

# MIND & BODY

DAHL, PER/GETTY IMAGES

## Happiness Is Usually Healthy—but Not Always

Extreme happiness is linked to a list of health risks, from heart attack to risky behavior

By Mercura Wang

While happiness can benefit your health in many ways, excessive joy can actually be harmful to your health. One of the most pointed examples of that is takotsubo cardiomyopathy, also known as “happy heart syndrome.”

The condition can be triggered by extreme emotional states, as demonstrated by recorded instances in which a person developed stress-induced cardiomyopathy after a positive emotional event, such as winning several jackpots at a casino.

“There are cases of people who have suffered heart attacks when receiving very pleasant news but who have not been channeled in a calm way,” Isabel Suárez, a psychologist with more than 25 years of experience and the head of wellness at I-M.I.N.D., explained in an email to The Epoch Times.

The University Hospital of Zurich established an international registry in 2011 to document cases of takotsubo cardiomyopathy to better research the phenomena.

### Happiness Is Good for Your Health

Of course, just because a few people suffered heart attacks from being too happy doesn’t mean that happiness isn’t good for you. In most cases, happiness is a very healthy emotion, far more so than many negative emotions, such as depression, anger, or fear.

### Promotes Greater Longevity

Happiness can even help us live longer. A study from 2016 analyzed the General Social Survey-National Death Index dataset, which is used in social sciences research. The study found that among



Extreme happiness is linked to dangerous behaviors, emotional issues, and a rare form of heart attack.

the American adult population, happiness is associated with longer lives, independent of factors such as marital status, socioeconomic situation, and religion.

The study involved more than 31,000 participants who were categorized into three groups based on their level of happiness: a very happy group, a pretty happy group, and a not-too-happy group. During the follow-up period, the pretty happy group had a 6 percent higher risk of death than the very happy group, while the not-too-happy group had a 14 percent higher risk.

### Lowers Blood Pressure

A 2006 study published in Psychosomatic Medicine observed 2,564 Mexican Americans aged 65 or older. The results suggest that positive emotions, such as happiness and hopefulness, may positively affect blood pressure.

The participants were divided into two groups: those taking medication to bring blood pressure down (32.8 percent) and those who weren’t. The results show that positive emotions were significantly associated with lower systolic and diastolic blood pressure in the group not taking medication but only with lower diastolic blood pressure in the medication group. Diastolic blood pressure is the second number, which measures the pressure on the artery walls between heartbeats.

Interestingly, the study found that the likelihood of participants on antihypertensive medication being moved to a higher blood pressure category was reduced by 3 percent for every one-point increase in the positive

*Continued on Page 2*

## Overdiagnosing ADHD Raises Concerns

The growing diagnosis of ADHD is an example of medicalizing the human experience, say experts

By Owen Evans

As more and more people seek a diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), so grows a debate among mental health specialists about the use of diagnostic labels that may medicalize the human experience instead of delving into the psychological issues behind symptoms.

According to the UK’s National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines, the adult incidence rate of ADHD—a condition in which people can seem restless, may have trouble concentrating, and may act on impulse—is between 3 and 4 percent. The

rate for children aged between 6 and 8 is 1.5 percent.

In the United States, the numbers are significantly higher. The National Survey of Children’s Health shows 15 percent of boys and 11 percent of girls aged 4 to 17 were diagnosed with ADHD in 2011, a 40 percent increase from 2003. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported similar rates for the years 2016 to 2019.

The UK’s National Health Service (NHS) released data in 2022 that showed a 35 percent increase in prescriptions in 2020–2021 compared to five years earlier for children and young people for drugs

*Continued on Page 11*

CHRISTOPHER FURLONG/GETTY IMAGES



When a disease’s diagnosis criteria is expanded, it means that more people once considered healthy may instead be up for a diagnosis—and a prescription.



# Cultivating Our GUT MICROBIOME to Stifle Disease

## PART VII HOW TOXINS, FOOD, AND FAT RUIN YOUR MICROBIOME

The microbiome raises alarms for disease risk; it also holds answers for healing

In this series, we'll share how the latest developments on this medical frontier are transforming our approaches to illness and offering new strategies to heal and prevent disease.

Previously: The microbiome plays a part in how the body can fight deadly diseases such as cancer and heart disease.

By Amy Denney

Risk factors for disease aren't always accompanied by obvious symptoms. For instance, you can have high blood pressure or high cholesterol without obvious signs of heart disease.

The gut microbiome operates similarly. You can have massive problems among that community of organisms living in a symbiotic relationship within you and not have any obvious signs of disease. And yet, problems in the gut microbiome should serve as an alarm for autoimmune diseases, which affect 1 in every 5 Americans. Some physicians use stool tests that measure different gut flora as biomarkers for disease.

However, just like certain lifestyle choices cause high blood pressure and contribute to heart disease, there are three major areas of your life that have an enormous influence on the community of microbes in your gut.

Toxic ingredients in your food, body fat, and poor sleep each have

a profound effect on gut microbes. Accumulating evidence shows the American lifestyle creates poor health and that an unhealthy balance of gut bacteria, otherwise known as dysbiosis, can exist long before symptoms manifest.

"We are seeing that our modern diet, lifestyle, and stress are causing an imbalance [of gut bacteria] that is central to most diseases," in-

tegrative physician Dr. Akil Palanisamy told The Epoch Times. Author of "The T.I.G.E.R. Protocol: An Integrative 5-Step Program to Treat and Heal Your Autoimmunity," Palanisamy describes the diversity of the gut microbiome as a key metric of health.

A stool test can reveal if we have too many problematic microbes and not enough beneficial ones, although even function-

al doctors may skip this test when patients are obese, overloading their gut with toxins, or sleeping poorly. In these cases, dysbiosis is all but guaranteed—and sooner or later, so are problematic, and sometimes life altering, symptoms.

### Toxic Foods

If you are reading this, chances are, you're at some risk of dysbiosis. Bacterial gut imbalances are a product of the modern world. Our unnatural foods, sedentary lifestyles, stress, obesity, and lack of restorative sleep destroy the ecosystem inside us.

Palanisamy highlights the risk posed by toxins that accumulate in fat deposits, or are slow or difficult to clear from the body. Our world is brimming with them, in our water, food, hygiene products, and air (especially indoors).

Packaged food contains countless toxins—many that haven't even been studied because of the government's "generally regarded as safe" policy that allows many food additives to bypass close inspection. Chemical ingredients do more than extend the shelf life of these foods; they are also added to create more appealing textures, colors, and flavors. Many of these are presumed safe only because they're a small percentage of the total makeup of a food product.

Switching to a diet of real foods from a processed food diet can make a huge difference in gut health.

Dr. Ari Grinspan, associate professor of medicine and director of the fecal microbiota transplant program at Mount Sinai Hospital, told The Epoch Times about one type of food additive—emulsifiers.

Emulsifiers, which can be made from natural plant-based or synthetic ingredients, help prevent the separation of ingredients, such as oil and water, in processed foods. Emulsifiers extend the shelf life of packaged foods. A 2021 study in Microbiome found several emulsifiers can change the makeup of the microbiome and increase gut inflammation.

We can also ingest toxic ingredients in pharmaceutical products, supplements, beverages, and unfiltered tap water. The lack of regulation and confusing studies that are often funded by biased sources means that reducing your toxin exposure is a personal responsibility.

In many instances, marketing messages have a powerful influence on what we eat and drink, as Dr. Scott Doughty, integrative family practitioner with U.P. Holistic Medicine, told The Epoch Times. He's no longer surprised when patients believe diet sodas are healthy or think nothing about the amount of alcohol they drink. Both products can throw off bal-

ance in the microbiome and damage health. Doughty's approach is to educate and empower patients to make better choices, rather than handing out restrictive prescription diets his patients would never choose.

His starting point is asking, "What do you think is the most impactful change you can make in your lifestyle?"

It's a simple but powerful assessment tool.

Another straightforward strategy to detoxify is eliminating, reducing, or rethinking sweets. Excess processed sugar is toxic to the human body.

"It also really disrupts the microbiome. It feeds the bad bacteria and contributes to dysbiosis," Palanisamy said. "Avoid artificial sweeteners because they also disrupt the microbiome."

He suggested reducing servings of sugar—and its artificial knockoffs—or replacing sugar with the natural substitutes xylitol, monk fruit, or stevia.

### Belly Fat

Sugar isn't only toxic, but it also can lead to another gut microbiome risk factor: obesity.

And when you combine obesity with a diet high in saturated fat and sugar, you're more likely to suffer nonalcoholic fatty liver disease because of shifts these factors can trigger in the microbiome.

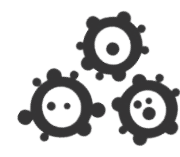
This metabolic process is seen in older patients and those with Type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, and metabolic syndrome. It affects nearly 25 percent of adults. Fat often accumulates around the midsection in metabolic diseases, making obesity in the form of belly fat a key contributor to problems in the microbiome.

Fat that accumulates around the stomach is called visceral fat. It surrounds internal organs in the abdomen and produces hormones and other signaling molecules that can trigger inflammation linked to diseases that range from cancer to Type 2 diabetes.

That may explain why studies show those who are obese have different types and ratios of bacteria in their microbiomes. This difference seems to trigger the activation of inflammatory pathways that lead to the progression of disease, according to a 2019 article in the Journal of Clinical and Translational Hepatology.

Belly fat isn't too complicated to reverse, especially in its early stages, Dr. Doni Wilson, a naturopathic doctor and certified nutrition specialist, told The Epoch Times. It's often a matter of reducing or eliminating refined carbohydrates, sugar, and processed foods.

Author of "Master Your Stress Reset Your Health," Wilson said oversized



Having a diversity of microbes in our microbiome will help to create a healthy and flourishing internal environment.



Visceral fat is fat that accumulates around the stomach and triggers hormonal changes, inflammation, and shifts in the microbiome.

1 in 5 AMERICANS are affected by autoimmune diseases.



The chemicals sprayed on our food can also end up affecting the microbiome. Glyphosate is one example.

portions of food also can lead to an imbalance of microbes. Too much of any food also burdens the liver, and excess glucose—fuel for cellular energy—can end up stored as fat.

"It's all this big, interrelated vicious cycle," Wilson said.

She said gaining weight can also lead to sleep issues.

### Poor Sleep

Circadian rhythm is "the most robust biomarker of health," according to Satchindananda Panda, a researcher and professor at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies and graduate of the Scripps Research Institute in LaJolla, California. He studies the genes, molecules, and cells that keep the whole body on the same circadian clock. He presented findings at the recent Digestive Disease Week in Chicago.

The most at risk of circadian dysfunction, he said, are shift workers, families of shift workers, the jet-lagged, and those who travel frequently. "Disease risk goes up in response to circadian rhythm," Panda said. "It's a modulator of cellular functions."

Unfortunately, sleep problems aren't limited to shift workers and frequent travelers.

Obstructive sleep apnea—disrupted airflow during sleep that causes the upper airway to collapse—has a profound effect on the body. It ruins sleep, leaving the body in a declining state due to sleep fragmentation, intermittent hypoxia, and excess carbon dioxide in the blood, known as hypercapnia.

A 2021 article in the journal Sleep found that sleep fragmentation, intermittent hypoxia, and intermittent hypercapnia can all alter microbiome composition. Hypoxia is low levels of oxygen that can cause rapid heart rate, difficulty breathing, restlessness, and confusion. Hypercapnia comes with neurological symptoms such as confusion, as well as headaches and shortness of breath.

The prevalence of obstructive sleep apnea and its bidirectional relationship with the microbiome affects a large number of people—older adults especially—who are at risk of disease. As much as 38 percent of the population suffers obstructive sleep apnea, but in the elderly, the figure is 90 percent for men and 78 percent for women.

The microbiome may also play diverse roles in the quality of our sleep.

A 2019 PLoS One study identified three phylum—Bacteroidetes, Firmicutes, and Actinobacteria—associated with sleep fragmentation in various ways. Bacteroidetes and Firmicutes are related to sleep quality, with growing evidence they may also

modulate circadian rhythm and food intake, both of which impact sleep quality. Increased richness within the Actinobacteria phylum contributes to sleep quality.

**Next Week:** Treating the root cause of dysbiosis involves the diet and occasional testing. Experts share the steps that are effective for healing.

### Profile of a Top Bug

**Our microbes aren't just good and bad. In the same way that a mixture of plants makes for a healthy ecosystem, a mixture of microbes makes for a healthy microbiome. And just as the dominance of one plant can destroy an ecosystem, the dominance of one microbe can ruin a microbiome.**

Sometimes, a microbe's role in the body depends on its numbers or location.

Bacteroides is the main member of the most common category of gut bacteria called Bacteroidetes, which make up 10 percent to 25 percent of the microbiome. It's considered a pathobiont because it generally isn't harmful but can become problematic, particularly if it escapes from the gut.

For the most part, Bacteroides is a good bug—aiding in immune system development, breaking down undigested food into compounds that support the growth of beneficial bacteria, and providing protection against infectious invaders. But when levels become too high, it's associated with reduced diversity and insulin resistance.

Because Bacteroides is responsible for producing beta-glucuronidase, an enzyme that plays a huge role in clearing toxins from the body, high levels will create excessive enzymes that wreak havoc on the body and impair detoxification. Bacteroides-related dysbiosis is associated with Type 1 diabetes, breast cancer, and colon cancer.

Keeping an optimal pH in the colon by limiting the intake of animal fats and dairy and increasing certain prebiotics and polyphenols can help reduce the overgrowth of Bacteroides, Palanisamy says.

INFORMATION ADAPTED FROM "THE T.I.G.E.R. PROTOCOL" BY AKIL PALANISAMY, MD. COPYRIGHT 2023 BY AKIL PALANISAMY, MD. WITH PERMISSION FROM BALANCE, AN IMPRINT OF GRAND CENTRAL PUBLISHING. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

## Happiness Is Usually Healthy—but Not Always

Continued from Page 1

emotion score. The decrease was even more significant for participants not taking medication, at 9 percent.

