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FROM THE EDITOR

By ANGEL CHAVEZ

DIVING & THRIVING MERRY CHRISTMAS!



DIVING INTO GOD'S
DIMENSION AND THRIVING IN IT,
IS A DAILY PRIORITY THAT WE
ALL NEED TO PRACTICE. WE CAN
DO IT BY FILLING OUR HEART
WITH WORD AND EDUCATING
OUR MIND AND SOUL.

FOUR BASICS TO DIVE AND
THRIVE!

"All flesh is as grass, And all the
glory of man as the flower of the grass.
The grass withers, and its flower falls
away, But the word of the Lord endures
forever."

1 Peter 1:23-25 NKJV

GOD'S WORD IS ETERNAL,
AND FOR IT TO BEAR FRUIT IN
OUR LIVES, WE MUST EXAMINE
OURSELVES BEFORE THE FINAL
EXAM. HERE ARE FOUR WAYS OF
KNOWING IF WE ARE HEAVENLY
MATERIAL OR HOW TO BECOME.

**1ST MAKE THE DEAL!
TRANSACTION BETWEEN
HEAVEN AND EARTH. "HIS LIFE
FOR YOURS"**

"For God so loved the world that
He gave His only begotten Son, that
whoever believes in Him should not
perish but have everlasting life. For
God did not send His Son into the
world to condemn the world, but
that the world through Him might be
saved." *John 3:16*

THIS TRANSACTION THAT I
CALL "HIS LIFE FOR MY LIFE",
WAS MADE FOR ALL OF US
BETWEEN GOD AND HIS SON
JESUS CHRIST IN FAVOR OF
ALL HIS CREATION. BUT OUR
SIGNATURE SEALS THE DEAL.
OUR ACCEPTANCE IS OUR
SIGNATURE THAT SEAL THE
DEAL. THE TRANSACTION IS
ACTIVATED AND SEALED.

**2ND BORN OF THE WORD,
BUILT BY THE WORD:** "Having
been born again, not of corruptible

seed but incorruptible, through the
word of God which lives and abides
forever." *1 Peter 1:23*

MAKE SURE THE WORD OF
THE LORD IS EDIFYING YOUR
NEW NATURE. GIVE PRIORITY
TO THE WORD OF THE LORD.
WE HAVE NO CHANCE AGAINST
THE ENEMY IF WE ARE NOT
FORMED BY THE WORD OF GOD,
THE BIBLE. AND CONTINUE TO
BE BUILT BY THE WORD. JESUS
HIMSELF IS OUR EXMPLE TO
FOLLOW:

"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit
into the wilderness to be tempted by
the devil. And when He had fasted
forty days and forty nights, afterward
He was hungry. Now when the tempter
came to Him, he said, "If You are the
Son of God, command that these stones
become bread. But He answered and
said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live
by bread alone, but by every word that
proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Matthew 4:1-4

THERE IS AN "EVERY WORD"
WRITTEN TO SOLVE YOUR
PUZZLE AND BUILD YOUR NEW
SELF UP. THE HOLY SPIRIT
WILL HELP YOU FIND IT AND
IMPLEMENT IT. EVERY WORD IS
DESIGNED BY GOD AS A TOOL TO
TRANSFORM YOU FROM A STATE
OF FEAR INTO FAITH, FROM
SICKNESS TO WHOLENESS, FROM
THE KINGDOM OF DARKNESS
INTO THE KINGDOM OF LIGHT.
"EVERY WORD" HAS A PURPOSE
IN YOUR LIFE!

**3RD LEARN TO LIVE BY
FAITH [BY THE WORD] NOT BY
SIGHT [SENSES]. THE NEW YOU
RESPONDS ONLY TO THE WORD
OF GOD.**

"Then the devil took Him up into
the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle

continued page 7

COVER STORY

LAKE O REAL ESTATE

Serving Okeechobee and Beyond



16 Blind Designs



8 The New Digital Reality



24 Senior Healthcare Bias

CONTENTS

OKEECHOBEE • DECEMBER 2021 • VOLUME 5 • ISSUE 12

ON OUR PAGES



5 ➤ KIDS

>> All things kids! Advice for parents of kids from 0 to 17. Activities. Nutritional information and more.



8 ➤ SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

>> Devices and ideas that help to improve our lives. Scientific & technical information. Product reviews.



10 ➤ NUTRITION

>> Foods that give us what we need to be healthy and energetic. Diet tips. Recipes.



12 ➤ FITNESS

>> Ways to improve your health. Advice and information for an active lifestyle.



14 ➤ HEALTH & WELLNESS

>> We show you ways to improve your health mentally and physically. Healthy lifestyles.



22 ➤ SENIOR LIVING

>> Tips, information and reviews for those who are over 55 years of age.



26 ➤ HOME IMPROVEMENT/REAL ESTATE

>> Advice and information, home construction. Real Estate. Tips for decorating your home and more.



28 ➤ WEALTH/LEGAL/BUSINESS

>> Ways to manage your hard earned dollars as well as legal advice on a variety of topics.



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Assistant Editors note: This subject really hits home for me as I have a 16 year old son that suffers from social anxiety and I have decided to have him schooled, as well as attend counseling. This decision for me was an easy one. His mental health is of utmost importance and in order for him to thrive, and that needs to be addressed first and foremost.

Many people actually decide to homeschool because of issues of school anxiety, social anxiety, or their children's refusal to go to school. Sometimes the root cause of social anxiety at school is due to trauma or stress incurred at school. While some kids may be resilient to the same amount of stress and trauma, others are overwhelmed by it.

When I hear the stories, sometimes I say to myself, "this kid's reaction is logical. I would not leave myself in a position of that much stress or with a person who bullied me." Other times I say to myself, "This seems like a pathological reaction. Something small happened, but there is a distortion in the child's perception about the likelihood it will happen again or how it is affecting him/her."

And of course there is always a third possibility, which is that the child is not able to or does not want to communicate the whole truth of what happened that is causing the anxiety, so it seems small, but the child's reaction (to something we don't know about) is actually reasonable and could help keep him/her "safe."

I'm not a therapist, so I'm not trained to know how to tease these differences apart nor what to do in these situations. It makes a layperson's kind of sense to me that if a child is making a big deal over a small thing because her thinking about it is exaggerated, then a surface level assumption about the situation might be that she should stay in the situation.

However, I'm interested in a pediatrician's and/or the school's concern about "root cause." Are they suggesting actual ways to help your child get at the root cause of their anxiety? Are they providing resources and referral for therapy, or are they investigating the situation to find out if your child's perceptions are accurate or distorted?

Continuing to attend school while in distress, but without any help, does not seem like it would be beneficial. Might a percentage of kids just "get over" their anxiety through continued exposure? I suppose that's possible, and it probably happens to some extent every day, but I do know a lot of parents who begin homeschooling because this approach is not helping their children, and the kid's anxiety is worsening. Furthermore, the parents' analysis of the root cause may reveal bullying by other kids or a teacher, poor fit for school expectations, and other problems that the parent

Homeschooling and Social Anxiety

by JEANNE FAULCONER | thehomeschoolmom.com

cannot resolve without significant attention and flexibility from the school.

In some situations I've seen, homeschooling has been a good choice for kids like this. The child is removed from an untenable school situation. The child is put into a more supportive environment. The child is able to feel safe more of the time and have more positive experiences. Families may be able to do lots of things that provide a variety of experiences to "stretch" a child socially and otherwise, without so many hours of immersion in the situation (school) that makes the child so anxious.

Yes, I do know kids with anxiety who were homeschooled and fared well. Some of them did not exhibit the same level of anxiety when they began attending community college or working, as compared to when they attended school during their K-12 years. Many of these kids did see a therapist to help them deal with their anxiety, so there was help and guidance to the child and parent in learning to deal with the problem.

I also know some kids who have always been homeschooled and who have anxiety. Their anxiety is not related to stress or bad experience at school. Many homeschooling parents help their children with this by providing resources such as therapy, a supportive atmosphere, positive parenting, a palette of experiences that help children gradually increase exposure to challenging situations, and an emphasis on strengths (academically, athletically, artistically, vocationally, etc.).

I have seen homeschooled kids who have anxiety go on to college, work, and entrepreneurship. I have seen some of them successfully return to public school. I have seen some of them really manage to overcome, manage, or reduce their anxiety, because homeschooling did give them time to work on the root cause. I have also known some homeschooled kids who continued to struggle with anxiety into adulthood. I know some homeschool grads whose anxiety turned on them, and they now struggle with depression.

