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LIFE TIME

September 2022

KIDS & PLAY

HOW TO MAKE
MOVEMENT A
LIFELONG HABIT
p. 60

WHAT'S YOUR
APOLOGY
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OVERCOMING THE
LONELINESS
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**PARTNERS
IN STRENGTH**
A FULL-BODY
CIRCUIT FOR TWO
p. 28

Creating Connections

Actor, activist, and
children's-book author

KRISTEN BELL

is leveraging her star power
to do her part to change the world —
with authenticity, hard work,
and a whole lot of humor.

p. 16

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BIG SUGAR GRAVEL OCT. 22

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HOW TO STOCK YOUR Food Pantry

Fall is the perfect time to bulk up on pantry essentials. We've put together a handy guide of all the basics you need to create cozy, comforting meals. Download the PDF at ELmag.com/pantry.



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HAPPY DAYS

Spiritual teacher Gabrielle Bernstein talks about how therapeutic work and medication helped her emerge from trauma. ELmag.com/happydays

BOOK CLUB

Find four tips for creating and sustaining a great book club at ELmag.com/bookclub.

RESTORATIVE YOGA

These five poses may help you find a renewed sense of calm — on and off the mat. ELmag.com/restorativeyoga



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LIFE TIME
HEALTHY WAY OF LIFE



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The reality is, we need each other, and if we can find ways to connect in spite of our differences, **we'll be on the path toward the real treasure: deeper, more meaningful relationships.**



YOUR THOUGHTS?

Email us at experiencelife@experiencelife.com.

Let's Play a Game

A couple of years ago, one of my daughters' favorite activities was doing DIY treasure hunts. With their friends in the neighborhood, they followed a series of clues — created by either the supervising adult or one of the kids — that ultimately led to a prize. Sometimes it was a treat, sometimes a favorite toy, but more often than not, it was simply a random object or place.

Working together, the kids would analyze each riddle, word by word, and once they figured it out, you'd hear them all stampede to the determined destination, eager to solve the next clue. Their conversations and laughs along the way were hilarious.

Despite their age differences, which spanned about six years, the kids collaborated and cheered each other on . . . for the most part (what game doesn't have the occasional debate or disagreement?). While the older kids would read the clues, the younger ones got to find the next hint in each location; they discovered and leveraged each others' interests and knowledge as they pieced together the information, which was often pretty cryptic.

The first time I witnessed the game, I was surprised by how creative and challenging the clues were. Yet time and again, the kids connected the dots and reached the treasure — and were usually ready to start the next hunt posthaste.

In the spirit of the creativity of those treasure hunts, I've decided to take a different approach in this month's column and send you on a little hunt of your own through this issue. What follows is a series of quotes from various articles. The challenge? Find each one, jot down the page number on which it appears, then identify the common theme between them all.

Ready, set, go!

1. "Working out with a partner can help encourage, motivate, and push you past your comfort zone as you both work toward a goal together." Page ____
2. "The most important thing to ask about your giving is, *What am I trying to help with? What am I trying to address?*" Page ____
3. "Your mind is your main social organ. You can feel lonely or grateful, just from the power of your mind." Page ____
4. "Hands down, laughter is the most fulfilling outlet for connecting with others. It signals to both parties that you see the world in the same way. It's connective tissue between you and even a stranger." Page ____
5. "Sometimes it takes someone outside of us to help us see our full potential." Page ____
6. "The courage to apologize, and the wisdom to do so wisely and well, is at the heart of having good relationships and a solid self." Page ____
7. "This is a class where you start on the floor, find a collective breath, then rise together. In the darkness of the room, the rhythm of the music and pounding of feet began to synchronize, creating a physical, almost sacred alignment." Page ____

If you played along and found your way back here, I'm guessing you pretty easily picked up on the common thread of nurturing connections and understanding — with yourself, with loved ones, with your community. It's the theme that's woven through many of the articles in these pages and one of the most important factors for building and maintaining optimal health for the long term.

The reality is, we need each other, and if we can find ways to connect in spite of our differences, we'll be on the path toward the real treasure: deeper, more meaningful relationships that do so much good for our health, our happiness, and our quality of life.

JAMIE MARTIN is *Experience Life's* editor in chief, Life Time's vice president of content strategy, and cohost of the *Life Time Talks* podcast.

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Talk to Us



WITH LYME, PERSISTENCE PAYS

✉ I began my chronic-Lyme journey in 1999 (“A New Look at Chronic Lyme,” June 2022). I have been challenged by the medical system and, at 80, after many treatments and disappointing outcomes, I am doing well despite still testing positive on several vector tests by IGeneX. Bartonella was the last, and it was very challenging, because many medical people still don’t know of it.

Kudos to the researchers who share their findings. My contribution to those currently facing chronic Lyme: Never give up! And do your research! I’ll be sharing this great article with every practitioner I meet.

Dorothy B.

POWERFUL TESTIMONY

✉ My heart is expanding with understanding today since reading Jamie Martin’s article “Confessions of an Imperfect Eater” (May 2022). I share so many of the challenges that she describes in her powerful personal testimony.

I was an overweight child, teen, and young adult who struggled with mindless eating, emotional eating, and sugar addiction. Years of on-and-off dieting prompted a rebellious relationship with food that produced a binge-eating disorder.

I’ve struggled with this for most of my 52 years.

I am also a graduate of the Institute for the Psychology of Eating. Studying with Marc David, whom Jamie mentions in her article, has helped me heal my relationship with food and, frankly, save my own life. I am a wounded healer in forever-vigilant recovery. I learned the tools of mind-body-spirit balance that I had been sadly missing my whole life. I had been living in a checked-out state and using food to cope, numb, soothe, and medicate when my life got complicated, which was often.

I am sending hugs and a big thank-you to Jamie for her vulnerability and sharing. These challenges are very real and are experienced by so many other amazing people. Reading stories like hers empowers others with the hope that they are not alone and really can heal from within.

Tracy D.

FITNESS FEEDBACK

✉ I enjoyed your article about how to make the Murph accessible for everyone, at all fitness levels (“The Murph Challenge,” May 2022). It’s a great workout that holds a lot of powerful meaning. However, I was disappointed that the article doesn’t mention that it was

created by CrossFit, and that it doesn’t mention its inspiration, Lt. Michael Murphy, by name.
Becky S.

We understand your concern. Because the Murph has become more mainstream and its origins more widely known in the fitness community in recent years, we chose to focus this workout article on how to make the challenge more accessible for more people. We’ve updated the online version of the article to include more details about the event’s background. You can read it at ELmag.com/murph.

f I’ve used compression sleeves, and I feel like they didn’t do anything positive for my body (“Get Compressed,” May 2022). I have found that being hydrated is best for recovery, and it’s been that way for a long time. To me, compression culture seems like a fad that will be gone soon enough.

Bryan R.

THE BLUE BELOW

🗣️ Thank you to Elizabeth Millard for her beautiful work exploring the oceans and coral reefs with Reef Life Foundation (“Climate Champions,” April 2022). Many inland people are not as aware of how every person, fish, or plant is helped by a clean and healthy ocean. We are grateful for her elegance in writing and opening the blue below for your readers.

Melody B., Reef Life Foundation

HEALTHY MOTIVATIONS

🗣️ When it comes to teaching kids how to cook, knowing what they can handle based on their age is important (“Young Chefs,” May 2022). This helps you save time while keeping them safe in the kitchen.

Carola J.

🗣️ Thanks for your article on cycling in the April 2022 issue (“Healthy Revolutions”). It encouraged me to dust off my bike, adjust the seat, pump up the tires (and my motivation), and get moving to find my balance in life.

@cdn_mcgee

🗣️ Great info (“A Simple Secret to Better Running,” April 2022). I’m curious if music is more than a distraction and maybe a good pacesetter. I’d feel curious to test what other distractions work to enhance running — humming? I feel compelled to sing to exercise my lungs while running.

Josine P.



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Letters to the Editor

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Just Sprint!

All-out sprint intervals can boost your fitness — and transform your body at a cellular level.

Sprint-interval training (SIT) just may be the most efficient form of cardio.

But there's a catch.

SIT is the lesser-known cousin of high-intensity interval training (HIIT). Both are characterized by short, fast bursts of intense exercise interspersed with periods of rest, yet there's one key difference: During a HIIT workout, you push yourself to 80 to 85 percent of your maximum heart rate (MHR); in a SIT session, you approach 100 percent.

These all-out dashes of 30 seconds or less are followed by a two-minute

recovery. The intervals are anaerobic: Your body needs more than just oxygen, and additional fueling comes mostly from stored carbs.

That's the catch. SIT is extremely effective and efficient, but it requires your full effort to reap the rewards — and sprinting like there's a tiger hot on your tail is not for everyone.

"Sprinting is nature's way of telling your body to toughen up and rise to the occasion," explains Life Time national education manager Abrea Wooten. "The research shows that sprinting changes us on a cellular level."

According to a 2019 meta-analysis of 75 PubMed studies, SIT sprinters saw a 91 percent higher reduction in body-fat percentage compared with a control group that engaged in moderate-intensity continuous training, even though the sprinters spent 71 percent less time working out. And SIT exercisers lost 39 percent more body fat than HIIT participants, though they spent 60 percent less time exercising.

Comparing SIT and HIIT, two recent meta-analyses published in *Sports Medicine* concluded that the training methods are similarly effective in boosting VO₂ max (the maximum amount of oxygen your

body can process). SIT workouts, however, required less time to produce those results.

Among SIT's other benefits is improved mitochondrial biogenesis. The power centers in your cells, mitochondria convert food and body fat into energy. Mitochondrial biogenesis refers to the growth and division of existing mitochondria.

Whether your goal is better health or improved athletic performance, you need plenty of powerfully functioning mitochondria. Because of its intensity, SIT prompts the body to produce more mitochondria by creating more demand for energy inside your cells.

SIT also improves insulin sensitivity (an important marker for diabetes) and hormonal response, Wooten says.

Plus, it increases human growth hormone (HGH) as well as testosterone. HGH's primary role involves cell regeneration, but it can also increase caloric burn and switch your body's fuel source from carbs to fat. Testosterone aids metabolic health, contributes to muscle gain, and supports cognition, among other benefits. HGH and testosterone levels decline as we age; exercise is one way we can support them.

"Human beings aren't designed to sit all day. From physical health to mood to social connectivity, exercise is important on so many levels," says Wooten. "Sprint-interval training is the closest thing we have to a fountain of youth."

— JULIE DULUDE



Sprinting is nature's way of telling your body **to toughen up and rise to the occasion.**



GET STARTED

New to sprinting? Try the eight-week beginner program at ELmag.com/SIT.





Why Magnesium?

The body contains more magnesium than almost any other mineral. Involved in more than 300 different enzymatic reactions, magnesium affects how we feel and function every day. Yet most of us don't get enough of it; among nutrient deficiencies, only vitamin D is more common.

"It's hard to find a body system that magnesium doesn't impact," says Life Time master trainer and nutritionist Samantha McKinney, RD, CPT. The mineral aids energy production, blood-sugar control, bone health, nerve conduction, muscle control, heart health, cognition, mood, and more.

"If someone's even a little bit low in magnesium, all of those systems are going to be impacted. And you can imagine that there's a whole trickle-down effect within each one of those areas."

To optimize your health, McKinney offers these three tips for increasing your intake of this vital mineral.



No. 1

EAT WELL. Dark leafy greens, beans, nuts, and legumes are all good magnesium sources. Still, food alone probably won't enable you to reach optimal levels if you are under stress or are active, or your diet includes a lot of added sugar, McKinney says.



No. 2

SUPPLEMENT YOUR DIET. Look for high-quality, chelated supplements; McKinney favors magnesium glycinate, magnesium malate, and magnesium threonate. They're more easily absorbed than cheaper supplement forms, such as magnesium oxide, which can cause digestive distress.



No. 3

TEST – BUT DON'T RELY SOLELY ON TESTING. You can measure magnesium in your red blood cells, but only about 1 percent of the mineral in your body is in the blood, so tests don't provide a complete picture. Magnesium supplementation is generally considered safe, and most people can take it regularly. (If you experience loose stools, scale back your dosage a little bit.)

— EXPERIENCE LIFE STAFF



HEAR MORE ABOUT MAGNESIUM

Tune in to the *Life Time Talks* podcast to discover more details about this mineral at [ELmag.com/magnesiumpodcast](https://www.ELmag.com/magnesiumpodcast).

Cataract Surgery: A NEW VIEW

Some 20 million Americans age 40 and older harbor a cataract in at least one eye, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It's a leading cause of blindness, but recent research suggests it may also contribute to depression and even dementia.

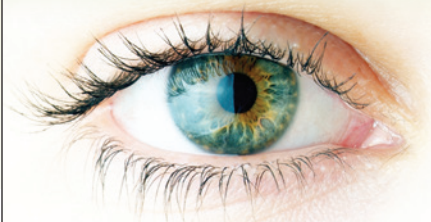
An analysis published in *Scientific Reports* in 2020 examined outcomes for 116,629 Taiwanese patients who'd received a cataract diagnosis between 2001 and 2015. During an average follow-up period of 7.8 years, Tzu Chi University researchers found that those who had undergone surgery to remove their cataracts were 25 percent less likely to develop depression than their counterparts who had not had surgery.

In 2021, Cecilia Lee, MD, MS, and her University of Washington colleagues reviewed a long-term memory study involving 3,038 seniors with cataracts but no symptoms of dementia. Nearly 1,400 of them eventually underwent cataract surgery, and researchers found that this group's risk of receiving a dementia diagnosis in the succeeding years was 29 percent lower than that of those who avoided the procedure. The results were reported in *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

Interestingly, the cognitive benefits did not accrue to those who underwent surgery to repair glaucoma. "People might say that those who are healthy enough to have surgery are healthier in general, and therefore less likely to develop dementia in any case," Lee tells the *New York Times*. "But when we see no association in glaucoma surgery, that supports the idea that it isn't just eye surgery, or being healthy enough to undergo surgery, but rather that the effect is specific to cataract surgery."

The mechanics at work here remain mysterious, but the results of both studies suggest that cataract surgery may offer patients a clearer view to a better quality of life.

— CRAIG COX



THE CASE FOR TEACHING MUSIC TO KIDS

The computer boom of the past 30 years sparked a surprising side effect — parenting advice. Teach your children coding, experts recommended: Even preschoolers will benefit, in daily problem-solving and computational thinking, as well as in their future careers.

Recent research, though, suggests that if you want smarter kids, teaching them music is important.

This advice may sound like an old song, but a 2021 study published in the *Journal of Neuroscience* zeroes in on how music shapes functional and structural brain networks.

Stanford and University of Zurich researchers recruited 103 student, amateur, and professional musicians and 50 nonmusicians, with nearly even numbers of females and males, and with a median age of 25. The musicians had begun instruction between ages 4 and 9 and trained for 13 to 25 years.

Comparing brain scans of musicians and nonmusicians conducted with fMRI and diffusion-weighted imaging, scientists found that musical brains had more robust structural and functional connections between and within brain hemispheres.

“Our results suggest that long-term musical training is associated with robust changes in large-scale brain networks,” the researchers write. Learning music early in life makes the brain more inter- and intrac connected by stimulating neural plasticity.

An earlier study published in the same journal measured greater gray-matter volume in the motor, auditory, and visual-spatial brain regions of professional musicians compared with amateurs and nonmusicians.

A metareview of studies published in *Frontiers in Neuroscience* similarly found that musically trained children displayed better reading ability, verbal memory, second-language pronunciation accuracy, and executive function. The researchers attribute this to the focus such training requires — particularly the study of timing and rhythm.

— MICHAEL DREGNI



A Daily Aspirin

MAY BRING MORE RISKS THAN BENEFITS

An aspirin a day keeps a heart attack away — that’s been the conventional thinking for most of the past 30 years among millions of Americans with no history of heart disease.

But a 2022 U.S. Preventive Services Task Force report in *JAMA* cautions heart-healthy people over 60 that starting to take a daily aspirin may present more risks than benefits.

The task-force report states “with moderate certainty” that taking aspirin for the primary prevention of cardiovascular disease (CVD) events in those over 60 years has “no net benefit.”

Such a shift in the prevailing recommendation could take time, though. “Aspirin therapy” for preventing a first heart attack became common in the 1990s. As of 2019, a third of Americans age 40 or older were taking aspirin as a CVD preventive measure, according to a 2021 study in the *American Journal of Preventive Cardiology*. Among those 70 or older, 45.6 percent took aspirin for primary prevention.

“Many people don’t even think of aspirin as medication — they think of it as more like a vitamin,” Amit Khera, MD, director of the preventive cardiology program at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center (who is not a task-force panelist), tells the *New York Times*. “But just because it’s over-the-counter doesn’t mean it’s not a drug with benefits and risks.”

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force is an independent, volunteer panel of 16 experts in disease prevention and evidence-based medicine, and its recommendation is not an official U.S. Department of Health and Human Services position.

The task force last issued a recommendation approving low-dose

aspirin use as a preventive measure for CVD in 2016. But the panel shifted its thinking after commissioning a systematic review as well as a modeling study to assess the balance of benefits and risks. This review included assessment of three recent clinical trials involving more than 47,000 older adults.

Two of the studies revealed no notable reduction in heart attacks or strokes among participants, but they did show an increased risk of internal bleeding. The third study, focused on people diagnosed with diabetes, reported a slightly lower risk of cardiovascular events along with a higher chance of bleeding.

Major internal bleeding occurred in only 1 percent or fewer of the trial subjects, notes Allan Brett, MD, an internist at the University of Colorado, in a *JAMA* editorial on the task force recommendations. But the risks increased among older participants.

“These are serious bleeds,” Brett explains. “They can require transfusions. They can put people in the hospital.”

For those ages 40 to 59, the decision to take low-dose aspirin for prevention of CVD “should be an individual one,” the task force states. “Evidence indicates that the net benefit of aspirin use in this group is small. Persons who are not at increased risk for bleeding and are willing to take low-dose aspirin daily are more likely to benefit.”

If you’ve been taking a daily aspirin as a preventive measure, Khera suggests consulting with your doctor about discontinuing the regimen. But don’t stress about it, he adds. “For people [who are] generally healthy, with few risk factors, it’s reasonable to just stop.”

— CC

After a Suicide



Suicide rates have risen sharply in the past two decades, and it's now the second-leading cause of death among 10- to 34-year-olds. It's particularly prevalent among veterans, Native Americans, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and rural residents.

Whether suicide rates increased during the pandemic is unclear, but evidence suggests that suicide *attempts* have risen, especially among the young. Emergency-room visits related to suspected suicide attempts jumped 31 percent from 2019 to 2020 among individuals age 12 to 17 — and 50 percent among teenage girls.

Such statistics are alarming, but they come with a sort of silver lining: Our society openly acknowledges suicide more than ever before. There are now hotlines, billboards, and public-service announcements, plus support groups and awareness-raising events. Stigma remains — and may never entirely fade — but it's at least being discussed.

Things weren't always this way.

“Nobody Talked About It”

In the years following her son Steven's suicide in 1977, Marilyn Koenig began connecting with other families who had lost a loved one to suicide.

“In those days, nobody talked about it,” she says. She recalls asking one administrator about their high school's suicide-intervention resources, only to be told, “That sort of thing doesn't happen here.”

“At the time, even discussions about depression were rare,” she adds.

Koenig and her friend Chris Moon, who'd also lost a teenage son to suicide, founded a nonprofit, Friends for Survival, to offer much-needed bereavement support and resources to other survivors.

Before this, Koenig says, “people would just cocoon in their own grief.”

Koenig later went on to join the newly formed Suicide Prevention Action Network USA, which successfully lobbied Congress for suicide-prevention funding.

Grieving a Death by Suicide

There are no shortcuts to grieving a suicide. Yet allowing yourself to fully experience that pain is an essential part of healing.

Gary Roe, a grief specialist and author of *Aftermath: Picking Up the Pieces After a Suicide*, advises the bereaving to name and accept their feelings, but not to confuse those feelings with facts (for example, feeling guilty doesn't mean one *is* guilty). He also encourages survivors to accept that they have questions that may never be answered.

“Our minds naturally search for order. Though we find no satisfying answers, our hearts must ask the questions,” he says.

Survivors need not — and should not — go it alone. Koenig learned the importance of peer support through both personal and professional experience. “It's so important to talk to others in the same situation. It is

difficult for people who haven't lost someone to suicide to understand,” she says.

Still, people don't have to have personal experience with suicide loss to help survivors with their healing. Assisting with housework or childcare, providing flexible time off, or simply offering space for them to talk, cry, or do something unrelated to their loss can be important forms of support.

Still, Roe cautions that some people are well-meaning but ultimately unhelpful. “The average person doesn't know how to respond. In their desire to do something helpful, they often utter things that belittle our pain or minimize our loss,” he says.

Others go into “fix-it mode,” focusing on advice, while some may even be critical or judgmental. Roe recommends that the bereaving limit their exposure to such individuals, focusing instead on “safe people.”

“Safe people meet us where we are, as we are,” he writes.

