

CURCIO LAW'S

Living Safer

VOLUME 10 • EDITION 3

MAGAZINE

America's
INVISIBLE CRIME:
child sex
trafficking

CURCIO LAW

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Living Safer

A Letter from the Firm



Dear Friends,

I hope that you have enjoyed the summer and took time away from work to spend time with family and friends, and to recharge the batteries. My wife Gale and I spent the 4th of July in Portland, OR. We had a great time exploring that beautiful city, meeting some of its many friendly residents, and visiting Mount Hood and Coastal areas, including the town of Astoria and Cannon Beach. If you have not visited Portland, I recommend adding it to your bucket list. Our next short vacation is to spend four days on a rented houseboat on Raystown Lake in Huntington County, PA. While I have been an avid

powerboater from my childhood growing up on Long Island, most states, including Virginia, now require that boat safety courses be taken by ALL operators of boats. The U.S. Coast Guard course I took 10 years ago does not qualify anymore, so I have been cramming in the mornings and evenings to finish the online course before I show up at the dock demanding the keys.

Our firm recently said farewell to Shirine Logmanian, our summer intern who is returning to Fordham Law School in NYC to start her second year. Shirine has been a huge help and is part of my efforts to help law students and young lawyers the way as I was helped by so many good people in my life and professional career. Judging from her temperament, intellect, and work ethic, Shirine is bound to have a successful legal career.

While I believe that most people are good, there are some bad actors out there from which we must protect ourselves and those we love. As the previous edition of *Living Safer* focused on cyberbullying and the role social media and the internet plays in that, those same forces have allowed innocent children to become victims of sex crimes and trafficking. I hope that you find the articles within informative, raise your awareness of these heinous crimes, and help you to better protect the vulnerable among us.

Stay well and hope you enjoyed our latest issue of *Living Safer*.

Sincerely,
Thomas J. Curcio

ONE Second IS NOT A VERY LONG TIME.

But when you're behind a steering wheel and your eyes leave the road—that ONE single second can change a life.

ONE second is all it takes to be distracted.

When you are driving, it should not be a secondary task—it should be the only task.

EndDD.org (End Distracted Driving) was established to raise awareness and generate action against the epidemic of distracted driving.

DISTRACTIONS INCLUDE:

Visual	Taking eyes off the road
Manual	Taking hands off the road
Cognitive	Taking mind off the road

While texting and talking on the phone are both mental and physical distractions, cellphone use is attributed to 18% of fatalities in distraction-related crashes.

What makes up the other 82%?

- » Putting on makeup
 - » Reaching to grab a drink
 - » Changing the music
 - » Dealing with the GPS
 - » Eating on the go
- The distractions are endless.
But they don't have to be.

The Core Mission of EndDD

Our core mission is to preserve life and promote safety on a large scale through advocacy, education and action. It is our hope that we can prevent families and friends from suffering the loss of a loved one because of distracted driving.

Together, let's work to prevent distracted driving from claiming another life.

VISIT US ONLINE

web: endDD.org

twitter: [@end_DD](https://twitter.com/end_DD)

facebook: [EndDistractedDriving](https://www.facebook.com/EndDistractedDriving)

End Distracted Driving is sponsored by the Casey Feldman Foundation and is dedicated to inspiring individuals and communities to take action to end distracted driving.

CONTACT US toll-free at 855-363-3478 or info@EndDD.org

Small Hearts



Big Challenges

Early Detection Leads to Early Prevention

Small hearts can conceal big challenges, especially when it comes to congenital heart defects. Nearly one in three infants who die from birth defects has this condition. But a simple, non-invasive screening for all newborns could save the life of your child or the child of someone you know.

Tell your legislator to support pulse-oximetry testing for all newborns.
Get involved at YoureTheCure.org



Heart Disease and Stroke. You're the Cure.
YoureTheCure.org

ON THE COVER

AMERICA'S INVISIBLE CRIME: CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING

30 America's Invisible Crime: Child Sex Trafficking

According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, commercial sexual exploitation of children is all around us. Labeled by many as modern-day slavery in America—its occurrence is growing and we need to do something about it now.

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FOR STRONGER,
HEALTHIER
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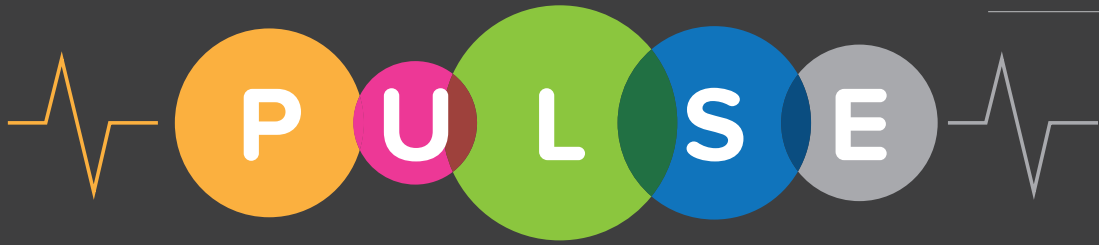


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Protecting Our Children: Are We Focusing on the Right Things?

by Bryan Silver

For a generation of parents who have been overly identified with parenting labels referencing any number of nurturing actions—from tiger, to helicopter to lawnmower (yes, it's a thing, and it has nothing to do with cutting the grass)—it might be time we all take a step back and assess what exactly we're really doing; as parents, as community and spiritual leaders, and as role models. Many might ask what's wrong with being protective over children when they face so many previously unknown issues in this technologically tweaked world—yet, one should ask if there's a good chance of us being overly protective... and is there an even better chance that it's not good for our children.

We slather our kids in chemical-laden sunscreen each day, just in case their teacher takes them outside for recess. We never leave home without at least one bottle of hand sanitizer for fear of germs the body might actually use to develop stronger defenses.

What we must be careful of is—in an effort to protect our children from any and all harm—are we also unintentionally removing valuable exposure and experiences that not only give children a healthy dose of perspective, but also enables them with the skills and tools to make their own judgement calls when we're not around. While such actions might protect them from danger, they might also rob them of defiance—that burning ember in their belly that allows them

to feel strong, to stand tall, and to say “no, I won't allow this to happen!” when confronted with a questionable scenario.

No one is saying parenting is easy, mind you. Even the seemingly smallest of decisions can potentially have monumental consequences for your child if you delve too deeply into the hypothetical. You want to protect your child, but you don't want them leading a sheltered life. You want to provide them with safe parameters, but not inadvertently crush their curiosity.

They say that a goldfish will grow to the size of its environment (which isn't exactly true, but valid enough to make the point)—an old adage that makes sense when comparing the goldfish kept in the desktop bowl to the larger koi that's given the far broader boundaries of a backyard pond.

So children need space. Children need to explore. As parents, it's up to us to make sure that they gain positive learnings through their exploration rather than making monumental mistakes, but mistakes they will make. We don't want to endanger our children, but neither do we don't want to stunt their ability to grow into confident young adults. Keep this in mind when preparing your child. Remember that you can't teach them how to handle every possible threat; thus the best you can do is teach them how to effectively assess dangers and develop their own game plan for dealing with it.

Gadgets & Apps to Help Keep Your Child Safe

by Brittany Monbarren

Every parent knows, it's a dangerous world out there. And, the safety and well-being of children rank high on any parent's priority list. Thankfully, modern technology has made this responsibility a little easier. We've listed some of the latest gadgets and technology available to help keep your kids safe online and off.



Trax Play

Trax Play GPS Tracker is a simple, no-frills device that handles the basics of letting you know where your child is. Its strongest feature is its built-in accelerometer and geofencing capability that alerts you when your child wanders outside an area that you designate. The tracker can work in 30+ different countries. It also connects to an app which includes real-time mapping, augmented reality for close proximity searches, geofencing and speed alerts.

My Buddy Tag

My Buddy Tag is a wearable, waterproof tracking device that's worn by kids like a watch. It's designed to 'keep kids safe' by allowing you to track their whereabouts via a smartphone app. It has a proximity alert system that tells you when they are out of the designated 'safe area', has a panic button on the wristband that children can press if they feel threatened and a personal ID to help reunite you with your lost child. This device can also help prevent drowning since it's waterproof.



AmberAlert GPS

This pocket-size tracker, is another great option to keep tabs on your children. You can put it in your child's pocket or backpack and check up on their location using the AmberAlert app. With AmberAlert, you can set up geofencing boundaries and receive notifications if they go out of the boundaries or if they are within 500 feet of a registered sex offender's home. This device also has two-way voice communication so you can call your child — and they can call you. Plus, the battery lasts up to 40 hours on a single charge, so you'll be covered even on sleepovers.

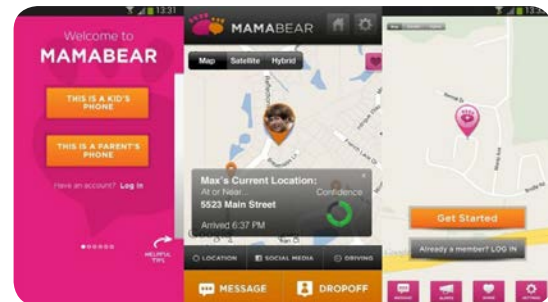


KidControl GPS

KidControl GPS phone tracker turns your kid's phone into a tool for monitoring the phone, controlling location and safety. Plus, it has some really useful features. You can receive automated alerts when your child arrives somewhere and returns home, your child can send help alerts if they are in an emergency, you can receive notifications if your child's battery is low, and KidControl GPS has intelligent battery consumption, so it uses 1-7 percent of the phone's battery during the day.

MamaBear

MamaBear helps you see your children (and family) on a map and receive arrival and departure notifications. You can monitor your children's interactions across social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and you can be alerted to signs of cyberbullying or inappropriate language on social media posts. The app also has the ability to monitor your teen's driving habits. You can set the app to alert you if your teen is texting and driving, or driving recklessly.



Life360

This app doesn't just track your location, it offers several other useful features such as a panic button and alerts when someone enters a preset zone. It also lets you check where they have been and when, where to get help in an emergency (hospitals, police stations), and allows you to send text and photo messages with its secure, private chat. And, like MamaBear, the app gives you the option to see information after each time your teen drives so you can help improve their driving.

What the Driver Sees



Behind this SUV is a group of daycare children. Not one of these children can be seen by the driver behind the wheel.



What the Driver Can't See

WORKING TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE IN AND AROUND VEHICLES

Before you turn the key...make sure you can see! Most drivers are unaware of the large and very dangerous blindzone that exists behind all vehicles. Every week at least 50 children are seriously injured or killed after being backed over because a driver was unable to see them behind their vehicle.

Help save the life of a precious child

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How to Choose the Best Financial Advisor for Your Goals

by Michael J. Swanson

Managing your personal finances and accomplishing your financial goals can be challenging, so it can be helpful to hire a professional financial advisor to assist you.

When searching for a financial advisor, it is crucial that you do your research to ensure that you are hiring the best qualified advisor for your personal needs.

At a minimum, your advisor should be a Certified Financial Planner (CFP). This status is awarded by the Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards and must be maintained by the advisor through ongoing education. Anyone can call themselves a financial advisor, so make sure they have the right credentials and experience. You can visit the Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards at www.cfp.net to check on your advisor's status or to search for a new advisor.

You may also want to check out the National Association of Personal Financial Advisors (NAPFA). They have a database of certified financial advisors that you can search through. You can filter your search by fee structure, technical areas of focus, and the type of clients they serve to find the one that is the best fit for your needs. NAPFA also has a multitude of different resources available on their website that can help you properly interview advisors to make sure they are the right choice for you.

When it comes to a payment structure, it is usually best to hire a fee-based planner rather than a commissioned planner. A fee-based planner will have fewer potential conflicts of interest since they do not earn fees or commissions by recommending particular investments.

Before you begin searching for an advisor, you should determine the financial goals that you want assistance with, such as retirement planning, budgeting, estate planning, and education funding. Doing this will help you choose an advisor that specializes in your needs. It will also help you communicate with potential advisors about what you expect to get out of their services.