My conclusion, as someone who is not a counselor or therapist, is that homeschooling does not by itself prevent, address, or cause anxiety. My reading indicates that some people are genetically predisposed to clinical anxiety, and neither homeschooling nor traditional schooling is the culprit or the cure. My reading also indicates that some environments and situations contribute to anxiety. Personally, I believe these situations could occur at home or in a school.

I think many professionals, such as the pediatrician and school officials mentioned previously, may mistakenly think that homeschooling automatically limits opportunities for socialization or does not encourage kids to "work through" their problems. While this could be true in some families, again, I believe we could certainly make the same case for some school settings. Kids are told over and over, "You're not at school to socialize," and we

continued page 14



From the Sheriff

by NOEL E. STEPHEN
Okeechobee County
okeesherriff.org

Winter Holiday Safety Tips

This holiday season, do not let the spirit of giving lull you into giving "The Grinch" (criminals) that chance to do their dirty work. Crooks love the holidays as much as everyone else, mainly because it is an opportune time for the crime.

Homes and vehicles are jam-packed with glittering gifts: stores, malls, and downtown streets teeming with unsuspecting shoppers. People rushing around, stressed out and careless, looking for last-minute gifts, trying to get everything done. It is enough to make every Grinch almost stretch a smile.

Here are some tips on how to celebrate this holiday season safely:

If you are traveling...

- Get an automatic timer for your lights.
- Ask a neighbor to watch your home. Neighbors are a fantastic security measure, but the best is a security system. Ring cameras and other similar systems offer incredibly affordable and easy to operate and maintain security systems.

And by the way, did you know the Sheriff's Office offers property checks while you are away? Simply call up, and after a few questions, you are added to the list of home checks many times daily.

If you are out for the evening ...

Turn on lights and a radio or TV, so it looks like someone's home. Be extra cautious about not locking doors and windows when you leave, even if it is just for a few minutes.

The days of leaving home unlocked are over, sadly; that opportunity is what those Grinch's pray on. Do not allow them the open door (figuratively and literally) to your home or vehicles.

Do not display gifts where they can be seen from outside, again, opportunity.

If you are shopping...

Stay alert and be aware of what is going on around you. Park in a well-lit space, and be sure to lock the car, close the windows, and hide shopping bags and gifts in the trunk. We always cover our shopping bags with an old beach towel we keep in the car.

Avoid carrying large amounts of cash; pay with a check or credit card whenever possible. Furthermore, keep that card in an RFID case. Thieves can now read cards from a distance of up to 10 feet away with a scanning device no more prominent than the standard cell phone. An RFID protector blocks the device.

Guess what? FREE credit card RFID protection packs are available at the Sheriff's Office located at 504 NW 4th St., Okeechobee. Just come in the administrative side and ask the staff upfront for some (limited to 5 a person).

Do not leave a purse unattended for any amount of time. So many theft cases happen when a purse, even secured within a shopping cart, is left open. It takes only a second for someone to distract you while their accomplice reaches in and grabs the wallet. Remember, teams of thieves work together.

Bag your trash -

Break down large boxes and expensive purchases when putting out and bag them. Thieves often drive around looking for the next "score" trash day gives thieves a great idea of what is new in your home.

I genuinely hope some of these tips keep you safe.

As Sheriff of Okeechobee County, our family here at the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office and the Stephen family wishes everyone a very safe, joyful holiday. ♦



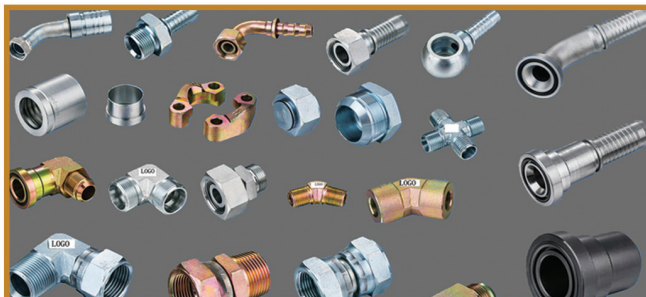
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from the Editor cont.

of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.' *Matthew 4: 5-7*

YOU MAY BE SAYING: I DO NOT TEMPT GOD, I RESPECT GOD. WELL, WHATEVER WE DON'T DO IN FAITH BECOMES SIN. AND SIN EXPANDS THE ENEMY'S NATURE INTO YOUR LIFE AND SURROUNDINGS. CAREFUL WHAT YOU DWELL ON IN YOUR MIND!

"...for whatever is not from faith is sin." *Romans 14:23 NKJV*

THE WORD WILL MAKE US WISE; TO THINK, TALK, AND ACT IN AGREEMENT WITH GOD. WHICH TRANSLATES INTO WHOLENESS HERE AND FOREVER. BY LEARNING TO AGREE WITH THE WORD AND OBEYING IT, YOU ARE WALKING WITH GOD.

4TH IF YOU ARE IN CHRIST, YOU ARE A WORSHIPER. DON'T ALLOW THE ENEMY TO DIMINISH YOU.

Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You fall down and worship me."

Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him. *Matthew 4:8-11*

LEARNING TO BE A WORSHIPER IS A WAY OF LIFE FOR ALL BELIEVERS. WORSHIP IS A SOURCE OF SUPERNATURAL STRENGTH.

"Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart." *Psalms 37:4*

WORSHIP IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WEAPON AGAINST STRESS, DEPRESSION, AND ANY ATTACK OF THE ENEMY. DO YOU WANT TO GET EVEN WITH THE UNSEEN FORCES THAT OPRESS YOU? THE LIES, ACCUSATIONS, AND MANIPULATIONS THAT ROB US? PRAISE THE LORD AND AS YOU PRAISE HIM, YOUR ENEMY GETS DESTROYED BY THE ANGELS OF GOD.

LET'S DIVE AND THRIVE, LET'S PRAY OUT LOUD: Lord, I do believe that Jesus of Nazareth took my place in the Cross. Lord, I am sorry for all my sins against you and against my own life, please forgive me. I believe Jesus was raised on the third day for my justification. Jesus, I receive you as my Lord and Savior. Your Holy blood cleanses me right now and God gives me a new heart and eternal life. Now my name is written in the book of life, guaranteed by the following written law: "That if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart, one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" *Romans 10:9-10*

If you made this prayer, email me at: icarepublications@gmail.com. I would love to share your joy and send you material for balanced growth in the grace of he Lord. Send this letter to anyone you know as a testimony of your faith. ♦

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Digital Reality Is Growing at Breakneck Speeds... and there's no stopping it!

by RUPENDRA BRAHAMBHATT

Imagine a place where you could always stay young, name a city after yourself, or even become the president — sounds like a dream? Well, if not in the real world, such dreams can definitely be fulfilled in the virtual world of a metaverse. The metaverse is believed by some to be the future of the internet, where apart from surfing, people would also be able to enter inside the digital world of the internet, in the form of their avatars.

The advent of AR, blockchain, and VR devices in the last few years has sparked the development of the metaverse. Moreover, the unprecedented growth of highly advanced technologies in the gaming industry, which offer immersive gameplay experiences, not only provides us a glimpse of how the metaverse would look like but also indicates that we are closer than ever to experience a virtual world of our own.

What is the metaverse?

A metaverse is a group of persistent, shared 3D virtual environments where you (in the form of your digital avatar) can visit places, shop for products, subscribe to services, work with your colleagues, play games, and even customize the scenes around you to meet your personal tastes and requirements, and the digital assets you own. So essentially, a metaverse is a virtual world or worlds, that would allow you to go inside the digital world — to be in rather than on the digital space.

The concept of a metaverse has been depicted in *The Matrix*, *Pokemon Go*, *Minority Report*, *Ralph Breaks the Internet*, *Black Mirror*, and countless other movies, video games, and TV shows. However, people still await to experience an immersive metaverse in the real world. Interestingly, companies like Facebook and Microsoft have already announced million-dollar plans directed towards the creation of the metaverse.

A brief history of the metaverse

The idea of a metaverse was first introduced in 1994's *Snow Crash*, a sci-fi novel, and now cult classic, written by American

writer Neal Stephenson. In his book, Stephenson defined the metaverse as an advanced stage of the internet — a virtual alternative to physical reality. The next year, a company named ActiveWorlds Inc. launched Active Worlds, an online virtual world based on the metaverse discussed in *Snow Crash*.

Prior to the release of Stephenson's novel, virtual environments similar to the metaverse had already appeared in some MMORPGs (massively multiplayer online role-playing games) and in other novels based on retro-futuristic themes, but none of them had discussed the metaverse with such clarity as *Snow Crash*.

