

INTERNATIONAL

Reader's

digest

FEBRUARY 2018

How to Be

Heart Healthy

**36 Things Doctors
Do to Protect Their Hearts**

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EUROPEAN OF THE YEAR

**Empowering Mothers to
Fight Extremism**

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ILLUSTRATION BY ANJA JAVELONA. PHOTO BY MARKUS HINTZEN



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Reader's digest

INTERNATIONAL

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LET US KNOW if you are moved—or provoked—by any item in the magazine. Share your thoughts by sending an email to:

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Editor's Note

Heroes Among Us

 **IT'S SAD AND SHOCKING** that more than 4,000 young Muslims left Europe to fight in Syria and Iraq. Jihadi recruiters continue to corrupt Europe's alienated, jobless youth, often enlisting them in terrorist attacks. Austrian Edit Schlaffer recognizes that mothers worldwide are the front line. She has developed a program to equip them to build their children's resilience against recruitment and to intervene effectively if they do recognize signs of radicalization.

For her dedication to this important work, Reader's Digest has selected her as its European of the Year award winner. Schlaffer, the 23rd European to receive this annual award, joins an exclusive group whose extraordinary work has made the world a better place. Read more about Edit Schlaffer in "Mother Power."

Heroism comes in many forms. Geri Taylor is engaged in a life-or-death struggle too. A former nurse with experience with Alzheimer patients, she knew what was in store for her when she was diagnosed. But instead of giving in, she found a new purpose in life. Read her uplifting story in "Waiting for Alzheimer's."

It's part of Reader's Digest's mission to give readers the latest news and experts' top advice on the big health challenges. In this issue, we canvassed cardiologists and other doctors for "36 Things Doctors Do to Protect Their Hearts."

You'll find lots more in this issue to inspire and even amaze you. Happy reading!

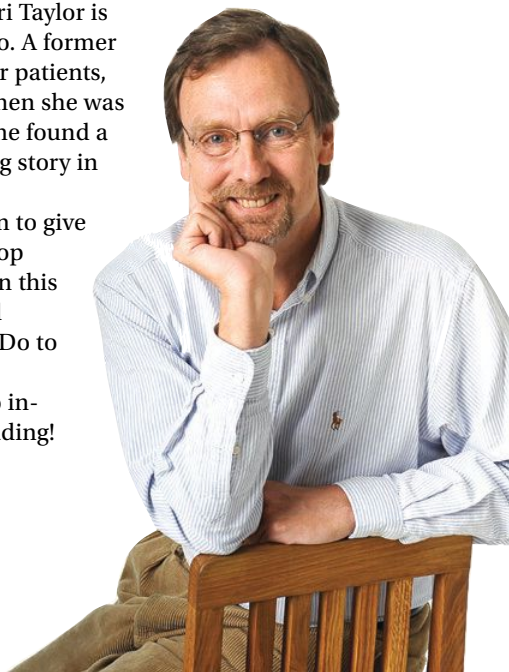




PHOTO: © YARVIN WORLD/LOUENEYS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

A close-up photograph of several curved, textured objects, possibly made of wood or stone, painted in vibrant colors like blue, green, yellow, orange, and red. The surfaces are highly detailed with intricate patterns and textures, suggesting a traditional craft or artistic style. The objects are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement.

SEE

THE WORLD ...

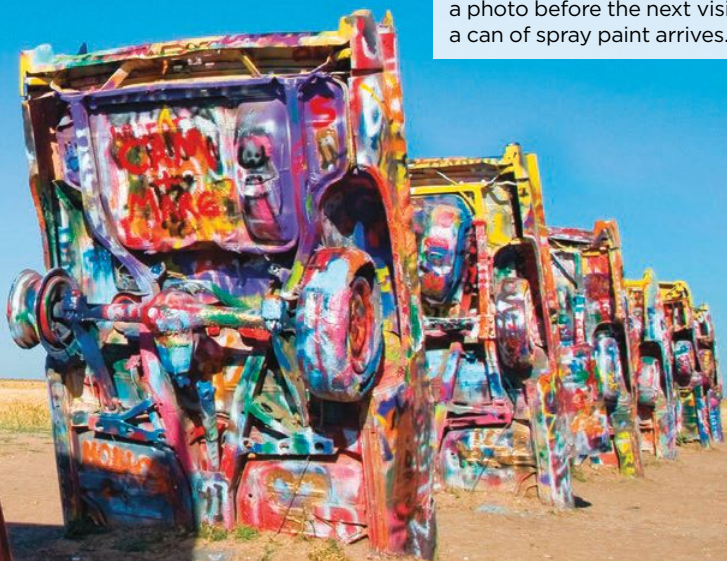
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Turn the page ➤➔



PHOTO: © HUGH HARGRAVE/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

... DIFFERENTLY

The *Cadillac Ranch* in Texas, directly on famed *Route 66*, offers an interactive art installation with ten garishly painted, half-buried luxury cruisers from a bygone era. A group of artists who called themselves *Ant Farm* realized this extraordinary concept in 1974 as a celebration of the stylistic development of America's beloved luxury car, the Cadillac. It has not only allowed but encouraged visitors to use spray paint to leave their marks on these dormant dinosaurs—but beware, whoever wants their contribution to endure had better take a photo before the next visitor with a can of spray paint arrives.



Some allegedly healthy habits may not be so helpful after all. Here are six you can stop right now.

Empty Promises

BY CHARLOTTE HILTON ANDERSEN



CALCIUM SUPPLEMENTS

“A recent analysis performed by researchers at Johns Hopkins Medicine, Maryland U.S. suggests that although a diet high in calcium-rich foods appears to be protective, taking calcium in the form of sup-

plements may be associated with increased risk of plaque buildup in the arteries. Bottom line: Eat calcium-rich foods such as dairy products and leafy greens and skip the pills.”

ANDREW D. ATIEMO, MD, FACC,
a cardiologist in Flagstaff, Arizona

ORGANIC JUICING

“Juicing has an undeserved health halo. Sure, you can drink your vitamins and minerals, but you also get a lot of sugar. The worst aspect of juicing is that it strips fruits and vegetables of their fiber, which mediates blood sugar response, contributes to satiety, and promotes bowel regularity. Just eat the produce.”

EMILY BRAATEN, MS, RD, LD, a registered dietitian in Washington, DC

DAILY MULTIVITAMINS

“People in the United States spend about \$6 billion per year on vitamins. Virtually all of that money is wasted, since there’s growing evidence that these additions to our diet are not effective in preventing chronic disease and may be harmful if taken in large doses. Foods contain trace elements and fiber that supplements don’t have, so try to maintain a healthy diet and eat your fruits, vegetables, and dairy products rather than taking supplements.”

STEVEN J. HAUSMAN, PHD, former research scientist for the National Institutes of Health and president of Hausman Technology Presentations

WASHING YOUR FACE TWICE A DAY

“This is standard skin-care advice, but it doesn’t work for everyone. If you have very oily skin, then yes, you can probably wash your face twice a day. If you have dry skin, however,

washing your face twice daily may dry it out even more. People should keep in mind that there is such a thing as over-washing your face, and twice a day isn’t the magic number for everyone. The one time you should definitely wash it, however, is after a workout.”

ALAN J. PARKS, MD, dermatologist and cofounder of DermWarehouse

ANTIBACTERIAL SOAP

“Using antibacterial soaps may increase the risk of bacteria’s resistance to certain ingredients in those types of soap. The best way to clean your hands is with regular soap and water, making sure to clean in between your fingers.”

ROB DANOFF, DO, osteopathic family physician and program director of the Family Practice/Emergency Medicine Residency programs at Aria-Jefferson Health

STATIONARY STRETCHES

“Static stretching before exercise was once thought to be important for preventing injury and increasing performance. However, new research has not proven it to decrease injury, and it may actually decrease muscle force. Dynamic stretching, in which you stretch muscles through controlled movements, is a good alternative to loosen the body before exercise.” ■

NARESH C. RAO, DO, sports medicine specialist at Sports Medicine at Chelsea

It's part of your body's
defense system

Earwax Care Is Important

BY SAMANTHA RIDEOUT

*W*HILE IT MAY NOT BE one of your body's most attractive features, earwax (medical term: cerumen) is part of its natural defenses. Secreted by glands in your ear canals, it cleans and protects by trapping invading dirt and dust and preventing the growth of bacteria. Thanks in part to the motions of chewing and talking, older cerumen makes its way out of the ear, where it falls out or washes away, bringing germs and other foreign particles with it and making room for fresh wax.

Under normal circumstances, proper wax management boils down to letting this process happen

naturally. If wax is visible on your outer ear, you can gently clean it with a cloth.

However, you shouldn't try to remove it from the inside. Don't be tempted by the cylindrical shape of certain cotton swabs, since "putting anything in the ear risks, at best, pushing the wax back in or, at worst, damaging delicate skin," says Dr. Shakeel Saeed, a professor of otology and neuro-otology at the University College London Ear Institute in the U.K. You could even perforate your eardrum or dislocate the bones of your inner ear.

Your ear canal may become




obstructed by wax if the glands in your ears produce an excessive amount of wax (some just do), if your body can't manage to clear it out effectively or if you accidentally jam it in further during a misguided cleaning attempt. Symptoms of blockage can include earache, tinnitus, decreased hearing, dizziness or even coughing, since the buildup can push against nerves and trigger the cough reflex.

A doctor, who will have professional tools and methods, can achieve removal far more safely than you could. Another reason why it's

best to visit a GP: it may not be cerumen that is causing your symptoms but rather an infection, age-related hearing loss, an injury from pressure changes or one of many other problems.

If earwax blockage is a frequent occurrence, your doctor may recommend cleanings and/or the use of earwax-softening drops. Commercial formulas are available, but mineral oil or olive oil can also do the job. If a hearing aid is con-

tributing to your recurring problem, says Saeed, you can try "removing it several times per day for an hour or so, to see if that helps." 

Earwax
contains at least

10

antimicrobial
peptides that
fight off bacteria
and fungi.



TEST YOUR MEDICAL IQ

Mycotoxins are...

- A. toxic mushrooms.
- B. harmful compounds produced by molds.
- C. poisons that are impossible to detect with medical testing.
- D. pollutants created by burning electronics.

Answer: B. "Mycotoxins" is the term for small mold molecules that are harmful to human health. Travelers in developing countries risk exposure through contaminated foods such as corn and rice. In the European Union, levels in food are regulated and people are less likely to get poisoned by mycotoxins by eating them. However, indoor airborne mycotoxins can still contribute to illness.



NEWS FROM THE

World of Medicine

BY SAMANTHA RIDEOUT

Bedbugs Spread Via Travelers' Laundry

Bedbugs have proliferated across the globe in recent years. While they don't carry disease, their bites are uncomfortable and can trigger allergic reactions. An experiment from the University of Sheffield in the U.K. suggests that the pests travel on dirty laundry found in hotel rooms.

Researchers left out eight sets of clothing—four clean and four with a few hours' wear—and released bedbugs nearby. Most of them flocked to the sullied laundry, suggesting that mere traces of human body odor are enough to attract them.

Dancing Helps Slow Brain Aging

Physical activity is shown to temper the effects of aging on the brain, but are some types of exercise better than others? German researchers compared an endurance and flexibility program (cycling, Nordic walking, stretching) to a dance course (which included jazz and salsa). After 18

weeks, people in both programs gained volume in the hippocampus, a brain region related to memory and balance and prone to age-related decline. But only the dancing group showed a measurable improvement in balance. Extra challenges, such as learning steps and adapting to changing rhythms, likely account for the extra benefits.

Eating Nuts Can Help Reduce Weight Gain

Conventional wisdom has it that nuts, which are high in fat and energy, aren't useful for people who are concerned about their weight. However, in a recent *European Journal of Nutrition* observational study of more than 373,000 subjects, those who ate the most nuts (including peanuts, which are technically legumes) gained fewer kilos over five years compared to nut-abstainers. They also had a five percent lower chance of becoming overweight or obese. Nuts are very filling, one of the authors observed, and can substitute for animal products in a meal. 



Medical Mystery

BY SYDNEY LONEY



PAPER ARTWORK BY KYLE BEAN; PHOTOGRAPHY BY MITCH PAYNE

THE PATIENT: Brett,* a 52-year-old factory worker

THE SYMPTOMS: Debilitating back pain and unexplained weight loss

THE DOCTOR: Dr. Herbert Ho Ping Kong, Osler Professor of Expert Medical Practice at the University Health Network in Toronto

IT ALL STARTED WITH a bad back in the fall of 2014. At first, Brett dismissed it as a side effect of his physically demanding job in an auto plant. But two weeks later, when the pain got worse, he went to his family doctor in Brampton, Ontario, Canada, who sent him to a physician at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). The doctor there confirmed Brett's suspicions—he was getting older and doing too much heavy

lifting. He was told to rest and take painkillers.

But then Brett began losing weight, and his back pain got worse. A different general practitioner referred him to an orthopaedic surgeon. X-rays revealed nothing amiss, so Brett was sent home with more medication. By now it had been three months, and the pain was so intense he could no longer work.

He tried a third doctor, who discovered blood in Brett's urine and referred him to a nephrologist. Concerned he might have a tumor, the doctor called for a cystoscopy (in which a camera is inserted through the urethra to the bladder to look for signs of cancer), but the results were negative.

Brett did, however, test positive for IgA, a relatively benign disease that occurs when the antibody immuno-

*Name changed to protect patient privacy

globulin A lodges in the kidneys, causing inflammation and, in some cases, resulting in blood in the urine. The doctor told Brett to manage his blood pressure and cut back on cholesterol, which would help protect his kidneys and slow the progression of the disease, which can't be cured.

But IgA didn't explain the back pain. Now, six months into his ordeal, Brett could hardly walk. He was also sweating profusely and had lost 30 pounds. Then one of his fingers turned black.

Brett then consulted a fourth doctor, who sent him to Toronto Western Hospital to see Dr. Herbert Ho Ping Kong, who's renowned for his skill in sorting out difficult diagnoses.

"If only someone had listened to his heart," says Ho Ping Kong. Within two minutes, the doctor was able to diagnose Brett with subacute endocarditis. "He would've been dead within three weeks," says Ho Ping Kong, who sees a case like this every couple of years; it's estimated that between two and six of every 100,000 people suffer from the condition.

Endocarditis is an infection of the inner lining of the heart that affects individuals who have diseased or damaged cardiac valves, such as those born with a congenital defect. (The doctor suspects Brett may have had

rheumatic heart disease.) Bacteria in the bloodstream travel to the heart and attach themselves to the damaged area, causing symptoms that include severe muscle pain, sweating, weight loss and blood in the urine.

Given the patient's history and symptoms, Ho Ping Kong knew as soon as he heard a heart murmur that it was endocarditis — and that they had to move fast. The blackened finger

was a sign of a septic embolism: infected tissue had broken off from the heart valve and lodged in the artery in his finger.

"It was an emergency," says Ho Ping Kong. "More pieces could break off and travel to his legs, his kidneys or his brain and cause a stroke."

Over the next week, the patient was given antibiotics and had cardiac surgery to replace the valve and prevent heart failure. Because the damage was extensive, he also needed a pacemaker. Although he couldn't lift as much as he used to, Brett was back at work within two months, pain-free.

"There are some cases where a clinical diagnosis is as good as any kind of CT scan or MRI," Ho Ping Kong says. "It's that combination of taking a complete medical history and a thorough physical exam—and you always have to listen to the heart." ■



Once he heard a heart murmur, the doctor knew it was endocarditis—and that they had to move fast.



Love 2.0

BY ANNE ROUMANOFF



ANNE ROUMANOFF is a well-known French humorist. She lives in Paris.

FEB. 2, 1980: How can I tell you the way I feel about you? I would like so much to get to know you better. Would it be possible for us to go out for a coffee together?

FEB. 2, 2017: hey, I adore u. want 2 mt 4 drnx?

FEB. 5, 1980: I loved our conversation, with your beautiful face turned toward mine. Tell me when you'd like to meet up next. I'd love to make you forget that man who made you suffer so much.

FEB. 5, 2017: wuz gr8 2 c u. 2 short. forget that guy who made u suffer. TBH he's a dork.

FEB. 7, 1980: Two days without hearing from you and I'm lost without you. Is it too bold of me to ask to see you again? Dare I hope that we might go out to dinner, just the two of us?

FEB. 7, 2017: Dinner 2nite? McDs or SBUX? ur choice!

FEB. 15, 1980: How I loved that night when our hungry, impatient bodies discovered each other. I am filled with wonder and feel like I'm floating on a cloud. When shall we see each other to explore paradise further?

FEB. 15, 2017: Ur kewl! Loved our nite. Seriously! Not kidding.

MAR. 1, 1980: I miss you, my love. Each day without you is like a tunnel without light.


Have I said or done something to upset you?

MAR. 1, 2017: Where r u? What u doing? Txt me! Y u not answer?

MAR. 5, 1980: Bliss to be back with you again after clearing up that misunderstanding. The woman was my cousin.

MAR. 5, 2017: That was my cousin. LOL. u r my only one.

MAR. 10, 1980: I think we should end things there. Your jealousy is wearing me down. I want my freedom back.

MAR. 10, 2017: Fed up of 3rd degree 24/7. Leaving u. Bye. 



Good News

SOME OF THE POSITIVE STORIES COMING OUR WAY

BY TIM HULSE

Norway Equalizes

SPORT While some sports, such as tennis and athletics, usually reward international male and female competitors equally, others have been slow to address the gender pay gap. And nowhere is this more true than in football. Top male stars earn millions, while leading female players receive a relative pittance.

But the Norwegian Football Association wants to change that. It has agreed to pay all its international players the same amount—with the men even making a financial sacrifice to help the women's team.

"Norway is a country where equal standing is very important for us, so I think it is good for the country and for the sport," says players' union chief Joachim Walltin. "It will



certainly make a difference. Some of the women's team (*pictured above*) have to hold down jobs as well as play football, and so then it's hard to improve."

Caroline Graham Hansen, a member of the women's team, saluted her male counterparts: "Thank you for taking this step for female athletes, and for making it a bit easier to chase our dreams," she said.

"It's a game-changer and will have a huge ripple effect throughout the world of fashion."

Kitty Block, president of Humane Society International, celebrates Italian fashion house Gucci's decision to become fur-free.


Chocolate Goes Pink

FOOD The romantically inclined celebrate Valentine's Day in many countries on the 14th of this month, and roses and chocolates will be much in evidence. But what if the chocolates could match the color of the roses? In future, this could be possible, because a Swiss cocoa processing company, Barry Callebaut, has invented and plans to market pink chocolate.

The new product is made from a special 'ruby' bean grown in Ivory Coast, Ecuador and Brazil and is said to be the first new natural color since the introduction of white chocolate

80 years ago. But chocaholics will have to wait before they get their first fix—the new ruby chocolate won't be available until later this year at the earliest.

A New View of Rome

HERITAGE The upper tiers of Rome's Colosseum have been opened to tourists for the first time in 40 years, following a major restoration. The guided tours of the fourth and fifth levels of the amphitheater, originally the cheap seating for spectators watching gladiatorial contests, now offers superlative views over the Italian capital. 



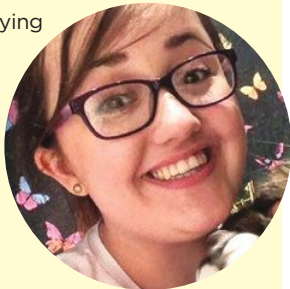
HEROES: NURSE SAVES LIFE AT 30,000 FEET

BRITISH NURSE Emma Channing (*pictured*) was flying back to London after a holiday in Mexico when an announcement was made: "Are there any qualified doctors or nurses on board?"

Channing made herself known, and was taken to a passenger suffering from breathing difficulties. "You could tell immediately it was serious," she says. "I have to admit to being a bit scared."

But Channing's nursing instincts took over. The man had suffered a broken rib on holiday and she realized he could be suffering from potentially fatal sepsis. She told the pilot they needed to land, and the plane diverted to Newfoundland, Canada, where paramedics were waiting on the runway to treat the man.

