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January/February 2021

## what's inside

### 6 Medical News

Vaccinations: Winning Faith, Trust and Credibility

### 10 Natural Options

Embracing Spirit, Ego, Body and Mind

### 17 Integrative Medicine

Creating New Habits - One Minute at a Time

### 20 Through the Generations

Parenting in a Pandemic: What My Mother Taught Me

### 22 Fitness

Keep Moving for Immunity

### 24 Fresh Cuisine

Healthy Comfort Foods: Soup, Porridge, Brownies and More!

### 26 Financial Health

The Gift of Estate Planning

Wishing you much  
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 The Desert Health<sup>®</sup> Team



## A fresh start

**H**APPY DAY! WE MADE IT. 2021 is upon us, and we all get a fresh, new start. It's time to set goals, ponder dreams and send forth our intentions for this brand-new year.

While we might like to erase much of last year, there are many things learned worth carrying forward.

We've gained a greater appreciation for all we have and we're reminded that our people are the most important, second only to our health.

We've learned the value of being kind human beings and the difference small acts of kindness can make. We've learned not to judge others because only they know what they are going through. In losing our ability to smile at those passing by, we came to understand the value of a smile. We've learned that none of us are invincible, and it's ok to ask for help. We need each other, and we are here for each other.

We've learned the value of slowing down, the joy and often patience that comes with learning new things. We've learned to ebb and flow with uncertain times; instability emphasizing the importance of managing stress.

We're reminded that all human life matters and that we are all created equal. Our world is small, and when faced with a common threat, we realize no matter our differences, we are all human beings.

We have come to value the happiness found in simple things and that small accomplishments can go a long way. We've been inspired by the unexpected and are more grateful than ever for those on the frontline.

We've come to understand that the greatest purpose in life is simply to live and to live happily, to honor the strength we have within and to use that strength to make staying well a top priority.

What goals are you going to set this year? Big or small, make sure they enliven your spirit, strengthen your well-being and calm your mind. Be a kind human and make each day count. Love your people, and remember, the most important thing you can do for them is to take care of yourself.

It's a brand-new year, and we all get a fresh, new start!

## A Huge Helping of HOPE

By Roger Moore



I don't know about you, but I'm looking forward to 2021 being a better year - because I choose to focus on self-care and to live in hope. Let me be clear: hope is not optimism or the belief that everything will turn out well, and hope doesn't mean denying our realities. Hope means facing them with a different attitude - one that promotes well-being rather than destroying it.

After 10 uncertain months of scrambled daily life, weariness and frustration can be just as dangerous as the virus itself. Stress is also our enemy. It's been well documented that stress lowers your immune system. The deeper your stress and the longer you indulge it, the less able your body is to fight off disease. It's there in the name: dis-ease. Fear is the epitome of stress, and hope is the antidote.

Sometimes we lose hope, and that's okay. It's a normal response to misery. But we can choose to actively create space for hope to dominate our lives.

As human rights activist Desmond Tutu said, "Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness." He doesn't deny the dark times we're in but encourages us to see beyond them to

any light - be it strong rays pushing down to the forest floor or tiny specks reflected on a hummingbird wing.

Nor is hope abandonment of personal responsibility. Simply hoping for something does not make it happen. Nor does turning your back on problems. Genuine hope is based on achievable, realistic expectations, and it requires action. Since hope is essential for our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health, let's welcome more of it into our lives.


The action I recommend is radical self-care, a collection of intentional actions for your total well-being. Just as planting a seed in your garden is an act of hope, self-care is a deliberate activity you can do every day to foster overall health and wellness.

The possibilities for self-care are limitless. Beyond the conventional advice to eat well, sleep well and exercise, here are some other ideas to stimulate your thinking.

#### For physical well-being

Do whatever makes you feel the best. Don't be a slave to what you think you ought to be doing.

*Continued on page 18*



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# DREAM BIG

Last January, I was celebrating a new start after a year of cancer treatments. 2019 had been rough, but I made it through with a renewed appreciation for life and a strong sense of fearlessness. Life is short, and I can do anything.

So, I decided to start riding horses again. I tried 10 years ago but was so full of fear I quit, convinced that I was too old to do the sport I loved. This time felt different, and I began training two to three days a week, setting the goal of competing in the fall. It had been over 20 years since I showed, and the goal was a lofty one.

Then 2020 started to unfold. Like many, I was challenged by numerous events that shook my confidence. Diagnosed with a brain tumor in mid-January, we lost my father in March. A worldwide pandemic was changing the way we lived our lives, and uncertainty was the only thing on which we could count. My one-year follow up to ensure the cancer was gone was deemed non-essential, and fear tried to work its way back. Then all events were canceled, and I felt my dream slipping away.

But I kept going. My time in the saddle became my solace. I was reminded of how much you live in the moment when you are doing a sport or hobby you love. Everything else disappears as you focus and thrive on the task at hand. Working towards a goal also creates a deep purpose; it's like a promise you make to yourself.



Rediscovering the champion within

Equestrian activities were allowed to continue, and I was grateful to have this outlet. I was also grateful for the partner assigned to me, a beautiful chestnut gelding named Tristan. We make a great team as he used to jump big fences but is now limited to smaller jumps due to an injury. My dream did not include large fences; completing an eight-jump course would suffice!

Fall approached, and I was ready. I signed up for the Desert Holiday Series, entering the same divisions I showed in as a kid: equitation (judged on me) and hunter (judged on the horse). These were child/adult classes, so I would be competing against all ages in nine different classes over three days.

The week of, we trailered over for a practice round. I couldn't believe it. For 12 years, I had attended shows at the Desert International Horse Park, only dreaming that I would be walking through the beautiful grounds on a horse one day. But as we started to warm-up, something happened. My heart started racing, and I couldn't catch my breath. For the first time in my life, I was having an anxiety attack. Fear overcame me and I couldn't do anything right. I was devastated by the thought that all my hard work might be sabotaged by my inability to actually enter the show ring.

I turned to my "confident me" and "fearless me" meditations and practiced breathing exercises to make it to Friday. With all the pieces in place - the braided mane, show coat, shiny boots and velveteen helmet - we entered our first class and walked away with second place. I was so proud I could have stopped there, but we had much more to accomplish.

I was most looking forward to the equitation flat class (walk, trot, canter) as I usually won this as a junior. When they called my name for the blue ribbon, I broke down crying. The little girl on her pony next to me softly said, "Congratulations, you did great!" as if she were the little girl inside of me.

We went on to win champion in the equitation division and reserve champion in the hunter. I succeeded in controlling my nerves and honoring my true spirit. It was the best feeling I have had in a very long time, and something everyone could use right now...

What is it that makes your spirit soar? This year, see if you can embrace it once again. Life is too short, and you are never too old, so dream big.

*Lauren*

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An Independent Publication

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## Finding Grace

By Jayne Robertson, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500

A while back, between stay-at-home orders, something happened that hadn't happened in several months. We paid an in-person visit to my mother. She has dementia and is living in a small care facility 15 minutes from where we live. She receives excellent care and has been kept safe during the pandemic, where she is one of the most vulnerable, and for that, we are extremely grateful.

We visited outside wearing masks and socially distancing from her, and as we were saying our farewells, she indicated that we were forgetting something...giving her a hug good-bye. My heart broke a bit as we looked at her and told her we weren't allowed to give her a hug at the moment. She offered a resigned shrug and said, "Okay." As we drove away, and for the next couple of hours, I had an underlying sense of agitation. It was a difficult visit in some ways, trying to navigate a conversation behind a mask with an 88-year-old person who relies more on body language than spoken words. The inability to rub her back and sit close by to share a recent slideshow felt disconnecting, and what I found myself needing afterward was to offer myself grace.

As I reflected upon my own need for grace, it expanded to not only my mother but to so many beings who have been greatly impacted around the world. One of the unspoken things we can turn to in challenging times is to soften; soften our reactions, our expectations, what we say, and how we act toward ourselves and others. I was reminded to hold myself gently, once again, without hardening my heart.

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One of the unspoken things we can turn to in challenging times is to soften; soften our reactions, our expectations, what we say, and how we act toward ourselves and others. I was reminded to hold myself gently, once again, without hardening my heart.

I realize I'm not the only one needing to find grace. People are fragile at the moment. It's no wonder with an on-going pandemic, interruption and re-organization of what we knew to be our "normal" lives. Add to this a political shift and uncertainty about the roll-out of vaccinating a nation and the world beyond, it's no wonder that people are feeling un-grounded and wobbly. It's

the perfect time to invite self-compassion in order to emerge on the other side of all of this with less suffering and more empathy and kindness.

I have a few suggestions in navigating your way into receiving more grace. The first is to have a

"news fast." Unplug from the breaking headlines and social media for a day or more. Other ideas are to get outside into nature and feel the elements - bare feet on the earth, wind in the hair, sun on the face. Stop and smell the roses; moon and star gaze; put your hands in the dirt. Offer kindness to others; they may need a dose of unexpected grace more than you could know.

And finally, let go of having to be any particular way right now. I'm trying to soften my connection to perfection. I hear myself saying, "It's okay for it not to be perfect. Let it go." And in that, I find what I need...a moment that feels like an unraveling that shifts into one of connection - that of myself to my own heart.

Jayne Robertson is owner and instructor at Desert Yoga Therapy. For more information, visit [www.desertyogatherapy.com](http://www.desertyogatherapy.com), call (760) 456.5160 or email [jayne@desertyogatherapy.com](mailto:jayne@desertyogatherapy.com).

**"One of the unspoken things we can turn to in challenging times is to soften."**

**- Jayne Robertson**

## Reducing the Stress of Loneliness

By Susan Murphy, PhD

How can there be a crisis of loneliness when there are more than 7 billion people in the world? Doesn't that seem counter-intuitive?

A few years ago, the UK created a Minister of Loneliness because loneliness in England was increasing at such an alarming rate. This crisis poses as grave a threat to global health as obesity, substance abuse and heavy smoking. When people live with little human contact, they are more likely to become ill, suffer cognitive decline and die prematurely. Experts refer to loneliness as "quiet devastation." Surprisingly, young Millennials aged 18-22 report being the loneliest population.



Small intentional steps can help combat feelings of loneliness which are on rise due to quarantine.

What can you do to reduce the stress of loneliness and increase your quality of life even when physically separated from loved ones?

### Remember that you are not alone in your loneliness

There can be solace in knowing that feeling lonely is very common. Everyone has felt lonely at some point. Although it may be hard for you to discuss, there is no shame in loneliness. Novelist Thomas Wolfe wrote, "Loneliness is and always has been the central and inevitable experience of every man."

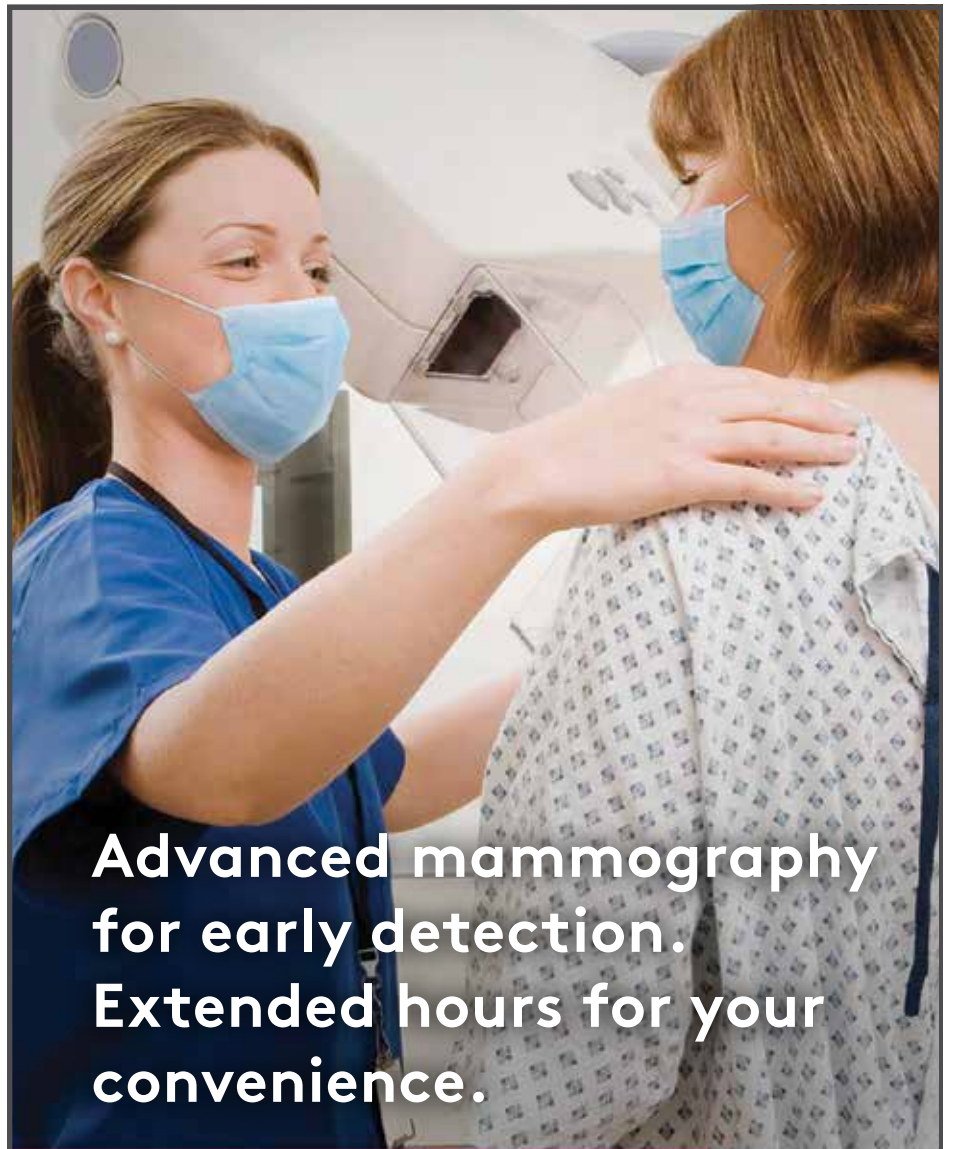
### Find ways to connect with others

Connecting with others can seem daunting when you already feel low. A lonely client finally mustered her strength and reached out to her friends, telling them honestly, "I'm feeling lonely. Want to meet for coffee?" Doing this felt like a difficult thing to do in her lonely state. However, the response Laura received by expressing her truth was so positive; she is now reaching out to others who may be lonely. Laura has reignited some old connections, deepened relationships with her family and befriended new people.

