

# MIND & BODY

FIXING HEALTH CARE

**\$1000****PER  
PERSON**

In 2019, the United States spent more than \$1,000 per person on prescription medicines, spending about double what peer countries pay.



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## Could Natural Medicine Save

# the Health Care System?



▲ Polypharmacy, the taking of multiple drugs, can lead to additional risks as side effects from drugs are treated with other drugs.

“**The kind of medicine that conventional medicine relies on is too expensive because of its dependence on expensive technology.**

*Dr. Andrew Weil, director of the Andrew Weil Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona*

**The United States suffers from the highest health care costs in the world—with little to show for it**

CONAN MILNER

**L**ooking for a bargain? You won't find it in health care. Particularly in the United States, where Americans spend more each year, but somehow have less to show for it.

According to a report from the Commonwealth Fund in early 2020, the United States spent nearly twice as much on health care as other wealthy nations (Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Canada). Despite this high price tag, the United States saw the lowest life expectancy and highest suicide rates among these countries.

The United States also suffers the highest chronic disease burden, with an obesity rate two times higher than the average in other peer countries. This may explain why Americans saw the highest number of hospitalizations from preventable causes, and the highest rate of avoidable deaths.

Dollar for dollar, the United States has the worst health care system in the world. The government spends more taxpayer dollars per capita than any other country in the world, including countries with entirely public health care systems known for exceptional quality of care. On top of those taxpayer dollars, American's

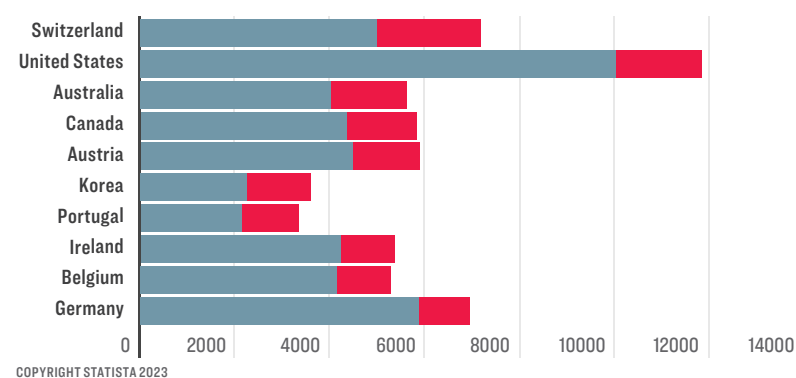
also spend more per capita of their own money than the citizens of any other country in the world except for Sweden, according to the latest analysis from Statista.

So where's all the money going to support these lousy outcomes? A lot is spent on drugs. A 2022 poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation found 6 in 10 U.S. adults were taking at least one prescription medication and 25 percent were taking four or more. That rate rises as people age. One CDC report found that more than 40 percent Americans 65 or older had taken five or more prescriptions in the last 30 days (a threefold increase from 20 years ago.)

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**Patients have become conditioned toward pill-based solutions.**

**The U.S. government spends more taxpayer dollars on health care per capita than any other country in the world.**



## Predictive Prescription Diets Could Be Closer Than We Think

Massive 5-year study underway to discover the elusive gut-health blueprint

AMY DENNEY

Imagine an algorithm that would tell you exactly what to eat for your ailments and even prevent you from suffering from genetic disease.

No longer would the conundrum of choosing between keto, Mediterranean, paleo, or other trending, slick-sounding diets exist. Your al-

gorithm would be form-fitting—not just to your medical diagnosis but also to your unique medical history, genetics, living environment, race, age, sex, medications, stress level, and microbiome.

Because people are more than just their illnesses, the multitude of factors in choosing a personal diet is important. An eating plan that works well for tackling heart disease might contain foods that don't metabolize well for a particular individual, based on their constitution, or may not identify an ongoing environmental

factor, etc. More insight is needed to provide a comprehensive, individualized plan.

In the current model of health care, issues like heart disease risk and metabolic syndrome are likely to be addressed with prescriptions than a prescribed diet, adding an expensive and sometimes unnecessary burden on the health care system and patients alike. Precision medicine, however, is now examining the efficacy of these current medical practices.

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Knowing our real nutritional needs may motivate us to eat better and enjoy the rewards of better health.







