brings a burst of energy, and we'd be wise to use that energy strategically.

Mindful Observation

Before reaching for any of the proverbial “tools in your toolbox” when confronted with anxiety, it's important to examine the anxiety and its source. This will help ensure you select the best tool for the situation. I find that most techniques break down into one of two categories, which I call “leaning in” and “pivoting away.” Both categories are actually useful, but it's essential to select from the category appropriate to your situation.

The leaning-in approach is best when you examine the anxiety and realize that there's actually a clear preparation behavior it's trying to stimulate.

For example, if you're experiencing anxiety due to an overwhelming list of

friends and family on your holiday gift list, the anxiety could actually be providing a helpful drive for you to make a list of recipients, brainstorm their gifts, and begin to shop now rather than waiting till the last minute when prices and selection are both likely to be worse.

On the other hand, if your holiday shopping is now complete but you're just experiencing residual anxiety over it, then you might consider pivoting away techniques that are geared toward relaxation or pointing the excess energy onto another task that needs your attention. To help categorize your concerns in the mindful observation stage, simply ask yourself if there is any preparation action you can take around the topic that's making you anxious. If there is, then find a way to “lean in” and use the nervous energy

constructively. If there isn't, then consider ways to relax, practice acceptance, or redirect your energy where it can be more useful. Either way, don't scold yourself for being anxious. This only leads to “anxiety about anxiety,” which offers no benefit.

Instead, be grateful for the extra mental energy you have, and use it in a way that is helpful to you.



Drugs can mask anxiety, but habits can help make it useful.

KUBAIS/SHUTTERSTOCK

We were given anxiety for a reason, so we want to consider its benefits.

The Mental Shortlist Technique

This is a pivoting-away technique. To flesh out the example above, let's suppose you had been extremely anxious about your holiday shopping, and now you've finally finished it—yet you still feel keyed up with residual anxiety even though all the preparation behaviors (shopping, wrapping, shipping, etc.) are complete.

At this point, you could absolutely choose to do some deep breathing, imagine a beach, or do whatever typical tried-and-true relaxation technique you like. This would be



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Sometimes the best way to deal with anxiety is to take meaningful steps toward resolving the thing you're anxious about.

Lifestyle Sources of Inflammation

The mental triggers of inflammation are often overlooked, a fact that Hanscom and his co-authors make efforts to draw particular attention to.

“Any mental or physical threat, perceived or real, is going to be met with a defensive response from your body,” writes Hanscom and his co-authors. “Although threats come in many forms, they always activate pro-inflammatory (Pro-I) cytokines.”

The mental threats that trigger stress and inflammation are especially insidious—and overlooked, they note.

“If you don't feel safe and peaceful, you are carrying elevated levels of inflammatory cytokines.”

Mental Triggers of Inflammation

- Memories
- Negative thoughts
- Repressed and suppressed thoughts and feelings
- Insecurities (social, financial, physical, etc.)
- Cognitive distortions
- Loss of purpose
- Social isolation

Families, for example, can trigger cytokine storms to a degree. According to Hanscom et al., when you're angry at your family, you should “disengage” because “no relationship is improved by angry interactions—ever!”

How do your spouse and children feel when they're around you while you're angry? Ask them, the “Lowering Inflammation Lengthens Life” authors say. Listen, without comment, to your family for a month, suggest the authors. You can also make a conscious choice to be an anti-inflammatory influence in your own household.

“Commit to being a source of inspiration and joy to your family,” write the authors, which means not criticizing or making your children feel unsafe.

“Advice should be given only when asked for,” they suggest.

They also encourage parents to find out who their children really are and consult the classic parenting book “Parent Effectiveness Training” by Thomas Gordon.

How Do We Calm Mental Causes of Inflammation?

According to Hanscom et al., the primary goal when it comes to reducing inflammation is to “decrease stimulation of your nervous system.” That includes re-examining what role over-stimulating behaviors may be exerting on your personal life.



What we think, feel, do, and eat, can all have a significant effect on inflammation.

What are some of these inflammation traps? According to the authors they include:

- Watching intense video games or violent movies
- Watching newscasts that upset you
- Arguing with family members
- Discussing your pain or health problems with non-medical people
- Complaining about anything, including the pandemic
- Gossiping

Anger and Forgiveness

Anger may give us a feeling of power and seem to alleviate our anxiety, but it's a dangerous trap. Since anxiety creates a need for control, anger arises to exert control. Specifically, write the authors: “When confronted with a threat, you'll produce anxiety that you may or may not be aware of, but your first impulse is to defend yourself. This is the fight response, necessary for survival. You will experience some level of upset, ranging from slight annoyance to all-out rage. Your body elevates Pro-I cytokines and stress hormones to increase your odds of success in defending yourself. Your dopamine (rewards) and testosterone levels also increase.”

Anger has the effect of covering up our vulnerability, write the authors. “Even if regaining control is out of the question (and you can't control your thoughts), anger allows you to feel as if you are in control. What's more, anger is nearly impossible to relinquish.”