From 1998 to 2004, companies like There Inc., blaxxun interactive, Linden Labs, and IMVU came up with their own, different 3D virtual worlds, games, applications, and online social networking websites. These platforms provided users with virtual avatars which could interact, play, and buy objects within their virtual environments, using digital currencies and rewards.

Out of all such platforms, Second Life from Linden Labs has turned out to be perhaps the most highly successful application based on the concept of the metaverse. As the name suggests, users can live a second virtual life in the game, and participate in different activities that occur only in the metaverse of Second Life. Launched in 2003, the game is still active and played by hundreds of thousands of users across the globe.

In 2004, an American-Indian inventor Bhargav Sri Prakash launched Vmerse metaverse, a real-time, consumer-facing, virtual reality simulation that was developed to support real-world applications, such as the college recruitment process, alumni relations management, emergency response training programs, etc. The University of Michigan used Vmerse to provide assistance to applicants from underserved sections of society in their admission process.

The technology was later implemented by other institutes in the US as well including Stanford University, Louisiana State University, and many others. Moreover, the United States

continued next page

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Department of State used Vmverse to guide foreign students about the admission process in American universities.

Google also launched (in Beta) an online virtual environment in July 2008 called Google Lively. This service allowed people to chat, watch photos and videos in a virtual room, and the design of the room could also be customized according to the user's preferences. However, Google Lively was shut down on December 31, 2008, as it failed to attract users and didn't turn out to be profitable for Google.

In the last 10 years, numerous other 3D applications and games (Fortnite, Minecraft, etc.) were launched by High Fidelity Inc., Sinespace, Facebook, Epic Games, Sorilax, and many other brands, for providing an improved metaverse experience.

How metaverse is overpowering the real world?

Although there is still some time until people get to experience a true metaverse, as shown in the movie Ready Player One, metaverse-based technologies have already started to influence reality and there are strong reasons to believe this:

- Blockchain-based platforms fueled by cryptocurrencies and NFTs are used in many metaverse games to buy virtual assets. For example, a digital investment firm Republic Realm bought a virtual plot in a virtual world called Decentraland using NFTs worth \$913,228.20 in June 2021. There are many artists, players, and even investors buying virtual property on such platform, worth thousands or tens of thousands of dollars. These transactions often use cryptocurrency.
- 3D modeling artists who have the skills to create restaurants, galleries, offices, and other types of structures in the metaverse can

sometimes earn between \$1000 to \$6000 for designing a single building. NFT (non-fungible token) artists are organizing virtual events to showcase their artworks, and they even charge an entry fee (in the form of crypto tokens) from visitors to such events.

- A metaverse is, in theory, an open world where your age, sex, race, or religion doesn't matter. Largely because you can hide who you really are behind your avatar. People can trade, collaborate, create assets, invest in virtual real estate, customize their world, swap identities, and can achieve so much, and all they need is an internet connection, a smartphone, and a VR headset. In 2019, Kyle Giersdorf, a 16-year-old boy from Pennsylvania received prize money worth \$3 million after winning the Fortnite World Cup.
- COVID -19 has triggered massive growth in almost all online services and metaverse-related sectors such as blockchain services, NFTs, and the gaming industry. NFT sales have crossed the mark of \$2.5 billion in 2021, the total valuation of the gaming industry is now believed to be around \$300 billion (due to an unprecedented increase in the number of mobile game users during the coronavirus outbreak), and the value of bitcoin and many other cryptocurrencies has also witnessed an upward trend since the pandemic.
- Many real world events such as music concerts, business meetings, auctions, fundraisers, and even marriages have started to take place in the virtual world as well. In April 2021, the well-known American rapper Travis Scott delivered a virtual musical performance in the game Fortnite, this digital event was attended by more than 20 million live viewers.

continued page 14

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FOODS THAT CAN HELP FIGHT STRESS

By LAUREN VENOSTA

Stress is a word everyone is familiar with and a feeling that everyone experiences. There are different kinds of stress - mental, physical, emotional - but the body responds in the same way no matter what the stressor is.

Your adrenal glands, which are grape-sized glands that sit on top of your kidneys, are responsible for your body's stress response. The stress response includes hormones like adrenaline, cortisol, and norepinephrine that are released during times of stress to equip the body to handle the situation at hand. These stress hormones are released in the same way no matter what the stressor is. Your body can't tell the difference between getting in a car accident (physical stress) and meeting a work deadline (mental stress). The adrenal glands don't discriminate! And over time, these adrenal glands can get pretty taxed if you can imagine. Reducing the effects of stress as much as possible is crucial for the overall health of your body.

You often hear of stress-reducing habits like breathing exercises, yoga, or meditation, but did you know some foods can help the body fight stress? Certain foods can help calm the mind while other foods help reduce oxidative stress internally.

Oxidative stress is physiological, which means it's stress that's happening on a cellular level. Things like inflammation from free radicals cause oxidative stress. It occurs when there is an imbalance between free radicals and antioxidants. Free radicals have an extra electron so they can cause many chemical reactions in the body because they can react easily with other molecules. When free radicals take over, they cause chronic oxidative stress in the body. Oxidative stress can lead to many illnesses and diseases like heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, and even cancer. Reducing oxidative stress in the body is key to maintaining long-term good health.

Let's dive into the foods that fight stress. They are all common foods and easily accessible so it won't take much effort to incorporate these 10 foods into your diet!

Turkey Breast

Everyone knows the post-Thanksgiving dinner feeling right? The big turkey dinner leaves you feeling lazy and ready for a nap. Turkey contains an amino acid known as tryptophan. This amino acid has properties that, according to studies, directly affect sleepiness. It creates a relaxed feeling so you don't feel as awake and alert. When trying to relieve stress, if you can make yourself sleepy so the body can relax, you will be able to fight that adrenaline rush. So although turkey is commonly consumed in the greatest quantities on Thanksgiving, enjoying turkey breast on a regular basis is a way to calm your body and allow yourself to get a good dose of rest.

Turkey doesn't have to be consumed as a large whole turkey sitting in the middle of your kitchen table like the Thanksgiving holiday spread. You can buy turkey breasts in most meat departments to cook just like you would a chicken breast. Ground turkey is another option that's easily accessible and quick to prepare. Get your turkey on and get that rest!

Salmon

Foods that help with stress come from the sea as well. Salmon is known for having an abundance of healthy fats, but did you know those healthy fats play a role in reducing stress? The omega-3 fatty acids found in salmon have been shown to reduce anxiety disorders in young adults. Stress and anxiety are common in young adults due to the pressures of college and starting a career. In half a fillet of salmon, you get 3,982 mg of omega-3 fatty acids. If simply eating salmon can reduce symptoms of anxiety and stress, why not incorporate it into your diet?

Salmon can be eaten raw, smoked, baked, grilled, or from a can. There are so many options for eating salmon that you shouldn't have any problems incorporating it into your diet.

Spinach

Spinach (and leafy greens in general) are known to be nutrient powerhouses already, but good for stress too? Is there anything a leafy green can't do? Greens like spinach contain folate, which has been shown to be helpful for boosting mood. Being chronically stressed can get you down, so if you can eat a bowl of greens to get that frown turned upside down, why not? Spinach, kale, mustard greens, romaine, collard greens, watercress, arugula—there are so many leafy greens to choose from to help fight the negative emotions associated with stress.

Greens can be used in a salad, thrown into smoothies, sautéed as a side dish with other vegetables, or chopped into stir fry—they are all versatile.



Oatmeal

Think of a warm, comforting bowl of oatmeal. Who doesn't love a big helping of carbohydrates? According to MIT researchers, carbohydrates are essential for mood. When a sweet or starchy carbohydrate is consumed, like oatmeal with maple syrup, for example, the brain makes something called serotonin. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that contributes to feelings of happiness and overall well-being. Carbohydrates increase the production of serotonin, which increases that good mood feeling.

Many people reach for carbohydrate-rich comfort foods when they're stressed or upset, but focus on consuming complex carbohydrates like oatmeal or brown rice rather than a cupcake or a donut. Your mood depends on it!

Blueberries

These are little berries that pack a good-mood punch and act as a stress reliever. Blueberries are packed with antioxidants known as flavonoids that have a positive effect on mood. Two studies involving children who were given blueberry drinks or placebos showed that the blueberry promoted a good mood. Because the flavonoids in these fruits have a positive effect on mood, they can be used to minimize the risk of depression and dysphoria. Both of these are common in adults as well as children. So when the stress and negativity begin to float in, reach for those cute little blueberries to lift your spirits.

