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FROM THE EDITOR

By ANGEL CHAVEZ

By Faith We Understand!

We must learn to place our mind and emotions as a red carpet to welcome wisdom and knowledge into our hearts. Then we will understand!

By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. Hebrews 11:3

By faith means that it is not exactly with the mind or by our five senses that we understand it. By faith means that we must understand it with our heart. Faith is of the heart, not our senses.

FAITH IS NOT FROM THE MIND? But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. Deuteronomy 4:29

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Hebrews 11:6

FAITH IS THE LANGUAGE OF GOD, AND HIS KNOWLEDGE IS MULTI-DIMENSIONAL. THE HUMAN SPIRIT IS ALSO MULTI-DIMENSIONAL, THEREFORE ,CAPABLE OF RECEIVING GOD'S MULTI-DIMENSIONAL KNOWLEDGE.

BY FAITH ALSO IMPLIES THAT WHOEVER DOESN'T HAVE FAITH, HAS NO REAL UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THE UNIVERSE WAS CREATED AND WHY IT KEEPS ON FUNCTIONING BETTER THAN A SWISS WATCH.

... in these last days [GOD IS] spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of

His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,...Hebrews 1:2-3

FOR CENTURIES WE HAVE BEEN EDUCATING OUR MINDS, NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT, EXCEPT THAT WE HAVE ELEVATED OUR MIND ABOVE OUR SPIRIT. THE MIND IS ONLY PART OF THE SOUL AND BODY, THE SPIRIT IS A COMPLETE BEING, CREATED IN THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD.

THE REBELLIOUS SOUL AND MIND WAS MISUSED TO CREATE DISORDER IN OUR ETERNAL BEING. THEREFORE, WE WERE CHOKED TO DEATH FROM WITHIN...

EVER SINCE THE FALL, WE HAVE BEEN DESPERATELY TRYING TO CONQUER THAT WHICH WE DON'T UNDERSTAND. BECAUSE ONLY BY FAITH WE CAN UNDERSTAND IT!

THINK ABOUT IT: HOW CAN WE RULE OVER THE INVISIBLE FROM THE NATURAL AND VISIBLE?

THE ANSWER IS BY FAITH. BUT HOW DO I OBTAIN FAITH? BY EDUCATING OUR SPIRIT WITH GOD'S WORD.

So, then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:17

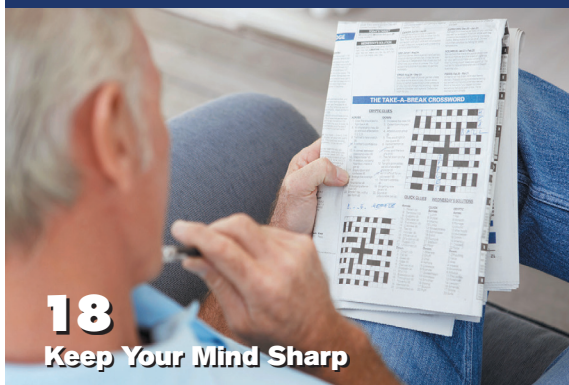
Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. Matthew 24:35

IF WE BUILD OUR FAITH, WE BUILD AND EMPOWER OUR HEART TO RISE AND DESTROY ALL THE WORKS OF THE ENEMY.

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Why some families discovered an unexpected love for homeschooling during the pandemic

by ANNIE RENEAU

When schools shut down in the U.S. in the spring of 2020, parents, teachers, and students alike were thrown into uncharted territory. Now, more than a year later, families are finding themselves navigating murky waters once again as the Delta variants surges and schools and local governments grapple with mitigation measures.

Throughout all of this, millions of families have taken the plunge into homeschooling. For some, that meant helping their kids through virtual learning through the public school system, but others decided to ditch the system altogether.

In fact, a Census Bureau report found that the number of U.S. households that reported homeschooling kids doubled from March 2020 to September 2020, from 5.4% to 11.1%. The jump for Black households was even more significant, from 3.3% to 16.1%. With schools starting up this fall in the midst of rising COVID infections, those numbers could grow even higher.

While some parents are choosing to homeschool because they feel like it's the safest choice, some parents tried homeschooling during the pandemic and found that they and their kids enjoyed it far more than they expected to.

"Homeschooling was something I always thought my kids would benefit from for many reasons, but I could never wrap my head around how to actually do it and the fear that I would fail as their teacher," Jennifer G., who homeschooled last year and decided to continue this year says. "Covid gave me the push I needed to put my fears aside and dive in."

"We struggled at times last year and it took a while to find a good routine," she adds. "But overall, we learned so much about

ourselves, about how we function together as a family, and how to make learning fun. We went on fun educational field trips as often as possible, cooked lots of new recipes together to learn about the world, experienced adventures through reading, & grew together as a family. We are looking forward to homeschooling again and having the flexibility to learn what we want how we want. I never imagined learning could be so colorful!"

Jenny S. says that she's wanted to homeschool for years but her husband and oldest child were never on board. However, due to COVID, she began homeschooling her third and sixth graders last year.

"My 3rd grader THRIVED," she says. "When the world shut down we noticed some behaviors that led to us finally figuring out what caused the sensory processing disorder we knew she had since she was an infant. So, we knew she'd be home again this year. She's so ahead of her peers, I didn't want boredom to add to the problems she already faced in a classroom. She has also learned that schools white-wash history, and boldly proclaims that she was lied to when asked why she likes homeschool better. She never wants to go back. She's been able to truly dive into her interests, and has learned and retained more than she ever has before."

Her oldest has chosen to homeschool for seventh grade for consistency. "While he misses his friends, he knows this year will be better, socialization-wise," she says. "He is also ahead of most of his peers, and loves that he can move at his own pace. We love the flexibility, fewer hours, and the outdoor time it has allowed us. Without evening homework, I still get hours to get my work done (I mostly work from home), have more time for prepping dinner, and just hanging out as a family."

Many parents I spoke to were surprised to find that their children excelled learning from home.

Judi S. spent last school year at home with her 10-year-old grandson while his parents worked, helping him with virtual learning through the school. She says he has mild ADHD and he was able to be more kinetic at home, which helped him focus better. But she also acknowledged that that wasn't the case for all kids.

