

July/August 2016

The art of growing young[®]

Complementary
Medicine

Feature



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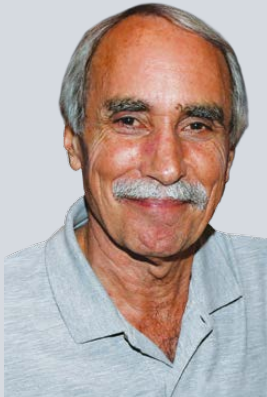
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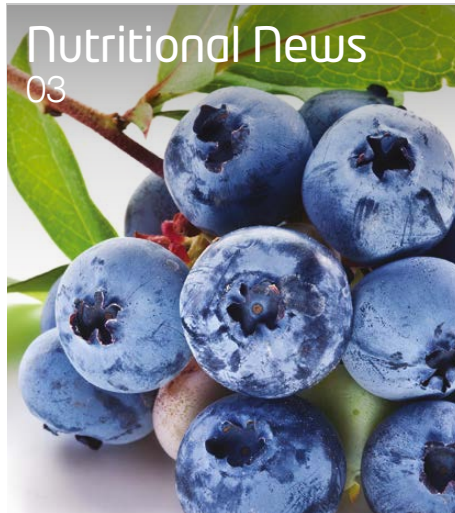
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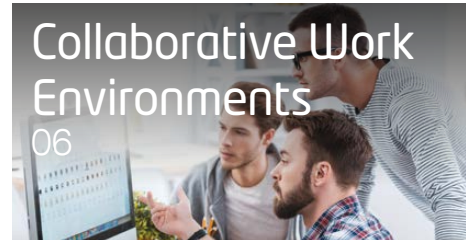
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The Benefits of Collaboration

We spend a lot of time talking about health and nutrition in terms of the individual—you and your body are unique, with unique needs, motivations and desires. Learning how to take care of these unique and personal needs is a wonderful process of self-discovery.

There is no doubt that it is important to see yourself as an individual. But it is also true that we tend to be happier and healthier when our lives are filled with people who have similar outlooks, desires, goals and needs in life. You may not agree on everything and your needs may not be 100 percent identical, but surrounding yourself with healthy people who are committed to focusing on the positive aspects of life can be a great way to practice the art of growing young.

We don't just think that other people impact our health; we know it! There is a large body of research on the topic. Did you know that simply being married to a person who lives a healthy lifestyle greatly increases the chances that you will be healthy too? Of course the opposite holds true as well. Too much time spent with unhappy, sedentary friends can increase the chances of your lifestyle becoming less healthy.

I know that I'm less tempted to skip a workout when a friend is counting on me to meet him or her at the gym. And I know my friends feel the same way. Harnessing the power of collaboration with your partners in health helps everyone.

Never forget that you are a unique individual with unique needs that must be met. But it is easier to meet those needs when working with a team in which every member is dedicated to helping every other member. Participating with others who have similar goals and activities can be a big plus in your life! Not every person will agree on every idea, but as long as everyone is generally aligned with the same thoughts and ideas, the diversity can spawn new (maybe even better) ideas, circumstances and experiences that everyone can enjoy.

Collaboration is such a powerful tool because we have an innate desire to help other people in life. It just plainly feels good to share success. Whether that success is at the gym, in the office, in the kitchen or anywhere else, when we work together, no health or fitness goal is unreachable. The more people working toward the goal, the better the results for everyone.



Dwight L. McKee M.D.

Dwight L. McKee
Scientific Director

Nutritional News

Steaming foods

Did you know that how you cook your food can make a big difference in its nutritional content? Steaming certain greens may actually help improve their cholesterol-lowering properties. Asparagus, beets, eggplant, green beans and cauliflower all appear to display better ability to lower cholesterol when steamed. Researchers currently believe that the steaming process somehow makes these vegetables better at binding to bile acids. This in turn prompts the liver to use even more LDL (unhealthy) cholesterol to make more bile. On the other hand, some nutrients contained in certain foods are more available to the body after regular cooking. Tomatoes are a perfect example.



Blueberries

More evidence has emerged showing that blueberries are good brain food. A new study of almost fifty seniors with mild cognitive impairments found that those who regularly consumed blueberries (in powder form in this study) displayed better cognitive performance and brain function. Specifically, the group that consumed blueberries showed improvements in memory and the ability to mentally access words and concepts. This study is yet another in the long list of evidence giving antioxidant-rich blueberries the nickname “super fruit.”



Breakfast smoothies

may help prevent weight gain in busy adults. All too often breakfast is skipped in favor of a few extra minutes of sleep before heading off to work. But research has shown that regularly skipping meals is linked to extra pounds around the midsection. This can be especially detrimental to your health, as gaining abdominal weight increases the risk of developing many other health problems such as diabetes and dementia. To help avoid the extra pounds often gained by skipping too many meals, try consuming healthy, homemade breakfast smoothies when you're running short on time. Simply blend a cup or two of frozen fruit with your favorite healthy beverage (avoid juices that are not 100% fruit juice) before you walk out the door.

Better sleep at night

Stick to a schedule during the day for better sleep at night. A new study has found that people who do not have regularly scheduled times for waking up in the morning, getting ready for the day, eating meals and being active tend to have a harder time falling asleep at night, as well as more trouble staying asleep throughout the night. Regulating your life a little seems to help a great deal with regulating sleep, which in turn can help reduce the risk of developing diabetes, heart disease, depression and weight gain. Not to mention that life is just easier when you're well rested!

Biking

to work in the morning can help protect your body all day long. A morning workout revs up your metabolism so you will burn more calories throughout the day. Research also shows that morning workouts may help boost brain power and reduce blood pressure. Morning workout routines also tend to be easier to stick to. Multiple studies show that over 90 percent of consistent exercisers prefer morning routines.



