

May/June 2016

The art of growing young[®]

Open Water
Swimming

Fitness



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Sound of Silence

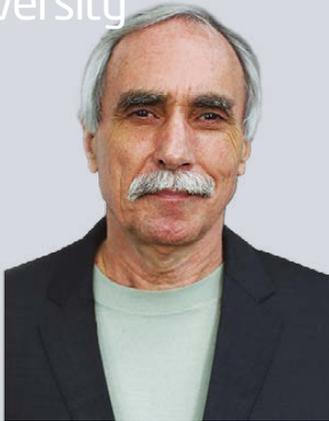
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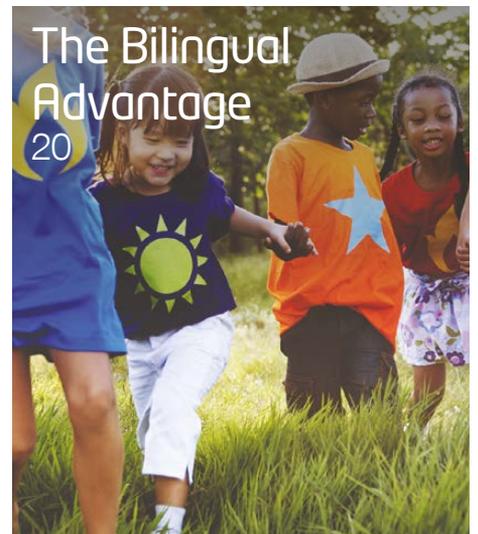
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My own thoughts on diversity

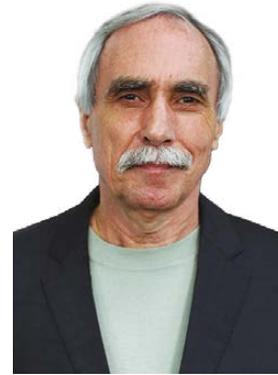
An article in this month's magazine discusses the importance of being yourself and the benefits of diversity. While reading the article, I reflected on how important diversity is. I don't just mean how important it is to be yourself—although that is, of course, very important—but the importance of diversity in all areas of life.

How often have you read about the importance of consuming a wide range of fresh fruits and vegetables? Since you are reading this right now, it's a safe bet you've read that phrase countless times. That's because the body requires a varied diet in order to consume the myriad nutrients it needs for optimum performance—that's yet another important form of diversity that will benefit your life.

One of the many reasons I enjoy working on this magazine is that it covers a wide range of topics. Isn't that another form of diversity? Even the people who come together to make the magazine form a diverse team. From the writers to the editors to the printers and everyone in between, we are a diverse collection of people, and that diversity makes this such a great publication. If it were created by just one person, you can bet the topics wouldn't speak to such a wide audience.

On a personal level, I know it's not always easy to celebrate one's diversity. Standing out can make you uncomfortable and vulnerable. But it's worth it. You never know what you can accomplish until you stop letting other people tell you what to be or do.

When I look at the people who come together to make this magazine, I see a group of individuals. Everyone is different, and yet we work together with a shared passion. When everyone stands out, nobody stands out. And when that happens, there is no limit to what we can accomplish. So as the article on page 10 says, let's all try to practice the art of being ourselves.



Dwight L. McKee M.D.

Dwight L. McKee
Scientific Director

Nutritional News

Running

Running can shrink more than waistlines; it may also help reduce bad cholesterol levels. According to research collected from the Aerobics Center Longitudinal Study at the Cooper Clinic and studied by the Arnold School of Public Health, exercising moderately for 150 minutes or intensely for 75 minutes every week can help postpone age-related increases in LDL cholesterol levels. Walking just thirty minutes a day most days of the week can postpone the increase for fifteen years!



Sleep quality

At what time do you brush your teeth every night? Believe it or not, new research is showing that older adults who adhere to regular personal care routines tend to fall asleep faster and experience better-quality sleep than those who are more irregular with their personal care. Since sleep quality tends to decline with age, seniors may find sticking to schedules when it comes to their daily activities helps reinforce circadian cycles.

Whom do you eat with?

Whom you eat with may play a role in how healthy an eater you are. According to a recent study at the University of New South Wales, when a person eats with a companion who eats smaller amounts, he or she also tends to eat less. Researchers believe this effect is due to a phenomenon called “social modeling.”

Small snacks

Need a small snack to tackle a big appetite? Nuts may be small, but they are packed with healthy fats, fiber and proteins that can help curb hunger pangs that lead to overeating. Nuts such as pistachios are also rich in heart-healthy antioxidants, making them a delicious snack that protects the body while they curb cravings.



Building muscle

Focusing less on lifting weights may help build muscle. According to a new study published in PLOS ONE, cardiovascular exercises may help increase the effects of strength training. This latest revelation reinforces the idea that a well-rounded workout is better for the body than focusing on a single type of exercise.



Open Water Swimming

Swimming is one of the most effective forms of exercise you can engage in. The aerobic movements combined with water's natural resistance create one of the most comprehensive workouts a person can do. Consequently, swimming helps boost cardiovascular fitness and muscle strength.

Pulling and kicking against water can help improve flexibility, control weight, boost stamina and more. And because of water's natural buoyancy, swimming is less stressful on joints, making it a great workout option for people with injuries, back pain, joint conditions, balance trouble and many age-related health concerns.

When most people think of swimming for health, they head to the pool, which can be expensive and crowded.

Open water swimming has all the health benefits of swimming in the pool at your local gym, but it's free! Other benefits include even more resistance in the form of waves and currents for building muscles, freedom from chlorine or other harsh chemicals, and sun exposure for boosting vitamin D levels.

Don't let fear of open water stop you from swimming in lakes, streams, seas and oceans. If you have fears, acknowledge them for what they are, and then prepare yourself to move past them. Different people have different reactions to open water swimming. Figure out what your fear is, and address it in a positive manner.

Do you fear swimming too far from shore and drowning? Are you afraid of the unknown below you? Does touching seaweed give you the creeps? Figure out what your specific fear is before putting a foot in the water.

If you are afraid of what may be below you, appeal to the rational side of your mind. At the depth where you will be swimming, you will be the biggest animal in the water. Everything smaller than you will want to avoid YOU! Knowing this and being comforted by it in the moment are two different things. However, the more you tell yourself this information while swimming, the easier it will become. At some point, you will find it is no longer a worry.



Take baby steps to overcome your fears. It may be enough to simply stand up to your ankles in the water during your first few trips to the beach. Once you are comfortable with that, move in up to your knees, then your waist and finally your chest.