"Some kids did well, some struggled, and some simply checked out," she said. "I wish that families still had the option of virtual learning as well as homeschooling and in-person because children

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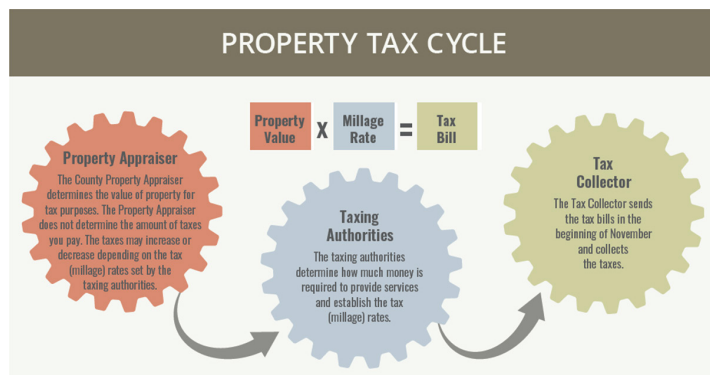
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TRIM Notice

Dear Property Owners,

Your Notice of Proposed Property Taxes (also referred to as the TRIM Notice) was mailed to you last month. This is not a bill, so payment is not needed. The TRIM Notice proposes what your property taxes may be when you receive your actual bill in November. Be sure to review the 2022 Informational Supplement that will be enclosed as this is your guide to understanding property values, exemptions, portability, and more. You will find six (6) QR codes conveniently placed throughout the supplement for the purpose of providing you detailed information as quickly as possible.

The chart below illustrates how the property tax cycle works and the responsibilities of the Property Appraiser, Taxing Authorities, and Tax Collector. My office (Property Appraiser) is responsible for determining the value of all property in Martin County for tax purposes. All of the taxing authorities such as county governments, school boards, water management districts, municipal governments etc., determine how much money is required to provide services and then establish the tax rate. Then in November, the Tax Collector (Ruth Pietruszewski) will mail the tax bill and collect the taxes owed.



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Ways to Heal Your Body by Using the Power of Your Mind, Backed by Science

There's a clear connection between the way your brain thinks and the way your body feels. Just like you can use your body to reduce your psychological distress, you can also use your mind to improve your body.

Simply changing the way you think and taking charge of what occupies your mind, can improve your physical health and well-being. While positive thinking won't cure everything, a healthy mindset is a key component to a healthy body.

Here are seven ways you can use your mind to promote physical health:

1. Make Your Treatments More Effective By Expecting Them to Work

Countless studies show the placebo effect influences the effectiveness of treatment. If someone tells you a pill will cure your headache, you're likely to find the treatment helpful--even if the pill was a sugar pill.

Whether you're trying physical therapy for a bad knee, or you're seeing a chiropractor for pain in your back, your belief that those treatments will work may be more effective than the treatment

themselves. So before you undergo any kind of treatment, think about all the reasons the treatment is likely to help.

2. Sleep Better By Writing in a Gratitude Journal

If you're struggling with insomnia, a gratitude journal might be the best cure. Several studies have linked gratitude to better quality and longer lasting sleep.

Identify three things you're grateful for and write them in a gratitude journal before you go to bed. Conjuring up feelings of thankfulness right before you fall asleep will increase the chances you'll get a good night's rest.

3. Live Longer By Focusing On Your Purpose in Life

Feeling like you have a sense of purpose could actually increase the length of your life. Studies consistently show people who believe their lives are meaningful are more likely to live healthier, longer lives.

Whether your work gives you a purpose, or you find meaning as a volunteer, make sure whatever you're doing matters. Feeling like you have a reason to get out of bed every day might be the secret to longevity.

4. Be Optimistic and Boost Your Immunity

Several studies have shown that optimistic people are less likely to get sick. For decades, many researchers thought the boost in immunity stemmed from the fact that optimistic people were more likely to take care of their health.

But, more recent studies have shown that a hopeful outlook is actually what influences immunity. Looking on the bright side makes you less likely to get a cold or infection because optimism keeps your immune system performing at its peak.



5. Slow Aging with Meditation

Meditation provides a generous buffer against the harmful effects stress can have on the body. Numerous studies have shown meditation slows the rate of cellular aging.

Not only might meditation help you stay looking youthful, but it could help you ward off age-related disease. Researchers suspect teaching children to meditate could provide lifelong benefits. But no matter what age you are, it's never too late to gain some health benefits from meditation.

6. Build Muscle by Imagining Yourself Working Out

What if you could get buff by imagining yourself lifting weights? Well, researchers have found that mental imagery can help you gain muscle without lifting a finger.

One study in particular found that people who imagined themselves working out were able to gain 24% more muscle strength. People who actually lifted weights saw better results, but the research shows mental training can provide some serious changes to muscle mass.

7. Reduce Your Risk of Heart Disease by Laughing

If you want to build a healthier heart, think about something funny. Research shows laughter decreases stress hormones, increases 'good' cholesterol, and reduces artery inflammation.

Perhaps laughter really is the best medicine. And the best news is, the positive effects of laughter last 24 hours.

The Power of Your Mind

Your mind can be your best asset or your worst enemy. Learn how to train your brain to help your body perform at its peak.

Everyone has the ability to build mental strength. With practice, mental exercises could be the key to living a longer, happier life. ♦



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GUT HEALTH

It's hardly news that the gastrointestinal tract is important to human health: It transports food from the mouth to the stomach, converts it into absorbable nutrients and stored energy, and shuttles waste back out of the body. If you don't properly nourish yourself, you don't live. It's that simple.

But in recent years, scientists have discovered that the GI system has an even bigger, more complex job than previously appreciated. It's been linked to numerous aspects of health that have seemingly nothing to do with digestion, from immunity to emotional stress to chronic illnesses, including cancer and Type 2 diabetes.

"We now know that the GI tract is full of trillions of bacteria that not only help us process food but that also help our bodies maintain homeostasis and overall well-being," says Dr. Tara Menon, a gastroenterologist at the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center. The key, experts say, may lie in the microbiome—the makeup of bacteria and other microorganisms in the stomach and

intestines, or, informally, the gut.

Research on the microbiome is still in its infancy. But studies have already found that certain environments, foods and behaviors can influence gut health for better or worse. Here's why that matters and what you can do to improve yours.

Why is gut health important?

Everyone's microbiome is unique, but there are a few generalities about what's healthy and what's not. "In healthy people, there is a diverse array of organisms," says Dr. Gail Hecht, chair of the American Gastroenterological Association Center for Gut Microbiome Research & Education. (Most of those organisms are bacteria, but there are viruses, fungi and other microbes as well.) "In an unhealthy individual, there's much less diversity, and there seems to be an increase of bacteria we associate with disease."

continued next page

Hecht stresses the word associate because scientists don't know for sure which comes first—whether bacteria influence disease risk or whether existing disease influences gut bacteria. Most likely, she says, both are true. “We're still lacking specific proof of how this connection works, but we know it's there.”

Some bacteria fight inflammation, while others promote it. When the gut works as it should, these two types keep each other in check. But when that delicate balance gets skewed, inflammatory bacteria can take over—and they can produce metabolites that pass through the lining of the gut and into the bloodstream, spreading the inflammation to other parts of the body.