### Help others and allow others to help you

Humans are social beings and have at their core the desire to connect. By helping others in meaningful ways, you are reminded of your values and purpose. The adage "it's better to give than to receive" fits here. Focusing on someone else who needs help makes you feel less alone and more meaningful. Your loneliness can disappear as you connect with and serve others, whether sending a greeting card, shopping for a sick neighbor, volunteering at a soup kitchen, calling a lonely widow or smiling at a stranger.

Continued on page 8



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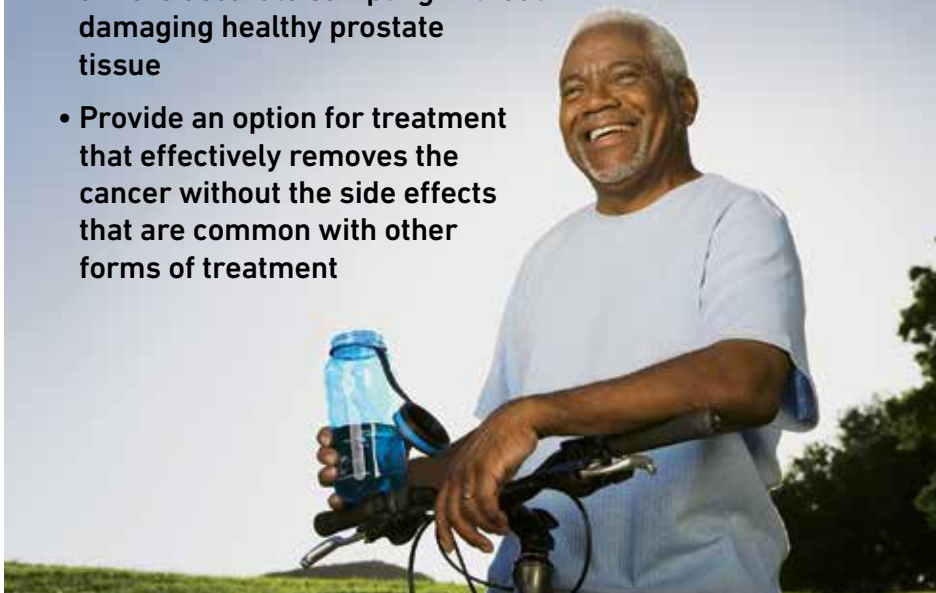
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## A Nurse's Plea

By Robin Cavaliere, MSN, RN

The American Nurses Association deemed 2020 "The Year of the Nurse," and as the global pandemic continues, nurses and other medical responders continue to be at the forefront of this crisis.

As a nurse working on the COVID floor at a local Coachella Valley hospital, my colleagues and I experience firsthand the drastic effects COVID can have on individuals and their loved ones. As nurses, we know the importance of following safe protocol. We no longer simply go to work in our scrubs; we suit up in full PPE to ensure the safety of not only our patients, but of ourselves, our neighbors and our loved ones.

When our first COVID patient came into the hospital in March, it seemed surreal. Since then, there has been a global adjustment in how we go about our day-to-day lives. As nurses, we now have to watch our patients struggle to fight the virus without the company of their family. We worry about each of them and keep them in our thoughts - even as we leave the hospital to go home to our own families. It is always hard to lose a patient, but as my colleagues and I have had to stand by as the only company in a patient's room when they pass, safety, protocol and isolation take on a new meaning for us.

I will never forget our first patient that passed alone in a room with just her nurse as she took her last breaths from COVID-19. The tears and overwhelming heartbreak seen on the nurses' and doctors' faces will be etched in my mind forever.

We know how to keep ourselves safe from the transmission of COVID; we wear our masks, wash our hands and maintain social distance. We want to keep you, our patients and our loved ones safe.

So, please join us in keeping yourself and your loved ones safe, watching out for your neighbors and protecting our community by wearing a mask. We are all in this together, and this simple act speaks volumes in the fight to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Contributor Robin Cavaliere, MSN, RN has worked locally as a medical/surgical nurse for 13 years.



The simple act of wearing a mask speaks volumes.

## The Rise in Dementia Disease

### Reducing risks through exercise

By Christopher Hancock, MD

Dementia, one of the most debilitating diseases of humankind, is increasing in global prevalence with over 50 million patients.<sup>1,3</sup> Dementia is a general term that describes the loss of cognitive ability, social functioning, and memory. There are many disease states that cause dementia representing divergent pathophysiologies, which are complex, multifactorial, ever-changing and not fully characterized.

Alzheimer's is the most common neurodegenerative disease representing 60-70 percent of all dementia cases with an approximate 5.5 million patient prevalence rate in the U.S. and greater than 43 million patients globally.<sup>1,3</sup> One in 10 seniors in the U.S. older than 65 have Alzheimer's disease,<sup>1,3</sup> yet interestingly, only one in four patients with Alzheimer's disease have been diagnosed.<sup>1,3</sup>

The percentages of the U.S. population with Alzheimer's by age are 85+ years, 38 percent; 75-84 years, 44 percent; 65-74 years, 15 percent; <65 years, 4 percent.<sup>1,3</sup> Vascular dementia and Lewy body dementia are the next two most prevalent neurodegenerative diseases representing approximately 15-25 percent of dementia cases each.<sup>1,3</sup> Parkinson's disease-related dementia and frontotemporal dementia represent the next two most common neurodegenerative disease states, and each maintains single-digit prevalence rates.<sup>1,3</sup>

Sadly, Alzheimer's disease is the sixth leading cause of death in the U.S., killing more people than breast cancer and prostate cancer combined<sup>1,3</sup> with cases growing; an 89 percent increase in the Alzheimer's death rate was documented between 2004 and 2017.<sup>1,3</sup>

The costs to individuals and our economy are significant. The total lifetime cost of care for a patient with dementia in the U.S. in 2018 was estimated greater than \$250,000.<sup>1,3</sup> It is estimated that Alzheimer's disease and other dementias cost the U.S. \$305 billion annually, which is projected to increase to \$1.1 trillion by 2050.<sup>1,3</sup>

Though there are many promising ongoing dementia clinical trials using immunotherapy, to date, there have been no FDA-approved disease-modifying agents that have significantly altered the trajectory of decline due to the onslaught of neurodegenerative disease.<sup>4</sup>

However, there is something we can all do to help reduce dementia risk and lessen cognitive impairment. Indeed, this is something that is supported by a growing compendium of medical research. It's something we all know we should be doing anyway; that's right, it's getting regular exercise. Specifically, more and more medical research has shown that aerobic exercise can reduce dementia risk and cognitive impairment.<sup>4</sup>

Recently, there have been meta-analyses of prospective clinical trials that have demonstrated a significant reduction in the risk of dementia in those who maintain routine exercise regimens in midlife.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, patients already diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment or even dementia tested for higher cognitive scores after maintaining a regular exercise schedule for six-12 months when compared to inactive controls.<sup>4</sup>

Interestingly, several other prospective clinical trials demonstrated increased cognitive ability in healthy patients who regularly exercised when compared to sedentary individuals.<sup>4</sup> Randomized control clinical trials have documented statistically significant increases in brain volume and neural connectivity using advanced radiology imaging studies such as MRI brain volumetry analysis.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, medical literature has shown regular exercise helps patients with Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis.<sup>5,6</sup>

In summary, the medical literature supports the use of exercise in reducing dementia risk, growing brain volume, increasing neural connectivity, and elevating cognitive ability in all people, including healthy patients, those with mild cognitive impairment, and even in patients with clinical dementia. Regular exercise should therefore be on all of our routine to-do lists.

Dr. Hancock is a board certified neuroradiologist with Halo Diagnostics and can be reached at (760) 694.9559. He is also a member of Desert Doctors. For more information, visit [www.HaloDX.com](http://www.HaloDX.com) or [www.DesertDoctors.org](http://www.DesertDoctors.org).

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### Navigating Life

I've been having a hard time finding the right words for this column because, like everyone else, I am struggling to understand life right now.

Everything in my struggle tells me to tell you, "Keep holding on to faith. Faith over fear. Live in love. Watch your words because you can unknowingly hurt someone. Life is precious, people, no matter whose life it is. In the end, all we have is each other. Life is a Gift."

I recently had a lot of blood taken to see if my body is still behaving itself; to see if my white and red blood cells are still where they need to be; to see if my kidneys and liver are still functioning as they should. You are probably thinking...it's just that time again when one goes to the doctor to get a checkup, right? No big deal. Wrong. Because right now, no one could come with me to hold my hand, to help me through my anxiety that, if my blood tests came back skewed, it might be cancer again. Life-after-cancer fear, anxiety and trauma are very real.



For those who might be struggling, you are not alone.

I want the world to go back to normal so badly. Especially my world before my cancer. Instead, I worry, "Why can't I lose this stupid weight? Could it be cancer? Why do I have constant breast, rib and leg pain?" It is always the thought, 'could it be cancer?' Why do I get so exhausted? Could it be cancer? I try so hard to overcome thinking 'could it be cancer' that sometimes I exhaust myself. Add in a world pandemic, and it doesn't help with the anxiety.

I try to get out of my own way as I sit with these feelings and emotions, trying to calm the storm inside of me. But I feel like I have to be honest that, even as a yogi, even as a person who seems to have everything together, even I need a little help from time to time. I recently decided to take medication for my anxiety. I am fine most of the time, but with the recent fear of the virus and my scans, I decided that I needed something to help take off the edge a little. I knew I could no longer handle things on my own. I also know this will not be forever, but for now, it has really made a big difference. I also continue talking to my therapist, and it helps.

For those of you who might be struggling too, you are not alone. You do not need to be ashamed. Not everyone will understand that for cancer survivors, cancer never leaves our minds. Not everyone will have compassion. I am fighting my fears. I am trying my best to let go of what I cannot control and focus on the things I can - just as I did when going through my cancer. I can control what I eat, how I exercise, and when I need to ask for help. I am trying to stay fit in mind, body and soul. I am starting a search

*Continued on page 6*



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## Vaccinations: Winning Faith, Trust and Credibility

*A look at the history of global pandemics*

By Shubha Kerkar MD, FIDSA, FACP, AAHIVS

The possibility of control and eradication of the current global pandemic of coronavirus (SARS-CoV2) is now a distinct reality because of two promising vaccines that have shown safe and effective performance in preventing 95 percent of infections in preliminary data of phase 3 trials.

### How will these vaccines work?

Vaccination prepares the human immune system to combat specific infections. In addition to the very basics, such as barriers to exposure with facial covering/masking, physical distancing and handwashing, vaccination is a powerful tool in the armamentarium of defenses against COVID-19.

Both the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines are based on a novel platform using "messenger" RNA to create vaccines (mRNA). They do not use the live virus or even any particle of a virus. They do not affect or interact with our DNA in any way. mRNA never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA (genetic material) is kept.

The cell breaks down and gets rid of the mRNA soon after it is finished using the instructions.

COVID-19 mRNA vaccines give our cells instructions to make a harmless piece of "spike protein," which is found on the surface of the virus that causes COVID-19. COVID-19 mRNA vaccines are given in the upper arm muscle. Once the instructions (mRNA) are inside the muscle cells, the cells use them to make the protein piece. In a placebo-controlled clinical trial where 30,000 to 40,000 volunteers in vaccinated vs. unvaccinated groups, there was a total of 100 infections, five in the vaccinated group and 95 in the placebo group. All volunteers who received the vaccine experienced no serious side effects, thus proving safety and efficacy.

### What does history tell us?

In the real world, however, vaccines are only as good as the ability to be accepted by everyone. Winning faith and trust in vaccines depends on the credibility of the doctors, scientists and experts, and their ability to educate and help calm fears. Once accepted, then the details of how to administer to the entire world population are practical challenges.



Vaccines are only as good as the ability to be accepted by everyone.

a milkmaid who had cowpox to James Phipps and established that he developed protection from smallpox.

In 2020, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the eradication of smallpox, a deadly disease causing global pandemic for thousands of years. Worldwide vaccination was carried out in an era of no computers, no internet, no easy overseas transportation - all on foot - and simply targeting the world's population one person at a time. Of course, now, the challenges are different.

### What are we seeing today?

Today, as I look around, not everyone is willing to accept vaccination as a silver lining in the dark cloud of this global pandemic. Perhaps there is no clarity, only doubt and mistrust, due to misinformation filtering through the current geopolitical scene, civil conflicts and social media, thus creating confusing layers.

I remind all to look back in history: When Dr. Jonas Salk discovered the polio vaccine, 70 million mothers stood in line to get their children vaccinated - even before the benefits were confirmed. Infantile paralysis was a devastating condition seen every year prior to that. Thanks to the polio vaccine - and the trust in that vaccine - today, it is part of childhood vaccination, providing 100 percent effectiveness in preventing polio.

It is not just us here in the valley, our state or county. We must focus and be part of collaborative international cooperation and the contribution of global intelligence and unite in celebrating this great discovery. We must educate ourselves, gather all the courage and will to educate and counsel each other, and slowly win faith and trust in the possibility of prevailing in this battle against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Kerkar is director of infectious diseases at Desert AIDS Project and Desert Regional Medical Center and an infectious disease consultant at Eisenhower Health. For more information on vaccinations, visit [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines).

### Navigating Life

Continued from page 5

for the right surgeon to help remove my implant then reconstruct both breasts to look normal again.

I am doing everything I possibly can in a hard world right now, and that is all I can control. It is a lot to handle, even without a pandemic.

So, remember, as you read this, think of others; be a kind human. Try to remember that you do not know what goes on in someone else's life unless you live with them. Have compassion and live for today because a lot of people will never see tomorrow.

Shay Moraga is a stage 3 triple-negative breast cancer thriver. She is the founder of Shay's Warriors - Life After Cancer and a yoga instructor for those who have gone through cancer. Contact her at [Shay@shayswarriors.org](mailto:Shay@shayswarriors.org) or find her on Facebook or Instagram.