The problem with that is the problem with any rewarding but unhealthy behavior—it can become habitual.

Since bullies have lower inflammatory markers than the bullied, the immediate but ultimately self-defeating benefits of anger can be seen.

Anti-Inflammatory Foods



Blueberries, cherries, strawberries, and other fruit



Kale, spinach, and other green leafy vegetables



Tomatoes



Salmon, tuna, sardines, and other fatty fish

“If you don't feel safe and peaceful, you are carrying elevated levels of inflammatory cytokines.”

Dr. David Hanscom and his co-authors

Our body and mind are inseparable and thoughts and feelings tell our body how to respond.

Inflammatory Foods

- **Added sugars**, especially in soda and other sugar-sweetened beverages
- **Fried foods** such as French fries and fried chicken
- **White breads**, pastries, and other refined carbohydrates
- **Processed meat**, such as hot dogs and sausages, and too much red meat

Your body considers many processed foods, with their added sugars and oils, to be foreign invaders, poisons of a sort, and so triggers inflammation to deal with them. Fortunately, just as there are foods that trigger inflammation, there are also foods that calm it down, most notably fruits, vegetables, and cold-water fatty fish, as noted by Harvard Health.



totally fine, and I would even recommend it if you felt the need.

However, you also have another choice: You could choose to redirect the nervous energy that often accompanies anxiety, and use that energy to accomplish something else that's meaningful to you. This is where the mental shortlist technique comes into play.

To try the mental shortlist, create a list of five things that you'd like to do whenever you have some extra energy. For example, your list might include calling friends and family, polishing your resume or online job profile, planning a fun date with your spouse, practicing prayer or meditation, doing a meal plan for the week, or catching up on your expense reports—the list could include anything.

This technique helps resolve the issue that occurs when we're anxious. We often get tunnel vision that makes it hard to see anything beyond the single item making us anxious. This is actually a gift from Mother Nature that helps us to focus on threats or serious stressors, but it becomes an obstacle when we're focused on a stressor that's outdated.

The silver lining is that if we have a mental shortlist, it's easy to redirect this burst of anxious energy toward something else. The only caveat is that we need to have a list prepared in advance, since it's often hard to recall other topics when our mind is stuck on the outdated stressor.

This is why I encourage people to actually write down their mental shortlist. The items on it will probably seem simple and obvious in your calm state of mind, but you'll thank

yourself for having the list ready when you're hyper-focused on an outdated stressor.

I often compare having a good mental shortlist available to having a fridge full of healthy and delicious snacks rather than leaving yourself with nothing but cookies when the snack monster strikes: It's much easier to make healthy choices when we have good options pre-selected and easily accessible rather than leaving ourselves to nosh whatever is quick and tempting when we're under stress.

The Zone of Control

This is a leaning-in technique, meaning that it's best for situations where your anxiety connects to a topic that would benefit from preparation steps.

For example, let's say you're anxious about an upcoming visit with family over the holidays. First, you would make a list of every facet of the visit that makes you nervous. The list might include a lack of personal time, a feeling of powerlessness around certain insensitive family members, an aversion to holiday travel, and a sense of displeasure over the expense.

Obviously, there are likely many positive aspects of your family visit, but for the purposes of this exercise, we're focused on the parts that make you anxious.

Once your list is complete, make a T-chart and divide your concerns into controllable and non-controllable. You might put lack of personal time and feeling powerless around

certain family members into the controllable category because, upon reflection, you realize that you could build moments of personal time into the trip (i.e., booking a massage or a day pass to the local gym, or even a walk where you have a cellphone call planned with a supportive friend); and that you can actually strategize how to handle certain family members (i.e., craft a few boundary-setting statements to set limits with the person, or plan a “secret signal” for your spouse to literally stand by your side if needed). You might put the fact of holiday travel and expense into the non-controllable category, although you might find the act of doing so activates your critical-thinking skills and promotes an awareness of ways you could reduce expenses or make the travel a bit less stressful.

Once you've divided these anxiety triggers into controllable and non-controllable, your next move is to write an action step by each item in the controllable category (for example, making the arrangements for gym, massage, or the cellphone call; or creating an “SOS plan” with your spouse for certain family dynamics).

Whenever you feel anxious about the trip, simply point your eyeballs at your action steps and start knocking them off. This will increase your sense of control around the stressor (a sense of control is a known protective factor for mental health) and it will ensure your anxiety is being used constructively by helping to stimulate the preparation behaviors you listed next to the items on the list of things you can control.

This proactive leaning-in approach is often healthier and more beneficial to you than simply stewing in anxiety, or even just closing your eyes to mentally escape to a relaxing beach. The difference is that you are actually using your anxiety constructively rather than just trying to manage or escape from it.

While no technique or approach is a panacea, hopefully these ideas offer you a fresh perspective. Don't hesitate to seek professional help if these or other forms of self-help leave you still feeling stuck. The goal here is just to realize that anxiety often offers a silver lining, which is a boost of energy and focus that can actually be quite helpful if we know how to use them to our advantage.