Blueberries can be enjoyed in so many ways. They are delicious on their own as a snack, or you can add them fresh or frozen to smoothies, salads, or homemade energy bars. Dried blueberries can be used in trail mixes or oatmeal. Blueberry muffins, blueberry pancakes, blueberry scones—the possibilities for this itty-bitty berry are endless. And the more blueberries you consume in your diet, the greater the positive effect it will have on your stress levels and mood.

Pumpkin Seeds

Pumpkin seeds are a tasty snack that does not just provide energy, but they provide stress-reducing properties as well. Pumpkin seeds are special because of two minerals they contain:

magnesium and zinc. Magnesium is shown to be helpful for reducing feelings of anxiety and overall stress. Hello, calmness!

Pumpkin seeds contain 1,212 mg of magnesium per cup—303 percent of the daily requirement for the average adult.

Zinc is also found in pumpkin seeds, which has been shown to have a role in the treatment of mood disorders. Zinc deficiency is linked to disorders like anxiety and depression. Consuming more zinc will avoid deficiencies that lead to those disorders. Pumpkin seeds contain

16.9 mg per cup which is 113 percent of the daily requirement for the average adult. Pumpkin

seeds are a great snack on their own, topped on salads, or mixed into a homemade trail mix.



Cashews

Cashews are a delicious, buttery nut that are easy to snack on. But did you know when you're eating cashews that you're also boosting brain health? Cashews contain vitamin B6, which is important for proper brain development and also for the production of serotonin. So if you're looking to reduce stress, that's a winner! Cashews also contain magnesium and zinc.

Cashews can be used in a variety of ways. Enjoy them on their own as a simple snack, add them to trail mixes, make homemade cashew butter, top your salads, or add to smoothies!

Chamomile Tea

This list of stress-relieving foods begins with a beverage. There is nothing more comforting than a warm cup of tea on a cold day. And if you can use it to relax too, that's a double win! Chamomile tea is used by many people to relax the mind and body. The chamomile flower is similar to a daisy in appearance and has many different species, but the most common are Roman and German.

The medicinal properties of chamomile come from the terpenoids and flavonoids found in the flower. These are powerful for anti-inflammatory effects like reducing free radicals in the body to fight illness and disease. But on a different level, chamomile is helpful as a mild sleep aid. Its sedative effects are due to a specific flavonoid known as apigenin. Apigenin binds to receptors in the brain to create that sedative impact.

Who knew chamomile was so powerful! So next time you're feeling stressed out or anxious, sip on a cup of warm chamomile tea and let the power of nature relax you.

Dark Chocolate

Who doesn't feel better when they're eating chocolate? It's not just the flavor you love when you're stressed out, but there is scientific evidence that chocolate reduces stress levels. A study done at Loma Linda University showed that eating chocolate (with a 70 percent or higher cacao content) had a positive effect on not only stress levels, but also mood and memory along with inflammation and immunity. The flavonoids in cacao are responsible for all these delicious benefits and it only gets better the darker the chocolate gets. The higher the cacao content, the more health benefits it contains. So reach for that dark chocolate fix every night after dinner to reduce stress and improve mood. But remember, go for 70 percent or higher cacao content to reap the full benefits of this sweet treat.

Red Wine

A glass of wine is good for many things, but most people use it at the end of the day to wind down. Why is it that people reach for that glass of red? Is it the alcohol or something else? While alcohol definitely helps take the edge off, red wine also contains something called resveratrol that helps relieve stress due to its corticosterone-blocking properties. Corticosterone is released by the adrenal glands in times of stressful situations—making you feel even more anxious. Between the effects of the alcohol content and the resveratrol found in red wine, an occasional glass to help fight those dreaded feelings of stress might be exactly what you need.

With so many different options of foods and drinks, you can consume to reduce stress, it's easy to start using your diet to help fight stress in a healthy way! ♦

Holiday Fitness Challenge

by STEVEN WYCHOWSKI

Media reports say that most people gain between 5 and 10 pounds of body fat in the six weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas. According to research from the New England Journal of Medicine, the average amount is much more modest – just over a pound. However, even modest holiday weight gain may be cause for concern: A study by the National Institutes of Health found that this seasonal weight gain – even just a pound – is usually not lost after the holidays; it simply adds to the “weight creep” that sneaks up on us as we get older.

Whether the weight gain is 1 pound or 10 pounds, did you ever ask yourself why does holiday weight gain happen at all?

Here are some common answers I’ve heard:

“I’m too busy over the holidays to work out as often as usual.”

“I’m more stressed over the holidays, and the food is there, so I eat more.”

“I have at least three parties to attend and then there’s Christmas and New Year’s, so it’s impossible to stay on a diet.”

“No one can tell me not to enjoy myself over the holidays, so I’m just going to eat whatever I want.”

These answers all have a few things in common.

First, they assume that it’s an either/or proposition: You can either get in better shape or enjoy yourself, but not both. Stated in reverse: You can either deprive yourself of holiday enjoyments or gain weight, but it has to be one or the other. The truth is, “either/or thinking” is a very limiting form of thought.

Second, these are all excuses or rationalizations. “I’m too busy” for example, is always an excuse, because I have never known someone who was too busy to make time for his or her highest life priorities. The problem then, is not lack of time, but that most people do not make exercise or eating healthy a priority. We all have the same amount of time – 24 hours a day – but the way people prioritize the use of time is the difference between success and mediocrity. And remember, words mean little. Actions reveal a person’s true priorities.

Third, none of these are the real reasons most people gain weight over the holidays to begin with. The real reason is because an intention was never set for the opposite: To get in BETTER shape over the holidays.

Most people set a “goal” to get in worse shape over the holidays!

It’s not consciously set, of course, as few people would

intentionally set out to gain fat. They simply do it by default. In their minds, they accept that it must be just about impossible to stay in shape with everything going on over the holiday season, so why bother?

Once the decision has been made, then the rationalizing (“rationing lies”) continues:

“Why should I deprive myself?”

“Family is more important”

“Worrying about diet and exercise during the holidays is neurotic”

“I don’t care if I gain a few pounds, I’m going to enjoy myself anyway”

“It’s only these two or three weeks that I let myself go wild”

“I’ll start the first week in January and lose the weight then.”

As a result of this “negative goal-setting,” they expect to work out less, eat more and gain a few pounds, and they don’t seem to even consider alternatives.

But what would happen if you set an intention and a goal to get in better shape between now and New Year’s Day?

What would happen if you decided that it was not an all or nothing proposition and that you could enjoy the holidays and all it has to offer and get in better shape at the same time?

And what if you decided that your health and your body were the highest priorities in your life, because you realized that can’t enjoy anything else in life, including family or holidays, if you don’t have your health?

Here’s what would happen: You would get in better shape!

I’m not all that different from you just because I’m a bodybuilder and a fitness professional. I have many of the same problems, concerns and struggles as you do. Although today I always get in better shape between Thanksgiving and New Year’s, that’s a result of a conscious choice, a close examination of my old belief systems and a lot of action. For me, it all started about six years ago.

For most of my adult life, I wasn’t much of a traveller and I didn’t enjoy flying or staying in hotels. I had a belief that if I traveled, my workouts and nutrition would suffer. After all, “it would be hard to stick with my usual bodybuilding diet, and I wouldn’t have access



to my usual gyms.” Because of these reasons (excuses), I never did much travel back in those days.

Then I was forced to take some trips for business reasons. Predictably enough, my nutrition and workouts suffered while I was spending time in airplanes and in hotels. With my experience having confirmed my beliefs, I re-affirmed to myself, “See, traveling is nothing but a pain. You just can’t stay on a diet and training program when you’re out of town.”

After several more trips, I noticed that something very negative happened: I surrendered. I had resigned myself to “not bother” while I was on the road. I let my expectations create my reality.

But I didn’t let it go on for long. As soon as I became aware of what was happening, I decided that I wouldn’t tolerate it, so I challenged myself and my previous limiting beliefs. I asked myself, “Why the heck not? Why let myself backslide? Why even settle for maintaining? Why not challenge myself to improve while I’m traveling?”

The answer: There was no reason, there were only excuses.

From that day forward, I set a challenge for myself: To come back from every trip or vacation in better shape than when I left. Of course there were exceptions, as when I went on a vacation for total R & R. But I never let travel get in my way again...

I prepared food that I would eat on the planes so airline food was never an excuse...

I only chose hotels that had kitchens, so I could cook my own food...

I went food shopping immediately after check-in...

And I actually found myself training harder than usual!