# Elbowing Out Epicondylitis

Treating tennis and golfer's elbow

By Eric Sickinger, DO and Thalie Timsit, BS

If you like to play golf, the Coachella Valley is the right place for you. With over 100 golf courses in the Coachella Valley area, it is considered a golfer's paradise. Tennis also happens to be a popular sport in the region.

What do players of these two sports have in common? They are both susceptible to similar injuries: epicondylitis, or inflammation of the tendon that attaches to the bony part of the sides of the elbow. While golfers experience pain on the inner elbow (medial epicondyle), tennis players experience it on the outer elbow (lateral epicondyle). Thus, the medical term for golfer's elbow is medial epicondylitis, and for tennis elbow is lateral epicondylitis. While the specific motions that cause the injuries are different, the underlying causes, treatments and prevention are fairly similar.

### Causes

Golfer's and tennis elbow both occur from overuse. The muscles used to bend your wrist and fingers, as done in golf, run along the underpart of your forearm and attach to the medial epicondyle. Alternatively, the muscles that straighten and raise your wrist, as required in tennis, are on the top of the forearm and attach to the lateral epicondyle. The repetitive movements in both of these sports cause the tendons to pull on the point of attachment, which is either the lateral or medial epicondyle. This

repetition leads to inflammation and micro-tearing of the tendons, which ultimately causes painful sensations.

These conditions are certainly not limited to golf or tennis players or even athletes. They can also arise from physically demanding hobbies or occupations like carpentry or typing. These activities commonly involve gripping or bending of the fingers and wrists. Other activities that cause tennis elbow include other racket sports, carpentry and painting which involve frequent straightening of the wrist.

### Prevention

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to help prevent these injuries. Always try to do a dynamic warm-up before you perform an activity. Long-term strengthening of the shoulder and upper arm muscles can also help avoid excess strain on the elbow. It is also imperative to ensure that you have the right form when performing your exercise or work. Ask a teammate to check your golf swing or a coworker to observe if your posture is correct at work.

In addition to the proper form, the correct equipment is key in preventing injury.

*Continued on page 20*



Golfer's and tennis elbow occur from overuse and are not exclusive to athletes.

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# Coffee, Tea or Toothbrush?

## How caffeine affects oral health

By Nick Baumann, DDS

Americans drink a lot of caffeinated beverages. Every day, the majority of us consume at least one drink that contains caffeine. While many people need that kick to get them through the day, there are effects on oral health I'd like to present for consideration.

Coffee is the second most popular caffeinated beverage in our country, following soda. Many people drink at least one cup a day. For the sake of oral health, we will lump it in with another common hot beverage many Americans drink, and that is tea. Both drinks are best consumed black, without added sugar or cream. However, this is not how most people take them. From an oral health perspective, adding sugar, whether in creamer or directly added, can create a much higher risk for cavities.

It's important to know if you add any sugar to your drink, you should finish it quickly rather than savor it over a longer period. The action of slowly sipping on beverages with sugar is often more damaging to teeth than larger amounts of sugar in a short duration. If a little sweetness is needed, consider artificial sweeteners as they do not contribute to tooth decay. Not all of them are created equal, though, and it's better to look at ones that come from natural sources like monk fruit and xylitol. Xylitol has even been shown in studies to help protect against cavities.

Another concern with coffee and tea is their ability to cause teeth staining. Between the two, tea actually tends to cause more staining even though it is a lighter color. One strategy to help limit the staining is to use a straw. By bypassing the front teeth, we tend to see less staining. Also, drinking plenty of water and rinsing your mouth after your morning cup can help cut down on staining by not allowing the coffee or tea to remain on your teeth longer than necessary.

In the past few decades, energy drinks have exploded in popularity in the U.S., especially with younger people. While these drinks may provide the caffeine kick of multiple cups of coffee, they also come with incredible amounts of sugar - usually multiple times more than most other drinks, including even the sugar-laden sodas. They also tend to be enjoyed over a longer period than coffee and tea, further increasing their potential for tooth decay. If someone is a frequent consumer of energy drinks, they need to be aware of the same risks as coffee and tea with sugar - but amplified.

One of the side effects noted with caffeine is increased rates of dry mouth. As I have discussed in previous articles, our saliva is essential to protect against tooth decay. The higher the incidence of dry mouth, the more likely tooth decay may occur. Drinking water along with our caffeine drink can help counteract this.

Some of you may even be drinking a caffeinated beverage as you read this. Given caffeine's popularity, many of us won't be giving up these drinks any time soon. So, it's important to be aware of the risks they present to our oral health, and what we can do to limit their effects and keep us out of the dentist's chair.

Dr. Nick is with Palm Desert Smiles and can be reached at (760) 568.3602.

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NICHOLAS S. BAUMANN, DDS

### Reducing the Stress of Loneliness

Continued from page 3

#### Embrace your solitude and rekindle your relationship with yourself

When you make time to understand yourself, what you desire in life and your values, you are more likely to make better choices about whom you want to be around. While alone, turn on some music, light a scented candle and think of the qualities you like about yourself and that you appreciate in others. This solitude may be the time to start journaling, meditating, praying, playing a musical instrument, or learning a new language.

#### Practice self-care

Tips from NASA for astronauts to ward off loneliness include a strict schedule for daily grooming, aerobic exercising, making healthy meals be shared experiences with other crew members and a sleeping routine that ensures adequate rest. Fresh flowers and green plants can be nourishing. Many people report that adopting a pet gets them up and moving every day.

#### Form an attitude of gratitude

Feeling lonely can deplete your energy and make the world around you seem increasingly dismal and empty. Try shifting your view to an attitude of gratitude. It is amazing to consider the discoveries, systems and inventions made during the past 30 years. You can now connect with people anywhere in the world instantaneously. Soldiers away from home can Facetime, play Internet games and even help their kids with homework. There are same-day home deliveries by stores, pharmacies and restaurants 24/7. The recent developments in technology make it easy to rekindle relationships and develop new ones. This is worth appreciating.

#### Don't wallow in your loneliness

Set a statute of limitations on feeling like a victim of loneliness. A friend once shared that she was so lonely she was going to watch the saddest movie she could find and cry for two hours. She was surprised when rather than continue to give her the sympathy I had been providing for a few days, I said, "Why not find the funniest movie you can and laugh for two hours?"

#### Keep reminders of loved ones close at hand

Surround yourself with pictures and sentimental items that remind you of loved ones and happy times. Astronauts, soldiers, and others who travel for long distances find that personal keepsakes can ease the pain of loneliness and often bring smiles to their faces and comfort to their hearts.

#### Limit your time on social media

Many studies show that social media can lead to feelings of depression, inadequacy and isolation as people compare their lives with everyone else's carefully orchestrated versions. FOMO, or fear of missing out, is a new phenomenon of social media where people sense that something great is happening and they are not included. Then, they feel neglected and abandoned. Oxford University found that of 150 Facebook friends, you can depend on only four, on average, if you need a real friend.

You deserve to feel connected, purposeful and valued. Can you think of a lonely person right now who would enjoy a call from you? Why not make that call? And if you feel your loneliness is turning into depression, please seek professional help.

Dr. Susan Murphy of Rancho Mirage is a best-selling author, business consultant and speaker specializing in relationships, conflict, leadership and goal-achievement. She is co-author of *LifeQ* and *In The Company of Women* and can be reached at [Susan@DrSusanMurphy.com](mailto:Susan@DrSusanMurphy.com). Murphy's article originally appeared on *Forbes.com*.





### Mindfully Resilient Program Helps Students Heal

With COVID-19 forcing schools into distance learning and the tremendous amount of additional social and emotional trauma in today's world, teachers Jason Tate, FMCHC of Indio High School and Jodie Capper, CTE from Coachella Valley High School created an online program that helps educators help their students to cope and heal.

The program, called Mindfully Resilient, teaches students practical techniques for self-care and mutual support. It covers the science and skills of meditation, guided imagery, biofeedback, and self-expression in words, drawings and movement in the classroom. The program was presented as part of OneFuture Coachella Valley's Mental Health Matters webinar series originally introduced in May 2020. The program is free and available online, and both educators and students are encouraged to access them.

"Educators not only have the opportunity to teach but to support and build communities centered around compassion, healing, forgiveness and gratitude," says Tate, who is also the creator and founder of The Health and Nutritional Sciences (HANS) Academy at Indio High. That program was developed to teach students practical life skills based on the foundations of movement, nutrition and mindfulness.

Prior to developing these programs, Tate took part in hundreds of hours of mind-body medicine through the Center for Mind-Body Medicine (CMBM) as part of the professional development allotted teachers to learn valuable skills and techniques to bring up-to-date relevant and powerful lessons into the classroom. He also received his certification as a functional medicine health coach through the Institute for Functional Medicine.

The CMBM, whose mission statement is "teaching thousands to heal millions," played an integral role in the development and enrichment of the HANS Academy, says Tate. "The organization teaches community leaders and healers the skills and techniques to provide relief and support for those suffering from social and emotional trauma. As educators, we can play an important role in teaching our students life skills such as stress management and healthy nutrition in addition to classwork, and those lessons are critical at this time."

The teachings he learned from CMBM provided Tate with the opportunity to build bridges and foundations of hope and resilience in his HANS Academy Zoom classrooms and led to the development of the Mindfully Resilient webinar.

Are the lessons effective?

"I know these self-care practices positively impact the lives of my students daily," Tate confirms. "At the end of many classes, students often protest, saying, 'Nooooooo! Can we please stay?'"

The Mindfully Resilient program is free and available online at <https://portal.onefuturecv.org/mindfully-resilient>. Jason Tate, certified functional medicine health coach and biology educator can be reached at [jason.tate@desertsands.us](mailto:jason.tate@desertsands.us). For more information on OneFuture Coachella Valley, visit [www.onefuturecv.org](http://www.onefuturecv.org).



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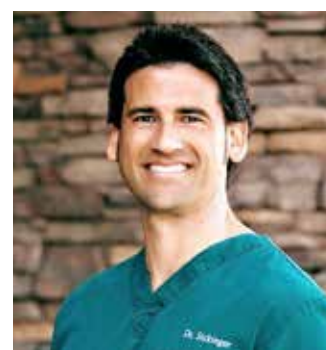


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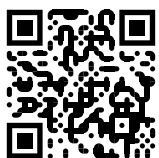
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## The Human Being: A Multi-Parted Being Embracing spirit, ego, body and mind

By Jens Christian Springmann

The fact that humans are multi-parted beings is nothing new or trendy; it is quite old, and yet, our disregard causes so much pain and disappointment.

There is a positive movement in the western world towards treating illness in a more holistic way. But are we ready to accept and act upon the fact that we all carry a "higher spirit," our "true self," inside of us? That within each of our bodies exists a mind, ego and spirit? Are we really convinced that this is not just esoteric chitchat, but that this higher spirit within is our true identity?

Embracing this fact is not only about reading, hearing or blindly believing the words; it is about taking steps towards finding the truth in these words for ourselves. Then, with our readiness to develop higher consciousness, our life instantly has a more significant meaning. It can be a lifelong process as many have described, including American psychologist Abraham Maslow, who, in his later years, adjusted his well-known hierarchy of needs placing "finding knowledge of holistic and inclusive levels of human consciousness" at the top.

Often, we are ready to step forward as we get saturated with experiences and material values or undergo sickness, pain, or disappointment. These places of "dis-ease" can be the best motivators to gain readiness in making progress, to leave our comfort zone in search of that holy grail, that heart of gold, that unconditional never-ceasing source of inner harmony and peace - nowhere else to be found but inside of us.

Now, what can I do by myself? As an individual, I can start right away with freeing my mind, slowing down, and practicing holding myself in stillness, calmly observing and distinguishing my thoughts and their source.

Most of our thoughts which contain fear, peculiarity or any other kind of separation, arise from our ego. Sooner or later they cause unpleasant situations as we place our belief in them. We must learn how to detect and deny fear by simply not letting it enter our minds. But, to dissolve it properly, we should also face the fear that is often present.

We have become so filled with worries that they contradict our true beauty and perfection, so now the truth has to await our recognition. That truth is harmony, warmth, safety, unconditional love and inner peace, which we all somehow have experienced before. True thoughts always contain compassion and affection, and true feelings always arise from our higher spirit located in the area of our heart or stomach, which keeps us connected with that glorious and universal power.

With our mind, we have the right of volition to choose, experience and gain knowledge in whatever we want to believe. This process all takes place within our individual bodies, and yet somehow, we are all connected as one.

At the end of the day, it is our ongoing humble strive to gain clarity and purity through self-awareness and the conscious communion through our higher spirit with something greater that lets us find deep rest and true satisfaction.

Jens ("Yenz") Christian Springmann is the founder of Satisfied Being - Meditation & Mindfulness studio in Rancho Mirage and can be reached at (760) 636.0557. For more information visit [www.Satisfied-Being.com](http://www.Satisfied-Being.com).

## Preventing Illness While Traveling

By Jessica Needle, ND

With the coronavirus pandemic continuing unabated, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises people to postpone travel and stay home to protect themselves and others against COVID-19. If it is impossible to avoid travel, here are some suggestions regarding supplements that increase immunity and can be used to help prevent illness.

**Melatonin is not just good for sleep.** Most people know melatonin as the hormone that regulates the sleep-wake cycle and often take it when traveling to help synchronize their body clocks to a new time zone. Besides helping you fall asleep, melatonin is protective against lung injury occurring in acute respiratory distress syndrome and pneumonia, and transforms life-threatening illnesses into milder ones.<sup>1</sup> Take 15 mg of time-release melatonin before bed.

**N-acetyl cysteine helps lung function.** N-acetyl cysteine (NAC) is an amino acid that helps the body make nitric oxide, an antioxidant gas that stops cellular damage and inhibits viral replication. The ratio of nitric oxide to reactive oxygen species (free radicals) is crucial for proper cardiovascular function. NAC may directly inhibit SARS-CoV-2,<sup>2</sup> the virus that causes COVID-19, while also breaking up mucus in the lungs. Take 500 mg of NAC twice per day.

