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Volume 11 • Issue 6

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FROM THE EDITOR

By ANGEL CHAVEZ

To Be or Not to Be

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED? Just like King Solomon about life and everything else?

“The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher; “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”

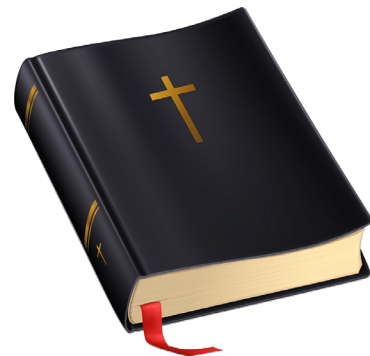
What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun? One generation passes away, and another generation comes, But the earth abides forever. The sun also rises, and the sun goes down and hastens to the place where it arose. The wind goes toward the south and turns around to the north; The wind whirls about continually and comes again on its circuit.

All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; To the place from which the rivers come, there they return again. All things are full of labor; Man cannot express it.

The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor the ear filled with hearing. *Ecclesiastes 1:8*

IF YOU EVER FIND YOURSELF LIKE A PREACHER PREACHING NEGATIVELY TO YOURSELF, GIVE YOURSELF AWAY TO THE ONE LIVING IN YOU, AND LET HIM BE, THEN YOU WILL BE ALSO.

YOU WILL FIND YOURSELF AS ONE THAT IS NEVER ALONE, NEVER PURPOSELESS, NEVER INADEQUATE TO FULFILL YOUR CALL, NEVER WITHOUT GRACE, NEVER POWERLESS, NEVER WITHOUT IDEAS, NEVER WITH EMPTINESS, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER... WITHOUT ANYTHING YOU MAY NEED. BECAUSE GREATER IS HE THAT IS IN YOU THAN HE THAT IS IN THE WORLD. YOU ARE AN OVERCOMER AND MORE THAN A CONQUEROR



IN HIM. YOU ARE FULL OF LOVE, JOY, PEACE LONG SUFFERING, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, AND SELF CONTROLLED, IN JESUS YES, WE ARE!

HIS PURPOSE IS BEING FULFILLED IN YOUR LIFE, THEREFORE, DELIGHT YOURSELF IN HIM AND HE WILL CHANGE ANY OF YOUR SELFISH DESIRES FOR HIS DESIRES.

I DO RECOMMEND YOU TO BE WHAT HE HAS CREATED YOU TO BE, INSTEAD OF WONDERING WHAT TO BE OR NOT TO BE.

WRAP YOURSELF IN HIS LOVE, THEN WALK, RUN, SWIM, OR FLY IN HIS LOVE. GET LOST IN HIM AND YOU WILL FIND YOURSELF, WITHOUT THE WONDERING, BECAUSE AS HE IS SO ARE WE IN THIS WORLD.

IF YOU ARE NOT SURE YOU ARE HIS, THEN YOU CAN START BY DOING THIS PRAYER: OUT LOUD IS MORE EFFECTIVE AND THEN TELL IT TO SOMEBODY, THAT YOU BELONG TO JESUS!

WE NEED THIS KIND OF BOLDNESS ONCE AGAIN IN THIS COUNTRY, OTHERWISE, WE ARE CAUSING THE ENEMY TO RISE IN OUR OWN FACES.

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- Leadership Development

Safety

We adhere to the highest safety standards and protocols, including single point of entry doors, self-locking doors, and school uniforms for both students and teachers.

All visitors are scheduled and scanned through our Raptor technology and assigned a visitor's badge during their visit.

House System

One feature of our whole school family is our school-wide House System. Starting in Kindergarten, students are sorted into one of 8 houses. Students remain as a member of their house for the duration of their school years at RCSSL. Our House System builds a large sense of community within the building and allows students to feel a part of a team.

Individualized Instruction

Through our data driven instruction we implement proficiency groups that meet our RTI, Esol, Gifted, and Special Populations.



Academic Excellence

- Highest Algebra 1 scores in St. Lucie County!
- 100% proficiency in Biology
- Girls Volleyball District Champions
- Consistent High Academic Achievement

Report Card

School Grade	Algebra 1	Middle School Acceleration	Parent Satisfaction
B	94%	93%	★★★★★

SCHOOL PROFILE 2022-2023

Mission of School

To provide learning experiences that inspire and empower our students to be great by choice.



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Principal
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STEAM: Renaissance Charter School of St Lucie incorporates STEAM education into not only electives, but also in our core classes. STEAM is an additional model of learning that uses Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics to inspire student interest, discussions, and critical thinking. We offer 1:1 technology, apple classrooms, and smart board technology. The end results are students who take thoughtful risks, engage in experiential learning, persist in problem-solving, embrace collaboration, and work through the creative process. These are the innovators, educators, leaders, and learners of the 21st century!

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- 3rd & 4th math acceleration
- Middle school math acceleration
- 3rd grade science acceleration
- 4th grade science acceleration
- Middle school science acceleration

High School Offerings:

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Montessori/Play with Purpose: We believe in educating the "whole child" at RCSSL. Our early childhood curriculum includes Montessori elements of both Practical Life, Sensorial as well as Montessori Math materials in grades K-3.



FROM THE CITY COUNCIL

by SARAH PROHASKA
Communications Director for
the City of Port St. Lucie

Tree-mendous: City of Port St. Lucie Receives Tree Cities of World Designation

The City of Port St. Lucie is honored to be formally recognized with the 2023 Tree Cities of the World designation, joining 138 other cities worldwide.

Port St. Lucie is among six Florida municipalities to receive the Tree Cities of the World designation. This is the first year the City has received this designation as part of a global network leading the way in urban and community forestry. The program recognizes cities committed to ensuring that urban forests and trees are properly maintained, sustainably managed and celebrated. The designation is on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Arbor Day Foundation.

To receive the designation, the City met five core standards including:

- Establishing responsibility for the care of trees
- Setting rules for managing trees
- Having an updated inventory of local trees resources
- Allocating resources for tree management
- Celebrating achievements for trees

“We’re honored to receive this recognition and award from the Arbor Day Foundation,” said Jennifer Perkey, Keep Port St. Lucie Beautiful Community Services Administrator. “We remain committed to creating a vibrant and diverse urban

forest. I would like to thank our residents for their continued care for our trees.”

The Arbor Day Foundation has also awarded the City of Port St. Lucie its 18th Tree City USA Award, and 17th Tree City USA Growth Award in recognition of effective urban forest management. These programs recognize high achievement in municipal tree programs nationally and globally.

Trees are an important public asset in urban environments, serving as a buffer between our transportation corridors and our homes while providing multiple economic, environmental, and social benefits such as cleaner air and water, cooler summer temperatures, and safer streets.

Port St. Lucie has planted 75,524 trees as part of the Port St. Lucie Tree Challenge. Since 2004, 13,611 trees have been distributed through the Keep Port St. Lucie Beautiful Tree Giveaway program.

“Trees are important to people, no matter what country they are from or what language they speak, said Dan Lambe, chief executive of the Arbor Day Foundation. “We all want to live in a city that is healthy, resilient, and beautiful – trees serve as a common language to make that possible. Being recognized in the Tree Cities of the World program means that your city is committing to go above and beyond to define trees as critical green infrastructure for your citizens.”

The Tree Cities of the World program is an international effort to recognize cities and towns committed to ensuring that their urban forests and trees are properly maintained, sustainably managed and duly celebrated. ♦

For more information about the Tree Cities of the World designation, visit treecitiesoftheworld.org.