At each step, just stand in the water and relax. Breathe normally, and be conscious of the world around you. It may help to develop a mantra such as "I am safe and at peace" while you stand in the water. Take as long as you need at each step until you are completely comfortable. This practice may take from a few hours to an entire swimming season. The important thing is to go at your own pace.

Once you are ready to start swimming, learn a proper sight technique so you can be confident that you won't swim too far off course. Sighting is the process of lifting your eyes just above water level to spot a landmark. Every time you spot the landmark, you can quickly gauge where you are without stopping your workout. Knowing you are on course can be a huge confidence booster.



Swimming with a partner can help a great deal as well. Your partner doesn't necessarily need to swim next to you either. Having a friend as a spotter on the beach can help you relax, especially if you are in an area without a lifeguard.

At all stages of swimming and conquering fear, be aware of your breathing. Controlling your breath will help control your body and your thoughts. When fears rise up, your respiration rate often increases. Fast, shallow breaths are the exact opposite of what you want to take while swimming (or during any other exercise, for that matter). Keep your breathing steady and deep to properly oxygenate your body and fight mental stress.



Prepare yourself mentally and physically. This includes getting the right gear. It's possible to swim with nothing but a bathing suit, but goggles, wet suits, hair caps and other gear can help boost confidence by making your workout a little easier. Wet suits protect against cold, for example. And goggles will help you with your sighting technique.

Newcomers to open water swimming should start in the warmest summer months, when the water will be most comfortable. Inland lakes and rivers are ideal for beginners. Remember that you don't need to be in deep water to swim effectively. Stay close to the shore where you can quickly and easily touch the bottom if you need a break. Becoming part of the natural world for a brief time can have benefits that go far beyond even the exercise involved. It is part of our natural heritage.

Enjoying the Sound of Silence

We live in an age when portable computers are capable of providing an endless stream of music, videos and conversations. When we're not in front of a computer, we take these distractions with us via cellphones, tablets, satellite radio and more. The next time you are on a public bus or train, look around to see how many people are wearing earphones.



It seems like the more we plug in, the less we actually connect with people. Friendly conversations with strangers, let alone meaningful connections with loved ones, can't take place when these devices are in the way.

Beyond the walls of noise we purposely live behind, we are surrounded by sounds every day that we can't control and are often not even aware of. Turn off all the electronic devices in your home and what do you hear? Do you hear silence, or do you hear traffic outside? Your neighbor's television? Perhaps music drifting in from somewhere down the street? Can you remember what silence truly sounds like?

The old saying that silence is golden may be more true than ever, since silence is becoming a rare and precious thing in our lives.

Studies have linked unwanted sound to increased levels of stress. Think about how frustrating it is when a car alarm down the block keeps going off. Or when construction near your house wakes you up early and prevents you from going back to sleep.

In those cases, it's easy to link stress with noise. But even low-level noise has been associated with health problems. Unwanted noise has been linked to sleep disturbance, impaired cognitive function, cardiovascular disease and more. Of course, there is also the obvious risk of damage to hearing.

Unwanted noise is called noise pollution. Traffic contributes a large percentage of noise pollution. The World Health Organization has recognized traffic noise as a serious public health problem. In the EU, the economic impact of traffic noise is estimated to be more than €40 billion per year. Another way to consider the pervasive nature of traffic noise pollution is to consider this: Every night, one in every five Europeans is exposed to enough noise pollution to significantly damage health.

An eye-opening study published in the *Journal of Environmental Psychology* found that reducing noise pollution in the classroom led to higher reading scores.

Silence is something we both crave and fear. Many of us have become so used to constant low-level noise that actual silence is intimidating or uncomfortable. Yet it is so beneficial to health. Cultivating an ability to sit with yourself in silence is a skill many of us have lost—and a skill that many of our children may never learn.

Not unlike needing to plug in your phone every day to recharge its battery, humans need silence to recharge their own mental "batteries." Research performed at Duke University found that two hours of silence every day prompted cell development in the brain, specifically in the region responsible for forming memories involving the senses.

Taking time every day for a little silence can help improve well-being and lower stress levels. Silence can also help foster peace and tranquility in your life. You can eventually learn to take the peace you find in silence and bring it with you when you head out into the noisy world.

We're surrounded by noise nearly everywhere we go. So how does one cultivate silence? Start small by turning off the television when you're not watching it and turning off your phone when you don't need it. Text alerts and email notifications can disrupt silence at the most inconvenient times.





Silence can be found nearly anytime and anywhere you have a few free minutes. But it is most easily discovered if you have a space dedicated to relaxation—a place with no radio, computer, television or other distractions. Preferably this space is inside your home, away from windows and doors that let noise pollution seep in. If you live in a more rural setting, your quiet place could be outside in a tranquil meadow or forest.

Begin by dedicating just five minutes a day to sitting in your quiet place. As you get more used to being alone in silence, you can extend this time.

If you aren't able to create a quiet place, you can still cultivate silence in your life by adjusting your daily routines a bit. Doing the dishes alone with no music or background noise will bring silence into your life. So will walking alone in the woods.



Even a quiet bath can turn into silent time. Baths can be especially relaxing if you can turn out the lights or bathe by candlelight.

Cultivate comfort in silence for the whole family by scheduling regular quiet times. Turn off all electronics (including cell phones), and keep them off for thirty minutes. Let everyone in the family get used to a quiet house. Older family members may be encouraged to simply sit in silence and reflect internally. Younger ones can read, draw, study or do any other quiet-time activity.

If your home has too much ambient noise surrounding it, perhaps from a nearby highway, you may wish to spend your silent time somewhere else. City parks and libraries are great free places to find some peace and quiet.