Nothing can ever fully take away the pain of losing a loved one to suicide. But allowing oneself to feel whatever emotions arise, lean on others, and practice self-compassion can help ease the journey. 🧡

— ALEXANDRA SMITH, MA, LPCC

Dial 988: SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

In July 2022, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (originally launched in 2005) established its 988 hotline, a 24-hour mental-health version of 911 staffed by trained counselors. The service comes at a crucial time. Demand for mental-health services far outweighs the available resources: Over half of U.S. counties don't have a single licensed psychiatrist, and studies suggest that the nation will face a shortage of mental-health professionals for at least the next three years.

Callers are typically connected to a counselor within 90 seconds and can choose from voice, text, and live-chat options. Culturally specific services for veterans and Spanish speakers are also available.

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BOOK AUTHOR
KRISTEN BELL
WANTS TO SAVE THE
WORLD — OR AT LEAST
MAKE IT A BETTER
PLACE FOR ALL.

SAVED BY THE BELL

To say that Kristen Bell is one of the hardest-working women in Hollywood is not an exaggeration. The 42-year-old performer has been working in the film and TV industries for more than 20 years. Her TV credits include *Veronica Mars* and *The Good Place*, as well as her latest, the Netflix miniseries *The Woman in the House Across the Street From the Girl in the Window*. She's starred in a number of films, including *Bad Moms* and *Queenpins*.

Since 2002, Bell has also been lending her voice to video games; both the original and the current reboot of *Gossip Girl*; and animated features, most memorably as Anna in Disney's *Frozen* and *Frozen II*.

Which is why it's so surprising — and yet utterly charming — that the überbusy actor, singer, activist, and entrepreneur chooses to do our Zoom interview while lying cozily in bed with her rescue dog, Whiskey. She is snuggling under the covers with the three-legged pooch (“our tripod,” as she affectionately calls him) and explains that “this little thing needs a lot of cuddles today,” which she happily provides during our conversation.

Bell has been giving animals much-needed love for most of her life. Born and raised in the Detroit suburb of Huntington Woods, she discovered her affinity for animals at an early age, became a vegetarian when she was just 11 years old, and is an advocate for animal rights, fostering, and adoption. (She also has another rescue dog, named Frank.)

When she's not saving fur babies' lives, she and three friends — Ravi Patel, Todd Grinnell, and fellow *Veronica Mars* actor Ryan Devlin — are helping human babies and children with This Saves Lives, the snack company they launched in 2013. It's a line of nutritious snack bars, granola, and oatmeal, with an altruistic motive: to help end child hunger.

“Every time you buy a bar, This Saves Lives donates a Plumpy'Nut [a packet of peanut-based paste enriched with vitamins and minerals], which is a treatment for severe acute malnutrition for kids across the globe,” explains Bell. This Saves Lives has donated more than 30 million packets of food worldwide.

When Bell and her husband, Dax Shepard — actor and host of the *Armchair Expert* podcast — started their own family (they have two young daughters), they realized there was a huge need for a less expensive line of high-quality baby merchandise.

“We were buying premium products and not looking at the receipts,” she recalls. “The irony of growing up in Detroit and experiencing this as adults was not lost on us. We believe that all babies deserve the best, and all parents need access to affordable premium products. There were many great options out there that were either sustainable or inexpensive, but no one was offering both.”

Hence, their company Hello Bello was born, offering affordable, plant-based baby products, including diapers, wipes, cleansers, and personal-care items like baby powder and sunscreen.

Hello Bello has also established an online community of parents who can

help each other financially. “We built something called the Diaper Registry Fund,” Bell explains. “Basically, you go to hellowello.com and you can either post a need or you can find a person in need and donate to friends and family or a random person.”

Hello Bello recently expanded its reach and created a Ukraine Relief Fund, supplying 200,000 products like diapers and other essentials to various organizations in the war-torn country.

As if she weren't busy enough, Bell has also added “children's-book author” to her résumé. In 2020, she and her longtime friend Benjamin Hart released *The World Needs More Purple People*, an instant *New York Times* bestseller that gives young readers a five-step road map to becoming a “purple person” — someone who sees similarities before they see differences.

“If you look at the map of the United States, it's divided by blue and red states,” she says. “But really the whole country is those two colors combined, which makes it purple.”

They sought to encourage children to find common ground with others while accepting and celebrating their diversity and differences of opinion. This summer, Bell and Hart released a follow-up volume, *The World Needs More Purple Schools*, just in time for back-to-school season.

We curled up with Bell and Whiskey to talk about the book's five simple yet profound steps to becoming a purple person and why these ideas are as useful and necessary for adults as they are for the children in our lives.



MY MAIN GOAL NOW IS TO HELP OTHERS ACHIEVE THEIR DREAMS. I'VE HAD A LOT OF SUCCESS IN MY LIFE. **NOW'S THE TIME WHEN I START TO BE OF SERVICE.”**

Q&A

WITH
**KRISTEN
BELL**



EXPERIENCE LIFE | What inspired you to write a children's book?

KRISTEN BELL | In 2019, Ben Hart and my family were sitting around the table discussing the state of the world and, prepandemic, the only topic on the table was politics. For lack of a better description, everyone at the table was voting the same. The conversation was very much about "us" and "them," and I don't like how harmful these perspectives can be.

Then Ben said, "I've had an idea for a book called *The World Needs More Purple People*," and I knew instantly what he was talking about. The book came together quickly and easily because it was a topic he and I had been thinking about in our social circle for quite some time.

EL | How did you decide what the five rules would be?

KB | We wanted verbiage to share with our kids that taught about commonalities and our collective humanity. So we created these five pillars that really no one could disagree with. I dare you to find someone who thinks working hard is bad or laughing a lot is terrible.

EL | The first step is "Ask (Really Great) Questions." How do you encourage your daughters to be inquisitive?

KB | Asking questions has always been the smartest thing that I do. I teach my kids that by modeling that behavior.

We also talk about finding an expert. If you want to learn how to do a cartwheel, find an expert. "Which one of Mommy's friends was a cheerleader? Oh, Monica! Let's ask Monica how to do a cartwheel." You find someone with more information than you, and you make that cool.

EL | One of the things we love about you and Dax is how funny you are. No shocker, then, that the second step is "Laugh (a Lot)." Why is that important?

KB | Hands down, laughter is the most fulfilling outlet for connecting with others. It signals to both parties that you see the world in the same way. It's connective tissue between you and even a stranger. Any shared experiences bring us closer together, but laughter is one of the easiest to accomplish. Shared laughter is a great unifier.

It's also stress-reducing, and there's nothing bad about that! Dax and I make fun of each other all the time. But there's a safety net and trust there. We laugh at each other constantly because we try not to take ourselves too seriously.

EL | The third rule in your book is "Use Your Voice (and Don't Lose Your Voice)." This can be especially challenging for women. How do you encourage your daughters to speak up?

KB | Well, it's not like pulling teeth, because they are just like their daddy — born on the debate team. How I work on that is when they make a case, like wanting to have chocolate, I encourage them to hone their argument skills, because I am open to listening to anything. If they say they should get chocolate because "I really want it," that's not a good argument. But if they say, "Here's how many vegetables I ate yesterday and here's how many I plan to eat tomorrow," then we can talk about having a chocolate bar.

EL | We've already established how hard you work, so the fourth step, "Work Hard (Super-Duper Hard)," is in your wheelhouse. Do you ever say no to new projects?

KB | I say no a lot more now. In fact, when we get off this call, I may never find another project that I want to do again. Who knows? I think I'm

industrious and hardworking. I want to work with people I like on something that's stimulating, to bounce ideas off people, to work on a great final product. Being a good team player is fun to me.

But my main goal now is to help others achieve their dreams. I've had a lot of success in my life. Now's the time when I start to be of service. It makes me feel so much better.

EL | The final rule, "Just Be (the Real) You," is about being true to yourself, but it's also about accepting other people's authenticity and their differences. Is that something we can learn?

KB | I think so. We are prone to go toward things that are familiar or similar. Much like eating broccoli isn't your first thought in the morning, sometimes things that are good for you aren't your first choice. There's a saying I like: "You're not responsible for your first thought, but you are responsible for your second thought and first action."

Diversity betters everyone, but you do have to fight your evolution to figure out why it's important. Once you start to identify what authenticity means to you — your sense of self, who you are, what you value — then you have a much easier time encouraging others to do the same.

I am a people pleaser. I came out of the womb looking at the doctor asking, "Was that OK for you?" I constantly have to remind myself to be authentic, and to not get angry at myself for thinking about the other person's perspective, because I think that's a superpower!

But I will remind myself that *my* perspective matters as well, and that I can bring my most authentic self to whatever interaction I'm having.

EL | Your new book, *The World Needs More Purple Schools*, has just been released. Why a focus on schools?

KB | The classroom was the next logical place to share the message. School is a place for kids to explore their differences, and we hope it teaches educators that kids will do just that. We can build anything good with these five pillars: being curious, working hard, using your voice, laughing a lot, and, the ultimate one, being authentic. The best way to sum it up is, you're the only *you* we've got. 🌱

CLAIRE CONNORS is a New York-based writer.

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How to Thrive Anyway

Whatever your situation, incorporating five minutes of meditation into your day can improve your well-being.

BY **SPIWE JEFFERSON, CMP, JD**

Many factors affect our well-being, from smaller daily life stressors to larger social determinants of health — think socioeconomic status, race, gender, and others. All of us can experience the benefits of mindfulness despite these challenges and disparities.

Whatever your situation, giving yourself space to incorporate just five minutes of meditation into your day can improve your physical, mental, and emotional health.

Mindfulness is living in the present moment without judgment and without allowing external conditions to

overwhelm you. Cultivating the ability to calmly confront your emotions — whatever they may be — can increase self-compassion and care; it helps address feelings of insecurity, unworthiness, and other nagging concerns.

In the previous issue, we introduced “FEETS,” an acronym I developed to describe five key elements of meditation to help you jump-start or refine your practice. (Revisit that at ELmag.com/feets.)

Now, build upon your practice by adding RAIN, a mindfulness technique developed by meditation teacher Michele McDonald, to lean in to your emotions.

RECOGNIZE the emotions you are experiencing in the moment.

ACCEPT whatever emotions are here for you right now. If old mental habits arise, such as trying to hide from your emotions, gently set those habits aside and sit with your feelings.

INVESTIGATE your emotions with curiosity and don't judge yourself for experiencing them. Where do they manifest and how do they feel? A knot or butterflies in your stomach? A weight in your chest? Blood rising in your neck or ears? What else?

NONIDENTIFICATION: Negative emotions can overwhelm us when we ruminate and become fully submerged in them. Intentionally separating yourself from your emotions allows you to observe them more clearly, explore whether they represent your truth, and make more objective decisions about them.

SPIWE JEFFERSON, CMP, JD, is the author of *Mindful in 5* and host of the *Mindful in 5* podcast.

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Thanks to painstaking physical therapy, personal training, and perseverance, Oliver Jack is once again getting out on the green (March 2022).



A Miracle and a Mulligan

After a near-fatal accident, a promising young golfer finds the support he needs to one day fully return to the game he loves — and pay it forward.

BY **OLIVER JACK**

I was an incoming freshman at the University of Colorado in the summer of 2018, thankful to have received a full golf scholarship. I'd played varsity golf all four years of high school, won the Colorado State Championship for my division as a junior, and set my school's record for the lowest round in its history. I dreamed of playing on the PGA (Professional Golfers' Association) Tour.

But on July 22, 2018, I lost the ability to reach for the future I'd imagined. In a matter of seconds, my life changed forever when a drunk driver ran a red light and hit me as I walked across an intersection.

Of course, the miracle is that I have a future at all — no one expected me to live through the night. My face and skull were shattered, as was my elbow. I had severe bleeding and swelling in my brain. I was in a coma for a month.

Everyone celebrated after I regained consciousness, yet I was unaware of what had happened. My parents had to explain that I had suf-

fered a traumatic brain injury. I would need to learn to walk, talk, and eat again. I couldn't believe that someone's momentary carelessness would continue to affect me every day.

Recovery and Reconciliation

After my surgeries at Denver Health, I was transferred to nearby Craig Hospital, where I spent three months in rehabilitation, followed by another year of outpatient treatment. The next step of my journey took me to a longer-term rehab facility in Omaha, Neb., for six months.

So while my friends headed to college shortly after my accident, I was relearning how to feed and clothe myself. As painstaking as it was to learn these mundane tasks again, I struggled even more with reconciling who I was now with the elite athlete I had been.

When I was a kid, basketball was my sport — until knee pain forced me out of the game. After that, I took a couple of golf lessons when I turned 12, and then I entered my first tourna-

ment. There was only one other person in my age bracket. We both shot 91 on the first day, but I shot 89 the second day and won. I was so pumped! I fell in love with golf then and there.

Having a natural talent for the sport was helpful, but I worked hard to win the high school state title. My dream was to play in college, and I thought the University of Colorado in Boulder would be a great step to my ultimate goal — the PGA Tour. I trained seven days a week to get there.

All that changed after the accident. On March 7, 2019, I went with my physical therapist, occupational therapist, and speech therapist to the PGA Tour Superstore in Greenwood Village, Colo., to hit balls. They had to hold me because I couldn't keep my balance while swinging. Even so, I was glad to try, and grateful for the goofy picture we took.

For a while after that, it was more painful to play and not live up to my earlier potential, so I turned my focus to other things.

Moving Forward

In the summer of 2020, I enrolled in an online cognitive-retraining program at Coastline College in California. The classes met four days a week for three hours.

We spent the first two hours of each session on cognition — retraining the brain to do tasks that once had come easy and learning how to compensate for or repair damaged executive-function skills, such as organization, time management, and problem-solving.

In our third hour, we worked through psychosocial issues in groups, supporting each other through our experiences as brain-injury survivors. It was this part of the program that helped teach me how to persevere whenever I felt stuck in social situations.

Before I enrolled, I would often become frustrated if I couldn't communicate as well as I'd expected. Since graduating from the program in December 2021, I'm better able to express myself, and I'm more patient with myself.

Earlier that year, I also joined Life Time and started working with a personal trainer twice a week and a Pilates instructor once a week. I arrived with clear goals: I wanted to improve my gait, relearn how to jump, improve my hand-eye coordination, and be able to play golf. Most of all, I wanted to feel like an athlete — to challenge my body and see what I could do with it again.

Finding My Center

I'd previously tried Pilates to improve my golf game, but it became critical to my training after the accident. The Cadillac, a bed with a metal frame around it to which you can attach springs, bars, ropes, and pulleys, is particularly important because

From left: Oliver at Denver Health a couple of days after his accident in July 2018; trying to walk again on October 3, 2018.



the support and resistance of its springs help me move in ways I'm not always able to on my own. Though I can walk, sometimes my gait isn't as even as I'd like it to be. Working on the Cadillac re-creates a better gait pattern that I can practice without bearing weight.

My personal trainer, Alex Jordan, and my Pilates instructor, Devon Janclaus, each worked with me on balance and stability. Devon focused on helping me use all the parts of my body together. Some exercises involved holding a squishy ball between my legs that reminded me to engage my center. I didn't have much control on my right side when we first started because my brain wasn't signaling that leg to move. If I dropped the ball during an exercise, it meant I didn't have the alignment and control I needed.

Alex and Devon both encouraged me and helped me do things I thought I'd never do again — like jumping. I was scared to try when I started training, but after four months, I could jump again. They boosted my confidence and gave me space to have fun. Recovery can be lonely; with Devon and Alex, I found a sense of community and a positive outlook.

Back Swinging

Since I began working with Alex and Devon, I've gained enough balance to swing a club on my own. Now I'm focusing on building distance.

There are many things I'm working to improve, but overall, the biggest change in my golf game is playing without my ego. Although Oliver 1.0 could never do what Oliver 2.0 can do: play golf and miss the ball, laugh it off, and not be frustrated.

Some days are better than others. I still struggle with some spasticity, and I'm working to regain more independence by reclaiming my driver's license. Meanwhile, I keep working on my hand-eye coordination and improving my reaction time.

For so long, I felt like I was stuck. I was always thinking about therapy, but never thinking about what to do *after* therapy. After experiencing the ways Alex and Devon challenged me and helped make me a better person, I've started thinking about my future, and I've decided that I want to become a personal trainer. I want to return the same generosity to others who need the motivation. 📌

Oliver's Top 3 Success Strategies

1

FOCUS ON THE NOW.
“You can hope and dream about the future, but ultimately the only thing you have control over is the here and now,” says Oliver.

2

SEIZE THE DAY.
“As I come further out of my injury, I realize giving my all every single day, both physically and mentally, is as much the right way to live as an approach to rehabilitation.”

3

KEEP TRYING.
“Falling short of your goal isn't failing so long as you try again.”



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A man in a brown raincoat and headphones is pushing a black medical transport case in the rain at night. The case has a red label that reads "HEART DONATED HUMAN ORGAN/TISSUE for TRANSPLANT NYU LANGONE NYC NY HANDLE WITH CARE". The background is dark with green and blue lights.

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— Amber McMillan,
Life Time senior vice president of
training and weight loss

Page
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Discover how this philosophy can take your training experience — and your results — to new heights.



Partners in STRENGTH

Find a pal and work through this full-body strength circuit together.

BY **MOLLY SCHELPER**

Want to double the enjoyment of your workout? Double the participants! Enlisting the camaraderie of a friend can offer an extra jolt of motivation for your exercise efforts.

“Working out with a partner can help encourage, motivate, and push you past your comfort zone as you both work toward a goal together,” says Cassandra Colosimo, studio classes instructor at Life Time Woodbridge in Vaughan, Ont.

Colosimo and fellow Life Time Woodbridge master trainer Maral Habibi partnered up to develop this body-weight circuit.

“The workout is focused on building full-body strength, targeting all muscle groups efficiently and effectively to promote muscle growth while also improving endurance,” says Colosimo.

Grab a friend and tackle this routine indoors, outdoors, or wherever you have the space — all you need is your buddy and a timer.

THE WORKOUT

THIS CIRCUIT WORKOUT features four pairs of exercises and a fifth exercise the partners do together: While partner 1 performs one exercise in a pair, partner 2 performs the other. They’ll then swap moves, before resting for the set amount of time. The partners finish the round together doing the same core exercise, and then rest for one full minute before returning to the top of the circuit.

Perform four rounds of the full circuit to complete a 30-minute workout.

Solo exercisers can adapt this workout by following the intervals on their own. Modify the Plank Shoulder Taps by placing your feet on the floor or by elevating them on a sturdy box or bench. For the Hop-Over Burpees, jump over a cone, box, or other manageable obstacle.

1. SQUAT HOLD AND JUMP LUNGE

Partner 1: Squat Hold x 30 seconds
Partner 2: Jump Lunge x 30 seconds

Then . . .

Partner 1: Jump Lunge x 30 seconds
Partner 2: Squat Hold x 30 seconds
Both: Rest x 30 seconds

2. WALL SIT AND PLANK SHOULDER TAPS

Partner 1: Wall Sit x 30 seconds
Partner 2: Plank Shoulder Taps x 30 seconds

Then . . .

Partner 1: Plank Shoulder Taps x 30 seconds
Partner 2: Wall Sit x 30 seconds
Both: Rest x 30 seconds

3. MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS AND SIDE SHUFFLES

Partner 1: Mountain Climbers x 30 seconds
Partner 2: Side Shuffles x 30 seconds

Then . . .

Partner 1: Side Shuffles x 30 seconds
Partner 2: Mountain Climbers x 30 seconds
Both: Rest x 30 seconds

4. HOP-OVER BURPEES AND PLANK HOLD

Partner 1: Hop-Over Burpees x 30 seconds
Partner 2: Plank Hold x 30 seconds

Then . . .

Partner 1: Plank Hold x 30 seconds
Partner 2: Hop-Over Burpees x 30 seconds
Both: Rest x 30 seconds

5. PARTNER V-SITS

Both: Partner V-Sits x 30 seconds

Then . . .

Both: Rest 60 seconds, then return to the top of the circuit and repeat for a total of four rounds.

THE MOVES

1. SQUAT HOLD AND JUMP LUNGE

Squat Hold

Bend your knees and hips to squat down until your thighs are about parallel to the floor. Sit back and hold a strong posture with your arms out for 30 seconds.



Jump Lunge

Lower into a split squat, being careful not to let your front knee go past your toes.

Jump and, in midair, switch your feet so you land with the opposite leg in front. Alternate sides.



2. WALL SIT AND PLANK SHOULDER TAPS

Wall Sit

Lower your body into a squat position with your upper back against a wall for 30 seconds.



Plank Shoulder Taps

From an all-fours position, step your feet back onto the thighs of your partner.

With your legs and arms straight and your ankles held by your partner, engage your core and alternate tapping opposite shoulders.



3. MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS AND SIDE SHUFFLES



Mountain Climbers

Assume a high plank position.

Flex one foot and drive that knee toward your chest, keeping your other foot on the ground. Alternate sides.

Side Shuffles

Stand with your feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart and knees bent.

Side-shuffle several yards, and then return. Do not allow your heels to click together or feet to cross.



4.

HOP-OVER BURPEES AND PLANK HOLD

Hop-Over Burpees

While your partner holds a plank position, jump laterally over their body (A-B).

