

July/August 2019

The art of growing young[®]

Role Models
Family Health



In this Issue...

Alignment and
Breathing

The Perfect Cuppa:
The benefits of tea (and
a couple drawbacks)

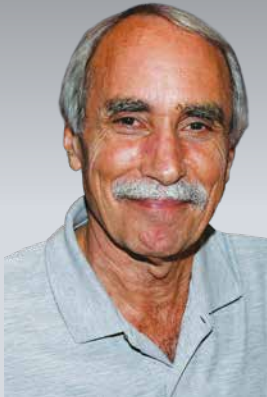
Waste Not, Want
Not: Reducing
Food Waste



In this Issue...

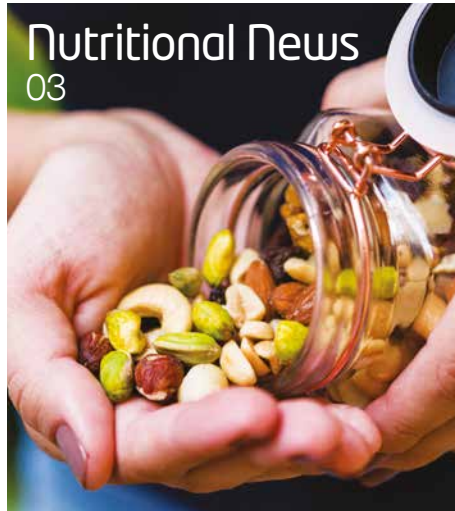
#BestLife

02



Nutritional News

03



Alignment and
Breathing

04



Entomophagy

12



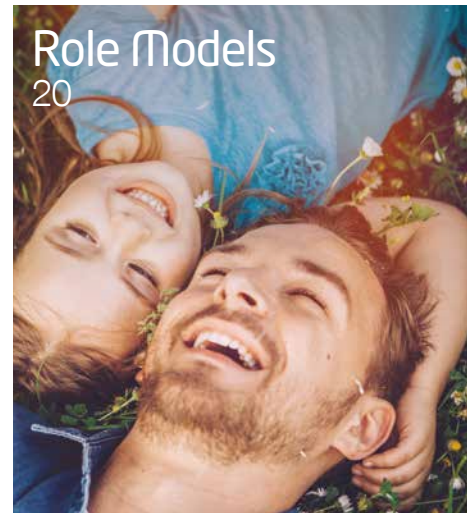
Reflexology

14



Role Models

20



02 #BestLife

03 Nutritional News

04 **Fitness**
Alignment and Breathing

06 **Feature Article**
The Perfect Cuppa:
The benefits of tea (and
a couple drawbacks)

10 **Lifestyle**
Waste Not, Want Not:
Reducing Food Waste

12 **Nutrition**
Entomophagy

14 **Feature Article**
Reflexology

18 **Herbs and
Supplements**
Magnesium

20 **Family Health**
Role Models

22 **Family Health**
Your Changing Bowel
Habits

24 **Family Health**
Man Brain

26 **Family Health**
Floral Therapy

29 Ask the Expert

#BestLife

If you spend any time on social media sites like Facebook or Instagram, you have probably seen the popular hashtag BestLife. I saw a #BestLife picture the other day in which a young woman was holding a giant lizard at the zoo. I could not help but think, "That isn't my idea of a Best Life." And my next thought was, "Isn't that wonderful?" That is the beauty of the art of growing young and of life in general: everyone's Best Life is different.

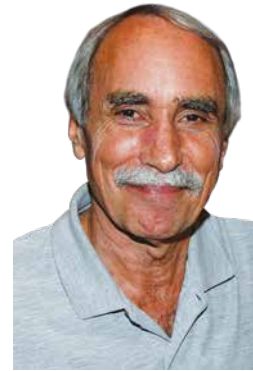
We are all different beings with different needs, desires and goals. On the road to wellness, we will find many people with whom we have a lot in common and many people with whom we have nothing in common. There is much to learn from both groups of people. When we keep an open mind and embrace new experiences, we allow the universe to give us wonderful and unexpected positive opportunities.

No matter what your idea of a Best Life is, if you focus on what you want and leave negative emotions, experiences, people and circumstances in the past, you will find your quality of life increases dramatically.

One other thought that I had about the Best Life social media trend is that we have to be careful not to idolize other people's posts. Always be aware that people tend to present themselves very carefully on social media. We don't know what's just out of view of the camera—it could be a messy room, crying

kids, stacks of bills or anything else that isn't Best Life worthy. Constantly comparing ourselves to the perfect photos we see online is not healthy. It will distract and shift our focus away from positive emotions and into negative ones like envy or jealousy.

The bottom line is, focus on your very own Best Life. Do not let envy of another person's life creep into your thoughts. Let the joy and happiness you already have attract even more people, experiences, emotions and circumstances into your life. When you do this, there is no limit in creating your own, unique #BestLife!



Dwight L. McKee M.D.

Dwight L. McKee
Scientific Director

Nutritional News

Housework Helps Your Brain

New evidence shows that by cleaning your house more often, you can help keep your brain younger. Light activity, even in short bursts of time, such as vacuuming a room, raking leaves or making all the beds, can give your body a boost in health. In the study, every extra hour engaged in light physical activity was associated with approximately one year less of brain aging!¹ The more physical activity you can engage in, the better your overall health will be. This study and others like it show that your daily exercise doesn't have to be done all at once.



The Sugar Rush Myth

When the afternoon feels long and sluggish, it's tempting to reach for a sugary pick-me-up to get through the day. However, the latest research shows not only that there is no such thing as a "sugar rush," but that eating junk foods may actually worsen your mood. Using data collected from 31 different studies, researchers found that consumption of high-sugar foods does not improve mood and often makes people feel less alert and more tired. A recent study found that eating refined carbohydrates can reduce alertness within 60 minutes and increase fatigue within 30 minutes.⁵ Healthier snacks such as a handful of nuts, carrot sticks and hummus, or a piece of fruit will help perk you up naturally.

Exercise Boosts Mood

Want to be happier? Try getting active. A study of more than 1.2 million people found that people who tend to stay more active also tend to be happier. According to the study, the happiest people engaged in physical activity three to five times a week for 30 to 60 minutes at a time. Another important finding is that physical activity with others, such as playing team sports, further increases a person's happiness—perhaps due to the social nature and camaraderie inherent to team sports.²

The Importance of Having a Purpose in Life

A new study of older adults found that when a person believes he or she is living a worthwhile life, that person will enjoy many positive aspects of life, including physical health. A few of the benefits that come from having a purpose in life are better emotional experiences, economic prosperity and better sleep. There are many ways for older adults to find a sense of purpose. It doesn't matter if it's through volunteering, mentoring, work, faith or anything else—it matters only that you find a purpose, not how you find it.³

Vitamin D Once Again Linked to Mood

A new study out of Ireland found that vitamin D deficiency resulted in as much as a 75 percent increase in the risk of developing depression in older adults. Vitamin D deficiency tends to be a problem for older people, who may not be able to get outside as often. This is one of many studies on the subject of mood and the sunshine vitamin. But it stands out because of its size and length, as it was based on the Irish Longitudinal Study on Aging.⁴ Just 20 minutes outside during peak sunlight hours (between spring and autumn in temperate climates) is enough for your body to generate all the vitamin D it needs to help boost your mood. Mounting evidence suggests that there may be other mood-boosting benefits to sunlight beyond the ultraviolet component that stimulates vitamin D production in the skin. Sunscreen completely blocks the vitamin D production of sun exposure, so be sure to get some exposure without sunscreen, though do avoid sunburn, which increases skin aging and the long-term risk of skin cancers.