### A Defense Against Infections

Happiness can also boost our immune systems. Research shows that when we're happy, our bodies produce more secretory immunoglobulin A, an antibody found in tears, saliva, and breast milk that plays an important role in the immune system's response to infections.

Happiness can also reduce the level of salivary cortisol, which is often used as a measure of psychological stress. Less salivary cortisol is a good predictor of happiness. While stress can temporarily boost our immunity, prolonged exposure can weaken our immune system and even trigger autoimmune diseases, such as Graves' disease and rheumatoid arthritis.

**When Happiness Becomes Harmful** "Experiencing happiness at the wrong

time, pursuing it in the wrong ways, and having the wrong types of happiness may not be adaptive and might even lead to adverse results," Ellie Borden, a registered psychotherapist and the clinical director of Mind by Design, said in an email to The Epoch Times.

Research suggests an inverted-U-shaped relationship between happiness and health, indicating that happiness may have costs when there's an excessive amount. For example, clinical mania is characterized by persistently increased degrees of elevated positive mood. People with this emotional dysregulation may be unable to experience negative emotions, and their happiness is in "overdrive," Borden explained. In this regard, Aristotle's idea of the mean—the area between deficiencies and excesses—may help guide people toward a balanced state of bliss.

### The Dangers of 'Happy Heart Syndrome'

Takotsubo syndrome, also known as takotsubo cardiomyopathy or stress cardio-

myopathy, is a non-ischemic cardiomyopathy characterized by an abrupt and transient weakening of the heart's main pumping chamber, which is the left ventricle. The symptoms are similar to those of a heart attack, including chest pain,

### There are cases of people who have suffered heart attacks when receiving very pleasant news but who have not been channeled in a calm way.

Isabel Suárez, psychologist



weeks to four years after the first.

Another study found that patients with takotsubo syndrome are at risk of readmission and death even after being discharged from the hospital. The study analyzed data from 61,412 patients hospitalized for takotsubo syndrome and found that 11.9 percent of them were readmitted within 30 days of discharge, and among them, 3.5 percent died in the hospital.

### Extreme Happiness Linked to Risky Behavior

Happiness, like anger or depression, can also be linked to certain changes in behavior that may be problematic. A study published in the Psychological Bulletin suggests that experiencing heightened emotions, such as extreme happiness, can reduce a person's perception of risks and dangers. Consequently, they tend to engage in more impulsive and risky behaviors than they would on other

occasions. The researchers attributed this behavior to a psychological trait known as "positive urgency," which involves acting impulsively when experiencing strong positive emotions.

Examples of behaviors associated with positive urgency include college students' end-of-year drinking parties and the resumption of gambling by recovering addicts who are in a happy mood. Such events may lead to binge drinking, drunk driving, alcohol-related incidents, and risky sexual behavior. Relapsing into gambling may lead to lifelong addiction for struggling individuals.

### Extremely Happy People May Use Avoidance-Coping Strategies

"Extreme happiness can sometimes lead individuals to ignore or dismiss negative emotions or experiences, which can result in avoidance-coping strategies and, ultimately, long-term negative health outcomes," Dr. Masica Jordan, a licensed clinical professional counselor and certified peer recovery specialist, wrote in an email to The Epoch Times.

A 2021 study published in the Journal of the Belgian Association for Psychological Science tested almost 700 people from the United States, Germany, Russia, and East Asia.

Researchers found that some cheerful people may avoid experiencing negative emotions altogether. Valuing happiness was negatively associated with the well-being of American participants.

Avoidance coping strategies are passive approaches aimed at reducing or ignoring the handling of a stressful situation. However, these strategies usually leave the underlying issue unresolved, and the situation may deteriorate.

Using avoidance-coping strategies can also lead to many adverse health outcomes, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, panic attacks, and anxiety disorders. These clinical psychopathologies may have long-lasting effects.

A decade-long study involving more than 1,200 participants found that avoidance coping was associated with increased chronic and acute life stressors four years later. Experiencing heightened emotions, such as extreme happiness, can reduce a person's perception of risks and dangers.

When we're happy, our bodies produce more secretory immunoglobulin A, an antibody found in tears, saliva, and breast milk that plays an important role in the immune system.

### The Emotional Price of Extreme Happiness

Experiencing intense happiness may not always positively affect our emotional well-being.

Dr. R.Y. Langham, a clinical psychologist and marriage therapist, warns of the unfavorable emotional impact of extreme happiness.

"The high that comes with extreme happiness may be followed by a crash, leaving a person feeling depleted and vulnerable," Langham said.

Research has shown that a highly positive event can make other events seem less enjoyable, as the extremely happy event sets the standard for evaluating all future events. For example, a group of college students who had previously received exceptional scores found lower but decent scores less satisfying.

In a separate study, 22 lottery winners were interviewed one year after their win. Although the initial thrill had disappeared, the participants reported experiencing more negative emotions and finding everyday amusement less fulfilling than before their win.

### Emotional Self-Regulation Can Improve Your Heart, Health

"Extreme emotions, whether positive or negative, must be balanced with self-care and healthy coping mechanisms to maintain a stable and sustainable degree of well-being," Borden said.

Emotional regulation is a fundamental coping skill that positively impacts psychological well-being and may lead to spiritual growth.

A cross-sectional study involving about 600 teenagers from the Bronx, New York, found a positive correlation between emotional self-regulation and healthier eating habits, such as increased consumption of fruits and vegetables and greater physical activity. Thus, emotional regulation may be a significant factor in shaping adolescents' eating and weight-related behaviors.

Emotional regulation can also lead to a sense of inner peace, which can profoundly impact our physical health and overall well-being. When experiencing inner peace, we're most likely to be free from stress, anxiety, and other taxing negative emotions that can take a toll on our health. As a result, inner peace can help promote physical health by reducing stress and anxiety, improving sleep quality, and boosting the immune system.



# AMERICA The FLUORIDATED

## PART VII ARSENIC-TAINTED FLUORIDE IN THE US WATER SUPPLY

Authorities tolerate a limited amount of arsenic in water fluoridation programs despite lack of a safe minimum level

By Christy Prais

**In this series,** we explore the contentious findings surrounding fluoridation of the U.S. public water supply and answer the question of whether water fluoridation poses a risk and what we should do about it.

**Previously:** Fluoride exposure comes from multiple sources, making individual exposure uncertain and dosage but another confounding factor.

MORE THAN  
**99.5**  
PERCENT

of the fluoride that goes into the drinking water to prevent tooth decay never sees a single tooth.



### ARSENIC

Much like fluoride, arsenic is both naturally occurring and an industrial waste by-product. The arsenic found in drinking water is a contaminant of the added fluoride.

MARCELCLEMENS/SHUTTERSTOCK

It is a wise idea to use water that has been filtered to remove arsenic, a toxin with no known safe levels.

The fluoride added to the public water supply of more than 73 percent of the U.S. population isn't naturally occurring, and that creates added risk. This fluoride is derived primarily as a chemical byproduct of the phosphate fertilizer and aluminum production industries. It would be deemed as pollution if it escaped into the air or was dumped into a landfill.

Rebecca Hanmer, former deputy assistant administrator at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Water, noted that reality in a letter she wrote in 1983:

"In regard to the use of fluosilicic acid as a source of fluoride for fluoridation, this Agency regards such use as an ideal environmental solution to a long-standing problem. By recovering by-product fluosilicic acid from fertilizer manufacturing, water, and air pollution are minimized, and water utilities have a low-cost source of fluoride available to them."

Man-made fluorides come with a problem, however: contaminants.

In a recent interview on the podcast "Discovering True Health," retired civil and control systems engineer John F. Mueller Jr. shared about one such contaminant.

Mueller was responsible for reviewing and updating the technical specifications for a large municipal water utility's fluosilicic acid (FSA) purchasing contract. He found that shipments of FSA over multiple years were all contaminated with arsenic, variably ranging from 25 to 50 milligrams per liter (mg/L).

### Arsenic Toxicity

Arsenic toxicity depends on the dose and duration of exposure.

Like fluoride, arsenic is both naturally occurring and an industrial waste by-product. It's present in air, water, soil, food, and pesticides. It's also a contaminant in the FSA added to the public drinking water supply.

The EPA states in its fact sheet on arsenic that it can cause various types of cancer, such as skin, bladder, lung, kidney, nasal passage, liver, and prostate cancer. It can also affect several bodily functions, including the cardiovascular, pulmonary, immunological, neurological, and endocrine systems, and cause diabetes.

Also, the 2007 Toxicological Profile for Arsenic report prepared by scientists from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry in accordance with the EPA that was peer-reviewed by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention staff and other federal scientists noted that "long-term exposure (years) to drinking water at levels as low as 0.001 mg As/kg/day [milligrams of arsenic per kilogram of body weight per day] have been associated with skin diseases and skin, bladder, kidney, and liver cancer."



### From Ambivalence to Activism

For Mueller, the discovery of arsenic in the water supply was life-changing.

"I was previously neutral on the fluoridation issue, but after reviewing previous purchase agreements with the city's FSA supplier at the time, the Mosaic fertilizer company in Florida, and reviewing certificates of analysis over several years of semi-monthly deliveries, I quickly learned that arsenic is in every shipment of FSA from regular suppliers," Mueller said.

In a certificate of analysis provided to The Epoch Times by Mueller, the chemical analysis for a 2013 delivery of FSA from Mosaic showed arsenic contamination levels at 52 ppm.

Another document The Epoch Times obtained provided a chemical analysis breakdown of FSA produced by Mosaic between 2011 and 2013, showing an arsenic contamination range between 43.8 and 60.1 ppm for the FSA produced from Mosaic's Riverview facility.

Although Mueller is now retired, he says the concern around arsenic contamination of the fluoride added to the U.S. water supply still remains, and there's now greater concern as smaller utilities now import their fluoridation chemicals from China.

Mueller explained that in order to understand how arsenic-contaminated fluoride is approved for the public water supply, we need to understand some of the basics of the National Primary Drinking Water Regulations, which are legally enforceable primary standards and treatment techniques for public water systems.

The EPA first determines a maximum contaminant level goal (MCLG) for contaminants. The EPA's definition of an MCLG is "the maximum level of a contaminant in drinking water at which no known or anticipated adverse effect on the health of persons would occur, allowing an adequate margin of safety."

MCLGs are nonenforceable public health goals.

The EPA's MCLG for arsenic is zero, as it's a toxic chemical agent and a known human carcinogen by multiple paths of exposure.

Following the establishment of the MCLG, the enforceable regulatory maximum contaminant level (MCL) is then established.

The EPA defines the MCL as "the highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. MCLs are set as close to MCLGs as feasible using the best available treatment technology and taking

cost into consideration." MCLs are the enforceable standards for compliance by water utilities.

The MCL for arsenic is 10 parts per billion (ppb); Mueller explained that his job included ensuring the treated water leaving the treatment plants met the regulatory requirements.

"My first reaction was, 'OK, we are diluting it so it is below the MCL, so we are not in violation of regulatory requirements,'" Mueller said.

He said that those who work in such positions have "a regulatory compliance mindset."

"As long as we are regulatory compliant and not violating any of the regulatory [maximum] contaminant levels (MCL), we are good," he said of his reasoning at the time.

"We can send our annual report out to all our consumers saying we meet the requirements and the water is safe to drink because these are the standards that have been established by the federal government."

This is the foundation of your job, he said.

It wasn't long after Mueller realized that arsenic is typically found in FSA as a contaminant that he decided he could no longer stand by quietly and not take action.

"When you get an engineering license, one of the underlying tenets of the profession is that you hold paramount the public health, safety, and welfare," he said.

Arsenic contamination in FSA conflicted with his adherence to that tenet, he said.

"Knowingly contaminating the public drinking water with a recognized, documented carcinogen and neurotoxin with an assigned MCLG of zero—as with arsenic—is a violation of not only the spirit and intent of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act but also the public trust," he said.

Mueller noted that the pro-fluoridationists will claim, and correctly, that the FSA is diluted to such a degree that the ending concentration of arsenic is below the enforceable regulatory MCL of 10 ppb.

"But they cannot claim that it is safe for human consumption, not with an MCLG of zero, even though the added arsenic is destined for dilution and therefore not a violation of water quality regulations," he said. "Legal does not equal safe."

Mueller started speaking out on the issue, and as a longtime member of the American Water Works Association (AWWA), he recommended a revision of its policy statement on water fluoridation, advising that there's no responsible way of adding contaminated fluoridating chemicals to the otherwise purified public water supplies. He didn't receive a reply from the AWWA.

### Costly and Wasteful

Issues of arsenic aside, water fluoridation may not even be the most economical way to prevent cavities, Mueller notes.

Based on his knowledge of water use versus water consumption, he said that when you break down the numbers, in a large municipality with domestic, commercial, and industrial water users, more than 99.5 percent of the fluoride that goes into the drinking water to prevent tooth decay never sees a single tooth.

Instead, it's used for washing laundry, watering lawns, showers, and flushing the toilet.

"I think we really need to do away with fluoridation and replace it with programs that are far more effective and are targeted to the underserved and economically depressed areas where oral health care is needed most. Right now, fluoridation is going to everybody, rich or poor, whether they need it or not," Mueller said.

Over the years, Mueller has continued to be a strong voice, calling for change and policy revision of the public water



ALL PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

▲ Barely any of the fluoride that goes into public drinking water has any effect on tooth decay because it is used for washing, watering lawns, and flushing toilets.

fluoridation program. He has spoken at more than a dozen public meetings with the EPA, CDC, and White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council.