On landing, squat down, place your hands on the floor, and jump your legs back to land in a plank (C-E).

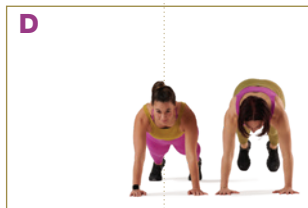
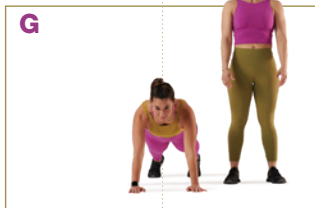
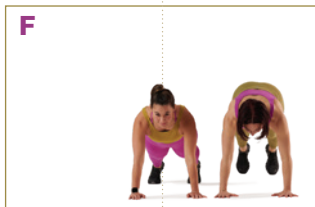
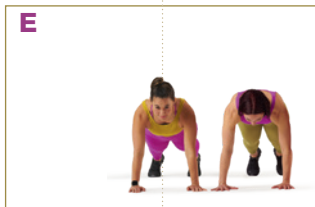
Then jump your feet forward to return to standing, before jumping back over your partner (F-H). Perform another burpee, then continue, alternating sides.



Plank Hold

Note: To progress the hop-over, have your partner set up in a low plank, or use a lower object, such as a box or cone.

STEP BY STEP



5.

PARTNER V-SITS

Sit on the floor facing each other and place your hands flat on the floor just behind you; lift your chest and legs so your body forms a V shape.

Keeping your core engaged, begin in-and-out extensions, bending and straightening your legs. Alternate doing so slightly to the left and to the right as your partner does the same.



GET THE DETAILS

For full exercise descriptions and demos, visit ELmag.com/partnerstrengthworkout.



MOLLY SCHELPER is a Life Time director of content strategy.

Bounce and REBOUND

Channel your inner child and amp up your cardio with this low-impact, high-powered mini-trampoline routine.

BY **MAGGIE FAZELI FARD, RKC, MFT-1, ALPHA**

There's nothing like bouncing on a mini trampoline to bridge the gap between high-level fitness and off-the-charts fun.

Also known as rebounding, mini-trampoline workouts build musculoskeletal strength and cardiovascular conditioning in a low-impact way, says Aly Giampolo, NASM, founder and director of the Ness rebounding studio in New York City.

"Many high-intensity workouts are higher impact, which can take a significant toll on your body over time," says Giampolo. The design

of a mini trampoline "takes the pressure off your joints and allows the trampoline to absorb the weight of your landing instead." Mini tramps are constructed with firm but soft mats connected to a frame by springs or elastic cords that give them, well, "give," she explains.


Despite its low-impact nature, rebounding doesn't lack in effectiveness. Trampoline workouts strengthen the legs, glutes, core, and back; improve balance and coordination; and can help stimulate the lymphatic system.

Like other forms of high-intensity training, rebounding can improve anaerobic and aerobic fitness, reduce insulin resistance, strengthen the heart, and burn fat.

And simply put, rebounding is fun: "I love how joyful the trampoline is," says Giampolo.


Because mini-trampoline workouts are low-impact, they're appropriate for people of various ages, sizes, and fitness levels. Giampolo advises that newbies join a basics class, either in person or online, or consult an experienced trainer who can give tips on form.

Once you've developed some comfort and familiarity, put on your favorite tunes and give the following moves a try.



LEARN THE MOVES

For full exercise descriptions and demos, visit ELmag.com/minitrampworkout.



INSTRUCTIONS

BEGIN WITH A FULL-BODY WARM-UP off the trampoline to prepare your body for movement. Then perform the following three moves, working up to performing each one for two minutes before moving on to the next. Rest minimally, as needed.



BOUNCE DOWN

This is the base for most moves on the trampoline: From standing, bend your knees, drive your heels into the trampoline, and use your core to lift your knees while keeping your body low.



FRONT BACK

This is similar to the bounce down, but instead of keeping your feet underneath you, you jump forward and back on the trampoline while your arms swing in the same direction as your legs.



RUNNING

This is like doing high-knee runs, but it "feels a lot nicer on your knees," says Giampolo. Lift one knee up while pressing down through the heel of your standing leg, then hop to transfer to the opposite side. 🔄

MAGGIE FAZELI FARD, RKC, MFT-1, ALPHA, is an *Experience Life* senior editor.

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The Double-Under

Master this heart-pumping jump-rope move to boost your cardio, balance, and coordination.

BY **MAGGIE FAZELI FARD, RKC, MFT-1, ALPHA**

Double-unders are a jump-rope variation in which the rope passes under your feet twice per jump. A powerful conditioning tool, they ramp up your heart rate to improve cardiac output and endurance.

Double-unders also strengthen your feet, calves, quads, core, shoulders, and forearms — as well as help develop neurological adaptations, like balance, coordination, and agility.

Because they're so taxing, and because they require just one piece of equipment and minimal space, double-unders are an efficient way to squeeze in a cardio workout.

"Dubs" are hard: You need a strong heart and efficient lungs to maintain the effort, strong calves and feet for a powerful jump, and quick wrists to spin the rope. And without some preexisting coordination, nailing even a single double-under can be impossible.

If you are new to double-unders or are struggling to string them together, a back-to-basics approach can be more helpful than whipping a rope around in frustration. Try the following steps to improve your double-under prowess.



Keeping your gaze straight ahead, listen and feel for the rope hitting the floor in front of your feet. Building this awareness will help improve your timing and accuracy.

Engage your core to keep your torso stacked and prevent your ribs from flaring.

Keep your feet directly under your body, toes pointed down and calves engaged. Initiate the jump from the balls of your feet.

Keep your elbows close to your body. If they start to move away, you're effectively shortening the rope, which will cause you to have to kick your feet or risk tripping over the rope.

X2

INSTRUCTIONS

1

Ensure your rope is the right length: When you stand with both feet on the middle of the rope, the handles should reach to about armpit height. Newbies will want a heavier rope for the feedback it gives each time it passes under your feet. More experienced jumpers may prefer a lighter rope with ball-bearing handles.

2

Master the single-under. Get comfortable jumping with the rope passing under your feet once per jump. Land lightly, jump powerfully, and keep your breathing calm. Practice listening to the sound of the rope hitting the floor in front of you. Gradually work on jumping higher without changing anything else.

3

Practice "penguin taps." Set your rope aside. Jump into the air with your hands at your sides. With each jump, tap your hands twice against your legs. If you can't tap twice before landing, work on gradually jumping higher and tapping faster. This will help you build coordination, wrist speed, and jumping power.

4

Work your dubs. It's unlikely that you will be able to do multiple double-unders in a row at the beginning. Some people swear by doing a few singles and interspersing a double into the mix, and gradually inverting the ratio. Others focus on nailing one double-under without any singles, then doing two, and so on.

DYNAMICALLY DIFFERENT

Dynamic Personal Training can take your entire exercise experience — and your results — to new heights.

BY **JULIE DULUDE**

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is about a proprietary Life Time offering. Life Time publishes Experience Life.

Maybe you've seen it while working out at your health club: a personal trainer and client so connected and engaged you can't help but watch from afar. Not only are they working together physically, but they also share a camaraderie, a clear sense of purpose, and a level of trust that seems to motivate the client to push a little harder or to try a move they might once have thought impossible.

This is Dynamic Personal Training.

Dynamic Personal Training is Life Time's unique philosophy, which can be applied to any modality of training. "It's a fully connected, fully engaged training experience that's the result of two things coming together," explains Amber McMillan, senior vice president of training and weight loss at Life Time. "It's an elevated physical session and a deeper, more supportive trainer-client relationship."

Often, the greatest obstacle to achieving our goals is not a physical limitation but rather the mental or emotional roadblocks that pop up along our healthy-living journeys. And that's where Dynamic Personal Training shines.

"Sometimes it takes someone outside of us to help us see our full potential," says McMillan.

"Through positive coaching and habit reinforcement, Dynamic Personal Training helps individuals realize all they are capable of."

The principles of Dynamic Personal Training can be layered onto any training session, from functional to athletic performance, regardless of an individual's current health and fitness status, age, or goals. "Dynamic Personal Training takes the science of personal training and elevates it to an art form," says Bahram Akradi, founder and CEO of Life Time. "It's exchanging energy and information in a way that cannot be replicated on your own."

Here, Danny King, a master trainer at Life Time, explains how Dynamic Personal Training, in practice, raises the bar on traditional personal training.



It's an elevated physical session and a deeper, more supportive trainer-client relationship."



The Dynamic Warm-up

We all know how important a good warm-up is — and how easy it is to skip. Yet this portion of any workout offers essential information for your trainer: Did you just get up? Just come from the office? Where are you feeling aches and pains? Or stiffness and soreness from a previous workout?

This is an opportunity to wake up your body and get energized for the session ahead. "We could put some warm-up exercises on paper and have someone execute them on their own," says King. "Or we can understand where they're at and offer support and customization, such as putting a hand on their lower back to make sure they're not compensating elsewhere, or giving an extra push to help them find mobility in their shoulder that they might not access on their own."

Trainers might also use percussive devices to help loosen tight muscles before the real work of your session begins. "After a few minutes of this, I often find that people are standing a little taller, their posture is better, and they are prepared mentally and physically to do the work ahead," King says.



The Workout

The actual work of a Dynamic Personal Training session includes progressive strength training, with functional movements (such as squats and pull-ups), followed by accessory strength exercises (think triceps extensions) that push you to muscle failure.

It typically concludes with conditioning to raise your heart rate: You might slam battle ropes, swing a kettlebell, or perform intervals on an airbike.

“The workout is a mix of hard work and some fun, which is kind of like the experience of riding a roller coaster — there are ups and downs,” explains King. “You might not love parts of it, but because it’s harder than you would push on your own, it’s what is needed to make the best progress.”



In each phase, you work with your trainer in a few key ways that differ from a typical training session.

PARTNER MOVEMENTS

One of the key differentiators between Dynamic Personal Training and traditional personal training is partner movements. Your trainer will often be physically engaged with you — even, at times, working out alongside you.

Solo medicine-ball tosses, for instance, are great power moves in any training routine, but performing them with a partner offers a different level of activation. Your balance and coordination are tested; your resistance is challenged.

Partner exercises keep you — and your brain — fully engaged. They help you go a little further, because there’s someone in it with you and you push through it together.

MANUAL RESISTANCE AND SUPPORT

Using resistance bands, physical touch (for those who are comfortable with it and give permission), or other tools, a trainer tailors each exercise to your fitness or fatigue level in any given moment. They customize every movement to meet your ability, by either increasing or decreasing the challenge with pushing, pulling, and gentle resistance and support.

In a high plank, for instance, a trainer might use a resistance band to purposely pull you off balance; this activates a different set of core muscles — including the obliques — than a traditional plank or pushup would.

If the trainer notices you’re struggling, they can change the angle of the resistance band, which can provide enough support for you to finish the last few seconds. Eventually, as you build your strength and confidence, you won’t need that additional support.

COACHING AND CUEING

Throughout your session, a trainer uses coaching and cueing to ensure you’re using proper form and activating the correct muscles. This might

include verbal instruction and encouragement, touch, or all of the above.

Physical coaching and cueing help build the mind-muscle connection by gently creating awareness of the muscle group you’re working. When you perform a reverse fly using free weights, for example, your trainer may use their hand to draw your attention to your trapezius and rear deltoid muscles. Over time, increased proprioception will ensure that the right muscles fire together at the right time, ultimately producing better results.

A trainer may also use coaching and cueing to guide your breathing. When you’re squatting, for instance, they may remind you to inhale on the way down and exhale on the way up. They may also use cueing to correct your form, which can help prevent injury.

As fatigue sets in during the various strength-and-conditioning movements, your trainer is there to give you physical support and extra encouragement, inspiring you to lift a little heavier or push a little harder.

The Recovery

Once the workout is done, taking a few minutes for recovery provides the opportunity for your body and mind to absorb all you’ve accomplished. In addition to assisted stretching and percussive work, you and your trainer can discuss the workout and how to prepare for the next session. “It’s the cherry on top,” says King.

Dynamic Personal Training is differentiated from other types of training by the physical, mental, and emotional connection. “The experience of leaving a Dynamic Personal Training session is similar to that of walking away from a massage,” says Akradi. “There’s nothing quite like the sense of discovery and accomplishment it provides. It leaves you wanting more.”

And *that* can mean real progress toward your fitness goals. 🎯

JULIE DULUDE is a Life Time senior copywriter. Additional contributions from Life Time’s Coy Larson and Sydney Kaye.



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Back to School, Back to Basics

A new adventure reminds our fitness editor of the foundational elements required for making progress.

BY **MAGGIE FAZELI FARD, RKC, MFT-1, ALPHA**

In early 2022, I took one of the biggest leaps of my life: I went back to school. I enrolled in a yearlong fiction-writing program, during which I would be expected to conceive and complete a novel. Never mind that I'd never written any fiction before. I was ready to stretch beyond my comfort zone and, with the blessing of my colleagues at *Experience Life* and *Life Time*, I dived in.

At first, I was excited. Words flowed out of me and a story began to take shape.

Then I was terrified. The words were flowing, but were they any good? Was the story idea compelling enough to warrant a whole book? Was I a good enough writer to be the one writing it?

And there, the rub that's rubbed me raw my whole life: that question, *Am I good enough?*

I've long battled with feelings of worthiness and good-enough-ness, which I've come to understand are engines for perfectionism. Logically, I know that striving to be perfect only gets in the way of progress. Yet the excitement and fear of trying something new often triggers a deep-seated need to be the best, to be perfect.

Mercifully, my brilliant instructor intervened. I share his wisdom here because the foundational principles of making progress are universal — including when it comes to fitness.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE THE BEST TO BE SUCCESSFUL. My teacher explained that he isn't a successful novelist because he's the best writer, or even because he has the best story

ideas. He's successful because he is committed to writing consistently — and, as a result, actually gets the work done.

Being hampered by pressure to write the next *War and Peace* prevents many writers from ever starting, let alone finishing, their work. But the consistency and work ethic inherent in a daily writing practice make up for any perceived lack in talent.

**Milestones are great,
but they're not the only
achievements worth honoring.**

As an avid exerciser and fitness coach, I've seen this play out. The desire to be instantly good at an exercise, activity, or sport can be demotivating and exhausting and a huge deterrent to progress. If you've ever given up on an activity or workout program because you didn't see instant results or immediate improvements, you know how defeating this attitude can be.

Meanwhile, the times when I've committed to moving consistently are the times when I've made the most notable and sustainable progress.

YOU WILL GET BETTER OVER TIME.

My teacher told us that the last 20,000 words we write will be better than the first 20,000 words — that when we go back to read our completed first drafts, the earliest pages and chapters will pale in comparison to the latter ones. That's because of the power of

practice. Every word, every sentence is practice. And practice over time — especially when combined with coaching — yields progress.

I think of all the times I've been a beginner in fitness. My first time trying indoor cycling, picking up a barbell, taking a dance class. All of these activities were uncomfortable and awkward for me at first, but I stuck with them. Over time, the discomfort faded. With every rep and step, I grew fitter, stronger, more agile. Perhaps even more important, I grew confident in my ability to make progress.

REVEL IN THE SMALL MOMENTS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT.

You don't have to wait till you've published a book, set a record in weightlifting, or achieved any other big goal to celebrate. It can be encouraging to attune to the small wins and take a moment to pause and feel proud.

Milestones are great, but they're not the only achievements worth honoring.

These bits of wisdom don't answer the question *Am I good enough?* But they do serve as a reminder that my hang-ups about being “good” and “enough” are irrelevant to what's truly important to me: I'm here (*here* in my writing, *here* at the gym, *here* in life) to learn and to grow. Whether I'm worthy of the experience has no bearing.



MAGGIE FAZELI FARD, RKC, MFT-1, ALPHA, is an *Experience Life* senior editor.



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Real Food



It's tough to beat a good sandwich, but sometimes the classics get stale or are based on unhealthy choices. Take your lunchtime to the next level with a few delicious, nutritious swaps.

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Find our recipes for three takes on avocado toast at ELmag.com/sandwich.

REAL FOOD Nutrients



POWER PLANTS

Learn how to get the protein you need from plant sources.

BY CATHERINE GUTHRIE



In the not-so-distant past, plant-based diets were considered relatively fringe in the United States. People enjoyed meatless meals only if they had a deep interest in animal welfare or needed to save money. Most of us had never heard of an oat-milk latte or oyster-mushroom jerky.

This attitude is changing fast. As of 2020, 44 percent of American adults reported that they were trying to eat a more plant-based diet, more than 30 percent had adopted meat-free days, and more than 50 percent were drinking nondairy milk, according to a report by the Culinary Institute of America and the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health.

One perspective hasn't really changed, however: Most Americans still tend to believe that when it comes to protein, meat is the gold standard.

Yet for most people who elect to skip animal foods — occasionally or entirely — plants can easily meet their protein needs. Especially if they maintain a diverse diet.

“Essential” Vocabulary

Some of the misunderstanding of what counts as “real” protein comes from our nutrition vocabulary, particularly the idea of “complete” and “incomplete” proteins.

A protein molecule is made of amino acids, of which there are 20 types. Our bodies make 11 of these, known as “nonessential” amino acids.

The body gleans the remaining nine from food; these are known as “essential.” Any food that provides all nine essential amino acids is called a complete protein. Most complete proteins are animal-based, while relatively few plant sources (soy, quinoa, and chia seeds, among others) are considered complete by these standards.

The nutritional terms “non-essential” and “incomplete” do not mean “unnecessary” or “undesirable,”

though. They create a hierarchy that inadvertently puts animal proteins at the top — but our bodies don't see it that way.

“The idea that you need a complete set of amino acids in the same meal is not true: Our bodies are smarter than that,” says Peter Horvath, PhD, associate professor emeritus of the Department of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences at the University at Buffalo. As long as we eat a variety of foods over the course of 24 to 36 hours, he says, we're covered.



The great thing about plant protein is that you aren't just getting protein.

You are getting micronutrients that the body needs to be healthy but that are often missing from our diet.”

For instance, you might get seven of the amino acids at breakfast and the other two at dinner. Your body would combine them to get all the protein it needs, Horvath explains. “Evolutionarily, we've adapted to finding a bunch of seeds one day and grains the next.”

For those who feel they can thrive only if they eat animal protein, that may have more to do with their health status and constitution than the meat itself. Biochemistry, genetics, activity level, and gut health all affect how well nutrients are absorbed.

Some people “do better incorporating certain animal products, like wild-caught fish, bone broth, or cage-free eggs,” explains Will Cole, IFMCP, DNM, DC. For those with compromised digestion, the protein in these foods may just be easier to absorb.

The Many Benefits of Plants

One of the many benefits of consuming more plant foods is that this tends to reduce the amount of animal foods one eats. Commercial livestock practices often lead to lower-quality meat, and no meat can provide the same abundance of phytonutrients as plants.

“The great thing about plant protein is that you aren't just getting protein,” says Cole. “You are getting micronutrients that the body needs to be healthy but that are often missing from our diet.”

Even if you still enjoy some animal foods, consuming more plant protein offers many benefits, including these:

- **REDUCED RISK OF CHRONIC ILLNESS.** Evidence shows that swapping in plant proteins for at least some of the meat in your diet (especially processed meat, such as bacon) can help lower blood pressure and may prevent several types of cancer, including colon, stomach, prostate, and breast cancer. It also assists with weight management.

“Following a plant-based diet doesn't just dramatically reduce the risk of chronic disease but promotes health and longevity,” says functional dietitian and sports nutritionist Barbara Lewin, RDN, CSSD, LDN, quoting research from the Blue Zones, a group that studies the habits of the longest-lived populations around the world.

- **MORE YEARS TO YOUR LIFE.** A study published in *PLOS Medicine* in 2022, in which researchers presented a calculator for estimating the impact of food on longevity, determined that young American adults could lengthen their life expectancy by more than a decade by replacing most of the meat in their diets with legumes, whole grains, and nuts.

Researchers also projected that older adults could benefit from the

protein swap: If they added more plant-based proteins and reduced their meat consumption — even at age 60 — they might increase their life expectancy by eight to nine years.

Even small shifts offer big rewards. When Japanese researchers tracked the diets of nearly 71,000 adults for an average of 18 years, they found that subjects who replaced just 3 percent of the red meat in their diet with plant protein were 34 percent less likely to die of any cause, 39 percent less likely to die of cancer, and 42 percent less likely to die of heart disease.

• **EARTH SUPPORT.** Growing plants generally requires less land, water, and energy than raising animals on conventional meat and dairy farms, especially when measured against concentrated animal-feeding operations (CAFOs). Compared with the resources needed to grow 1 pound of beans, producing 1 pound of beef requires roughly 14 times more land, eight times more water, nine times more fertilizer, and eight times more pesticides.

Then there are the greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions. Beef makes up 36 percent of all food-related emissions in the United States, and the meat and dairy industries generate 14.5 percent of total human-caused GHG emissions.

Studies show that adopting a vegetarian diet that includes some eggs and dairy can drop an individual's diet-related GHG emissions by approximately 35 percent; adopting a vegan protocol can reduce it by approximately 50 percent.