"You never expect something like that to happen to you on holiday," says Channing. "You just do everything you can."



The secret to a happy life is...

... secret.

BART PETERS
the Netherlands

... honesty,
family and friends.
Norway.

... to talk,
and compromise
PAUL VAN WOUW
België

... drink
plenty of
water

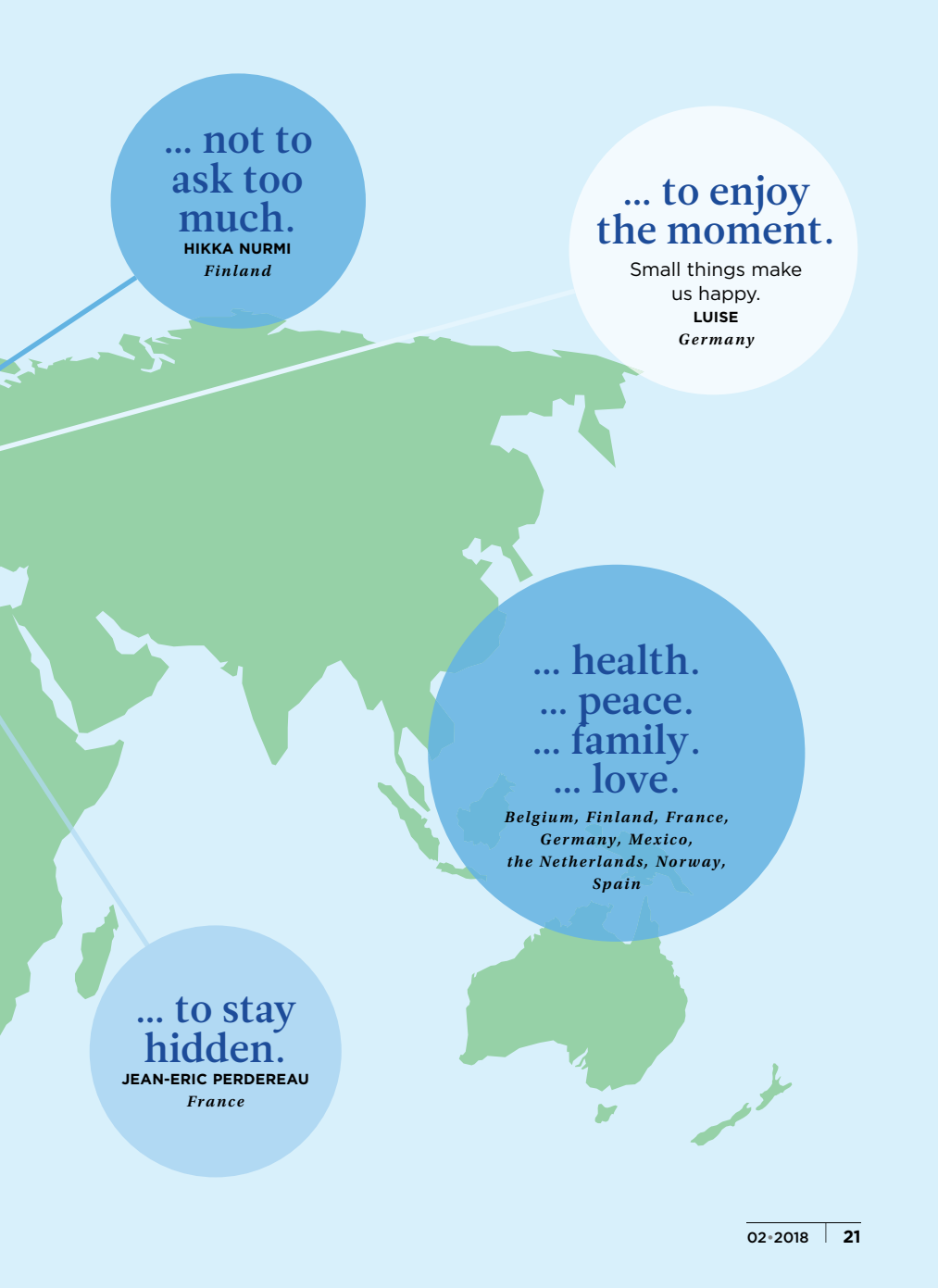
and pay no attention
to movie critics.

ENRIQUE PÉREZ
Mexico

... to love
what you do
every moment,

even if it isn't what you
dreamed of.

ISABEL PÉREZ
Spain



**... not to
ask too
much.**

HIKKA NURMI
Finland

**... to enjoy
the moment.**

Small things make
us happy.
LUISE
Germany

**... health.
... peace.
... family.
... love.**

*Belgium, Finland, France,
Germany, Mexico,
the Netherlands, Norway,
Spain*

**... to stay
hidden.**

JEAN-ERIC PERDEREAU
France

As Kids See It



“What would I have to do to be sent to my room without the Brussels sprouts?”

WHEN ASKED HOW his first visit to the beach went, my five-year-old nephew, Adam, replied, “It was so dirty. There was sand everywhere! They should really vacuum it.”

NAIMA SHAIKH

I USED TO WONDER why I had hair on my legs, but now I know it’s for my toddler sons and daughters to pull themselves up off the ground as I scream in pain.

Comedian JIM GAFFIGAN

CONAN DE VRIES

MY TWO-YEAR-OLD granddaughter, Aiva, was being tickled by her mom. They were both giggling and having fun, then her mom said, “I am going to eat you up.” Aiva looked at her mother with alarm and replied, “Don’t eat me, Mommy. I’m people.”

WAYNE WESTLAKE

WHEN MY DAUGHTER, Adina, was eight, she was taught to recognize the importance of best-before dates on food. One evening while we were having friends over, I opened a bottle of wine. Ever vigilant, Adina came running over and yelled, “Daddy don’t drink that! It’s from 1998!”

JACK SHAHIN

FOUR-YEAR-OLD: What did I earn for being good today?

ME: My love and affection.

FOUR-YEAR-OLD: *Cries* I don’t want that!

@ASHLEYAUSTREW

DAUGHTER: How was your day, Daddy?

ME: Pretty busy, lots of meetings and deadlines.

DAUGHTER: DEAD LIONS!?!

@THEGLADSTORK

MY DAUGHTER’S DAYCARE has circle time every morning. One day we were running behind schedule and entered during the middle of it, so my daughter explained, “We’re late because my mommy had diarrhea.”

cosmopolitan.com

I LIKE HAVING conversations with kids. Grown-ups never ask me what my third-favorite reptile is.

@SIMONCHOLLAND

OUR SIX-YEAR-OLD granddaughter, Rylee, was having a chat with her mom about babies. She was asking how pregnant women know whether they’re having a girl or a boy. Her mother explained that there are tools doctors use to see inside the belly. Rylee replied, “Yes, but how can they tell when the hair is so short?”

KATHY SONNENBURG

I WAS DRIVING through a parking lot and hit a speed bump a bit too fast. My three-year-old son yelled out, “OHHHHHH! MY SPLEEN!”

buzzfeed.com

ME: What did you learn in kindergarten today?

FIVE-YEAR-OLD: A doughnut would help me remember.

Apparently she learned bribery.

@XPLODINGUNICORN

I ASKED TO switch seats on the plane because I was sitting next to a crying baby. Apparently that’s not allowed if the baby is yours.

@MOMMYSHORTS

AND THEN ONE DAY we decided we were tired of sleeping in and doing whatever we wanted whenever we wanted in a clean house, so we had kids.

@TCHRQUOTES



EUROPEAN OF THE YEAR 2018

Mothers are on the frontline against terror. So says Edit Schlaffer who works tirelessly to help women around the world identify and tackle signs of extremism in their children. In recognition, she receives the *Reader's Digest* European of the Year award for 2018.

Mother Power

BY TIM BOUQUET

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARKUS HINTZEN





*Edit Schlaffer
leads a training
program in
Germany.*

Luton, England, May 2016

"I couldn't believe my son had gone to Syria. I didn't know how to deal with it. I was angry inside—angry with those who had brainwashed him." Khadijah Kamara, 37, is talking to a group of 40 mothers about 19-year-old Ibrahim, the eldest of her four teenage sons, who went to fight with extremists in Syria. He was killed in an air raid in September 2014.

The mothers, mostly of Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Somali origin, are beginning a free 10-week training program in a community center in the English town of Luton, close to London. The room is often used for keep-fit classes, but today's lesson is altogether more serious.

It is a striking scene. Kamara, originally from Sierra Leone, her head and neck covered in a hijab, gazes out over a sea of colorful headscarves, saris and shalwar kameez.

She tells the women about her "loving and respectful boy," who had wanted to become an engineer but was recruited to jihad. "My son has died and up to this day I cannot explain," says Kamara.

The mothers listen intently. There are tears as Kamara says she discovered from another jihadi fighter that

Ibrahim had been trying to contact her from Syria just before he died.

Sitting next to Kamara is Austrian sociologist Dr. Edit Schlaffer, who has flown in from Vienna to meet the mothers. Schlaffer is the creator of this ground-breaking program, called MotherSchools. Its purpose is simple and ambitious: to equip mothers to

build their children's resilience against recruitment by extremists, and to intervene when they recognize signs of radicalization.

Part of a global initiative, the course is being held in Luton for good reason. The town has frequently been linked to terrorism and has been dubbed a "hotbed of Islamist extremism" in the U.K. media.

Since November 2015 there have been seven major terrorist attacks in Britain, France, Belgium, Germany and Spain, claiming 329 lives and injuring 1,648. The perpetrators have often been home-grown jihadis, many inspired by Islamist propaganda and extremists on social media sites.

Over the ensuing weeks the Luton mothers will learn through role play and confidence-building exercises how to communicate better with their children, how to observe their psychological development, monitor their use of the Internet and recognize

“
Schlaffer has
seen how
terrorist
recruiters
continue to
corrupt
Europe's
alienated
youth.”

Edith Schlaffer meets French President Emmanuel Macron at the Elysée Palace.

warning signs. The aim is to help the mothers develop resilience and build it in their children, families and communities.

Many of those in the room live in male-dominated households and rarely leave home beyond taking their children to school.

“Mothers have heard of radicalization,” says 74-year-old Bangladeshi-born Nazia Khanum, an expert on gender issues, forced marriage and community empowerment, who runs the Mother-Schools course. “But they don’t know what it means. Tied to home, they feel isolated and terrified of the Internet. Edith helps them to end that isolation and to regain a connection with their children.”

Both she and Schlaffer have seen how terrorist recruiters continue to corrupt Europe’s alienated, jobless youth. More than 4,000 young Muslims have left Europe to fight in Syria and Iraq. “We have to bring sense into the world and we must start with our children,” says Schlaffer. “Mothers will make the world safe for us all.”

The Luton mothers will be among the first in Europe to graduate. She tells them: “You can be a new army—without weapons, but with words.”



Crossing Continents

Schlaffer is the mother of two grown-up children and married to a professor of psychology. She is 67 but looks a decade younger, which is remarkable, given her punishing schedule.

In just one six-week period last autumn, for instance, she spent seven days visiting MotherSchools in Jordan, returned home to Vienna for two days before heading to Paris to speak at a global forum hosted by President Macron and flew on to Washington DC to speak at the American University. Days later she was spreading her message as a delegate at the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly.

Her commitment reflects determination and strength. “Hope in these dark times and a sense of adventure and empowerment is what drives me on,” she says. “Why stay at home

watching TV and feeling helpless?"

Schlafter describes her childhood as "uneventful, peaceful and laid-back", if not entirely conventional. Born in 1950 to middle-class professional parents, she spent the first six years of her life on her grandmother's farm in eastern Austria, meters from Soviet-occupied Hungary.

"My friends and I would play under the eyes of a Russian soldier in his watchtower. My parents would tell me how lucky I was to be on this side of the fence."

She discovered activism as a sociology student at Vienna University and had ambitions to become a foreign correspondent. But the offer of a research job led her

towards a career as an academic. In the 1980s, as a sociology lecturer at the university, her research took her into the field.

She first worked with refugees—mainly traumatized women and children—from the Bosnian conflict. "I knew we were witnessing living history and I had to document it," she says.

Her work in the 1990s would also take her to Pakistan, where she met women and children fleeing war in neighboring Afghanistan. There, she got to know a group of women who risked their lives to cross the lawless

border into Pakistan, bringing out video evidence of fundamentalist brutality and executions.

"I have this vivid picture of their floating burqas as these brave women made their perilous journey," she says.

The experience inspired her to launch Women without Borders (WwB) in 2001, with the goal of

empowering women as agents of change. The NGO's projects have included the first anti-extremist hotline in Yemen, empowerment strategies for girls in Rwanda and a women's center in Afghanistan.

Then, in 2008, WwB launched SAVE, Sisters Against Violent Extremism, a female counter-terrorism platform that aims to unite women

around the world. "We have to stand up for ourselves and for each other. Times of crisis are also times of opportunity," says Schlafter.

Khujand, Tajikistan, 2012

Four years later, Edit Schlafter and a group of Tajik mothers are gathered in a sparsely furnished room at a small community center in Tajikistan's second city. She is part of a mission, funded by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to discuss increasing radicalization in the country. There is just a single

“Hope in these dark times is what drives me on. Why stay at home watching TV and feeling helpless?”



small stove to ward off the mountain cold, but the shivering women are eager to talk.

“They were alarmed that their children were dropping out of school and being drawn to mosques funded by Saudi Arabia, where they were being taught an extremist interpretation of Islam. They felt powerless to intervene,” says Schlaffer.

“I said, ‘Can’t you talk to them?’ They replied that their sons were no longer boys, they were men—and that made it very difficult to challenge them. Some of these ‘men’ were just 12 years old, but they wanted to talk tough and be heroes. The women were trying to care for their children, but another influence had created a distance between them.”

Suddenly, Schlaffer had a lightbulb moment. “I can still see Rosaria, a mother of four in her mid-forties, in

Schlaffer (third from left, seated) with MotherSchools trainees in Bavaria.

front of me. She had a wonderful smile. She said, ‘We mothers have to go back to school.’

“That was the moment that MotherSchools was born in my mind. I realized that it is mothers who are on the frontline against terror. We have to equip them with not only the confidence but also the right tools and techniques to interact better with their children.”

Schlaffer won funding to develop her ideas and a curriculum. She and her team researched exhaustively, interviewing a thousand mothers of adolescents in areas of historic conflict, including Northern Ireland, the Palestinian territories, Pakistan and Nigeria. Many of the mothers identified an urgent need for practical

opportunities and skills to respond to the risk of radicalization.

The first MotherSchools pilot opened in Tajikistan in February 2013. Others followed in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Macedonia, the United Kingdom and several non-European countries.

Würzburg, Bavaria, September 2017

Edit Schlaffer's lightbulb idea is catching on fast. There are 22 women sitting in a circle as the sun filters through the windows at the Congress Centrum in Würzburg on the banks of the River Main. Famous for its baroque churches and vineyards, this peaceful corner of Germany seems a world away from Islamist terrorism.

Yet the previous year the country had suffered its first jihadist attack by an asylum seeker when a radicalized 17-year-old Afghan, armed with a knife and axe, attacked passengers on a train near the city.

The women, who hail from Turkey, Tunisia, Algeria and Syria, are social workers, teachers, translators, counselors and full-time mothers. They are about to be trained to launch and run MotherSchools in five separate locations in Bavaria.

The Bavarian government has asked

Schlaffer to set up the schools as part of its radicalization prevention program. She may be a gifted enabler, but she knows it is only women from local communities who can effectively deliver the MotherSchools curriculum.

Schlaffer, wearing red sneakers and a flowing white shirt, starts proceedings with a challenge. "Each one of you is going to walk across the room," she says.

There is reticence at first. It's a daring test for the women, many of whom are used to playing a secondary role in their cultures. Then one young woman in jeans and black heels steps

forward. She glides across the room. Her self-assertiveness inspires others to stand up. Soon the room is a colorful catwalk of elegant suits, jogging suits, sparkling trousers and headscarves. Cheers and laughter ring out.

This exercise leads to a discussion on how mothers send out signals to their children

through their body language. "Children can read body language," Schlaffer explains. "When we radiate self-confidence, so do they. Extremist recruiters are very warm and empathetic. They are also assertive, saying they will help young people to a better life. Mothers need to adopt those

“**Making mothers strong starts with reinforcing the idea of how valuable they are.**”

same approaches—but to a positive end. Making mothers strong starts with reinforcing the idea of how valuable they are, as mothers and as people.”

“If there is no prevention there is radicalization,” says Bouchra, a 46-year-old mother of five who will lead one of the Bavarian MotherSchools. “I came to learn. I want to do the right thing.”

Luton, September 2017

Back in the United Kingdom, 40-year-old Parveen is one of the latest graduates from the MotherSchools program in Luton. Born in Pakistan, she came to England 20 years ago. She has two teenage sons, aged 18 and 13.

“Before I did this course my eldest had stopped listening to me. I worried he was spending too much time on the computer,” she says. “The other mothers helped me re-learn how to talk to my children, how to avoid rows or silences. We have the computers downstairs in the sitting room and the

family eats together rather than me being stuck in the kitchen.”

“I didn’t know what community meant,” she adds. “But now I have many friends and a part-time job as well. I feel as if I’m a mother bird who has learned to fly out into the wider world.”

Her words are clear evidence of the difference that MotherSchools can make in increasing mothers’ self-confidence and social connectedness so that they can better safeguard their children. As Edit Schläffer says, “When I see the warmth and confidence in our graduates I know they can confront extremism and violence by changing attitudes.”

*With additional reporting by
Isabelle de Pommereau*

READER'S DIGEST EUROPEAN OF THE YEAR Our annual award recognizes an exclusive group of Europeans whose extraordinary work helps to make the world a better place. Edit Schläffer is the 23rd winner of this unique *Reader's Digest* award.

* *

A CONFUSING CALL

My mother hadn't been feeling well, so I was worried when she didn't answer the phone. I jumped into the car and raced over to her house—only to find her sitting in her living room calmly watching TV.

“Why didn't you answer the telephone?” I asked. “I was worried.”
“Sorry, dear. I heard it ringing, but I thought it was on the television.”
“Oh,” I said, relieved. “What were you watching?” “*Spartacus*.”

DON CUNNINGHAM

Heart disease kills more people than all cancers combined. Here's how cardiologists and other healers beat the odds in their own lives.

36 Things Doctors Do to Protect Their Hearts

BY CHARLOTTE HILTON ANDERSEN

1 I eat eggs. “The science shows that a diet without cholesterol does not necessarily lower a person’s cholesterol. In fact, when the cholesterol in a food is high, it is often acting as an antioxidant. Eggs are full of satiating protein and essential fats.”

CAROLYN DEAN, MD, ND,
author of *Atrial Fibrillation:
Remineralize Your Heart*

2 I get eight hours of sleep. “Poor sleep is linked to higher blood pressure, a risk factor for heart disease. I try to get to bed by 10 p.m. I don’t watch television right before bed, and I keep my room dark. I also never drink caffeine after 10 a.m., and I avoid alcohol on work nights.”

JENNIFER HAYTHE, MD, *cardiologist and
assistant professor of medicine at
Columbia University Medical Center*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARK ALLEN MILLER





3 I take the stairs.

“Modern conveniences such as elevators and escalators reduce the amount of exercise we get on a daily basis. To counteract this, I take the stairs at every opportunity.”

RICHARD WRIGHT, MD,
*cardiologist and chairman
of the Pacific Heart Institute
at Providence Saint
John's Health Center*



4 I meditate.

“Stress can cause catecholamine release—also known as the fight-or-flight response—and that can lead to heart failure and heart attacks. I have found comfort in 20 minutes of meditation daily.”

ARCHANA SAXENA, MD, *cardiologist at
NYU Lutheran Medical Center*

5 I do CrossFit.

“Exercise blunts the ‘cortisol spike,’ the rush of stress hormones that has been linked to increased risk of a heart attack or a stroke.”

ADAM SPLAVER, MD, *cardiologist and
cofounder of NanoHealth Associates*

6 I'm always finding something to laugh about.

“Seeing the humor in everyday situations helps me maintain perspec-

tive. Laughing dilates the arteries and keeps blood pressure down.”