After you have determined your goals, do some research to find a few financial advisors in your area to research further. You can do this by asking family and friends for recommendations or going to objective websites to search through their databases of advisors. Also read the financial advisor's website and any available online reviews to get an idea of how they perform their business. Make note of anything you find that you don't understand or that you may want to find out more details about later on from the advisor.

Once you have found a few advisors that you think could help, schedule a phone call or face-to-face meeting with them before you make your final decision on who to hire. Before speaking with them, prepare a few questions to ask them about their educational and professional experience, their areas of expertise, the services they provide, their disciplinary history, and their compensation policies.

Having an expert on your side can be invaluable when it comes to something as important as your personal finances. You don't have to do it all on your own, but it is vital that you choose carefully in order to find an experienced financial advisor who has your best interests in mind. [B](#)



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Live Safe Foundation is devoted to making life and fire safety education, awareness initiatives and life saving tools available on a broad basis to communities and campuses.

Our primary goal is to reduce national fire fatalities and fire losses.

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Signs Your Physical Pain is Related to Stress

by Shelly White

Stress wreaks havoc on humankind increasingly in this fast-paced, technological, often difficult world. The common conception may be that stress causes plenty of anxiety, mood changes, and other emotional and psychological symptoms, but stress can also literally cause physical symptoms and even has links to death through stress-caused physical ailments. Stress has been tied to a host of conditions, illnesses, and life-threatening disorders, yet most people are unable to effectively prevent, manage or simply get a handle on that which causes stress. A list of diseases not impacted in some way by stress would be difficult to compose. High blood pressure, hypertension, heart attacks and other cardiac issues are often linked to stress. Conditions such as a compromised immune system and an increased infection vulnerability can result from stress and lead to things such as viral illnesses, autoimmune conditions (i.e. rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis) and even cancer. Neurological diseases such as Parkinson's or Multiple Sclerosis are not immune to stress factors, either. Stress can cause rashes, hives, dermatitis, as well as gastrointestinal conditions, such as ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis, and even gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).

In daily life, individuals likely see the short-term effects of stress that can easily become chronic if the stress is not managed. Think of the individual who clenches their jaw, grinds their teeth, or tightens their muscles for hours at a time, day and night. Such habits—conscious or not—can result in TMJ of the jaw, dental issues, headaches, and muscle pain. Stress also impacts the nervous system, the musculoskeletal system, the respiratory system, the cardiovascular system, the endocrine system, the gastrointestinal system, and even the reproductive system. For instance, stress triggers the brain to send out alerts from the hypothalamus for the ramped-up production of cortisol by the adrenal cortex and epinephrine by the adrenal medulla. One might know these better by the term “stress hormones.” The list is long of resulting physical symptoms with stress ties—including, but certainly not limited to, headache, muscle tightness, muscle pain, chest pain, sex drive decreases, stomach upset, overwhelming fatigue, interrupted sleep cycles, weight gain,

and weight loss. The world has come to a crisis of sorts in the need to address stress and its negative effects on society at large. However, it really comes down to the individual understanding stress and its unique personal impact. Stress education and stress management are key in cutting down on physical symptoms, as well as the mental ones usually attributed with the insidious life interrupter. There are tools to manage stress and its symptoms, but there are also ways in which an individual can do more than a surface remedy—actually getting underneath the stress and see what exactly is going on inside.

One can explore options such as getting consistent exercise, relaxation technique engagement, laughing daily, looking to community for support, and taking time for life enjoyment activities and passions. Cutting down on technological gadget use is a stress management tool and this includes things such as television, internet, social media, video games, and cellular phone use. While many believe engaging in seemingly “mindless” activities involving these gadgets is stress relieving, these activities ramp up stress over time. One need only look at the evidence that shows convenience and technology has been purchased at a price—mainly peace and well-being over the long term. Other things that can be done to manage stress include balance in eating, getting enough sleep, and avoiding overconsumption of caffeine, alcohol, or drugs. Reaching out for help can also get to the source of the stress; support can range from talking with family and friends to mental health therapy as well as “getting in touch” with the spiritual side of life.

One should know a caveat when it comes to employing any of these managers and solutions. Stress can easily cause a lack of motivation or focus, feelings of being overwhelmed, anxiety or depression. Therefore, beginning with small steps towards stress management is important, as it is less likely to cause even more stress through self-condemnation and frustration.

The bottom line is: be kind to oneself in the process of getting a handle on that monster called stress and be sure to enlist the support and accountability of others when possible—whether it be family, friends, support groups or other mental health resources. [IS](#)





Pets are Good for Your Health

by Danny Feldman

Anyone who has a pet probably knows this already, but science has shown that having a pet can improve our health—both physically and mentally. The question is: How?

More Exercise: Having a dog requires owners to walk the dog, sometimes several times a day. As a result, dog owners in particular get more exercise than non-dog owners. Even when it's cold, rainy or just "gross" outside (90-plus degrees and 90 percent humidity—which we get about 90 days a year down in the south) dog owners are outside walking their pet. The result: a healthier heart.

Less Stress: Petting your animal, whether it be a dog, cat, or something else, has been shown to lower a human's blood pressure. In short—it's downright soothing. Not only does it de-stress a person, it also soothes the animal. It's hard to come home from a stressful day at work and for that stress not to melt away after you've walked the dog and then spent some quality time petting your pet.

Better Mood/Less Depression: Being responsible for an animal makes people feel better about themselves. Studies have shown that pet owners are generally happier, more trusting and less lonely than non-pet owners. Why? Experts theorize that by focusing on your animal's needs, wants and desires, people

become less concerned about their own problems (indeed pet owners go to the doctor less than non-pet owners). And, when you are responsible for another living creature, it's easier to get up in the morning and do things for your pet. Indeed, a recent study at an assisted living facility introduced all types of pets, not only dogs and cats, but chickens, rabbits and other animals, to be cared for by the seniors who lived in the community. And, not surprisingly, the use of antidepressants at that senior living community dropped significantly.

Breaking the Ice: Having a pet allows people to more easily interact with one another. Take a dog for a walk and you realize all the social encounters you have that you would not have had if you had been walking without a dog. It is socially acceptable to approach someone with a dog and start up a conversation, and more social interaction leads to less feelings of loneliness and depression.

Better Immune System: Babies raised in a home with dogs get less allergies and asthma. Children with dogs or cats in the home get fewer colds and ear infections. Exactly why is unknown, but studies have pretty clearly shown that having a pet (dog) around the house results in a better immune system.

So, although the primary reason for pet ownership may have nothing to do with improved health, the fact of the matter is that having a pet around the house can lead to a healthier you. [IS](#)



Emotional Abuse is Real

by Tammie McKay

We are all familiar with what physical abuse is; we can see the signs and the damage it does. Emotional abuse isn't as clear-cut, often going undetected by family members, friends, and oftentimes even the victim. The effects can be just as severe as those from physical abuse or likely worse, for in many circumstances, the victim blames themselves. Victims develop coping techniques to minimize the abuse in order to deal with the stress. In a way, emotional abuse is a form of brainwashing, as it slowly destroys one's sense of self-worth, security, and trust in oneself and in others.

Emotional abuse is usually comprised of a pattern of verbal threatening, bullying, intimidation, and manipulation. Over time, the victim acquiesces and becomes trapped in the relationship— additionally experiencing anxiety, depression, chronic pain, substance abuse, and PTSD.

Here are some signs of emotional abuse to watch for:

- 1 Domination and Control**
Maybe the person says things to upset or scare you, or they become jealous of attention from others. They might monitor your whereabouts, your calls/texts, or even your email contacts. Worse, they might make major decisions without consulting you, dictate how you spend money, or make subtle threats or remarks to frighten or control you.
- 2 Signs of Verbal Abuse**
Does the person show disregard and disrespect toward you or neglect your opinions, suggestions, or needs? Maybe they make "jokes" at your expense or use sarcasm to make you feel bad. They might try to point out your flaws, talk in circles to confuse you, or even call you names or swear at you.
- 3 Demanding and Controlling Expectations**
Does the person order you around or get angry with you when demands aren't met? Such individuals may demand obedience, treat you like a child, or behave like a child themselves. They lack empathy or compassion for others, cannot laugh at themselves or tolerate others laughing at them, and ultimately, view others as an extension of their lives instead of an individual.
- 4 Emotional Blackmail**
Does the individual give you looks to make you feel bad? Are they emotionally unavailable? They might also withhold intimacy or affection while also using guilt trips, and the problems only escalate if you talk back.

- 5 Unpredictable Behavior**
You might witness unpredictable, emotional outbursts or "Jekyll and Hyde" mood swings. The person may stomp out during an argument or they sulk while refusing to talk about an issue.
- 6 Chaos and Crisis Creation**
Does the abuser like to be the center of attention, always making a big scene? Maybe they act jealous and suspicious of your friends, make claims of infidelity or threaten divorce on a regular basis just to get a rise out of you.
- 7 Character Assassination**
This might involve actions that belittle, insult or berate you; puts down your physical appearance; or trivializes you, your accomplishments, or your dreams. It can escalate to where the person turns others against you, corrects you for your behavior, or tells you your feelings are irrational.
- 8 Gaslighting**
Deriving from the Ingrid Bergman classic film, *Gaslight*, the term refers to psychological manipulation to the point where the victim questions their own sanity. It could include the aggressor accusing you of being crazy, lying, or not remembering; denying their abusive behavior; hijacking conversations; or blaming you, the victim, for their problems or bad behavior. Ultimately, it's a series of mind games which accuse you for things that aren't true—such as infidelity—while making you feel that you're always wrong.

The first step to recovery from emotional abuse is to recognize the abuse is occurring. Keep in mind; even if your partner exhibits just a few of these signs, you are still in an emotionally abusive relationship. Do not fall into the mindset of telling yourself it isn't that bad. It is vitally important to realize it is the abuser with a problem, and this is not your fault. Being completely honest with yourself regarding what you are experiencing can help you begin to take control of your life again. Do not live in denial and make excuses or concessions for the abuser. It can be very difficult to learn to again trust your judgement and thoughts during and after experiencing emotional abuse. There is no shame in admitting you are a victim of emotional abuse and seeking help and guidance. The key is to get help before the situation escalates further. [IS](#)

'Hangry' Is a Real Thing

by Bret Hanna

"Hanger" or being "hangry" is the dangerous collision of hunger and anger. It's a thing, but there are onset signs that can help one avoid the "state of hangry."

When you are hungry, your blood sugar (blood glucose) level drops. Glucose fuels the brain, and when the level drops, brain function is impaired. Impaired brain function can impact behavior, cause weakness, shakiness and feelings of fatigue. The result is "hanger," but there are a number of signs that signal its onset which can help you avoid the "state of hangry."

Grumpiness. Being grumpy or testy without provocation from external sources is a sure sign of "hanger."

Road Rage. While driving, you overreact to every slight or inconvenience that comes your way.

Inability to Concentrate. When "hangry," about the only thing you can pay attention to is your rumbling stomach. You tune out everything else—even conversations you are directly involved in.

Irrational Reactions. Overreacting to every single thing that happens, no matter how trivial, while "hangry."

Lack of Food Discretion. You will eat literally any food that comes your way, regardless of whether you like that food or not.

Weird Food Desires. You express a desire to eat items or even objects that aren't fit for human consumption.

Dumb Mistakes. Such things as not being able to find your sunglasses which are on your head. Or searching the house for your

car keys when they are on the hook where they belong.

Impatience. Snapping at family and friends, those you love the most, is a sure sign of "hanger."

Everything Seems Difficult. Talking, walking and just "being" seem more difficult if you are "hangry."

Obsession. You can't think of anything else until food is in front of you.

Visions of Food Theft. You can't stop thinking of stealing food from anyone you encounter who has some.

Napping. The fatigue that results from a drop in blood sugar often results in a nap.

Crazy Grocery Store Shopping. When shopping while "hangry," every item on the shelves begins to look good. "Hangry" shoppers often get home with food they would never buy on a "non-hangry" shopping trip.

Stomach Sounds Like a Construction Site. That rumbling sound coming from your stomach when you are hungry means you are well on your way to "hangry"—if you aren't already there.

Going Crazy with Food Apps. You don't care who you order from, you only care about who can deliver food the fastest.