“A diet that optimizes human health is simultaneously protective of the environment — it's not often you see a consensus among so many health professionals and organizations like this,” says Heidi Lynch, PhD, RDN, whose research at San Diego's Point Loma Nazarene University focuses on plant-based diets, athletic performance, and environmental sustainability. “What's good for one is good for the other.”

THE SEVEN BEST SOURCES OF PLANT-BASED PROTEIN

Whether you choose to eat meat or not, aim to enjoy a diverse diet: It will include protein everywhere you look. Broccoli, spinach, asparagus, and sweet potatoes, for example, all contain 4 to 5 grams of protein per cooked cup. This guide outlines some of the other protein-abundant foods in the plant world.

1. PULSES

Beans, lentils, dry peas, chickpeas

Protein: 14 to 18 grams per cup, cooked

Beans, lentils, dry peas, and chickpeas have sustained populations around the globe for millennia. They are also among the most affordable, nutrient-dense, and versatile proteins on the planet.

If you're short on time, use pulses like split peas and lentils, which cook quickly without soaking. Still, there's no need to be intimidated by soaking beans. Lynch builds the ritual into her morning routine: “I soak beans overnight and then simmer them on the stove for an hour while I'm getting ready for the day.”

Beans and pulses also function well in disguise. Nanna Meyer, PhD, RD, CSSD, recommends making plant-forward burgers by replacing a third of the meat (ideally humanely raised) with pulses (such as lentils) and whole grains, and another third with hearty vegetables, such as carrots, kale, and beets. If you're looking for a high-protein pasta, consider one made with chickpeas or black beans, and season it with nutritional yeast.



2. SOY FOODS

Tofu, tempeh, edamame

Protein: 14 to 36 grams per cup

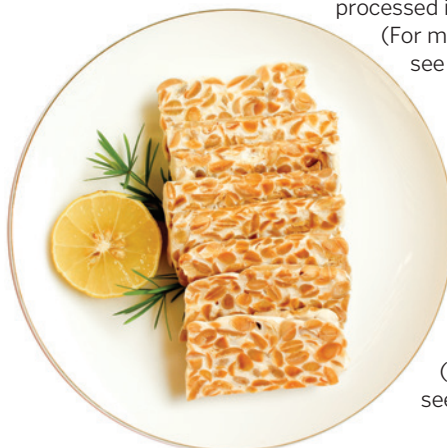
Soy foods contain all nine essential amino acids, along with a wealth of phytonutrients. Tofu is especially high in leucine, an amino acid key to muscle growth. Tempeh's texture makes it satisfying as a meat replacement, and its fermentation process makes it especially easy to digest.

While there are many soy-based meat substitutes out there, it's best to reserve them for a special treat — they often contain soy isolate, a highly processed ingredient of dubious nutritional value.

(For more on plant-based meat substitutes, see ELmag.com/fakemeat.)

Controversy over the breast-cancer risks posed by the phytoestrogens in soy has calmed in recent years after numerous studies concluded that they are safe. Some suggest that eating soy may even reduce the risk of breast cancer. It is, however, one of the most common food allergens, so consume soy in moderation and pay attention to how it affects you.

(For more on the pros and cons of soy, see ELmag.com/soy.)





3. WHOLE GRAINS

Brown rice, quinoa, millet, teff, wild rice, steel-cut oats

Protein: 4 to 10 grams per cup, cooked

The whole grains and “pseudograins” in your grain bowl also contribute a healthy amount of protein. Lewin likes to make a pot of quinoa (a grain-type seed) at the start of the week to use as a foundation for vegetable stir-fries.

Quinoa contains all nine essential amino acids, and it’s packed with fiber. Most American diets have insufficient fiber, which can cause a variety of gut-health issues, Lewin says, but “on a plant-based diet, getting enough fiber is not an issue.”

4. NUTS AND NUTLIKE LEGUMES

Walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, Brazil nuts, macadamia nuts, pistachios, cashews, pecans, peanuts

Protein: 9 to 38 grams per cup

Even if you’re unlikely to eat a full cup of nuts in a day, a quarter cup of nut butter can go down pretty easily, and a fistful of nuts makes a sturdy midmorning or afternoon snack.

Peanuts are technically a legume, but Americans eat them like nuts, and they’re by far the most popular, mainly in the form of peanut butter. With a whopping 7.3 grams per ounce, peanuts have more protein than any other nut.

They also provide arginine, which is considered a “semi-essential” amino acid: The body makes arginine, but a boost is especially helpful for older folks or those recovering from illness or injury. Studies show that this amino acid helps buttress the body’s immune and circulatory systems.

Still, peanuts are another common allergen, so be sure to vary your nut consumption. In addition to protein, walnuts also offer plenty of omega-3 fatty acids, and almonds supply plenty of magnesium and calcium.



5. SEEDS

Hemp, pumpkin, flax, sunflower, sesame, chia

Protein: 4 to 9 grams per ounce

Seeds provide healthy fats and a slew of vitamins and minerals. Chia, hemp, and flax are all good sources of omega-3 fatty acids, especially useful for those who avoid fish.

Add seeds to smoothies or sprinkle them on salads, grain bowls, and avocado toast.

Cole loves hemp seeds. What they lack in fiber (compared with whole hemp hearts) they make up for in convenience; they are shelf-stable and easy to keep on hand. (For more on seeds, see ELmag.com/seeds.)

7. PLANT-PROTEIN POWDER

Protein: 8 to 42 grams per serving

For athletes or anyone recovering from an illness or injury, powders can be a good source of easily assimilated protein. Look for plant-based supplements that include multiple sources, such as peas, seeds, and rice.

Horvath believes blends are more well-rounded than a single-source supplement. He notes that pea protein is a rich source of leucine, a key amino acid for muscle growth, but combining it with protein from seeds, like pumpkin and sunflower, can give the body easy access to dozens of other phytochemicals and micronutrients.

To ensure high-quality ingredients, choose a protein powder tested by a third party (preferably NSF-Certified for Sport or Informed Choice).

6. NUTRITIONAL YEAST

Protein: 5 grams per tablespoon

Nutritional yeast is the deactivated cousin of brewer’s and baker’s yeast, meaning it has no leavening power. The yellow flakes have a cheesy, nutty, umami-rich flavor and deliver all nine essential amino acids.

Also known as “nooch,” it often shows up in vegan recipes that call for a cheese-like flavor, but it’s an excellent condiment in its own right. Shake it over popcorn, grains, steamed vegetables, or pasta.

In addition to providing protein, nutritional yeast is also a solid source of B vitamins, including B12, and minerals, including calcium, copper, iron, phosphorus, potassium, and magnesium.



As you experiment with plant

proteins, consider one last piece of advice from Lynch: “Don’t get hung up on labels like being vegan or vegetarian.” There’s no need to give up all animal foods; if you want the benefits of plant-based proteins, just aim to include more of them.

“I would much prefer to see everyone reduce some of their animal-based protein than see a couple of people go vegan,” she says. We’re all likely to eat more plant-based proteins if they’re part of flexible diets that celebrate food — and that’s what counts. 🍌

CATHERINE GUTHRIE is an *Experience Life* contributing editor.

Returning to Our Food Roots

Our ancestors have a lot to teach us about eating well. These heritage diets provide a guide to healthy living.

BY CAMILLE BERRY



Heritage diets, or the way our ancestors ate, represent a powerful tool for both connecting with our roots and introducing nutritious ingredients into our lifestyles. Wherever your family’s roots lie, there’s abundant wisdom passed down through the generations: how to live, how to eat, and how to thrive in a community.

You may have examples of this from your own life, maybe in your grandma’s braised collard greens. Or the eggplant, potatoes, and peppers your father would stir-fry into *di san xian*, “three treasures from the ground.”

Fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains were once the cornerstones of traditional diets. Today, these whole foods make up only a small percentage of the standard American diet (SAD), which is heavily skewed toward refined starches, sugar, and red meat.

Studies show that a plant-based way of life is associated with reduced risk of cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity. Some may say this is a compelling argument that our ancestors were on to something in the food department. Reclaiming those roots could allow us to focus more on the foods that nourish our bodies and feed our souls.

That’s the mission of Oldways, a nonprofit organization that offers

education in traditional foodways through courses, recipes, and other resources. In collaboration with doctors, dietitians, food scholars, and other experts, Oldways developed a series of heritage-diet pyramids to serve as illustrative guides for understanding how our ancestors ate.

Each pyramid represents the eating patterns of many different regions and cultures, yet they all have a lot in common.

“The plant-based or plant-forward pattern is the dominant feature of each of the heritage diets, and it is this pattern, rather than the specific foods or preparations, that defines the pyramids,” explains Oldways director of nutrition Kelly LeBlanc, MLA, RD, LDN. “This, in turn, provides the framework to describe the more specific foods eaten in a particular country or region.”

Ancient grains, vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, and seeds are the nutritious building blocks of each heritage diet. Leafy greens are prevalent, including China’s bok choy and India’s saag. Mustard

greens are a staple both on the Indian subcontinent and in West Africa — and by extension, in African American cuisine.

Fish and seafood often appear in the next tier. The importance of fishing is reflected in the mythology of many cultures, especially in coastal and river regions. Today, research supports moderate fish consumption

as a healthy way to incorporate protein, healthy fats, and other vital nutrients into your diet.

(For more on making sustainable seafood choices, see ELmag.com/sustainable-seafood.)

In every traditional diet, these foods are the primary emphasis. Dairy and meat are less common, and sweets are reserved as an occasional treat.

You can see these similarities reflected in cuisines across the world — perhaps even in some of your favorite foods. “Think of all of the different types of bean-and-rice dishes — such as hoppin’ John with collard greens, Greek chickpeas and rice, jollof rice with black-eyed peas, or Mexican tomato rice and black

Wherever your family’s roots lie, there’s abundant wisdom passed down through the generations: **how to live, how to eat, and how to thrive in a community.**



Mediterranean Diet

The Mediterranean diet is the most well-known — and well-researched — traditional diet. Many are familiar with the virtues of extra-virgin olive oil, which is a fundamental component. High olive-oil consumption is associated with lower blood pressure, improved heart health, and a reduced risk of some cancers.

Mediterranean dishes are seasoned with herbs and spices like basil, rosemary, and sumac. Fish is regularly present on the Mediterranean plate, as are vegetables, nuts, and legumes. Wine consumption is kept to a moderate level, typically enjoyed with food as a digestion aid — and in community, among family and friends.



The traditional Mediterranean way of life also features plenty of walking, a form of exercise that improves both physical and mental health. (For more on this traditional foodway, visit ELmag.com/mediterraneandiet.)

beans,” says LeBlanc. “Or think of salsa: tomato, onion, peppers, spices — all foods that are part of the Mediterranean diet, and just like a Spanish *sofrito*.”

And there’s more to it than the foods we eat. How and with whom we share our meals are equally important. Heritage diets encourage us to spend time as a family and community — a lifestyle habit that’s less common in the convenience-driven SAD — and to incorporate movement, whether in the form of dance, martial arts, or simply taking a stroll through the park.

Heritage diets — and the many cultures they each represent — have a lot to offer for modern living, particularly to multiracial communities. “Nutrition research has historically been Eurocentric, meaning that many people of color have been taught that the foods they grew up eating aren’t healthy, and that their culture or race puts them at a higher risk of health complications,” LeBlanc explains. “Heritage diets empower both individuals and their community by restoring the culinary legacy and often-unsung cultural ownership of healthy eating for people of diverse backgrounds.”

Let’s take a closer look at some heritage diets and the ways they prioritize good food and good health.

African Heritage Diet

“The rich callaloes of the Caribbean, the collard and turnip greens of the southern United States, the use of leafy greens along with the consumption of their liquid, called *pot likker* — these are culinary connectors,” writes culinary historian Jessica B. Harris, PhD, in Bryant Terry’s *Black Food: Stories, Art, and Recipes From Across the African Diaspora*.

“The abundant use of okra in gumbos or soupy stews or simply eaten alone is another; just think of a *sopa de quimbombó* in Puerto Rico or Cuba.”

The African heritage diet features abundant vegetables, tubers, fruits, legumes, and nuts, and leafy greens form the base of the pyramid. In traditional sub-Saharan African diets, ancient grains like fonio, sorghum, millet, and barley are prominent.

Homemade spice blends, such as *suya* spice in Nigeria and *mitmita* in Ethiopia, and marinades are used to season dishes. Spices and spicy food are common across Africa and cuisines with African roots — spices around the world have a long history of both culinary and medicinal use.



Latin American Heritage Diet

The traditional Latin American diet is fiber-rich. Ancient grains, like maize and barley, and seeds, like quinoa and amaranth, play a major role. Popular health foods, such as chia seeds and spirulina, were staples of the Aztec diet.

“Most people have room in their diets to increase their fiber intake,” says dietitian Krista Linares, MPH, RD, who offers nutrition coaching through her California-based company, Nutrition con Sabor. “This can help with hunger and fullness cues, improves blood sugar and cholesterol, and is great for our gut health.”

For her clients, Linares often points to traditional Latin foods that provide fiber, like beans, lentils, and vegetables in the form of fresh salsa, diced onion, and cilantro. “This allows people to cook essentially the same meals they’re used to eating but add a bit of extra fiber and vitamins and minerals on the side.”

There is a misconception, particularly in the United States, that Latin American diets are unhealthy, she notes. “It’s easy to look at a Latin American plate and see mostly carbs and protein. But the vegetables are there, too.” And traditional Latin American cultures also included plenty of movement, often in the form of dance.

Food has long served as a social linchpin in Latin culture. Eating meals together may build positive family relationships while supporting mental health and fostering healthy eating habits.



Asian Heritage Diet

Whether you look to the east in China and Japan or to the south in India, Bangladesh, and their neighboring countries, the Asian heritage diet is rich in dark leafy greens, legumes, whole grains, and herbs. Major protein sources include legumes, such as soy; whole grains, like rice and pseudograin seeds like buckwheat; and plenty of fish and shellfish.

Many health-promoting superfoods have roots in various Asian cuisines: Think green tea from China, seaweed from Japan, and turmeric and ginger from Southeast Asia.

Poultry and eggs make occasional appearances on the traditional Asian table, and red meat is less common. In fact, many Asian cultures have ancient vegetarian roots, thanks to the practices of Buddhism, Daoism, Hinduism, and Jainism. Ancient wellness practices — tai chi, qigong, and yoga — encourage people to engage in meditative movements that provide a range of mind-body health benefits.

Native American Heritage Diet



Naturally, there are many similarities between Latin American and Native American heritage diets. The “three sisters” (squash, beans, and corn) have long been staples of Indigenous cultures across the Americas, often appearing in folklore that speaks to their cultural significance.

Today, they remain a fixture in many Native American dishes. “When we look at Indigenous food systems, we’re looking at commonalities of how Indigenous peoples were surviving with the world around them, primarily with plant knowledge,” says chef Sean Sherman,

founder and co-owner of the Sioux Chef, an organization committed to educating the public about Native American foodways.

“When you look at the world around you with an Indigenous perspective, you see nothing but food and medicine and so much giving out there. The Western diet has largely ignored the bounty of the plant life that’s around us in North America.”

Before they were forced onto reservations, Native Americans built their diets on seasonal, regional ingredients and traditional hunting, fishing, and agricultural practices. There’s a great wealth of dietary diversity across different tribes and regions.

“When you’re following an Indigenous diet, especially of North America, it happens to be extremely low glycemic,” says Sherman. “There’s an immense amount of plant diversity, and it’s not overly protein- or sodium-heavy. It just becomes an ideal diet in general — almost like what most diets are trying to get to.”

CAMILLE BERRY is a wine and food writer based in San Francisco.



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STEP UP YOUR SANDWICH

Put a healthy spin on your favorite lunchtime classics with these plant-forward recipes.

BY ROBIN ASBELL

Who doesn't love a sandwich? If you're looking for a simple, pack-and-go lunch, it's hard to beat this classic fare. But if you've been relying on the standard ham on white bread, your sandwich game might be due for a nutritional upgrade.

These flavorful recipes are made with whole-food ingredients and plenty of plants, so you can enjoy a tasty sammie that's good for you, too.

Building a good sandwich starts at the grocery store. Check out "Bread Basics" (opposite page) for tips on choosing a great loaf, or turn to page 85 for some of our favorite gluten-free breads and wraps.

Chickpea "Tuna" Salad Wraps

Makes two servings

Prep time: Five minutes

Assembly time: Five minutes

- 1 15-oz. can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 large celery rib, minced
- ¼ cup diced red onion
- 2 tbs. fresh dill, chopped
- 1 sheet nori, chopped
- ¼ cup full-fat Greek yogurt
- 2 tsp. Dijon mustard
- ½ tsp. sea salt
- 2 10-in. sprouted-grain tortillas (or gluten-free tortillas of choice)
- 2 cups arugula

In a medium bowl, combine the drained chickpeas and the celery, red onion, dill, and nori.

In a small bowl, mix the yogurt, mustard, and salt. Add the yogurt mixture to the chickpea mixture and stir to mix well.

Place a tortilla on each of two plates. Scoop about a cup of the chickpea salad into the middle of each tortilla, top with a cup of arugula, and then fold in the sides and roll up. Serve immediately, or wrap tightly in wax paper and serve within two days.



This recipe will make more chia-seed jam than you need for four sandwiches. Store the extra in the fridge for up to a week.

Chia-Seed Jam and Nut-Butter Sandwiches

Makes four servings

Prep time: 15 minutes, plus two hours for the jam to chill

Assembly time: Five minutes

- 2 cups raspberries, frozen or fresh
- 2 tbs. maple syrup
- 1 tsp. grated fresh ginger
- 3 tbs. chia seeds
- 8 slices sprouted-grain bread or bread of choice
- ¾ cup peanut butter or nut butter of choice (make your own with the recipe at ELmag.com/scratchrecipes)
- ¼ cup chopped walnuts
- 2 large bananas

Start the jam at least two hours ahead of serving. Place the raspberries in a small pot over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil, stirring with a wooden spoon to keep the berries from sticking to the pot. Once the berries are bubbling, add the maple syrup and ginger. Continue to cook, stirring the jam to encourage it to break down, for about 30 seconds.

Remove the pot from the heat and stir in the chia seeds. Let cool, then transfer to a jar and refrigerate until jelled, about two hours.

Toast the bread, then spread four of the slices with 3 tablespoons apiece of nut butter. Sprinkle a tablespoon of walnuts over the nut butter, then dollop 3 tablespoons of the chia jam over the nuts. Peel and slice the bananas, then distribute banana slices over the chia jam, and top with another slice of toast.

Serve immediately, or store wrapped in wax paper or in a glass container to enjoy for lunch.

BREAD BASICS

READ LABELS. Ingredients are listed by volume: largest amounts to smallest. Look for breads that list 100 percent whole-grain or sprouted flours first — these breads contain more fiber than those with enriched or refined flours, which lose nutrients during the milling process. Avoid breads with added sugars or vegetable oils, like soybean or canola, which are often high in inflammatory omega-6 fats.

GO BACK IN TIME. Breads made with “ancient grains” or “heritage wheat” contain unhybridized, unrefined grains. Ancient grains include millet, barley, teff, quinoa, and rice, as well as the grandparents of modern wheat: emmer, einkorn, Kamut, and spelt. Heritage wheats are newer, bred from ancient wheats but predating modern hybridized wheat.

Breads using ancient grains or heritage wheat contain more protein, fiber, and other vital nutrients than your standard loaf, and they may even be easier to digest.

SEEK SPROUTED GRAINS. Sprouted grains have been soaked and allowed to sprout, breaking down starches and deactivating their phytic acid — so the grain becomes more digestible and the nutrients are easier for your body to absorb.

CONSIDER SOURDOUGH. When sourdough ferments, the wild yeasts and bacteria in the sourdough starter break down some of the sugars and proteins in the flour, leaving behind beneficial lactic acid, lowering the glycemic impact, and making nutrients more absorbable and the bread itself easier to digest.

GO FOR GLUTEN-FREE. If you’re avoiding gluten altogether, look for products that are certified gluten-free (GF). Many GF breads and tortillas are made with ancient-grain flours, like rice or millet. You can also find grain-free options that use coconut or even cauliflower flour. The same rules apply: Avoid products made with refined versions of these flours or ones that contain added sugars.

White Bean and Fontina Pan Bagnat

Makes six servings

Prep time: 10 minutes

Assembly time: 10 minutes, plus up to two hours for optional chilling

- 1 15-oz. can navy beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 small radishes, quartered and thinly sliced
- ¼ cup pitted kalamata olives, chopped
- 4 oz. fontina cheese, shredded
- 1 cup fresh basil, chiffonade
- 2 tbs. red-wine vinegar
- 2 tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- ½ tsp. sea salt
- ½ tsp. crushed red-pepper flakes
- 1 crusty whole-grain bread loaf, unsliced (standard size)

Put the drained beans, radishes, olives, cheese, and basil in a large bowl and stir to combine. In a small bowl, whisk the vinegar, olive oil, mustard, salt, and red-pepper flakes. Pour the dressing over the bean mixture and combine, stirring firmly to break up some of the beans. Let marinate at room temperature while you slice the bread.