SUZANNE STEINBAUM, MD,
*cardiologist and spokesperson
for the American Heart Association's
Go Red for Women movement*

7 I eat berries.

“Berries have natural antioxidants, such as vitamins C and E, and anthocyanins, the pigments that give berries their color, both of which help the heart. I eat fresh or frozen berries regularly.”

NITIN KUMAR, MD, *gastroenterologist and
expert in cardiometabolic risk at the
Bariatric Endoscopy Institute*

8 I respect the power of blood pressure.

“In 2015, we did a study that found that lowering systolic blood pressure (the top number) to 120 mm Hg

reduced rates of death due to cardiovascular disease, heart failure, stroke, and heart attack by 25 percent. It's important to keep it in check by eating a healthy diet, being physically active, and maintaining a healthy weight."

CORA E. LEWIS, MD,
*epidemiologist and professor at
University of Alabama at Birmingham
School of Medicine*

9 I take care of my teeth.
"Good oral hygiene can lead to less systemic inflammation in the short term. While more research is needed to determine whether this decreases heart attacks or strokes—the link has been debated for decades—having a healthy mouth is important to overall wellness."

JULIE CLARY, MD,
cardiologist at Indiana University Health

11 I eat lots of protein.
"Since the heart is a muscle, it needs daily lean proteins. I eat grass-fed meat and wild-caught fish along with heart-healthy olive oil, nuts, and vegetables. And I avoid meat that contains antibiotics or hormones."

AL SEARS, MD,
*antiaging specialist and author of
15 books on health and wellness*

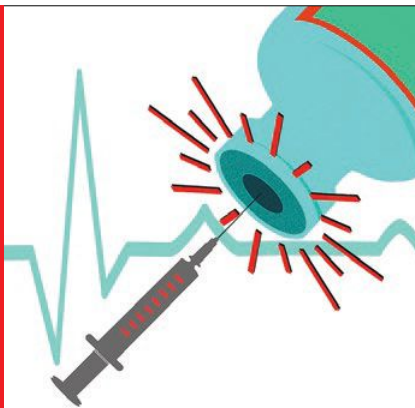
12 I try to schedule exercise.
"I often hear my patients say they don't have time to exercise or say they had no idea that they had gained weight. This is why I schedule my exercise sessions just as I would schedule a business meeting or any other event."

STEVEN TABAK, MD, FACC,
*medical director for quality and
physician outreach at
Cedars-Sinai Heart Institute*

10 I get the flu vaccine every year.

"Getting a flu vaccination is especially good for people with heart disease and heart failure. The vaccine has recently been shown to offer protection against new-onset atrial fibrillation (irregular heart rhythm)."

JASON GUICHARD, MD,
cardiologist in Birmingham, Alabama





13 I lost weight.

"About ten years ago, I found myself 40 pounds overweight. I also had not been to a doctor for many years at that time. I made an appointment to see my doctor but not until I went on a diet, joined a gym, and over a year lost the 40 pounds." A 2016 study found that being overweight could take one to three years off your life, while being obese may take as many as eight—and the effect is three times worse for men than for women.

MARK GREENBERG, MD,
*director of the White Plains
 Hospital Catheterization Lab and
 medical director of interventional
 cardiology at Montefiore
 Health System*

14 I choose my cooking oils carefully.

"There has been a lot of research recently into how different oils affect our heart health, and it goes far beyond olive oil. I avoid products with palm oil and look instead for those with canola oil. Coconut, avocado, and almond oils are also good choices."

JONATHAN ELION, MD, FACC,
*cardiologist and associate professor of
 medicine at Brown University*

15 I'm on alert for high blood sugar.

"In adults with diabetes, the most common causes of death are heart disease and stroke, according to the National Institutes of Health. I avoid junk food, particularly soda, and other foods that lead to high blood sugar and insulin resistance, the precursors to diabetes."

RICHARD WRIGHT, MD

16 I do intense aerobics.

"Frequent, intense, prolonged cardiovascular exercise lowers blood pressure, increases good cholesterol (HDL), reduces bad cholesterol (LDL) and triglycerides, and stabilizes blood sugar. I try to do a 45-minute session nearly every day."

PAUL B. LANGEVIN, MD,
*associate professor in the department
 of anesthesiology and perioperative
 medicine at Drexel University
 College of Medicine*

17 I spend time outdoors.
“Recently I realized I had been indoors too long, so I ‘prescribed’ myself a hike! This nature hack relieves stress and allows me to get vitamin D from the sunshine.”

MONYA DE, MD, MPH, internal medicine physician in Los Angeles



18 I eat a Mediterranean diet.
“Instead of grabbing chips when I get home hungry, I slice up half an avocado and drizzle on olive oil. Delicious and filling, this quick snack is part of a Mediterranean diet, which has been proven to be heart healthy.”

GLENN RICH, MD, an internist specializing in endocrinology, obesity, and weight management in Trumbull, Connecticut

19 I make time for my loved ones.

“Heart disease has been associated with job strain and psychological distress at any point in life—things that friends and family can help with.”

JASON GUICHARD, MD

20 I ask for a heart scan.
“A coronary calcium CAT scan enabled me to determine whether I was developing early heart disease. This test is simple, widely available, and relatively cheap. It can find signs of heart disease before you even feel the symptoms.”

GLENN RICH, MD

21 I take a vitamin K2 supplement.

“Recent studies indicate that vitamin K2 is critical to heart health. It works by shuttling calcium into your bones instead of letting the calcium clog your arteries. Vitamin K2 may reverse coronary calcification, the disease that causes blockage of your arteries.”

ADAM SPLAVER, MD

22 I skip the hot dogs.

“According to a Harvard University analysis, there is strong evidence for association between the consumption of processed red meats, such as sausage, hot dogs, and lunch meat, and an increased risk of cardiovascular disease and early death.”

MICHAEL FENSTER, MD, interventional cardiologist, chef, and author of The Fallacy of the Calorie: Why the Modern Western Diet Is Killing Us and How to Stop It

23 I got tested for sleep disorders.

“Sleep apnea, one of the most common sleep disorders, causes you to



24 I drink a ton of water. “Drinking five or more glasses of water a day can lower the risk of heart disease death, as dehydration leads to increased hematocrit (the ratio of red blood cells to blood volume) and increased blood viscosity or thickness, both of which have been associated with cardiovascular events.” **JASON GUICHARD, MD**

take long pauses in breathing during sleep. This can starve your organs of oxygen and wreak havoc on your heart health.”

ADAM SPLAVER, MD

25 I drink alcohol in moderation.

“Moderate drinking (one to two servings a day) can offer protection from heart disease. But if you do not drink at all, keep it that way. If you drink more than one or two drinks in a single occasion, it can increase your risk of a stroke.”

SAMUEL MALLOY, MD,
*medical director at drfelix.co.uk, an
 online doctor and pharmacist*

26 I get plenty of vitamin D. “Studies have shown that having low vitamin D levels is a significant predictor of cardiac death, heart attack, and stroke. Low vitamin D is also associated with high blood pres-

sure and blood sugar, which are risk factors for heart disease. Have your doctor check your vitamin D level and supplement up to normal with high doses if needed.”

NITIN KUMAR, MD

27 I take probiotics.

“Probiotics such as *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Bifidobacterium lactis* have been shown to significantly decrease bad cholesterol and inflammatory markers that may lead to heart disease.”

NICOLE VAN GRONINGEN, MD,
*internal medicine physician at
 UCSF Medical Center*

28 I tried a vegetarian diet.

“Last year, our cardiology group started an Ornish Reversal Intensive Cardiac Rehab, a specialized program developed for cardiac patients. The outcomes for our patients have been dramatic. So we doctors

decided to follow the program ourselves. One part is eating a vegetarian diet for three months. I was surprised at how much better I felt—less bloated and tired after meals.”

JOSEPH A. CRAFT III, MD, FACC,
cardiologist at the Heart Health
Center in St. Louis

29 I mix magnesium powder into my water.

“If sufficient magnesium is present in the body, cholesterol will not be produced in excess. So I supplement with magnesium citrate powder mixed with water. It can be easily sipped throughout the day.”

CAROLYN DEAN, MD, ND

30 I practice gratitude.

“One study showed that volunteers who focused on feelings of deep appreciation had increased heart-rate variability (HRV), associated with decreased death from cardiac disease. Another study found that patients who kept gratitude journals for two months had lower levels of inflammatory biomarkers that could lead to cardiovascular disease.”

NICOLE VAN GRONINGEN, MD

31 I take an herbal sleep aid.

“Small doses of melatonin and 5-HTP supplements have been very effective in helping me get to sleep and sleep through the night.”

WESTIN CHILDS, DO,
an internist practicing in Gilbert, Arizona

32 I eat a “no-white” diet.

“I stay away from white sugar, white flour, white bread, and white rice.”

ADAM SPLAVER, MD

33 I do yoga.

“I reduce stress through yoga; it helps me unwind, find balance, and escape for a short time every day.”

JENNIFER HAYTHE, MD

34 I recommend aspirin, but only for some people.

“If you’re healthy, there is no preventive benefit in taking aspirin. But for people who have already experienced a heart event or those with diseased arteries, a low-dose aspirin a day is very helpful at preventing a future heart attack.”

RICHARD WRIGHT, MD

35 I recommend lots of lovemaking.

“Sex is like interval exercise, which is very good for the heart. One easy and fun way to help your heart is to have more sex!”

RICHARD WRIGHT, MD

36 I eat dark chocolate.

A 2016 study found that a daily dose of dark chocolate helps prevent diabetes. “It may improve arterial elasticity and help lower blood pressure. Keep an eye out for at least 75 percent cocoa, and then savor an ounce or two.”

CYNTHIA GEYER, MD,
medical director of Canyon Ranch in
Lenox, Massachusetts

Daniel Miller had promised his wife, Saimaa, he'd never leave her. But could he stay alive until help arrived?

One Breath Away

BY HELEN SIGNY

WHEN SAIMAA MILLER FIRST SET EYES ON her future husband, Daniel, she was attracted by his stoicism. A friend of her builder in Bondi outside of Sydney, Australia, he'd joined them for drinks the day his dog had died. *He is the sort of man I'd like to be with*, she thought. A few months later, she walked out of her Bondi naturopathy practice and he was standing outside, waiting for her. She knew at that moment he would be her partner for life.



*Daniel at his
Charlotte Bay
home, in New
South Wales,
Australia.*

They soon moved in together and before long, in 2007, had found the perfect property in Charlotte Bay, on the New South Wales mid-north coast. Daniel, a qualified builder and landscaper, could develop the land into a yoga retreat and one day they could imagine their children running around its grassy paddocks.

"Don't you die before me," Saimaa would often joke. Her mother had passed away when she was just 13, and it was unimaginable that she could be left alone again.

"I promise," Daniel replied.

Several years later and the dream had come true. Their children, Kalan and Leilani, were nine and four, and the family had made the property their permanent home, with Saimaa commuting three hours each week to see her clients at her Bondi clinic.

That's where she was that day in February last year. With the children at day care and the school swimming carnival, Daniel, 45, thought he'd finish the landscaping around a dam about 50 meters from the house. He'd been meaning to tidy up an old rock garden against the dam wall.

Using his three-ton mini-excavator, Daniel started to shift some of the larger boulders and plants. It hadn't rained for a long time and the water in the dam on the other side of the wall was very low. He steered the excavator to the edge of the dam and lowered the bucket to drag out a load of mud.

Just then, the excavator started to

slide with the weight. Used to working with heavy machinery, Daniel wasn't alarmed when the excavator slipped in its tracks. He quickly lowered the bucket to the ground to act as a counterweight and stabilize the excavator. As he did this, the wall gave way and the excavator slid toward the water.

In sheer panic, Daniel pushed himself away from the machine to try to get clear of its weight. Man and machine crashed into the muddy floor of the dam, the excavator tipped onto its side and the roll bar landed on his back just below his shoulder blades. He was pinned down under the water.

I've got to get out of here, Daniel screamed to himself, pulling his body forward with all his might to try to get his head above water. He wriggled and squirmed until the roll bar was across his lower back, but he couldn't get it past his buttocks.

Jamming his hands into the mud, Daniel arched his back and pushed as hard as he could until his head was above water. He then grabbed a full breath of glorious air. *I can't die first* was all he could think.

DANIEL WAS fortunate to have landed facing the dam wall, with his chest on a step where the water was only 60 centimeters deep. Towards the center of the dam, his legs were floating in deeper water. Still, he couldn't move and 60 centimeters was plenty deep enough to drown in.

Daniel's arm was wedged under his chest in a push-up position, similar to an upward dog in yoga. If he pushed himself up with all his strength, he could just get his chin out of the water.

He had to calm himself. A surfer of many years, he knew the only way to survive in the water was to slow down and think rationally. He pushed away the panic and began to think.

The excavator was still running, spewing hydraulic oil and diesel into the water. Eventually the oil would flood the engine and the noise would stop. *Then who would notice?*

No one else was on the property. Saimaa was 300 kilometers away in Sydney, and Mel, the next-door neighbor, about 500 meters away, would be at the swimming carnival. He cursed himself for canceling the guy who was supposed to come and mow the grass that day. *Maybe he would turn up anyway? Were there any courier deliveries due?* he wondered.

Most likely, the first people to miss him would be his son's teachers when he didn't show for school pick-up. They wouldn't come to the property to look for him; they would just send Kalan to after-school care, and the alarm wouldn't be raised until after 6 p.m. It was the same with Leilani's pre-

school. It was now just past 11:30 a.m. *That means I have to stay alive for six or more hours,* he thought.

Mel might come home around 3 p.m. Could he hold on till then?

The weight of the roll bar didn't seem to be evenly distributed along Daniel's back and he didn't feel like he was carrying the full weight of the excavator. That might mean he could dig himself out. As he propped up his

body with one hand, he used the other to dig underneath his pelvis and legs, pushing the mud to the side.

It was a near-fatal mistake. The machine sank further as he dug, and Daniel realized with horror that now he could only manage to raise his eyes and nose above the waterline. If he used all his strength he could lift himself far enough up

to clear his mouth, but he couldn't do that for more than a few minutes at a time, it was too painful. He had to conserve energy. Daniel knew he could be here for a long, long time.

His options were simple. He could either fight or die. If he died, the carers at his daughter's day care would bring her home. They'd see the excavator overturned in the dam, perhaps his boots would be floating on the surface. He could not let that happen. As excruciating as it was to

===== “ =====

AS PAINFUL AS
IT WAS TO KEEP
PUSHING
HIMSELF HIGH
ENOUGH TO
BREATHE,
THERE WAS
NOTHING ELSE
HE COULD DO.

=====

keep pushing himself high enough to breathe, there was nothing else he could do.

Daniel wasn't new to endurance. He had done years of open ocean paddling. The trick was to chunk the pain into manageable blocks. To last in this position for six hours was unimaginable. But he could do it for 60 seconds. So he started to count.

He set his hands in one position, counted to 60 and waved one hand back and forth in the water to pass time and keep calm. At 55 seconds he'd allow himself the luxury of knowing there were only five seconds to go. Then he'd shift his weight into a different position and start again. It was like Daniel was giving himself a break every minute.

As the engine finally sputtered and cut out it became very peaceful in the dam. With his ears submerged, all Daniel could hear was the rapid ticking of the machine. The sun shone on his head, his lips were at the waterline and he could see the oil and fluids floating on the surface. When debris came too close to his nose he'd blow a bubble to gently push it away.

The counting worked. For more than an hour, Daniel watched a grasshopper walk up a blade of grass and down the other side. Letting his



The scene that greeted emergency workers was of Daniel submerged, with his nose just above the waterline.

thoughts wander, he played out different scenarios of how someone might find him. He thought about the sump pump, less than 100 meters away, that could drain the dam and save him. He willed different people to come, even trying telepathy for someone to pop in for a visit. Above all, he thought, Saimaa must not hear he was dead.

Saimaa had often nagged him about taking up yoga. He'd always insisted that after ten minutes he was bored. Now, his arched back was screaming and his arms were throbbing. *How long has someone stayed in an upward dog position before?* he wondered. It was best not to think about the pain.

As the time dragged on and the excavator continued to slowly sink, Daniel felt a slow rising panic, made worse when he remembered that rain

was forecast that day. Just 20 millimeters would be enough to kill him. He could fight for hours, but there were some things over which he had no control.

But there's no use dwelling on them, he told himself. If he could stay calm and make good decisions, he would have a reasonable chance of staying alive.

At times emotions would well up and he'd laugh hysterically. Was he really going to die in the mud at the bottom of his own dam? But then he'd calm himself, breathe through his nose and get back to counting.

The engine continued to softly tick.

BY WHAT must have been around 2.30 p.m., staying alive had become almost robotic. Breathe, count, stay calm. Daniel's ears were full of water and oil, and he could only just hear the engine ticking. He had no idea where the neighbors were, but he was getting tired. He would have to start calling for help. He'd give it another few blocks of 60 seconds and then have a go.

At the appointed time, Daniel summoned all the strength he had left to push himself high enough out of the water to clear his mouth. He yelled at the top of his lungs for ten minutes. "Help, help, help!"

Shouting was exhausting. He stopped, full of adrenalin, bursting with anger. He struggled to free his pelvis, furious no-one could hear him.

Then, out of the corner of his eye, he caught a movement. He turned his head and, sure enough, he could make out his neighbor Mel's blue sedan approaching along the driveway. He imagined her parking her car, getting out and looking around. He pushed himself up and yelled again. There she was, running around the corner with her phone in her hand.

That was when he knew. *Thank God. You're going to live, man.*

Mel rushed down to the edge of the dam. "What do I do?" she cried.

Daniel pushed his mouth out again. "Ring Reg, get the neighbors!" he shouted, then resumed his position.

The nearest emergency services were 30 minutes away in Forster but Reg, another neighbor, was close by. Within minutes he arrived and jumped into the dam to hold Daniel's head. Another neighbor who'd been alerted by Mel arrived and ran to fetch a snorkel from the house, but it was impossible for Daniel to breathe through it.

Mel used her phone to google "What to do when someone is trapped in a dam." At the top of the list was the instruction that no one else should enter the dam—it was too unstable. Reg got out as other neighbors arrived.

On a nearby property, real estate agent Charles Degotardi's pager went off. As captain of the local Rural Fire Service, he rang the station and was told someone in the area was trapped

under an excavator in a dam, just up the road from the property he was now inspecting. *He's probably already dead*, Charles thought.

There was no time to fetch the fire truck, so he phoned his senior deputy and drove around the corner to the Miller property. He was the first emergency services officer to arrive. He could not believe the scene that greeted him. A bunch of people were gathered at the dam, all staring at Daniel's nose and eyes sticking out of the brown water.

The local fire truck arrived within seven minutes. The absolute priority was to lower the water in the dam, so Charles and his colleagues grabbed the portable pump and set up the hoses over the side of the dam. As the pump kicked into action, they maneuvered the truck to the side of the dam and inserted a larger-volume pump as well.

Within a few minutes, the water level had dropped below Daniel's nose and ears, and he could hear what was being said. Everyone was concerned about the excavator moving and crushing him further. It had fallen onto a boulder, which was keeping it from sliding to the bottom of the dam.



Back home with his family, Daniel says that his options were simple: he could either fight or die.

But with only a few centimeters to go, it was clear the three-ton excavator was about to slip off the large rock.

Police and ambulance began to arrive, followed by Fire and Rescue from Forster. Daniel watched them as they approached the edge of the dam one by one—the look of total disbelief on their faces that he was still alive.

As the water dropped, it became clear how incredibly lucky Daniel had been. Had the boulder not been there, he would have been crushed. As it was, he was pinned in soft mud, yet miraculously, the full weight of the machine was not on him.

In a rescue operation that lasted more than an hour and a half, emer-

gency services fixed a cable onto the boom of the excavator to stabilize the machine, and then winched it to lift the weight off Daniel.

By the time it reached five centimeters above his pelvis the pumps were beginning to clog with mud, but there was enough visibility to start digging Daniel out. They cleared the mud from underneath his legs then hauled him out by his shoulders.