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If we reject life's inevitable hardships, we will miss the opportunity to learn, adapt, and grow.

WISE HABITS

# Seeing the Gift in Hardship

Life doesn't give us everything we want, but that is part of what we need

LEO BABAUTA

There are a number of common deterrents to creating powerful change in your life:

- Feeling that the effort is pointless
- Resisting the effort
- Frustration with yourself or others
- Disliking the activity
- Feeling an urge or compulsion to do the old habit

Each of these can derail your efforts to create something new. And to be clear, there's nothing wrong with any of these—they're wonderfully human traits. But to create powerful change, we have to learn to work with them.

I'd like to introduce a magical tool that I call "seeing the gift."

If you deploy seeing the gift, you can work with any of the above deterrents. Let's take a look.

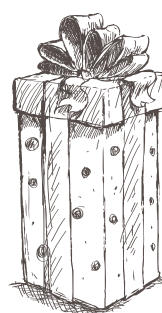
### What's 'Seeing the Gift'?

In any activity, in any person, you can find a gift. Sometimes it's obvious—the person in front of you is kind and generous, and you feel them very easily as a gift. When you're watching a sunset out in nature, you can feel the wonder and joy of the gift of that moment.

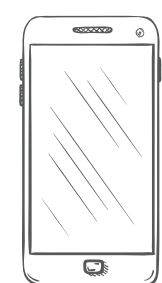
But other times it's more challenging—the person in front of you is being annoying, or you're going through illness or injury, or the project in front of you is boring and hard. In some situations, or with some people, we resist seeing the gift. We want to just complain. And that's OK! Let yourself complain, and see the gift in expressing the frustration or despair in your heart.

How can that emotion be a gift to you?

**Sometimes, to accomplish a goal, we have to do something we don't like.**



Some of life's gifts are obvious, others take effort to recognize.



When old urges beckon, sit with the feeling instead of indulging.

If you continue to sit with that emotion, you'll relax a bit. Then you can look deeper. While the person in front of you is causing you frustration, there's something they're offering you. There's a gift in them, if you are willing to look.

Are you willing? If you're taking on an overwhelming or boring project, it can be hard to see the gift—but if you sit with it for a little longer, you'll find it in the silence. You'll start to realize what the project has to teach you. It will start to change you.

The gift is what it has to teach you; how it changes you; and how it connects you to the divine, to yourself, and to everything around you. The gift is the sacredness of the moment and of you. The gift is a profound realization of the wonder of life.

It's always there, if we're willing to look.

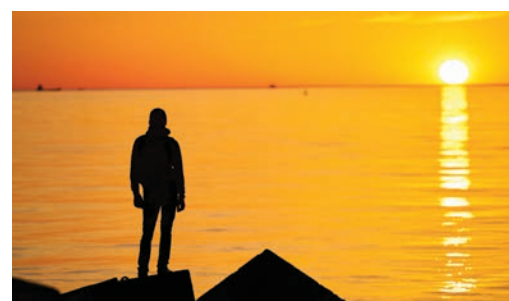
### How to Use 'Seeing the Gift' for Powerful Change

#### The Rescue

Let's take each of the deterrents to change that I mentioned above.

**The effort is pointless.** It feels like you'll never accomplish what you want to achieve, so it feels pointless to even try. This feeling of pointlessness stops every one of us. Could you see the gift in trying even if you don't get to the goal? Could the effort be a gift no matter the outcome?

**Resisting the effort.** You have the project sitting over there waiting for you to start it, or you planned to do a workout today, but you're resisting it. Everything else seems



The gift found in hardship may be a more profound connection to the divine, to yourself, and to everything around you.

more urgent, so you put it off. What if you paused for a minute to sit still and see the gift in the project or the workout? What if you let that gift call you to the change you want to make in your life and the world?

**Frustration with yourself or others.** The person in front of you is obnoxious. Or you aren't living up to your expectations. These kinds of frustrations with yourself or others can be a huge deterrent to creating something new in your life. What if you paused for a few minutes, took some breaths, slowed down, and looked for the gift in this person, or in yourself? Could this frustrating person be teaching you something unintentionally? Could there be something beautiful in them for you to find? Could you find the gift in the sacredness of your frustration?