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FROM THE SHERIFF

by KEN J. MASCARA
St. Lucie County Sheriff
stluciesheriff.com

Help protect your home and neighborhood from crime

In these times of economic distress, many people are concerned about the threat of rising crime in their communities. Fortunately, there are ways to help protect your home and your neighborhood from crime. From simple steps like keeping your doors locked to starting a Neighborhood Watch program, there are plenty of things you can do to prevent crime.



Work with your neighbors to keep your neighborhood clean and orderly. Keep spare keys with a trusted neighbor or nearby shopkeeper, not under a doormat or planter, on a ledge, or in the mailbox. Set timers on lights when you're away from home or your business is closed, so they appear to be occupied. Illuminate or eliminate places an intruder might hide: the spaces between trees or shrubs, stairwells, alleys, hallways, and entry ways. There has never been a more important time for citizens to work together to prevent crime.

Unfortunately, no neighborhood is completely immune to crime. However, there are steps you can take to help keep your family and your neighborhood safe.

Know where your children are. Have your children tell you or ask permission before leaving the house and give them a time to check in or be home. When possible, have them leave a phone number of where they will be.

Help children learn important phone numbers. Have your children practice reciting their home phone number and address, and your work and cell phone numbers. If they have trouble memorizing these, write them down on a card and have them carry it at all times. Tell your children where you will be and the best way to reach you.

Set limits on where your children can go in your neighborhood. Do you want them crossing busy roads? Playing in alleys or abandoned buildings? Are there certain homes in your neighborhood that you don't want your children to go to?

Get to know your children's friends. Meet their parents before letting your children to go to their home and keep a list of their phone numbers. If you can't meet their parents, call and talk

to them. Ask what your children might do at their house and if they will be supervised.

Choose a safe house in your neighborhood. Pick a neighbor's house where your children can go if they need help. Point out other places they can go for help, like stores, libraries, and police stations.

Teach children to settle arguments with words, not fists. Role-play talking out problems, walking away from fist fights, and what to do when confronted with bullies. Remind them that taunting and teasing can hurt friends and make enemies.

Work together with your neighbors. Watch out for suspicious and unusual behavior in your neighborhood. Get to know your neighbors and their children so you can look out for one another.

Here in St. Lucie County, the Sheriff's Office has launched the Eye Watch program. This is an online database of homes and businesses that have external security cameras. In the event of a criminal incident, the Sheriff's Office can search the database and identify locations where video evidence may have been captured. This evidence could result in the timely and efficient arrest of a criminal or the successful solving of a case.

If you have home or business security cameras, including doorbell cameras, you can register online at www.stluciesheriff.com/eyewatch. You could be the missing link in fighting crime. For more information about Eye Watch, Neighborhood Watch or other crime prevention programs, call our Community Engagement Unit at (772) 871-5303. ♦



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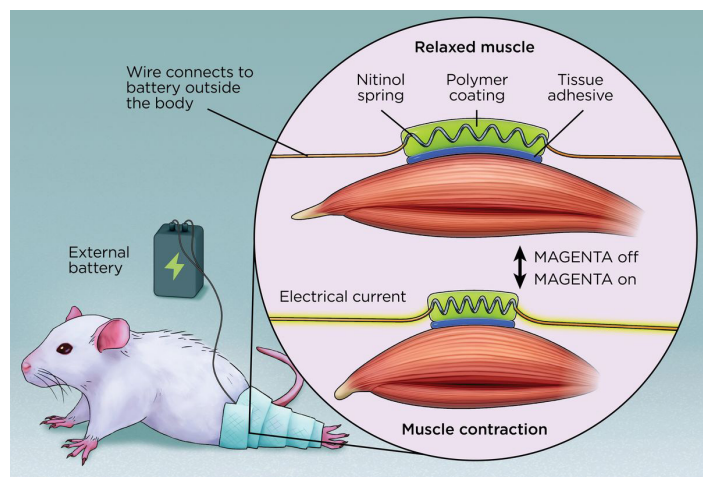
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New implantable device for fighting muscle atrophy

Scientists developed a new biomedical device that adheres to muscle tissue and delivers contractions, promoting tissue regeneration.

Source: sciworthy.com



When a person does not routinely move their muscles, the muscles begin to thin and waste away, a condition known as muscle atrophy. Although muscle atrophy can be treated through exercise, it is not feasible for many patients, including those on bed rest. Scientists have been exploring ways to directly stimulate muscle tissue to promote tissue regeneration and reduce muscle atrophy.

Previously, scientists have demonstrated that stretching pieces of engineered tissue in the lab increased cell production and cell growth. Although devices are routinely used to externally stretch human tissues, such as those used in orthodontics, scientists have yet to build a device to stimulate tissues inside the body. Scientists face two main challenges for developing an internal device. The first challenge is designing a system that can mechanically generate forces along the tissue surface. The second challenge is successfully adhering the device to the muscle tissue in a way that will effectively stretch or compress the muscle.

Recently, scientists from Harvard University built a device that addressed these two challenges. To generate forces along the tissue surface, they designed a spring made out of nickel and titanium, called nitinol. When these two metals are mixed together, they form a material with unique mechanical properties called a shape memory alloy.

The spring is originally formed in a tight coil. When it is stretched at room temperature, the spring changes shape, or deforms, and holds this new shape. When the spring is heated, in this case by electric current, the spring “remembers” its tight

coil shape and contracts back to it. When the electric current is turned off, the temperature in the spring drops and it can again be deformed into a stretched shape. Shape memory alloys have been safely used in other medical devices and proven to be biocompatible.

To adhere the spring device to muscle tissue, the scientists first embedded the spring inside a stretchy rubber called an elastomer. Then they added a sticky yet strong gelatin-like material to the elastomer called a hydrogel. Previous researchers have shown that tough hydrogels can adhere strongly to human tissues. The scientists named this new device MAGENTA, which stands for mechanically active gel-elastomer-nitinol tissue adhesive.

The scientists then performed several experiments to test the effectiveness of MAGENTA. First they attached MAGENTA to a piece of engineered tissue in the lab and applied an electric current through the wire. As the wire contracted, the surrounding elastomer also contracted, which then caused the underlying tissue to squeeze together. When the current was turned off, the spring and tissue relaxed back, confirming MAGENTA operated as the scientists expected. They performed a similar successful experiment on muscle tissue removed from the hind leg of a mouse.

Next, the scientists set out to test MAGENTA in living tissue. They implanted the device on the large muscle in the hind leg of live mice. When electric current was applied through the wire, the scientists observed the skin covering the device contract. They also confirmed the muscle was moving with the device using high-resolution ultrasound imaging. The scientists observed only mild inflammation in the mice’s stimulated muscles and no severe adverse effects, confirming biocompatibility.

The scientists then designed an experiment to learn if MAGENTA could treat muscle atrophy. They immobilized the hind leg of mice to induce muscle atrophy and implanted MAGENTA into half the mice to stimulate the immobilized leg muscle. After two weeks, the scientists measured higher levels of protein synthesis in the leg muscles of the mice treated with stimulation. The muscles in the mice treated with MAGENTA were bigger and heavier than in the mice that were not treated. The scientists also measured the force that the muscles could expel and found the treated mice generated forces much higher than the untreated mice. These forces were actually similar to those generated in muscles of healthy, active mice.