Although Mueller is now retired, he says the concern around arsenic contamination of the fluoride added to the U.S. water supply still remains, and there's now greater concern as smaller utilities now import their fluoridation chemicals from China.

### Present-Day Concerns

Mueller notes that it's his understanding Mosaic is no longer a direct supplier, as it sold much of its FSA business to Univar Solutions.

Univar Solutions, a U.S.-based company, states on its website that it "is one of the largest suppliers of hydrofluorosilicic acid (HFS), [another term used for FSA as mentioned above], in

the United States with more than 120 locations throughout the nation."

They offer both products made from processing phosphates as well as high-purity quartz.

Their HFS product page says that the arsenic levels in their standard HFS ranged from 10 to 50 ppm or greater, with no maximum cap identified. The arsenic level for their high-purity HFS is below 5 ppm.

The Epoch Times reached out to Univar Solutions with questions regarding which product level is most widely bought by U.S. water suppliers but it didn't respond by press time.

Mueller highlighted that smaller water utilities often fluoridate their water with powdered sodium fluoride delivered in sacks, which are commonly imported from China.

"In these cases, there is a concern

with quality control measures being largely unknown to ensure safety for human consumption," Mueller said.

**Next Week:** The ongoing landmark lawsuit brought against the EPA by the Fluoride Action Network in 2017 has uncovered surprising admissions from both EPA and CDC officials and has brought to light government interference and suppression of crucial scientific findings around fluoride.

Christy A. Prais received her business degree from Florida International University. She is the founder and host of *Discovering True Health*, a YouTube channel and podcast dedicated to health and wellness. Prais also serves on the advisory board at the Fostering Care Healing School. She is a contributing journalist for The Epoch Times.

## Easy Exercises to Address Blurry Vision

Strengthen your eyes to find relief from presbyopia and diplopia

By Anne Lee

Age-related farsightedness (presbyopia) and double vision (diplopia) are no longer limited to the elderly. Due to the widespread use of electronic devices, eye damage has become increasingly common among younger people.

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) offers simple yet effective methods to achieve better eyesight.

Dr. Hu Naiwen, a renowned Chinese medicine practitioner in Taiwan, introduced eye training exercises in an NTD program to help prevent and correct presbyopia by moving the eyes regularly while reading or browsing the internet. NTD is The Epoch Times' sister media outlet.

A study published in Progress in Retinal and Eye Research in 2019 noted that presbyopia is a condition that affects more than 1 billion people globally. The study also revealed that even in developed nations, as many as 34 percent of individuals over the age of 50 have untreated presbyopia.

Presbyopia typically manifests around the age of 45 and worsens progressively, eventually reaching a plateau after age 65. This ailment's root cause is part of the natural aging process, whereby the eye's lens hardens and loses elasticity, resulting in the inability to focus light accurately on the retina—the light-sensitive tissue layer located at the back of the eye. Consequently, individuals with presbyopia find it challenging to see objects at near distances.

The crystalline lens inside the eye is crucial in focusing on objects. Outside the crystalline body lies the ciliary muscle, which is responsible for altering the shape of the lens. When contracted, the ciliary muscle thickens the lens, enabling clear vision of nearby objects.

Conversely, when relaxed, it makes the lens thinner, making it possible to see objects at a distance. However, in the elderly, the ciliary muscle loses its elas-

PROSTOCK STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK



Our screen-bound lifestyle leaves our eyes focused at a fixed distance. Many exercises to improve eyesight are based on exercising our ability to focus at various distances.

ticity, leading to difficulty in contracting and ultimately making it hard to see nearby objects.

Muscles in the eyes work together in a coordinated manner to perform various functions. Some muscles are responsible for controlling the movement of the eye, while others regulate the iris. The transverse muscles facilitate blinking and are under conscious control, whereas the ciliary muscles are involuntary and control the shape of the lens. While the ciliary muscles can't be controlled by the mind, they can be strengthened through specific exercises that involve looking at distant and nearby objects.

Hu recommends three effective training exercises to strengthen the ciliary and associated eye muscles.

### Eye Movement to Correct Diplopia

Eye muscle problems can result in diplopia, also known as double vision. Dip-

### Eye Movement to Correct Presbyopia

#### EXERCISE 1

Alternately focusing on a distant object and then a close object



Hold a pen, or similar object, in front of your eyes and keep your eyes focused on the pen while stretching the arm holding the pen away, then pulling it close, so that the ciliary muscle can be fully trained. Do this repeatedly for a while.

#### EXERCISE 2

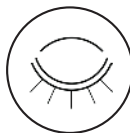
Keep your eye on the ball



While watching live soccer, badminton, or baseball games, intentionally keeping your eye on the ball will cause the eyes to focus farther away, then closer—a very effective way to train the ciliary muscles. Watching these games on television won't have the same effect.

#### EXERCISE 3

Blink hard repeatedly



The many eye muscles are coordinated, and training the blinking and eye rotation muscles makes those muscles stronger. Repeated, hard blinking of the eyes contracts the muscles of the outer eyelid. This exercise will change the pressure inside the eye and make the muscles stronger.

ALL ICONS BY BOGDAN FLORESCU/THE EPOCH TIMES



# The Miraculous IMMUNE SYSTEM

## PART VII SAFEGUARDING YOUR SPLEEN AND IMMUNE FUNCTION

Removing the spleen comes with long-term risks, so it's important to protect it

➔ **In this series, "The Miraculous Immune System," we explore the true power of our immunity and the organs that work tirelessly to protect us. We also provide practical ways to protect these vital divine gifts.**

**Previously:** Though small, the spleen performs a multitude of critical functions, but recent studies have found that COVID-19 can decimate the spleen.

By Yuhong Dong & Makai Allibert

The spleen protects us in many remarkable ways, so it's essential to learn how we can keep it healthy. Although we can live without a spleen, having it surgically removed can create serious long-term consequences, putting us at risk for severe, life-threatening infections.

### A Study of Army Servicemen Without a Spleen

In 1977, the National Cancer Institute, National Academies of Sciences, and National Research Council conducted a groundbreaking study that followed 740 U.S. servicemen whose spleens had been removed because of trauma during World War II.

After monitoring the servicemen for 28 years, the study found that they suffered significantly higher mortality rates from pneumonia and heart disease, regardless of age or the length of time since their surgeries.

The spleen is crucial for removing microorganisms such as bacteria or viruses and for creating substances that can clear out pathogenic invaders, thus helping the body's defense system.

Removing the spleen can result in an increased number of abnormal blood cells. Since the organ is also responsible for filtering and recycling blood clotting factors such as platelets, removing it may result in an increased number of platelets in the blood.

One's platelet number may remain high for a long time, ultimately speeding up the formation of plaques in coronary arteries and leading to heart disease.

### Severe Infection After Spleen Removal Is Common

Spleen removal isn't a benign procedure; it can increase one's risk of death, as well as of suffering a collapsed lung, inflammation of the pancreas, block-

ages in the lung blood vessels, and excessive bleeding.

In the long term, removing the spleen places the patient at a significantly higher risk of developing an overwhelming infection, regardless of age.

Infections can quickly progress from a mild flu-like illness to life-threatening sepsis, even in those vaccinated to prevent infection.

A review study found that the mortality rate for individuals experiencing infection can reach a staggering 38 to 70 percent, despite the use of treatments including antibiotics, steroids, and fresh plasma.



### Losing the spleen means losing a critical command center for the immune system and blood recycling.

The incidence of overwhelming severe infection after a splenectomy ranges from 2.5 to 13.5 percent.

The risk of infection is greatest within the first two years, but up to 33 percent of complete splenectomy patients will experience infection within 10 years of removal. One's level of risk depends on age and medical conditions.

The symptoms of infection include but are not limited to fatigue, weight loss, abdominal pain, diarrhea, constipation, nausea, and headaches.

### What Causes the Severe Infection?

Normally, our body's immune system fights infection in a controlled way.

However, when the immune system goes into overdrive, infectious agents and inflammatory chemicals can circulate throughout the body, causing a vicious

cycle and lethal outcome: sepsis.

Post-splenectomy sepsis can be caused by bacteria, viruses, fungi, protozoa (e.g., malaria parasites), or encapsulated bacteria, which have an extra layer that protects them.

The immune systems of splenectomy patients have a harder time killing off encapsulated bacteria, which are frequently associated with severe infections in this population.

The most nefarious such pathogen is *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, but *Haemophilus influenzae* and *Neisseria meningitidis* are also significant. Because these organisms are enclosed in capsules, they can survive when the spleen is not helping to produce bridging molecules (e.g., complements and antibodies) or when the macrophages (scavenger cells) in the spleen are unable to remove them effectively.

### Spleen's Super Weapons to Kill Encapsulated Germs

Pathogenic bacteria can be crafty little devils, especially the encapsulated ones. We rely on some highly intelligent, super-powerful weapons to take down these elusive germs.

Inside the small but mighty spleen, macrophages battle to scavenge bacterial invaders. With the help of complements and antibodies (two types of proteins produced by the spleen), these macrophages can grab encapsulated bacteria and gobble them up like a handful of candy.

Complements produced by the spleen can form a group called the membrane attack complex (MAC). The MAC breaks down the membrane of bacteria in a process called lysis, which disrupts the balance inside a bacterium and ultimately kills it.

Without these complements and antibodies, our immune system is severely handicapped in its ability to fight off these protected pathogens.

The spleen is also a major hub for producing specific antibodies that bind to pathogens and play a crucial role in the early stages of infection.

Losing the spleen means losing a critical command center for the immune system and blood recycling. So it's important to do all we can to protect and keep our spleen whenever possible.

Without a spleen, the immune system is weaker and more vulnerable to infection. That means special treatments are required.

The most critical treatment for an infection after spleen removal is the immediate use of broad-spectrum intravenous antibiotics, which may reduce mortality to about 10 to 40 percent from 70 percent.

**Next Week:** As one of the most mysterious immune organs in our lymphatic system, the thymus gland also plays a critical function in the endocrine system by making and releasing hormones.



Your spleen is the Pentagon of your immune system, so keeping it battle ready is a wise thing to do.

ALL IMAGES BY SHUTTERSTOCK UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

### Be Mindful of an Abnormal Spleen

If a physician can feel your spleen during an examination, that usually means it's enlarged and unhealthy.

Splenomegaly, or an enlargement of the spleen, affects about 2 percent of the U.S. population. An enlarged spleen increases the risk that the organ will rupture, which can be life-threatening.

Possible causes of an enlarged spleen include:

- trauma
- heart failure
- liver cirrhosis
- leukemia
- cancer
- infections
- autoimmune diseases such as lupus and rheumatoid arthritis
- COVID-19 infection and COVID-19 vaccination
- abscesses
- excess alcohol use
- fatty liver



Korean ginseng has been highlighted for its immune boosting properties.



Eating more fava beans, soybeans, and lupins can help to maintain healthy spleen function and prevent splenomegaly (enlargement of the spleen).

### 6 Practical Ways to Protect Your Spleen

#### 1 Always Fasten Your Seat Belt

The highest risk to your spleen is trauma from external injury. Buckle up before driving or riding in a car, since a car accident will likely damage your spleen and can lead to serious complications, or even death.

#### 2 Eat a Healthy Diet With More Beans

Unhealthy dietary patterns can lead to chronic inflammation that can disrupt the normal function of the spleen.

A 2018 study found that feeding mice a diet high in fat and added sugar for 12 weeks led to obesity, high blood sugar, elevated inflammatory markers, and spleens that were 50 percent larger than those of mice fed a standard diet.

Following the 12 weeks, spleen size was reduced through exercise and treatment with genistein, a natural compound found almost exclusively in legumes, including in soybeans, lupins, and fava beans.

It's also important to chew food slowly, which optimizes digestion and reduces the burden on the spleen.

#### 3 Eat Spleen-Nourishing Herbs

Korean ginseng berries were found to have the potential to

boost the immune system and improve spleen function.

In a 2021 study, extracts from the berries were given to mice with weakened immune systems. The extracts improved the function of natural killer cells and increased the production of lymphocytes in the spleen. Immune-related genes were also found to be more active. These effects depended on the amount of extract given.

A long-term evaluation of Korean red ginseng, which contains these extracts, found that it's safe and suggested that it improves immune system activity and reduces viral infections.

Ginseng is considered a promising herb for the treatment of viral infections, including COVID-19. It's reported to boost innate and adaptive antiviral immunity and increase the function of macrophages and natural killer cells.

Other herbs that can help to improve spleen and immune function include licorice and Chinese yam.

#### 4 Increase Movement to Boost Lymphatic Flow

Our lymph fluid can move through the body by itself, but drainage of the lymphatic system works better with increased movement, including regular exercise, which can help the spleen filter and transform particles in our lymph fluid.

All the methods described in Part 4 and Part 5 of this series will help our spleen to function

more effectively.

#### 5 Reduce Stress and Make Relaxation a Priority

Are you feeling stressed out? Your lymphatic, immune, and spleen functions are all vulnerable to the effects of stress.

Our brain communicates with our organs, and when they sense that we're in a threatening situation, hormones are released that can lower our immune system's ability to defend itself.

Stress is generally an internal response to external events, such as an argument or work pressure. It goes away once our perception changes or the stressor is resolved. Stress can be either positive or negative.

Anxiety is usually a reaction to stress. It often involves a persistent feeling of dread that can interfere with your life. It can be constant, even when there's no immediate threat.

Modern psychoneuroimmunological research has proven that chronic stress can weaken the immune system and indirectly interfere with spleen function, causing inflammation, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcers, and much more.

Studies have shown that prolonged stress can lead to anxiety. The influence of anxiety on spleen function is likely also mediated by both nervous and endocrine factors.

So how can we combat high amounts of stress? The answer is to make relaxation a priority. Try performing relaxing exer-

cises such as yoga and qigong, spending time in nature, taking warm baths, or consuming adaptogenic herbs.