Community Sports For All Abilities

It's long been understood that having a workout partner motivates both people to exercise more frequently and regularly. If one workout buddy is good for your health, then two, three or an entire community are even better.

The desire to find a workout buddy is so prevalent that web pages are popping up offering matchmaking services for people who need someone else to work out with. There are even smartphone apps that help people locate workout buddies.

Why is there such a huge demand for community in the realm of sports and exercise? Because working out alone isn't as fun, stimulating or effective. The Society of Behavioral Medicine published a study that showed aerobic workouts done with a partner lead to better results and burn more calories.

Having at least one workout partner can make exercising more fun and less lonely.

Being able to talk, laugh, encourage and inspire helps both people stay motivated. Depending on your chosen workout routine, incorporating a social aspect can keep you moving for far longer. For example, if you like to run but tend to get bored after a short time, finding a partner to talk with while running creates a perfect combination that can potentially add miles to your workout.

Having a friend with you also makes it easier to try something new. Joining a new class at the gym or picking up free weights for the first time is a lot less intimidating when you have a friend's support. It's also just plain easier to figure out complex gym machinery with two people reading the instructions! Having a trusted friend by your side can open up all sorts of new healthy experiences when you're both willing to say "I'll try it if you will!"



For those of us with a competitive side, having a friend or two will help push us to go further and perform better. If you want to maximize this effect, find a workout partner who is in better shape than you. Studies have actually found that motivation to compete and work harder is maximized when your workout partner is about 40 percent better than you. This creates a challenging but achievable goal.



If you want to help maximize the potential of motivation and give your metaphorical heart muscles a workout too, you may find that volunteering to help a person with a disability exercise can be extremely rewarding.

A 2010 report found that over half of adults with disabilities reported having no leisure-time physical activity. Less than a quarter of adults with disabilities engage in moderate physical activity, according to a National Health Interview Survey. People of all abilities deserve the health- and happiness-boosting effects that come with regular physical activity. This may be even more important for populations that have a tendency to live less active lifestyles.



Depending on the disability, some people will need extra care and specific exercises. Fortunately, there are groups and organizations that are always looking for volunteers to help. KEEN is an organization that uses volunteer coaches to provide free, noncompetitive, one-on-one programs of exercise, fitness and fun for children with disabilities.

The English Federation of Disability Sport is a similar organization that helps people of all ages with disabilities engage in community sports.



Other organizations include British Blind Sport, Disabled Sports USA, Paralympics, Special Olympics, UK Deaf Sport and WheelPower. These are just a handful of such organizations. There are many, many more that can be found in your area with a simple online search.

Volunteering your time and talents in the realm of sports and exercise provides many benefits. A large, ethnically diverse survey found people who gave social support to others had lower rates of mortality than those who did not. A different survey found people who volunteer their time report greater life satisfaction and better physical health. Volunteering your own time to help a person with disabilities get the exercise he or she needs will help both of you!

Collaborative Work Environments

The classic “top down” method of office hierarchy is going out of style. This is a change driven by younger generations who understand the importance of every voice being heard. These new collaborative work environments are making life better for everyone.





Innovative new leaders realized that people in classic work environments and relationships suffer from too much stress, and that is bad for companies and employees. As stresses and worries build up in workers, the accumulated physical toll can eventually lead to larger health problems and more sick days needed. A major study found that workers who labeled themselves “burned out” from stressful jobs had as much as a threefold higher risk of developing heart disease and stroke than did those who did not consider themselves to be burned out.

Workplace stress can be exacerbated by a lack of collaboration in the workplace. When deadlines are looming, feeling alone and abandoned exacerbates stress and worry. This can cause even more time off due to illness, slower work because of stress headaches, increased arguing with coworkers and other barriers to effective work.

Converting to a team-based, collaborative environment can greatly reduce stress levels from the very top of the company to the very bottom—every employee will benefit. Creating a healthy, collaborative environment requires more than just putting a group of people together in a fancy new conference room and expecting great things to happen.

Creating collaborative work environments starts at the very top.

The success of any office change relies heavily on the strength of leadership. This is especially true when making a fundamental change to a company’s culture. When executive- and managerial-level personnel foster team spirit, build relationships and demonstrate collaborative behavior themselves, the larger working environment will function better as a unit.

Collaboration will only succeed when everyone takes the needs of others into account. There is no room for selfish behavior in collaborative teams. You can’t expect your coworkers to think more about others’ needs if you are not doing the same. Again, this style of thinking must take place at the leadership level in ways that can be clearly seen and adapted by employees. Telling employees they need to think of their coworkers more but then demonstrating selfish behavior will create resentment and inhibit collaboration.

Good communication is the cornerstone of any collaborative effort. Information must flow freely between everyone. Sharing ideas with coworkers, contacts and managers helps clarify ideas more quickly and allows everyone to offer opinions that may be unique to that person’s understanding and experience.

Open communication allows the sharing of information, which leads to better problem solving and higher productivity.

When every employee on the team is encouraged to share knowledge and ideas, the whole organization benefits.

Of course, open communication such as this can be nerve wracking for some people. Offering up your personal ideas for group discussion is not always easy. Everyone involved needs to know how to communicate effectively, even when critiquing. Giving constructive criticism is an art that not everyone has learned. Take time to help teach team members good communication skills—both in giving and receiving.

If there is a history of closed communication in the office, employees will need to learn how to trust each other before they can truly come together as an effective team. In these situations, employees will need to be encouraged to be honest with one another (in respectful ways) and to not talk behind one another’s backs. Help them realize that if a person trusts his or her teammates, that trust will be returned.