One drawback to MAGENTA application is the need to have wires attaching the device to an electric source outside the body. The scientists observed the nitinol spring could heat and contract by shining a laser on the device. They then implanted a wireless MAGENTA onto the muscle of a mouse leg. They shone a laser onto the mouse leg and confirmed the device stimulated the muscle. This demonstrated that the laser could remotely activate MAGENTA through a layer of skin.

Although the focus of this study was to develop a biomedical device to treat muscle atrophy, the scientists think MAGENTA could be used on other types of human tissue such as skin and heart. However, wireless application via laser heating is currently limited by how deep in the body it can be implanted. The scientists suggest future work to increase light sensitivity could address these limitations and open up possibilities for other applications. ♦

How to Evaluate Technology Solutions for Your Business

When evaluating technology solutions for your business, it's important to consider the long-term implications of any decisions you make. Here are a few tips to help you make the best choice for your organization.

1. Identify Your Needs: Before you start looking for the right technology, it's important to understand what your business needs. Make a list of tasks and processes that you want to improve or automate. This will give you a better idea of what type of technology you should be looking for.

2. Research Your Options: Once you have a better understanding of what your organization needs, it's time to start researching the different options available. Look into different vendors and products to see how they compare. Consider factors such as cost, functionality, customer service, and scalability.

3. Evaluate Performance: Performance is key when it comes to selecting the right technology. Make sure to test out any potential solutions to ensure they're up to the task. Ask vendors for trial periods and pay close attention to how the technology works in real-world scenarios.

4. Consider Support: Technology can be complicated, and it's important to make sure you have access to the support you need. Look into the vendor's customer service policies and read reviews from other customers. It's also important to look at the vendor's track record for updates and bug fixes.

5. Calculate the ROI: Finally, it's essential to consider the return on investment for any technology solution you select. Make sure the cost of the solution is off set by the increase in efficiency and productivity.

By following these tips, you can make an informed decision when it comes to finding the right technology solution for your business.



By Angel Moncada
President of
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EXPIRED

Expires On, Sell By and Best Before Dates... What Does It All Mean?

In case you're contemplating some spring cleaning, you may want to take on the task of organizing your pantry and refrigerator. There's a good chance you're buying food you probably already have in your kitchen (especially if it's unorganized) — just hidden in the back or under other products. On the other side, you may have “expiration police” in your household. Those who refuse to consume anything expired and are quick to toss anything “old” in the garbage. They're always the ones searching for an expiration date on every package.

It turns out, they may be the ones committing a crime — the crime of throwing out perfectly good food and, therefore, wasting money. Many of those tiny little expiration dates refer to the quality of the item, not its safety for consumption.

It seems most of us are confused about expiration dates. Every year, it's estimated that the average American family of four loses \$1,500 to uneaten food — oftentimes because of the expiration date on the package. (Can you imagine having an extra \$1,500 every year?)

Even the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) notes that food remains safe to consume after the expiration date, as long as it's been handled properly and shows no signs of spoilage.

However it's important to note cans that are dented, rusted, leaking or bulging should definitely not be consumed, because the contents could be tainted with bacteria such as botulism.

Did you know the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not require food manufacturers to list expiration dates on products? The only exceptions are infant formula and baby food. Otherwise, in most states, it's completely at the discretion of the manufacturer. What does the date mean?

Best If Used By or Best Before

Established by the manufacturer, the term refers to the food or beverage's quality. Until the date listed, the food is at its peak quality. After the date, the food or beverage is still safe to consume. However, the flavor and quality may not be as good. Of course, the longer you wait, the quality will diminish accordingly.



Use By

The term is a little more definitive, meaning the food should be consumed by the date stamped on the package. Past the date, you should be cautious and just toss it for safety.

The term is mostly used for perishable foods, including vegetables, fruits, meats, poultry, fish and dairy.

Consuming these foods past the expiration date can make you sick. The life of these foods can usually be extended by a few months, if you freeze them by the date on the package.

Sell By

The term is intended for retailers, as a marker for when the product needs to be removed from the shelf. Most of these items are safe to eat or drink afterward — sometimes for weeks.

However, this is the term that causes the most confusion (and waste) for consumers because most read it as an “expiration date”, believing the food is no longer good past the date.

Storage recommendation

You should store commercially canned foods and other shelf stable products in a cool, dry place.

Never put them above the stove, under the sink, in a damp garage or basement or any place exposed to high or low temperature extremes.

If you do so, according to the USDA they are safe indefinitely. However, over time, most canned foods will change in taste and texture and may eventually lose nutritional value.

Get organized

One of the best ways to save money on your groceries is to organize your kitchen. Food is less likely to be trashed, when older items are used first.

If you keep your pantry and refrigerator organized, you can easily use what needs to be eaten next before it “goes bad.”

This is a trick bargain hunters have known for years — just treat your pantry as your own little grocery store.

When you restock a household staple, simply move older product to the front and put the newer items in the back.

That way, when you pull a can, bag or box for a meal, you know they're in chronological order by expiration date.

The biggest mistake is just stocking new items on top of old ones. That's how you end up with a can of beans from 2009.

Save money

Expiration dates can be a gold mine for bargain hunters. Many retailers drastically reduced the price on perishable and non-perishable products about to expire. You just have to know where to look for them.

Find the clearance spots at your favorite grocer, as they usually keep them in the same areas. (You can also check the shelves for clearance tags.) Then, every time you shop, check each area for the latest bargains.

You can usually find lots of deals in the meat and dairy departments. If an item is about to expire that same day or in the next few days, most grocers would rather sell it than throw it away.

As a result, you'll find deep discounts — often 50% off or more. (If you're lucky, you can sometimes find items at 75% to 90% off.)



The key is to know your family will consume it immediately, especially with dairy products. Although, a big family with lots of kids can easily go through a gallon of milk within in just a day or two! A good discount can also help dictate your dinner plans. If you find a great deal on ground beef or chicken, you can easily make hamburgers, tacos or fajitas that same night.

Discounted meat also offers a little more flexibility because you can easily freeze it to extend its usability. If you find big savings, you might consider stocking up your freezer.

And don't be shy. If you find a product on the shelf about to expire, ask the store or department manager if they'd be willing to reduce the price. You'd be surprised at their response. My tip is to be extra polite. Being rude or demanding won't get you too far.

You're actually helping them keep their shelves "fresh" and from potentially losing money on an expired product. Make the meat and dairy department managers your friend! This trick also works well in the floral department.

Being a good bargain hunter takes a little confidence and work, but it's worth it. You may not always get a "yes", but it never hurts to ask — especially when it comes to saving money. ♦

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Not all foods are equal when it comes to nutrition and anti-aging properties. There are many lists of superfoods, and many strong opinions about which is best, but you will always find the following mentioned!

Blueberries

These are the most super of the superfoods. They are little exploding bombs of nutrients, packed with bioflavonoids, a type of antioxidant that is said to strengthen artery walls and maintain the structure of the skin. They contain anti-cancer and anti-aging properties, and can help to lower cholesterol. Sprinkle them on porridge or cereal for a power breakfast.



Broccoli

A powerhouse source of iron, broccoli is the king of vegetables. Absolutely packed with bioflavonoids, it is top of the list of anti-cancer vegetables, and has been shown to protect against breast and prostate cancer. Use it steamed or in stir-fries.

Tomatoes

A source of lycopene, which can help to fight prostate cancer in particular, as it mops up the free radicals that cause damage to body tissue. The body absorbs lycopene more efficiently if the tomatoes are cooked, so use freely in soups and sauces. Tinned tomatoes are an excellent source of lycopene, as they have already been cooked.