Specific types of bacteria in the gut can lead to other conditions as well. Studies in both animals and humans have linked some bacteria to lower immune function; others to greater risk of asthma and allergies; and still others to chronic illnesses like diabetes, heart disease, multiple sclerosis and some cancers.

Gut health has even been linked to anxiety and depression, and to neurological conditions like schizophrenia and dementia. The makeup of gut bacteria also varies between lean and overweight people, suggesting that it may play a role in causing obesity in the first place.

What affects gut health?

The food you eat obviously plays a role in the bacterial makeup of your gut, but so do a lot of other factors, including the nature of your birth. Research shows that babies delivered vaginally grow up to have more diverse microbiomes than those delivered via C-section, thanks to the exposure they get to different bacteria as they pass through the birth canal. Breastfeeding has also been shown to foster beneficial gut bacteria.

The environment you grow up in matters too. “We are way too clean of a society,” says Hecht. More exposure to germs and bacteria, within reason, can strengthen our microbiomes. “Go outside, dig in the dirt, play with animals ... it's all good. These are things that will help establish a healthy gut.”

Emotional stress can also affect gut bacteria. Scientists refer to the “gut-brain axis,” a pathway through which signals from the gut can affect neurotransmitters in the brain, and vice versa. Research is still early, but a person's microbiome and mental state appear to be able to influence each other to some extent.

Then, too, there is the role of medications, including over-the-counter painkillers and drugs used to treat acid reflux, diabetes and psychiatric conditions; all have been linked to microbiome changes. But the best-known gut-altering drugs are antibiotics: though they're prescribed to kill harmful bacteria, they can also wipe out bacteria of all kinds.

“I've seen patients on antibiotics develop allergies, or become more susceptible to infection, or have motility issues, all because their microbiota composition suddenly changes,” says Hecht. Antibiotics should be prescribed when they're needed to fight bacterial infections, she adds, but doctors and patients should be careful about overuse.

Can you tell if you're having health problems in your gut? When the microbiome is thrown out of balance for any reason, it's often easy to tell. Bloating, gas, diarrhea, stomach pain or nausea are all pretty direct signs that something in the gut isn't

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WEIGHTLIFTING:

Train, Don't Strain

Are you into weightlifting or interested in giving it a try? It is a great form of exercise that will help you lose weight, strengthen your bones and muscles, and boost your energy levels. However, if you've never tried it before you may be a little hesitant due to the following factors:

1. You have no idea where to begin. Right now, the fitness facility looks more like something out of the Spanish inquisition than a means of well-being.
2. You are fearful of the "no pain no gain" people that seem to frequent exercise establishments.
3. You are afraid of getting injured, or worse... dying!
4. You feel that you do not have enough time or energy to put into exercise.

Many people are intimidated by the gym. Yet, there is nothing to be afraid of. Resistance training, often called weightlifting, can appear confusing. However, it doesn't take long to figure it out and feel right at home in the gym.

Here is some advice to help you along. Did you know there is a sensible way of going about exercise that will not cause excessive stress on the body, but still give you the results you are looking for? Forget about spending hours in the gym - it is unnecessary and counterproductive. Here's the truth, in as little as 15 minutes, 3-days-a-week, you can accomplish great gains with minimal risk. Interested? Here's how:

1. Take a little time to learn about some different exercises and techniques. Find a book or trustworthy website that teach proper form. If you need some extra motivation, consider hiring a personal trainer just to get you started.
2. When developing your exercise routine, be sure to pick an exercise for each of the major muscle groups: chest, upper back, shoulders, biceps, triceps, legs, abdominal, and low back.

3. Once you have your list, head to the gym. For each exercise, perform one set of repetitions until you feel like you have had enough. At first you will most likely be very kind to yourself which is fine. It is still better than what you were doing, which was nothing. As you get more comfortable, start raising the intensity by doing more repetitions.

4. Twenty repetitions is a good goal to work towards. I find this number fits well into most people's comfort range. Once you are able to accomplish 20 reps, move up to the next level. When you do, shoot for 12-15 repetitions since the weight is now heavier. Again work with the weight until you accomplish 20 reps, then you'll be ready to move up again.

5. As you train, focus on maintaining good form. Also, don't blow through your repetitions too fast. It is better to do your reps with a slower motion (2 seconds on the contraction, 4 seconds on the return) than to jerk or slam the weights. Remember, you are not in a weight lifting competition—you are exercising.

6. Keep in mind you are not just training your body, you are training your mind as well. A large part of weight training is psychological. Most people can do a lot more than they think, but they need to build the confidence to push themselves.

One of the benefits of using the concepts above is that you will not get into muscle soreness that typically haunts those who over-train. Soreness is caused by doing too many sets of exercise wears away at the connective tissue causing micro trauma to the tissue. It is not caused by lactic acid trapped in the muscle as is commonly believed.

That's about all there is to it. Try this approach for 2 months and you will be amazed at the changes. Weightlifting isn't hard. Just remember to train rather than strain. ♦

Obesity:

You don't have to lose weight to be fit

New research suggests that people with obesity can enjoy good cardiovascular health as long as they keep physically fit. Also, for those with severe obesity, keeping fit may be just as important as losing weight.

"You can get fit," explains study leader Jennifer L. Kuk, who is an associate professor from the School of Kinesiology and Health Science at York University in Toronto, Canada, "without losing weight and have health benefits."

She and her team investigated the relationship between cardiorespiratory fitness and markers of cardiovascular health in individuals with mild to severe obesity.

Prof. Kuk explains that exercising for a total of 150 minutes per week - as recommended in national guidelines - is generally equivalent to losing less than half a pound in weight.

But this level of physical activity can bring considerable improvements in health for people with severe obesity.

"You really have to disconnect the body weight from the importance of fitness," she urges.

The researchers report their findings in a paper Trusted Source that was recently published in the journal BMC Obesity.

Overweight and obesity

The World Health Organization (WHO) define Trusted Source overweight and obesity as "abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that may impair health."

Body mass index (BMI) is a "crude measure" of obesity calculated by dividing a person's weight in kilograms by the square of their height in meters. Overweight is defined as having a BMI of 25 or higher, and obesity is defined as having a BMI of 30 or higher.

Using these measures, researchers have found that being overweight or having obesity likely puts people at higher risk for cardiovascular and other diseases, such as diabetes and cancer.

In the United States, more than two thirds of adults Trusted Source are overweight, including around a third who have obesity.

As well as eating habits, there several other factors that play a role in overweight and obesity - such as genes, medical conditions, and being physically inactive.

Evidence suggests that more physical activity is needed to lose weight than is required to benefit health.

The new study is among the first to show that exercise may be even more important for people with severe obesity - that is, those whose BMI exceeds 40.