The solution? When you start to recognize the signs of "hangry," get some food! Everyone around you will appreciate it. [IS](#)





10 Things You Can Do At Night to Debloat and Promote Weight Loss

by Gina Pribil

Nights are good for binge watching “Game of Thrones,” snacking on some sweet treats, date nights, catching up on some work—you name it. But why not make your body work for you at night? Set yourself up for some bigger and better things, and promote some weight loss by doing these simple things:

1 Have a Low-Sodium Dinner

Skip the pizza or Chinese for dinner. If you eat something with high sodium, the salt stays in your system overnight resulting in a puffy complexion. To combat this, eat a diet of steamed vegetables and lean proteins without very much salt. You’ll wake up feeling lighter and more alert.

2 Pack Your Lunch

Who has time to pack a lunch? Right, but ordering out for lunch traditionally contains more than twice the amount of calories, according to a 2013 study from JAMA Internal Medicine. This calorie intake does not account for breakfast or snacks throughout the day.

3 Drink Boatloads of Water

Water is an extremely important element for your everyday health. Water helps flush the system, which, in turn, helps with the bloat. Quick tip though: do not drink anything an hour before you head to bed or you will create a new workout routine for yourself by waking up often and running to the restroom!

4 The Boudoir Must be Extremely Dark

Research shows that an extremely dark environment for sleeping triggers the hormone melatonin, which then heightens calorie-burning brown fat. Your body already produces melatonin when you are in a dark room to help with the sleep process, but turning it up a notch with some blackout curtains will help jumpstart weight loss.

5 Set the Temps Low

Turning down your air conditioner to as low as 66 will burn 7 percent more calories than those sleeping at 76 degrees, according to a study by the National Institute of Health Clinical Center. It is almost too good to be true!

6 Work Out Before Bed

All it takes is 15 minutes to jumpstart your system. It does not have to be tedious. Take Fido for a walk or jog around the block. It helps to break down the bloat, gets you up and moving, and tires you out for bed quicker (which means less snacks to be tempted with!).

7 Make Fruit Your Dessert

Instead of a pint of Rocky Road (which we know is delicious!), reach for an apple or peach. Fruit is a healthy alternative. Keep the skin on for extra nutrients and fiber to ease the digestive tract.

8 Ginger

Shred some ginger in your teas or food. It can speed up your digestion and expel gas.

9 Eat Slowly

Eating quickly can increase the amount of air that gets into your system causing you to expand. Eating more slowly and with your mouth closed will decrease the amount of air coming into your system.

10 Do Not Eat Two Hours Before Bed

Doctors generally recommend resting the digestive tract for 10 hours every night in order for it to sort out any issues from the day before.

By implementing one, a few or all of these tips, you can help fight bloating with some really simple steps. Don’t let bloating get the best of you! [IS](#)



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Food crazes and fad diets usually come and go as quickly as new fashion trends. However, the latest fasting trend taking the world by storm — Intermittent Fasting (IF) — seems to actually have some health and science behind it. Indeed, some doctors say it's one of the most proven ways to improve health in both the short- and long-term. They cite better blood sugar balance, decreased inflammation and increased cognitive function as primary factors.

medicine physician. In fact, studies suggest that a period without food may be restorative to the mind and body.

Another factor in doctors' approval of IF is the effect it can have in the prevention of cancer and Alzheimer's disease, according to fasting expert Jason Fung, M.D., a Canadian nephrologist. Additionally, Fung points to obesity, type 2 diabetes, fatty liver, and polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) as conditions that can be positively affected by IF.

According to Ilene Ruhoy, M.D., Ph.D., an integrative neurologist with the Center for Healing Neurology, fasting is something she uses as a brain-boosting tool before big projects.

"IF is beneficial because it slows the regular transport of glucose into the brain cells and allows the existing glucose and glycogen stores to be converted to energy," she explains. "This energy can then be used to focus on brain cell metabolic processes, enhancing brain function and allowing one to gain greater energy and mental clarity."

Indeed, fasting is a cleansing timeout for your gut, clears out the foggy brain and gives cells the time to clear out old proteins and other material to rebuild and regenerate to keep one healthy.

Valter Longo, Ph.D., with the University of Southern California's Longevity Institute agrees, explaining that 14-hour windows between dinner and breakfast (the most important meal of the day) a few days a week is the perfect opportunity to cleanse the mind and body and reap the many positive benefits of intermittent fasting.

History of Fasting

Fasting is one of the most ancient healing traditions in history. It has been practiced by every culture and religion. That said, there is a social stigma behind it as starvation usually comes to mind.

However, there is a difference. Starvation is the involuntary

absence of food. On the other hand, fasting is the voluntary withholding of food for health, spiritual or other reasons.

Hippocrates of Cos, widely referred to as the "Father of Modern Medicine," used fasting as something he prescribed regularly along with the consumption of apple cider vinegar. "To eat when you are sick is to feed your illness," he said.

The ancient Greeks believed that medical treatment can be looked upon from nature. It is a natural thing to fast while being sick. Consider the last time you were sick with the flu. The consumption of liquids only was the only thing on the menu until the illness left your system.

The ancient Greeks also believed that fasting improves cognitive abilities. Look at your typical Thanksgiving meal, for example. Were you more mentally alert after eating such a full meal or more in a "food coma"?

According to Intensive Dietary Management, "Blood is shunted to your digestive system to cope with the huge influx of food, leaving less blood going to the brain. Result—food coma."

Intermittent fasting reaps many benefits for the mind and body. A healthy mind and body is extremely important to fight against disease, illnesses, and mental sluggishness. Find a system that works best for you!

Intermittent Fasting Methods

Below are five fasting methods that have been found to be very beneficial for those wanting to try an IF diet, according to Daily Burn:

Lean Gains

Ideal for dedicated gym-goers who want to lose body fat and build muscle.

How It Works: One must fast for 14 (women) to 16 (men) hours each day, then "feed" for the remaining eight to 10 hours. No calories are permitted during the fasting period except black coffee, calorie-free sweeteners, diet soda and sugar-free gums. The most ideal time to "break" the fast is about six hours after waking up each morning. Maintaining a consistent "feeding time" is important in order for the hormones not to get out of balance.

On exercise days, carbs are more important than fat. On rest days, fat intake should be higher. Protein intake should be high every day due dependent on goals, gender, age, body fat and activity levels.

Eat Stop Eat

Ideal for healthy eaters looking for an extra boost.

How It Works: Fasting for 24 hours once or twice a week is recommended. In the 24-hour fasting period, no food can be consumed, but you can drink calorie-free beverages. Once the fast is over, go back to eating regularly.

Eating this way will reduce overall calorie intake without truly limiting what one is able to eat. It is recommended to incorporate regular workouts to improve body composition and a healthier mind.

The Warrior Diet

For people who like following the rules.

How It Works: One can expect to fast for about 20 hours every

day and eat only one large meal a day every night. The fasting phase is more about "undereating." One may eat a few servings of raw fruit or vegetables, fresh juice, and a few servings of proteins if desired. This is to maximize the sympathetic nervous system intended to promote alertness, boost energy and stimulate fat burning.

The non-fasting hours cater to the parasympathetic nervous system's ability to help the body recuperate along with a calming effect; promoting relaxation and digestion while providing nutrients needed to repair the body.

Fat Loss Forever

For gym-goers who really love cheat days.

How It Works: One gets a cheat day (yay!) followed by a 36-hour fast with the remaining days being split up by different fasting protocols. It is suggested to save the longest fast for the most productive day so the focus will be on what needs to get done during the day.

This fasting uses the first three fasting methods listed above in combination with a workout regimen to maximize gains.

Up Day Down Day

For disciplined dieters with specific weight goals.

How It Works: Eat very little one day, and eat normal the next. On low days, take one-fifth of the normal calorie intake. For example, 2,000–2,500 calories on "normal" days and "fasting" to 400 to 500 calories.

On low days, meal replacement shakes are encouraged because of the fortified essential nutrients that can be sipped throughout the day rather than split into small meals. This can only be done the first two weeks, then the shakes need to be replaced with healthy foods. [IS](#)

"I Choose"

anti-bullying campaign

The "I Choose" campaign is a challenge and movement for change. It's about recognizing bullying for what it is: a choice. What you say or do to someone has the power to affect that person's life. The campaign challenges people to stop, think and remember that their choices matter.

What do you choose?

We believe that there are five powerful choices that kids and teens can make to counter bullying:

Friendship

Kindness

Respect

Compassion

Love



How you can be a part of the "I Choose" movement

Teachers

If you are interested in incorporating the "I Choose" Anti-Bullying Challenge into your classroom or school, please visit whatdoyouchoose.org and get signed up today.

Youth

Whether you were the victim or you know someone who was, your story has the power to shift someone's perspective. Visit whatdoyouchoose.org to share your story and make your choice.

Supporters

Spread the message by purchasing an "I Choose" bracelet for yourself or a child in your life.



Why Does the U.S. Have the Highest Rate of Maternal Deaths in the Developed World?

by Matt Casey

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 65,000 of the 4 million women who give birth annually in the U.S. experience a dangerous and even life-threatening complication. Of those women, 700-900 will actually die due to pregnancy and childbirth complications. The numbers do not paint a promising picture, as data shows that the United States has the highest rate of maternal mortality in the industrialized world—and it's trending in the wrong direction:

- » Between 1979 and 1986, the U.S. averaged 9.1 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births

- » In 2000, the rate was 14 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births

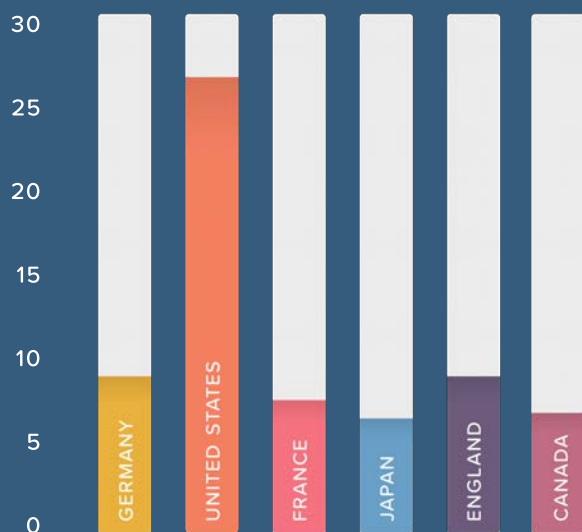
- » In 2009, the rate was 17.8 deaths per 100,000 live births

- » In 2013, the rate was 18.5 deaths per 100,000 live births

Yet, while the numbers continually rise in the U.S., other countries such as Germany, France, Canada and Japan have had their maternal mortality drop over time. Since 2016, ProPublica and NPR have investigated factors that led to the increase in maternal mortality in the United States. They reported the rate of life-threatening complications for new mothers in the U.S. has



From 1990 to 2015, the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 births in most developed nations has been flat or dropping. In the U.S., the rate has risen sharply.



Source: The Global Burden of Disease 2015 Maternal Mortality study as published in *The Lancet*.

more than doubled in two decades due to increased maternal age, pre-existing conditions (notably obesity and hypertension), medical errors and unequal access to care. They also reported black women experienced life-threatening pregnancy and childbirth complications at much higher rates than white or Hispanic women—in part because they have higher rates of chronic disease and prolonged stress.

There Should be Warning Signs.

Most maternal complications causing death or near-death experiences happen in the days and weeks immediately after childbirth, and they include postpartum bleeding; hypertensive or high blood pressure disorders such as preeclampsia and HELLP syndrome; postpartum infections or sepsis; cardiac complications such as cardiac arrest, cardiac failure or a pulmonary embolism; acute renal failure; and the evacuation of an incisional hematoma. This all makes postpartum education key to the safety of the mother and child, yet 40 percent of new mothers—overwhelmed with caring for a newborn, often lacking maternity leave, transportation, childcare, and other supports—never return for their follow-up appointment.