Oily Fish

Oily fish, such as salmon, mackerel, tuna and sardines are top sources of Omega-3 fatty acids. These are absolutely the “in” nutrients of the moment, said to help lower the risk of blood clots, and the build up of fatty deposits on arteries. However, it is the suggestion that Omega-3 improves brainpower that has been causing a stir, and experiments have shown a marked improvement in the



continued page 23



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Wellness with Joanne

by JOANNE AUGUSTO

Owner of Nutrition World

101 N. US 1, Ste 118, Ft. Pierce, FL 34950

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Charge Up with Electrolytes

I'm not sure about you, but I definitely wish I could plug myself in sometimes like my phone.

The first thing that one should consider when the body feels tired is electrolytes.

Electrolytes are essential for good health.

These major nutrients (calcium, sodium, magnesium, chloride, potassium, and phosphate) aid numerous vital bodily functions. Nearly every fluid and cell in your body contains electrolytes.

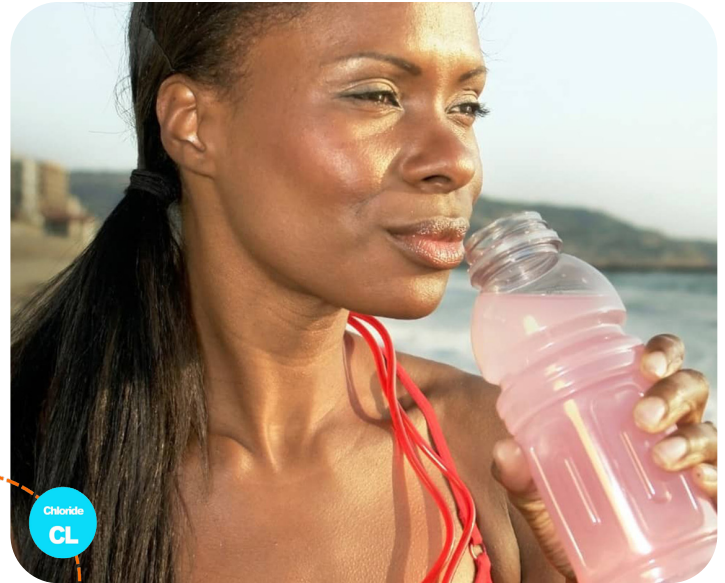
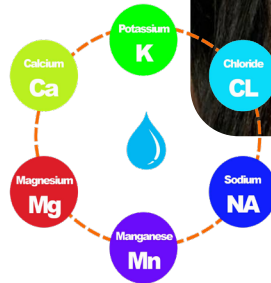
They help your body regulate chemical reactions, maintain the balance between fluids inside and outside your cells. Electrolytes conduct electricity when dissolved in water. They regulate nerve and muscle function, hydrate the body, balance blood acidity and pressure, and help rebuild damaged tissue.

Some signs of low electrolytes are arrhythmias, fatigue, dizzy, high pulse rate, muscle twitches, cramps, constipation, headache, nausea, and loss of blood clotting factors.

Some causes of low electrolytes are dehydration, diuretics, vomiting, diarrhea, and sweating.

Other causes that are more difficult to pinpoint are excess sugar, foods that are nutrient deficient and prescription drug side effects.

It is very important to keep these electrolytes in balance. For instance, we need ten times as much Potassium than magnesium. The first step in keeping a healthy electrolyte balance is consuming ample amounts of water for your body. We all live different lifestyles so you need to base your water consumption on your body.



Calcium is an electrolyte that many people have enough of due to the food industry enriching our food supply.

Sodium is an electrolyte that gets vilified when it is absolutely necessary to run the human body. Being particular with the type of salt you consume is worth the research. I prefer Celtic or Redmond salt. The sodium in refined processed food is not the sodium the body needs and those processed food can lead to a mineral deficiency.

Potassium is my favorite electrolyte. Found in most vegetables as well as yummy apricots.

The body needs 4,700mg of Potassium in a day. Eating veggies with every meal and having a small snack of bananas, prunes or apricots can get you there.

Magnesium is known as the miracle mineral. It increases bone density, helps with muscle function, and transmits nerve signals throughout your body. Pumpkin seeds are a great source as well as Swiss chard.

These are just a few tips but if you need to learn more check out our website. JoannesNutritionWorld.com ♦



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beginning your EXERCISE ROUTINE



Adoption and Adherence

Why do you stay interested, excited, and motivated in your exercise routine? Many people experience lapses or drop out of work out programs due to a lack of mental readiness, inappropriate exercise prescription, difficulty in changing habits, and injury. When the training program is overly restrictive, too challenging for beginners, or does not promote self-responsibility, it is easy to quit. Exercise psychology studies the mood changes associated with exercise, both desirable and undesirable, in order to describe, explain, predict, and intervene.

Common exercise goals consist of muscle toning, body sculpting, weight loss, and cardiovascular fitness. Less common reasons for engaging in an exercise program are mood enhancement, stress reduction, social interaction, and experiencing flow. Flow happens when you have achieved the state of peak performance in physical, technical, and mental training, so you have a total immersion in the activity.

Common mistakes made in training include overtraining, under training, performing non-specific exercises, failure to schedule a long-term training plan, and failure to taper before a performance. Tapering includes a short-term reduction in training load prior to competition to allow the muscles to re-

synthesize glycogen and heal from training-induced damage or delay onset muscle soreness (DOMS).

Let's review, what is exercise? Exercise is a large muscle activity involving repetitive body movements that are planned, structured, and purposeful and intended to enhance physical fitness, well-being, and health.

There are six known exercise psychology strategies for enhancing exercise adherence. Behavior Modification Approaches consist of prompts, verbal, physical, or symbolic cues used to initiate behaviors, and contracts including the expectations, goals, responsibilities, behaviors, contingencies, and consequences. Reinforcement Approaches include charting your attendance and participation and providing rewards and feedback for attendance, participation. Cognitive-Behavioral Approaches comprise of goal setting, which can be flexible, set by the individual, and time-based. Decision Making Approaches involve you, the exerciser, in the decisions prior to beginning your exercise programs to create a decision balance sheet. Social Support Approaches incorporate your family and friends, buddy systems, and increased group identity into your exercise program for further support and encouragement. The sixth method

continued next page

for enhancing adherence is Intrinsic Approaches which focus on increasing the fun and enjoyment of working out through focusing on the experience and the process, typically through engagement in purposeful and meaningful activities.

Everyone can improve one's consistency and reduce negative thoughts associated with sports, exercise, and staying physically active through adopting the idea, "Let's focus on what you can do." When embracing excellence in mental state, focus on dreams to stay excited; on successes and how they are influenced by free will, change, and lifelong learning; stay positive through being your own best friend, biggest fan and greatest coach; and create your own reality through keeping things in perspective.

Another important consideration is "don't forget to have fun!" To create the perfect exercise program for you, start by using your critical thinking skills to make two lists. The first list will answer the question "Why don't I exercise?" and the second list will focus on "Why do I like to exercise?" After reviewing the lists, act on your opportunities.

The first step in developing a realistic fitness plan is to first have a fitness assessment. Exercise and diet are essential parts of achieving health-related fitness. Health-related fitness consists of five components: strength, muscle endurance, cardiorespiratory or cardiovascular endurance, flexibility, and body composition. Strength is your muscle's maximum ability, while muscle endurance is how long your muscles can perform a task. Cardiorespiratory or cardiovascular endurance is the body's ability to supply oxygen to working muscles, especially during aerobic exercises such as walking, biking, swimming, and dancing that work most of the body. Flexibility helps redistribute blood after bouts of exercise and stretch and loosen muscles and joints. Body composition is body fat percentage.