Study assessed fitness and metabolic health

Prof. Kuk and colleagues analyzed data on 853 people who were attending a weight management clinic in Southern Ontario.

All participants underwent clinical exams, gave blood samples, and performed a "maximal treadmill test," during which cardiovascular and respiratory measures were recorded to assess fitness.

continued page 21

The Adult Activity Center of the Treasure Coast ...

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U.S. CONSTITUTION

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

Be “Enlightened Enough”

Did you know that all public schools are mandated by law to teach the Constitution-on-Constitution Day? “Public Law 108-477, section 111 (b) “Each educational institution that receives Federal funds for a fiscal year shall hold an educational program on the United States Constitution on September 17th of such year for the students served by the educational institution.”

If you have your children or grandchildren in public schools, you need to know what they are being taught so that they love God, our nation and you. We surveyed our county years ago. We called the 40 public schools and asked if they were teaching the Constitution on Constitution Day. Only three knew what we were talking about and only one school knew that they were doing so.

When we looked at the curriculum that some of the schools were teaching, we learned that one of the power points used taught that the Founders “formed a more perfect union” after the Civil War. Well, that is only 78 years off...

Could you discern, if you read what public schools are teaching today, if it is the original intent? Many of us could not, because we were not taught what the Preamble actually purposed and yet Gouverneur Morris insisted for there to be a Preamble because he was concerned that Americans might not read it or teach it to the next generation. We are that generation.

How do we rise above our ignorance and choose to become part of the solution? We can join the growing number of older Americans who are taking time to learn the original intent of the Constitution. As Thomas Jefferson penned:

“I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education. This is the true corrective of abuses of constitutional power.”

Can you imagine how easily we could retake our nation, if each one of us learned the original intent of the Constitution and then faithfully guarded our liberty for the next generation by holding our representatives accountable to stay within their “few and enumerated powers.” That is the enemies of Liberty’s worst nightmare. But we can do it! Please join us for Constitutional Conversations in Six Weeks, starting 9/19. Learn more at: TeachingHisStory.com. ♦

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homeschooling cont.

have such diverse learning styles. And I dread the return of all those soul-sucking hours of homework. I think a lot of parents have discovered how arbitrary and mostly unnecessary homework actually is. We always suspected and now we know.”

Homeschooling isn’t a magic bullet, of course. Not all parents can make it work, and not all parents should even try to make it work. Having come from a teaching background and homeschooled my own kids for almost two decades, I can attest to the fact that it’s not for everyone. And for many families, it’s simply not an option.

At the same time, the pandemic has provided a prime opportunity to give it a shot for those who want to. Much has been made about the mental health impact of school closures, as well as the kids who will fall through the cracks because of needs that get met at school. Those problems are real and those concerns are legitimate—however, a lot of kids really do fare better academically, emotionally, and socially learning outside of a traditional classroom setting.



The fears and reservations that kept many families from trying homeschooling have been trumped by the fears of viral spread and reservations about kids’ safety in the classroom. Though the circumstances that got us to this point are undesirable, there’s never been a more opportune time to experiment with different modes and models of learning. Schooling has been turned topsy turvy anyway, so why not try something entirely new if you have the desire and the ability?

The educational landscape is shifting quickly and there are more resources for learning than ever before. While broad questions about equity and accessibility loom large across that landscape, parents shouldn’t be afraid to explore the various options that are out there. The opportunity to reexamine what learning looks like for individual kids has been laid at our feet with the pandemic blowing up school as we know it. Might as well take advantage of it while we have the chance. ♦



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

ANDRES GARCIA

CEO/Owner of Vital Health Solutions

Connect with Andres
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Andres, please give us a short introduction about yourself.

My name is Andres Garcia and I am from Jamanducaro, Michoacan, Mexico. I have worked in healthcare since I was 18 starting out as a rural nurse. I have always tried to find ways to help others. I studied medical coding, IT systems and now I am currently working on a Masters in Healthcare Economics.

When and why did you move to the Treasure Coast?

I fell in love with the area, it makes me feel safe and at home. We moved to Vero Beach in 2012 and was lucky to have family in the area that opened their arms to me. After a year, my brother started high school in Vero Beach and is currently attending college at IRSC.

Please tell us about your family.

My family lives in Mexico. They come from a line of farmers and have always worked the land, from my great grandfather all to my father's generation. My mother passed away when I was 11 and since then I've always had my little brother Luis to count on. He's been my biggest supporter, and together we both have achieved milestones with Vital Health Solutions.

Why do you love about what you do?

I love the fact that I can use all the skills that I have learned to help people. I educate and teach other patients what real healthcare is and I try to maximize their benefits. I have been able to change the views for hundreds as to what a provider and insurance company do for them. There is so much work that goes into a doctors appointment. Adding to all of this, I work with the best team that are family to me, from providers to technicians.

Please give our readers a short story about how your business has helped people.

Vital Health Solutions started as another medical billing company that was in the business of processing claims for health care providers. One day, I had someone come up to me and ask me to help with their bill, they didn't know how to read it and why were charges so high. I took about a good 40 minutes to go over their claims and explain their charges and that they didn't owe anything. This patient was in his 70's and served in the military for a very long time. As he was waiting on Uber, I went over to him and gave him a sheet of paper with everything he was entitled to claim. From free transportation to copay assistance. I realized that this country has veterans that need to be informed what their insurance offers.

What are your future plans?

I'm currently working with Tricare and the VA to create a referral system for veterans and their families. I want to utilize the health care providers I collaborate with to create specific hours and days for them.

I want to help all patients by educating them about their healthcare, including appointments and prescriptions all the way to prior authorization. I'm currently working with primary care and behavioral health providers and would like to expand specialties.

What is your philosophy on business and life?

I wake up with excitement every morning always starting with positive energy and always repeat to myself. "What great things will I do today" ♦



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6 SIMPLE STEPS KEEP YOUR MIND SHARP AT ANY AGE

Everyone has the occasional “senior moment.” Maybe you’ve gone into the kitchen and can’t remember why, or can’t recall a familiar name during a conversation. Memory lapses can occur at any age, but aging alone is generally not a cause of cognitive decline. When significant memory loss occurs among older people, it is generally not due to aging but to organic disorders, brain injury, or neurological illness.

Studies have shown that you can help prevent cognitive decline and reduce the risk of dementia with some basic good health habits:

- staying physically active
- getting enough sleep
- not smoking
- having good social connections
- limiting alcohol to one drink a day
- eating a balanced diet low in saturated and trans fats

Certain health conditions that can impair cognitive skills include diabetes, high blood pressure, sleep apnea, depression, and hypothyroidism. If you have any of these health issues, you can help protect your memory by following your doctor’s advice carefully.