Daniel was hypothermic, completely caked in mud and his lungs and ears were full of oil and diesel. But he was euphoric. He was alive.

SAIMAA WAS in Bondi seeing clients when she noticed a missed call from her neighbor Mel. *I'll call back later*, she thought. Then another came from a second neighbor, Julie Henry. Something must be wrong.

"Something's happened to Daniel," Julie told Saimaa, who could tell by her voice that it was serious.

When she learned what had happened, Saimaa remained calm. Daniel had promised he would not die first. She knew he would be OK.

Saimaa called her mother-in-law and then spoke again with the neigh-


bors Julie Henry and her husband John Henry. It was as if the whole community were working as one. The kids were picked up and taken to Mel's, while Saimaa jumped in her car to meet Daniel at their local hospital.

Daniel spent three days in the trauma ward. He had swelling in his back and an infection from the fluids he'd inhaled, but he was otherwise unharmed. His back pain lasted several weeks. Saimaa got her wish and he started yoga to help release the knots, and before long he was back to work and surfing.

Looking back, the Millers see that day as a positive experience. They were overwhelmed by the dedication of their local community and the emergency services.

"There is so much negativity in the world at the moment, but this was a story of believing in life and wanting to live," says Saimaa. "It's about people helping each other. It's about mateship."

Daniel feels like the luckiest man alive. To survive in the dam was a massive feat of endurance, and he was victorious. He beat the odds.

And all because he promised Saimaa he wouldn't die first. 

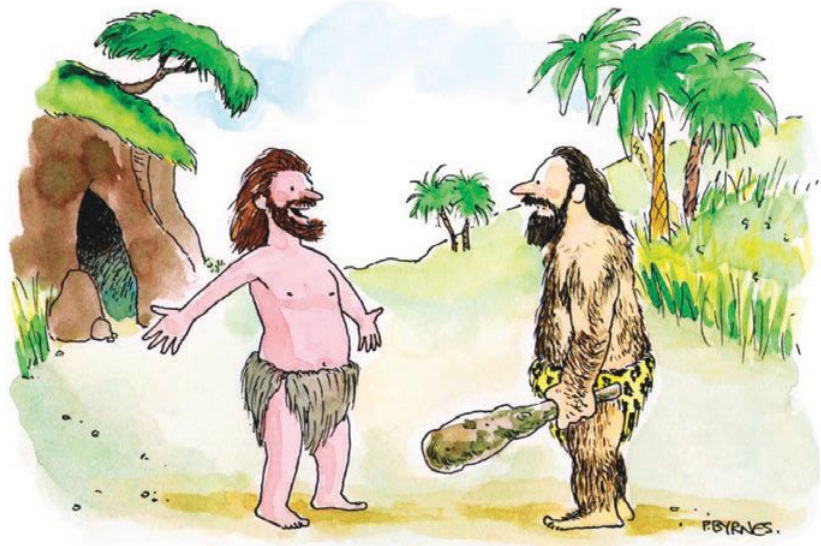
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GRAMMATICALLY FUNNY

Question: Why do words, phrases and punctuation keep ending up in court? **Answer:** To be sentenced.

Laughter

THE BEST MEDICINE



"I invented wax."

ON THE FIRST NIGHT of their honeymoon, the husband isn't sure how to tell his bride about his stinky feet and smelly socks, while the wife is wondering how to break the news to him about her awful breath, which so far, she's been able to cover up. After some soul-searching, the husband gathers his nerve and says, "I have a confession."

She draws closer, peers into his

eyes, and says, "Darling, so do I."

Recoiling, he says, "Don't tell me—you've eaten my socks."

*Submitted by JUSTIN EZZI,
Wilmington, California*

WHERE ARE average things manufactured? The satisfactory.

THE ANNUAL Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest honors purposely lousy

opening sentences for nonexistent novels. This entry from finalist Phillip Davies of Cardiff, Wales, gave us a very real laugh: “Finally, after 97 long days adrift, Captain Pertwee was rescued, mercifully ending his miserable diet of rainwater and strips of sun-dried Haddock—which was actually far ghastlier than it sounded, what with George Haddock being his former first mate.”

DO YOU STILL rock out to eight-track tapes? Then you’ll dig these band names for aging musicians:

- Counting Crows Feet
- R.E.Member?
- Nine Inch Toenails
- Hair Supply
- Minivan Morrison
- The Early Byrds
- WalkDMC

From **DAVE PELL** of nextdraft.com, on medium.com

ON AN ICY, BITTER-COLD day, Hank visited Lou. “I had a rough time getting here,” said Hank. “For every step forward, I slipped back two.”

“If you slid back two steps for every one you took forward, how’d you get here?” asked Lou.

“I almost didn’t. But then I said to myself, Forget it. So I turned around and started home.”

Submitted by
FREDA SLOAT, *Tuxedo, New York*

A FARMER counted 196 cows in the field. But when he rounded them up, he had 200.



IF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS WERE WRITTEN BY POPULAR WEBSITES:

- I.** What You Need to Know Now About the Lord Totally Being God
- II.** At the Beginning He Had Me Confused, but by Minute Two I Knew that I Shouldn’t Have Other Gods
- III.** Are You Making This Common Mistake with Graven Images?
- IV.** How I Work: Read This Life Hack from God, Your Only Creator
- V.** She Admitted to Doing *What* Every Sunday?
- VI.** Seven Morning Habits of People Holier than You: #7 No Killing Before Lunch
- VII.** 37 Things in Your Bedroom That You Need to Get Rid of Right Now, Like Adulteresses
- VIII.** What the Government Doesn’t Want You to Know About Stealing Your Neighbor’s Servants
- IX.** This Little Girl Bore False Witness, and the Results Will Shock You
- X.** Doctors Hate Her, but You Shouldn’t Covet Her

From **DAVID TATE**, on McSweeney's Internet Tendency, mcsweeneys.net

The story of how a pig turned our lives—
and hearts—upside down

A Creature Great and Small

BY STEVE JENKINS AND DEREK WALTER,
WITH CAPRICE CRANE FROM THE BOOK *ESTHER THE WONDER PIG*



*Could you resist a
face like that? One
family of animal
lovers couldn't.*

ONE NIGHT ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO, I WAS ON MY laptop in the living room when I received a Facebook message from a woman I knew from middle school, someone I hadn't spoken to in 15 years:

"Hey Steve," she said. "I know you've always been a huge animal lover. I have a mini pig that is not getting along with my dogs. I've just had a baby and I can't keep the pig."

It's true that I've always loved animals. My very first best friend was my childhood dog, Brandy, a shepherd mix, brown and black with floppy ears and a long, straight tail. So I was intrigued. A mini pig sounded adorable. In hindsight, of course, the whole situation was bizarre, but I've always been a trusting person.

I replied with a casual, "Let me do some research and I'll get back to you," but I knew I wanted the pig. I just had to figure out how to make it happen.

I lived in a three-bedroom single-level house in Georgetown, Ontario, a small community approximately 30 miles west of Toronto. It's tricky enough bringing a pig back to the house you share with two dogs, two cats, your longtime partner, your two businesses, plus a roommate. But on top of that, only nine months earlier, I'd

brought our cat Delores home without talking to Derek about it. He didn't react well.

So I had to plan this right, to make it look as if I wasn't doing something behind Derek's back, even though I *was* doing something behind Derek's back.

A few hours later, I got another message from the friend:

"Someone else is interested, so if you want her, great. If not, this other person will take her."

You're probably smart enough to recognize this as a manipulative tactic, and normally I'm smart enough too. But I was not letting that pig go. So I told my former classmate that I'd take the animal. I gave her my address, and we agreed to meet in the morning.

I knew nothing about mini pigs. I didn't know what they ate; I had no



She was maybe eight inches from tip to tail, with chipped pink polish on her little hooves.



Always eager to help, Esther checks on what Steve's got cooking. (No, it isn't bacon.)

idea how big they got. Once I started doing some Internet research, I found a few people claiming that “there’s no such thing as a mini pig,” but I was blinded by my sudden obsession and my faith in my onetime friend. She had said the pig was six months old and spayed and that she’d had her for a week, having gotten her from a breeder. It seemed this mini pig would grow to be about 70 pounds, maximum. That was pretty close to the size of Shelby, one of our dogs. That seemed reasonable.

WHEN WE MET the next day, I watched the woman handle the pig, and I could tell there was zero attachment.

The pig was tiny, maybe eight inches from tip to tail. The poor thing had chipped pink nail polish on her little hooves and a tattered sequined cat collar around her neck. She looked pathetic yet lovable. I’d met the pig 12 minutes ago, and I already knew she needed me. Ready to drive home with the newest member of our family, I had only a few hours to figure out what to tell Derek.

The mini pig sat beside me in the front passenger seat, skittish and disoriented. I talked to her and petted her while we took back roads to our house and I planned my “please forgive me for getting a pig” dinner for Derek. (The likely menu:

bacon cheeseburgers and garlic fries.)

When we got home, the cats were their typical curious but uninterested selves when faced with the pig. The dogs are excitable around baby animals and children, so they whined and jumped. I held on to the pig securely and let them sniff her a little before I hid her in the office. I figured I'd better get Derek in a good mood before springing the new arrival on him.

WHEN I LED HIM to the office and revealed my surprise, Derek stood in the doorway like a statue. Every emotion other than happiness flashed across his face. It didn't take more than a half second for him to know what I had done and what I wished to do next.

He was furious. He ranted about how irresponsible I was. He insisted there was no more room in the house. The only positive thing I could say was, "She's a mini pig! She'll stay small!"

I knew that what I'd done was wrong, but I hoped I could smooth things over. Soon enough, the lovably adorable pig did the smoothing for me. One night we were having dinner, and Derek started talking

about where the pig's litter and pen would go. You don't "build a pen" for someone you're getting rid of. Within two weeks, we christened her. We wanted to evoke a wise old soul. "Esther" felt right.

AS SOON AS THE veterinarian saw Esther, he shot me a bemused look.

"What do you know about this pig?" he asked. I gave him the story, or at least the one I'd been told.

"I already see a problem. Look at her tail. It's been docked," he said.

"Is that why it's a little nub?" I asked.

"Exactly," he said. "When you have a commercial pig—a full-size pig—the owners will generally have the pig's tail cut back. This minimizes tail biting, which occurs when pigs are kept deprived in factory farm environments. If Esther really is six months old, she could be a runt. If that's the case, when fully grown, she could be about 70 pounds."

"OK," I said. No news there.

"But if she's a commercial pig and *not* a runt— Well, I guess we'll cross that bridge when we get to it."

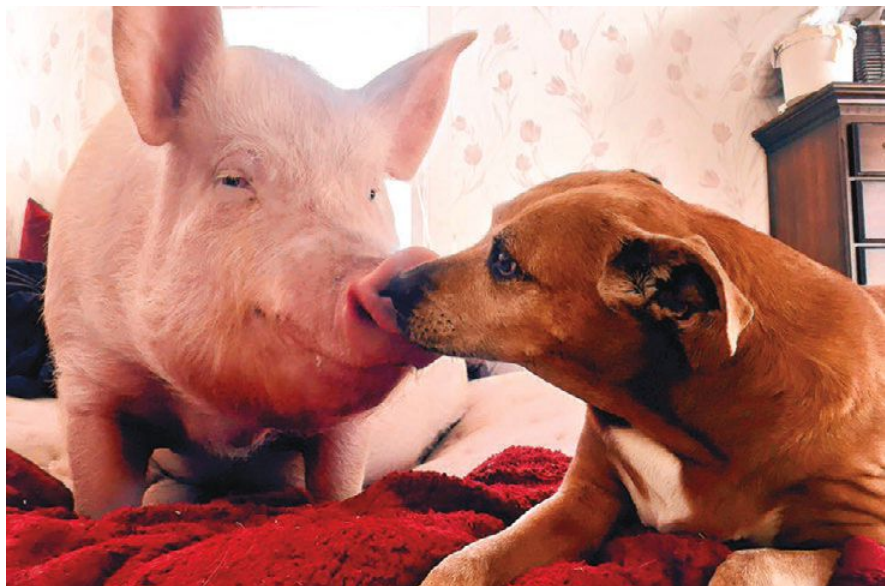
The vet explained that the only way to know anything for sure would be to weigh and measure Esther and start



He was furious. The only positive thing I could say was, "She's a mini pig! She'll stay small!"



(Clockwise from below) Esther and a few of her favorite things: best friend Shelby, snuggles with “dad” Derek Walter, and bath time.





Steve (left), Derek, and their menagerie try to pose for a family photo.

a chart. Pigs have a very specific rate of growth.

On our next vet visit, a few months after we'd adopted Esther, I had to admit that she'd been growing quickly. Over that short time, she'd started closing in on 80 pounds. It was becoming clear that I'd probably adopted a commercial pig—and she was going to be enormous.

IHADN'T KNOWN I'd wanted a pig, but the joy I felt once I knew I would always be going home to her made me smile. Everything about Esther was precious: the way she shuffled around, the way her little hooves slid along the floor when she ran, the funny little clicking noise she made when she pranced. She'd

also nuzzle our hands to soothe herself, licking our palms and rubbing her snout up and down on us as she fell asleep. And she stayed precious, even as she approached her full-grown weight of 650 pounds.

Now, I admit there's nothing all that peaceful about being startled awake at 3 a.m. by a 650-pound pig barreling down a hallway toward your bedroom. It's something you feel first: a vibration that rumbles through the mattress into your consciousness. You have only moments to realize what's happening as you hear the sound of hooves racing across the hardwood, getting louder by the second.

Within moments, our darling pig, Esther, comes crashing into the room, most likely spooked by a noise. She

launches onto our bed much the same way she launched into our lives. And while it might be a mad scramble to make space for her—there are usually two humans, two dogs, and two cats asleep there—it's more than worth it for the excitement she has added to our world.


One thing I hadn't expected was just how many behaviors Esther would share with the dogs. She'd play with a toy as they would, shaking it back and forth. She'd want to chase the cats and cuddle when she was tired, climbing into our laps to nuzzle—even as she outgrew the dogs by 10, 20, 30 pounds and more.

And just like the dogs, she often wanted our attention. She started playing and doing hilarious and clever things on her own. (She can open the refrigerator!) So we treated her like one of the dogs. And that struck us to our cores.

What made pigs different? Why were they bred for food and held in captivity while dogs and cats were welcomed into our homes and treated

like family? Why were pigs the unlucky ones? Why hadn't we realized they had such engaging personalities and such intelligence? And where would Esther be now if she hadn't joined us?

AND SO A FEW WEEKS after getting Esther, we realized we had to stop eating bacon. Shortly after that, with some difficulty, we cut out meat entirely. And a few months after that, dairy and eggs followed. We were officially vegan—or “Esther-approved,” as we like to call it.

In 2014, we moved a half-hour drive from Georgetown to Campbellville, Ontario. There, we founded a farm where we care for abandoned or abused farmed animals—so far, six rabbits, six goats, two sheep, ten pigs (not including Esther), one horse, one donkey, three cows, three chickens, and a peacock. Esther has changed our lives—that's obvious. And now it's our turn to try to change the world for other animals. The name of our farm? The Happily Ever Esther Sanctuary. 

FROM THE BOOK *ESTHER THE WONDER PIG* BY STEVE JENKINS AND DEREK WALTER, WITH CAPRICE CRANE. COPYRIGHT © 2016 BY ETWP, INC. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION OF GRAND CENTRAL PUBLISHING, NEW YORK, N.Y.

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WIT AND WISDOM

Things could be worse. Suppose your errors were counted and published every day, like those of a baseball player.

ANON.

Germany's apprenticeship system is the envy of Europe. Here's why.

THE WAY INTO WORK

BY TIM BOUQUET

NOT MANY 20-YEAR-OLDS WOULD RELISH

getting up at 5.45 a.m. every day in order to arrive at work for a 7.30 a.m. start. And Priscilla Wölbling admits that she does cast envious eyes at her student friends and the gentler hours they keep—"plus, of course, the long holidays," she says, smiling. However, while Priscilla's peers may be learning—her brother and sister are both at university—she has been





Apprentice Priscilla Wölbling gets hands-on, supervised by a Mercedes trainer.

both learning and earning as a second-year apprentice at the massive Mercedes-Benz plant at Sindelfingen, near Stuttgart.

More like a small town than a factory, this is Mercedes' biggest plant in Europe, employing 26,000 on its production lines and 11,000 more in its R&D department.

Working alongside them are 850 apprentices, a fifth of them female. Across Germany, Daimler AG (Mercedes-Benz's parent group) employs just under 6,000 apprentices on 31 apprenticeship programs, 20 focusing on the complex technical skills required in car and vehicle making and 11 administrative apprenticeships.

"I knew nothing about cars beyond the fact that they have four wheels and a steering wheel," says Priscilla, who is training in car mechatronic systems, the multidisciplinary fusion of mechanical engineering, electronics and computer science that features in today's vehicles and in the robots that increasingly make them.

"As far back as I can remember, I was interested in technical things," she says. "A friend of mine was already doing a mechatronics apprenticeship here and he spoke very positively about it. The chance to earn while

training instead of continuing school was also a big draw."

So in the summer of 2015, following an online test to assess her ability in maths and science, Priscilla came to the Sindelfingen plant for a 'Let's Benz' recruiting week.

"I took the application test, had an interview, met some apprentices and got to try some things out. I really

liked what I saw and the fact that girls were being trained, although hopefully the number will increase even more. A week later I was told I had been accepted; I started that September on a three-and-a-half year apprenticeship."


Also starting was 17-year-old Max Ehrlich, who is training to be a construction mechanic.

"We are in charge of all

the body parts of the car. I was always interested in cars, but I knew nothing about how they were physically constructed," he says.

LOOMING SKILLS SHORTAGES are driving apprenticeships to the top of the political agenda in Europe. "Forty percent of European employers report that they cannot find people with the right skills to grow and innovate," reports the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, which is dedicated to strengthening the quality, supply

“
More than
half of young
Germans
become
apprentices
when they
leave
full-time
education.”



Thomas Fuhry, head of vocational training, with Priscilla Wölbling and Max Ehrlich in the background.

and image of apprenticeships across Europe. And while 13 million people across Europe are involved in vocational and educational training (VET) programs leading to a qualification these often involve little more than workplace visits for school pupils.

More than half of young Germans become apprentices when they leave their full-time education. What makes German apprenticeships different is that they are based on the concept of “dual training”, whereby practice and theory go hand in hand. In school, the curriculum followed by apprentices is related to the particular job they are being trained for.

Nevertheless, it is important that they have good common knowledge as

well, so subjects such as German, ethics and social studies are also taught.

As Thomas Fuhry, head of vocational training at Sindelfingen, explains: “We hire our apprentices as employees—they start on just under €1,000 a month—and we supply all the hands-on practical training and invest heavily in our facilities and new technologies required to train them. But our apprentices also spend time going to a technical school where they learn the theory behind the practice. The German government pays for that part of their apprenticeship.”

All major German companies, such as Bosch and Siemens, and many smaller ones, offer similar dual training, working with government,



Virtual welding forms part of Max Ehrlich's training.

technical universities and chambers of commerce to tailor training to future needs. In 2014 nearly 1.4 million young Germans were in 350 dual apprenticeship programs, which last two to three-and-a-half years with an average graduation age of 22.

COULD THIS BECOME the model for the rest of Europe, where most countries offer an often-bewildering patchwork of less-focused training opportunities? In the UK, where less than 2 percent of 16-year-olds become apprentices, the government has pledged to hit a target of three million apprenticeships by 2020. But the independent research body the Institute for Fiscal Studies has

branded the initiative's funding, based on an employers' levy, as "poor value for money".

In France, where youth unemployment is around 21 percent and only about a quarter of youngsters take up apprenticeships, the problem is not so much the quality of the teaching and work experience. The obstacle remains traditional snobbery towards vocational training in a country where the Grandes Ecoles focus on creating elites and the rules on apprenticeships seem to change faster than firms can fill in the forms.

Those countries with the most effective apprenticeship systems—Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands—have largely adopted the Ger-

man model.