#### 6 Avoid Overthinking

Uncertainty can be unhealthy because it can make it difficult to concentrate on tasks requiring executive function. One reason for this may be that we conserve energy when we're unsure about things. Uncertainty was shown to impair the performance of tasks even more than when we're certain of negative outcomes.

In traditional Chinese medicine, the spleen is linked to the "earth." When we worry too much, we're "up in the clouds." Being more relaxed and mindful can help us to feel more grounded, which can help us worry less and keep our spleen healthier.

When you take care of yourself by relaxing, staying grounded, avoiding overthinking, and trying to be more decisive, you will help to keep your immune system and spleen healthy.

The spleen is an important organ, and its loss or injury can be devastating to our health. Being proactive by implementing these practical ways to safeguard this vital organ will support your spleen's ability to function as it was miraculously designed, providing a lifetime of health benefits.

➔ To find the studies mentioned in this article, please see the article online at [TheEpochTimes.com](https://TheEpochTimes.com)

### FOOD AS MEDICINE

## Discover the Power of Apple Cider Vinegar

This fermented food has been studied for its beneficial effects on weight loss and cardiovascular health



▲ Apple cider vinegar—one of nature's natural digestives.

By Teresa Zhang

Apples have many health benefits, and apple cider vinegar made from fermented apple juice is a natural health food with multiple health-boosting effects. In addition to aiding in weight loss and digestion, it can also protect the cardiovascular system.

What is the best way to consume apple cider vinegar, and who should take it with caution? Jingduan Yang, founder and medical director of Yang Institute of Integrative Medicine in the United States, proposes five tips for taking ap-

ple cider vinegar in Four Dimensional Health, a series he developed to detail a holistic perspective on health and disease treatment.

Apple cider vinegar has a variety of health benefits and works as a decontaminant, purifier, and astringent in skin care products. It contains malic acid, pectin, enzymes, vitamins, and minerals, which can enhance immunity and help fight infectious diseases. Apple cider vinegar can also promote gastric acid secretion and improve gastrointestinal function. If you feel sick from overeating, drinking apple cider vinegar can often help.

### Helps Weight Loss, Lowers Blood Lipids

One of the best-known benefits of apple cider vinegar is its application in weight loss by increasing the body's metabolic rate and promoting fat burning. The Journal of Functional Foods published a randomized controlled clinical trial in 2018 showing that the intake of apple cider vinegar during dieting and weight loss is better than only adopting a low-calorie diet.

The researchers divided 39 overweight or obese people into two groups. Each

group underwent a low-calorie diet for 12 weeks, reducing their daily calorie intake by 250 calories. The experimental group ingested 30 ml of apple cider vinegar a day, while the control group was on a reduced calorie intake without consuming any apple cider vinegar.

The results showed that the group who consumed apple cider vinegar every day not only lost more weight, but also had a decreased hipline, visceral fat index, and appetite index. Moreover, blood tests found that the blood lipids and cholesterol of the group that took apple cider vinegar were also significantly reduced compared with the control group.

The role of apple cider vinegar in protecting blood vessels is not just limited to lowering blood lipids. According to one research review published in BMC Complementary Medicine and Therapies in 2021, a combination of six clinical trials found that after taking apple cider vin-

egar, fasting blood sugar decreased by about 7.97 milligrams/deciliter. Experiments on animals also found that apple cider vinegar can increase oxidation resistance, is anti-inflammatory, and can aid in the prevention of diabetes, high blood pressure, and high blood lipids.

### People Who Should Take Caution With Apple Cider Vinegar

Apple cider vinegar is safe for most people when consumed properly. However, Yang cautions that the following four types of people should take extra care when taking it:

**Patients with gastric ulcer or gastroesophageal reflux disease.** Apple cider vinegar can irritate the gastric mucosa and aggravate the condition.

**People taking hypoglycemic drugs.** Apple cider vinegar can lower blood sugar

levels like some blood sugar-lowering medications, so combining them should be done with caution.

**People with sensitive teeth or bleeding gums.** Apple cider vinegar is acidic and may damage teeth or gums.

**Pregnant or breastfeeding women.** It's not certain whether apple cider vinegar is safe for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

### 5 Tips for Taking Apple Cider Vinegar

**1 Take the appropriate dosage.** It's recommended to drink one to two tablespoons once or twice a day.

**2 Dilute before serving.** As the acidic concentration of apple cider vinegar is high, it's recommended to

dilute it with water at a ratio of at least 1 to 5. Too high an acidity of vinegar can harm the digestive tract.

**3 Season to taste.** Some people find apple cider vinegar strong or unpleasant. Try adding some honey or lemon juice, or add the vinegar to a salad dressing.

**4 Avoid drinking strong vinegar on an empty stomach.** Drinking apple cider vinegar on an empty stomach may irritate the stomach lining. If taking apple cider vinegar on an empty stomach, it must be further diluted.

**5 Consult a doctor when taking medicine.** Apple cider vinegar might react or interfere with prescribed drugs. If you have a digestive system disease or are on medication, it's best to talk to your doctor before taking apple cider vinegar.



A growing number of people have been reporting strange, adverse reactions after getting their second or third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

In a Harvard study that followed 271 patients who developed urticaria after COVID-19 vaccination, about **70** percent reported that they wouldn't get additional doses even if recommended.

# UNEXPLORED COVID-19 VACCINES ADVERSE EVENTS

## PART VII SKIN CONDITIONS REPORTED AFTER COVID VACCINATION

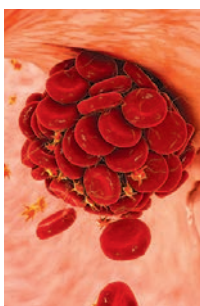
Difficult skin symptoms have been linked to COVID-19 vaccines but treatments do exist

➔ *In this series, we evaluate some of the lesser-known yet common adverse events that are appearing in the research literature and doctors' clinics and, more importantly, how to deal with them and reduce the risks.*

By Marina Zhang



Various autoimmune skin reactions have been reported post COVID-19 vaccination, including vitiligo, a condition that causes patchy skin pigmentation.



Microclots in blood vessels have been observed by many people after COVID-19 vaccination, a condition that has been said to be triggered by the spike proteins in the vaccine.

the skin's outer layer to plaque and flake off, revealing the raw inner skin.

Worst of all was the pain, which caused Jackson to pass out in the shower twice.

He has also developed ailments, the worst of which is psoriatic arthritis, another chronic skin condition that primarily causes rashes, joint pain, and dents in the nails. In Jackson's case, his joints and bones have gradually eroded. As a result, his nails and teeth have become brittle, with some even falling out.

### Postvaccine Skin Reactions

Jackson is likely one of the worst-case scenarios for skin reactions to the vaccine. But unfortunately, no one has any answers for why he developed these symptoms.

However, most skin reactions reported in the literature have been relatively mild and self-resolving.

"We can conceptualize vaccine reactions as both allergic and autoimmune," Dr. Jonathan Kantor, professor of dermatology from the University of Pennsylvania, wrote to The Epoch Times.

Allergic reactions to the vaccine are probably rarer, while the autoimmune reactions are more common but tend to resolve over time, he continued.

### Common Skin Reactions

COVID arm, which occurs as a rash appearing several days after injection, is a common side effect of the COVID-19 vaccine. The rash can become red and swollen, manifesting across most of the forearms.

Most resolve after a few days with or without topical steroids and may not recur if the person is injected for a second time.

While research has documented these rashes as a potential vaccine allergic reaction, Dr. Kimberly Blumenthal, a clinical professor and allergist from Harvard University specializing in drug allergies, said they might actually be unexplained immune reactions.

Another common skin

“  
From the top of my head to the bottom of my feet, I looked like a burn victim.”

Jeff Jackson, 40-year-old man who suffered adverse reaction to Modern's mRNA COVID-19 vaccine

reaction is COVID toes. These reactions were first reported in acute COVID, where patients' toes develop skin sores or bumps that typically occur after exposure to frigid temperatures. Similar presentations have also been reported after COVID-19 vaccinations.

### Allergic Reactions

COVID-19 vaccines can trigger allergic reactions.

Urticaria, a type of itchy red rash, can appear acutely or as a chronic condition following vaccination. While not life-threatening, the itchiness and discomfort can discourage further immunization.

In a Harvard study that followed 271 patients who developed urticaria after COVID-19 vaccination, about 70 percent reported that they wouldn't get additional doses even if recommended.

Reports of eczema after vaccination have also increased.

### Autoimmune Skin Reactions

Many autoimmune dermatological reactions have been reported postvaccination, including:

- Psoriasis, a skin rash that may also cause damage to the internal organs
- Lichenoid disorders (such as Jackson's lichenoid dermatitis), characterized by skin plaques and swelling
- Lupus, with typical symptoms including a butterfly rash on the face and rashes on the body
- Vitiligo, an incurable condition in which the body attacks the pigment in the body, causing white patches of skin

Studies have suggested that COVID-19 vaccines may cause autoimmunity, which occurs when the body attacks healthy tissues. The COVID-19 spike protein has many regions similar to human tissues and proteins, so similar human tissues may also be harmed when the body attacks these spike proteins. Renowned immunologist Dr. Aristo Vojdani found that antibodies produced



to fight the COVID-19 spike protein can react with at least 28 human tissue markers. Some affected tissue markers include collagen, a significant building block of skin, and phospholipids, which are present across all cells.

Microclotting in blood vessels, which is related to autoimmune conditions, can also be triggered by the COVID-19 spike protein produced after vaccination.

"There is also an interesting pattern of finger-pulp wrinkling that has been described as well. When the tips of our fingers do not receive enough blood supply, the skin is negatively affected. Nails will become thinner and more brittle," said dermatologist Dr. Angela Bowers, founder of Southlake Dermatology.

Dr. Jordan Vaughn, a board-certified internist who has researched microclotting among vaccinated and infected patients, said at the Front Line COVID-19 Critical Care Alliance (FLCCC) conference on April 28 that all post-COVID and postvaccine patients have some degree of abnormal microclotting in their blood.

### Viral Reactivation

Reactivation of latent viruses has also been reported after COVID-19 vaccination. The most common are shingles and herpes flare-ups.

Dermatology physician assistant Claire Rogers said she has seen an increase in shingles and herpes flares since the vaccine rollouts in 2021. However, she's unsure if all the patients reporting these symptoms have been vaccinated.

In recent years, Rogers noticed that herpes and shingles activation have become more severe in the rash distribution.

"Normally [herpes flares] are a little more focal," Rogers said, but now in more cases, the rash wraps on one of its sides. She didn't see this before the vaccine rollout.

### Neuropathy

Tingling, numbness, burning, and pain are the hallmarks of neuropathy. Bowers and Rogers said many patients who experienced neuropathy after vaccination would reach out thinking that they were experiencing a skin condition. However, it's actually a disease of the nervous system.

One associated symptom Bowers noticed was that areas affected by neuropathy might also develop hair loss, both in the scalp and distal regions. Professor Josef Finsterer from the University of Vienna, for instance, wrote in a study that a vaccinated patient who developed small fiber neuropathy also developed hair loss in her legs.

### Conventional Treatments Can Help

Dermatologists are still primarily using conventional therapeutics to treat these skin reactions.

Despite the change in clinical presentation, Rogers said psoriasis and eczema flare-ups have been responsive to conventional treatments of steroids and topical biologics that suppress immune activity.

Low-dose naltrexone, corticosteroids, and intravenous antibody infusions can also help to subside neuropathy flare-ups and autoimmune skin reactions.

Antihistamine medications, such as histamine blockers, can reduce sensitivity reactions, such as urticaria and allergic skin reactions.

Bowers believes that vaccine injuries take longer to resolve compared to long-COVID and non-vaccine-related conditions.

An Indian study on cutaneous reactions reported similar findings. The authors found that while mild, moderate, and severe vaccine-related skin reactions responded to conventional treatment, patients who developed lichenoid diseases after vaccination had a slower recovery.

Some skin conditions may need interventions outside of the conventional protocol.

Bowers found that all patients report some improvement when she gives them medication that improves their blood flow.

"Pentoxifylline has been a medication I've found very useful for patients with microclotting. It has been around for decades in the dermatology armamentarium," Bowers wrote.

Other anticoagulants include nattokinase and aspirin. However, Bowers noted that some patients, especially those with a genetic predisposition to blood clots, don't respond to anticoagulating treatment.

### Realities of the Vaccine-Injured

Jackson likely isn't the only person who has experienced severely debilitating skin conditions after vaccination. Many choose to stay silent about their injuries.

He feels isolated from his friends. He relies on public donations to pay for daily necessities and medical treatment. He knows vaccine-injured people in worse financial and physical situations than he is or is unwilling to come out publicly out of fear of repercussions.

Jackson has spent most of his days searching to find answers and said he has worked out a formula for his skin. It's a mixture of colloidal silver, neem oil, tea tree oil with aloe vera, and zeolite.

He combines all four ingredients, covers his body with the salve for 15 to 20 minutes, and then takes a shower. He did this for five days, resulting in "complete baby skin."

Jackson's endgame is to recover physically so that he can become self-sufficient. He's still severely debilitated by the pain and suffers from insomnia.

"My parents are in their 70s. I'm supposed to be taking care of them," Jackson said emotionally. "I don't want to have my mom come over here and take care of me. I want to be a father for my kids, whom I haven't seen in years."

**Next Week:** For the many who haven't experienced any symptoms but are concerned, there may be recourse to prevent these effects, doctors say.

## Does Alcohol Really Offer Any Health Benefits?

New research finds that previous studies likely came to incorrect conclusions based on problems in data selection

By George Citroner

For years, it has been widely accepted that moderate drinking, as part of a healthy diet and lifestyle, has protective health benefits. However, a recent study suggests that this long-held belief may not be accurate.