¹ Spartano, Nicole L., Kendra L. Davis-Plourde, Jayandra J. Himali, Charlotte Andersson, Matthew P. Pase, Pauline Maillard, Charles Decarli, Joanne M. Murabito, Alexa S. Beiser, Ramachandran S. Vasan, and Sudha Seshadri. "Association of Accelerometer-Measured Light-Intensity Physical Activity With Brain Volume." *JAMA Network Open* 2, no. 4 (2019). doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2019.2745.

² Chekroud, Sammi R., Ralitza Gueorgieva, Amanda B. Zheutlin, Martin Paulus, Harlan M. Krumholz, John H. Krystal, and Adam M. Chekroud. "Association between Physical

Exercise and Mental Health in 1.2 Million Individuals in the USA between 2011 and 2015: A Cross-sectional Study." *The Lancet Psychiatry* 5, no. 9 (2018): 739-46. doi:10.1016/S2215-0366(18)30227-X.

³ Steptoe, Andrew, and Daisy Fancourt, Daisy. "Leading a meaningful life at older ages and its relationship with social engagement, prosperity, health, biology, and time use." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* Jan 2019, 116 (4) 1207-1212; DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1814723116

⁴ Briggs, Robert, et al. "Vitamin D Deficiency Is Associated With

an Increased Likelihood of Incident Depression in Community-Dwelling Older Adults." *Journal of the American Medical Directors Association*, Volume 20, Issue 5, 517 - 523

⁵ Mantantzis, Konstantinos, Friederike Schlaghecken, Sandra I. Sünram-Lea, and Elizabeth A. Maylor. "Sugar Rush or Sugar Crash? A Meta-analysis of Carbohydrate Effects on Mood." *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews* 101 (2019): 45-67. doi:10.1016/j.neubiorev.2019.03.016.

Alignment and Breathing

Many of us know the importance of maintaining correct posture. Some of us probably do stretching practices that target the muscles and ligaments that help with postural support. A few of us may even incorporate exercises into our fitness routine that help strengthen the muscles that support our abdomen and back.

Most likely we do these things because they make us feel good—they alleviate back pain or help us calm down and relax at the end of the day. However, many people do not know about the connection between body alignment and our respiratory system.

We're all probably aware of the trifecta of how our thoughts, feelings and actions incorporate a triangular dependence, each one affecting the other.

One can say that posture, breath and movement (or exercise) have a similarly interdependent relationship for our physical health.

When your respiratory system is functioning optimally, then your body and its organs, muscles and neurons are better oxygenated.



However, sometimes we aren't breathing as well as we can due to poor posture.

For example, if we are continually slumped over, our body needs to figure out a way to open our lungs more fully. Often the body will recruit and overwork accessory muscles to do this. Accessory muscles like the muscles on the back of your neck between the shoulder blades, called the levator scapulae, can get tight and tense.

If you need to visualize this, think of someone who has just ran a quick sprint. Often their shoulders rise and fall in an exaggerated manner. Similarly, people who suffer from pulmonary obstructive conditions will often unwittingly recruit their shoulder muscles to help them breathe.

Sometimes over-exercising can lead to this. When you strengthen one muscle group, consider strengthening its opposite. For example, if you work your abdominal muscles day after day, consider ways to complement this by exercising your back muscles. The reason is that over-working the abdomen, for example, can shorten or tighten up those muscles to almost encourage a slouching posture.

If you counterbalance that with back exercises, your back muscles can help pull those abdominal muscles longer.

But we all know the big zinger when it comes to poor posture, and that is prolonged sitting. Perhaps you work at a desk all day, or maybe you have a long commute to work. Some are calling sitting the new smoking when it comes to the negative effects on public health. Not only is it imperative to get up and move every 30 to 60 minutes when you are seated for so long, but it is also necessary to be mindful of your breathing patterns and body alignment.



So, how do you breathe correctly when exercising and moving about? Generally speaking, when you move into a C-shape or a fetal position, you should exhale or breathe out. If you are moving so that your spine is straightening up or elongating, or even stretching back (e.g., in yoga the movements for cobra, upward-facing dog), then inhale, or breathe in. Another example is the cat-cow pose in yoga. On all fours, when you drop your belly to the floor and arch your back, neck and tailbone backward from the floor, you should also breathe in. Breathe out when you transition to cat pose, arching your spine upward toward the ceiling. In other words, inhale when you stretch out your spine and lengthen. Exhale when you bend forward or reach to touch your toes.



It will take perhaps several weeks of strong awareness to train your body into optimal posture.

While you are standing, your head, shoulders, lower ribs, hips, knees and ankles should form a smooth, upright line. When you are sitting (at work for example), your eyes should be perfectly horizontal to the top of your computer, your shoulders should be relaxed, your back supported against a chair, your arms supported with a ninety-degree angle while resting on the arms of the chair, your hip bones should be directly under your head, and your knees bent so that your feet rest flat on the floor.



Do this while activating your inner core muscles and breathing properly. When you exhale, your abdomen should come inward and upward.

When you inhale, don't just breathe into your belly or your chest, but try to also expand your entire core and ribcage. Focus on breathing into the lowest tips of your ribs and expanding those out as wide as you can.

Once you master these basics, bring them into your exercise routine!

The Perfect Cuppa:

The benefits of tea (and a couple drawbacks)





Black tea is the second-most-consumed beverage in the world. It is an integral drink in so many cultures, from Great Britain to India to Turkey to China. Served by itself or flavored with bergamot (Earl Grey) or spices (chai), sweetened with raw honey or iced down with sugar like in the Southern United States, black tea is a versatile drink. And like so many traditional drinks (guarana, coffee, green tea, matcha, coca tea), it is loaded with health benefits.

Antioxidants

While green tea gets a lot of credit for being the soldier against free radical attacks, black tea has similar levels of antioxidants. Catechins, theaflavins and thearubigins are three of the polyphenols—a type of antioxidant—that show up prominently in tea. Drinking tea may help decrease the effects of damage to the body's cells, and could lead to a reduction in chronic illnesses.

Additionally, many of the health benefits discussed here are due in large part to the actions of a powerhouse of antioxidants in tea.

Cardiovascular health

Flavonoids—a group of antioxidants found in many vegetables, fruits, red wine and chocolate—are quite prevalent in tea. And they could be the key to increased cardiovascular health. Tea decreases the chances of developing coronary heart disease.¹ And for those who already have some cardiovascular risk factors, drinking about three cups of tea a day improves cholesterol and blood sugar levels.²

Blood pressure

An essential part of cardiovascular health is our body's blood pressure. According to a randomized controlled study, the consumption of black tea can contribute to improvements in both systolic and diastolic blood pressures.³ That said, other researchers found mixed results among studies.⁴

Cholesterol

In one study, participants consumed either a black tea extract in tablet form or a placebo three times a day for three months. The researchers noted that those who consumed the actual black tea extract, as opposed to the placebo, saw a significantly lowered level of “bad” cholesterol, or LDL.⁵

Stroke

A stroke, sometimes referred to as a “brain attack” in order to correlate the urgency of it to heart attacks, occurs when the blood vessels in the brain do not receive enough oxygenated blood. This usually occurs when there is a blood clot or a thickening of the blood vessels to create an obstruction, or when a blood vessel ruptures. Strokes are directly linked to poor cardiovascular health.