Collaboration benefits from diversity, especially in the workplace.

The challenges faced by today's workforce are vast, and a collaborative team of people with different backgrounds and specialties is far better suited to rise to the challenge than is a smaller group with less diversity.

Diverse environments are not without their own challenges. Good team leaders will know and explain everyone's roles and the particular responsibilities of those roles, while also allowing for flexibility. Start new collaborations by clarifying responsibilities and expectations while also brainstorming ways in which employees can help support one another.

Physical environment is important too. There must be a balance between open areas that allow for groups and private spaces for silent concentration.

A team is made of individuals, each one with his or her unique needs and desires. Leaders need to nurture the team as well as the individual. Large creative companies such as Pixar and Google rely heavily on the architecture of the building to help promote collaboration.

If possible, take a cue from these highly successful businesses and implement similar strategies. Open floor plans that encourage accidental interactions between people who wouldn't otherwise work together can result in startling new ideas.



More common areas such as kitchens, break rooms and meeting rooms than you might think are needed will allow many smaller groups to meet whenever necessary. Emphasize areas that can hold at least two or three people over small, one-person offices.

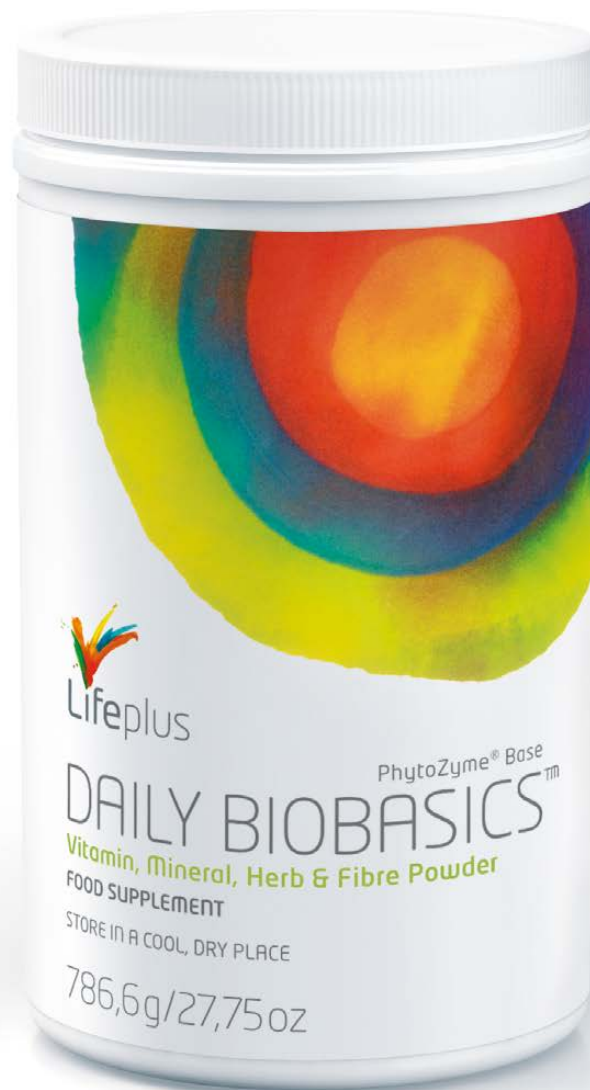
Creating a collaborative work environment requires leaders to adjust to new ways of thinking. The old style of leaders believing power comes through authority must give way to leaders understanding that power is better utilized in a team environment. Information should be open for all and not owned by anyone. No matter what the size or structure of an organization, creating a collaborative team approach to problem solving and project management will make everyone's job easier and help employees maximize productivity in ways that leave them feeling refreshed and happy about their jobs.

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Food supplements should not be used as a substitute for a varied diet.

Harvesting Community Health

It's been known for years that staying socially connected is good for a person's mood and cognitive function.

Exciting new sociological research is uncovering some of the secrets behind the effect community has on not just the individual but society.

We're learning just how much community-based activities can improve everyone's quality of life.

The individual has been in the spotlight for many years, especially in Western countries where independence, stoicism and a strong sense of entitlement are part of contemporary culture. On their own, none of these qualities are inherently "bad." But when they become too important, they can create a culture of individuals with little community.

Research published in the Association for Psychological Science journal brought up the concept of a loneliness epidemic. The study found loneliness can increase the risk of premature death by an astounding 30 percent!

Some of this loneliness may be due to shifting communication methods. Despite the fact that computers, cellphones and tablets allow 24-hour connectivity to friends and community, many argue that all the texting and image sharing is actually making us less connected emotionally. Don't let online social networks replace face-to-face relationships. Instead, these tools should be used to supplement real-life connections.



Fortunately, for your health and the health of the community around you, focus is shifting from the needs of the individual to the needs of the many. With this shift, people are now looking more at what they can give back to society or share with others.

You can see this shift happening (with connections supplemented by technology) as more and more people embrace crowdsourcing time, talent and treasure to start new projects; urban communities come together to create shared gardening spaces; and strangers loan their couches and bedrooms to travelers, expecting no payment other than that of a good conversation.



New research is showing that these kinds of social connectivity are a major factor in good health for each individual involved. In each of the examples above, every individual involved benefits somehow while also making an impact on the greater community around.

Urban garden communities are a wonderful example of this powerful impact.

Many public health workers and community activists believe community gardens create urban-rural partnerships that are capable of producing social, economic and health benefits for not just the actual gardeners but also the people in the neighborhood. It appears that low-income communities have the most to benefit.



People react to their surroundings. A vacant lot full of trash is a depressing scene that tends to attract more negative behaviors and situations from nearby residents. On the other hand, a well-tended garden is a beautiful site that attracts positive behaviors and situations.