**The power of beet powder.** Sold at health food stores, beet powder will increase your blood level of nitric oxide.

**Vitamin D increases immunity.** Low levels of vitamin D are common during winter and are correlated with susceptibility to influenza and coronaviruses. Supplementing vitamin D increases immunity, reduces lung damage, and decreases mortality in resuscitation patients. It is safe to take oral vitamin D at doses up to 10,000 IU per day for short periods, particularly in older adults, the population that is most affected by low vitamin D.<sup>3</sup>

**Vitamin C boosts health and shortens illness.** Vitamin C has long been used to prevent viral infection. It preserves the epithelial lining of the lungs, where SARS-CoV-2 binds to the angiotensin-converting enzyme and enters the cell. Vitamin C concentrations drop markedly in seriously ill patients. Try taking a 1,000 mg tablet 3-4 times per day but lower your dose if you experience diarrhea. If you become ill, higher doses of vitamin C can be administered intravenously to shorten ICU stays.<sup>4</sup>

**Geranium helps lower blood pressure.** Geranium and lemon essential oils inhibit the activity of the angiotensin-converting enzyme,<sup>5</sup> so you can dilute the oil and spray it on your mask for a good smelling adjunct to your prevention strategies.

Dr. Jessica Needle is a licensed naturopathic doctor with Optimal Health Center in Palm Desert and can be reached at (760) 568.2598.

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Supplements can give your immune system a boost if you plan to travel at this time.



## Back to the Basics for a Fresh Start

By Sonja Fung, ND

This past year, we have collectively experienced profound physical, mental and emotional stressors that have pushed us all to the limits and disrupted our self-care routines. We fall back on our “comfort foods” and what’s easy. We tend to overindulge with sugar, carbs and alcohol, and our bodies feel the impact of the resulting added stress and inflammation. This vicious cycle continues as it pushes all the feel-good buttons in our brain and gut and makes it that much more addictive and harder to quit.

When the world around us seems out of control, it is time to get our house in order, starting with ourselves.

One of the main goals I have for patients this year is to focus on self-care basics. Many of my patients have serious, complicated issues. When treating complicated cases, the first thing I do is start with naturopathic “BTGs” or basic treatment guidelines: nutrition, movement, sleep, mindfulness and digestion detox. These are the foundations of daily health and wellness that will help reset and restore from the inside out. It doesn’t have to be complicated, but it does have to be consistent!

Nutrition is the primary focus of the BTGs. Starting the year off with a nutrition reboot can be a simple way of resetting your digestion and detox. Effective cleansing programs can help with weight loss, increased energy, reduced inflammation, normalized digestive function, improved sleep and reduced joint pain. Coupled with daily exercise or movement, a structured detoxifying program can help many people

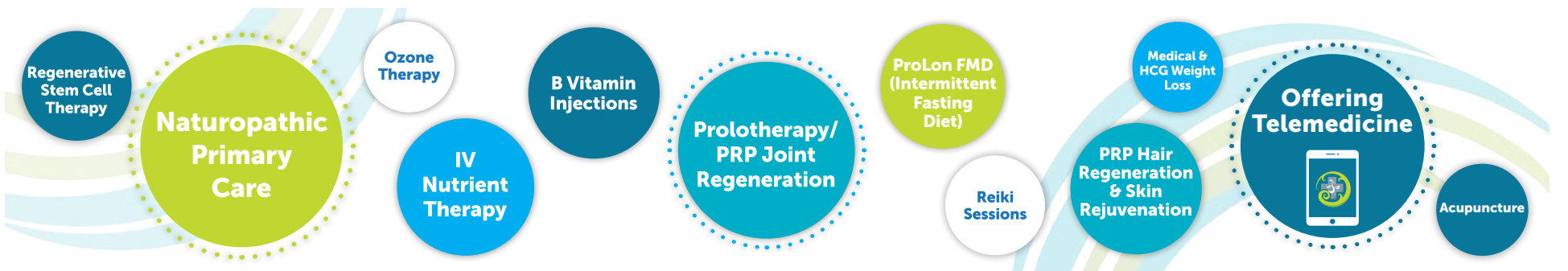
identify and eliminate specific chemicals and foods that cause inflammation and immune imbalances in their body and get back on track with their health.

I just finished a five-day ProLon fasting group protocol to kickstart digestive detox and quickly reduce excess inflammation from my system accumulated from this year and dropped four pounds in fat and inflammatory water weight. Often, people need a longer time to reset their system for lasting change, but that’s a good start. It takes 21 days to form a habit, which is the recommended length for a detoxifying cleanse to reset your taste buds, get rid of sugar cravings, and get on a healthy eating plan you can follow throughout the year.

You can complete a five- or 21-day program on your own at home or by joining a virtual group. Virtual group programs have the advantage of accountability and the support of others throughout all stages. Studies have shown that people who participate in a group are much more likely to successfully follow an entire protocol and report better results.

Getting back to the basics. Putting in the time now while you’re motivated at the start of a new year will serve you best to achieve a sustainable healthy lifestyle in the long run. If you have any health issues, you should be screened before starting any program to determine if it is safe for your body.

Dr. Sonja Fung is a primary care naturopathic doctor with a focus on integrative cancer care and PRP regenerative joint injections at Live Well Clinic in La Quinta which also offers a ProLon fasting group starting January 4, and a 21-day Nutrition Reboot group program starting January 14. For more information, call (760) 771.5970 or visit [www.livewellclinic.org](http://www.livewellclinic.org).



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## Setting Screen Time Parameters

By Scout Lennon, FMCHC

COVID-19 has forced us all to adjust to a new normal. Classes, meetings and happy hours are just a few of the former face-to-face interactions that are now done virtually - substantially increasing screen time. Initially, there was more optimism toward it. People were no longer burdened by their commutes, and their go-to pair of sweats were now acceptable to wear to the “office.”

But now, the Zoom fatigue is real, and people are craving human connection more than ever. Unfortunately, with the amount of time spent in front of the screen soaring, our health is at risk.

Research shows the amount of time spent on phones, computers and other devices directly correlates with increased levels of anxiety and depression, poor sleep quality and physical health issues such as headaches, eye strain and obesity.<sup>1-5</sup>

As a health coach, I see numerous clients struggling with these obstacles because all of their interactions revolve around their devices, leading to challenges when it comes to achieving a work-life balance. So, I decided to share a few tips to help you reduce screen time and improve wellness.

**Set boundaries.** How much time are you spending on your devices? Monitor screen time by taking advantage of device settings: utilize the ‘Do Not Disturb’ option, turn off app notifications and set time-constraints. A results-oriented goal is to dedicate a specific amount or scheduled time to avoid screens.

**Separate your personal and work life.** Are you answering work emails after 5 or 6 in the evening? Organize apps and designate work to a specific device and personal matters to another. This plan avoids temptation and eliminates distractions. Another option is to create a ritual that represents “work is over.” This can be as simple as closing your laptop or

writing tomorrow’s to-do list, maybe at a designated time each day.

**Create time for activities and hobbies.** With more time at home, now is an opportunity to get outside and learn something new like gardening or resume an old hobby lost over time. Hobbies activate pleasure and a sense of accomplishment, improving moods and preventing depression.

**Practice time management skills.** Are you procrastinating during the day and studying or working late into the night? Research shows individuals are the most focused in the morning, so commit to tackling the most important tasks (MIT) when most alert.<sup>6</sup>

**Change the alarm clock.** Ah, the convenience of using phones to wake up. It is the first and last thing many people look at every day, but having a phone in arm’s reach may increase anxiety. Buy a traditional alarm clock and charge the phone further away from your nightstand or another room. Additionally, allowing morning light in is a more natural way to wake up and start the day and provides many natural health benefits.

Devote time to reflect on changes you would like to adopt in the New Year. It could be creating a better routine, increasing your productivity or getting back in shape. By decreasing time on devices and reconnecting with ourselves, realizing what is truly important becomes possible.

Scout Lennon is a functional medicine certified health coach. She works with clients to help them set and achieve sustainable health and wellness goals and can be reached at (760) 808.2589 or visit [www.ScoutWellnessLA.com](http://www.ScoutWellnessLA.com).

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## Manual Lymphatic Drainage Therapy

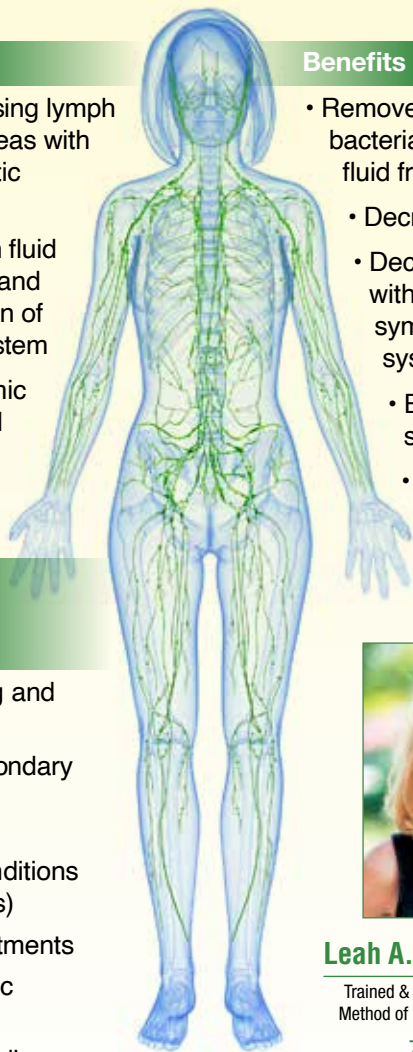
Our lymphatic system is key to sustaining homeostasis throughout our bodies. It works silently and consistently to maintain fluid balance while serving as a main pathway for eliminating toxins via our lymph nodes. The strokes applied in MLD stimulate the movement of lymphatic fluids to assist in cleansing our bodies.

### How MLD Works

- Assists in increasing lymph drainage from areas with impaired lymphatic function
- Eliminates lymph fluid from extremities and aids in contraction of the lymphatic system
- Increases systemic effect on affected areas and local regions

### Benefits of MLD

- Removes toxins, wastes, bacteria, proteins, and fluid from body tissues
- Decreases pain
- Decreases stress with relaxation of sympathetic nervous system
- Enhances immune support
- Faster healing from trauma, surgeries, and injuries



### MLD Improves Many Conditions Including:

- Relieves swelling and skin tightness
- Primary and secondary Lymphedema
- Non-infected inflammatory conditions (sprains & strains)
- Post-cancer treatments
- Pre/post-cosmetic procedures
- Pre/post-orthopedic procedures



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## Maintaining a Healthy Lymphatic System

### Simple steps to support immunity

By Leah Wiltgen, LMT, CDT

The body is an amazing and complex machine. It is comprised of several systems that all have to run in sync to operate at peak capacity. It is something we don't give much thought or credit to unless there is a malfunction or breakdown that causes pain or incapacitates us in some manner.

The lymphatic system is an unsung hero in our daily bodily function and an essential part of our immune system. It is our first responder to infection and is the primary reservoir of white blood cells. The lymphatic system works silently and consistently to maintain fluid balance while serving as the main pathway for eliminating toxins via our lymph nodes.

A compromised lymphatic system can result in chronic diseases and increased pain and swelling, which can negatively affect our quality of life and limit daily activity. When the congestion of lymph occurs, it can impair healthy circulation and nerve conduction. Lack of movement, surgeries, blockages, or damages to the lymph vessels and or nodes themselves can cause an increase in swelling referred to as lymphedema.

#### Signals that our lymphatic system is in distress include:

- swelling in the fingers or toes
- cold hands and feet
- brain fog
- depression
- bloating and digestive issues
- weakened immune system/increased colds and flu
- enlarged lymph nodes
- allergies
- unexplained injury and illnesses, to name just a few

#### Simple steps to help get the lymph fluid flowing again include:

- increase exercise and water intake
- avoid sitting or standing for long periods
- eat a cleaner diet incorporating raw foods like beets, cherries, cranberries, and pomegranates
- wear loose-fitting garments so as not to impinge the skin
- simply breathe deeply...and laugh more!

Conversely, reducing the intake of toxins like nicotine, alcohol, caffeine and prescription and or recreational drugs will reduce the strain on the lymphatic system overall.

Lymphatic enhancement therapies can also help give a push to our lymph fluid movement. Manual lymphatic drainage (MLD) by a trained therapist can effectively reduce edema throughout the body. The use of compression garments is a passive way to ensure the system keeps moving without fluid buildup. Dry brushing is also effective in stimulating fluid movement under the skin.

Why is it important to maintain a healthy lymphatic system? The benefits are many: immediate relief of "heavy" legs and arms, reduction of cellulite, prevention of varicose veins, improvement of immune function, improved bowel movements, reduction in muscle spasms, decrease in lymphedema and excess fluid retention, and acceleration in recovery from injury and surgery.

Remember, it is critical that the lymphatic system is stimulated, so the flow of lymph fluid can improve compromised areas, as well as the entire body.

Leah Wiltgen is a licensed massage therapist with certification from the Dr. Vodder International Academy of Manual Lymph Drainage and can be reached at (760) 449.7855 or leahwiltgenmld@gmail.com.

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## Becoming the New You

By Dipika Patel

Happy New Year, my dear friends. I know on a collective level, most of us are glad to see the end of 2020. That in itself is a reason for celebration with the good, bad and the ugly behind us; we did it!

I want to personally congratulate you on getting past the worst of 2020 and being here to embrace a new beginning. It's an opportunity for us to start fresh no matter what has happened individually and as a community. Maybe it is an enthusiastic start, or perhaps a conscious end to something you have wanted to let go. This new year represents a choice you can make to take back your power no matter the circumstances.

Did you find yourself saying, "Because of COVID, I didn't get to do this, that or the other"? If so, I invite you to live this year differently. Instead of blaming circumstances such as people, places and things, I encourage you to say, "Because of COVID, I got to do this, that or the other, and I feel so good about myself for taking the step to be who I want to be!"

This year is where you get to embrace a new you; you get to choose the language you speak to yourself and others, not regurgitating what others are negatively saying to you. Whether you want to drop a few pounds, mend a relationship, maybe even end some relationships, create a new career path or find a new job. Whatever it is, this is time to look within and see what has stopped you from living the life you really want and desire - to become the authentic new you.

Will you continue to tell the story of the bad times that have happened, or are you ready to live your new life, new story, new you? There is a saying, "where attention goes, energy flows," and I want to bring that to the front of your mind. The new you is where your attention can be; get clear on what that might be for you. Consider reframing your experiences to focus on the positive, so when you remember 2020, you think, "Wow, I can't believe I did that!" instead of "Ugh, last year was the worst, and I can't see this year being any better."