I also recommend goal setting strategies and positive self-talk, like "Today I will... Yes, I can..." Eating healthy food and following a balanced diet is critical to achieving fitness. You should ensure you consume the right nutrients, including a balance of carbohydrates, protein, fat, water, minerals, and vitamins, through making good food choices and having a food plan. ♦

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UNNAMED PAIN: Coping with ambiguous grief

The death of a loved one can be among the most distressing experiences people face. It's a clear loss with expected and validated feelings of grief and sadness. Many times, however, people can feel significant loss when there isn't a death. It can be more difficult to recognize and validate these emotions.

Ambiguous grief is a person's profound sense of loss and sadness that is not associated with a death of a loved one. It can be a loss of emotional connection when a person's physical presence remains, or when that emotional connection remains but a physical connection is lost. Often, there isn't a sense of closure.

Ambiguous grief can feel lonely, stressful and confusing. Your feelings need to be validated and the significance of the experience recognized. However, there's often no formal recognition from others that a loss has occurred — or if others do acknowledge it, they show no recognition that it is of any major significance. You may have intense sorrow, numbness, bitterness, persistent longing, pain, rumination, guilt and anger.

Types of ambiguous grief

Grief is complicated and complex. Ambiguous grief is no exception.

Many scenarios could generate feelings of ambiguous grief, which usually fall into one of these general categories:

Goodbye without leaving

This happens when the person you are grieving is physically alive but not emotionally or relationally part of your life. Examples include divorce, estrangement, incarceration, relocating to a new country or a chronic illness like dementia.

The relationship you had with the person is over or substantially changed. This can result from your decisions or be a situation entirely outside of your control.

A couple in conflict is a common situation where someone might experience ambiguous grief. A partner may say, "I want the person he or she used to be." A similar sentiment is shared by a caregiver for someone with memory loss, who yearns for the relationship before their loved one's dementia progressed. In these cases, the wanted person is no longer available, leading to significant loss and grief.

Leaving without a goodbye

You may grieve a person who is physically gone under circumstances where you are unsure if they are dead or alive. For example, the person may have an addiction that leads to abandonment or a missing person scenario. These situations are difficult because you aren't able to say your farewells. There may not be a traditional funeral or another mourning period, which can lead to a lack of closure. This grief also is experienced by children when a parent leaves the family due to a divorce.

Situational goodbye

Sometimes, feelings of ambiguous grief aren't due to a relationship change but occur because of other losses. These situations could affect you personally or occur elsewhere but cause significant grief in your life. This could include the COVID-19 pandemic, a change in future plans, natural disasters, political unrest or a loss of financial or personal security.

Ambiguous grief coping tips

People follow different paths through the grieving experience. There's no right or wrong way to grieve. There are no specific phases. It's rarely a linear path and instead has ups and downs and moves forward and back.

Remember these coping tips as you navigate your ambiguous grief journey:

Identify your grief.

It's important to validate your ambiguous grief. One way to do this is to write down everything in your life that has changed or will change due to your loss. Nothing is too small to include. Don't minimize your list, as that can short-circuit your grief. A list for a parental estrangement may include wedding dress shopping together, sending Mother's Day cards or holiday gifts, having inside jokes and more. The list for an incarcerated loved one may include lost holidays and milestones, vacations, daily conversations and physical intimacy. The list for a loved one suffering from dementia may include planned trips, sharing holidays, living in the same place and shared memories. When you are done with your list, share it with a trusted friend, family member or mental health counselor.

Recognize multiple emotions.

During the grieving process, many people experience multiple emotions simultaneously. You can feel relieved to have your divorce finalized but saddened over the loss of the future you

continued next page

envisioned. A loved one's dementia diagnosis can make you distressed, even as you welcome the opportunity to spend more quality time together and continue to visit often.

Don't compare.

It's impossible to compare grief because people aren't simple or the same. There are many variables or contributing factors that are more or less important to each person. It's not helpful to minimize your grief because your situation doesn't include death.

Remember that grieving can compound as well. For example, a person could be moving a child to college, caring for an ill family member and coming to terms with an estranged loved one. Separately, these situations may be manageable, but when they happen simultaneously, the person could struggle with deep feelings of ambiguous grief.



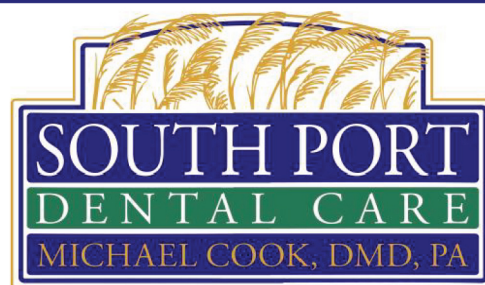
Consider ceremonies.

When there is a physical death, it's common for the community to gather to pay tribute to the lost person and lend support to those grieving. Traditions vary, but there is usually a memorial service, sharing of meals and retelling of happy memories. While full closure may not be possible with ambiguous grief, ceremonial activities can provide therapeutic benefits. You could write a letter to the person, plant a tree, donate money or time, host a remembrance ceremony or do other meaningful activities. A mental health counselor can help you find a creative way to process your loss through such ceremonies.

Seek support.

People aren't meant to carry their grief alone. Most need others to help them work through their feelings and move forward. Family members, friends, social support groups and your faith community are good resources to help you work through your grief. You may be able to find a support group focused on a particular type of ambiguous grief, such as divorce, estrangement, addiction or missing persons. Professional counseling can help you explore your emotions and develop healthy coping skills.

Feelings of loss and sadness due to ambiguous grief are valid. Talk with a professional mental health counselor if you have intense grief, anxiety or trouble performing daily tasks. There's nothing wrong with your reactions or emotions, but a counselor can help you live more freely. ♦



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DENISE CINTRON

Owner of Artistic Closets

Hi Denise, please give us a brief introduction about yourself and when and why you came to Treasure Coast.

My name is Denise Cintron, owner of Artistic Closets Inc. I am originally from New Jersey and moved to Florida in 1992. We owned a custom closet business in New Jersey for 5 years prior to our move to the Treasure Coast in 1992. We had decided on Florida to raise our future family, better our life, and to enjoy a little piece of paradise the Treasure Coast had to offer. Of course, not having to be in the cold winter weather was a big plus. We started Artistic Closets Inc. in 1992 as the area was beginning to grow. Our company is now the Treasure Coast's #1 custom closet and cabinetry company today for products, installation and service.

Tell us a little about your family.

I am very blessed with a 27 yr old daughter married to my wonderful son-n-law, a 2 year old grandbaby girl and another grandbaby girl on the way! Being a grandmother has brought more joy than I could have ever imagined. I cherish spending time with them. When you stop by one of our showrooms ask for Mema DD.

My beautiful elderly Mom lives close by along with the rest of our family. We stay close to each other and understand in life it's the little things that truly matter.

What do you love about what you do?

I love meeting with new clients whether it be at their home or in one of our showrooms. I enjoy getting to know them and giving new insights on how they can create more space with proper organizational planning that is both aesthetically pleasing and functional. In meeting with new clients, I sometimes feel as if I have traveled the world. I enjoy hearing their travel adventures, and life stories while getting to know them on a more personal level.