Community gardens also create beautiful spaces for informal social interactions, group meetings and educational programs—all of which are communities of their own that serve to support the health and happiness of their members.

Let's not forget the nutritional aspects of community gardens. Healthy fruits and vegetables provide sustenance that may be hard to find in the "food deserts" associated with low-income urban environments. Children who are involved learn early on how to care for the food that will nourish and protect them throughout life.



Community gardens are just one example of an intentional community in which people come together to experience something greater than the sum of its parts alone. There are many such opportunities. Social clubs exist everywhere; many of them are specifically dedicated to doing good in the world. If joining something along the lines of Rotary International seems too daunting, start smaller. Even a group as small as a book club offers benefits to everyone involved.

The social relationships that come with intentionally committing to a community affect mental and physical health in both the short and long term, according to sociologists. Moreover, the effects seem to be cumulative throughout life. So having your children be part of groups and communities of peers can give them a lifelong advantage, as well as help teach them social skills that will be helpful later in life.

No matter which communities you choose to join or create, there is little doubt that working together with positive, like-minded people will create something better for everyone. Explore the opportunities around you for a society and community that you believe in. Abandon an individualistic worldview and embrace community for your health and the health of all those around you.



Ensure Nutritious Food for Future Generations

How do you choose the foods you put in your grocery cart? Most likely you choose foods based on your taste preferences, and perhaps also on their nutritional content.

Do you choose foods by thinking about what your great grandchildren will be eating? If you're like most grocery shoppers, the answer is probably no. Perhaps it's time to think long term when you're planning meals for the week.

Many experts agree that if we don't start investing in sustainable agriculture, we run the risk of limiting the options our children will have for bountiful, nutritious food. Sustainable agriculture is a system of farming based on an understanding of ecosystem services and the study of relationships between organisms and their environment. These practices are varied, but they have the same goals of enhancing environmental quality and natural resources while growing healthier food.

Ultimately, our grandchildren may suffer too as environmental consequences take their toll.

Loss of natural habitat, water waste, soil erosion, soil degradation, pollution and global warming and other negative side effects of modern living can have a lasting negative effect on the food supplies that will feed our children.

The challenge to ensure enough nutritious food for generations to come has been acknowledged by many. It involves changes on every level, including the choices you make while shopping. In essence, we can help ensure our children's children and beyond are able to eat healthy, delicious foods by fostering a system that nurtures sustainability.

As consumers, employees, family members and thoughtful members of society, we make decisions every day about the food we



buy. This gives us great power to reshape the way we produce, process, transport and prepare food. The very basic laws of supply and demand that dictate how free markets work suggest that if enough people demand sustainably produced foods the markets will adjust. The global food system is highly complex and is driven by many economic, cultural and environmental factors. Even still, almost all of these factors can be traced to one person—the person who chooses what foods to put in his or her grocery cart. In other words, you!

Diversifying our diet not only better serves our bodies by supplying a wider range of nutritional support, but also better serves the environment and oceans. Supermarkets carry what consumers ask for. When consumers demand out-of-season produce, food must be imported from faraway places. The processes it takes to transport that food increases carbon footprints and puts a strain on local farmers, who can only produce what the seasons allow.

Out-of-season foods are often less flavorful too due to the time it takes to transport them from farm to store. Moreover, some produce has been genetically altered to better withstand the strains of travel, at the sacrifice of taste and possibly nutrition. Adventurous eaters who fill their shopping carts with

locally grown, in-season produce tend to consume more flavorful, healthier foods. Choosing a variety of foods should extend beyond fruits and vegetables. If every consumer chose tuna, for example, for every meal of fish, how long would it take for the ocean supply of tuna to be completely fished out? We should probably eat fish such as tuna very sparingly in any case, as it is a long-lived fish at the top of the food chain and therefore scarcer. These fish also tend to be higher in mercury and other environmental toxins, which bio-accumulate in the oceans.

When consumers branch out and ask for a wider variety of options, they are creating a more sustainable relationship with food supplies.

The more people do this, the greater the positive effect it has on oceans, fisheries, food distributors and supermarkets.

As more consumers are becoming aware of their role in the health of the environment, more grocery stores are stocking organic, free-range and other sustainably produced options. Every time you purchase one of these options, you are helping promote sustainable agriculture.

Limiting food waste can also help ensure the nutritional safety of future generations. Some estimates say that up to half of all food produced around the world is lost or wasted. In the European Union alone the amount of food waste is predicted to increase to roughly 126 million tons a year by 2020. Not only does food waste unnecessarily fill garbage dumps, it also means even more food must be produced, further straining our finite natural resources. Be sure that when food is wasted, it finds its way to a compost pile and ultimately is returned to nourish the soil so more high-quality food can be grown.

Feature article

Complementary Medicine

Complementary medicine derives its name from the simple fact that its practitioners rely on a complementary relationship between two or more styles of medicine.





Successfully using complementary medicine does not reject conventional wisdom nor accept all alternative therapies without critical thought. Instead, it uses scientific fact, conventional wisdom, common sense and an open mind to mix the best of both concepts in a way that produces better results than either method could alone. The result is a partnership between patient and practitioner that takes a holistic approach to the healing process. If that whole-body approach sounds appealing to you, you're not alone. Some estimates report that almost 40 percent of people have used complementary medicine.

From traditional Chinese medicine practices to cutting-edge surgery techniques, complementary medicine relies on a vast body of knowledge, practices and concepts.

In 2012, the National Health Interview Survey reported that the ten most common complementary health approaches were natural products (defined as dietary supplements other than vitamins and minerals); deep breathing; yoga, tai chi or qi gong; chiropractic or osteopathic manipulation; meditation; massage; special diets; homeopathy; progressive relaxation and guided imagery.