No matter who you are, I absolutely guarantee that more positive things happened in your life last year than you might think, and 2021 will only get better if you allow yourself to see what is possible.

I look forward to meeting the new you full of vibrant health, joy and passion for life; however life is for you. I toast cheers to your new beginnings.

Dipika Patel is a certified holistic health coach and lifestyle practitioner who empowers her professional clients to activate an overall balanced lifestyle of mind, body and soul. Her inaugural book, Own Your Inner Bitch So She Can't Own You, is coming soon. Dipika can be reached at (760) 821.3119 or www.LoveYourLifeHealthy.com.

Sending our prayers and good wishes to all during this time

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## Vitalism: A Naturopathic Perspective

By Shari Jainuddin, NMD, BCB

In current culture, vitality is frequently associated only with youthful enthusiasm. In the field of naturopathic medicine, vitalism is the life force, the spark within each of us. It was taught and passed down by our founders and is woven throughout our medical education. Unfortunately, the constraints of testing and diagnosing do not elaborate much on the subject. While it would be wonderful to have a lab value of vitalism ranging from 0-100, it is not something that can be measured with labs or seen on imaging. But you all know it when you see it, and more strikingly, when you don't.



Vitality is not reserved only for youth, it is found within each of us.

You may have been with someone close to their end of life. Or maybe you've interacted with someone you didn't know anything about, but you could tell they were near their end of life. At that point, you can see the vitality waning from their body. Children, on the other hand, tend to be overflowing with vitality. You can see it in their enthusiastic smiles, boisterous laughter, and beaming eyes. As fellow humans, we can sense the lack or abundance of vitality in others. I use this analogy when attempting to describe the naturopathic meaning of vitalism to patients. It's one of those more elusive terms, but its absence and presence is undoubtedly appreciable.

Now that I've briefly defined what vitalism is in naturopathic medicine, I want to explore more of what goes into one's vitality. There is no doubt a person's health status is linked to the strength of their vitality. Fortunately, there are many steps you can take to improve your vitality that are not found in a prescription bottle or supplement. Yet, we can all drink from this fountain of youth (figuratively) one sip at a time.

In the last edition of *Desert Health*, I mentioned the foundations of health. Supporting them increases one's vitalism. They are nutritious food, clean water, exposure to fresh air (take a mindful breath!) and natural light, physical movement, restful sleep, community bonds and belief systems (self-defined). I bet most of us are unable to check each of these off as we are reading them; many may not be able to check off more than one. Now imagine how you would feel if you could achieve one more, two more, or all of them! Acknowledging there are health issues that need medical intervention or additional support, addressing these foundations will benefit you tremendously, and enhance your vitality.

As you start your journey into this new year, consciously integrate these foundations of health. Write them down to remind yourself daily. Instead of making routine decisions, stop, contemplate and give yourself the opportunity to choose the more healthful option. One step at a time, each small decision you make today impacts your vitalism tomorrow. And as always, have grace with yourself!

Dr. Jainuddin, is a naturopathic medicine doctor with One Life Naturopathic. She is also board certified in biofeedback and can be reached at (442) 256.5963 or [www.OneLifeNaturopathic.com](http://www.OneLifeNaturopathic.com).

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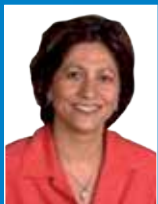
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## Living Wellness

with Jennifer Di Francesco



### Honoring the Light

As I was walking through the forests of Big Sur during the holidays, taking a socially-isolated reprieve from work and daily life, I was struck by the magnificence of how light expresses itself in the forest. In some areas, sunlight illuminates the burnt orange leaves of Oak trees. Around another corner, it reveals itself in narrow passageways resembling filtered light rays.

At one moment of the hike, I was taken aback by how light uncovered the luminescent threads of an elaborate cobweb. The gift of viewing this work of art could not be experienced without the presence of light.

Are we captivated every time we witness light casting itself upon nature?

The same light we see in the universe exists within each of us. During this pandemic and time of emotional upheaval, we must take the time to acknowledge the way light illuminates around us, within us, and within others.

In one of the oldest religions of ancient Persia, called Zoroastrianism, there is a strong emphasis upon honoring light as a divine symbol. Fire is the oldest element that has created light, has kept us warm, and provides a way for us to cook food. It also aids in personal transformation.

In the shamanic tradition through civilizations rooted in the Amazon and Peru, fire ceremonies are deemed medicinal practices. We can participate in a simple fire ceremony by finding a small stick and candle and focusing through active meditation on something in our life we want to release. With intention, blow the wish multiple times into the stick before lighting it. As a small flame is lit upon the stick, we can scan one hand over the smoke and warmth, placing that hand after each scan on the body's three main centers: the belly, heart and forehead. These are the three main areas we hold our deepest intentions.

In yoga, it is a tradition at the end of class to repeat the Sanskrit phrase "Namaste," meaning, "The light within me honors the light within you." By connecting with the light within ourselves, we take that light out into the world and see it in others.

One of the pre-requisites to admire light is to perceive the darkness. We must be obliged to admire the light on a morning hike, around a fire, after reciting "Namaste," or during any experience where we feel darkness is enclosing. As singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen serenaded, "There is a crack in everything. That is how the light gets in."

There is light at the end of the tunnel, and it will materialize in 2021.

Jennifer Di Francesco is a wellness explorer and desert adventurer and can be reached at [zenjzen@aol.com](mailto:zenjzen@aol.com).

## Helping the Body Heal Naturally

Regenerative medicine offers less invasive options

By Arsallan Ahmad, MD, ND

The growth of regenerative medicine now offers patients a variety of less invasive treatment options to joint surgery, replacement and pain management. The basic principle of regenerative medicine uses the body's own healing mechanisms to repair damaged tissues. The field includes injectables, patches, traditional Chinese medicine techniques and electronic stimuli equipment to name a few.

Gone are the days of icing every injury and pain associated with bones, ligaments, tendons or other soft connective tissue. Today, the use of heat or constitutive hydrotherapy like alternating hot and cold-water treatments is more conducive to proper healing and long-term recovery.

Regenerative injections, simple procedures, also referred to as bio-puncture therapy, use the aid of natural solutions such as sugar water, vitamins, minerals, or growth factors from a patient's blood. Commonly known treatment options include prolotherapy and platelet-rich-plasma (PRP), but the field has grown to include exosomes, peptides, and stem-cell-based or derived products as well. For pain management, numbing solutions often used in dentist offices and surgical procedures such as lidocaine and procaine can also be safely injected or applied via topical patches available over the counter.

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) techniques, including acupuncture, cupping, or topical botanical formulas using an array of essential oils, are also beneficial for joint issues and pain. In fact, many present-day injection solutions and techniques like prolotherapy fall under the category of "wet needling," as described in TCM.

Electronic stimulation devices like TENS units or pulsed electromagnetic force (PEMF) have also become exceedingly popular to help regulate not only blood flow but also the lymphatic system, which has been found to be critical for overall healing. Electrical stimulus from these devices or the prick of an acupuncture needle can help trigger proper communication between cells and activate nerves that are not firing properly due to discord.

Older injuries resulting in scar tissue can also benefit from needling or injection techniques, even if an injury occurred a very long time ago.

Regenerative medicine offers a variety of less invasive options in an out-patient clinical setting rather than a hospital or surgical ward. Discoveries of therapies that assist the body's natural healing process are continuing, and the growth possibilities are endless.

Dr. Ahmad is both a medical doctor and a licensed naturopathic doctor specializing in regenerative medicine. He is with Optimal Health Center in Palm Desert and can be reached at (760) 568.2598.





### Creating Habits - One Minute at a Time

Even when we know what we have to do to live a healthier lifestyle, doing it isn't as easy as it should be. Eating healthier, moving more, surrounding ourselves with a great social network, and going to bed earlier are a few of the things no one could argue would help them live a healthier life. However, we are all busy in different ways, and it is hard to make new habits stick.

I will outline the system I use with my patients and expand on it with an example of a patient who wants to increase movement or exercise in their life.

**Fake it before you make it.** It is so important to change your mental attitude and to "become" the goal you set. So, I have my patients come up with an affirmation to repeat every morning. These can be as practical or as fun you wish. The patient may start every morning meditating on the phrase "I am an active person" or "I am a hiker, a biker, a walker and a sun lover." The second part of faking it is outlining a specific goal. For example, instead of "I will become more active in four weeks," the goal would be "I will walk 60 minutes a day every day in 30 days."

**Start small.** All of the steps toward a goal should feel attainable and easy to do. In this stage, I have patients break it down in conceivable chunks to achieve the specific goal they set for themselves in step one. For this patient above, it might be, week one: "I will walk for 5 minutes a day." Week two: "I will walk for 15 minutes a day." Week three: "I will walk for 30 minutes a day." Week four: "I will walk 45 minutes a day." Week 5: "I will walk 60 minutes a day, every day."

**Schedule it.** If it isn't scheduled, it will not happen. In this example, adding "after dinner" at the end of each weekly goal as the specific time the activity will be completed now makes it a scheduled activity.

**No set cheat times.** When starting a new habit, you should plan to do it every day. It is confusing and takes a lot of mental energy to keep track of on days and off days.

**Have a fall strategy.** Knowing there will be a day you may not do your new goal activity, have a plan for it. The main strategy in our example would be, if for some reason you were unable to walk one day, don't beat yourself up or decide it's a lost cause and just stop. The next day it starts over, and you walk. You can't let one day of skipping your goal activity turn into two days, which turns into one week, which sabotages your new habit.

**Do a habit check.** Once your new habit feels like an old habit, and feels very weird if you don't do it, you have successfully created a new habit. But, remember, life can interfere, so if you find yourself falling out of the habit, quickly go back to step one and start again.

*Dr. Fayssoux is an integrative primary care practitioner with Ohm & Oot Wellness Medicine in Rancho Mirage and can be reached at (760) 469.9900. For more information, visit [www.KinderfayssouxMD.com](http://www.KinderfayssouxMD.com).*

### Are You Eating Your Healthy Fats?

By Jenny M. Wheeler, MD

The controversy over dietary fats began in the 1940s when research started to link high cholesterol with heart disease. High dietary fat was blamed for high cholesterol, and many people avoided all fatty foods - even those that are health-promoting - for decades.

We now understand the relationship between dietary fat intake and cardiovascular disease is not linear and inflammation is an important factor. While trans-fatty acids should be minimized, ironically, excluding healthy fatty acids from our diets in favor of low-fat, high carbohydrate alternatives promotes higher levels of systemic inflammation. Including the right types of fats and avoiding others can decrease inflammation.

Saturated fat has been controversial and while it is true that high dietary intake of even healthy saturated fats like MCTs in coconut oil or those in grass fed meats may raise your LDL ("bad"), that increase is seen in the less inflammatory LDL and has not been associated with an increase in mortality. Healthy saturated fats also raise HDL ("good") cholesterol. Appetite control can be another benefit of including clean saturated fat in your diet.

**Types of essential fatty acids.** There are two main classes of essential fatty acids - omega-3s and omega-6s. "Essential" means these nutrients are something our bodies require but cannot synthesize. Research suggests that maintaining a favorable ratio between omega-3s and omega-6s can reduce systemic inflammation. Omega-6s are not unhealthy per se, but modern diets contain excessive amounts. To improve the ratio, reduce your intake of omega-6-containing oils such as corn, sunflower, safflower and soybean (common in processed and restaurant foods) while adding dietary sources of omega-3s.

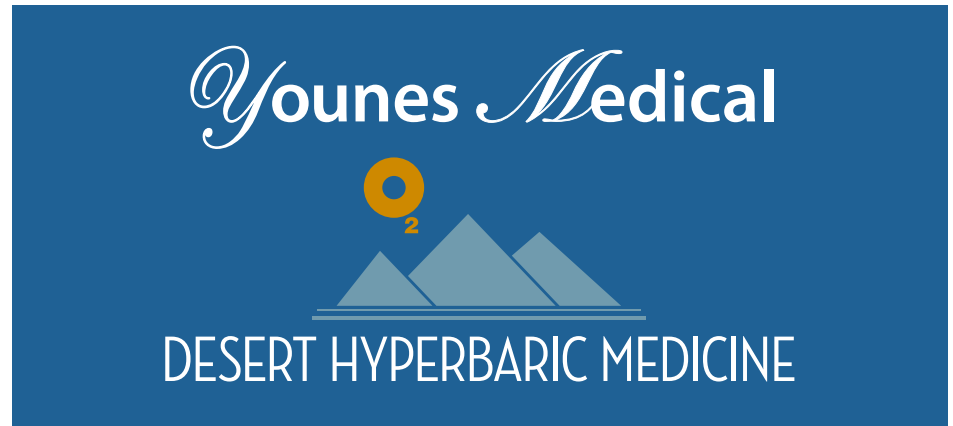
Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) are the primary forms of omega-3s fatty acids. EPA reduces cellular inflammation and neuro-inflammation, which are associated with chronic conditions as diverse as dementia and fibromyalgia. DHA helps increase the protective ("good") cholesterol HDL and decreases triglycerides. It also protects your telomeres which are important for anti-aging. ALA is found in plants and must be converted to be active in the body.

**Good sources of omega-3s.** Dietary sources of omega-3s are preferred to supplements which do not permeate vital tissues in the way that whole food sources can. In fact, taking omega-3 supplements does not guarantee that you do not have a fatty acid deficiency. Recommended daily amounts of omega-3s vary depending on your situation; however, two servings of fatty fish per week are a good baseline. Include fish from the SMASH group (Salmon, Mackerel, Anchovies, Sardines and Herring) as they are generally lower in toxins and higher in omega-3s. Oysters contain omega-3s; fish roe and cod liver are also convenient sources.

Avoid farmed fish as they are often fed grain-based feeds that promote omega-6 fatty acid content over omega-3. Likewise, the type of feed livestock consume determines the fatty acid content of meat. Cows raised on grain-based feed (containing mostly corn and soy) produce beef, milk and cheese that has a high ratio of omega-6 to omega-3. If cows are grass-fed, they produce beef and dairy products rich in omega-3 fatty acids. Similarly, eggs can contain significant amounts of omega-3s if raised on specialized feed.