“The combination of schooling and practicing and the chance to learn on the job is a foundation of German industry,” says Thomas Fuhry. “I think that this is the formula to succeed.” Indeed, former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder began his career with an apprenticeship in retail sales at a hardware store.

Daimler and Mercedes-Benz have been offering systematic on-the-job training since 1916, but apprenticeships in Germany have their roots in the Middle Ages, when craft guilds took on young people to learn skills from master craftsmen. It is no coincidence that modern Germany has the lowest youth unemployment in Europe: 6.7 percent against the EU average of 16.7 percent.

IN THE THIRD WEEK of every month Priscilla and Max attend the nearby Gottlieb-Daimler School, named after Daimler’s founder, to learn the theory they need to do their respective jobs well.

The apprentices’ training center at the main Sindelfingen plant covers two large floors. It is packed with Mercs up on ramps and on test beds and has exactly the same equipment the apprentices will use when they start work in the factory, including the

latest robotics for assembly and paint finishes, diagnostic electronics, milling and stamping machines.

But before they join the fast-changing world of hybrid cars and driverless technology, all apprentices, sporting their blue Mercedes overalls, begin with the basics. “In my first year I

learned how a four-stroke engine works by taking it apart and putting it back together in perfect working order,” Priscilla explains. “Then we moved on to the electrics.” In his area, Max began with just a small aspect of body construction.

“To teach the whole car in one step would be too complex and an information overload,” says Joaquim Santos,

who is responsible for international qualification and apprentice projects at Sindelfingen and who completed his own apprenticeship at Daimler 34 years ago.

“We start small and work it up until they have an intimate knowledge of product and processes. People like Priscilla and Max, who come with little car knowledge but a desire to learn, make really good apprentices. In my experience, those who think they already know everything about cars tend to fail the selection test!”

Throughout their training these

“
Those countries with the most effective apprentice schemes have largely adopted the German model.

young engineers are keenly aware that an apprentice scheme is not a dress rehearsal for the world of work; rather, it is the first step in what Mercedes hopes will be a long career. And that first step gets increasingly technical.

The apprentices now use 3D printing in the training center's Future Lab to make prototype parts, just as they do in the plant's Advanced Design Center. A prototype can be made in minutes rather than days or weeks.

Max dons a *Robocop*-style mask to do some virtual welding on a computer screen. "Learning to weld virtually is not only safer but is also very cost-effective because you don't waste materials if you make a mistake," he says.

Even so, working by hand is still a respected skill and high standards are demanded. Those apprentices specializing in paint and coating technology know they will eventually be working with robot painters, but first they have to learn all the different color mixes and how to spray car bodies manually.

"My second-year practical examination project is to make a tool that can be used in the production line," Max says. "It has to be precise and working perfectly and I have six hours to do it." Priscilla's challenge is to devise three

different diagnostic tests for electrical systems and engine performance. Then there is a series of written exams.

The company's history is not forgotten. Among the shining contemporary models is a working replica of an 1886

Benz Patent-Motorwagen, regarded as the world's first automobile, and one of several made by the apprentices.

“

All apprentices who successfully complete their Mercedes training are offered a full-time contract.

”

“TODAY'S apprentices will not be spending their lives just making cars,” says Thomas Fuhry. “With all the robotics and technologies at their disposal they will be first and foremost problem solvers

and communicators.

“It is really important that they understand the concept of VUCA—the challenges of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity—which we all face in the industrial, economic and political environment. Tomorrow nothing will be as we expect it to be today.”

So why do other countries not follow the German model? Well, to some extent they do because German global companies have plants around the world following the dual training approach. Daimler AG has just over 2,000 apprentices around the globe and runs school-cooperation programs involving 4,000 young

people in China, India and other countries where it has a presence. Overseas apprentices also often visit the training center at Sindelfingen.

“Traditionally, German companies invest in their future,” says Joaquim Santos, who has run apprenticeship schemes for Daimler in Brazil and the United States. “I think many countries, such as America, are focusing on short-term solutions.”

MAX EHRLICH IS IN IT FOR THE long-term. “When I finish my apprenticeship I want to go to university to study for a mechanical engineering degree, before coming back to Daimler.” This he can do with financial support from the Daimler Academic

Program. Priscilla says she might like to move into R&D.

Beyond the early starts, eight-hour days and the demands of work and study that eat into their leisure time, neither Priscilla nor Max sees a downside to life as an apprentice. They are quietly confident and, despite their youth, skilled time managers. Both love playing sport (she baseball and biking, he squash and gym) and hanging out with friends; Priscilla also volunteers at her local fire department.

All apprentices who successfully complete their Mercedes training are offered a contract. When asked what the dropout rate is, Thomas Fuhry looks perplexed. “Why, it’s zero,” he says, breaking into a smile. ■

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CELEBRITIES TALK BRITAIN

TV personalities share their thoughts on our fair nation:

Danny Dyer on etiquette: “Gonna watch a bit of #questiontime while munching on a toasted crumpet...sophistication.”

Kevin Bridges on the Royal Family: “It must be pretty surreal, being Prince Harry and William on a stag night. Just you and your mates, stuffing pictures of your gran into your lap-dancer’s bra.”

Karl Pilkington on having a stiff upper lip: “I’m really happy. I just don’t choose to show it.”

Frankie Boyle on English-Scottish relations: “In Scotland we have mixed feelings about global warming, because we’ll get to sit on the mountains and watch the English drown.”

SOURCE: BUZZFEED.COM

Points to Ponder

THE INVENTORS we remember didn't invent anything. They're the people who took somebody else's invention and made it commercially viable.

MARK KURLANSKY,
author, in *Time*

IF JOHN LENNON was right that life is what happens when you're making other plans, parenthood is what happens when everything is flipped over and spilling everywhere and you can't find a towel or a sponge or your "inside" voice.

KELLY CORRIGAN,
writer, in her book *Lift*

PEOPLE ALWAYS tell me, "There aren't enough hours in the day to get to everything I want to do!" which is true. But we don't live our lives in days; we live our lives in weeks. Think 168 hours instead of 24 hours, and everything changes.

LAURA VANDERKAM,
author,
in *Philadelphia*

AS LONG AS everybody smells good and has a smile on their face, that's a beauty regime.

JULIA ROBERTS,
actress, in *People*

It's OK to be afraid, because you can't be brave or courageous without fear.

DAVE CHAPPELLE,
comedian,
in a speech at Allen University



WHY DOES ANYONE GO on spring vacation? It seems odd to fly to a tropical destination at the very moment one of the great astonishments of life on Earth is taking place right at home. When friends tell me their spring-vacation plans, they mention “escape.” Really? You want to escape spring? That’s like fleeing paradise.

GEORGE BALL,
chairman and CEO of Burpee,
in the *Wall Street Journal*

GRACE IS MY FAVORITE church word. A state of being ... Something you can obtain. Perfection is out of reach. But grace—grace you can reach for.

ELIZABETH SCOTT,
author, in her book *Living Dead Girl*

WHEN I LOOK AT THE INTERNET, I feel the same as when I’m walking through Coney Island. It’s like carnival barkers, and they all sit out there and go, “Come on in here and see a three-legged man!” So you walk in, and it’s a guy with a crutch.

JON STEWART,
former host of The Daily Show,
in *New York*



If you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain.

DOLLY PARTON,
musician and actress, in a tweet

WORKING IN THE HOSPITAL teaches you that there are only two kinds of people in the world: the sick and the not sick. If you are not sick, shut up and help.

HOPE JAHREN,
geobiologist, in her book, *Lab Girl*

Wild Beauty of the Desert



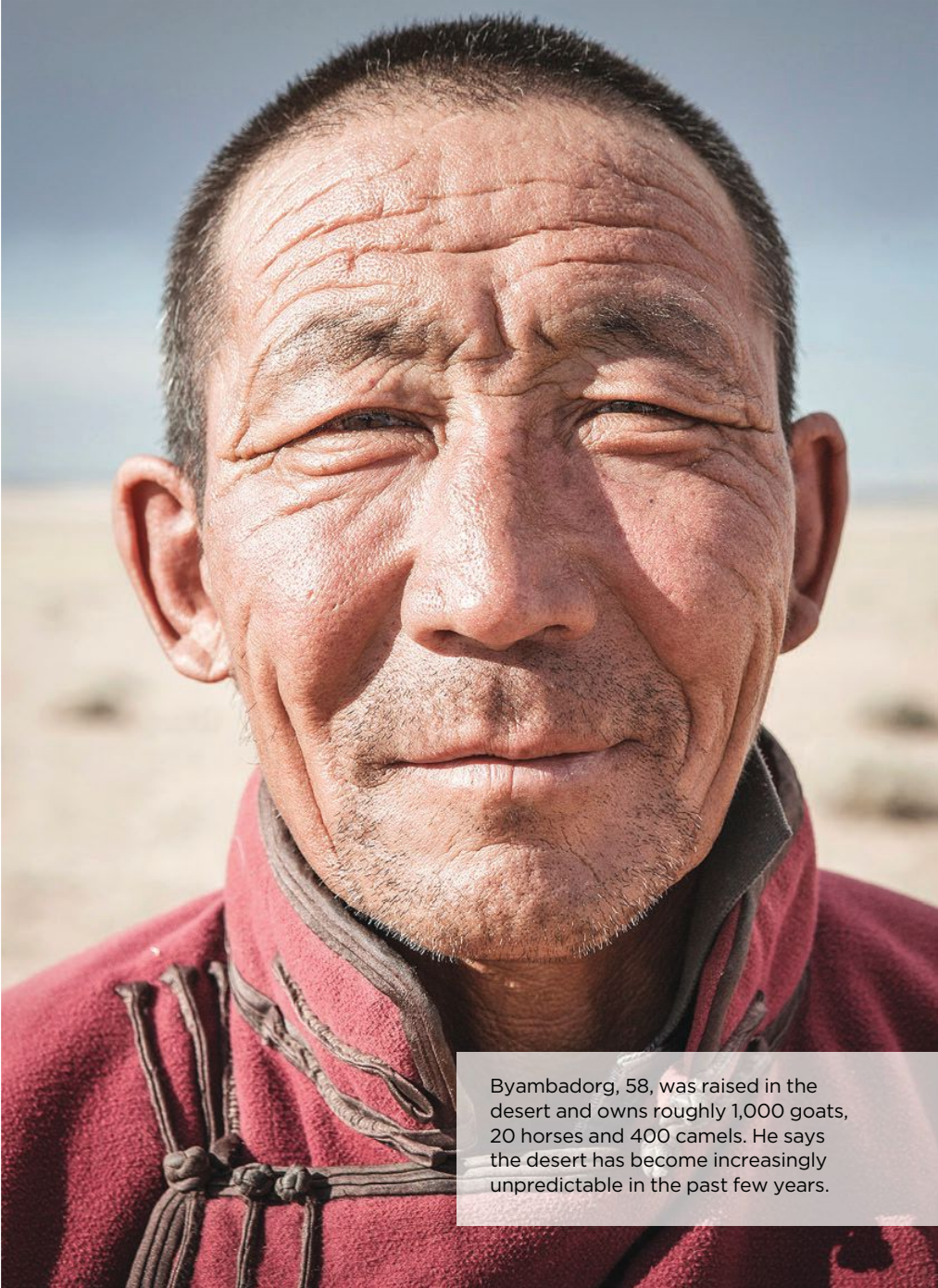
A young girl with her hair in a ponytail, wearing a black leather jacket with a fur collar, dark leggings, and pink shoes, stands on the back of a brown camel. She is holding a rope. The camel is lying down on a dry, dusty ground. A red saddle with a yellow and white pattern is on the camel's back. The background is a vast, flat, arid landscape under a clear blue sky.

A photographer goes to
the Gobi in Mongolia
to capture images of an
age-old nomad culture

PHOTOS BY BARBARA DOMBROWSKI
TEXT BY CORNELIA KUMFERT

Few pack animals can carry as much weight and travel as far as a camel. The nomads have bred them for millennia. At market, white camels (previous page) claim the highest prices.





Byambadorg, 58, was raised in the desert and owns roughly 1,000 goats, 20 horses and 400 camels. He says the desert has become increasingly unpredictable in the past few years.



During a normal week, ten-year-old Khongurzul lives in Dalanzadgad, the capital of South Gobi, where she goes to school. She looks forward to her weekends at home in the desert.





Breeding goats is considered essential to the nomads, but the animals graze plants down to their roots, giving the vegetation zero chance to recover.



The Gobi is a vast desert and semidesert region 1,600 km long and 500 to 1,000 km wide. Each year, grazing fields are lost to huge dunes like this one.



The Mongolian horse is at home on the grassy steppes. These robust animals can withstand temperatures as low as minus 40° Celsius.



Camel breeder Tschulun lives with his wife and their two children in a traditional round tent known as a Ger, which serves as living room, bedroom and kitchen combined.

Shamanism has been practiced for centuries in Mongolia. Below, Shaman Budsana prepares for a ritual in Ulaanbaatar.

See more at:
www.tropic-ice.com



How the strange new science of 'suspended animation' will save lives **BY RENE EBERSOLE** FROM *POPULAR SCIENCE*

BACK FROM THE DEAD

An illustration on the right side of the page shows a hand holding a flashlight. A bright beam of light from the flashlight illuminates the background, which is a soft, yellowish glow. The flashlight is dark, and the hand is rendered in a light, sketchy style.

ONE AFTERNOON IN FEBRUARY 2011, Kelly Dwyer strapped on snowshoes and set out to hike a beaver pond trail near her home in Hooksett, New Hampshire. Hours later, the 46-year-old teacher hadn't returned home. Her husband, David, was worried. Grabbing his cellphone and a flashlight, he told their two daughters he was going to look for Mom. As he made his way toward the pond, he called out for Kelly. That's when he heard the moans.

Running toward them, David phoned Laura, 14, and told her to call 911. His flashlight beam soon settled on Kelly, submerged up to

ILLUSTRATION BY THE RED DRESS



her chest in a hole in the ice. As David clutched her from behind to keep her head above water, Kelly slumped into unconsciousness. By the time rescue crews arrived, her body temperature was in the 20s Celsius. Before she could reach the ambulance, her heart stopped. The crews attempted CPR—a process doctors continued for three hours at a hospital nearby. They warmed her frigid body. Noth-



IMPROVEMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY MEAN THAT THE ODDS OF COMING BACK FROM DEATH ARE GETTING BETTER.

ing. Even defibrillation wouldn't restart her heart. David assumed he'd lost her for good.

But Kelly's life wasn't over. A doctor rushed her to the nearby Catholic Medical Center, where a new team hooked her up to a cardiac bypass machine that more aggressively warmed, filtered and oxygenated her blood and rapidly circulated it through her body. Finally Kelly's temperature crept back up. After she'd spent five hours medically dead, doctors turned off the machine and her heart began beating again.

Incredibly, Kelly Dwyer walked out

of the hospital two weeks later with only minor nerve damage to her hands.

Bringing people back from the "dead" is not science fiction any more. Typically, after just minutes without a heartbeat, brain cells start dying and an irreversible, lethal process is set in motion. But when a person becomes severely cold before his heart quits, his metabolism slows. The body sips so little oxygen that it can remain in a suspended state for hours without permanent cell damage.

Thanks to improvements in technology (like the cardiac bypass machine that saved Kelly's life) the odds are getting better for coming back from the edge. They are so good, in fact, that a handful of scientists and medical experts across the United States is now looking for ways to suspend life in order to perform surgeries without the threat of a trauma patient bleeding to death, or to prevent tissue damage during the treatment of cardiac events.

The U.S. Department of Defense too is heavily involved. In 2010, it launched a \$34-million initiative called Biochronicity. Ninety percent of war casualties result from bleeding out on the battlefield.

"The question is, can we decrease the person's demand for blood so, for a period of time, he actually doesn't need blood flowing," explains Colonel Matthew Martin, a 49-year-old trauma surgeon whose research is funded through Biochronicity. The purpose would be making a wounded soldier

able to survive longer “so that we can get somewhere to treat the injury,” says the active-duty surgeon.

DR. MARK ROTH’S OFFICE at the 15-acre Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle is crammed with boxes of newspaper clippings about people who came back from the “dead.” There is a skier in Norway, a toddler in Saskatchewan, two fishermen who capsized in the Gulf of Alaska—all of whom had flat-lined in the freezing cold.

“I’ve been a student of these cases for 20 years,” Dr. Roth tells me. At 60, he is widely recognized as a pioneer in the pursuit of using suspended animation in trauma treatment.

Hunched over a microscope, he invited me to take a look at a petri dish bustling with tiny, hours-old zebra fish. “Because they’re transparent, you can see their hearts beating and the blood moving about the tail,” he says. “This is the core of our own animation—the heart and blood flow. We’re going to take away the oxygen and alter their animation.”

Dr. Roth began piping nitrogen into a transparent box containing the petri dish. “In time the whole system in there will become straight-up nitrogen, which will get to these creatures and turn them off,” he says. “In the morning, we’ll put them back into the room air, and they’ll reanimate.”

Then he prepped a similar experiment. Taking two petri dishes of nem-



After falling through the ice while snowshoeing, Kelly Dwyer was “medically” dead for five hours before doctors got her heart beating again.

atodes at precisely the same stage of development, he placed one dish in his nitrogen box and left the other on a lab bench. His hypothesis: The gassed worms’ metabolism should gradually slow until they’re essentially suspended in time, while the fresh-air siblings should keep getting bigger. Because nematodes grow quickly, his theory would be proved or disproved by tomorrow.

Up until the early 2000s, Dr. Roth’s experiments were confined to the scale of tiny creatures. Then one night he was watching a television docu-

mentary featuring a cave in Mexico that caused cavers to pass out because of an invisible hydrogen-sulfide gas.

"If you breathe too much of it, you collapse—you appear dead," says Dr. Roth. "But if you're brought out from the cave, you can be reanimated without harm. I thought: 'Wow! I have to get some of this!'"

After exposing mice to 80 parts per million of that gas at room temperature, he found he could induce a suspended state that could later be reversed by returning the mice to regular air, with no neurological harm. For Dr. Roth, it was a breakthrough. The medical community immediately took notice, seeing his work's potential. A \$500,000 "genius grant" from a philanthropic foundation followed soon after.

Since then Dr. Roth has identified four compounds (sulfur, bromine, iodine and selenium) that he now calls "elemental reducing agents," or ERAs. These naturally exist in small amounts in humans and can slow a body's oxygen use.

Dr. Roth wants to develop an ERA as an injectable drug that can, for one, prevent tissue damage that can occur after doctors halt a heart attack. This happens when normal blood flow resumes; the sudden rush of oxygen can permanently damage heart cells, leading to chronic heart disease (the leading cause of death in the world).

Roth's current research in pigs shows that if he injects an ERA before the blockage is removed, it's possible

to keep the heart muscle from being destroyed. Human trials on heart-attack patients are already underway, and Dr. Roth says ERAs could one day be used for a range of medical conditions, including organ and limb transplants.

DR. SAM TISHERMAN HATES the phrase "suspended animation." As director of the Center for Critical Care and Trauma Education at University of Maryland's School of Medicine in Baltimore, he prefers 'emergency preservation and resuscitation (EPR).' "We want to preserve the person long enough to stop the bleeding and resuscitate him."

Unlike Dr. Roth's method, Dr. Tisherman's approach is to cool patients into a hypothermic state, essentially inducing the same state that Kelly Dwyer was in. To do that, he replaces blood in the body with extremely cold saline solution, quickly reducing the patient's core temperature to a frigid 10 to 12 degrees Celsius. If it works, it could be a lifesaver.

Routine care for trauma victims with injuries such as gunshot wounds typically involves inserting a breathing tube, and then using intravenous catheters to replace fluids and blood while a surgeon attempts to repair the damage before the patient's heart fails. "It's a race against time," Dr. Tisherman says, "and only 5 percent of people in cardiac arrest from trauma survive."

Inducing a hypothermic state could buy surgeons as much as an hour to operate. Afterward, they could resume blood flow and gradually rewarm the patient. Dr. Tisherman and his colleagues have spent more than two decades perfecting their procedure in animals. In 2014, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration gave them the go-ahead for the first human trials to begin. If human patients follow the success of the animal studies, their chances of survival could double.