These may be the most popular, but they are far from the only options. Other alternative practices include acupuncture/-pressure, hypnosis, reiki and magnet therapy. The term complementary medicine is most often applied to a combination of standard Western medicine and some form of alternative medicine. The combinations are nearly endless and are determined by many factors, including illness, personal goals, work situation, community engagement, stress level, diet and much more.

Natural products are the most common complementary treatments used.

Changing your diet can produce radical changes in your health. Working with a trained nutritionist can maximize these changes and help ensure your body is getting the nutritional support it needs no matter what disease or illness you are facing.

Imbalances in nutrition have become a leading cause of some of today's most prevalent health crises. The obesity epidemic is due in large part to diets that provide far too many carbohydrates and too much sugar for the amount of calories expended in modern lifestyles. Many dietary and herbal approaches used in complementary medicine attempt to bring the body's nutritional intake into balance with the person's lifestyle. Instead of relying on medications and/or surgeries, we can use simple dietary changes to help prevent many of the conditions associated with obesity.

Combining medicine with lifestyle changes is the perfect example of complementary medicine, and it's a combination many people use to treat cardiovascular disease. When a person has high blood pressure, a modern doctor will most likely prescribe medicine. A doctor who believes in the power of complementary medicine will also advise changes in diet, activity level and, if appropriate, stress management. If the patient seems particularly saddened or nervous about the diagnosis, psychosocial and spiritual support may be provided as well. After the patient has adopted these lifestyle changes, the medicine portion of the treatment may no longer be needed.





Cancer patients are another group who frequently combine alternative health treatments with modern treatments to maximize success. In addition to using modern, mainstream therapies, these patients opt to include complementary treatments to help deal with their stress and worry. Physical and nutritional adjuncts help keep the physical body strong and well nourished.



Complementary remedies and practices can help control stress, depression and fatigue. In these cases therapy, massage, yoga, meditation, aroma therapy, guided imagery and other calming practices are used to boost mood and help patients find a sense of peace during a stressful time.

Our physical state is closely related to our emotional state, and our feelings can have a major impact on our health. Put simply, you don't want to bring more negative emotions into your life when you are already facing an illness. Instead, fostering peace and happiness can help attract more positive feelings in your life that will leave you much better suited for tackling illness. This also helps prevent a defeatist attitude, which, in extreme conditions, can be a critical factor in an illness.

Acupuncture is another common complementary practice used in conjunction with modern mainstream medicine. Acupuncture uses hair-thin, sterile needles inserted at specific locations to manipulate the flow of energy in the body. According to the National Institutes of Health, acupuncture is proven to help treat pain, nausea and vomiting. These are three common side effects related to several modern medical procedures such as cancer chemotherapy and kidney dialysis. Often, the ancient practice of acupuncture can give welcome relief, and it is offered in the integrative oncology sections of many major cancer centers.

Guided imagery is a visualization technique that helps people focus on positive mental pictures in order to promote relaxation, reduce stress and improve focus on positive

things, people, experiences and situations. If we tend to attract into our lives the things we focus on, would you rather focus on how bad you feel when you are ill or how happy you feel when you are well? This powerful but simple concept is why proponents of complementary medicine believe so strongly in utilizing the mind-body connection to maximize health.

People all over the world are turning to complementary practices because they feel more involved in their own health.

They work with a team of providers to create a personalized regimen tailored to their unique needs, both physical and mental.

Everybody is unique and will respond uniquely to various different approaches. Massage might work great for you but not your neighbor. At the same time, your neighbor might respond to acupuncture while your body does not. No one treatment will be a miracle or failure for everyone. There are many treatments to be explored with an open mind, common sense and a willingness to try something new.

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Herbal Synergy

Centuries before there was anything that even resembled modern medicine, healers used herbs to treat illness and injury.

Through trial and error, and witnessing the effects of treatments, practitioners of herbal medicine learned how to combine different herbs to produce more effective results. Over time, many of these herbal combinations were abandoned for more modern medicines. Today, people who are once again looking at natural, holistic health options are rediscovering the powerful herbal combinations our ancestors relied on.

Medicinal herbs tend to have a multicomponent nature—they are each “multitaskers”—which gives them great potential for exhibiting synergistic effects. One herb can have multiple nutritional components, each capable of acting alone or in conjunction with other components.

One of the oldest and most widely recognized herbal combinations is ginseng and astragalus.

Formulations of these two herbs have been used to support a healthy immune system as well as to protect the muscular and circulatory systems.



Modern science backs up what our ancestors knew—there is scientific evidence that ginseng and astragalus are indeed a potent combination. In one well-known test, patients saw a boost to their immune systems when they consumed the herbal combination. Specifically, they had more NK cells, which are a type of protective white blood cell.



Curcumin with boswellia is another ancient combination verified by modern research techniques. In the report titled “Clinical Evaluation of an Herbal Formulation in the Management of Knee Osteoarthritis,” researchers found great promise in this herbal combination for keeping joints healthy, flexible and pain free.

In one study of children, a combination of ginseng and Ginkgo biloba clearly showed positive effects on behavior as well as a decrease in social problems. Many herbs are rich in essential oils, antioxidants, phytosterols, vitamins and minerals.

Combining the right herbs can greatly increase the effectiveness of each individual herb's ability to help fight against toxins and germs.

Because herbs have such a wide range of potential health-boosting components, it's no wonder they work so well in combination in the body. Whereas modern medicine tends to view each drug as one method for fixing one problem, herbs contain components that act on multiple systems in the body. When combined with other herbs, the effects are far greater.