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

Artistic Closets Inc. has been organizing homes and businesses for over 31 years. During these years, it has given us and our team great pleasure in knowing we made a difference in another person's life. We have had clients with handicaps and installed pull-down rod systems for their convenience. We've seen the panic in some of our elderly clients of having to move and we do our best to take the stress away and ease their transition. We assess their needs and design a plan that works for them individually. We handle the project from start to finish, installing it in only one day. This leaves the customer with peace of mind and a place for everything. Our favorite moment is the big smile and most often the phone call we receive letting us know how much they love our work. Our priorities have always been customer service, the quality of our products installed, and adhering to our company code of ethics.

What are your future plans?

Our future and present plans are to stay innovative in keeping up with the trends in home improvement continuing to meet the various needs of our client base in products and customer service.





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What is your philosophy on business and life?

Our business philosophy is to provide our clients with the highest quality of products and craftsmanship along with exceptional customer service from the start of the project through completion. We also believe in providing our team with a family oriented work environment where each person is supported and motivated to succeed. In life we believe in doing everything with a good heart, and we wouldn't want to do it any other way.

What is your best advice to the community?

We encourage clients to hire local and use a company that manufacturers. To be careful of sales gimmicks such as large coupon discounts. Clients should receive competitive and fair pricing from the start of the project. Be sure to compare apples to apples design plans and pricing will vary depending on what is designed in your space. Material thicknesses should be no less than 3/4" furniture grade scratch resistant. If you are looking for the least expensive company using subpar materials 5/8" we would not be the right fit. We stand behind all our products and installations. ♦

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Unlocking Inner Peace:

The Powerful Benefits of Meditation

In today's fast-paced world, where stress and anxiety seem to be ever-present, finding ways to calm the mind and relax the body has become more crucial than ever. One practice that has gained widespread popularity for its numerous mental, emotional, and physical benefits is meditation. Meditation is a simple yet powerful technique that involves training the mind to focus and cultivate a state of deep relaxation and awareness. With regular practice, meditation can unlock inner peace and transform your life in many ways. In this blog post, we will explore some of the incredible benefits of meditation and how it can enhance your overall well-being.

- **Reduced Stress and Anxiety:** In a world filled with constant demands and pressures, stress and anxiety have become prevalent. Meditation has been proven to be an effective tool for reducing stress and anxiety by activating the relaxation response in the body. By quieting the mind and releasing tension from the body, meditation helps to lower the levels of stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline, resulting in a sense of calm and tranquility.

- **Improved Mental Clarity and Focus:** Our minds are constantly bombarded with thoughts, distractions, and information overload, which can leave us feeling scattered and overwhelmed. Regular meditation practice helps to sharpen the mind, increase mental clarity, and enhance focus. By training the mind to stay present and observe thoughts without judgment, meditation cultivates a heightened sense of awareness and concentration that can be applied to various aspects of life, such as work, studies, and relationships.

- **Enhanced Emotional Well-being:** Emotions play a significant role in our overall well-being, and meditation can help us develop a healthier relationship with our emotions. Through meditation, we learn to observe our thoughts and emotions without reacting to them, allowing us to respond to situations in a more thoughtful and balanced way. Meditation also promotes positive emotions such as compassion, gratitude, and loving-kindness, which can boost emotional resilience and foster a positive outlook on life.

- **Improved Physical Health:** The mind and body are intricately connected, and the benefits of meditation extend beyond mental and emotional well-being. Numerous studies have shown that meditation can have positive effects on physical health, including reducing blood pressure, boosting the immune system, improving sleep quality, and reducing inflammation. Meditation has also been found to alleviate symptoms of various health conditions such as chronic pain, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), and cardiovascular diseases.
- **Enhanced Self-awareness and Personal Growth:** Meditation is a powerful tool for self-reflection and self-awareness. Through regular practice, we learn to observe our thoughts, emotions, and patterns of behavior with a non-judgmental attitude, allowing us to gain insight into ourselves and our actions. This increased self-awareness can help us identify areas for personal growth and development, and make positive changes in our lives. Meditation also encourages self-compassion and self-acceptance, fostering a positive relationship with ourselves and promoting a healthy sense of self-esteem.

- **Better Relationships:** Our relationships with others play a significant role in our overall well-being, and meditation can enhance our interactions with others. By promoting mindfulness and compassion, meditation helps us develop better communication skills, empathy, and understanding towards others. It also fosters a sense of connection and intimacy with our loved ones, leading to healthier and more fulfilling relationships.

- **Increased Resilience and Coping Skills:** Life is full of challenges, and building resilience to cope with them is essential. Meditation helps us develop mental and emotional

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Summertime Care, Are You Staying Hydrated?

by PAULINE FORSHEE, RDN LDN
Joy Rising Nutrition
www.joyrisingnutrition.com

As summertime approaches, I am often asked how much water is enough water? My answer is, "It depends." Living in sunny Port Saint Lucie, we want to ensure we are staying well hydrated. If we are out in the sun less than one-hour plain water is our best source. Avoid pricey enhanced waters that contain minimal amounts of vitamins and minerals but contribute added sugars to our diets.

When we are in the sun for more than one-hour and sweating or performing a strenuous activity for greater than one-hour, in addition to water we should also replace our electrolytes. This is when a sports drink would be appropriate.

So, how do we know when enough is enough? A general rule of thumb for adults is 8 - 12 cups of water each day. This is the equivalent of 2-4 liters of water. This number will vary slightly from person to person. Additionally, as we age, we often lose the sense of thirst. I recommend to our seniors setting a reminder to drink 4 oz of fluid every thirty minutes this will help prevent dehydration.

What about our kiddos? An easy way to ensure our children remain well hydrated is 1 8-ounce glass of water per year of life. For example, if you have a four year they would need, on



average, 32 ounces (1 liter) of water daily. For children eight years and older they would require a minimum of 64 ounces (2 liters) each day.

Finally, additional sources of thirst-quenching hydration include 100% fruit or vegetable juices, milks, melons, popsicles, Jell-O, and brothy soups. Pour yourself a refreshing glass of hydration today and step outside to enjoy our beautiful Port Saint Lucie surroundings! ♦



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I am unashamedly a Christian that uses sound evidence based research along with the Bible to inspire, motivate, and empower change. I am a registered dietitian nutritionist and hold a degree in Early Education and a Bachelor of Science in the field of Dietetics and Nutrition. I have taught internationally and have been the keynote speaker at conferences, seminars, and retreats. As a former missionary, pastor's wife, and church leader, I know first hand the pressures of self-induced perfectionism. I joyfully call myself a "recovering perfectionist." God isn't finished with me yet and He isn't finished creating a joyful life for you either!



W. Pauline Forshee, RDN, LDN

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But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. - Isaiah 40:31

anti-aging foods cont.

concentration of school children who have been given Omega-3 supplements. Parents are now being advised to make sure their children have adequate Omega-3 in their diets.

Garlic

For centuries garlic has been renowned for its healing properties. It is also a powerful antioxidant, and is considered one of the best natural remedies for colds and 'flu. Garlic has also been shown to help reduce high cholesterol levels. For best results, eat garlic raw, if you dare! Failing that, use freely in cooking..

Brazil Nuts

Brazil nuts are considered high in fat, but this is unsaturated fat, considered to be the "good" fat. They are an excellent source of the antioxidant selenium, which neutralizes free radicals in the body. Just two or three brazil nuts a day will provide you with adequate levels of selenium.