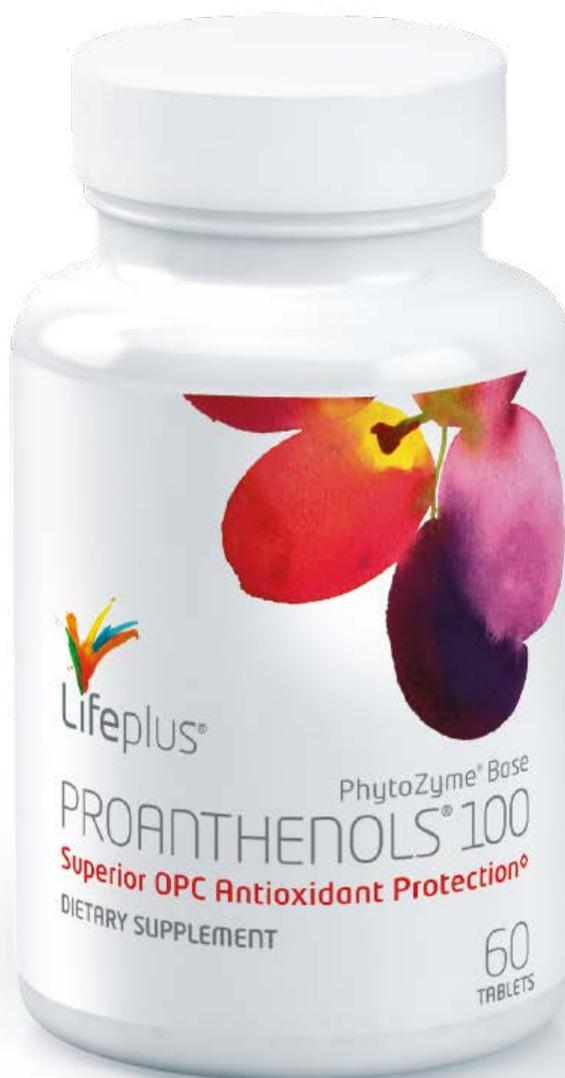
We are so used to noise all around us that spending time in silence can be profoundly intimidating. Being completely alone with one's thoughts can make you feel vulnerable. Allow yourself to be vulnerable. Let yourself be uncomfortable. Know that the more time you spend in silence, the easier it will become. Eventually, you will be completely comfortable sitting in silence and allowing your mind and body to be rejuvenated.

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The Art of Being Yourself

We live in a world that bombards us with messages telling us how we are supposed to look, what we are supposed to eat, how we should act, what we should wear, and more. Breaking free of these messages and learning to be an individual can provide you with a freedom that you've never experienced.

It's not easy to break free of wanting to conform to stereotypes. But it is possible. Practicing the art of being you will allow you to love yourself for who you are, which in turn will give you the freedom to make the healthy changes and decisions that are best for you.

During the tumultuous teenage years, many kids want nothing more than to fit in with their classmates. They have yet to realize what many adults are able to figure out—being different should be something to be proud of.

It takes confidence to stand out, especially in subcultures where conformity is the norm—such as in school. However, with that confidence come self-worth and freedom. Parents must nurture their children's confidence and self-worth in order to give them the freedom to make their own choices later in life.

The first step in the art of being yourself is to learn how to focus on your strengths instead of your weaknesses.

You can become better at anything you put your mind to, but you can become great at the things you are naturally good at. When you are great at something—anything—you will naturally become a role model. People will look to you for inspiration instead of the other way around.

It's also important to be self-aware. You can't be yourself if you don't even know who you are. Seeing an ad on TV and immediately thinking to yourself that you want to look like that model, dress like that model and live out what is happening in the ad is a sign that you may need to work on becoming self-aware. Immense amounts of time and money go into creating ads that will convince you to purchase products. So it is natural to have some of those feelings. But to be truly happy in your life, you must have the self-awareness to know the reasons behind those feelings.

Becoming self-aware is a process in itself. In large part, it comes from learning how to focus on your feelings—and to be guided by your positive feelings and emotions. Focusing on the things that truly make you happy will help guide your thoughts, emotions and experiences to a position of independence.

Young children may not be able to fully understand what it means to be self-aware, but that doesn't mean they won't benefit from your lessons on the topic. When a child is "different," it's more important for him or her to feel loved than to have you explain what being self-aware means.





To help your child understand the importance of being different, show him or her how proud you are of the things that set the child apart from everyone else.

Does your young son have a unique sense of fashion? Compliment him on the clothes he picks out. If your daughter likes to read, while most of her friends prefer physical activity, make special time together to nurture her love of books instead of

encouraging her to conform to the activities her friends enjoy.

There may be a few challenges to being different, especially during a person's impressionable teenage years, but there are many, many joys to focus on. Practicing the art of being you will expose you to some joyous feelings you never knew were possible.

Diversity makes the world a wonderful place. When we come together with a diverse collection of backgrounds, cultures, ideas, looks, tastes, etc., we are stronger in all things on all levels—friendships, families, schools, society. Practice the art of being yourself in order to be a part of the diversity that makes the world great.



Breaking Down Processed Foods

Western diets are full of processed foods that can sit in your pantry for months before use. The modern “miracles” that keep these foods fresh and readily available are the same reasons many doctors and nutritional scientists are calling for people to avoid them.

Before you clear out your cupboards, it's good to educate yourself on why so many processed foods are bad. What is in them that is so bad? What are they missing nutritionally? What even constitutes a processed food?

A lot of the foods we regularly purchase are processed in some way. But that doesn't necessarily mean they are unhealthy.

Ground beef from the butcher has been mechanically processed into its current form. Cherries are processed when they are picked from trees and their stems and pits are removed. Olive oil exists only because of a processing technique that extracts the oil from the plant's fruit. Even cheese, yogurt and milk have all been processed.

It's foods that come prepackaged and premade that tend to be the worst nutritional offenders. Microwave meals, canned soups, fast food, potato chips, soda, candy, cookies and other “junk foods” make up the category of processed foods that nutritional experts are rallying against.

The ingredients in processed foods that make them unhealthy can usually be grouped into four broad categories: preservatives, flavorings, colorants and texturants. Food in each of these categories can be made from either natural or synthetic ingredients.

Preservatives are ingredients that prolong shelf life. This is the category that is largely responsible for the exponential rise of processed foods over the past several decades. Fast-moving cultures that demand quick and easy access to food are ripe for marketing messages that show how a food is easy to purchase, store and consume. Preservatives give processed foods these qualities.

One of the worst preservatives injected into processed foods is trans fat. Trans isomers, often called trans fats, are created by partial hydrogenation (adding hydrogen to a polyunsaturated or monounsaturated fat). Increasing the saturation of an unsaturated fat increases shelf life and boosts flavor, but it also creates a very unhealthy fat. The words “partially hydrogenated” on a food label mean the product contains trans fats (even if the label says “zero grams trans fats”—as food manufacturers in the US are permitted to “round down” from 499 mg to zero grams).

Flavorings are ingredients added to change the taste of a processed food. Often the ingredients in processed foods are so far removed from what that food originally was that they require extra ingredients in order to make them tasty. How well do you think your meal would turn out if you made a lasagna from scratch, but instead of baking it in an oven, you put it in your microwave for five minutes? It probably wouldn't taste good at all. And yet, if you purchase a microwave lasagna meal from the frozen food section of your grocery store, that's probably all the time you need to cook it. Why does it turn out, then? The answer is, in large part, flavoring additives.



Levels of salt, saturated fat, preservatives, flavor enhancers (such as monosodium glutamate) and sugar tend to be high in most processed foods because these unhealthy ingredients simultaneously boost flavor and increase shelf life. They also happen to be ingredients that increase health concerns when consumed in excessive quantities.