**Disliking the activity.** Sometimes, to accomplish a goal, we have to do something we don't like. This will often cause us to decide that the goal isn't worthwhile. But what if there could be a gift in this dreadful activity? Could we find it, and allow ourselves to claim the gift? This gives us access to more possibility than if we shut out every activity we don't like.

**The urge to do an old habit.** Let's say you're trying to change your diet or go on social media less. The best of intentions can be derailed by an urge to do what you normally do. But an urge is just a momentary sensation in the body, nothing that has to dictate our lives. What if you could just sit with the urge for a moment, and see the gift in that sensation? What if the moment of the urge is simply what change feels like, and the gift is learning to be with the sensation of change?

As you can see, seeing the gift can unlock powerful possibility. All it takes is a willingness to sit for a few moments, and a willingness to see.

May the gift unlock new possibility in your life.

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

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### A Fast's Effect

Eating triggers a cascade of cellular activity as food is broken down and turned into countless compounds and molecules.

Fasting gives our body a chance to repair its cellular machinery and use up waste products.

# 9 Researched Benefits of Intermittent Fasting



Chris Pratt says fasting has helped him better play the part of a superhero.

There are several approaches to intermittent fasting and specific ways to approach it

JINGDUAN YANG

Through intermittent fasting and controlling the intake of calories, the human body can increase the amount and function of stem cells, which are vital to delaying the aging process and reducing inflammation.

What is intermittent fasting? What are the benefits of intermittent fasting? How do we know if we are suitable for doing intermittent fasting?

"Fasting" means not eating or drinking anything that contains calories for a period of time. One can drink water, black coffee, or other calorie-free drinks (though it's best to avoid artificial sweeteners).

#### Types of Fasting Methods

Twitter founder and former CEO Jack Dorsey told the press that he eats only one meal a day, between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m., which consists of proteins and vegetables. Fasting helped him feel more focused and able to devote more attention to everyday life. Skipping breakfast and lunch, Dorsey

**Eating less can help our body produce fewer harmful metabolites.**

said he gained more time to focus on important things. This intermittent fasting method is known as "samurai fasting," or OMAD (one meal a day). In ancient times, samurais didn't eat three meals a day but had one huge dinner instead. This method has people drink only water, black coffee, and low-calorie beverages within a 20-hour period, and consume high-calorie food within the remaining four-hour window of the day.

However, the evening may not be the healthiest time to have a huge meal, according to some.

Chris Pratt, star of "Guardians of the Galaxy," told his fans that intermittent fasting is a "must try." Pratt claims that fasting helped him play the superhero roles well in his movies.

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## Purposeful People Live Longer—and Better, According to Research



Sometimes we have to change our circumstances in order to pursue a more meaningful life.

YUHONG DONG

Scientists have discovered that finding positive meaning in life is closely related to one's health. The more purposeful one's life is, the stronger the immune system.

In 2003, Dr. Julienne Bower led a team of researchers in the UCLA Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences to conduct a bereavement-related disclosure intervention study on 43 females who recently lost close relatives, mostly mothers, to breast cancer. Their findings were published in the

Annals of Behavioral Medicine. The participants averaged 42 years old. The study lasted for four weeks.

We know that the grief from losing a loved one can cause the release of stress hormones and decrease immune function and the body's ability to fight viruses and cancer. Thus, these participants were at an elevated risk of breast cancer.

The study found that the probability of one getting breast cancer is related to one's thoughts. Those who started to actively search for the purposes of life had stronger natural killer (NK) cell functions, leading

to a decreased risk of breast cancer.

That is to say, the philosophical topic of life's purpose has a direct relationship with the function of our immune system.

#### Natural Killer Cells and Cancer

First, let's take a look at NK cells. These are a type of immune cell, which makes up about 5 to 10 percent of peripheral blood lymphocytes. An array of inhibitory (red) and activating (green) surface receptors enable the functions of NK cells.

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# Study: Acupuncture Helps Relieve Insomnia Safely and Effectively

LISA BIAN & NATHAN AMERY

Insomnia is a common ailment and can be a sequela (a condition that arises following another condition) of COVID-19.

Many medications for treating insomnia have side effects with the potential to cause drug dependence. According to an article published by Mayo Clinic, prescription sleeping pills may include side effects such as dizziness, lightheadedness, headache, changes in thinking and behavior, diarrhea, nausea, and the like.