Examples of plant-based sources of omega-3s include chia seeds, pumpkin seeds or pepitas, walnuts, hemp hearts, flaxseeds and macadamia nuts. Algal oil has also

*Continued next column*



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emerged as a reliable vegan source of DHA and EPA. Keep in mind that plant-based sources of omega-3s provide ALA that must be converted in the body. This process is inefficient, so while these are great whole foods, it is difficult to consume sufficient amounts of plant-based omega-3s to meet daily requirements.

**Monounsaturated fats (MUFAs)** are another class of health-promoting fatty acids. MUFAs are most notably found in olive oil and are associated with improved LDL and HDL profiles, providing some of the well-known cardiovascular benefits of the Mediterranean diet. Other sources of MUFAs include olives, avocados, almonds, cashews and pecans.

**Cooking with oils.** Cooking with oils and fats imparts flavor and taste. However, overheating them causes damage, and consuming heat damaged fats promotes inflammation. The smoke point is the temperature at which an oil can become damaged. Avocado oil, coconut oil and ghee are safe options for grilling or baking with high heat. Olive oil's smoke point varies based on how refined it is. Extra virgin olive oil is best for drizzling onto foods after cooked; more refined or light olive oils have higher smoke points and are more suitable for grilling and frying.

Lastly, remember when increasing dietary fats, it is important to cut refined carbohydrates and sugar from your diet at the same time. The benefits of adding healthy fats can be offset by an imbalance in your microbiome if you don't have the antioxidants and nutrients from plenty of fresh vegetables and fruits to keep your entire system in balance.

*Dr. Wheeler is a board-certified family medicine physician with Riverside-San Bernardino Indian Health in Thermal. She is certified through the Institute of Functional Medicine and is available for functional medicine consults through Restore Health in Indian Wells. For more information visit [www.RestoreHealth.me](http://www.RestoreHealth.me) or call (760) 898.9663.*



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**A Huge Helping of Hope**

*Continued from page 1*

Learn some new dances on YouTube; get a dog and take your new friend walking to explore places you've never been; expend some energy helping others. What skill do you have that others need? Can you repair bikes? Bake bread? Run errands for neighbors? Anything that gets you moving will improve your health.

**For mental well-being and peace of mind**

Dump the screens full of gloom and doom. Choose comforting media to consume: old movies, classic novels, vintage sitcoms, Zoom some enduring children's stories with your grandkids. Cherish the good memories and hold them dear. Revive an old hobby or start a new one, maybe even with your spouse. Keep a Joy List of at least five things you see, hear, smell, taste or feel each day that brought you pleasure. Reread often.

**For emotional well-being**

Smile at five or more strangers every time you go out - you have to make an effort to smile with your eyes, but it can be done. Sometimes it helps to add a friendly wave. Call a family member or friend and express your love, then tell them what you most appreciate about them. Start a Gratitude Journal and note several things each day for which you're thankful. This reflection is one of the highest forms of self-care, and if you've never tried it, now is the perfect time. Look into your own eyes and assure any worried parts of yourself that you can take good care of them.

**For spiritual well-being**

Pray, meditate, watch a sunset or walk in the sunshine - whatever form of inner stillness works for you. In our changing world, rethink what matters to you and clarify your purpose in life. Spiritual wellness is connecting to something greater than yourself and having a set of values, principles, morals and beliefs to guide your actions. See what new activities this might inspire.

Schedule your daily self-care practices and honor these appointments with yourself as you would any commitment. If you have the privilege to feel hope, ponder how to share it. Keep a journal of your daily self-care activities and challenge family and friends to join you in a year of self-care.

Together, we can make 2021 a hope-filled year.

Roger Moore is a certified counselor and registered hypnotherapist with Palm Desert Hypnosis and can be reached at Roger@HypnosisHealthInfo.com or (760) 219.8079. For more information, visit [www.hypnosishealthinfo.com/medical-hypnosis](http://www.hypnosishealthinfo.com/medical-hypnosis). All sessions are online telehealth.



*Genuine hope is based on achievable, realistic expectations and requires action.*

## Link Between Parkinson's and Pesticides

Scientists sound the alarm in new book

By Joseph E. Scherger, MD, MPH

Most of us are aware that Alzheimer's disease is on the rise due to high blood sugars and excessive inflammation. These factors are also related to the rise in overweight, obesity and type 2 diabetes.

Less well known is that the frequency of Parkinson's disease is also on the rise and may be the fastest growing neurologic disorder in the world, according to a team of expert doctors and neuroscientists. In their recent book, *Ending Parkinson's Disease: A Prescription for Action* (Dorsey, Sherer, Okun, Bloem; Hachette Book Group, 2020), these specialists point to the most common causes of this neurodegenerative condition and what we can do to avoid it.

Alzheimer's and other dementias are due to generalized atrophy and inflammation in the brain. Parkinson's disease reflects the neurodegeneration of specific parts of the brain that use dopamine as the neurotransmitter: the basal ganglia and substantia nigra. Signs of Parkinson's include resting tremors, slow movements (especially in walking), and eventually dementia. Genes and environmental triggers have been suspected, but until now, the main causes have been unknown.

The evidence for agricultural pesticides and herbicides causing the increase in Parkinson's disease is now clear, and these academic neurologists and neuroscientists are calling the alarm. It appears this devastating disease is avoidable.

Agriculture in America is big business, and any health measure that threatens profits is very difficult to enact. This challenge is not new. It took many years to stop the use of DDT in agriculture (still used in developing nations) and asbestos in buildings. Most at risk are the farmers and farmworkers regularly exposed to the chemicals cited below, but because there is an approximate 20-year lag between peak exposure and the disease, the cause is not always recognized.

The three major chemicals linked to Parkinson's are paraquat (the most commonly implicated), chlorpyrifos, and trichloroethylene (TCE).

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recognizes paraquat as "highly toxic." It is banned in 32 countries but still used on crops in much of the U.S. *Paraquat is banned in 32 countries and listed as a "restricted use" product in California,* however, the authors report that in the past decade, its use throughout our country has doubled.

The nerve toxin chlorpyrifos is the most widely used insecticide in the U.S. The California Farm Bureau Federation reports that in 2013, chlorpyrifos was used to treat almost 60 different crops, including alfalfa, almonds, cotton, grapes, oranges and walnuts, covering about 1.3 million acres. *Fortunately, in 2020, California banned the sale of chlorpyrifos, and as of December 31, 2020, agricultural growers are not allowed to possess or use it. However, this doesn't apply to all states.*<sup>2</sup>

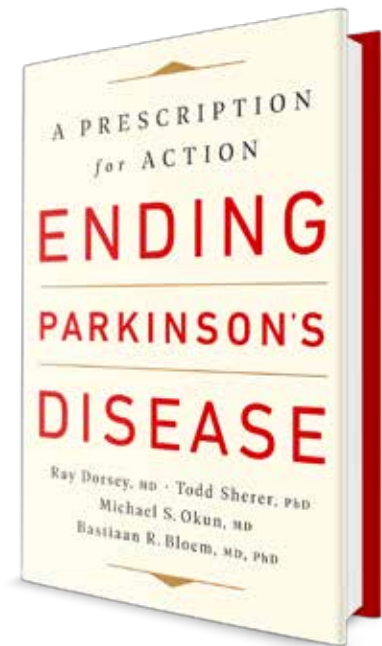
TCE is used as a solvent to remove grease from metal. It can become toxic by breathing its fumes, ingesting it or absorbing it through the skin. It is found to cause Parkinson's disease in laboratory animals. *This product has been banned by the EPA for most consumer use, but not entirely for commercial use.*<sup>3</sup>

This book is an important call to action. The Michael J. Fox Foundation has played a leading role in sounding the alarm and supporting action in Congress. We must protect the workers who put food on our table, as well as ourselves and our families, from another manmade factor causing devastating neurodegenerative disease.

Eating organic produce and carefully cleaning off agricultural residues are especially important today. Pay special attention to the "Dirty Dozen" and "Clean Fifteen" as recognized by the Environmental Working Group and found on their website at [www.ewg.org/foodnews](http://www.ewg.org/foodnews).

Joseph Scherger, MD, MPH is founder of Restore Health in Indian Wells, a clinic dedicated to reversing disease. For more information, visit [www.restorehealth.me](http://www.restorehealth.me) or call (760) 898.9663.

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# THE Paradigm Shift in Medicine Today

By Jeralyn Brossfield, MD



## Asking for What You Want Cures Resentment

I've been doing a deep dive on how thoughts create reality. During my quest toward personal health, I have been learning how Eastern cultures view disease as originating in the soul. This concept takes healing to a whole new level!

When I was diagnosed with cancer, I began asking myself the question, "What needs to change in my life to create integrity with total health?" Several specific areas came up for me: setting boundaries, protecting my energy and asking for what I want. The common thread of these three practices was my automatic pattern to shift to resentment when people didn't conform to my unspoken needs. Crazy, isn't it? I had not made my boundaries or needs clear, yet I was holding people to my unspoken standards. It certainly wasn't effective at getting what I needed. I would marinate in my feelings of anger and resentment, and therein lies the soul problem that I'm certain was part of my being susceptible to cancer.

If this sounds hard to follow or too woo-woo, let me explain further. When I would get to the point of resentment, I started to make up stories that reinforced my belief that I was the only one who could save people. This narrative reinforced a feeling of importance that filled insecurities about my worth, but it also created a vicious cycle of over-work and imbalance. The more I tried to meet others' needs, the more depleted I became. My thoughts had created responses that began to impact my physical health.

Another explanation of this process was written by Dr. Jennice Vilhauer in *Psychology Today*, "Your thoughts, if you think them over and over, and assign truth to them, become beliefs. Beliefs create a cognitive lens through which you interpret the events of your world and this lens serves as a selective filter through which you sift the environment for evidence that matches up with what you believe to be true... Because the brain's selective filtering system, often referred to as priming, works on an activation/inhibition model, when the brain is primed by a certain belief to look for something, it shuts down competing neural networks, so you actually have a hard time seeing evidence to the contrary of an already existing belief."

The opportunity in becoming aware of this pattern was that I had a choice. When I first realized this was part of my healing journey, I was honestly too deep in managing through chemo to have the energy to do much about it. But one of my commitments has been to only tackle what was immediately necessary, and I was able to trust that the way would become clear to change my patterns. I have prayed to be open to learning and to see meaning in anything that could teach me.

A few weeks ago, I was weak after chemo, yet my appetite had returned. I figured it was obvious I needed someone in my household to make me dinner. Wrong. Honestly, I have a pattern of being so self-sufficient that I have trained the people around me not to expect me to have needs, so it was not entirely surprising. But I began feeling resentful. Then I had an "aha" moment. This was the exact pattern I had realized wasn't working for me.

*Continued on page 20*

## A Holistic Approach to Healing



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## What My Mother Taught Me

*The new role of parenting in a pandemic*

By Amy Austin, RN, PsyD, LMFT

My mother and I could not have been more opposite. She said I came out of the womb with my little fingers daintily pointing into the air. She was one of 11, born to a fruit and vegetable peddler father and a mother who emigrated from Romania and tried her best to manage her brood. Let's just say my mother was street smart, suspicious (I'll reframe this in a positive light as protective), outspoken and sometimes reactive. Whatever you can imagine as the opposite of that was me.

I recall when I was about 21 I had gotten myself into a mess. I called my mom. I distinctly remember her saying, "Amy, the way you got into it is the way you'll get out of it." And she hung up the phone. Tough love was alive and well. I froze. There is good news. I did get myself out of that mess, but did not, could not, yet comprehend the gift she gave me. Years later, she told me in her usual 'Sara style,' "I knew I wouldn't die happy until you learned to say no and stand on your own two feet."

Here are a few more "Saraisms:"

**On relationships:** "You gotta like their smell."

**On the importance of sex in a marriage:** "If I had a nickel for every time I said no to your father, I'd be rich. Don't repeat this!" My parents were married 71 years, so you do the math.

**On women's roles:** "Pretty is as pretty does." I do not know how many times I have told clients that our behaviors define who we are.

**On education:** "You're going to be another year older anyway, might as well have a degree."

**On love:** "It's one thing to love someone, but it's quite another to be IN love."

Why am I telling you this? I am quite aware we are all cognizant of the importance of healthy and adaptive parenting and the crucial role parents play in their children's lives. But, at this juncture in my own life as a parent, grandparent and psychotherapist, I cannot stress this enough. Observing my children parent their children has been an awe-inspiring and eye-opening experience. And, of course, many clients have shared ways their lives have been affected by their parents recalling caring and emotionally connected role models, as well as emotionally unavailable and/or abusive guardians.

COVID-19 has created many challenges with children being schooled at home. Parents are not only caregivers but have become teachers as well. I passionately believe all struggles can lead to opportunities. This pandemic is presenting ways to become more self-aware, less impulsive and less reactive as our children are always watching. Parenting styles can vary, but we know that children thrive when they have consistency and structure according to their age and stage of development. When parents set healthy boundaries, they teach their children what they expect, what they will and will not tolerate, and more about who they are as humans. I always say, we either become it, or we marry it unless we explore it.

As I look back, I realize I needed a parent who was my polar opposite, and for that, I am forever grateful. My business card tagline is "Nurturing No-Nonsense Therapy."

I wonder where I got that from.

Amy Austin is a licensed marriage and family therapist (MFC# 41252) and doctor of clinical psychology in Rancho Mirage. Dr. Amy can be reached at (760) 774.0047.

### Elbowing Out Epicondylitis

Continued from page 7

Whether it's a golf club, tennis racket, hammer, or paintbrush, be sure the equipment suits your needs.

#### Treatment

Fortunately, most patients recover from these injuries without requiring surgery. An important part of any treatment plan is rest which doesn't necessarily mean stopping all activity - just specific movements that trigger the pain. Returning to the activity that caused the pain may further injure the area and could lead to permanent damage.

In addition to rest, ice and heat are natural anti-inflammatory remedies. Physical therapy is often incorporated to help strengthen and stretch the injured muscles and surrounding muscles. A simple and effective treatment is the use of an elbow strap which acts as an attachment point for the tendon and prevents it from tugging on the epicondyle. It reduces the tension of the tendon and absorbs the force exerted.

Anti-inflammatory treatments, including topical, oral, or injectable medication, may help. Steroid injections are commonly performed to treat these injuries, as they can provide targeted relief. In more serious and rare cases, surgery is done to remove the damaged tendons.