Colorants are simply ingredients that alter the color of a food. Have you ever added an ingredient to a healthy dish for the sole purpose of making its color more appealing? Probably not. Various food colorings have been studied and associated with negative impacts on health for years—some are known carcinogens. However, others are quite benign. This is yet another reason to study ingredient lists carefully when shopping. There are many naturally derived food colorants (such as the bright yellow of curcumin) that are simultaneously useful as a colorant and as a health-promoting nutrient. Some synthetic food colorings were used for some time and then found to be carcinogenic. Others have never been tested in combinations. There are over 3,000 chemicals licensed as additives to foods in the United States, with a similar number in Europe, and most are used by the processed food industry. They have been tested for safety individually, but never in the complex combinations in which they are found in processed foods. New science has



revealed that some chemicals are “partial carcinogens,” meaning that individually they don’t cause cancer in a test animal, but in combination, with as few as four other chemicals, they may increase the incidence of cancer.

Texturants are similar to colorants in that they are ingredients added to make a processed food more palatable. When you cook at home from whole foods and natural ingredients, you simply don’t need to alter the texture of your food because it turns out the way it is supposed to. Similarly, some foods such as shredded cheeses contain “anticaking” ingredients.

The bottom line is that processed foods tend to be high in all the wrong ingredients and low in the healthy ones.

Even foods you may think of as healthy options can be filled with sugar, fat and chemicals. Granola bars are a prime example. At first glance, a consumer associates the word “granola” with health food. But store-bought granola bars tend to be filled with refined carbohydrates, fats and sugars. Another example is fruit-flavored yogurts, which line the shelves of many health food stores and yet may contain as many grams of refined sugar (often labeled as “organic dried cane extract”) as a commercial soft drink.

Consider a simple, easy snack such as popcorn. If you make it yourself, popcorn can have as few as two ingredients: corn and grapeseed oil (or simply corn, if air-popped). However, if you buy a processed version such as microwave popcorn, you may be surprised at what the label says is in your snack. The ingredients of one popular brand are whole-grain popcorn, partially hydrogenated soybean oil, salt, natural and artificial flavors (milk), added color, and the freshness preservative propyl gallate.

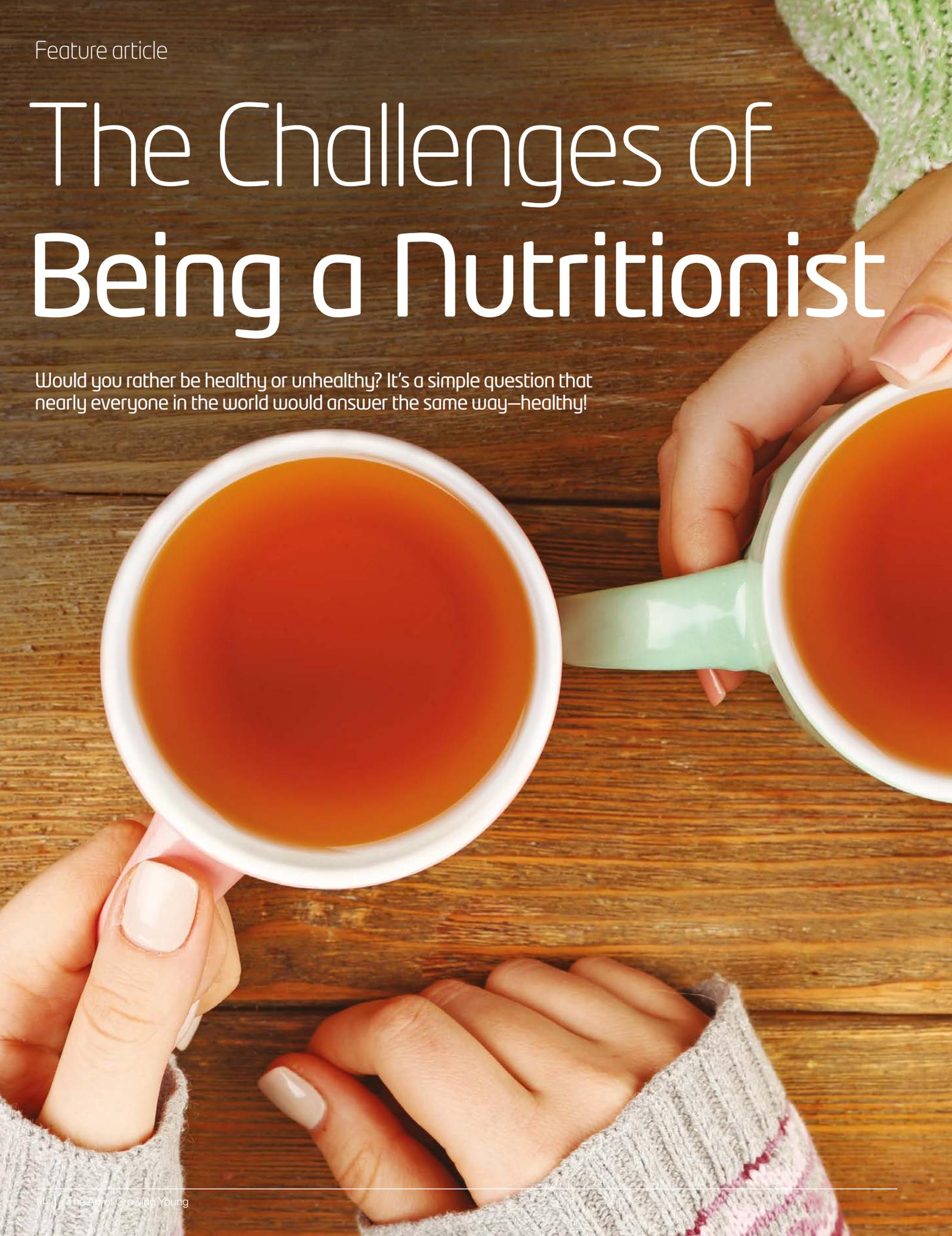


When you look at the ingredients in a processed snack as simple as popcorn, you soon realize how vastly different the list would be in entire meals when you make them at home instead of purchasing them in the frozen food aisle of your grocery store. Over the past several decades, too many people have abdicated the art of cooking to the processed food industry. What we get in convenience, we pay for in long-term health risks. The art of gathering healthy food and preparing it as delicious meals is indeed a life-preserving skill, one we must teach to our children if they are to survive and thrive in an increasingly toxic world.

Feature article

The Challenges of Being a Nutritionist

Would you rather be healthy or unhealthy? It's a simple question that nearly everyone in the world would answer the same way—healthy!