Building a Team Approach to Healthy Eating Habits

Growing, shopping for and preparing our own healthy foods are key survival skills for our children in today's world.

The past several generations have increasingly abdicated these skills to the prepared-foods industry. Now many older children and young adults rely primarily on ready-to-eat meals, a group of industrial faux foods in which over 3,000 chemicals are licensed to be added as ingredients.

In the past, it was up to parents alone to teach their children healthy eating habits.

Today, parents are busier than ever, and children spend more time at school, playing organized sports, at daycare and with after-school clubs than at home. For many modern families, the old saying that it takes a village to raise a child rings more true than ever before. But what if that village, in this case comprising teachers, coaches and nannies, doesn't share your beliefs about the importance of diet and nutrition? If that's the case, it's time to take charge and lead that village down a path toward appreciation for a healthy diet.

The following steps will help you get involved in your child's school, or any group or organization in which your child is involved.

The first step in fostering a healthy team approach to teaching good eating habits is to educate yourself on what your children are currently being fed when they are not in your home. Study the menus that your children bring home from school. Don't make any judgements on just one month. Collect several menus and look for patterns. Educating yourself also means understanding current laws that affect school lunches.

Schedule a few lunch dates at school with your child so you can see firsthand what the food looks like. The word fruit listed on the menu can mean anything from a few slices of sugary canned peaches to fresh apple slices. You won't know until you see for yourself. Engage your child while you're both in the lunch line. Use the time to ask questions about his or her usual choices and try to encourage healthier options, if available. This is also your chance to seek out any food options not seen on the monthly menu. Salad bars and à la cart selections may be available but not listed.



Now that you know what the food is truly like and understand the laws governing some of the decisions, it's time to enlist the help of others. Seek out parents, teachers, cafeteria staff, principals, school board members, PTA members, students and anyone else who is involved with the processes of selecting, preparing, serving and eating the food at your child's school.

Once you develop a core group of people, turn those stakeholders into a nutrition committee. This group should be as varied as possible. In other words, a group that contains at least one member from each of the groups just listed will be far more effective than a group of parents.



Use your new committee to prioritize the desired changes and outcomes and to come up with no more than ten goals to start with. Be realistic.

Eliminating trans fats and high fructose corn syrup are challenging but attainable goals.

Switching to an all-organic vegan menu is less likely to be accomplished ... at least at first. Save any dream goals for later, after your team has practiced and the school is used to working with you.

Now the real work begins. Your committee will have to engage many people on many levels in order to create change. You can start by attending PTA and school board meetings. Meet with teachers and administrators on all levels. Engage in positive, open conversations and recruit like-minded people to help with your committee.



Another good point of contact is the school nurse. The nurses charged with taking care of our little ones while they are at school are already invested in the health and well-being of your children. They can often facilitate meetings between parents and administrators and bring important medical-based knowledge to the conversations.

Start every new conversation by commenting on the things the school has done well in order to put the other people at ease.

You need to create a dialogue. Demanding and ordering changes will build walls that are hard to tear down and will impede your chances of making changes.

Understand that there will be a large need for education at all levels. Even if your school board agrees to pull all processed and unhealthy foods from the menu right away, replacing them with salad bars and nutritious whole foods, many of the children (and adults) at the school will not be used to this healthy food.

Volunteer to work with the school in order to develop methods of educating and introducing these foods in order to make them more attractive to children being raised in a generation that views a bag of potato chips and a soda as an acceptable meal. Many areas require basic nutrition and health lessons, but how involved should they be? Inquire, and offer to help out if necessary.

In many cases, school lunch patterns, and even laws, may have been heavily influenced by agribusiness and government, often acting in concert. In extreme circumstances, consider forming a co-op to produce alternative healthy lunches that can be delivered to kids' homes on a weekly basis and taken to school, while boycotting the unhealthy fare being offered by the school kitchens (if they refuse to change)—or simply involve your kids in packing their own lunches.

Celebrate every success with your committee. Change can be hard. Even small changes like replacing a sugary fruit cocktail with fresh fruit can take a long time and a lot of energy. Take time to celebrate these wins, no matter how big or small.

Understanding the Importance of Social Capital for Seniors

Retirement can be a time of wonderful new beginnings, full of adventure, growth, self-discovery and happiness. Or it can be a time of loneliness and solitude. Ultimately, the choice of how you spend your retirement is yours. But finding or creating the right community can empower anyone to live a self-determined lifestyle of joy for years to come.

A large health survey of almost 14,000 adults found that seniors who lived in areas with greater social capital had significantly higher physical mobility than those who lived in neighborhoods without social capital. In essence, the study revealed that when seniors are able to live in communities filled with mutual support, they are able to stay independent longer.

Social capital is a form of cultural capital in which transactions are made in the form of reciprocity, trust and cooperation.

A community with high social capital is filled with people who work toward a common good rather than focus solely on their own self interests.

A separate but related study found that when people live in communities with high social capital they are more likely to receive health screenings at recommended ages, which helps lead to earlier diagnoses and better results in treating serious disease. This phenomenon may help create a cycle of healthier, socially connected individuals prompting others to live similarly healthy and engaged lifestyles.

These and other studies show that actively participating in and managing one's community and social settings can have a profound impact on health. How does one stay connected to community as one ages? Today more than ever there are lots of ways to contribute to the social capital in your area.



The internet is a wonderful tool for staying connected, though it should complement and spark new connections in the real world, not replace them. Shared calendars, neighborhood listservs, newsletters, email chains, video phone calls—these are all tools that can be used to help keep people connected outside the home. If you're not convinced that you'll be able to connect with people your age online, know this: the 74-plus demographic is the fastest-growing internet social network user, according to the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project.