While tennis and golfer's elbow are common conditions, especially in the Coachella Valley, they can be easily prevented. Fortunately, most people who experience epicondylitis will recover without surgery, but preventative measures should be taken to reduce the likelihood of injury.

So, at the next golf session or tennis match, try to make a habit of stretching beforehand to avoid injury and enhance performance!

Founding physician Eric Sickinger, DO and medical assistant Thalie Timsit, BS are with Advanced Center for Sports & Musculoskeletal Medicine. For more information, contact their Palm Desert office at (760) 636.1067 or the San Clemente office at (949) 388.1060, or visit [www.SportsandMSKmedicine.com](http://www.SportsandMSKmedicine.com).

### Asking For What You Want Cures Resentment

Continued from page 19

I have never liked asking for help. And, in many ways, my drive has gotten me far in life. At this point, it became super clear to me that I needed to ask for someone to make me dinner. This request may sound so simple and clear, but it felt really hard. However, I was hungry, and resenting my family for not "reading my mind" was not helpful. So, I made a choice and asked for what I needed.

The response was simple and miraculous, "Of course, what would you like?" Presto, not only could I drop my resentment and realize it had no merit, but I also received exactly what I needed. It turns out; my family wants me to tell them what I need. They are happy to help me, and it makes it so much easier for them when I am clear in my requests.

I am new at this, and I am committed to letting these new patterns of asking and being clear in my communication ripple out into other areas of my life. This practice of being intentional seems so easy and perhaps insignificant. But at least in my case, I believe it is these little changes that will have a profound effect in helping me stay healthy for the rest of my life.

Jeralyn Brossfield, MD, is the founder and physician of XO Health and medical director of Brain Treatment Center both in Rancho Mirage. She can be reached at (760) 573.2761 or [www.BrainTreatmentCenter.com](http://www.BrainTreatmentCenter.com) and on Facebook @XOHealth.

Source: 1) <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/living-forward/202009/how-your-thinking-creates-your-reality>



## A Secret to Beautiful Winter Skin

By Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos

Oh, baby, it's cold outside! You can feel it - and often see it - on your skin. So, tonight, plan something soothing and rehydrating for yourself...take a relaxing olive oil bath. Yes, many generations have known the secret to beautiful winter skin can be found in your kitchen. How intriguing is that?

Often, secrets from the past catch up to our present to change the future. Researchers recently revealed that the superfood olive oil is also an ancient key that unlocks the door to beauty as it creates a moisture barrier for your delicate skin while vacationing on sun-kissed beaches, skiing on wind-swept slopes, hiking through canyons, or just relaxing at home.<sup>1</sup>

Our bodies naturally produce squalene, a molecule that helps skin retain moisture, but its effectiveness starts to decline heavily in our 20s. Antioxidant-rich olive oil helps maintain skin's elasticity and softness by nourishing, hydrating and rejuvenating skin cells while reducing the appearance of wrinkles and fine lines. While many expensive anti-aging skincare products contain olive oil, using natural organic products (found in your kitchen!) is a healthier alternative. Organic cold-pressed extra virgin olive oil is recommended.

Dr. Oz describes olive oil as "an anti-aging wonder food with head-to-toe benefits that is also liquid gold." He encourages everyone to use it daily. So what's the secret?

Gorgeous Italian actress Sophia Loren adds two tablespoons of olive oil to her bathwater. Australian model Miranda Kerr swears by mixing olive oil with a little lemon juice for shiny locks. "It's a home

recipe my mother taught me, and I have yet to find a better way to repair my split ends," she told French *Elle Magazine*. My personal secret is adding a drop to moisturizer and perfume for longer-lasting hydration and fragrance.

Consuming olive oil also nourishes nails, hair, and body from the inside out. Pairing it with another of my favorite beauty secrets from the kitchen, apple cider vinegar, gives you a tasty inflammation-fighting dressing to spice up salads and dishes. Research shows consuming a daily tablespoon of apple cider vinegar has health benefits for type 2 diabetes, may help arthritis, heart health and promotes weight loss.<sup>2</sup>

Here are tips for the perfect olive oil and apple cider vinegar dressing:

- Use the 3-to-1 rule: 3 Tablespoons olive oil to 1 Tablespoon vinegar
- Rinse lettuce, add oil and toss. Residual moisture distributes the oil evenly and keeps lettuce from wilting from vinegar acids.
- Drizzle vinegar onto lettuce and toss.
- Season with your favorite herbs to taste.

So, there you have it. The secret to beautiful winter skin can be found in your kitchen. Use olive oil inside and out for healthy hydration all season long.

*Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos of Rancho Mirage is a survivor, author, dream expert, speaker, TV/radio host/producer and has been featured on Dr. Oz and The Doctors. For more information, visit [www.KathleenOkeefeKanavos.com](http://www.KathleenOkeefeKanavos.com).*

References: 1) <https://www.oliveoiltimes.com/basics/the-facts-about-olive-oil-and-skin-care/85377>; 2) <https://www.healthyand-naturalworld.com/how-to-use-apple-cider-vinegar-for-weight-loss/>

## Technology Can Help Reduce Isolation Among Seniors

Provided by Alzheimers Coachella Valley

One thing experts do agree on is that technology is changing the way we're interacting socially.

Technology can be a very effective tool in reducing social isolation, especially among senior citizens, by enhancing communication and connectivity between friends, family and caregivers. Research shows belonging to social groups and networks is just as important a predictor of health as are diet and exercise.

One study of nearly 600 older adults led by Michigan State University psychologist William Chopik, PhD found that social technology use, including email, Facebook, and online video services such as Skype and instant messaging, was linked to lower levels of loneliness, better self-rated health and fewer chronic illnesses and depressive symptoms.

Of course, the best cure for loneliness is being around other people, but maintaining those connections gets more challenging as you age. And having to shelter at home during COVID adds to the isolation.

Spouses and friends pass away, and physical challenges can make it difficult to leave the house. Younger family members may live across the country or be busy with jobs and children. Meanwhile, caregivers are often so busy with the demands of caring for a loved one that they may neglect their own relationships.

Skype, email, Facebook, Zoom livestreaming and other online social platforms can keep families who are geographically separated in touch and, consequentially, strengthen connections between family members of various ages.

Technologies encourage multigenerational learning. Many community-based programs engage youth and young adults, who are more knowledgeable about technology, to teach older adults how to use computers and other devices.

By using technology to preserve memories and stories, older adults can share their wisdom with future generations through the use of digital legacies.

Robotic technologies are also getting attention these days. Having a cat or dog can relieve insolation, provide companionship, even lower blood pressure. But many older adults can no longer care for a live pet. Several new products on the market are Hasbro Joy for All robotic cats and dogs whose behaviors mimic live animals and whose fur feels real. Gerijoy virtual pet features an animated dog or cat on a screen that can chat with an older adult in real-time, ask about the grandkids, show photos of special moments and even compliment a new sweater.

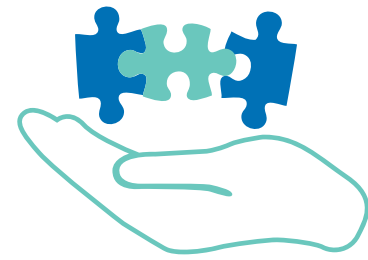
Voice-enabled smart speakers provide easy access to news briefings, look up recipes, play a song, turn on the lights and check the weather - without having to hassle with a keyboard. They can make hands-free video calls to anyone who has an Echo or the Alexa app on their phones. The device's "Drop-in" feature helps caregivers because it lets you pop in to see connected friends and family members anytime.

At Alzheimers Coachella Valley, all our support groups, social and educational programs are offered livestreaming on Zoom. We even use "old technology," a telephone tree, to keep in touch with our families.

Technology does not replace human or animal companionship, but it can help relieve isolation and fill the gap.

For more information contact Alzheimers Coachella Valley at (760) 776.3100 or visit [www.cvalzheimers.org](http://www.cvalzheimers.org).

Sources: 1) <https://www.socialconnectedness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Social-Isolation-and-Technology-How-Technology-Can-be-Used-to-Reduce-Social-Isolation-Ainstruments>; 2) <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2019/05/ce-corner-sidebar>; 3) *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, Vol. 19, No. 9, 2016; 4) <https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/home-care/info-2018/new-technology-social-isolation.html>



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Alzheimers Coachella Valley is a community based 501 (c) (3) nonprofit providing support and services for residents in the Coachella Valley living with cognitive impairment, their families and care partners. All funds raised here remain local to fill the need for professional and peer-led programs. We are not affiliated with any national organizations.





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**Michael K. Butler**  
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## Keep Moving for Immunity

By Michael K. Butler, BA;PTA;CSCS\*D;RSCC\*D NMT

These are trying times, not just for Americans but for the entire world. Since the first outbreak was announced in February of last year, many businesses have been shut down, and fear and uncertainty have placed millions at home, affecting most people's mental, emotional, financial and physical health.

With many gyms compromised or closed right now, having a home gym is becoming more of a reality. Society is trying to figure out how to stay active and avoid couch potato syndrome. Yet, many complain of increased weight, getting out of breath easier, and becoming mentally exhausted from it all.



Movement is key to boosting your immune system.

Whether you are young or old, those at higher risk include people with compromised immune systems and chronic diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure and COPD.

The answer to staying healthy during a pandemic is education, awareness of your surroundings and building a stronger immune system.

Exercise is the key to boosting your immune system, and by exercise, I mean MOVEMENT. It helps to manage your weight, reduces or prevents disease, builds strong bones and improves balance and mobility. It also reduces stress and anxiety, improving both mental and emotional health.

Some of the exercises I recommend right now include swimming, hiking, running, cycling, yoga, Pilates and functional weight training. Do your best with what is available to you, but the key is to keep moving. There is nothing worse for your immune system than stagnation! Sitting at home, putting on weight and living in fear can all create a poor immune response and negatively affect your health. Mask up, get out of the house and relish in some vitamin D and regular exercise.

Eating healthy meals at home, including vegetables, lean meats and healthy fruit, will help build stronger immunity, as will supplements like vitamins C, D and zinc. Sleeping eight hours a night and clearing negative thoughts from your mind through meditation before bed helps control your mental and emotional stability.

We are all in this together. There is no timetable for stopping COVID, but having positive thoughts, keeping physical distance, wearing your mask and building a strong mind and body can go a long way in not only preventing COVID but setting a strong foundation for a healthier lifestyle.

Michael Butler is owner of Kinetix Health and Performance Center in Palm Desert. He holds a state license as a physical therapist assistant, national certification of distinction through the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) as a strength and conditioning coach, and a Poliquin International certification as a Full Body Active Release Techniques Practitioner. He can be reached at (760) 200.1719 or michael@kinetixcenter.com.

## Getting Every Body Moving

By Lauren Del Sarto

There is a new non-profit in the Coachella Valley serving all of Riverside County by offering wellness and sport opportunities for those with disabilities. Palms to Pines Parasports (PPP) was founded in June of last year with the purpose of providing competitive and recreational opportunities for people with disabilities while instilling a lifelong passion for wellness.

The volunteer-run organization offers an array of weekly activities ranging from online meditation to cycling, archery, basketball and boccia in collaboration with the Desert Recreation District (DRD), among other organizations. Participants include people with physical disabilities as well as those with developmental considerations.



Athletes enjoy tennis and pickleball, popular activities offered by Palms to Pines Parasports.

"We felt there could be more offered for those who face challenges when it comes to getting outdoors and enjoying all our area has to offer," says co-founder Michael Rosenkrantz whose work with people with disabilities began overseas. When he returned to the U.S. in 2016, he thought there would be substantial opportunities for this population but found that wasn't the case. He and his wife moved to the Coachella Valley over a year ago, and his work with Desert Ability Center locally opened his eyes to the potential throughout Riverside County.

"Our area has a lot of resources, and there is room to grow more opportunities for this population," he says. "One of PPP's goals is to develop collaborations to maximize these opportunities."



Sport equipment is adjusted for all abilities.

A 15-member board that includes several parasport athletes develops the programs and partnerships. Some of the current Coachella Valley collaborations beyond DRD include Desert ARC, Building Bridges CV, Leaps Services, United Cerebral Palsy of the Inland Empire and Friends of the Desert Mountains. Many more partnerships are in the works, including with municipalities.

While some participants bring their own equipment, specialized items like handcycles and sports wheelchairs, along with general gear, including racquets, archery bows and basketballs, are provided by DRD and

volunteers. Classes are taught by volunteer experts in their sport, many trained to work with the disabled; online meditations are led by Rosenkrantz.

Activities are slated for six days a week with flexibility for COVID restrictions. A weekly Facebook Live meeting takes place each Friday at 9 a.m. to let the community know what activities will be taking place, all under DRD's COVID guidelines.

PPP has also formed a team to participate in the 23rd annual Tour de Palm Springs, taking place as a virtual event this year on February 20.

"Sports are an entry point to help people grow, and it is very rewarding," adds

Rosenkrantz, "but it's also about wellness. Getting people out of the house and moving is good for both body and mind, and teaches many life lessons."

Palms to Pines Parasports puts athletes first. "This is about ensuring that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else," says Rosenkrantz. As the organization's website states, they "go to extraordinary lengths to identify potential and current athletes and meet them where they are on their life journey, engaging with them and their families on the playing field, in rehab facilities, hospitals, their homes and any other location that is comfortable."



Athletes experience a variety of scenic destinations.

Barb Gregory, whose son Brian participates in several sports, said, "My son's energy level is improving. He is eager to get to the park and enjoy the fresh air while actively engaged with friends in sports. While we appreciate the wonderful Zoom programs he has been attending, I notice he has more life and enthusiasm now that he has been in outside adaptive sports."

"We are very excited about all of the opportunities opening up for this population locally," states Rosenkrantz. "Life is a series of doors and windows, and you make things happen by stepping through. For me, it's been a path of service that I am passionate about."

For more information and a schedule of events, call Michael Rosenkrantz at (760) 469.9207 or email ppmiker@palmstopinesparasports.org. Visit www.palmstopinesparasports.org

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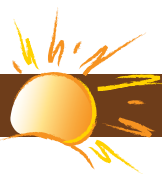


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# Eat, Drink and Be Healthy

Substitutes you'll savor by Lauren Del Sarto

Making healthier choices doesn't mean giving up everything you love and crave; it's about finding satisfying, convenient alternatives and getting creative! In this new column, I'll share ideas and favorites.