Memory changes can be frustrating, but the good news is that, thanks to decades of research, you can learn how to get

your mind active. There are various strategies we can use to protect and improve memory. Here are several you might try.

1. Keep learning

A higher level of education is associated with better mental functioning in old age. Experts think that advanced education may help keep memory strong by getting a person into the habit of being mentally active. Challenging your brain with mental exercise is believed to activate processes that help maintain individual brain cells and stimulate communication among them. Many people have jobs that keep them mentally active, but pursuing a hobby, learning a new skill, or volunteering for a project at work that involves a skill you don’t usually use can function the same way and help improve memory.

2. Use all your senses

The more senses you use in learning something, the more of your brain that will be involved in retaining the memory. In one study, adults were shown a series of emotionally neutral images, each presented along with a smell. They were not asked to remember what they saw. Later, they were shown a set of images, this time without odors, and asked to indicate which they’d seen before. They had excellent recall for all odor-paired pictures, and especially for those associated with pleasant smells. Brain imaging indicated that the piriform cortex, the main odor-processing region of the brain, became active when people saw objects originally paired with odors,

even though the smells were no longer present and the subjects hadn't tried to remember them. So challenge all your senses as you venture into the unfamiliar.

3. Believe in yourself

Myths about aging can contribute to a failing memory. Middle-aged and older learners do worse on memory tasks when they're exposed to negative stereotypes about aging and memory, and better when the messages are positive about memory preservation into old age. People who believe that they are not in control of their memory function — joking about “senior moments” too often, perhaps — are less likely to work at maintaining or improving their memory skills and therefore are more likely to experience cognitive decline. If you believe you can improve and you translate that belief into practice, you have a better chance of keeping your mind sharp.

4. Prioritize your brain use

If you don't need to use mental energy remembering where you laid your keys or the time of your granddaughter's birthday party, you'll be better able to concentrate on learning and remembering new and important things. Take advantage of calendars and planners, maps, shopping lists, file folders, and address books to keep routine information accessible. Designate a place at home for your glasses, purse, keys, and other items you use often.

5. Repeat what you want to know

When you want to remember something you've just heard, read, or thought about, repeat it out loud or write it down. That way, you reinforce the memory or connection. For example, if you've just been told someone's name, use it when you speak with him or her: “So, John, where did you meet Camille?”

6. Space it out

Repetition is most potent as a learning tool when it's properly timed. It's best not to repeat something many times in a short period, as if you were cramming for an exam. Instead, re-study the essentials after increasingly longer periods of time — once an hour, then every few hours, then every day. Spacing out periods of study helps improve memory and is particularly valuable when you are trying to master complicated information, such as the details of a new work assignment. ♦

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gut health cont.

working as it should. The imbalances often fix themselves after a short time, but if they become chronic, they may require a medical diagnosis and treatment. (Gastroenterologists can test for specific conditions associated with the microbiome, like an overgrowth of certain bacteria.)

But more and more, doctors are discovering irregularities in gut bacteria that don't cause immediate symptoms—at least not gastrointestinal ones. “You can have bacteria in your gut that aren't overproducing gas or altering your motility or anything you'd notice but that, for example, are associated with an increased risk of colon cancer,” says Hecht.

For people curious about their microbiome, commercial testing kits will analyze a stool sample and provide information about the strains of bacteria detected. But if you're looking for advice about your health, doctors say the kits are not worth the money. “We don't know enough to make those readouts meaningful yet,” says Dr. Robert Hirten, assistant professor of medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. “We know

in general what looks like inflammatory and noninflammatory bacteria, but in a practical sense we can't really measure it or match specific bacteria to specific diseases.”

How can I maintain my gut health?

You don't have to know exactly what's going on in your gut at all times. And as long as you're following doctor's orders for overall health, you're likely benefiting your microbiome. “We tell people to follow a balanced diet, stay hydrated, exercise regularly and get a good night's sleep,” says Menon, “because we think staying healthy overall will help you maintain a healthy gut.”

Similarly, the same habits that are bad for your heart, lungs and brain—like cigarette smoking and excessive alcohol intake—can also hurt the microbiome. (Some data does suggest, however, that moderate amounts of red wine may be beneficial.) Avoid taking unnecessary medications, says Hecht, and talk to your doctor about how your current drug regimen might affect your gut health.

Limiting dairy, red and processed meats, and refined sugars can also improve gut health. So can getting the recommended amount of fiber—20 to 40 g a day, depending on your age and gender. Most Americans don't meet these guidelines, but you can increase your amount by adding fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds to your diet.

Menon recommends keeping a food diary to track fiber intake, as well as GI symptoms related to food. A sudden switch to high-fiber foods can cause bloating, so introduce them gradually and keep track of how your body reacts to anything new. “Sometimes you can identify specific trigger foods that make you feel bad every time you eat them,” says Menon, “and you can find alternatives that work better for you.”

Some studies have looked at how regular consumption of specific foods—including mangoes, cherries, cranberries, broccoli, walnuts and leafy greens—appear to benefit the gut. But rather than narrowing your options to these items, it's more important to look at what they (and plenty of other foods) have in common, says Hirten: they're high in nutrients and



fiber, and low in saturated fats and refined ingredients.

Overall, says Hecht, eating a wide variety of foods—including plenty of fiber-rich fruits, vegetables and whole grains—is the best way to encourage a diverse and healthy microbiome. “Your gut bacteria lives off whatever's left over in your colon after your cells have digested all of the nutrients and amino acids,” she says. “You want to feed them complex fiber, not bad, processed stuff.”

Should I take probiotics?

Many commercial dietary supplements claim to boost gut health and introduce good bacteria. But the science is still out on the real-life benefits of probiotic pills and capsules. One potential problem is that even though probiotics should contain live bacterial cultures, the supplement industry isn't well regulated—and there's no guarantee that what's in the bottle matches what's on the label.

What's more, studies have been inconclusive about whether probiotic supplements actually improve gut health for everyone. The evidence is stronger for people with specific health conditions, such as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) and antibiotic-associated diarrhea. “A lot of probiotic strains are not what you would naturally find in large quantities in the human intestine,” says Hecht. “So you can eat them or drink them, but they won't necessarily stay and colonize, and they won't necessarily do you any good.”