In the past, research indicated that people who consumed moderate amounts of alcohol tended to live longer and have a lower risk of heart disease than those who didn't drink at all.

However, a recent review of previous research has raised concerns about the validity of this association. Scientists at the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research conducted a review of more than 100 cohort studies involving nearly 5 million participants to investigate whether health benefits attributed to alcohol use may actually be due to other factors, such as lifestyle and socioeconomic status.

Their findings, published in the medical journal JAMA Network Open, suggest that biases in the previous studies—including the use of health factors not associated with drinking, such as diet, dental health, income, and weight—may have affected the results.

"Light and moderate drinkers are systematically healthier than current abstainers on a range of health indicators unlikely to be associated with alcohol use," the study authors wrote.

Furthermore, previous studies may have failed to account for biases in the abstainer group, particularly by not removing the so-called "sick quitters," former drinkers who have stopped or reduced drinking for health reasons.

"When we now look back at those studies, we realize that they were poorly structured and that the results were misleading," Dr. Timothy B. Sullivan, chair of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Northwell Health at Staten Island University Hospital, told The Epoch Times.

### The Research Review Found No Health Benefits

In this analysis, researchers conducted a systematic review of studies published between January 1980 and July 2021 to investigate the association between all-cause mortality risk and alcohol use, taking into account the average ages and sex distribution of the study population.

The analysis included people who consumed less than one drink a week to address the bias of poor health among nondrinkers observed in previous studies. The researchers also adjusted for age bias by only observing individuals recruited before a median age of 51 and remaining in the study until a median age of at least 60.

According to the study, this meta-analysis of 107 studies found "no significant protective associations of occasional or low-volume drinking (moderate drinking) with all-cause mortality."

However, it did find an increased risk of all-cause mortality for those who consumed 25 grams (0.9 ounces) of alcohol or more a day and a "significantly increased risk" for people drinking 45 grams (1.6 ounces) of alcohol or more daily. For reference, a standard U.S. alcoholic drink contains 14 grams of pure alcohol. The researchers also found the risk to be higher for women. "There was a significantly increased risk of all-cause mortality among female drinkers who drank 25 or more grams per day and among male drinkers who drank 45 or more grams per day," the authors wrote.

Dr. Jarid Pachter, a family medicine



Even moderate alcohol intake has been linked to a greater risk of cancer.

specialist with multiple hospital affiliations, including Stony Brook University Hospital, pointed out that the meta-analysis didn't specifically say that drinking any amount is unhealthy for you. The bottom line of the meta-analysis is that the conclusion of the "previous studies that said that moderate drinking was healthy for you was not valid," he added.

### Alcohol Consumption Linked to Higher Cancer Risk

This doesn't mean drinking isn't associated with potentially severe health consequences.

According to the World Cancer Research Fund International, a nonprofit dedicated to cancer prevention research, consuming alcohol, in general, increases the risk of certain types of cancer, such as:

- mouth, pharynx, and larynx cancers
- esophageal cancer (squamous cell carcinoma)
- breast cancer

More specifically, consuming two or more alcoholic drinks a day—which amounts to 30 grams or more—is linked to an increased risk of colorectal cancer, while three or more drinks daily—45 grams or more—raises the risk of stomach and liver cancers.

In 2021, research published in Cancer Epidemiology concluded that alcohol consumption accounts for a "considerable proportion" of cancer incidence and mortality across the United States. "Implementing state-level policies and cancer control efforts to reduce alcohol consumption could reduce this cancer burden," the study authors wrote.

Based on results from a recent study published in Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention, most Americans are unaware of the link between drinking and cancer risk or that the risk varies significantly for different types of alcoholic beverages. "All types of alcoholic beverages, including wine, increase cancer risk," senior author William M.P. Klein, who has a doctorate in social psychology and is the associate director of the National Cancer Institute's Behavioral Research Program, said in a statement. He added that this study's findings underscore a need to develop interventions for educating people about cancer risk and alcohol use, "particularly in the prevailing context of national dialogue about the purported heart health benefits of wine."

Everyone's health risks are unique, and individuals must make informed choices about alcohol use with the help of their physician, according to Sullivan. "People with a heightened familial risk for alcoholism are, of course, always advised to avoid or at least strictly monitor their alcohol use," he said. "But it is also a fair assumption that persons with significant health risks of any sort would be best advised to avoid alcohol, given what we know of its effects on essentially every organ in the body, including our immune system."

### Consider the Reasons Behind Your Drinking

"What we know about drinking is that it's different for everybody," Pachter said. "What may be a little for one person is too much for another."

He suggested that people should question their motives for drinking, especially if they're using alcohol to alleviate anxiety or to help them sleep. "Those are all real red flags," he said.

However, Pachter also pointed out that people from different socioeconomic backgrounds may have different levels of risk associated with drinking. "The JAMA study did point out that those people who are a little bit more well-off may be the ones who accrue some potential health benefits from a little bit of drinking," he said. "So you can't compare every person to just somebody else; you have to compare within the socioeconomic status."

Pachter added that it's important to consider individual circumstances rather than making generalizations based on studies. People automatically assume that the study findings apply to them, he said.

"I think right now is the time for people to reflect on their habits and ask themselves, 'Do I think that I'm doing this too much?' If so, you should talk to somebody like your doctor about it."





MARTIN-DM/GETTY IMAGES

INTENTIONAL LIVING

# A Playbook for Dealing With Life's Frustrations

Difficulty is inevitable and often a key contributor to self awareness and growth

By Mike Donghia

I was angry enough to rip the closet doors off the wall and smash them to pieces with a hammer. Rewind about two hours: My wife kindly asked if I could fix the kids' sliding closet doors, which had been falling off their tracks for several months. I had been strategically "prioritizing" other projects to avoid this one but was officially out of excuses. After driving to the hardware store, losing a nut in the parking lot, and then fiddling with the closet doors for an hour, I had made essentially zero progress. In fact, I may have made things worse. I could feel frustration and tension building in my whole body with each failed attempt. Afterward, as I ate my lunch, I continued to stew in my frustration and act like a grump toward my family. Why did I let something so trivial in the grand scheme of my blessed life get me so upset?

**Finding the Source of Frustration** When you notice yourself getting frustrated, it's a good time to reflect and observe what's going on inside of you. Strong emotions are a clue as to what you value most—but I'll warn you that you might not always like what you see. When you've cooled off enough to do some self-reflection, ask yourself this question: What stories or inner dialogues was I telling myself that caused me to be so frustrated? Here are some stories I was telling myself as I labored in vain:

- You're not even competent enough to fix a sliding door.
- You'll probably have to spend hundreds of dollars to hire someone to fix this.
- You've wasted two hours of time that you'll never get back.

This little exercise has made it clear to me that I highly value my sense of personal competence, my money, and my time—so much so that the thought of having less of any of them could leave me boiling in anger. This isn't a proud fact for me. I had certainly hoped that by now my efforts to mature in character would have elevated me beyond so heavily valuing such

things. But we're all a work in progress.

**The Myth of a Hassle-Free Life** Frustration isn't necessarily bad, as it's a sign that you really care about a particular outcome. The trouble is when frustration leads to discouragement, or when you are getting frustrated about things that aren't truly important. For me, this bout of frustration was a wake-up call that I have become too protective of my time and money and my identity as someone who never struggles—but to what purpose? When we cling tightly to our time and money, does it really improve our daily lives? Does it make us better people? Not that I've seen. And when I allow my ego to become so fragile that every struggle is an embarrassment, what's the result? I think it causes me to play it safe and stick with only what I'm good at instead of doing hard things that might be important. It also causes me to hide the weak parts of myself from others. You can see why these aren't values that I want ruling my life.

**Transforming Frustration Into Reflection** An intentional life is one in which nothing is wasted, not even the moments you'd rather forget. In fact, there's often far more to learn from failures and struggles than successes. Let me recap what I'd suggest you do when angry or frustrated because of one of life's curveballs:

- First, ask yourself what stories or inner dialogues are driving your frustration. Remember: There's always a "why" behind your anger—something important that's being threatened.
- Then, ask yourself whether these values are worthy of guiding or motivating your actions.
- Finally, write down the list of attributes and character traits that you'd rather have guide you in those moments of struggle.

Over time, this practice will transform your life. Instead of being a waste, each moment of frustration will lead to a reflection that pushes you further toward the person you hope to become.

*Mike (and his wife, Mollie) blog at This Evergreen Home where they share their experience with living simply, intentionally, and relationally in this modern world. You can follow along by subscribing to their twice-weekly newsletter.*



Taking the time to reflect after an emotional upset can help us to see the notions that drive our actions and enable us to improve.

## REASSESSING PRIORITIES

In light of what I learned about my ego and overly strong desires to protect my time and money through this episode of frustration, I decided to write down the values that I'd rather be driven by.

**Patience.** Being able to deal with obstacles or uncertainty with a calm and stress-free attitude.

**Optimism:** Being confident that some solution will eventually reveal itself if I keep at it.

**Mindfulness of relationships.** Not allowing my inner struggles to distract me from loving others.

**Light-heartedness.** Not taking myself so seriously that every failure is a threat to my identity.

**Gratitude.** Appreciating what's good in my life rather than focusing on current problems.

Guided by these values, I know I'll be led toward becoming the person I want to be. My frustrations will be fewer, and when they come, they'll be a useful gauge that my life isn't in alignment with the things that really matter.

# Overdiagnosing ADHD Raises Concerns

Continued from Page 1

used to treat the symptoms of ADHD. And while ADHD is often thought of as a condition that's diagnosed during childhood, some organizations say the number of adults in search of a diagnosis is skyrocketing. The National Institute of Mental Health in the United States reports that the overall prevalence of current adult ADHD is 4.4 percent. Talking to the BBC in January, the ADHD Foundation said it had seen a 400 percent rise in adults going to them compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic. The United States has also seen a notable rise in adults seeking prescriptions for ADHD drugs, both before and during the pandemic, according to the CDC. But some are questioning the rise of ADHD and what's behind the condition.

**Pathologizing Behavior** Ben Harris, a psychotherapist in private practice in London, told The Epoch Times that he believes that we're living in a culture that incentivizes us to give ourselves illness labels. "What we need to do in our culture is to think less about diagnostic labels and more about the meanings, the meaning of people's experience, because that's the only way you can understand what ADHD means to a specific person," he said. "Is there more ADHD than there used to be? Well, diagnostically, it appears so. There could be various reasons for that."

In certain cases, he said, parents or indeed adults do want to have a diagnosis, and we "could be incentivizing the diagnosis of these symptoms at lower and lower thresholds." One of the reasons people may want a diagnosis is to access drugs popularized for the treatment of ADHD. Another is because it provides an explanation for some of the difficulties they face. We should be looking behind the label, Harris said, because what's being diagnosed as ADHD could be many things grouped together behind one label. Depression, the distraction of digital addictions, poor nutrition, stress, and illness can all compromise focus and executive function. And then there's the simple fact that some people are just different. While ADHD-type behaviors can impair function in certain roles and environments, some people cel-

brate the creative traits many ADHD types have. And then there's the profound change in our culture and lifestyle with people becoming more sedentary and chair bound, with less physical engagement and less dynamic routines. People that could have once thrived in the endless variety of work in common rural lifestyles are now bound in cubicles staring at screens. People are suffering, but that may not be a mental illness, Harris said. "You've got this problem, potentially as I would see it, with the medicalization of human experience, and the pathologization of behavior that previously might have been tolerated and thought of as within the norm, as now being seen as outside the normal," Harris said.

**'Are You Saying My Distress Isn't Real?'** Dr. Damian Wilde, a psychologist with many years of clinical and therapeutic experience in the NHS, told The Epoch Times that an ADHD "diagnosis is quick, but formulation takes time." "People want quick these days, which is modeled by the government and society, people need to slow down," he said. Depression is another diagnosis that's on the rise, with people seeking a quick diagnosis and drugs to boost their mood. But saying depression is an illness overlooks the fact that people have legitimate reasons to be depressed, including the fact that we live in a time of tremendous isolation, uncertainty, and division. Stress, processed foods, toxic exposures, and too much time online can all contribute to feelings of depression.

Wilde says that ADHD isn't an illness in the way many people think it is, though the distress is very real. He said many people experience trauma, a difficult life event, neglect, a lack of opportunity, poverty, day-to-day stress, and poor relationships, all of which can contribute to psychological distress. In some cases, this unresolved pain can manifest as ADHD-like symptoms. The ADHD rate for children aged between 6 and 8 is 1.5 percent. (Matthew Horwood/Getty Images) And then there's the issue of diagnosis creep, which happens when the diagnosis criteria for a disease expands and what's considered "normal" becomes an ever-smaller territory. A 2015 review in The Canadian Journal

of Psychiatry claimed that ADHD is being overdiagnosed and argued that the definition of ADHD in doctors' guidelines has broadened in recent years. On the other end, some researchers have called for more UK children to be given drugs such as methylphenidate, commonly branded as Ritalin, to treat ADHD. An ADHD assessment takes place with a specialist, typically a neurobehavioral psychiatrist, and normally takes one to three hours, using a list of symptoms from the reference book "The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders," often known as the "DSM." Wilde said that when he worked with a team in NHS Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services, he saw child patients that may have difficulties with attention, but by speaking to parents and schools, he was able to formulate an explanation. "The explanation wasn't, for example, about attributing blame but saying, for example, perhaps the child has witnessed a trauma and this is a reaction," he said. He noted that, sometimes, if someone gets an ADHD diagnostic label, the risk is that they don't have to look at themselves. Famous psychoanalyst Carl Jung once said, "Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside awakes," Wilde noted. "Whatever we call it, the end goal is the same, that is: What can we do to help?" he said, explaining that ADHD advocates will say you need diagnostics to access certain services.