## HT7 Stimulation Can Relieve Caffeine-Dependent Sleep Deprivation

Two recent studies in South Korea have shown that acupuncture is a safe and effective way to treat insomnia.

The Korea Institute of Oriental Medicine research team led by Dr. Ryu Yeon-hee confirmed that acupuncture can improve insomnia in treating endoplasmic reticulum stress (ER stress). ER can result in cells not folding proteins properly, a biochemical misstep that can lead to insulin resistance and other disorders.

In the animal experiments conducted by the research team, mice were injected with high doses of caffeine and induced to high alert status. The researchers used electric acupuncture to stimulate an acupoint corresponding to the human acupoint spirit gate (HT7).

In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), the spirit gate is on the wrist at the base of the palm on the pinky finger side. To be precise and technical, it's on the ulnar end of the transverse crease of the wrist, in the depression of the radial side of the tendon of the flexor carpi ulnaris muscle. It can regulate brain function, sports senses, and emotions.

The study results show that electroacupuncture can relieve ER stress to affect the brain while sleeping. The endoplasmic reticulum is, in essence, the transportation system of the eukaryotic cell. If pressure is overexerted on the ER, the

intake of caffeine and similar environmental factors will induce the problem of immune reaction, inequivalent neurotransmission, and cause insomnia.

The results of the study confirmed changes in the patterns of sleeping and wakefulness after acupuncture stimulation. HT7 stimulation can relieve caffeine-dependent sleep deprivation by modulating the ER stress response. The results also confirmed the curative effect of electroacupuncture on exercise recovery.

## The study results show that electroacupuncture can relieve endoplasmic reticulum stress to affect the brain while sleeping.

The research team believes that acupuncture therapy produces little adverse effect and can be used as a continuous treatment for nonmedicinal sleeping management. The research team hopes that this method will become the foundation of curing insomnia instead of machines and medications.

"Although the focus of this research is on the effect of acupuncture upon the ER stress, the curative effect is far more than that," corresponding study author Dr. Seo Soo-yeon told South Korean media outlets. "[They] will continue to do similar research on controlled and stabilized acupuncture therapy with more scientific evidence provided."

The research results were published in the international journal *Biomedicine & Pharmacotherapy* on Sept. 23, 2022.

## Study Confirmed the Safety of Acupuncture Therapy

Moreover, the Korea Institute of Oriental Medicine recently confirmed the safety



of acupuncture therapy through a large-scale study.

The Department of Science in Korean Medicine, College of Korean Medicine, Graduate School, Kyung Hee University and the institute released research on Dec. 12, 2022, on the safety of acupuncture therapy conducted by Korean medicine doctors and published the results in *BMC Complementary Medicine and Therapies*.

The research team revealed that although previous large-scale studies from the UK, Germany, and Japan reported an acceptable safety profile for acupuncture treatment, outcomes may differ according to the clinical and cultural context in which it's performed. Therefore, it's necessary to do a massive and prospective study on the safety of acupuncture treatment by Korean medicine doctors.

From July 2016 to October 2017, the research team compared and analyzed the data provided by 222 Korean medicine doctors on 37,490 acupuncture treatments. The result showed that at least one adverse event was reported in 4,518 out of 37,490 acupuncture treatments, including bleeding, needle site pain, and bruising. Most of the adverse events were consid-

ered mild in severity with no sequelae and quick recovery time.

## What Is Acupuncture in TCM?

TCM has discovered that there's a "meridian" system in the human body that's responsible for transporting "qi" and "blood" throughout the body. The two substances of qi and blood circulate to maintain balance and stability in various tissues and organs. When the meridian system is blocked, it will affect the transportation of substances and allow abnormalities to appear in the human body.

Acupoints are a unique term in Chinese culture and TCM, and they're places with many nerve endings and blood vessels. They're specific locations where qi and blood gather, transfer, and enter and exit and are also regarded as energy-gathering points of the human body.

According to TCM theory, the flow of qi in the meridians can be improved by stimulating acupoints through acupuncture. When needles are inserted into the acupoints of the human body, they strengthen the circulation of qi and blood, help overcome the blockage of the meridians, restore the meridian system to normalcy, and thus help cure disease.

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