Instead of pills, Hecht recommends getting beneficial bacteria from fermented food sources—like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut and kimchi—that have other nutritional benefits as well. Hirten also advises his

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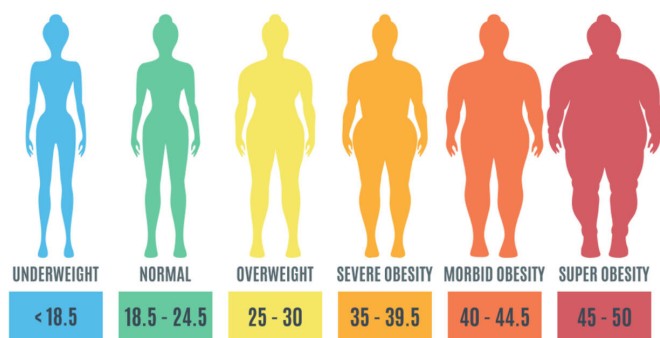


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obesity cont.**BODY MASS INDEX**

The team used three categories of obesity: mild (a BMI lower than or equal to 34.9), moderate (a BMI of 35–39.9), and severe (a BMI of 40 or higher).

From the blood tests, they assessed a range of metabolic risk factors - including blood pressure, triglycerides, high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, and blood glucose.

The results showed that of those with mild obesity, 41 percent were considered fit, compared with 25 percent and 11 percent of those with moderate and severe obesity, respectively.

Participants considered fit were more likely to be younger (age 48, on average, compared with 51), be female, and have a lower BMI (36, on average, compared with 41).

Higher blood pressure, higher levels of triglycerides and glucose, and lower levels of high-density lipoprotein cholesterol were more prevalent in the participants who have moderate and severe obesity.

'Important health benefits' for those with severe obesity

The group whose members were classed as having severe obesity was the only group in which level of fitness seemed to make a significant difference to health measures.

For instance, the least fit 20 percent of the group were more likely to have higher levels of glucose and triglycerides as well as high blood pressure, whereas this was less of an issue in the fitter 80 percent of participants with severe obesity.

Also, the authors note that higher fitness was "associated with smaller waist circumferences, with differences between high and low fitness being larger in those with severe obesity than mild obesity."

It would seem, therefore, that if you have severe obesity, avoiding being in the least fit 20 percent might be enough to make a significant difference to health.

The study authors suggest that their findings reveal the "potentially important health benefits of having a high fitness level, particularly for those with severe obesity."

This is in line with previous studies that have shown that you need to do a lot more exercise to lose weight than to improve health.

However, the researchers believe that their study is the first to support the idea that being fit might make more of a difference to health in people with severe obesity than losing weight.

"In my practice," says study co-author Dr. Sean Wharton, an adjunct professor at York University, "I see many patients who are looking for different results."

"There are some patients that want to significantly improve their health and others that are only looking for an aesthetic goal," he explains. ♦

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Heart Health & Well-Being: A 5-Point Plan



As we get older and chronic conditions surface—whether it's high blood pressure, another form of heart disease or diabetes, for instance—taking medication becomes vital. Yet lifestyle changes are important as well. Sometimes these are necessary to help your medication be effective, such as the dietary changes needed when you have hypertension. In other cases, they can both make you feel better and prevent your condition from worsening.

The same lifestyle changes often have beneficial effects on an entire host of chronic conditions. For example, changes you make to help manage or avoid heart disease may keep you from developing diabetes. Though simple, these changes do require a shift in habits that may be very ingrained in your everyday life. Walking for 20 to 30 minutes, even at a slow pace, might seem like a huge adjustment to make if you are rarely active. But walking doesn't cost you anything, doesn't require

an insurmountable effort and doesn't involve learning a skill—you just need to want to get in the habit.

Here are five lifestyle changes that can bring the greatest results for the smallest effort.

1. Watch blood sugar levels.

Keeping blood sugar levels in check helps maintain your cognitive function and makes for healthier aging. Recent studies have shown that certain regions of the hippocampus are vulnerable when blood sugar levels are regulated, leading to more severe symptoms of dementia. Time-honored ways to help keep blood sugar levels steady call for simple lifestyle adjustments and involve the next three suggestions—exercising, getting sleep and eating better.

2. Get the right amount of sleep.

Though seniors do tend to sleep less, to feel your best, start by getting enough

continued next page

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sleep—try to log at least seven hours a night—and stick to a regular schedule, going to sleep and waking up at the same times as often as possible. Sleep patterns that vary can negatively affect blood pressure as well as blood sugar—you'll also feel more alert and have a better outlook in general.



3. Get more exercise.

This is important for those who want to prevent illnesses like diabetes and high blood pressure as well as people who need to actively combat them. The more sedentary you are, the worse it is for your overall health. Most experts suggest a three-part approach that includes heart-healthy cardio exercise, strength training and stretching, but don't let that deter you—you can start with even just 5 to 10 minutes of walking a few times a day and build from there. Working with a physical therapist, especially if you have arthritis or another mobility-limiting condition, will enable you to get a personalized regimen that can progress in intensity as your abilities improve.

4. Watch your diet and watch your calories.

Some studies have shown that you can improve your health and increase longevity by cutting back on calories as you age. Of course, good nutrition is still important—especially if you are eating less, each calorie needs to deliver essential nutrients. One diet (for maintenance or weight loss, depending on the number of calories eaten) that consistently shows healthful benefits is commonly referred to the Mediterranean Diet. The natural diet of people living in the countries around the Mediterranean Sea, with its abundance of fresh seafood, emphasizes the good-for-you monounsaturated fats in olive oil, fresh fruits and vegetables, legumes and whole grains. As part of an overall plan that includes exercise, it may also have a preventive effect on dementia and even depression.

5. Find ways to reduce stress.

Stress impairs thinking even in people with no cognitive loss, and when stress exists along with Alzheimer's disease, it can create greater impairment in your cognitive function. You might think that stress is limited to people with taxing jobs or demanding schedules, but stress affects everyone and can stem from minor annoyances and problems. It's not always possible to get rid of all sources of stress, but you can find ways to let handle it. Try deep breathing, a relaxing practice like tai chi or the meditation suggestions in Yoga for Heart Health.

It takes effort to make these changes, but you will feel the benefits of even the slightest improvements you make, and you'll feel them almost from the moment you start to make them. ♦



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9 Health Tests Everyone Over 50 Should Get Checked Annually



Maintaining your health is easier to do if you stay on top of things. After all, it's easier to stay in shape than it is to get in shape. It's also easier to prevent an illness by detecting the warning signs, than it is to cure one. Thus, the importance of getting annual check-ups increases with every passing year. Here are several tests experts advise people over 50 to discuss with their doctor about to maximize the benefits of these yearly visits.

Blood Tests

Regular blood testing is one of the most effective ways to keep track of physical well-being, because it allows doctors to see the way your body functions change over time. Blood tests are used to search for markers of diseases and health conditions such as diabetes, anemia, cancer, and coronary heart disease, as well as countless others. The most common (and important) blood tests to consider are:

- **Complete Blood Count (CBC)** - Measures the levels of 10 different components of every major cell in your blood. Abnormal results could indicate nutritional deficiencies, anemia, clotting problems, cancer, infection, or immune system disorders.
- **Basic Metabolic Panel (BMP)** - Measures eight common compounds in the blood, and could potentially detect kidney disease, diabetes, or hormone imbalances.
- **Comprehensive Metabolic Panel (CMP)** - This test includes measuring the eight compounds in the BMP, as well as various proteins and liver enzymes, which really ups the diagnostic power.