For many seniors who are not used to using computers, learning to use these tools also provides an added bonus of exercising the brain in order to help protect cognitive function.

These are just tools to help facilitate finding and participating in communities. What communities you choose depends entirely on your own interests and desires. Many retirees find they finally have time to take that dream vacation they kept putting off while working. In fact, there are many travel agencies that specialize in organizing senior travel groups. Connections made on such trips can lead to new friends to be visited and even more adventures abroad with like-minded people.

A closer-to-home community that can be of great social, personal and even nutritional value is a community garden. Most big cities have multiple community garden areas. A quick online search can reveal a host of opportunities. Not only will you be able to spend time sharing your hobby with other enthusiasts, but access to calming gardens and fresh fruits and vegetables, not to mention the physical activity of working in a garden, provides even more health benefits.

New communities and opportunities for friendships are all around you. Local bookstores often host book clubs, writing classes and tutoring opportunities. Churches, hospitals, schools and other community organizations are always looking for volunteers.

Giving your time to those who need it is an excellent way to stay connected and create positive social capital.

If you can't find a club or organization that fits your needs, start your own. Organize a weekly card game, lunch club, book club or any other regular meeting that will bring together people with similar ideas and goals in life.

No matter where you look to stay socially engaged, be sure your communities are filled with social capital. Not every social club or organization will be populated by people who want to help others or contribute to the greater good. Making an effort to spend time with positive-minded people will pay off in more ways than you can imagine. Your mood and health will prosper, as will the people around you. Best of all, seeking out these positive communities will help you attract even more wonderful opportunities to experience life the way you want to!



Coping Strategies for Stay-at-Home Dads

A growing number of men are choosing to eschew the old masculine stereotype in favor of a more family-based, nurturing role. With this new standard comes a host of benefits for father and family.

But it's not without its challenges. Fortunately, there are plenty of resources for stay-at-home dads when they feel pressure building up from the old expectations of society.

In many cultures, the modern man who chooses to stay at home with his family will be up against a societal norm that has been in place for hundreds (if not thousands) of years. Psychologists and psychotherapists are seeing a new wave of patients as men try to deal with changing roles. A common struggle men face is overcoming doubts concerning their ability to be more involved with their children when their own fathers were largely absent. Without a clear role model of their own, these men struggle to create emotionally open relationships with their growing families (and friends).

From the very beginning, house husbands should be clear and honest with their partners about how critical their support will be in creating these relationships, as well as finding validation and self-worth in this relatively new lifestyle decision.

An open and honest conversation with his spouse will help a man ensure his emotional needs will be met so he has the emotional capital to create the family relationships he truly wants.

Some dads who feel the pressure of old social norms can feel empowered by taking on dismissive comments they hear. Recognize your worth and defend your choices in life by letting closed-minded people know that being the breadwinner isn't the only way a man can provide for his family. Try not to feel angry or hurt by other people's comments. Instead, point out all the

positive benefits to your family and how good you feel staying at home with the children. And always remember that your children are paying attention to you and are influenced by the way you act. Set a good example at all times; no matter how hurt or angry you get, express yourself in a respectable manner and, above all, show the pride you have for being a father.

Sometimes all that is needed is for a man to change his focus. Of course this is easier said than done, but dwelling on negative feelings will attract more and more negatives into your life.

Replacing negative thoughts with positive ones focused on the benefits and joys of fatherhood, and the advantages you are giving your children, can do wonders for a struggling outlook.

When your thoughts turn negative, think about the fact that active fathers benefit the physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioral development of their children. Children with present dads tend to have higher grades and greater ambitions in life. They are also at reduced risk of teen pregnancy and mood disorders.

If you choose to stay at home with the kids, know you are not alone. According to the National At-Home Dad Network, the number of stay-at-home dads has doubled in the past ten years. Many fathers who are not stay-at-home dads would like to be. Researchers from the Lancaster University Management School report that 82 percent of fathers who work full time have a desire to spend more time with their children.

You may feel like the only stay-at-home dad in your area, but you are not. There are plenty of online resources for dads, many of which serve to not just provide information but to connect dads with other dads. The National At-Home Dad Network (US) and Stay At Home Dads (UK) are both great places to start.

If you can't find the help you need, start your own daddy group. Joining or creating a community of fellow stay-at-home dads is vital for finding success and happiness as a stay-at-home parent. A community offers





multiple levels of support, from advice and commiseration to babysitting and group outings.

Dad-based communities also help fight the isolation that every stay-at-home parent feels from time to time.

It's okay to admit to yourself that you feel lonely. The company of your baby, while wonderful in many beautiful ways, is no

substitute for the mental companionship of adults. A get-together on a weekly basis with other dads in your area will provide friendship and mental stimulation that your infant cannot. Organizing day activities with neighborhood dads will allow the sharing of child-watching duties while adult talk can happen. The respite will be even better if you can get together with other dads during the evening when moms are around to watch the kids for a few hours.

Finally, don't be afraid to join groups traditionally attended by mothers. For example, libraries and many bookstores have free story times for children. Just because not many fathers attend doesn't mean you shouldn't. You may be surprised to find how much support the mothers will be willing to give a struggling stay-at-home dad.



The Business Case for Breastfeeding

Pressure from competitive work environments often causes women to rejoin the workforce before the optimal time after having a baby. For many new families, mothers return to work when babies are still breastfeeding. This can be bad for mother, baby and the business.

There are myriad reasons why breastfeeding makes sense for mother and baby. For a mother, breastfeeding can reduce the risk of developing postpartum depression and certain cancers. It also helps reduce the risk of developing postmenopausal osteoporosis later in life and facilitates bonding between mother and infant.