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Conclusion

While no technique or approach is a panacea, hopefully these ideas offer you a fresh perspective. Don't hesitate to seek professional help if these or other forms of self-help leave you still feeling stuck. The goal here is just to realize that anxiety often offers a silver lining, which is a boost of energy and focus that can actually be quite helpful if we know how to use them to our advantage.

We were given anxiety for a reason, so we want to consider its benefits, especially in a time or season when anxiety runs high.

The techniques featured in this article are borrowed from my book “Nervous Energy: Harness the Power of Your Anxiety” (Macmillan 2021). It's available in many languages, including Simplified Chinese.

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Imagine a beach, or do whatever typical tried-and-true relaxation technique you like.

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Being overwhelmed is the new normal but you can only do what you can do—so make sure you are doing what matters most to you.

WISE HABITS

Working Effectively When You're Overwhelmed

Life throws a lot at us, but that's fine as long as we know our priorities



LEO BABAUTA

I've noticed that so many people are feeling overwhelmed, scattered, and stressed—so much so that focus and effective work become incredibly difficult.

So what can we do to be more effective in the midst of this scattered, overwhelmed state?

Today, I'm going to share the top three things I do to help myself find focus and effectiveness even when I'm at my most scattered.

The Interstitial Pause

The first thing I recommend is a pause between anything you do—I call it the “interstitial pause.” An interstice is a space or gap that intervenes between two things or something that would otherwise be continuous.

Basically, instead of switching from one task to the next, I recommend a pause.

- If you answer an email, pause—do you want to keep answering emails or is there something more important you'd like to do?
- If you finish working on a task, pause—would you like to take a break or choose the next task from your list to focus on?
- If you notice yourself automatically opening an app or website that's a distraction, pause—is there something more important you'd like to focus on?
- If you've just been given a bunch of messages and tasks, pause—add them to your list, and prioritize, choosing one thing to focus on (more on that below).
- If you've been working for a while, pause—would you like to stretch your

One of the biggest challenges when we're feeling overwhelmed is that we're often drained and our ability to focus is lowered.



Instead of switching from one task to the next, I recommend a pause.

legs, get some water, clear your head?

This pause helps us navigate chaotic waters, and helps us to be more intentional about our day.

The Flexible Focus Method

This is a simple, time-tested method for finding effectiveness when things are chaotic:

- **Make a Short List:** This is a list of 3–5 things you'd like to focus on for the day. Choose three things if they're big ones, or if you have a day that's full of meetings. Choose five things if they're medium tasks. If you're feeling optimistic, choose six things. Put them in order of importance.
- **Make a Long List:** This is the list of everything else you'd like to do. Put things that are more urgent near the top. This long list is a “would be nice to do” list but you aren't going to focus on it. Focus instead on the short list.
- **Focus on the Top Task:** Each day, focus on the top task on your short list. Only on that. Nothing else. When you're done with that, focus on the next item.
- **Dealing With Interruptions:** The beauty of this method is that it's flexible. If you're interrupted, you can simply return to the important task you were working on when you were interrupted, or pause and find something more important to focus on. If you have incoming tasks and messages, you can simply add them to your long list. If they're important enough, put them on the short list and knock something else onto the long list. Be flexible and allow yourself to adjust to a changing landscape.

- **At the End of Each Day:** Take a moment to check things off and celebrate your accomplishments—then simply take the unfinished items on the short list and add them to tomorrow's short list. Make your new list for tomorrow, so you know what to focus on when you get started.

Refilling Your Capacity

One of the biggest challenges when we're feeling overwhelmed is that we're often drained and our ability to focus is lowered. We can't take on hard tasks because we just don't have the mental energy.

The practice to take on here is committing yourself to making self-care a priority. What do you need to do to get your mental energy where you want it to be in order to be effective and focus? If we can't get this fundamental thing down, then we can't create what we want to create in the world. For me, this means prioritizing:

- Rest and recovery
- Exercise
- Eating well
- Something comforting, such as a hot shower, hot tea, or hugs from a loved one
- Practicing self-compassion

If I can do those things, then I can be effective and focus on what matters. What would you need to do to get your capacity to the level you need it to be?

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His Winnowing Fan



Only a portion of the many messages of the Bible are being heard today. Hardly any are on eschatology, the subject of heaven and hell. Instead, we hear only an abbreviated form of Christianity that consists of Jesus's teachings on love, mercy, forgiveness and compassion. While crucial to our understanding of salvation, they do little to startle or influence behavior, but are preached because they are easier to hear.

Messages that concern God's wrath and man's eternal future should be preached more often, for they alert us to be more watchful of what we say and do, and help us to act more naturally with honesty, integrity and truthfulness. In addition, important aspects of Christian life are seldom if ever taught today, such as how should evil be treated – should it be tolerated or opposed, and how should Christians view the tolerant world?

Each chapter of this book discusses an important sermon topic that is seldom if ever elucidated. They tell us that the purposes of God are not the purposes of man, that God's purposes transcend man's, and also man, himself. Were the full teachings of the Bible faithfully given to the world, the problems of the church would be solved and attendance would take care of itself.

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