**'We Can Lose the Essence of a Person'** Wilde said that there's a risk with every diagnosis, however.

"The problem with a diagnosis is the attribution becomes the disorder—the child does something, that's because of his ADHD, and it can't be helped," he said. He noted a trend of people putting a "neurodiverse" label on social media biographies. In an article titled "Mental Illness Doesn't Make You Special," the publication UnHerd wrote about a "thriving ADHD community" on TikTok and Tumblr in which people "view their attentional difficulties not as an annoyance to be managed with medical treatment but as an adorable character trait that makes them sharper and more interesting than others around them." While some may celebrate the label, others surrender to it. Wilde said that the problem with an ADHD diagnosis is that it can become part of a person's identity, which can halt recovery from otherwise resolvable issues. "With a psychiatric diagnosis, we can lose the essence of a person here in some ways, because it becomes about the disorder rather than about the person's likes and interests," he said. "It can stop people from exploring and finding out the real reason for their problems, and secondly, it becomes part of their identity. "People can say, 'I am always going to struggle, I am always going to be unwell because of this illness; I've got this disorder.'"

*Owen Evans is a UK-based journalist covering a wide range of national stories, with a particular interest in civil liberties and free speech.*

ALEJANDRO RUHL/GETTY IMAGES



An ADHD diagnosis typically takes one to three hours and uses "The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders" as a reference for symptoms.

# Reversing the Age-Accelerating Effects of Stress

The biological clock can be slowed down or even rewound with certain habits and practices

By Jessie Zhang

While stress from life events such as surgery, pregnancy, contracting COVID-19, and taking the vaccines can age a person biologically, the body is able to naturally reverse this and increase longevity, a new study from Harvard University has found. While chronological age is defined by the number of years one has been alive, biological age represents how much one's DNA has been altered by a chemical reaction called methylation. This biological age is influenced by factors such as disease, lifestyle, and environmental factors. A person can look and feel much younger than someone of the same chronological age if he or she is biologically younger. According to a recent British study, the original COVID-19 virus can impair cognitive ability in a way equivalent to making the brain age by two decades. Meanwhile, the spike proteins in vaccines increase inflammatory factors, cause mitochondrial damage, produce misfolded

proteins, and cause genomic instability, all of which accelerate cellular aging, according to a study by researchers from St. Louis University, published in the Journal of Virology in 2021. Challenging the traditional view of aging, the Harvard team found that aging can be reversed upon recovery from stressful events. "Traditionally, biological age has been thought to just go up and up, but we hypothesized that it's actually much more dynamic," the study's lead author, Jesse Poganik of Brigham and Women's Hospital from Harvard Medical School, said. "Severe stress can trigger biological age to increase, but if that stress is short-lived, the signs of biological aging can be reversed." Poganik and her colleagues examined blood samples and methylation levels from elderly patients undergoing emergency surgery, pregnant women, and patients admitted to the ICU for COVID-19. They found that psychological stress increased the biological age for several of the patients but returned to baseline after the surgery, birth, or hospital discharge. "Our findings challenge the concept that biological age can only increase over a person's lifetime and suggest that it may be

possible to identify interventions that could slow or even partially reverse biological age," senior author Vadim Gladyshev said. "When stress was relieved, biological age could be restored. This means that finding ways to help the body recover from stress could increase longevity." **Destroying Worn-Out Cells Extends Life** Scientists have shown that eliminating aged cells can turn back the biological clock. Published in Nature in February 2016, the article "Destroying Worn-Out Cells Makes Mice Live Longer" stated that eliminating senescent cells in mice extended their lifespans by up to 30 percent. Senescent cells were killed off in mice over the course of six months. Compared with the control group of mice, whose senescent cells were allowed to build up, the test mice had better heart and kidney function. They were also more resilient to stress and more active, and had delayed cancer development. In fact, there are many things we can do to minimize the effects time has on our biological clocks. It may help to take rejuvenat-

ing supplements such as curcumin, collagen, and resveratrol and to eat a healthy diet full of vitamins, minerals, and compounds that are known to support the body. Exercise, get outside, and stay strong to reduce the risk of age-related injury that can lead to hip and knee replacement. Reducing stress with a combination of high-quality sleep and meditation practice is a known way to slow down the body's biological clock. **Shedding Off Years** The University of California-Los Angeles and the Australian National University jointly published a study in 2016 in the journal *NeuroImage*. The study's subjects were 250 meditators and 50 nonmeditators, with an average age of 51.4 years in both groups. After analyzing and comparing the brain ages of the two groups, the researchers found that the brain age of the meditators was younger than their actual age. For instance, 50-year-old meditators had the same brain age as a 42.5-year-old nonmeditator, and 60-year-old meditators had the same brain age as a 51-year-old nonmeditator in the control group. Interestingly, in the meditators group, for each additional year of actual age above 50, the brain appeared to be one month and 22 days younger than the actual age on average.



Relieving stress can restore our biological age and even lead to increased longevity.

POPICON/SHUTTERSTOCK





Have Fun, Productively

Test your brain with one of the biggest libraries of crosswords, puzzles, brain games, and sudoku on the web.

Play now at **EpochFun.com**

THE EPOCH TIMES  
EpochFun



A Life-Changing Bestseller



Zhuan Falun expounds on the profound principles of Truthfulness, Compassion, and Tolerance. It focuses on a long-forgotten term called “cultivation” and the importance of moral character on one’s path to spiritual perfection.

The book is the main text of the spiritual practice Falun Dafa. It was a national bestseller in China in the 1990s, and has since been translated into more than 40 languages. Find out why it has captured the hearts and minds of tens of millions of people in more than 100 countries worldwide.

“What made Falun Gong stand out from other qigong exercises and meditation practices was a moral system—compassion, truthfulness, and forbearance—unmistakably Buddhist in origin.

Arthur Waldron  
LAUDER PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Order Your Copy

Promo.Fayuanbooks.com or 845-538-4490



The Epoch Times Offers  
Free Subscriptions for Students

**OUR STUDENTS** are on the front lines of the American Culture War. So it’s extremely important to keep them grounded with objective reporting. We counter other media’s brainwashing by giving them a better option: The Epoch Times for FREE.



PLEASE SHARE THIS INFORMATION WITH STUDENTS YOU KNOW.  
ReadEpoch.com/student



THE EPOCH TIMES  
TRUTH AND TRADITION

Acetaminophen Overdose: Subtle, Deadly, and Often Accidental

This painkiller is the leading cause of liver failure in the US—and many people don’t even know they’re taking it

**GEORGE CITRONER**

In the United States, acetaminophen is widely available and included in hundreds of cold and cough medicines. Unfortunately, it can also be easily misused and has been responsible for deaths by suicide and unintentional poisoning.

Because of its potential dangers, acetaminophen is one of the most frequently banned or restricted drugs. Countries that have limited or banned drug combinations using acetaminophen include the UK, Norway, India, Algeria, and Kyrgyzstan.

Acetaminophen overdose is the leading cause of liver transplantation in the United States, according to a recently updated report by the National Institutes of Health. About 500 Americans die yearly of complications from acetaminophen toxicity. It also causes approximately 56,000 emergency department visits and 2,600 hospitalizations annually.

**Why Is Acetaminophen Toxicity Rate So High?**

“Acetaminophen is by far the No. 1 cause of acute liver failure in the United States,” Dr. Nima Majlesi, director of medical toxicology at Staten Island University Hospital in New York, told The Epoch Times.

He noted that most cases result from unintentional chronic acetaminophen overdoses, often due to misuse of medications such as Percocet, Vicodin, and Tylenol PM or taking multiple acetaminophen-containing products without recognizing the danger of high daily doses.

*Continued on Page 16*

Few patients know that many of their prescription and over-the-counter drugs contain acetaminophen.

Acetaminophen’s hidden presence in many drugs puts people at risk of overdose and liver failure.





THE EPOCH TIMES


Care about health? So do we.  
Get practical health news for your daily life for just \$1\*.

ReadEpoch.com


\*digital subscription








# Join



## Showcase Your Creativity

A platform free from violent, erotic, criminal, and harmful content



GanJingWorld.com

“**WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING**

“**“This is true journalism. This is what the Founding Fathers meant by ‘freedom of the press.’”**

— DARRYL AGEE

“**You have been my source of hope.** The truth is so scarce in media. The quality of my life is subject to the quality of truth in my life. Friends, work encounters, community interactions, all hinge on truth. The meticulous delivery of all sides of issues you cover permit me to sustain my hope in humanity. You have my deep respect and gratitude. I have told many, many patients (I am a physician) about you and will continue to do so. Truth + trust = hope + health.”

— DR. MARY ELLEN BLUNTZER

“**I am sharing Epoch every chance I get.** You guys bring a #1 product that people need DESPERATELY. Never have I read such a comprehensive, well researched, well sourced product in my entire life.”

— STEPHEN SZYMANSKI

“**Love the Epoch Times.** Wonderful to see news honestly presented...You have a good mix of uplifting, traditional, family, health & art/science. I know the truth when I finish reading the Epoch Times...I would recommend it to almost anyone.”

— ANNE KELLY

Learn more at **EpochSubscription.com**

”



Black seed oil has been regarded as a universal remedy for many health conditions including insomnia, menstrual cycle problems, and eczema, among others.

PLANT MEDICINE

## Black Seed Oil’s Effects on Obesity, Eczema, and More

This traditional remedy has been shown to be effective against several ailments, including COVID-19

ARMEN NIKOGOSIAN

Black seed oil, which can be ingested or applied to the skin, has been touted as a remedy for everything from headaches and obesity to insomnia to COVID-19.

Black seed oil is extracted from *Nigella sativa*, a plant native to the Middle East and Eastern Europe but now cultivated in a much larger area. *Nigella sativa* was long been used as medicine and food. For instance, in the area that is now Iran, it was traditionally used to help with menstrual cycle problems; in India, it was used for indigestion problems; and in China, it was used to treat insomnia, dizziness, and bronchial disorders.

*Nigella sativa* has very high concentrations of omega-6 fatty acids and phytochemicals, specifically thymoquinone, which is believed to be the driving force behind many of its therapeutic effects.

There are limited large studies on black seed oil, and many studies use a concoction of black seed oil with other natural products such as coconut oil and cocoa butter. The problem with these studies is that it’s difficult to isolate the effects of black seed oil from those of the other ingredients.

But the fact that there are few large studies doesn’t mean there isn’t any quality research or that researchers aren’t interested. In fact, a search for “*Nigella sativa*” in PubMed, the National Library of Medicine’s database of biomedical research and scientific literature, reveals a sharp uptick in research into the plant in the past 20 years. There are nearly 2,000 entries on the plant, and half of those are from the past five years.

Among the existing research looking solely at the effects of black seed oil, one study found that it could aid in weight loss. In the study, approximately 90 obese women aged 25 to 50 on low-fat diets were split into two groups. One received one gram of black seed oil before each meal and the other received only a placebo.

After eight weeks, the black seed oil group showed an average weight loss of 6 percent and a waist circumference reduction of 6.9 percent. Meanwhile, the control group had an average weight loss of only 3.6 percent and a waist circumference reduction of 3.4 percent.

Black seed oil has also demonstrated activity against the SAR-CoV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19. The thymoquinone and other components of the oil have a high binding affinity for the ACE2 receptor in the lungs and can effectively prevent the virus from binding and entering the cell. It can also bind

a toxic uremic byproduct made by the virus, which is known to contribute to kidney failure occasionally seen as a result of infection.

Black seed oil may also treat vitiligo, a skin condition that occurs when cells that increase skin pigmentation called melanocytes die, resulting in patches of very pale skin. These can vary from small inconspicuous patches to a large patch that covers the entire body.

Researchers had 33 people apply a black seed oil cream twice a day for six months. The study showed that the black seed oil cream helped reduce the size of the areas affected by vitiligo.

It was theorized that it helped by spreading the natural pigment produced by melanocytes, known as melanin, more evenly throughout the skin. While putting the black seed oil in cream could have altered its effectiveness, the results clearly demonstrated its effects. This study was replicated with a slightly larger patient population, and the cream showed similar results.

Some have also claimed that black seed oil treats eczema. A study of 60 people with eczema compared the effects of black seed oil, a steroid cream called betamethasone, and a popular moisturizer called Eucerin.

All three test groups were made up of 20 people who applied the treatments twice a day for four weeks. The results were that Eucerin did worse than both black seed oil and betamethasone cream at easing the symptoms and discomforts associated with eczema. Black seed oil was found to have roughly the same effectiveness as betamethasone cream, which has been used as a symptomatic treatment for eczema for decades.

In conclusion, while black seed oil may not be the cure-all purported by some, it’s developing a growing list of acknowledged therapeutic effects. Given the very low levels of toxicity associated with the oil, it’s a potentially valuable addition to any medical practitioner or health-minded individual’s toolbox.

Armen Nikogosian, M.D., practices functional and integrative medicine at Southwest Functional Medicine in Las Vegas, Nev. He is board-certified in internal medicine and a member of the Institute for Functional Medicine and the Medical Academy of Pediatric Special Needs. His practice focuses on treating adults and children with illnesses such as chronic gut issues, autoimmune conditions, autism and other complex medical conditions. He also treats healthy adults for anti-aging and health/performance optimization.



Researchers found that rubbing black seed oil on the body helped reduce the patches of skin affected by vitiligo.

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

# Study Confirms Benefits of Natural Fructose

While added fructose is linked to obesity and health problems, natural fructose can aid in weight loss: study

FLORA ZHAO

Researchers have affirmed that not all fructose is created equal. While it’s widely believed that consuming sugar, particularly fructose, can cause weight gain and harm our health, a recent study finds that the quality of fructose is a factor in how it affects weight gain. In fact, good fructose not only aids in weight loss but also leads to improvements in other health indicators.