The good news is that an overwhelming majority of strokes are preventable. A study out of Sweden of nearly 75,000 men and women analyzed the cardiovascular health of the participants. When the researchers adjusted for other factors, they concluded that tea consumption—about four cups a day, to be exact—was significantly associated with a lower incidence of strokes.⁶

Blood sugar

Higher blood glucose levels are not just of concern for those at risk for or living with diabetes. Elevated blood sugar also contributes to poor kidney function, cardiovascular conditions and even depression.

Some studies have demonstrated a positive effect on blood glucose levels for regular tea drinkers. One theory is that components of tea—namely antioxidants—help promote insulin activity in the body.⁷

Immunity

Research is inconclusive regarding how black tea improves the immune system. There are a few theories on why black tea may improve the immune system, and those mainly have to do with the brain-gut connection and antioxidants.⁸ The polyphenols in tea may also improve gut health by positively affecting the gut microbiome.

¹ Bahorun, Theeshan, et al. “The Effect of Black Tea on Risk Factors of Cardiovascular Disease in a Normal Population.” *Preventive Medicine*, vol. 54, 2012, doi:10.1016/j.ypmed.2011.12.009.

² Gardner, E J, et al. “Black Tea – Helpful or Harmful? A Review of the Evidence.” *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, vol. 61, no. 1, 2006, pp. 3–18., doi:10.1038/sj.ejcn.1602489.

³ Hodgson, Jonathan M. “Effects of Black Tea on Blood Pressure: A Randomized Controlled Trial.” *Archives of Internal Medicine*, vol. 172, no. 2, 2012, p. 186., doi:10.1001/archinte.172.2.186.

⁴ Elliott, W.J. “Effect of Cocoa and Tea Intake on Blood Pressure: A Meta-Analysis.” *Yearbook of Cardiology*, 2008, pp. 60–62., doi:10.1016/s0145-4145(08)05009-0.

⁵ Fujita, Hiroyuki, and Tomohide Yamagami.

“Antihypercholesterolemic Effect of Chinese Black Tea Extract

in Human Subjects with Borderline Hypercholesterolemia.” *Nutrition Research*, vol. 28, no. 7, 2008, pp. 450–456., doi:10.1016/j.nutres.2008.04.005.

⁶ Larsson, Susanna C., et al. “Black Tea Consumption and Risk of Stroke in Women and Men.” *Annals of Epidemiology*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2013, pp. 157–160., doi:10.1016/j.annepidem.2012.12.006.

⁷ Anderson, Richard A., and Marilyn M. Polansky. “Tea Enhances Insulin Activity.” *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, vol. 50, no. 24, 2002, pp. 7182–7186., doi:10.1021/jf020514c.

⁸ Hamer, Mark. “The Beneficial Effects of Tea on Immune Function and Inflammation: a Review of Evidence from in Vitro, Animal, and Human Research.” *Nutrition Research*, vol. 27, no. 7, 2007, pp. 373–379., doi:10.1016/j.nutres.2007.05.008.



Gut health

In addition to the antioxidative benefits, the tannins in tea, along with the warm water, can aid in digestion after meals. They have also been demonstrated to have anti-diarrheal qualities.⁹

Cognition

The caffeine in black tea can help with focus and memory. However, the caffeine spike and drop isn't as severe as that of coffee. Black tea drinkers often describe increased alertness at a level that doesn't produce jitters or anxiety and that has a longer duration.¹⁰ The amino acid L-theanine plays a complementary role to the caffeine, promoting relaxation and improved focus.¹¹

⁹Doustfateme, Sareh, et al. "The Effect of Black Tea (*Camellia Sinensis* (L) Kuntze) on Pediatrics With Acute Nonbacterial Diarrhea." *Journal of Evidence-Based Complementary & Alternative Medicine*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2016, pp. 114–119., doi:10.1177/2156587216654600.

¹⁰Bruin, E.a. De, et al. "Black Tea Improves Attention and Self-Reported Alertness." *Appetite*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2011, pp. 235–240., doi:10.1016/j.appet.2010.12.011.

Stress

Black tea may help your body mitigate the negative chemical response to stress. Interestingly, tea has been shown to decrease stress by reducing the stress hormone cortisol, compared to a placebo. And subjectively speaking, tea drinkers report greater levels of relaxation.¹²

Hydration

For quite some time, it was thought that caffeine-containing beverages were dehydrating. More recently, scientists are concluding that is only a concern when drinking many cups of caffeinated beverages (like five, six or more!).

¹¹Bryan, Janet. "Psychological Effects of Dietary Components of Tea: Caffeine and L-Theanine." *Nutrition Reviews*, vol. 66, no. 2, 2008, pp. 82–90., doi:10.1111/j.1753-4887.2007.00011.x.

¹²Steptoe, Andrew, et al. "The Effects of Tea on Psychophysiological Stress Responsivity and Post-Stress Recovery: a Randomised Double-Blind Trial." *Psychopharmacology*, vol. 190, no. 1, 2006, pp. 91–91., doi:10.1007/s00213-006-0620-z.

Downside

All of the health benefits discussed here are most often seen when drinking black tea in moderation. This usually shakes out to about three or four cups a day.

When you go beyond that, you risk some of the negative aspects of drinking too much of it, including getting jittery from too much caffeine or perhaps some dehydrative effects.

Particularly because tea is a leaf, it is important to buy tea from a brand or source you trust. Leaf and ground vegetables are most vulnerable to pesticides and fertilizers. Additionally, many of the world's tea farmworkers come from very poor regions. Look for third-party certifications that can attest to organic, fair trade and anti-deforestation standards.

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

Waste Not, Want Not: Reducing Food Waste

As children, we probably heard things like “Eat it all up” and “You can leave the table once you clear your plate.”

Likely we were told not to dish up more than we could eat. Or maybe our elders reminded us of those less fortunate than us who do not have enough to eat. Perhaps they even shared stories of their past when food was scarce.

Nowadays, with the ever-increasing obesity epidemic, we are being told that those messages we heard as kids may not be great for our health. It's highly likely we internalized many of those expressions or sentiments.

Even as adults, we may continue to eat food that is in front of us even when we are quite full.

Or maybe we even say some of those things to our own children. Let's face it, wasting food is probably biologically wired into our psyche as something that just isn't good.

Added to this complex issue is how food waste goes beyond our waistlines or pocketbooks (wasted food is wasted money). It has become a serious environmental concern. In fact, roughly a third of greenhouse gas emissions are caused by food production. And about the same percentage of food produced is wasted. And it isn't just about leaving a small portion of potatoes on our plate when we are full or eating just half a banana and tossing the rest. Waste is happening on a much larger scale that encompasses the agricultural industry, the dining industry, and municipal and national waste management systems (think garbage dumps).

Food production is the largest effect that humans have on the world's resources. It takes a lot of energy to support farming and animal husbandry.

Mainstream and large-scale agriculture uses tremendous amounts of water, electricity and vehicle fuel to produce crops. A weekly grocery haul may be filled with vegetables, fruits and grains that have traveled many miles to reach the grocery store. Animals raised for human consumption also have to eat. That leads to more land (and water and fuel, such as gasoline or diesel) being used to grow grains and food for those animals. The runoff from animal farming contaminates streams, rivers and lakes. This doesn't even take into account all of the energy, pollution and garbage caused by food packaging.