Slice the loaf horizontally into three pieces, making the top and bottom pieces about an inch thick. Save the middle piece for another use. Carefully scoop or tear out about half an inch along the center of both the top and bottom pieces, creating channels for the filling.

Place the bottom piece on a 14-inch length of wax paper.

Pile the filling into the channel, then place the top piece on it and press closed. Wrap tightly with the wax paper. Once it's wrapped, press down on it with your hands or place a cutting board on top to compress it slightly. If desired, place in the refrigerator with a weight on top for 20 minutes to two hours.

Slice the loaf into six portions and insert a toothpick into each sandwich to hold it together. Serve at room temperature.



This recipe is a vegetarian spin on a classic French sandwich. *Pan bagnat* translates loosely to “bathed bread.” Pressing the sandwich and refrigerating it before serving will soften the bread and allow the ingredients to meld.



Mushroom “Bacon,” Lettuce, and Tomato Sandwich

Makes four servings
Prep time: 30 minutes
Assembly time: Five minutes

- 8 oz. shiitake mushrooms, stemmed
- 2 tsp. maple syrup
- 1 tbs. tamari or soy sauce
- ¼ tsp. sea salt
- ½ tsp. smoked paprika
- 2–3 tbs. coconut oil, for pans
- 8 slices ancient-grain bread (or bread of choice)
- ½ cup vegan or other mayo
- 1 small head Bibb or butter lettuce, leaves washed and dried
- 2 medium tomatoes, sliced

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F. Use a sharp knife or mandoline to slice the mushrooms as thinly as possible. Place in a large bowl.

In a small bowl, whisk the maple syrup, tamari, salt, and paprika, then pour the mixture over the mushrooms and toss to coat. Let stand at room temperature for 10 to 15 minutes.

Spread coconut oil over two sheet pans. Add the sliced mushrooms, spreading them out so each slice is flat on the pan.

Bake for 10 to 15 minutes, using a spatula to turn the slices halfway through cooking time. When the slices are shrunken and feel firm but pliable, remove them from the oven — they will become crispier as they cool slightly.

Toast the bread, then place four slices on a cutting board. Spread with 1 tablespoon of mayo per slice. Cover the mayo with the shiitake “bacon,” then lettuce and tomato. Spread 1 tablespoon of mayo on each of the remaining bread slices and put them on top. Serve immediately, or store wrapped in wax paper or in a glass container to enjoy at lunch. 🍴



EAT 'EM UP!

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Yogurt

Whether enjoyed as a quick snack or used as a building block for other recipes, this fermented milk product is an all-star in the kitchen.

BY MARCO DREGNI



MAKE A CULTURED CHOICE

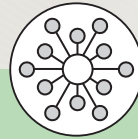
Yogurt is renowned for its probiotic benefits, so look for brands that list active cultures or display a Live and Active Cultures (LAC) seal, which guarantees that it was not heat-treated to kill bacteria. Watch out for the words “made with active cultures,” which may indicate pasteurization, and avoid brands with added sugar. Store for up to two weeks in the fridge, or freeze for up to a month — it will retain its probiotic content.



KNOW YOUR NUTRIENTS

Yogurt is a good source of calcium and B vitamins as well as phosphorus, magnesium, and potassium. Its beneficial bacteria can help improve digestive health and strengthen your immune system.

Seek out whole-fat yogurts: They're full of healthy fats that make for a satiating snack. Skip low-fat options: They're often thin in taste and include sugar or other additives to bolster the flavor.



TRY THEM ALL

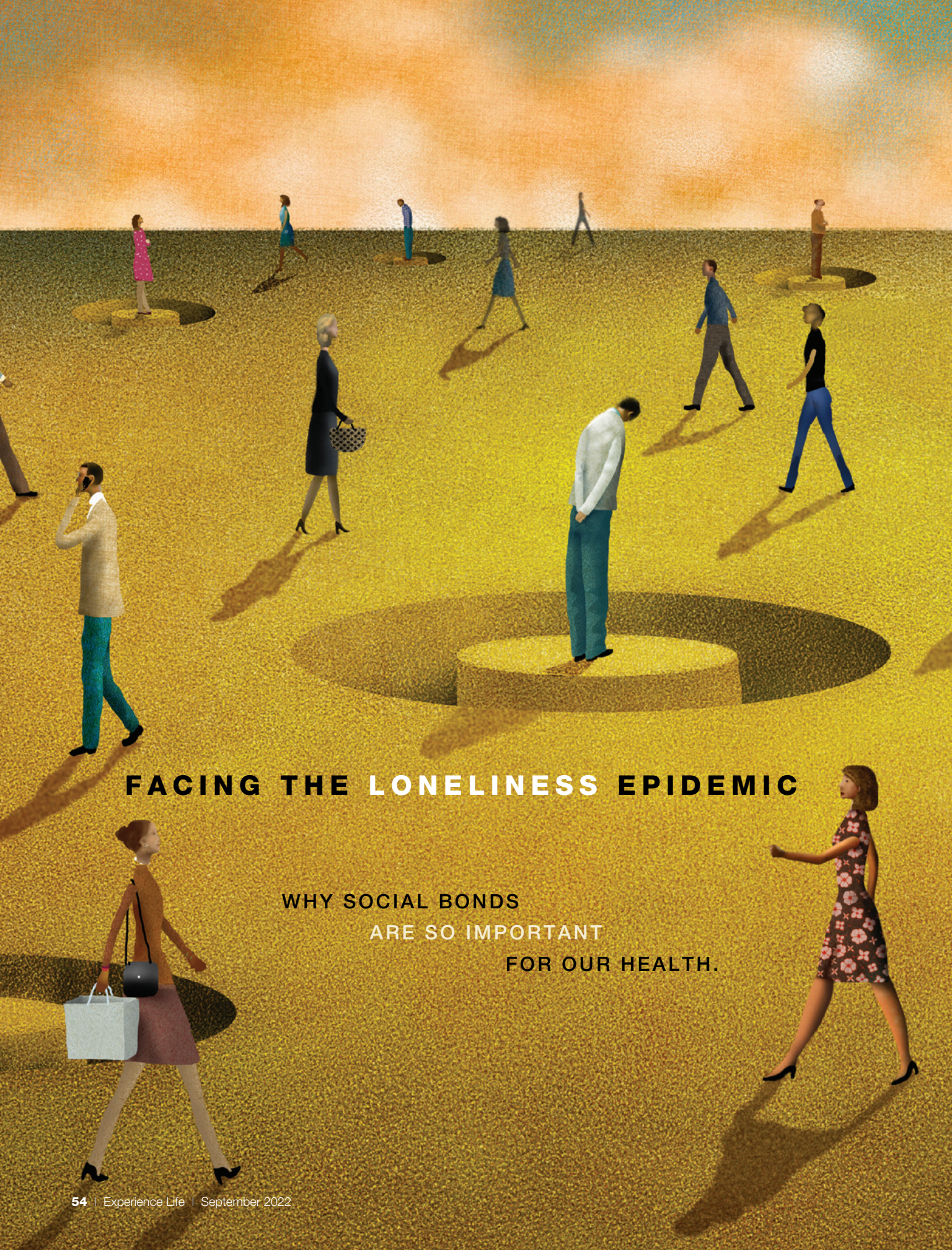
Traditional yogurt and thicker, strained Greek yogurt are popular options, but other varieties offer similar health benefits. Icelandic skyr, often thicker than Greek yogurt thanks to a longer straining time, is high in protein. Australian yogurt is sweeter and thinner than Greek varieties. There are many nondairy yogurts on the market as well, including options made with soy, coconut milk, pea protein, or almond milk.



SNACK, SAUCE, OR SUBSTITUTE

Try yogurt instead of mayonnaise or sour cream in your favorite recipes for a protein boost. It's also ideal for dips and sauces (like our Spinach Yogurt Dip at ELmag.com/spinachdip). Add nuts, seeds, and fruit for a naturally sweet dessert (try our Pumpkin Pie Yogurt at ELmag.com/pumpkinyogurt). You can also make your own yogurt at home with our guide at ELmag.com/greekyogurt.


MARCO DREGNI is an *Experience Life* contributing writer.



FACING THE LONELINESS EPIDEMIC

**WHY SOCIAL BONDS
ARE SO IMPORTANT
FOR OUR HEALTH.**

BY MO PERRY



Alfred, 94, lives alone in the house where he and his late wife raised their family. Hard of hearing and nearly blind, he waits every day in an easy chair by the front door for his daily visit from a Meals on Wheels volunteer. Every other Thursday, I'm that volunteer. I always linger for as long as I can, chatting with him, and he soaks up the conversation like a thirsty sponge. It's the only interaction he has most days.

Lately, Alfred has been complaining of poor sleep. Pills don't help. He tosses and turns and wakes up still feeling tired. As it turns out, fractured sleep is one of the main symptoms of chronic loneliness. Alfred appears to be one of millions of Americans suffering from it, as well as social isolation.

Even before the pandemic, more than 20 percent of Americans who were 65 years old or older and living in community settings reported feeling socially isolated, a condition featuring few social relationships and infrequent social contact. Still, social isolation and loneliness are different: Loneliness is the *feeling* of being isolated, and we can experience it even when we're surrounded by people. (For more on the difference between loneliness and isolation, see ELmag.com/loneliness.)

In 1985, American adults had an average of three close confidants. By 2004, the average was two, and roughly one in four Americans reported having no close confidants at all. This suggests that for many of us, even if we have plenty of people around, our social connections are becoming shallower and less supportive.

In 2014, Vivek Murthy, MD, MBA, began his first stint as U.S. surgeon general with a listening tour of the country. In small-group meetings and large town halls, he connected with parents, teachers, pastors, and busi-

ness owners about the issues troubling their communities.

In his book, *Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World*, he writes: "Loneliness ran like a dark thread through many of the more obvious issues that people brought to my attention, like addiction, violence, anxiety, and depression. . . . Clearly there was something about our disconnection from one another that was making people's lives worse than they had to be."

AN EPIDEMIC WITHIN A PANDEMIC

The loneliness epidemic has only accelerated in the age of COVID-19. In the fall of 2020, a Harvard University survey of some 950 Americans found that 36 percent of respondents (and 61 percent of all young-adult respondents) were experiencing "serious loneliness."

And a 2020 Cigna report found that 50 percent of baby boomers, 71 percent of Millennials, and 79 percent of Gen Z respondents reported feeling lonely.

This might have been expected in the pre-vaccine era of social distancing. But even as the world opened back up, the sense of social disconnection persisted.

"During COVID, we've seen an increase in more people reporting feeling lonely more often," says Stephanie Cacioppo, PhD, director of the University of Chicago's Brain Dynamics Laboratory and author of *Wired for Love: A Neuroscientist's Journey Through Romance, Loss, and the Essence of Human Connection*.

Loneliness is defined as the subjective experience of a gap between one's actual and desired levels of social connection. "It's the discrepancy between what you want and what you actually feel from your social relationships," Cacioppo explains. "You can be alone without feeling lonely. And you can feel

lonely in a marriage, or in a crowd, when reality is falling short of your expectations.”

This may explain why loneliness hasn't abated even as pandemic isolation has waned, she notes. As people started venturing back into the world, they may have expected that everyone would be social and friendly.

“Then you go out, and it's not necessarily open arms and smiles. People were still in masks. My hypothesis is people felt very lonely coming out of COVID lockdown because they had high expectations that weren't met, which led to feelings of rejection.”

THE LONELY MIND

Loneliness, like hunger or thirst, is a signal. Instead of telling us our bodies need water or food, though, it's a sign that we're not getting the social connection that we need. Everyone feels lonely from time to time, but it becomes problematic when it produces a self-reinforcing loop of negative thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

In his book *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection*, Stephanie Cacioppo's late husband, John Cacioppo, PhD, writes, “Evolution shaped us not only to feel bad in isolation, but to feel insecure, as in physically threatened. . . . Once these feelings arise, social cognition can take the sense of danger and run with it.”

This is how loneliness becomes a spiral. Someone who feels alone may start to see danger lurking everywhere in the social landscape. “Filtered through the lens of lonely social cognition, other people may appear more critical, competitive, denigrating, or otherwise unwelcoming,” he writes.

This sense of hypervigilance, combined with a tendency to misinterpret social signals, means the lonely person is less likely to reach out for (or accept) the social connection they need. “Logically, we'd think loneliness would motivate us to engage in approach behaviors, but in fact it motivates us to withdraw, because of that sense of threat,” explains University of Arizona communication professor Kory Floyd, PhD, author of *The Loneliness Cure: Six Strategies for Finding Real Connections in Your Life*.



WE FUNCTION MUCH LESS EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY IN THE WORLD WHEN WE'RE LACKING THAT SOCIAL CONNECTION WE ALL DESIRE. WHEN PEOPLE ARE IN THE GRIP OF IT, IT CAN BE LIFE THREATENING.”

“That perpetuates the downward spiral of loneliness. That spiral has to be interrupted for someone to recover.”

THE COST OF LONELINESS

Social connections aren't a luxury; they're critical to our physical and mental well-being. “A significant body of research documents the effects of loneliness,” says Julianne Holt-Lunstad, PhD, a professor of psychology and neuroscience at Brigham Young University. “Most people recognize the mental-health effects, such as anxiety and depression, but some of the most robust evidence is around increased risk for cardiovascular disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and premature all-cause mortality.”

Studies have found that loneliness can increase the odds of early death by 26 percent — which is an influence comparable to smoking and greater than that of obesity. Social isolation is also associated with cognitive dysfunction and, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a 50 percent greater risk of dementia.

Loneliness also affects the immune system. It can increase our susceptibility to viruses, impede our ability to heal from an infection, and even reduce the likelihood of an effective immune response to a vaccine, says Holt-Lunstad. “Ironically, the thing that can protect us from exposure to a virus — isolation — can also negatively

influence our immune response if we are exposed, and our vaccine response as well.”

We see the effects of loneliness in the form of elevated stress hormones, lower resilience, chronic pain, and impaired sleep (likely due to hypervigilance), Floyd adds. Loneliness is also associated with anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation.

“We function much less efficiently and effectively in the world when we're lacking that social connection we all desire,” he explains. “When people are in the grip of it, it can be life threatening.”

Holt-Lunstad served on a committee that produced a consensus report on the medical implications of isolation and loneliness in older adults for the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in February 2020. “We concluded that this was a major public-health concern even before the pandemic,” she notes. Given the increases in loneliness during the pandemic, she expects the associated health consequences to become more prevalent as well.

The good news, however, is that research suggests that we have the power to change the trajectory of the loneliness epidemic and its associated health burden. A study published in 2016 reviewed four nationally representative sample groups across the human life span and found a dose-response effect of increased social connection. “For every level of increase in social connection, there was a decrease in biomarkers for inflammation, blood pressure, and mortality,” Holt-Lunstad says.

DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL CONNECTION

So, what counts as enough social connection? “That's tricky,” admits Holt-Lunstad. “We have recommendations for how much sleep we should get and how many fruits and veggies we should eat, but we don't have a good sense of what we should be aiming for with social connection, and at what point you should be concerned.”

The answer will likely vary from person to person, says Floyd. “Even

with food or sleep, we all need those things, but we don't all need them in the same amount. But we know the optimal amount is north of zero."

Because loneliness is a subjective experience, explains Stephanie Cacioppo, it isn't necessarily determined by how many relationships we have. "An introvert might only need one person to feel fulfilled, and an extrovert might need a different friend for each activity."

While there's no consistent number of connections we all need, most of us benefit from cultivating a variety of types of relationships. "The fewer people you have in your life, the fewer opportunities you have for people to provide support when you're in need," notes Holt-Lunstad.

Different kinds of relationships can fulfill a variety of needs and goals, she adds. Your spouse may satisfy your need for intimacy, for instance, while a coworker satisfies a need for intellectual curiosity, and a neighbor helps you find a new dentist.

Of course, quality matters, too. "When negativity is present in relationships, that's associated with negative health outcomes," she says. "We want to increase the time people are spending together, but if it's with someone with a high degree of conflict, that may not be helpful."

Cacioppo describes social connection as three rings radiating out from the center: private (the closest ring), relational (the middle ring), and collective (the outer ring). The private dimension might include your spouse or a dear pet. The relational dimension may contain your friends and family. And the collective dimension includes your broader community or even our planet — your sense of being part of something bigger than yourself.

"You can feel lonely in every dimension," she says. "But they're also protective of each other. If you feel lonely at home or at work, you can always go back to the collective to feel less lonely."

That might mean volunteering, participating in a group class at the health club or gym, or attending a church service. It might even include time spent alone, doing something like



**THE FEWER PEOPLE
YOU HAVE IN YOUR
LIFE, THE FEWER
OPPORTUNITIES YOU
HAVE FOR PEOPLE TO
PROVIDE SUPPORT
WHEN YOU'RE
IN NEED."**

cleaning up trash at a national park. “Whatever makes you think, *I’m part of something bigger than myself and I can do something good for others,*” suggests Cacioppo.

INTERRUPT THE SPIRAL

There are often clear signals that we need to take action to address our own social disconnection. Feeling hypervigilant against perceived threats is a good clue, says Floyd, especially if there’s no obvious environmental cause. “That sense of, I don’t feel as safe, I feel less trusting — that can be a potent sign that your social connections may be deficient.”

Other clues include noticing that you’re more inclined to withdraw from others, and dreading — rather than anticipating — social encounters.

Increased substance use, compulsively eating junk food, and risky sexual behavior can also be tip-offs. “These activities provide a temporary dopamine boost, so they make you feel better in the moment,” Floyd says.

Relieving isolation and loneliness seems like it should be easy enough. Just go out and spend time with other people, right? Not necessarily.

“In the lonely mind, areas of the brain associated with detecting potential danger are activated, and areas for understanding others are less activated,” Cacioppo explains. “The mind is directed toward the self rather than others when you’re lonely — you become your own bodyguard in a sense.”

If you put a bunch of lonely people together in a room, they’re unlikely to forge meaningful new connections, she adds. “Because of this bodyguard in their mind, lonely people tend to find fault with others.”

Studies have found that cognitive-behavioral therapy can help people adjust the underlying mental and behavioral patterns of negativity that reinforce loneliness, while exercise can help increase levels of endorphins, dopamine, and other salutary neurochemicals in the brain. “Once the body feels better, the mind will feel less lonely,” Cacioppo notes.

INCREASE YOUR CONNECTIONS WITH GRACE

Building or rebuilding connections can be a challenge, given the potential resistance of our nervous systems. So Cacioppo developed a set of strategies to help us overcome this fear and consciously enhance our sense of connection; it uses a handy acronym: GRACE.



ONCE THE BODY FEELS BETTER, THE MIND WILL FEEL LESS LONELY.”

G: GRATITUDE. Gratitude is the backbone of a healthy social life, says Cacioppo. She suggests that writing down, every day, five things we truly appreciate can improve our subjective well-being and reduce our feelings of loneliness. “Your mind is your main social organ,” she says. “You can feel lonely or grateful, just from the power of your mind.”

Cultivating gratitude is a potent way to switch off the inner critic that isolates you from others. A 2019 Gonzaga University study found that a daily gratitude writing exercise significantly reduced loneliness and other symptoms in older adults.

R: RECIPROCITY. From an evolutionary perspective, we’re wired for mutual aid and protection, Cacioppo notes. “We need to receive care from our parents, but we also have to give back in order to have a sense of worth.” Feeling useful and needed eases feelings of isolation.

Holt-Lunstad and her colleagues ran a randomized controlled trial during the pandemic: They asked participants to perform small acts of kindness for their neighbors (clearing sidewalks of snow, helping with pets) over four weeks. People who performed the acts reported feeling less

lonely. “One of the best ways to help ourselves is to help others,” she says.

A: ALTRUISM. Generously offering your time or resources helps divert the self-focused ruminations that are a hallmark of the lonely mind. “It helps reorient our focus away from ourselves and onto others,” says Floyd.

Altruism is about sharing, and not just money: Life experiences, wisdom, and direct assistance are also valuable gifts. This is why volunteering can be a great way to enhance feelings of connectedness. A study published in 2018 found that widows who started volunteering just two hours per week reported lower levels of loneliness, comparable to those of their married counterparts who volunteered with the same regularity.

C: CHOICE. Understanding that we have some choice about how we feel is important, says Cacioppo. “You would never feel guilty about feeling thirsty, but if you stay thirsty, that’s a choice you’re making.”

Just as we make choices about food and exercise, we can choose to work toward a positive mindset. “People feel there’s nothing they can do about being lonely, but we can control what’s controllable and make choices that will benefit our well-being.”

E: ENJOYMENT. Most of us could use a little more fun in our lives — not least because it helps us cope with unsettling news. Describing what they call the critical positivity ratio, positive psychologists argue that it takes three pieces of positive stories to counter every negative one. The same ratio is true for experiences, as well.

The best part, of course, is that every positive experience we share with others has a broad ripple effect, improving our well-being as well as that of those around us. “We benefit when we receive affection, but we benefit even more when we give it,” says Floyd. “That’s empowering. It means there’s something proactive I can do.”