- **Lipid Panel** - Measures cholesterol levels, which is a Big Deal™ in the medical community. (HDL, or “good” cholesterol helps remove harmful substances from your blood and helps your liver break them down, while LDL, so-called “bad” cholesterol, can cause plaque to build up in your arteries.)
- **Thyroid Panel** - Your thyroid produces hormones that control many of the body's basic metabolic processes. An under-active thyroid can cause weight gain, fatigue, hair loss, forgetfulness and cold intolerance. An overactive thyroid can lead to anxiety, sleep issues, weight loss, weakness, and eye problems. Many thyroid issues are easily corrected with medication, so it really pays to get this test done.
- **Blood Sugar or A1C test** - Used to detect diabetes, doctors recommend this test be done annually after the age of 45.
- **Vitamin D** - As you get older, it is harder for your body to synthesize vitamin D, which is essential to protecting your bones and defends against heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. Measuring these levels can detect deficiencies so they can be easily corrected with supplements.

Blood Pressure

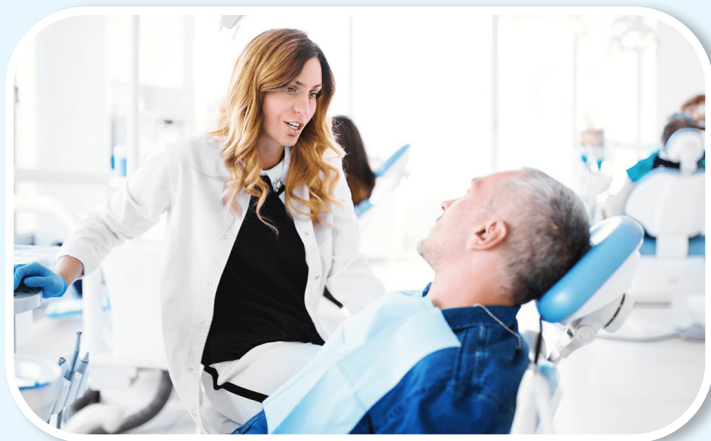
Getting your BP checked regularly is another easy way to stave off or discover serious health complications. One in every three adults has elevated blood pressure, or hypertension. Hypertension is often called a “silent killer” because symptoms may not show up until it's too late as it increases your risk for stroke or heart attack.



Eye Exams

The American Academy of Ophthalmology suggests that every adult should get a baseline eye screening at the age of 40. Then, they recommend annual screenings if you need vision correction, and every other year if you don't.

This may seem like a trivial thing but many eye conditions such as glaucoma, cataracts, and other vision issues are deteriorative, so the sooner you catch them the sooner preventative measures can be taken.



Periodontal Exams

No one loves going to the dentist, but they play a crucial role in maintaining your physical well-being. Oral health is important to keeping your natural teeth, which is critical for avoiding painful dental procedures and needing expensive prosthetics. Gum disease can also lead to other health complications: research has linked periodontal disease to heart complications, strokes, diabetes, and respiratory issues.

Hearing Tests

Hearing tests don't need to be done annually unless you have underlying conditions, but they should be performed at least every two to three years. Yes, they could lead to you using a hearing aid. Yes, that can be an embarrassing indicator that you are indeed aging. And yes, it would be really silly to not treat hearing loss as early as you can for vanity's sake. Recent research has indicated that hearing loss is a causal factor to developing dementia, which is a lot worse than just needing to turn up the volume on the TV.

Bone Density Scan

Regular bone density scans that detect osteoporosis are recommended after age 65, especially for women, who are at higher risk. Weaker bones can lead to more broken bones during a fall as well as less stable balance. Approximately 75 million people in Japan, Europe, and the US are affected by this condition, which can lead to debilitating injuries.

Mammogram

Women over the age of 55 should have an exam every 2 years, or every year if you have a family history of breast cancer. As with many diseases, early detection is important to surviving, so wouldn't you rather get squished just to be safe?

Pelvic Exams

Equally uncomfortable and important, regular pelvic exams (including pap smears) can help detect cancers and help with issues such as incontinence or pelvic pain. There is some debate in the medical community (as well as insurers) about how frequently these exams should occur. The U.S. The Preventive Services Task Force recommends that women between the ages of 21 and 65 have a pap test every three years, or a human papillomavirus (HPV) test - or a combo of the two - every five years, starting at age 30. But then, women over the age of 65 can stop getting screened if they've had at least three consecutive negative Pap tests, or at least two negative HPV tests within the previous 10 years. (Women who have a history of a more advanced precancer diagnosis should continue to be screened for at least 20 years.)

Prostate Cancer Screening

The ladies don't get to have all the fun! The American Cancer Society suggests that doctors discuss screening with people who have average risk for prostate cancer starting at age 50 (and earlier if the risk is higher due to family history.) Prostate cancer is the most common cancer amongst men after skin cancer, but it is also one of the most treatable if discovered early. ♦

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Times You Should Not DIY a Home Improvement Project

HGTV makes everyone feel as if they're only a couple of power tools away from being home renovation masters. But don't be fooled. There's a reason building and construction trades are considered skilled jobs.

Tackling a home renovation project requires more than an eye for design and the ability to match colors. You also need to understand how the various parts of a structure fit together, and you may even have to (gasp) do some math.

What's more, a home improvement project done wrong can be expensive to fix, or even dangerous. Before you end up with a DIY disaster, here are six times when you should probably call in a pro.

1. You don't understand what you're doing

Yes, this seems so obvious, doesn't it? And yet, some people try to do projects when they don't understand the mechanics. Perhaps they mistakenly think it will all simply fall into place once they get a bit further into the project.

Don't assume project instructions will make sense later. Know what you're doing right from the start. Otherwise, you won't be able to identify potential problems as they arise. Or worse, you could get halfway through and find you can't finish.

The same thing goes for tools, especially power tools. If you don't know how to use something, maybe you shouldn't be using it.

Failing to heed this advice could result in shoddy work or personal injury. Neither is a good outcome for a DIY project.

2. Someone knowledgeable advises you to get a pro

Maybe you go to the hardware store, explain the project, and the workers raise their eyebrows and say, "Really?"

When someone familiar with the project says you're crazy for attempting it, it's a cue to reconsider. Ask yourself these questions:

- Has this person done such a project themselves?
- Have they heard from multiple people who have tried such a project?
- Do they have a vested interest in discouraging you from doing the project?