After four tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, Col. Matthew Martin, the army surgeon, was trying to achieve the same results as Dr. Tisherman—without extensive equipment that would be impossible to bring to the front lines. That means using chemicals—not cold—to slow the body’s clock.


“The goal is to create ‘hip-pocket therapy,’” he says, “where a medic could carry a drug in his bag and whip out a syringe for a severely injured soldier, inject it and start the process of suspended animation, giving the soldier more time to get to a surgical facility.”

He and his colleagues have identified a series of enzymes known as

PI 3-kinase, which helps regulate metabolism. They also found a drug that controls the activity of those enzymes and is already in clinical trials as a potential cancer treatment. After examining the effects of the drug on pigs, Martin’s early data suggests that administering it at the moment of ischemia—when blood flow to the heart becomes inadequate—can slow down the metabolism without harming the animal.

MEANWHILE, BACK AT Dr. Roth’s lab in Seattle, he’s likewise hoping the answer to stalling time lies within a portable, injectable drug.

A day after putting his nematodes to sleep, Roth returned to his lab to check on their progress. As expected, the little worms that spent the night in the nitrogen chamber hadn’t grown but were easily brought back to life when exposed to fresh air. At the same time, the ones left out on the table had grown noticeably larger. Soon they would have babies of their own.

It’s a far cry from saving a human trauma patient. But witnessing those tiny worms “resurrected,” I felt I’d just seen a glimpse of the future. 

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THE WORTH OF ALL THINGS

What is a cynic? A man who knows the price of everything
and the value of nothing.

OSCAR WILDE



How to make choices
that reflect your values

Do the **RIGHT** *Thing*

BY LUC RINALDI

ASTRID BAUMGARDNER HAD grown accustomed to her morning routine. Her husband, a securities lawyer, woke up each day excited to head to the office; Baumgardner, meanwhile, felt more inclined to stay in bed. She *should* have loved her job: she was a partner at a law firm in New York and brought in a hefty salary. But she couldn't muster the enthusiasm she saw in her husband—the position didn't fulfill her need to help people or give her a sense of purpose.

So, in 2000, after 24 years in law, she left the profession, sacrificing prestige

for passion. After a series of positions in different fields, she earned her certificate as a life coach in 2008 and started her own business.

Today, as a lecturer and coordinator of career strategies at the Yale University School of Music (a position she's held since 2011—and loves), Baumgardner helps students make decisions as tough as her own. Through her story and theirs, she's discovered that people feel most fulfilled when they choose options that align with their most deeply held values.

Here's how to stay true to yours.

KNOW YOUR VALUES

If you hope to shape your life according to your ideals, you have to know what those ideals are. Baumgardner begins her sessions by having participants identify the concepts that are most important to them from a list: honesty, structure, family and so on. “Those qualities are influenced by your parents, your culture and society as a whole,” she says, “but you have to take ownership of your own decisions.”

Here’s the tricky part: almost all of these qualities are things most of us aspire to hold dear. “There are a lot of ‘shoulds,’” Baumgardner says. For instance, we feel like we *should* covet adventure, even when, in reality, we spend our free time bingeing on Netflix series. To determine which principles are more than just aspirational, she asks her clients to reflect on situations that resonate with them.

For one of Baumgardner’s students, creativity and lifelong learning was key. “He felt that being in an orchestra would stifle that desire—he wouldn’t have autonomy over what and how he played,” she says. After graduating, he launched a career as a soloist and lecturer, and became the director of a new-music ensemble that premieres works by contemporary composers.

FIND THE BEST TIME

Identifying your values will steer you in the right direction, but a few strategies can help you follow through. Before you make a big decision, do

something that will put you in a good mood: exercise, socialize with friends, volunteer. Researchers theorize that such activities enhance our mood, which boosts dopamine levels in certain areas of the brain, improving our cognitive abilities and helping us weigh different options.

In one 2013 study, Ohio State University (OSU) psychology professor



A SINGLE DECISION
CAN SEEM LIKE A
TUG-OF-WAR, BUT
LIFE CHOICES DON'T
NEED TO BE AN
EITHER/OR QUESTION.

Ellen Peters followed two groups: one that received small bags of candy and one that didn’t. The mild positive feelings inspired by the gift influenced subjects to make better choices and improved their working memory. “If you can make someone just a little happier, they may become a better decision maker,” says Peters, who is also the director of OSU’s Decision Sciences Collaborative.

Trouble is, the toughest decisions often arrive at the most inconvenient times. When you’re under duress, Peters recommends consulting a family member, a friend or, in certain cases, a professional. They can provide ad-

vice that's not tinged by the work deadline, spousal drama or leaky roof sapping your mental energy.

BALANCE ALL OPTIONS

Of course, people make decisions that contradict their ideals all the time, no matter how single-minded or happy they may be. "There are lots of values we hold dear, and they frequently come into conflict with one another," says Peters. "It's not so much that people don't know what they want; it's that there are many things we desire, and we don't always know how to make the trade-off."

A retired couple, for example, might be torn between yearning to be actively involved in their grandchildren's lives and using their free time to travel. While a single decision can seem like a tug-of-war between competing impulses, broader life choices don't need to be a definitive either/or. That aspiring-globetrotter pair might temporarily put off an epic trip to explore locations closer to home, or commit to setting aside time for vacation with their family every summer, no matter what else comes up.

An omnivore yearning to cut out animal products may find it easiest to make small-scale adjustments that support the principles that prompted his dietary shift. If he opposes factory farming, he could consider eating ethically raised meat; if he's after health benefits, he can opt for what


food guru Mark Bittman refers to as a "vegan before 6 p.m." diet.

STAY THE COURSE

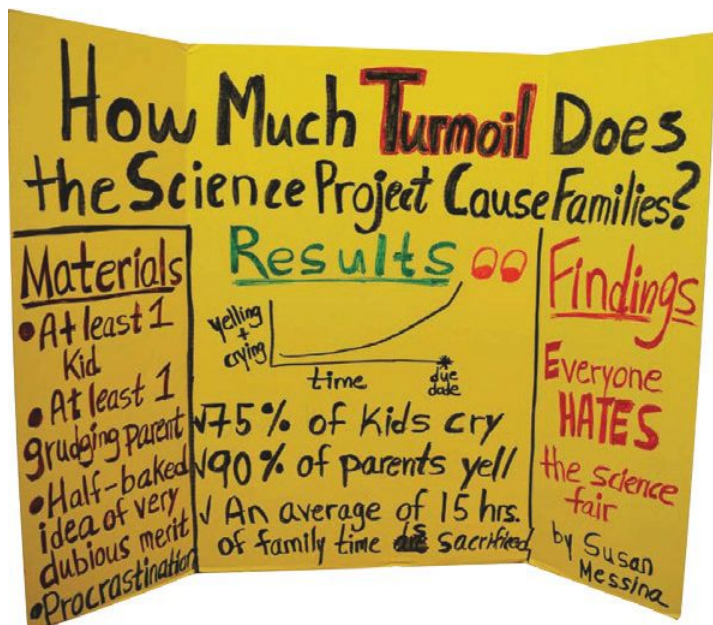
At Yale, students often stumble into Baumgardner's office when they're grappling with major decisions or life changes. Though each case is unique, Baumgardner typically starts by examining what led her client down a path, then brainstorming ways for them to reclaim that inspiration.

A pianist might benefit from listening to the composer who sparked her interest in the instrument, for example. Following that, surrounding yourself with people who share your passion can also prevent you from faltering. "A group can remind you, 'Hey, we're doing this because we love it,'" she says.

If you're still struggling, there's no shame in revising your core values. If you're determined to pitch in at an out-of-the-cold meal program but spend the evening with pals instead, maybe camaraderie is more important to you than volunteerism. Better yet, find opportunities to give back with your friends.

You may also learn that what you believed was a core priority actually has much more to do with living up to the expectations of your parents, co-workers or culture. "If your values align with who you really are, no one will have to ask you to make those choices," Baumgardner says. "It'll just feel right." 

Life's Like That



SEEN AT THE SCIENCE FAIR

SCENE: Me using the Siri app on my iPhone.

Me: Siri, call my wife.

Siri: Samantha McLaughlin is not in your contacts.

Me: Samantha Gibbs is my wife.

Siri: I've added Samantha Gibbs as your wife.

Me: Call my wife.

Siri: Which wife?

TAYLOR GIBBS, *Visalia, California*

MY YOUNG SON ran to me, crying. "Daddy, I stubbed my toe," he sobbed.

"Let me kiss it and make it better," I said. "Which toe was it?"

"The one that has no roast beef."

GARY NEAL, *Clearwater, Florida*

AH, MARRIAGE. I was standing in front of the bathroom mirror one evening admiring my reflection,

when I posed this question to my wife of 30 years: “Will you still love me when I’m old, fat, and balding?”

She answered, “I do.”

MICHAEL JORDAN, *Moss Point, Mississippi*

THE WATER I WAS HEATING for pasta refused to boil, and if my 12-year-old son was right, I wasn’t helping by constantly checking on it.

“It’s like that old saying,” he said. “A watched website never loads.”

HELEN RUSS, *Medford, Oregon*

WHEN I BOUGHT BEER at the grocery store, the clerk asked for my birthdate.

I said, “10-3-60.”

Her next question: “Is that ‘19’ 60?”

DAVID PHENIX, *Columbia, South Carolina*

A LONG LINE leading to the ladies’ room greeted my friend’s wife. Since desperate times call for desperate measures, my friend took her into the empty men’s room, then stood guard. When she exited a few minutes later, a man waiting his turn called out, “I hope you remembered to put up the toilet seat.”

RAYMOND V. PACKOUZ, *Lake Oswego, Oregon*

MY FRIENDS gave their science-loving son a small rocket powered by vinegar and baking soda. The boy and his friend went outside and launched and relaunched the rocket until they ran through all the white vinegar. Rummaging through the

pantry in the kitchen, he discovered a bottle of balsamic vinegar. Pulling it off the shelf, he told his friend, “Let’s break out the good stuff.”

DEBBIE CAMPBELL, *Louisville, Kentucky*



MSW?! (MOM SAY WHAT?!)

Texting acronyms can stump even the best parents:

Mom: Your great-aunt just passed away. LOL.

Son: Why is that funny?

Mom: It’s not funny, David! What do you mean?

Son: Mom, LOL means Laughing Out Loud.

Mom: I thought it meant Lots of Love. I have to call everyone back.

Daughter: I got an A in Chemistry.

Mom: WTF!

Daughter: Mom, what do you think WTF means?


Mom: Well That’s Fantastic.

Mom: What do IDK, LY & TTYL mean?

Son: I don’t know, love you, talk to you later.

Mom: OK, I will ask your sister.

Source: lifebuzz.com



Communal and cathartic, each
spring this spectacular ritual electrifies
the citizens of Valencia

Night of Fire & Fun

BY LIA GRAINGER

PHOTO: © BORIS STOIMENOV / SHUTTERSTOCK

*Valencians gather to witness "La Cremà,"
the burning of monumental figures
on the final night of Las Fallas.*



WE SAT AROUND A long table in the floodlit street, the chilly Valencian midnight breeze

doing nothing to cool our anticipation. My companions were men, women and children from the Casal Esparteros, a neighborhood *casal* (club) whose main purpose was to erect the collection of enormous, cartoonish figures that towered over us as we sat and drank.

It was the second night of *Las Fallas*, the most important festival in Valencia, Spain, and I sensed these *falleros* (those taking part in *Las Fallas*) were looking for mischief.

An older member of the *casal* unfolded a long, papery spool and laid it in a ring around the table. Then, as we goaded him on with laughs and shouts, he lit one end, and in an instant the long string of firecrackers exploded all around us.

I squeezed my eyes shut tight. When I opened them seconds later, everyone was cheering and hugging, the smell of burnt gunpowder in the air. The giant artful figures smiled overhead, somehow in on the party.

IN THE SPANISH CITY of Valencia, spring is welcomed with *Las Fallas*, a street festival that celebrates renewal and communal creativity on a colossal scale. Hundreds of local *fallera* groups or clubs each erect a collection of monumental figures or *fallas* (pup-

pets) and place them in the street to be admired. On the final night, most of the *fallas*—except one or two of the more outstanding—are set on fire and destroyed.

Las Fallas is a five-day assault on the senses, celebrated from March 15 to March 19 every year. It is a barrage of brass marching bands, costumed *falleros*, fireworks, bullfights, paella, endless drinks, and games with firecrackers. Overseeing the chaos from as much as 41 meters overhead are the *fallas* themselves, spot-lit observers of this annual mayhem.

I'd come to Valencia to gape at the mammoth *fallas* with the rest of the throngs, so the next morning, Friday, I set out to track down another one.

At 16 meters high, the *falla* of *Na Jordana* stood even with the three-story buildings that surrounded it. In the thick crowds milling about the monument's base, I met Alex Campón Moya. A lifelong *fallero*, the industrial engineer was eager to talk about the festival's history.

"The festival has pagan origins," explained Alex. Back in medieval Valencia, the city's many craftsmen extended their daylight working hours during winter with candlelight. These candles were perched on a special, multi-armed candelabrum called a *parot*. When spring finally arrived, workers took their parots out into the street and burned them to celebrate the changing season. Over time, workers began dressing their parots in old rags.



Clockwise from above: The Bollywood-themed falla of Casal Convento Jerusalén, 2017; a “niñot” of Donald Trump, and one of a Mona Lisa-faced woman. The 2017 members of the Casal Esparteros wait for their “fallera major” to join them on a procession around the city.





Fireworks exploding before La Cremà on the final night of festivities.

“At some point the fallas became a way to mock well-known locals, like the baker or the carpenter,” said Alex. From this evolution the *niñot* or doll-like effigy was born. Today, niñots still poke fun at well-known figures; Trump, Obama, Merkel and other world leaders have featured prominently. Somewhere along the line Catholicism was thrown into the mix and today the festival is also a celebration of Saint Joseph, the patron saint of carpenters.

“This year our theme is *comedia*—the theater,” explained Alex, pointing upward. The falla’s crowning niñot loomed above us, an elegant, Mona Lisa-faced woman with blue hair. She wore an ornate 17th-century-style corset dress, her billowing skirt transforming into a pair of peacocks halfway

down her hips. Clustered around the base were 14 niñots. Some are larger than life, others more or less life size, in various cartoonish poses.

The work was overwhelming—and pricey. Alex explained that this year’s falla cost 100,000 euros. “Back in the day, the casal would pay for all of it,” he said. Today, fallas are sponsored. Da Jordana’s was flanked with banners advertising Alahambra beer, and a giant Coca Cola logo made from strings of red and white lights hung nearby.

There was also some not so subtle political satire on offer. Alex pointed to a life-sized figure of a white-haired man dressed as an old-time theatrical player and wearing a chastity belt. It is Ximo Puig, he explains, the president of the government of Valencia.

“He was here a few minutes ago,” says Alex.

What did this dignified politician think of the likeness?

“He loved it! In Valencia, it is the ultimate honor to be in a falla.”

I HEADED BACK to Casal Esparteros for lunch, where I’d been invited to try a local delicacy: *arrós amb fesols i naps*. At one end of the casal’s private clubhouse was a makeshift kitchen with three gas stoves a meter wide each. A crowd of men stood around an enormous steaming pot that held enough of the rich brew—rice, pork, white beans, onion and turnip—to feed 300.

My explosive introduction to the

festival the previous evening had come care of José Vicente López, the president of the *casal* and a round and rosy character bursting with pride for his *falla*.

More than art for art's sake, the *fallas* are a competition. José explained that as well as a monumental main *falla*, each club also builds a smaller sculptural work called a *falla infantil* that is designed to appeal to children. The *Esparteros* have won best *falla infantil* (children's *falla*) 13 times in the past 74 years—no small feat considering they aren't one of the wealthiest clubs.

This year their *falla infantil*, a pastel cacophony of elegantly curving figurines representing the four seasons, had received eighth place. "We thought we would do better," said José, his eyes betraying disappointment. Then he brightened. "We didn't win, but we always win at partying and fun." It was easy to believe him.

While I waited for my piping hot bowl of food to be served, I chatted with Gemma Gómez, a 12-year-old girl who happened to fill one of the most important roles in Las Fallas.

"It's an honor," said Gemma. Tiny and pretty with straight black hair pulled back into an impossibly elaborate braided bun, Gemma was the year's "fallera infantil," a designated club princess of sorts. She explained that it was her duty to attend events throughout the year and during the festivities as an official representative of the *falla*.

She has support from the club queen to her princess—the *fallera major*. This year it's 29-year-old María Cruz, and she holds hands with Gemma across the table as we chat. The petite princess seems mature beyond her age, until I ask her what she likes best about the festival.

She gives a wicked little smile: "The firecrackers."

IN VALENCIA, Gemma is far from alone in her unrelenting love of blowing things up. I'd only been in the city for 24 hours, and it was already clear that the constant onslaught of noise and explosions was at the very core of Las Fallas.

Strolling down an otherwise quiet street, I'd find myself jumping at the sudden bang of a firecracker and would turn to see a child barely old enough to walk with another one ready to go in hand. A parent would usually be casually supervising nearby—or goading the child to light another.

It rattled me, and I found myself wishing for a firecracker-free *falla* experience, something locals assured me was impossible.

Among those locals was Antonio Monzonís Guillén. At 85 years old, the tiny Valencian poet knew his hometown's famous festival better than most.

The artistry of it all inspired a young Antonio, and art and poetry became his life work. He even painted *fallas*—one of his pieces sits in the Museo del Artista Fallero.

Many people like Antonio were able to make a career in the arts thanks to Las Fallas. He explained that to the northeast of the city is a fallero suburb, the Ciudad del Artista Fallero. Roughly 200 artisans work out of some 70 studios, the majority big enough to house the construction of these huge and time-consuming projects.

The next morning I made my way to the artist's neighborhood to check out the museum. There I meet Alfredo Nadal, a painter and expert in the history of the Valencian tradition.

"Here you can see how the fallas were traditionally built," says Alfredo, walking over to an enormous, half-constructed figure. Its wooden skeleton was half exposed, overlaid in places by thin, reed-like strips of wood to give it mass, and then covered with layer upon layer of paper maché.

As we walked among the cartoonish figures, Alfredo explained that the biggest commissions could take a large team an entire year to build. Today, though, the traditional wood has been for the most part replaced with something cheaper and easier to manipulate: Styrofoam.

"This new method has to change," said Alfredo. When the fallas go up in flames on Sunday, the air won't be filled with clean, woody smoke, but with black clouds produced by the burning of plastic.

But it didn't seem to bother the hundreds of thousands who flocked to ogle the monumental structures. The city's

population more than doubles during the festival, to reach upward of 1.5 million. Endless crowds flowed up and down the cobbled streets, taking in the spectacle and—to my profound irritation—setting off more than the occasional firecracker.

LAS FALLAS SEEMED TO take place everywhere in the city at once, but every afternoon for a few brief minutes, the festival had a single focal point: the *mascletá* (fireworks display) at the city hall square.

I arrived early but already a crowd hundreds of thousands strong stood in my way. At 2 p.m. it started, first as a regular fireworks display—bright white explosions accompanied by echoing booms.

Then sound became the main event, a physical sensation as 120 decibels vibrated through every ounce of flesh and bone in the packed square. With one final, heart-shattering boom, it was over. A sigh emanated from the crowd, and then the whole teeming mass erupted in a collective cheer.

Though its pagan origins still permeate the festival, there is one custom at Las Fallas that is undeniably Catholic—*La Ofrenda*. Over the final weekend, more than 100,000 falleros pay homage to the patroness of Valencia with an offering of flowers. I headed down to La Plaza de la Virgen to take in the spectacle. In the center of the square stood a figurine of the Virgin 15 meters high

surrounded by a skeletal wooden cape.

Falleros streamed by in full formal dress and handed their bouquets to a team who carefully placed them to form an elaborate design over the wooden structure. As I drew closer, I noticed that as they finished making their offering, most of the falleros were in tears.