No matter where I was training – it could even be some “dungeon” of a gym in the middle of nowhere – it didn’t matter because my mind was focused on improving and looking better when I came home than when I left. I had a goal!

What do you think happened? It’s not hard to guess: I always came home in better shape than when I left.

Since then, my “travel challenge” has become somewhat of a ritual in my life. When I’m away from my “home-base” it becomes a “fitness road trip.” I search the Internet or yellow pages or ask locals to help me find the most hard-core gym nearby wherever I will be staying. When I get there, I train every bit as hard as if I had a competition just weeks away. I look forward to it now.

In fact, this experience is what led me to my “holiday fitness challenge.”

Like many people, I travel over the holidays, so I’m automatically in “travel challenge” mode at thanksgiving, Christmastime and New Year’s. But with the additional temptations and busyness that the holidays bring on top of the usual travel stresses, I saw fit to declare a new challenge: “The Holiday Challenge.” The difference was that for my “holiday challenge,” I pledged to not only to return home in better shape than when I left, but to enjoy the holidays to the fullest at the same time.

People who think I “deprive” myself to look the way I do would be shocked: I eat some damn good food over the holidays including Pie at Thanksgiving and my mom’s famous red and green Jell-O Christmas cake. Then on New Year’s I’m usually toasting champagne and having a blast with friends or family. The difference is, every other meal stays right on schedule and I work out hard

continued next page

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digital reality cont.

The unrestricted flow of NFTs and cryptocurrencies in metaverse-based immersive games is taking the shape of a virtual economy (also referred to as metanomics). A report reveals that around 2.5 billion people are involved in trading activities that are taking place in different metaverses around the globe. Such numbers seem powerful enough to bring drastic social, technological, and economic changes in the real world.

Future of the metaverse

Even if you combine the total sales made by Hollywood, the music industry, and other film industries around the globe, the figures still won't be enough to match the revenue that the gaming industry generates alone. Moreover, by the year 2030, the AR and VR industry is expected to boost the global GDP by \$1.5 trillion.

These impressive market figures, the growing interest of the big tech in the metaverse, and the surge in the demand for augmented reality-based devices indicate that in the coming years, our world is likely to get more involved in the virtual world. However, a true metaversal experience, where a human could no longer tell the difference between the real and the virtual world, is a feat that is yet to be achieved.

Perhaps that is for the best, after all, Snow Crash is hardly a utopian novel. *spoiler alert* A brain-eating virus ends up being spread through the Metaverse *end of spoiler alert*. When Vanity Fair recently asked Stephenson about the prospect of social media tech giants bringing his idea to life, he apparently offered a "low laughter and a very, very, very long pause." ♦

fitness challenge cont.

and consistently over the holidays; I don't let everything fall apart just because 'tis the season.' In fact, I work out HARDER over the holidays!

The idea that you can either enjoy the holidays or stay in shape – but not both – is damaging and limiting. It hurts your social life, your emotional life and your physical life. Life is not an either or proposition; it's a matter of balance. Success does not mean going to extremes. Success can be a simple matter of re-examining your beliefs, rearranging your priorities, setting goals, changing the questions you ask yourself, re-evaluating your expectations and acting in accordance with all of the above.

Your expectations will become your reality.

What are you expecting this holiday season? Are you expecting to be in better shape after holiday parties, celebrations, banquets, dinners, and desserts? If not, then why not? What's preventing you from enjoying all of the above and still getting in better shape? Do you have a limiting belief which dictates that it's one or the other? Could it be that you never set a goal, intention or expectation to do it? Could it be that you're rationalizing or making excuses? If so, then I challenge you to change it this year.

There's less than a month until the end of the year. Why not see how much you can improve your physique over the holidays, without depriving yourself of any holiday enjoyments or festivities? Just step up your expectations. Step up your standards. Step up your nutrition. Step up your training. Step up your action. Step up to the "holiday fitness challenge" the minute you finish reading this, and then just see what happens! ♦

homeschooling cont.

hear over and over how difficult it is to get special resources from cash-strapped schools, where one guidance counselor may serve many hundreds of high school students.

In general, homeschooling can offer wonderful social opportunities for kids and plenty of time for them to "become socialized." In fact, the insider joke about socialization among homeschoolers in many locales is, "Do we have a problem with homeschool socialization? Yes, we do: too much of it!"

And of course, there are differences in social opportunities depending on where homeschooled children live, whether they have special needs or unique situations, and what their families are like.

You can read more about homeschooling's potential social benefits in the book *The Well-Adjusted Child: The Social Benefits of Homeschooling*.

The truth is, homeschooling can provide a uniquely supportive environment, where anxious kids can be encouraged to try new things, and where their emotional and mental health can take priority over academics when that's helpful. Academic learning occurs in a child's total context, and lower anxiety can certainly be part of that context. They can have time to heal from immersion in stressful situations. Many people who are unfamiliar with homeschooling have not thought about these aspects and only picture children who are "sheltered" at home, perhaps causing anxiety to become more entrenched.

I'd urge you to find a therapist who is willing to take the time to understand homeschooling and who is willing to work with your child and you to truly get to the root cause, whether that be distorted thinking or some kind of trauma or something else that a trained professional knows about that I do not! I'd urge you to explore the balance between safe haven at home and opportunity to find her way in the world, to make sure you are providing opportunities for both.

If the school pushes back, ask them their concrete plans for helping to determine and address the root cause of your child's anxiety. If they're not able to provide an actionable plan for that, but you are able to do that at home, then I think you have your answer. If they have some really good resources that you come to trust, then keeping your child in school might be reasonable. But why haven't those resources been deployed yet? Or if they have, is your child showing improvement?

One other point: public schools today make a big deal out of absences, and excessive absences can lead to truancy charges. This may be different from when you attended school or when your children attended school. In earlier years, schools may have informally worked with families in these situations, not counting all the absences if a child "tried" to attend school or did work at home. Most public schools today cannot make any provision for part-time attendance, and even parents with good intentions can quickly find themselves in legal trouble due to absences. When people decide to homeschool in the midst of such a situation, they need to be sure any required paperwork is filed appropriately.

Finally, listen to your child, and help her feel she has some control over the situation. My reading indicates that having more autonomy lessens anxiety for some kids. I think that's one reason why some kids with anxiety do fare better being homeschooled. ♦



U.S. CONSTITUTION

by DR. BRENDA MACMENAMIN, DCE
Professor, Christian Leadership University

What The Founders Said Of Education:

How is it that the Founders could write such brilliant documents like the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution? How could they so clearly discern what would give us Liberty and protect us from tyranny?

We have the “3R’s” (which are not 3R’s are they!) Rosalie Slater, who studied their system of learning, summarizes their technique for teaching and learning with 4R’s: Research, Reason, Relate and Record. This means that students were taught how to think by researching for themselves, then reasoning, especially from Biblical principles, relating these principles to what they were learning, then applying these revelations through different methods of recording. Most commonly they recorded their work in a notebook. We can read these today!

As the Founding Fathers were the product of the 1730’s Revival, they realized how important the Bible was to education, child-training and government. You can see this reasoning in their quotes:

“Let divines and philosophers, statesmen and patriots, unite their endeavors to renovate the age, by impressing the minds of men with the importance of educating their little boys and girls, of inculcating in the minds of youth the fear and love of the Deity and universal philanthropy, and, in subordination to these great principles, the love of their country; of instructing them in the art of Self-Government, without which they never can act a wise part the government of societies, great or small; in short, of leading them in the study and practice of the exalted virtues of the Christian system.” ~ Samuel Adams

“A nation of well-informed men who have been taught to know and prize the rights which God has given them cannot be enslaved. It is in the region of ignorance that tyranny begins.” ~ Benjamin Franklin

“The philosophy of the school room in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next.” ~ Abraham Lincoln

Deuteronomy 6:5-7 says, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”

Parents, we can do this today. If you have any questions about this, please reach out to me. You have authority to raise your children well! God Almighty will help you. Trust Him to work Supernaturally in your life and family! ♦

For His Glory!

Dr. Brenda MacMenamin, DCE

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About Lake O Real Estate:

We moved into our new location, 110 NE 3rd Ave., about 9 months ago and we are very pleased. It is in the heart of downtown Okeechobee and it is feeling more and more like home. Being a part of the community is important in many ways. The ability to react quickly to the customers needs of viewing a property for purchase or to list for sale is sometimes crucial to the process. We realize the value of our customers time and make every effort to work around their schedule.