Beyond this, farmers often can only sell pristine produce. This means that a carrot that has a kink or a bend in it may not make it to the grocery shelf.



Or an apple that is lopsided and doesn't look plump and round probably will be tossed before it even reaches the consumer. Twenty to 40 percent of produce is rejected before even making it to the grocery store.



As is so often the case with these multifactorial, complicated issues, one wonders what they can do. There is the macro level that incorporates governments, nonprofit organizations, businesses, agricultural producers and policymakers. In France, the government has made it illegal for large supermarkets to throw food away. Instead they must donate it to food banks, give it to farmers for animal food or compost it.

In the United States, about 25 percent of food waste happens within the home. In Great Britain, about 15 million tons of food are wasted from the farm to the table. Both of those numbers also reflect how many food insecure people are living in those countries!



And then there is the micro-level change that begins with you. What can you do to help curb food waste? As always, it is a good idea to buy locally and in season.

Create a weekly meal plan and shop specifically according to it. Bring reusable containers to the bulk aisle in the supermarket where you can purchase just what you'll use.

Store fruits and vegetables properly so that they don't wilt away or rot in the fridge. Buy imperfect or ugly produce.



Talk to your grocery store manager or farmer at the market to see if he or she can have a special section for such produce at a small discount to consumers. Learn about nonprofits that support diverting food waste from grocers and restaurants to those in need.

Finally, come to terms with it. Your mother was right—wasting food is bad! It doesn't mean you have to overstuff yourself. It just means you have to be a more conscientious consumer.



Entomophagy

Over the past several years, healthy living and organic foods have become part of the mainstream. It really is an amazing time to focus on mental wellbeing, holistic living, organic eating and a robust ecosystem.

It can almost seem like daily we're learning about a new "it" superfood from indigenous tribes or ancient people, with experts lauding its benefits of sustainability, whole nutrition and physical wellness. We hear how these foods have been consumed by certain cultures and how they have produced a given health benefit. Sometimes those new superfoods are nuts or seeds like macadamia, chia or hemp, or a versatile grain or "pseudograin" like quinoa or faro. Perhaps it is an exotic new taste like acai berries. At times, we drink it, as with matcha tea or kombucha. And then other times we think, "What? I could never!"



And such is the case with entomophagy, which is, quite simply, eating insects.

It may be the latest and more interesting of the superfood fads to come into the spotlight. When one considers a true paleo diet (foods of our hunter-gatherer Stone Age ancestors), insects certainly were a significant part of it. Our hunter-gatherer ancestors were certainly not eating on a regular basis any animals such as cattle that spent the whole day grazing in a protected space. Meat was likely available rarely, and from an animal that was quite different from modern-day cattle, pigs or chickens, even those that are organically produced. Our ancestors ate what they could find and knew was safe, based on the experience of their ancestors handed down over many generations. It's extremely likely that this included worms, and grubs and other insects, which were easy to find under rocks and in grassy vegetation areas.

It turns out entomophagy isn't so rare outside North America and Europe, although it is gaining popularity in haute cuisine restaurants and in the world of celebrities. The trend is even creating a small market for insect farms in the United States and Europe.

Proponents tout the benefits of insect eating as a form of animal protein that is kinder to the environment. Feed lots for cattle, pigs and chicken use tremendous amounts of resources and contribute to a worsening environment—the pollution from animal excrement accounts for thousands of tons of carbon dioxide and methane spewed into the earth's atmosphere each year, as well as high-nitrogen wastes that are responsible for algae blooms in bodies of water that are exposed to runoff from factory farms. Poultry farming has been shown to emit nearly 90 percent more greenhouse gases than cricket farming.¹ In fact, the meat industry is said to produce the same amount of environmental degradation as every single vehicle on earth combined.² Speaking of poultry farming and cricket farming, it would be far more natural to feed crickets and other insects to poultry, rather than grain (particularly GMO corn and soy, which are the staple of large-scale poultry production), as poultry in the wild eat large numbers of insects and are considered insectivores.

Eating a plant-based diet is an important step to being better to the planet. The trouble with meat is that the animal consumes that plant-based diet and then we consume that animal. It adds an additional and environmentally devastating step to the process when practiced on the enormous scale of industrialized agriculture and animal husbandry. Insects consume far less vegetation, which in turn means less farmland (and the resources and energy to cultivate and transport) needs to be utilized for their production. That said, it is unclear how it all works out pound for pound.

Advocates also tout the nutritional benefits of insects as a lean and healthy protein. But this remains to be more rigorously studied and solidly proven. Additionally, so much of the nutritional content depends on the type of insect and their farming conditions. For example, crickets are quite different from beetle larvae. One could assume their nutritional contents would also differ.³

If the insect-eating trend catches on beyond the fringe gourmets and health gurus, it could be a potential benefit to poorer producers.

When we look at the people who are the traditional consumers and primary sellers of insects as food, they largely live in the developing world.

But this could be complicated, and a bit difficult to predict. When quinoa became more popular, some indigenous people in the Andean region of South America (mainly Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador) saw an increase of income and a higher quality of life. But many were priced out of a food staple that they had consumed for generations.

So, if you're so inclined, how can you dabble in entomophagy? Some fans of insect eating buy pulverized protein powder and add it to their smoothies. Check your local health food store to see if they have any insect snacks. Or check local restaurants with more avant-garde menus or authentic ethnic food places to see if they serve insects. Its part of the true paleo diet of our ancestors. Chocolate-covered grasshoppers are a delicacy in some Asian markets, but not likely a food of our hunter-gatherer ancestors!

¹ Halloran, A., et al. "Life Cycle Assessment of Cricket Farming in North-Eastern Thailand." *Journal of Cleaner Production*, vol. 156, 2017, pp. 83–94., doi:10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.04.017.

² Wellesley, Laura, et al. "Changing Climate, Changing Diets:

Pathways to Lower Meat Consumption." Chatham House, 7 Dec. 2018, www.chathamhouse.org/publication/changing-climate-changing-diets#.

³ Payne, Charlotte. "Giving up Meat and Eating Bugs Can Help

Save the Planet." *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 22 Mar. 2018, www.independent.co.uk/news/long_reads/entomophagy-eat-insects-food-diet-save-planet-meat-cattle-deforestation-a8259991.html.

Reflexology

Our feet do a lot for us in this life. They help us explore the world by walking around, and they keep us active with running, walking, jumping or dancing. Practitioners of reflexology believe that our feet are much more than vehicles for physical mobility.



Reflexology is an alternative or complementary wellness modality that focuses on the zones of energy in the body and how certain pressure points on the feet (as well as the hands and ears, sometimes) connect to them.

The idea is that when we apply pressure to these specific, mapped pressure points on the feet (as well as the hands and ears), energy pathways in the body can more effectively optimize a person's health. Practitioners claim that reflexology can clear up toxins, congestion and stress in the nervous system.

Reflexologists use foot maps that indicate where a point on the foot may correspond to an area in the body.

Broadly speaking, the left foot will correspond with organs on the left side of the body and the right foot will correspond with organs on the right side.