Focus on Infants During Childbirth Leaves Mothers at Risk

Probably the single biggest factor contributing to maternal death is the overwhelming desire to focus on the newborns. The healthcare system, doctors, nurses, even the new mothers themselves—all tend to hyperfocus on the well-being of the newborns at the expense of the recovering mother. Studies have shown that postpartum nurses spend most of their time teaching

new mothers how to care for their newborns and spend very little time teaching them how to care for themselves. In fact, many admit they are not comfortable talking with new mothers about possible postpartum complications and, therefore, only spend on average ten minutes on the subject. The net effect is that they fail to educate new mothers on dangerous warning signs that could signal deadly conditions, such as preeclampsia or a blood clot in the heart or lungs.

“We worry a lot about vulnerable little babies,” said Barbara Levy, vice president for health policy/advocacy at the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and a member of the Council on Patient Safety in Women’s Health Care. Meanwhile, “we don’t pay enough attention to those things that can be catastrophic for women.”

At the federally funded Maternal-Fetal Medicine Units Network, the preeminent obstetric research collaborative in the U.S., only four of the 34 initiatives listed in its online database primarily target mothers, versus 24 aimed at improving outcomes for infants (the remainder address both). Under the Title V federal-state program supporting maternal and child health, states devoted about 6 percent of block grants in 2016 to programs for mothers, compared to 78 percent for infants and special-needs children. The notion that babies deserve more care than mothers is similarly enshrined in the Medicaid program, which pays for about 45 percent of births. In many states, the program covers moms for 60 days postpartum, their infants for a full year. The growing specialty of maternal-fetal medicine drifted so far toward care of the fetus that as recently as 2012, young doctors who wanted to work in the field didn’t have to spend time learning to care for birthing mothers. There were some fellows that could finish their maternal-fetal medicine training without ever being in a labor and delivery unit.

Lack of Standard Protocols for Dealing with Maternal Complications

According to the CDC, the rate at which women are suffering nearly fatal experiences in childbirth has risen faster than the rate at which they’re dying. Based on the rate per 10,000 deliveries, serious complications more than doubled from 1993 to 2014, driven largely by a fivefold rise in blood transfusions, a nearly 60 percent rise in emergency hysterectomies, a 75 percent increase in the use of breathing tubes on new mothers, and an increase in the number of new mothers treated for sepsis, a life-threatening inflammatory response to infection.

Hospitals and medical centers often have a hodge-podge of protocols for dealing with maternal complications.

In a 2016 study of all women admitted for delivery over a period of 30 months at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, researchers found “opportunity for improvement in care” in 44 percent of life-threatening complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. If hospitals implemented more robust and uniform standards of care for maternal birth complications, they could prevent very treatable complications from spiraling out of control.

In studying maternal complications, researchers found one thing time and again which they dubbed ‘delay and denial’—which is the failure of doctors and nurses to recognize a women’s distress signals both during childbirth and the often-risky period that follows. This lax attitude exists largely because most pregnant

women don't experience any complications or, if they do, most resolve without much intervention. The 'delay and denial' approach is so pervasive, some hospitals don't even have protocols in place for blood loss—such as supply carts stocked with blood or routine training and drills. When something does go wrong, doctors and nurses are often caught flat-footed.

Patient safety groups, such as Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health (AIM), have drafted guidelines for the prevention and treatment of various complications, including hemorrhage, preeclampsia and blood clots. But the AIM program is still in its early stages. Some hospitals have been slow to adopt protocols, and some doctors have resisted what they see as intrusions on their discretion and professional judgment.

Lack of Reporting and Data Tracking

When it comes to women facing dangerous or life-threatening complications while giving birth, there is currently no universal reporting or tracking system in place. While hospital and government authorities in the U.S. often fail to investigate why a new mother died, complications that aren't fatal receive even less scrutiny. The U.S. government, which stopped publishing an official annual count of pregnancy-related fatalities a decade ago, has had similar difficulties tallying near deaths.

The notion of investigating maternal deaths to prevent further fatalities isn't new. Medical societies in some large cities and states began establishing maternal mortality panels in the 1930s, when the maternal mortality rate was more than 600 deaths for every 100,000 live births. Even then, there was a strong sense that many deaths could be prevented through improved medical and hygienic practices. The work of those panels, combined with the Social Security Act of 1935, the advent of antibiotics, advances in obstetrics and medicine in general, and the trend toward more hospital births led to a significant drop in the mortality rate through the early 1960s.

Many of the review panels disappeared. But as rates started rising again in the late 1990s, they began to resurface. David Goodman, the senior scientist for the CDC's Maternal and Child Health Epidemiology Program, estimates that a dozen states are currently creating them in addition to the 20 or so that already have them. These review panels are often an appendage to state health departments and usually receive little state revenue. Instead they must rely on private funding and participation of volunteer members, such as doctors, coroners, lawyers, as even police officers.

A deeper understanding of the cause of death might illuminate a systemic problem that could easily be addressed. For example, a death certificate may indicate that a new mother died from an infection, but a deeper examination might reveal deficiencies in the sterilization of surgical equipment in hospital obstetrics units. This happened in California, where evidence revealed by their maternal mortality review panel led to revised protocols in the handling of post-delivery hemorrhages in all California hospitals beginning in 2008.

Expecting Mothers Deserve Better Care

While some states are making progress, other states have no data tracking or maternal mortality review panels in place. The

progress is slow, and women continue to suffer. "The nature of our system is to focus on these women while they're pregnant," said Eugene DeClercq, a professor of community health services at Boston University School of Public Health. "And then if there are difficulties later, they get lost to the larger system that doesn't particularly care about women's health to a great degree unless they're pregnant."

What Can I Do?

by Marc McCallister

You've read all about the data. So, what can be done to protect you or your loved ones from a tragedy that is often preventable?

Be an Advocate for Safety

Doctors and nurses have limited time to spend with each patient. Oftentimes, the conversations are confusing and involve complicated medical terms that do not make sense to the average person. Remember that being an advocate does not make you an adversary of the doctor. Being an advocate allows you to ask questions, slow things down and know what to expect—helping you to understand the treatment plan as well as what could happen if complications arise. If the plan is to deliver the baby by Cesarean section, it is important to speak with the doctor about risks and complications unique to that procedure.

As patients, family members and friends, we have a responsibility to demand better care and better training and preparedness from our medical providers. Certainly the statistics show us there is significant room for improvement.

Plan for Doctor Appointments

Prior to the delivery date, it is important to spend time thinking about questions and concerns. Expectant mothers undergo a lot of changes and many are forced to juggle and balance work-life stresses as the ever approaching due date lingers on the horizon. Consequently, there are a lot of variables that can alter critical thinking (fatigue, anxiety, hormones, emotions, etc.) and make it difficult to formulate and ask important questions during a prenatal appointment. In order to avoid being rushed or forgetting to ask an important question, write down a list of questions that need to be addressed before the due date.

In the end, the only way the United States will be able to reverse course and reduce the rate of maternal mortality and injury is if multiple entities insist on this change. Hospital administrators, insurance companies, malpractice insurers, and those entities responsible for paying for childbirth must stand up and insist that health providers and hospitals take the necessary steps to protect our sisters, daughters, wives, and moms. ♪

A low-angle, close-up photograph of a person's legs from the knees down, standing on a paved path. The person is wearing dark blue athletic leggings and colorful running shoes with blue, pink, and yellow accents. Their right leg is bent, and they are holding their right knee with both hands, suggesting a stretching or warm-up routine. The background is a soft-focus view of a path leading into a wooded area with green trees under bright, natural light.

How I Learned to Run

by Pete Mackey



hen I was younger, running was my passion. I planned each day around my run. I typically ran at lunch, and so each work morning I spent 30-45 minutes checking the weather, calling the folks I was running with that day, and just generally not getting work done. Looking back, I have come to realize that just about everything we were doing then was wrong.

It started before and after I took my first step. I would spend 5-10 minutes doing dynamic stretches—holding a stretch in a particular position for about ten seconds. We now know that dynamic stretching (there are plenty of good examples on YouTube) is the better way. After my run, I would repeat those dynamic stretches and then would not stretch until my next run. Now I know to stretch every morning and every evening.

Next, and this is particularly easy to fall into in a group run (it was for me), don't do too much too fast. When you are ramping up the mileage, take your time. Spend at least two to three weeks at a particular distance before you increase it. Your body needs time to adapt. When you do increase, do not up the mileage more than 10 to 15 percent. The same goes with your training pace. If you can't talk to your running partners, you are going too fast.

If you race, you want to run faster every time you head out so that running fast on race day won't be so hard, right? Wrong. Running fast in a race is not the product of a lot of fast running. It comes from training your legs and lungs to run at a particular speed that is faster than your training pace—developing muscle memory. Running fast all the time just wears you out. Running fast (speed work) should not make up more than 10 percent of your weekly mileage. This was probably my biggest failure.


Make sure you are running in the right shoes—I didn't. Different brands fit different runners. A good running store can fit you with the brand that suits your body and your running style. They will put you in the right sized shoe, as well. Most runners need a half size

bigger than they wear in other shoes because your feet expand as you run. And don't run in them for too long or injuries will be your constant companion. Again, a good running store will let you know how many miles you can expect out of a particular shoe.

Getting too hung up on technology can really drag you down. Watches, step counters, heart rate monitors, yada yada—they are all good tools. Unless you know how to use them properly, however, and how to use them together, you are courting trouble. Having too much information can raise your expectations unrealistically.

Also, using one or more of these devices at the same time can make you feel like a pilot in a 737. I saw a runner almost get run over earlier this summer because he was trying to navigate a running watch the size of a hockey puck as he ran through an intersection. Even if you do use one or more devices, leave everything at home a day or two each week and let your body pick the pace and distance. This is the one thing I did right.

Most importantly, don't run through pain. That ought to be easy, but you would be amazed at how bad the problem is with runners. When you do feel pain, be careful about a self-diagnosis. Often time that knee pain is something going on in your ankle. Some pain, like that from plantar fasciitis, might go away or lessen when you are running. It becomes easy to think you can just run through it—until it gets so bad that you agonize over your first steps each morning. That is still a bad memory...

Last—there are a lot of ways to exercise besides running. Running is good for your lower body and your lungs. Weight lifting, Yoga, Pilates, biking and swimming can help with other areas of your body, but moderation is a key word here. The more cross-training you do, the less you need to be running. Don't be hidebound. Mix it up and change your schedule. Who wants to run a 10-miler at noon in the heat of August? Who wants to ride a bike outside in January when it's 30 degrees? If it's too much of a drudgery, you won't keep it up. 



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When Saying Goodbye Should be Cause for Concern

by Tammie McKay

Has a loved one or someone close to you ever made an unexpected visit or phone call and then said an awkward or odd goodbye or farewell that left you scratching your head? Here's why you should pay close attention to such behavior. This is how so many suicides happen—out of the blue.

Suicide doesn't make sense. Understanding the reasoning behind suicide is difficult for the human psyche, because it is a curse to reason and instinct. We are wired for maximum self-preservation, and this desire to protect oneself drives our reasoning that life must be worth saving. We observe medical professionals performing daily efforts to keep people alive. They work in operating rooms and emergency rooms saving lives from the brink of death. So it is understandable that the family and friends left behind want some logical explanation as to why someone would take their own life.

Some who commit suicide have talked about wanting to or planning to kill themselves—others don't mention it at all. The decision might be made just minutes before or even days before. Typically there are two types of suicides. The first, which most people recognize, is where the person had identifiable mental health problems, made prior attempts, and exhibited warning signs. The second type is the impulsive suicide, where there was no history of depression and no warning signs. Impulsive suicides usually involve a triggering event. This event may not be recognized as significant to others; however it could be an immediate access to a recognize way to end one's own life. The suicidal thoughts may pass without the immediate access to a suicide method.

Here are common characteristics of an impulsive suicide:

- » **Gender** – typically male
- » **Age** – adolescents face a higher risk
- » **Emotional maturity** – diminished ability to think through consequences
- » **Mental illness** – significant for psychosis and alcohol/drug abuse, but not for depression
- » **Method** – considered medically severe
- » **Other factors** – a history of aggression or previous impulsive suicide attempts

Every suicide is different. Many are triggered by feelings of intense anger, despair, hopelessness, and even panic. No one really knows what prompts an individual to take his or her own life. Factors that can put one at a higher risk for suicide include:

- » **An episode of depression, psychosis, or anxiety**
- » **A significant loss** – death of a loved one or loss of job
- » **A personal crisis or lifestyle change** – breakup or divorce
- » **Loss of social support**
- » **An illness or medication that triggers a change in mood**
- » **Exposure to the suicidal behaviors of others**

Although we all face these situations at one point or another, for some individuals these situations cause such a pain or hopelessness they can't see any other way out.