If everyone wants to be healthy, then it would make sense that the role of a nutritionist (someone who is devoted to helping people improve their nutrition to become more healthy) would be an easy one. But it is not. In fact, the opposite is true.

The life of a nutritionist is not easy. To understand why, we must first understand exactly what a nutritionist does.

At its core, nutritional science is the study of how the body reacts to diet. To study this, a nutritionist calls on molecular biology, biochemistry, genetics and even more to better understand how the biochemical makeup of foods creates metabolic and physiological responses in the body.

To oversimplify, a nutritionist can tell you why it is healthier to eat a carrot than a doughnut and then help you plan your diet around that knowledge, taking into account many factors you may not even think about, such as activity level, stress level, taste preferences, geographic location or family health history, to name a few.

One of the first challenges nutritionists face is that, compared to other sciences such as calculus and physics, nutritional science is still in its infancy.

Researchers have learned a lot, and yet there is much more to be discovered.

This also means it's an exciting time in the field of nutrition because nearly every day a new discovery is made that alters our perceptions of health. Of course, this flood of knowledge can also be confusing. In the best cases, nutritionists make discoveries that lead to life-changing breakthroughs, such as when Dr Jaques Masquelier discovered OPCs, a group of the most potent free radical-fighting, plant-derived antioxidants ever found.

In the worst cases, new but not yet fully examined knowledge can be used to mislead people in order to sell bogus products, promote unhealthy fad diets or needlessly scare people away from healthy options.

A huge battle nutritionists fight every day is the overconsumption of bad data due to modern technology. In other words, it's possible to find anything on the Internet, and people do just that. In a matter of seconds, a person can find "evidence" to back up nearly any opinion. Do eggs increase or decrease cholesterol? Is coffee good or bad for you? How much salt is too much? These hot topics are discussed over and over again in forums throughout cyberspace—many of which link to sources of dubious credibility. For most people, it's far easier to do a quick Internet search than to take the time to have an in-depth conversation with a nutritionist in order to fully understand the complex relationships between foods and our bodies.



Several years ago, headlines around the world were proclaiming certain antioxidants cause lung cancer. People were in an uproar and pointing fingers at nutritional supplement companies. However, upon closer examination, it was revealed that the alarming headlines left out that the study in question involved synthetic antioxidant vitamins as well as many other factors, such as smoking cigarettes.

Imagine the frustrations of a nutritionist who has to have the same conversations over and over again with people who are rightly feeling scared and sometimes angry due to feeling misled.

Nutritional science has grown, and our understanding of how nutrients affect the body has increased. Even as our understanding grows, our diets change. Unfortunately, this is not always as a result of the discoveries made by the science that looks to create healthier relationships between people and food.





The industrial age sparked massive changes in average daily diets. But that's not all. Factory farming, fast-food chains, increases in work hours, increasingly aggressive advertising agencies, globalized economies—there are too many influences to list. But even this small sample gives you an idea of what nutritionists are up against. Every day people are exposed to more and more choices of what to eat—and in all those choices, the percentage of truly healthy food seems to be shrinking.

Nutritionists are often tasked with sorting through these faux foods and researching whether or not they are healthy. When trans

fats first became popular, they were lauded as a miracle food that increased both taste and shelf life. It's no surprise that manufacturers of prepackaged foods included trans fats in the vast majority of their recipes.

Of course, now we know how incredibly unhealthy trans fats are for the body. When nutritional scientists informed the public of this, manufacturers began to revise their recipes again, this time making them healthier but also using their influence with regulatory agencies to allow them to hide a low level of these antinutrients in their products.

Food deserts are an increasing problem faced by nutritionists as well. Industrialization has led to larger and larger cities. For a variety of socioeconomic reasons, some urban dwellers currently live in neighborhoods devoid of stores that sell healthy food options. How is it possible for people to learn how to eat healthy foods when they simply cannot purchase those foods in their neighborhood?

A nutritionist can spend hours creating a healthy meal plan for a person, but if that person has no access to healthy foods, it won't do any good. Knowledge of what constitutes a healthy diet is only half the answer. Access is the other half. Some

urban dwellers have found ways to plant fruits and vegetables in vacant lots owned by the city to provide fresh produce that is otherwise unavailable to them.

One of the most frustrating challenges facing nutritionists is also one of the least expected—uninformed doctors. Logically, patients often think that since doctors are experts in health and medicine, they will also be experts in nutrition. But remember, modern nutritional science is relatively new. Modern medical science has focused on new drugs, diagnostic procedures and surgeries, and it has been slow to adopt breakthroughs in nutritional science. The standard medical model tends to remain one of treating disease rather than maintaining health. This is slowly changing as nutritional science expands. But in the meantime, it remains a struggle for nutritionists who feel they need to educate both patients and doctors.

From farming techniques to cooking methods to genetics and microbiology, nutrition is an incredibly complex topic. In addition to dealing with the science of nutrition, nutritionists are also faced with a multitude of external challenges. However, at the heart of complexity, there is also simplicity. As one noted nutrition journalist succinctly put it: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants."



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Minerals

Vitamins and minerals go hand in hand. Yet too often we focus only on vitamins when considering health and diet. We may not talk about minerals as often, but they are just as important.

Dietary minerals are inorganic compounds obtained from the foods we eat. Many come predominantly from plant-based sources. Plant roots absorb minerals from soil, and we in turn consume those same minerals when we eat plants such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, grains and legumes.

According to the National Institutes of Health, there are two classes of minerals: macrominerals and trace minerals. As their names suggest, your body requires larger amounts of macrominerals than it does of trace minerals. Macrominerals include calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, sodium, potassium, chloride and sulfur. Trace minerals include iron, manganese, copper, iodine, zinc, cobalt, boron, molybdenum, silicon and selenium. Beyond even trace minerals are the ultra-trace minerals such as bismuth and strontium. The exact role of some of these in our biochemistry is as yet uncertain in the evolving science of nutrition. While there is some overlap in duties, each mineral has unique benefits for your body, and none should be skipped.

The body uses minerals for many purposes, including nervous system functions, cellular reactions, structural systems, enzyme functions and hormone functions.

Many of the important enzyme actions in our metabolic process couldn't even take place without certain minerals being present. For instance, we know that over 300 different enzymes (the complex protein catalysts that facilitate biochemical reactions at body temperature) require the single mineral magnesium in order to function properly.



Calcium is most well-known for its ability to help build strong bones and teeth; therefore, it is often a staple nutrient that parents provide their children by serving foods such as milk, yogurt and soybeans.