MO PERRY is an *Experience Life* contributing editor.



LET'S TAKE CARE OF EACH OTHER

What if we're concerned that someone we know is isolated or lonely? "It may be less easy to spot loneliness from the outside, because it's subjective and occurs internally," says Julianne Holt-Lunstad, PhD, a professor of psychology and neuroscience at Brigham Young University. "But opening up the conversation is important."

University of Arizona communication professor Kory Floyd, PhD, agrees that one of the most important things we can do is just reach out. "If you notice the tone of their social-media postings becoming more pessimistic or helpless, that's a signal that you might be able to do some good just by checking in."

Stephanie Cacioppo, PhD, director of the Brain Dynamics Laboratory at the University of Chicago, recommends using social media as a gateway to connecting face-to-face, which is generally better than digital communication at alleviating loneliness. A 2021 study of older adults found that more remote contact did not meaningfully reduce their loneliness or depression.

That said, digital connection can be helpful for lonely friends or family members who live far away or who may suffer from social anxiety. "Talking remotely may help them connect in ways that feel more comfortable," Holt-Lunstad notes.

If you are close by, consider inviting your loved one to volunteer with you, or ask them for advice or assistance. This tells them, "You matter to me; you're useful," says Floyd.

One small silver lining of the pandemic is that it has reduced the stigma of loneliness. "Prior to the pandemic, people didn't want to admit they were lonely. Now we're seeing more openness to discussing it," Holt-Lunstad says. "So, if you're concerned about someone, simply ask them."





KIDS

at Play

Our children face many fitness challenges, including sports specialization, gender issues, excess screen time, and more. Discover how to help kids find meaning, health, and joy through physical activity.

BY NICOLE RADZISZEWSKI

Ten-year-old Tesla Vuckovic is a ninja warrior. Part of a ninja team, he excels at climbing, balancing, and especially performing laches — tricky jumps and swings between obstacles that require strength, skill, and coordination as you propel yourself through the air. With this training and a natural athleticism, he shines at stringing together complex moves in different combos.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, he attended practice twice a week, as well as supplementary parkour classes. But the series of lockdowns and facility closures resulted in big changes to the busy schedules of Tesla and his equally active sisters, Elena, 12, and Mara, 8.

“At first, it felt like no one knew what to do,” says their mother, Esther Hunt. “My kids would ask for their iPads, even after being on screens for

remote learning. I felt anxious about them not doing enough movement.”

It was a common problem across the United States.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that children ages 6 to 17 get one hour of physical activity every day. Yet in 2020, only about one in five kids reached this goal, according to the National Survey of Children’s Health. And more than one in 10 weren’t even exercising one hour a week.

Meanwhile, kids’ screen time doubled. Forty-four percent of children ages 5 to 10 were now spending more than four hours daily on screens, outside of school-work. For those 11 to 13, it was 47 percent; for adolescents 14 to 17, it was 62 percent. Only a third of parents who were surveyed said their children had spent this amount of time with screens before the pandemic.

“We want kids to be active every day, and not just by playing organized sports.”



The juvenile period is when the adult body is being programmed, so kids need a lot of movement — and a lot of different *types* of movement, explains biomechanist Katy Bowman, MS, founder of Nutritious Movement and author of *Grow Wild: The Whole-Child, Whole-Family, Nature-Rich Guide to Moving More*.

“Movement is a big category that contains all the ways a body *can* move — exercise and sports are types of movement, but there are many other movements that are not exercise and sports. Exercise and sports hold some of what kids need, but there’s a chance the activities being done aren’t moving the entire body in a lot of different ways, or for enough hours of the day.”

Whether kids are sitting on the couch playing Roblox or playing travel soccer exclusively, they’re probably not getting the mix of movement their bodies need for optimal health. There’s a balance — and it’s never too late to start encouraging activities that bridge the extremes.



This all came on top of another recent trend: Youth sports have grown ever more rarefied, competitive, and costly. Many kids now specialize in one or two sports from a young age, taking on rigorous training and travel schedules.

What kids are *not* doing as much of is playing pickup basketball, scrambling across jungle gyms, running freely around the neighborhood, and climbing trees in the woods.

“We are going in the wrong direction,” says Joel Brenner, MD, a pediatric sports-medicine specialist at the Children’s Hospital of the King’s Daughters in Norfolk, Va., and former chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics’ Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness. “There is a lot less free play than 20 or 30 years ago. I think we are dealing with two extremes — and this is a long-standing problem: kids who are overtrained and specialized, and kids who are not doing enough. We want kids to be active every day, and not just by playing organized sports.”

Kids who fully and frequently move their bodies reap myriad benefits: improved cardio-respiratory fitness, stronger bones and muscles, and better overall health. Physical activity can also promote self-confidence, which is crucial for heading off mental-health issues. And regular exercisers tend to outperform their more sedentary peers in school.

Physically inactive children, on the other hand, are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, and musculoskeletal issues as they age. Inactivity can also lead to depression and anxiety, says Brenner.

UNDERSTANDING HEALTHY MOVEMENT

Saying that kids need to move “is like saying ‘kids need to eat,’” explains Bowman. “Both are entirely correct statements, but they aren’t specific enough to be helpful. Kids need to eat a range of foods that provide them with the right amount of nutrients — calories, macronutrients, and micronutrients. Similarly, kids don’t just need to move enough; their bodies need specific mechanical nutrients.”

One way to evaluate whether kids’ activities are meeting their movement needs is by promoting physical literacy, which consists of three

components: ability, confidence, and desire. It's at the heart of the Aspen Institute's Project Play, a nationwide initiative that helps stakeholders build healthy communities through sports.

Though "physical literacy" only recently came into use, the research supporting the concept spans decades. The quality of motor development in early life is a strong predictor of physical activity during grade-school years, setting the foundation for adolescence and adulthood. Michigan State University's Motor Performance Study, which began in 1967 and followed more than 1,200 subjects for 36 years, found that learning fundamental movement skills was essential for healthy development and was a strong predictor of future physical activity.

But it's important not to mistake early achievement in a particular sport for overall athleticism and love for movement, says Tom Farrey, founder and executive director of the Aspen Institute's Sports and Society Program and author of *Game On: The All-American Race to Make Champions of Our Children*. "For all children up to at least age 12, the priority should be on developing physical literacy, not on being the age-group champion in some faraway state."

MAKING MOVEMENT ATTRACTIVE

For kids approaching adolescence, the CDC's recommendation of at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day doesn't change. But statistics show a sharp decline in physical-activity levels of older youth. In 2016, 42.5 percent of 6- to 11-year-olds met the 60-minute guideline; only 7.5 percent of those 12 to 15 and 5.1 percent of those 16 to 19 did.

As kids get older, there's also another shift: They're engaging less in free play and more in organized sports, which are not as accessible. Teens are also more self-conscious and less likely to partake in an activity if they don't feel confident in their abilities.

We can better serve adolescents by providing them with a greater variety of choices and entry points for physical activity, as well as mentors who can help them feel comfortable and find greater value in movement. (For ways to assess your child's current level of activity, see ELmag.com/activitylevel.) Project Play's survey of 6,000 high school students suggested that there's a strong demand for nonsport fitness activities, but that schools struggle hard to meet it.

"The most revealing finding, to us, was the strong demand for fitness activities — 35 percent of students (athletes and nonathletes) said they have an interest in strength training. Another 21 percent are interested in yoga," Farrey notes. Many schools have difficulty meeting this demand: Their primary focus is on supporting interscholastic sports, and although it varies by school and state, physical education (PE) is now offered less often after freshman year, he says.

"So, we're starting to think that the real opportunity in reimagining school sports is better connecting students, especially the approximately six in 10 who do not play interscholastic sports, to fitness facilities and other community organizations that have capacity. Imagine students getting PE credit at local fitness facilities — it's starting to happen."

He recommends that students and parents talk with their school

Whether kids are sitting on the couch playing Roblox or playing travel soccer exclusively, **they're probably not getting the mix of movement their bodies need for optimal health.**

administrators about creating extracurricular opportunities outside of the regular interscholastic-sports menu. "There are tremendous opportunities to create a more youth-owned experience through clubs, such as an Ultimate Frisbee club," he says. Or clubs for skateboarding, yoga, parkour, biking, climbing, trail running — the possibilities are endless.

Connecting kids with mentors is a powerful way to help them build confidence and develop a healthy relationship with exercise. All kids can benefit from positive role models, but research shows that preteen and teen girls may need more support. And nonbinary adolescents may face other issues of feeling like they don't fit in or are unwelcome on gender-binary teams.

Girls' confidence peaks around ages 9 to 12 — "and then plummets, and there is a huge gap between physical-activity levels of boys and girls from this point on," says Mary Uran, cofounder and executive director of Girls on the Run (GOTR) Minnesota. The GOTR program aims to help girls build self-confidence, reinforcing their sense of what they can accomplish and inspiring them to question the narrative they see in society around women's and girls' roles.





Mentorship is a major component of GOTR's success. "I've seen a connection in preventing mental-health issues, stress, isolation, and anxiety," says Uran. "It's good for girls to realize 'I'm not doing this to win a game or make my body smaller. . . . I get positive benefits from moving my body, whether stress management, clearing my head, et cetera.'"

Former professional athlete Mechelle Lewis Freeman, a 2007 track-and-field world champion and 2008 Olympian in the 4x100 relay, is well aware of the challenges adolescent girls face. Her own experiences inspired her to create TrackGirlz in 2015, connecting young girls with mentors and a curriculum that helps them navigate physical, mental, and social challenges through sports.

(Freeman is also on the board of the nonprofit Life Time Foundation and in 2021 helped launch an initiative to support schools and community organizations in encouraging youth physical activity.)

She is determined to reach girls who may not otherwise have access to school sports programming, including those in underserved and marginalized communities, as well as to motivate girls to be physically active and to help develop their athletic abilities.

"Track and field is one of the most diverse sports: You can run, jump, and throw. It's important for girls to embrace who they are,

and the sport allows them to discover and embrace their unique abilities," Freeman says.

Connecting kids with a local organization that provides mentorship and social-emotional programming, such as GOTR or

TrackGirlz, can help parents and guardians offload some of the heavy burden of the preteen and teen years while helping kids find greater value in physical activity.

GameFace is another innovative approach. This Life Time program offers classes in athletic-training fundamentals designed just for kids. Importantly, the introductory classes are not sport specific, explains GameFace founder and national director DeVentri Jordan.

"GameFace is designed to meet kids where they are and help them gain confidence while discovering new activities and ways to exercise. It's a holistic approach," he says.

GameFace Sport teaches fundamentals for athletes ages 8 to 13 — specifically, speed, agility, and strength — helping them control their bodies while moving and developing proprioception, all backed up by fun games built around the exercises.



For all children up to at least age 12, **the priority should be on developing physical literacy, not on being the age-group champion in some faraway state.**



MODELING AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

When you rise in the morning to work out or you carve out time after dinner for a family walk, you're teaching your kids that making time for exercise is important.

The reverse is also true, says Brenner. "If parents are sedentary, that has a big impact on kids, and that's how you see this as a societal problem." Studies have consistently shown a positive relationship between parents' and children's physical activity, regardless of the kids' age.

Modeling an active lifestyle for their two children has come naturally for Freeman and her husband, Life Time strength coach David Freeman. Still, Mechelle says, there's more to raising active kids than just walking the walk.

"You always start by establishing what your values are for your family," she explains. "Once you do that, you have some guidance on your choices as they relate to your kids and movement. You can hold yourself accountable to your values and make them active on a daily basis."

When David wakes up early every morning to work out, he's not only demonstrating an active lifestyle; he's modeling the values of consistency and dedication. When he recruits Bayne, 9,



and Harley, 6 (pictured at bottom left), to join him in the family's garage gym for 30 minutes a day for age-appropriate workouts, he's not trying to turn them into elite athletes; he simply wants them to experience these values.

"We have expectations of showing up and being your best self, not about being the best performer on the field," says Mechelle. "We just want you to be dedicated to what you're doing and be consistent."

You don't have to be a professional coach or athlete to fit more movement into your family's lifestyle. But if you can figure out how movement coincides with your values, you'll be able to better align your goals and actions.

For instance, if environmental stewardship is important to your family, biking instead of driving is a great way to share this value with your children while helping them meet their movement needs. If family time is important, after-dinner walks and active vacations are ways to combine family time and physical activity.

If you go to a health club or fitness center regularly, try including your children, suggests Shelly Forsberg, director of programming for Life Time Kids. Many places offer family memberships and varied kids' programming. While you work out, your kids can participate in classes, such as martial arts, dance, rock climbing, and gymnastics. (For ideas on encouraging your child to try new activities, see ELmag.com/newactivity.)

You can also play *with* your kids. (For a family yoga workout, see ELmag.com/familyyoga. For a family fitness circuit, see ELmag.com/familycircuit.)

This way, a healthy way of life becomes a normal part of your daily routine. The following are a few ways to make choosing to move more enticing and interesting for kids of all ages and abilities.

BALANCE

Screen Time and Movement

Lifestyle habits and nutrition influence our energy levels, desire to move, and ultimately how frequently we exercise. One effective lifestyle change families can make to encourage movement is limiting screen time, says Brenner.

Besides sacrificing time during which kids could be moving, hovering over a device can lead to back pain and musculoskeletal problems, not to mention issues with socialization, he says. "In my office, we talk about limits of 30 minutes at a time for screen time and try to come up with alternate activities."

Strategies or rules governing screen time might include requiring kids to go outside before they are allowed to use devices, matching the amount of screen time with physical activity time, or limiting their device use to weekends.

But screens don't have to be the bad guy. As we've learned over the last couple of years, many fitness opportunities incorporate them in some form. For shy or self-conscious kids, participating in a game or a dance video increases accessibility and provides an opportunity to move, even with minimal space. Practicing age-appropriate and parent-approved TikTok dances can coexist with movement goals.

The key is making sure devices aren't occupying time that could be spent moving and socializing in person.

"There are lots of times when our kids would rather be on Xbox or an iPad or making TikToks," says Mechelle Lewis Freeman. "But it's about giving them boundaries and finding the balance that works best for your family."





CREATE Movement- Friendly Spaces

Some homes feature playrooms, but Rachel Wiegand has taken her family's movement aspirations to the next level. A mother of two girls, 6 and 2, in Sheboygan, Wis., Wiegand was inspired in part by Bowman's *Grow Wild* to revamp her home in a big way: The Wiegands installed monkey bars on basement crossbeams, added a climbing wall upstairs, and swapped traditional living-room furniture for a floor couch and plyo boxes.

Wiegand's goal is to inspire her kids to move as a part of daily life. "I'd like them to develop an awareness of what it looks like to move in different ways without a stigma attached — not just play sports and have that be their movement. It's been a really big change in ways I wasn't expecting," says Wiegand, whose daughters now set up obstacle courses and jump in pillow piles every night.

Making your home movement-friendly doesn't have to be so extreme

— nor does it have to be complicated or expensive, says Bowman.

"Make space!" she suggests. "Create some open floor for tumbling, set up a box or item for jumping on or off, and get a low-cost chin-up bar for hanging. Play games or watch shows while stretching on the floor. Set up a couple of weekly meals outside. Change the rules of the house so they don't discourage movement."

As the Vuckovic kids have gotten older, the family discovered that what they really needed in their home was more open floor space and less stuff that could be knocked over or broken. "A lot of times, the kids will want to play hide-and-seek, or dance, or just sprawl out on the floor. We cleared out some coffee tables in the living room and rearranged the couches, and now this is the room they hang out in the most," Hunt says.

For outside play, they hung a Ninja-line between trees in the backyard,

which offers opportunities for climbing without the investment of a large play structure.

Whether you have a fenced-in yard, share a courtyard, or just live near a patch of open green space, you can encourage more outdoor play by keeping outdoor toys accessible and making sure your kids have appropriate gear for any weather.

And when your kids want to roughhouse, throw a ball around, or dance in the living room, engage with them. "What they're telling you is that play is key to their development as human beings," *Game On* author Farrey explains. "Children are wired to play. Take them up on it — drop what you're doing and play with them."



Children are wired to play. Take them up on it — drop what you're doing and play with them."



CREATE MORE WAYS TO MOVE

For a guide to building your own home obstacle course, see ELmag.com/kidsatplay.

BRING BACK Free Play

For as long as little legs have been running, free play has been part of childhood. Whether kids are making up versions of tag, kicking a ball around, climbing trees, or playing pickup basketball, it's these experiences of unorganized, informal physical play that they naturally seek out. Free play can be sports-based, or it can just be joyful movement for movement's sake.

"Free play helps develop creativity, allows kids to experiment, [and] promotes love of the game, and it's an experience owned by the participant," says Farrey. "The reward is more intrinsic, versus the extrinsic reward you get from organized sports. It's the core of sports in their original form."

You can bring back free play by providing both the when and where for kids to engage in play on their own.

- **ADVOCATE** for more green space and park facilities in your community so access isn't limited to organized teams.
- **EXPOSE** your kids to a variety of sports and activities with some formal instruction so they feel confident playing with other kids. Coaching, lessons, and classes can be expensive, but think of them as an investment in a well-rounded experience rather than just in a particular sport or activity.
- **INTRODUCE** your kids to natural environments that stimulate free play, such as parks and forest preserves.
- **MAKE TIME** for free play, even if this may mean limiting organized sports and other formal activities.
- **CONNECT** with other families who value free play. Get the ball rolling by arranging a time when kids can meet at a park to play.
- **PAIR** movement with responsibility. For instance, allow older kids to ride their bikes or meet up to play with friends if they can promise to follow safety rules and be home by a certain time.

Even as kids get older and choose to play organized sports, free play is key to fostering a long-term, sustainable love of movement. "I've never seen or heard of a child getting burned out from free play," says pediatric sports-medicine specialist Brenner.



THINK Beyond Sports Specialization

It's easy to buy into the idea that your child needs more of the same sport to become a better athlete. And it's hard to say no to extra practices and camps when it seems the roster for the local high school soccer team is already being shaped in elementary school.

But if our goal is to promote lifelong athletics and movement, experts say, specializing in one sport is not the ideal. "Early specialization, for the majority of kids, is not helpful — it can be harmful," says Brenner. "From a physical standpoint, kids are more likely to sustain stress fractures and other overuse injuries. From a psychological standpoint, we see burnout. Kids might drop out of sports completely, or their experience can lead to depression and anxiety or make it worse."

More-specialized adolescent athletes are significantly more likely to be injured compared with less-specialized athletes, according to a longitudinal study published in the *Orthopaedic Journal of Sports Medicine* in 2020. Young athletes whose weekly training hours exceeded their age or who trained twice as many hours as they spent in free play were significantly more likely to be injured.

"If you slot a kid into playing baseball exclusively at age

6, they might be burned out by the time they reach high school," says Farrey. "Kids who play multiple sports will have developed overall athleticism and the ability to use different parts of their bodies, and have a better chance to find the activity they care about most." (For more on specialization and competition in kids' sports, see ELmag.com/kidssports.)

Rather than pushing kids to choose their lifelong sport, parents can encourage them to try sports without any pressure and let them step away from activities they dislike. Give them a chance to try a couple of practices or classes, and let them discontinue activities without pressure or judgment.

Finally, remember that the parents' sports don't have to be the kids' sports, says Farrey. Let your kids think outside of their parents' paradigm. New activities you've never even tried could become their thing, whether it's Ultimate Frisbee, parkour, horseback riding, pickleball, or a game waiting to be created.

The endgame for most kids isn't sports; it's a lifelong love and appreciation for movement, Farrey adds.

"It's really about the sense of joy and play we have as kids. And the more that we can retain that into adulthood, the better." 🧡

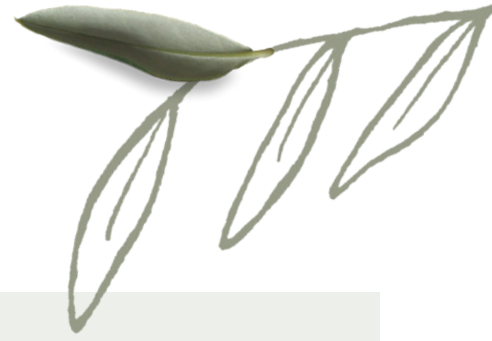
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The Art of Apology

Just as we all have a primary
love language, we also have an
apology language,
and it can shape how we approach
mending a rift.

BY JESSIE SHOLL



Maybe you have a good friend who is always late. You wish she would just once apologize for it. Perhaps she does apologize, but you're sure that if she really meant it, she would be on time. Or you're happy to forgive her for making you wait an hour at the restaurant — as long as she picks up the check.

In these cases, you're waiting for an apology that feels sincere — to you.

Such apologies can mend a fence, deepen a relationship, and even help with healing a stress-induced health condition. Yet despite their almost miraculous restorative power, genuine apologies rarely come easily.

Psychologist Molly Howes, PhD, author of *A Good Apology: Four Steps to Make Things Right*, describes earnest apologies as both seemingly “too hard to do, and too important not to do.”