Avocado

Another superfood considered to be high in fat, but again, we are talking about the beneficial monounsaturated fat. Nutritionally, avocados are almost a complete meal in themselves, containing high levels of many vitamins, especially vitamins E and C.

Olive Oil

Favorite anti-aging ingredient of the Mediterranean diet which has proved to be so beneficial in improving blood vessel function,

and maintaining a healthy heart. It is rich in monounsaturated fats which help lower cholesterol levels. Recently it has been found that extra virgin olive oil contains an anti-inflammatory compound, which may help people with arthritis. Use freely as a salad dressing and in cooking.

Honey

Honey, like garlic, has been a superfood before the term had even been invented! Has powerful antibacterial and healing properties. Manuka honey, a specialist honey from bees that feed on the flowers of the manuka tree has been found to be effective as a topical dressing in the treatment of wounds and infections. It has been used to cure difficult wounds like leg ulcers when conventional treatment has failed.

Bananas

A meal in a skin! Exceptionally high in minerals, bananas provide potassium, and good carbohydrates. They are the chosen snack for athletes and anyone engaging in vigorous physical activity as they help to maintain energy levels.

Try to include at least some of these anti-ageing superfoods in your diet, and you and your health will certainly benefit. ♦

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inner peace cont.

resilience by training us to stay present, observe our thoughts and emotions without judgment, and respond to situations in a more thoughtful and balanced way. This increased resilience enables us to navigate through difficult times with grace and equanimity, and bounce back from setbacks with greater strength and clarity.

Meditation is a powerful practice that offers a wide range of benefits for our overall well-being. From reducing stress and anxiety to improving mental clarity, emotional well-being, physical health, and relationships, meditation has a transformative impact on our lives. It is a tool that can be easily incorporated into our daily routine, and with regular practice, it can unlock inner peace and help us lead a more mindful, balanced, and fulfilling life.



Getting Started

Getting started with meditation is simple. You can begin with just a few minutes of daily practice and gradually increase the duration as you become more comfortable. There are various meditation techniques to choose from, such as mindfulness meditation, loving-kindness meditation, body scan meditation, and many more. You can experiment with different techniques to find the one that resonates with you the most.

To start meditating, find a quiet and comfortable space, sit in a relaxed posture, close your eyes, and bring your attention to your breath or a chosen focal point. As thoughts arise, simply observe them without judgment and gently bring your focus back to your breath or focal point. Over time, with consistent practice, you will notice the benefits of meditation manifesting in your daily life.

Incorporating meditation into your routine can be a game-changer. It can help you manage stress, improve your mental and emotional well-being, boost your physical health, and enhance your relationships. It can also foster personal growth, self-awareness, and resilience, empowering you to navigate life's challenges with grace and equanimity.

So, why wait? Start unlocking the incredible benefits of meditation today and experience the profound positive impact it can have on your mind, body, and soul. Take a few moments each day to quiet your mind, connect with your inner self, and cultivate a state of deep relaxation and awareness. Your well-being deserves it, and you deserve the peace and clarity that meditation can bring. Begin your meditation journey and unlock the power of inner peace in your life! ♦



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Many people think retirement age is the time to relax and live the good life. This is the case for some, but not all. Seniors are living longer and traditional models of work and retirement have not kept pace with inflation. Those who have worked their entire lives have found themselves facing 2008 financial crisis where many lost half of their retirement, or more. Some were never really able to recover before COVID-19 hit in spring of 2020 when a second financial hit occurred to many seniors IRA accounts.

In addition to the financial struggle mobility is a very real issue for our seniors. Everyday objects, homes and communities not originally designed with longevity in mind often become obstacles to movement, safety, independence and socializing. Remaining safe and mobile are top priorities for older adults.

The health care journey can be particularly complex and fragmented for older adults, two-thirds of whom have at least two chronic conditions. This adds a second layer of financial hardship for seniors who pay excessive costs in medication and treatments. ♦



What you may not know...

Over the past century in the United States alone, the proportion of persons aged 65 years or older increased more than threefold, from 4.1% to 12.9%. According to a 2018 U.S. Census Bureau report, in 2035 “there will be 78.0 million people 65 years and older compared to 76.4 million under the age of 18.” This is estimated to account for 20% of the population. Is the medical community prepared for this? Are these people even going to be able to afford medical care with the ever increasing costs?

According to a Statement from the National Senior Citizens Law Center, poverty among older adults disproportionately impacts women, especially women of color, with twice as many older women as men living in poverty in 2012. Poverty rates were even higher for black (21.2%), Hispanic (21.8%) and Native American (27.1%) women 65 and older. Over 25 million American senior citizens are living at or below 250% of the federal poverty level (\$29,425 per year for a single person). The elderly struggle with rising housing and health care bills, inadequate nutrition, lack of access to transportation, diminished savings, and job loss.

It's no secret that we have a medical epidemic in this country, especially for seniors. Approximately 80% of senior citizens have at least one chronic disease, and 77% have at least two. Having four chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes—statistically cause almost two-thirds of all deaths each year. According to an article on CNBC—“A 65-year-old couple in good health will need \$387,644 to pay for health-care costs for the remainder of their lives, according to HealthView Services, a provider of health-care cost projection software.”

Now More Than Ever, Your Help Is Needed!

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WANT TO LIVE TO 100?

It's all in the Genes

New research suggests that your life choices might not be the crucial factor in determining whether you make it to 95 or beyond; it finds that many extremely old people appear to have been as bad as everyone else at indulging in poor health habits during their younger years.

Of course, don't take this as an excuse to blow off the gym and enjoy a steak dinner with fries and a cigarette. Your lifestyle matters. But genes seem to provide an extra boost to those who end up living the longest, said Dr. Jill P. Crandall, a professor of clinical medicine at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and co-author of a new study on longevity.

"The genetic component that allows people to survive into extreme old age is probably a very powerful one," she said, even counteracting the effects of unhealthy lifestyle choices.

The study focuses on the genes of extremely old people, who are a hot topic in anti-aging research. "When there is going to be a breakthrough that allows us to slow biological aging, it's probably going to come from the genetics of these people," said S. Jay Olshansky, a professor of epidemiology at the University of Illinois at Chicago who studies aging.

The study authors interviewed people living independently at ages 95 to 109, and asked them to recall things such as their weight, height, alcohol consumption, smoking and their physical activity at age 70; they were also asked whether they ate a low-calorie, low-fat or low-salt diet at that age. All the subjects were Ashkenazi Jews, who share a similar genetic heritage.

The researchers then compared the responses to those from a group of 3,164 people who took part in a survey in the 1970s. At the time, they were at about the same ages as the elderly subjects who appear in the new study.

In essence, the researchers wanted to know whether today's elderly people acted any differently back around age 70 than people in general. Were they healthier? Did they smoke less and exercise more?

The answer: Not really. "We found that our centenarians by and large did not adhere to any specific healthful diet more than the other population did," Crandall said. It was the same for smoking and exercise. Only 43 percent of men aged 95 and older, for example, reported engaging in regular exercise of moderate intensity, compared with 57 percent of men in the comparison group.

However, there was one interesting difference. Researchers found that although men and women aged 95 and older were just as likely to be overweight as their counterparts in the general population, the centenarians were significantly less likely to become obese.

It's not clear if the extremely old people in the study continued to indulge in bad habits such as smoking. When the elders were asked why they thought they had been able to live so long, most (apparently correctly) did not single out lifestyle factors. One-third reported a history of family longevity, while 20 percent believed that physical activity also played a role in their long life. Others attributed a positive attitude (19 percent), a busy or active life (12 percent), less smoking and drinking (15 percent), good luck (8 percent), and religion or spirituality (6 percent) to their centenarian status.