Leafy green vegetables are also one of the best sources of calcium. But did you know that calcium also helps blood clots form after injury, aids in nerve messages being sent and even plays a role in muscle contraction?

Just because a mineral is classified as trace doesn't mean it isn't an important dietary nutrient. It's amazing what the body can do with such relatively small amounts of some nutrients. Manganese, for example, helps the body form bone and connective tissue and some hormones. It also aids in metabolizing fat and carbohydrates, absorbing calcium, and regulating blood sugar. Your brain and nerves also require manganese to function properly.

If all those benefits aren't enough to convince you of the importance of manganese, the powerful nutrient is also a component of a particular antioxidant enzyme (superoxide dismutase) that helps fight free radicals and oxidation in the body. However, too much manganese, especially in the wrong form for the body to use, can be toxic and has been implicated in neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's disease. So having the right amount of minerals in the right form is crucial to good health.

Because of its wide range of interactions within the body, manganese has an equally

wide range of possibilities in preventing illness and supporting healthy functioning of multiple systems in the body. Manganese has been studied for its possible effects on osteoporosis, premenstrual syndrome, diabetes, arthritis and epilepsy.

That's a lot of impact for a mineral with a generally accepted adequate intake of just around 2 mg per day. And the other trace minerals are just as varied in their roles within the body.

Much like vitamins, minerals have varied and complex roles in the body. For example, potassium helps nerves communicate, works to prevent muscle cramps, aids in allowing nutrients to enter cells, helps regulate healthy blood pressure and more. That's a lot of important jobs for one mineral. Sweet potatoes, bananas and beans are a few good sources of potassium.

Similar to vitamins, some minerals work best when combined with other nutrients. The best way to ensure your body is receiving all the minerals it requires is to consume a varied diet with a wide range of fresh fruits and vegetables. Because of the industrialization of agriculture over the past 60 to 70 years and the use of NPK (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium) fertilizers, much of the world's topsoil in which our food is grown has been relatively depleted of many macrominerals and trace minerals, such as magnesium (the central mineral for chlorophyll, upon which all photosynthesis in plants depends), zinc, selenium, chromium, manganese, molybdenum and silicon, to name a few. This is why the age-old practice of composting leftover food, planting "cover" crops, rotating crops, minimizing the use of herbicides and pesticides to allow the microbiome of the soil to flourish, and planting many things together are essential for the health of our soil, upon which the health of our bodies depends. Organic agriculture is simply the way food was produced prior to the industrial revolution. There was wisdom in the way our ancestors did things, and our health depends on finding sources for such things as critical minerals that are increasingly in short supply in the soil that produces much of our food supply.

The Bilingual Advantage

The world is growing smaller. As the reach of the Internet grows and long-distance travel continues to become cheaper and faster, the world is shrinking for our children.

Coming generations will be exposed to more languages and cultures than any previous generation because of this phenomenon. Raising a bilingual child from early on may help prepare them for this new and exciting time in human history.

In addition to helping your child thrive in an increasingly globalized society, helping him or her learn a second language may have other, hidden benefits.

Multiple studies show the cognitive benefits of learning a second language during childhood. One thing that may be behind these benefits is simply the brain-boosting workout a person (of any age) receives when learning a new language.

People of any age who can switch between two languages fluidly may be helping to keep their brains active and flexible. Some research has even shown bilingual children are better suited to understanding math problems.¹

One thought about why bilingual children seem to have a leg up in other areas of learning is that the brainpower it takes to switch between languages may help children adopt more flexible approaches to thinking through problems. Studies have shown bilingual children display higher levels of abstract thought—a trait critically important to excel in the classroom.²

Another study, this one published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, found that some infants raised in bilingual homes experienced accelerated cognitive development in order to manage both languages.

As reported in *Psychology and Aging*, simple cognitive tests show children who are raised in bilingual homes and continue to speak both languages tend to outperform monolingual children by a significant margin.

It's clear that learning a second language early on has big benefits in the classroom. But there are more benefits than simple academic performance.

Holding on to our ancestry may become more and more challenging for future generations who live on a much more global scale. Therefore, understanding the language of one's cultural heritage may help a person stay connected socially and culturally to family, while understanding the language of one's current geography is necessary for a person to connect on professional and social levels with coworkers and friends.



Speaking of maintaining professional and personal relationships, at least one study has found that bilingual people may have better conflict resolution abilities. What better gift to give your child than the ability to peacefully and effectively deal with conflict throughout life?³

Ideally, a mentally and cognitively healthy person is able to connect with friends, family and coworkers to produce three distinct but overlapping webs of support throughout life. For centuries, this was done in one language, but that is changing. To prepare your children for the future, helping them foster an interest in foreign languages may be prudent.



Knowing a second language may continue to help long past school and career ages as well. Some studies show that knowing more than one language may even correlate with a reduced risk of developing dementia later in life.

Given all the clearly established health benefits and the knowledge that the world is becoming a smaller place, fostering a love of languages in your child early on is clearly a gift that will benefit him or her for a lifetime.

Helping your child acquire a second language is incredibly easy if you and/or your partner are bilingual. Everyone learns language from his or her parents first. If you speak in multiple languages, your child will naturally follow suit.

If languages are not in your zone of comfort, never fear. There are other ways to help your child learn. Bilingual education is available from early Head Start programs all the way through college and beyond. Tapping into these resources often begins with a simple online search or asking friends who also have children.

However, if your child is learning a second language in the classroom, know that family participation can greatly increase the likelihood that your child will become fluent. Take time to help your child study, and take the classes alongside him or her by reading the textbooks, studying notes and even doing your own version of his or her homework.



¹ Zelasko, N. & Antunez, B. [2000]. If your child learns in two languages. National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.

² Diaz, R. [1985]. The intellectual power of bilingualism. In Southwest Hispanic Research Institute, *Second Language Learning by Young Children*. Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico.

³ Albert Costa, Mireia Hernández, Núria Sebastián-Gallés. "Bilingualism aids conflict resolution: Evidence from the ANT task," *Cognition*, Volume 106, Issue 1, January 2008, Pages 59–86.

Ensuring a High Quality of Life

Average life spans have been steadily on the rise since the beginning of industrialization and the modern era. What does living a longer life mean, and how does it affect independence, health and overall quality of life?

It's no surprise that research has shown chronic diseases disproportionately affect older adults. As we get older, our bodies wear out and slow down. That's an inevitable consequence of aging, right? Not necessarily.

It is true that increased life spans also tend to increase the risk of developing certain illnesses. But there is much that you can do in your early years to greatly reduce many of those risk factors. By staying healthy and maintaining a positive outlook in life, you can live a long, happy and healthy life.