More specifically, examples of pressure points are the near inner edge of the foot at center sole corresponding with the adrenal glands. Apply pressure here for increased energy and to combat stress and fatigue. The bottom of your big toe corresponds to your thyroid. Pressure here can aid in metabolism.

Different theories exist on how reflexology works. A common theory is that reflexology helps to stabilize the body's nervous system. In this theory, the reflexologist applies pressure to the given referral points on the feet (or hands or ears) and this pressure sends a signal from the peripheral nervous system (the nerves) to the central nervous system (the brain and spinal cord). The central nervous system then sends back signals to help optimize the body's function.

One theory is that reflexology reduces pain particularly by boosting the mood and reducing stress in the body.

The theory suggests that pain is largely a subjective experience perceived by the brain. When a reflexologist applies pressure to certain points, that helps relax the body and the brain will experience less of the given stimulus as pain.

Another theory is that illness can be tamed because reflexology helps the body's "vital energy" to flow more appropriately. The theory implies that the body has energy pathways (some connect this with the nervous system) that can get congested (similar to the concept of "chi" as an energy that flows through the meridians defined by ancient Asian cultures that developed what we now call acupuncture). These congestions contribute to illnesses. Reflexology clears this congestion in the body's energy to better promote health.

Finally, there is the "zone theory," which has a lot to do with the historical origins of reflexology, particularly in the Western world. Usually, within this theory, the feet (or hands) are divided up in vertical zones, from the toes to the heel, with the body divided up into corresponding vertical zones from the top of the head to the feet. For example, the area between the second and third toe follows the same vertical zone as the eye lies. As noted, these zones are similar to the concept of meridians in Chinese medicine; however, they are not the same (but some do coincide).

What can you expect during a typical reflexology session? Initially, a reflexologist will take a medical history and specifically discuss what your current ailments are.

During a session, reflexologists may focus on the overall wellness of their client or target a specific ailment.

If the session will focus on the feet, you will certainly take off your shoes and socks and either sit or lie down as the practitioner works. The practitioner will assess your feet for sores, bunions or warts, and may ask you about specific pain that could interfere with treatment.

If you are there for a specific issue (e.g., migraines, nausea or nerve pain), the reflexologist will focus on the area of the foot that corresponds with your ailment. If there are multiple issues or if it's a general session, then you can expect the reflexologist to cover the entire foot, from the toes to the heel, and perhaps even incorporate the hands and ears.

Reflexology can feel like anything from occasional discomfort to relaxing pressure to sensations of tingling or "energy" running from the practitioner to the client.





Reflexologists attribute this to the opening up of the pathways or the self-healing of the body.

Sometimes the touching may cause ticklish feelings and laughter. Clients sometimes feel an immediate effect, and other times it takes a day or so for the body to integrate the therapy and begin to heal itself.

Generally, the session will last half an hour to an hour. You can either converse with the reflexologist or relax in silence.

Reflexology, while similar in nature, is not the same as massage or acupressure. Massage focuses on stretching and manipulating muscles to create a relaxing experience and stimulate blood and lymphatic circulation. Massage therapists work from the outside in, whereas reflexology attempts to work internally. Acupressure, like reflexology, uses reflex or referral points to improve health. However, acupressure and reflexology use different points, and acupressure uses points all over the body.

Reflexology cannot be used to diagnose or exclusively treat serious health conditions. Practitioners of reflexology believe that they cannot heal someone, but that reflexology may help the body heal itself.



They believe that the body responds to touch, which is a mode for healing. In fact, the scientific literature is inconclusive as to its effectiveness.¹

Some studies do show clear benefits, particularly with pain perception and stress reduction.²

Nevertheless, it has been used as a common complementary therapy by many cultures for centuries. As far back as 1000 BC, references are found in Chinese medicine texts about the connection between internal medicine and points of the feet. It is believed that Marco Polo may have introduced the concept to Europe when he translated other Chinese medicine texts into Italian. Sir Henry Head, a British neurologist working around the turn of the last century, began establishing the relationship between the skin, the nervous system and the internal organs. In the beginning of the previous century, an American medical doctor, William H. Fitzgerald, found that placing pressure on certain points (or “zones”) of the foot that referred to other areas of the body could help alleviate pain after injury or during certain medical procedures. His work was further expanded on to develop more modern reflexology maps.

¹ Ernst, E., Posadzki, P., & Lee, M. (2011). Reflexology: An update of a systematic review of randomised clinical trials. *Maturitas* 68, 116-120.

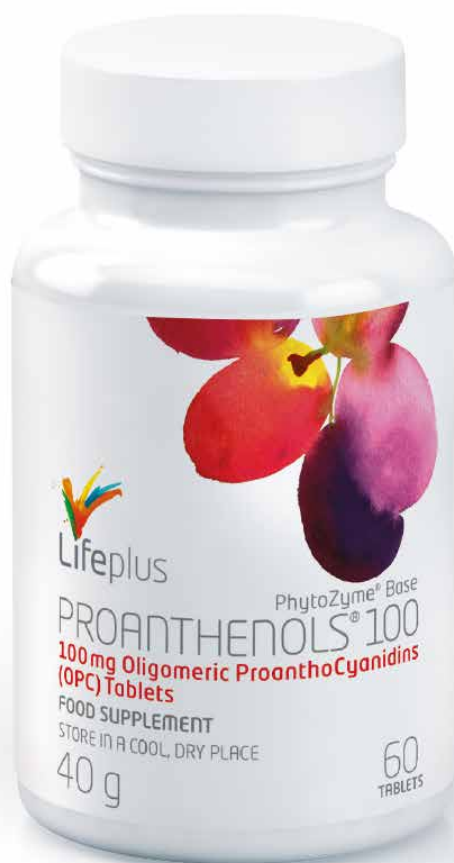
² Kunz, B. & Kunz, K. (2008). Evidence-Based Reflexology for Health Professionals and Researchers: The Reflexology Research Series.

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Magnesium

One of the most common deficiencies in the human body is the often-overlooked mineral magnesium. Magnesium is essential for literally hundreds of actions and processes in the human body. It is the fourth-most-common mineral in the human body, the eighth-most-common mineral on earth and the third-most-common in the ocean. So why do we have a deficiency? And how do we know if we have a deficiency, and what can we do about it?

Modern, large-scale farming has a lot to do with the reason we're deficient. Soil depletion is common, and many fertilizers do not replace magnesium in the soil (the way they often do for nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus). In fact, many hybridized vegetables are engineered to not need as much magnesium. But that usually means they also are not good sources of dietary magnesium for us.

Depending on the country or municipality you live in, your drinking water may have fluoride added to it. That fluoride binds with the magnesium and creates a chemical structure that is relatively insoluble. This is unfortunate, because water—particularly water that comes from deep earth sources such as wells and aquifers—could be a good source of magnesium.

Processed foods contribute to our magnesium deficiencies. The reason is they are often high in sugar and the body uses large amounts of magnesium to process those foods in our body.

Magnesium can be depleted in our bodies when we experience high levels of stress. Lack of sleep, the overstimulation from technology and being in a constant state of “flight” are part of daily modern life. Stress hormones use incredible amounts of magnesium.

Magnesium is utilized in the body for so many vital functions—from cardiac and blood pressure regulation to energy production and temperature regulation, from bone and teeth formation to detoxification. It helps us maintain a sense of calm (hence stress uses up a bunch of it) and aids in digestion and defecation. There are over 300 magnesium-dependent enzymes in the human body—without enough magnesium, these enzymes, which are essential to the biochemistry of life, function very inefficiently.