Our Agents:

All of our agents, Jody Carter, Sonya Baxley, Rhonda Patrick, Rick Gonzalez, Gordon Skellett, along with the Broker, Jim Jones, belong to the National Association of Realtors, Florida Association of Realtors, and most importantly, the Okeechobee Board of Realtors. Our community is rural and unique in many ways. We feel being

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connected locally, both by living in the community and working everyday in the community keeps us in touch with important factors that affect value and marketing of real estate.

Though located locally, our advertising through various internet sites allow us to market a local property to virtually everyone and anywhere with an internet connection.

Our agents buy into the core values of honesty and integrity and carry those values through the entire

business process. We are proud of every one of them. They are what makes Lake O Real Estate special, and successful.

What comes to your mind as to some of the significant changes you've seen as a real estate professional in recent years?

The internet and ability to view properties and gain information keystroke fast is amazing. Sites like Realtor.com, Zillow, our company's website and several others allow buyers to view and obtain information 24 hours a day on properties within minutes of the agent putting the listing on the multiple listing portal. Also, the ability to email documents and have customers electronically sign is speeding up the process and making it more convenient for all parties. It has been challenging, but we have kept up with these changes.

What is your philosophy on business and life, and what inspires you?

Maintaining a business built on reliable, honest, and hard working people is important. Not being the biggest or flashiest. Treating our customers with the respect they deserve is part of our philosophy. I think life should be lived in the middle, not the far left or far right. These positions seem to create an atmosphere of less respect and less tolerance for one another's views and beliefs.

In Closing:

If you have a need to buy or sell real estate in or around Okeechobee, I invite you to call us. We would be glad to discuss your needs and hope to earn your business. Thanks to all the folks I've had the pleasure of working with and for, and I am looking forward to meeting many new customers in the coming year. ♦



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How To Avoid Weight Gain During The Holidays

{WITHOUT SKIPPING YOUR
FAVORITE FOODS}

by DANIELLE DAVIS

“It’s the most wonderful time of the year!” – Doesn’t that just make you want to start singing Christmas carols?! I LOVE this season and I am so excited for everything it brings! The decorations, the clothes, the family time, the love, the happiness... and of course I am SO looking forward to the holidays this year because I am a mom. I feel like the holidays are DOUBLE the fun once you have a kid to celebrate with, do you agree?!

If you are anything like me, your clothes are already feeling a little tighter because Halloween just passed! We went trick-or-treating and brought home TONS of candy and I have a really hard time keeping my hand out of the jar. I am ADDICTED to chocolate. And anything chewy. And sour things. And oh goodness... I guess I am a sucker for it ALL!

Luckily, I am married to a health MASTER who can keep me in line and help so I don’t gain weight during the holidays. He has shared some tips and tricks with me that WORK and I am so excited to share them with you for this season!

So many times when we think of losing weight or avoiding gaining weight, our minds tell us we need to cut all sugar and sweets out of our diets – but guess what?! That isn’t true!

In fact, we have come up with 10 super easy tips to help you avoid weight gain during the holidays without having to skip your favorite foods!

1. SET GOALS: First things first – think about what you want to achieve. Where you want to be. How you want to feel. It is always so important to work towards something so you can feel accomplished at the end and be proud of yourself!

Write your goals down and put them somewhere that you will see them everyday, like on your bathroom mirror or refrigerator door. If your goal is not gain weight be sure to know your daily calorie limit and set goals to avoid going over.

2. USE A SMALL PLATE: What happens when we use a large plate? We fill it up to the max and think we need to eat it all, right? Go for a small plate and keep your portions in control. Avoid making return trips to the buffet line. Fill your smaller plate with your favorites and don't have more than one serving. It is okay to have a cupcake or a cookie as long as your not filling large platefuls of multiple servings. Control your portions, don't let your portions control you!

3. EXERCISE, EXERCISE, EXERCISE: Get your body moving! Go for a walk or run – if it is too cold {which is very likely! I am already freezing here!}, get a gym membership or try a work-out at home. Having exercise in your routine frees up area for holiday calories. A piece of pie always feels guilt free going down after a brisk morning work out. Check out this super easy



beginner Crossfit workout you can check out here. Be active and get your exercise in and you'll still feel great even if you have a few extra goodies.

4. DRINK 2 GLASSES OF WATER BEFORE EVERY MEAL: Water is such an amazing thing. Our bodies are made up of 60-70% of this great stuff! Drinking 2 glasses of water before your feast of foods can help curb your appetite and encourage you to eat less. Health authorities often suggest drinking eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day, which equals about 2 liters! That is a lot – so drink 2 before every meal and not only will you get

your recommended daily dose of water but you'll be preventing yourself from over eating too.

5. REWARD DAY: Often times when we go on "diets" we push all sweets and our favorite treats away. Ironically enough, it is because of this food avoidance that we relapse and one day just splurge on our favorite treats because we have missed them so much! By creating a reward day, it not only helps so you don't do this, but it gives you a day to look forward to. Try to eat as healthy as possible 6 days out of the week and then choose a day for your "Reward Day" where you can allow yourself to eat those foods {in moderate portions} you have been craving all week!

6. DON'T DRINK YOUR CALORIES: Oh, you know that delicious drink that comes out around the holidays? EGG NOG?! SO good right?! It's okay to enjoy your favorite beverage but don't forget that Egg Nog, Sodas and other special drinks are full of

continued page 21

HELP FOR FIRST RESPONDERS! WHO ARE RESCUING OTHERS BUT DESTROYING THEIR OWN MARRIAGE "MARRIED FOR A PURPOSE."



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avoid weight gain cont.

calories – just because it is a drink, doesn't mean it won't cause you to gain weight.

7. DON'T SKIP MEALS: The holidays are a BUSY time of year! Running everywhere and always on the go! You may think by skipping breakfast or lunch you will be fine – but in reality, it can actually cause you to GAIN weight! Your body thinks you are “starving” yourself so it stores fat for later. To avoid storing the excess holiday calories be sure to keep your metabolism burning all day by fueling your body and not skipping meals.

8. EAT 5 TIMES A DAY: We are always taught to eat 3 times a day, but the best thing for our bodies is to actually eat 5 times a day! Now, that doesn't mean to have steak and shakes 5 times a day or a few cookies and chocolate milk but instead to eat 5 healthy snacks/meals 5 times a day. This helps your body fuel your metabolism and also helps you avoid overeating at meal times.

I suggest to even set your alarm on your phone to remind you to eat. While on the go, bring a snack in your purse and eat it while sitting in the parking lot waiting for your kids to get out of school or on your drive to the grocery store. It is easy to forget and lose track of time, so setting an alarm helps so much!



9. DRESS YOUR BEST {Avoid eating in sweats}: When we eat in sweats, we feel comfortable and can eat and eat and eat. That is why sometimes I like to wear my stretchy pants to Thanksgiving dinner! BUT by wearing clothes that don't stretch, you can easily tell when you are full.

10. FIND AN ACCOUNTABILITY BUDDY: Probably one of the most important things on this list – a buddy. When we have someone who is holding us accountable for our goals, it is easier to achieve them. Ask for help from a spouse, a co-worker or friend. Tell them your goals and check-in with them weekly on your progress. If they want to be conscious of their bodies over the holidays too, have them join you! Work out together. Create a friendly competition. And make it fun!

The holidays are SO much fun and I am excited for this exciting time of year full of yummy treats and amazing meals! As you keep these 10 tips in mind over the next few months, you aren't going to have any problems at all! And I promise... you can bring on the sugar cookies and egg nog and be JUST fine! ♦

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Enhance a Seniors Holiday Experience!



There is a lot of pressure on people to enjoy themselves during the holidays. The reality, however, is that many people feel increasingly isolated and unhappy during this season of goodwill, and elders can have an especially hard time.

While aging can bring wisdom and experience, there are inevitable losses that even the healthiest seniors face. Loved ones and friends fall ill and pass away. Energy and mobility levels often decrease, resulting in feelings of lost independence and opportunities. Neighborhoods change over time, leaving even those well enough to remain in their own homes feeling lonely. The focus on family, friends and togetherness during this time of year can actually bring melancholy feelings to the forefront.

If you believe that your parent, spouse, friend or neighbor may be depressed, there are steps that you can take to help lift their spirits. You are probably busy with your own holiday preparations, but it's important to remember what the holiday season is truly about. Simplifying some of your

plans will allow you to focus on what really matters: the important people in your life. Use these ideas to brighten up a loved one's winter season.

12 Tips to Enhance a Senior's Holiday Experience

1. Make a point of actively listening when they want to talk, even if the discussion is negative. An honest and empathetic conversation can help them process what is bothering them, whether they are mourning a loss or coming to terms with new challenges in their life. It may also reveal why they are feeling down and help you devise other ways to lift their spirits.