Suicide always raises questions to those left behind: What did I miss? What could I have done? More than likely the answers will always be nothing and nothing. Many never let on what they are feeling or planning. Unfortunately, those who are most intent on committing suicide know they have to keep it to themselves if they want to carry out the act.

Some suicides or attempts do not come completely out of the blue. Here are a few behaviors that may help family and friends see the indicators:

- » **Talking about suicide** – “I'd be better off dead” or “the world would be better off without me”
- » **Seeking the means** – trying to get access to guns, pills or other objects used in a suicide attempt
- » **No hope for the future** – feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, being trapped or believing things will never get better
- » **Self-loathing** – feelings of worthlessness, guilt, shame and self-hatred
- » **Getting affairs in order** – giving away possessions or making arrangements for family members
- » **Saying goodbye** – unusual or unexpected visits or calls to family and friends, saying goodbye as if to never see them again.

People who exhibit these signs are often communicating their suffering, hoping to get a response. These signs should not be ignored. There is never a wrong time or way to talk to someone about suicide. But when an individual takes their life with no warning, all we can do is turn to each other for support.

Suicide leaves deep, long lasting wounds for those left behind. The feelings of anger, rejection, and abandonment that occur after many deaths are especially intense and difficult to sort out after a suicide. [IS](#)



10 Tips to Be Happy

(At Least a Majority of the Time)

by Lindsey Andrews

"Don't worry, be happy."

It's easy to say, but not as easy to accomplish. Life is full of ups and downs. Yet, we, as a society, expect everyone to be happy all of the time—it is simply not possible.

Still, there are things we can do that will enhance our happiness. The first few tips are self-explanatory, yet people, time and time again, fail to actually do them.

1 Eat healthy.

Again, this is preached about from every angle—doctors, teachers, and yes, even lawyers, but the attention you give your body matters. The food you put in your body literally fuels your body—why would you treat it badly?

2 Exercise, often.

As for exercise, Elle Woods clearly knew it best when she said, "Exercise gives you endorphins. Endorphins make you happy. Happy people don't kill their husbands. They just don't."

3 Get enough sleep.

This is so important, and yes, all of those medical professionals who told you to get more sleep are right. Sleep is an essential part of your day-to-day activities. Without it, your brain cannot function to its full capacity. Sure, we all know that person that can run on a few hours of sleep, but that doesn't mean they, or you, should. A good night's sleep can do wonders for your brain. And the end result? Happiness.

4 Enjoy the fresh air.

Scientific study after study have outline the benefits of going outside. It doesn't just benefit your body, but it greatly benefits your mind. Stress levels decrease, concentration increases, and your general disposition shifts to positivity. The benefits of fresh air are abundant.

The next six tips are all related to your mental health. A combination of both physical and mental health is an important part of happiness.

5 Don't compare yourself to others.

At this point you're asking yourself, "Isn't this common sense?" Sort of, but people often forget to actually practice it. Valuing the qualities that make you...well, you...creates confidence. With that newfound confidence, you will feel happier with yourself.

6 Take a few minutes every day to yourself.

It's cliché, but it works. Read a book. Take a 20-minute nap. Watch the new show all of your coworkers have been talking about. Regardless of the activity, take the time out of your day to do what makes you happy.

7 Focus on relationships more than material objects.

We've all heard this one before, but it's true. The relationships we establish with our loved ones can have much more of a positive influence on our overall happiness than material objects. Sure, we'd all enjoy a fancy sports car, but if you don't have anyone to share the drive with, is it as fulfilling?

8 Try to have a positive attitude.


This may be difficult in certain situations, but look at the bright side will help change your mood in a positive way.

9 Surround yourself with positive people.

What's the point of having a positive attitude if the group of people you surround yourself with continuously brings you down? The point is, if you surround yourself with positive people, the effect of the positivity will spread to you as well.

10 Be grateful.

Take a minute to close your eyes and relax. When you think of happiness, what do you see? In that moment, maybe you saw your family, a birthday party surrounded by friends, a memory of a perfect day at the beach, or even the walk in the park you took between meetings. Regardless of what the image is, it's clear that you have something to be grateful for. Everyone has something to be grateful for, and that, more than anything, is important.

If the right steps are taken, happiness is an achievable goal for each and every one of you! 





Why 'Experiences' are Good for Your Health

by Jamie Goldstein

Whether it's getting, giving or simply having them, there's no denying that modern society puts significant emphasis on material objects. Yes, such items can provide a lasting physical reminder—and that can be important—but, contrary to the popular belief that experiences only add to our memory bank, research shows that experiences provide so much more by reducing stress, creating happiness and enhancing one's mental and emotional state.

Reduce Stress

Allowing yourself to take a break from work and other stressors gives your body a chance to relax and re-energize, diminishing your stress and, in turn, improving your overall health. Taking a trip allows your mind to turn your focus away from the problems of daily life. The reduction in stress during travel causes your cortisol levels to drop, which in turn makes you feel more at ease. This happens even if your travel plans are packed full of daily activities, so don't feel like you need to lay at the beach to receive the health benefits of taking a vacation.

Happiness

Studies show that while people believe that physical objects are more likely to increase your happiness, experiences actually are more likely to keep you happy in the long term. This is because we adapt to new objects, and the initial excitement diminishes. Think of a child who begs for a shiny new toy only to have it collecting dust months later. The concept is the same with adults.

Yet, not only are experiences better for a continual level of happiness, studies show that over time your happiness actually increases when recalling past experiences. The reason experiences tend to increase your happiness over time is that they become part of you, as opposed to a physical object. Experiences become stories you can share with others. They allow a greater connection with

those that joined you on the experience. They can connect you to others by sharing your story.

Experiences can also make for important life lessons or a funny story. Experiences that might have been scary or stressful at the time can change upon reflection; you might realize the humor in the situation, thus increasing your happiness over time. Another positive to experiences over physical objects is that you're less likely to compare or be judged. This is because experiences are individualized and unique, whereas physical objects can fall victim to unproductive comparisons—like who has the fancier car or who has the bigger home.

Mental and Emotional State

Your mental and emotional state is directly connected to your level of stress and your overall happiness. When people are not in a good place mentally or emotionally, they tend to keep to themselves and not participate in life. This only causes greater harm to their mental and emotional state. Experiences, however, can help to enhance one's mood. The experience can be an extended one such as a month-long vacation or something as simple as a walk if it's in the right environment—studies show experiencing a nature hike versus a walk in the city can actually improve your mental health.

While some may fear that these experiences could increase stress and, in turn, cause harm to one's mental and emotional state, experiences actually tend to create mental resilience. Unexpected glitches in travel plans teach us how to work through the obstacle while often ultimately leading to success with a story to tell down the road. One other reason that experiences often boost mental health is because they are often experience with others, whether it is going to a concert, finding a friend to hike with or taking a vacation with someone. All of these experiences allow for human interaction and human connection, which is a key component to improving your mental health. [B](#)

America's
invisible crime:
child sex
trafficking

by Bryan Silver



For many, the images conjured up of child sex trafficking involve a foreign backdrop—one that focuses on some vaguely familiar, overcrowded city with the all-too-common characteristics of poverty, squalor, and rampant crime. Possibly it's Rio de Janeiro or Venezuela's capital, Caracas; maybe one of the poorer sections of Guangdong Province in China. It could even be some Slavic country where a socioeconomic stagnation still exists as much of the population still struggles almost 30 years after the collapse of communism.

The one place most Americans never picture child sex trafficking occurring is within the United States itself—yet, it's between our borders where thousands are sold into sex trafficking every year.

According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security—the federal agency responsible for investigating human trafficking, arresting traffickers and protecting victims—commercial sexual exploitation is all around us. Considered to be modern-day slavery in America, it's a grave violation of basic human rights and it's not going anywhere unless we do something about it.

THE NUMBERS ARE ELUSIVE BUT THE THREAT IS CLEAR

There's no denying that dependable data on the extent of child sex trafficking is lacking. Many point to an absence of legitimate studies. Others make mention of most victims' reluctance to speak out, to report the abuse.

Contributing to the confusion is a claim that has been repeated by media and experts alike over the years, but never truly substantiated:

"At least 100,000 children in the U.S. are commercially sexually exploited each year."

The statistic can be traced back to a statement made by Ernie Allen in 2010, then president of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, as he reported to Congress on the growing problem of child sex trafficking.

The problem with the number is that Allen was only estimating and it was never based on empirical evidence. "I don't think it matters that it is 50,000 or 100,000 or 25,000. It is an underreported problem," Allen insists, even today. "It almost doesn't matter what the number is. There is abundant evidence that the number is significant."

While "modern slavery" includes those who are forced into prostitution, it also references individuals forced into working in agriculture or construction, children made to work in sweatshops and even young girls made to marry older men. The website www.antislavery.org currently estimates that as many as 40.3 million people around the world are enslaved against their will, while 4.8 million of those are specifically forced into sexual exploitation. In the U.S., child sex trafficking numbers can vary wildly from 17,000 children to 100,000

children each year (more on this in *The Numbers Are Elusive...* sidebar)—mainly because there is so little statistical data that has been gathered. According to Monique Villa, the CEO of the Thomson Reuters Foundation, which works to combat human trafficking, the issue lies in that many of the cases go unreported. "The problem with human trafficking is that of course the victims are silenced," Villa said. "We don't have good data about it. You don't know how many slaves there are around the world."

HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN AND WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT IT?

Usually, sex traffickers use violence, threats, lies and other forms of coercion to their victims to engage in commercial sex acts against their will. Especially in the case of teens and children, sex traffickers will specifically target vulnerable populations such as runaways and victims of domestic

violence or social discrimination. Yet, according to U.S. law, a minor only needs to be subjected to commercial sex to be considered a victim of sex trafficking—regardless of their situation, compliance, or whether or not the trafficker used force, fraud, or coercion.

The situation has become so dire, that U.S. lawmakers recently passed a new law by the name of FOSTA-SESTA—which refers to the House bill “Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act” and its sibling Senate bill “Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act.” While initially proposed separately, they were recrafted to include much of the same language—finally being signed into law by President Trump in April 2018 after receiving overwhelming support by Congress. The reason for the rather speedy adoption of FOSTA-SESTA is that the Internet was seen as a potential catalyst if not accelerant for spreading the sex trade beyond seedy street corners and into the homes of many Americans.

Don’t interpret this as a one-way conduit, though. While some Americans are begrudgingly being pulled into this oversexualized cyberworld from constant exposure, others are pushing hard to best

utilize ever-changing technologies in a practice that once required a fair bit of time, knowledge and luck. Now, residents and visitors alike to this dark world only need an Internet access device and a few minutes each day. As an example, the FBI currently estimates that—at virtually any moment of any day—there are 750,000 child predators online.

While prostitution and slavery have been around possibly as long as human civilization, there’s no denying that the digital world has exponentially elevated its availability and its appeal to some.

Yet it’s this availability of anything that leads to the rejection of nothing. What’s worse is that our current culture does little to discourage such consumption. Many would argue that American culture still focuses on the needs of men above those of women and children—thus, they are the ones who are most often exploited.

**“THE INTERNET [IS] THE CRACK COCAINE
OF SEX ADDICTION. YOU CAN FIND
ABSOLUTELY ANYTHING ONLINE.”**

— Joel Ziff, Ed.D., psychologist and certified sexual addiction therapist

HOW ONE SURVIVOR HELPED INITIATE CHANGE

Kidnapped at the age of 12, Melanie Thompson was locked away in an abandoned house by her captors, forced to live in a space behind a closet. She was then coerced into all forms of sexual conduct on the streets of New York City, ranging from prostitution to underground strip clubbing. Eventually, she was “sold” repeatedly through classified ads on the Internet—specifically through a website known as Backpage.com.