Sincere apologies are difficult for myriad reasons. We're likely to feel guilt and shame about the offense. Perfectionism can make even admitting a mistake excruciating — forget being able to find the humility a genuine apology requires.

Given these obstacles, most of us are unlikely to have witnessed many good apologies when we were kids. This all adds to the confusion and resistance we might feel when attempting to offer amends — even when we know we're wrong.

That is, *if* we do. We often have no idea we've hurt someone's feelings.

Our occasional (or chronic) oblivion also makes sense in context. If mistakes weren't well-tolerated in our childhood homes, it can be frightening to admit errors as an adult; denial may be an unconscious, self-protective habit.

Howes also believes we're at least partly hardwired to remain unaware of our wrongdoings. “Our brains are really good at being streamlined and efficient, which is not great for noticing how we affect the other person in our relationships,” she notes.

Indifference requires less energy from our brains than reviewing our behavior and considering other perspectives does. Yet when efficiency means blowing past the hurt look on your loved one's face, there are other prices to pay.

Thankfully, we can choose to become more conscious of mental habits like denial, impatience, and perfectionism. It takes effort, but even if we struggle with apologies, we can learn to muster up the courage, set aside our ego, and admit we were wrong.

Most of us have managed this at some point in our lives and have reaped the rewards. In the best-case scenario, the hurt party accepts our contrition, and the relationship is reconciled.

But then there are other scenarios. Sometimes our words or actions don't land well (or, to everyone's dismay, make things worse) and the relationship remains splintered. We may try and try, but the hurt simply can't be soothed. At these moments it can feel as if we're speaking a completely different language than the person we're trying to reach.

According to psychologists Gary Chapman, PhD, and Jennifer Thomas, PhD, that could be the case. In their book, *The Five Apology Languages: The Secret to Healthy Relationships*, Chapman and Thomas posit that everyone has one primary “apology language” they respond to best.

“Each [apology language] is important,” Thomas notes. “But . . .

one or two of the languages may show your sincerity more effectively than the others.”

In short, when we say we're sorry using a person's primary language of apology, they can actually hear it. This makes it much easier for them to accept the apology as genuine.

But when we fail to speak someone's language, it can be almost impossible for them to trust the amends we've offered, regardless of their sincerity.

The outlines of this concept may sound familiar. That's because Chapman is also the author of *The Five Love Languages*, and the two books are founded on the same basic idea: We create harmony by adapting to the preferred communication style of our loved ones.

When we speak someone's love language, for example, that person is more likely to feel loved than if we communicate in a different way. (The five love languages are words of affirmation, quality time, physical touch, acts of service, and receiving gifts. For more, see ELmag.com/lovelanguages.)

Likewise, when we speak someone's apology language — by expressing regret, accepting responsibility, making restitution, planning change, or requesting forgiveness — they're more apt to feel sincerely acknowledged.

Understanding apology languages can help our amends reach the person we care about, so we're more likely to help resolve a dispute and heal a fracture. And understanding our own primary apology language(s) can help us get clarity when it's hard to let go of a conflict. It sets us up to ask directly for what we need when someone else's apology feels incomplete.



The Five Apology Languages

We tend to give apologies the way we like to receive them. Noting how you typically apologize (by asking for forgiveness, say, or making a gesture of repayment) is a good way to decipher your own apology language.

Identifying another person's apology language is more challenging, though observing them can help guide you. How does that person apologize to others? What do they do or say?

If you've never had a chance to witness their apology style, think about what pleases them. If you're in a relatively close relationship, you can also discuss what they need from an apology, or even take the online quiz together at www.5lovelanguages.com/quizzes/apology-language.

The most important thing to understand about apology languages is that they represent a diversity of needs. What you require from an apology may not be the same as what your partner, your child, or your best friend requires.

When in doubt about someone's apology language, or when you're stuck in a conflict and your apology isn't landing, it never hurts to offer an apology that draws on all the languages: Be sincere, accept responsibility, offer to fix the problem, make a plan for the future, and leave it up to the other person to decide whether all of this is enough to warrant forgiveness.

Each of these efforts demonstrates an honest commitment to righting a wrong, and that's something all true apologies have in common.

1. EXPRESSING REGRET

If you find yourself needing to hear the words "I'm sorry" for an apology to feel complete, then expressing regret may be your apology language. An expression of regret entails more than saying one is sorry; it also denotes specifically what action has spurred the regret. A statement that starts with "I'm sorry *that* I . . ." and names the regrettable action is a fluent expression of this apology language.

If you catch yourself including "but" or "if" in your apology, stop and rephrase. Mixed messages such as "I'm sorry, but I didn't mean to offend you," or "I'm sorry if you misinterpreted what I said," puts the onus on the hurt person.

So rather than "I'm sorry I yelled at you, but you made me feel overwhelmed," try something simpler: "I'm sorry that I yelled at you, and I wish I hadn't done that."

Another way to show sincerity, suggest Chapman and Thomas, is to align your tone and your body language with your words. If you're yelling, "I'm sorry, OK?!" while your eyes are blazing with anger, your apology will (unsurprisingly) not seem sincere.

And while it might be tempting to toss out a thoughtless "I'm sorry" simply to end a discussion, know that it will ring false. If you need a break from an argument, say so directly and take one. Wait to apologize until you're calm.

STARTER PHRASES:

- "I'm sorry that I _____ [state specifically what you are sorry about]. I truly regret the hurt I caused you."
- "I really regret _____ [again, be specific]. I'm sorry I caused you so much pain, and I understand if it will take time for you to trust me again. I hope we can get there."

2. ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY

For someone whose apology language is accepting responsibility, it's necessary to hear some version of the words "I take full responsibility for . . ." for an apology to feel true. Accepting responsibility involves both admitting that you regret your past behavior and acknowledging your role in the wrongdoing.

This can be challenging, since we're often reluctant to admit we've made a mistake — especially if we tend toward perfectionism. In these cases, admitting to wrongdoing is tantamount to admitting that we're flawed or that there may be something wrong with us. That's a vulnerable position many of us will resist all day long.

That resistance is often cultural, explains Howes. "The ideal adult, and especially one who is male-identified, is independent, confident, has no doubts about themselves, and doesn't rethink things," she says. "Cognitive dissonance sets in when you're faced with a situation that challenges your self-image."

Still, part of being a real adult, as opposed to an ideal one, is being able to take ownership of one's less-flattering actions. In this sense, learning to accept responsibility has benefits beyond offering a better apology. It's a step toward greater maturity and wholeness.

"In a good apology, we take clear and direct responsibility for specifically what we have said or done — or not said or done — without a hint of evasion, blaming, obfuscation, excuse-making, or bringing up the other person's crime sheet," explains psychologist Harriet Lerner, PhD, author of *Why Won't You Apologize?*

STARTER PHRASES:

- "I was wrong for _____ [be specific about your mistake or misdeed]."
- "I take full responsibility for _____. I was wrong."

3. MAKING RESTITUTION

In legal terms, making restitution means offering a payment or some other form of compensation to make amends for damage. If this is your apology language, an apology won't feel authentic until some action is taken to make things right — such as payment or replacement for a broken item, or a do-over for a missed birthday.

If you're addressing someone who speaks this language, a simple way to make restitution, according to Howes, is to ask for a do-over. This offers you a chance to restage the hurtful event and show how you would do it differently now that you understand your mistake. "It's fertile ground for collaboration with a person who has been hurt," she says. "And they get to be the one who evaluates whether, that time, they are satisfied."

It goes without saying that if your mistake involves financial damage, it's essential to make restitution no matter what apology language the hurt party speaks.

STARTER PHRASES:

- "How can I make this right?"
- "I apologize for what I did and want to make things right. I will pay for the damage."
- "I am so sorry, and I would like to offer _____ [specific action] to make it right."

4. PLANNING CHANGE

Some people need a guarantee that the hurtful action won't happen again, and they need evidence to believe it. When someone speaks this apology language, outlining the changes you intend to make and living up to these guarantees is a chance to regain their trust.

As Lerner points out, to show that our apology is not empty words, we need to change our behavior. "A good apology," Lerner says, "lets others know that we're capable of reflecting on our behavior, that we'll listen to their anger and pain with an open heart, that we'll do our best to set things right, with no repeat performance."

When you apologize, be very specific about what you plan to do differently now. If habitual lateness is stressing your relationship, offer a plan to be on time and accountable. If you mess up, take responsibility and make a more specific plan.

STARTER PHRASES:

- "I'm so sorry I'm late again. I promise that next time we meet I will leave earlier."
- "I understand that my checking my phone during dinner hurts your feelings, and I'm sorry. I promise to turn my phone off during meals from now on."

5. REQUESTING FORGIVENESS

About 20 percent of the people Chapman and Thomas interviewed said that what they wanted during an apology was to be asked for forgiveness. For them, "Will you forgive me?" were "the magic words that indicated sincerity," Chapman and Thomas note. Without this request, the apology remains inadequate.

"Requesting forgiveness shows that you are willing to put the future of the relationship in the hands of the offended person," they explain. As with admitting mistakes, this takes courage. Many of us deeply fear rejection, and letting the other person determine the outcome of a conflict can be scary.

Still, requesting forgiveness is another opportunity to step into the demands of maturity. It shows that we respect the other person's choice to relate with us or not.

Chapman and Thomas suggest that this step may be worth taking no matter what apology you've already offered. "Verbally requesting forgiveness after you have expressed an apology using some of the other apology languages often is the key that opens the door to the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation. It may be the one element of your apology that the offended person is waiting to hear."

STARTER PHRASES:

- "I'm so sorry for what I did. It was wrong. Would you consider forgiving me?"
- "When I _____ [specific action], it was wrong, and I am truly sorry. I hope you can find it in your heart to forgive me. You don't have to answer right away."

When Not to Apologize

There are some cases in which an apology is not the most appropriate gesture, says psychologist Molly Howes, PhD. Consider these examples.

1. Someone has requested that you don't talk to them again. Then the best apology is to respect their wishes.
2. Your apology is motivated by a desire to alleviate your own guilt rather than to relieve someone else's hurt feelings. The same is true if you're apologizing only to end an argument and still don't believe you caused any hurt.
3. A verbal apology would hurt the other person or reopen old wounds. In this case, consider other forms of apology. Twelve-step programs suggest making "living amends," which entails amending the way you live. It starts by changing the hurtful behavior; if you broke promises to this person, you could work on keeping your promises to everyone.

earning and practicing the five apology languages is likely to improve all our relationships, including our relationship with ourselves. "Our self-respect and level of maturity rest squarely on our ability to see ourselves objectively," says Lerner, "to take a clear-eyed look at the way our behavior affects others."

Even though we may fear that others will judge us for admitting our faults, displaying this kind of integrity will probably have the opposite effect. "The good apology," Lerner explains, "earns us the respect of others, who can trust us to orient toward reality, admit error, and set things right. The courage to apologize, and the wisdom to do so wisely and well, is at the heart of having good relationships and a solid self." 🌱

JESSIE SHOLL is an *Experience Life* contributing editor.

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Dreaming of getting away from it all, but your autumn schedule is simply too jam-packed? Consider a microgetaway for a weekend — or even just a weekday afternoon!

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Find a wealth of ideas for mini vacations that can help you refresh and restore.

Envision a Positive Future

A futurist explains how to build your resilience and adaptability, even in uncertain times.

BY KATHERINE REYNOLDS LEWIS

While booking a family vacation recently, I stalled on the question of whether to purchase trip-cancellation insurance. Just a few short years ago, I would have dismissed the option without a second thought, but what if the pandemic surged again? What if gas prices skyrocketed? What if one of us got sick? So many possible futures appeared in my mind that it felt almost paralyzing.

Whether you're planning an event, agreeing to a commitment, or signing up for an activity, you crave some clear sense of what your future holds. That's an increasingly challenging task in the face of unpredictable events like pandemics, uprisings, war, and a roller-coaster economy. It's tempting to simply crawl back into bed and pull the covers over your head.

You're not alone. Earlier this year, a long-standing survey reported that more Americans feel unhappy than feel very happy, for the first time since the study began in 1972.

Separately, a review of 10,000 young people last year found that stress about climate change causes negative daily effects for more than 45 percent of respondents.

This is one reason we need urgent optimism, says Jane McGonigal, PhD, director of game research and development at the Institute for the Future. In her book *Imaginable: How to See the Future Coming and Feel Ready for Anything — Even Things That Seem Impossible Today*, she lays out the tools we all need to envision tomorrow without fear.

“Urgent optimism is a very empowering sense that there are important things you can do to determine how the future turns out,” McGonigal explains. “It’s a combination of being willing to think about things that other people describe as unthinkable, but also being willing to imagine the kinds of positive actions and new social movements and technologies capable of creating positive transformation.”

McGonigal conducts large-scale simulations in which groups of people experience what it would be like to live through a crisis. About a decade before COVID-19 emerged, she oversaw more than 20,000 game players who imagined living through a global pandemic — and the gamers developed remarkably accurate forecasts about supply-chain disruptions and misinformation that mirrored the actual experience of 2020.

Most important, they felt more optimistic and empowered than you’d expect after weeks of dwelling on such a frightening topic.

“Urgent optimism is a mindset; it’s not a personality trait,” she explains. “We can increase it by practicing and building three psychological strengths: mental flexibility, realistic hope, and future power or self-efficacy.”

Mental Flexibility

The first skill to hone is the ability to recognize that *anything* can change. After all, so many things we take for granted today — a computer in your pocket, self-driving cars, one-day package delivery — were inconceivable just a couple of decades ago.

Practice challenging your assumptions and imagining the opposite. For example, the Institute for the Future runs a game called 100 Ways Anything Could Be Different. You pick a topic, such as voting rights, and then list 100 things that are true — for instance, “The voting age is 18.”

Then imagine how these things might come to no longer be true — what if babies could vote?



Urgent optimism is a mindset; it's not a personality trait.



At first, the opposite of each statement might seem ridiculous. But if you type your “upside-down facts” into Google, you might discover that there are people working toward this vision of the future. “We can essentially unstick our mind,” McGonigal argues. “You don’t know what to look for until you articulate the impossible ideas.”

You can use the 100 Ways game with your own life. Maybe you’ve always wanted to move to another country or switch careers, but you dismissed it as impossible. By imagining how that future might come to be, you stop talking yourself out of a potentially beneficial change and start developing new ideas about what’s within reach. “It can create an open space in your mind,” she explains.

More important, it disproves the notion that there’s nothing you can do to change your situation. “There’s so much confidence and inner peace that comes with being willing to think about the big, hard stuff,” she says. When you experience something unexpected, you may see an echo of the future you’d imagined — like the gamers who played through a pandemic simulation long before COVID — and therefore, you feel more prepared and confident in uncertain times.

Another exercise McGonigal recommends is imagining yourself in the future, one, five, or 10 years from now. Where do you live? How do you spend your days? Who are you with? Be as specific as possible and engage all your senses to make the reality as vivid as possible.

When you imagine yourself 10 years from now, your brain experiences time spaciousness, because a decade seems an abundant amount of time for many things to change. That lets you dream up dramatic transformations without feeling panicked, building your mental flexibility.

Realistic Hope

Once you’ve built your mental flexibility, you’ll need to strike a

balance between your positive imagination and your “shadow” imagination, which encompasses your more skeptical or critical thoughts about the future.

“Realistic hope is being able to identify the global risks that are worth worrying about and readying ourselves for, while also always expanding our knowledge of the things that would give us a reason to feel excited for the future,” she says.



Nothing else matters if half the planet has completely given up. We’re not going to get out of that unless we’re really learning to play with the deeper issues.”

The Institute for the Future runs a Scenario Club that workshops different futures each month. For example, they might discuss climate migration and brainstorm how to equitably move a billion people to safer climates and welcome them into those communities, or how to realistically live in higher-density populations than is currently typical.

You can practice this in your own life, too. Try creating a group text with friends and spend a few minutes every Friday doing research and reading about the “signals of hope” that show people are working toward a better future.

As you share these pieces of information, you’ll be engaging with how other people imagine coping with some of the biggest issues of our time; you’ll also expand your collective imagination and optimism.

“There are people all over the planet doing amazing work, testing incredible ideas, building unbeliev-

able social movements,” McGonigal says. “We need to become aware of them so we can build up that positive imagination.”

Future Power

The final piece of the puzzle is developing a feeling of self-efficacy: the idea that you personally can change or improve your circumstances. It’s not about “becoming a superhero who saves the world from the brink of disaster,” McGonigal explains — but futures thinking can help you stretch yourself so you’re prepared to adapt when the time comes. Begin by asking yourself whether you can take a step, learn a skill, or try something new that might prepare you for an uncertain future.

McGonigal, for example, decided to learn to fly a drone, because of how useful they’ve been in emergency situations such as search-and-rescue efforts and natural disasters.

Every goal like this can be broken down into tiny steps, which McGonigal calls micro actions. “You don’t have to save the world today,” she says. If you have five minutes, you can find and bookmark an article listing the 10 most affordable drones.

Think of self-efficacy like a meditation practice, in which you take small actions every day — or a few times a week — to prepare yourself physically or mentally. The key is to develop that sense of agency.

“We have to spend time facing the future with creativity, together, and with a sense that positive action is possible, because otherwise the next generation is going to grow up feeling doomed,” she says. “Nothing else matters if half the planet has completely given up. We’re not going to get out of that unless we’re really learning to play with the deeper issues.” 🌀

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Imagining Dragons

BY DARA MOSKOWITZ GRUMDAHL

Kelly Barnhill is one of the foremost manufacturers of dragons. A mom, teacher, and author, she creates these creatures in her small blue study just off a well-used kitchen in her Minneapolis home. Once these new monsters are in good shape, she sets them free in books.



Her 2016 novel, *The Girl Who Drank the Moon*, won the prestigious Newbery Medal, one of the biggest prizes in children's literature. The dragon in that book is tiny and hangs out with a good, gnarled witch who saves babies in the woods.



In her most recent children's book, *The Ogress and the Orphans*, a dangerous, glinting dragon comes to town, disguised as a slick politician. And in her first novel for adults, *When Women Were Dragons*, published earlier this year, ordinary American wives and mothers sprout wings, spit fire, and fly.



All these dragons, sent flying by one mom in running shoes. It got us wondering: What are Barnhill's secrets to leading a life that gives her clear access to those wells of creative imagination deep inside, where fairy tales and myths are born?

DARA MOSKOWITZ GRUMDAHL

is an award-winning writer based in Minneapolis.

Award-winning author Kelly Barnhill on sustaining a creative life.



TRAIL RUNNING

"I go out with my dog trail running nearly every day. Just hearing birdsong, feeling the soft ground, moving my body — there's a particular joy of breathing deeply while surrounded by trees that gives me a sense of calm that I need inside."



WRITING BY HAND

Barnhill has written all of her books in longhand, in small notebooks. "It all started because my kids were little: If I had a notebook, I could write at a moment's notice. But I noticed right away that when I was writing longhand the connectivity of my ideas was much deeper, and more unexpected, and I was able to associate and riff off ideas that I couldn't access by screen."

Longhand writing is believed to activate different areas of your brain, and Barnhill thinks it's particularly powerful for artists. "You get access to metaphor, image, creativity, and association I don't think you can access otherwise. It's quiet, it's tactile, and it brings up all sorts of sensory material."

DRAWING ON BEAUTY

"There's no happier vacation than going camping in a national park. When my husband and I were young, we worked for a summer at Olympic. Since then, we've taken the kids to the Everglades, Shenandoah, Yellowstone, Glacier, Rocky Mountain. National parks make me feel so patriotic. They are the jewels of our country, and when you see something *that* beautiful, it really gives you beauty you can draw on forever."



MEDITATING ON AND DRINKING TEA

"I am a near-constant tea drinker. The meditative part, the way tea can't be rushed — there's a whole process that forces you to stop and simply *be* for a moment, and I think that's really important. We get so distracted and overwrought by so many things assaulting our brains all day. But with tea, you have to turn on the kettle and wait for the kettle, then pour the water and wait for the tea; then you sit down and you're holding this warm thing — I find it all profoundly pleasurable. Look at one of my books and behind it is thousands of cups of tea."

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Stress Adaptation

These three adaptogenic plants can help you deal with challenging conditions.

BY HENRY EMMONS, MD



Adaptogenic herbs, or adaptogens, have long been used in medical systems like Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine, usually to mitigate the effects of stress. Also known as tonic herbs, they're believed to help tone the stress-response system.

I think of them as helping us adapt to changing or challenging conditions. They can soften the effects of the stress hormones, balance the fight-or-flight response, improve sleep and energy, and stabilize mood.

There's still no large-scale research that shows exactly how they work, but evidence suggests that adaptogens interact with the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, which helps the brain manage the production of stress hormones by the adrenal glands. There seem to be few side effects to adaptogenic herbs, and minimal long-term risks, so I often prescribe them in my natural mental-health practice. I find these three especially useful.

Rhodiola

FOR ENERGY AND FOCUS

This adaptogen supports the adrenals and autonomic nervous system, making it an excellent overall tonic when your stress response is in overdrive. It helps down-regulate stress hormones and can give a gentle energy boost without overstimulating your system.