**Today's topic: SALTY SOLUTIONS**

Who doesn't love salt? We know it's something to be consumed in moderation, but we all crave it, and unfortunately, the sources to satisfy those cravings tend to be the worst for us. Top of mind? French fries.

Here are some creative bites you can throw together and my favorite finds in the snack aisle at most grocery stores.

**Creative: Baked veggies chips**

With more time on your hands, maybe you've discovered the chef within and a new joy of cooking. I certainly have, and one of my favorite things to make is baked veggie chips with sea salt. They make a great healthy snack or a hearty appetizer to share while preparing dinner.



My favorite vegetables to use are radishes and beets (don't judge until you try them; they taste completely different prepared this way!). You can also use zucchini, summer squash, broccoli, or try your favorite veggie. Just thinly slice, lay out on a paper towel and generously add sea salt. Preheat the oven to 350F. After 15 minutes, dab the veggies to remove excess water. Then, toss in a bowl with a splash of avocado oil and place single-layered on a baking sheet. Cook for 30-40 minutes (until they start to look

crisp), rotating once. Let them sit to cool, which will add crispness and snack away!

Sweet potatoes are another good option. With less moisture, they don't need to be laid out in advance; simply slice thin and toss in a bowl with oil and salt before placing in the oven. You don't want to use olive oil (read more on cooking with oils pg. 17). You can also find many good recipes online and if you really want to get creative, read up on hydrating vegetables at [www.deserthealthnews.com](http://www.deserthealthnews.com).

**Convenient: Healthier chip options**

Sometimes you just want to grab a convenient salty snack in a bag. We all grew up with pre-packaged chips, but ingredients I now try to avoid include corn (inflammatory),



wheat/gluten and vegetable oil. So, instead of reaching for Doritos, Cheetos, or Frito-Lays, consider these newer, healthier options.

**Siete Grain-Free Tortilla Chips.** Made from cassava, a tuber root vegetable, these satisfying chips are gluten-free and great for dipping. The only other ingredients are avocado oil, coconut flour, chia seeds and sea salt. We serve them all the time, and I haven't found one person who doesn't love them.

**Vegan Rob's Cauliflower Puffs.** Cheetos used to be my favorite, so I was elated to find Vegan Rob's line of vegetable puffs. They deliver the same satisfying crunch and quench your craving for a delicious salty snack. The main ingredient is sorghum, a gluten-free nutrient-packed grain rich in vitamins and minerals. Flavoring comes from cauliflower, onion and garlic powders, and the cauliflower taste is light. Their variety of flavors includes Brussels sprout, spinach, beet and more, along with Dragon Puffs for Flamin' Hot Cheetos fans, but I recommend starting with the Cauliflower Puffs. Be careful not to eat the whole bag. They are that good!



And for a salty dessert? As one who avoids sugar, my favorite is Lily's Salted Caramel Chocolate Bar sweetened with stevia. One small bite will satisfy, but you won't feel guilty eating more!

## Healthy Chocolate Brownies

Gluten, dairy and sugar-free delights!

These brownies from Brenda Bennett of [Sugarfreemom.com](http://Sugarfreemom.com) are Lauren's favorites. (Mom makes them for her all the time!) These gooey, tasty chocolatey delights are simple to make and especially good with So Delicious vanilla bean coconutmilk non-dairy frozen dessert. They are so healthy, you can even have them for breakfast!

**Prep Time:** 10 minutes

**Cook Time:** 35 minutes

**Servings:** 16

**Ingredients:**

1 ¼ cups sugar-free chocolate chips (Lily's stevia-sweetened chips recommended)

1 15-½ ounce can of black beans, rinsed and drained (the secret ingredient!)

¼ cup carob powder or cocoa powder unsweetened

2 eggs

½ cup olive oil or coconut oil melted

¼ teaspoon cinnamon

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

¼ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon instant coffee

1 tablespoon powdered stevia

**Directions:**

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.

2. Line an 8-by-8-inch baking dish with parchment paper.

3. Spray parchment paper with nonstick cooking spray (avocado oil spray recommended).

4. Process all ingredients in a food processor or blender until smooth.

5. Pour onto parchment paper in the baking dish and smooth out batter to edges of the dish.

6. Bake 30-35 minutes until a toothpick comes out perfectly clean.

7. Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes, then remove by holding edges of the parchment paper and lifting out.

8. Sprinkle additional Lily's chips on top and transfer onto a wire rack to cool before slicing on a cutting board.

For nutritional facts search 'fudgy flourless brownies' at [www.sugarfreemom.com](http://www.sugarfreemom.com) where you will find an enticing array of other delicacies for the sugar-free, gluten-free, keto and low carb lifestyle.



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# Simple Spiced Scottish Porridge

By Dipika Patel

Many of us are welcoming the New Year with new lifestyle and eating habits. Personally, I believe it's time to clear my digestive tract and flush out those accumulated pandemic and holiday toxins. Over the holidays, I indulged in hearty breakfasts, lunches and dinners, so it is time to simplify my morning routine.

If you're feeling the same, I'd like to share one of my favorite versatile meals, spiced Scottish porridge.

Do you know the importance of presoaking your oats (porridge) and why it is supportive to your digestive system? The traditional method is to cook oats in your liquid of choice on the stovetop for about 10-20 minutes. However, this method does not naturally allow the oats to open. It also cooks out nutrients that can be damaged through excessive heat. On the other hand, soaking oats helps the starches break down and reduces the natural phytic acid. This process helps your body utilize the nutrients efficiently, absorbing vitamins, minerals and macronutrients. It also keeps you feeling fuller for longer and provides the necessary slow-releasing energy to last you till your next meal.

Not only does this particular recipe need minimal prep time, but there is no stove involved. The process is much longer; however, this will not affect you as you will be getting your beauty sleep!

2-4 servings

**Ingredients:**

- 1 ½ cups old fashioned rolled oats
- 2 cups of liquid of choice (milk or water)
- Pinch of Himalayan salt to taste
- ¼ teaspoon cardamom
- ½ teaspoon ginger powder
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 - 2 medjool dates, pitted and chopped

**Directions:**

1. Pre-soak oats by mixing oats and liquid of choice and mix; cover and refrigerate overnight.
2. Next morning, take presoaked oats and mix in all your seasonings. Add more liquid if your desired consistency has not been achieved.
3. You can either warm it on the stove or microwave or eat it cold.

This porridge keeps in the refrigerator for up to a week. If you do not add the spices, you can turn this delicious mixture into a sweet or savory dish, or you can add a couple of tablespoons into your favorite smoothie and blend for a thicker, smoother texture. Don't forget... the topping options are endless; be creative and add whatever will brighten your day!

*Dipika is a holistic health and lifestyle coach who empowers clients to activate a balanced lifestyle of mind, body and soul. She can be reached at health@loveyourlifehealthy.com or www.loveyourlifehealthy.com.*

# French Onion Soup

Warm winter comfort food

By Janet Zappala

It's a new year and time to press the reset button! I believe that we're all more than ready to begin 2021 with a clean slate and hope for a better tomorrow. The past year has been challenging for all of us (good riddance 2020!), and nourishing ourselves through the difficult times is absolutely critical.

Positive thinking has never been more powerful than over these many months; it's been the fuel for getting us through. Self-nourishment has also been a saving grace. Eating well, of course, including lots of fruits and vegetables, but also learning a new skill, accomplishing a goal, or creating a delicious recipe.

And that brings me to something that will surely lift your spirits. At the least, it will have your taste buds doing a jig.

I've often read about the healing power of cooking, and baking. And since I spend a good amount of time in the kitchen, especially over the past year, I can personally attest to that. One of my all-time favorites is a variation on a beloved classic, onion soup. Anytime you have a hankering for a delicious, satisfying and good-for-you treat, try this! Yellow onions are high in vitamin C and a good source of fiber; this recipe is also lower in salt and fat than usual, but the classic taste remains.

Serves: 2

**Ingredients:**

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup natural buttery spread (such as Earth Balance)
- 2 large yellow onions, sliced
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1½ cups low-sodium chicken broth (organic preferred)
- 1 ½ cups beef broth (organic preferred)
- ½ cup V8 juice
- 1 tablespoon low-sodium soy or gluten-free tamari sauce
- ¼ cup port wine
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper

**Directions:**

Heat the olive oil and butter alternative in a large saucepot over medium heat for 1 minute. Add the onions; stir to combine. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the crushed garlic; cook for 2 more minutes. Add the chicken and beef broths and soy sauce. Stir thoroughly. Reduce the heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Increase the heat to medium; stir in the V8 juice, port wine, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 20 more minutes, stirring occasionally. Ladle soup into bowls and enjoy.

Nutrition Facts: (Per Serving) Calories: 193, Carbohydrates: 18 grams, Fiber: 3.2 grams  
 Janet Zappala is the author of My Italian Kitchen Homestyle Recipes Made Lighter & Healthier available on www.Amazon.com. She's also a certified nutritional consultant, an Emmy award-winning news anchor and reporter, and the creator and host of Your Health Matters. Find her on Facebook @JanetZappalaYourHealthMatters.



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## The Parent Trap

By Michele T. Sarna, CFP®, AIF®

Hello, 2021! Boy, are we glad to see you. However, with an unbelievable year behind us, many are still faced with the repercussions of the extraordinary events in 2020; pointedly, the need for families to move in together. Whether you are a recent college graduate or a full household, moving home takes on a whole new meaning. Not to mention the added stress if you are also caring for your parents.

**The College Grad.** You finally graduated from college or are ready to and, until now, had plans to live on your own. Or, you may have been living on your own in some capacity and find yourself back home. It's ok. If your plans have been altered, take this time to reevaluate your financial goals. If the burden of rent is not an issue right now, budget what you can afford as a rent payment and put it in a separate savings account earmarked for future housing needs. You should also try to live lean. Don't splurge on unnecessary items; instead, try to save as much as possible until you get a big enough nest egg to fly the coop once again. Try to make the best of the situation - it's not permanent. If your parents aren't charging you rent, you may want to add some additional chores to your duties to repay them.

**Empty Nester.** As great as it is to have your kids back home, there are a handful of financial issues that arise. A budget adjustment is vital as food and utility costs increase with the additional people in the house. You may also need to check your auto insurance policy to ensure every driver under your roof is named on your policy. If the kids are still working, have them pitch in what they can, and if you feel bad about charging them room and board, set that money aside and give it back to them as a moving gift when they are ready to move out again.

**The Full House.** If you are one of the many families combining households to lower expenses, then kids, get together with your parents and set a household budget for food and utilities to share. Combining your home with theirs may require the use of a storage unit, so go through all your stuff and only keep the necessities. Pairing down will help you obtain a smaller storage unit at a cheaper price or omit one altogether. Again, if you have some income to put toward rent, start a separate savings account just for future housing needs.

**Role Reversal.** Welcoming your kids back home may have always been a thought in the back of your mind, but what if your parents suddenly need care? Pandemic or not, this situation occurs a lot. Taking care of your parents in your home may require outside help to enable you to continue to work. Depending on the financial support available, exploring assisted living or full care facilities might be necessary.

There are many planning questions for these situations, and it's important to know all your options - and the costs associated with them - before making decisions.

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## The Gift of Estate Planning

By Neil Seidel

In researching my book, *Leaving Life*, I discovered that the lack of proper estate planning is somewhat of an epidemic within the baby-boomer generation. The result of not preparing a proper will or living trust can lead to heirs, partners and children fighting over assets or possessions. Irreparable relationships are often the byproduct of settling an estate that has not clearly made provisions for distribution of real-estate, collectibles, stocks, cash and various assets that have purely sentimental value.

The children of the late Martin Luther King Jr. spent several years in the court system fighting over custody of Dr. King's Nobel Peace Prize and his traveling Bible. Most everyone has heard stories of families torn apart over money and valuable items.

Stress, anxiety and uncertainty all undermine our good health. Attempting to settle a poorly crafted will or lack of living trust can lead to years of legal headaches, including probate court, lawyers, litigation and extended stress for all parties involved.

I know. My father passed away in 1989, leaving an incomplete estate plan. Ben Seidel was an award-winning life insurance salesman for Metropolitan Life. He understood the financial world. However, he hadn't quite worked out how to provide for a disabled child without losing their state medical benefits. Unfortunately, an untimely heart attack left our family with an incomplete estate plan and many details to unravel.

I was totally unprepared for managing a team of lawyers, accountants and bookkeepers, and was thrust into the world of settling a complicated estate, facing the probate court process as well. It took two years of work and adjustments before everything was settled and the distribution of assets could go forward to our mother. After we accomplished this, I engaged a competent estate attorney to draft my mother's living trust.

Ten years later, when my mother passed, her estate was quickly settled with no hassles, problems or time delays. This process prompted me to think about the importance and obligation we all have to spare our heirs the distressing and stressful experience my family had to endure as a result of my father's incomplete estate plan.

There was also the challenge of disposing of a huge amount of "stuff." My parents rarely got rid of unused items. It was necessary to sort out and dispose of or donate tons of acquisitions. As such, I advocate for culling and disposing of one's possessions during our lifetime to save our survivors from having to go through our junk and make hard decisions to save or dispose of them.

If you own collectibles, I recommend photographing and appraising these items to help take the mystery out of dealing with the value upon your demise and perhaps aid your family in obtaining a fair price if they wish to sell them.

The question of why people avoid planning their estates, final arrangements, advanced medical directives and durable power of attorney, etc., has to do with the resistance to facing one's mortality. In our "forever young" culture, people don't want to face the fact they are going to die, and dealing with this reality can be difficult for many.

Writing a will is an acknowledgment of the reality that our life is finite. There are not unlimited years allotted to us, even if we are in the best of health, and the avoidance of preparing your affairs is a byproduct of this illusion.

Creating a proper estate plan is the compassionate and responsible course of action to take for your loved ones. In doing so, you also gain peace of mind and the knowledge that your final wishes have been made clear. I hope this message reaches a wide audience and helps many engage in this most important responsibility to themselves and their loved ones.

Neil Seidel of Palm Springs is a former teacher at Loyola Marymount University, California State University and Los Angeles City College. His book *Leaving Life* is available as an e-book on Amazon.com. Neil can be reached at guitarflight@aol.com.

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