It can be a bit tricky to know if you are deficient in magnesium—the list of symptoms is extensive and can be attributed to other issues as well. Since most of the body's magnesium lies inside cells (especially in the bones and muscles), standard laboratory blood levels are not very telling (unless there is a severe deficiency). Because the heart requires magnesium to do its very important work, the blood will sort of steal away magnesium from the bones and muscles to make sure the heart and other essential organs and tissues are getting what they need.

Signs and symptoms of magnesium deficiency most often include muscle spasms or cramps, restless leg syndrome, severe headaches, constipation, difficulty sleeping and mood imbalances. Sounds like a lot of things, right? Another option is to ask your health care provider to order a Magnesium RBC blood test. Or, realistically, you can just assume you have a deficiency and add high-magnesium foods and supplements to your diet.

Foods high in magnesium include the ever-heralded powerhouse of leafy greens (particularly spinach, kale and chard).

Chlorophyll, which is the essential compound for photosynthesis, allowing green plants (it's responsible for their green color) to convert sunlight into stored energy, which they then transmit to animals that eat them, is identical in structure to the heme molecule that makes up hemoglobin in all mammals—with the exception that in heme, there is a central atom of iron, whereas in chlorophyll, there is a central atom of—you guessed it—magnesium! Therefore, all green leafy vegetables are excellent sources of magnesium, assuming they were grown in magnesium-rich soil, which generally means soil that has been composted, rather than treated with chemical fertilizer (which still contains no magnesium).



Seeds such as the common pumpkin or squash seeds or the more exotic watermelon seeds are also good options.

Even better are sprouted seeds because the magnesium is more bioavailable. Legumes such as mung beans and black beans (which should be soaked overnight to increase bioavailability), seafood such as mackerel and halibut, and the ever-popular dark chocolate are other sources.

The kind of supplement you would want depends on your primary concern or symptom, and the list is fairly lengthy. One option is to research which form of magnesium is best for your given symptom. Or you can try a multi-magnesium complex that includes many of them. Many practitioners claim that magnesium is well absorbed as a topical supplement. This also helps skip the digestive tract if you find that magnesium makes you a bit too regular. You can try Epsom salts in your bath or a magnesium oil or lotion, which consists of a concentrated solution of magnesium chloride that has an oily consistency but is actually water based.

One of the most bioavailable forms of concentrated magnesium is a whole food form, in which magnesium has been added to growing cultures of single-celled organisms such as *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* subsp. *bulgaricus* or *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* (instrumental in winemaking, baking and brewing since ancient times), which assimilate and concentrate it, and can become up to 20 percent magnesium by weight.

Role Models

Children are wonderfully and miraculously bright. They are able to live in the moment and embrace the present in a way that our adult minds can't seem to fathom. And they are always watching and observing—even when we think they aren't. The old saying “Do as I say; not as I do” is hardly realistic. Children observe and incorporate the rules of the world through our actions.

Many of us recall the period in life when our toddlers started repeating things we said. How funny it was to hear a small child say very adult things like “Are you hearing my words?” or “That flower is absolutely gorgeous.” We may have laughed as we saw a mirror into ourselves! Similarly, remember the way we marveled when our baby stared at us intently and then mimicked our facial expressions?

Practice humility

Cultures in all areas of the world fall into the dynamic that adults are superior and children are inferior. A comedian in an interview once joked that children are little, psychopathic aliens dropped in the world and it was up to us adults to civilize them! Any parent or grandparent, no matter how enlightened, can chuckle at that and feel some sort of agreement. But how does this dynamic develop children?

Anyone who has ever been in a relationship (either through work or a personal one) in which the other person acted as such knows well that you just don't function as well.

Societies in which equality and flat hierarchies are the norm (think Denmark, Sweden, Norway) generally are happier and healthier. Tell your children when you are learning from them. Show them that you see them as people you respect and deeply care about. Listen to their points of view and be open to their suggestions. Talk openly about the importance of humility and highlight ways in which you feel humble in other areas of your life.

Express fear

Part of humility is showing vulnerability. While we need to be the leaders for our children—and they deeply want us to be—it is okay to show children that we also worry and have concerns about life.

This helps them see that fear, worries and insecurities are a normal part of being human. It also helps them see that even in the face of fear, though sometimes you must retreat, often you have to confront the fear.

Highlight failure

For many of us, one big fear in life is actually failure. Again, we have to be the leader in our relationships with children. But being a leader doesn't mean always being right or always doing things right. When we discuss failure with children, they see that it is part of life's disappointments. Of course, we want them to feel successful (and be successful), but often that comes with a few falls in life. Those falls can teach us something.



If a child loses a sports game, instead of steering the conversation away to “You'll do better next time,” try and see where the conversation goes when you ask how they feel about losing the game.



Show resiliency

Often, it's important to stay with a negative experience for a while in order to fully process it. When the time is right to move beyond it, demonstrate perseverance in the face of adversity. You can talk to your children about a difficult project you have at work and how you didn't fully understand how to make things right. Highlight how it makes you feel (e.g., frustrated, angry, hopeless), and then tell them how you are continuing to find ways to solve the given problems.



Embody kindness

It sure can be difficult to be nice when someone cuts us off in traffic. Or perhaps a neighbor continues to blast loud music and it really annoys us.

Children can see through phony behaviors. It's okay to let children see when we are frustrated with other people, but it is important for them to see us solve conflict in a kind and respectful way.

Praise them when they show kindness to their peers, animals or their siblings. Highlight times when they help others.

Practice patience

A child development expert once said that the single most important word for children to learn is "wait." In a fast-moving world in which we have so many opportunities for instant gratification, slowness, patience and waiting are qualities and skills that are often overlooked. When modeling the life skill of waiting, we demonstrate to our children that we can occupy ourselves and find meaning in the midst of expecting and wanting. Simple examples such as waiting for a pie to bake in the oven, or growing a potted plant, focus on the fact that things don't always come as soon as we want them.



Your Changing Bowel Habits

It's perhaps not the most comfortable casual conversation topic for many of us, but the truth of the matter is your poop says a lot about you! And as we grow older, there are some subtle and not-so-subtle changes we can expect. So, what does healthy stool look like, what are healthy bowel habits, and how can we make sure that we maintain the best bowel health as we grow older?

First of all, what constitutes healthy pooping habits?

One aspect to consider is frequency of your stools. There is a saying that purports that "normal" can mean anything from defecating once every seven days to doing so seven times in one day.

That is quite the range! The most optimal is emptying your bowels once a day, and some experts believe it is best to eliminate after each meal.

Another component of healthy bowels is the consistency. Is it hard and pebble-shaped? Is it loose and watery? Do you see bits of food in it on a regular basis? Does it float or sink to the bottom of the toilet bowl? Do you see oil that pools up on the surface of the toilet water?

In the medical world, there is actually a chart that reviews all the different types of stool, called the Bristol Stool Chart. In summary, the chart categorizes stool from one to seven, with one being hard and lumpy (indicating constipation) and seven being watery with no solid pieces. Out of the seven different stool descriptions, the best place to be is number four. Number four on the Bristol Stool Chart is stool that is like a snake or a sausage and is smooth and soft.