Contractors may play Negative Nellies because they want your business, so don't rely on their advice alone. However, if



your best friend who is handy says the project is a nightmare, give some thought to their words.

3. Your time is limited

Even if you are capable of finishing a home renovation on your own, that doesn't mean you should attempt the project.

If you already have a full schedule of work and family obligations, how much time are you going to devote to the renovation? Will you want to live with your kitchen being a construction site for months on end? If your answers are "not much" and "no," call a pro.

4. It will be obvious you did it yourself

It might not matter if the shelves in your closet are crooked or the paint in your bedroom is uneven. No one except your immediate family will see those anyway.

However, if your kitchen cabinets are misaligned, it may be obvious to everyone who walks into the house. Consider who will see the project, the likelihood you'll mess it up and how embarrassed you'll be when a visitor notices your mistakes. A visibly botched job — done badly or not to code — can affect the value of your home if you decide to sell it.

5. Major electrical or plumbing work is involved

Anything involving major electrical or plumbing work needs to be left to pros.

Poor plumbing could lead to a messy situation and water damage that will end up costing more to fix than you would have paid to have the job done right in the first place.

Electrical mistakes could lead to house fires, putting your family's safety in jeopardy. That sort of risk isn't worth saving a few bucks.

6. Serious injury is possible if something goes wrong

Think twice about any project that could result in serious injury.

Re-shingling a house with a steeply sloped roof comes to mind. According to an article by DoItYourself.com, each year millions of DIYers working on home projects end up going to the hospital. About 170,000 people are treated at hospitals every year because of injuries related to ladders alone.

Another peril is knocking down walls when you're not sure which beams are supporting the roof. ♦

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Use Your Slow Season To Your Advantage



Almost every single business has a slow season, no matter what service or product you offer to your customers. For some businesses, the slow season comes because of changing weather, like in the case of a surf shop. For others, specifically those in the wholesale or home improvement business, the slowest part of the year comes in the summer when other people tend to take vacations from their jobs or focus on leisure activities.

Whatever your slow season is, the answer isn't just to go through the motions and wait until business picks up again. Use this guide to help you learn how planning for the slow season can boost your revenue and help you spend your time in a worthwhile fashion, even if you aren't earning as much as you do during the busiest part of the year.

buy. This concept of gaining followers in the slow season that will carry over to the busy season is particularly important for companies who sell seasonal items or activities.

PREPARE YOUR STAFF

One of the best things you can do to make sure your business is functioning at its highest level when you are busy is to work on building your staff's skills during the slow season. For companies in the retail market that could mean teaching your sales associates the basics of making sales or even sending them to classes to learn more about your industry or business.

Preparing your staff could also mean giving each employee time to study your product line or visit the factory where products are made. Downtime for you also means downtime for your employees so make

continued next page

FOCUS ON 'FREE' MARKETING

There's no such thing as free marketing when you're running a business, because even going out on the street and telling potential customers about your business takes time and money whether you're doing it yourself or paying someone. However, there are types of marketing that cost very little when compared with traditional print media or advertising.

For most companies, cost-effective marketing is all about using social media wisely. Developing a social media strategy is essential when it comes to planning for the slow season. Dedicating a little more time to communicating with your customers and boosting your visibility on social media sites like Facebook is an ideal way to spend some of your downtime.

To really connect with your customers and raise awareness of your company, consider implementing things like giveaways or contests for people who follow you or like a certain page or product. When customers or potential customers follow you in the down season that means they will also be following you when it's time to



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sure they're using that time wisely so they can help your company improve when they really are busy.

OFFER DISCOUNTS

Planning for the slow season, at least in the case of many retail businesses, means offering discounts to your customers when they normally wouldn't be thinking about your product or service. If you own a surf shop, try having a mid-winter sale. People may not be surfing, but they may take advantage of great prices and get a jump on the gear they'll need when the weather starts to warm up.

IMPROVE YOUR OFFICE OR STORE

If you own the office where your company works or the retail space where you sell a product to customers, basic improvements can make it hard to do business. Paving the parking lot or even putting up a fresh coat of paint can make it hard to close a sale.

That's why you should be planning for the slow season by making the necessary repairs when you don't have a lot of business. Your space will look its best when you're overrun with customers and you'll be using your downtime wisely.

WOO YOUR POTENTIAL BEST CUSTOMERS

If you own the office where your company works or the retail space where you sell a product to customers, basic improvements can make it hard to do business. Paving the parking lot or even putting up a fresh coat of paint can make it hard to close a sale.

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USE VACATION TIME

Planning for the slow season is very important if you want to keep your business growing all year round but even the most proactive business owners need some time away from work to unwind. If you're smart, planning for the slow season also means making sure that you take your vacation time when you'll be needed at work the least. ♦



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from the editor cont.

Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, he shall never see death. John 8:51

WE CAN DO THIS. WE MUST DO THIS. IN JESUS, WE CAN DO ALL THINGS.

HERE IS WHERE WE ALL START, PRAY WITH ME: 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 the Lord. Also, send this letter to anyone you known as a testimony of your faith. www.iCareTown.com >Free Subscription. ♦

gut health cont.

patients to focus more on a healthy diet and lifestyle rather than on pills. "I'm always cautious of new diets or supplements that claim to alter gut health in some way," he says.

Finally, there are the cutting-edge ways in which doctors are beginning to manipulate the gut microbiome directly. Fecal transplants, which introduce donor stool material containing healthy bacteria into the intestinal tract of a recipient, have been used to treat IBD as well as C. difficile, a dangerous infection that causes recurrent diarrhea. Researchers are also studying how bacteria-killing viruses can target strains of E. coli associated with Crohn's disease. "We're actually giving people viruses to see if we can treat this specific bacteria," says Hirten.

With so much still unknown about the microbiome, he adds, the best advice is stick to the basics. "I think that at this point, the most important thing we can do is follow a healthy diet and lifestyle," he says. "If it's good for you, it's probably good for your gut." ♦

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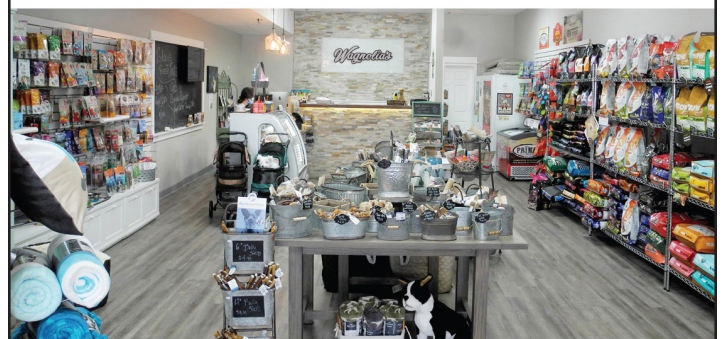
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