For babies, breastfeeding can help protect against illnesses, safeguard against allergies, reduce the risk of obesity and may even help boost intelligence. Breastfeeding also helps later in life by reducing the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, celiac disease and Crohn's disease.

Despite the many benefits of breastfeeding, pressure from the office leads many women to stop early. But it doesn't have to. In order to create a breastfeeding-friendly environment at your work, start the conversation well before birth and maternity leave. Explaining your expectations early will give your boss plenty of time to make any arrangements that might be needed.

Because breastfeeding involves a "private" area of the body, many women are shy about talking about it with their bosses. For the sake of your baby, don't be shy. Tell your supervisor about your needs. Most employers do want to meet the needs of their employees and will do their best to accommodate you.

If your employer needs convincing, explain why it makes good business sense to create a breastfeeding-friendly work environment.

Women who are able to continue breastfeeding when they return to work tend to miss fewer days of work due to infant illnesses compared with women who do not breastfeed. Breastfeeding bolsters a baby's immune system by providing antibodies, immune factors, enzymes and white blood cells. Amazingly, if a baby comes in contact with germs the mother has not come in contact with, the baby will pass those germs to the mother during breastfeeding. The mother's immune system will then create antibodies that are passed back to the baby at later feedings.

Breastfeeding at work is vital because a woman's milk supply is directly related to how much stimulation her breasts receive.

In other words, the less she is able to nurse, the more quickly her milk supply will end. If a mother is unable to express milk at work, her breasts may become engorged. This can cause plugged ducts, which can lead to mastitis, infection and the need for antibiotics—and the need to take sick days to recover.



Another option for women who, for whatever reason, are unable to arrange to breastfeed their babies at work is to purchase a breast milk pump, and then store breast milk in a bottle that can be warmed to body temperature and fed to the baby by someone else. Many businesses will create a pumping room for women to have privacy. Some areas have laws requiring this.

Businesses that create breastfeeding-friendly environments are better able to retain good employees, see fewer sick days taken by moms and dads, have lower healthcare costs due to sick babies and have a workforce with high job satisfaction and productivity.



Breastfeeding-friendly environments make sense on the consumer side too.

It is estimated that women drive the decisions for up to 85 percent of consumer purchases. When a business, restaurant, store or coffee shop creates a breastfeeding-friendly environment, new mothers will be able and willing to spend more time and money in these establishments. They will also be more apt to spend more, make return visits and leave positive reviews.



A breastfeeding-friendly environment is one that treats nursing mothers the same as any other consumer, patron, staff or manager. It creates quiet and private spaces for mothers who wish to nurse away from the public. Businesses that are pro-breastfeeding train staff to understand local laws and handle complaints about breastfeeding from other customers in a way that is respectful to everyone involved.

According to a study published in the journal *Pediatrics*, the United States alone could save roughly \$13 billion in medical costs every year if 90 percent of families were able to breastfeed their babies for at least six months. With numbers like these, it's clear to see that breastfeeding is good business.

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Food supplements should not be used as a substitute for a varied diet.

Ask the Expert

What is “nutrient synergy”?

It's easy to view nutrients with a “this is for that” formula—calcium is for bones, vitamin C is for the immune system, iron is for the blood. But nutrition is much more complex than that. Nutrient synergy refers to the ways nutrients interact with each other to become even more powerful than they are alone. For example, vitamin C helps the body more effectively absorb iron. Therefore, oranges (vitamin C) and kale (iron) work together synergistically.

A quick internet search will give dozens of delicious citrus-kale salad recipes that will help boost your body with synergy.

Clearly, nutrient synergy reveals that we shouldn't look at vitamins and minerals with a “this is for that” mind-set. You shouldn't think of it as simple addition either. With synergy, the effects can be multiplied many times over. Consuming the right combinations of nutrients can create amazing health-boosting benefits. Vitamin B6



requires zinc and phosphorus before it can be used by the body. Vitamins C and E appear to work more efficiently when paired. The flavonoids and catechins are perfect partners that work to keep your blood healthy. These are just a few examples. Scientists know many of the complex ways in which nutrients work together, but they have yet to discover them all. That's one reason it's important to eat a diet rich in a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables; doing so will help ensure your body receives everything it needs to take advantage of the complex relationships nutrients have in our bodies.

How many meals a day should I really eat?

There is no one answer that fits every person. Your body is unique and therefore has unique requirements. Some people find they are better able to control weight and feel healthy by consuming four or five small meals a day. Others prefer to consume the traditional three. Still others do best by eating three normal meals and one or two small snacks. Your diet, metabolic rate, activity level, age, mood and other factors all dictate how often and how much you should eat. No matter what your daily meal number is, never try to skip one in order to lose weight. Skipping a meal that your body is expecting can have negative results on your waistline, mood and energy level. Allowing yourself to get too hungry often leads to binge eating later in the day—often on unhealthy convenience foods. Finding the right number of meals for your body in your current life stage only requires a little experimentation, nutritional knowledge and common sense.

Should men worry about osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis, a condition in which bones become fragile, is most often associated with women. While it is true that more women than men suffer from osteoporosis, men are also at risk. After the age of 65 men and women lose bone density at the same rate. Estimates published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggest that 3.3 million men in the United States will have osteoporosis by 2020. That's no small number of men! To help ensure your bones stay strong and healthy later in life, it's important to build your bone bank when you are young by consuming calcium, vitamin D, vitamin K and trace minerals. While all these nutrients are important, they work even better when consumed together. Vitamin D helps the body more effectively absorb calcium. Once it has been absorbed, vitamin K2 appears to direct the calcium straight to your bones, where it is needed.



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Food supplements should not be used as a substitute for a varied diet.



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