2. Remind them how important they are as a part of your life, your family members' lives and these annual holiday celebrations. They may feel useless or burdensome if they cannot contribute to or fully participate in the festivities like they used to. Encourage them to do what they are capable of, and be

especially careful not to act like what you do for them is a duty. Show them they are loved.

3. Over the years, holiday cards often bring bad news and diminish in quantity. I used to sit with my mom when she opened her cards, because so many of them brought news of illness or death. She was also keenly aware of the people she didn't hear from. Be gentle with your loved ones if these annual greetings are an important tradition of theirs. If possible, ask other family members and friends to contribute a simple card, photograph or drawing to help keep the senior's seasonal mail more upbeat. My mom needed this connection with her life-long friends, so I helped her write her outgoing cards each year as well.

4. Help them see that you are trying to simplify your holiday plans to focus on the real meaning of these celebrations. Let them know you are trying to ignore the increasing hype over the food, gifts, decorations and parties in order to focus on the people and values that you cherish. Remind them that they taught you the importance of family and friendship, and thank them for that.

5. If a senior is in a long-term care facility, check with the activities director and local schools or extracurricular programs to see if they can arrange for children to visit with or even perform for the residents. New activities and interactions with younger generations can be very uplifting for an elder who is in physical or emotional pain. If possible, take the senior out to school programs and games, especially if they feature younger family members.

6. Check with your loved one's religious organization to see if they can offer social and/or spiritual support. For example, the Stephen Ministry is a program offered by many Christian churches that provides one-on-one support to those who are



Happy Holidays

having difficulties in life. Many churches can arrange for a congregant or leader to visit a senior in need at home or in a facility. Just having someone to talk to can go a long way toward relieving depression.

7. Help them add decorative touches to their home or room in the long-term care facility. Ensure that they do not present a safety hazard and try to decorate in stages to prolong the fun and give them something to look forward to. Many seniors enjoy reflecting on past holidays as they unpack cherished decorations, so be sure to listen to their stories and ask about special items.

8. Cook traditional baked goods or treats with your loved one, if possible. If they reside in an assisted living facility or nursing home, bring treats on your visits for your elder to enjoy and share with their friends.



MERRY CHRISTMAS!

9. Call your elder's friends and see if they would be able to come to a small holiday gathering. One year, I was able to use a small conference room at the nursing home to host a New Year's Eve party for my parents and their friends. They loved it.

Keep in mind that it doesn't have to be on a particular holiday or a large or expensive shindig. Realizing that the people they care about came out to spend time with them is priceless for an elder. Just be wary of large or loud groups if your loved one has dementia. Parties can be disorienting and upsetting for them.

10. Make their dinner table special. Whether your loved ones live at home or in a facility, try to make their dining table festive with some appropriate colors, themes and seasonal flavors.

11. The most important thing you can do with a senior to make them feel loved and included this season is to spend time with them. Look at family photos, watch home videos or holiday movies, listen to seasonal music, or do crafts together. Regardless of what you decide to do together, any time you can spare is a precious gift.

Do what you can to help your aging loved one feel involved and get into the holiday spirit without stressing yourself beyond your limits. If you put too much on your plate, it is likely that neither you nor your loved ones will enjoy the festivities nearly as much. Your best efforts are good enough. ♦



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Seniors Decry Health Providers' Age Bias

Joanne Whitney, 84, a retired associate clinical professor of pharmacy at the University of California-San Francisco, often feels devalued when interacting with health care providers.

There was the time several years ago when she told an emergency room doctor that the antibiotic he wanted to prescribe wouldn't counteract the kind of urinary tract infection she had.

He wouldn't listen, even when she mentioned her professional credentials. She asked to see someone else, to no avail. "I was ignored and finally I gave up," said Whitney, who has survived lung cancer and cancer of the urethra and depends on a special catheter to drain urine from her bladder. (An outpatient renal service later changed the prescription.)

Then, earlier this year, Whitney landed in the same emergency room, screaming in pain, with another urinary tract infection and a severe anal fissure. When she asked for Dilaudid, a powerful narcotic that had helped her before, a young physician told her, "We don't give out opioids to people who seek them. Let's just see what Tylenol does."

Whitney said her pain continued unabated for eight hours.

"I think the fact I was a woman of 84, alone, was important," she told me. "When older people come in like that, they don't get the same level of commitment to do something to rectify the

situation. It's like 'Oh, here's an old person with pain. Well, that happens a lot to older people.'"

Whitney's experiences speak to ageism in health care settings, a long-standing problem that's getting new attention during the COVID pandemic, which has killed more than half a million Americans age 65 and older.

Ageism occurs when people face stereotypes, prejudice or discrimination because of their age. The assumption that all older people are frail and helpless is a common, incorrect stereotype.

Prejudice can consist of feelings such as "older people are unpleasant and difficult to deal with." Discrimination is evident when older adults' needs aren't recognized and respected or when they're treated less favorably than younger people.

In health care settings, ageism can be explicit. An example: plans for rationing medical care ("crisis standards of care") that specify treating younger adults before older adults. Embedded in these standards, now being implemented by hospitals in Idaho and parts of Alaska and Montana, is a value judgment: Young peoples' lives are worth more because they presumably have more years left to live.

Justice in Aging, a legal advocacy group, filed a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of

continued next page

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Health and Human Services in September, charging that Idaho's crisis standards of care are ageist and asking for an investigation.

In other instances, ageism is implicit. Dr. Julie Silverstein, president of the Atlantic division of Oak Street Health, gives an example of that: doctors assuming older patients who talk slowly are cognitively compromised and unable to relate their medical concerns. If that happens, a physician may fail to involve a patient in medical decision-making, potentially compromising care, Silverstein said. Oak Street Health operates more than 100 primary care centers for low-income seniors in 18 states.

Emogene Stamper, 91, of the Bronx in New York City, was sent to an under-resourced nursing home after becoming ill with COVID in March. "It was like a dungeon," she remembered, "and they didn't lift a finger to do a thing for me." The assumption that older people aren't resilient and can't recover from illness is implicitly ageist.

Stamper's son fought to have his mother admitted to an inpatient rehabilitation hospital where she could receive intensive therapy. "When I got there, the doctor said to my son, 'Oh, your mother is 90,' like he was kind of surprised, and my son said, 'You don't know my mother. You don't know this 90-year-old,'" Stamper told me. "That lets you know how disposable they feel you are once you become a certain age."

At the end of the summer, when Stamper was hospitalized for an abdominal problem, a nurse and nursing assistant came to her room with papers for her to sign. "Oh, you can write!" Stamper said the nurse exclaimed loudly when she penned her signature. "They were so shocked that I was alert, it was insulting. They don't respect you."

Nearly 20% of Americans age 50 and older say they have experienced discrimination in health care settings, which can result in inappropriate or inadequate care, according to a 2015 report. One study estimates the annual health cost of ageism in America, including over- and undertreatment of common medical conditions, totals \$63 billion.

Pat Bailey, 63, gets little of that kind of consideration in the Los Angeles

County, California, nursing home where she's lived for five years since having a massive stroke and several subsequent heart attacks. "When I ask questions, they treat me like I'm old and stupid, and they don't answer," she told me in a telephone conversation.

One nursing home resident in every five has persistent pain, studies have found, and a significant number don't get adequate treatment. Bailey, whose left side is paralyzed, said she's among them. "When I tell them what hurts, they just ignore it or tell me it's not time for a pain pill," she complained.

Most of the time, Bailey feels like "I'm invisible" and like she's seen as "a slug in a bed, not a real person." Only one nurse regularly talks to her and makes her feel she cares about Bailey's well-being.

"Just because I'm not walking and doing anything for myself doesn't mean I'm not alive. I'm dying inside, but I'm still alive," she told me.

Ed Palent, 88, and his wife, Sandy, 89, of Denver, similarly felt discouraged when they saw a new doctor after their long-standing physician retired. "They went for an annual checkup and all this doctor wanted them to do was ask about how they wanted to die and get them to sign all kinds of forms," said their daughter Shelli Bischoff, who discussed her parents' experiences with their permission.

"They were very upset and told him, 'We don't want to talk about this,' but he wouldn't let up. They wanted a doctor who would help them live, not figure out how they're going to die."

The Palents didn't return and instead joined another medical practice, where a young doctor barely looked at them after conducting cursory examinations, they said. That physician failed to identify a dangerous staphylococcus bacterial infection on Ed Palent's arm, which was later diagnosed by a dermatologist. Again, the couple felt overlooked, and they left.