### How Does Fructose Contribute to Weight Gain?

Fructose is more lipogenic (promotes fat production) than glucose. Excessive fructose intake is widely believed to be associated with obesity, fatty liver disease, cardiovascular diseases, and even cancer.

That’s partly because fructose is primarily metabolized in the liver and converted into fat. Specifically, fructose promotes fat production in the liver and damages mitochondria (which produce energy in cells) and associated enzymes. Additionally, the byproducts of fructose digestion by gut bacteria further stimulate fat production by the liver.

Fructose reduces the body’s energy expenditure, promotes leptin resistance, and stimulates appetite.

Excessive intake of fructose can lead to an increase in the intestine’s surface area, which further accelerates the absorption of nutrients and the process of obesity.

But not all fructose is the same.

### An Experiment to Unravel the Mysteries of Fructose

Researchers from the University of Toronto published a systematic review and meta-analysis in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. They examined 169 clinical trials to determine the varying effects of fructose from various food sources on human health.

The study included 14 types of fructose-containing foods:

- Sugar-sweetened beverages
- Sugar-sweetened dairy
- Sugar-sweetened soy
- 100 percent fruit juice
- Fruit drink
- Whole fruit
- Dried fruit
- Mixed fruit forms
- Sugar-sweetened cereal grains and bars
- Honey
- Sweets and desserts
- Added-calorie sweeteners
- Mixed sources with sugar-sweetened beverages
- Mixed sources without sugar-sweetened beverages

The researchers primarily focused on body weight, followed by secondary indicators



Researchers recommend consuming whole fruit to help maintain a healthy body weight.

such as body mass index (BMI), to evaluate the effects of fructose on the body.

### Consumption of Some Kinds of Fructose Can Aid in Weight Loss

These fructose-containing foods exhibit clear trends and patterns in their effects on the body.

In the study, when fructose-containing foods were replaced with drinks containing added-calorie sweeteners or mixed sources with sugar-sweetened beverages, the average weight gain was 0.66 kilograms (1.45 lbs.) and 0.27 kilograms (0.6 lbs.), respectively.

On the other hand, replacing fructose-containing foods with fruit resulted in an average weight loss of 0.38 kilograms (.84 lbs.). This confirms that fruit can aid in weight loss, although the researchers note that the fruits mainly consisted of berries, such as strawberries, blueberries, and raspberries.

Adding fructose-containing foods, such as sugar-sweetened beverages, result-

ed in a significant weight gain of 0.49 kilograms (1.1 lbs.). Consumption of a 355 milliliter (12 oz.) can of such a beverage, which accounted for 8 percent of daily energy intake, led to an even more substantial weight gain of 1.04 kilograms (2.3 lbs.). Juice drinks were also found to be detrimental,



Consuming fructose has a bad reputation of causing excessive weight gain, but studies suggest that the source and quality of fructose is more important than the fructose itself.

## Is Your Diet Giving You UTIs?

New research suggests *E. coli* in some meats could be causing urinary tract infections

MAT LECOMPTÉ

*Escherichia coli* bacteria, better known as *E. coli*, are often behind food poisoning, but a new study suggests they could make you sick in other ways.

Research recently published in *One Health* has revealed that these same microbes may be responsible for causing millions of urinary tract infections (UTIs).

UTIs are a very common illness that affect more than half of women at least once in their lives. A vast majority of them are

caused by *E. coli*.

Symptoms of a UTI include a frequent urge to urinate, burning while urinating, and lower belly pain.

Most strains of *E. coli* exist naturally in the gut as part of a diverse microbiome. They are completely harmless and even possess benefits. However, when *E. coli* is shed in stool, it can migrate to the urinary tract and cause a UTI.

The prevalence of UTIs in women all comes down to anatomy. The

Improperly cooked meat may be a contributing factor for some cases of urinary tract infections (UTIs) due to the presence of the *E. coli* bacteria.



ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

opening to the urethra is situated close to the anus, making it much easier for bacteria to find their way to the urinary tract. Women are 30 times more likely than men to get a UTI.

But new evidence suggests that at least a portion of UTIs may be caused by food. The research team found genetic evidence that some UTIs are caused by *E. coli* in chicken, turkey, and pork purchased at grocery stores.

The researchers estimated that about 8 percent of UTIs caused by *E. coli* could be traced to a food source, accounting for a half million infections per year.

The team analyzed genomes of *E. coli* from meat and from UTI patients, focusing on segments of

resulting in a significant weight gain of 0.9 kilograms (2 lbs.).

However, it’s worth noting that 100 percent fruit juice, despite being a sweet liquid, has a fundamentally different effect on the body from that of sugar-sweetened beverages.

Consuming 100 percent fruit juice in moderation, with calories not exceeding 10 percent of daily energy intake, led to weight loss of 1.30 kilograms (2.9 lbs.). However, when consumed in higher amounts, weight gain may occur, although the magnitude of the increase isn’t substantial. In other words, moderate consumption of pure fruit juice can aid in weight loss, while excessive consumption may result in weight gain.

Eating fruit offers similar benefits: When consumed in an amount that does not exceed 10 percent of daily energy intake, body weight can be significantly reduced by 0.6 kilograms (1.3 lbs.). However, there is no weight loss effect when it is consumed in excess. It’s worth noting that both fresh and dried fruits can lead to significant weight loss, with dried fruits resulting in a weight loss of up to 1.29 kilograms (2.8 lbs.).

“Most people don’t eat enough of all forms of fruit,” lead author Laura Chiavaroli, who holds a doctorate in nutritional sciences and is an assistant professor at the University of Toronto, said in a statement.

The study also answered a question: Does consuming honey, a food mostly made up of sugar, contribute to weight gain? The answer is no.

Replacing foods containing fructose with honey resulted in the most significant weight loss among all food sources, with a reduction of 1.65 kilograms (3.5 lbs.).

“More specific guidelines regarding added sugars may be needed for different food sources of fructose-containing sugars. Ultimately, calories count, as does the food source of sugars,” said John Sievenpiper, a professor in the Department of Nutritional Sciences at the University of Toronto and an author of the study.

### Moderate Consumption of Fruit and Fruit Juices Leads to Reduced BMI

Fruits aid in weight loss and promote a leaner body composition. The consumption of foods containing “good fructose” can lead to a reduction in BMI.

In substitution trials, fruit led to a significant reduction of 0.21 kg/m<sup>2</sup> (kilograms per square meter) in body mass index (BMI).

Moderate fruit juice consumption also led to a significant reduction of 0.52 kg/m<sup>2</sup> in BMI.

The effect of dried fruits on reducing BMI is surprising. When consumed in an amount equivalent to 5.5 percent of daily total energy intake, dried fruits led to a significant reduction of 4.58 kg/m<sup>2</sup> in BMI.

### Best Serving Sizes for Fruits, Fruit Juice, Dried Fruits, and Honey

While fruits, fruit juice, dried fruits, and honey have been shown to aid in weight loss, the amount consumed is crucial, as overconsumption may lead to adverse effects.

Researchers recommend consuming 50 grams or less than 10 percent of the daily total energy intake for fruits. The fruits in the study were generally low-calorie berries with high-antioxidant content.

The recommended daily intake of honey is similar to that of fruits.

The study emphasized the benefits of consuming 100 percent fruit juice, with the recommended amount being no more than 10 percent of daily total energy intake, which is approximately 400 milliliters (13.5 oz.).

The recommendation for dried fruits is 60 milliliters (2 oz.) or less per day, which is roughly the amount that can fit in the palm of one’s hand.

bacterial DNA that are unique strains that colonize in animals that people eat but not in people. Then they modeled the likelihood that a given infection came from food.

These findings don’t prove that UTIs can come from undercooked meats, but they further reinforce the need for safe cooking methods and adequate food hygiene. Be sure to cook meat properly and avoid cross-contamination. Wash your hands and cooking surfaces well and often when handling raw meat and its packaging.

Republished from BelMarraHealth.com

Starting as a journalist over 10 years ago, Mat has not only honed his belief system and approach with practical experience, but he has also worked closely with nutritionists, dietitians, athletes, and fitness professionals. He embraces natural healing methods and believes that diet, exercise, and willpower are the foundation of a healthy, happy, and drug-free existence.



Good fructose not only aids in weight loss but also leads to improvements in other health indicators.

It’s worth noting that

100 PERCENT

fruit juice, despite being a sweet liquid, has a fundamentally different effect on the body from that of sugar-sweetened beverages.



## Continued from Page 13

A woman with brown hair tied back, wearing black-rimmed glasses and a teal denim shirt over a pink top, is shown from the chest up. She is holding a clear glass of water in her right hand and a small white pill in her left hand, looking at it with a thoughtful expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall with a dark curtain on the right side.

ALL IMAGES BY  
SHUTTERSTOCK

A photograph of a young woman with long, straight blonde hair, smiling broadly. She is wearing a light-colored, button-down shirt. A young child with blonde hair is sitting on her shoulders, also smiling and laughing. The child is wearing a blue patterned shirt. They are outdoors in a park-like setting with green trees and foliage in the background. The lighting is bright and natural, suggesting a sunny day.

Studies have found that having children can give women longer, healthier, and happier lives.

**VANCE VOETBERG**

### Longer Life Expectancy

In a study published in the *British Medical Journal*, parents (both moms and dads) were found to live longer than people who don't have kids.

\_\_\_\_\_

These differences may help you know if you should schedule a visit with your general practitioner

LISA LIN

## Rectal Bleeding: Hemorrhoids or Cancer?

One of the prominent signs of colorectal cancer is rectal bleeding, but it can also occur in patients with hemorrhoids. So how can we distinguish between the two?

During an interview with The Epoch Times, Jung-Chien Chen, CEO of the Minimally Invasive Surgical Center at Min-Sheng General Hospital in Taiwan, explained that hemorrhoids are varicose veins that appear in the anus or lower part of the rectum. When subjected to

**Another study found that women who had their last kid after 33 had double the chance of living to 95 as women who had children at a younger age.**



The research-backed advantages to being a mother include enhanced creativity and productivity as well as a reduced risk of developing breast cancer and cardiovascular diseases later in life.

In the study, which included more than a million people, researchers found that “having children is associated with increased longevity, particularly in an absolute sense in old age.”

Another study found that women who had their last kid after 33 had double the chance of living to 95 as women who had children at a younger age. This study and other evidence support the theory that having children at an older age may not be a bad thing.

## Happier in Middle Age

According to different reports, middle-aged women also tend to be happier when they're mothers. As discovered in the Population and Development Review, researchers found that women aged 40 or older generally experienced more happiness and contentment as mothers than women who didn't have children.

The 2014 study, which included participants from 86 countries, noted that “children are a long-term investment in well-being.” Other research has shown similar results.

## Greater Intelligence

The phrase “mom brain” is often used negatively to refer to unclear, incomplete thinking by a mother. But, according to research, motherhood increases the size of a woman’s brain and might improve her creativity.

Other research shows that motherhood improves learning and creativity. Given oxytocin's known positive effects on creative performance, researchers hypothesize that its increased presence in postpartum mothers is what stimulates renewed creativity.

## More Productivity

It's now been verified by scientific research that mothers are paragons of multitasking.

In a 2014 study published in the *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, comparing the productivity of mothers with that of other women, researchers found that “mothers of at least two children are, on average, more productive than mothers of only one child, and mothers, in general, are more productive than childless women.”


*Vance Voetberg is a freelance journalist for The Epoch Times based in the Pacific Northwest. He holds a B.S. in journalism and aims to present truthful, inspiring health-related news. He is the founder of the nutrition blog "Running On Butter."*

## Is There a Link Between Foul-Smelling Flatulence and Colorectal Cancer?

Chen explained that the odor of flatulence is influenced by the type of food a person eats. Consumption of spicy food, a high amount of protein, or foods with high bean content can cause flatulence with a stronger odor the following day. This can be improved by making dietary adjustments.

The longer that feces stay in the intestines, the stronger the odor becomes. One possible reason for fecal accumulation in the intestines is the obstruction of feces by an intestinal tumor, which can cause incomplete bowel movements. If a person experiences persistent foul-smelling flatulence despite having a bland diet, it's advisable to seek a professional medical examination to determine if it's related to colorectal cancer.

## Is Sudden Weight Loss a Sign of Cancer?



Chen explained that during the first stage of colorectal cancer, a person's weight typically isn't affected. However, as cancer progresses to the second or third stage, the tumor may start invading the blood vessels and lymphatic system, depriving the body of necessary nutrients.

food, such as cereals, barley, wheat, still bran, germ, and some of the oils. All are rich in iron and minerals, as well as vitamins that can help with gut health.

TTTSTOCK

## How to Prevent Colorectal Cancer Effectively?

Then recommended increasing fiber intake and staying hydrated to promote regular bowel movements and prevent fecal buildup in the intestines, thereby maintaining a healthy intestinal environment and reducing the risk of polyps and cancer.

Chen also emphasized the importance of a balanced diet. He suggested consuming more whole grains and vegetables and a moderate amount of fruit while avoiding excess calories and sugars.

A systematic review published in the British Medical Journal in 2011 shows that a high intake of dietary fiber, particularly cereal fiber and whole grains, is associated with a reduced risk of colorectal cancer.

A cohort study published in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* by the National Cancer Institute in 2020 stated that consuming whole grains as a source of fiber can help prevent colorectal cancer. The study analyzed the dietary habits of nearly 500,000 American adults aged 50 to 71 and found that those who consumed the highest amount of whole grains had a 16 percent lower risk of developing colorectal cancer, compared to those who consumed the least amount of whole grains.

Whole grain foods, unlike refined grain, contain the bran, germ, and endosperm. They're rich in fiber, healthy fats, protein, B vitamins, and vitamin E, as well as minerals such as iron, copper, zinc, and magnesium. Examples of whole-grain foods include brown rice, millet, corn, oats, buckwheat, barley, quinoa, sorghum, and more.