Color could be a key to a healthy bowel, but it isn't everything. For example, many of us have eaten beets only to forget about it, and then a day later gasped as we peered into the toilet to see dark red stool. Similarly, we may see more orangey stool after eating a lot of carrots or papaya. But on average, you want your stool to be a medium dark color, similar to milk chocolate.



If you are seeing pale or gray stool, it is important to discuss this with your health care provider, as it likely indicates an obstruction or malfunction of the gallbladder/biliary system.

Similarly, if you are consistently seeing black, sticky poop, this could be a sign of bleeding in the upper portion of your gastrointestinal tract. Bright red blood on or in the stool indicates bleeding from the lower GI tract, most commonly from bleeding hemorrhoidal veins.

Age-related change in the bowel has a lot to do with lifestyle changes. As people grow older, it is common, but not necessary, to lead a more sedentary life and not exercise as much. If we are living alone it may be easier to eat prepared and processed foods as opposed to whole foods.

Many seniors are on a strict budget and could find it difficult to purchase higher-quality vegetables and fruits. And quite a few take medications that could interfere with healthier digestion and elimination.

So, how do you poop healthfully as you age?

Unsurprisingly, the most important aspect of healthy pooping is healthy eating. If your stool is more watery, try the BRAT foods. BRAT stands for banana, rice, apples and toast. Consider a high-fiber supplement as well (but start with small amounts and gradually increase, to allow your gut microbiome to adjust—otherwise a lot of intestinal gas and bloating are likely, until your microbiome adjusts to the increased dietary fiber). These are foods that help bulk up the stool. If your stool is harder and difficult to pass, you need to consume more fruits and vegetables. Consuming fermented foods and high-quality pre- and probiotics can also be beneficial for balancing gut bacteria. Additionally, constipation could be due in part to a magnesium deficiency. Arguably of equal importance is drinking plenty of fluid, particularly water. This is especially important with age-related constipation.

Get moving. If you want your bowels to move, then you need to move. Exercise helps stimulate the bowels.

Assume the position. When we think about the ways our ancestors defecated, we know there were no seated toilets. With that, our anatomy probably evolved to accommodate their squatting stance. While in the Western world we chuckle or get nervous with a squat toilet, that is truly the most anatomically correct and functional way to pass stool. It doesn't mean you should install an entirely new toilet system in your house. A practical alternative is to buy a pooping stool. This helps bring the knees up for easier elimination.



Man Brain

There has been a lot of discussion in recent years—and particularly sparked by younger generations—on issues of gender identification. What is nature versus nurture when it comes to male versus female? Do our brains differ between the sexes? And if so, what does it mean?

A rough history of this line of questioning began in the Western world in the 1700 and 1800s. The lower classes were starting to rise up and question the notion of predetermined class systems and rankings of superiority. One might argue this was the beginning of the concept of egalitarianism for Europe and North America. Amidst these social changes, there were questions about the rightful roles and rights of women compared to men.

In order to counteract these challenges, the male power structure began trying to scientifically explain the differences in the sexes, with the emphasis on men being superior.

Fast-forward a few centuries, and we're still having these conversations—both colloquially and in the scientific community. Granted, nowadays the conversation has less to do with proving biological superiority.

That said, the notion that the male brain is less capable of more “feminine characteristics” like empathy or nurturing is being challenged by younger generations and by science.

In the United Kingdom, a cohort of 5,000 men and women received MRIs to analyze the physical aspects of the brain, and scientists indeed saw some physical variations based on sex.¹

Adjusting for some differences in body size, male brains tended to have larger volume in many different areas of the brain and women's brains tended to have thicker cortices. But the researchers found many more similarities between the two sexes' brains.

When it comes to mood, men have traditionally been told by society to be stoic and reserved with emotions. But that's not healthy for a man or his brain. While some modern men are embracing their emotions more than their fathers did, more men could benefit from mood-boosting exercises such as meditation, deep breathing or even just talking about how they feel.

Neither men's brains nor women's brains are better or superior. For example, neither sex has a brain-sized boost in IQ tests.² They are just different in certain areas. It's possible that these differences are due to our evolution from scavengers to hunter gatherers, with men and women perhaps having different tasks for survival. Yet each relied on the others' strengths as well. It may be that the male predominance of testosterone and the female predominance of estrogen contribute to differential development of different parts of the brain, which are then affected by life experience—the combination of nature and nurture.

One thing we know for sure is that both men and women can help protect their brains with a diet that contains ample amounts of omega-3 fatty acids, specifically DHA. A large portion of the human brain is comprised of this healthy fat that is found in fresh, cold-water fish such as salmon and mackerel.



¹ Price, Michael, et al. "Study Finds Some Significant Differences in Brains of Men and Women." *Science*, 8 Dec. 2017, www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/04/study-finds-some-significant-differences-brains-men-and-women.

² Johnson, W., Carothers, A., & Deary, I. J. (2008). "Sex Differences in Variability in General Intelligence: A New Look at the Old Question." *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 3(6), 518–531. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6924.2008.00096.x>



The omega-3 fatty acid EPA is also important for brain function, but DHA is a fundamental structural lipid required for all human brains, both male and female.

We can also help safeguard our brains by learning new tasks. If it helps, think of your brain like a muscle. The more you use the muscle, the stronger it will become. Learning new tasks and interacting with new people is good exercise for your brain.

It's also good for men to move beyond intellectual or physical learning opportunities and try more typically "female" activities. Or challenge yourself emotionally and socially by being more effusive and vulnerable with those you care about.



Floral Therapy

Mindfulness. Nature. Aromatherapy. Aesthetic pleasure. Manual and craft therapy. Utilitarian art. Creative expression. All of these have received a lot of attention in recent years for their soothing effect on our psyche and how that plays into a more robust wellbeing. But to do each of these things individually would take a lot of time and effort!

One concept that incorporates all of these wellness activities is floral therapy—or flower mindfulness. It can be a passive experience, simply involving lingering a little longer at a floral shop or in the flower section of the grocery store, or literally stopping to smell the flowers that you may pass in your yard or as you walk along a sidewalk. Or it can be a more hands-on experience of simply arranging and tending to flower bouquets. It truly is that simple.

Mindfulness can sometimes feel difficult. We may ask how we are to stop our “monkey mind” or when can we really take a half-hour to sit and meditate. Quite frankly, some of us may not enjoy silent meditation.

Floral therapy helps us disconnect from our screens and our to-do lists. It helps us stay in the moment as we focus on a task that involves our hands and occupies our minds “just enough.”

We’ve all heard of physicians in Japan prescribing “nature” to patients as a form of preventive or even therapeutic medicine. Or take the Scandinavian expression “There is no bad weather; only bad clothing” as a reference to the need to be in nature in every season. In fact, more preschools in the United States are emulating a Waldorf-style education in which children play outside year-round. And some hospitals are creating wellness gardens for patients to visit. “Forest bathing” (a walk in the woods) has become popular.

This is because nature soothes and nurtures us. It is undoubtedly good for our health!¹

That said, nature doesn’t have to be this distant place. There is this concept that nature is far away from us, that we have to travel far to get there. Instead, reframing the idea of nature to include small snippets of plants and flowers can make “nature bathing” a more easily accessible everyday practice. That is why floral therapy is so appealing—it is easy to do.