“It was Backpage that made my experience in prostitution worse for me and better for my pimp,” said Thompson. “The sex buyers who found me on Backpage were the most violent and demanding; they didn’t care that I felt violated and degraded. Backpage helped my pimp keep them coming.”

Before the passing of FOSTA-SESTA, websites that fueled the spread of child sex trafficking were protected by an Internet freedom regulation that allowed the owners of the website to skirt prosecution under the guise of free speech. Now, Thompson has been a pivotal part of this momentous effort, shining a light on an otherwise dark area of our society.

WHAT KIND OF A PERSON BUYS CHILDREN FOR SEX?

As with the most basic of transactions, to successfully sell your commodity you must have buyers who are willing to pay the price. It then stands to reason that—in order for such condemnable commerce to exist—there needs to be a consumer. But who are these individuals and why do they do what they do? For many, the answers may be surprising. According to one survivor, they come from all walks of life. Many are otherwise upstanding members of their community. They have prosperous lives. The Internet has allowed child sex trafficking to emerge from the rubble of decaying inner cityscapes and disrupt the false sense of security which the suburbs so often provides its respectable residents.

How is it that such a depraved practice has spread throughout our society? One hard to accept, yet undeniable answer is that the process has simply become easier in recent years. Whether you're looking at the rise of the Internet, social media, or even the prevalence of hard-to-trace payment methods such as prepaid and disposable credit cards or cryptocurrency like bitcoin, they all have contributed to not only a surfacing of the otherwise seamy side of civilization but actually helped it to thrive.

Another contributor to the explosion in child exploitation is that, until recently, buyers have faced little in the way of risk—specifically here in the U.S. As way of explanation, Department of Justice spokesperson pointed out that the primary objective has been to focus "...our limited resources on apprehending the traffickers, who pose the most imminent threat to the victims."

As an example, police in Nashville rescued a 12-year-old girl in 2016 who had been held captive in a hotel room located in a relatively wealthy suburb of the city for more than a month. She had been repeatedly sold via a Backpage.com advertisement to men in the area and repeatedly raped. The 36-year-old man allegedly responsible (he still awaits trial) was charged with multiple counts of trafficking, kidnapping and rape—yet, none of the men who paid to sexually abuse the young girl were ever charged.

"That child will have to fight the stigma of what happened to

her for the rest of her life," said Alex Trouteaud, a representative for Demand Abolition, an organization dedicated to reducing demand for commercial sex. "Meanwhile, the buyers will never be held accountable. It's what we call the *culture of impunity*." Many may have heard this term used to describe Third World countries where murder, theft and other crimes go unpunished when perpetrated by the privileged. Yet, recently, cultures of impunity have become more of an American problem. Crimes in the financial and corporate worlds with devastating economic repercussions have evoked little to no repercussions. From Hollywood to the hallowed halls of our higher learning institutions, sexual assault has been ignored or covered up. And incidents of police brutality or unjustified killings go unaccounted for when they occur in minority communities.

But not all buyers escape justice. In July 2017, a 56-year-old tradesman working in the Cleveland area was sentenced to 17.5 years in federal prison for exploiting an underage sex trafficking victim. Initially responding to a Backpage.com ad that professed to be from a "lovely college girl," Richard Purnell began hiring—through a known pimp—the then 14-year-old girl for sex. In 2016, FBI agents investigating the pimp (who later was sentenced to 14 years in federal prison) followed the trail to Purnell and expanded their investigation to include the otherwise normal owner of his own roofing company.

Between July 2015 and February 2016, federal authorities say Purnell sent 5,854 text messages and placed 204 phone calls to numbers listed in Backpage escort ads. More than 1,000 of those calls and texts were to three young trafficking victims from the Cleveland area, including a girl who was first sold for sex when she was 13. According to Mike Tobin, the Community and Public Affairs Specialist with the U.S. Attorney's Office in Cleveland, Purnell's case has the distinction of being the first case ever where the U.S. Attorney's Office charged a "customer" with sex trafficking—mainly due to the fact that the federal statute allows authorities to charge anyone who solicits a child for sex with the same crime as somebody who recruits or advertises the services.

How CHILDREN FALL victim to TRAFFICKERS

According to Thorn—a unique nonprofit founded by celebrity activists Ashton Kutcher and Demi Moore that's focused on stopping the spread of child sexual abuse—technology is now playing a large role in the recruitment of these children. Building on statements from actual child sex trafficking survivors, the organization issued a report entitled *Survivor Insights: The Role of Technology in Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking* in 2018, which offers some very telling data. Specifically, the report states that how traffickers approach, groom and recruit potential victims is rapidly changing with the adoption of digital technologies and social media platforms.

Prior to 2015, Thorn contributors claimed that they met their trafficker first in person 84 percent of the time. Perhaps in a public place such as a shopping area or a chance meeting on the street. After 2015, the approach took a noticeable change, with 55 percent of first-time meetings occurring via texting, a website or social app. Similarly, 85 percent of those who were recruited before 2015

said that the trafficker spent time with them in person, building a relationship. After 2015, survivors said that the relationship was fostered in person only 58 percent of the time, with the remaining interactions occurring either through digital means (63 percent) or simply phone calls (25 percent).

The most striking takeaway from the information collected is that, previously, recruitment occurred through a singular dominant method—face-to-face meetings—where, now, multiple methods of interaction and often no in-person contact are becoming the norm. This is disturbing because it severely curtails the ability of parents or authorities to monitor the interactions of children and traffickers respectively. While an unknown adult suddenly spending time with a withdrawn or maladjusted child is an immediate red flag for responsible adults in any community, there now might be no visible signs of interaction to a casual observer—only those delving deeply into a child's digital footprint might traces of a trafficker be revealed.

Of course, leaving a digital trail also improves the chance for apprehension and prosecution in many ways. In the case of Richard Purnell, it was a log of text messages and phone calls that allowed federal authorities to piece together a timeline of the trafficker's interactions with his victims, and it was the sheer volume of transcripts that painted the picture of a masterful manipulator—an image that might have been blurred and incomplete in a courtroom if it was left only to the testimony and personal recountings of young traumatized victims.

Child sex trafficking is a disturbing topic, but it's one that must be confronted by our society as a whole if we are to change the paradigm. Contrary to popular belief, it's not something that only happens in far away alleys where impoverished children beg for food and lecherous men take advantage of the fact that everything has a price. While Hollywood would have you think differently, the majority of child sex trafficking isn't perpetrated by sneering strangers who lurk in the shadows and doesn't usually involve kidnapping or imprisonment. Oftentimes it occurs to any given child randomly, or worse, its occurrence is simply a matter of misplaced trust.

Traffickers often don't have to try very hard at all, they simply must trick their victims into thinking they are a friend, a protector and a provider. For a troubled child who is scared, it does not take much to submit to something so terrible, as long as there's the promise that someday it will all lead to something better.

This is why we should never call these individuals victims. While they have traveled down the darkest of tunnels and waded through the dankest of filth, they have made it through to the other side. Regardless of what they experienced, they push onward with the hopefulness that things will look better in the light of a new day. They have emerged as survivors. [IS](#)

QUICK FACTS ON A FAST-GROWING PROBLEM

Estimated that **1 in 7** runaways are likely sex trafficking victims

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reviewed:
450,000 files in 2004 | **25 Million** files in 2005

150,000
New escort ads—including those for underage victims—are posted online every day

1,000
American children are arrested for prostitution each year

Research shows that a child in the sex slave trade is

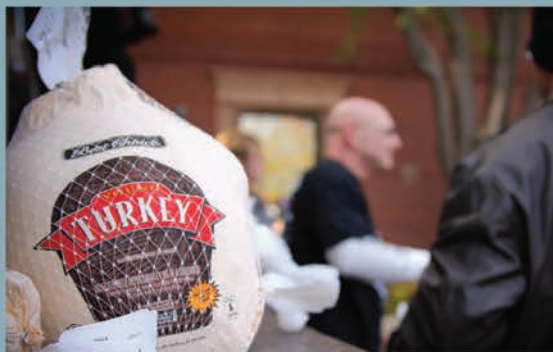
1 PURCHASED

on average **5.4** times a day



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8 Foods for a Healthy Heart

by Colleen M. Story



Heart disease is the no. 1 killer of both men and women in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that about 610,000 people die of heart disease every year, which adds up to about one in every four deaths.

Fortunately, there is a lot you can do to protect yourself. In addition to avoiding smoking and exercising regularly, the

American Heart Association (AHA) suggests you eat a healthy diet including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, fish, poultry, nuts, legumes, and fat-free or low-fat dairy products.

Most of us lead very busy lives, though, so how can we break that recommendation down to something simpler? Try including these eight heart-healthy foods into your diet on a regular basis, and you'll be taking a good step forward.

8 Heart-Healthy Foods

1 Blueberries

Blueberries are packed full of nutrients and “polyphenols,” which are antioxidants that combat cellular damage. In a 2010 article published in the scientific journal *Nutrition Reviews*, the authors noted that the polyphenols, nutrients, and fiber in berries had been found in clinical studies to help reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. Choose blackberries, cranberries, blueberries, and strawberries.

2 Broccoli

Broccoli also has a lot of healthy nutrients, one of which is called “sulforaphane.” This nutrient has been found in studies to help reduce plaque buildup in the arteries. In one 2011 study, researchers reported that strong evidence suggested that “regular consumption of Brassica vegetables may provide a preventative dietary approach to reduce cardiovascular risk.” That means you should eat more broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, collard greens, kale, Brussels sprouts, and bok choy.

3 Green Tea

Several studies have looked at how green tea may affect cardiovascular disease, with results showing that it can help lower risk of a heart attack and death. The tea contains polyphenols called “catechins” that help reduce inflammation, reduce blood pressure, lower levels of fats in the blood, and prevent blood clots. These are also powerful antioxidants that protect the health of blood vessels.

4 Nuts

Grab a handful of mixed nuts and you’ll be doing your heart good—as long as you don’t eat more than a handful at a time (they’re high in calories). Nuts are rich in fiber and healthy fatty acids that help protect the heart and blood vessels. In a large study analyzing data from about 210,000 people, researchers found that compared to those who rarely or never ate nuts, those who ate one ounce five or more times a week had a 14 percent lower risk of cardiovascular disease and a 20 percent lower risk of coronary heart disease.

5 Avocados

Add more of these to your sandwiches, salads, and tacos if you want to keep your heart healthy. They’re rich in healthy fatty

acids and may help lower cholesterol levels. In a 2015 study, researchers found that participants who consumed one Hass avocado every day lowered their LDL “bad” cholesterol levels even more than those on low-fat diets that didn’t include avocados. The change was significant—those on the avocado diet lowered total cholesterol by 13.5 mg/dL and LDL cholesterol by 8.3 mg/dL. Other studies have also found that avocado may help increase HDL “good” cholesterol levels.

6 Salmon

Salmon and other types of fatty fish are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which have been tied to heart health. We know they help lower inflammation, and they can also help improve blood vessel function and blood pressure. In one study, researchers found that participants who consumed 2 grams per week of omega-3 fatty acids in fish—about one-to-two servings a week—reduced their chances of dying from heart disease by over one-third.

7 Spinach

Spinach and other leafy green vegetables like collard greens and kale are nutrient powerhouses, full of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that you need for a healthy heart. They also provide dietary nitrates, which are linked to reducing blood pressure and supporting the health of blood vessels. Researchers reported in a 2016 study review that people who regularly consume these foods can reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease by nearly 16 percent.

8 Oats

All whole grains are healthy for you, but oats have evidence linking them with optimal heart health. In a 2008 study review, researchers confirmed that regularly consuming oats reduces total cholesterol levels and lowers levels of LDL “bad” cholesterol, without negatively affecting levels of HDL “good” cholesterol. There is also some evidence that they may help keep blood vessels healthy and flexible.

You should find that adding these eight items into your diet is totally doable—not only will the variety be a welcomed aspect of daily eating, but the effort will also help ensure your body is always at its best! [LS](#)



The Real Story on the **Apple Myth**

by Tammie McKay

W

e've all heard the expression "An apple a day keeps the doctor away," but is that really true?

Well, in short, yes.

There are a multitude of health benefits from apples, ranging from prevention of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, to helping fight constipation, anemia, diabetes, heart disease and liver disorders. Apples also lower the risk of some cancers, reduce weakness, promote eye health, healthy digestion and aid in whiter, healthier teeth.