Traditionally, rhodiola is used for mental focus, though research suggests that it may also ease anxiety and depression. Other studies suggest rhodiola may improve serotonin and dopamine levels and counter the effects of cortisol. This plant can be especially useful in the winter months for anyone with a tendency toward seasonal affective disorder.

Dosage and Use: The typical dose for rhodiola is 200 to 250 mg twice daily. Children need less — around 100 mg twice a day. Look for a standardized extract containing at least 3 percent of the active compound rosvavin.

Rhodiola is best taken with meals, but aim for breakfast or lunch rather than dinner — it is energizing and may interfere with sleep. On that note, if you notice trouble with sleep or feel too hyper, discontinue use.

Eleuthero

FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT

Eleuthero (also known as Siberian ginseng) is a flowering shrub. Its root, bark, leaves, and berries all contain beneficial bioactive compounds called eleutherosides. This plant is a staple of traditional medicine in China, Korea, and eastern Russia, where it has been used to treat a range of conditions, including memory loss, high blood pressure, and elevated stress.

The studies are few, but some researchers speculate that it can help increase catecholamines, such as norepinephrine and dopamine, in the stress-managing parts of the brain. Eleuthero may also affect levels of a chemical called brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), which helps support the growth of nerve tissue and protect the brain. Studies suggest that low BDNF levels may contribute to anxiety and depression.

Dosage and Use: Standardized extracts of eleuthero are commonly dosed at 200 to 400 mg, to be taken once or twice daily. Most eleuthero compounds are made from eleutherococcus root, which is considered safe for short-term consumption for most people.

Holy Basil

FOR CALM

Holy basil is known as a tonic for a host of health concerns, including eczema and GI problems. A systematic review showed benefits in three areas: cooling inflammation, stabilizing blood sugar, and improving overall stress tolerance. In fact, in Ayurvedic medicine the tincture is sometimes called liquid yoga.

The goal of stress management is to reduce reactivity and help the body clean up after an overactive stress response; holy basil assists with both. It may help slow the release of cortisol, calming the stress response, and help block cortisol receptors, limiting its damage.

Dosage and Use: The typical dose of holy basil for adults is around 300 mg, taken two or three times daily. (For children, 100 mg twice daily, at most.) Look for a standardized freeze-dried form or liquid extract or enjoy it as a tea — one cup at bedtime to relax. (In tea form, holy basil is typically called tulsi.)

I like using supplements that combine holy basil with other herbal adaptogens; they often work better together. Like other tonic herbs, holy basil is considered safe, even for long-term use.



HENRY EMMONS, MD, is an integrative psychiatrist and cofounder of NaturalMentalHealth.com. He is the author of *The Chemistry of Joy*, *The Chemistry of Calm*, and *Staying Sharp*. He is also the cohost of the monthly *Joy Lab* podcast.

Make Your (MICRO) Getaway

We could all use a little R&R, especially as autumn ramps up. Try these ideas to get out of the house for fun and restorative mini vacations for weekends — or even a weeknight.

BY JILL PATTON, FMCHC

Last year, my husband and I signed our daughter up for summer camp in Michigan but neglected to plan a vacation for ourselves. In figuring out the logistics of transporting a teenager across two states and around one Great Lake, however, we saw our opportunity for a sojourn of our own: Put her on a plane to camp, then drive to pick her up — and sneak in a microgetaway for ourselves during the journey from point A to point B.

So, we loaded up our trail bikes and headed for Michigan's Upper Peninsula (UP). We booked two nights at a historic inn not far from our midtrip destination: Grand Island National Recreation Area, a half-mile ferry ride on Lake Superior from the UP's north shore. At that point, it was time for a microgetaway — one glorious day of biking through old-growth hardwoods along weather-worn cliffs, with turquoise and cerulean extending to the horizon. Perhaps because it was so micro, I remember almost every hour of that adventure with my sweetie.

What if we all did more of this sort of thing? Getaways don't need to be full vacations to be meaningful: Maybe we shift our mindsets around vacations altogether and start looking for smaller, more frequent opportunities to refresh, restore, and recreate.

Consider these ideas.



ALL'S FAIR AT THE FAIRS

Summer's end is rife with last-ditch hurrahs (and huzzahs), so if fairs and festivals are your thing, you probably won't have to look far.

Some of the nation's biggest **state fairs**, including those in Texas, Minnesota, New York, Oklahoma, and Massachusetts (the Big E showcases all six New England states), take place in late summer or early fall, so go enjoy food-on-a-stick for a day or a week. If medieval costumes and jousting excite the imagination, hop online and find a **Renaissance Festival** near you.

Don't forget end-of-season **art fairs, music festivals, and film festivals**. (Check out www.festivalnet.com to search for events by date and location.) Look for **cultural celebrations** in your community as well; September 15 to October 15 is National Hispanic Heritage Month, and there may be events where you can celebrate, learn, and enjoy amazing food.

FAVORITES FOR FOODIES

Harvest season (hint: that's *now*) is ideal for getaways that get you in touch with the sources of your food.

Pack up the kids and head to a nearby U-pick farm for an afternoon in an **apple orchard or pumpkin patch**. Gather friends for a weekend of **wine, cider, or kombucha tasting**. Or take a **foraging** class and learn what's in season in your neck of the woods. (Check out www.eattheplanet.org for foraging-based tours around the country.)

Explore your town's **farm-to-table restaurants**. Venture to a nearby **pizza farm** (trending in the Midwest and picking up steam in other parts of the country), where you can bask in a bucolic environment while noshing on a pie made from local ingredients. Or explore www.farmstayus.com to find a weekend **farm vacation**.





HAVE HOBBY, WILL TRAVEL

How do you spend your free time? Pair your hobby with a quick getaway.

Once a railroad town on the prairie, Hamilton, Mo., is now a mecca for quilters, boasting 12 quilting-centric shops that are all owned by the same family, whose Missouri Star Quilt Company transformed the community. It also features a quilt museum, restaurants and lodging, and the world's largest spool of thread.

Whether you're a knitter, woodworker, poet, or vintage-car lover, there's a **retreat or convention** or other destination for you.

Love antiques? Sketch out an itinerary to visit **small-town antique shops**. Avid reader? Look up **book-lover tours** in your favorite city.

Go fly-fishing. Scout out **record stores, vintage shops, or yoga studios** whenever you're in a new town — because even a business trip could double as a microgetaway if you keep your eyes open.



FALL IS FOR NATURE LOVERS

Break out your fleece and flannel and get outside. Crisp fall air is around the corner, and if you plan it right, you can spend your weekends **chasing fall foliage** — heading north for early oranges and following the color cascade as it marches south.

Speaking of heading south, grab a pair of binoculars and find a nearby **bird-migration** hot spot to behold the mass exodus. Favorite viewing destinations include Cape May Point in New Jersey, famous for raptor sightings; Horicon National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin, where you might see a dozen or more duck species alone; and Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge in Texas, where hundreds of species pass on their way to Central and South America.

State and national parks, forests, and grasslands beckon this time of year — they're less crowded, especially once school begins, and you'll soon find cooler temperatures and fewer bugs. Pitch a **tent** or rent a **cabin** and spend a day or a weekend exploring. You can lace up for a **hike** to a waterfall or other geological points of interest or hit the singletrack on a **mountain bike**.

Drive the **scenic routes**. At night, lie back on a blanket and **watch the stars**.

Check out www.nps.gov for information on national parks, and www.fs.usda.gov for national forests and grasslands. For on-the-go maps of hiking trails, try the AllTrails app.



GO SMALL AND STAY HOME

If you need a quick change of scenery but can't venture far, try booking a night at a **local hotel**. Get up the next day and explore your own town's **museums and galleries** — the ones you haven't visited yet. Sign up for a **walking tour** and learn fun facts you can share with your next out-of-town guests.

If your town boasts an **arboretum, zoo, or aquarium**, appreciate it with the eyes of a tourist. Take in a **concert**. Unwind at a **day spa**.

You can go even smaller with the nano-getaway: Grab a **lawn chair**, leave your phone at home, and head to a **nearby park** or the banks of a **neighborhood pond**. Breathe.

In a pinch, you can even go virtual: During the pandemic, **online retreats and virtual tours** filled in where travel had to leave off, and many offerings are still available. Check out Airbnb Experiences, Amazon Explore, and Flyover Zone for digital excursions that at least give you a taste for what you'll do once you can truly get away. 📍



JILL PATTON, FMCHC, is a health journalist and certified functional-medicine health coach based in Minneapolis.

Mindful Giving

Evaluating your passions, the world's problems, and your giving strategy could yield better results for the greater good.

BY **KATIE DOHMAN**

In the aftermath of the Sandy Hook school shooting in 2012, a suggestion circulated to send teddy bears to comfort the children in the devastated community. In the end, according to one report, 65,000 teddy bears arrived — overwhelming the town of about 27,000.

People wanted to help, and sending stuffed animals seemed like a good thing. But by many accounts, the surfeit of packages simply compounded the nightmare. Community leaders had to locate and rent storage spaces. Volunteers had to sort and redistribute the bears, all while carrying their own grief and trying to connect their neighbors to the services they truly needed. In short, the intention was good. The actual result? Not so much.

Australians experienced something similar with the wildfires in 2019 and 2020, explains Luke Freeman, executive director of Giving What We Can (part of the England-based Centre for Effective Altruism). Well-intended donations arrived from around the globe, but they overwhelmed volunteers and went to waste because they weren't serving the community's actual needs.

Actions like these have a name: disaster giving. Although spur-of-the-moment donations are well-intentioned, they can create more problems than they solve.

"As individuals, we might be inspired by what's going viral, and



ILLUSTRATION: CLARE OWEN

that's good — it shows you are a compassionate person," says Freeman. "But those moments are a time to pause and reflect on what's more high impact. Often, the most impactful stuff is preemptive, but it gets ignored because it's not in front of people's faces. If you reflect on your giving more intentionally, then you will give in line with your values."

Identifying What Matters to You

Aligning your giving with your values is a crucial step, notes Rick Cohen, chief operating officer of the National Council of Nonprofits. He suggests considering two separate questions: What problem in the world do you hope to help solve? And what are the things that bring you joy?

Inevitably, Cohen says, one (or more) of the country's 1.5 million-plus nonprofits is doing exactly the thing that lights you up. "You can find organizations focused on finding homes for specific breeds of dogs and cats, or a group dedicated to spreading the works of the late [composer and songwriter] Stephen Sondheim."

It's also vital to recognize that the most relevant party in your giving equation is the one in need, says Joan Harrington, JD, director of social-sector ethics at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics and author of the organization's "Ethical Giving Guide." "The most important thing to ask about your giving is, *What am I trying to help with? What am I trying to address?* If you stay on those

questions, you take the you out of the equation.”

There are a few reasons that motivate people to give, Harrington explains. These include giving from the heart (to something that resonates with you personally, such as your alma mater), maximizing the impact for the least cost (also known as effective altruism), and healing and overcoming injustices.

Identifying which types of giving make the most sense for you may help guide your future choices. “If you can say, ‘Wow, I’m going to pause for a moment and think about one or two paths that are interesting to me,’ you eliminate the chaos when you are thinking of giving,” she says. “Because there are demands everywhere, even on Facebook with friends asking for donations on their birthdays. Try to take the time to figure out who you are.”

This preemptive thinking also makes it easier to say no to appeals that don’t align with your values: You already have your giving planned, so you can decline without feeling guilty.

Giving to the Max

The number of philanthropic people in the United States has declined by about 20 percent over the last two decades, even as the total amount of money donated has increased, notes Kevin Scally, chief relationship officer at Charity Navigator. “Money is going up, but the number of people participating is down. The danger is that corporations and ultrawealthy individuals are giving more and making choices as to what gets funded or doesn’t,” he explains.

“There is such a power in giving, even if it’s a nominal amount. It’s like voting: If you’re not participating and many other people are, your needs are overlooked.”

Besides getting in the game, there are other ways to direct your giving that can help provide stability to an organization you want to see succeed. The first is unrestricted giving: not designating your donation to a specific task within the organization (like a scholarship fund or crisis services),

but rather trusting the organization to invest it wisely.

Also, Cohen says, don’t forget about the power of a recurring gift. There are many reasons people give once at the end of the year, including tax planning and feeling the holiday spirit. But if you choose to spread your donations throughout the year instead, you’ll probably feel less strapped for cash.

This model might even allow you to give more overall; you likely won’t notice a slight increase to your monthly gift, but your favorite cause will notice the uptick. “You’re investing your dollars in their work,” Cohen explains. “You’re not going to get a share of stock with a return on that investment in dollars, but the ROI is inside you.”

A donation isn’t always monetary, Cohen adds. The nonprofit and philanthropy world also value the “three Ts”: time, talent, and treasure. Donating your time and talents to an organization can often be what it needs most. All you need to do is ask.

Finally, don’t get hung up on an organization’s overhead. This tends to be a hot topic, but experts agree that the concern is often overblown.

In a 2013 TED Talk called “The Way We Think About Charity Is Dead Wrong,” Dan Pallotta, founder of the Charity Defense Council, makes an impassioned argument to stop equating morality with frugality. It’s a false equivalency that can actually undermine the causes we care about, minimizing their impact on the major social issues of our time.

In fact, overhead is not an enemy of the cause. A nonprofit carrying a higher overhead may provide more nutritious food at its food shelf, offer more competitive pay to retain the brightest people, or deliver more overall community impact — and more sustainable growth — than one with a smaller budget.

“Philanthropy is the market for love,” Pallotta declares. “It is the market for all those people for whom there is no other market coming.”

KATIE DOHMAN is a writer and editor in St. Paul, Minn.

GIVING RESOURCES

Taking the time to search and vet nonprofits and their impact is an important first step. These are some places to start. Just remember: No one statistic, especially overhead, should necessarily rule your decision. Always consider impact.

CANDID (FORMERLY GUIDESTAR AND FOUNDATION CENTER)

Get insights and data to research the nonprofits that mean the most to you.

www.candid.org

CHARITY NAVIGATOR

Consider Charity Navigator’s ratings for your nonprofit of choice, browse current cause trends to support, and more.

www.charitynavigator.org

CHARITYWATCH

Get giving tips, plus search charity ratings and data.

www.charitywatch.org

ETHICAL GIVING GUIDE

Find ideas for how to align your values with your financial donations.

www.scu.edu/ethics/ethical-giving

GIVEWELL

Search a smaller number of particularly impactful charities.

www.givewell.org

GIVE.ORG

Visit the Better Business Bureau’s nonprofit side.

www.give.org

GIVING WHAT WE CAN

Learn answers to all the critical questions of how, when, why, and where to donate, including philosophical concerns and the brass tacks of donations.

www.givingwhatwecan.org/blog

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NONPROFITS

Find facts, figures, and myth-busting information about nonprofits nationwide.

www.councilofnonprofits.org



The Gift of Health

ALL YEAR LONG



Discover gift-subscription options:
ExperienceLife.com/LTMemberGift
Experience Life

A photograph of two women with dark hair, one in a purple top and one in a blue and white striped top, smiling and smelling a bouquet of bright yellow sunflowers. The scene is outdoors with a bright, sunny background.

The Gift of Health

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SOURDOUGH DELIGHT

Chewy and sturdy, with a classic sourdough flavor, Simple Kneads breads are made with seeds like teff and quinoa, and without gums or other mystery ingredients. \$37 for a four-pack; ships anywhere. www.simplekneads.com



FRESH START

This grain-free, almond-flour-based bread mix from Simple Mills puts a fresh, savory loaf within easy reach. Just combine flour mix with eggs, olive oil, and a little vinegar and water, then bake to perfection. \$9 at www.simplemills.com.

Keep It Simple

Gluten-free breads and wraps that truly satisfy.



EVERYDAY GOODNESS

Vegan and grain-free, this substantial, two-pound loaf from AWG Bakery is ideal for everyday eating, especially sandwiches and toast. \$24 at www.awgbakery.com.



SLICE OF LIFE

Nut-free and plant-based, these wide-sliced loaves from Little Northern Bakehouse offer flavorful support for all your favorite sandwich fillings. \$48 for four loaves. www.littlenorthernbakehouse.com



IT'S A WRAP

Liven up taco night with Mikey's colorful, coconut- and cassava-based tortillas. Their bright appearance and superb taste come from superfoods, such as turmeric (above), greens, and beets. \$10 at www.eatmikeys.com.

Katia

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Why Cashews?

Cashews are the main differentiator in Katia's newest flavors: They are rich in protein and healthy fats and antioxidants, which leave you feeling satiated and nourished.

High-Quality Ingredients

Katia Bars contain 20-plus superfoods, are gluten-free and non-GMO, and have no artificial additives, fillers or preservatives. Superfoods — including spinach and blueberries — are rich in antioxidants and vitamins.



The Katia Story

A few years after moving from the former USSR to the United States with her family as a teen, Katrina Alexandria — who goes by Katia — began to experience health problems: weight gain, skin breakouts, fatigue, and lethargy. With her mom, Katia began investigating possible causes and realized the issues might be the result of the food she was eating.

Together, they began researching the U.S. food supply, which led her to adopt a whole-foods-based, organic diet and eventually develop her own whole-foods line of protein bars, aptly named Katia Gourmet Protein Bars. Now with six flavors, Katia Bars are a tasty, nutritious, clean alternative to other options on the market. (To read Katia's full story, visit ELmag.com/katiastory.)

#LoveYourLife

katiafoods.com

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Find Katia Gourmet Protein Bars in the LifeCafe coolers and at shop.lifetime.life.

LIFETIME®



Something's Different Here

(And it's not only that we're featuring a new writer this month.)

BY JILL PALMQUIST

While I appreciate the opportunity to express my perspectives here, sometimes I read something that is more relevant than anything I could write on an issue. This piece from my colleague Jill Palmquist about the rise of women at Life Time really resonated with me, and I see value in sharing it with you.
— Bahram Akradi

Life Time has always been synonymous with transformation: Our mission champions positive change one moment, bite, class, conversation, and day at a time, inspiring people to get healthier, stronger, and happier. To find confidence, courage, and balance. To somehow become kinder, perhaps more generous, maybe even a little less self-obsessed. All of this adds up to becoming your best self, and a better human being.

Sometimes change is drastic — there's a diagnosis, death, divorce, broken femur, or jackpot win.

Other times, it's smaller and stealthier, until things are just . . . different. You eat less sugar and your jeans fit. Or you meditate and start to notice your mind shifting. Or, one day, there's suddenly an inexplicable number of whiskers on your chin.

Lately, I've observed a couple of things that are different at Life Time.

The first was in a CEO-led marketing meeting around a large, executive conference table. Counting, I realized 11 of the 18 seats were occupied by women. While I'm not that good at math, it was clear that women were taking up more than half the seats.

In the past, our company has gotten a bad rap for a lack of gender balance in leadership. And while there was some to truth to that, what is

important now — at least to me — is who I saw around the table that day.

I have worked with, admired, and been friends with many of these women for a long time. They run various aspects of the business, and every day they show up, strong and smart. With constant forward motion, they make decisions and get things done.

This change in who has a seat at the table has happened over time and naturally, because these were the right people consistently doing the right things.

There have also been significant changes driven by the pandemic, which was challenging — yet I'm proud to report that things at Life Time are now pretty fantastic. As a company, we transformed, found opportunity, and emerged stronger than before. And while several things contributed to this, one of the key factors is alignment.

Today, the teams across our athletic country clubs are aligned on our shared priorities, objectives, and strategies. Our corporate teams have intentionally melded even more into the day-to-day of our locations with the goal of providing the very best offerings and opportunities, all to improve the member experience.

This is one of our most important differentiators. Our clubs are like laboratories, bubbling with information. Working like scientists, we do research, test hypotheses, and gain as much understanding as we can. Showing up as anthropologists, we study behavior.

For many team members, the clubs are our third space, where we connect, commune, and create that energy that really can only be found at Life Time.

Which is why I was just “doin’ my job” when I recently attended a new

class format that goes deep integrating the mind-body connection.

Many of the same women from those corporate meetings were also in attendance, and there was an almost suspicious amount of laughter — the kind you might hear when all the aunties get together to throw a shower. Then a hush fell over the studio as we settled in.

This is a class where you start on the floor, find a collective breath, then rise together. In the darkness of the room, the rhythm of the music and pounding of feet began to synchronize, creating a physical, almost sacred alignment.

Not everyone there was a mother (or a woman), but I felt a deep, almost maternal energy. Firm and intentional. Profound and unconditional. It seemed to grow, exponentially, as it was transferred between us.

Jessie Syfko Ruof, the creator of this program (who's half evangelist, half unicorn), said it better than I ever could: “It's not an accident that every single person in this room is working for this company, on this day, at this time, on this planet. You are all needed. We are all together, yet you are unique. Which means there is a magic you bring that can come only from you.”

This is the alchemy that is Life Time: a business that has residence in those boardrooms, and a brand that is reborn and renewed every single day. Embodied through extraordinary individuals who are committed to their purpose, devoted to each other, and united in a mission to help others.

And isn't that how the world changes?

JILL PALMQUIST is the chief storytelling officer at Life Time.



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for connection —
it's what gives
purpose and
meaning to our lives.

— **BRENÉ BROWN**

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