And let’s not forget how wonderful flowers smell. Have you ever walked down the street in early summer and passed a lilac bush or a jasmine vine? Or reveled in the smell of your Christmas tree when you first bring it home? That is because the scents of nature, particularly plants and flowers, help to release the feel-good chemicals in our brain. Part of the reason essential oils have become so popular is that they are a way to bring natural scents into our home and work spaces, which help calm us.²



When you are arranging flowers, or are at a flower shop or spending time in a flower garden, you are reaping the benefits of aromatherapy.



Beyond the wonderful smell, quite obviously flowers are gorgeous. Human beings are drawn to aesthetic beauty. We like to be visually pleased. People go on vacation and want a room with a view! We might spend hours at an art museum just to experience the beauty. We want our homes to look comfortable and feel visually pleasing. And obviously we like to make ourselves physically attractive by dressing nicely and taking care of our bodies, hair and skin. Looking at flowers and seeing the vibrant, bright colors or soothing ivories and whites is a pleasant experience.

¹ Song, Chorong, et al. “Physiological Effects of Nature Therapy: A Review of the Research in Japan.” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 13, no. 8, 2016, p. 781., doi:10.3390/ijerph13080781.

² Cho, Mi-Yeon, et al. “Effects of Aromatherapy on the Anxiety, Vital Signs, and Sleep Quality of Percutaneous Coronary Intervention Patients in Intensive Care Units.” *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, Feb. 2013, pp. 1–6., doi:10.1155/2013/381381.



When we participate in flower arranging, we are using our hands. Many of us work in an occupation in which we are seated, looking at a screen and using our minds and social skills. However, there is something to be said for using our hands to create something. Some people like to experiment with carpentry in their free time or perhaps see cooking as their manual therapy. Flower arranging is another way to not only make something with our hands, but to create something pleasurable and useful to our homes (or offices!).



Perhaps you are a painter or a sculptor. Or maybe you like to play the piano. However, many of us haven't participated in something artistically creative since we were children in school! Floral therapy allows us to express some aesthetic creativity. First we pick the colors when we are buying or picking the flowers and foliage. Then we choose the right vase or glass for them. And finally, we find ways to arrange them to showcase their textures, colors and shapes.



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Ask the Expert

What's the difference between a complex carbohydrate and a simple one?

Carbohydrates are one type of fuel for your body. You can choose from two different kinds: fast-burning simple carbohydrates and slow-burning complex carbohydrates. Fast-burning simple carbohydrates provide a quick source of energy that rapidly goes away or, if you don't burn it with activity, ends up getting converted into fat. Complex carbohydrates are burned much more slowly by the body and provide a steady source of energy that is less likely to end up stored as fat in your body. One simple way to tell complex carbohydrates from simple carbs is by color. Complex carbs are usually brown while simple carbohydrates tend to be white due to processing techniques.

For example, whole grain flour is brown and a complex carb. Refined white flour is white and a simple carbohydrate.

The same goes for pastas and breads made with them. Similarly, brown rice is a complex



carbohydrate and white rice is a simple carbohydrate. However, cooking white rice, then refrigerating it and reheating it, causes a process known as gelatinization, which converts it to what is called "resistant starch," meaning that a portion of it becomes indigestible by our digestive enzymes, thus reducing its caloric content and allowing it to functionally serve as a type of dietary fiber. Fiber is digested in the colon by the gut microbiome, rather than by the digestive enzymes that break starch down into simple sugars that are absorbed and used as energy, which we may or may not need.

Can breathing affect my health?

The first thing a baby does when it is born is take a deep, life-giving breath. From that moment on, the way we breathe has profound effects on our bodies. Think about how you breathe when you are excited, scared or nervous. Compare this to how you breathe when you are relaxed and calm. Slow, deep breaths are taught as a means to control stress and anxiety, partly because shallow breathing limits the amount of oxygen you take in. Consciously controlling the breath also balances the autonomic nervous system, downregulating the often-overactive sympathetic nervous system (the stress response) and upregulating the parasympathetic nervous system (associated with relaxation, digestion and immune function). Taking deep breaths from the diaphragm may seem unnatural. In cultures that view flat stomachs as attractive, breathing in a way that pushes the stomach out can even feel unsightly. But this method of breathing has many positive benefits to your health and mood. To take a deep, diaphragmic breath, slowly inhale through your nose and let the air expand your abdomen. Then slowly release the breath through your mouth. With each exhale, feel your body release stress, worry and anxiety. With each inhale, visualize your body filling with positive, life-giving energy.

Which is more important for weight loss, diet or exercise?

There has been an ongoing debate for years over which is more important for controlling weight: diet or exercise. Some people strongly believe diet is more important and others swear exercise is key. One reason there are two sides to this debate is that no two people are the same—every person's body has unique needs. One thing we all have in common is that our bodies need a generally healthy diet and regular physical activity. Due to metabolism, nutrient availability, lifestyle, family history and other factors, some people will find they need to concentrate a little more on their diet while others will realize focusing more on exercise will help them stay healthiest. The trick is to know what works for you and to stay focused on your own needs, desires and goals. Don't let the unique needs of others distract you. Nobody knows what your body needs better than you do. Let common sense and good results dictate how you choose to live your best life. One important tool in weight control is what you DON'T eat, as in intermittent and periodic fasting, which has been an integral part of human diet for eons, either through food shortages or religious practices, and had been largely forgotten until recently.

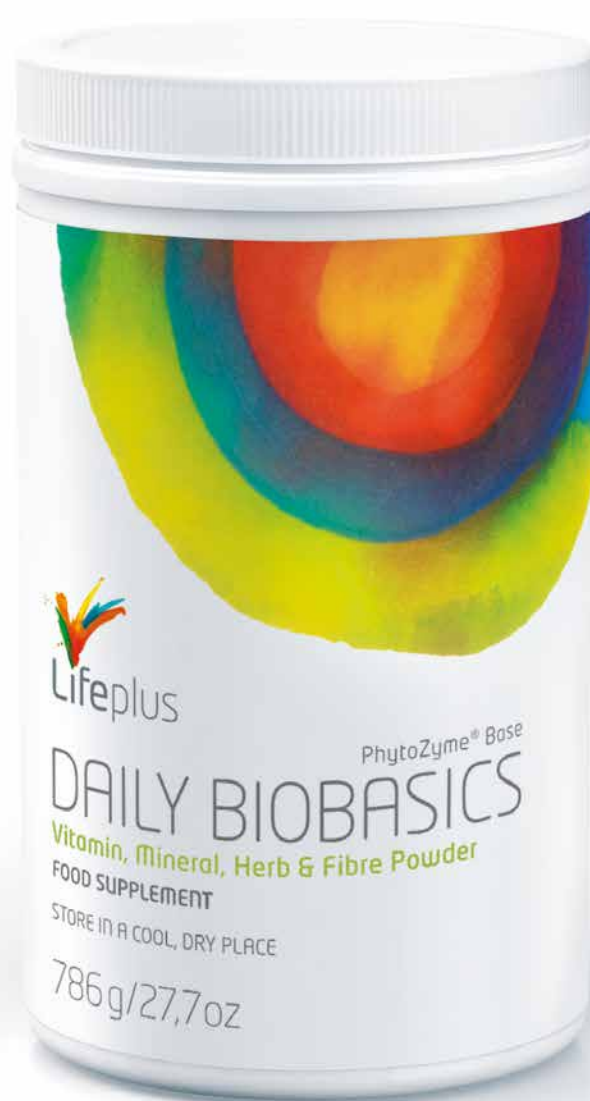


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