MINDSET MATTERS

# When You Keep Getting Triggered by the Same Person (Part 2)

These 3 steps can help you deal with an intractable reaction to a certain person in your life

NANCY COLIER

If there someone in your life, maybe from your past, whose company sets off strong and difficult feelings over which you don't seem to have any control, no matter how much "work" you've done and continue to do?

If so, you're not alone. In Part 1 of this two-part series, I described the frustration, confusion, and pain that certain people can trigger in us, sometimes for an entire lifetime.

Often, these people remain in our lives because they're family or part of some other important community. Sometimes, we even want to see these people for other reasons, because, as human beings, we're complicated and contradictory by nature.

It's a challenge to keep a sense of calm and inner peace with someone who triggers you if their very presence sends your nervous system into a code-red emergency.

I'm often asked whether there are ways to stay grounded when faced with the people who trigger us and whether there are strategies for making these triggering interactions less painful and disruptive even if our nervous system is telling us that danger is imminent.

In working with clients on some version of this issue for nearly three decades, in addition to working with my own triggering people along the way, I've discovered a few practices that are immeasurably helpful.

## Investigate Your Feelings and Beliefs

This practice is about getting curious and precise about the thoughts and feelings that this person's company triggers in you.

We tend to assign blanket descriptions to our experience, such as "She makes me feel anxious" or "I hate being with her" or some other generalized description of an emotional experience that's really quite subtle and refined. Often, this experience contains a whole life story.

You need to get under these blanket descriptions and into what exactly you feel in this person's company. Is it shame, guilt, humiliation, sorrow, inadequacy, helplessness, or rejection? What's the felt sense?

And what are the narratives and beliefs that echo in your mind as a result? What specifically do you believe about the world and yourself in this person's company?

The purpose of getting specific about these thoughts and feelings isn't to better figure out what this person did to you; it's about opening up a deeper level of empathy, compassion, and understanding for yourself.

To truly empathize with your own suffering, you have to know what you're offering

An important part of this process is also accepting that these big and sometimes overwhelming feelings are going to arise with this person.

It's a powerful practice just to honor your wish to not suffer anymore.

empathy for and sometimes even how and why these specific emotions and narratives came into existence.

Once you're aware of the direct experience being triggered in you and the exact nature of the feelings you're reliving, you can be compassionate for yourself and even hold onto that self-loving energy as you're being triggered.

On a practical level, when in this person's company, you can literally and symbolically hold yourself by putting a hand on your heart or belly, perhaps casually enough that it isn't noticeable, as a gesture of kindness toward yourself. This is a way of saying to yourself, "This is hard, I've got you." You can acknowledge silently (or out loud in the bathroom) what's happening inside you.

Also, in getting ready to see this person, remind yourself that being in their company will probably kick off these feelings and that

you may not feel like yourself again until you're out of their company. Wish yourself safe travel and passage. You can say something such as: "Remember, sweetheart, being with her sets off that feeling of shame and guilt—for something unknowable. It's OK; it's just an old tripwire. It will happen, and it will pass."

Or maybe, "There wasn't any reason for you to feel ashamed then, and you have nothing to feel ashamed of now." Or a straightforward "You're not guilty, you're not guilty, you're not guilty ..."

What words would have helped that younger version of you that was originally triggered so long ago? What did she need to hear and know? Tell yourself that now—with love.

## Accept the Experience

An important part of this process is also



It's important to look inside when you find yourself slipping into behaviors you dislike around certain people.



Loving yourself and accepting your feelings is one of the first steps toward healing in the face of trauma.

To truly empathize with your own suffering, you have to know what you're offering empathy for and sometimes even how and why these specific emotions and narratives came into existence.

not your fault.

Regardless of why or how or whether it should be happening, the reality is that when you're with this person, you feel bad again and again.

You've tested this system enough times, played out enough strategies, exhausted enough hopes and prayers, and fought with this reality long enough. You've felt the same fire burn you the same way enough times. It's OK to surrender to reality and choose a different path. It's OK to not see this person anymore and stop putting yourself in harm's way. It's OK to say "no."

You may believe that you have to keep trying to change what makes you uncomfortable, to make it different from the way it is, but in fact, you don't have to change it, and you don't have to keep trying.

It is the way it is. You're allowed to stop trying to prove that you can keep this person in your orbit and be OK with it. You can acknowledge that this isn't even something you want to do. It's a powerful practice just to honor your wish to not suffer anymore.

You don't necessarily earn any points by putting yourself in situations with people who make you feel bad. The harder and more spiritually challenging and transformative choice may, in fact, be to stop trying to have a different experience.

Instead, what if you were to choose to do the really challenging thing and be fiercely kind to yourself—to give yourself what you actually want and live by what feels loving and supportive? Do you have the courage to make that choice?

There comes a time in life when we're ready to let go of the endless attempts and demands to be the person we should be. We wouldn't judge an alcoholic who doesn't want to go out to pub night with friends after work, so why would we judge ourselves for avoiding a situation that triggers a similar intractable habit of being? Maybe you can let yourself just be and can welcome and love the whole miracle and catastrophe that you are.

Nancy Colier is a psychotherapist, interfaith minister, thought leader, public speaker, and the author of "Can't Stop Thinking: How to Let Go of Anxiety and Free Yourself from Obsessive Rumination," "The Power of Off," and the recently released "The Emotionally Exhausted Woman: Why You're Depleted and How to Get What You Need" (November, 2022.)

WISE HABITS

# Be All In: Unlock Your Full Power

Finding a deep commitment to the people and projects that matter to you can change your world

ALL IMAGES BY SHUTTERSTOCK



Giving up is all too common, and very few people remain committed to the tasks and habits they choose to take on.

## LEO BABAUTA

One of the things that really humbled me in recent years is the realization that I'm often only halfway in on anything I do. I'm rarely ever really all in.

For example, I might join a coaching program with the idea of trying it out but be unsure if I can do it. Then, when things start to get hard or overwhelming, I might start looking for the exit or hide so that I don't have to be embarrassed. Halfway in means being ready to be all the way out.

Another example: I commit to meditating every day. Then, when I'm meditating, instead of being fully in the meditation, maybe I'm waiting for it to be over or giving myself reasons I should end early. Then two days into it, maybe I really don't feel like it, so I skip it. Then I find reasons to keep skipping it. This is even less than halfway in.

Most of us do this in just about everything we do. And it has a really corrosive effect on whatever we're taking on, as well as our trust in ourselves.

Does it have to be this way? Let's take a look at what it looks like to be all in and why we rarely do that. And then we'll look

at how being all in can create something powerful in your life.

## What It's Like to Be All In

Some of us have an experience of being all in somewhere in our lives. Here are some life areas and experiences that might be true for you:

- Your kids—you're not about to abandon them when they're not behaving the way you would like.
- Your marriage—a subset of people are fully committed and will do what it takes to work it out, even when there are really big problems. There are others who get ready to bolt when big problems flare up. Which are you?
- Best friend—maybe you have a bestie to whom you're fully committed, whom you'll be there for no matter what, whom you'll never abandon, even when they're lashing out and not being ideal.

If you can relate to one of these—like having kids—then imagine what it would be like to have that kind of all-in commitment to whatever you do.

Imagine working on a creative proj-

ect and having no question that you'll complete it. Even when things get hard, you're working with the difficulties. Even when you feel like giving up, you don't give yourself the option. Even when you miss a few days, you come back without any questions. Even if you die with it incomplete, you'll die knowing that you gave it your all.

Doubts might come up, but those are expected. Your heart is fully in it. This is full devotion.

## Why We Avoid That

We rarely let ourselves be all in because it's hard and scary.

We don't think we can do it. We don't think we're strong enough. We have a lot of evidence that we'll screw it up, based on past experience. We don't trust ourselves.

We don't trust the other person. We fear what they really think of us, or we think they'll abandon or hurt us or let us down. Yet again.

We don't think we can work out the hard problems. They feel intractable, overwhelming, or out of our control. We hate not having full control.

It's easier to run. But it leaves our full heart and power unused.

Of course, a deeper commitment doesn't mean staying in an abusive relationship or anything that's harmful to you. It means that when you want to run from something healthy and meaningful, you stand your ground and find something deeper inside to keep you going.

What would that do for the projects that

A deeper commitment doesn't mean staying in an abusive relationship or anything that's harmful to you.



Trying to start a new habit, especially one that will elevate our spirit, will inevitably stir resistance.

are most important to you? For the relationships that you care about most? How would you show up differently for your purpose in life?

## How to Practice

This isn't another set of expectations to judge yourself by. This is about practicing deepening.

Here's how you might practice:

1. Notice the situations where you're looking for an exit. Where are you only half committed?
2. Notice how this impacts your life, the people you're in relationship with, and what you care about.
3. Notice the fears that keep you looking for the exit. Can you be with these fears as if they were only a sensation in your body?
4. Notice what you want to do from those fears: run, hide, eject someone from your life, quit, and so forth. Can you hold these fears with love and acknowledge them as something you've created to protect yourself?
5. When the fears show up, try to catch yourself. Notice what you want to do, and recognize that this is just a safety mechanism. Breathe. Be with the fear. Give yourself love.
6. Then, see what else might be created if you don't run.

This isn't an easy practice. I highly recommend you get some support. Tell your friends and loved ones what you're working on. Seek others facing similar challenges.

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK



INTENTIONAL LIVING

# The Keys to Controlling Your Attention

7 Steps to mastering the most important skill of the 21st century

JOSHUA BECKER

*“In this information-rich, time-poor society, attention has become our most important resource.”—Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi*

Bruce Lee once said, “The successful warrior is the average man, with laser-like focus.” I tend to think that he’s right, and maybe now more than ever. Especially as our attention spans, all around the world, shrink. In a world where distractions abound, both big and small, the greatest skill we can personally hone is the control of our attention. In fact, the ability to keep focus amid ever-increasing distractions may just be the greatest determining factor of success in the 21st century.

## Controlling your attention—just like any skill—requires practice, patience, and pursuit.

Our attention is the driving force that shapes our lives. It’s what creates wisdom from our past experiences and helps us make the most out of the skills we’ve developed, the education we’ve experienced, and the talents we’ve accumulated.

It’s our attention that puts these assets to work, allowing us to make the most of our potential. Only with focused attention do we make the most out of these strengths. Ultimately, it’s where we direct our attention that shapes the direction of our path, how effectively we reach our goals, and what we accomplish with the one life that we have to live.

### Improving Focus

This is why controlling your attention is so important. Fortunately, there are some important ways that you can improve your ability to focus.

1.

**Simplify Your Environment**  
Simplicity is the stepping stone to clarity. A cluttered environment, whether physical or digital, results in a cluttered mind. By minimizing the unnecessary, we remove visual noise and make room for focused attention. This doesn’t just mean owning fewer possessions but also decluttering our online spaces.
2.

**Practice Mindfulness**  
Mindfulness is the art of being fully present. It’s a skill that trains your brain to focus on the here and now, preventing it from being hijacked by past regrets or future anxieties. Simple mindfulness exercises can be a great starting point, as can religious rituals, such as prayer, meditation, and spiritual reading.
3.

**Notice When Distractions Take Your Attention**  
Awareness is key in controlling attention. Work hard to notice when your attention drifts. Are there specific triggers that lead your mind astray? Maybe a particular time of day or a specific task that causes your mind to wander? Or maybe it’s a specific app or website that grabs your attention? Begin to notice them in your day and week. Identifying these can help us regain control when our focus begins to waver. It’s certainly an important step.
4.

**Understand Big and Small Distractions**  
Distractions, both big and small, can impact our focus. Small distractions are often immediate—a phone notification, a game, TikTok videos—things that interrupt us briefly but frequently. On the other hand, there are larger distractions that can keep us from a more meaningful

life—things such as an excessive pursuit of wealth or constant worry about others’ opinions. These distractions, often more subtle than a buzzing phone, can divert our attention over a longer period. Recognizing and tackling both types is essential for controlling our attention.

5.

**Prioritize Time**  
It’s important that we start each day by setting our intention and remembering our priorities. By organizing our time according to what we value most and our goals, we can better direct our attention. What activities today truly deserve your focus? What aligns with your purpose? Asking these questions can guide us to invest our attention wisely. Of course, prioritizing time can only happen if we’ve set clear goals.
6.

**Set Clear Goals**  
Clear goals channel our attention. They act as a compass, guiding our attention and focus toward what truly matters. Of course, we all get to decide for ourselves what that’s going to be. But the important step is to do it. That’s why I included an entire chapter on finding your purpose in “Things That Matter.” Also, it’s helpful to remember that breaking down larger goals into smaller, manageable tasks

can help us overcome being overwhelmed and maintain focus.

7.

**Take Regular Breaks**  
Rest is different than distraction—especially when we’re intentional about it. Rest isn’t the enemy of productivity, it’s a requirement for it. Regular breaks give your attention the time it needs to recharge and refocus. Controlling your attention—just like any skill—requires practice, patience, and pursuit. But the rewards are immense. A more intentional, fulfilling life awaits those who can harness the power of their attention. By controlling our attention, we make room for the moments, the people, and the passions that matter most. Controlling your attention may be the greatest skill of the 21st century. And that’s good news, because anyone can do it.

*Joshua Becker is an author, public speaker, and the founder and editor of Becoming Minimalist, where he inspires others to live more by owning less. Visit Becoming-Minimalist.com*

Taking regular breaks throughout the day will help freshen your mind and increase your productivity.



# The Epoch Times Offers Free Subscriptions for Students

**OUR STUDENTS** are on the front lines of the American Culture War. So it’s extremely important to keep them grounded with objective reporting. We counter other media’s brainwashing by giving them a better option: The Epoch Times for FREE.



PLEASE SHARE THIS INFORMATION WITH STUDENTS YOU KNOW.  
ReadEpoch.com/student