The key to enjoying a high quality of life when you are older is to pick up healthy habits when you're younger.

That said, it's never too late to get healthy and active in order to improve your quality of life.

A few of the major factors that contribute to your quality of life are diet, exercise, mental stimulation and avoidance of unhealthy habits. As you grow older, learning to practice safety habits that will help you avoid accidents will also contribute to your quality of life.

You are never too old or too out of shape to get active. Physical activity (aerobic activities, strength training and flexibility exercises) will make muscles stronger, range of movement better and balance steadier. Improving these three traits can greatly reduce the risk of accidents. Being in shape also helps boost confidence, which in turn grants the freedom to get out and be even more active. The ability to leave the house and enjoy life is a major component of a high quality of life.

All it takes to get started is walking a few minutes a day. Experts recommend at least thirty minutes of exercise most days of the week. For many seniors, that goal can be easily met with a short walk around the neighborhood.

According to the World Health Organization, elderly people are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition. The WHO has also stated that many diseases associated with age are the result of dietary factors.

Eating a lifelong diet of healthy, unprocessed foods can help combat malnutrition at every stage of life. At any age, a diet that is rich in a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables will help provide the body with the nutrition it needs to function at optimal levels.

Metabolic processes tend to slow as we age, which means elderly people burn fewer calories every day. Altering our diets as we age to include fewer fats and calories in order to match activity and metabolism levels will help keep off extra pounds and reduce the risk of developing certain cardiovascular diseases.

Maintaining a healthy weight with proper diet and exercise will make it even easier to stay active. One wonderful secret of healthy aging is that good habits produce a snowball effect in your life. Eating a healthy diet will make your exercise more effective, which in turn will give you more confidence, which will give you more freedom, which allows more options, and on and on. It's amazing how much of an impact a few small choices will have on your road to wellness.

With the freedom that comes with a healthy body, seniors can be much more active in the community. Getting out and interacting with friends also helps fight depression, further improving overall quality of life.

Staying mentally active is to your brain what lifting weights is to your muscles. The more you do it, the better off you will be. One of the best ways to stimulate your brain is to engage with other people. Whether you play cards with a group of friends, join a book club or just regularly have breakfast with your neighbors, actively participating in conversations with other people provides invaluable mental stimulation.

We live in an age when the quality of a person's life is heavily dependent on the health of his or her lifestyle. Living a healthy lifestyle can greatly improve your quality of life at any age.





Overcoming Compassion Fatigue

Couples are choosing to have children later in life than ever before. One benefit of this shift is that couples can be more financially secure before dealing with the expenses of starting a family.

One drawback is that it can leave parents caring for elderly family members while raising small children.

In traditional family models, women are the caregivers. Despite changes in modern family dynamics, many women are still responsible for the majority of caregiving. Moms are often the ones who schedule appointments, volunteer to help at school, stay home with sick children and perform other caregiving duties.

Caring for young children can be a full-time job. So can caring for elderly parents. In today's family situations, many women do both while also working full time and trying to stay connected to friends and their husbands. These strains on women can lead to compassion fatigue—a recognized condition characterized by a gradual lessening of compassion over time. Some women will feel it less as a reduction in compassion and more as a hardening of their softer side. Spending too much time caring for other people and not enough time caring for yourself can ultimately lead to burnout and exhaustion.

To prevent and/or reverse compassion fatigue and exhaustion, modern moms need to learn how to take care of themselves. From simple activities such as long, hot showers to more elaborate ones such as weekend getaways with girlfriends, there are many things moms can do in order to stay healthy and happy while still caring for their loved ones.

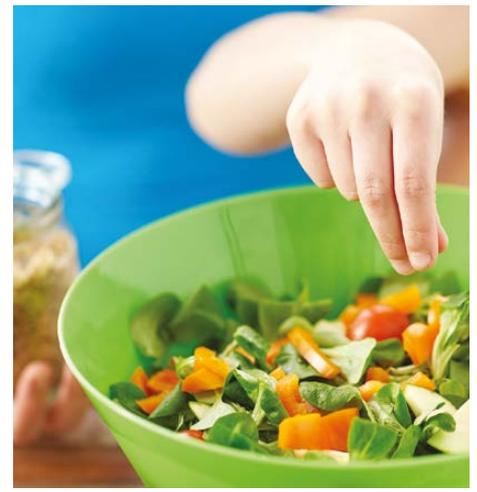
Before you can counteract compassion fatigue, you must first learn to recognize when your negative emotions are building up. Set aside a few minutes every day to check in with yourself. It doesn't have to take a lot of time or effort—just three to five minutes of quiet reflection.

Ask yourself how you are doing mentally and physically. One or two bad days are natural and shouldn't be a concern, but if you notice prolonged issues, you may need to take a deeper look at your life to see whether you are experiencing compassion fatigue. A few things to look out for are unwanted changes in weight, loss of interest in activities that have previously been enjoyable, changes in sleep patterns, frequent illness, frequent irritability, feelings of anger toward yourself or the person you are caring for, and withdrawal from friends and family.

Fight fatigue by taking care of your body physically. Eating a healthy diet that provides your body with long-lasting sources of healthy energy can help you get through rough spots. When you're not supplying your body with the nutrition it needs, you can never be at your best. Regular physical activity will also help keep energy levels high and boost self-esteem. Exercise is also a natural mood enhancer and a major component of stress management.

A fit and healthy body will do wonders for fighting compassion fatigue, but you need to take care of your mind as well. Relaxing activities can help calm your nerves and ease tension. There are many ways to relax, and not everybody chooses to relax in the same ways. Some women may find gardening relaxing, while others see it as nothing but hard, dirty work. That's fine. There is no one way that will work for everyone to help defeat compassion fatigue.





The trick is to find what works for you and to make sure you spend some time every single week (every day if possible!) engaging in an activity that relaxes you.

Last but not least, engage with other people on a daily basis in conversations that don't center on negativity. Enjoying the company of close friends and family should leave you feeling recharged and happy.

If you realize that you always feel nervous, angry or upset after spending time with certain people, try to limit how much you interact with them. Since we tend to attract into our lives the feelings and emotions we focus on, it's vitally important to stay focused on relationships that replenish rather than drain your positive emotions.

Explore your feelings, and find out what works best for you. It's possible that the stresses of caring for one family member have a different remedy than the stresses of caring for another one. Fight compassion fatigue by living a life that leaves you feeling generally healthy and happy, and remember to ask for help when you need it. Nobody should go through life on his or her own—especially a caregiver like you.



Revising the Male Role Model

The classic male role model is a macho, hardworking head of the household. This stereotype is on the decline, which may be a good thing, as personality traits associated with it have negative implications for a man's health.