BY SUNDAY AFTERNOON, there was only one event left: *La Cremà*, the night of fire. In theory, the fallas infantiles are all burned at 10 p.m., and every massive falla is lit at the stroke of midnight. Unfortunately, there aren't enough fire engines and firemen and women to be at every falla at once, so the burnings are slightly staggered.

Several firemen with a massive hose arrived at the Esparteros casal a little after 10 p.m., and everyone assembled around the falla infantil. A string of explosive charges had already been carefully laid among the delicate figurines. The falleros, usually animated, fell quiet.

The queen and princess, María Cruz and Gemma Gómez, stepped forward and solemnly lit the charge that would destroy their falla.

There was a series of loud bangs

and flashes of light, and then slowly, quietly, amber flames began to creep their way up the falla.

The figures melted and wilted, cracking and spitting until nothing was left but the skeletal sticks that once held them up.

Gemma stood to one side in the embrace of Maria, tears running down her cheeks.

"It's over," she said quietly.

I STROLLED AWAY from the melancholy scene in search of a giant falla that would burn at midnight and settled upon a Bollywood-themed, 23-meter eruption of color by Falla Convento Jerusalén. As the flames rose five, six stories in the night sky, I turned to gaze at the thousands of fire-lit faces turned up in wonder.

The cremá felt timeless—something ancient and communal and cathartic that allowed every citizen in an entire city to simultaneously start with a clean slate. Walking back to my hotel that night, I spotted a small pile of undetonated firecrackers. I took one, lit it, and tossed it into the air, where it exploded with a delightful crack.

And you know what?

I liked it. 

*
* *

TAKE A DEEP BREATH

No revenge is more honorable than the one not taken.

SPANISH PROVERB



As a nurse with a long career in health care, Geri Taylor had seen Alzheimer's in action.

A woman faces the ravages
of this feared illness
and finds a new purpose in life



WAITING
FOR
ALZHEIMER'S

BY N. R. KLEINFIELD
FROM *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

IT BEGAN WITH WHAT SHE SAW IN THE bathroom mirror. Geri Taylor padded into the shiny bathroom of her New York City apartment and casually checked her reflection.

Immediately, she stiffened with fright. She didn't recognize herself. She gazed at her image, thinking: Oh, no, that's not me. Who's that in my mirror? That was late 2012. She was 69 years old and recently retired.

For some time she had experienced the sensation of clouds coming over her. There had been a few hiccups at her job. She was a nurse with a master's degree in public health, who'd moved into several administrative positions. Once, she was leading a staff meeting when she had no idea what she was talking about, her mind like a stalled engine. She got past the episode by quickly handing off the meeting to a colleague.

Certain mundane tasks stumped her. She told her husband, Jim Taylor, that the blind in the bedroom was broken. He showed her she was pulling the wrong cord. Kept happening. Finally, nothing else working, he scribbled on the wall which cord was which. Then there was the day she got off the subway unable to figure out why she was there.

So, yes, she'd had inklings that something was going wrong with her mind. But to not recognize her own face! This was when she had to accept a terrible truth. "Before then

I thought I could fake it," she would later explain. "This convinced me I had to come clean."

She confided her fears to her husband and made an appointment with a neurologist. The neurologist listened to her symptoms, took blood, gave her a standard cognitive test. She was asked to count backward from 100 in intervals of seven; she had to say the phrase: "No ifs, ands or buts." He told her three common words, said he was going to ask her about them later. When he called for them, she knew only one.

He gave a diagnosis of mild cognitive impairment, a common precursor to Alzheimer's disease. The first label put on what she had. Even then, she understood it was the footfall of what would come. Alzheimer's had struck her father, an aunt and a cousin. She long suspected it would eventually find her.

Alzheimer's is degenerative and incurable, and democratic in its reach. Worldwide nearly 47 million people

have Alzheimer's or related dementia. It is most common in Western Europe, with North America close behind. People live with it about eight to 10 years on average after diagnosis, though some people last for 20 years.

The disease moves in worsening stages to its ungraspable end. That is the familiar face of Alzheimer's, the withered person with the scrambled

band, also retired, live in Manhattan, and they keep a country place in Connecticut, about 70 miles outside the city.

In her health-care career, she had seen Alzheimer's in action. Now she would live it. Those who learn they have the disease often sink into a piercing black grief. They try to camouflage their symptoms from a dismissive



“THE BEGINNING IS LIKE PURGATORY,”
GERI SAID. “IT’S KIND OF A GRACE PERIOD.
YOU’RE WAITING FOR SOMETHING.”

mind marooned in a nursing home. But there is also the beginning, the waiting period. Now this was Geri Taylor. Waiting.

SHE NEVER CRIED

Geri remained energized, in control, the silent attack on her brain not yet in full force. But what about next month? Next year? The disease would be there. It nicks away at you, its progress messy and unpredictable.

“The beginning is like purgatory,” she said later. “It’s kind of a grace period. You’re waiting for something. Something you don’t want to come. It’s like a before-hell purgatory.”

Geri is an effervescent woman, with a round face and a froth of swirling hair. She is now 75. She and her hus-

band as they backpedal from life. But Geri pictured Alzheimer's differently, with defiance and through a dispassionate, unblinking lens.

Crossing into the pitted terrain of Alzheimer's made her question her purpose and hunt for possibility. Her career was concluded. Mortality was pressing in. Was she limited to backward glances, or could this be a new beginning?

At first her husband had trouble adjusting. He wouldn't meet her eyes. He drew away. Jim is two years younger than Geri, a lanky, warm-voiced man with a narrow face and precisely combed snow-white hair. To unfreeze the chill between them, it took a pep talk that put the present in softer perspective. Geri told him, “This is some-



Geri and Jim Taylor on their wedding day in 1993. With them are their children. From left: Mark Taylor, Heidi Taylor, Amy Taylor and Lloyd Widmer.

thing that is going to develop, but it hasn't developed yet."

Yes, something big had happened. Yet they were still alive. Still together, with more mileage in their future. So they moved forward into their reordered lives.

Many think of Alzheimer's as a memory disease, but its awful mysteries involve more than that. Not only was her memory leaving her, but also what is called "executive function." You lose the sequence of steps in a process, like a man who begins shaving before applying shaving cream.

She couldn't know the speed of her decline. It is different with everyone. The impact, she learned, in part appears determined by the amount of cognitive reserve, the mental capabilities that accumulate over a life-

time. She felt she had plenty of that—at least she hoped so.

Her doctor put her on Aricept, a drug designed to improve cognitive performance. It seemed to sharpen her thinking, especially in the morning, but she couldn't really gauge how much good it did.

Her belief system was optimism. She never cried. Depression, she knew, would lead her down alleys she didn't want to visit and held

nothing for her. Instead, the disease made her hungry for living. She vowed to plunge ahead and accelerate her longtime interest in photography. See friends more. She aimed to live the most fulfilling days she could at what seemed the bleakest possible time.

STRUGGLE TO KEEP UP

Jim Taylor drew up a to-do list, a way to get things started. When to tell the kids and the grandkids. How long to keep two homes. Advancing care need. End-of-life decisions.

Geri was advised not to tell people of her condition. Friends will fall away from you, she was told, stamp you off-limits. It was as if there were something illicit about contracting Alzheimer's. The Taylors wanted no part of that. "It was my decision to let

the disease be alive in my life,” Geri said. “You don’t have to just throw in the towel.”

They waited six months. She wanted time to try on her new life, so she could share the news without an overflow of emotion. Then in the summer of 2013, she told the children.

They were not surprised. They had detected glitches in her memory, and now they knew their origin. She postponed informing the grandchildren and moved on to other relatives and friends. Some accepted the news, others quibbled, the glare of the truth too bright. Are you sure ... You don’t seem

then forgot about it and moved on.

Others could hardly see it. She knew better. She was slipping, the disease whittling away at her. Certain words became irretrievable, sentences refused to come out. Belongings vanished: keys, glasses, earrings. She lost things and then forgot what she had lost.

A fraying at the edges of her life. “I know the tide is going out on my memory,” she would say.

She had trouble with time. “I have no clock in my head anymore,” is how she put it. “The concept of how long it takes to do something has been lost.”



HER NEW BEST FRIEND WAS HER IPHONE. MAYBE 20 TIMES A DAY SHE SCROLLED THROUGH THE CALENDAR.

... I didn’t notice ... Some practically tried to talk her out of it.

One friend combed the Internet for solutions and zeroed in on coconut oil. Some research suggests it may improve cognitive function. She mentioned it to Geri, who is generally scornful of charlatan cures and magical thinking. Yet she knew coconut oil was innocuous enough. So she began drinking it. “What harm could it do?” she wondered. “It’s good for nails, good for the skin.” She drank it for a few weeks, detecting no benefit,

If she had seen someone that morning, by afternoon she would wonder if it had happened some other day.

“I can’t reconstruct yesterday, and I’m not thinking about what will happen next. Because I don’t know.”

Her new best friend was her iPhone. She fished it out maybe 20 times a day and scrolled through the calendar and the notes she made to herself. Have to be where? When? Do what? Call whom? She used the camera to snap pictures of places to remember them.

In March 2014 she went to the Car-

ingKind organization in midtown Manhattan. She had been reluctant to visit, picturing the place as a resource for those sunk deeper into the disease's darkening world, that it was too early for her. But once she mingled, she knew she was right on time. "I thought these were my people," she said. "This is where I belong."

She enrolled in some programs, including a photography workshop. She

Alzheimer's was normal. In Memory Works, she felt protected and safe.

The chumminess among these strangers was amazing. They were hijacked by a ghastly disease. But they joked around, egged one another on. "Everyone's laughing," she reported, "and everyone is happy they are with people just like them who can't get the words out." Sitting there in the bubbly ambience, she would sometimes



SHE WAS A DIFFERENT PERSON WITH ALZHEIMER'S, TUGGED BACK AND FORTH ACROSS THE BORDERS OF THE DISEASE.

signed on for a Memory Works group that engaged in mind exercises. The moderator said the games would not cure them or forestall their decline. They were there to have fun.

Name words starting with the letter B.

Name foods starting with the letter M.

The best part was not having to mask her shortcomings. In the outside world it was a constant struggle to keep up. "People say: 'What do you mean? There's nothing wrong with you,'" she would explain. "But I'm always hiding things."

Outside, people with Alzheimer's are looked on as broken. Inside these walls, though, everyone had it.

think, We shouldn't be this happy.

It was as if they were all high. High on Alzheimer's.

COPING STRATEGIES

Geri became watchful when she was walking. Her gait had changed. She felt as if she was weaving, one wrong step away from whirling onto the floor. It was worst when she talked while walking. Once she stumbled and fell while conversing with friends. Her new rule: Talk only if necessary while walking.

One day she was driving in upstate New York, and she bumped into another car. There was no serious damage, but it was totally her fault. Not long after, she was driving with Jim



Her relationship with Jim is “better than ever” since learning she has Alzheimer’s.

when she came on some road work. A flagman motioned her to stop. Instead, she continued onward, feeling an irresistible urge to speak to the flagman. Finally, Jim got her to stop. She couldn’t explain her odd behavior.

That night, Jim suggested that she ought to stop driving, that she was using poor judgment. She lashed out at him, told him he used poor judgment all the time. Drove too fast. Tailgated. But the next day, once the weight of inevitability settled in, she agreed to cut back, drive only when absolutely necessary.

A friend showed her the “Find My Friends” app on her iPhone. “I hope this doesn’t offend you,” the friend said.

“No offense,” Geri replied. “I’ve al-

ready got it.” She had set it up with Jim, allowing him to track where she was through their phones, in case she got lost and had to be rescued.

She was a different person with Alzheimer’s, tugged back and forth across the borders of the disease. One day things were one way and then they were another. Feeling normal. Trapped in a diffuse cloud. Bursting with energy. Worn out. The disease wasn’t a straight line.

The fluctuations would lead her to question herself. “It’s the fraud complex that Alzheimer’s people have,” she said. “You have good days and bad days. And when you’re having a good stretch you think, Am I a fraud?”

But then the disease would clear its

throat and remind her. Some nights, she would walk in her sleep. One morning, she woke up and found herself stock-still in the living room, peering out the window. Sometimes she hallucinated and had creepy, involved dreams. She would scream in her sleep, and Jim had to shake her awake.

She felt like she was working at half-speed. "I can't just open my closet in the morning and put together what to wear. I lay things out the night be-

She had trouble keeping up in a conversation. "When I'm talking to friends, I'll prepare," she said. "Do some research. Like make sure to ask about the latest granddaughter. Which I forgot to do the other morning. Or to ask about the husband, making sure there is a husband."

One thing nagging at her was finding purpose in her life, a purpose to replace her career. She'd loved her work. She never wanted to simply walk the sidelines.



WITH HER BIRDS, THERE WAS NO NEED TO SCRABBLE FOR THE RIGHT WORD. SHE DIDN'T HAVE TO TALK TO THEM.

fore or start earlier in the morning. One thing I concentrate on is looking orderly. I don't want to look old and crazy. In a heartbeat, I know, I could look disorderly."

She lost interest in buying clothes. "When I go into a store now, there's too much. I can't distinguish among things."

Food also mattered less to her. She never liked grocery shopping, saw it as one of the "cranky" things in life. She liked it even less now. "One big symptom is the inability to cook and assemble," she said. "Now I'm happy with a plain sandwich, or I'm buying precooked chicken."

Photography had been a sideline for 30 years, but now she could really devote time to it. Birds were her avid interest. She put her best photos on cards and gave them as gifts.

Certainly, the photography was a salve. When she immersed herself in it, the world around her seemed to relax. The Alzheimer's felt oddly absent, not able to touch her. With her birds, there was no need to scrabble for the right word. She didn't have to talk to them. "For me, the disease doesn't exist when I'm taking pictures," she said.

The birds were wonderful. But were they enough? She didn't think so, but hadn't yet imagined what could be.

THIS IS HOW YOU FEEL

The CaringKind caregiver workshop began in the training room. Chairs were bunched around pushed-together tables. There were eight participants, Jim Taylor among them.

The moderator told the participants that eventually they would need support, too. “You can only bend so far before you break,” she said. She invited sharing. Driving came up. A woman said she got nervous when her husband almost ran a red light and stopped only because she yelled. Afterward, she confiscated his keys. He got furious. She relented. They were still hashing it out.

One frustrated woman, caring for her husband, said with a quaver in her voice: “You’re left on your own with this, looking all the time, watching—oh you repeated that two times, you repeated that three times. I don’t like it.”

Another woman said: “He probably doesn’t like it, either.”

The moderator brought up the organization’s medical alert program. Wandering is common with Alzheimer’s. It typically happens if there is a disruption in one’s routine. So the organization recommends everyone get an identification bracelet.

Next the moderator said she wanted to try an exercise. She handed everyone two sheets of paper. Each contained a star drawn in double lines. She asked them to draw a line

between those double lines, tracing the outline of the star. Once they finished, she asked how they felt about the experience.

Back came their answers: “Boring.” “Annoyance.”

She then handed everyone a small mirror. Now, on the second sheet, she wanted them to position the mirror so they could see the star in the reflection. Then to trace the star again while looking only in the mirror. The point was to let them experience a taste of what it was like to have dementia, to promote understanding and empathy.

As he fumbled his way through the star exercise, Jim Taylor said, “This is like driving a U-Haul trailer in reverse.”

The results were appalling, lines scooting all over the place. Again, the moderator asked how they felt.

“Frustrated.” “Disoriented.” A piqued woman asked, “So is this how they feel, people with Alzheimer’s?”

The moderator replied, “I would put that back to you. What do you think?”

The woman was quiet. “Yes,” she said softly, “I guess it must be.”

SHARING THE JOURNEY

Jim Taylor read a newspaper article about an early-stage study for an experimental drug. The drug was aimed at slowing mental decline by breaking up the plaques formed by the beta amyloid protein that are the hallmark of Alzheimer’s. The company Biogen

was testing subjects with mild cases of Alzheimer's. It was a promising possibility in a field littered with disappointments.

Geri trawled the Internet and learned that part of the trial was underway at Yale New Haven Hospital in Connecticut. She called Yale and found that a few slots were still open. Soon she was in New Haven for cognition testing. The results placed

talk about living with Alzheimer's at a church that Jim's sister belonged to.

They had at first been hesitant. But if it went well, perhaps it was something they could keep doing. Maybe how they were figuring out this disease could help others.

Three dozen people squeezed into the room at the church. Geri sat in a chair. When she stood too long, she got tremors.



THE AUDIENCE WAS HUSHED AND RAPT, HEARING A COUPLE TELL HOW THEY WERE TORN UP AND UNITED BY A DISEASE.

her in the mild stage of Alzheimer's, the appropriate group. A PET scan confirmed she had amyloid buildup in her brain, another prerequisite for the trial.

This felt like hope and it had a potent allure for her, the possibility that the drug might negotiate some sort of truce with this disease.

She wouldn't know whether she would receive the drug or a placebo, though because of the way the trial was structured, the odds of getting the treatment were high. Either way, she would be entitled to the actual drug after the yearlong study period.

Meantime, in February 2015, the Taylors took a winter break in Florida. They were invited to give a dinner

Jim said: "We're happy to be here tonight to share our journey. While sometimes difficult, it's actually been a rather exciting time."

They told about the way the disease weighed on them, how they avoided the lockdown that people with Alzheimer's went through, how they chose forward as the only sensible direction to follow. The small details drew good laughs. How Geri kept confusing their toothbrushes and finally threw away Jim's because she couldn't figure out whose it was, even though, as she put it, "there were just the two of us."

She gave tips on how to communicate with someone with the disease: Focus on one subject, never ask sev-



Geri Taylor in Florida, where she and her husband traveled in the winter 2015.

eral questions at the same time. When a friend pelted her with multiple questions, it left her baffled.

The audience was hushed and rapt, hearing an aging couple tell how they were torn up and united by a disease.

They took questions. A man wanted to know if she did crossword puzzles. She said she didn't, they were too frustrating. But she still loved to read and was plowing through *Crime and Punishment*. Someone else asked, "What do you want to hear when you tell someone you have Alzheimer's?"

"I love you, anything I can do I'll do," said Geri. "The acceptance is more important than the particulars."

When they finished, the applause went on for a while.

NEW MISSION

In March 2015, Geri had her first monthly infusion of the trial drug aducanumab. Biogen had recently announced that an analysis of 166 patients had shown positive results. The drug slowed cognitive decline and reduced plaque in the brain. Experts saw the data as encouraging. Of course other drugs had offered initial promise only to be discarded as false leads. (In fact, further results a few months later were more nebulous.)

In April the doctor sat with Geri as she lay outstretched, an IV needle in her arm. She knew about the parade of failures for Alzheimer's drugs. "It must be exciting to be involved in a success," she said to the doctor.

"Well, a qualified success," he replied. "It's still early."

At this point, the drug remained a question mark.* It would take years to know its genuine worth. He was rightly cautious.

"How are you feeling?" he asked.

"Fine."

"No itching?"

"No." She felt hopeful. It was her inner optimism, her desire to locate a way out. She told the doctor, "I've said to Jim that if I could be freeze-dried like this, I could live with that."

And, sure, who wouldn't grab that bargain? Live with "that," with hunting for words, misplacing her belongings, not driving? And why not? She knew nothing would repair her and return her to the person she had been, but being freeze-dried where she was, that was better than the ugliness of the disease's concluding stage.

Meanwhile, Geri and her husband gave several more talks on Alzheimer's—at a Jewish center in New York and a firehouse in Connecticut. They were becoming apostles for how to live with the disease. But she needed to do more. She wanted to see strategies identified and shared for navigating the everyday mundanities, for wrenching survival out of this disease.

*On Aug. 28, 2017, Biogen announced positive results from a three-year trial that found levels of amyloid plaque continued to decrease in patients taking aducanumab. Two global Phase 3 studies are currently underway.

Since she was the one who had it, she felt she was an authority.

In August, Geri met with two CaringKind staff members. Geri gave her pitch. She didn't want a traditional support group. She wanted a group to share strategies, an Alzheimer's tutorial that could be peer-driven. "We don't want to be done to, we want to do."