Although lifestyle factors did not appear to greatly influence the centenarians' longevity, the researchers stressed that people not blessed with longevity genes should definitely watch their weight, avoiding smoking and exercise regularly -- all things associated with a longer life span.

Olshansky said the findings underscore the importance of genetics to life span. "The only way anyone has any chance at all of living an exceptionally long life is if they won the genetic lottery at birth," he said.

But, he said, your choices about health can do one thing: lead you to the grave earlier than otherwise. "The only control we have over our duration of life is to shorten it. We exercise that control all the time." ♦

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8 Benefits of Tai Chi for Fitness



Tai Chi is a Chinese martial art often practiced for its health benefits. The practice involves slow, graceful movements coordinated with deep breathing and mental focus. While Tai Chi is often seen as a form of meditation or relaxation, it can also be a great exercise that can improve your fitness in several ways. In this article, we'll explore the eight benefits of Tai Chi for fitness.

Improved Balance and Stability

Tai Chi involves a lot of movement that requires you to shift your weight from one foot to the other. This can help improve your balance and stability, which is especially important for older adults who are at risk of falls.

Increased Flexibility

Tai Chi involves a lot of stretching and reaching movements, which can help improve your flexibility. This is important for maintaining mobility as you age and for preventing injury during exercise or other activities.

Strengthened Muscles

While Tai Chi is a low-impact exercise, it still requires using your muscles. The slow, controlled movements can help strengthen your muscles, especially in your legs and core.

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Improved Cardiovascular

Health While Tai Chi may not be as intense as other forms of cardio exercise, it can still provide cardiovascular benefits. The deep breathing and slow movements can help improve circulation, lower blood pressure, and reduce stress.

Reduced Stress and Anxiety

Tai Chi is often practiced as a form of meditation or relaxation, which can help reduce stress and anxiety. The slow, controlled movements can also help promote mindfulness and improve mental focus.

Improved Posture

Tai Chi requires you to maintain good posture throughout the practice, which can help improve your posture over time. In addition, this can help reduce pain and discomfort in your back, neck, and shoulders.

Increased Energy and Stamina

While Tai Chi may not leave you sweating and out of breath like other forms of exercise, it can still help increase your energy and stamina. The deep breathing and slow movements can help boost your energy levels and improve your endurance.

Low Impact Exercise

Tai Chi is a low-impact exercise, which means it is gentle on your joints and muscles. This makes it a great option for people with arthritis or other joint conditions and for older adults who may be more prone to injury.

Overall, Tai Chi is a great form of exercise that can provide a wide range of benefits for your fitness and overall health. Whether you want to improve your balance, flexibility, strength, and cardiovascular health or simply reduce stress, Tai Chi can be a great addition to your fitness routine. ♦



For classes on Tai Chi please visit the following websites to find one in your area:

- www.pslbg.org/tai-chi-at-the-gardens
- www.ladytaichi.com
- www.masterchenwellness.com
- www.internalartsinstitute.com
- www.vbka.com
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Summer is around the corner, and it's shaping up to be a scorcher.

According to the Farmers' Almanac's summer 2023 forecast, most regions in the United States can expect warmer-than-average temperatures. Thunderstorms are also on tap for the Southeast and south Central regions of the country, and heavy rainfall is expected in the Central states.

Kiplinger talked to home experts on how to prepare your home for this summer's weather conditions.

1. Tune up your HVAC system

An inefficient HVAC system can drive up your summer cooling costs. Mallory Micetich, home expert at Angi, tells Kiplinger she recommends hiring a professional HVAC technician to service your system before summer begins to ensure it will run smoothly during the hot-weather months. According to Angi data, a tune-up costs an average of \$150 — less than half of the cost of the average HVAC repair bill.

2. Change HVAC air filters

"A clean HVAC filter can reduce allergens in your home and help your HVAC system run easier," Micetich says. For best results, she suggests changing your HVAC filter at least once every three months.

3. Rotate ceiling fans counterclockwise

When used properly, a ceiling fan can help keep a room cool. In the summer, you should set your ceiling fans to rotate counterclockwise. "This will help circulate cool air and push it down into your room, creating a cooling effect throughout," Kate McKenna, a senior editor at home improvement website The Spruce, tells Kiplinger.

4. Plug air leaks

A poorly insulated house can jack up your utility bill, but you can combat it with a combination of air sealing and proper insulation. Check your home's attic, windows, and exterior doors for gaps, and seal them before the summer months to help keep conditioned air inside your home.

Bonus: Adding insulation also means you'll save money in the winter by keeping warm air inside your house. Indeed, homeowners can save an average of 15% on heating and cooling costs by air sealing their homes and adding insulation in their attic, floors over crawl spaces, and basements, the EPA estimates.

5. Program your lawn sprinkler system

Your lawn may need some extra hydration to sustain long, hot summer days. "A professional can help make sure your sprinklers are functioning with proper rotation and power and you're not over-watering your lawn, as many homeowners are guilty of doing," says David Steckel, home expert at home services website Thumbtack.

For best results, Micetich suggests running your sprinklers in the evening or early morning to avoid the hottest part of the day.

6. Aerate your lawn

Aeration entails making small holes in your yard to allow for better water penetration, helping the soil breathe and soak up nutrients. You can do the task yourself by renting a core aerator from a local home improvement store, or hire a professional aeration service. Depending on the size of your lawn, aeration typically costs between \$75 and \$203, according to HomeAdvisor data.

7. Deep clean your outdoor grill

Cookouts are synonymous with summer, so make sure your grill is ready for barbecuing. If you have a gas grill, first scrub the grates with a grill brush and then soak them in a mixture of 2 cups of vinegar and 1 cup of baking soda. Dust off any cobwebs from your grill, which can cause a flare-up if they ignite, and clean the outside of the lid and bowl with soap and water.

Cleaning methods can vary based on the type of grill you own. Home Depot provides step-by-step cleaning guides for gas, charcoal, and pellet grills.

8. Clear out gutters

Heavy rainfall can spell disaster if your gutters are clogged. Clearing out dirt and debris can help prevent water backups. "This is a project that really should be left to the professionals, as it can be dangerous for the inexperienced and can also cause damage to your home if done incorrectly," Steckel says.

A professional gutter cleaning costs between \$119 and \$228 on average, HomeAdvisor reports. (Gutter cleaning for two- and three-story homes tends to cost more than single-story homes.)

9. Keep indoor humidity in check

Generally, your home's indoor humidity level should stay around 40% to 50% in the summer months. Humidity levels of 60% or higher can lead to mold and dust mites, according to the EPA. If necessary, purchase a dehumidifier to draw excess moisture from the air.

10. Consider getting flood insurance

Floods can happen anywhere. In fact, more than 25% of flood insurance claims are filed by people who live outside high-risk flood areas, according to FEMA. However, flooding isn't covered by most standard home insurance policies.

You can purchase flood insurance coverage through the National Flood Insurance Program. Nationally, the average annual flood insurance premium is \$700, FEMA reports; rates for homes in areas with low-to-moderate risk of floods typically cost \$400 to \$500 per year. That's a worthwhile investment when you consider that the average NFIP insurance claim is over \$32,000. ♦

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Using The 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.

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 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 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.

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.

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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Romans 10:9-10 ♦

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