Now they're with a concierge physician's practice that has made a sustained effort to get to know them. "It's the opposite of ageism: It's 'We care about you and our job is to help you be as healthy as possible for as long as possible,'" Bischoff said. "It's a shame this is so hard to find." ♦



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HOW TO HANG CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

by DANIELLE DAVIS

'Tis the season of lights so brighten up the holidays—and the neighborhood—by decorating your home with colorful Christmas lights. The following tips and strategies will make it much easier and faster to hang holiday lights, so you can step back and enjoy your masterpiece when you're done.

And if you're in the market for some new lights, here are some of the very best Christmas lights you can buy today.

There are a lot of terms out there when it comes to holiday lights. Here's a quick glossary of need-to-know terms:

INCANDESCENT: Classic, filament-based bulbs that give off a warm glow. They do get hot though, so handle them carefully and keep them away from anything flammable.

LED: Lasts at least twice as long as an incandescent. Emits very bright light. LED bulbs stay cool to the touch, but some of the pure white ones can look a little too cold.

WIDE-ANGLE LED: LED bulbs that have concave tips that throw light.

TRANSPARENT: Colored minibulbs with visible filaments.

CERAMIC: Opaque and look as if they've been painted. A classic.

GLOBE: LEDs inside globe-shaped bulbs that stay cool.

NET LIGHTS: Minilights or small LEDs in a webbed circuit.

RGB LED: Programmable diodes that can display light of virtually any color.

PLAN AHEAD

Before you start stringing lights all over the place stop and create a lighting plan. Measure the distances along where you want to string lights. Most likely this will be along rakes, eaves or gutters, and around windows and doors. Then use the plan to estimate how many light strands you'll need and how long each should be. And remember, whenever possible, use one long strand instead of two or three shorter ones connected together.

There are no standard strand lengths, but there are standard-size bulbs and standard distances between bulbs on a strand. Look for C7- or C9-size bulbs spaced 6 to 8 inches apart. A longer distance between bulbs allows for more light to spread across a wider area, creating more picturesque shadows and greater warmth.

C7 bulbs are the smaller than C9s, and have an E12 candelabra base. They're about 1 1/2 inches long and generally use 5-watt bulbs. C9 bulbs are larger,

measuring over 2 inches long, and fit an E17 base. They're available in 7 or 10 watts.

Both C7 and C9 bulbs are available as incandescent or LED. (A 25-pack of C7 LEDs costs \$25; the same number of C9 LEDs is also around \$25.)

And if some of your light strands aren't working properly, here's how to fix Christmas lights.

HOUSE LAYOUT

Place the first bulb from the male end of a strand on the corner of the eave that's closest to an outlet. The eave is the lowest part of the roof that extends out beyond the house walls.

Now extend the light strand along the eave and around the exterior of the house. Be sure to keep the strand taut—no one likes saggy lights. Secure the lights with gutter clips so they don't droop down or creep up the roof. The clips are cheap (less than \$6 for 100), so buy a bunch of them.

Then, use an exterior-grade extension cord to connect the lights to the outlet.

TREE LAYOUT

If you're looking for a quick, easy way to illuminate trees and shrubs, just cast a net light over them. But for a more traditional look, wrap the tree with strands of regular mini-lights. This will not only look better, but it'll afford you the opportunity to wrap the trunk and each individual branch with as many - or as few - lights as you'd like.

continued page 30



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INFLATION

As inflation hits a 31 year high, here's what you need to know about the effects

A recent trip to the grocery store or a glance at the cost of fuel at the pump may have left you with sticker shock. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers rose 5.4% compared to a year ago. Let's dive into what inflation is and how it may impact your budget.

What Is Inflation?

Inflation is a common term used to describe the rising prices of goods and services. Essentially, with inflation, you'll spend more money to receive the same products or services – weakening your purchasing power. So, why all the talk about inflation?

Inflation isn't new or uncommon, but the current rate of inflation is higher than average levels — an annual increase around 2% is considered “normal.” A moderate amount of inflation can be a sign of economic growth. Inflation isn't caused by one thing, rather many factors contribute to increasing prices. For example, an overall increase in demand for goods and services paired with worker shortages and supply chain issues has driven higher rates of inflation.

How Can Inflation Impact Your Budget?

The impact of inflation on personal finance affects individual budgets in different ways and at different times. For already tight budgets, inflation can quickly bust them. Rising costs for housing, food, gasoline and energy hit wallets hard — especially for Americans still recovering financially from pandemic implications and those who rely heavily on a fixed income or Social Security.

How Can a Budget Help You Adjust with Inflation?

If you aren't currently following a budget, now's a great time to start – and stick with it. When creating a budget or making adjustments to your current plan, be sure to factor in a rate



of inflation for items likely impacted — food, clothing, gas, energy costs, etc. Assign priorities for your budget. Doing so can help identify which expenditures can be reduced.

How Can You Make Your Money Go Farther?

When costs are on the rise, it's a good time to find new ways to get what you need — and within your budget.



There may be cheaper alternatives like store brands for the essentials or keeping an eye on where you can buy the same product for a smaller cost — such as gasoline. Couponing is another way to bank savings. Review personal finance basics and take a hard look at your budget. What things can be cut? What can you do at home instead of paying for? Are you spending \$5 or more a day on a latte instead of making coffee at home?

How Can Inflation Impact Your Individual Investments?

Over time inflation can chip away at the returns on your investments. The impact of inflation on your investments may vary based on the types of assets you own.

For example, investments with fixed, long-term cash flows typically won't perform as well when inflation is on the rise. However, assets with variable cash flows such as real estate may do better when there's increasing inflation.

When it comes to fixed income investments like certificate of deposits (CDs), the purchasing power of the interest earned decreases as inflation rises. But historically, stocks tend to rise to a certain extent with rising inflation. Diversification of your portfolio is one way to help protect your money against inflation.

How Can a Financial Plan Help You Weather Inflation?

While no one wants to pay more for goods and services, inflation is something everyone must prepare for, but a little planning can help you manage it. Creating a comprehensive plan and reviewing it regularly with a financial advisor can help ensure your long-term strategy properly plans for rising inflation. ♦

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Christmas lights cont.

To determine how many feet of lighting you need, divide the height of the trunk by the desired spacing between each strip of lights; about 3 inches is ideal. Then multiply that number by the trunk's circumference. Do the same calculation for any large branches you want to wrap.

First, wind the lights up the tree, leaving about 6 inches between each pass. Continue on to the branches, then wrap back down into the empty spaces. That will give you the desired 3-inch spacing. So, for a 6-foot-tall trunk with a circumference of 2 feet, divide 72 inches by 3 inches of spacing, for a total of 24. Multiply 24 by the 2-foot circumference, for 48 feet of lights.

ELECTRICAL ISSUES

When stringing lights outdoors, it's not uncommon to blow a fuse on a light strand. Look for the tiny fuse behind a small sliding door on the male end of the plug. If the fuse is burned out, replace it with a new one of the same amperage. Blown fuses are usually caused when moisture gets into the connectors that attach strings of lights to each other.

To create a classical, most traditional Christmas scene, decorate your home with strands of white lights. Hang the lights in these three spaces: along gutters or eaves, in windows, and on larger trees or shrubs. And try to aim for symmetry.

There are 3 varieties of white LED lights:

- Warm white mimics the glow of classic incandescent bulbs.
- Polar white emits an icy-blue tinge.
- Pure white is exactly that: pure, bright white light.

In fact, most people find pure white bulbs a little too bright and not at all festive. The best approach is to place warm-white strands along the eaves or gutters and offset those with polar-white lights on trees and shrubs. The two tones play off each other well. Avoid pure-white bulbs, unless you like the look of high-beam headlights.

THE DELIGHTFUL MONSTROSITY

The difference between a festive holiday light display and a garish flood of eye-burning bright lights is in the color and number of bulbs.

Use multicolored strands along the gutter, and beneath that hang a string of icicle lights. And use bulbs of various sizes to create more visual interest. Bigger C9 bulbs are best installed along the roofline and gutters; C7s are better for around windows and doors. You can wrap holiday garland in mini-lights. Wrap your mailbox, too, if you've got easy access to electricity. If not, use battery-powered Christmas lights.

THE MINIMALIST

Buy a real pine wreath and put it on your front door. Then stake an E17 LED warm-white bulb a couple of feet back from the door and aim it at the wreath.

It says, “I acknowledge that it's Christmas, but I'm not getting on the roof for anything short of a DirecTV catastrophe.” ♦

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