Apples are full of nutrients that include a rich source of anthocyanins and tannins. Other nutritional elements include vitamins C, K and B6, and riboflavin. Apples also have minerals, such as potassium, copper, manganese and magnesium. A single serving provides 12 percent of the daily fiber requirement, and they are packed with phytonutrients and flavonoids like quercetin, epicatechin, phloridzin and other polyphenolic compounds.

Still not sold? Take a peek below at some easy-to-digest benefits.

Digestion – Apples are rich in fiber, which helps in the digestive process. They contain a soluble fiber called pectin. The fiber can pull water from the colon to keep things moving or absorb excess water to slow down the bowels.

Intestinal Health – The beneficial bacteria living in your body is one of the most important aspects of our health. Apples improve the function of the bacteria living in the large intestine. Studies show apples stimulate metabolism within the digestive tract and balance the bacteria by maximizing nutrient uptake and eliminating harmful bacteria and toxins.

Anemia – Anemia is a deficiency of hemoglobin in the blood requiring an increase in iron intake. Apples are a rich source of iron. To prevent anemia and ensure the proper oxygenation of essential organ systems to keep them functioning properly, you need to increase the number of red blood cells in the body.

Weakness Reduction – Patients are often advised to eat apples to help recover quickly from illness. There isn't a significant amount of protein found in an apple; however, the combination of the antioxidant compounds and the actual protein in apples plays a major role in preventing weakness and improving muscle tone. Apples help in detoxifying and improve overall health.

Controlling Diabetes – Individuals afflicted with diabetes need to keep their blood sugar in control. The polyphenols in apples have been linked in reducing the uptake of carbohydrates; this reduces the fluctuation of blood sugar levels that occur in the bloodstream.

Polyphenols lower glucose absorption in the digestive tract, stimulate the release of insulin in the pancreas, and stimulate the insulin receptors on cells throughout the body, which speeds up the removal of sugar from the bloodstream.

Whiter, healthier teeth – Apples help clean both the teeth and gums. The fiber in an apple cleanses the teeth, while the antibacterial properties keep bacteria and viruses from infecting the body. Eating an apple will stimulate the secretion of saliva, an alkaline compound that will further reduce the ability for bacteria to multiply and grow in the mouth.

Alzheimer's & Parkinson's Disease Prevention – The antioxidants found in apples have a positive impact on these two tragic neurological conditions. These antioxidants are known to protect brain cells against oxidative stress. Apples increase the amount of acetylcholine in the brain, which is linked to concentration, problem solving and memory. Additionally, these antioxidants also stop the gradual breakdown of dopamine-producing nerve cells.

Treat Respiratory Issues – Asthma is a serious respiratory condition, as it can be fatal in severe cases. Apples show anti-inflammatory behavior that stands out among other treatments.

Preventing Heart Diseases – The skin of an apple has the phenolic compound that prevents cholesterol from solidifying to the artery walls. There are 4 grams of fiber in the skin of a medium apple. You can reduce the risk of coronary heart disease by 14 percent when consuming 10 grams of fiber daily.

Liver Disorder – The liver's function is to clear toxins from the body. Malic acid is a natural cleansing nutrient found in apples, which removes carcinogens and other toxins from the blood. Granny Smith apples are rich in malic acid, along with being one of the most antioxidant-rich apple varieties.

Eye Health – Due to apples being rich in flavonoid compounds and antioxidant phytonutrients, they are believed to make the eyes stronger and improve sight. This combination reduces the impact of free radicals on the eye, preventing macular degeneration, cataracts and glaucoma.

Apples should be bought when they are firm. Once the apple has wrinkles, it has lost most of its health benefits. If apples are overripe or start to rot, they metabolize their nutritional resources by releasing a compound called ethylene gas. This gas can stimulate the ripening and rotting of other apples. Be sure to remove overly soft or bruised apples from the bag. [15](#)





Carbs:

The Skinny on Macros that Supposedly Make Us Fat

by Chad Finley

Carbohydrates—or carbs for short—are considered one of three macronutrients that are a necessary part of a healthy daily diet. Carbs include the sugar, starches, and fibers found in fruits, grains, vegetables and dairy products, as well as processed foods.

Most dietary experts believe that the average diet should consist of about forty percent carbohydrates.

But in recent years, carbs have been demonized by trendy diets, with some nutritionists associating carbs with obesity and health risks such as type-2 diabetes. The recently popular Keto diet even recommends that consumers cut carbs almost completely. Yet, other health experts still promote carbohydrates as an important part of daily consumption. This leaves consumers asking “which is it? Are carbs good or are carbs bad?”

Well, the answer is both—carbs can be good, and they can also be bad.

When health experts preach the importance of carbs in a daily diet, they are right. Those sugars, starches, and fibers make up

most of our body’s needed calories, which in turn are converted into the energy required to function properly.

Dietary trends that depreciate the value of carbs in our daily diet could put us at risk because they often require participants to increase caloric intake of the two other macronutrients, fat and protein. The human body is like a well-oiled machine, with specific fuels—macronutrients—used for specific tasks. More of one macronutrient and less of another is not equivalent to the recommended daily balance of all three macronutrients. Your body simply will not perform its best without all three. For example, research shows low-carb diets to be linked to increased risk for heart disease.

This does not mean that carbs can’t be bad, and when some health experts equate carb intake to obesity—they’re not wrong.

When you over consume carbs, especially bad carbs, your body’s natural response is to convert those carbs into stored energy, fat. If you consume too many carbs then your body fat will slowly increase over time. This is also true of bad carbs, which



are more difficult for your body to break down and convert into immediate energy. But what is a good carb and a bad carb?

Bad carbs are, luckily, pretty easy to differentiate from good carbs.

Good carbs are naturally occurring fiber-rich products such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and beans. These carbs are slowly absorbed into your system, which minimizes spikes in blood sugar levels. Bad carbs are rich in sugars, starches. Most refined and processed carbohydrates are considered bad carbs. They are quickly absorbed into your system and cause a spike in blood sugar levels. White grains such as white bread and white rice are the more prominent bad carbs found in the average person's daily diets. Almost all processed foods also contain bad carbs. Sugar-rich foods and sweets may be the biggest bad carb culprit attributing to obesity and type-2 diabetes.

If you want to practice a healthy, balanced diet, but you're afraid of putting on a couple extra pounds, there is no reason to cut out carbs. Instead, make sure that your carbohydrate macronutrients are coming from natural fiber-rich products. Eat plenty of fruits

and vegetables. Substitute those white grains for whole grain products. Avoid processed and refined foods as much as possible. But if you can't completely cut out processed foods, and many of us can't, pay close attention to the sugar content in the processed foods that you consume.

Maybe most important, you should find the right balance of macronutrients that works with your body. Health experts generalize carbohydrate macronutrient intake, saying that the average person's macronutrient balance equilibrium is around 40 percent carbs, 30 percent protein, and 30 percent fat. This balance might not be perfect for you, and you may need to restructure your intake to meet your body's optimum function. Talk to a nutrition specialist to develop a dietary plan with a macronutrient balance that is best for you.

So, next time you want to cut a few pounds and are considering a new diet fab—consider the healthier simple way first. Avoid those empty calories in bad carbs, consume plenty of fiber-rich natural products, and find a healthy macronutrient balance that fits your lifestyle! [IS](#)

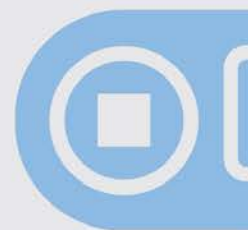


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Are Your Kids Over-Programmed?

by Mark M. Bello



Busy schedules have become part of our culture, but is keeping our children active and engaged causing them to be over-programmed?

Largely gone are the days of unstructured free time—bike rides in the neighborhood, climbing trees, kickball in the backyard, hours of creative play. Kids today are taught that successful people try new things, take risks, and work hard.

Many parents work and need to know their kids are in a safe place. Some may be projecting their own wants and needs onto their children or don't want their kids to miss out on experiences. And they aren't wrong. Organized activities and sports are beneficial, fostering social skills and teaching valuable lessons, like sportsmanship, self-discipline, and conflict resolution. However, there is the competition of social pressure. Parents have high aspirations for their kids whether it be an academic success or excelling in extracurriculars, and kids, too, will dictate a full schedule because they don't want to feel left out. As teens, they feel the pressure to boost their extracurricular activities to help get into their college of choice.

However, kids often don't even recognize when they are experiencing overload. So how can you as a parent know when your child is too busy? Here are a few warning signs.

Change in Sleep Habits

Is your child tired, fatigued, or restless? Kids who are rushed from one activity to another without downtime often have trouble falling asleep at night. Some kids will wake up earlier than necessary, feeling overwhelmed or underproductive. Others will be so exhausted that they struggle to wake up in the morning.

Grades

Is your child suddenly falling behind in schoolwork? Have you noticed a sudden drop in your child's grades? Though it may seem counterintuitive, if something has to give, schoolwork usually falls to the wayside before the extracurriculars.

Mood Swings

Is your child moody, irritable, withdrawn, or depressed? Does your child have emotional outbursts or displays of frustration and anxiety? The more activities a child is involved in, the more opportunities there are to not live up to a standard—their own or their parent's.

Illnesses and Aches

If your child frequently complains of headaches, stomach aches, and body pains then take a look at his schedule and reduce some load from

their shoulders. It is common in younger children for the condition to arise just before an activity. This may suggest a loss of interest.

Losing Family Time

Too many families grab a quick bite in the car every evening as they're rushing to/from activities. If your child is eating on the go more than a few times a week, it may be time to re-evaluate their schedule. Furthermore, are you spending more time with your kids in the car than anywhere else? This is a sign that activities and schedules are dominating the focus of family time.

How Can You Help?

- » Make sure the activities are based on your child's interest, not yours.
- » Encourage your child to prioritize choices and set limits on the number of activities your child can participate in at any given time.
- » Have your child refrain from comparing themselves to others. The ability to manage multiple activities simultaneously varies from person to person.
- » Allow your child to change or reduce activities when they need to, even if you believe they have the capacity to "do it all."
- » Discuss requirements and time commitments for each activity. For example, does your child realize that soccer practice is twice a week, right after school? Then there's the weekly game, too. Will there be time to practice piano in between lessons? Will homework suffer?
- » Set priorities. School comes first. If your child has a hard time keeping up academically, then maybe they need to drop an activity.
- » Make family time a priority. This can include playing a game, watching a movie, or just sitting on the patio chatting over lemonade.
- » Make sure your child has unstructured time; a time when there is no pressure to be anywhere or do anything. No activities, no sports, no homework, and no plans.
- » Leave room for flexibility and spontaneity.
- » Be a role model. Children look to parents for guidance and encouragement. Parents should model healthy levels of work, recreation, and family time themselves.

The key is to schedule things in moderation and choose activities with a child's age, temperament, interests, and abilities in mind. After all, success should not be measured by how much you do, but by how happy you are about doing it. [IS](#)

Getting Remarried?

How to Prepare the Kids

by Gina Pribil

The going divorce rate in the U.S. these days is approx. 50 percent. Yes, half of all marriages dissolve.

However, there's less talk about the "remarry" rate; i.e., those folks who believe in giving marriage a second (or sometimes, third) chance. In fact, an estimated 60 percent of white men and women remarry, compared with 51 percent of Hispanics, 48 percent of African-Americans and 46 percent of Asian-Americans.

And while "boy meets girl: part deux" may seem sweet and romantic, oftentimes, there are others involved in the relationship—children—who may view it differently.

Emotions run high for kids as their parents start back into the dating world. From feelings of loss to worrying about "sharing" their parents with outsiders, it's a tricky balance.

The following are some things to remember as you navigate this new aspect of your life, according to healthychildren.org:

- » Your child(ren) may feel a sense of "loss" as you develop new serious relationships. Child(ren) begin to realize that their original family will not go back to the way it was.
- » Close relationships with parents during singlehood must now learn again to share with new spouses and possible stepchild(ren).
- » Acceptance of new family members as they navigate "Where do I belong?"
- » New rules that will have to be put into place for the "new normal."
- » Privacy issues as more people now live in the house. It is important to children to have a place of their own. So, what should you do? Studies suggest the following:

Child(ren) do not get to decide. Give your kids some time between the engagement and the actual marriage. This will help with the adjustment period. However, keep in mind that there's no "set time" on when a child acclimates.