The classic male role model is increasingly becoming outdated, largely because of changes in the workforce. Today's workforce is quite a bit different from the one our parents entered. Women are increasingly becoming financially independent, in some cases becoming the breadwinner in a family. Both genders are putting in more and more hours at work every week. These factors are fundamentally changing what a modern-day relationship looks like—especially when children are involved.

With roles shifting and changing in modern-day relationships, now is the perfect time to revise the classic male role model in order to create a new standard that is healthier and happier.

The modern father is no longer the detached disciplinarian who derives self-worth from earning money and providing for his wife and children. Instead, he can be single, married or partnered. He is just as likely to work at an office as he is to work from home. He may even be a full-time dad while his partner works all day.

The modern father is also anything but distant from his children. And that's a great thing—psychological research has shown that when fathers are more involved, children's social and emotional development are often increased.

As wonderful as these changes are for families as a whole, it can be a challenge for some men to adapt to them. This is especially true for men who grew up looking up to a father who fit the old-fashioned role model.



Being a more active dad may be emotionally challenging for some men. However, they can take comfort in knowing that according to a meta-analysis of almost 30,000 parents that looked at seven critical parenting areas, there was no significant difference between mothers and fathers. Warmth, nurturance, responsiveness and other areas important for a developing child were equal between both mother and father.

With this knowledge, modern men who grew up with old-fashioned fathers and are currently struggling to find their identity can shift the way they measure their self-worth from achieving at the office to achieving in the home.



The traditional male gender role has been associated with a host of psychological and physical problems. The modern male is a healthier male, largely because of the time he spends with his family instead of stressing out about work responsibilities.

As with many things in life, you get what you give. An involved, giving father will receive the love and affection he puts out. What a wonderful way to feel your self-worth rise!

Just thirty years ago, stay-at-home dads were practically unheard of. Now not only are more men deciding to stay home with the children, but they also are truly embracing the role and all the benefits that come with it.

To embrace being a modern-day role model, take the initiative a classic role model may not have.

Get involved with your family before being asked—plan trips, make appointments, start conversations, initiate hugs. In other words, create the family you want to be a part of rather than passively watching from the couch.

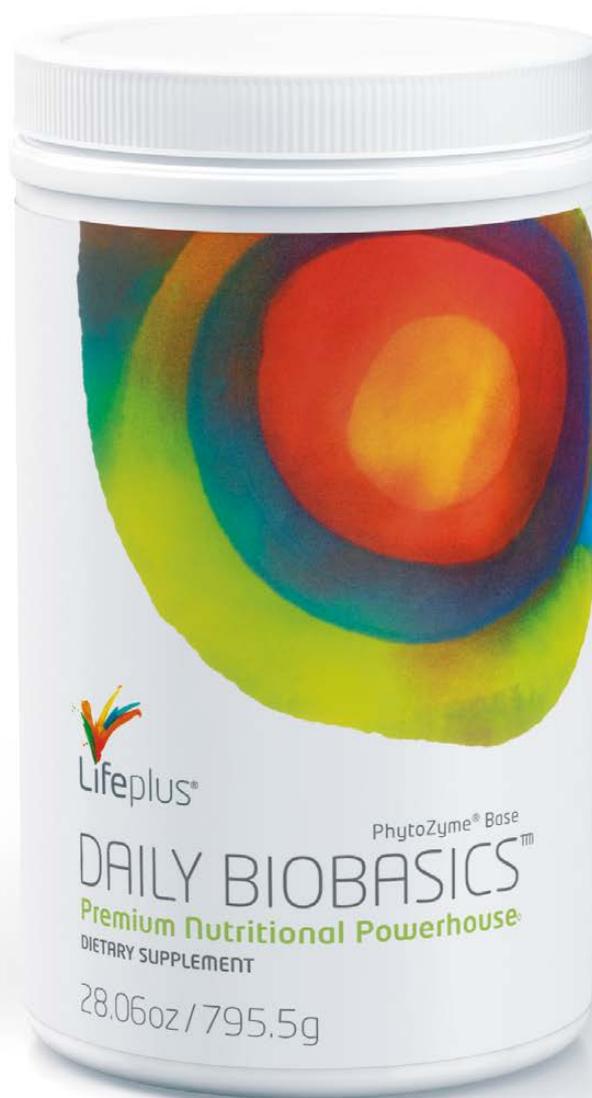


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Ask the Expert

Are there really such things as good fats?

The war on fat may have done more damage to waistlines than any other nutritional misstep in recent history. It seems that the more people were told to cut fat out of their diets completely, the larger waistlines grew around the world, mainly because the food industry replaced dietary fat with refined carbohydrates.

Today, we know not all fats are equal, and fat-soluble vitamins require some dietary fat in order to be used by the body.

The bottom line is that humans need some fat in the diet in order to live. A healthy lifestyle involves matching your fat intake to your activity level.



It's also important to avoid man-made trans fats that have no nutritional benefits. The healthiest diets also include ample amounts of omega-3 fatty acids—a special fat that has been positively linked in multiple studies to cognitive function and improved mood.

Can I get sick from too much stress?

In small amounts, stress, anger, worry, anxiety and other “negative” emotions can help you live an accomplished life. The stress of making your paycheck to take care of your family is a “good” form of stress that helps keep you motivated at work. But when stress levels get too high and stay elevated for too long, they can lead to unhealthy changes in your body. Common bodily reactions to stress are stiff muscles, stomachaches and headaches. These tend to be short-lived annoyances. However, chronic stress can contribute to a compromised immune system. With too many stressful days in a row, you may find yourself fighting a cold as well as a deadline. Fortunately, positive feelings can have a positive effect on the body. Never underestimate your mind’s ability to influence the health of your body. Like many other areas of life, we tend to attract what we are focused on, whether that is stress and anxiety or health and happiness.

Does sleep affect weight control?

A few nights of tossing and turning will have no lasting effect on your health, but chronic sleeplessness can lead to a variety of health concerns. Insomnia has been linked to high blood pressure, heart attack, decreased quality of life and, yes, weight gain. Too little sleep affects the brain and mood. After a few sleepless nights, you may find yourself bingeing on sugary snacks at work trying to get a boost. It only makes sense that when you come home tired and in a depressed mood, getting a good workout is probably the last thing on your mind. When this goes on too long, it can definitely affect your waistline simply because you haven't been taking proper care of your body. Sleepless nights also alter two key hormones that help regulate healthy eating patterns. All of these can be equated with expanding waistlines. To avoid these issues, try to slow down both physically and mentally as bedtime nears. Keep your bedroom dark, cool and free of distractions such as cellphones, computers and televisions.



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