CaringKind set up a series of three workshops to swap strategies for living with early-stage memory loss. For and by the underdogs. People voiced their problems. There was interest in clinical drug trials. Strategies were called out and put on a white board. Geri Taylor offered her ideas. How to rely on a smartphone. The idea of socializing frequently, inventing reminders and finding a purpose. She suggested the group should have handbooks published detailing these strategies.

Later, the Taylors met with the Connecticut chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, saying they were amazed at how many people were still in the closet about Alzheimer's.

They learned that the association offers to do presentations at companies. Executives first say they don't think they have anyone affected, and then the association shows up and there are 80 or 90 people waiting to listen. The stigma again. The denial. People hiding it.

"If it stays hidden," says Geri, "people don't develop the strategies to compensate for the deficits. They just slowly pass into a state of inability."

The Alzheimer's Association staff members agreed. They mentioned a woman who couldn't remember where different dishes were stored so she put glass doors on her cabinets. And the husband who worried his wife would get lost when they went shopping and he wouldn't recall what she was wearing, so now they wore shirts of matching color.

Geri Taylor listened to all this, and then the association executive said she wanted Geri's help. Come and speak. Become one of their champions. Maybe become a representative to the national organization.

Geri's face crinkled up, and she began to cry. For what she wished more than anything was for people with Alzheimer's not to live in shame but in nobility, and to learn ways to carry on. And this woman was telling her she wished for it, too. Geri had never cried, never pitied herself for getting

the disease, but this made her cry.

More than three years had rolled by since Geri Taylor hadn't recognized her face in the mirror, and began to wonder what would fill her days. Now, with her involvement in the Alzheimer's Association, here was the answer. This would be her second act, something that drew on her health-care career: helping others deal with the darkness of Alzheimer's.

Having purpose was the stabilizing force. And Alzheimer's itself, she realized, could be her purpose.

Currently, Geri Taylor is involved with CaringKind and the Connecticut and New York City chapters of the Alzheimer's Association. She is a national spokesperson in the United States for the Alzheimer's Association, sharing her story to raise awareness of the disease and advocating for increased funding for Alzheimer's research. 🏠

FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES (MAY 1, 2016), COPYRIGHT © NEW YORK TIMES, NYTIMES.COM.

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UNDER PRESSURE

Thinking on the spot doesn't always go well, as demonstrated by the question-and-answer round in the Miss Universe pageant:

Question: "If you could be either water or fire, which would you be and why?"

Miss Serbia: "Well, I'm a human being and I don't know how it is to be fire or water, and from that reason I really don't have answer on this question because I'm a human being, I'm a girl who has an emotion, and fire and water don't."

SOURCE: TIMESOFINDIA.COM

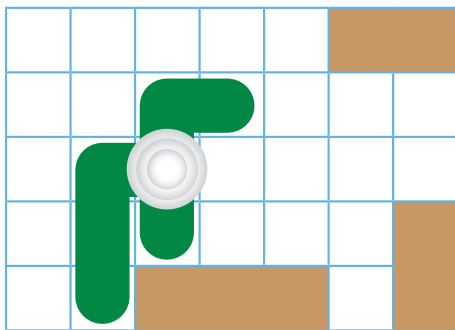
Brain teasers

Challenge yourself by solving these puzzles, then check your answers on page 116.

BONHOMIE

(Moderately difficult)

Two young siblings, Carol and Noël, ran excitedly outdoors after a snowfall to build a snowman. They rolled up three squares' worth of snow for a base, then started elsewhere and rolled two squares into a body, then moved once more and rolled one square for a head, as shown in this plan of their backyard. (The brown squares are covered by buildings or trees, not snow.)



In their haste, they weren't very careful about where they rolled their snow, but if they start planning ahead now, they can use up all the snow in their yard to build three more identical snowmen. Where would those snowmen stand? (Carol and Noël aren't strong enough to carry a large ball of snow very far, so you should assume that wherever they finish rolling each ball is where the snowman should be placed.)

PRIME CANDIDATES *(Easy)*

Beloved by math geeks everywhere, prime numbers can be divided by only two numbers: themselves and the number 1. Can you find four two-digit prime numbers in this array?

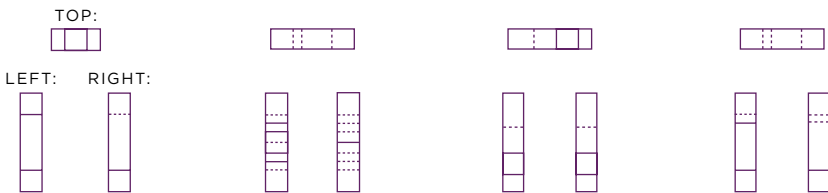
53	28	58	66	82	91	20	52	62	87	79	88	12
23	92	93	86	90	77	76	78	75	57	62	60	49
85	56	34	44	22	10	16	14	18	12	25	37	39

THE VIEW FROM THE TOP (Difficult)

Here are some three-dimensional number blocks viewed from the front:

1234

Now here are diagrams of the same four objects, as viewed from the left, the right and the top. A dotted line indicates an edge you could see only if the object were transparent; a solid line is an edge you would see even if it were opaque. In what order are the number blocks portrayed below?



(THE VIEW FROM THE TOP) DARREN RIGBY; (SOCCER BREAK, STAR SEARCH) FRASER SIMPSON



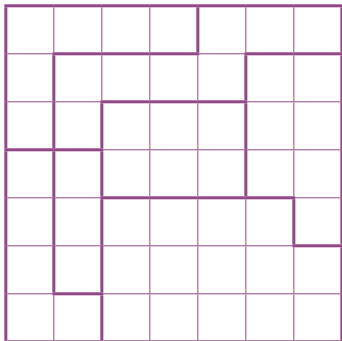
SOCCER BREAK (Easy)

Two soccer teams, one in red and the other in yellow, are taking a breather. Three players sit in a row on a bench. The player on the left end is wearing a red uniform and the player on the right end is wearing a yellow one. From this information alone, can you conclude with certainty that a player in a red uniform is immediately to the left of a player in a yellow one?

STAR SEARCH

(Moderately difficult)

Place stars in seven cells of this grid so that every row, every column and every outlined region contains exactly one star. Stars must never be located in adjacent cells, not even diagonally.



Trivia Quiz

BY BETH SHILLIBEER

1. The hydraulis was an ancient musical instrument that resembles what current church-music staple?
2. Which country is home to the city that won the European Green Capital Award for 2017?
3. What Renaissance man allegedly said, "Nothing strengthens authority so much as silence"?
4. What did the authors George Sand, Isak Dinesen and Vernon Lee have in common?
5. After Athens, which European capital is the oldest?
6. What *Star Wars* character is represented as a tower gargoyle on Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.?
7. What reptiles are the object of fear in one of the most commonly reported phobias worldwide?
8. What thrilling theme-park invention is claimed by both Russia and France?
9. The Canadian city of Churchill, Manitoba, has a "jail" for temporarily holding what mammals when they wander too close to town?
10. What hot beverage was named for the brown clothing worn by 16th-century Italian (Capuchin) monks?
11. The yellow birch is among the tree species that are moving their territory in which cardinal direction, possibly in reaction to climate change?
12. What ancestor is shared by Johnny Depp, Michael Douglas and Ellen DeGeneres?
13. What is the only animal to have been knighted by the Norwegian army?
14. Although several countries claim Santa Claus, which one issued him a passport?
15. *What clothing item was restricted in Britain and the United States during the Second World War because its material was needed for parachutes and other army supplies?*



15. What clothing item was restricted in Britain and the United States during the Second World War because its material was needed for parachutes and other army supplies?

ANSWERS: 1. The pipe organ. 2. Germany. (The city was Essen.) 3. Leonardo da Vinci. 4. They were all women with male pen names. 5. Lisbon, Portugal. 6. Darth Vader. 7. Snakes (ophidiophobia). 8. The roller coaster. 9. Polar bears. (The bears are released back into the wild farther away from the city.) 10. Capuccino. 11. North. 12. England's King Edward III. 13. A king penguin named Sir Nils Olav. 14. Canada. 15. Nylon stockings.

IT PAYS TO INCREASE YOUR

Word Power

Before sending a card this Valentine's Day, be sure you know the language of love. Here are some words perfect for would-be Romeos and Juliets. Don't know them by heart? See the next page for answers.

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

1. ardent ('ar-dent) *adj.*—
A: engaged. B: lyrical. C: passionate.

2. paramour ('pa-ruh-mor) *n.*—
A: chaperone. B: lover. C: token of affection.

3. buss ('buhs) *v.*—A: kiss. B: elope.
C: carve initials in a tree.

4. swain ('swain) *n.*—A: intense crush. B: male suitor. C: gondola for two.

5. connubial (kuh-'new-bee-uhl) *adj.*—A: coy. B: of marriage.
C: about the heart.

6. troth ('trawth) *n.*—A: wooden or rustic altar. B: fidelity. C: Celtic wedding ring.

7. coquettish (koh-'ket-ish) *adj.*—A: flirtatious. B: alluring.
C: shy.

8. macushla (muh-'koosh-luh) *n.*—A: darling. B: fainting spell.
C: best man.

9. platonic (pluh-'tah-nik) *adj.*—

A: of a honeymoon. B: smitten.
C: without physical desire.

10. liaison (lee-'ay-zahn) *n.*—
A: secret affair. B: exchange of vows.
C: pet nickname.

11. beaux ('bohz) *n.*—
A: traditional string used to join hands in marriage. B: winks of an eye. C: boyfriends.

12. requite (rih-'kwiyt) *v.*—
A: ask for someone's hand.
B: give back, as affection. C: fondly remember.

13. epistolary (ih-'pis-tuh-la-ree) *adj.*—A: serenading. B: set in an arbor. C: relating to letters.

14. philter ('fil-ter) *n.*—A: love potion. B: caress. C: family keepsake or hand-me-down.

15. cupidity (kyu-'pih-duh-tee) *n.*—A: valentine shape. B: lust or desire for wealth. C: condition of instant romance, as love at first sight.

Answers

1. ardent—[C] passionate. Though he's a native New Yorker, Peter is an *ardent* Red Sox fan.

2. paramour—[B] lover. Claire was overwhelmed by the devotion and affection of her new *paramour*.

3. buss—[A] kiss. During the bus ride, Lauren and Alex sneaked off to *buss* in the backseat.

4. swain—[B] male suitor. The princess gave a weary sigh as she awaited the entreaties of her *swains*.

5. connubial—[B] of marriage. Aside from their celebrity status, Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward were famous for their *connubial* bliss.

6. troth—[B] fidelity. "It was in this gazebo, 20 years ago, dear, that we pledged our *troth*," said Arthur.

7. coquettish—[A] flirtatious. Alison caught Dean's eye with a *coquettish* smile and nod.

8. macushla—[A] darling. In *Million Dollar Baby*, boxing trainer Clint Eastwood gave his dear protégé Hilary Swank the nickname *macushla*.

9. platonic—[C] without physical desire. I hate to disappoint the paparazzi, but my current relationships are all *platonic*.

10. liaison—[A] secret affair. The young couple stole away at midnight each evening for their *liaison*.

11. beaux—[C] boyfriends. I doubt that Sharon considers young Timothy one of her best *beaux*.

12. requite—[B] give back, as affection. Her lyrics tend toward *requited* love rather than heartbreak.

13. epistolary—[C] relating to letters. The romance between Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning is marked by an *epistolary* trail.

14. philter—[A] love potion. Hoping for attention from my crush, I went to Madam Ava for her purported *philter*.

15. cupidity—[B] lust or desire for wealth. The testimony gave clear evidence of the *cupidity* of the accused investors.

GONE A-COURTIN' ...

You may know that *horticulture* pertains to gardening. It comes from the Latin *hortus* ("garden"). Add the prefix *co-* ("with") to that root, and you get both *court* (a yard) and *cohort* (a companion). In royal settings of old, and still today, a flowery yard is an ideal spot for courting a sweetheart. (A quaint old synonym of *courting* is *pitching woo*. But etymologists aren't sure where *woo* came from.)

VOCABULARY RATINGS

9 & below: Flirty
10-12: Affectionate
13-15: Amorous

ALL IN

A Day's Work



OVERHEARD IN THE OFFICE

Supervisor to team leader:

So our people aren't astute enough to understand these comments on the document?

Leader: What does *astute* mean?

SUSAN JESTER, Huntsville, Alabama

PRN IS A MEDICAL abbreviation of the Latin *pro re nata*, meaning

“when necessary.” Apparently, some nurses never learned their abbreviations. One day, a senior nurse walked into a patient's room to find a suppository shoved up his nose. When she confronted the younger nurse responsible, the latter admitted that she thought *PRN* stood for “per right nostril.”

Source: scrubsomag.com

TWO YEARS AFTER my heart attack, I was teaching my college course when I suddenly felt some discomfort in my chest. I paused the class to pop my medication and quickly felt better. "Now, if I ever do have a heart attack," I told my students, "I will give extra credit to whoever gives me CPR."

One of them shouted out, "How much?"

SHARON HARVEY, *Bloomington, Minnesota*

I LOVE WHEN I leave work early to surprise my wife at home and she greets me with those three very special words: "Were you fired?"

🐦@THEBOYDP

TECH SUPPORT: Is the light on your modem blinking?

Customer: No.

Tech: So it's solid, then?

Customer: Yes. It's solid, then it's off, then it's solid again, then it's off again ...

Source: notalwaysright.com

WHILE I WAS WORKING as a store Santa, a boy asked me for an electric train set. "If you get your train," I told him, "your dad is going to want to play with it too. Is that all right?"

The boy became very quiet. So, moving the conversation along, I asked, "What else would you like Santa to bring you?"

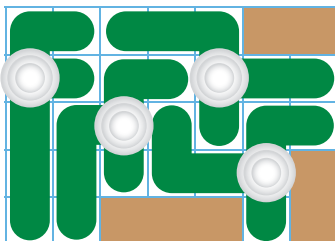
He promptly replied, "Another train."

From guy-sports.com

Brainteasers: Answers

BONHOMIE

Variations are possible when it comes to how the snow is rolled, but the locations of the snowmen remain the same.



PRIME CANDIDATES

53, 79, 23 and 37.

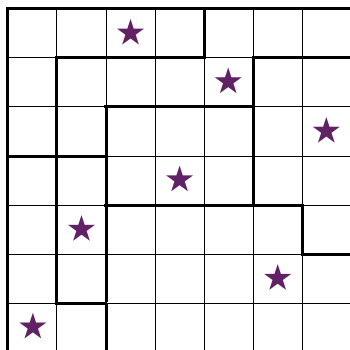
THE VIEW FROM THE TOP

1, 3, 4, 2.

SOCCER BREAK

Yes, since the only two possibilities are RRY and RYY.

STAR SEARCH



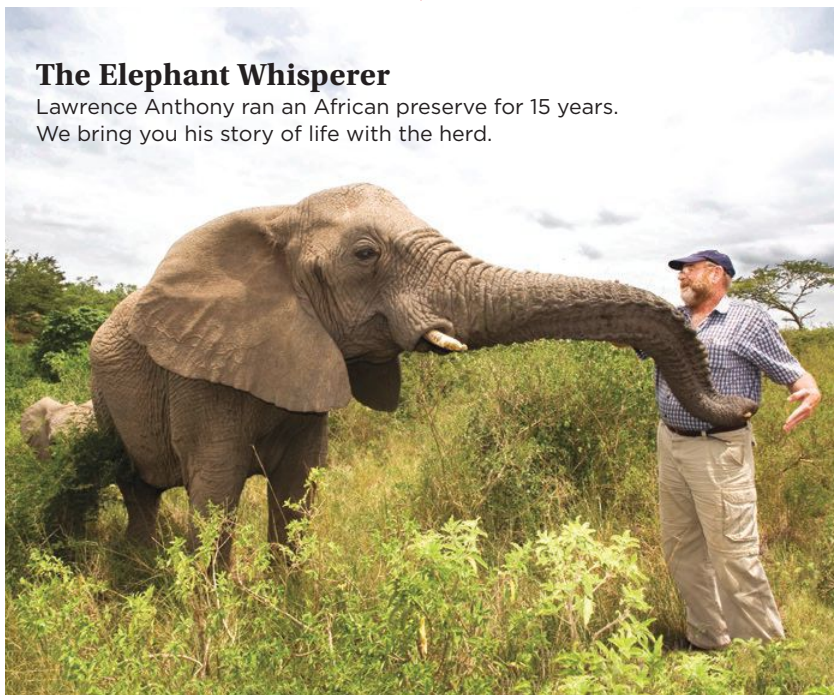


Next Month

COMING IN THE MARCH ISSUE

The Elephant Whisperer

Lawrence Anthony ran an African preserve for 15 years. We bring you his story of life with the herd.



Parkinson's Now—What You Need to Know

Treatments that are unique to each individual are the way of the future.

Drama in Real Life The Drive of His Life

A cabbie, his kidnapper, and the unlikely connection that redeemed them.

Can We Talk?

Why more conversations, and fewer texts, are good for your relationships and your emotional health.

PHOTO: © SUKI DHANDA/CAMERA PRESS/REDUX

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Last Laugh

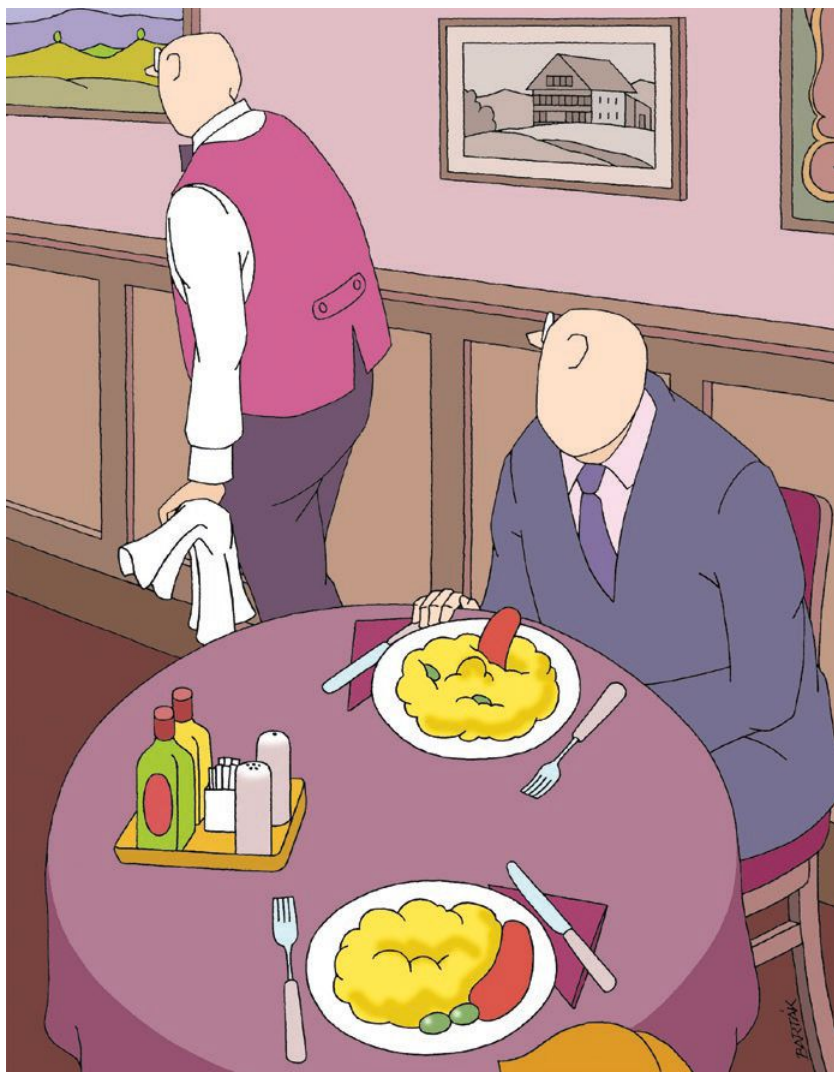


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