Live where it is least disruptive. Location, location, location!

Determining a place that is a "comfort spot" for your child(ren) is incredibly important. Try to keep them in the same school. Have a similar daily schedule. Uprooting too much of their lives will be a shock and make the transition even more difficult.

Spend time all together. Group activities with the entire new family (significant others, their children, etc.) are vital toward building relationships and bonding.

Alone time with your kids is still key. Regardless of how well the blending of families is going, your kid(s) are going to crave the attention of just you. Build into your schedule a time to do activities that is devoted **ONLY** to them. Get ice cream, go to the zoo, the movies, pull them from school while everyone is out and spend a day baking cookies. The possibilities are endless and memorable.

Seek out professional help if needed. There is no shame in asking for help. Adjustments are difficult and therapy is not uncommon.

Remember, no family is perfect. There will be a need for transition time and adjusting, but keeping open lines of communication and setting aside the appropriate time for all will help. Just because there may be disagreements, arguments, or tension does not mean it will always be that way. This too shall pass. [IS](http://livingsafer.com)





Pro v. Con: Should You Let Your Child Play Youth Football?

by Hillary Rinehardt and Cheyenne Hunt

While many view the sport of football as an integral part of today's middle and high school experience, it has not always been the case. In the early 20th century, Amos Alonzo Stagg—known as the father of modern football—worked alongside the president of the University of Notre Dame to get the sport banned from prep schools across the country. In 1909, New York City forbade football from all high schools in the city. In recent years, the connection between tackle football and permanent brain damage has become a national conversation.

In 2016, there were over three million students suiting up for football practices and games every day across the United States, yet that number continues to fall each year. Last year, there were 3.21 million adolescents ages 6 to 17 years old playing tackle football across the nation, which is a drop of 750,000 since 2009.

In 2002, Bennet Omalu, M.D., discovered and published findings of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) in American professional football players while working at the Allegheny County Coroner's Office in Pennsylvania. His first finding involved Pittsburgh Steelers player Mike Webster, who played center in the NFL for 16 seasons. In a joint study, the Department of Veterans Affairs and Boston University showed that 91 former NFL player's brains tested positive for CTE; however, in 2015, less than 44 percent of youth football coaches were trained in teaching proper tackling techniques, which can prove traumatic when a 9- to 12-year-old can take up to 500 hits to the head each season.

Every parent has the responsibility to educate themselves and their children to ensure that they are limiting the potential for any injuries. But in tackle football, it is impossible to avoid hits to the head.

So why should children play tackle football at all with such extreme long-term risks?

Although research has proven that football players, specifically

those youth football players who do not learn how to tackle properly, are susceptible to serious injury, helmet manufacturers are also beginning to increase their safety protocols. Football helmet manufacturers are beginning to be graded for safety, with the sole mission to improve player health. Youth football safety studies are continuously conducted across the United States at various top universities in order to ensure that each player is safe while participating in the sport. Across the country, youth football leagues also have definitive rules about the amount of full contact during practices to keep your children safe. Leagues that employ USA Football's Heads Up Football Program have seen a decline in overall injuries at all age levels.

Tackle football also teaches toughness and aggressiveness, as well as strengthening the bonds between teammates. Football, at its core, is not a soft sport. Contact is a pertinent aspect of the game, and students who play tackle football are taught from the first day of practice that when you get knocked down, you must get back up—and this is a life lesson that players will keep with them, both literally and figuratively. As a member of a football team, each player has an obligation to perform their specific position responsibility at each snap. Without this brotherhood bond—with each player contributing—the team will undoubtedly fail.

In an age where more children are spending time isolated indoors, and nearly 1 in 5 children are obese, children need to be active. Youth football provides a way to keep children outdoors, active, and engaged with their peers. In any sport, there is chance for injury. Whether the benefits outweigh the risks will be an individual evaluation for parents to make. Because students who play youth football will come to learn the various life lessons of the sport—including responsibility, discipline, and teamwork—many families will choose to participate. [IS](#)



Mental Health Break

Why It's OK to Take a Vaca Without the Kids

by Gina Pribil

We absolutely love our kids, but between the stress of working a full-time job, a full-time chauffeur to the tiny people we've created, a personal chef, and the 18 other hats we wear throughout the day, we also need a vacation. And that's OK.

Allina Health reports, "Research shows Americans work more than anyone in the industrialized world. They also take less vacation, work longer days, and retire later."

Productivity is important. We want to give our children the lives we think they deserve and have better than we did growing up. It's the oldest story in the book.

But, high levels of productivity, stress and deadlines can have a negative effect on our physical and mental well being. This, in turn, can result bad reactions to our children.

In fact, a number of studies have shown that "people who take vacations have lower stress, less risk of heart disease, a better outlook on life and more motivation to achieve goals," according to Allina Health.

Need some more convincing to ditch the office and drop the kids off at Nana and Papa's? Here are some additional benefits to taking a bit of "you time":

- » **Improved Physical Health:** Stress can contribute to many different parts of the body. Especially contributing to a higher risk of heart disease and high blood pressure.
- » **Improved Mental Health:** Neuroscientists have found that brain structure is altered by chronic exposure to the stress hormone cortisol, which can be a major contributing factor to anxiety and depression. Feelings of calm arise from time away

from work and relieve stress, which allows the body and mind to heal in ways that it couldn't if it were still under pressure.

- » **Improved Familial Relationships:** Spending some alone time (just your spouse or yourself) may be exactly what the doctor ordered. Reconnecting and realigning is vital to a healthy relationship.
- » **Decreased Burnout:** Unplug! A break from constantly being "on" is a good thing. Don't think about the 106 emails waiting for you at work. Submerging yourself in the culture of your vacation destination will help recharge those mental batteries.

But What About Guilt?

Guilt is something that weighs heavily on the minds of parents. Understandable. However, you're no good to your kids if you're burnt out and beat down. Take a short break away from the kids. They will be fine, and someday, they may even thank you for it.

After all, children are sponges; they soak up every little thing they see and hear, especially when it involves their role models: YOU. It's important they see that you take care of yourselves and your relationship as man and wife—not just mom and dad. This is something they'll take with them as they grow older.

Additionally, it's a great learning experience for them. Staying with family or a close friend will allow them to maybe gain a bit of independence and take in some new experiences while you're gone.

So, what are you waiting for? Start searching for flights today. You deserve it. [IS](#)



Overprotected?

Why Keeping Kids 'Safe' is Harming Them

by Gina Pribil

A few decades ago, the only rule for kids running up and down the street was to be home by dark. Maybe they came home with bumps, bruises and scratches, but they were fine. Fast forward to 2018: there's a decent chance you may see a child on a "leash" and a hearty serving of "helicopter parenting" everywhere you turn.

Yes, the world is changing and we must understand our surroundings and know what to watch for. However, in actuality, violent crimes in the U.S. have fallen sharply over the past quarter century, according to the Pew Research Center. In fact, the violent crime rate fell 48 percent between 1993 and 2016, according to FBI numbers.

Unfortunately, public perception about crime in the U.S. often doesn't align with the data. Hence, this idea that our streets are no longer safe for our children to play alone.

As parents, we are so protective of our cubs and want so much for them, it's easy to miss the fact that in the long run, making sure your child never falls down or deals with adversity could end up hurting him.

In fact, there's actually a clinical term for it: acute stress. It's essentially the response to frightening, competitive or

dangerous stimulus — and something that is completely resolved in matter of seconds or minutes. Sports, video games and other competitions or contests are a few prime examples.

It's the idea that your child will indeed be OK if they don't get a trophy this time around. Or, if they fall down, sometimes it's OK to let them pick themselves back up. In fact, doctors say it is beneficial for childhood development.

In a recent study, rats that were deprived of playful stress grew into adults that cannot handle stressful situations and tend to lock up. Studies also showed that stress-deprived rats grew up to be hyperaggressive and antisocial.

However, these studies were not just done on rats but also a variety of different animals. Acute mild stress was found to be beneficial for brain development, social and behavioral skills, and, in some aspects, intelligence.

So, as hard as it may be to try and protect your child from the world, know that your kids are strong. Let them play outside. Enroll them in sports, team-related activities, and let them sort out their own minor issues. This will allow them to be shaped by their youth into striving, fully functioning adults. [IS](#)

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DECLUTTERING:

How to Say Goodbye to Unneeded Items

by Florence Murray

Are you a packrat? A fan of the phrase, “a cluttered desk is the sign of a brilliant mind?” Or are you just a full-blown mess? If you answered yes to any of these questions, it may be time to declutter. The good news is that it can be a lot easier than you think.

First, truly assess your situation and determine if you suffer from the psychiatric condition known as hoarding. If you do, these recommendations can help but it would be best to discuss it further with your counselor or primary care physician. Five percent of Americans meet the criteria for being hoarders according to hoarding specialist and psychologist David Tolin, Ph.D., author of *Buried in Treasures*. Experts draw the line between a merely messy lifestyle and hoarding: It comes down to the person’s ability to function, according to Tolin. Luckily for most of us, we function—we just cannot see our desks. If you are not a hoarder and would like to declutter your life, here are some recommendations.

First, you have to assess your mess and separate it into three piles: those things you’re going to keep; those things you’re going to give away; and those things that need to be thrown away. This is not a one-hour solution. Rather, you should plan in advance with large black trash bags and boxes and devote an entire day to your endeavors. In determining whether to keep something think about the last time you used it, how important it is to your daily functioning, and whether you could absolutely live without it. If you’re not using it chances are you really don’t need it, so it’s either trash or someone else’s treasure. If it is in relatively good condition, consider donating it to a colleague, or perhaps a worthy cause like Goodwill. You may also ask to have a tidier friend help you with your decision making. Hopefully by the end of the day you have three distinct piles, with the trash and giveaway piles being substantially larger than the keep piles. Try not to think about it overnight, and throw away the trash

immediately and take giveaway items to Goodwill that day.

Now you have to figure out what to do with the things you kept. Ideally, you can develop themes of items that belong together. If it is your home, put all blankets in one place, and store the spices next to your stove as opposed to around the corner on a dusty spice rack. You can even consider hiring a staging professional. If it is your office, go to an office supply store and buy the organizational bins which will help you keep pleadings in one location, correspondence in another, and filing in yet another. Be careful not to get too many organizational bins as they can get messy just as easily as paper. Make sure to tab any organizational tools that you use so that you can quickly find what it is that you need. Organization has become a multimillion dollar industry, so do not fall prey to all the bright and shiny options. Keep it simple and your desk will be sublime.

Whether it’s the home or the office, it’s okay to have empty space. In fact, it’s preferred. At home, pretend you are trying to sell your home and envision what buyers want to see. Do they want to see 12 pair of tennis shoes in a pile in the corner or would they rather see the beautiful hardwood that lies underneath. At the office, it can be very reassuring to actually see your desk. The more of your desk that is visible, the more calm you will be and the more productive. While the occasional family picture is appropriate, knickknacks, candles and other items serve as mere distractions.

There are four different questions to ask yourself: Do I need this? Do I want this? Can I live without it? Who else could use this? With the stressful lives we all live, do not allow your home and your office clutter to add to that stress. Take one day, answer your four questions, fill your trash bags and organize your life. Your brain, your family and your coworkers will thank you! [IS](#)



Dos and Don'ts Traveling Alone

by Brittany Monbarren

DO



Know how to get where you're going.



Ask security to accompany you to your room at any time.



Stash your valuables – most hotels have a safe in the room.



Pick safe environments for meeting locals.



Know how to defend yourself.



Step inside when asking for directions.



Program local emergency numbers into your phone.



Always know your surroundings.



Flout the local rules of etiquette.



Sacrifice your safety.



Appear to be traveling alone.



Wait until you hit town to find a nice place to stay.



Stay in a room at the end of the hall.



Be weighed down by luggage.



Carry tons of cash.



Park far away from your hotel.

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